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INTRODUCTION:

Anyone who has spent time in Buddhist lands attempting to communicate the "Good News" must come up against the exasperating fact, that no matter how brilliant a linguist one may be, no matter how sincere one may be presenting the Gospel, no matter how totally saturated in the local culture, one's message seems nevertheless, to fall on deaf ears. All sorts of reasons have been propounded for this unmistakable lack of communication and response. The writer has wrestled with this problem for 30 years, the church has wrestled with it in in Asia and Thailand for one hundred and fifty years. The fact is that Buddhist people across Asia, for the most part seem to be impervious to the Gospel. A frustrated Korean missionary even wrote a book entitled 'The Unfinished Mission in Thailand: The Uncertain Christian Impact on the Buddhist Heartland'. This is not just a Western missionary problem; many Asian Christian leaders are also exercised about it. They are ambitious to analyse all the factors that may contribute to this virtual rejection of Christianity in their lands. The majority of Christians in Asia, have got to the stage where they reluctantly accept the status quo as inevitable, and yet at the same time they look enviously at one or two nearby countries, (especially South Korea), where there has been phenomenal Church Growth and wonder why it has not happened in their own country.

The present writer seeks to investigate the reasons for this conspicuous lack of response by Buddhist people to the Gospel. I first of all attempt to analyse some of the problems, and then suggest some radical solutions. Radical in terms of proposing new approaches to Buddhists coupled with advocating a new appreciation for and understanding of indigenous cultures. The goal being, to preserve the essential nature of the Gospel and at the same time take seriously the implications of the Incarnation as it relates to local Asian cultures.

Three fundamental problems need to be addressed. One, the alien nature of the Gospel as presented by missionaries from the West to Buddhists. Two, and perhaps more serious, the subsequent perpetuation of this foreignness by Asian Christian leaders themselves, and how this problem may be resolved. Three, the dual problems of vocabulary, and transference of concepts between the two contrasting belief systems; trying to mix what Koyama a Japanese missionary calls "Aristotelian pepper and Buddhist salt". Or as we may put it, trying to compare chalk and cheese!

To try and illustrate the problem of communicating the Gospel to Asian Buddhists, let us imagine a young enthusiastic missionary to Thailand, (which is 99.9% Buddhist), frustrated by the tedious task of language learning, anxious to communicate the gospel in a nutshell; attempting to take a short cut to effectively communicate his message. He is convinced that Scripture itself should convey the true meaning of the Gospel - is it not after all as powerful as a two edged sword? Does not the Holy Spirit illuminate the Word, so that it will pierce the listeners heart?

He spends considerable time memorising John 3:16 accurately, in perfect Thai - even getting all the tones right! Having checked and rechecked with his language teacher, he begins with enthusiasm to share John 3:16 with his neighbours. They smile benignly and he thinks he has delivered the message with clarity - after all he has sown the seed faithfully - so he imagines. What in fact is he actually saying in terms of the Receptors' categories? With

all due respect to the missionary's enthusiasm, he is in fact communicating unintelligible gobbledygook. Words scrambled together that convey both confusing and contradictory concepts. The hearer nods his head knowingly (to please the communicator), but he in fact is no wiser than before he had heard John 3:16 pronounced so accurately in his own language. What then is the problem? If we break down John 3:16 into components and consider each part separately we shall begin to perceive the problem from a Buddhist's point of view:

“For God so loved the World”. This word “God” (“Prajna”) in Buddhist cosmology can mean any number of things -- to use computer analogy, if you call up the word “God” on the screen (mind) of a Buddhist, the “read out” would be “Sun, Moon, Stars, members of the Royal Family, members of the Buddhist Priesthood, (all Monks are called “Prajna”). Hindu mythological gods, special sacred places - or images of Buddha; all use the same designation.

A Buddhist never thinks of the possibility of using this word “Prajna” for the “God” the Christian is so enthusiastically trying to convey. He has no such concept. There is no God in the Christian sense in Buddhist cosmology. It is like trying to call something up on the computer screen, when there is nothing on the disk! This is compounded by the fact, that whoever this God is, he is apparently supposed to “love”. But again, if you call up the word “love” on the computer screen of a Buddhist mind, it will register “all desire, good or bad, in Buddhism is by definition bad - it presupposes relationships and attachments”. How confusing then to say that God “loves”? Again, if we infer that the Christian God is personal, we fall deeper into a morass of misunderstanding. Some Buddhist priests, upon being told that the Christian God, is a “personal” God, came to the logical conclusion as far as they were concerned, that this was of course feasible, but such a “person” must then be compared with Buddha BEFORE his Enlightenment. Anyone who has achieved Enlightenment would no longer have the capacity to love, or “desire” to have any such attachments to people or to the world. How could this Christian God, “love people” and the world? For God to want to have a loving relationship with human beings would indicate to the Buddhist mind that this God lacks something, He is inadequate in Himself, that he needs something (a response!) and tries to derive it from men. Also, for this God, “to give His only Son”, is on its own a totally meaningless statement. One can only imagine what bizarre conclusions that one might come to! The other segments of the verse will further confuse the recipient regarding the nature of this “good news”. The idea of “believing” or “trusting” is also totally contrary to the Buddhist concept of salvation. Salvation in Theravada Buddhism, is not dependent upon anything or anybody. The best known Buddhist epithet, embedded in the memory of every Thai person is “Hai ton pen ti peng khong ton” which means “You cannot depend upon anyone else (for your salvation), you must depend upon yourself alone”. The last part of the verse; the result of the good news, - “that you may have everlasting life” is the ultimate obstacle to understanding. “Everlasting life” may be good news to the Christian, but it is certainly not for the Buddhist - it is the last thing he wants. For the Buddhist, the word as used in the Bible, “Everlasting Life” is understood in terms of a “predestined” process, a miserable cyclic rise and fall of one meaningless, aimless reincarnation after another. A

Buddhist “aspires” (although that in itself is a contradiction) to Nirvana, not to a perpetuation of reincarnations which in his own terms is “Eternal Life”. If our enthusiastic missionary communicator had realised what had been going on in the Buddhist mind, when he was quoting his verse, perhaps he would have sat down and reasoned that effective communication can only be determined by how the Receptor perceives and understands the message, not how accurately the Communicator thinks he has delivered it. This presupposes a comprehensive understanding of the Receptor’s world view and perceptions. Buddhism is a sophisticated philosophical belief system which demands our utmost respect and

study, before we earn the right to communicate what is objectively to us good news, but which may be perceived as bad news to them. It is obvious that this problem is not particular to Thailand when communicating the Gospel to Buddhist people - it effects the whole of Asia and beyond - and the principle of "receptor oriented communication" is in fact Universal. In questioning why the Gospel had produced such feeble results when communicated to Buddhists in Tibet, Marku Tsering raises the question "Were Tibetan Buddhist peoples just resistant to the Gospel message, or could the Christians have done more to make the message clearer to them?...some peoples who are thought to be resistant to the Gospel actually have not had a fair chance to accept it". Having said this, even if it could be possible to contextualise the gospel perfectly, the message of the Cross which already is "foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews" may well appear as "ignorance" to many Buddhists. It is impossible to escape from the stigma inherent in this message. One cannot make attractive the "scandal of a crucified God". Apart from the "enlightening" work of the Spirit of God, human minds will react as they did when Paul preached in Athens:

Some asked - what is this babbler trying to say? Others remarked he seems to be advocating foreign gods. They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

CHAPTER 1.

WHAT IS CONTEXTUALISATION?

Dr. Bong Rin Ro, a prominent Asian Theologian of the Asia Theological Association in an article on Contextualisation states:

"A theologian once said, "Theological ideas are created on the European Continent, corrected in England, and corrupted in America". I would add "and crammed into Asia". Shoving "Westerner's Christianity" upon Asians is no longer acceptable".

The most subtle ongoing expression of cultural imperialism is evidenced by the wrong assumption that because the "West" has encouraged the "Third-World" churches to become "indigenous", (meaning churches follow the "three-self", "Nevius method" of being self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating); that it has therefore relinquished power and control. This is in fact not the case - non-Western churches are still not free. Not free to theologise within their own context, not free to be led by the Spirit into truths that may have never emerged in Western theological systems, not free to express Christianity within their own cultural forms. The fact is, third world churches are still saddled with Western Theological systems, which in large measure confine and restrict theological categories to Western presuppositions, and in themselves are both archaic and to some extent redundant even in the West.

Genuine sincerity coupled with deep conviction prompts some well thinking Christians, to dispatch container loads of Western theological books en masse to the Third World, often with little regard to their cultural appropriateness or theological relevance. They are inspired by the conviction that this is what the churches in those "deprived" areas need.

One of the most alarming discoveries of modern mission today is that its ambassadors from the West still have not acknowledged the fact that all theologies are by nature culturally conditioned which in effect means that mass exportation of Western theological books may be counter productive on three accounts. Firstly, they perpetuate Western world-view, Western values, and Western theological presuppositions. Secondly, such ventures relieve churches in other lands of the urgent priority to create their own theologies which would by their very nature, produce relevant answers to the questions that local people are asking. Thirdly, they unconsciously perpetuate unacceptable theological imperialism - the idea that we in the West really have got it all right, and that the whole repository of divine revelation has not only been fully and finally given to us, but that it can and should only be interpreted by us - everybody else therefore must feed off the doctrinal crumbs that fall from our theologically heavily laden desks and bulging bookshelves. On a journey to the Bangalore area of South India, in the early nineties, the writer visited some seven theological institutions. On checking the curriculum content and the teaching syllabi, it was noted that most of the Colleges were fundamentally dependent on western imported systems and content, with little reference to local context - even the teaching of church history emphasised the expansion of the Church to the West - not the East! One or two College were either exact representations of their Western denominational counterparts, or subscribed totally to their Western doctrinal formulae without apparent question as to its applicability to local context.

The really important questions Asian Buddhists and Animists ask, do not relate to what Westerners understand as being absolutely essential in explaining the nature of the Gospel. For instance, we feel the need to produce all sorts of evidence to prove the existence of the supernatural. They do not need endless volumes of philosophical and theological proof employing the typically Western, ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments (whatever they are supposed to mean!), to prove the existence of God, or the supernatural! For them, this is already taken for granted, accepted as real.. Almost all of our Western theologies spend an unwarranted amount of time and space on this subject which is already a basic assumption for peoples whose belief system is based upon a 'supernaturalistic' world-view. It is therefore a total waste of time energy and paper to try and convince somebody regarding the existence of the supernatural when they already believe it! Bible Colleges and Theological seminaries all over Asia, still indoctrinate their students with these imported and totally unnecessary arguments. The ordinary Asian does not need to be convinced concerning these matters, so why waste time for what to them is tacitly obvious! It is a sad picture that many Christians from Asia are encouraged, to research Western books on theology, to discover answers to questions local Buddhists from nother Continent, are asking. They could spend endless hours searching through all of the Western theologies for such answers - and never find them! Where in Western theology for instance are there any answers to the problems Asians may be facing that relate to topical issues such as Karma, Reincarnation, the Living Dead, Ancestor Veneration or Spirit Possession?

Western churches also, need to look at the up-to-date issues raised by their own culture and context, such as secularism, affluence in a poverty stricken world, DNA and genetic engineering, Aids, abortion, euthanasia, ecology and the environment, global warming etc. One would need a lot of time and patience to find answers to such Western contemporary and contextual problems, from Calvin, Hodge, Strong Owen or any other reputable Western theologian. It was after all, the contextual and contemporary problems of the early church that

caused them to develop fallible Credal statements responding to the theological storms they were experiencing at that time. Creeds, are not static formulae but need to develop new responses and answers to the theological, cultural and contextual storms that modern society is encountering.

Yet Asian and African theologians, too long in close contact with the West, are often guilty of perpetuating the foreign concepts they have learned from the West thereby destroying what possibly started out as a more Biblical world view in their own country's church.

John S. Mbiti a well known African Theologian, described his "Theological Impotence" after study at Cambridge University:

"He learned German, Greek, French, Latin, Hebrew in addition to English, church history, systematics, homiletics exegesis, and pastoralia, as one part of the requirements of his degree. The other part of the dissertation he wrote on some obscure theologian of the middle Ages. Finally he got what he wanted a Doctorate in Theology. It took him nine and a half years altogether...He was anxious to reach home as soon as possible, so he flew and he was glad to pay his excess baggage, which after all consisted only of the Bible in the various languages he had learned plus, Bultmann, Barth, Bonhoeffer, Brunner, Buber, Cone, Kung, Moltmann, Niebuhr, Tillich, Christianity Today, Time magazine....At home relatives, neighbours, old friends, dancers musicians all gather round him to welcome him back. The fatted calves are killed: meat is roasted, girls giggle as they survey him surrounded by his excess baggage; He must tell them about his experiences overseas, for everyone has come to eat, to rejoice to listen to their hero who has studied, who has read so many theological books who is the hope of their small but growing church, the very incarnation of theological learning....suddenly there is a shriek. Someone has fallen to the ground. It is his older sister, now a married woman with six children and still going strong. He rushes to her, people make room for him, and watch him. "Let's take her to the hospital" he calls urgently. They are stunned. He becomes quiet. They all look at him bending over her. Why doesn't someone respond to his advice?

Finally a schoolgirl

says "Sir, the nearest hospital is 50 miles away and there are few buses that go there." Someone else says "She is demon possessed. Hospitals will not cure her!" The chief says to him "You have been studying Theology overseas for 10 years, now help your sister. She is troubled by the spirit of her great Aunt." He looks around. Slowly he goes to get Bultmann, looks at the index, finds what he wants, reads again about spirit possession in the New Testament. Of course he gets the answer: Bultmann has demythologised it. He insists that his sister is not possessed. The people shout "Help your sister, she is possessed!" He shouts back "But Bultmann has demythologised demon possession!....Fantasy? No, these are the realities of our time".

Western missionaries should realise that it is not only our Western Theology that hinders effective communication of the Gospel to other peoples, but even deeper than that, it is our whole value system, our world-view. Western Christianity is by definition "syncretistic" in that been influenced and to some extent contaminated by a secular, naturalistic worldview.

Urban "civilised" peoples separate the secular from the sacred but rural "primitive" folk- cultures have no such false division. When Missiologist Leslie Newbigin makes the statement "In the past Christian mission has been the greatest secularising force in history ", it really is time to sit up and listen. William Smalley notes in his article on "Cultural Implications of an Indigenous Church", the irony of the West being financially best suited yet culturally least suited to the task of world evangelism!

Dr. Saad Chaiwan, has long wrestled with the same problem. In his Doctoral Thesis entitled "A study of the Impact of Christian Missions on Thai Culture from the Historical Perspective (1662-1985) ", he describes the early lack of response among the Thai towards the Gospel, and suggests the reasons for that:

"Though the missionaries had this clear-cut objective and tried to work toward it, they failed to convert many Siamese. Twenty-two American Board missionaries who had laboured for eighteen years, 1831-1849, could not make a single Thai convert. In thirty years 1833-1863, the American Baptists made only forty-five converts, chiefly among the Chinese. The French Catholic missionaries rarely mentioned conversion in their reports simply because there were none or very few. The main cause of failure could be the lack of understanding of and adaptation of the missionaries to the culture in which they were working. Because they were from the Western context to spread the Gospel in the oriental context which had its own advanced religious philosophies. Moreover the missionaries seemed to ignore the social system of the native. IN THE EARLY TIME, A SIAMESE COULD NOT BECOME A CHRISTIAN SIMPLY BECAUSE TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN HE HAD ALMOST COMPLETELY TO DENOUNCE HIS OWN CULTURE î. (my capitals).

As early as 1931, Carl C. Zimmerman, an American Sociologist reported that everything the Thai convert was expected to do shouted foreignness. He argued that even the method of presenting the Gospel to Thai people by the foreigner, more often than not, caused offence because it was a crusading type of evangelism, incompatible with Buddhist values. Zimmerman adds:

îA person could not become a Christian according to standards laid down by the missionary, without becoming almost completely denationalised and deculturised; from his own social system. A Siamese Christian even today, can give but a part of his life to the social system created by the Christian Church".

It is sad, but self evident that these observations from one country are equally applicable to most places where the church has been planted throughout Asia. A faulty underlying premise seems to have been part of the problem for Western missionaries. It had been taken for granted, that "theology" per se, was immutable and unchangeable. However, the task of the theology of any people is to articulate their understanding of the eternal truths in terms of their given locale or cultural matrix. It is not wrong therefore to speak of an Asian Theology, or a Western Theology.

Before discussing the implications of "contextualisation", and Biblical precedence for this concept, we will look briefly at its historical origins. The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith issued the following injunction in 1659 to the missionaries in China and Indonesia:

"Put no obstacle in their way: and for no reason whatever should you persuade these people to change their rites, customs and ways of life unless these are obviously opposed to religion and good morals. For what is more absurd than to bring France, or Spain, or Italy or any other part of Europe into China. It is not these that you should bring, but the faith which does not spurn or reject any people's rites and customs unless they are depraved, but on the contrary tries to keep them...admire and praise what deserves to be respected" (Sarapong 1987).

In the early 1970's, Ecumenical, Catholic and Evangelical Missiologists adopted "Contextualisation" as a useful term but heated debate over the precise meaning

of the word continues without abating. It is certain that the general "Ecumenical" perception of the word and the "Evangelical" interpretation are considerably different, although there are some common areas of meaning. The proliferation of definitions can be seen from the following quote taken from "Theology and Mission":

"This is essentially the meaning of Charles Kraft's usage of 'transculturation' of S. R. Garcia's and William Wonderly's usage of 'incarnation' of Louis Luzbetak's usage of 'accommodation' and of the Roman Catholics' general use of 'adaptation'. It is essentially what John Beekman means by 'a culturally relevant witness', what Wm. Reyburn means by 'transformed symbolism' what Michael Green and Ralph Winter have emphasised with reference to the 'flexibility of the early church witness, and what Eugene Nida and Kraft call 'dynamic functional, equivalence translations'. It is what J. Merle Davis meant by the title of his anthropologically oriented 'New Buildings on Old Foundations' which characterises the approach of missionary authors such as Edwin W. Smith, W. Stanley Rycroft, J.T. Dale, and many others".

Professor Hollenweger of the University of Birmingham stated very clearly the purposes of Intercultural Theology (Contextualisation):

"Intercultural Theology is that theological discipline which operates on the basis of the following presuppositions:

All theologies are contextually conditioned.
There is nothing wrong with theology being contextually conditioned. It may take others to show us how conditioned, parochial or ideologically captive our own theology is.

Even if once we could ignore such voices, now we can no longer do so. The point of contact between our traditions and the new theologies from the Third World is Scripture.

Only in creative tension with the widest possible perspective can we develop theologies appropriate to our own particular situations.

Within the Church the ultimate loyalty is not simply to nation, class or culture.

The universal Church is uniquely suited to provide the context in which the task of creative theologising can take place".

There is now a huge amount of literature available on the subject of Contextualisation from the so called "Third World", more appropriately designated "The Two Thirds World". Apart from a conference paper on "God and Christ in the Context of Buddhism" which surveys ideas of God and Messiah in Buddhist Cosmology, attempts at Contextualisation from the Asian perspective are few, but significant in that most of them have been written by Asians themselves. It is heartening however to see Asian Evangelical Theologians struggling to put right some of the failings of Western missionaries by wrestling with these issues. The Asia Theological Association are a prime example in producing publications that try to redress the situation. These and other publications, will be referred to extensively in this study. Other books dealing with same subject can be found in the Bibliography.

CONTEXTUALISATION IS NEEDED, SYNCRETISM IS NOT

The foreignness of a Gospel dressed in Western clothes has been one of the main characteristics of the modern missionary movement. This was for two reasons. First the assumed supremacy, technologically, historically, and intellectually of Western culture; and second, the rejection of traditional cultures as primitive and "underdeveloped". Early missionaries came face to face with weird and wonderful practices which seemed to have no explanation other than that they were "pagan", or "demonic". Practices such as female circumcision, burning of widows, infant sacrifice, foot binding, child prostitution, the concept of "castes" and the stigma of the "untouchables" etc., seemed to lead most missionaries inexorably to only one possible conclusion. Coupled with this came the observation that religion appeared to be the "nerve centre" or "control box" of culture. Unlike the West, food, clothing, house construction, marriages, markets, farming, fishing, hunting, festivals, music, dance, drums were all shot through with religious significance. These observations could only lead to the one conclusion; that morality (rather immorality), culture and religion, were all wrapped up together, so they must be rejected as alien. Culture per se was perceived as totally hostile and unacceptable to any expression of Christianity known to the missionary.

To consider using any one part of such a culture as a valid vehicle for the Gospel, would result, (as far as they could see), in debasing its pure character, and lead to confusion both in the minds of the Communicator and the Receptor. The hymnology of the Western church especially in the "missionary" section of most hymnbooks, reflects these premises. To quote -

"From Greenland's icy mountains, from India's coral strand. Where Africa's sunny fountains...they call us to deliver their land from error's chain" (Herbert 1783-1826).

"In doubt and dread dismay, midst superstitions gloom, the godless grope their way and joyless reach the tomb" (Havergal 1793-1870).

While there may well be truth reflected in these hymns, the problem is that they give the impression of the darkness, deprivation and lostness being "over there", and contribute to the idea that all other cultures are invalid and unsuitable in toto.

It became the norm in Christian literature, to refer to all other cultures with heavily negative labels such as "primitive", "animistic", "uncivilised", "idemonic" or "pagan". How natural it was therefore to conclude, that our dress, our art, our music, our hymns our liturgies, our theologies our architectural design, were the only valid cultural vehicles for the expression of "true" Christianity.

Hiebert gives three reasons for the rejection of non Western cultures by Western missionaries. The rise of Colonialism, the Theory of Cultural Evolution, and the Triumph of Science. Colonialism demonstrated the superiority of Western civilisation, Evolutionism legitimised this in terms of history, and Science and Christianity provided the intellectual foundations on which the whole was built. Hiebert concludes "It is not surprising therefore that the period from 1800-1950 was anti contextual in its approach".

But with the collapse of Western dominance in the world, the missionary was dragged along, sometimes with heels kicking, realising first that he could no longer depend upon the backing and authority of Western power, and second that his message had been a mishmash of New Testament Christianity mixed with massive

amounts of Western culture and that this was now becoming unacceptable to people who now had the freedom to choose. The foreignness of the message had some effect, but it was generally outward and cosmetic and had not really reached the African or Asian heart. It was not therefore missiological perception, or theological conviction that has brought about transformation in the attitude of many Western missions today, but sheer necessity!

Ralph Winter points out in his "Twenty-Five Unbelievable Years", some of the factors that changed the face of the world, and the heart of mission. Winter indicated that four hundred years of political expansion and conquest by the West, were rolled back to zero in just twenty five years. The peak of Western expansion was reached in 1945 when 99.5% of the Non-Western world was under Western domination. Within just twenty five years (1945-1969), the most incredible reversal of power in the history of the world took place. By 1969 the West had retreated to the extent that 99.5% of the World had by then gained their independence. The withdrawal of political power often signalled a return to national languages and revived cultural expressions. Perhaps the greatest indictment against the missionary form of the Gospel has been the emergence of over ten thousand New Emerging Religious Movements (NERMS), in the world since Independence. Six thousand of these in Africa alone. Most of them reflect the heart cry of the African to express Christianity within his own cultural forms. The fact that many of these expressions of Christianity are heavily syncretistic is a statement in itself that the African has been trying to "contextualise" the Gospel uncritically. It also proves the point that contextualisation must have clear parameters if it is to maintain its distinctive Christian character. It should be noted here that even in Korea, within the last ten years there has arisen over three hundred NERMS, all attempting to de-Westernise the Gospel. Some interesting theologies are also emerging. One with a particular nationalistic emphasis gaining a considerable following, which claims that South Korea is the new Israel of God, the chosen seed to spread the Gospel to the nations.

As a result of the alarming development of these NERMS and many other reasons, the missionary and his organisation has been forced to switch perspective and acknowledge the defects of his own culture, and the validity of other cultures. Such disciplines as Missiology, Cultural Anthropology, and Contextualisation began to be applied to the problem of searching for new ways that would facilitate the extrapolation of the Gospel from its Western expression and interpretation, and incarnate it into the Receptor culture. The Bermuda Report (Evangelical) of 1978 stated the need for all churches to contextualise the Gospel in order to share it effectively.

For the first time Westerners began to think seriously about the importance of seeing things from the inside as far as the Gospel was concerned, rather than imposing it from the outside.

Kraft pictures Biblical truth as a universal "gold-mine". Men from various cultures stand above at different places (in different times) continually boring shafts, which are directed (contextualised) by their own world-view and needs, so that through the shafts, they draw from the gold-mine those aspects of truth that are relevant to and answer their particular needs. Many common nuggets of gold are extracted from the different shafts but some draw up other particular "finds" and discoveries that others never make claim to, because they are not particularly relevant to them. John Calvin's shaft, The Institutes of Christian Religion, has no answer to Ancestor Worship, Luther does not address or see need for a theology of "Caste". The Reformers had no "Theology of Mission". In fact it was two hundred years after the Reformation that the

modern missionary movement began! This did not mean that there was no "Theology of Mission" in the "gold-mine", it was just one of those nuggets lying unrecognised. The historical context of the Reformation period was that Europe was almost overrun by the invading Turks. Moslems or reactionary monarchs were the enemy, so there was hardly time to think of taking Mission to them!

Those who theologise from an outsider perspective generally disqualify themselves on two accounts. First they tend to superimpose their own theological assumptions without being aware of it and, second, they generally lack sufficient empathy with the receptor culture to enable them to theologise "incarnationally". At best, the "outsider approach" would need a tremendous amount of "insider input", to make it at all significant, thus reflecting in some measure the flaws of this book! The insider approach to theologising is therefore the most necessary function of competent Nationals in the local church in any given area, at any given time.

In dealing with contextualisation one must foresee the potential dangers of uncritical syncretism. Wherever the Gospel finds itself there will inevitably be some "give and take" as it both moulds and is moulded by its cultural environment. After all, the Western expression of Christianity, is as syncretistic as many other expressions of it in other parts of the world!

Charles Kraft uses the analogy of various kinds of ice cream to illustrate the problem. We in the West tend to make syncretism a "black-and-white" issue and therefore prefer a "Neapolitan" rather than a "strawberry-swirl-mix" type, because the Neapolitan type has distinct flavours and is clearly identifiable. The question remains, is the expression of Christianity in any society ever totally "black and white" - is it possible (or desirable) to have a separate "Neapolitan type Christianity" where the "flavour" of the culture is not appreciated?

Ralph Winter recalls the origin of many Western Christian practices:

"I grew up without realising that Easter sunrise services could easily revert to their original paganism if Christians attending them do not see and sense a Christian meaning in them. The very word EASTER comes from a Teutonic spring goddess of fertility called EOSTRE. The same is true of Christmas. We have all fought to maintain Christ in Christmas, since Christmas is also originally a pagan holiday that was taken over by the early church. Romans gave gifts to each other on December 25th long before Jesus was born..."

Extensive research in this area would reveal vast areas of belief and behaviour in the Christian church in the West, that have been borrowed from non-Christian antecedents. This includes much of the paraphernalia associated with Christmas and the "contextualising" of many pagan songs, into Christmas Carols, ad infinitum. Using or redeeming the pagan service of Spring rise, to illustrate the rising Christ is not the same as syncretising (mixing) Christ with pagan religion. Few if any of us now get them mixed up - few if any of us even realise that they were originally totally pagan! Old forms can be invested with new meanings, until the old meaning are forgotten.

Theologians have attempted to define syncretism. The Wheaton Declaration of 1966 states that syncretism is

"the attempt to unite or reconcile biblically revealed Christian truth with the diverse or opposing tenets and practices of non-Christian religions or other systems of thought that deny it" .

Bruce Nicholls, missionary to India states that the central issue in contemporary Asian theological debate is where to draw the line between the 'right and necessary' methodology of contextualisation and the 'wrong' methodology of syncretism.

If either of these processes are not recognised and dealt with in an appropriate manner the distinctives of Christianity could be lost and all that would remain could be the sort of "anonymous" or "cosmic" type of 'Christ of Hinduism', or an 'inclusivist Christology' or simply the adding of an undefined 'Christ' to the pantheon of other gods available in some religions such as another divine Avatar in Hindu religion or a Bodhisattva in Buddhism .

It is salutary for the Evangelical to realise that many of those whom he consigns to the so-called 'Liberal' camp, are in some areas of belief, more Conservative than they themselves are! Paul Tillich, whose very name disqualifies him for consideration by Evangelicals, could hardly be more warmly welcomed by them, when he states in a remarkable sermon on 'The New Being'; that the Apostle Paul was not remotely interested in the question of comparison of religions. Commenting on the text 'For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation', Tillich expresses the spirit of the Apostle when he says:

'Don't compare your religion and our religion, your rites and our rites, your prophets and our prophets, your priest and our priest, the pious amongst you, and the pious amongst us. All this is of no avail! And above all don't think that we want to convert you to English or American Christianity, to the religion of the Western world. We do not want to convert you to us, not even to the best of us. This would be of no avail. We want only to show you something we have seen and to tell you something we have heard; That in the midst of the old creation there is a New Creation, and that this New Creation is manifest in Jesus who is called the Christ'.

The tendency towards syncretism is more prevalent when Christianity is severed from its historical foundations in the New Testament.. The first step occurs when there is an attempt to make a division or distinction between the so called 'Jesus of History', and the mythologised "Christ of Faith". Such 'mystical' faith becomes ripe for absorption into an indiscriminate universal morass generally termed 'mystery religion' which will tolerate everything and leave out nothing. Kung strongly repudiates this concept, when he states:

'Jesus of Nazareth cannot serve as a cipher for all kinds of religion; he cannot be used as a label for an ancient or modern syncretism'.

Buswell states that syncretism occurs "when the critical and basic elements of the Gospel are lost in the process of contextualisation ". and turns into what Stott call 'a fruit cocktail of religions' .

Hollenweger uses the term 'theologically responsible syncretism', thus acknowledging the fact that all expressions of Christianity will in some measure be syncretistic but he calls for distinctive Christian theological parameters.

Hiebert in discussing the problem, further elucidates:

"Not only must we separate the Gospel from our own culture but we must seek to express it in terms of the culture to which we go. But we have seen that translation involves more than putting ideas into native forms, for these forms may not carry meanings, suitable for expressing the Christian message. If we, then translate it into native forms without thought to preserving the meaning, we will end up with syncretism - the mixture of old meanings with the new so that the essential nature of each is lost. If we are careful to preserve the meaning of the Gospel even as we express it in native forms, we have indigenisation. This may involve reinterpreting a native symbol".

It is the "critical and basic elements of the Gospel " that need definition and clarification. To some there seem to be no critical and basic elements at all. Francis M. Seely, a Presbyterian Missionary in Thailand who had a major role in shaping the future leadership of the Thai church, and who taught for many years at the Thailand Theological Seminary in Chiangmai, makes no apology for his view that:

"I regard the Bible as a record of one way out of many ways by which God has spoken to his people which includes all humanity. The way God spoke to the Hebrews and early Christians and the way they understood and expressed what they heard of God's word was necessarily conditioned by their culture and that of surrounding nations. I believe God has spoken also in Thailand through Buddhism....So to me to "teach" the Bible does not mean to teach in such a way that the Buddhist will accept the Christian expression of God's revelation and reject the Buddhist expression of God's revelation. To "Teach" the Bible to me means to give insight into what happened in that particular cultural situation and why it happened, and how the Bible expressed these things for the culture in which it arose".

McGavran hotly refutes the above assumptions and it is necessary to quote his response:

"Seely apparently maintains, first, that the Bible is culture-bound, i.e. God was so limited by having to give his revelation in Hebrew and Greek that he could not reveal universal truths binding on all people in all cultures. Seely's second main thought follows closely from this, namely, that God has also spoken to Buddhists in Thailand (and Marxists in Russia?) so that their cultural light is as good for them as biblical light is for Christians. Seely takes culture very seriously indeed. He grounds it in God. To put it more exactly, Seely believes that God REVEALED nothing and men perceived (manufactured) many concepts which fit their circumstances".

It must be noted that the critical basic elements of the Gospel were not lost, even after the New Testament period. On the contrary, as a result of interaction with the world-views of the surrounding cultures, Hebrew, Greek or Roman, the distinctiveness of the Gospel burst through - it did not submerge into its philosophical and cultural environs and disappear. It was "incarnated" into its cultural milieu. boldly took what was there, and in God's Name addressed that milieu with its own unique message, thus transforming it. Such a concept is almost analogous to the Incarnation itself. "The Word became Flesh"; He did not so merge into Hebrew religion that he disappeared. He took upon Himself all that was involved in "kenosis". Yet at the same time, He was unique, He was apart, He was different. He was man and yet He came from heaven. Repeatedly He would challenge the status quo -"You have heard it said.....but I

say..". Whatever Christ came for, it was not to slip anonymously, or merge serenely, into the status quo. One could hardly say Christ was "culture bound". The supreme paradox of the Incarnation is that Christ fully identified with culture, and at the same time "judged" it, in order that it might become a suitable mechanism to usher in the Kingdom of God. One sees here the models of *continuity* and *confrontation* being happily married at His hand. Dialogue (His normal means of communication), did not extend to an a priori assumption that He would be prepared to align Himself with the status quo, or that He would modify His own prophetic message to accommodate to His listeners. As Christ was the visible expression of the "missio Dei", and ministered according to these models, so His church must also minister prophetically addressing today's issues and needs using the same models. God, through the Old Testament Prophets, addressed His own people and the surrounding nations using similar models. One cannot find any advocacy for a simple fusing of religions. Repeatedly the people of Israel are rebuked by God through the prophets for their tendency toward indiscriminate syncretism, especially with Baalism. Glasser poignantly states:

It is widely held that the religious life of the people of Israel throughout its long history was strongly influenced by religious myths and cultic activities of their neighbours, particularly by Baalism. Considerable syncretism resulted. Indeed, from the conquest of Palestine onward, this Canaanite religion proved a constant temptation with its fertility festivities that encouraged drunkenness, and sexual immorality. It became quite intermingled with the authentic traditions of the Patriarchs, the Exodus and the covenants. For long and short periods even the cultic rituals associated with the Tabernacle and the temple were either neglected or so poorly understood that their worship of Yahweh was offensive to him. We gain insight into this from such prophetic denunciations as Amos 5:21-27 and Isaiah 1:11-15 along with many others. The canonical prophets regarded this syncretism as apostasy. They condemned all worship of idols, of heavenly bodies, and of other gods. They stood against Israeli penchant for frequenting local altars and pillars, engaging in child sacrifice and religious prostitution, burning incense at *high places* to Asherim or under sacred trees. Indeed the total unrelieved hostility of these prophets to all forms of syncretism has its roots in the Mosaic legislation (e.g., Deut 6:124, 15: 7:25, 26) and continued without deviation throughout the whole Old Testament period.

Much of the message of the Old Testament is God's judgment upon his own people because of their persistent idolatry and immorality. and there is no doubt that God, on His part, and His (faithful) people on their part, did not want the nations to misunderstand their distinctiveness.

Moses begged God to go up with them, so that the nations would know that Israel was different. What else, he asked, would distinguish them from others? (Exodus 34:15-17)

Through Isaiah Yahweh challenges His people to compare and contrast Him with the dumb idols, made of firewood. He, Sovereign Creator and Ruler of the Universe, has the right to command total allegiance. He mockingly invites His (unfaithful) people to bring "their idols", to present their case before Him, and asks them to "tell us what is going to happen, so that we might know you are gods - (41v22). Then Yahweh uses the language of ultimatum, not "dialogue": "you are less than nothing and your works are utterly worthless; he who chooses you is

detestable" (41v24) This is not addressed to the nations but to His own people who were guilty of reducing Yahweh down to just another god, or raising up the idols to be on a par with Him. This leaves no doubt that the God of the Old Testament (and the New) is a jealous God. It is in the context of the giving of the Law that God calls Himself a Jealous God. The language of Exodus 34v14, is not one of syncretism.

"Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, and cut down their Asherah poles. Do not worship any other god, for the Lord whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

Some argue that these instructions were "situational" and should not have any binding on today's church. But this requires questionable hermeneutic juggling and arbitrary selection from and interpretation of the Scriptures.

Although we may find little direct reference to "idols" in Jesus' teaching, we do have His repeated emphasis on the "two Kingdoms", - The Kingdom of God and The Kingdom of Darkness/Satan. (Matt 12v25-29). The danger of Dualism, (trying to be loyal to two masters at the same time), is referred to frequently by Jesus. At His own temptation, He is offered the kingdoms of this world. "If you worship me, it will all be yours", is Satan's ploy, to which Jesus responds from the Law, "It is written 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only'" (Matt 4v8).

Other writers of the New Testament implicitly or explicitly warn against the dangers of dualism and syncretism.

The first historic Council of the Church at Jerusalem gives a paradigm of Contextualisation without indiscriminate Syncretism, showing that wherever there is cross-cultural communication of the Gospel, there will inevitably be a tug-of-war. On the one hand, the Gentiles were not expected to be circumcised and obey the Law of Moses, thus discontinuing what were perceived to be unessential parts of the message. On the other hand, they were also not expected to continue to offer up food sacrificed to idols, thus discontinuing something of their own religion, forbidden in the Old Testament. The missiological task today is no different from the methodological procedure of this first Council; stripping those elements of the message, that only have particular relevance to Western expressions of Christianity on the one hand, while encouraging surgery for those elements of the recipient culture which are incompatible with the essential nature of the Gospel on the other. Throughout the Old Testament, into the New, and up to today, there are four supra-cultural, non negotiable sins that cannot be countenanced, namely Idolatry and Immorality Injustice and Individualism. These are trans-cultural behavioural distinctives which cannot be negotiated. There were of course transcultural belief categories which were wholly new.

Judas and Silas were sent off from the Council with a letter for all the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia, confirming the decision, namely "That we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God (by imposing unnecessary elements of the Law-discontinuity), and that they should abstain from food offered up to idols and from sexual immorality" (continuity), (Acts 15:29).

Paul continually warned his congregations to "flee from idolatry": "You cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons too-are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy?" (1 Cor 10:14-22). Peter reminds his readers: For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do, living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness carousing and

detestable idolatry" (1 Peter 4:3).

John opens his first epistle a note of wonder of his own experience of Christ: "that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim, the Word of Life. (1Jn 1:1-3). Is it any wonder then that he closes this same letter with the disenchanting alternative: "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (5v21).

In the last scene of the last chapter of the book of Revelation, there is portrayed the beauty and wonder of the city of God and the comfort and security of those who bathe in the light of the Throne of God and the Lamb. The other half of the scene portrays the misery of those outside: "Outside are dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters" (22:15).

The purpose in quoting these New Testament texts is to highlight references to idolatry and immorality. Both, whatever they mean within a given culture, are incompatible with the distinctive genius of the Christian Gospel. When Luzbetak speaks of "cultural surgery", and the necessity of "major operations" being undertaken in any culture, he is saying the same thing. Insufficient surgery will only permit the cancer of indiscriminate syncretism to destroy the essential nature of the Gospel - this principle applies equally to Western forms of Christianity as well as Asian forms.

The outstanding question must still be asked - what are those "critical and basic elements" of the Gospel which are irreducible and non-negotiable- those essentials which accentuate the uniqueness of the Christian faith?

The elements to be considered must first of all be "transcultural" (or intercultural), for the Church of Jesus Christ comprises people from every tribe, tongue and nation. They must have their roots and source in history, for they have always belonged to the Church universal in time space and history.

Writing on the implications of contextualisation from the New Testament, Ericson suggests four "boundaries" or "limits":

1. The Core: Revelation and Salvation effected in Christ.
2. The Substance: The Gospel tradition in Apostolic transmission.
3. The application: Exhortation addressed to particular people.
4. The expression: quality of life in a cultural setting.

Ericson points out the degree of variability is least in number one, and greatest in number four. Rene Padilla offers different guidelines:

1. The Word of God, as the basis of theology.
2. The concrete historical situation as the context of theology.
3. Obedience to Christ as the purpose of Theology.

The question remains - is there a transcultural unchanging "gospel core"? Missiologists and theologians are divided over this issue. The question is integral to the problem of contextualisation and is likely to emerge in some form or another in every serious discussion on the subject. Krikor Halebian in researching scholars' views from the Evangelical world, can find no consensus at all:

"Some (Beyerhaus 1975: McGavran 1975: Kato 1975: Athyal 1976: Fleming 1980) are of the opinion that there is a Gospel core, and it is identifiable albeit in general terms. Others (Nicholls 1979: Marshall 1979: Packer 1979: Loewen 1979) in essence

contend that there is no Gospel core, and even if there is such a thing it would be difficult to separate it from the cultural forms in which it is given.

For those who contend there is a 'core', there will be a difference of opinion as to its nature. Fleming suggests 'the Bible itself'. McGavran proposes a three point formula of the Bible, the Triune God, and the Ordinances and doctrines set out in the Bible.

Packer and Loewen, in arguing that there is no core, state that the gospel is multi-faceted and that different cultures will select different parts as more meaningful than others. Any specific delineation of the Gospel core therefore will accordingly be an obstacle in cross-cultural communication.

Hollenweger suggests a number of common categories for all Christians that distinguish the nature of the Gospel:

1. The 'decisiveness' of Jesus of Nazareth (not 'Christology'). When one states 'Jesus of Nazareth', the Personhood and historicity of Christ is implicit. Any Christologies, however defined, are man-made formulas concerning Christ and must therefore be limited and culturally bound.
2. The uniqueness of the Bible as the revelation and definition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. Worship: The use of hymns and prayers (i.e., the Lord's Prayer). Here the trans-cultural nature of the Gospel will be evident. Universally God's people worship Him. The 'form' will be different, but the substance will be the same.
4. Baptism: Christ's command was to make disciples of all nations 'baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. With rare exceptions this occurs universally.
5. The Lord's Supper. Christ's 'command 'Do this in remembrance of me': was to His whole Church - 'until He comes'.

This rough outline was suggested in conversation with Professor Hollenweger. However he would speak of these categories as 'bridges', rather than 'basic irreducible elements'.

Two categories not mentioned in any of the formulations are 'Evangelism' and 'Suffering'. We may ask, is Evangelism an essential characteristic of the church in any culture? Here true Gospel evangelism should be defined as 'demonstration, explanation, persuasion and invitation'. The methodology of Evangelism would be culturally determined and therefore could be monologue, dialogue, presence, or whatever. Although it would seem that both Jesus' and Paul's method of Evangelism were dialogical and situational for the most part, it would nevertheless be quite wrong to assume that the only method of evangelism is 'dialogue'. However, Hollenweger sees only two brief 'monologues' in the New Testament.

Communication in the New Testament was not in the main 'propositional', i.e., declaring some statements of truth into thin air, but was always in response to a given situation, and generally explanatory in nature. In response to topical questions that were being put to Jesus, his answer would be 'contextual', earthed in real-life events. Peter's first sermon on the Day of Pentecost, was in response to the question 'what is the meaning of this?' - an event. In New Testament evangelism, preaching followed an event, something that actually happened and was an explanation of it. In today's Evangelism, we vocalise first, without any explanation of context or event.

Evangelism must reflect both theological and situational relevancy. Credal statements of 'faith', that are no longer earthed in our time and history, only

give rise to other "local" theologies that seek to answer the problems of the here and now and are therefore contextualised as the earlier creeds were. Liberation theology may have gone beyond the parameters of legitimate theologising, but is still a genuine attempt to find answers to injustice, oppression and poverty from people who are passing through such suffering. We have "good news" but it must no longer be delivered as verbal mumbo jumbo. It must be socially relevant, equipped to speak into its cultural milieu and address new issues that have never arisen before, such as biogenetic engineering, ecological systems, etc. Filbeck states:

In spite of past misinterpretation of the Biblical phrase "compel them to come in", it must be insisted that real evangelism is not proselytism, which has been defined as "anything that forces and violates the right of every person or human community to be free from external and internal constrictions in matters of religion".

The universal Church from the Acts of the Apostles onward has seen it as necessary to engage in Evangelism in obedience to Christ's command to "go and make disciples". There is therefore historic precedence for this activity of the church, no matter what culture it happens to be in. Professor Hollenweger notes that if we believe, that evangelism is a necessary expression of the life of the church, then we must give an account of the process of sharing ourselves to non-Christians.

It is also necessary to state that the church has always been a "Suffering" church. It is true that in some countries (the USA and Korea for instance), the church has been so shaped by its environment (syncretistic), that it can even espouse "prosperity doctrine". The church in the USA has developed this doctrine because of its identification with affluence and materialism, the Korean church because of "continuity" from its pagan antecedents where the faithful in Shamanism were also promised prosperity. Is this one reason why Paul Yonggi Cho's church in Seoul is so successful? Should one therefore preach prosperity? Does the end justify the means? It cannot, for sooner or later, the church will suffer - this is what the Lord Jesus said "In the world you will have tribulation".

In the Buddhist context, the issue of inappropriate syncretism becomes all the more important because as Dr. Samuel Kim notes concerning one country in Asia:

"They think the more religion you mix together, the more effective your salvation will be".

It has been observed that most expressions of Buddhism, including the Theravada School (which claims to be pure), are basically eclectic and have an almost "magnetic" nature. They inexorably draw together a whole mixture of elements from a whole range of backgrounds, including Animism, Brahmanism, Mahayana Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism, the teaching of Confucius, Taoism, the Cosmology and Astrology of Hinduism, worship of spirits and supernatural beings - "the gods". To draw into this conglomeration a "cosmic Christ" would be quite simple. Even to incorporate the historical Jesus of Nazareth would be feasible, but such a Christ would no longer be the Christ of the Bible, the "King of Kings" and "Lord of Lords". He would merely join the long line of "other gods" of whom Paul says "for even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live: and there

is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live (1 Cor 8:5-6).

Although discussion concerning honest 'Dialogue' as a method of communicating the Gospel is beyond the scope of this chapter, it must be said that if dialogue means preparedness to jettison Christian presuppositions, thereby giving the impression that such would be the only honest way to dialogue, then this is a serious departure from true historic Christian witness and could not be modelled on Christ's own ministry or that of the early church. While we can accept the first part of the following quote, we rigorously reject Knitter's conclusion:

'If our description of inter religious dialogue is going to work, all partners must be genuinely open to the possibility of accepting insights into divine truth that they previously either never realised or had rejected. So they must be ready to reform, change, perhaps even abandon, certain beliefs in their own religion ...dialogue is not possible if any partners enter it with the claim that they possess the final, definitive, irreformable truth. Claims of finality set up a roadblock to any real growth in experience and understanding'

It goes without saying that genuine dialogue should be engaged in with an attitude of tolerance, compassion, and a genuine desire to hear as well as to be heard. If the outcome of dialogue leads to a deeper understanding of 'general revelation' (a reflection of 'the true light that lights every man that comes into the world' - the still apparent, but broken image of God reflected in other religion), then it would not lead to denigrating other religious systems, as Knitter assumes.

If dialogue simply means that there are no irreducible non negotiable aspects of one's own belief system - then all we have left is pure subjectivism or what Knitter terms 'The New Model' of 'truth through relationship'. In spite of this, Knitter concedes that Christianity may yet be defined as having something distinctive, something unique - but only insofar as one small piece of a jig-saw puzzle could be said to be distinctive and unique because it is one just a part that 'fits' into a greater picture - the nature of which no one dare to 'picture'. But how can one possibly reduce the One who came from Heaven to disclose to Man what God is like, to a mere piece of a jig-saw? The very substance and nature of the Gospel would have to be completely abandoned to accommodate to such compromise. God may have spoken to man in times past by many prophets 'But in this final age he has spoken to us in the Son whom He made heir to the whole universe and through whom he created all orders of existence; the Son who is the effulgence of God's splendour and the stamp of God's very being, and sustains the universe by his word and power' Hebrew 1:2-4 (New English Bible). Is He pictured here as just one small piece of a jigsaw puzzle - or as the very Creator of all the pieces?

CHAPTER 3.

WESTERN WORLD-VIEW AND BUDDHIST / ANIMIST WORLD-VIEW

"I am convinced that for a person to be fully conscious intellectually he should not only be able to detect the world views of others, but be aware of his own - why it is his and why in the light of so many options he thinks it is true" (Sire).

A World-view is a set of presuppositions or assumptions which are held, consciously or subconsciously about the basic make up of the world around us. A jig-saw puzzle is analogous to a world-view. The picture on the outside of the box serves to provide the overall picture of the whole puzzle. A world view picture of reality gives helpful clues to where each individual piece of the puzzle may fit (traits, complexes and institutions) - or at least it shows up patterns and reflects values. All cultures have differing world views, and the many subcultures within a given culture, may each have their own partly unique world view.

World views should not normally be judged in terms of right or wrong, although there may be some supra-cultural criteria for such an evaluation such as, what would be helpful or desirable for a society? It would be universally agreed, for example, that a Nazi regime to say the least, would neither be helpful or desirable for a society! The problem always arises, who determines what is helpful or desirable? Is there objective data - a point of reference which would determine this? (For the Christian there are the Scriptures). How do non-Christian societies determine good and evil? Is it by social consensus or conviction, or that some other being may be offended? World views are defined as alternative ways of looking at the Universe. The problem is that all cultures are ethnocentric by nature, so all cultures can be guilty in thinking that they are the only ones whose world-view is the right one. There is no such thing as a perfect culture; nor is there a culture which is totally corrupt. In any culture there will be certain features which are "good" and other features which will be "evil". Humanly speaking, the criteria in making a judgement or evaluation, by non Christians on cultures would be based on what they perceive as is good or bad and that may only be measured by them, in observing how such actions affects that culture. Another way of perceiving world view would be to suggest that it can be regarded as spiritually and morally neutral. The problem is that what seems good, acceptable or neutral to one culture (polygamy), may seem quite wicked or unacceptable to another. Anger is freely expressed in the West without any sense of shame or expectation of reprisal or disapproval, for it is very low on the list of the big sins. In the East however, it is seen as a major transgression and is socially quite unacceptable. How then does an Easterner perceive the Western missionary when he shows anger? If we live at different times, in different locations, with different needs and different values, then our world-view will be to a great extent unconsciously determined by those factors.

