

## VALUES OF THAI BUDDHISTS AND THAI CHRISTIANS

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It is commonly believed in Thailand that all religions teach people to be good. Indeed, this is considered to be one of the most important functions of religion in society. It is also believed that different religions have similar effectiveness and are of similar value in carrying out this function of teaching people to be good. It does not really matter whether one is a Buddhist, a Christian, or a Muslim, as long as one has a religion.

On the other hand, there have been some Christian missionaries who have maintained that conversion to Christianity should involve a change in values. Some have argued that Christianity teaches different values to those espoused in Buddhism. For example, it has been suggested that the prime virtue in Buddhism is calm contentment and absolute peace of mind, while the prime virtue in Christianity is altruistic service for other people. Some missionaries have claimed that a change of values is evident among Thai converts to Christianity.

Two Thai researchers, Suntaree Komin and Snit Smuckarn, have constructed an instrument for measuring the values of Thai people. This instrument is similar to one developed in the United States of America by Milton Rokeach, an American social psychologist.<sup>1</sup> Rokeach's instrument has been used in many countries throughout the

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In 1978, he enrolled in the Religious Studies Department of Lancaster University, England, and began studies towards the degree of doctor of philosophy. The following year, he went to Chiang Mai, Thailand. He spent three years in Chiang Mai, teaching at Payap College, and completing his doctorate after transferring to the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology. He conducted research on the relationship of the beliefs and values of the Thai Christians to those of the Thai Buddhists. Apart from journal articles, he has written two books on Thailand: *Thai Culture, Values, and Religion: An Annotated Bibliography of English Language Materials*, and *Proclamation and Response: Study of the History of the Christian Faith in Northern Thailand*. Both books have been published by the Payap College Archives, Chiang Mai.

1. Milton Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values*. New York: The Free Press 1973.



world, in Europe, Asia, Australia, as well as in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Suntaree Komin and Snit Smuckarn have shown that their instrument is capable of distinguishing the values of groups of people who differ in such characteristics as sex, age, educational background, and socio-economic status. They have also noted that there are differences in values which correspond to differences in religious piety.<sup>3</sup>

Suntaree and Snit, following Rokeach, distinguish between two types of values. One type are described as terminal values. These are end states of existence which are considered to be good in themselves, such as the values of having good friends, and of peace in the world. Instrumental values, in contrast, are desired because they aid in the attainment of worth-while ends. Amongst such instrumental values are cleanliness and courage.

This paper reports the findings of research in which the terminal values of Thai Christians and Thai Buddhists were compared. Methods used were similar to those of Suntaree and Snit. Their list of twenty terminal values were presented to groups of Christians and Buddhists. However, whereas Suntaree and Snit required their respondents to rank these values from one to twenty, this researcher asked respondents to rate each value according to whether it was "very important", "important", "of some importance", or "not important" to the respondent.

It is difficult in this type of research to isolate the effects of one particular variable, such as religious affiliation, on values. Differences between groups of Christians and Buddhists could be due to differences in age, educational background, socio-economic status, or any one of a number of characteristics apart from religious differences. To minimize such interference from extraneous factors, two groups were chosen which were as closely matched as possible. Seventy-one Christians and three hundred and eighty-five Buddhists were compared. Both groups consisted of tertiary students studying in a college in Chiang Mai in the north of Thailand. They were studying similar subjects. Students majoring in philosophy and religion, the majority of whom were Christians, were excluded from this comparison. The differences and similarities between these two groups are described in the following section.

There is a possibility, however, that neither group of students was particularly interested in or committed to the religion with which they were affiliated, and thus would not be greatly affected by their religious affiliation. In order to overcome this problem, a wider sampling of students was also taken, including Christian students

2. For a list of these, see Milton Rokeach and John F. Reagan, "The Role of Values in the Counseling Situation", *The Personal Guidance Journal*, 58 : 9, May 1980.

3. The details of the construction of this instrument for measuring values, and tests of Thai values performed with it are described in Suntaree Komin and Snit Smuckarn, *Thai Values and Value Systems : A Survey Instrument*, Bangkok : Nida, 1979. (In Thai)



studying Christian theology and Buddhist tertiary students who had taken a course in Buddhism at a university. This wider comparison is discussed in the third section of this paper. Conclusions are drawn in the fourth and final section. For comparison, the questionnaire was also given to a group of forty-two missionaries working in Thailand in association with the Church of Christ in Thailand.

### **The Matched Groups of Christian and Buddhist Students**