Historically one of the greatest problems for the Western missionary in presenting another culture with the gospel has first been his inability to distinguish which of his own values and customs come from the Bible and which are purely from his own cultural background. Even when the missionary is successful in that enterprise, it is now necessary for him (perhaps with the nationals help) to distinguish what values and customs from the Bible can be transferable into the national's culture that are essentially part of the good news, and at the same time what elements should be regarded as non essential and non transferable customs because they merely reflect how people behaved in Biblical times and would have no ongoing significance or application to the recipient culture today. For

instance, we do not offer a shoe as a token of assuming responsibility for our brother's wife if he has died, but this was an Old Testament custom in the time of Ruth. Nor do we all wash each others' feet, or greet one another with a holy kiss, in accordance with these everyday customs in the New Testament. The insights of Cultural Anthropology may contribute greatly to a clearer understanding of these issues.

If it is maintained as some do, that although it is not necessary to transfer the outward form of such customs, yet since they must have ongoing significance and moral value, we should contextualise them by transferring the inward meaning, then that may be a valid proposition, but the new outward form should be firstly culturally appropriate, and secondly convey accurately the inward meaning of the original custom/ritual - not a foreign imposition from outside. So J.B. Phillips in his translation of "Greet one another with a holy kiss" gives the rendering "give one another a warm hand shake" (1Thessalonians 5:26). This may be a valid dynamically equivalent translation for Europe, but since handshakes (and any public touching of the human body) are alien in most Asian countries, a holy kiss would be culturally offensive to say the least, a culturally appropriate application of the inward value should be encouraged. So placing the hands together in a typical salutation or greeting would be the most appropriate expression of the inward meaning. - People living in S.E. Asia, have already forgotten that even this now common non-religious greeting, was originally an Indian Hindu token of obeisance to the gods! A classic illustration of not only investing old forms with new meanings but changing of the inner meaning over a period of time, even though the old outward form is still used!

World views, then, are not static any more than the cultures that enshrine them are static even though underlying values and customs within world-views can be and are inherited from one generation to another, as are various customs. These can be passed on for millennia.

If we could reduce all world-views to just two ways of looking at the world, then it may be possible to label one, a "naturalistic" world-view, and the other a "supernaturalistic" world-view. It has been stated that these two positions reflect the essential difference between the way Western and Asian peoples see the world.

In the past the missionary message seemed to advocate Deism rather than Theism. God could be safely consigned (compartmentalised and privatised) to the area of religion, while science dealt with everyday secular life thus reflecting a Greek Platonic Dualism - a segmentation, "Upper tier - Lower tier" perspective of the world. Reflected by the fact that in the West, there is a deep feeling that it is "wrong to mix politics, business and religion". But this was certainly not an Hebrew Old Testament perspective, neither is it the world view of all folk religions, nor indeed is it the essence of Christianity.

Our Educational and Medical Institutions have perpetuated this Western world view and left a vacuum in other societies that have adopted these Institutions. This vacuum has been filled by a return to their own primitive religion. It has hardly been noticed that their so called "primitive" religion was sophisticated enough to have satisfactory answers for all of the phenomena that they perceived within their world view, but our Christianity left a huge gap which had no answers. It is a non-Biblical reductionist view of the world where Science deals with all that goes on "down here" and Religion, deals with all that goes on "up there".

No other religion or world view in the non-Western world perceives the world in such a way and yet we persist in presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ within this Western framework. The "discovery" that the Western presentation of the Gospel within the framework of its own world-view, was not meeting the needs of the Eastern mind was not made through missiological theorists in some Western library, remote from the realities of everyday living, but by missionaries in the villages of India and the towns of Africa. They were desperate to find answers to the questions that the Nationals were asking, but which could not be found in Western theological systems.

Mbiti records his dilemma in being confronted with a demon possessed girl. Hiebert is asked why the goddess of smallpox was angry with the village and why one of the Christian girls in the village had contracted the disease. Further he is expected to pray publicly for the girl to be healed! Hiebert records:

"What happened to villagers who became Christians? Most of them took problems they formerly took to the Hindu saints, to the Christian minister or missionary. Christ replaced Krishna or Siva as the healer of their spiritual diseases. Many of them turned to western allopathic medicines for many of the illnesses they took to the doctor and quack. But what of the plagues that the magician cured? What about spirit possession, or curses, or witchcraft or black magic? What was the Christian answer to these? Neither the missionary evangelist or doctor had an answer. These did not really exist they said. But to people for whom these were very real experiences in their lives, there had to be an answer. It is not surprising therefore that many of them turned to the magician for cures".²

Hiebert concludes that our presentation of the Gospel has a serious deficiency in it; what he terms *THE FLAW OF THE EXCLUDED MIDDLE*.

In any society which holds a supernaturalistic world view there is an unseen "other world" all around, above and below, which pervades everything and which relates to and engages with *supernatural phenomena*, such as sudden unexplainable disease, plagues, extended droughts, crisis in families, accidents, empirically unexplainable loss of health, the return of "the living dead" to cause calamity, and the common phenomenon of possession. Such phenomena need to be dealt with immediately in the here and now. There is an urgency with regard to such situations that will demand action; and pat answers from remote theological ivory towers in the West (which may satisfy the Western mind, regarding the problem), will not meet the need of the Eastern "casualty". Where is the Christian answer to these crises?

In every Asian society, there will be a "Practitioner" who, apart from the use of natural means, will be able to summon into the situation what they perceive to be supernatural powers of some sort or other, which may in many circumstances be able to resolve the problem. Certainly such powers will not resolve all the problems, but neither do people who go into Western hospitals always come out well. It is not unreasonable for a non-Westerner to ask how many people are carried out dead from the hospital, when they went in alive.

Hiebert states we need to develop holistic theology and practice where solutions will be found to answer the fundamental problems and values of the *supernaturalistic world-view*.

So far, Western theologies seem to have no answers to Eastern problems and values, which is not surprising for they are both addressing differing perceptions. This is particularly the case with regard to the Buddhist/Animistic world view of most Asian people. The whole theological package people have been given has only penetrated into their world view skin deep. It is only when one begins to probe down into the underlayers of these presuppositions, that one begins to see just how much the isupernaturalî invades and pervades their whole life.

Nothing is done from morning to night, from cradle to cremation, without there being some reference to or engagement with the invisible world around. The very first word a Thai child learns is "phi" (spirit) and to this word is generally appended the adjective "laug" (deceiving). They are warned that if they do not behave in a pleasing and appropriate way, they will have to give account to the "phi laug", (deceiving spirit), who will mete out the severest punishment.

The following description of the preparation and construction of an ordinary rural house indicates the extent to which an average family would have dealings with the spirit-world in just one area of their lives.

During the construction of most houses that are built in Thailand and surrounding countries including Laos, Cambodia and Burma, elaborate preparations will be essential in order that the prospective residents of the house may acquire peace, prosperity, and good fortune. There may be slight differences between countries and areas, but the methodology is essentially the same. First, an astrologer will be consulted to ascertain the most auspicious time for construction and the exact location of the house. In determining the location, the slope of the land, occurrence of anthills and any other strange factors will be taken into consideration. Utmost care will be needed so that the layout of the house will not be constructed in an inauspicious direction. It will now be necessary to clear the site, not just for facilitating the building, but to ensure that there will be no impurity in regard to whoever may be observing the activity from the unseen spirit world.

When the site has been cleared, before the next step, it will be necessary for the builder to engage the expertise of a ãritual specialistí in order to pacify the resident spirits who may have been disturbed by the building preparations. If the practitioner is a monk, Pali mantras will be chanted, if a layman, gifts will be offered, sacral water, incense candles and flowers will be placed on the earth whilst at the same time invoking permission from the various powers to proceed with construction.

It is interesting to note that although the monk may act as the ritual specialist, he does not offer to the spirits, because in his priestly status; as he would not lower himself to ask favours of ordinary man, so he would hardly disdain to do such with the spirits! They do not seem to object either, whereas it would be essential for the layman to make such offerings! This is an example of the sort of accommodation or compromise that regularly occurs between Buddhism and Animism.

Having cleared the site and prepared for construction, the next step will be to find the right sort of wood. For the country person, this may often mean that only certain woods can be selected, not because one wood is better than another for the purpose, but that the spirits may be offended if the wrong wood is used. In some areas it is still essential that the ritual specialist accompany the builder to the forest in order to select auspicious trees which are growing in favourable positions in the forest. Some trees seem to attract spirits, so do some locations, these factors will be taken into serious consideration in the selection process. The chosen trees will then need to be felled in an auspicious direction for the same reasons. Certain trees having

wrong-sounding names could not be used. For instance the tree called in Thai - "Mai Makhaamoonî (Afzelia xylocarpe) would not be used because it has the onomatopoeic sound of "kill" in the word, although being unrelated to that meaning. Timber mills consequently changed its name to "Mai charoensuk" which means "Happiness tree" and have successfully marketed the wood as a result.

Ceremonies generally occur on two successive days, at the beginning of the construction of the house, when the holes for the posts are being dug, and when the principal or "first pole" is being erected. An elaborate ceremony is undertaken with the digging of the first hole. The ritual specialist will indicate the exact spot where it should be dug and in which direction the soil should be thrown out of the hole. He may need to consult a special book to find out the precise position in which the ãking of serpentsí ("phayaanaagî), is resting. This position alters at different times of the year. The hole must not be dug where the head of the serpent is, for this would mean disaster and the wife of the owner would die. Nor should the hole be dug where the serpent's tail is, for this would mean that the daughter of the house will kill another human being and have to flee the community. It is only through the belly of the serpent that the hole can be dug for this will bring great peace and happiness. There are favoured times when most people build houses in Asia and although this does have something to do with the seasons (rainy etc.), it nevertheless relates mainly to the unseen world's approval or disapproval.

The precise depth of the hole, into which each pole is lowered, is also dependent upon the spirit's approval or otherwise. The first pole-hole will receive an offering from the owner and the ritual specialist comprising a coin. Some alcohol would be lowered in a basket the right side up if it is dark and upside down if it is daytime. This placing of offerings at the bottom of the first hole is also extended to large buildings in towns, where precious stones are sometimes offered and also to Temples where a large ball of gold is lowered into the hole. When the first pole has been erected the ritual expert will fasten a banana plant and a young sugar cane at the top. They will be taken down later and planted and if they take root it would be regarded as a good omen. If they die, it bodes ill for the residents. Certain ornaments will now be fastened to the pole appropriate to the character of the female spirit who will reside there. This may include earrings, bracelets, a piece of expensive silk cloth, and finally a "yantraî, a piece of red and white cloth upon which magical signs have been inscribed. As the first post is being lowered into the hole, usually one of the bystanders commences a drawn out chant in a modulated pitch. The villagers who are helping in the construction will then respond in unison. This focuses the attention of all upon the action and at the same time is a means of exorcising evil spirits. After this responsive singing has been repeated a few times, the construction of the building can then proceed safely.

The "Resident" of the principal post is sometimes recognised as an Ancestor spirit, but others believe it is the spirit-owner of the wood that was hurt when the tree was being felled and who now wishes to return and live in its own home. Others understand that it is a female spirit called a "nang mai". .

Every effort will be made during the whole building procedure to avoid inauspiciousness. All sorts of actions will be avoided otherwise some harm may come to the future inhabitants of the house. It is said that a wrongly placed or constructed house will offend the sun which in Thai, is called "the eye of the day" ("Tawanî) If a number of people in the community incur eye disease (ëta daeng ë) while building a house, this would be interpreted as the "eye of the day" having been offended. From this example it can be seen that even in the simple every day event of constructing a house, folk Buddhists see nothing as "secular" or unrelated to the unseen world. All they do is perceived as "sacred", incorporating into every operation, an inter-action and relationship

with unseen, personal and impersonal, spirit powers. It is virtually impossible to do anything or go anywhere without this interaction.

Apart from the elaborate house building process which culminates with a house warming ritual; every garden-compound, throughout the country will have its own spirit shrine ("phra phuum". This spirit owner of the land upon which the house is built is called the "landlord " of the place ("cawthi"). . As with the Ancestor spirit of the house, the local spirit-land-lord is to be duly respected and recognised. Seeking permission from and giving submission to the spirit is part and parcel of everyday life for the average Buddhist. If respected and well treated, the Ancestor Spirit inside the house and the local Spirit Lord in the garden will in return guarantee protection and care for the safety of the house and its occupants. But this is not all! Apart from every house having its own Ancestor Spirit resident in the first pole and each garden its Spirit Lord resident in the garden shrine, each village will have one or two larger "phrapuum" (shrines). The spirit Lords of the village areas including the Temple area will be duly responsible to care and protect their environs on condition that they in turn are treated with due recognition and respect.

Beyond this there is yet another hierarchy of Spirit Lords. They are the Spirit Lords of the Towns and are called "phi myang", These more powerful spirits reside in the city pillar of each town that is called the "lakmyang". They are responsible as princesses to guard and protect the towns. Each of the Spirit Lords in the hierarchy would not be satisfied by offerings being made to those of another level. The House Spirit must be respected in its own right, as do the other Spirit Lords. Each Spirit Lord is guardian of its own specific area and its powers are localised to its specific geographical parameters. To supplicate, tap their power, or receive benefit from them one needs to go to the exact location of the shrine or ritual centre where they operate. Such obeisance to the Spirit Lords, is not just for the simple country folk. All levels of society are involved in dealings with this spirit world. The Royal Family also pay their annual visit to the Spirit Lord of Bangkok and pay their due respects at the lak myang in the centre of Bangkok.

It has been astutely recognised that the whole stratification of these invisible spirit powers almost exactly represents the visible hierarchical social structures of Thai society, both centering around the control, manipulation and distribution of "power". Mulder observes:

"In the olden days the order and experience of society closely matched with the Animistic concept of saksit power. All worldly power was thought to emanate from the King, but divided among princes and nobles who each held a share of that power. That power was of one kind, namely political, and the available quantity of it was limited. A powerful man held a bigger share of it which he could enlarge by usurping from another, or which he could lose to somebody else. If a prince decided to press his claims for independency in a certain territory, the king simply lost a share of the total quantity of power; when the king subdued this rebel he reacquired it, but somehow the total quantity was limited. The way in which all this was expressed in the organisation of saktina, (power) and legitimised in the Traiphuumiphrruang (Buddhist scriptures) cosmology is well known.

Beyond this stratification of local Spirit Lords who are regarded as essentially malevolent and capricious, there is yet another high level hierarchy of spirit beings who are regarded as essentially benevolent and protective.

These are called upon regularly by all Thai people for their blessing and protection. They are called "theebarak" or "phirak" . These spirit beings are called upon especially when people are going on long journeys, or need some

special favour such as passing exams, or restoration of health, or in order to conceive children etc.

Another nebulous hierarchy of spirit beings, who are called upon to give blessings to other people, are called by an unusual term that is inclusive of all possible benevolent spirit beings.

They are called "sing saksit tanglai tua sakol lok" which means "all the powerful spirits in the universe". Their technical designation is "Thewada" (angelic beings). Sometimes one or two of these may be named distinguished deities that have their mythological origins in Hinduism. They are "Pra In and Pra prom" , Indra and Brahma of Hinduism. Tambiah states:

"One interesting aspect of the distinction between the categories is that the THEWADA are described by villagers as a permanent heavenly category of non-human origin while the phi are described as beings who were formerly human...in general it is said that the "winyan" (soul) of every individual turns into phi at death...the basic opposition between thewada and phi emerges in village ritual. Phi punish people and cause illness or misfortune. The help of the thewada is necessary to diagnose the malevolent agent and depending on the category of the phi, either to placate him or exorcise him. The village diviner always begins by inviting the thewada to appear in his divining device and "force" the phi to appear"

As soon as someone steps out of the domain of a given guardian spirit he has already encroached upon another's domain and needs therefore to give due recognition to the spirit lord of the new area. However, sometimes things do not seem to work out and protection for some reason is not granted. To cover this contingency the vast majority of folk Buddhists will have their own personal protective devices - "Mobile Spirit Lords" in the shape and size of magically charged amulets, tattoos, Buddhist image necklaces, special "nyans" which are tied around the

waist, Buddhist texts encased in various forms in clothing or in small leather phylacteries. By the use of these various means of protection the traveller surrounds himself with ambulant protective power that is localised in these various forms. Most of the armed forces, especially soldiers in combat, are issued with such protective devices to ward off bullets, bayonets or whatever antagonistic force comes from the enemy.

Other forms of transempirical phenomena can be approached through certain rituals which, when carried out precisely, may harness the cosmic forces to respond in giving rain, or sun according to need. Also miraculous relics of the Lord Buddha are supposed to be efficacious in answering prayer for health, happiness, passing of exams, fertility or whatever. Various places may also be foci of power, especially where there is a "footprint" of the Lord Buddha. Many Buddhist images are purported to have obvious preferences in what they regard as acceptable

offerings. The Buddha image "Prhachinarat" at Pitsanuloke apparently prefers pigs heads, the Emerald Buddha loves hard boiled eggs, the spirit of the city pillar in Bangkok is fond of "Lakhon chatri" performances. The four-faced Brahma at the Erawan Hotel appreciates flower garlands, elephant statues, and a donation to the Erawan hospital foundation!

All these powers react to presentation, such as right ceremony, proper words, appropriate movements and formulae. Contracts that are made are mechanical and temporary. The contracts are "manipulative" with some "wheeling and dealing" by both parties, both bargaining for the best deal. If the procedure has been carried out correctly, then the results should be assured.

To not execute a finally agreed contract would be dangerous with the possibility of ensuing disaster in some form or another. It is not "sin" to break a

contract, it is considered stupidity or just bad business. Mulder in his perceptive analysis of the way Thai people view the world states that:

"These saksit powers are highly sensitive about their power, rank, and prestige, easily insulted, yet also easy to satisfy by the show of respect, an offer or a bribe".

Folk Buddhists sometimes do not discern between mechanical impersonal-supernatural power or "force" (mana), and personal-supernatural beings. They often merge the organic world view where spirit beings are negotiated with, and a mechanistic world view where impersonal force is manipulated. They do recognise that next to the good beings are many "non resident", mobile wicked and evil beings that represent the realm of chaos and immorality. Such beings are non-domesticated and are often thought of as "roaming", having no home. They are malevolent carriers of bad luck. These are far more difficult to deal with, they do not wait for "contracts" or deals, they are fickle and unpredictable. They are generally caught after the act - if a tragic accident has occurred, it will be because one of these malevolent spirits called "phidaihong" has been operating. The reason why the unfortunate driver will run away from an accident is not primarily because of the corruption that is involved in trying to prove innocence in a Court case, which is bad enough, but because of the fear of reprisal from the phidaihong.

Such powerful forces can only be dealt with by powerful people who are especially equipped and recognised by the community as being able, through one means or another, to subdue or exorcise the spirits.

Many renowned monks are famous, not because of their accumulated wisdom and knowledge of Buddhism, but because of their ability to prescribe the correct solution to the given problem regarding the spirit world. This is usually accomplished by localising and identifying the malevolent spirit, mediating, supplicating, invoking the aid of the more powerful ethewadaí, and discovering the prescribed ransom which will be whatever the spirit demands in order to restore normality.

This ability to diagnose and prescribe is gained through acquired merit so it may also be possible for a "layman", who has acquired a considerable amount of merit, to be able to negotiate with the spirits in a successful way. Many of these spirits live (although not in a permanent sense) in cemeteries, forests, or remote lonely places and it is for this reason that Asian people have some kind of mobile protection with them all the time.

Asian people are familiar with scores of different types of spirits. They are generally designated by the nature of the event caused by the spirit such as death or sickness etc., or the way a person influenced by a spirit behaves, so if a person began to bark, it would be a dog spirit.

The Ancestor spirits ("the living dead") are also powerful guardians and Asian people "feel" that their Ancestors, although just out of sight, are certainly not out of mind. These Ancestor spirits act as guardians who uphold and reinforce the moral way of life and become irate with any infraction of the rules of normal social harmony, such as illicit sexual relationships. These Ancestor spirits are the only category that can either be good or bad. Their good or bad responses would depend upon either the right or wrong conduct of those who are looking after them. If they behave badly in spite of the good conduct of their guardians, this is seen as the result of bad karma - the law of cause and effect. i.e. The Ancestors themselves must have been bad when they were alive.

From these observations it may be concluded that the average folk Buddhist sees the whole of life permeated with what to them is sacred. There can be no part of his existence before birth, during life, or after death, that does not have some direct alliance with this unseen spirit world. Add to this the forces of

astrology and magic and one is left with the only conclusion possible, that their whole world view is saturated with the supernatural - a "sacred" rather than a "secular" world, a cosmos that is to a large extent governed and controlled, not by just the human "powers that be" (perhaps these are just reflections or shadows of the real?), but by the supernatural powers. This unseen all-pervading world, so real to the average folk Buddhist, does not fit into Western world view categories and is therefore regarded as purely imaginary or primitive superstition. How then can a Westerner who denies the existence of such a world, bring answers from the Bible to deal with the problems that face people who live in such a world? Is it any wonder that the Gospel has been largely ineffective in Buddhist countries?

Most Buddhism is made up of three or four components or subsystems, comprising Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana, Brahmanism and Animism all of which mutually support each other without conflict. Kirsch sets these out in table-form:

Summary of the Three Religious Sub-Systems of Thai Religion

	Buddhism	Brahmanism	Animism	
I.	Goal Orientation	Other worldly	This worldly	This worldly
	World-view Certain	Rational/ Certain	Rational/ Uncertain	Capricious/ Uncertain
	Ritual Routine	Standard/ Routine	Standard/ tailored.	Individually-
II.	Specialists	mainly male	mainly male	mainly female
	Recruitment achievement	Universalistic achievement	Universalistic ascription	Particular
III.	Participants	laity	client	client
	Involvement	constant	intermittent	intermittent
IV.	Attitude Toward Social focus locality and society.	highly favourable whole society	favourable bridging	ambivalent highly localised

Although others maintain that these are two opposing religious systems, Asian Theravardians see no inconsistency between an organic Animistic world view with its multitudinous gods and spirits, and a mechanistic Buddhist world view; they marry conveniently and live harmoniously together.

In spite of the fact that relatively few rituals and ceremonies practised by the majority of people are directly related to Buddhism, they are still part and parcel of everyday life in Buddhist countries in Asia. They fill a vacuum and satisfy the need to integrate with and pacify whatever unseen powers there may be, "out there". It cannot be over emphasised that such ceremonies not only serve to answer the problems of how to deal with transempirical phenomena, but form an indispensable part of the social life of the community, bringing a sense of *éesprit de corps* í. Not only would a Buddhist feel "lost" in the cosmos without the religious significance of these ceremonies but he would also feel lost socially. If these ceremonies were for some reason discontinued, Christian

anthropologists and Missiologists would agree that dysfunction and disintegration of the social structures that keep the community together would result - unless there was some sort of "functional equivalent" introduced to reestablish and maintain cohesion within the society.

It may be appropriate at this point to ask how the introduction of Christianity has affected the social structures of Buddhist society in Thailand? Is it not the case that a colossal vacuum has been created, producing a feeling, not of security and salvation from the "world outside", but of bewildering insecurity and lostness?

Sociologically, has the introduction of Christianity brought a new cohesiveness to the Christian community or do Thai people who have become Christian now feel insecure? Are there "functionally equivalent" Christian ceremonies, rituals, and activities that could bring celebration and commiseration to all levels of social life and at all times of social need? Or is it not true that even with the paucity of Christian rituals or innovations that have been introduced, they have highlighted individualism, rather than giving a sense of community? Is it not the case that ceremonies within the Christian community have been reduced mainly to Sunday functions in Church? If our "good news" ridicules folk Buddhist world-view by downgrading or rejecting the idea of, supernatural transempirical phenomena; scorns their myths and fairy stories; does not bring together the sociological and spiritual needs of people as one all pervading package; and reduces the ritual/ceremonial aspect of culture to occasional celebrations or commiserations a couple of hours a week, separated from "real life" at that, then the Gospel really cannot be "good news" for the vast majority of people. This may be one of the most important reasons why the Gospel has not taken root in Buddhist countries.

C H A P T E R F O U R

L O C A L T H E O L O G I E S

Whatever the source of any given theological statement or creed, they will have always been "local" in that they were originally determined by the historical context and situation in which they were formulated. Theological formulae could be defined as reasonable responses to sociological, environmental and "theological" contexts, based upon the belief system of the formulators concerning the nature of the world as it is perceived by them. Because all theologies are essentially "situational", it is fundamentally wrong to assume that a theological formulation created at a given time in a given historical context, would therefore be necessarily relevant to another time, place and context. This does not mean that theologies or Credal statements from the West are not true, they may indeed be true, but the question to be addressed is, are they relevant? Do they answer the questions local people are asking? It may be true to say for instance that a certain medicine can relieve a certain sickness - but is it relevant if my question is, "how can I repair my car?" All theology in the New Testament was contextualised, as we will see; it was developed and taught within given philosophical, theological, historical and ethical contexts. The Pauline epistles were mainly apologetic in that they were defending the teaching of Christ in a context of incipient Gnosticism, Docetism, and Polytheism. The Nicene Creed was promulgated in 325 AD to defend Orthodoxy against the Arian heresy and to assert the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father. It was absolutely imperative to deal with this question because the crucial historical debate of the time centred around the

issue, it was the controversy of the day. The carefully thought out, clear-cut statements in the Creeds were applicable and helped clarify the justifiable questions people were asking about Christ at that time.

If one were to develop a Creed within a Muslim context, for instance, it would not have to be word for word the same as the Nicene Creed, because the questions Moslems are asking about the Person of Christ are different from the heresies of earlier days. It might be good, right at the beginning of a Credal statement for a Muslim context, to make clear that Jesus Christ is not 'the Son of God' in the sense that He is the progeny (as they understand Christianity teaches) of God the Father, having intercourse with Mary. Such clarification would have been totally unnecessary when the Nicene Creed was formulated then, but absolutely essential for the Muslim now. Phil Parshall gives some helpful hints on what would be important for Moslems to know concerning the nature of Christ; much of this information could be drawn from the Koran itself.

A Credal formula for the church in Buddhist countries, which would respond to contemporary theological questions and problems confronting that particular church within its Buddhist milieu is an urgent necessity. Why should Christians from Buddhist countries be catechised with ancient European theological formulae, when they need to respond to their own burning issues? A preliminary tentative example of a Thai creed will be found in Appendix 2. This is experimental in nature and not definitive, but it could act as a catalyst for Christian leaders in Buddhist contexts to begin to Contextualise in a thoroughly local manner, thus making the good news relevant to the questions local people are asking. This would mean that there may well be a common core of base material within Asia, reflecting commonly held Asian beliefs, but certain details would need to be added according to the various strands of Buddhist/Animist belief in different countries. Cambodian Christians may develop a slightly different creed, to say, the particular form of Buddhism in Sri Lanka which idolises the Buddha's tooth, Laos or that of the Dai in S.W. China or the Shan in Myanmar. The fundamental questions to be asked in formulating such statements, would be:

1. Will the statement of faith anticipate and respond (in terms that the respondent understands), to the questions people will ask concerning the essential nature of the Gospel AS THEY MAY PERCEIVE IT?

For instance, in some contexts where the people expect physical healing resulting from their wheeling and dealing with the spirit world, it might be necessary to clarify that Christ does not always automatically guarantee such immediate physical healing and to add the more important element of the Gospel concerning the ultimate meaning of 'wholeness' and salvation, rather than just the temporary physical aspect. At the same time the very nature of 'grace' would need to be explained to prevent the new believer bringing with him his former 'wheeling and dealing' bargain type of attitude and approach, to Christ! Many have come to Christ with such false expectations, so when He does not fulfil their immediate expectations, they go back to their former beliefs; or maintain their Christian beliefs, but when illness strikes, they 'go underground' to their former practitioners- trying to get the best out of both worlds!

2. Will the statement anticipate in advance the particular strengths and weaknesses inherent within the receptor's belief system?

It is quite clear that when Paul preached the good news in Athens, that both these factors were high on his agenda - he applied the principle of continuity and discontinuity when communicating. In a Buddhist situation, when speaking of Christ being captured by His enemies and suffering a humiliating death on the Cross, one should anticipate the typical Buddhist response, that He was receiving the just rewards of evil deeds in his previous life and that his karma had caught up with him, and find ways of refuting that assumption straight away. As indicated later, there are ample examples of people dying in other people's places, who are regarded as heroes of the faith - so there are possible exceptions to the karmic principle, even within Buddhism itself! Our task is to anticipate the questions people will ask, know the elements within their own belief system that are in accord with the Gospel and commend them, while at the same time point out those elements that are contrary to the truth of the Gospel and respond relevantly.

These matters can be explained far more reasonably by people who have themselves been previously immersed within those belief systems- thus reflecting the need for local people to be involved in developing local theologies..

As indicated, any theological system will have its central focus on some aspect of truth which is pertinent to the local theological climate of the day. For Calvin this was the Sovereignty of God; for Luther, Justification by Faith; for Barth, the Word of God.

Barth, in a letter to South East Asian Christians, recognised clearly that his own theological formulations, although true, may not necessarily be relevant to questions Asians were asking. His own theological task was cast within a particular framework and designed to meet the needs of the Protestant church within its own theological and historical context, namely nineteenth and twentieth century European Theology. Barth asked, "Can the theology presented by me be understandable and interesting to you, and how?" He then answered it with a suggestion:

"Now it is your task to be Christian theologians in your new, different and special situation. You truly do not need to become 'European, Western men', not to mention 'Barthians', in order to be good Christians and theologians. You may feel free to be South East Asian Christians"

Various modern expressions of "situational" or "local" theologies have arisen: "Liberation Theology" developed out of the cry of the poor and oppressed (or perhaps of their middle class, self appointed defenders), in South America, to find an answer from the Scriptures to sanction their "fight" for freedom from the oppressor. Other expressions of the same theme are being formulated in South East Asia, particularly the Dalit theology of India and the "Minjung (Masses of people) Theology" of South Korea. This takes into consideration the cries and groans of the suffering people known as 'Han' because the Minjung are politically oppressed and powerless and economically exploited. This same concept of Liberation and the debate surrounding the "force of right, or the right of force", will no doubt find expression in other areas experiencing similar conditions, such as the Philippines. Dr. Kazoh Kitamori's "Pain of God" theology in Japan is an excellent illustration of an attempt to reconcile the devastation and defeat of Japan in World War 2, with the fact that the God revealed in the Bible is the God of suffering and pain who would be able to identify with the suffering Japanese.

Dr. Kosuke Koyama's "Waterbuffalo Theology" is an honest attempt by a Japanese missionary to shape theology into the forms that country farmers in the backwoods of Thailand will understand. In his preface to the book he points out :

..I begin speaking from where they are (i.e. cock-fighting). From talking about the human situation I go on to call God into this real human situation. It is not I, but my audience, who determines my approach of "theology from below". ... I decided that the greatness of theological works is to be judged by the extent and quality of the service they can render to the farmers to whom I am sent.... My theology in North Thailand must begin with the need of the farmers and not with the great thoughts developed in these books ... In this decision is the beginning of a theology for Thailand and for Asia" .

Ironically, his book is so full of western concepts and theological jargon in Greek, German ("leitmotifs!"), Latin, or Sanskrit that there will be very few farmers who can understand it. The educated Thai theological fraternity are going to find it difficult enough even when they read the Thai translation of his book, but he has made his point; and it may be that he had a Western audience in mind when he wrote this, so perhaps it was after all, contextualised!

ESSENTIAL ISSUES REQUIRING DEFINITIVE LOCAL THEOLOGIES

The following are some issues that would arise within the religious and cultural milieu of Buddhist people which would require definitive theological apologia (local theologies), if the essential nature of the Gospel be first of all understood, and secondly be regarded as good news for them.

1. The components of a Buddhist world-view.
2. The nature of "GOD" , "his" attributes.
3. The nature of "MAN", his constitution.
4. The nature of "SIN" ,its individual and corporate implications.
5. The nature of "SUFFERING", its cause and effect.
6. The nature of "LIBERATION", its Biblical roots vis a vis its political ramifications.
7. The nature of "ENLIGHTENMENT" and "NIRVANA"
8. The use of "CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE RITES AND RITUALS".
9. Dialogical Power Encounter. (see chapter 7).
10. The use of NON -STEREOTYPED COMMUNICATION MODELS.
(Drama, Redemptive Analogies, Spirituality) (see chapter 8).

1. THE COMPONENTS OF A BUDDHIST WORLD-VIEW.

There are definite indications that the monolithic structure of Buddhism has already some very large cracks in it. Forces from outside such as secularisation, plus divisions from within, are effecting the nature of the world as it is perceived and indeed the very nature of Buddhism itself. This phenomenon is developing throughout the Buddhist world and the splintering seems to follow some common characteristics. There now seem to be at least four distinct divisions within Thai Buddhism, each claiming to follow Gotama's teaching more precisely than the other.

Each of the four groupings have their respective distinctives. There is first of all the main Orthodox branch of Buddhism with its principal monastic order (sangha), its legislative, administrative and judicial structures. All other variations of Buddhism should only be acceptable if they conform to the

requirements of the structures of this Orthodox branch. The problem is that at least three other 'New Emerging Religious Movements', within the main structures, are straining at the leash for freedom of expression both in belief and behaviour. "Re-formation" is happening as never before.

It would be a very interesting study to compare the different emphases within current Buddhist thought and behaviour in Thailand, with the various strands of emphasis in surrounding Buddhist countries, Christianity and all other religions. It is certainly true that within both Christianity and Islam there are movements which correlate with four different streams. There will be for instance the traditional orthodox stream (the Fundamentalists), the purist reformer stream; the subjective mystical stream, (analogous to the Sufis of Islam and the Pietists in Protestant Christianity); and then the Ascetic stream, analogous to certain monastic orders in Christianity, and the holy men of Hinduism and Islam.

Each expression of Buddhism has its own philosophical undergirding based upon what they perceive as essential elements to their particular emphasis. They even know or perceive in different ways depending on whether their main emphasis would be related to knowledge, experiential religion, fundamentalism, or mysticism.

All this serves to illustrate the fact that it is difficult to analyse and present one consistent and coherent world view which would cover the present religious scenario in Buddhist countries today. It would also suggest that their differing emphases, should be taken into consideration when we present the good news to them. That there is an increasing diversity in the belief systems is not under question. Analysts, sociologists, anthropologists and even scientists have no simple answer to this problem of diffusions of concepts, decentralisation of structures and disintegration of what was previously held to be orthodox belief.

A survey carried out for a Thai Social Sciences Programme, with approximately three hundred scientists from seven universities, indicated that such traditional beliefs as Nirvana and many other beliefs associated with reincarnation, tended to be rejected in the name of Science. More than sixty percent of the entire sample maintained that they did not believe either they or anyone else would be reborn in any shape or form after death.

Putat's neo-orthodoxy appeals on biological grounds when he states that man is reborn every minute. This reveals a desire to "contextualise" their own theology in order to be consistent with their contemporary discoveries. Only 2.7 per cent of the total number of Scientists had any desire to reject Buddhism in toto. In fact 73 per cent respondents maintained that religion was important.

Subgroups within the one Religion, with their various presuppositions will predispose people to respond to differing emphases, even although they may be listening to the same message!

In Africa Jacob Loewen was asked to be a Consultant to a group of missionaries and nationals who were developing Sunday school material. Loewen suggested that the Africans should select the truths and stories to be taught- the missionaries were incensed. After all, they were seminary-trained people. They knew their Bible and what it teaches. Loewen helped them see the different cultural perspective by getting everyone to write down what they thought was the central message in the story of Joseph.:

The missionaries wrote that here was a man who was loyal to God even to the point of resisting the most fierce sexual temptations. The Africans wrote that here was a man who, in spite of his brothers' mistreatment, was totally loyal to his family...these several factors point to the need for seeing the Gospel in

its broadest as well as its deepest dimensions, rather than insisting on a "one chord" definition".

2. THE NATURE OF GOD

The basic problem is finding common ground in defining "God". The favourite Western categories range from monotheistic to polytheistic but "fail to get a grip on it" in the words of Ninian Smart. He suggests that Theravada Buddhism is "transpolytheistic", pointing out that many "marvels" occur in the Pali canon as the world of the gods seemed to respond to the crucial events in Buddha's career - a far from "rationalistic" approach to popular religion.

New perceptions and discoveries in the realm of "matter and physics" reveal some crucial themes that Eastern and Biblical world-views have in common. Such views are radically different from the popular secular worldview of the West and contest our hand-me-down theological formulas.

A further problem for Buddhists is the concept that the Christian's God is perceived to be "Personal". For a Buddhist, the idea of "personality" must include impermanence, attachment, transience, feelings, always attaining to but never realising Enlightenment.

One Buddhist monk said the Christian's "personal" God, defined in the usual terms a Christian defines Him, certainly is comparable to Buddha - BEFORE HIS ENLIGHTENMENT!

Some well-known Buddhist scholars are prepared to speak of the Christians' God in such contradictory terms as "rightness" (impersonal) not "righteous", which would imply personality; "The Law (force) of Nature"; the law of inevitable automatic retribution (Karma), or "IGNORANCE" (avijja) following the theological argument that since all around us is impermanent, meaningless, and leads to suffering and death, - what sort of "intelligence" would create such unmitigated chaos? The only appropriate name for such a "person" would be "Ignorance". One monk admits that there is no clear reference to God in Buddhist doctrine but feels

"God is the only natural law which governs the Universe and if Christians were to interpret the word "GOD" as natural law, Buddhism and Christianity could be at one. But if Christians insist on seeing God as a person, the two cannot be in accord, for Buddhism has no personal God and no reference to God as a person. Moreover "GOD" in Buddhism is "avijja", the very essence of ignorance. An ignoramus was the Creator of this universe. This was the epitome of ignorance since what was created was completely ruined".

This is hardly "good news", it would be in fact, if it were true, a most unattractive principle (or person) to become involved with. Thus the Gospel seems to confound even the most learned Buddhist scholars, because it will not fit into their categories.

The Rev. Wan Petsonkham himself an ex Buddhist Scholar, points out two possible interpretations of the word 'avijja'. The first interpretation is, "ignorance as a state of unknowing", the second is "Nature which is unknowable". He suggests that the second interpretation is better:

In reality, avijja should be understood to mean the law of nature which man cannot know through his own intelligence. If that is what is meant, we can agree. Man could not know that God is the creator unless God had revealed it or

inspired men to know it. Man has no way of knowing, for he was not present at the creation. He can know nothing about it except through revelation".

This latter interpretation accords with Schumann whose exegesis of the Pali sources is that ignorance is specifically non-acquaintance with the Four noble truths into which Buddha arranges his teaching.

"According to this, ignorance is not understood as lack of knowledge but specifically as non-acquaintance with the Four Noble Truths, into which Buddha arranges his teaching.

Puttatat (a leading Thai monk), appears to contradict himself in his writings, for in his Sinclair Thompson Memorial Lecture 'The Teaching of Christ - the Teaching of Buddha' he asks whether in Buddhism there is 'One' who has power to create and to destroy; and he answers his own question by stating 'if you ask has Buddhism this God? - Yes, in one word God is Dharma, 'the Teaching'. Yet in his booklet written to a Roman Catholic Father, he refers to 'GOD' as 'Ignorance'! Such inconsistencies display confusing ambiguity.

Two further points need discussing before a solution is considered. First, one cannot compromise the essence of God's personality, because God Himself in Scripture says "I am, that I am" implying Personhood and manifests Himself in the life of Christ.

Second, it is a fact that Western Christendom has been guilty of domesticating, privatising, and individualising God. Indeed, our claim to have a "personal relationship" with the Creator of the Universe may appear to be egotistical and arrogant. We are also guilty of seeing God as ONLY a Person. He transcends not only His creation, but His Personhood. We give the impression that we know all there is to know about this Being. But our God is "too small". He is also inaccessible height and fathomless depth, incomprehensible breadth and eternal length. If nothing else this points to the need to define 'personal' in religious language.

As a bridge to the Buddhist, is it not possible to speak of God firstly in terms of His "non-relational" attributes - those attributes which are opposite to the concept of 'avijja' (that is, if we interpret 'avijja' according to Puttatat's idea that God is ignorance). It is possible to speak of God as 'goodness', One who is independent of all other properties or persons, or 'justice', 'holy', 'attractive', 'powerful', etc., Perhaps He should be spoken of in

more "mystical" terms for that is certainly what the Church Fathers did. This would appeal to the Buddhist. Second as an alternative, is it not possible to speak of God as a "Spirit Being", comparable to a powerful spirit-being in Buddhism's own spirit hierarchy? They have gods that people are thoroughly acquainted with already - such as 'Pra In and Pra prom'. When they invoke a blessing at New Year, they call upon "the whole host of heaven", who they acknowledge without question or reservation, as personal beings who are both powerful enough to bestow blessings and who are of the essence good. They pray - "May all the powerful heavenly beings bless you.

Rev. Wan says that the exact meaning of the Thai word for 'God' indicates that he is glorious, majestic and pure 'pra jao'. Paradoxically, it would seem therefore that within Buddhist Cosmology, a place can be found for a Being comparable to the Christian God.

The Edenic account in Genesis chapter three, can portray for Buddhists, the most profound way of illustrating the true nature of God. If ěavijjaí is personified in Genesis three, then it would not be God who is described in such terms, but the Serpent who is seen to be the cause of all the devastation that is depicted in the world.

As rust comes from iron without iron being the effectual cause of it, so suffering is the

consequential result of the Eden episode. Here the law of karma begins, "if you do good you receive good, if you do bad you will receive bad", here lust is born (ěshe looked at the fruit and it was pleasing to the eyeí) here Enlightenment is promised, (a special knowledge and perception), but ěavijjaí (Ignorance) and shame are the outcome; here estrangement between man and man, man and nature, man and God occur. Here indeed IGNORANCE HAS PREVAILED.

The Genesis account elucidates the ěgenesisí of things in a far more comprehensive and satisfactory way than merely stating that ěavijjaí, (Ignorance) is the effective cause of all ills! If ever man needed to escape, it is from this meaningless cycle of existence, described so perfectly in this pictorial form. As in Buddhist mythology the gods interact with man, so here in the Garden, God takes action. He depicts both the cause of suffering and the curse of

existence, so it is -"by the sweat of your brow " that man exists and survives.

But He also promises the answer, not that man should depend upon himself, but that he should put his trust in the Saviour who was to come (proto-evangelium).

A further possible solution to the problem of defining "God" to Buddhist people, would be to advocate the "principle of continuity". This would mean searching in Buddhist cosmology for a ěbeingí who had similar attributes (as near as possible) to the Christian God and then ěreloadingí the name of this ěbeingí with Christian content. This may alarm Evangelicals - but why should it? The principle has Biblical precedence- in the Old Testament, Abraham happily accepts the non- Jewish God of Melchizedek-El Elyon and acknowledges him as "the most High God". When Paul preached the Gospel among Greek-speaking peoples, he did not impose a Jewish name

for God - Jehovah, Yahweh, Elohim, Adonai, or El Shaddai. When the Johannine writer struggles to find a word to explain Christ, he picks upon a term which had both Jewish and Greek etymology. John double-re-loads the meaning of LOGOS, firstly from an O.T. meaning where "THE WORD" expresses the action of God, rather than His person, secondly from a Greek perspective where the term originated with Heraclitus (560BC) as the pantheistically perceived rational principle undergirding all existence, and possible thirdly from the slogan of numerous sects, seeing in Logos a kind of world reason which pervaded the universe.

Richardson explains terminology in Paul's message to the Athenians in this light:

" Paul placed his apostolic seal upon a 200 year old decision of the Translators of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. They had given the God of the Jews a totally Greek name-THEOS. Paul followed suit.

Interestingly enough translators of the Septuagint did not try to equate the Greek god Zeus with Yahweh. Nor did Paul, although Greeks esteemed Zeus as "king of the gods", he was also viewed as the offspring of two of the gods, Cronus and Rhea. Hence the name Zeus could not qualify as a synonym for Yahweh, the Uncreated. This was true even though the Latin cognate of Zeus-Deus, was later accepted as the equivalent of Yahweh for Roman Christians! In fact, it is probably true that even "Theos" sprang from the same linguistic root as both "Zeus" and "Deus". Furthermore, when Paul preached the Gospel at Athens he

boldly equated Yahweh with "an unknown God" associated with a certain altar in the city, saying "What you worship as something unknown I am about to proclaim to you". It is impossible to talk about an uncreated Creator without meaning HIM and anyone capable of protesting: "But all His attributes are missing" is responsible to fill them in!"

Richardson also claims that most missionary outreaches have adopted the names of local gods rather than importing them. When Celtic missionaries went to northern Europe, they did not impose upon them Jewish or Greek names for Deity, but used Anglo-Saxon words such as Gott, God or Gut. Presbyterian missionaries in Korea discovered a Korean name for God Hananim, ìthe Great Oneî, so rather than sweeping him aside and creating a foreign name, they proclaimed Hananim as the God of the Bible. The link was forged with the culture in the choice of this Korean term with all its potential ambiguity. Harvie Conn, himself a missionary from Korea, feels that this is one of the reasons for the remarkable response to the Gospel by Korean people. Conn observes the findings of anthropologist Homer Barnett and applies them to the Korean situation:

ìBarnett has said that new ideas will be accepted only if (1) they satisfy a want better than some existing means, (2) they connect in part with the previous life experience of the people, and (3) pervasive dissatisfaction has already gripped a portion of the people. Korea was providentially prepared by the Spirit to meet those conditions, had begun to taste the transforming work of Christî.

It should not therefore be difficult to accept the principle of continuity for proclaiming the Good News to Buddhists. This must also involve "reloading". The Thai translation of the prologue to John's Gospel could have been better if the word (Dharma-"Teaching") had been used rather than the present " (prawata 'word') which although understandable seems to be a coined expression rather than an expression already in vogue.

One must always recognise the danger inherent within the "re-load" principle. Historically, Christianity has often succumbed to an inadequate reloading, to the extent that the essential distinctives of the Gospel have become foggy and faded. This will result in a wrong understanding of the message and put Christ "on the shelf" along with all the other gods, and the resultant "Religion" will be an indistinguishable, unsavoury mishmash. The fact that this sometimes happens should not mitigate against the basic principle. The use of the word ìPreahî in Cambodian is an illustration of this principle- it can mean ìholy oneî, so many Cambodians blurt out when they have committed some sin or indiscretion, ìI am not Preahî which can mean ìI am not a Buddhaî. Bishop Silas sates:

ìIt is correct to say that Buddha and Jesus are ëPreahí as founders of religions, but if we do not give more explanations about Jesus, the Buddhists will remain with the idea that Jesus is a teacher of good moralsî

Bishop Silas is proposing the use of a word already in existence that reflects SOME of the required meaning and then perceiving its inadequacy to reflect who Christ is, RELOADS the word with Christian content.

Koyama makes a useful contribution to the argument by pointing out the danger of perpetuating a concept already extant in the Buddhist mind, and then superimposing it onto the Christian God. He shows that the Christian idea of God is the antithesis of the expected image in a Buddhist's mind as a sort of 'ëtimeless apathetic Being', beyond history, with no concern for man and no meaningful anger toward sinful man. Koyama clearly feels and

correctly so, that Thai Christians tend to over contextualise the God of the Bible, so that their image of God would fit with the Buddhist ideas. He states:

"The Thai mind tends to identify God with an absolutistic idea beyond history (a timeless, apathetic God), but the wrath of God has a unique power to historicize God. In short, if God can be truly moved to wrath, he cannot be a timeless, apathetic God beyond history, but he must be God in history. The God in history who can be meaningfully moved to wrath cannot be domesticated. The God who is severed from history cannot be meaningfully moved to wrath but can be domesticated. The wrath of God is the critical expression of God in history. This is the message which was thrown out of the Thai Christian life with the despised perturbation of soul. It is the contention of the writer that Thai theology, bolstered by an indigenous ideal of apatheia, tends inadvertently to neglect "God in History" by reducing the wrath of God to a matter of minor significance".

In spite of the inherent dangers, local theologies can be and should be defined within the cosmological world-view of Buddhist people across Asia, especially those with predominant folk religion convictions, which probably amounts to ninety five percent of these countries.

2. THE NATURE OF MAN.

The distinction between the Christian concept of Man and the Buddhist teaching is perhaps even more difficult to resolve than the idea of God in both religions. The contrast between a 'no-soul' coagulation of material particles round a centre of karmic force (morally directed causality), unendingly evolving from and dissolving into the continuing world process, and Biblical Man, the crown of God's creation, the very IMAGO DEI, is obvious. The importance of our being human, (the distinction between and the extension of our creatureliness), cannot be overemphasised for a Christian understanding. In Buddhism there is only cyclical "continuity" from creatureliness, to more creatureliness, but here we see "discontinuity". The imago does not evolve, it is created. Created body and soul.

Anderson in his "Essays in Theological Anthropology", states:"the doctrine of the Imago Dei does not refer solely to man's present state, but also his future condition, and although Christian Theology has been tempted to surrender the body to the fate of the dust, and pin its hopes on the immortality of the soul, this would compromise orthodox Christian belief in the resurrection of the body. The impersonality of a disembodied soul breaks the bond of true humanness". Anderson points out that to capitulate to non-biblical ways of thinking, or speaking regarding the body as a lower and mortal aspect of the person, while the soul in its abstraction from the body would be a higher principle of Personhood, is wrong.:

Actually, the description of Man from a Buddhist perspective, is quite inadequate in itself, for all Buddhists believe that man consists not only of material particles, (tua sangkharn) but also of "spirit", (winyan). This nebulous force is difficult to define.

Rev. Petsongkhram states that there are varying interpretations within Buddhism itself. Some say it refers to the six senses (winyan 6), so it remains only until a person dies. The majority classify it as a kind of power that resides in the body and then leaves the body at death. It will then seek a new residence.

This sees the body as a house, with the "winyan" as the occupant. Generally, folk Buddhists believe that the ěwinyaní exists after death and must be reborn. Petsongkhram states that the problem was with Buddha himself because of his lack of clarity over the subject! The problem is compounded by the stratification of Man into two broad classes, the lower category of ordinary human life ěkhon thamadaí and the higher category, 'ongí which includes all Buddhist monks, the King and very high royalty. The higher category are regarded as "mana filled". This raises some people into an almost god-like status where they are regarded as "higher" than other mortals, a special "higher" language is used for them and by them.

All this indicates, for the folk-Buddhist, that there are non-material parts to the human constitution, god-like in some aspects, and earth-like in others. Both constituents, "body" and "spirit", could be defined as "self" ěattaí and appear to match the Pauline "lower nature".

However, the terminology is ambiguous from a Christian point of view. There is always a danger of "dualism" when using New Testament terms to describe manís constitution. The fact is that whether SOMA (body), or PSUCHE (soul), or SARX (flesh), or PNEUMA (spirit) are used, they all refer to the whole man, his person. Owens warns against the notion that phenomena can be compartmentalised into "spirit and matter",

"Thus by far the largest "part" - if one can talk in terms so crude when describing something so ephemeral - of matter is actually an invisible binding force. This is your body we're talking about. This is matter. As immaterial as the most rarefied scholar's spirit. ...How did we ever fall into this heretical habit of despising creation, of disembodiment of our spirits and disembowelling the world?... Well, from the Greeks, perhaps, those picadors of the universe, who started the penchant for categorising, for drawing lines in the air. But not from Paul, although his thoroughly Hebrew soul may have found itself accommodating the sophisticated Greeks with their modern notions of immateriality somewhat more than he had intended. When he speaks disparagingly of flesh, it is flesh that refuses to recognise the source of its life, that denies the destination of its own consciousness, that sees itself, satanically, as self sufficient. But it was no Gnostic, no matter-demeaning Manichee who asked in amazement ěDo you not know that your BODIES are members of Christ?í Flesh that does not know itself to be quickened by Christ is a fetid sore, a cancer on the cosmos.

Both Buddhism and Christianity recognise that man's chief problem, however he is constituted, is "himself" (ěattmaí), and salvation is found in resolving the problem of selfhood. Thus the true Buddhist can cry with Paul "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?"(Rom.7:24) Although Donald Swearer wishes to pursue the similarities between Christianity and Buddhism, by implying that the goals in view are the same in both religions, (i.e. moving from a deprived state of being to a fulfilled one), and that the only difference is in language and symbols used, it is really at this point that the similarities cease. For unlike Buddhism, Christianity teaches that it is only by abandoning oneself to God that one can die to self. Self cannot be denied by directly focussing on self. It is a psychological fact that conscious self-denial makes a man self-possessed and self-absorbed. As Christianity sees it, the only cure is a turning of one's attention from self to God, so that He can occupy the centre of one's being.

1. THE NATURE OF SIN, ITS INDIVIDUAL AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS.

The typology of "Shame" or "Guilt" cultures was first introduced by Ruth Benedict in "Patterns of Culture" (1934). She proposed that all societies are directed by an organising principle that arises from the basic aspects of human personality. The "principle" was called the "mainspring" out of which a given culture would respond in either guilt or shame categories. Benedict developed Margaret Mead's theories who posited the West as guilt-orientated and the East as shame-orientated.

Augsburger agrees that the issue is not "either/or", but "both/and":

"To call a society a "shame" culture, or a "guilt" culture reduces the complex patterns of affect to a single emotional control pattern. Subsequent research confirms the hypothesis that anxiety, shame and guilt are a universal developmental sequence, although they occur in varying measures and are expressed in diverse cultural patterns. When we speak of a group that is more anxiety controlled, or tends toward a great shame orientation, or is predominantly guilt focused this is no longer to imply that the one process is exclusively present. Rather it is to examine part process in an integrative system of controls, while noting that one particular part may play a decisive role in that culture's socialisation of the person and the social process in community".

Both shame and guilt should be seen therefore as highly important mechanisms and have important functions in all societies. Anxiety is always a precursor to both these functions and Augsburger helpfully compares and contrasts these emotions showing the positive and negative powers:

AUGSBURGER'S COMPARISON OF ANXIETY, SHAME AND GUILT:

Both van der Weele and Augsburger agree that where "guilt" predominates in a society, behavioural controls are expected to be primarily internal, but almost always relate not to society below, but to "powers" above. Guilt is seen as both breaking rules, and at the same time, as a personal offending of a spirit being. All folk religion, to some greater or lesser extent, has these built in controls. In a predominantly shame-orientated culture the expectations, sanctions, restraints of the significant others in a person's world become the agents of behaviour control.

The prevailing view of the great religions sees guilt arising from perceived wrongdoing in regard to the demands or expectations of a *îgodî* or *îgodsî*. The wrongdoing may occur by accident, negligence or wilful intent, the same result ensues, a sense of guilt and a responding desire to put things back into harmony. Shame cultures have a closely paralleled goal in view, that of *îsaving faceî*, and returning to a harmonious field within the social matrix.

Each culture has a different combination of sanctions against each kind of wrongdoing. These differences, as well as differences in the ways that wrongdoing is perceived by the individual and the society, will determine whether the focus in a particular culture will be on guilt or on shame as the deterrent for wrongdoing.

Before considering a specifically Buddhist or Christian perspective one may propose some tentative conclusions. First, that all people in all cultures are aware of wrongdoing, whether or not they call it sin. Second, people from

guilt oriented cultures have a deeper sense of personal wrongdoing, while people from shame oriented cultures have a sense of corporate offence. It may be that the traditional Western emphasis on personal sin is not totally Biblical, in that sin in Scripture is often defined in terms of how I treat my neighbour, in the here and now. It relates to injustice, oppression, corruption in society, taking advantage of the poor and even the environment. Evangelicals have certainly tended to privatise sin, feeling that what is done personally, is really nobody else's business, but the individual's and God. There is also the tendency to "eschatalogise" sin, seeing it as something that relates primarily to the future, rather than the present.

Brief mention must be made of the concept of "loss of face". This feeling refers to loss of self-respect in one's own sight, or in the sight of the community. The measure of pain that is felt is culturally determined and always leads to both shame and guilt in greater or lesser degree. "Saving face", or "losing face", are often described as an Eastern preoccupation or obsession, but they are essentially the universal concerns of all human beings. Saving and losing face were important features in the life of King Saul and no doubt reflected the cultural values of the day. When he had committed sin against God, he was anxious that Samuel escort him publicly in order to 'save face' and give the right impression to the people. This story (in 1 Samuel chapter 15) illustrates shame, guilt, anxiety, and fear of loss of face before others.

Perhaps the Edenic scenario could be perceived once again as classic model of guilt, shame, anxiety, fear and loss of face. There are over one hundred and fifty references to "shame" and its derivative words in the Old Testament. On the other hand, "guilt" or "guiltiness" occur rarely. An interesting contrast is found in Psalm 31 with its expression of shame, and Psalm 32, with its emphasis on guilt and the desire for forgiveness.

In the New Testament there are also various references to both guilt and shame. St. Paul appeals to those at Corinth, that they should have a sense of shame (1Cor 5v1-2) because of immorality in the church. He also rebukes them in Chapter 11 for "humiliating" those who have nothing in the church (v22). Paul's emphasis on human guilt in Romans chapter 1-3, focuses on universal human guilt as fact, rather than on feelings of self-recrimination.

There is considerable difference of opinion among Buddhist scholars regarding these concepts. Schumann states that Buddhism does not know of "sin", i.e. offence against the commandments of God or a god. Although Winston King and Kenneth Wells infer concepts of guilt, confession and even Buddha's forgiveness from the Buddhist Scriptures, they note that in the monks' general confession of faults thrice daily, there is no thought of absolution or even of confessing specific faults; and King at least concedes that the Buddhist myths and philosophy of the human condition ordinarily find little place for sin and guilt because they give a predominance and central place to the concept of "dukkha" - suffering. A deeper explanation of this word will be given later. His reference to "sin" and "guilt" here would relate directly to offending a spirit being.

Further consideration of the cause and effect of either guilt or shame must lead to the conclusion that Buddhists are not exempt from either of these responses. All Buddhists KNOW what evil is and the consequences of doing evil. They even have differing words of intensity for the idea of "sin" (ìbabî [kx]) which is lesser, or "evil" (ìkhvam chuaî) which seems to be a worse form of sin. Probably the most common Buddhist expression, used in everyday language is the warning, "If you do good you will receive good, if you do evil you will receive evil" ("tham

dee dai dee i) They also recognise that even this law is not inexorable because it is recognised that the person who does good sometimes receives evil and the person who does evil sometimes receives good ("tham chua dai dee tham dee dai chua Buddhist laity are obliged to keep at least ten commandments, and monks two hundred and twenty seven different laws. Many of these laws can be "broken" without other people necessarily observing them, so they would not necessarily produce "shame" as offence to the observer. However because of their vows to fulfil these requirements, and their inability to do so at the same time, a sense of guilt must follow. This sense of guilt may be fatalistically described or interpreted as "suffering". Whatever the case, guilt follows because the person stands condemned by his own inability to attain to what he aspires.

One may summarise that the mechanisms of guilt and shame are common phenomena in both Buddhism and Christianity. One may even go further and say that they are an intrinsic part of our humanness - or perhaps one should take one final step and say that they reflect the very Imago Dei in mankind, for conscience is that supra-cultural God-given function, which responds in different ways in different cultures. It is that link with *etethersi* the creature to the Creator, whether he knows it or not. This seems to be Paul's argument in Romans chapter three.

As to the exact function of conscience, it would be appropriate at this point to discuss to what extent the function of conscience is determined by or impinges upon cultural values. It is certainly true that although universally, man has a conscience, its estimation of right and wrong, good or evil are to some extent conditioned by local values and are therefore culturally variable. Clearly the Jewish conscience was sharpened by the giving of the Law of Moses, but Paul indicates that even without objective laws, all mankind knows what is right and wrong morally because of the function of conscience. (Romans 2v12-16). It is also evident from Scripture, that conscience, can be *clear* or *good* (1Tim3v9 1 Tim 1v5), can become *weak* or *defiled* (1 Cor 8v7), *darkened*, (Romans 1). It can also be *calloused* or *hardened* or *dead* (1 Tim 4v2) - to such an extent that what may have been regarded as basically evil, can be justified at a later stage as permissible or even good.

The apparent justification for killing of newborn twins, among the Akha tribe in North Thailand may be cited as an illustration-that whereas originally, conscience appeared to be fully justified because of cultural values, so that the killing was perceived as quite legitimate, the subsequent introduction of Christian value for life put a stop to this. This raises the question as to the reliability of conscience. - An article by Robert Priest in *Missiology* has highlighted how missionaries have often presented the Gospel in such a way that it has been perceived by local people as bad news rather than good news. This appears to have been because of a basic misunderstanding of the function of conscience as it relates to community values, so much so that the function of conscience at the local level, does not support their message!

Cotterell's analysis, although unpopular, must be seriously considered. He states:

"The Christian mission is not concerned with an attempt to reach some kind of mutual understanding with world religions, nor is it particularly concerned with the reformation of religious systems. Systems of theology or philosophy cannot repent. The Christian mission is *ELENCTIC* in the New Testament sense of that word, rebuking, refuting, confuting and calling to repentance the PEOPLES of the world. The verb *ELENCHEN* occurs eighteen times in the New Testament. In nine

of these occurrences the word is used in direct relation to sin. For example, Jesus asks: "Which of you CONVICTS me of sin?" (Jn. 8:46). and Paul tells Timothy "As for those who persist in sin, REBUKE them in the presence of all" (1 Tim 5:20). James says "You commit sin, and are CONVICTED by the law (Jas 2:9). In missiological terms an elenchus is a confrontation with error in which error is exposed for what it is, the one guilty of error feels rebuked and compelled to admit his error and, one hopes is led to repentance".

Cotterell goes on to speak of the "elenchus" of the Spirit, in which the Spirit comes to CONVINCe the world of sin. He states that it is this elenctic ministry of the Spirit which characterises "Mission". Cotterell emphasises that the nature of the ěsiní indicated has to do with moral transgression. However the moral aspect of the word is only one aspect of its meaning especially in the verse from Johnís Gospel, the breakdown or transgression here is directional or relational, rather than moral and has to do with a failure to recognise who Christ is rather than what we have done or have not done in a moral sense. There seems to be a universal application to what Christ is saying in this passage - that the Holy Spirit will convince a personsí conscience of this particular transgression. One may infer, that in this particular case, the Holy Spirit will convict peopleís consciences concerning this particular transgression in a supra cultural sense, and that there will be therefore little or no cultural variance or conditioning of conscience in this regard. This should encourage the communicator of the Gospel to emphasise what is such a vital element of the Gospel but almost totally ignored in the West.

It cannot be overemphasised at this point that both the focus of the preaching of the early apostles, and the promised ministry of the Spirit by Christ, was not on sins (plural) as such in the moral or ethical sense, but on the SIN (singular). ĨWhen the Spirit of truth is come, He will convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgement to come....of sin BECAUSE THEY DO NOT BELIEVE IN ME. Of righteousness because I go to my Father, of Judgment because the prince of this world is judgedĭ. The fact of Christ returning to His Father, indicates Godís approval of Christís life and death - all that He said and did. Clearly his uniqueness and supremacy over all other human beings, meant that it was the right and appropriate place for Him was to return - to the highest place of authority at the right hand of His Father. The fact of ěthe prince of this worldĭ (Satan) being judged shows Christís sovereign power over all the powers of the unseen world and that through the Cross Christ he disarmed Satanís potential and power.

Since it was Jesus Himself who is recorded to have made the statements concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit in John chapter 16, it is evident that as far as He was concerned, the greatest sin in the world, was that of not acknowledging or recognising who He was and who He claimed to be - most of Johnís Gospel centres around this fact. We find it quite clear in chapter 3, where John indicates that man is ĭcondemned alreadyĭ ĭbecause he has not believed in (not recognised who He is) the name of Godís one and only Sonĭ. Condemnation here is not predicated because of moral sin in the first place, but because mankind did not believe in Him. (verse17-18) or, as even more clearly put ěwhoever rejects the Son (v36). Again the context of this verse is stating repeatedly the uniqueness of who the Son is - v31 - ĭThe one who comes for above is above all - the one who comes from Heaven is above allĭ Such an emphasis of this aspect of the Gospel if presented to a Buddhist would probably be regarded as elitist exclusivist and intolerant. But Jesus (in spite of the cultural mores of His own time) never evaded if necessary, challenging the religious leaders of His day

concerning who He was. Paul's own method when preaching to the Gentiles was also challenging, some would say confrontational. Whatever the case, it may be safely stated as is quite evident from Scripture that neither Jesus nor Paul accommodated their message to please their listeners! Paul addressed those who totally misunderstood both his person and the nature of his message, "We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God ".(Acts 14:15) He spoke to those at Athens in similar vein, "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, ìBut now He commands all people everywhere to repentî (Acts 17v30).. Here again the context of the imperative ìrepentî, has more to do with who God is and who Jesus and the resurrection are, than a list of moral sins.

Such an emphasis should not be misunderstood to imply that God is not concerned about our moral behaviour - rather that change in moral behaviour should not be the basic requirement or condition in order to become a Christian initially. If moral behaviour (attaining to some sort of standard) were assumed to be necessary beforehand, it would mean that there must be some sort of moral prerequisite, BEFORE becoming a Christian, but this would change the nature of the gospel and contradict the whole emphasis of ãsalvation by grace, through faith and that not of yourselvesí (Eph 2v8-9) - ìJust as I am without one pleaí is more in accord with the nature of the Gospel. It seems the Biblical requirements are first ìbelieveí (which implies recognition of who He is and trust in Him) and then ìrepentí. Not the other way round; one repents of moral failure because it is an offence and affront to God.

Hypothetically, a person could be morally pure and yet still not acknowledge who Christ is, and trust in Him; such a person would thereby still be guilty of ãrelationalí rather than ãmoralí sin, and because of this would need to repent. It is this latter category of unbelief, tantamount to distrust in, non recognition of and disregard for a person that needs repentance in order to become a Christian, not the former which has to do with ethical behaviour. Of course, having become a Christian, the whole area of the requirement for moral purity goes without saying.

The following illustration often used by the writer when attempting to convey the importance of who Christ is; one would address those listening as follows: "if I was approaching your village and asked permission from a young teenager at the entrance of your village to stay in the village for a few days, when the Headman heard of this request, what would he think of my behaviour; since it is understood by all that he alone has the right and authority to give hospitality to strangers who visit the village? The obvious response would be that, having sold his face and openly disregarded and rejected his authority, the Headman would be seriously offended because I was not acknowledging his sole right and authority to grant permission for anyone visiting the village. This culturally determined, serious offence would be relational rather than ethical. So with Christ; as Creator of the world-the fact that we disregard and reject Him, and ask other beings (who have usurped His position), for help and protection is a direct insult to Him. He has the right to be acknowledged and recognised for who He actually is. There would be very few cultures whose values were so diverse, that they would not understand these concepts.

The story has been told of a certain tribe in North Thailand who lived in one of the remotest jungle areas and existed by eating insects or foraging for roots in the forest. They were seldom seen or contacted by Thai or other tribes people and they were given a nick-name ìspirits of the Yellow leavesí indicating that as soon as the green banana leaves of their temporary shacks had turned yellow, they had wafted off somewhere else into the dense jungle. A few years ago some Thai officials from the Siam Society explored the area in search of this group. Upon meeting some, they were able to talk through an interpreter. When the Thai asked who the land belong to, they naturally said it belong to them, they had roamed the area for as long they could remember and

as far as they were concerned it was theirs. It was with some difficulty that the Thai officials made it plain that the land where they lived, was part of a Kingdom, and belonged to a King who lived a thousand miles away in a place called Bangkok.

The 'yellow leaf' tribe could only respond in two ways to this news. They could either accept it, as the 'good news' of a beneficent King who had a right to reign, and become willing citizens relationally, or alternatively reject the message as 'bad news' and in so doing become virtual enemies of the King by rejecting who He was. The application of this story is goes without saying, in terms of who Christ is, where His Kingdom extends and what His claims are. The tribes people concerned were not spoken to in terms of their ethical behaviour, but in terms of their need to establish a relationship- no doubt if they had rejected the King, conscience would have immediately sprung into action!

Even the traditional Western understanding of how one becomes a Christian explained in terms of 'receiving Christ as your Saviour' must also be held under question on two accounts. First, although it is true John 1v12 says 'Yet to all who received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God' - the meaning of this must be interpreted by its context - which relates to 'recognition' of who Christ is - the Jews did not 'recognise' ('ginoschoi) Him- nor did the world which He had created - 'Yet to all who (lambano=received, welcomed,

apprehended or recognised) Him - to them He gave the right to become children of God. A right recognition of who Christ is qualifies us to become His children. How can anyone possibly 'receive' Him, if they do not actually recognise who He is? Again the moral aspect of the issue is absent. It is taken for granted that it will follow!

Such recognition of who He is surely must come from the previous 11 verses? 'In the beginning was the Word, with God and the Word was God. Through Him all things were made... He is the creator. 'to those who BELIEVED... He gave the right to become the children of God. Belief here does not refer to adherence to some Credal formula, but dependence upon and recognition of a Person for one's salvation. Spiritual birth is predicated by the verses before and after verse 12. - including verses 13-17! Hendkriksen says of this passage:

'The verb ginoschoi means not only to know, to come to know, to recognise, to perceive, to understand, but also to acknowledge...so also here; the fact that more than mere intellectual recognition is intended is evident from the parallelism in verses 5 & 11...as has been pointed out the clauses 'did not appropriate', 'did not acknowledge' and 'did not welcome' are instances of litotes. They indicate that the world - particularly the Jews, which represented it - utterly disowned Christ. All rejected him; all with the exception of those to whom reference is made in verse 12 & 13.'

Second, the idea, that by an act of prayer one 'receives' Christ into one's heart has no Biblical precedent whatsoever and has now been reduced to a sort of 'how-to' mechanism or method by which (Western?) people become Christian. Neither this passage nor Romans 10v9, is speaking of 'how to' but of WHO to! IT IS NOT THE ACT OF RECEIVING THAT MAKES US CHRISTIAN, BUT THE FACT OF RECOGNISING!

In fact the Greek meaning of the word 'confess' with your mouth in Romans 10v10 (homologeō) literally means 'to say the same thing, to agree recognise or acknowledge' - in other words, we agree with God as to who Christ is - Lord. Recognising Christ as Lord in those days may well have meant risking one's own life, because it raised political issues in terms of Caesar and who he claimed to be! The application of the word 'Lord' in this context is taken deliberately by Paul from the Old Testament where the same word is used for God (Joel 2v32)

(Yahweh) thus equating God of the Old Testament with Christ of the New.

It must be stated that all other verses relevant in the Bible make it quite clear, that unless Christ is actually recognised in the first places as LORD (and all that implies in that culture at that time), then He cannot be Saviour.

This raises all sorts of questions as to the nature of the Gospel that is presented in the West and by the West and may well be one of the reasons for the ineffective and non demanding type of Christianity that is practised. How can THE LORD Jesus Christ, be perceived as Saviour - without being Lord? But sadly this is the case in West - so much so that we have developed a two stage theology, where one is supposed to receive Christ as Saviour to start with, then later - perhaps if they see fit, He will become Lord. This is NON RECOGNITION of who He really is right from the start and a defective and destructive rendition of the good news.

In developing authentic local theologies which take into consideration, the world view and values of the local people, all the above crucial issues must be wrestled with. There is no simple solution, and dialogue is essential at every stage in order to comprehend the lengths and depths of Buddhist assumptions so that the Gospel may be fully understood, both in terms of relational and moral sin.

While the aforesaid emphasis concerning relational sin is primary, the writer does not mean that it is wrong to mention sins in the ethical sense - for it also holds that conscience is an ally for those who preach the Gospel, stressing that all mankind, (in spite of their usage of all sorts of self defence mechanisms such as denial, rationalisation and projection to protect themselves from the inevitable fact that they fall short even of their own standards), are therefore convicted by their own consciences as this level. Robert Priest points out:

While human consciences do extensively agree with and overlap with morality as revealed in Scripture, there are also significant areas of discontinuity between consciences as shaped by culture and what is revealed in Scripture. Conscience on its own is not sufficient to unerringly guide us into sanctified moral understandings

The implication of such a statement is that even the Biblical standards of morality need to be understood in terms of WHO IT IS that requires such a standard - since a breaking of those standards is not merely a moral issue, but indicates a breakdown of favour and relationship between God and man. A presentation of the moral code in terms of who God is and what He requires, gains the aid of conscience and will bring a greater conviction of sin especially in a shame oriented culture where relationships are fundamental to harmony and existence. Priest adds that preaching about morality in terms of a missionary conscience, rather than the culturally determined conscience of the listener, may result in some sort of conversion, but will merely relate to the local person accepting a new set of rules and norms akin to their previous taboos, not in a deep personal moral conviction.

We may safely say that the mechanisms of shame and guilt, with the function of conscience, are an intrinsic part of our humanness, and that in some way or other, in one culture and another, people will seek to resolve the dilemma of sin, by appeasing, placating, making atonement for, confessing, or engaging in a ritual whose outward form and inward meaning give assurance that the problem has been resolved. All this activity may reduce anxiety, but

determining whether the result desired (forgiveness) is efficacious is a theological matter, and for the Christian in any culture will remain unresolved, unless it is resolved through Christ, the Cross and the Resurrection. True guilt in the light of the Bible is not merely a subjective feeling of discomfort or dysfunction with reference to self or others but a state in relation to (or out of relationship with) God.

Although the subject of Buddhist rites and rituals will be discussed in another chapter, it is significant to note here that the popular Rite of "Loi Krathongî in North Thailand, has been "reloaded" by some Thai from its original mythological origins into a Rite of forgiveness, (conscience clearing), invoking the god of the river upon which little candle-lit floats are launched to "take away" or forgive the offerer (offender) from all sins and offences. The imagery of a "taking away" of sins is clearly seen and noted by Thai Christian leaders as illustrative that man's need is not met in Buddhism which offers no assurance or resolution to the problem of shame, guilt or a clear conscience.

To infer that there may be some other route or ritual in which to "take away" the problem of guilt would effectively reduce Christ to a mere Teacher of Religion, rather than the Saviour of the World. It is not inapplicable or inappropriate to confront Buddhists with the claims of Christ. St Paul was certainly engaged in such confrontational ministry in the Acts of the Apostles. He spoke of the facts of Jesus Christ as of "The first importance" (1 Cor 15:1-3). Cotterell with Stott stipulate that Paul's ministry was not mere debate and most

certainly was not an attempt to reach an agreed lowest common denominator of all religions by means of dialectic.

"And Paul went in as was his custom, and for three weeks he argued with them from the scriptures" (Acts 17:2).

Although well meaning people have done much work in attempting to achieve a Buddhist - Christian amalgam, by merging many of these ideas and concepts, the fact remains, they are not mutually coherent or consistent. Buddhism clearly teaches that the root of the world's ill is suffering, the Bible teaches that it is sin (in the moral and relational aspect). These two concepts, sin versus suffering cannot be merged. The goal therefore of developing local theologies, is not necessarily in order that these religious systems complement each other, but in order that a Buddhist can clearly understand the nature of the Christian message, and based on his clear understanding respond accordingly. That is the nature of elenctics.

C H A P T E R F I V E

"THE NATURE OF SUFFERING"

In comparing the Christian concept of Sin ("baab ") with the world of Buddhist suffering, ("dukkha" King graphically describes the journey to be travelled:

"We must leave behind the miasmatic swamps of human passion permeated by an overwhelming sense of obscure guilt: where friend and foe can be distinguished only with difficulty, but only to find oneself alone in an infinitely complicated maze in which he, like a lost soul - or lost no-soul is condemned to wander endlessly

about looking for an exit from this dark and lonely misery but finding none - this is the world of Buddhist Dukkha".

While accepting a common ground regarding suffering for both Buddhist and Christian, there is nevertheless a fundamental distinction between The First Noble Truth of Buddhism (the Truth of Suffering) with its pessimism and unattractive escape mechanisms, and the Biblical acceptance of the fact that "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward ". For the Christian, even suffering can be transformed from something inherently destructive, into something constructive and redemptive. The Buddhist could argue too that suffering is beneficial for him as well since it urges him along to Enlightenment. However, both the cause and the effect of "liberation" are different, a subject which will be discussed later.

The fundamental difference between Christ and Buddha on this subject is Christ's emphasis on the problem of moral evil, while central to Buddha's teaching is the problem of pain. However, this does not mean that Christ overlooked the reality of physical suffering. He understood in full the teaching of Isaiah's 'SUFFERING Servant', Ecclesiastes' view of 'life under the sun' with its endless cycles as well as treatment of the problem of evil and suffering. In that regard Buddhism would take the position of Job's friends who maintained that Job's suffering MUST be caused by his evil deeds. There is no answer in Buddhism to the question - why do the righteous suffer, while the wicked flourish? Buddha resolved this problem with the doctrine of Karma, which either assumes evil causes, or denies their existence - for according to Karma, there is no INNOCENT suffering, since all suffering is punishment justly earned by misdeeds in a previous incarnation. Jesus repudiated this predestinational view that exceptional misfortune is an evidence of, and punishment for, exceptional sin when He pointed out that the eighteen people who died when the tower of Siloam collapsed, were no more sinners than his listeners who had not met such a fate (Lukel3v4). In John 9 He showed that it was neither his father or mother's sin, nor his own, that had caused the man to be blind. Jesus' parable of the workers in the vineyard, where those who had worked all day, and those who had arrived late in the afternoon, received exactly the same wages, was an unjust enigma to his hearers. (Matt 20:1-16). It was not the FACT of suffering that was overlooked by Jesus, it was the MEANING of suffering that was interpreted in a completely different way.

Streeter points out:

The problem of human life as it presented itself to the Buddha's mind, would have seemed to Christ unduly simplified. The Babylonian exile, followed by centuries of oppression by foreign power, had made suffering for the Jew a problem of national experience, as well as of individual, to an extent unparalleled elsewhere in human history. Christ speaks of pain much less than does Buddha, but he knew more about it. And for him there was a graver problem. The history of his people, as interpreted by a long line of prophets, had concentrated attention, again to an extent unique in human history, on the problem of moral evil, both in the individual and in social life....To the Buddha we have seen, the problem of moral evil was incidental to the problem of pain: immoral action tends to increase the will to live, there the overcoming of evil impulses in the soul is a precondition of deliverance from pain. It was impossible for a Jew either to explain suffering by means of Karma, or to think of sin as something incidental. Thus to Christ the problem of evil had been posed on a larger scale than to Buddha: and paradoxically enough, it was a

problem made at once more difficult and more hopeful of solution because it had been written "God saw that it was good". .

The Biblical escape mechanisms from this whirlpool of misery differ logically from the escape mechanism of Buddhism, because there are different views both with regard to the nature of ultimate Reality, and the cause and effect of moral evil and pain. If the diagnosis for a disease is different, then logically the prescription for its alleviation will be different.

Although Buddhism and Christianity do share some common ground in regard to suffering there are nevertheless some extensions of the meaning of suffering which are exclusive to Buddhism. For instance, suffering for the Buddhist, includes not only the usual physical or mental dimensions, but it also incorporates actual *ñlivingí* or 'state of beingí. To have individualised existence, is suffering - *ñSelfí* is per se, the expression of desire, and the expression of desire is per se the fact of personal existence. Our existence is marked by three things: impermanence, ("anijang " non-substance, ("anattaí and suffering,(took).

"So it is that the Buddha said that all things relating to sense and life are on fire-with the fire of that desire which leads on to ever new birth-death experiences: and this is why he elsewhere called the body a "wound". The body, or our physical sense capabilities, is a wound because it is a continual source of agitation and distress to man. Hence he can never be at peace in the body. And it is also a wound because it is a breach in man's spiritual impregnability through which pour in the unspiritual infections of an order of existence driven by craving. Indeed, the total individualised existence of man is a wound. Mind-body individuality is an eternally bleeding, reinfesting painful wound, producing a continual restless disease in man, deeper and more pervasive than any of his specific illsí.

This "dis-ease" of man from a Buddhist perspective is presented as the Second Noble Truth: the discovery that the three poisons, Ignorance, Attachment, and Hatred are the cause of suffering.

The principal cause is Ignorance. "Enlightenment" will banish this Ignorance, by seeing that suffering (the Third Noble Truth) ceases when desire ceases. The "Good News" of Buddhism is the Third Noble Truth, i.e. those who really believe the first two truths can be released from suffering. This can be finally attained, by following the the Fourth Noble Truth which is the Eightfold Path, otherwise called, the "Middle Way".

The Eightfold Path should lead to release and detachment, which in turn produces a state where

Personhood is dissolved and the Individual disappears "as a drop" into the "ocean of nothingness" called Nirvana or Nippana.

The Eightfold Path (indicated below) is essentially concerned with three areas of human behaviour:

Morality, Spiritual Discipline, and Insight:

1. Right Knowledge or Understanding: i.e. A recognition of the Four Noble Truths.
2. Right Attitude and Desires: Freedom from lust, hatred, selfishness and cruelty.
3. Right Speech: Lying, gossiping, and harsh or unkind language, are totally unacceptable. Instead, speech should be wise, truthful, and aimed at reconciliation and peace.

4. Right Conduct: This embraces all moral behaviour. In Buddhism morality and intellectual enlightenment are inseparable.
5. Right Livelihood: Every aspect of life must be governed by the principle that nothing one does should be harmful to any other creature.
6. Right Effort: Evil thoughts and desires must be subdued and good thoughts fostered.
7. Right Mindfulness or Awareness: The conscious act of not submitting to desires and emotions.
8. Right Concentration or Meditation: This demands a single mindedness of thought so that one is freed from all distractions, thus leading to tranquillity and finally nirvana.

Attempting to meet the standards of this belief system results in despondency and fatalism, because not only has the adherent been walking the treadmill of eternity in the past (and seemingly got nowhere), but ahead of him too are seeming endless existences to which Karma has inexorably predestined him.

"To a believer in Karma, death is no escape: it is only a preliminary to a new series of rebirths-perhaps in Hell, for an aeon, perhaps on earth as an animal, as a woman, as a pariah, or as a man whose life is more crowded with disappointment and disaster than that from which death seemed a refuge. If death is no escape from human misery, but merely a portal to rebirth, something must be found to break the chain of cause and effect which makes that rebirth necessary. This, to the Buddha, can be done by the eradication of "desire", that is, of the will-to-live, which is the primal cause of birth and continued rebirth: and it can be done in no other way. To this end a man must realise that his individual self belongs, like other phenomenal objects, to the realm of MAYA. And he must know the individual self to be illusion, not merely with the pure intellect, but also with that deeper realisation which can be achieved only by a long discipline of negating every personal desire".

The ordinary Buddhist, naturally resists the call to detachment from this life, not knowing that such an attitude will condemn him to the appalling prospect of future eternities dominated by craving and imprisoned by the endless cycle of birth and death. Suffering indeed! He may try to blame Karma for the past, but it is his present deeds that will determine the future - how awesome and fearful a predicament. King paints the picture of man seen from a Buddhist perspective:

!This then is man according to Buddhism: an eternally individualised, infinitely repetitive projection of the will-to-be into ever new forms, of which his present being is but one. The difference from the Christian view of man is obvious. The Buddhist view sharply qualifies or even undercuts the Christian sense of the "worth" of the unique human individual that grows out of the latter's historicity and personalism.

Or at the very least it places the worth of man in a very different context. And since this so basically colours the Buddhist approach to man's problem and to human life and activity in general, it is most important to grasp its real significance. It may therefore help if the Buddhist view of man is phrased thus "THE FUNDAMENTAL ROOT OF MAN'S MISERY IS HIS EXISTENCE AS A PERSONALISED INDIVIDUAL", and for whatever form of Buddhism we survey, this holds true. The "FALL" of man, according to Buddhism, was his "FALL" into individualised sentient being".

One may conclude that Individual existence as such is essentially Dukkha suffering. So the quality of Dukkha pervades the life of the Buddhist as guilt

does for the Christian. But unlike the Christian whose guilt can be dealt with here and now, there is no separating of life from Dukkha for the Buddhist.

The one book in the Old Testament which may parallel Buddhist world-view is Ecclesiastes. "The Preacher", probably Solomon, seemed to perceive the world as an endless cycle of meaninglessness. All pursuits, whether striving for wisdom (philosophy), possessions (materialism), pleasure (hedonism), work (idealism) or whatever, were perceived as a "chasing after the wind". The Preacher saw man as "living under the sun". If this was his only perspective he would expect him to reach the same conclusion as the Buddhist - life is totally meaningless. His penultimate conclusion is: "I hated life, all of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun. However, the end of the book brings an added perspective which is not the same as the Buddhist. Both see impermanence and illusion of this material and mundane world. Both see "all flesh is grass and its beauty is like the flower of the field". Both see the material world as only a qualified reality and that there is nothing of eternal (real) value. The Preacher sees youth, changing into age, beauty transformed into ugliness, the strong beginning to stoop and even "desire no longer is stirred". In his God-less despair the Preacher concludes:

"Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other.. All have the same breath, man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from the dust, and to dust all return. Who knows if the spirit of a man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?"

But at the end of the story, the Preacher rises above life "under the Sun" (without God) and exhorts his readers to "Remember your Creator". Seeing things from ěaboveĚ throws new light and brings meaning into the human dilemma. Acknowledging ěyour CreatorĚ gives true perspective to the whole of existence.

Swearer suggests a positive feature of "Buddhist impermanence" for the Christian:

"Restore this part of the meaning of the Biblical understanding of the World...Let us take seriously the Buddhist teaching that the fleeting reality of the world does not allow us to fashion God's Kingdom on earth: that our worldly ambitions slip through our fingers as water passes through a sieve; that no structures or institution of this world including the church- can fill our lives with meaning and value. With this knowledge we can sit lightly to the world, or, in Buddhist terms, not be attached to it, in preparation for that complete fullness of time whose reality is personified in Christ Jesus".

John also warns Christians concerning their attachment to "the world".

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, the love for the Father is not in him. For everything that is in the world, the cravings of sinful man and the lust of his eyes and boasting of what he has and does, comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever".

Buddhist and Christian interpretation of 'the world' is not the same. ěThe World ,Ě in these verses, does not relate to the positive beauties and wonders of creation, but the "the dark side" of man's nature, "the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does".

It is true that some perceptions of the Buddhist and Christian are similar but we should not conclude that they are the same. The Christian for instance sees the world as originally and essentially "good". "God saw all that He had created, that it was good". Because creation is essentially good, man can appreciate the wonder of creation-he can even become "attached" to it, without feeling guilty! The Psalms continually ring out with praise and wonder, both at the God's creation, His love and goodness, and at the marvellous creation of man. There is both a positive and a negative dimension- a Biblical "Yin-Yang" construct.

Jung Young Lee suggests that the "Yin-Yang" construct of "both/and" is solely Eastern and the "either/or" construct is damagingly Western (blaming the predicament of Christianity in the world to this Western absolutism). He overlooks the fact that Buddhism incorporates both the (so called) Western and Eastern constructs continually. There is either "knowledge" "wichaï or "ignorance" "awicha", there is either "self" "atta" or "non-self" "anatta", there is either "uprightness" "Kwamtiang" or "non-uprightness" "kwammaitiang" etc.

It is therefore over simplistic to imply that Western Theological constructs are exclusively "either/or", for many Credal statements incorporate the "both/and" of Biblical truth especially in relation to the nature of God or Christ. Another approach would be to suggest that they are neither both/and or either/or constructs, but rather dialectical, incorporating both constructs at the same time.

Morris Inch suggests that the Yin-Yang model can be used as a bridge builder to Oriental thought. Concerning the Creation of man, Inch states:

"For instance there is a striking polarity in the Biblical concept of man. God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life. Biblical man is a peculiar product of earth and heaven. We cannot understand him simply in terms of one or the other; rather we must recognise that both earth and heaven are reflected in man".

Inch critiques the indiscriminate use of the Yin-Yang model alone because in many cases it promotes syncretism. It tends to merge God with His creation, making no distinction between the two. God becomes Nature and Nature becomes God - the ěground of all beingí.

It has been noted that the assumptions of Buddhism do not allow for the "either/or" or the Yin-Yang model. To most Buddhists, reality is "wholeness", total perfection, so that all things without exception are one . Lim indicates that even in Mahayana Buddhism, heaven (and God who dwells in it) is still imperfect because it co-exists with hell. It cannot be absolutely perfect until all is comprehended in one single reality. All distinctions, emptiness and fullness, good and evil, subject and object must ultimately exist as complete unity, as Nirvana.

D.T. Niles on the subject of the cause and cure for suffering and sin suggests that there can be salvation from "Dukkha " (suffering), but only if we recognise that the primary problem is not dukkha, but "Doha" (sin). He explains:

ìUntil and unless this evil is dealt with, both in the world and in us, there is no final solution to the problem of living. For life's basic ill is not dukkha

but doha--that attitude of rebellion and disloyalty which we have toward God, who is the ground of our being, the final cause of the world and the purpose which gives meaning to life. The cause of dukkha is my clinging to self; it is this same self-centralism which is also the cause of doha: the unconscious or conscious assumption that I hold within myself the clue to life's meaning and can of myself discover and obey that clue. Dukkha comes as a result of the self's craving to satisfy itself with the things of this world: doha comes as a result of the self's attempt at self-satisfaction.

The first seems good to eat; it also brings the promise that we shall be as God (Gen3:5-6). It is not enough, therefore that I seek to walk in the middle path - the path of discipline -nor is my need for a teacher who will teach that path. My need rather is for a saviour who will do for me what I cannot do for myself, who will take away from me that twist in my nature so that I can come to live naturally and spontaneously in God. It is I who am the problem and not the world; it is my doha and not the world's dukkha that needs primary solution".

Williams summarises the essential difference between Buddhism and Christianity as dealing with both Dukkha and Doha, and "self" and "selfishness". For Buddhism, Dukkha causes self, which in turn causes Dukkha, so in order to extinguish Dukkha one must extinguish self. He states:

"Christianity demands the suppression of selfishness; Buddhism demands the suppression of self, with the one object of extinguishing all consciousness of self. In the one, the true self is elevated and intensified, in the other, the true self is annihilation of the Ego, the utter extinction of the illusion of personal individuality".

This inevitably leads to the question of "deliverance" or "liberation" ("kan lud pon"). Both Buddhists and Christians see the need for deliverance, and that each person is responsible for his behaviour. Both believe that Dukkha and Doha can and must be overcome. The Christian believes that man has been infected by Doha, and thus needs de-contamination, theologically termed cleansing or forgiveness; this he cannot do for himself.

1. THE NATURE OF DELIVERANCE.

For some Buddhists it is "ignorance" which leads to attachment, which leads to evil. Deliverance is by meditation "wipasna". To understand reality, one must become detached, in order to become "Enlightened". This is very much a mental process, which often leads to a mystical experience. Such "knowledge" is the beginning of a process which moves from the intellectual to the existential. King perceives that:

"The merely intellectual must penetrate below the cerebral to the visceral level of man's life and awareness: it must cease to be another's deliverance to us, even though it is the Buddha's, and become our own insight. It must be a full, firsthand, "felt-in-the-bones" kind of thing out of which attitude and action will flow".

Others do not see ignorance as the root of suffering, but desire. Liberation comes through the destruction of desire by detachment. Everything depends upon a total abandonment and commitment by the individual to extinguish the fires of desire in the present .

The Buddhist Scriptures state:

"Evil is done by self alone, by self alone is one stained; by self alone is evil undone, by self alone is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on one's own self. No man can purify another".

Wan points out that this is considered one of the loftiest teachings of Buddha. All Thai Buddhists are familiar with a favourite quotation from Gotama "A MAN CAN DEPEND UPON NO-ONE EXCEPT HIMSELF ", ìhai thon pen thi peng khong thonî.

2.THE MEANS OF DELIVERANCE

Following the eightfold path, (siní) should lead to deliverance. Like a soiled white cloth that needs restoring to its original condition, adherence to the eightfold path, is meant to act as a cleansing agent. Added to this will be the "Teaching" (Dharma), likened to a "dye" which, when added to the cloth, makes it a new colour. A comprehensive knowledge of Dharma, the Laws of Buddhism is essential since this is the way to deliverance. The ordinary Monk is obliged to adhere to two hundred and twenty seven different regulations. These cover every aspect of living, from begging for food to sleeping, ad infinitum. The standard of perfection demanded in Theravada Buddhism is "baramiî. There are in all thirty categories, each with ten subdivisions, arranged in ascending order of moral difficulty. These thirty stages of moral achievement Buddha himself had to practice before he could achieve the experience of "enlightenment" (tratsroo)

Wan explains:

"The first stage of barami is alms giving or giving of material things such as money, possessions, fields, gardens or any other tangible object. The second is a little higher, the gift of a part of the body. The third is to give one's life for another. It is for this reason that some Thai say that Jesus was a "Bodhisattva" (but that he had not yet attained Buddhahood. Of course, we are not willing to accept this definition because we do not agree that Jesus, the Son of God, had to begin at a low moral level and advance up the ladder of virtue until he could attain the state of Bodhisattva. He was God from the Beginning (John1v1)".

Buddhists do not agree on this standard but they all speak of different levels. The height to which one must "climb" in order to gain "deliverance" is not stated, but most agree that it is beyond the reach of the vast majority. Women must first be reincarnated to men, men must go permanently into the Monkhood. Yet with all this, who knows whether his good merit will outweigh his transgressions? How many possible reincarnations must he endure before he like the Buddha (who apparently underwent 500), will attain to Nirvana? Lim rightly states:

"Buddhism tends to engender fatalism indifference and hopelessness ". Any hope that there is, arises from investing in good deeds, which will outweigh the bad ones, and thus carry one higher up the scale. "If you do good, you get good" is a favourite saying of Buddhist people; ìtham dee dai dee tham chua dai chua" . Furthermore, "If you do bad, you will receive bad". Lim states: "One can stop and reverse the process of causal sequence by building "good karma", a series of good mental and physical conduct which will end in the attainment of Nirvana". Drummond sees this as "the focus of the entire message of the Buddha - the third Noble Truth".

DeSilva describing Buddhism, emphasises that while insisting that man is ãnon-soulí, nevertheless it teaches that man is sufficient in himself and does not need any external help - man is his own Saviour.

"Buddhism is emphatic in denying the self, and is equally emphatic in affirming the sufficiency of the self in working out his own destiny. In effect Buddhism says "man is nothing, but man alone can do something to determine his own destiny". In contrast the Bible says, "Man is nothing and therefore he can do nothing about his destiny" Man has no sufficiency in himself".

3. THE AGENT OF DELIVERANCE.

In Buddhism the Agent of Deliverance is one's self, but in Christianity the Agent can only be a Saviour. Mahayana Buddhism, however, allows for "Bodhisattvas" (enlightened beings who remain on earth to help others), who can give aid and merit to those who pray to them and follow their teachings. Emphasis is not on one's own merit alone, but the self-sacrifice of the Bodhisattvas, who postpone their own entrance into Nirvana in order to gain merits for their devotees.

Some Christians have used the Bodhisattva model as a point of contact to illustrate Christ's willingness to live down here on earth, for others, and His ultimate sacrifice for others. The obvious problem is that Christ is not the end process of evolutionary reincarnations. Doubtless, many Thai Buddhists regard Buddha as a type of glorified Bodhisattva, a god who lives, knows all, hears and answers their prayers- a saviour! Yet Buddha never claimed to be able to help others, except for pointing the way. In presenting the Gospel one must ask, who is Jesus Christ in the context of the Buddhist perception of reality? Lim asks:

"To Theravadins, can he be presented as the supreme arahant who has broken through samsaric cycle and rules over the karma? Or the true Dharma to Nirvana (whatever these terms mean to any Buddhist, qualified of course)? To Mahayana Buddhists, can he be presented as the Bodhisattva par excellence? Or the supreme Buddha who enlightens every person? Or the perfect Surrata who takes all the threefold phenomenal forms mentioned in the Trisikas? Christian dialogue-in-mission may have to take various approaches to Buddhist views into consideration".

The starkest contrast of the two systems centres on the persons of Jesus and Gotama themselves. The central symbol of Christianity is the Cross which speaks of God's INVOLVEMENT IN and ATTACHMENT TO the lives of men. Christianity speaks of establishing the Kingdom of God here and now, on earth. The prayer Christ taught His disciples focuses upon this point. "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". King puts it graphically:

"It is therefore Jesus on his cross that remains the vital and central symbol of the Christian way of life. This cross is the final consummation of Jesus' (and the Christian's) supreme prayer: "Thy Kingdom come"! It was the voluntary taking upon himself of the cost of Kingdom-coming, of world-changing into harmony with the will of God, up to and including the price of his own life. In this Cross the Christian sees a matchless example of the deliberate involvement of Jesus, the sinless one, in the suffering of sinful men: in it he also reads the unforgettable lesson that the Kingdom will not come into the world easily: and in it he hears a command to share in its self-sacrificial involvement in the lives of men about him for their salvation and for the renewal of that world in which all men live".

"Redemption", "deliverance", "liberation", whatever the term used, is broader than the individual, or even a community of people. Yet there is a "down to earth materialism" about man's liberation. He is not going to be swallowed up into an ocean of nothingness, thereby losing his Personhood. Indeed the benefits of Christ's death extend beyond the individual (including his physical body), to the corporate "body of Christ", (the believing community) and effect the entire creation, reversing the negative effect of doha and dukkha in all these areas:

"For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God".

Jesus' great renunciation, was giving up his glory in heaven in order to get involved with man in his need for deliverance from doha and dukkha. He relinquished his "omniscience" (kenosis) to suffer with and for man. He did not "leave his palace" (as Buddha), to seek salvation for himself, but to so identify with those who suffered that he took upon himself their suffering. This is why the Cross is the central symbol of Christianity. His was A RENUNCIATION BY INVOLVEMENT (attachment).

This sharply contrasts with the symbol of Buddhism, a man sitting with legs crossed, withdrawn into imperturbable inner calm, sitting under the Bodhi tree. A picture of total detachment. King asks:

"But what is he doing there? What is his relation to the world about him? It is also one of renunciation. For he too, as had Jesus, has renounced the world. He was a princeling, raised in luxury, married and with a child. But in the midst of family love and physical satisfaction he restlessly sensed their essential emptiness and unreality. Therefore he renounced them and turned to the life of a "homeless one" who like Jesus, had nowhere to lay his head. When we see Gotama under the Bodhi Tree he has come at last to the end of the way of renunciation. He will sit here under the tree in meditation until he pierces through the veil of ignorance that enshrouds all human knowing and cuts every bond that binds man to dukkha-ridden existence. And he succeeds! He pierces through to a knowledge of things as they are, the knowledge that life in this world is full of impermanence, suffering and emptiness: and in the coming of that knowledge all desire for that world of selves and things dies within him. Thus the physical renunciation of the princely life is consummated in the spiritual-mental quality of equanimity, A RENUNCIATION BY DETACHMENT. Thus does Gotama become Buddha, the enlightened one, whose final counsel to his disciples, before his death, forty busy but peaceful years later, was "Be a lamp unto yourselves".

The contrast is seen clearly between a way of total involvement in human suffering and sorrow by one person, who taught His followers to be salt and light IN THE WORLD. Buddha, in contrast, taught his followers a way of escape FROM THE WORLD. This is in essence the goal of Buddhism - the resolution of the problem of selfhood.

What is 'Selfhood' in Christian teaching? Christian "deliverance" is not the annihilation of self, but freedom from selfishness. How different this is to the Buddhist idea of "non-selfhood". The Buddhist, states King, makes relentless war on the self in all its conceptions, forms and manifestations. He does not

believe that one can defeat self by treating the symptoms of the disease, that is by exhortations to be unselfish, to consider others, or by trying to limit self-centredness.

The final goal for the human self, or not-self, is the total extinction of the factors that constitute ěhuman-beingí.

No wonder King describes this as:

"An absolute negativity in its every context: metaphysically there is no self, only a temporary collection of elements about the persistent karmic impulse, cemented to it by the glue of ignorance.

Religiously speaking, every effort must be bent toward the destruction of self or of the illusion of self, both with regard to intellectual belief in it and the emotional attachment to it. In the end my anatta is to find its terminal home in the final dissolution into nothingness of that fitful, feverish, dream existence sometimes called Life. Is this, then, the end of the doctrine of Buddhist selflessness? In terms of explicit doctrinal statement and religious discipline in the Southern tradition, it IS the final word. As such it represents what is

perhaps the most baffling form of that negativity so characteristic of Southern Buddhism. It is perhaps the extremist form of the VIA NEGATIVA to be found in all the world's religions. And it becomes the more baffling as we try to relate it to a way of ultimate salvation embraced by millions of people. Part of this bafflement is only on paper, since most of these many millions practically speaking DENY the denial of self by immersing themselves in the pursuit of better self-rebirths and by consoling themselves with the fellowship of the devas and a personalised and living Buddha. But there still remains the problem of the orthodox VIA NEGAVITA of anatta, which leads somehow to a joyous and ardently desired salvation".

Whereas the Buddhist tries to disavow self and negate its importance, the Christian can enjoy God and His creation to the full as well as celebrate his selfhood.

Cragg goes as far as affirming that "desire", the whole root and cause of Dukkha, can, if perceived correctly be a positive rather than negative attribute:

"That we can be rightly desirous, is then, the affirmation and the enterprise of the Christian gospel. We leave with a conclusion identifying "desire", not as the arch-villain, the lurking deceiver, the sure falsifier of the self, but as the quality which authenticates and fulfils it. In so identifying "desire", we must be clear about the "desire" we identify. It must be a "will for which "I" is in no respect a goal", in order that the "I" may be in every respect be a servant, possessed in dispossession. Meanwhile we have to explore inclusively what Pilate's cry, ECCE HOMO compels us to heed and understand if our Christian faith in "right desiring"-its possibility and its attaining-is not to sound altogether sanguine in Buddhist ears and hollow to their discipline".

As Christians, we should not paint a too optimistic picture of self for there is the 'dark side of self' (lower nature) with which we must deal. Thus, self from the Christian view still needs a Liberator because it is equally a slave to dukkha and doha. This liberation, however, is not that of extinction or annihilation, but transformation. It is analogous to the metamorphosis of a butterfly, no longer constricted by a hardening chrysalis of selfishness, nor

relegated to oblivion, but released to embrace and express in itself the wonder of all that it means to be a "new creature".

Original selfhood sees man without dukkha or doha, created in the image of God. That image, however, is now shattered, barely reflecting its original image, fragmented, like the shattered windscreen of a car. This ãtheological humpty dumptyí, incapable of ãputting itself together againí, finds no help ãfrom all the Kings horses and all the Kings mení. Only the King can put him together again! This is the essence of Christianity, man fallen apart, totally unable to put himself together again, on the one hand, and God, totally able and willing to restore him to his original image and purpose, on the other.

Christianity recognises primarily, that man is no more able to liberate himself, than a prisoner can, for if self-liberation were possible he would no longer be a prisoner. The very condition he is in, reveals first he is not liberated, and second he cannot liberate himself - the key to the prison door is not in the hands of the prisoner.

Man is incapable of helping himself. To tell a terminally ill patient that his only hope is for him to operate on himself would be 'bad news'. The Christian 'good news' is that there is an expert Surgeon at hand, ready to give assistance. The good news of Christianity is that Christ is the Saviour of the World-to those who put their trust in Him; but even He will not forcefully "operate" on anyone.

This does not mean that Buddhism has no Liberator, for there is clearly in Buddhist prophecy the promise of one to come (the details of which will be considered in another chapter), Phra Sriariya This hope, however, is for the distant future and gives little comfort for the present. Now, since man determines his own salvation, he has no reason to complain about his own present condition, for he was its cause and is its effect. He has no-one else who can determine his future, for he is both its cause and effect. He is merely reaping the sum total of all the merits or demerits of his previous existence. Man is therefore not punished FOR his own sins, but BY them. There is however a hint of vicarious suffering in some expressions of Buddhism.

Christmas Humphries suggests that the true Bodhisattva, does not suffer for himself, but "suffers with" mankind:

"Our own pain we just suffer, learning to remove the constant cause of it, the desire of self for self.

But others' suffering is more and more our personal concern, and it is a fact to be faced that as we climb the ladder of self-expansion and self-elimination we suffer not less but more. For as we increasingly become aware of the One Life breathing in each brother form of life we learn the meaning of compassion which literally means "to suffer with". Henceforth the suffering of all mankind is daily ours, and as the sense of oneness grows so does the awareness of "that mighty sea of sorrow formed of the tears of men". Here is the glory of the Bodhisattva ideal, to turn aside at the entrance of Nirvana, and to postpone that ultimate guerdon of a thousand lives of effort "until each blade of grass has entered into Enlightenment".

There are two problems here, firstly in Theravada Buddhism there are no Bodhisattvas, and secondly, the process of waiting for "a thousand lives" in order to help others, is for the masses a dim prospect indeed. Christ never implied that it was necessary for him to deal with selfishness in order to attain to a state or condition of being able to help others. Christ challenged one audience to accuse him of any sin, and none did. (Jn 8v46&19v4-6)).

His purpose in coming to earth was to be made like man, in order to identify with man and rescue him. Christ, being "Enlightened" already, not only told man HOW to become "Enlightened", but enabled him to experience what it meant. Barth says concerning Christ:

"How can there be a perception of Jesus Christ and our being in Him? How is it to come to pass that we see Him and ourselves in Him? We have learned that the real Jesus Christ is the Crucified, and that it is as such that He is the King our Lord and Head and Substitute. It is in Him as such that we have our peace with God-or we have no peace with God".

This truth, of a Saviour and Substitute, although not so evident in Theravada Buddhism is very clear in Mahayana, where the Bodhisattva is believed to take different bodily forms in order to be able to save. A Bodhisattva resolves:

"I take upon myself the burden of all suffering, I am resolved to do so, I will endure it...I must rescue all beings from the stream of SAMSAARA, which is difficult to cross...I myself must grapple with the whole mass of suffering of all beings. To the limit of my endurance I will experience in all the states of woe, found in my world system: all the abodes of suffering".

In response to this identification with man's plight, the Mahayana Buddhist sees one who is dependable, able to help, and therefore willingly casts his lot with that one and affirms:

"I believe in him as the highest being: because of the sinfulness of men and because of their suffering, Amida Buddha was incarnate and came upon earth to save men: and only in his suffering love is hope to be found for me and for the world. He became human to become its saviour, and no one but he alone can help. He watches constantly over all who trust in him and helps them".

These quotations sound very similar to Christianity! DeSilva comments: "This truth thus apprehended in Buddhism as an ideal and symbolised in the figure of the Bodhisattvas, who were as Edward Conze says "productions of the mind and without historical or factual basis", is actualised in Jesus Christ in history. In practically all religions there are approximations to this ideal (e.g. Avatars in Hinduism etc.), but the Christ event is the only historical actualisation of this ideal. This is the central message of the Gospel".

The idea of substitution, merit making on behalf of another is common to many religions. In fact most religions require the guilty one to transfer his guilt to another by means of a ritual of substitution. . The "loikrathong" ceremony incorporates this concept. So does the Thai expression, "A goat which etakes awayí sin" (phae rab baab). In Tibetan Buddhism there is an actual scapegoat ritual. A goat is selected and symbolically iloaded with guiltí, and then sent out to be killed by whoever finds it. Brow goes as far as to state:

"It is often pointed out that the most ancient literature of the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Chinese, the Hindus, and the traditions of many races agree that the first men brought animals to represent and substitute for them in their worship of God".

The "kenosis" passage of Scripture actualises those redemptive aspirations in other religions and transforms fiction into fact and hope into history.

"Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking upon himself the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father".

King suggests other passages which convey the meaning of selfless, vicarious suffering. The early church interpreted the Suffering Servant passages of Isaiah in terms of Christ's vicarious death for others. "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, he was wounded for our transgressions and was bruised for our iniquities: upon him was the chastisement that made us whole and with his stripes we are healed".

"To state the exact meaning of vicarious suffering is much harder than to say that it expresses, perhaps supremely, the Christian doctrine of selflessness and has been of immense importance in the Christian Tradition. Christians themselves have been radically disagreed on the theological and sacramental significance of vicariousness....Still further, it is even more difficult to state this doctrine in a meaningful way to a Buddhist SELF-salvationist, and the Southern Buddhist inclines to see in this approach to salvation the absolute antithesis of all that Buddhism stands for".

The problem is even further compounded if one applies the folk Buddhist interpretation to an event like Christ's death on the Cross. Such an ignominious death is not perceived as a voluntary, self-sacrificial deed, nor is it seen as an example of heroism. It is rather seen as the just retribution of karmic causation. Such an horrific tortuous death as Christ's, can only mean one thing, that in his previous existence he must have been a very wicked person. Such a death is called "dai hong".

Thai legends and history along with Buddhism does record the concept of sacrificing for others where one person has voluntarily died in place of another.. Appleton points out:

"Buddhism knows much of sacrifice for others, both in the conception of the Bodhi-sat in Northern Buddhism who defers his entry into Nirvana for the sake of men and in the spiritual fables of the Jatakas, the Birth Stories, which picture often in a childlike way, but sometimes with telling maturity, the sacrifices undergone by the Buddha in earlier lives. Neither Bodhis-sats nor Jatakas may be historical, but they are evidence of a conviction within Buddhism that a sacrifice is both right and effective".

The most famous historical record of a vicarious substitutionary death was that of Queen Srisuriyothai.

"At the time of Burma's first attack against Thailand, the Thai having prepared elephants for

combat, sent their King to the front to engage in hand-to-hand combat with the leader of the opposing army.

The elephants were used as battering rams. The side whose king was killed would not have the heart to fight on and would flee. In the case of Thailand, if the Thai king was killed it was the equivalent of taking Thailand. On this occasion, the battle lines were set up. King Chakraphat and his two sons rode out on Elephants to the battle. Queen Srisuriyothai and her two daughters disguised themselves as men and went out to the battle too. They were dressed exactly the same as the men and rode on elephants in order to witness the battle. When the elephant of King Chakraphat and the elephant of the Burmese general were head-on, in the way that is often portrayed in pictures, and Thai teak models, the Thai elephant was seen to

be in the losing position-it was lower than the Burmese elephant. This put the Burmese general in the position in which he could bring his sword down on King Chakraphat. When Queen Srisuriyothai saw what was happening, she quickly drove her elephant between the two fighting elephants, received the sword blow herself instead of the King. She did this because she knew if the King were killed the country would be lost.

This heroic deed showed that she willingly sacrificed her life for the King and her country. A memorial chedi, was built to commemorate Queen Srisuriyothai's heroic deed".

In this instance the queen willingly sacrificed her life in order that her whole country could be saved!

Thai people understand the concept of dying for another, especially Thai soldiers on the border who risk their lives and die - on behalf of the nation. Their deaths no matter how horrific the circumstances may have been, are extolled as being the ultimate in self-sacrificial bravery and explained as substitutionary. Such deaths are not interpreted in the folk fashion of "dai hong". They are on the contrary termed "wiraburut"-those who died heroically on behalf of others. DeSilva goes further to compare the death of Christ with the three fundamental characteristics of Buddhism,-(drailak).The causation of all suffering, anicca, the transitory fleeting nature of existence-impermanence, dukkha suffering of all kinds, and anatta non-entity, or non-selfhood.

DeSilva suggests that Christ "became" Annica, Dukkha and Anatta:

"1. Though He was born in ãthe likeness of maní He was in ãthe form of Godí. He was one with

man and one with God simultaneously. Anicca was thus conquered in His being by being brought into participation with God who is Changeless.

2. Though He was found in the form of a servant, ãevery tongue confesses that Jesus is LORD to

the glory of God the Fatherí. He suffered, but in His suffering borne for the redemption of mankind He glorified God. Dukkha was conquered in His being by suffering being transformed into glory in His participation with the Eternal.

3. Though He became anatta, God ãhighly exalted Him and gave Him the name which is above

every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and earth and under the earthí The word ãnameí implies character and content. Though he emptied himself, the fullness of the God-head was in Him. In Him we have the identity of anatta and atta, the non-being and being, the ãyesí and the ãnoí. Thus Anatta is conquered in His being, by being brought into participation with the Eternal".

Such ideas of substitution, vicarious suffering, of liberation through the intervention of and alleviation by another, are both attractive to the Buddhist and yet obnoxious. They undermine the idea of self determinism, karma and fatalism.

Until recently the masses viewed leprosy as the direct result of bad karma. Leprosy patients were barred from Temple, not because of their infection but because of the teaching on Karma. A man sows what he reaps, so this man must have been evil in his past life. To extend compassion on a leper would imply that the karmic process was unjust. The Thai Department of Health is seeking to reeducate the population to see that no disease is the result of karma. This karmic question brings up a philosophical question. If it is inevitable that men reap now what they have done in the past, why do evil men prosper in the here and now? It could be rationalised that their evil has not yet "come to fruition". Does this mean that karma is arbitrary in its timing? Does it also mean that someone with good karma now, can suddenly be caught by a dose of bad karma from the past?

Karma is like a computer with a memory bank which registers every good and bad thought and deed. It is capable of giving a karmic read-out of the present state of any given person. The problem is that at any moment a delayed reading from the memory banks can 'kick in' bringing a karmic updating to the present read out. This action would transform one's circumstances immediately. So theoretically one could be experiencing a prosperous happy life, but this is only because the karmic computer reading has not provided the cumulative register of merit versus demerit and any moment the state of affairs could change. What a terrifying state to exist in.

"Even an evil-doer sees happiness as long as his evil deed has not ripened: but when his evil deed has ripened, then does the evil doer see evil. Even a good man sees evil as long as his good deed has not ripened: but when his good deed has ripened; then does the good man see happiness".

The uncertainty engendered by this state of affairs, where the predictable karmic "cause and effect" syndrome can no longer be taken "as read", will only lead to a situation where no judgement can be given regarding any situation. If people really believed this, there would be no value judgments on anybody as they are at present. In actual fact, all Buddhists make value judgments about the state of the person in the present, based upon whether they are receiving "good fortune" in the here and now, so this does not work.

In effect no Buddhist should ever make a value judgment on another since at any moment the karma principle could "kick in" and reveal a totally different state of affairs. In actual fact, Buddhists make value judgments everyday based on the "good" or "bad" fortune they may be experiencing at the present moment.

What you end up with is a situation in which the person feels he is reaping the rewards of good karma only to be hit with a dose of devastating bad karma. In other words, all the merit gained, could be wiped out in a flash, like the Wall Street Stocks and Shares crash, leaving the victim spiritually bankrupt.

The nature of "accidents" also demands attention, and there are enough in Asia! Are they really "accidents", or is there some form of "predestination" governed by karmic forces? Does a persons present condition always depend upon their good or bad karma? What about war, or natural disasters, when thousands of people are engulfed in a catastrophe, so that each person suffers the same fate? Have they all behaved in exactly the same way in their

previous existence, so as to experience the same catastrophic "fate" now? What about "The Killing Fields"?

What about Auschwitz, or Belsen, or Hiroshima? How dare one apply the Law of Karma to these scenes of devastation? Does one have to assume that none of the six million Jewish victims, put to death in gas chambers were innocent, but they had all committed exactly the same degree of sin, so as to deserve exactly the same degree of punishment?

Christmas Humphries, ingeniously borrows the Good Samaritan story of the New Testament and tries to convince his readers that:

"The Good Samaritan of the Christian New Testament was not "interfering" with the karma of him

he helped, while he that passed by suffered the grave loss of an opportunity. It is your karma that YOU should be helped, as you are, or left unaided as you may be, and it is your friend's good karma to have you as his friend. Away then with all thoughts of interference...The avalanche which sweeps down the mountain cannot be stayed. Such karma is "ripe" for reception, and no new cause of our devising can stay the conclusion of cause-effect. Such karma has the force of destiny, of fate, all else is unchangeable".

To borrow his own analogy, one may ask, what if the avalanche that sweeps down the mountain engulfs a whole township? Do all those victims in the town deserve the same "force of destiny" predicated by karma? Were they all equally bad? Holding such a position is unreasonable and illogical, but that is the postulate of karma..one only receives what one deserves.

Added to that, Humphries also assumes that in all conditions, we can and must be master of our own fate. He explains that while one cannot stop it raining, one can control one's physical, emotional and mental reaction to the fact of rain. Is one also supposed to be able to control one's physical, emotional and mental reaction if an avalanche is descending? Such assumptions may work when related to rain, but what about the problem of pain ?

The question could be asked, how does the law of karma effect the destiny of children? In one village the residents were asked why one child turned out as a "good for nothing", "nagkleng", and another a top admiral. The villagers were asked if the two boys' parents training may have had any influence on these individuals, they replied:

"Yes" and "maybe" in the case of the admiral, but disavowed all parental influence in the case of the "nagkleng". One villager phrasing his comment as a personal conjecture, volunteered that the notion of parents being the major influence on a child's character was "modern".

This assumes that the karma predetermines the way our characters are formed. No-one is to blame except ourselves, both in the past and the present. Humphries again speaks clearly of the Buddhist hope when he states:

"Is a picture of Buddhist values beginning to emerge? No God, no Saviour, but every man a busy

gardener removing weeds and cultivating virtues; or to change the simile, concerned with the purification and the expansion of his own consciousness, until like that of the Buddha, it is commensurate with the universe. None can hurry the pilgrim on this Way, none can prevent his reaching the goal".

To be able to attain to such heights of detachment, in order to be reborn at a higher level in the future, requires a total abandonment of the natural way of

living, such as enjoying the beauty of creation, music, art, friendships, the love of family and children, that the stakes are too high for most Buddhists. The Christian, on the other hand, can gladly accept all these without reservation as God-given virtues. It is no wonder that the most devout Buddhist sometimes asks himself - is it really worth it?

It is at this point that the fact of Liberation, deliverance or extrication by another, comes as sweet music to the ear. The good news is that, ontologically, and existentially it is possible for Karma to be cheated of its prey, for people to be delivered from its clutch.

Usually karma is seen from a negative perspective but let us not forget the aspect of "good karma" (kusaon). Whatever good is experienced now, is viewed as the result of good karma from of a previous existence. It is quite simple to speak in terms of humans gaining a higher degree of merit and progress towards enlightenment if it relates to moral choices and behaviour. How do animals progress the same way? Reincarnation predicates the possibility of intelligence and choice in a moral sense. Has a cockroach, or a camel, the capability, the intelligence, even the volition to progress up the ladder? Can (or must), an animal ascend to humanhood, before it is able to reach its ultimate goal of Nirvana? And why is it that a woman must be reincarnated into a man as the next step to any advancement? If the law of karma is just, then there must be surely be equal opportunities for all to gain merit. But what chances can animals have in contrast to humans, or even women in contrast to men? These questions reveal massive black holes of philosophical inconsistency, injustice and gender prejudice.

Good karma can be interpreted at three levels. The folk level regards it as well-being and prosperity, including all the benefits of materialism. Ordinary Buddhism would see it as the qualities of the individual, in terms of peace, detachment etc. Philosophical Buddhism cannot define at all what is passed on from one existence to another. There is no immortal soul or self that persists from one rebirth to another. Even those immaterial factors which compose the mental or spiritual side of man will dissolve. King tries to explain:

"The whole structure called a person simply falls apart upon death, yet this falling apart is perhaps not simple. For the force of its falling produces at least an echo as it were. Indeed it is more than a mere echo. It is in some sense the continuation of this structure that was a self or person, and results in a new self, or at least sentient being of some sort. What the nature of this ongoing impulse is in actuality raises a considerable philosophical problem. We shall only note the orthodox Buddhist answer to those who persist in perplexity that which passes on from one birth to another is not identical with self. Indeed, what passes on even from one moment of our present existence to the next is not the same in terms of identity. The following analogies are often used to illustrate this different but connected relationship: milk changes to curds to cheese: a tree produces a seed that produces a tree of the same kind, that produces a seed-and so on ad infinitum. Or we may quote a direct answer to the same question in more philosophical language: "If there is no Atma, the self or soul, what is it that moves from life to life, changing all the time until it enters into the state of Nirvana, which is the only unchanging Reality? The answer is the uninterrupted process of psychophysical phenomena or the composition of the five aggregates which is called a being".

All three viewpoints at least accept that the extent to which one had refrained from evil, done good, and purified his heart (which is the sum of Buddhism), to that extent he is credited with good karma. Just how this transference is

accomplished, between whom and the time span between the transfer raises numerous questions. In fact the whole system of the Priesthood is based on the concept that it is possible to transfer good karma. All young boys are pressured to go into the Priesthood, not on their own behalf, but for their parents. This is "paying back the cost of mother's milk", *ëchai kha namnom mae í*. Wan elaborates:

"Those who enter the priesthood today have only one idea in mind, to repay their parents. In Thai custom it is felt that if one has a son, he brings much merit (boon), and when that son goes into the priesthood, they feel that if the mother has committed any sins, by virtue of the son's priesthood, when she dies she may "go to heaven on yellow cloth" (*kophalyang khun swaan*-She goes to heaven on the merit of her son. There are many stories about this".

Wan further intimates that there are many reasons for entering the priesthood, some because of unemployment, some illness, some old age, some sincerely believe in it as a step on the way to Nirvana.

"But most today enter the priesthood because of custom. If we ask why they do it, most would answer, "My parents have brought me up. I want to repay them. They want me to do it and I am doing it for them".

In his analysis of Thai village life Phillips observes from his informants that:

"The major form of the villagers' responses, is the deep feeling of obligation that individuals feel towards their parents. In several instances, the obligation is simply assumed, and the informant gives a completion which describes the nature of his obligatory act: making merit for the parents...in a few cases it is a moral imperative *ëif you are a male, you must get ordained to redeem the sins of the parentsí*".

Thus the transference of merit from one person to another is wholly acceptable within a Buddhist world-view. It covers transference FROM those already past, for those living now; it includes transference BETWEEN living persons; it even includes transference BY people living now TO Ancestors, or recently parted members of the family. Terwiel observes:

"The dead are thus seen to be able to understand what happens, they are also seen capable of receiving beneficial karma whenever the descendants perform a "kruadnaam" ceremony in which they include a thought for the Ancestors".

The concept of transference from the Bodhisattva or from Buddha himself is a concept well ingrained in the Buddhist mentality. The idea of transference of merit in the death of Christ can therefore be explained to a Buddhist without fear of misunderstanding.

Thai folk Buddhism believes that there is a way to short circuit, or "deactivate" karma. The process of nullifying or deactivating karma is called "ahosi-karma". "Ahosi", actually means "to ask forgiveness". Although this phrase is sometimes addressed to fellow human beings, it is often addressed "into the air" in the hope that Someone will hear and forgive.

A further consideration concerns the Agent of karma, that it is an act. If it is an act, which is acknowledged by all, then there must be an Agent of the doing. It follows that the Agent who commits the act must be above the act. Buddha, claims Wan, puts the act above the person. If karma causes rebirth, who or what is the Agent who produced the karma which causes rebirth? Some believe that "Nature" is the cause of karma without realising that this "Nature" must have the ability to create and therefore, must have intelligence beyond that which it creates.

When pressed the Buddhist will reply "ignorance" as the origin or possibly "nature created" (thamachatsaang)).

Nature is never defined in terms of either intelligence or ability, but a "natural force" which would have created, the "force of karma".

On the other hand, the Christian rejoices in the ìAgentî who created him, accepts the fact that his own merit could never outweigh his demerits. He joyfully accept the transference of adequate merit offered by his Liberator. The Christian accepts this "unmerited favour" much as the battered man accepted the Samaritans help in Luke 10.

To some Buddhists this story demonstrates a form of "cheap" grace, that of acknowledging helplessness and the need of a Saviour. In contrasts others may feel that the two who passed by on the other side, were like those who felt karma should take its toll to the last drop? The story of the Good Samaritan has an element which the Thai call ìmettkarunaî This is a combination of "mercy" with "grace". van der Weele explains:

"If the leader shows favour, it is also KARUNA, but often I have heard it used in combination with METTA, stressing the level of respect and the intensity of the question. In a deep conflict between two Thai's, I heard it used when someone was trying to reconcile the two, and asked from the offended party for straight METTA. The leader can decide to overlook, to forgive, on his own impulse, or on the urgent request of the offending person. Offending does not have to be a "sin", in western concept, just troubling the leader, or coming at the wrong moment, is already embarrassing. Forgiveness with propitiation through the suffering of someone else, thus is a very strange concept. Having someone plead for you, for mercy, is more easily understood".

It has been pointed out that van der Weele is probably wrong when he asserts that "forgiveness with propitiation through the suffering of someone else is a very strange concept ". Nevertheless his definitions of the use of "mettakaruna" are correct. The Good Samaritan showed "mettakaruna" to the one robbed who would in return reciprocate with "mettakaruna". We will now discuss "Enlightenment" and "Nirvana".

ENLIGHTENMENT AND NIRVANA.

Gotama's experience of "Enlightenment" "tratsroo-î, is the basic foundation, of Buddhism. While seated under the now famous "Bo Tree" (a Poplar-fig tree) he began to dilate, closing the eyes and heart from all distractions until he was finally unaware of sound, taste, touch or sensation. With his spiritual perception heightened, he began to strip off layer after layer of the nature of existence until he "saw" and was "Enlightened"- which means "to know".

Wan defines the process in this way:

"When Lord Buddha was enlightened he did not study from anyone else. First he practised

concentration according to the accepted method. Those who practised it sat quietly, did not even so much as blink, held their tongues firmly to the roof of their mouths, scarcely breathed, folded their hands until they nearly grew together. We can almost say that they tortured themselves. Lord Buddha tried this for six years without success and eventually gave it up. Finally he turned to the use of the mind and was able to solve the problem through thought. At last he knew the "truth" about life. This experience of his is called enlightenment. He learned three truths which are considered the highest wisdom in Buddhism:

1. He knew about his own previous reincarnations. According to one account he saw that he had been reincarnated five hundred times, sometimes as a monkey, sometimes as a dog, a bird, a cat, a mouse and in many tens of other ways. But gradually in these rebirths he advanced until he became Lord Buddha.
2. He was enlightened to the births and deaths of others, together with the dates of births and deaths. This ability is called the Celestial Eye *ĕdatipí*
3. He knew himself to be emancipated from ignorance and from the cycle of rebirths. He had been enlightened.

Some Christians have attempted to use the concept of Enlightenment to explain the nature of Christian conversion or claim that Christ, like Buddha was enlightened. Wan himself makes this suggestion, but later clarifies when he states that since Christ was not merely man, so He did not need enlightenment. It is interesting to note that the ancient heresy of Docetism claimed that the man Jesus became the divine Christ - was enlightened - at His Baptism. The Gnostic concept of a special insight given to selected people is also similar to this idea.

Swearer compares enlightenment with the concept of "the new creation in Christ". He sees the "not-self" of "anatta" resembling Paul's notion of the "new life filled with the power of God". But this really does not seem to be an appropriate analogy for the way to "not-self" is by a process of negation, destroying self, leading to emptiness, while the way to Christian new life is by positive creation, not negative destruction.

Comparing conversion with enlightenment falls far short of the Biblical definition. Paul explains clearly that enlightenment for the Christian cannot come from human endeavour, or independent origination. "No-one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God...we have received the Spirit who is from God that we may understand..." . This is so much in contrast to Humphries who in explaining the essence of conversion reveals clearly its source in Buddhism:

"In the absence of a mighty Being who has power to withhold the sequence of cause-effect the Buddhist looks within for his spiritual needs, including his "salvation". He is therefore at the outset of his religious life thrown back on his own interior sources: for him the Buddha is never more, though never less, than a Guide and Leader on the Way...the essence of conversion is in the turning. Psychologically it is a process of intro-version, or turning inward, a withdrawal of consciousness from the phenomenal world into the noumenal Essence of Mind which is the highest cognizable reality".

THE NATURE OF NIRVANA (NIPPAN).

The subject of comparing the Buddhist "Nirvana" with the Christian concept of "heaven" is a matter for continual debate. The debate revolves around semantics, a constant problem due to the danger of using Buddhist terminology for Christian concepts:

"Many warn that even in the use of Buddhist terminology, one needs much work to define and explain such terms (with endless conditional sentences and explanatory paragraphs) to avoid misunderstanding".

Nirvana for the Buddhist is described not as a place, but as a state of being, or perhaps a state of non-being. To be in Nirvana is literally to be extinguished. There will be no birth, or re-birth, no attachment, no desire, no ignorance, no passion or anger. Nirvana is not a place, it is a "stateless-state", an unreal reality. Saddhatissa describes it thus: "Nirvana defies description...it has been called the deathless, the other shore, being uncompounded, it is not subject to the three characteristics of compounded things, impermanence (dukka) and substance less. It is compared to the wind, it is made of nothing at all. One cannot say of Nirvana that it arises or that it does not arise, or that it is to be produced or that it is past or future or present, that it is cognisable, by the eye, ear, nose, tongue or body".

The average Thai Buddhist, however, has no real aspiration to reach Nirvana, because it is generally accepted to belong to those devotees already ordained into the Priesthood, who spend all their time in meditation and good works of merit. In popular Buddhism there is another place called "Heaven" (sawan). This is an intermediate state between death and Nirvana in which there are apparently various levels of bliss as there are various levels of hell, with increasingly intense experiences or levels of torment. Heaven is therefore more attractive since it is supposedly attainable by the layman. Dr. Kenneth Wells in describing the funeral rites for an average Buddhist explains beliefs regarding those recently departed:

"There is an underlying mood of resignation to funerals: among a choice few there is the hope of Nirvana with the extinction of personal striving: among the vast majority there is the expectation of rebirth, either in this world, in the heaven of Indra or some other, or in another plane of existence, possibly as a spirit. Over the basic mood of gloom there has grown up a feeling that meritorious acts and the grace of the Lord Buddha can aid the condition of the departed".

Folk Buddhism therefore offers a more realistic hope with the aid of the Lord Buddha, than Nirvana. Thomas Kirsch points out that there is this great gulf between the orthodox belief in Nirvana, and Folk Buddhism:

"There is a special problem. The outline of Buddhism which I have presented is derived basically from their formal belief system and carried by religious virtuosos, .e.g., the monks. But few laymen are so sophisticated as monks in terms of either their religious belief or practices. For example the religiously sophisticated may pursue the abstract religious goal of nirvana. When queried most laymen view the goal of their Buddhist religious actions to be a sojourn in "paradise" (sawan). Lay Buddhists may be recognising a point which sophisticated doctrine makes explicit: that nirvana is extremely difficult for any one to achieve.

Only those with especially favourable moral balances may realistically aspire to achievement of that ultimate goal. Hence the layman focuses on more immediate and attainable goals".

The Christian gospel has much to offer at this point. It can certainly be termed "good-news" for those who live with such unrealisable and unachievable aspirations. Heaven for the Christian is not reserved for the elite, or even for the minority, it is "prepared" for all those who put their trust in Christ. It is one of the "givens" of Christianity, granted by the grace of the One who was both qualified (as King) and able (as Redeemer).

Hope for the Christian's future is portrayed by a picture of a great multitude of people, worshipping Christ around His Throne (Revelation chapter 7), described as people from "every nation, tribe, people and language". Heaven is not perceived merely as a state, it is necessarily a place, - "to be with Christ". The Biblical view of heaven cannot refer simply to state of mind, or annihilation. John records Christ's repeated assurances to his disciples that "where I am you will be also" (John 14v1). Some may say that the Christian view was affected by the world view perceptions of the Mediterranean basin. But even if this was conceded, it would not detract from the ongoing supra-cultural interpretation of the nature of heaven which the Church has commonly held throughout history. Whatever the case, heaven for the Christian is unembarrassedly a condition of joy, peace, harmony, love, worship, communication and recognition. The corruptible will have put on incorruption, selfishness, will have been "crucified" and the real "self" will enjoy the full liberation and restoration to God's Image - a far more attractive prospect than a drop of dew dissolving into an ocean of nothingness; a complete evaporation of whoever I was and who ever I would like to have been.

CHAPTER SIX.

ACCEPTABLE SUBSTITUTES FOR RITUALS AND CUSTOMS

Ever since New Testament times the church has been divided over how far one can go in adjusting the Christian message to the recipient culture. In our day Evangelicals are often the first to resist moves to incorporate acceptable substitutes due to a fear of compromising what they feel are essentials of the faith. This stance is maintained even though there has been virtually no church growth in Buddhist countries for decades.

This resistance to innovation goes deeper than just theological conviction. It can be traced to a subconscious attitude of "imperialism" by the communicator. Not only does he feel that his theology is superior but that his culture is as well. The history of missions reveals that most of its early ambassadors were unfortunately guilty of both these sins.

It may well be that early missionaries were unaware of their own negative assumptions concerning the nature of other cultures. For the most part they either implicitly or explicitly rejected non-Christian cultures as being totally unsuitable for the Gospel. They had no "Theology of Culture", nor had they sought to present the message in terms of the receptors' world-view. The gospel they preached was packaged so heavily in western cultural wrappings that both the package and its contents became regarded as "foreign" to the hearer. At first some were attracted to the foreign package but it was short lived and later proved to be counter-productive.

Since 1945, with the demise of Western Colonialism, ten thousand New Emerging Religious Movements have arisen with one common denominator - they all seek to interpret the Gospel in terms of their own roots and culture. Instinctively man desires to worship God within his own familiar cultural framework. Yet far too often the missionary was unfamiliar with this cultural framework and thus wary of it. It was easier to communicate a familiar message with which he felt safe, using his own world-view assumptions, his own language, his own method of worship, his own music, his own architecture, as if all these were divine "givens"- and more serious than anything else, he used his own theological categories and assumptions. This led to an implicit rejection of culture, rites, rituals, ceremonies, music, art, skills, values and perceptions of the recipient culture.

The Rites Controversy concerning Matteo Ricci in the fifteenth Century is a classic example of this issue. Ricci had seen that Christianity would never survive in China without adapting itself to Oriental culture, thought forms and world-view. He was appreciative of the fact that Chinese culture was far more advanced, in many ways, than Western culture. He obviously respected and loved Chinese culture - and understood it. After a life-long study of Chinese practices, he was convinced that some of them ought to be tolerated in the early stages of Christianity, even though they may be essentially wrong. His precedent was the early Churches' attitude toward slavery. In the early stages it was tolerated in spite of its inhumanness. Even though slavery is now regarded as a social evil, the early Church had little to say on the subject - except "slaves obey your earthly masters as you would obey Christ" (Ephesians 6v5).

Ricci felt that converts ought to fulfil their two traditional duties, the veneration of Confucius and the dead members of their family. This "veneration" has been variously interpreted and is still a burning issue today. Ricci felt there was a case for filial piety and respect. He certainly did not advocate "worship" of Ancestors.

A Hebrew would perhaps understand such a "Theology of Ancestors" better than a Western Christian, since his God was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - the God of the Living, not of the Dead. Westerners are hardly aware that "we are surrounded with so great a cloud of witnesses" and have come to "thousand upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn,to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a New Covenant".

Near the end of Ricci's life the number of Chinese converts had reached 300,000. Although he approved of filial piety, he certainly disapproved of idolatry. On one occasion when one prominent family decided to become Christians, they sent Ricci their wooden and bronze idols, bellies crammed with votive offerings, gold, silver and pearls:

"The house was already so cluttered with josses that Ricci decided to have the metal ones melted down. When several foundries declined the task, he undertook it himself, using the wooden idols as fuel and obtaining a good supply of metal for globes".

It would be wrong therefore to imply that Ricci was advocating syncretism. He was not. He was however culturally sensitive enough to consider the possibility of allowing certain rituals and ceremonies to continue, thus avoiding the creation of a social and religious vacuum within the social and religious structures.

As the Christian movement grew, Franciscans and Dominicans entered China. Their method was confrontational and culturally insensitive.

"The Spaniards among them did not hesitate to proclaim that all the long line of Chinese Emperors were burning in hell. When they discovered that converts made by the Jesuits were allowed to honour Confucius, they protested that a tainted form of Christianity had been introduced into China".

For seventy years the controversy raged, while Rome, seeing it was one of the most far-reaching problems it had ever faced, used delaying tactics in dealing with it. Ricci prepared a document obtained from the Emperor which should have clarified his position:

"Honours are paid to Confucius not as a petition for favours, intelligence or high office, but as to a Master, because of the magnificent moral teaching which he has left to posterity. As for the ceremony in honour of the dead ancestors, it originates in the desire to show filial piety. According to the customs observed by Confucians, this ceremony contains no request for help: it is practised only to show filial respect to the dead".

Yet the other side continued to protest that Confucius was venerated, not merely as a teacher, but as a superhuman being and that their attitude towards their Ancestors went well beyond filial piety. In November of 1704, nine Cardinals, all Italian, all monocultural, none having ever visited the Far East, assembled in Rome and issued their decree, confirmed by Pope Clement XI. They decreed that all Christians were to cease such ceremonies based on the guiding principle that "integrity must precede charity". Even the forms of homage paid to Confucius at graduation ceremonies, as well as any semblance of sacrifices or offerings on the graves of the dead, were prohibited.

A French bishop named Maigrot communicated the decree to the Emperor who had no sympathy with the new ruling. He was in fact outraged and regarded Christianity no longer as a universal religion, but "a swashbuckling, narrow, prejudiced cult". He decreed that from then on all missionaries who wished to remain in China must agree to abide by Ricci's practices:

"Once the sympathy of the Emperor and high Mandarins was lost, as Ricci had foreseen-the authority attaching to Christianity quickly declined. Eleven years after Tournon's visit, the foreign religion was formally prohibited in China".

Although missionaries were allowed to stay, they remained not as trusted advisers, but as painters, landscape gardeners, etc.

Before considering the theological implications of Ricci's position, it would be profitable to gain some anthropological insights into Malinowski's "The Dynamics of Cultural Change". Malinowski argues that all societies consist of integrating social institutions which are so tightly knit, that it is impossible to change one, without affecting the others. There would be a "spider-web" reaction, or a "ripple effect". To introduce change into any of these institutions produces such a "ripple effect" upon all the other institutions and cause disequilibrium.

He points out:

ìAn Institution like the family or chieftainship, ancestor worship or agriculture, has its roots in all aspects of culture".

Since all cultures have such ritual and ceremonial systems, it is the responsibility of the missionary to introduce FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENTS for rituals or ceremonies that could not be assimilated with Christianity. Rituals that associated with cannibalism, widow strangling, infanticide, patricide, feuding and sorcery, would naturally be excluded. However Malinowski points out:

"The piecemeal attack on pregnancy taboos, on occasional sexual excesses and on certain marriage customs in some tribes by missionaries, who have been unable to relate these rites to the fundamental institutions of family and marriage, has been, in my opinion, the main cause of the failure of Christian endeavour in raising permanently the moral standards of the African in those communities".

Seldom do "functional substitutes" actually become functional, which is due in part to their foreign character. Herskovits refers to:

"The corollary that when no functional equivalence can be achieved, the imposition of new ways by the donor society leads to demoralisation of the recipient group".

Nida points out that the introduction of functional substitutes have been "almost wholly unsuccessful" because of the highly integrated character of the non-Christian rites to be modified, because the changes have been imposed from the outside, and because they have not aimed at solving the basic psychological needs. There are three alternatives for dealing with this problem. First, advocating functional substitutes from outside, by the missionary. This is generally least effective because the missionary is usually unqualified to make judgments about the nature of the culture and its deeply entrenched belief system. Second, encouraging the new community to use old forms and reinvest them with new meaning and value. Third, giving space for the culturally sensitive new believers to decide which old forms to adjust and which ones to eliminate. There could be a combination of these three possibilities.

Tippet's observations are valuable:

"First, missionaries, even though in one sense they are truly agents of change, are not really the innovators. We should not bypass the truth that the convert is the acceptor, and that unless he or she is then the innovator a substitute will not be permanent. Second, most functional substitutes which I know to have failed, have only been tried years after the eradication of the original institution, when a quasi-Christianised generation has arisen with another set of values—partly Western and only slightly indigenous. Surely a functional substitute is difficult to apply when a later generation of missionaries repents at the loss of cultural heritage. On the other hand when good functional substitutes have been proposed and accepted at the time of the primary religious change (conversion), "in my book" these have stood the test of time and proved effective. Third if conversion (like any other major social change) is to be accepted by a communal group, some adequate substitute or substitutes are essential, otherwise a cultural VOID of some kind will most certainly emerge due to the felt but unmet needs. These voids produce tensions which inevitably burst forth in some form of nativism....in the process of incorporating converts into their new fellowship group or congregation, indigenous forms, rites, festivals and so forth, which can be given a new Christian value

content, have greater likelihood of finding permanent acceptance than foreign forms and rituals.

Tippet records an incident in which a newly converted tribe asked advice concerning a pagan planting ceremony. The missionary wondered, "Could this ceremony be done in the name of the Christian God? In the end he found themes in the Old Testament which dealt with people living close to the soil. The ensuing Christian functional substitute was addressed to God, the Creator, Provider, and Protector of the Harvest.

In summary, all societies have extensive ritual systems, which cannot be disregarded without to some degree destabilising that culture. If functional substitutes are not found, then a cultural void can be created which will result in some form of overt, or underground syncretism - the very thing the missionary seeks to avoid. Cargo cults, nativistic and millenarian movements, breed in the "empty house" that has been thoroughly cleaned, (by the missionary) but has no occupants. Seven demons worse than the first will wreak havoc and damage, not only by

distorting the nature of the gospel, but also destroying the structure of the culture. Literature on this is abundant and irrefutable. Having said all that, the writer was interested by a national leader's response to the above observations. He stated that as far as he was concerned, the Gospel could have been presented in such a way that most of the tedious, expensive and arduous rituals of his previous belief system would be eliminated - this would have been good news to him - rather than trying to find functional substitutes for all the previous arduous rituals.

The overriding determining factor here would be what is perceived as good news by the Receptor rather than a slavish following of the functional substitute principle.

It is interesting to note how the New Testament church interacted and experimented with cultural forms of government and worship from its Hebrew cultural antecedents. The church discontinued some rites and rituals from the previous system (e.g. blood sacrifice). It continued with some ceremonies, but endowed them with new meaning, such as Pentecost and Passover. Even within the New Testament Church certain issues were purposely not standardised and no right or wrong answer was given. We may for instance assume that circumcision continued in the Jerusalem Church and that its members did not eat pork. This was not expected to be continued among the Gentiles, although there were some who were most ambitious that it should. Also Paul gave no ruling on which day should be considered sacred (Romans 14:5).

Kraft helpfully explains the principle involved:

"Such adaptation to and of culture has continued in God's workings, as recorded in the New

Testament and in subsequent church history. The New Testament records a series of experiments engaged in by the people of God. These in the cultures of that day, served functions such as government, worship and ritual, equivalent to those served by the parallel cultural forms in Hebrew culture. God had not given up on Israel or changed his mind concerning the appropriateness of their forms in former days, as certain interpretations of the Scriptures would contend. He simply continued to do as he had always done - to interact with humans in terms of the appropriate cultural forms. There was of course, in Christ, a mammoth infusion

of new information and new stimulus into the human scene. And this infusion made obsolete ("fulfilled") certain aspects of the previous system".

Kraft implies that as the early church understood its culture and discovered appropriate structures and ways of worship under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so the church of today should also be "dynamically equivalent" to its own culture, It should not be seeking "formal equivalence" with the New Testament church, because that would presume a totally similar cultural environment. Copying the outward form of the New Testament church would produce a static and culturally irrelevant model, thus losing its communicating potential.

Smalley defines such a church as:

"A dynamically equivalent church is a group of believers who live out their life, including their socialised Christian activity, in the patterns of the local society, and for whom any transformation of that society comes out of their felt needs under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures".

The church in most Buddhist countries has failed to take on this dynamic equivalence principle and has instead substituted a foreign "formal equivalence" which spells bad news to the majority. It is not always necessary to introduce a new rite or ritual in place of an old one. In many cases there are already rites and rituals within cultures that are of themselves purely "cultural" and "amoral". Such rituals ought to be welcomed and used by Christians, because they are familiar and give a sense of security and solidarity with the culture. The missionary does not himself normally qualify to act as judge in such matters. He is usually over-critical and imperceptive, especially if he reflects an early dictum from the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the USA to its missionaries in Buddhist Thailand, which stated:

"All compromising with ethnic religions, in the matter of comparisons, and in the matter of adopting forms similar to theirs should be discouraged".

Although this was written in the early thirties, the position is no different today in Thailand. Most of the "practices" of the church are foreign importations. The "Order of Service for the Churches of Christ in Thailand" follows almost exactly similar patterns to those in the "Worship book of the Presbyterian Church in the USA". Out of 247 hymns in the Church of Christ Hymnbook, eleven have been written by Thai people. Of these only seven tunes (after 150 years of Christianity in Thailand) are composed by Thai people. The other 95.5% are translations of Western hymns. Still only Western music instruments are used. Out of forty churches in Chiangmai it was reported that only one used Thai traditional musical instruments! Similar observations can be made for churches in surrounding countries. The Christian and Missionary Alliance hymn book has about the same number of foreign translations compared with local hymns and music. The fact that there are any indigenous hymns there at all appears to be patronising tokenism rather than appreciation of God's gift to Asian people.

Philip Hughes, in his Doctoral Thesis (1983), summarises the present state of the Thai church as he sees it:

"On the surface, then, most aspects of the external forms of the Thai church, are Western. They

have been imported by the missionaries, and the Thai Christians have maintained them. This is consonant with the general missionary attitude that they were introducing a completely new religious system. They were not attempting to add new elements to traditional religious ideas, or to help develop traditional patterns. Christianity was introduced as a completely new way of life. It was not considered inappropriate, then, that the external forms of the activities of church should be completely new to the culture. The missionaries used the forms and patterns they knew in their home churches in the West. While most Thai people have rejected or ignored Christianity because of its foreignness, others have accepted it despite that, and have accepted these foreign patterns".

A Thai Professor makes his own critique:

"It may not be exaggerated to say that from the evangelical perspective concerning the relationship between Christianity and culture, Christianity demands conversion of culture...Conversion to Christ is not regarded as complete until one disavows his cultural heritage and embraces the so-called Christian value systems developed in entirely different historical and cultural contexts that he has never experienced...thus from the beginning of the Christian mission in Thailand, as the churches were established, the early believers had to strictly forsake all the cultural forms, which the missionaries considered as pagan ways of life. Culture is seen to be incurably evil, therefore believers are expected to exhibit the totally anti-traditional way of life".

The Thai Professor mentioned is not totally fair to Evangelicals, in that he labels them all with the same brush, stating:

"Since the evangelical theology of culture has a negative attitude towards culture, the evangelical task, therefore is to evangelise the culture of the world. Evangelicals reject the interfaith dialogue as a means of achieving a more profound knowledge of Truth on the part of Christian participants in this dialogue, because they do not want to recognise that God can lead us to a further understanding of His Word by means of asking the non-Christian who is outside the boundaries of the Church and who is also searching for Truth".

As will be seen from much evidence presented in this book, Dr. Saad is not reading the barometer of contemporary Evangelical thinking accurately. The Willowbank Report of 1978, which records the findings of Evangelicals today says:

"Conversion should not éde-culturiseí a convert. True, as we have seen, the Lord Jesus now holds his or her allegiance, and everything in the cultural context must come under his Lord's scrutiny. This applies to every culture, not just those of Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim or animistic cultures but also to the increasingly materialistic culture of the West...the convert may try to adopt the evangelists's culture, instead the attempt should be firmly but gently resisted".

Although this position is not accepted by all, it certainly is by those avant garde thinkers within Evangelicalism who acknowledge that all cultures are equal in the sight of God as are all peoples within those cultures. They would perceive that as the image of God is reflected in Man, so it must also be reflected in Man's culture. This means that social institutions within a culture can be vehicles through which the Gospel is expressed, and if used would

not result in the destruction of a culture or the distortion of the message. It would mean

cultural change which is common in cultures everywhere. The anticipated changes would not mean absorbing Western culture, or even Western ways of how to express the Christian faith, they would not be extrinsic, but intrinsic to the culture. The goal should be the development of local theologies and local expressions of Christianity which are culturally wholesome and appropriate. Any other position would be a perpetuation of arrogant cultural and theological imperialism.

Historically, the church in Buddhist countries has much justification in complaining about the way the Gospel was introduced into their countries, without any sense of appreciation, of their distinctive cultures. There is no wonder that many Asian Church leaders today are hurt, because they have felt, that in order to become Christian, they have had to betray their own cultural heritage and identity. The lack of interest by non-Christian people can be traced to this perception of needing to reject their culture to become Christian. One has to be wholly sympathetic with a leading Thai Christian whose doctoral Thesis examines the attitude of the early missionaries to Thai culture and values. The Thesis quotes extensively from the archives of the "Lao Mission", revealing the intolerant attitude to Thai culture, and the belief that only the "American model" of Christianity would suffice for the Thai. Dr. Maen Pongudom illustrates from the early Church Fathers that their attitude toward culture was completely different. The Fathers were prepared to interact and dialogue with culture, borrowing concepts and vocabulary which would enhance both a clear understanding of the nature of the Gospel, and an appreciation of the extant culture

Some of the more "Liberal" missionaries (as late as 1965), began to speak of "dialogue" and "mutual appreciation" of Thai people's belief, as outlined by Sinclair Thompson's suggestion:

- a. Study Buddhism for what it really means to a Buddhist. Gain as far as possible, an insight into the "inwardness" of this faith.
- b. Study Buddhism for what Christ has to say to it. Where are the chinks in the armour, the gaps in the system, the short-comings of the philosophy which leave it open to the constructive and illuminating spirit of Jesus Christ?
- c. Search Christian Doctrine for the Christian statements on these themes which have already proven themselves dear to Buddhist hearts. Buddhists proclaim to have solution to suffering. What has Christianity to say to this?".

The Evangelicals remonstrated and rejected these overtures, because they felt the proponents' theological propositions indicated that they were prepared to sell-out the historic Christian faith, for a form of syncretism which would be neither Christian nor Buddhist. When Rev. Francis Seely presented a paper at the "Study Conference on Preparing for the Ministry of the Church of Christ in Thailand" in 1965, he stated:

Christianity is our faith, our way of life, and as such we believe there is something in it for others including Buddhists. But since we are not omniscient we should be open to the possibility that God may have something for us, a word to us, in the way of life of the Buddhists....The idea that "the enemy" of Christianity in Thailand is the Buddhists should be dispelled. The enemy is self-pride, lust, hate, power seeking, ignorance, etc., things which are also enemies of Buddhists...the main force in Thailand to this day that God has used

to counteract these evils has been Buddhism. Through Christianity we believe God is now providing an alternative to defeat the common enemy in Thailand. The fact that we believe this Christian alternative is more realistic, more effective, more true than Buddhists should not blind us to the fact that the true Buddhist is our ally, not our enemy".

Doctor Maen records further developments concerning this new idea of rapprochement, the restoring of good relations with Buddhists:

"It also seems that during the first hundred years of American Presbyterian missionary proclamation Buddhism has not been taken into consideration seriously enough for its purpose. The excitement of one missionary when he thought about the possibility of establishing a Christian Centre for the Study of Buddhism ascertains this fact. Dr. Herbert Grether expressed his feelings as follows:

“Ultimately the evangelistic and teaching ministries of the whole church could be illuminated by the result of such study. I think such study, seriously made, would force those who make it to realise, as never before, what we are for, and how to go about doing it. ..There would be opportunity for directly evangelistic thrust. If Christianity has anything to hope by such arrangement (face to face learning from one another between Christians and Buddhists), it is about time we found this out. We cannot go forward except on the basis of what is true. At this point we need lose nothing except mistaken ideas. If our religion is true, it should come forth from the encounter, shining with the beauty of its truth revealed. Out of such an institute should come Christians who know what they believe and who could make their belief luminous. Evangelism could be stimulated and informed by such an experience. This implies, of course, participation by persons who combine, intelligence, conviction and honesty—a somewhat rare combination, I'm afraid”.

The final "sell-out" came, as far as Evangelicals were concerned, when a prominent Buddhist monk (already quoted in this book), Puttatat, was invited to the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Chiangmai to deliver a Lecture on "Christianity and Buddhism ". The Church of Christ in Thailand later published the lecture with a symbol of the Cross superimposed on the Bo leaf (the tree under which the Buddha was Enlightened), on its front page! This was interpreted by Conservatives, as the ultimate in compromise - a rejection of the uniqueness of Christianity, thus further reducing any hope of continue dialogue. Gustafson categorises these polarised positions among missionaries in Thailand as those who advocate "dialogue and presence" and those who speak of "encounter", thus dividing the Liberals and the Conservatives. Gustafson, himself a Conservative, is one of the few who seek a middle path for what he calls "a dialogue-plus-encounter theory of missions".

As early as 1931 missionaries were already exercised by the lack of results in their work. Zimmerman and McFarland, in their "Report on Siam 1931", made observations which should have been taken up, but they were not:

"Christianity came to Siam as a Western cultural system...So the first attempts of the Church were largely to Westernise and to denationalise the converts...At that time a person could not become a Christian according to the standards laid down by the missionary, without becoming almost completely denationalised and de-culturised from his own social system...As we have already indicated from time to time, a Siamese Christian even today, can give but a part of his life to

the social system created by the Christian church...Anyone who knows the Siamese or the people of any Oriental nation, soon find that there are thousands of fine spirits who believe all the central doctrines of the Christian religion and who follow its ethical basis as closely and at times even more closely than perhaps some of the missionaries. But... the man who joins the church must inevitably "lose face"..If the Christian institution will attempt to modify its behaviour and relationship to the Siamese culture long enough for the general custom of entering the Christian Church to become a creditable thing...they can join without "losing face"...accordingly in order to have these concrete results it is going to be necessary from the Christian institution to so acculturalise itself to Siam, that men can become nominal Christians without "losing face"...The Christian must be so thoroughly acculturalised that no one pays any attention to his differences other than the subject of religion...The Siamese church cannot grow either outwardly or inwardly until it begins upon a definite program of acculturalisation, it cannot grow until it becomes a part of the life of the people".

Maen observes that forty years after this report had been submitted, the missionary himself witnessed the fact that:

"Even the lovely ceremony of Thai wedding has not been Christianised into the Church. There are also other Thai customs that are very dear to Thai people, for instance Loi Krathong (floating banana leaf boat), Songkran (new year sprinkling water), Sukhwan (summon the spirit essence). There is no evidence of any missionary's attempt to seek their meanings in their depth so as to adopt them for indigenising Christianity. The forms of worship, music, liturgy, were almost wholly Western".

It is now apparent that most missionaries have never seriously engaged in acculturating the Gospel. Indigenous art, music, play, dance and architecture have been totally neglected together with the use and adopting of key Buddhist terms until the late 1970's. "Not a single missionary has really been criticised of having 'Siamised or Buddhistized' Christianity as the early Church apologists were of having 'Hellenised' it ." German missionaries, (by saying this the writer may risk losing some very fine German missionary friends), have imported fine bronze bells from their homeland, to be installed into their Tyrolean-type church steeples in the remotest rural Thai villages, thus making the implicit statement that Thai architecture, and the Thai method of calling the faithful to worship are inadequate or inappropriate. There are some places in South India where one may be deluded into thinking one was on a hill overlooking the English countryside, for whichever direction one looks, one sees Anglican churches built in exactly the same architectural style as in England. One imagines that they must stand out as sore thumbs across the Indian countryside! It may be easy for Christians to get used to this because they have assumed (or have been taught - at least by example), that this is part of the package of Christianity which is necessary- but it shouts foreignness to the local people! It is probably unfair to highlight the mistakes of one group of missionaries, because all Evangelicals from whatever mission have been equally guilty - showing a total disregard for and disinterest in the enculturation of the Gospel. This is a desperately sad picture and a reflection on most Western missionary attitudes which require true repentance (a "metanoia", or a change of mind and direction) on the part of the missionaries. Now, with the growing interest of many Asians in mission outreach to surrounding countries, one has to ask the question, what sort of Christianity will they take with them when they cross into other cultures?

Maen states woefully:

"Perhaps the most serious of all was the indifference of the missionary-Thai-Christian community as a whole. By the end of 1978 no serious attempt to present the Christian message through the Thai Buddhist vessels had been made, either in the religious or the cultural matrix.

All rites, rituals and ceremonies should be carefully examined as potential vehicles of expression for Christian truth. Gustafson sensitively proposes:

"Their culture with all of its forms and expressions is as real and valid for them as ours is for us. As we seek to change the religious content of the non-Christian, we must be careful not to change their culture as well..the basic cultural patterns and expressions should be left in tact and won for Christ by putting the Gospel message and the church structure into existing forms and expressions. In short we must seek to use the existing cultural forms and expressions except when they distinctly clash with the central message of the Gospel".

Since many missionaries have no "theology of culture", they write off most indigenous expressions and forms, not realising that most of their own religious expressions were "baptised" into Christian usage from their previously pagan ancestors! They consciously deny and reject for others what they have unconsciously done themselves!

The examination local rituals is beyond the scope of this book. It would require an expert in Buddhism and local culture to decide which ritual was exclusively religious and which was neutral. As far as is known there has only been one small book, written by a Thai Christian, explaining some of the Thai rituals, apart from some sophisticated technical texts written specifically for Buddhists. (It would be interesting to know what has been written by local Asian Christian leaders for their own local Christian constituencies in this respect). A book of this latter category lists at least twenty seven religious "rituals" (ĕpithií), and a further thirteen ĩcustomsĭ (ĕprapenií). This latter category is defined in the book as "Customs which are the distinguishing characteristics of the nation ". They are broken down into a further three categories as follows:

1. Customs which if not adhered to or neglected, society would regard as "sin".
2. Customs, or traditions which society has established as an example and have been followed from the dim distant past.
3. Customs or popular ceremonies which may be celebrated as and when the population deem appropriate.

The same customs may be categorised in a different way as follows:

1. Customs according to Age (Rites of passage?).
2. Personal customs.
3. Everyday Buddhist rituals.

Although this text claims to separate religious rituals and national customs it is apparent that many national customs include Buddhist practices. This shows how difficult it is to define any given ceremony as Buddhist cultural or national custom. Most Buddhists find it impossible and unnecessary to separate ceremonies into "either/or" categories. For instance the funeral custom is placed under both religious and cultural headings. When analysing the ceremony

itself it is obvious that certain aspects are directly Buddhist while others are strictly cultural.

It is highly probable that this same principle can be applied to all rites, rituals and ceremonies in Buddhist countries, although Buddhists may not perceive this themselves.

Three questions remain to be asked from a National/Missionary perspective.

1. Is it right to continue the course taken by early missionaries, to disregard all rites, rituals and ceremonies, as unsuitable to express the Christian gospel?
2. Would it be right to encompass all Buddhist and cultural rites, rituals and ceremonies (if it be assumed that they cannot be separated), and begin to "reload" them all with Christian content and meaning?
3. Should National Christians begin to incorporate and with careful discrimination adopt many (or most?) of their own customs, while at the same time reject some others, because they may lead to either compromise or confusion regarding the nature of the message?

The Thai Pastor, who has written the booklet entitled "Thai Customs and Christian Belief", makes some helpful observations concerning the nature of customs. He says that there are both "good" and "bad" customs - so society itself may reject some of its own customs which may be practised by only a small section of the community. The religious element connected with a given ceremony is stressed differently depending on the Host, communal pressure or geographic location.

A further observation concerning rites and rituals is that they are seldom static in nature, there will always be revisions, additions and adaptations. Although they are passed down from generation to generation, their original meaning often dims, moving from what was primarily a religious action to a purely social function. This of course is the case in the West with Christmas and Easter; the central content and meaning is largely forgotten. A classic example of this from the West is the function of Bridesmaids in a Wedding Ceremony. Formerly, they functioned as decoys for the Bride against any attack from evil spirits. They in fact were dressed the same as the Bride in order to confuse the spirits as to her real identity. How surprised bridesmaids of today would be if they knew! There is today the same outward form, but the inner meaning and function has changed.

Such protection from the evil spirits is invoked when every young girl in Thailand addresses herself as "nu" meaning "rat". This derogatory statement was made to deceive the evil spirits hoping they would be disenchanted from attacking such innoxious vermin. Today very few Thai realise the origin of this expression. It has the same original form, but is now invested with a different meaning and function.

Many Thai rituals were originally religious but now are good, clean, and wholesome social functions. Even pressing the hands together in a "wai-" to greet each other, no longer has religious connotations. Most people do not realise that this action has Hindu origins and was an act of personal obeisance in honouring and acknowledging god in the other person and one's own protector gods.

In an honest attempt to define which rituals are acceptable, Pastor Seth points out that Jesus Himself denounced the Scribes and Pharisees for "setting aside the commands of God, in order to observe your own traditions". Jesus quotes in the same passage from Isaiah "These people honour me with their lips, but their

hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men ". He further rebukes them "Thus you nullify the word of God by your traditions that you have handed down " . Seth concludes:

"If man has created popular customs himself, they will have been contaminated or influenced by sin to a greater or lesser degree. If therefore it is a custom that is contrary to the Bible, we must not observe it, not because we have any objections to others participating, but in order that we have no part in those sins".

With due respect to Seth's interpretation of this passage, it must be pointed out:

Jesus was addressing the inner attitudes of his hearers, rather than their outward actions. His rebuke was aimed at their attempt to evade the Mosaic law of honouring father and mother, by reinterpreting it, "for Moses said...but you say". He also clarified the meaning of "purity", which issues from the heart of man not outward ceremony. Jesus did NOT state that the ceremony should be given up - instead it should be reinvested with its true original "inner meaning". Jesus would not have objected to the ceremonial washing, if at the same time, the people's hearts had been close to Him. Thus any ritual or ceremony is in itself null and void, if it is divorced from inner meaning. Even Christian rituals are "an outward sign of an inward spiritual grace".

John the Baptist acted in the same way with regard to the rite of Baptism. He did not reject the rite as merely an outward ritual; in fact he refused to administer it to the Pharisees who came to him, because their attitude was wrong-they were not prepared to produce evidence of inner repentance. All they wanted was the outward form, without the inner meaning. For Seth to infer that all rituals are contaminated by sin would implicate Christian Baptism, which was originally a pagan rite as well as Jewish. Jesus invested the ceremony with particular new meaning, he did not reject it because it had pagan antecedents. His usage of the same ceremony of baptism was reloaded, even in contradistinction to John's use of baptism. His was "in the Name of The Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ", whereas John's was a baptism "unto repentance ". It cannot be overemphasised that although there is the same outward ritual form with the same name, baptism, they had essentially different functions and meanings.

Holding to religious forms that have lost their intended meanings, either means rejecting the form, which is Seth's proposition, or reinvesting the already existing form with new meaning, which is what both Jesus and John did. The alternative is, either creating a new form that would be culturally appropriate or just leaving a vacuum.

In spite of Seth's original proposition that all rituals are by their nature contaminated with sin and therefore unsuitable, he later concedes that there are some parts in some ceremonies that hold no religious connotations, are socially wholesome, and may therefore be participated in. His method of approach is to isolate each meaningful segment of each ceremony, scrutinise their significance, and then put each segment into one of three categories.

The first would be those elements of the ritual which are contrary to Biblical norms. The second would be elements that may be maintained without any change. The third would be added elements or "functional Christian substitutes" which would be culturally pleasing, and not offensive to the Buddhist religion.

The first category - elements contrary to Christianity:

1. Astrological predictions or any form of fortune telling pronounced on the married couple.
2. Any "magical" ceremonies, including the use of "magic" water in dousing the couple.
3. Any directly Buddhist activity, including obeisance before Buddhist idols.

The second category - those legitimate parts of a ceremony that are neither rejected nor need adapting.

1. Taking part in the "collection" part of the wedding ceremony called "kan hair khan maag i". Equivalent to taking round an offering plate for the couple.
2. Placing garlands of flowers round the necks of the couple.

The third category, elements introduced as functional substitutes:

1. Some may like to either place hands upon the head of the couple, or hold their hands together and pray for God's blessing to be upon them.
2. In the "anointing ceremony", instead of using scented "magic water which has been mixed with flour," to apply to the foreheads of the couple for their blessing, it is suggested that the Christian could use a functional equivalent such as oil mixed with flour, applying this in the same way, but with prayer for the couple.

Seth applies the same advice to all the other rituals and ceremonies mentioned in his booklet. He sees no problem in Christians participating in the renowned water-blessing ceremony "songkran".

Although certain segments of this Festival fall into category one, there are nevertheless many parts of the Festival which are culturally delightful. The most important part of the ceremony is where young people honour their parents by taking bowls of water and sprinkling a small amount on them. The ceremony is generally performed in procession together, by groups of people who go from house to house blessing the old people.

Although the ritual sometimes gets out of hand by young people throwing water over each other, this in itself has meaning. It reflects the abundance of water and blessing that has been given, to be shared with others.

One of the most famous of all rituals in Thailand, is the "Lotus Float" ceremony, called "loi kratong". The origins go back to and beyond the Ayuthaya period of Thai history. Its origins are found in mythology. Most now regard the ceremony as an opportunity for holiday and fun. It is celebrated after harvest and reflects thanksgiving to the god of the water. It is significantly a time of "spring cleaning" in the house, with new beginnings - by forgetting the past, asking forgiveness, and doing merit. A small float is constructed from banana leaves, with a candle placed in the centre. This is lit and floated down the river, anticipating that the float actually carries away with it, all that the sender wanted to get rid of, including sin and wrongdoing. Different areas in the country attribute differing meanings to the ceremony.

It is most unfortunate that Seth deems this ceremony contrary to Christianity and advises Christians to shun it completely. What is worse is that he offers no functional equivalent at all, thus creating a vacuum of insecurity and a feeling of loss, even of identity, for the Thai Christian.

It is not the place of a missionary to propose solutions, but this writer is convinced that some elements of this ceremony can be given Christian meaning, and the ceremony itself can be used to give thanks, not to a river god, but to the God of the Universe. It can be reinvested with redemptive meaning to

declare the other Way of removing sins, the other Way of finding forgiveness. There are clearly what Missiologists term "Redemptive Analogies" intrinsic within this ritual. How good it would be if Christians could show social and cultural solidarity

with their own people during this important time, yet at the same time clearly indicate the distinctiveness of the good news - perhaps they could place a cross as well as a candle on the float. This would be totally Thai and would evoke questions about the meaning of the cross - and how it is through the cross that sins are taken away.

It could pointed out too, that even the Thai ceremony had its origins before Buddhism came to Thailand in folk religion, so of itself it is not Buddhist. It may be argued that such a method would confuse issues rather than clarify them, that the risk is too high. Yet Paul risked being misunderstood when he taught on the "altar to the unknown god" in Acts 17. Paul met the people where they were at in their understanding, and then built a bridge of communication, taking them from the known to the unknown. These principles can be applied to similar rituals in other Buddhist countries in S.E. Asia.

In discussing the burial ceremony Seth once again takes apart each segment, and places it into one of the three categories mentioned. Seth feels certain parts of the ceremony are acceptable, such as washing and sprinkling the body and that the departed should be honoured but not worshipped. Flowers and wreaths are appropriate in order to show that Christians are just as serious in mourning as others. Sometimes just sitting quietly by would be sufficient indication of our participation and sympathy, without actually being involved in the Buddhist rite.

In conclusion, Seth, in seeking to give directions on Thai rituals, gives both uncertain and ambiguous recommendations. His uncertainty is shown by his appeal to an individual's personal convictions without giving concrete directions. His ambiguity is shown by the subjective way he assigns rituals to his three categories. With this whole matter being absolutely crucial to the advancement of the Gospel in Thailand a lot more work must be done as soon as possible, so that new Christians will not feel robbed of their cultural heritage, and feel secure in their new-found faith.

A well known Evangelical missionary, perceiving the vacuum created by the usual methods of evangelism in Thailand, began to consider the possibility of reloading the traditional *Sukhwan Rites* with Christian content and meaning. Van der Weele takes Tambiah's outline of the major categories in the Sukhwan Ceremonies first of all, then attempts to apply the framework to possible Christian alternatives:

the occasion

the sender

the receiver

the supporting cast

the message (a combination of the language of object symbols, physical acts and the language of words).

The occasion relates to when the ceremony is performed, already indicated in this Thesis

The sender - the Officiate, usually an elder or an Ex-Buddhist priest.

The receiver - a sick person, or some other specially needy situation.

The supporting cast, - the whole village, or as many as possible.

The message - delivered symbolically by tying strings and chanting mantras.

Upon invitation to a Sukhwan ceremony van der Weele graphically describes what happened and his personal response:

My wife and I were invited to attend the wedding of one of the favoured mission language

teachers. We belonged, as I look back at it now, to the supporting cast. The elders present were invited to tie the cotton to the arms of the bridal couple. In fact we followed immediately in a row to congratulate, as we considered it, as most honoured guests, after the old grandparents. The old lady assisting the ãmau khwaní, the Officiant, gave us too, a few pieces of cotton, she was confused when we refused to do so. I still remember the look of confusion in the eyes of the bride, and the apologetic smile.

It became clear to us what pressures believers are facing. Nothing in my training had given me

ways to respond adequately, apart from the missionary colleagues who simply told us: ãdon't get involved, it is occultí. Thai Christians have taken the same approach, except those under social pressure of non Christian relatives, who felt compelled to endure it.

I am not aware of any attempt to find a solution for this tension. Obviously the gulf between the believer and his occult past seems too large, to build a bridge. Yet questions remain. In denying this form of expression of love, concern and morale building, what then takes place? If missionaries insist on such an approach, what happens when the Christian relative becomes sick, fails his much sought entrance exam to Teachers College or any other misfortune. Is then the missionary responsible to provide for an answer?

Things get even a bit more complicated when one realises that the missionary usually encourages proper (western) medical care, and as in our case, even sells medicine at a modest price. Then missionaries and Thai Christians have their own ceremonies to deal with illness and stress: they anoint with oil and lay hands on for healing (James 5:14). Going the Christian way does provide substitutes, but the non-Christian relative cannot participate in this.

Obviously this must foster a sense of alienation. The sense of ãcommunityí fostered in the Sukhwan ceremony, is not fostered in the Christian ceremony. This all has serious implications for the proclamation of the Gospel. Thai Christians have not been able to resolve this dilemma.

They do not want to be a part of an animistic rite. What other approaches can be made which might lessen the strain? What does the Sukhwan ceremony rite attempt to achieve and are there elements which give points of contact? Are there specific Christian ways which might be of a blessing to the general community?

Van der Weele then investigates the possibility of readapting this ceremony so that it fulfils its social and religious function, now within a Christian context, while at the same time fulfilling its former function in continuing to benefit the whole community. He perceives the basis of the ceremony to centre around the need for ãwholenessí and ãreintegrationí of the individual and society and suggests the Hebrew idea of ãShalomí analogous to this. He calls it ãA Christian Tranquillity Rite, Shalom Sharing í . This suggestion warrants further investigation even with the risks involved. Such innovation could produce positive benefits in the Thai community and allow them to see the gospel as indeed "good news".

Dr. Petrus Octavianus an outstanding Christian statesman (formerly a member of Parliament in Indonesia, and Principal of a Teacher Training College), gave a paper at the first ãInternational Congress on World Evangelisationí at Lausanne

in 1974. His premise was that the insensitivity of missionaries often disqualifies them as counsellors in these matters. He then gives a list of items within Indonesian Muslim culture which should be upheld, which should be rejected and which are affirmed by Scripture. So far such an exercise has yet to be done in

a Buddhist context, so although the following details will be different, many of Octavianus's suggestions may be applied a Buddhist context. He outlines these features as follows:

1a. NEUTRAL FEATURES THAT CAN BE MAINTAINED

1. The use of the Kopyah; White cap; used in South Sumatra by those who have not yet gone to Mecca - used in other parts mainly as national dress.
2. The use of sarong and kebaya, the women's native dress and not only worn by Moslems.
3. Sitting on the floor mat without chairs.
4. Ways of greeting one another.
5. To take off sandals or shoes when entering a house or church for worship or fellowship.
6. The use of indigenous musical instruments to make Javanese feel at home.
7. The use of Arabic language when approaching educated Moslems.
8. Circumcision, a Muslim tradition, is basically a health measure and should be considered as such.

B. INDONESIAN MUSLIM FEATURES THAT ARE ENDORSED BY SCRIPTURE.

1. Respect to parents (Exodus 20:12).
2. Respect to husband (Eph.5:22).
3. Strict sex regulations: no sex relationship before marriage.
4. Giving of alms, concern for the poor (Eph 2:10).
5. Abstinence from alcohol and drunkenness. In strong Muslim areas like Aceh, nearly no liquor can be found in the shops (Gal 5:21).

C. FEATURES OPPOSED TO BIBLICAL REVELATION

1. Polygamy
2. Prayer ceremonies performed for the deceased
3. Other forms of association with the occult, such as spiritualistic practices and animistic observances.

Although Octavianus may be unaware of Buddhism in some Asian countries, he makes some helpful comments on all the religions of the East and then gives some helpful hints for Buddhist and Shinto rituals:

"Each of the major religions with its underlying Animism has to be carefully examined and evaluated, according to the above pattern, so that Christians may discern which practices and features are neutral, which are opposed to Scripture and which can be endorsed by Scripture. In this way, the Gospel messenger to the Chinese will have to introduce a functional substitute that replaces the customs related to Ancestor Worship, in order to fill the social vacuum. I would also like to give a short list of forms of culture which has Shintoism and Buddhism as its background, as to which factors can be maintained, which ones must be rejected and which ones are endorsed by Scripture.

FORMS OF CULTURE WHICH HAVE A SHINTO/BUDDHIST BACKGROUND.

A. NEUTRAL FEATURES THAT CAN BE MAINTAINED

1. Ethics on polite manners, e.g. "Sado" (tea ceremony), "Kado" (flower ceremony).
- .2. Way of visiting friends and relatives with gifts after returning home from a long journey (not just because of tradition but with sincerity!).
3. Music and traditional dance, e.g., using "Koto" a kind of harp, played by women, and "Shakuhochi", a kind of flute played by men.

B. FORMS OF CULTURE WHICH CAN BE TAKEN FROM SHINTOISM / BUDDHISM AND THEN SUBSTITUTED:

1. "Hichi-go-san" Ceremony. Children go to the temple and ask blessing from their gods and then receive cakes. As an alternative, Christians could take their children to the church to receive the blessing from our God and introduce them to the congregation or pastor to pray for them one by one.
2. Self-discipline in Buddhism is stressed in order to gain peace, reading loudly the Buddhist sacred books diligently every day and copying from the Sacred Books. This custom could be applied by reading the Bible aloud every day and copying it. The Buddhist people lead a self-disciplined life only for their own salvation, but Christians lead a self-disciplined life for the glory of God as people who have been saved.

C. FORMS OF CULTURE ENDORSED BY SCRIPTURE

1. Monogamy.
2. Respect for parents.
3. Respect and loyalty to the government.

D. FORMS OF CULTURE OPPOSED TO BIBLICAL REVELATION

1. To worship the departed ones.
2. Spring and autumn ceremonies held in the temple for the departed. By doing so they think that the soul of the departed will take time to visit their homes.
3. Ceremony for the deceased (Buddhist ceremony).
4. Wedding ceremony, worshipping the sun god (from Shintoism), also drinking liquor, a kind of sanctification before marriage.
5. Birth ceremony-to receive the blessing of the sun god with a sanctification mark. A worship ceremony to the gods in a small temple is held on Children's Day, every March 5.
6. Economic and political matters: economic and political discussion is always accompanied by the presence of women and the serving of alcohol. There is a saying in Japanese, "Machiai seeji" or "the policy of the Japanese Government is decided in the bar".

Although not all is applicable, the outline shows an Asian leader engaged in a struggle to make the presentation of the Gospel of Christ as culturally relevant as possible without compromising the essential nature of the message. A well known missiologist of former years, J.H.Bavinck in his "An Introduction to the Science of Missions ", encountered similar issues. He pointed out that

the same problems have faced the church from its earliest inception. Augustine struggled with it , the later Jesuits and Catholic scholars confessed that:

"The static retention of European customs is responsible for the fact that the progress of missions has nearly ended in failure and despondency".

Louis J. Luzbetak, another Roman Catholic missiologist, uses the term "accommodation " to define the interaction between the Church (Theology) and Culture (Anthropology). He defines "accommodation" as follows:

"Accommodation may be defined as the respectful, prudent, scientifically and theologically sound adjustment of the Church to the native culture in attitude, outward behaviour, and practical apostolic approach".

Yet Luzbetak still maintains the uniqueness of Christianity and so also adds "the limits of accommodation ". He indicates that whatever may be "imprudent" or "unreasonable" can never be the object of accommodation. Interestingly Luzbetak stipulates:

"The Church has the strict obligation of preserving the deposit of Faith in its entirety and purity. No jot or tittle may be compromised, even if by so doing one could win over a whole nation to the Church or prevent a serious persecution or schism. The Church may not tolerate any beliefs or practices that are contrary to revealed truth: nor may she tolerate a double standard, one for mission lands and another for mature Christian countries".

While Luzbetak endorses the principle of accommodation, he is by no means indiscriminate in his selection of appropriate rites, rituals and ceremonies. Of any questionable forms of worship that may have immoral innuendoes, he says:

Thus accommodation is never justified in regard to the worship of nature-spirits, promiscuity, or polygamy.

Johann Thaurer discusses various types of accommodation, but when finally asked what customs ought to be adapted and what customs we cannot adapt to, he states:

Certain customs clearly contradict the Christian faith, such as idolatry, witchcraft and the like. It is absolutely impossible to adapt to them. But others, such as modesty in attire, are in themselves good...other customs are not harmful in themselves but under the influence of religion they have acquired a superstitious character, and finally there are customs which in themselves are neutral.

Bavinck observes that Catholic missions and Protestant missions view customs and ceremonies differently mainly due to their divergent positions on the nature of man. According to Catholics man is not totally depraved since God's common grace acts as a safeguard and restraint from decline. They perceive cultures in the same way, estranged, yet still containing much which is essentially good. The same idea is applied to culture. The Reformation view is much stronger, using vocabulary such as "total depravity", seeing man in totality, affected and infected by sin. If man can "do no good " in God's eyes, then his culture can "be no good " according to their perception.

Evangelicals, while not necessarily denying many of the earlier Reformation presuppositions, see that God has "not left himself without a witness ". Bavinck, himself an orthodox Presbyterian suggests concerning other cultures:

"In the moral and legal sphere, and in other areas as well, we frequently encounter unexpected and surprising values. The cultures met on mission fields are in other words, indivisible structures in a certain sense, but here and there loopholes are in evidence, because man has not felt fully the condemnation of God that he brought upon himself by his sin. God has not left Himself without a witness. Therefore we ought never to run rampant on the mission field with an inflexible theory. We must always have an eye for what God has spared in his mercy and for what he does in the world day by day.

Bavinck feels that the use of the word "accommodation" when it has to do with rites rituals or ceremonies extant within a culture, connotes something of a denial, a compromise or even a mutilation. Although his own language is somewhat archaic and could be quite offensive today (ie. use of "pagan" or "heathen"), he nevertheless gives a helpful contribution. He prefers to use the term *POSSESSIO*, *to take in possession*. He suggests that:

"The Christian life does not accommodate or adapt itself to heathen forms of life, but it takes the latter in possession and thereby makes them new...it is in essence the legitimate taking possession of something by him to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth.

When Bavinck discusses the veneration of ancestors, he makes some quite remarkable observations:

"What is directly striking in Christianity is that the dead are so entirely relegated to the background. They are naturally still spoken of within the narrow family circle, but they are not worshipped, and nothing is expected of them. All this appears extremely strange and in some instances even disrespectful. Frequently a person may hesitate to become a Christian because by so doing he believes he would be acting contrary to the will of his ancestors, and that he would no longer be able to pay them their due respect. The newly formed Christian church ought not to be indifferent to such problems...In Japan, as in China the veneration of one's ancestors constitutes a very important element in the national religion. And here and there at a certain time of the year, Christians gather as a family around the portrait of their dead relative or ancestor. The life and accomplishments of the one departed are then spoke of with respect. The Scriptures are then read, prayers are offered and hymns sung. In such practices something of the old is retained and yet it is wrested free from its pagan moorings. TO RETAIN OLD CUSTOMS IN SUCH A WAY BY ENLISTING THEM IN THE SERVICE OF JESUS CHRIST IS PERFECTLY PROPER IN MY JUDGMENT" (*my italics*).

The following models do not attempt to deal with each ritual and ceremony in detail. They seek to evaluate the components of each ritual, categorise them, and then suggest possible ways of "accommodating", *ipossessing*, "continuing", or "discontinuing" within a given ritual.

These frameworks could be applied to any ritual and may help missionaries and nationals (preferably nationals) to determine where and when "functional substitutes" should be used, and what form they should take. Hiebert's model in *Dealing with Old Ways* below introduces the subject. National leaders should be qualified to deal with Number 3 in the chart, and follow through with appropriate contextualised Christian forms. The models

following Hiebert's are the writer's suggested outlines for analysing Thai rituals and Ceremonies.

A MODEL FOR USE IN CONSIDERING APPROPRIATE COMPONENTS OF RITUALS FOR INCORPORATION INTO CHRISTIAN WITNESS AND WORSHIP.

SUGGESTED CHRISTIAN ALTERNATIVES (FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENTS) FOR INCORPORATION INTO THE TRADITIONAL THAI MARRIAGE CEREMONY.

CHAPTER 7.

POWER ENCOUNTER

Western theologians' unwillingness to discuss themes which exist outside their own categories have caused them to overlook the theme under discussion in this chapter. This makes them 'demythologise' or 'rationalise' what the New Testament writers term the 'Principalities and Powers'. They would even go as far as to suggest:

'They were merely manifestations of material power: the laws of physical power, institutionalised forms of corporate power, psychological forms of power, perhaps even various forms of psychic power. And whatever residue we cannot force into our material categories, we will tend to regard as 'superstition'. The ancients could not help it if they did not understand the physical laws of the universe uncovered by our science. They could deal with these invisible, unknown forces only by personifying them and treating them as if they were conscious, willing beings....When we read the ancient accounts of encounters with these

Powers, we can only regard them as hallucinations, since they have no real physical referent. Hence WE cannot take seriously their own descriptions of these encounters - as long as our very categories of thought are dictated by the myth of materialism'.

There have been several studies on this subject over the last fifty years and even Barth

treats what he calls 'The Rebellious Powers', in the Lord's prayer. Hendrik Berkhof expresses

surprise regarding Barth's contribution to the subject:

'The way Barth treated this material came to me as a great surprise. Naturally this treatment goes immeasurably deeper than that which I offer, but it goes in the same direction. I feel sympathetic with this deepening treatment. I noticed with special interest that when Barth delivered these lectures (1961) he was clearly no longer bothered about 'demythologising' which he had previously easily accused me of. On the contrary, he is now combating the modern spirit whose rational scientific world view has no eye left for the power of the Powers'.

Though indiscriminate "de-mythologising" is mostly a thing of the past, modern scholars

still find ways to "water down" these themes to fit their own categories:

Now liberation and political theologians are attempting to undergird their social ethics by appealing to the Biblical notion of the Powers, reducing them almost entirely to social institutions and structures.

The language of "the powers" pervades the whole New Testament. The belief system and

world view of that time was mutually understood by both the writers and the readers. Our task in interpretation is not to make judgments from our limited perspective, but to actually enter into the perspective of the original writers and readers.

Walter Wink on his definitive work on "power" in the New Testament concludes that the

expression "principalities and powers" is but one of many paired

expressions for "the powers". Wink found that these expressions may refer to both heavenly and

earthly, divine and human, spiritual and political, invisible and structural.

The verse that best illustrates this is Colossians 1:16. "For in Him, all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones (????????), or dominions (???????? or principalities ???????? or authorities (???????? all things were created through Him and for Him." Wink observes:

"It is only because scholars have narrowed the focus to just the occurrences of "archai kai exousiai" in the Pauline or Paulinist corpus, that the full scope of the Powers has gone unrecognised. We have already seen that they are found in every book of the New Testament; much more evidence waits its turn. The theme of the Powers encompasses every concentration of power in any authorised agent or actor. If a world view includes spiritual beings, then they naturally will be covered by the vocabulary of power. But they do not exhaust it or even have the first call on it.

The New Testament uses "exousiai" 102 times, 87 of them relate to more impersonal structures, rather than personal beings. This is not to say that the New Testament neglected

angelic/demonic beings for they are accepted without question both in the Gospels and Acts.

However, Wink points out:

"It is a modern bias to single out just the supernatural powers, as if they alone were of significance. For the Ancients, heaven and earth were a seamless robe, a single interacting and continuous reality. To read the literature on the subject, one would never have suspected that the spiritual powers comprised only fifteen percent of the uses of the term. WE are fascinated with the supernatural forces the Ancients describe;

THEY seem to have taken them for granted and to have been much more preoccupied with that more

amorphous, intangible, indefinable something that makes it possible for a King to command subjects to voluntary death in war, or for a Priest to utter words that send a King to his knees. Perhaps they lack the systematic precision of what our modern analyst describes or a vocabulary for designating it. And they may have been in touch with dimensions of power which our more materialistic point of view rarely glimpses. It is perhaps this "amorphous intangible, indefinable something" that Paul is referring to when he uses the word "stoicheia" ("elements"). This term has puzzled expositors for centuries and has been the occasion of a massive etymological excavation. While more bits and shards may yet emerge, enough is known to consider

at least the broad outlines of its meaning, settled once for all.

Berkhof attempts to analyse the meaning of the term and translates it 'world powers'. He states:

'The Powers rule over human life outside of Christ. They are manifested in human traditions (Colossians 2:8), in public opinion which threatens to entice Christians in Colossae away from Christ. They are manifested in the cautious and timorous observance of requirements about abstinence from food and drink or of feast days (v16, 20ff). All of this may be summed up as 'prescriptions and doctrines of men'. The 'world powers' under which mankind languishes, to which the Colossians risk falling subject once again, are definite religious and ethical rules, the solid structures within which the pagan and Jewish societies of the day lived and moved. In v14, these structures are spoken of as the way in which the principalities and powers rule over men, or rather the powers ARE the structures. The main point is that by His Cross, Christ has unmasked and disarmed the quasi-divine authority of these structures'.

Any thorough study of stoicheia (?????????) will provide a broad range of usage, from 'basic elements' (see Hebrews 5:12), to 2 Peter 3:10 where the word is rendered by Wink as 'the constituent elements of the physical universe'. In Galatians chapter 4, he translates it as 'the basic requirements or rules of a system'. It can also apparently be translated in terms of social structures that no longer fulfil their original purpose, and possibly to angelic beings (Romans 8:38).

If, as Paul seems to suggest, 'principalities and powers' were created by Christ and for Christ, why does he then speak of these powers as being antagonistic, hostile and opposing God's divine purposes? Why does he speak of them as being possible agents that may separate us from the love of God?

Berkhof suggests:

'Paul speaks, once, of the Powers as related to the Creative will of God. But we do not know them in this divinely intended role. We know them only as bound up with the enigmatic fact of sin, whereby not only men have turned away from God, but the invisible side of the cosmos functions in diametric opposition to its divinely fixed purpose. When Paul writes that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, not even the Powers, he presupposes that the nature of the Powers would be to do just that - to separate. The Powers are no longer instruments, linkages between God's love as revealed in Christ and the visible world of creation. In fact, they have become gods (Gal 4:8) behaving as though they were the ultimate ground of being, and demanding from men an appropriate worship. This is the demonic reversal which has taken place on the invisible side of creation. No longer do the Powers bind man and God together; they separate them. They stand as a road-block between the Creator and His creation. The Powers continue to fulfil one half of their function. They still undergird human life and society and preserve them from chaos. But by holding the world together, they hold it away from God, not close to him. They are the 'rulers of this age' (1 Cor 2:6). In their desire to rule, they are in enmity toward the Lord of glory. Paul touches on this in a remarkable way in Ephesians 2:1 saying that Gentile believers had previously walked 'according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air'. The

Powers which rule our life, though not divine, exercise their dominion from above.

Paul's terminology in Ephesians of the prince of the power of the air, or being raised up in the heavens with Christ, or our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms, may seem archaic and outmoded to those in the West but they are very relevant to folk Buddhists in Asia today. In fact such 'insights' help them read the New Testament with a far deeper understanding than Western theologians do.

Berkhof, modern scholar that he is, risks his academic credibility with his peers when he is brave enough to suggest:

We have been speaking of ancient cosmology, in connection with the word *airí*. Here, however,

as well as with many other Biblical expressions usually thought to be borrowed from this cosmology, the question arises whether the world view we need to deal with is not the more natural one, given to us as a part of our being human, which is pre-intellectual, experienced and understood by every man. For man, erect of carriage, with his spiritual capacities located in the uppermost part of the body, the best is naturally above and evil below. God and heaven belong together. The Powers which rule our life, though not divine, exercise their dominion from above. We ourselves say, even more literally, that something is in the

airí. When Hitler took the helm in Germany in 1933, the Powers of Volk, Race, and State took a new grip on men. Thousands were grateful after the confusion of the preceding years, to find their lives again protected from chaos, order and security restored. No one could withhold himself, without the utmost effort, from the grasp these powers had on men's inner and outer life. While studying in Berlin (1937), I myself experienced almost literally how such Powers may be in the *airí*. At the same time one had to see how they intruded as a barrier between God's Word and men. They acted as if they were ultimate values, calling for loyalty as if they were the gods of the cosmos. I allude to this example solely because it makes so strikingly clear the sense of Paul's expressions (not only his meaning but also his actual terms). Nor should it be difficult for us to perceive today in every realm of life these Powers which unify men, yet separate them from God. The State, Politics, Class, Social struggle, National interest, Public opinion, accepted morality, the ideas of decency, humanity, democracy - these give unity and direction to thousands of lives. Yet precisely by giving unity and direction they separate these many lives from the true God; they let us believe that we have found the meaning of existence, whereas they really estrange us from true meaning.

These perceptions appear outdated and unscholarly to the modern secular mind, even to the Western missionary mind, perceived by Newbigin as one of the greatest secularising forces in history. Yet this archaic New Testament cosmology is more closely akin to the world view of all primal religions and especially to folk Buddhist cosmology.

In primal religions the universe is not divided between natural versus supernatural, or secular versus sacred. The universe is seen as an integrated whole - a seamless robe, which enshrouds all phenomena. Using the mechanistic and organic analogies is a helpful model. Inanimate, impersonal

force would be perceived as mechanistic, analogous to electricity. Such power has no volition, but operates according to inviolable laws. This force may be good bad or neutral, it may be manipulated or channelled by an expert Practitioner, but if it is not handled in the right way, it could be as dangerous as uninsulated electric current. Other powers would be described as organic in nature, they are either the living dead (ancestors), or spirit beings. These living beings have their own personalities, are able to relate to others, have volition and affection. Such beings may be humoured, placated, manipulated and deceived. They may come to the aid of one in need, but because of their fickle unpredictable nature, return evil for good in spite of all that is done to please them. Although all cultures will have minor variations of their own cosmologies, they can still be broken into organic and mechanistic categories. Professor Paul Hiebert illustrates this perspective as follows:

HIEBERT'S ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS.

ORGANIC ANALOGY	MECHANICAL ANALOGY
<p>Based on concepts of living beings impersonal objects relating to other living beings. Stresses impersonal deterministic nature of essentially amoral in Relationships are essentially character.</p>	<p>Based on concepts of controlled by forces. mechanistic and events. Forces are moral in character.</p>
<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	

HIGH RELIGION BASED ON COSMIC BEINGS.	HIGH RELIGION BASED ON COSMIC FORCES.
<p>unseen or super- natural. cosmic forces other world.</p>	<p>- kismet - fate - Brahman and karma - impersonal</p>
<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	

knowledge
based

o n inference or
super
natural
ex-
perience
magical

FOLK OR LOW RELIGION.
- local gods and goddesses
- ancestors and ghosts
- spirits
- demons and evil spirits
- dead saints

MAGIC AND ASTROLOGY.
- mana
- astrological forces
- charms, amulets and
- rites.
- evil eye, evil tongue.

this
world

.....
.....
.....
.....

FOLK SOCIAL SCIENCE.

FOLK NATURAL SCIENCE.

seen or
natural
em-
natural forces.
pirical.

- interaction of living
beings such as humans,
possibly animals and plants.

- interaction of
objects based on

.....
.....
.....
.....

HIEBERT'S DESIGNATION OF THE "MIDDLE AREA" WHERE WESTERN
CHRISTIANITY IS INADEQUATE TO DEAL WITH EASTERN CATEGORIES.

The "good news" must deal with all aspects of the receptor's world view. If
what Hiebert calls the "power encounter" is neglected the resulting vacuum will
be filled with familiar substitutes. Hiebert states:

As missionaries we prepare to witness to people who are tied to Buddhism,
Hinduism, Islam and
other high religions which deal with the questions of ultimate truth and
meaning. We are surprised, therefore when we find that most of the common folk
do not know much about their own high religions, and that they are often more
deeply involved in such folk-religious practices as magic, astrology,
witchcraft, and spirit worship. We find that we are not prepared to deal with

such practices. Folk religions deal with the problems of everyday life, not with the ultimate realities. Through omens, oracles, shamans, and prophets they provide guidance to people facing uncertain futures. Through rituals and medicines, they counter such crises as droughts, earthquakes, floods, and plagues as well as help to bring success in marriage, in producing children, in business, and life. Given our Western view of things, we do not take folk religions seriously. Consequently we do not provide Biblical answers to the everyday questions the people face...it should not surprise us therefore that many young Christians continue to go to shamans and magicians to deal with such questions.

Yet our goal is not simply to substitute a new "magic" of prayer, for the old "magic" in order to manipulate God for our own benefit. At times a necessary "power encounter" will have taken place. The Kingdom of Christ will have challenged and clashed with the Kingdom of darkness.

Christ's own ministry was characterised constantly by this power encounter, expressed through combating disease, demons, natural disasters, threatening crowds, or even death itself. Such encounter or confrontation was also seen in Christ's anger against a corrupt religious system, injustice, legalism, oppression and hypocrisy.

An illustration of the "power encounter" concept, can be drawn from nature. When warm and cold fronts collide, an almost uncontrollable violence follows, with thunder and lightning; there may even be hurricanes, and tornadoes if extreme conditions prevail.

The ultimate power encounter was the crucifixion of Christ, an encounter with the forces of evil, "principalities and powers" stoicheia ??????????:

"All of creation was rocked; the earth shook, rocks split, the sun stopped shining for three hours, the Temple curtain was torn in two. Even tombs were opened, releasing the dead - holy people as they are described in Matthew 27:52. Life was radiating from the death of Christ; it shook a creation that was under the reign of evil. Two fronts, two kingdoms, two economies had hit head on. And in the resurrection and ascension, Christ came out victor, Satan the loser."

German Theologian, Oscar Cullman, adds this helpful analogy taken from World War 2.

In World War 2, most military experts agree, that the victory for the Allies was assured on "D Day" (6th June 1944). This was the day that they successfully invaded Nazi occupied Europe on the Normandy beaches. Because the German forces failed to prevent their entrance, victory for the British, American and Canadian forces was inevitable. But it took eleven months for the Allies to actually end the war. During this time thousands of men lost their lives in some of the bloodiest battles of the entire conflict. The coming V-E Day (8th May 1945) was assured but not yet realised.

In this age the task of the Church is to continue this ongoing "clearing-up" operation over the principalities and powers, especially in religions like Buddhism. This role is clearly addressed by Paul in relation to the "stoicheia":

"To make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God who created all things. His intent was that now, through the Church the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."

How exactly is the manifold wisdom of God to be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, and indeed why it is to be made known, draws only silence among the Commentators.

The public celebration of Holy Communion may also be linked with this concept. In the celebration, Paul tells us that we proclaim Christ's death until He comes. The question remains - to whom do we proclaim His death? No doubt it was for the benefit of the believers plus the few "unlearned" who attended. Yet could it not also be a "proclamation" to those very powers that were vanquished at Calvary. For it was there, that having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Because of their integrated world view, they (not us) would probably understand the significance of the writer to the Hebrews when he unveils a scene we can scarcely imagine:

You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect...

It follows that this proclamation of His death could well refer to all those clouds of witnesses, both good and evil, which seem to people from a Folk Religion to be so real yet for us are so remote and unreal. David Burnett perceives:

A rejection of spiritual powers can often lead ultimately to the rejection of a spiritual God, and therefore to an entirely secular perspective.

More recently Evangelicals have been more open to listen to theologians and members of Third World churches, who affirm the reality of the principalities and powers within their own cosmologies. This led the Lausanne Continuation Committee of 1978 to produce a booklet entitled "The Willowbank Report":

We wish to affirm, therefore, against the mechanistic myth on which the typical Western world view rests, the reality of demonic intelligences which are concerned by all means, overt and covert, to discredit Jesus Christ and keep people from coming to Him.

Church history confirms the reality of these demonic intelligences and Christ's power over them. A superficial study of the Patristic era (100-600 AD) indicates that their beliefs were in accord with Pauline cosmology and therefore not dissimilar to folk religion cosmology.

Later church history is replete with instances of power encounter. K.S. Latourette summarises the records of early church history when he states:

While from the very beginning Christians had believed in the miraculous, the power of the Christian faith to work miracles was one of the factors in the conversion of the Roman Empire. In the years after 500, miracles loom more prominently in the writings of the educated leaders of the Church in the West, than in the centuries before that dividing line. Gregory the Great had very much more to say of them than did the pre-sixth century Fathers of the Church. The same is true of Bede. 22

Perhaps the most well known power encounter occurred through the ministry of St. Boniface who went to Europe to preach to the Saxons in the eighth century. At Geismar the people worshipped a sacred oak believed to be a symbol of Thorís power and presence. Boniface publicly began to chop the tree down. As he started a great wind shook the tree over, and as it landed on the ground it split into the shape of a cross. The response of the people when they saw that Boniface received no retribution was to acknowledge that God he was the all powerful One and they turned en masse to Christ. 23

Such issues raise questions concerning the phenomenal growth of the Pentecostal Church across the world. Much has been written attempting to give numerous answers 24 . Perhaps the simplest would be to suggest that their message (often devoid of scholarship, but denying secularism), is relevant to the respondents in terms of their world views. A demographic study shows that their response relates less to class, temperament, or environment, than it does to their cosmology. In other words, they respond because their iprincipalities and powersî are dealt with fully and finally by the good news presented to them in Jesus Christ. Power encounter to them is not limited to the time of Christ, but is demonstrated before their eyes ithrough the churchî. This concept also extends to the realm of exorcism and healing. Often traditional medicine and the ministry of healing through prayer has been seen as incompatible. It reflects the false dichotomy assumed by many that the body and soul are separate entities and have separate curators. The body should (as far as they perceive), be dealt with by the medical profession and the soul by the church. It is true there has been many advances in such concepts as "holistic medicine" in recent years, but there is considerable evidence that the dichotomy still persist in the minds of many in the West today, even within the Church.

Wilkinson reaches back into the history of the Church to affirm that these ministries were part and parcel of its heritage before the Renaissance:

îPrior to the Renaissance the Church had practised all forms of healing, and had not confined its concern to matters of the soul alone. It is not surprising therefore to find that eventually the Church came to reassert its right to practise both medical and non-medical healing, and to reject the view which confined its activity to only one part of manís beingî.

It should be noted that cases of healing and exorcism in the New Testament were primarily and predominantly manifested in the context of proclamation or evangelism. They were????????(signs) and ??????. (wonders). They can be better described as îPower Encountersî. Most missionaries affirm that such happenings do occur today. It is beyond the confines of this book to delve deeply into the subject. Suffice to say that great numbers of Buddhists and Moslems have come to Christ as a result of some form of Power Encounter especially in the area of dreams and visions. Christ has become, both the way the truth and the life to them through some form of direct transempirical encounter which often bypassed the ëreason-ableí, but was nevertheless verifiable through a total change of beliefs, values and behavioural patterns.

The writer can verify this principle, from his own experience in Thailand. Twenty five years ago, he was hosted by a "Yao" Headman for three days during which period he explained the Gospels. Upon being asked îCan Jesus heal today?î,

he was obliged to confirm what he had been teaching, and so stated, without deep conviction or faith, that 'Of course, Jesus can heal today', whereupon he was escorted from the Headman's house to another house where to his horror, he saw a coffin lying at the side of the house. The sick father in the house had told his sons to prepare the coffin, because the local shaman said there was no hope of recovery. The Headman made this challenge - 'if your Jesus is alive and can heal, ask Him to heal this man and we will believe'. With very little faith, the writer laid hands on the sick man and prayed that he would be healed. The following morning, to everyone's consternation, he was walking around! Twenty five years later the writer reentered the village which was now Christian. The wife

of the sick man gave him an uncultural hug, affirmed her husband's full recovery and explained that the coffin had been disassembled and made into a small bridge over the stream, which is still there today. That bridge is regarded by the community as a statement ('sign') that Jesus is alive and does heal the sick.

Such an incident did not lead to 'prosperity doctrine'; that Jesus always will or must heal. The story of Job clearly shows that God sometimes has greater purposes than immediate physical restoration. What it does say to those without the advantage of modern medicine, is that they may still witness the power of God present in 'power encounter' today.

Power encounter (however alien to West), ought nevertheless be seen as an important 'contextualised' medium for the communication of the Gospel in all areas where folk religion is dominant, especially in Asian countries.

Elizabeth Wagner in her booklet entitled 'Tearing down Strongholds' indicates the way people who communicate to Buddhists use words and concepts which may appear quite legitimate within their own frame of reference, but can be perceived in a completely different way by the listener - two elements we hold dear that are intrinsic to the Gospel, are God's love and God's power - but both these can be perceived in a wrong way:

'Buddhism recognises love not as a virtue but as a negative and unacceptable passion. Only the love a mother has for her children is viewed as positive and even this is a concession to human need. This type of love is the only concept a Buddhist can refer to when he hears about God's love. But the ideal of a mother's love in Buddhists society has little in common with God's love. A mother must show that she loves her child by fulfilling the child's every wish. Likewise any person who claims to love another must be willing to satisfy the desires and wilfulness of the loved one at any cost. So, when Christians talk about God's love, a Buddhist inevitably measure that love by his own yardstick. If God is God and if he is love, he reasons, then he also will fulfil my wish at any time and in the exact manner I desire. Such expectations of God are misunderstood as faith. If God does not meet these expectations, this is reason enough to declare God useless and to seek other gods who are more willing to fulfil one's wishes. It is not uncommon for a young Christian to still have this wrong view of God's love. His becoming a Christian may have been just one step toward finding out how useful God might be in fulfilling his dreams. This is the reason why, after a short time, some young Christians become disillusioned and turn away from God. Many Christians inadvertently encourage such a misunderstanding of God by promoting only the so-called 'power approach' as the means of reaching Buddhists. They emphasise that God needs to show his infinite power by many supernatural miracles so that people will believe in Him.

But a good look into the New Testament shows that this is only part of the solution to the problem. Failure to respond to God is not rooted in lack of demonstrated love and power of God's part.It is possible for us to receive great blessings from God without being drawn to him. Therefore, we must realise that receiving God's blessing, even dramatic and miraculous ones, will not necessarily cause people to respond to his love.

It would be wrong to leave this subject of "power encounters" without a word of warning about the possibility of "counterfeit phenomena". We see clearly that from the most ancient of times - even at the time of Moses, supernatural phenomena that appeared to be exactly the same, could be demonstrated by two opposing parties - and it was obvious at that time that the source of the phenomena was different - see the story of the counterfeit plagues produced by the Egyptian magicians (Exodus 7:11, 22). It is interesting that in Exodus 8:19 it is the Egyptian magicians who recognise and acknowledge the source of Moses' supernatural power. This event could be understood as one of the first recorded "power encounters" in the Bible. The results or effects of some of the miraculous demonstrations were EXACTLY THE SAME, but the cause or sources were obviously "Poles Apart". The casting out of demons was evidently quite common among non-Christian (Jewish people) at the time of Christ. This can be seen from the argument Jesus has with the Pharisees in Matthew chapter twelve, when He affirms that they engage in exorcism: - "If I by the finger of God cast out demons - BY WHOM DO YOU CAST THEM OUT?" It may be asked "why would Satan want to heal, or cast out demons?" Would not such an exercise be beneficial to mankind? - Would Satan ever do anything good for man? The answer of course is; certainly, if in the final analysis such beneficial acts would bring the person under even greater bondage to the power of Satan.

Someone has pointed out that when Jesus stated "if Satan casts out demons by his own power, he would bring down his own kingdom", He was not questioning the fact as to whether Satan cast out other demons or not. He meant that if Satan cast out demons, for some merciful, beneficial reason, producing the same results as Jesus, the collapse of his kingdom would certainly result. When Jesus casts out demons, people are freed, when Satan casts out demons, seven more, worse than the original could quickly take over and occupy the "vacant possession". In similar fashion, if the efforts of the Egyptian magicians had won the day, the power and evil of Pharaoh would have prevailed and the children of Israel would have continued under even greater bondage.

Miraculous manifestations can have two results - one for good the other for evil, because both their sources (causes) and their outcomes (effects) can be different - even though on first appearance, subjective experiences or objective phenomena may appear to have come from a common source, (i.e. God or Satan), the outcome should naturally be one important factor in determining whether this is actually the case or not. At the same time, it is possible for two people to have almost exactly the same experience, with almost exactly the same outcome, but that

these effects could nevertheless have originated from different sources or cause. This can often happen, especially when Christians explain or justify the proof of their supernatural experience as having "a deep sense of peace or joy". Buddhists and Animists can also experience a similar "deep sense of peace or joy" equally as much as Christians can. That being the case it is necessary to examine the source or cause, as well as the effect. It should also warn us that we cannot accept any subjective experience, no matter how "blessed" we may feel as the determinative or sole criteria as to whether such comes from God or not. Yet almost without question Evangelicals in the West today are prepared to depend upon this criteria to determine the validity of a

given experience. Sadly this indiscriminate acceptance of supernatural phenomena has permeated the Asian church also.

There is no doubt at all that many of the miraculous elements described in the Gospels can be and indeed are counterfeited. Such counterfeits (masterminded by Satan himself who is capable of producing that which is hardly discernible from the real thing) seem to occur most often, either in situations where the peoplesí prevalent world-view, accepts as normal the invasion of the unseen upon the seen, or in situations as in the West where a definite paradigm shift has occurred. For a long time Western Christianity (influenced by the Enlightenment and rationalistic thinking), has accepted a ěnaturalisticí world view which blocked out or restricted the expression of supernatural phenomena so that even if it did occur and was genuinely from God, it would have been explained away with rationalistic arguments.

While the church in the West has been floundering; at almost the same time, and without warning, there has erupted into this vacuum of spiritual barrenness, (especially among young non Christians who have become disenchanted with the church, materialism and naturalism), ěwavesí of New Age supernatural phenomena, which to the uninitiated have been, without qualification and with considerable naivete, accepted without question, and considered to be genuine and beneficial. Add to this the drug scene, the massive upsurge of programmes from the mass media concerning the para normal from the Exorcist to ěBack to the Futureí and everything in between. Multiply the New Age movement which is a form of ĩcontextualised Buddhismî in Western dress, mix a bit of astrology in and you have a recipe for unmitigated disaster in terms of peopleís understanding of what is going on ěout thereí.

In more recent times most Christian denominations in the West, have also been affected by ěwavesí of supernatural phenomena. Inexplicable happenings (some with little historic precedent in the Church and even less Scriptural precedent), have become contagious, spreading from congregation to congregation and across Continents.

These happenings have been so ěsense- sationalí and so welcome that any manifestation has been on many occasions been embraced, lock stock and barrel with few asking seriously what the potential sources of such phenomena are, and what criteria can be used to measure their genuineness or falsity. In view of what has already been stated concerning the nature and possibility of counterfeit manifestations, investigation of this subject is perhaps one of the most important tasks of the church today. With the West being so seriously short of experience

and knowledge of the subject, we could perhaps learn a lot from our Asian brethren who even in their pre-Christian state, had already been experiencing all sorts of supernatural phenomena, many very much akin to what they now perceive to be happening in the Church!

It must be said that most of this sort of phenomena are quite common in other religions. Exorcisms, supernatural healings, speaking in tongues, amazingly accurate and verifiable ěwords of knowledgeí, ěinspiredí prophetic utterances that actually come true, collapsing under supernatural power, shaking, every sort of vocal expression from barking, roaring and laughing (uncontrollably) are all experienced in folk Buddhism Animism and other religions. Even more ěsensationalí phenomena occurs, such as ěastral projectioní, out of body experiences,

levitation (not just bouncing up and down on soft mattresses!), and changes of form (ecto-plasm) - so weird as to be beyond the credence or cognizance of anybody from the West. A recent article in ĩTransformationî by a respected Chinese theologian raises questions as to whether people in the West qualify to interpret what is going on and even questions the move of the Pentecostal church

from one that links Christian Holiness as a condition to receiving the power of the Spirit, to a new form of what has been termed Christian shamanism, that divorces power from personal holiness or even Christian morality and plugs into a new form of animism!

All of this requires some sort of objective measuring criteria to check the possible sources of all manifestations of supernatural phenomena. It is necessary to ascertain what may be attributed to have come from God as ãdivine manifestationí and what can be attributed to be demonic phenomena. But this is still not enough - it would be simplistic to suppose that there are only two sources of paranormal phenomena. One then needs to ask whether some manifestations of this type of phenomena can also originate from other possible sources. For instance, mass hypnotism or mesmerism (induced by or manipulated from outside of a person) or - psychic psychosomatic self induced type phenomena. It must be recognised that certain types of ãatmosphereí can be manipulated or contrived by practitioners which in themselves create a platform or opening for paranormal phenomena to occur - this happens in almost all religions. Continual vocalising and repetition of various sounds (singing or otherwise) and continual body movements in certain atmospheres (both in Christian churches or other non Christian religions) can trigger responses among people that move them from the controllable, to the uncontrollable. It is noticeable that the move from the controllable to the uncontrollable is often preempted by a waiting period and accompanied by the particular activity of the leader whose task it is to encourage and enthuse the audience to experience whatever is expected. This activity created by various means, raises the level of expectation for the paranormal to occur at that precise moment. A further factor that should be addressed would be, that whilst recognising the fact of direct activity or ãinterventioní from both the divine and demonic sources, is there a whole area of the para normal which could be called ãneutralí in the sense that it is a part of the nature and fabric of the universe? Are there other forms of ãpowerí comparable to magnetic power, electricity, radio and television waves, which Christians and non Christians alike may stumble on to? We know that there is a perfectly natural healing process of regeneration in the human body and indeed in the whole of nature - have some people (who we term faith healers, who have nothing to do with spiritualism or Christianity) stumbled upon or plugged into this, and do they have the capacity to accelerate that regenerative process either from within themselves or from outside? The fact is we do not have all the facts nor do we have an adequate theology that gives us the answers!

Whatever the case, there is at the same time, the danger of a pseudo Christian Shamanism emerging with leaders ãperformingí in the church in almost the same way as their counterparts in folk religion. This elevates the role of such practitioners to almost to a priestly mediatorial role upon whom certain powers are invested and through whom they can be channelled and acquired. Similar perhaps to the role of some of the more disreputable TV Evangelists?

There do appear to be one or two dependable and irrefutable criteria whereby one with some confidence may determine whether a given manifestation is genuine or otherwise. Before a proposal with regard to this is made, let us be reminded of some preliminary points which as far as Evangelicals are concerned would be indisputable:

1. That the Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture, and because of this, no activity that He would originate, could possibly contradict or conflict with the way Scripture reveals He operates or inspires.

2. Bible believing Christians begin with Scripture and end with Scripture in terms of its sufficiency for doctrine and behaviour. They not only believe in the Spirit breathed inspiration of Scripture, but also *sola Scriptura* - its sufficiency in terms of it being the *Canon* - the measuring rule of doctrine and behaviour. The argument that *you can't get guidance for everyday life from Scripture* implies its inadequacy. Of course Scripture does not give minute details of how one is supposed to conduct one's life at the end of the second Millennium, but it DOES give principles that apply to today's living. For instance Scripture does not detail the possible content of a prophetic utterance, but it does say quite clearly that *the spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophet* (1Cor14v31). The principle of not being out of control is evident from this verse and can be extended to all other church activity.. The following verse states quite clearly that *God is not a God of disorder, but of peace* and can be universally applied. It is reiterated in the last verse of the chapter (40) *everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way*. The fact that these verses are in the context of Holy Spirit inspired manifestations makes the case even more important and relevant for all time. The principle overriding the whole of these chapters is that everything should be carried out with a view to edifying the church.

3. No matter what reason-able arguments may be produced from either church history or personal experience, to verify or authenticate any manifestation of phenomena purported to have come from the Holy Spirit, - they are of themselves unacceptable evidence and totally inadequate unless and until they are brought to the bar of Scripture for verification and validation.

4. If there appears to be some inconsistency between phenomena experienced and Scripture, then a correct interpretation of Scripture must be the determining criteria to authenticate its genuineness or otherwise.

5. The argument that because the Scripture does not indicate this or that phenomena and that what is happening although new, does not necessarily contradict, but could be an extension of the ministry of the Holy spirit, sounds very plausible but is extremely dangerous. The fact that such phenomena has not been evident or needed for two thousand years of the churches experience should raise questions as to why if this is so vital has the Holy Spirit deprived His own Church for so long? This argument (that just because it is not in Scripture it does

not prove it is not from God) substantially denies the distinctive Reformation doctrine of *sola Scriptura* and would open the door to all and every possible *revelation*, from Papal infallibility to the claims of most sects in the world today- that they have some sort of new revelation outside of Scripture, direct from God. It must be pointed out here that many Evangelicals have either consciously or unconsciously abandoned this traditional Reformation position in order to validate what is happening in their churches, so that subjective experience becomes determinative and normative for them and not Scripture. Their argument would be, that as long as the phenomena does not directly contradict Scripture, then it can be valid. That leaves them with no objective measuring capability, and anything can go as long as the leaders agree it is kosher, because they claim they have received direct spiritual discernment from the Holy Spirit.

6. To propose that something new is happening which is vital and necessary for today's church, implies that the Holy Spirit has deliberately withheld that particular blessing (or truth!) from the church which since the time of the ACTS was not needed but is needed now! Whereas it is quite evident that all that was needed for Church growth and church nurture. HAS ALREADY been given. The fact

that He has poured out His gifts upon the church from the beginning so that we may all attain to the unity of the faith in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature attaining to the WHOLE MEASURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST WOULD SEEM

TO INDICATE THAT HE HAS ALREADY GIVEN EVERYTHING NEEDFUL FOR A HEALTHY SPIRIT FILLED CHURCH. If His fullness we have all received. There must be therefore, some Biblical basis to justify the concept that we need something new above and beyond what He gave to His church at Pentecost.

7. To state that what is happening is merely of an extension of what happened in principle in Scripture, one would need to ask are the outcomes the same? For instance, when people fell in Scripture, it appeared to be controlled response to the might and majesty of God. They were neither immobilised or unconscious, (or semi-conscious, but unable to physically respond) - such would in itself be a contradiction of how the Spirit describes Himself working- it would therefore not be justifiable to say that the latter description was an extension in principle of what went on in Scripture.

8. To scrape the bottom of the barrel of Scripture in order to find odd obscure verses to justify the happening, is not being honest to genuine exegesis, nor will it bring provable blessing to the church.

At this point we may ask what Biblical criteria may be used to determine whether a given manifestation is from the Holy Spirit or some other possible source?

The issue of self-control is used as determining criteria when Paul speaks about inspirational utterances by the prophets in the Church - 1 Cor 14v32 . At the risk of repetition, it is quite clear that a distinctive must be drawn between false and true prophets, not only with regard to content of the message, but also control of the message - the spirits of the prophets are subject TO THE CONTROL of the prophets and Paul adds that any other type of utterance (out of control) would contradict the principle of ORDER (V33) within the church. Not being in control implies disorder Paul says For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace. In conclusion to this important chapter, Paul again states... Therefore my brothers be eager to prophecy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues, BUT everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way (v39).

The Scripture clearly states that the fruit of the Spirit is self control. Galatians 5v21 and although the context may be speaking about contrasts of behaviour in respect of the works of the flesh, some of the works of the flesh do indicate areas, where the implication is certainly that self control would be absent - drunkenness, debauchery, witchcraft, orgies etc. So one could apply the principle that when controlled by the Spirit, the opposite effect would be expected, the person would be self controlled in every area of their lives because that is the mark of the fruit of the Spirit. The other fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and gentleness all presuppose the final one, self-control. Other passages would seem to indicate that this element of self control is important even among congregations of believers. The whole argument of Paul in 1 Corinthians 12v1-2 is that of inspired (controlled by outside influences) utterances. Paul implies that previously the Corinthians had spoken or been influenced and led astray by a spirit - the idea being led astray or rather carried away, implies being under control of an outside influence.- Alford in His commentary on the Greek text renders it blindly transported hither and thither anyone speaking by The Holy Spirit Paul is saying COULD NOT SAY. Jesus be cursed as if under compulsion. The word Paul uses for influence here really means under the control of. Alford

continues:

These last words imply the absence of all fixed principle in the oracles of Heathendom, such as he is about to announce as regulating and furnishing the criterion of the spiritual gifts of Christendom. This even as you were led might take a man to contradictory oracles, the whole system being an imposture, their idols being void of all power of utterance, and they being therefore imposed on by the fictions men or who led them.

In the light of such passages one must ask how such phenomenon now described as being drunk in the Spirit where a person is not in control of his normal faculties, can be attributed to the Holy Spirit? To argue from the passage, that it justifies actions where one cannot control oneself is hardly reliable exegesis of the passage and certainly contradicts other Scriptures! When people justify drunken-like behaviour in Church services (hardly consistent with the verses in Corinthians above where a person becomes no longer in control of their normal faculties), from the verse Acts chapter 2 where mockers speak of the disciples as being drunk, one must surely conclude that Luke does not intend for words in the mouths of mockers to accurately reflect what was going on - after all, they were mocking. If one used the same premise or argument with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ then one would have to say, concerning the passage where mockers said He is demon possessed and raving mad (John 10v20), that Jesus was also showing such uncontrollable manifestations - that would be blasphemy - but it would be using the same argument for those who interpret Acts 2v13 in such a way. It is quite evident in Ephesians 5v18 that Paul is contrasting drunkenness with wine (which leads to debauchery to the extent that one cannot control oneself) to being filled with the Spirit not implying either the same manifestations or effect! Such interpretation of Scripture is imposing on the text what was not originally intended. Even if one conceded the passage as a comparison (of being drunk with wine as the same as being drunk with the Spirit as some suggest), rather than a contrast, the result of being filled with the Spirit here, implies nothing about not being in control - but knowing the will of the Lord, being wise, making the most of every opportunity, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs and making music in ones heart to the Lord. It then extends to relationships with a whole range of people. So being filled with the Spirit here is not spoken of in terms of uncontrollable subjective manifestations or feelings, but practical outcomes!

The same question must be asked concerning any other uncontrollable experience. All manifestations of supernatural power in Scripture can be validated by the fact that the people concerned - even if they fell flat on their face as one dead, did so for a reason - they had experienced the Holiness of God. To equate such sacred isolated happenings to uncontrollable experiences which some have, who when they have regained consciousness, did not even know WHY they had been laughing or crying or whatever, cannot be paralleled to any of the Biblical happenings. While it is true that many state their experience did not imply actually losing consciousness because they were aware of what was going on around them, they nevertheless were not able to participate because they were in a state of immobility. Such phenomena has no parallel in Scripture, but is certainly parallel to experiences in Animism and hypnotism. To argue that God needs to by-pass the mind in order minister to certain people when they are not conscious or in control, is extremely dangerous and certainly has no Biblical foundation or precedent. It is after all the mind that is the

place where God always works- our thought world is to be brought into captivity to Christ (2Cor 10:4-6); we are enjoined to be transformed in the renewing of our minds -not by saying goodbye to them, but by not being conformed to this world. We are told to set our minds on things above. To advocate that we should be prepared to abdicate the responsibility of the right use of the mind as an element of Christianity is

certainly new and - smacks of charlatanism and counterfeit- the sort of thing that goes on in all animistic religions and its Western counterpart, the New Age movement. While it may be true to argue that Asian Christians are more at home with this sort of phenomena and accept it as "naturally supernatural", this should not mean that Asian Christians abdicate those "reason-able- faculties which God has given to all Christians whatever cultural background they come from, nor does such supernatural perception mean that Scripture no longer becomes

determinative, for Asian Christians as well as any others, for we can all be deceived by Satan if we do not use the authority and sufficiency of Scripture as our measuring rule for what is acceptable and what is not acceptable within the Church.

Paul was vitally concerned with regard to the Corinthians: "I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning YOUR MINDS MAY SOMEHOW BE LED ASTRAY (THUS IMPLYING INSPIRATION FROM SOME OTHER SOURCE), from your sincerity and pure devotion to Christ. Paul goes on to posit the feasibility: "For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted YOU PUT UP WITH IT EASILY ENOUGH" (2COR 11:1-4).

In summary, one has to acknowledge the possibility that any person (including the disciples of Jesus), can be deceived. The Scripture uses this word "deceived", in a number of contexts that warn Christians about this possibility. A simple exercise is to look up the word "deceive" in a Concordance where one can discover at least forty references and warnings concerning God's own people being deceived. Most of the Epistles, Galatians, Colossians, Hebrews Corinthians 1 John etc, were written to protect and warn the early church with regard to various doctrinal and behavioural deceptions or deviations that were endemic at that time. The writers were at that time very much aware of this - yet today, seldom is a voice heard concerning even the possibility of deceptions in the church - whether they relate to either belief or behaviour. Does one conclude that such deceptions are no longer prevalent, or are we being deceived?

One also must ask: "what manifestations should be attributed directly to the Holy Spirit's action, and what could be termed a human's subjective physiological response to God's "moving"? This subject would require a book in itself - if one were to examine for instance the response of say Saul, or Ezekiel to "the Hand of the Lord" or to examine David's subjective responses to God in the book of Psalms, or Daniel or Jeremiah one would see a variety of subjective physiological (physical and emotional) responses. For Paul to fall off his horse when he heard the sound from heaven, does not require others to do the same - even if they were in the same situation. The important point is God speaking, not Paul falling. The outcome is always the most important, in terms of obedience to God's revealed will. "LORD what will you have me to do?" is Paul's immediate response - anything that emerges from any experience, however profound, that does not evoke such a response of willing obedience to God's will must be held up to question as to its genuineness. This of course does not always mean that even when God manifests Himself in special ways, we always respond obediently- but it follows that rather than being blessed if we do not respond in this way, we will receive

the greater judgement for to whom much is given, much is required, and special manifestations of God's presence only bring true blessing if obedience follows, whatever we feel. Our measure of love for God does not primarily have to do with warm feelings, but cold obedience - even when we do not feel particularly pleased about it - "Not my will by Thine": Gethsemane! "If you obey my commandments you remain in my love" (John 15:10) must be our measuring rod in determining whether we remain in His love or not - for that is what He has said!.

To make claim that subjective physiological responses are themselves from God may be a misunderstanding of what is happening. God may indeed speak, or manifest Himself as He did for instance to Isaiah in the Temple, but the human response of falling on one's face, or crying out "woe is me", was not that was God forcing Isaiah to do this, but it was his own personal response. Such response could be corporate - as for instance when God manifests His glory so much so that the priests fall on their faces before God's glory (2 Chron 5:13) - the effective manifestation is divine, the subjective response is human. The great danger occurs when man tries to replicate to reduplicate the physiological response, without God moving in the first place! The fact that God moves in mysterious ways, and as the wind, "He blows where He lists", should be sufficient for us to be wary of stereotypes - anticipating that because He worked in this or that way, He always works that way. The only exception to this would be, that whenever a man experiences the majesty and presence of God's holiness, (especially in Revival) two things occur, one an overwhelming sense of awe at who He is, and second an overwhelming sense of one's own sin, accompanied almost universally, by a deep sense of sorrow (repentance) expressed in times of revival by tears, and subsequent joy - because one has experienced forgiveness. The human response to such divine visitations are perfectly natural and reasonable. To experience phenomena which is neither natural nor reason-able and claim it is similar to times of revival does travesty to meaning and leaves one in the danger of accepting the one instead of the other.

Some people feel inhibited by "slavishly following the Bible" because they are out to get any and every experience they can, they are desperate for anything and everything that will make them either feel good or get closer to God - at the expense of discovering and being guided by how people got closer to God in Scripture. There surely can be no greater freedom and liberty for any of God's children than when He is acknowledged as Lord. For where the Spirit is Lord, there is liberty.

Finally one must ask what the purpose of the mightiest outpouring of the Spirit upon the people of God at Pentecost was? It was not for the recipient's benefit! It was in order that peoples from the ends of the earth should hear "the wonderful works of God". The fact that they spoke in other languages (dialektos means intelligible language) meant that Pentecost has to do with communication and mission - a reversion of the confusion of Babel; so it cannot possibly relate to some "private blessing".

For some on the one hand to reduce the significance to Pentecost to merely a regeneration experience is certainly not in line with what Jesus spoke of it as; for others to privatise it, as some personal blessing for themselves is equally unbiblical. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be....witnesses..." "They were all filled with the Spirit and spoke..." How can anyone possibly extract "mission" (being empowered for a purpose), out of Pentecost and thereby destroy its meaning? Are we guilty? If ever there

was a time when the church needed the real thing it is today. Pentecost must be our model - it was not fulfilled on one day in Jerusalem 2000 years ago. In the last days - (plural), God promises to pour out His Spirit..all the signs and wonders promised on that day have not yet been fulfilled - let us look keenly for them and opt for nothing less.

Possibly the greatest sign was 3000 people pricked in their hearts crying out "what shall we do to be saved". Why, in spite of all our claims to being blessed are we not seeing more people convicted of Sin, of Righteousness, and of Judgement?

C H A P T E R 8.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION MODELS

1. THE USE OF DRAMA.
2. THE USE OF 'REDEMPTIVE ANALOGIES'
3. THE USE OF SPIRITUALITY IN COMMUNICATION

THE USE OF DRAMA

Just as there is no single medicine to fit every patient, there is no single communication method for any given culture. Each culture has different ways of effective communication which will be culturally determined. Some feel that monologue is the best form of gospel presentation (based on 1 Cor 1:21,AV.), yet Jesus Himself used a variety of approaches including debate, dialogue, verbal drama (parables) object lessons (the fig tree etc), as well as monologue. It should be pointed out at this juncture, that the above verse is not emphasising the method of communication - preaching - but the content of the message.

The Bible holds no monopoly on one method, it clearly is far more concerned the the message, not the medium and in that sense, the medium is certainly not the message!

A recent communication from a certain Christian radio station reported an amazing change in response to radio programmes beamed into a restricted access country in Asia. This began when the programmers changed to a completely new method or style of communication. Up until 1985 the programmes were the usual Western style with Western style preaching (monologue) and music. The response was meagre. Subsequently they decided to contextualise the presentation using more culturally sensitive approaches and adopting the more traditionally Buddhist language namely Pali. This attracted many Buddhists Monks together with the more religious among the community so much so that short messages started bringing immediate responses. A reporter stated:

It represents to me possibly one of the most effective means I know of engaging Buddhists with the Gospel today. Given that the local people are so well versed in Buddhism, possibly more than any other race - it is particularly encouraging to see how the use of Pali has been so richly rewarded. The programme is not polemic in style but comes alongside the listener and takes him for where he is in his understanding of spiritual realities..... Over a two week

period the results of research showed that 6000+ people responded to the programme, 81.8% of whom were Buddhist, 18.3% per cent Christian and 2.0% Muslim.â

Thus we see that the message and the medium are closely tied. To effectively communicate the message it needs to be packaged in a medium that will be culturally acceptable. For each particular context, it is through the use of local terminology and concepts, leading listeners on from where they are already familiar; so added to the concept of "peace of mind" which is the goal of most Buddhists, there would be introduced the concept that it is possible to have peace of mind in the midst of circumstances (through Christ of course), rather than trying to escape from them. For the Thai and many other surrounding countries, the medium of effective communication is drama. There are few other means of communication which makes such a powerful impact on Asian audiences as the various expressions of dramatic arts.

D R A M A

The most ancient roots of a lot of Asian Drama can be traced back to Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. A single play can take from seven to nine nights.

"Each act is elaborated upon in minutest detail. A repertoire of ten plays is extant. Night after night audiences witness these performances in rapt attention. Participation in the performance is a ritual act comparable to the daily worship the devotee offers to the deity inside the Temple..performances of Ramalila are pervasive throughout India. The life cycle of Rama, hero and god, is also presented during early autumn in Java, Bali, Thailand and Malaysia".

Although Thai drama, "Likay", is eclectic in origin, bringing together Indian and Chinese contexts, it is now regarded as a traditional Thai art form, and whenever presented is sure to draw large crowds. A classic illustration of "contextualising" from the Indian context, it combines music, singing, drama, and narration, with the performers dressed in traditional Thai costume. Often the story will be serious, with the costumes identifying the villain, the victim and the hero. Spectators get so caught up in the dramatic presentation that they often weep and may even threaten the villain from the audience. Humour is also included, usually by one or two "simple minded" characters.

Only recently has this art form been used to present the Gospel in Thailand. Teams from the Bible Training Centre in Phayao (North Thailand), and Payap University (Christian Communications Institute) in Chiangmai have used various art forms to present the Gospel especially Likay. have over recent years spent the hot season in rural evangelism, using Likay as its primary form of communicating the Gospel.

Creating Likay performances of the Gospel parables were one of CCI's first projects. They now have a full-time Thai Troupe, which averages 35 performances per year in rural villages. Such performances serve to break down prejudices against Christianity, which is normally regarded as a Western foreign religion. This group has seen unprecedented acceptance among Thai people. It has also toured many countries and performed at the White House, Washington D.C. The CCI also conducts contemporary evangelistic music programmes in Christian schools, produces weekly radio, and monthly television programmes. The policy of CCI is "to use every art form available to communicate the Gospel of Christ, and through the Gospel to provide non-violent alternatives

for individual and social change". Some of the most popular adaptations from the Bible into Likay, so far include The Prodigal Son, and:

"The story of Esther, modified to carry the Gospel message and an appeal against prejudice, is the Troupe's latest show. The Likay stories we adapt from the Bible are couched in Thai terms and have Thai appeal. Thai people respond more readily to music and drama than to the printed page. For this reason we use bright costumes, exaggerated make-up, and add a few dramatic touches to the original Bible story. However we do not neglect the social message. Because corruption is a major problem in Thai society, we made our rich man in the Lazarus story commit all kinds of corruption and hence deserve eternal punishment. But Lazarus learned that faith in Christ makes anyone a new person".

Such examples of the use of Thai art forms performed by the CCI Troupe, required much skill and substantial financial backing. Yet local churches have the ability to use this medium both for evangelism and education. Rural Thai especially, respond to this oral and visual means of communication. Experiments have been conducted in many local churches with much success. Smith observes: "After 1960 the OMF collected and published indigenous hymns written by a converted Likay musician Samyong, as well as other Thai composers. These songs are most popular in rural congregations. The C.&M.A. have also printed several volumes of Lam Lao, North Eastern minstrel chants. In Udorn Jim Gustafson, with Thai helpers is working on Thai instrumental orchestration for their rural congregations. Drama is also being used. For example a Christian family in Uthaitani who had been in a drama troop before conversion, initiated a family gospel drama team. In Thai style, they write, produce and present excellent cultural portrayals of the Scriptures. Each year they volunteer two months in the dry season to evangelise nearby villages through this drama medium. Another drama team has developed from the Thai at the Seminary and Phayap College in Chiangmai. A few Thai Christians in the South have also utilised a lantern shadow play using flat rubber puppet figures to good effect. IT IS HOPED THAT MORE EXPERIMENTS WILL DEVELOP THIS INDIGENOUS MEANS OF COMMUNICATION WHICH WILL RESULT IN MORE EFFECTIVE GOSPEL PROPAGATION" (my capitals).

More recently Thai art and drawings have been adapted to present various Bible stories. They have proved to be a most effective method of communication using culturally attractive means. (see appendix). In considering the use of culturally appropriate forms, the New Testament could be used as a model. St. Paul for instance never separated so-called "secular" forms of communication from "sacred" forms, nor labelled some forms unacceptable or taboo. The "Incarnational principle", clearly described in 1 Corinthians 9:19-20, was taken up by William Carey, when he advocated "the use of MEANS for the conversion of the heathen". Paul states "I have become all things to all

men, so that by ALL MEANS I might save some". If this principle is applied to Asian cultures, then the present Western approach and methodology should be rejected, and appropriate Asian cultural forms used in their place. This principle would apply to the presentation of the Gospel within any country - it should adopt the local art forms which are already familiar and generally appreciated by the local community.

If missionaries simply allowed the local people freedom to develop their own forms of worship, culturally appropriate forms would develop naturally. One need not fear that the Asian Christian would merely copy Buddhist forms of worship since such worship is devoid of joy and celebration which is the essence of Christian worship. Such joyful expression in worship would develop in a uniquely indigenous way, attracting non Christians and yet keeping true to the Gospel.

To restrain or hinder such expressions of worship by Asian people in their own forms is to impose upon them a burden of foreignness, an unnecessary yoke, which the church may be able to bear, but which the masses outside the church would certainly not be willing to bear. Such action would deny the Holy Spirit the right to guide and inspire local people in creating forms of worship pleasing to Him.

Withholding this right to express worship in their own God-given cultural forms has been the missionaries most serious mistake. This attitude reflects a lack of belief that God is able to guide Asian people to worship Him in culturally appropriate ways, without compromising the essence of the message. The problem is that "mono-culture missionaries" themselves, seem unable to separate what is essentially the "seed of the Gospel" from what is actually the "soil of their own culture"- they have not "de-Westernised the Gospel". The following chart can help determine what the essential Biblical forms of worship would be. By applying a typical Sunday's activities to this grid we will be able to determine what is Biblical and what is cultural:

CULTURAL FORMS.		
BIBLICAL FORMS:		
1. Time of worship (culturally determined)		No Biblical stereotype.
2. Type of building (culturally determined) style.		No Biblical
3. Layout inside building (pews)	"	No Biblical model.
4. Use of Pulpit/Platform	"	No Biblical model.
5. Mode and order of Service	"	No Biblical precedent.

From this short list it can be seen, that almost everything that happens on a Sunday is culturally determined. The essentials of Christian worship recorded in the New Testament include singing of hymns and songs, prayers, reading and teaching from Scripture, using the gifts of the Spirit, observing Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These may be considered trans-cultural in content, but not in form.. None of these essentials was conducted in ways that would have been foreign to the participants at that time. New forms of worship were no doubt used, but they would not have been imported from an alien culture. Gilliland points out:

"Worship that is in context will, in the first place guarantee that freedom to innovate. Freedom is the essence of the gospel itself, and leads to creativity in the Spirit. No worship pattern that does not fit Ephesus or Philippi is allowed to be exported from Jerusalem. Paul did not expect any such imitating, nor did he foster it. In Africa we have wondered many times if self expression in worship might not more readily be achieved out of doors. Sitting in rows to worship may be what is expected as correct by most orthodox churches, but who is to say

that this is the only "Christian" form?...worship in context will, express the theological concepts held by people.

This very important mark of indigenous worship will depend on how much "thinking through", the faith has been done by new Christians...there is evidence that certain quite local creeds were beginning to develop by the time Paul wrote his pastoral epistles....It is sad that mission churches that have used Western theological concepts and liturgies often object to change simply because they have been using the foreign form for so long that truly indigenous concepts and texts would not be familiar".

Worship at the local level should always be determined by local culture, and if that culture has no appropriate forms (which is highly improbable), then the local people, depending on the inspiration of the Spirit, would determine and create new forms thereby minimising any need for the introduction of foreign elements.

R E D E M P T I V E A N A L O G I E S .

If God has "not left himself without a witness" in the various cultures, then the primary task of the missionary should be to find the "entry point" into that culture. Don Richardson has called this "Finding the Eye-Opener", or "Concept Fulfilment". His thesis, along with other Missiologists, is that cultures contain keys which will open the hearts of the people so that the Gospel will be "good news" to them. Each culture will have a different entry point, a different set of keys to unlock its doors. The entry point for John the Baptist was the

proclamation of Jesus as the "Lamb of God ". He stated that Jesus was the perfect fulfilment of all that had gone on before - "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world". For Nicodemus Jesus used "concept fulfilment" when he related the story of the Brass Serpent on a pole from John 3:14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:14). Time and again Jesus used this method, speaking of Himself as the "True Manna", the Bread of Life, that comes down from Heaven. The Pharisees were aware of Ezekiel's indictment against Israel's unfaithful Shepherds (chapter 34), and so were conscious of the depth of Jesus' meaning when He spoke of Himself as "The True Shepherd" - a concept fulfilment.

Hebrews shows that Christ actually fulfilled all the central elements of Jewish culture, the Priesthood, Tabernacle, Sacrifices and even the Sabbath Rest. The purpose of these "shadows" is to point to the substance, Christ.

Some support Biblical "Redemptive Analogies" but argue strongly against analogies taken from pagan or non Hebrew cultures. But God is still the originator of cultures and His image, however dim, is still reflected in these cultures. Concerning an "unknown God" is a case in point. Why is it then that missionaries have been so slow in adopting this strategy?

"The strategy of concept fulfilment can be applied by missionaries today -if only we learn to discern the particular redemptive analogies of each culture. Consider the advantage; when conversion is accompanied by concept fulfilment, the individuals redeemed become aware of the spiritual meaning dormant within their own culture. Conversion does not deny their cultural background, leaving them disoriented. Rather they experience heightened insight into both the Scriptures and their own human setting, and are thus better prepared to share Christ meaningfully with other members of their societies".

Richardson presents irrefutable evidence for the effectiveness of concept fulfilment, when he lists tribe after tribe who have turned in large numbers, following an understanding that the Gospel fulfils their prophetic expectations.

He mentions the "Damal" people who anticipated a long awaited "Golden Age" within their mythology called "Hai". When Christ's second Advent was preached the Damal took this as fulfilled prophesy and responded in large numbers. The nearby "Dani" had a similar prophesy in their culture and began to enquire. They believed that one day it would be possible for man to become immortal. Upon hearing of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they accepted that He was to be "the firstborn among many" and they turned in mass to Christ. The Karen tribe in Burma, the Lahu tribe, the Yali tribe in Irianjaya, and perhaps more notably the Sawi tribe, (of "Peace Child" fame), have all turned to Christ as a result of finding the "Eye Opener" into their culture. Dr. Arthur Glasser of Fuller Theological Seminary, warns us, however, that Richardson has a tendency to find such analogies in almost anything within the culture, especially in regard to the so called "high god" in primitive religion, a concept absent in Buddhism, for they have no god at all.

The question must be asked, are there any redemptive analogies in Thai culture? It is highly probable that there are many such keys or entry points. Some may have yet to be unearthed, simply because the notion of concept fulfilment has rarely been presented to Thai people. The concept of "transference of merit and substitution" has been applied, but the use of myths, legends, prophecies etc., has seldom been investigated or used, with perhaps one exception.

Buddhist Scripture speaks clearly of a coming Messiah. Although there are said to have been at least 27 appearances of Messiahs before Gotama, as well as those to come, the one Messiah who is foremost in Buddhist aspirations and prayers is "Metteya (Maitreya)" This Messiah ranks as the highest of Bodhisattvas and is the most popular figure in Buddhist Art. At the scene of his death, Buddha is reported to have said:

"I am not the first Buddha who came upon earth, nor shall I be the last. In due time another Buddha will arise in this world, a holy one, a supremely enlightened one, endowed with wisdom in conduct, auspicious, knowing the universe, an incomparable leader of men, a master of angels and mortals. He will proclaim a religious life, wholly perfect and pure; such as I now proclaim...He will be known as Metteya, which means "he whose name is kindness".

Various Buddhist Scriptures expand on the nature and activity of Metteya. He is regarded as all powerful, a Prince (of Peace), for that is the meaning of his name. According to a Dictionary of Buddhism, he is the one who

will take on human form to deliver the world when it is on the verge of destruction. He prophesies:

"I shall lift human beings out of the mire of gross ignorance and error, and enable them to cross over this troubled world to the realm of happiness on the farther shore. Those who are entangled in the meshes of sinful passions, or who still drink the bitter waters of unrighteous desire, or have lost their way in the endless maze of this troubled series of existences; to them shall I preach revealing to them the road to the pearly city, that is the Land of Happiness, Nirvana....I shall open with the key of true doctrine. With eye medicine shall I cleanse the eyes, that is the understanding of those whose vision is defective having become blurred by evil desire, or by anger, or hatred, or ignorance....to those who have lost their way in the wilderness because of darkness I shall give you light".

It is highly probable that many of the early Christians in Thailand became Christian, because they saw Christ, as the fulfilment of this ancient prophecy. As early as 1897, Dr. W.C. Dodds made a number of visits to the "Tai" peoples of Southern China presenting the Gospel as the fulfilment of Buddhist prophecies. This is how Dodds records one incident when among the Tai Lu peoples of Sib Sawng Pan Na area.

"It was a fine sight to see their mirth change to reverence, then to deepest interest. The message was absolutely new to them, and many of them lifted their hands in adoration. As the adoration was directed neither to me nor the picture, but to the "Coming One", who I was heralding, I did not forbid. One man said 'Is this Yesu, he whom we call Ariya Metteyaí? I replied, 'YES', because Ariya in Sanskrit means Ayran, high born, and Metteya, means merciful. I then proceeded to show that Jesus is Highest born of all who ever came to earth, and that He is all-merciful. As I was speaking the man's countenance fell, and he said sadly, 'And so the Coming One has already come, and we did not see Himí. At once I understood the man's sorrowful reception of what ought to have been the best news he ever heard. Buddhist books teach that Ariya Metteya, the next Buddha will deliver from the ever ceaseless round of births all who are alive on this earth...in all the countless ages, this is the one chance of salvation; and the poor man's first thought was that he and all the rest of them had missed that one chance. Quick as a flash from heaven came a light into his face, a reflection, I doubt not of the illumination of the Spirit in his heart and he added, "We did not see Him with our eyes; but we see pictures of Him, we see His book and hear His message, we are here when His religion comes, and that is enough". I believe fully that he accepted the message".

More recently a Thai Pastor records a "find" that was made by his father in an ancient document in a Buddhist Monastery in North Thailand. He records as follows:

This unpublished document which I received from my father was a copy of Buddhist Scriptures placed at Pra-sing Temple at Chiangmai. In one section of this document which is part of Buddha's prophecy, a certain old Brahman asked the Buddha about how to be saved from sin. The Buddha answered that regardless of how many laws you have kept, or even if you pray five times a day, you shall not be saved. Buddha continues saying that sin is too great to be washed away; even though I become a hermit, for more than eight 'A-song-kaií or am reborn for another ten times, I shall not be saved. The Brahman asked what Mettaya's character is. The Buddha

answered that in his hands and feet are wounds, his side has a wound which was pierced and his forehead is full of scars from wounds. He is the gold ship to carry you to heaven where you will find the Tri-praí (the Crystal Triune god). Thus, give up following the old way. A spirit from heaven will come and dwell in your heart by which you will overcome your enemies from both four and eight directionsí.

The Thai Pastor was so excited upon reading this manuscript, and amazed to see how remarkably similar it was to prophecies concerning Messiah in the Old Testament. He thought that perhaps this document had been a ěplant by early Christians in Thailandí. He states:

ĪThese questions came into my mind and fearing that this document was influenced by Christians in Thailand, I went to the temple in Chiangmai. I got the answer from an assistant professor at Chiangmai University that this Buddhaís prophecy was written in the local language of the Old Kingdom located at the present Chiangmai. It was written before the present Thailand was established. Therefore it is impossible that the writer of this document was influenced by ChristianityĪ.

The Thai Pastorís conclusion is the same as many Missiologists today. Hidden somewhere within each culture, there will be keys that can unlock the good news to the recipients of those cultures.

ĪJesus, the Metteya, is the Holy One, thus Christ Jesus is also the fulfilment of the One whom Buddha asked his followers to wait for. He is the one, but Buddhists have not yet known about this comingĪ.

A recent conversation with a Cambodian Pastor at the Refugee Camp, in Thailand, revealed an interesting fact concerning a similar prophecy in Cambodian mythology. In those crisis days just before the fall of Phnom Penh, many thousands of Cambodians showed a great interest in the Gospel through the ministry of Stanley Mooneyham, then Director of World Vision International. The Pastor felt that Mooneyham must have done research into the history and prophecies concerning one ĪMetteyyaĪ, who was to come and save Cambodian people. Mooneyham centred in on Christ as the fulfilment of these prophecies. The Pastor was both surprised and delighted that there was a parallel prophecy extant in Thai Buddhism. This of course is not surprising, for both Thai and Cambodian religious vocabulary has its same source in Pali and Sanskrit. What is more important is the fact that this prophecy was known in at least five countries; China Thailand and Cambodia Myanmar and Sri Lanka (as we shall see later). The Cambodian Pastor went on to say that his 84 year old Mother had come to Christ as a result of a dream in which she saw Christ with wounds in his hands and side. She related that immediately to her knowledge of Metteyya, which she had received from her forebears.

This does not mean that all missionaries in Thailand or the surrounding countries agree on using "Metteyya" as a bridge to lead people to Christ. Roman Catholics are certainly not agreed either. In a Paper published by the Bishop Salasí Cambodian Catholic Centre, the writer questions the appropriateness of what he terms ĪThe Protestant Approach to reaching Cambodians with the GospelĪ.

ĪSome Protestants tentatively replace the word ěChristí by a Buddhist word Metteya- the Buddha of the end of all times of this world that will make everything new. It is tempting to say Īthe ěMetteyyaĪ, who you Buddhists are

expecting has already come, he is Jesus Christ, he has fulfilled the expectations of Humankind.

However there is a big question - do we have to Christianise Buddhism or to "Buddhisize" Christianity? We certainly can present Jesus as the one who fulfils the expectations, the desire for happiness which is common to human kind.

Some Buddhists fear that such prophecies will draw their people away from the faith and have made the claim that these prophecies were actually planted by the early Christian missionaries to North Thailand. Yet it is highly unlikely that you would find the same prophecies in five separate countries, Cambodia, China, Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka, if this had been a plant by missionaries in an obscure Temple in North Thailand and that relatively recently. A well known authority on Buddhism in Burma (Myanmar) records clearly the expectant hopes of Buddhists for the coming of this "Prince of Peace" for centuries. He indicates that there are inscriptions and images of "Metteyya" which have been found in Pagan, the "holy city" of Burma. This author also clearly intimates this prophecy having been known by "the kings of Ceylon" and in all Theravada countries!

"The worship of the Future Buddha, Metteya, who is now living in the abode of the gods, has been prevalent in Burma for centuries. The details of his life and when he comes are so well known to the Burmese that he is known to them as Arit-Metteya. His images have been found in Pagan...even in Ceylon, where Theravada Buddhism has a more or less continuous history, kings set up for worship statues of the future Buddha and in all Theravada countries, devout Buddhists piously hope to be able to worship the Buddha Metteyya in person and listen to his preaching when he appears".

A recent article written by a leading Buddhist scholar in Thailand makes a scathing attack on the Catholics in this regard. They have, says the scholar, deceitfully taken a Buddhist prophecy and applied it to Christ. He claims to possess a top-secret document from the Vatican, which encourages all Catholic priests in Thailand to use this prophecy, in order to "destroy completely every vestige of Buddhism and put the Cross in its place". Another booklet, published by a Buddhist priest entitled "Buddha and Christ", also claims that Christians are guilty of stealing Buddhist concepts and applying them to Christ. Both scholars feel that using this prophecy undermines Buddhism and is therefore basically dishonest.

This may reflect the same feeling that the Jews have when they hear passages in the Old Testament (especially the "Servant songs" of Isaiah) being applied to Jesus rather than "the Servant of Yahweh". Perhaps Buddhists could find some consolation, that in spite of the prolonged Christian usage over millennia of these prophecies from what is essentially Jewish Scripture, Judaism is still strong. Many Christians however, are convinced that any such prophecies are part of God's preparation for the coming of Christ, and because they are common to most cultures there is every justification in using them with integrity for they are essentially "general revelation" a part of God's preparation in bringing the nations to Himself.

The oriental mind places great value of the mystical, subjective experience of the worshipper. The eastern mind places emphasis on "spirituality" a quality of life which stresses meditation, contemplation and asceticism rather than the cerebral and logical approach of the West. This is why many Buddhist's discount Christianity as a "shallow" religion which is incapable of answering the deep philosophical questions of life. This is why the topic of "spirituality" is so relevant to any discussion on contextualising the gospel, especially in Asia.

The term "spirituality" is extremely difficult to define. Both Christianity and Zen speak of mystical experience but from different perspectives. Thomas Merton has written a great deal on the relationship of the two. He concludes that such comparisons are difficult especially on the level of doctrine or teaching. Zen is subjective realisation, while Christianity is objective in that it relates primarily to history and doctrine. Wm. Shannon interprets Merton:

Christianity is verbal: much ink has been spilled in expounding its doctrine, Zen is, as far as possible, non-verbal. To compare the two at the level of doctrine, therefore would be futile. For Christianity, doctrine is of primary importance: in Zen it is accidental. But there is a possible point of meeting for the two: namely at the level of experience.

Although two people may have the same experience subjectively, we cannot conclude that the source of their experience was the same anymore than a Doctor would conclude that all headaches have the same cause! The problem of defining spirituality is therefore complex, differing writers giving exhaustive definitions. Michael Cox in quoting *Varieties of Religious Experience*, says that William James gives four basic absolute categories for describing Christian spirituality:

One: Ineffability - an unutterable, indescribable experience, not a psychological condition. A mystical experience of God's presence.
Two: Noetic quality - Knowledge that can be grasped by intuition and insight activated by a source beyond itself.
Three: Transience - mystical experiences rarely last long, though their significance and effects far outweigh the proportion of their duration.
Four: Passivity - the feeling of something given - a feeling of being overwhelmed by a greater will than one's own, which subsides temporarily.

One distinctive element of Christian spirituality is that it normally produces an overwhelming desire to help meet society's physical and spiritual needs. Jesus comes out of the desert to relieve the needs of the multitudes. True Christian withdrawal and contemplation explodes into action. The *waiting* by the disciples before Pentecost is seen to produce results in the rest of the book of Acts as the church moves out into the world. Spirituality in the Christian community is collective rather than isolated and individual.

Mysticism in its authentic form moves out from individual experience to collective spirituality and functions as an essential vivifying current in the spiritual life of the whole Church. The life and influence of St. Francis is perhaps the supreme example of this creative process, emphasising that the true Christian mystic does not withdraw from life.

A further distinctive of Christian spirituality is that it is essentially Christocentric and Theocentric. Its sources are rooted in both Old and New

Testaments. Spirituality in Israel was understood in terms of the presence of God (the *Shekina*) manifested in the midst of his people not as an individual quality of the obedient worshipper. If God was not manifestly present then Israel saw themselves as no different from the other nations:

Then Moses said to Him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are with me and with you people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

The presence of God was symbolised by the Tabernacle, the Temple, the great Feasts such as Passover, and lesser feasts of Purim and Dedication. One of the Prophets' warning themes to Israel was that God's presence may depart from the midst of His people. Ezekiel sees the *Shekina* glory departing from the Temple. This theme was one of the worst fears of Israel. It is often intimated in the Psalms (Ps 51:11, 73:23-26):

We can say that the presence of God is one of the central themes of the Old Testament. The Torah sets out the terms on which God will be with his people; the histories show from concrete examples how his presence can be forfeited, and how gracious must be the God who never lets his absence from an unworthy people become permanent; the prophets look forward to the day when God will never be or even seem to be absent again; and the Psalms reflect on all these aspects of presence and absence as they effect both the worshipping community and the individual at prayer.

Spirituality in the Old Testament seemed to relate more to the concept of *shalom*, - positive *wholiness* (wholeness), rather than a negating metaphysical mysticism. It was *collective* (affecting the whole community), rather than individual. The prayers of Old Testament saints, which reflected this type of spirituality and Jewish piety, were for God to visit His people in mercy holiness and justice. The belief, was that God was present, not with those who seek to see Him, but with those who seek to obey Him:

We should understand this to mean that the personality of the God of Israel (together with his overwhelming, all-conquering wholly transcendent majesty) made itself felt as increasingly present, more and more immediately perceived in all things, to the degree that this transformation was brought about. Its term was not a religion without prayers and without rites, but a religion in which prayer and rites were permeated with the sense of the nearness of God together with His elevation. The Israelite is a man who lives, who tends to live constantly in the sight of God. His perpetual reflex act is to pray with Isaiah "woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people with unclean lips, and yet my eyes have seen the Lord". But this reflex is accompanied by the continually renewed certainty expressed in the vision of the Seraph taking the burning coal from the altar and saying "this has purified your lips". The purity of heart towards which the requirements of religion thus tend is not a mere interior rectitude; it is the disposition to encounter God: God manifested in the history of his people which is also the history of each person, God manifested as intervening in us in a mysterious way to carry out at the same time both his promises and his demands.

The history of Christian spirituality drawing as it does from its Jewish antecedents, ought never to be seen as the product of subjective metaphysics. Spirituality derives from relationship, rather than mere reflection, from

communion with a person, rather than contemplation of a subjective state. For the follower of Christ, spirituality will never be divorced from either personal piety or the fulfilment of its social obligations. Loving your enemies, praying for those who persecute you, showing concern for the poor and the widow are radical dimensions of Christian spirituality which make the Kingdom of God. The replacing of the heart of stone with a heart of flesh as spoken by Ezekiel, reflects true Christian spirituality; where man is not only commanded to love the Lord thy God and thy neighbour as thyself, but actually wants to do so. The early church drew their models of spirituality from the Old Testament sources. The Apostles, including Paul were thoroughly steeped in Hebrew theology and spirituality.

It is intriguing to observe the way Paul defines his own spiritual experiences. His emphasis is more on the source of such experiences, rather than his own subjective feelings. He spoke of receiving revelation from Jesus Christ, placing the emphasis on the cause rather than the effect. He refers to his Damascus road experience three times in Acts (9:1-19, 22:5-16; 26: 10-18); the emphasis here too, is on the voice from heaven, not primarily on his subjective response to the voice. There are at least three recorded incidents where the Lord communicated to Paul in visions (Acts 16:9; 18:9; 27:23). Perhaps the most important visitation Paul experienced from God, was the one he described to the church at Corinth:

I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven - whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know - God knows. And I know that this man - whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows, was caught up to Paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that a man is not permitted to tell....to keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh.

Commentators assert that this experience of not knowing whether he was in the body, probably occurred after he was stoned and left for dead at Lystra (Acts 14:19-20). This was not some form of self-induced astral projection, the result of extreme asceticism or intense meditation, nor did it require some sort of mediator or middle-man to minister channel this experience. It was wholly outside himself - he did not contribute to it. He was caught up to Paradise, implying the action was from someone else. Accompanying the vision was a thorn in the flesh accompanied by an audible voice My grace is sufficient for you. Paul heard inexpressible things, that a man was not permitted to tell. Such was not the experience of a man out of his mind. Paul's deepest mystical experience had within it the essential ingredients of all true Christian spirituality:

1. An overwhelming subjective experience of God. I knew a Man in Christ, showing a personal relationship with Christ.
2. The experience was likened to being caught up to paradise. This legitimises experiences which cannot be explained in reasonable terms. This is why love for God has been termed affective spirituality.
3. Throughout the experience, there was communication and communion. The experience was both mystical and pedagogical.
4. Its effect was strengthening and ongoing. It enabled Paul to carry on his work and witness. My grace is sufficient for you.

Michael Cox in speaking of Paul's experience suggests:

While there was much new in his mystical apprehension, his spiritual life forms a bridge between the Old and New Testaments, across which Christian tradition gained full access to the heritage of Hebrew Scripture. St. Paul clearly illustrates the threefold mystical way through the intensity of his moral struggles, the gradual illumination as the life of prayer develops, and the final consummation of union with Christ – I live, not I; but Christ lives in me. His experience on the road to Damascus is as profound as the consciousness of the Old Testament prophets, that they were being called to be the mouthpieces of God; but the element which is wholly new in Paul's experience is its conviction of direct person to person contact.

The voice he hears asks him – Why persecutest thou Me, to which Paul replies – Who art THOU, Lord? Paul's union with Christ is a unity of faith and love; it is a moral, not a metaphysical union, one in which – as in all Christian mysticism – the integrity of the human and the divine nature remains unviolated. This is not the Neoplatonic union of the alone with the Alone: it is a genuine mystical relationship that takes place within the very body of Christ – His Church.

Paul's use of hymns in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 also manifest aspects of spirituality; that he may have even borrowed concepts from non-Christian hymnody and reloaded the words with Christian content in some of these passages. Formulas stating belief and expressing prayer in the Epistles are common (cf. Phillipians 2:6-11).

Often such formulas were fused together so that prayer to God emerges from the faith statements about God.

The climactic characteristic of Christian spirituality, is love (already defined as affective spirituality). God Himself is love, therefore the supreme Christian virtue must be love. Isaac Watts calls this the singular story of our religion. Once again, the true source of Christian love must be distinguished from mere human love. Here man is overwhelmed by God's love, it is the love OF God (originating from God) that is experienced, rather than man's love FOR God. Paul expresses this in Romans: And hope does not disappoint us, because God has Poured out

His Love, into our hearts, by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us. The quality of Christian spirituality is reciprocal, we love Him, because He first loved us.

It is intimate and trusting, we call Him	Our Father,.
It is reverent,	Hallowed be thy Name.
It has future eschatological aspirations,	Thy Kingdom Come.
It has present social implications, as it is in heaven.	Thy will be done on earth
It is dependent,	give us this day our daily bread.
It is repentant,	forgive us our trespasses.
It is forgiving, against us.	as we forgive those who trespass
It aspires to holy living,	lead us not into temptation.
It anticipates struggle – power encounter,	deliver us from evil.
It recognises His Sovereignty, Power and glory	For thine is the Kingdom the
It anticipates eternity.	For ever and for ever
It reflects certainty- it will be son.	Amen!

Christian spirituality is the instrument and vehicle through which God's saving grace is to be made known to all people. By this will ALL MEN know that you are

my disciples if you have love for one another (13:35). It is this love for Christ that constrains Paul to reach out with the good news:

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again.

Christian spirituality without love profits nothing, it is like a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. It may be all knowing, all believing, and totally sacrificial, but if it is not permeated in love from God, it is nothing, valueless, meaningless. True spirituality comprises of faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love. The Cross, the centre of Christianity is the paradigm of spirituality, the ultimate declaration to man of God's love. The study of spirituality is a discipline in its own right and has a vast literature. Little or nothing has been printed in S.E. Asian languages, so the Church has only its Missionaries as models of spirituality! They hardly reflect the vast legacy of spirituality of the world-wide Church of God, nor are they attractive to Buddhists, who see their own spirituality more desirable. Some of the following elements of spirituality must be seen by Buddhists before Christian Spirituality could be perceived in any way as a means of communicating the Gospel; a life of meditation and prayer; a life of sacrifice and self denial; a life of compassion, demonstrated in good works; a life of detachment and unconcern for materialism. Christian spirituality should be the most attractive and effective means of communicating the Good News. Christians are called to demonstrate those qualities and virtues of Christ in order that the world may be attracted to Christ:

The credential of the church is her spirituality as perceived by the Buddhists. There is need to take the contextual factor into far more serious consideration than it has in the past. But this can only happen as the Church rises and fits into the cultural configuration of the people.

CHAPTER 9.

BIBLICAL PRECEDENTS FOR THE CONCEPT OF CONTEXTUALISATION.

1. THE OLD TESTAMENT AND CONTEXTUALISATION

Some have questioned - why do we need this chapter at all? This in fact is probably the most important part of the whole book - for if we can find no Biblical precedents for the whole concept of Contextualisation, then we are left to the speculative and the subjective. One may say - 'I contextualise because I feel it is right' - or another may state: 'why should I contextualise at all?' - but such responses are not adequate for the Christian worker, who must appeal to the authority of Scripture both in doctrine and in practice. If there is no Biblical basis for contextualisation, either in the ministry of Jesus, or in the underlying principles of how the early church operated, then we are free to arbitrarily do as we please, for we would have no bench marks to use or models to work from. But if we can find in the Old Testament and in the New, clear evidence for the principle, then we would be skating on very thin ice to ignore or neglect such an important process of communicating the good news.

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND CONTEXTUALISATION:

Many Old Testament scholars try to find a string of supposed 'evolutionary patterns' in development from primitive religions into the more sophisticated

Judeo/Christian monotheism. Oesterly and Robinson's book 'Hebrew Religion; its Origin and Development,' uses 121 out of 417 pages attempting without much success to highlight the relationship of the Hebrew religion to animism, polytheism, and other aspects of primitive religion as if one necessarily developed out of the other.

Norman H. Snaith runs counter to the findings of many of these scholars. He questions the supposition that all religions have the same origins and defends the "distinctiveness" of especially the Hebrew religion. Snaith states:

"Our concern is with elements of OT religion which distinguish it from other religions. We recognise the importance of realising that the Hebrews had many items of belief and practice in common with other peoples of antiquity, but our interest in these common features, is for our present purposes, definitely secondary. We are concerned with them only in so far as the study of them throws into greater and clearer relief the essential differences. Our aim here is so far as maybe, to isolate and emphasise the distinctive elements of OT religion".

An illustration of unacceptable elements in pagan religion excluded from (because they would have been unacceptable) the Hebrew religion would be for instance the Egyptian and Babylonian preoccupation with death and the after-life. They had a sophisticated belief system involving Ancestor worship, child sacrifice, preparations for the 'other world', with numerous rites, rituals and ceremonies enacted to bolster their beliefs.

Moses discriminately and deliberately avoids any mention of the after-life, as do most of the writers of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament reflects an interaction between the surrounding nations, Hebrew culture and the revealed "Word of God". When Yahweh chose Israel (Ex.19v6-7) in a special way to be "my people", He at the same time transformed many of the existing pagan rituals and cultural forms and utilised them for perpetual implementation by His people. Of course these outward cultural forms were "reinterpreted" with new inner meaning, but there is no doubt that they were already "there" before Yahweh chose the people of Israel. Few Scholars deny now, that many of the rituals Israel adopted had pagan origins. The annual feasts and even circumcision had pagan antecedents or counterparts. Yet many concepts which conflicted with divine self-disclosure, such as Canaanite concepts of El, the Baals, etc, were progressively removed as the patriarchal story developed. This may sound obscure and academic - but the principles behind what is happening in the Old Testament apply to how we should interact with our own previously pagan religious belief systems and those from the surrounding cultures of our day. Israel could not live in isolation and was therefore continually being affected by rituals and belief systems from surrounding religions. Bruce Nicholls states that:

"During the pilgrimage of the Israelites as nomads in the Promised Land, followed by their captivity in Egypt, and then during the wilderness journey, undesirable elements of the surrounding culture were progressively weakened and eliminated. Idolatry, pagan sexual immorality, corrupt economic and political practices, came under the judgment of God".

He also states, "In the formation of a covenanted people, God transformed some of these cultural forms such as circumcision to his purposes and rejected others such as idolatry. Here we see clearly the principle of continuity and discontinuity operating hand in hand. The story of the Patriarchs, is on the one hand a progressive de-culturalisation of undesirable elements, such as idolatry, sexual immorality, corrupt economic and political practices, and on the other hand, it is an "extension" of other elements from the previous cultural norms or religious forms. The basis of this selection process, will be investigated later. It has been said that the Old Testament is largely the record of the ongoing struggle against the syncretistic tendency of the Baalization of Yahweh worship which continued from the Patriarchs until the exile.

"At times of faith and dependence on God, the people of God acknowledged his Lordship over their total behaviour and the degree of false cultural conditioning by the neighbouring cultures became minimal and the rebuke of the prophets effective. This acknowledging of God's Lordship over history by the covenant people, transformed cultural conditioning from a problem and a curse, to a channel of revelation and grace. The transformed function of circumcision is a case in point, but later degeneration turned it into a stumbling block to true faith".

H. Wheeler Robinson indicates both the principle of continuity and discontinuity in Israel when he states:

"It is this moral intensity, then, which more than anything else, lifted the religion of Israel above that of all its contemporaries, and gave it the power to assimilate foreign contributions without loss of its native strength and continuity. Israel's history is remarkable for the number of influences operating upon it from without. Had it not been for this moral intensity, the nature-worship of Canaan might easily have permanently degraded the religion of Israel to its own low level of sensuality. But the moral instinct of the nation was guided by its leaders to "take the precious from the vile"; the necessary FORMS OF WORSHIP WERE BORROWED, whilst the immoral features of the Baal-cult, such as religious prostitution, were, at least ultimately rejected. The same selective moral sense worked on the legislation and mythology derived from Babylon, and gave them a NEW VALUE AND MEANING. No better proof of the inherent vitality and moral strength of the faith of Israel could be given, than this power it possessed to assimilate and transform the various elements due to its historical environment". (my capitals).

Robinson may give us some clues here as to the modus operandi for the correct application of the principle of continuity and discontinuity within a given culture.

Some scholars, such as H. H. Rowley, interpret the Covenant ritual of walking between the divided sacrifices in Genesis 15 as a willingness to be dismembered (as the sacrifices) if either party broke the Covenant. In the incident recorded in Genesis however, Abraham stands on one side, and it is Yahweh alone who passes between the pieces. The reason appears to be that Yahweh again takes a familiar ritual belonging to the culture and reinterprets it in a way that must be both acceptable to Him, and yet still maintains significant resemblances to its former meaning., but is nevertheless distinctive Dr. Arthur Glasser states in his "Theology of Mission " lectures:

"This ritual was widely used in those days when two contractual parties sealed their covenant

commitment to one another by passing between the divided carcasses of sacrificed beasts and thus

invoked upon themselves a similar fate should they break their covenanted promise, each to the other.

But the covenant God made touching Abraham and his seed was altogether within the Godhead.

Abraham was off to the side. A spectator, completely passive, while God in Shekinah presence moved alone between the slaughtered animals. God and God alone was the covenant's initiator. He alone made the promises and he alone would be the guarantor of their being kept".

The sign of the Covenant, circumcision, no doubt had pagan precedents. The original rite was probably a transition rite of puberty but it was "reloaded" with divine content by its use on infants. In an exhaustive study on the subject De Vaux states:

"It seems, then, that the Israelites were not distinguished from the Semitic population which they displaced, or with whom they mingled in Palestine, by the fact of circumcision. On the contrary they seemed to have adopted this custom when they settled in Canaan (Cf. Gn 17:9-14, 23-27; Jos 5:2-9.), but with them the practice took on a particular religious significance. Originally, and as a general rule circumcision seems to have been an initiation-rite before marriage; consequently, it also initiated a man into the common life of the clan...The custom must originally have had the same purpose in Israel: the story of the Shechemites expressly connects it with marriage (Gn 34); the obscure episode of Ex 4:24-26 seems to refer to marriage also, for the pretence of circumcising Moses makes him a "bridegroom of blood". We may add that the Hebrew words for bridegroom, son-in-law and father-in-law are all derived from the same root, HATAN which means in Arabic "to circumcise". Circumcision, therefore, is regarded as that which makes a man fit for normal sexual life: it is an initiation to marriage. This significance must have died out when the operation was performed soon after birth. Above all religion gave the rite a more lofty significance".

Circumcision, therefore, substantiates the principle of "continuity vis a vis discontinuity". Parts of the ritual were ideinvested of their original meaning (discontinuity) while some parts were a continuation, having similarities to their original purpose and meaning and re-investing other aspects with new meaning. There would have been no misunderstanding that they were still being used in exactly the same manner and for exactly the same purpose as their previous pagan usage.

"From its inception infant circumcision was the distinctive Israelite custom, not derived from Egyptian or other practice and contrasting sharply with the puberty rites of other nations: the latter point to social acknowledgement of adult status, the former to a status before God and a prevenience of divine grace".

There is unlimited evidence to substantiate these findings from theologians across the board. Four outstanding books that offer extensive and thorough scholarship regarding this matter are: "Ancient Israel, its Life and Institutions" by De Vaux, "The History of Israel" by Martin Noth, and "A Survey of Israel's History" by Leon Wood, "The Tribes of Yahweh" by N. K. Gottwald.

Although such findings may disturb Evangelicals, there should be an acceptance of the fact that in this act, God is validating many important cultural forms

which we in a monocultural environment may write off as "pagan", or even "demonic". In conclusion, it is probable that none of the festivals or rituals used by Israel appeared out of the blue - "ex nihilo", but that God took what was already in the pagan culture and reformed it, by giving it both distinctive outward form and new inner meaning.

Rev. Alec Moyter, a highly acclaimed Old Testament scholar admits that there is a difference between the concept of "borrowing" (from surrounding nations), and "revelation" where God gives direct instructions to the Prophets, yet, even the "borrowing" by Israel from its pagan surroundings was directly under the control of Yahweh and certainly was not indiscriminate. "Israel was not born in a vacuum, there were already 8,500 years of history before Moses." So states K.A. Kitchen in a Lecture on "The Old Testament and Pagan Cultures".

If we accept that the God of the Old Testament is not only portrayed as exercising care and control over Israel, but also of Israel's environs, then we ought also to accept that God is the God of all cultures and that there is nothing inherently wrong in cultural borrowing or transfer. Different people groups who live in close proximity will always have a certain amount of assimilation and borrowing. Yet amid this cultural mix Israel was not only chosen, but was prepared in a unique way to fulfil God's purposes. It was through Israel that all the families of the earth were to be blessed. We see therefore a unique shaping, both of what was essentially Israel's own culture, and those aspects borrowed from other cultures.

It is worthy of note that even Israel's main Festivals probably had pagan origins. Rowley intimates that aspects of the Passover feast were known among the Arabian tribes and that it was originally a nomadic springtime festival to ward off evil from flock and home. The I.V.P. Bible Commentary suggests that "Moses quite possibly adapted more ancient ceremonies, Unleavened Bread being an agricultural festival". And yet in respect of the Passover, we are told clearly that "The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron..saying this month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you..." (Exodus 12v1). In the instructions that follow there are changes in time, function and meaning, but the pagan roots remain.

It is also highly probable that the other Feasts of Israel were "re-loaded" with new meanings, labelled "historicised" by Edmond:

"It is the significance of the great feasts that the process of historicization is most apparent; the Passover, originally the Feast of offering of the first-born of the flock, became at a very early date by reference to the Exodus, the commemoration of that event. The New Year Feast, the annual feast par excellence, became through the theme of the kingship of Yahweh revealing himself in history, much more the time of renewal of the nation's destiny than the renewal of nature.

Edmond again states:

"Although much indebted to Canaan, whose ritual and cultic practices it adopted to a large extent, Israel succeeded, through the substitution of history for myth, in breathing a new spirit into identical forms. Israel's originality in the cultic field is shown by the priority of history over myth and of time over space" (*my italics*).

Another remarkable observation concerns the architecture and design of both the Tabernacle and the Temple. It is generally assumed that these places of worship were unique, since the pattern was given directly to Moses and David by God. (see Exodus 25v8 & 1Chron 28v11, 19ff). Yet K.A. Kitchen speaks of "portable pavilions, employing practically the same constructional techniques as the tabernacle to have been in actual use in Egypt long before the time of Moses". This did not mean that the whole structure was exactly the same. The layout, for instance, of the "holy of holies", was different.

Yahweh's temple had no seating arrangements, but pagan temples did. The layout of some temples including the entrance to the holy of holies compares with the Jerusalem Temple. That the actual activities within these structures were notably different, is of course self evident.

Such observations must have far-reaching implications. Whatever else one may deduce, one must accept the fact that Yahweh is in the business of validating all cultures by using what is there (even the architecture!), and transforming it for His usage. If Yahweh did it, why are His servants (missionaries) so reluctant to follow suit?

It is widely held, even by Evangelical scholars that much of the Biblical Wisdom literature was "common knowledge" to all cultures. This would be classified by some under the category "general revelation" because it was almost certainly "there" among the pagan nations before Israel was constituted as "the people of God". Since Israel lived in such close proximity to their neighbours, it was inevitable that Canaanite stylistic devices with regard to poetic forms would influence Hebrew literature. For instance, Proverbs 31:1-9 is written by a non-Israelite woman.

King Lemuel's mother was the Queen Mother of the Arab Kingdom of Maseh (Gen 25:14). This wisdom was passed on to her son and considered important enough to include in the Hebrew canon. Wisdom literature as seen in Proverbs has a distinctly international character. Bauckmann observes:

"The sages of Israel belonged to a world of international learning. Because their wisdom was not like the law and the prophets, based on the special salvation history of God's covenant people, but that which was based on common human experience, they readily borrowed from foreign wisdom literature".

This example suggests four clear points:

1. The Bible itself incorporates common wisdom of mankind irrespective of the cultural context.
2. The material is taken into the Bible when and if it correlates with other Biblical material:

"The content of the advice correlates very closely with the concerns of their law and the prophets, concern for the rights of the weakest members of society, who cannot protect themselves (Prov 31:8-9), is required of Israel's political and judicial authorities, both by the law (Exodus 23:6) and by the Prophets (Jeremiah 22:2-3). Lemuel's mother expresses a common ideal of kingship in the ancient Near East which was also Israel's ideal (Psalm 72:12-14) and became the Messianic ideal (Isaiah 11:4)".

3. The material is contextualised into salvation history. The kind of concern that Lemuel was to show for his people gains new motivation and there is new insight given for their importance, because this is the way Israel's Covenant King behaves toward his people. King Lemuel's concern for the needy, reflects God, King of Israel's concern for the poor, the needy, and the rights of those who are destitute. The Messianic King will come to show solidarity with the poor. The Messianic King will come to show solidarity with the poor.

4. The incorporation of this material is important not only for what it reveals concerning God himself, but His activity within history. History is not an unending cycle but will push ahead until God's ultimate goals are achieved. When the King behaves in this way, he is not only being wise, but he becomes a model of God's activity which will continue to its climactic eschaton.

Israel understood the risk of syncretism but continued to adopt, adapt, transform and re-invest anything from the surrounding cultures, and make it uniquely its own. They knew they could not live in sterile, vacuum-sealed isolation and unashamedly borrowed whatever may further their own purposes. Ringgren observes:

We may ask what elements are part of a common heritage, what elements are really imported in the course of Israelite history, and what elements of tradition are a protest against foreign ideas....It is important that foreign influence is given its right place: it should neither be flatly denied, nor be exaggerated. Above all, it should be stressed that foreign ideas were never taken over unchanged but were adapted to suit their new Israelite context. The important task of research in this area, therefore is to assess the Israelite use of the foreign material and the reinterpretation it underwent in the framework of Yahwistic religion.

If Israel could borrow from OTHER SURROUNDING CULTURES which were familiar to them, why is it wrong for Asian Christians to borrow from THEIR OWN CULTURE S? How would the Gospel have impacted Thai society from the start had the early missionaries adopted the principles that God seems to have used in the Old Testament? What would have happened to Christian Mission in Africa? Why are there now more than six thousand New Emerging Religious Movements (NERMS) in Africa today? Surely the heart cry of the African is to express his worship to God, not in unfamiliar foreign forms and meanings, but in local forms that are vital to him because they belong to his own culture; not an imported package, which shouts "foreignness", and includes foreign buildings and architecture with mediaeval European style stained-glass windows, foreign music, foreign liturgy, foreign dress, foreign presentation, and worse than anything else, foreign theology! Deep down in the heart of the Asian Christian there undoubtedly must also be this same yearning to be free to worship God in his own cultural forms.

2. CONTEXTUALISATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Undoubtedly contextualisation took place in New Testament times. The apostles, were continually involved in contextualising the Christian message. The message came to them in a Semitic language and culture, and they communicated it to those who spoke and thought in Greek patterns. They took local indigenous words and concepts full on non-Christian values, often transformed their meaning, and

used them to communicate in culturally acceptable ways. Almost every significant New Testament word in the original Greek must have had very different meaning in its original religious non Christian context, from the meaning that the New Testament writers subsequently loaded them with.

The Incarnation is a classic case in point.. There God "contextualised" Himself in Jesus Christ. He became "Emmanuel", God with us - in concepts and language that we understand. The Incarnation had nothing essentially "foreign" about it. Of course He was different and yet, He was one of us.

The New Testament is not a definitive, systematic-theology textbook, although systematic theology may be derived from it. The New Testament says much concerning sociology and anthropology but it was not written as a text book in these disciplines. What can be stated, is that all the events recorded in the New Testament are earthed in real-life situations. Teaching emerges from "context". Miracles did not just happen for the sake of it. They were responses to evident needs in real situations. Water was not turned into wine just to show how clever Jesus could be, but to meet a need. It is pointing to the Messianic nature of Jesus' ministry. Even the few Credal statements that may be found in the New Testament (Phil 2 & 1 Tim 2:16) were not intended as "blanket statements", nor were they comprehensive summaries of the life and ministry of Christ. They were apologetic responses to the need of the hour in that historic context. The Gospels, and the Epistles, were written not just as doctrinal or propositional statements, but as responses to audiences who had specific needs or questions. The synoptic Gospels were written to different audiences with different literary techniques. Matthew's Gospel was written to a Jewish audience and thus foregoes the traditional chronological treatment in favour of a more Jewish method. The Gospel is broken up into sections of threes, and fives and sevens and forms blocks of narrative followed teaching this means that Matthew was taking his target audience into consideration when presenting his "Life of Christ" - he was in other words "contextualising the Gospel". Mark most probably wrote for the Romans. His readers were totally unfamiliar with Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives has to be located (13:3); Jewish customs are explained (7:2 ff; 15:42). Certain words needed to be interpreted (from their Aramaic original form) into Greek. Latin words occur which are not in the other Records (eg. 6:27; 7:4; 12:42 etc); his very "racy" journalistic style, which is simple and direct, all appeal to the Roman mind-set.

Luke's cosmopolitan, universal appeal, with its emphasis on women, and the poor, and John's "spiritual" approach are not accidental, they reflect a desire to be culturally relevant. One may legitimately state that each Gospel reflects "different Christologies". Not that these Christologies contradicted each other. Like a diamond they merely reflect differing colours as observed from varying angles. John does not trace a genealogy from Abraham like Matthew or Adam like Luke but "out of the blue" introduces a "precosmic Logos". John made this emphasis with his audience in mind and "reflected" on what would be most significant about the Christ for them, in terms of their assumptions and world view .

Although Paul's letter to the Corinthians teaches aspects of universal truth (for instance the Resurrection), he nevertheless applies his theology into given contexts . His teaching on holiness was due to the danger of sexual immorality in Corinth. In fact all of Paul's letters are written to specific, historical contexts. The teaching in Galatians arose from a number of issues concerning the problem with Judaisers. This was totally different from the problem at Colossae which was Gnosticism.

Erickson states concerning the nature of the New Testament:

"The dynamic of the New Testament literature consists of its life orientation. Rather than being an abstraction of principles, ideas or dogmatics, it is a treasury of the experiences of the early church. It includes material from the preaching of the apostles, directions from travelling evangelists, and samples of the homilies of the early church ministers. In addition to this there are special types of literature which reflect the ideological and literary customs of the day".

3. Some examples of Contextualisation within the New Testament.

The prime example of contextualisation in the Christian church centres around the Council of Jerusalem. It has been said that, had a wrong decision been made at this Council, Christianity would have remained an insignificant, obscure Jewish sect. In fact, if the Church had failed to contextualise in this instance, there would never have been a Church. The leaders confirmed that they had been led by the Holy Spirit, thus affirming the principle that God Himself is in the business of contextualising the Christian faith. The consensus of the Church at Jerusalem is simply recorded; "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us" (15v28). Two vital issues were at stake. The first was HOW could the Gentiles receive salvation, and the second, WHAT were the conditions of fellowship between the new Gentile believers and the older Jewish believers in Messiah?

In regard to the "HOW", it seemed that the Jewish faction were attempting to impose two Jewish requirements on the Gentiles; the rite of circumcision, and keeping the Law of Moses (v5). In regard to "WHAT", - what were the conditions of fellowship? Acceptance of Christ was not sufficient in the mind of many Jews. They must also meet certain regulations, before the right hand of fellowship could be offered. (There seems to be a familiar ring about this!). There was also the conviction that since all truth had once and for all been delivered to the Jew, IT MUST BE AS FAR AS THEY COULD UNDERSTAND, SUPRACULTURAL AND THEREFORE BINDING ON THE GENTILES. So how could the Gentiles possibly be accepted, except by total conformity to their prerequisites? There are of course all sorts of modern counterparts to this position, the most scandalous being the concept of apartheid, taken supposedly from the book of Genesis.

F. F. Bruce states:

"Centuries of devotion to the laws governing food and purity bred in (many Jewish Christians) an instinctive revulsion from eating with Gentiles which could not be immediately overcome. Gentiles quite happily ate certain kinds of food which Jews had been taught to abominate, and the laxity of Gentile morals, especially where relations between the sexes were concerned, made the idea of reciprocal hospitality between them and the Jewish Christians distasteful".

The conclusions reached by the Council were far reaching. First, the Gentiles were not compelled to observe circumcision or the Law Moses; (discontinuity). Second, the Jewish Christians were not compelled to STOP circumcision, nor to stop observing the Law (continuity); third, the acceptance and fellowship with Gentiles was ratified. In the practical sense, the "middle wall of partition" had now been taken down in a practical sense and the way was open for true cross-cultural fellowship.

1 Corinthians 8:1-10:22.

In this passage, Paul is again dealing with the problem of food offered to idols, which had already been addressed in the letter from the Jerusalem Council. Since however the audience was different, Paul in his wisdom does not even mention the letter from Jerusalem, fearing perhaps that the Corinthians may rebel against some new law, imposed at a distance by a Jewish church upon Gentiles! His argument is far more relevant than some remote letter from a distant Council, although the conclusion is the same. Here Paul reasons with the Corinthian Christians in a way that would be acceptable to them and take their worldview into consideration with its broadened understanding of the supernatural; that all principalities and powers were made by Him and for Him etc).. First, that an idol has no real existence in the world (contrary to the local worldview) (8:4). He qualifies this later, by saying that what a person really worships when he worships an idol, are demons, and that food has no intrinsic religious value (8v8). Second, that the table of the Lord is authentically what the idol banquet purports to be (10:16) and that worshipping anything but God Himself is in effect again worshipping demons (10:19). The conclusion is that you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons at the same time (10v21). Here is a clear case of "discontinuity" from both belief and behavioural systems or what Luzbetak calls "cultural surgery".

Paul does differentiate in these chapters between "outward form" and "inner meaning". If the meaning is intrinsically contrary to Christian perception of truth, no Christian may participate. If however a practice is wrong only in view of some people, then the Christians must abstain only in their presence, in order not to be a stumbling block. One person's "liberty" must not be another person's stumbling. (8v7-13). Is there some inconsistency in Paul's arguments here? The answer could be in the affirmative. This is because Paul saw no incongruity or inconsistency between writing to the Galatians about circumcision saying "those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised...circumcision is nothing" (Gal 6v11-14) and then taking Timothy and having him circumcised (Acts 16:3)! He saw no inconsistency between enjoining others not to keep the Law, and then undertaking a vow - "to show that you yourself keep the Law" (Acts 21v21-24). He even saw no inconsistency theologically (it seemed) between the once-for-all, sufficient sacrifice of Christ upon the cross and his paying expenses for sacrifices for him and others in the Temple!

"Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved..the next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the sacrifice would be made for each of them" (Acts 21:23-26).

The overriding principle was that of "contextuality". Erickson states:

"The pinnacle of Paul's enculturation is expressed in 1 Corinthians 9:19-21. He accepts-for the sake of evangelisation- the life style (enslaved), ideological mold (Judaistic or lawless), and personal deficiencies (weak conscience) of the people to whom he ministers".

Erickson also points out a further illustration of contextualisation by Paul from the various epistles he wrote.

The frequent occurrence of a "haustafel" (a Roman-type household structure which included master and slaves) shows that Paul addresses an immediate situation in a local church, quite unlike the Jewish context. In fact Paul's whole teaching on slavery is "situational". To the Corinthians he indicates that they should not bother about being slaves (7:21). He encourages Philemon to treat a slave as a brother in the Lord (v16). On the other hand he warns slaves in his letter to Colossians to serve their Masters "as to the Lord" (3v23-25).

It has been noted that even "baptism" as an outward form, previously used in Judaism, Pagan religions, and by John the Baptist, is taken by Jesus and given another inner meaning. He did not create some new type of ritual, but transformed what was there into something distinctively "Christian". There were resemblances, to other forms, but Christian baptism is invested with a unique meaning of its own.

The "principle of continuity" is further illustrated by the use of the word "LOGOS". in the John's Gospel and Epistles. John does not take a "foreign" word to express the nature of Christ or his preexistence. He takes a word, long used in Greek philosophy, to express his meaning. Not all agree with regard to the origin of this controversial word and some maintain it was Hebrew in origin. Even if that were the case, John nevertheless "reloads" the word and builds into it a unique concept of who Christ is. The context of the usage of the word is the loading apparatus for its new meaning. It must be added that John's use of the term is not to engage in deliberate syncretism, as some may suppose or propose. Dr. Christopher Wright contributes to the debate in an article in "Themelios" :

"John (and even more obviously Paul, in Colossians) is resisting the syncretistic tendency by deliberate assimilation of current vocabulary into a thoroughly Christian (OT based and Jesus centred) theology. In this he differed greatly from what the Apologists were trying to do. If A=the revealed truth of the gospel and B= the 'target' culture (in this case Greek popular philosophy and religion), it is one thing to say, with John 'I will use vocabulary from B because it can be used to make A intelligible to people in culture B, but A remains the unique distinctive and governing truth which will give the vocabulary fresh shades of meaning'. It is quite another to say 'I will use vocabulary B because B (or the best in it) is in reality the same as A, such that B people unconsciously believe A anyway'. Secondly, talk of the logos as the non-incarnate Christ' easily becomes abstract and divorced from the unique particularity of the incarnation. The historical Jesus becomes 'The Christ principle'. the once-for-all atoning death of Jesus becomes "the pattern of the cross" etc. Such worthy-sounding concepts fit easily into the syncretistic soup and nicely avoid the scandal of particularity. However, it can easily be seen that though this process may use the Johannine logos as a tag, it is fundamentally incompatible with John's intention in his Prologue, which is to lead relentlessly up to the climax: 'The logos became flesh. Whatever you may do with the concept of logos, you can't syncretise or abstractify the flesh of the man Jesus'.

Acts of the Apostles.

Perhaps the most significant evidence for the principle of contextualisation comes from the Acts of the Apostles.

A comparison between Peter's message on Pentecost (to Jews Acts 2 v14-36,) and in the house of Cornelius (to Romans 10v34-43) reveals a completely different

emphasis. The same thing happens in Paul's messages to monotheistic Jews and Gentile God-fearers in the synagogue of Antioch (13:16-41), and polytheistic devotees on Mars' hill (17:16-33). In Paul's two messages to polytheistic audiences he clearly contextualised his message according to his receptors' categories, not his own. For instance, why does Paul mention the fact that it is God who gives rain from heaven and crops in season in chapter 14 and not in 17? And why does Paul exhort them "to turn from these worthless things to the living God" in chapter 14 but in chapter 17 says "The God whom you ignorantly worship, Him I declare to you"? If we desire to be sensitive to our audience's needs when we communicate the Gospel, then we must be sensitive to these fundamental principles of contextualisation.

Joslin examines the content and structure of three of Paul's sermons recorded in Acts noting various differences. See chart on the following page.

Joslin's Analysis:

Three evangelistic sermons preached by the apostle Paul to different audiences:

Background:

1. Geographical location:	Pisidian Antioch	Lystra	Athens
2. Bible text:	Acts 13:13-43	Acts 14:8-20	Acts 17:16-34
3. Religious Status of the audience.	Jews and God fearing Gentiles.	pagan Gentiles	pagan
4. Social Status of the audience.	various? intellectuals.	working-class community.	middle-class farming

Sermons

a. Point of contact and gaining attention. ignorance.	synagogue worship and teaching. (13: 14-15).	idolatry and ignorance. (14:13-15).	idolatry ignorance. (17:22-24,29)
b. Evidence of the The Living God the nature of God. (cf idols) created world and every thing in it. (17:24-25)	God's Word (13:15) and God's acts in choosing Israel as His people. (13:15-20)	The Living God (cf idols) created the world and every thing in it (14:15)	

- c. Experience of the God's provision and God has provided
 All life is sustained
 goodness of God (Rom:2:4). protection for His them with the
 necessary by the providence of
 people climaxed in the harvest, food and God.
 Nothing exists
 promised Saviour (13:17) happiness (14:17).
 independently of God. (17:21, 26-28).
- d. Cultural identification. Paul is Jew. He speaks God's provision of
 crops World order and of brothers 13:13, and and food (14:17). A
 purpose considered. the God of our Fathers farming community Quotation from
 one of (13: 17, 32). would appreciate this. their
 poets (17:26-28).
- e. God and history. The history of God's In His grace and patience
 In His grace and dealings with Israel. God overlooked their
 patience, God (13:18, 37). former ignorance.
 overlooked their (14:16). former
 ignorance. (17:30).
- f. Spiritual obligation. God kept His promises God has blessed them
 As God's offspring and sent them the with food and joy. It
 they are completely Saviour they need. is their duty to honour
 dependent on him. (13:23, 37-39). God as God and give They are
 to honour thanks to Him. and give
 thanks to (Rom 1: 21). Him.
 (Rom 1:21).
- g. Evangelistic exhortation. They must believe in telling you to turn from
 God demands the resurrected Jesus these worthless things
 immediate repent- for forgiveness of sins. to the living God
 ance from all people. (13:38-41). (14:15). (17:30).
 God will one day judge the world
 through the
 resurrection of Jesus (17:31).

Don Richardson also helpfully illustrates the background to Paul's preaching on Mars' hill. Apparently about 600 BC there had been a devastating plague in the city of Athens. The people of Athens offered sacrifices to their 30,000 gods asking them to intervene and halt the plague but the plague raged on. Epimenedes was summoned to help resolve the problem. Since the gods were silent he felt there must be another God who would be great enough to help. He called for a flock of sheep to be let loose on a sacred spot on Mars' hill. He commanded the men to follow the sheep, and call upon this "unknown god" to cause the sheep to lie down on the spot where the "god" wanted a lamb to be sacrificed. On that spot the Athenians built an altar and inscribed on it "To an Unknown god". Subsequently the plague lifted and the city was delivered. Six centuries later, Paul takes the story of this "pagan" altar, and states clearly "Him who you worship I declare unto you". Richardson adds:

"Others remarked 'He seems to be advocating foreign gods! In other words, Paul, whoever you are, we already have 30,000 gods here in Athens, and you are bringing us the message of still another god? We need another god like we need a hole in our heads! We've got so many gods here in Athens we can't keep track of them all! Who would have the audacity to proclaim another god in that context? How does he respond to the charge that he's advocating some superfluous or nuisance god in the city already afflicted with 30,000 or more of them?.....Paul was in effect, saying: 'Foreign God? No!. The God I proclaim is that God who did not consider himself represented by any of the idols in the city so many hundreds of years ago, but who delivered your city from the plague when you simply acknowledged your ignorance of him. But why be ignorant of him any longer, if you can know him!. In this way Paul used that familiar Athenian altar as an eye-opener to get to first base. Then he went on to try to turn his listeners from the darkness of idolatry to the light of God's truth. And this God has left himself a witness in hundreds of other cultures around the world".

Wright correctly points out that Paul is not congratulating the Athenians on their polytheism, rather he is saying, 'Despite your religiosity, you don't know the true God at all, though you could and should do, for the knowledge of him is available before your eyes, but you have obscured it with your 'every religious! Temples and idols!':

"Taken thus, it fits perfectly with what Paul writes concerning the availability but suppression of the knowledge of God in Romans 1. God is not, in fact an 'unknown God!; it is the Athenians who are ignorant of Him".

There remains a fear for those of us committed to contextualisation that in applying these principles we may fall short of communicating distinctive "good news" and instead leave a hotchpotch mixture of diluted Christianity with a large dose of paganism as the principal ingredient. We should take courage on three accounts.

First, it has been clearly proven that God initiated and inspired this principle of Contextualisation in Scripture.

Second, the result was not a mixed up "soup" of religion, but a unique revelation of Person and purposes applied to the historical context. Third, that both the Word of God and the Spirit of God have been given to guide and ensure what the appropriate parameters of contextualisation will be.

Contextualisation is as great a risk for the servant of God as exercising faith and trust in Him!

In conclusion, there will always be the danger of syncretism; in fact all expressions of Christianity are in some way culture-bound and therefore by definition syncretistic to some degree. The key is to discern between illegitimate, critically-determined syncretism, and uncritical syncretism. The former will be authentic, constructive, will validate the Scripture, and affirm the Culture, resulting in an unambiguous application of the 'good news'. The latter will be confusing, destructive both to Scripture and Culture, leaving no Scriptural 'good news'. With the assurances already indicated, our task must be to Contextualise for the sake of Christ and the Gospel.

CONCLUSION.

Before a new product is launched, feasibility studies and market research must be done. The same must be done with some of the proposals in this book. Experimentation and investigation may reveal some of what has been proposed as impractical or ineffective. On the other hand, the writer feels that the church in Asia, has nothing to lose by testing some of the radical innovations suggested. Only the results can determine whether they will be effective or not.

This thesis is not a final answer but merely an introduction to the task of Contextualisation. The general principles suggested must be beaten out on the anvil of creative experimentation by the hands of those more qualified for the task - Asian Christian leaders. This subject needs much more research both in detail and depth.

One important area that needs further investigation is the relationship of Biblical studies to Contextualisation.

Reference to the Bibliography may be helpful in pursuing this theme.

Due to space limitations, many crucial issues have not been dealt with. The following are some areas that require further research.

1. The Development of 'Local Theologies' in Asia.

At one end of the spectrum, there is 'Traditional Theology' which Tissa Balasuriya defines as 'culture-bound, church-centred, male-and-age dominated, pro-capitalist, anti-communist, over theoretical and unrelated to the social contexts in which it is developed'. At the other end there is 'Planetary Theology', where the planet Earth in its entirety is the context. In the middle are 'Local Theologies'. The problem arises, how 'local' should they become? To develop a 'Contextualised Theology for the Church in Thailand', further research should be done in Sri Lanka, Burmese, Laotian, Cambodian, and Vietnamese contexts. Such experimentation, dialogue with other leaders and research, will contribute to the development of an authentic Thai Theology which will answer the questions Buddhists in Thailand are asking. Such interaction may also encourage National leaders in other countries in Asia to consult together and develop local theologies, suitable to their particular context. It may be that a broad based contextual theology could be developed for all of the Buddhist countries in Asia since all of these countries have very similar Folk-Buddhist belief systems. Schreiter's 'Constructing Local Theologies' is definitive, and gives invaluable guidelines in this whole area. Who will take the first step to initiate such a proposal?

2. An in-depth Analysis of Rites, Rituals and Ceremonies .

A problem arises in that Thai and other national leaders are generally not prepared or very reluctant to engage upon this delicate operation themselves, but neither the writer nor any other expatriate is qualified either! The alarm warning that SOMETHING MUST BE DONE has been sounded. The type of Christianity introduced by the early missionaries created a 'black hole' leading to social alienation and loss of cultural identity for those who became Christians. It does not require a Prophet to predict that unless something is done soon, Thailand and other Buddhist countries in Asia will be added to the long list of countries with New Emerging Religious Movements mushrooming everywhere, because the climate is now ripe for this phenomenon to occur. Already there are as many as 300 such NERMS in S. Korea. It is therefore imperative that Asian leaders address the issue at national level immediately. Certain rites and ceremonies should be adapted, new ceremonies inspired by the Spirit could be created and new methods of communication developed, all contextually relevant. There is nothing to be lost, and Asia to be gained!

3. Cognitive Processes of Communication.

Systematic theology is a distinctively Western approach to theology and is derived in its cognitive process and forms from the ancient Greek philosophers. Alternative methods of communication have been discussed here, but the 'content' of local theologies needs to be packaged in local 'forms'. One must address the question, are Asians essentially non-linear 'Oral' Cultures? If they are, then our present methods of communication need major changes. Hollenweger points out :

'Oral theology operates through the medium of story, not statement. It does not use definitions, but descriptions. It operates with songs, not systematic statements. It is not based on an Aristotelian framework of logic but on the cohesion of the tradition in a community'.

Suffice to say the communication process in Asia needs to be predominantly Oral. This would mean that local theologies should be developed and communicated within Asian oral traditions. For instance, Thai song styles, such as the 'jo' and the 'so', together with Thai 'Pop' and folk music, should be used as effective mediums of communication. The tentative Credal Statement in the Appendix could be restructured by perceptive Thais, so that its form, as well as its content, be culturally applicable. It would also be profitable to research what Stroup terms 'Narrative Theology'. This of course does not necessarily mean we adopt an 'either/or' philosophy, for - 'Christian theology has always been oral AND literary. The Gospels belong to the oral genre. The Epistles to the literary genre. Academic theology so far has not developed sophisticated oral theologies'.

4. Culturally appropriate expressions of Christian Spirituality.

There is always the danger in a book like this, of analysing belief systems and world views in a detached academic fashion, emphasising what people believe while overlooking how they behave. When one observes both the dedication and the devotion of a sincere Buddhist, one must ask what has the Christian to

offer? Sad to say, many Christians in Asia, (especially those influenced by a predominantly affluent, materialistic hedonistic Western value system), live below the standard set by and indeed achieved, by many Buddhists. Although some of the related issues are dealt with in chapter 8, far greater reflection is necessary especially in view of Wanís statement:

if we live simply as those who have given themselves to the service of God, I believe people will receive us gladly because Thai people already have faith in and admiration for this kind of life, that is, the life of sacrifice. All those in Buddhism whom they admire, whether abbots or priests or Buddha himself, are people of sacrificial lives. If Christians present themselves like Jesus, it will certainly reinforce what they say.

What is needed is a distinctive Asian spirituality which combines both a "mystical" dimension as well as the practical. Such a "prophetic-type-spirituality" is appealing since it addresses BOTH manís inward condition AND his outward environment. This would reflect the balance of inward and outward spirituality portrayed in the nature and role of the "Servant" in the Old Testament, and perfected in Christís own life and ministry. The practical application of a culturally attractive Christian spirituality still needs to be seriously addressed. The idea of "Christian Community" also needs consideration. Since the Temple (Wat) is a place of Buddhist community - ought there to be some Christian "functional equivalents" for these life-styles and structures?

5. The issue of "Power Encounter".

The shortest chapter in this Thesis (8) concerns "Power Encounter" as it relates to effective communication of the "good news" to Asian people. This should not reflect the relative importance of the subject. Although controversial, the subjects of "stoicheia", "principalities and powers", "territorial spirits" and the nature of "spiritual warfare" must be addressed. The responsibility of developing suitable "local theologies" in this area falls mainly to Asia Christian leaders since the tendency of the Western observer is either to over simplify and theorise, (people falling over themselves to experience the latest type of supernatural phenomena) or to sensationalise, as indicated by the recent spate of Christian "novels" on the unseen world, together with the voluminous literature pouring forth from the West on areas that Western theologians are least qualified to theologise on!

6. The need of a Thai Creed

One of the most important elements of this Thesis is found in the Appendix! This attempt to develop a Thai Creed will need exhaustive work before it becomes meaningful for the Thai Church. An ongoing process has begun; now a Commentary on the Creed should be written to explain why certain important elements have been omitted and others added. It is anticipated that Thai Christian Leaders will work together on this important project. See appendix for an example of the Thai Creed.

CHAPTER TEN:

HOW CHURCH STRUCTURES CAN EFFECTIVELY HINDER OR HELP
CHURCH GROWTH.

INTRTODUCTION :

This chapter interfaces the nature of culture and the nature of the church and asks what structures the church should adopt to express the full life of Christ within a given cultural maxtrix. It suggests that many missiologists have unconsciously capitulated to cultural norms with their hidden values and that this has been the cause for the church to be stunted in its growth and witness. The following diagram will indicate five irreducible components for dynamically equivalent church structures and the chapter will seek to evaluate the results of not applying these Biblical principles when planting churches in any culture.

A SUGGESTED THAI CREED.

slyd-hvg=njv-v'8iblg9upo=k;wmp

1. -hkrq0hjjkg=njv;jk lbj'lkiryfmuj,uvp^j.oF]drihv,myh'0ydi;k]w,jwfhhgdbf
-7hogvH'c]tw,jwfhv6[y9b-7ho,kFfpv;b=kgxHogs96c9jritg0hkz^hmi'vmbbAmTb
c]tlyrryPP^mi'gxHoz^hobi,b9lhik'07'gsHo;jkm6d lbj'fuoyd

I believe in God who is Almighty and All knowing, who having created the Universe saw that everything he had made was good, All things did not come into being on their own, nor did ěIgnoranceı create them.

2. -hkrq0hkg=njv;jk ,o6KpNF]d,udbg]L9yPPskw,jgmujp'myh'.o8;k,8bfdbibpk
c]t;k0k07's,flbmTbNc]tw,jlk,ki5muj0tg-hjjk57'g,nv'[i,l6-gdK,=7j'
gxHomuj]ib16mTHmuj]l6f

I believe that all mankind have evil desires, are not righteous in thought, word and deed, and consequently are both disqualified from and incapable of entering paradise, because it is a holy place.

3. -hkrq0hkg=njv;jk ,o6KpNw,j,usomk'muj0t.sh9ogxNomujr7j'-v'9oc]t
w,jlk,ki5muj0tlitl,[6Pw;hrvmuj0toe57':7j'dkis]6frho07'9hv'
rbokL9k,g;i9k,dii,

I believe that mankind has no hope by depending upon himself. He is incapable of attaining sufficient merit to liberate himself and therefore sowing what he reaps according to karma, he must perish.

4. -hkrq0hkg=njv;jk v'8Hritz^hgxHog0hkmi'xitdv[fh;prit,skdki^IkTb86I
07'wfhibgibj,0yfg9iup,somk'cdhxyPsk[kxdii,-v',o6KpHFfp
. :hz^hcmog-hk,k.oF]d8nvrityg:^8ib19Hrit[69i-v'ritv'8Hgrnjv
Ffprit[69ioyho,o6KpH0trho0kdv[kp,6d

I believe that God who is full of compassion and mercy,initiated the way of solving man's problem by sending His Representative Jesus Christ into the world so that man may be delivered from Hell.

5. -hkrq0hkg=njv;jkk ritgp:^8ib19HwfhvkLkl,y8i] ',k
0kdl;iiLHiy[=k8bdegobfgxHo,o6KpHFfpXDbloTH.o8iipH,kgiup9k,
xit;y9bLkl9HgrnjvgxHoıcrtiy[[kxıcmo,o6KpH07'wfh1bhorit=opH[o
w,hdk'g-Hogrnrjviy[FmKmyIRHmuj8;i9dvpj^dy[,o6KpHgrikt[kxdii,-v'g-k

I believe that Jesus Christ volunteered to come from heaven to be born of the Virgin Mary according to history in order to be manís escapegoatí by dying on the Cross to receive the penalty due to man because of his sin.

6666. -hkrq0hkg=njv;jk ritgp:^8ibl9Hz^hgxHoTii,twfhmi'g,99k,o6KpN07'
rihv,muj0tpnjo[6PPko64krvyov6f,[ib[^iIH-v'ritv'8H.sh
cdjz^hmujpv,lki4krc]t]tmbh'[kx-v'9o9jvritv'8Hf;hp8;k,0ib'.0

I believe Jesus Christ who is truth and mercy is ready to offer his own abundant merit to whoever will confess and forsake their sin with sincerity.

7. -hkrq0hkg=njv;jk ritgp:^8ibl9H,uveok01^'l6fgsonvok,vnjomyh'xj;'mujg-k
gvjp-7how,jw=j.op68ouhgmjkoyhoc9j.om6dp6dm6dl,yp07'wfhxit0koc]t
=ot9jv[iifk4^9bzuxbLk19Hc]tlbj'LydfbHlBmTHmyh's]kpmjy;lkd]F]d.shvp^j
.9hrit[km-v'ritv'8Hffpw,hdk'g-Ho

I believe that Jesus Christ has power over all people and all spirits in all ages and has demonstrated his power over them openly by the Cross.

8 -hkrq0hkg=njv;jk ritgp:^8ibl9HgxHoz^hgfup;mujwfh=ot,iI4krFfpwfh
mi'aanho8norit=opH=u[c]tmi',u=u;b9v,9txy006[yo07'lk,ki5
c]trihv,muj0t=j;pd^h,o6KpH.shrho0kd[kxdii,wfh9]vfdki

I believe that only Jesus Christ has had victory over death through his resurrection, that he is now alive and is therefore able and ready to deliver mankind from the results of sin for ever.

9. -hkrq0hkg=njv;jk ritgp:^8ibl9HgxHoz^hmuj0tglfH0,k.oF]dgxHoz^hmuj0t
x]fgx]nhv'8;k,m6d-H-v'[iifk,o6KpH=k9b9k,8emeokpc]t.o
vok890tglfH0,k.oF]d8iyh'mujlv'grnjv0t9yh'vIk0ydiHobiyofi:7j'
xitdv[fh;p8;k,p69bTii,c]t8;k,=v[Tii,

I believe Jesus Christ is the One who is to come according to prophecy to liberate all mankind. He will come the Second Time to establish his everlasting Kingdom on earth which will be filled with Justice and Righteousness.

10. -hkrq0hkg=njv;jk z^hmujg=njvg]njv,.lLiyMtk.oritgp:^8ibl9Hwfhg-hjjk
gxHolj;oso7j'.o8ibl0ydi-v'ritv'8H07',usohkmujg=njvay'c]txDb[y9b
9k,s]yd8elvo-v'ritv'8H:7j'[ii06w;h.orit8iblTii,8e4uiH
Ffpw,jiy'gdup0;y<oTii,vyofu'k,-v'=k;wmpmujw,j-yf0kds]yd8e
lvoLydfbNlBmTbNfy'dj]k;

I believe whoever puts their trust in Christ becomes a member of His Church and is therefore responsible to be obedient to His teachings which are written in the Christian Scriptures and that by so doing he will not despise or destroy those beautiful parts of Thai culture which accord with Scripture.

AN AFRICAN CREED - BY VINCENT. J. DONAVAN.

We believe in the one High God, who out of love created the beautiful world and everything good in it. He created man and wanted man to be happy in the world. God loves the world and every nation and tribe on earth. We have known this High God in the darkness, and now we know him in the light. God promised in the book of his word, the bible, that he would save the world and all the nations and tribes. We believe that God, made good his promise by sending his son, Jesus Christ, a man in the

flesh, a Jew by tribe, born poor in a little village, who left his home and was always on safari doing good curing people by the power of God teaching about God and man, showing that the meaning of religion is love. He was rejected by his people, tortured and nailed hands and feet to a cross, and died. He lay buried in the grave, but the hyenas did not touch him, and on the third day rose from the grave. He ascended to the skies. He is the Lord. We believe that all our sins are forgiven through him. All who have faith in him must be sorry for their sins, be baptised in the Holy Spirit of God, live the rules of love and share the bread together in love, to announce the good news to others until Jesus comes again. We are waiting for him. He is alive, He lives, This we believe. Amen.

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Vol 9,
No.2. Jan. 84.

This is a quote from Koyama's "Waterbuffalo Theology".
Markus Tsering "Sharing Christ in the Tibetan Buddhist World" p164.
Bong Rin Ro. "The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts" a chapter entitled
"Contextualisation of Asian Theology ". p63.

The writer is not alluding to "Book Aid" an organisation in England that
collects used Christian books and distributes them across the world. They are
very sensitive to this issue and carefully cull those books which would present
a purely Western perspective.

It is not the place here to debate the nature of what will be conveniently termed "the supernatural". (Please see footnote 12 in Chapter 3. for further discussion). One could just have easily used 'ordinary' vis a vis 'extra ordinary', or 'normal' vis a vis a vis 'para normal' or 'empirical' vis a vis 'trans empirical'. It does presuppose a view that perceives phenomena akin to Greek, rather than the Hebrew worldview. For an investigation into the 'naturalist versus the supernaturalist' debate, the most comprehensive book to study would be "Miracles" by C.S. Lewis, especially the first two chapters. This matter will of necessity be dealt with at length in various places in this Thesis.

John Mbiti. "Mission Trends No. 3, Third World Theologies" quoting from "Lutheran World Federation" (xxi 3-1974) Geneva, Switzerland.
Leslie Newbigin. "Phenomenology of Folk Religion " Lecture Notes from Fuller Theological Seminary 1974.

Dr.Saad Chaiwan. An important Doctoral Thesis presented to the Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary. Korea. Entitled "A Study of the Impact of Christian Missions on Thai Culture from the Historical Perspective 1662-1985." Dr. Chaiwan, is now Dean of McGilvary Theological Seminary, Chiangmai, N.Thailand.

Philip Hughes. D.Th. Thesis "Christianity and Culture;A case study in Northern Thailand". p 100. quoting from C.C. Zimmerman and Mrs. G. B. McFarland, "Report on Siam" 1931, in Maen Research Papers. MSS Div. Payap College.
Byang H. Kato "The Gospel, Cultural Context and Religious Syncretism" in "Let the Earth Hear His Voice ". p 1217.

"Theology and Mission". op.cit., p 91-92.

Walter J. Hollenweger. Selly Oak Journal, "Mission Today " No. 4. Jan. 86.Until 1990 Hollenweger held the Chair of Mission at the University of Birmingham. He gives credit to Kraft for this quotation.

J.M. Roberts states in "The Triumph of the West" :
"The idea of progress sustained a secularised missionary spirit. The faith it was morally proper to spread was not just that of the Cross (though that was for a long time to continue to be part of the package), but faith in Western values - understood of course, as universal - and in the material bounty of Western civilisation. As fresh material succeeded from the manipulation of nature, the Europeans' belief that they ought to spread the Good News, of which their culture was the carrier, broadened out to sustain that Christianity and material improvement were meant to go together, that men ought to share prosperity as well as truth and that Western man has a duty to beings unfortunate enough not to have arrived at them for themselves. This was a new kind of missionary zeal, unknown to mediaeval Christendom. The Gospel, hospitals, schools, uncorrupt administration, women's rights, protection of animals - the whole benevolent but culturally arrogant bag of goods is still with us today, sustained by a conscious sense of superiority and duty". (p 308)

Hiebert, P. "Anthropological Insights for Missionaries" p 174-192.
ibid. p 217.

David Barrett listed 6,000 in his book "Schism and Renewal in Africa"
Harold Turner coins
a new expression to distinguish between "NERMS" and "PRI-NERMS". For extensive
Bibliographies on this subject, see "African Traditional Religion in Biblical
Perspective",
Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol. 18. p 698 under "Tribal Religious Movements,
New."

See Kraft, "Christianity in Culture" chapter one. And Phil Parhsall, "New
Paths to
Muslim Evangelism" p 43-45.

"The Wheaton Declaration." 1966.

John Hick, "God has 100 Names " pp 50-58.

From a Paper entitled "Buddhist Christian Encounter" Feb 21. 1961.
presented at

a Consortium of Asian Scholars. Holy Cross College, Rangoon. part 2. p 65.

Hans Kung, op.cit., p 104.

ibid. pp 50-58.

Byang H. Kato, quoting Stott in "The Gospel, Cultural Context and
Religious

Syncretism" from "Let the Earth Hear His Voice". Ed. J.D. Douglas, p 1218.

Hiebert, op.cit., pp 184-186.

McGavran, quoting Seely in "The Clash Between Christianity and Cultures"
p 32.

ibid. p 33

See Glassers' Chapter in "The Word Among Us - Contextualising Theology
for Mission Today
". 1989, Word Publishers.

The literal transference of the prohibition regarding blood implies a
continuity of form rather
than meaning. It is still a major problem for some peoples who are not living in
the same
context as the Jews & Gentiles at this time. For further observations concerning
this issue, see
Footnote 33. Chapter 9.

See Luzbetak, "The Church & Cultures". "Evangelisation consists in more
than tenderly
planting, gently watering, faithfully weeding, and carefully cultivating, for
mission work
actually implies a kind of "cultural surgery". If a cultural trait, complex, or
institution
"scandalise" (i.e. prove to be inconsistent with Christianity and therefore a
stumbling block),
the society must "cut it off" or "pluck it out". Compromise is impossible when
'surgery'
happens to be the only means of saving the true and full meaning of the Gospel"
p 183.

Krikor Haleblian quoting Ericson, op cit. p 231.

ibid. p 231. quoting Rene Padilla.

Krikor Halbelian, op.cit., p 232.

ibid. p 233.

Hollenweger prefers to use the term "decisiveness" of Jesus because it describes the quality of His 'otherness'. It is essentially evangelistic and calls for response and decision, whereas 'uniqueness' is static and does not.

These observations result from personal conversation with Professor Hollenweger.

see Hollenweger's book "Evangelism Today-Good News or Bone of Contention" "Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism" .p 115.

Dr. Kim in his Thesis entitled " The Unfinished Mission in Thailand, The Uncertain Christian impact on the Buddhist Heartland" from Theo van Der Weele, M.A. Fuller Degree entitled "Encouraging Emic and Etic Pastoral Counselling in Thailand. p 137

Paul F. Knitter "No Other Name?" SCM Press Ltd., p211.

Sire, J.W. "The Universe Next Door a Guide to World Views" p 16.

Much of the material in this section has been the result of observation and

conversation with Thai villagers. It is confirmed in a scholarly study (by S.J.

Tambiah) of the subject entitled "Buddhism and Spirit Cults in North East Thailand".

Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology No 2. Details of various ceremonies are

referred to extensively in this book, including the house construction ceremonies

referred to here.

Some of the information here comes from B. J. Terwiel in a Monograph series

published by the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies (No 24) entitled "Monks and

Magic, An analysis of Religious Ceremonies in Central Thailand".

Thai Airways produce "Sawasdee-Inflight Magazine" Invariably there are some articles

on popular art and folk religion. This information came from July/August 1983 issue, an article

entitled "Bangkok's Multi-spirited Shrines" Wm. Warren.

Niles Mulder. "Everyday Life in Thailand" A remarkable book which has evoked

considerable protest by Thai critics because of its forthrightness.

S.J. Tambiah "The Ideology of Merit and the Social Correlates of Buddhism in Thai Villages" . p 41.

Mulder. op.cit., p 24.

op cit., Kirsch. p 146.

Robert Schreiter indicates that one must recognise the need for local theologies (and creeds) in our own time, otherwise one does injustice to previous creeds, by 'disincarnating' them from their historical contexts. See "Constructing Local Theologies". p 77.

Parshall "New Paths to Muslim Evangelism - Evangelical Approaches to Contextualisation" p 139. Parshall asks: "Does the Muslim designation of Jesus as 'the Word of God' help us bridge the gap which exists between the Muslim and Christian understanding of Jesus' person and His relation to God? Certainly this title is more helpful than others such as "son of God" or "Lamb of God". This designation can be a launching pad to show the Muslim that Jesus is God's eternal Word.

An Article by Dr. J.A. Veitch, entitled "Is an Asian Theology Possible" in "The Scottish Journal of Theology", quoting "The South East Asian Journal of Theology", Vol.2, Autumn. 1969. p3.

Bong Rin Ro. "Asia Theological News" Vol. 123:4. Oct-Dec, 1987. See also "A Korean Minjung Theology - An Old Testament Perspective". C.R.H.S. Moon.

"Mission Trends No. 3. Third World Theologies" p 7.

Kosuke Koyama. "Waterbuffalo Theology" preface pp viii-ix.

ibid. p 27.

John Stott and Robert Coote. "Down to Earth: Studies in Christianity and Culture". Stott is most helpful when he suggests that it is the believing community who must assume the ultimate responsibility for Contextualising the Gospel in its own setting p 121.

Wan Petsongkhram. quoting Puttatat in "Talks in the Shade of The Bo Tree" p 52.

ibid. p 59.

Don Richardson. "Concept Fulfilment" from "Perspectives on the World Christian Movement" A Reader. p 414.

Harvey M. Conn. "Conversion and Culture - A Theological Perspective with Reference to Korea" from "Down to Earth - Studies in Christianity and Culture" p154.

Bernard Dupraz "Insights into the Religious Background of the Khmers" Cambodian Catholic Centre. p15

Koyama. op.cit., p 97.

Donald Swearer Thompson Memorial Lecture "A Theology of Dialogue". p38.

Van der Weele. "Encouraging Etic and Emic Pastoral Counselling" p 140.

ibid. p 142.

Schumann. op.cit., p 65.

ibid. p 17.

Wm. Hendriksen "The Gospel of John" Banner of Truth 1961.

see Robert J. Priest. "Missionary Elenctics; Conscience & Culture" Missiology
Volume XX11
No 3. July 1944.

Winston. L. King. "Buddhism and Christianity " p 110.

It may be argued that the central teaching of Christ was the Kingdom of God, or love, or justice, etc. The purpose in emphasising 'moral evil' here is to attempt to contrast what was at least very high on Christ's agenda, to what was undoubtedly paramount in Gotama's thinking - not how to deal with moral evil, but how to escape the cause and effect of suffering.

B.H. Streeter. "The Buddha and The Christ ".p 63.

King. op.cit., p 118.

King. p 115. The "Fall" as far as Buddhism is concerned does not relate to an historical event, or even a "mythological tale". Buddha refused to speculate about the beginning of individualised sentient being or whether there ever was state in the world where there was no craving and no karma existed. His assumption is that while there is life, there must be karma. Its origins are of no significance or interest whatsoever. He is more interested in extinguishing the blaze, rather than worrying about how or who caused it! Therefore 'the fall of man takes place every time a new birth occurs, or for that matter, at every successive moment of one's continued individual existence'.

King. ibid. p 115.

Ecclesiastes 2:17.

Isaiah 40: 6-7.

Ecclesiastes 12:2-6

ibid. 3:19

D. Swearer "A Theology of Dialogue " p 27. Swearer emphasises from his quote, the "fleeting reality of the world". There is of course much evidence in the New Testament concerning the transitoriness of life, especially when the people of God are experiencing intense persecution or suffering. But normally we are exhorted to "enjoy, both food and marriage which God created to be gratefully received, for everything God created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude!" (1 Timothy 4:4-6.) In his endeavour to syncretise Buddhist and Christian concepts, Swearers' bias is revealed. He seems to want to pour into the same mould teachings that have an apparent similarity, but which have different purposes in view. Buddhism deprecates everything material, while Christianity can with qualification appreciate everything material. The qualifying factors relate to a right prioritisation and evaluation between what is created and who Creates.

Immediately the created takes precedence over the Creator, then Buddhist values of "detachment" could be applied, not with a view to eradicate the God given gift of appreciation, but so as not to restore the right balance between a right appreciation of, rather than a total dependence upon "all good gifts around us".

1 John 2v15
Genesis 1:31

Jung Young Lee "The Yin-Yang Way of Thinking" in Mission Trends No.3. p 29.

Morris Inch "Doing Theology Across Cultures " p 50.

J. Fenton. "Buddhist Meditation and Christian Practice", Anglican Theological Review 53 (Oct. 1971). p 247

David Lim. "Sharing Jesus In The Two Thirds World " An Article entitled "Biblical Christianity in the Context of Buddhism ". This paper explores the various philosophical issues raised from the Christian dialogue-in-mission in Buddhist Cultures. The paper suggests that the approach of some Christians who adopt Christian symbols and fill them with Buddhistic meaning is a non-historical and non- doctrinal model incompatible with the biblical world-view, see pp253-298.

D.T. Niles. "Buddhism and the Claims of Christ" p 49. For a slightly different emphasis on the nature of dukkha see Cotterell "Mission, meaninglessness and the

Good News in a World of suffering".

David Lim quoting C.G. Williams in "Sharing Jesus and the Two Thirds World" p 269.

King. p.128.

David Lim. op.cit., p 274, points out in a footnote that Sundar Singh discusses the futility of gaining salvation by the extinction of all desire (both good and bad). Singh gives six arguments:

(a). Even good desires are based upon selfish motives. When desiring to do good, consciously or unconsciously, we expect some reward we shall merit;

(b). As living beings we cannot exist without emotions or desires; where there are feelings, desires surely will be produced from them;

(c). The desire to kill desire, is itself a desire, like trying to extinguish fire with fire;

(d). The Creator's desire is for us to use rightly his created things, and we sin by not using and by killing our desires;

(e). The fact of any desire is proof of the availability of the material to satisfy that need (like water for thirst, sleep for fatigue) and proof that it will be fulfilled (not eliminated):

(f). Restlessness increases if desire is not satisfied: but even if desire increases, that infinite Being, which is love, is sufficient and able to fully satisfy all our desires".

Buddhist Scriptures.

Wan. "Talks in the Shade of the Bo Tree " p110.

These rules are identical with the translation by Rhys Davids and Oldenberg in Vol. 13. of the "Sacred Books of the East " p 1-69. Quote from Wells op.cit., p 154.

Wan. op.cit., p 110.

Wan. op.cit., p 137.

David Lim. op.cit., p 271.

ibid. p 275.

Richard Drummond. op.cit., p 191.

deSilva. "Creation, Redemption, Consummation " p 164.

David Lim. op.cit., p 281.

King. op.cit., p 131.

ibid. p 133.

Kenneth Cragg. "The Christ and The Faiths-Theology in Cross-Reference " p 263.

ibid. p 265.

Christmas Humphries. "The Buddhist Way of Life " p 53.

Karl Barth. "Church Dogmatics" Vol. 4. Part 2. p 297.

deSilva. op.cit., p 69.

ibid. p 70.

ibid. p 70.

Marku Tsering. "Sharing Christ in The Tibetan Buddhist World " Tibet Press 1988

p 108.

R. Brow. Article in "The Lion Handbook on World Religions ".

Michael Banton in "Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion " points out that

even in Theravadin Buddhism, the Pali Canon does not deny the existence of a wide range

of superhuman beings who interact with humans, accept sacrifices, grant merit to them and

grant them assistance in times of need. "To summarise I would argue that the belief in

superhuman beings and in their power to assist or to harm man approaches universal

distribution, and this belief-I would insist-is the core variable which ought to be

designated by any definition of religion" p 94.

Phillipians 2:6-11.

Isaiah 53:4-6.

King. op.cit., p 180.

G. Appleton. "Christian Presence Amid Buddhism ". p 51

"Clues to Thai Culture " p 219.

deSilva. op.cit., p 73.

Irving Babbit "The Dhammapada " p 20.

Christmas Humphries. op.cit.,p 85.

In spite of the fact that orthodoxy in Theravadin Buddhism normally requires a belief

in the 'non-transmigration' of a soul from a previous existence, Weber noted that the

concepts of karma and of multiple rebirths are logically interrelated and form, in Webers own

words 'the most consistent theodicy ever produced in history'. (see his "The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism" p 21. A. Thomas Kirch points out that the ordinary Thai recognise this link and that King Prajudhipok in a preface to a popular Buddhist Catechism for young people observed "the great point of Buddhism is the belief in karma, but Karma cannot be taught without an understanding of transmigration" see "Clues To Thai Culture" p 135 for further elaboration on this important subject.
Herbert P. Phillips. "Thai Peasant Personality ".p 84.
Christmas Humphries. op.cit., p 143.

King. op.cit., p 192.
Wan. op.cit., p 93.
ibid. p 93.
H.P. Phillips. op.cit., p 89-95.
B.J. Terwiel. "Monks and Magic-An analysis of Religion Ceremonies in Central Thailand "
van der Wele. op.cit. p 141.
ibid. p 20. See also "Christian Presence Amid Buddhism" p85.
This would be a form of 'adoptionist Christology'. for further discussion see
A. Harnack. "History of Dogma". p 48-50.
op.cit., Swearer (p37). Prefers to compare the Buddhist concept of "non-self" (anatta) with the Christian concept of the "new creation in Christ". This does not seem appropriate for the "new creation in Christ" has positive connotations, rather than negative, it emphasises the idea of creation, not destruction, fullness rather than emptiness.
1 Corinthians 2:9-13.
Humphries op.cit., p 114.
"Biblical Christianity in the Context of Buddhism" from "Jesus in the Two Third's World"
p 288. This article by David Lim is extremely valuable and relevant to this discussion.
Saddatissa. op.cit., p 42.

Wells. op.cit., p 214.
"Clues to Thai Culture ".p 125.
An extensive study under the Editorship of Dr.Bong Rin Ro has been produced, with mainly Asians contributing to the discussion. The book is entitled "Christian Alternatives to Ancestor Practices ". Another important contribution is a Paper presented at the Congress on Evangelism for Malaysia and Singapore (COEMAS) in Singapore (1978), entitled "The Christian Answer to Ancestral Worship " by Lucy Tan.
Hebrews 12:23-24.
Vincent Cronin. "The Wise Man from the West ", p 261. See also an unpublished Paper by A. Ewbank on "Baptism for the Dead vis a vis Lao Song Ancestral Beliefs" Alan Ewbank

makes some very interesting observations and suggestions in this paper which are the result of

his wrestling with the beliefs of the Lao Song people and the apparent inadequacies of Western theological perceptions to contribute to a Christian understanding of the issue. See Also A.J.

Broomhall's "Barbarians at the Gates" (Vol 1 of the Life of Hudson Taylor), where he expands upon the Rites Controversy in detail.

Ricci, op.cit., p 280.

ibid. p 282.

ibid. p 282.

ibid. p 283. "Christianity appeared to the outraged Tartar no longer a universal religion adaptable to all peoples, but a swashbuckling, narrow, prejudiced local cult".

A.R. Tippet. "Introduction to Missiology " quoting Malinowski, p183.

ibid. p 185.

ibid. p 185.

ibid p 187. Christologies can be developed that meet these needs. Anselm of Canterbury

developed an understanding of the Atonement based on a Germanic idea of honour. God had

been dishonoured, and now honour must be restored to God, by an innocent sacrifice.

Different perceptions of the atonement, do not take away from Christology, but reveal its

multi-faceted possibilities. It is only when 'Christology' has been put into cement (by Western

theologians who are either afraid of error, or believe they have a monopoly on INTERPRETATION

OF the truth) that it becomes insignificant to some people in some cultures.

ibid. p 185.

Luke 11:24-26.

Any evaluation of the history of Protestant Christian Missions must incorporate observations

which confirm the calamity produced when early missionaries assumed that their institutional

structures and culture were the only viable vehicle for the presentation of the Gospel. Such

contributors to the debate as John Mott, Henry Venn, Rufus Anderson, Rolland Allen, John

Nevius, were, for their time, all innovative and revolutionary in their thinking.

Kraft. op.cit., p 321.

Kraft. ibid. p 323. quoting Smalley.

The Manuscript Division of Payap University, Chiangmai. Records of Lampang Presbytery dated 1933.

Philip Hughes. op cit., p 101.

ibid. p 102.

Saad Chaiwan. op cit., p 31.

ibid. p 33.

"The Willowbank Report " (1978), p 78.

See Bernard Ramm, "After Fundamentalism ", Kraft, "Christianity & Culture ",

Conn, "Eternal Word and Changing World " Costas, "Theology at the Crossroads in Contemporary Latin America ", plus the writings of Vinay Samuel, Chris

Sugden, Arthur Glasser, Paul Hiebert, et.al.

Maen Pongudom, A Ph.D. Thesis for the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, 1979.

entitled "Apologetic and Missionary Proclamation: Exemplified by American Presbyterian Missionaries to Thailand (1828-1978), Early Church Apologists: Justin Martyr, Clement of

Alexandria and Origen, and the Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, A Thai Buddhist Monk-

Apologist ". Having said that one is sympathetic with the Thesis, it must be noted with regret,

that the writer has himself been predominantly influenced in his theological presuppositions,

not by Eastern thinking, but by certain critical forms of Western theology, imported without

question, from the USA, and which appear to have done neither him, nor the church in

Thailand as a whole any good at all.

Maen. *ibid.* p 78.

Dr. Charles Taber pointed out to the writer that this was by no means the position taken by all

the Church Fathers, especially Tertullian.

ibid. p 80.

ibid. p 79.

ibid. p 79.

Gustafson. A Master of Arts Degree presented to Fuller Theological Seminary, the School of World Mission, entitled "Syncretistic Rural Thai Buddhism " (1970); parts 2 and 3.

Maen. *op.cit.*, p 154. (quote from footnote).

ibid. p 163.

ibid. p 396.

ibid. p 397.

Gustafson. *op.cit.*, p 225.

"Thai Customs and Christian Belief " (Prapeni Thai kab khwam chuer khong Christian)

"xitgrIuwmpdy[8;k,g=njv-v'8iblg9upoî by Seth Jansong.

"Thai Customs " "phitikam lae prapeni " ìrbTudii, c]t xitgrIu" Author: Plaek Sontirak.

see note 35.

Mark 7:6-9.

Seth Jansong. *op.cit.*, p 12.

Matthew 5:4-10.

Compare Matthew 28v18-20 with Acts 19v4-7.

van der Weele. *op.cit.*, see his Appendix C. p 227-230..

ibid. p 205 para 9.

P. Octavianus. "Let the Earth Hear His Voice " pp 1244-1246.

ibid. p 1245.

Bavinck. "An Introduction to the Science of Missions " p 170.

ibid. p 180.

Luzbetak *op.cit.*, p 341.

ibid. p 349.

ibid. p 350.

Bavinck. op.cit., p 174.

ibid. p 174.

ibid. p 178.

ibid. p 178.

Paul Hiebert. "Anthropological Insights for Missionaries" Baker, 1985.
p 188.

W. Wink. "Naming the Powers, The Language of Power in the
New Testament" p 89.

Barth. "Church Dogmatics iv - The Christian Life" (Das Christliche
Leben) Zurich: 1976 p 367.

H. Berkhof. "Christ and The Powers" (Trans. J.H. Yoder). p10.

Wink. op.cit., p 6.

ibid. p 12.

ibid. p14.

Berkhof. op.cit., p 22.

O'Brien's perceptive chapter on "Principalities and Powers" is worthy of observation in this regard. He refers to various Commentators on the verses in Colossians, especially Eduard Schweizer who suggests that: "the Colossian 'philosophy', which Paul was seeking to correct in his letter, had been influenced by Pythagorean ideas in which cosmic speculation about the elements had been ethicized. The elements exercised power in much the same way as the law did. Purification of the soul took place by abstaining from meat, etc. To behave in accordance with these elements was a matter of life and death, but in fact led to a kind of slavery to innumerable legalistic demands". Whether Schweizer's detailed arguments with reference to a Pythagorean background convince contemporary New Testament scholars or not, he has certainly opted for an impersonal understanding of "stoicheia" meaning "elements" or "elemental principles" and such a view lends itself more easily to being reinterpreted with reference to a structural understanding of the principalities and powers." op. cit., p 136. However O'Brien insists that stoicheia has reference almost exclusively to personal beings rather than impersonal force.

Berkhof. op cit., p 32.

ibid. p 33.

L. Newbigin. "Honest Religion for Secular Man". p 35.

Hiebert. "Anthropological Insights for Missionaries" p 223.

It is interesting to note that Ronald Sider makes the following perceptive statement with regard to

Principalities and Powers: 'The announcement of Christ's Lordship to the Principalities and Powers is to tell governments that they are not sovereign....there is growing agreement that when St. Paul speaks of the principalities and powers...he refers BOTH to the sociopolitical structures of human society AND to unseen spiritual forces that undergird, lie behind and in some mysterious way help shape human sociopolitical structures'. See Sider in 'Christ and Power', I.R.M. 69. (1980) p 17.

Wimber. 'Power Evangelism'. p 32.

Oscar Cullman. 'Christ and Time' p 64.

Ephesians 3:10-11.

Colossians 2:15.

Hebrews 12:23.

D. Burnett. 'Unearthly Powers' p 259.

The Willowbank Report.

22

23

24

ibid. p 170.

E. Wagner Tearing Down Strongholds - Prayer for Buddhists
Christian Literature Crusade, Hong Kong. 1988.

See in 'Life and Times of Messiah' by Eddersheim. You will find an Appendix on Jewish belief and practice of exorcism of demons at the time of Christ - a fascinating study!

The writer could relate a number of unusual and inexplicable events that happen in Thailand (everyday life to them), which will not fit into western world view categories, so they, will be immediately consigned to the nearest possible interpretation to fit the Western 'rational' world view, namely - 'wild imagination', 'myth', or simply untrue. However, knowing many of the persons involved, who are just as biblically knowledgeable and devout Christians as any from the West, such happenings cannot simply be swept under a convenient theological carpet and be forgotten. How would you for instance, respond to a letter from a theologically educated evangelical Pastor who asks advice on how to deal with the following pastoral problem: 'Some of our women who have to leave the village before dawn and pass through the paddy fields and a wooded area before arriving at the market, have recently been sexually molested by a 'female person', who appears out of nowhere, makes lewd suggestions, attempts physical contact, and then when resisted, literally disappears into thin air'. This has been the experience of a number of the women who have witnessed and experienced similar attacks even when they have been together. I can assure you this is not some sort of early morning

mirage, wild imagination, or mass hysteria. Please could you give your advice on how to deal with the matter!

See 'Transformation' July issue 1944

Alford. 'New Testament for English Readers' p 210 Vol 11 Part one. Rivingtons. 1881.

Eliade. op.cit., Vol.4. p 152.

Extract from a Publication of the Christian Communications Institute

Chiengmai Thailand. (1986).

Extract from a Pamphlet published by The McGilvary Theological Seminary and

the C.C.I. in Thailand, 1987.

Alex Smith. "Siamese Gold" p 276.

D. Gilliland. "Pauline Theology and Christian Practice" p 233.

D. Richardson. "Perspectives of the World Christian Movement " p 417-420.

use
ibid. pp 420-430. Other books that illustrate the effectiveness of the

of Redemptive Analogies as far apart as South America and Africa, are

"Bruchko ", (previously published as "For This Cross I'll Kill You ". A remarkable story of a young man who discovers the key to their culture.

And "Christianity Rediscovered" by Donovan. A Roman Catholic

missionary, who realising the irrelevance of traditional approaches,

speaks to the Masai in terms of their own cultural surroundings, likening

faith, for instance (p63) to the Lion hunter, who when felling the Lion

pulls it to himself and thus makes it part of himself. However the debate

continues and Arthur Glasser, Dean Emeritus of The School of World

Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary in their latest publication: "The

Word Among Us " feels Richardson to be simplistic, especially in regard

to the concept of a "high god" in all primitive religions. Glasser states

concerning Richardson's use of Wilhelm Schmidts "High Gods" concept,

(see "Ursprung der Gottesidee"): "On close examination however it

became apparent that Schmidt's "High Gods" although characterised by

a sort of solitariness, were far removed from approximating biblical

monotheism in any recognisable form. It is rather unfortunate that this

particular application of Schimdt's thesis has been recently revived and

promoted by Don Richardson (Eternity in Their Hearts 1981). He uses it as a springboard for the thesis that in the culture of every people one can find redemptive analogies reflecting this primordial faith. What he unfortunately overlooks is that all alleged evidence for this one Prime Cause of all, is so shrouded in mythology, so dependent on the world (rather than its Source), and so manipulatable by external forces that no common ground exists with the biblical God who is supreme over all". p 38. Also see Eliade's contribution with regard to "The High God" among primitive people in "Journal of Religion and Religions" Vol.3. Spring 73, p 18. And "Patterns in Comparative Religion " and "The Sacred and the Profane " by the same author.

A sensational article from a Thai monograph entitled "The Buddhist Messiah and Roman Catholic Priests" by Dr. Sethipong Wannapok. This article is a strong refutation of the claim that Jesus Christ was the fulfilment of Buddhist prophecy. It accuses the Vatican of subterfuge and of having secret plans to destroy Buddhism.

P. Carus. "The Gospel of Buddha " p 196.
"A Dictionary of Buddhism:Chinese-Sanskrit-English-Thai " Bangkok 1976. p 511.
Wm.C. Dodds. "The Tai Race, Older Brother of the Chinese " p 68.
Pracha Thaiwatcharamas "God and Christ in the Context of Buddhism" an article from "Jesus and the Two Thirds World".p 313.
For an excellent illustration of Contextualisation within the Hindu/Buddhist perceptions, see "Fulfilment of the Vedic Quest in the Lord Jesus Christ", by Acharya Daya Prakash Titus. Completely at home with the Vedic documents in their Sanskrit originals, the author seeks to enculturate the Gospel, and at the same time maintain an unswerving loyalty to Jesus Christ.

ibid. p 314.
H. Campbell. (trans) "Ariya Metteyya, The Buddhist Messiah ", from "The Siam Outlook" Vol.vi. April 1930 No.13. p 407.
Bishop Salas. "Insights into the Religious Background of the Khmers" p 20.

Maung Htin Aung "Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism" Religious Affairs Dept. Press.
Yegu, Kaba-Aye, P.O. Rangoon.p 131.He states " The worship of the Future Buddha,

Metteya, who is now living in the abode of the gods, has been prevalent in Burma for centuries. The details of his life and when he comes are so well known to the Burmese that he is known to them as Arit-Metteya. His images have been found in Pagan...even in Ceylon, where Theravada Buddhism has a more or less continuous history, kings set up for worship statues of the future Buddha and in all Theravada countries, devout Buddhists piously hope to be able to worship the Buddha Metteyya in person and listen to his preaching when he appears".

Refer to Thai Monograph. see Note No.21.

"Buddha & Christ" by Winai Siwakul.(R6mTdy[8ibl9N Ffp ;byp v Lb;td6])

ibid. p 203.

ibid. p 181.

See "A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality" p 4.

M.Cox . "A Handbook of Christian Mysticism" .p 25.

Exodus 33: 15-20.

ibid. p 5.

Jones, Wainwright & Yarnold. "The Study of Spirituality" p 56.

2 Corinthians 12: 13-16.

The "Dictionary of Christian Spirituality " describes "affective spirituality", as "falling in love with Jesus" p 4.

Cox. op.cit., p 46-47. This is a most important quotation for its clearly distinguishes the unique aspects of Christian spirituality.

Certain Commentaries imply this. It would not be inconsistent with Paul's quotations

from non Christians sources, (in Titus he quotes from the Cretan Poets etc.), if and

when he felt that such usage would clarify the nature of the message, or make

the recipient of the message familiar with his own hymnody or poetry. Such usage

would not imply a muddling of the message, or that it would lead to syncretism, rather

the opposite.

Romans 5: 1-3.

2 Corinthians 5: 8.

The reader is referred to the Index of modern authors on the subject in "A History

of Christian Spirituality" Bouyer. p 539. Also a "Select Bibliography" on the subject of

mysticism and related matters in "A Handbook of Christian Mysticism" p 267.

See also the definitive work: "Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth

Century" Vol. 16, of "World Spirituality-An Encyclopaedic History of the

Religious Quest" ed. C. McGinn.

Tissa Weerasingha. "The Cross and the Bo Tree" p 103.

N.A. Snaith. "The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament ". pp 11.

Oesterly and Robinson cannot conceal their biased presuppositions when wrestling

with the issue of the afterlife in Babylonian and Assyrian religions vis a vis Old Testament.

They suggest that 'the religion of Babylon was little concerned with the Hereafter ' and then

proceed to prove the opposite by writing ten pages on evidences for the firm belief in the

afterlife! They then state concerning the numerous rites rituals and ceremonies in these

religions, that "there is no indication of the things referred to in the Old Testament", but

then without objective evidence proceed to posit the reason -i.e. that "The Old Testament

has been edited, worked over by the priestly scribes of later times; and from their point of

view much which originally stood in the text has been rightly eliminated "(see p79-

97).Goldingay also makes some valuable observations, stating that there are a variety of

responses to death in the Old Testament, depending on the time and circumstances. All of the

responses are to some extent historically and culturally conditioned and therefore any one of

these should not be perceived as superior to others in the Canon. op.cit., p34 -35. See also

Gottwald's important observations (p694) "The Tribes of Yahweh".

Glaser points out that the basic word for deity per se in the ancient Semitic world of the

Near East, was El. This he says: "was also the proper name for the supreme god of the

Canaanite pantheon, and frequently appears as such in fourteenth century B.C. Ugarit

religious literature. The Israelites appropriated it and gave it new meaning, in much the

same way that the Jewish translators of the Old Testament into Greek (the Septuagint) later

appropriated the word Theos from the Greek pantheon and transformed it (not as having

shape and form as the pagans conceived god, but as pure spirit to conform to God's unique

revelation of himself. The Israelite use of El in the plural form (Elohim), but with singular

meaning was not unique in Israel. Abraham identified Melchizedek's 'Elohim Most High'

with 'The Lord' (Gen 14:18-22). This implied a plurality of powers, of attributes and of

personhood, and did not imply a deity that was intrinsically monistic" from "The Word

Among Us " p 36. A further valuable contributor to the debate, is Shorter, in his "Toward a

Theology of Inculturation" see esp. pp 107 - 112.

B. Nicholls. "Theology of Gospel and Culture ". p 46.

ibid. p 46.

ibid p 47.

H. Wheeler Robinson. "Religious Ideas of the Old Testament" p 45.

H.H. Rowley. "Worship in Ancient Israel ".p 30.

Arthur Glasser. "Theology of Mission " Lecture Notes, Fuller Seminary.

R. DeVaux. "Ancient Israelite Life and Institutions " pp 47-48.

"Illustrated Bible Dictionary". I.V.P. London. 1980 pp 1137.

It is also interesting to note the striking parallels in form between the Sinai Covenant

(which is the heart of Israel's religion) and the international covenants of the second

millennium. Kitchen illustrates this in his book "Ancient Orient and Old Testament " pp.

92. Further study concerning the sacrificial system of Israel and its parallels among

surrounding cultures would be most interesting. This would be beyond the

parameters of the present Thesis. Any good Theological Library would provide

adequate resources for such study. See extensive Bibliography in Goldingay

"Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament".

Rowley."Worship In Ancient Israel ". p37. W.F. Albright also mentions nomadic

Arabs having portable "Tabernacles" parallels to both the OT Tabernacle and the Ark of

the Covenant. see "From the Stone Age to Christianity " .pp 266.

" I.V.P. Bible Dictionary " pp 1137.

Edmond.J. "Theology of the Old Testament ". pp 199-200.

ibid. p 200.

"I.V.P. Bible Dictionary " op.cit., p 1151

Kitchen also writes extensively on the Architectural origins of Solomon's Temple in his

book "The Bible in its World " pp 54. See also Matthiae O R-44 pp 345-6 and fig 3

(p347) for the Hazor Temple cf. Y.Yadin, "Hazor, The Rediscovery of a Great Citadel

of the Bible " p 96ff.

R. Bauckham "Using the Bible to do Politics".

ibid. Bauckham.

I am indebted to Rev. Tim Marks (Moorlands College) for these insights

from an unpublished article entitled "Contextualising Taoism Today".

H. Ringgren, "The Impact of the Ancient Near East on Israelite Tradition" in

"Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament ". D. Knight ed. p 36.

For a discussion concerning the use of "redaction criticism" and the use of 'midrash' as

genre and hermeneutical tool, see "The Historical Reliability of the Gospels", by Craig

Blomberg.

Hollenweger earths the message of Corinth into its social and cultural matrix

by developing what he calls 'narrative exegesis'. He states "It is well known

that the writings of Paul are not merely theological documents, if in fact such a thing exists at all. His theological ideas are inseparable from the so-

called non-theological traditions and concepts of his culture. That in fact is the

case in all theological struggles from Marcion to the Reformation and Northern

Ireland. They always have been at one and the same time theological, political

and cultural struggles" see "Conflict in Corinth " p 66.

For a discussion concerning the nature of 'holiness' (hagiotēs, hagiōsmos and hagiōsynē)

and its usage by Paul in the Corinthian epistle, see Ridderbos "Paul: An Outline of his

Theology" p 263. The cultic significance has little relation to Paul's usage, where the

concept carries with it more the sense of being morally clean, pure, innocent, chaste. etc.

There is now debate whether or not Paul really was writing to refute Gnosticism, but this

does not alter the fact, that he was writing into a context that was essentially different from

the Galatian context. See H. Berkhof, "De katholiciteit der Kerk ", 1962, pp 61ff. I.J. Du

Plesis, "Christus as Hoof " pp 116 ff. from Berkhof op.cit., 391. O'Brien suggests Paul was

refuting a Pythagorean worldview. "the Colossian 'philosophy', which Paul was seeking to

correct in his letter, had been influenced by Pythagorean ideas in which cosmic speculation

about the elements had been ethicized. The elements exercised power in much the same way

as the law did. Purification of the soul took place by abstaining from meat, etc. To behave in

accordance with these elements was a matter of life and death, but in fact led to a kind of

slavery to innumerable legalistic demands" See also Chapter 7 footnote No. 9.

Erickson. "Theology and Mission." p 71.

Hesselgrave observes "the four categories mentioned in Acts 15:20 correspond

to regulations in the Old Testament law against the pollution of idols (Lev 19:4

cf 1 Cor 10:20-21) fornication (Lev 18:6-18), eating that which has been strangled, and

eating blood (Lev 17:10-14). These are obviously issues of dietary or ritual cleanness and

not primarily ethical matters. That omission seems to have been considered by some early

interpreters. Accordingly variant readings (most in the "D" or 'western group' of texts) of

the admonition in 15:20 include the prohibitions against idolatry, fornication and

murder, and a negative formulation of the Golden Rule (see Didache 1:2)

"Contextualisation, Meaning, Models and Methods" p 11.

Erickson. op cit., p 72.
ibid. (quoting Bruce) p 73.
Dr. Chris Wright . An article entitled "The Christian and Other Religions, The Evidence" "Themelios" Vol. 9. No.2. Jan 84.
Roy Joslin. "Urban Harvest". pp 160-161.
See "Perspectives of the World Christian Movement" D. Richardson article entitled "Finding the Eye opener" p 424.
"Themelios" op cit., p 8.
Tissa Balasuriya "Planetary Theology" London. SCM 1984 pp 3-10.
Hesselgrave, Kraft, Hollenweger, and others have raised serious doubts about the superiority of the Western way of thinking, especially from the Biblical point of view.
See Hesselgrave op.cit., p 228.. Although some of the New Testament is couched in more Western thought patterns, clearly the Old Testament and the Synoptic Gospels bear the stamp of non-western ways of thinking. "It seems quite clear that the Hebrews can be classified as concrete relational thinkers. The Hebrews never developed a systematic theology, and it was not until the time of Moses Miamonides in the twelfth century AD. that any doctrinal statement was drawn up, and it never gained universal acceptance". See H.D. Leuner "Judaism in The Worlds Religions". ed. J.N.D.
Anderson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1950, p 59.
W.J. Hollenweger "The Future of Mission and the Mission of the Future", p 9.
George.W. Stroup. "The Promise of Narrative Theology".
Hollenweger. op.cit., p 10.
Wan op. cit., p 141.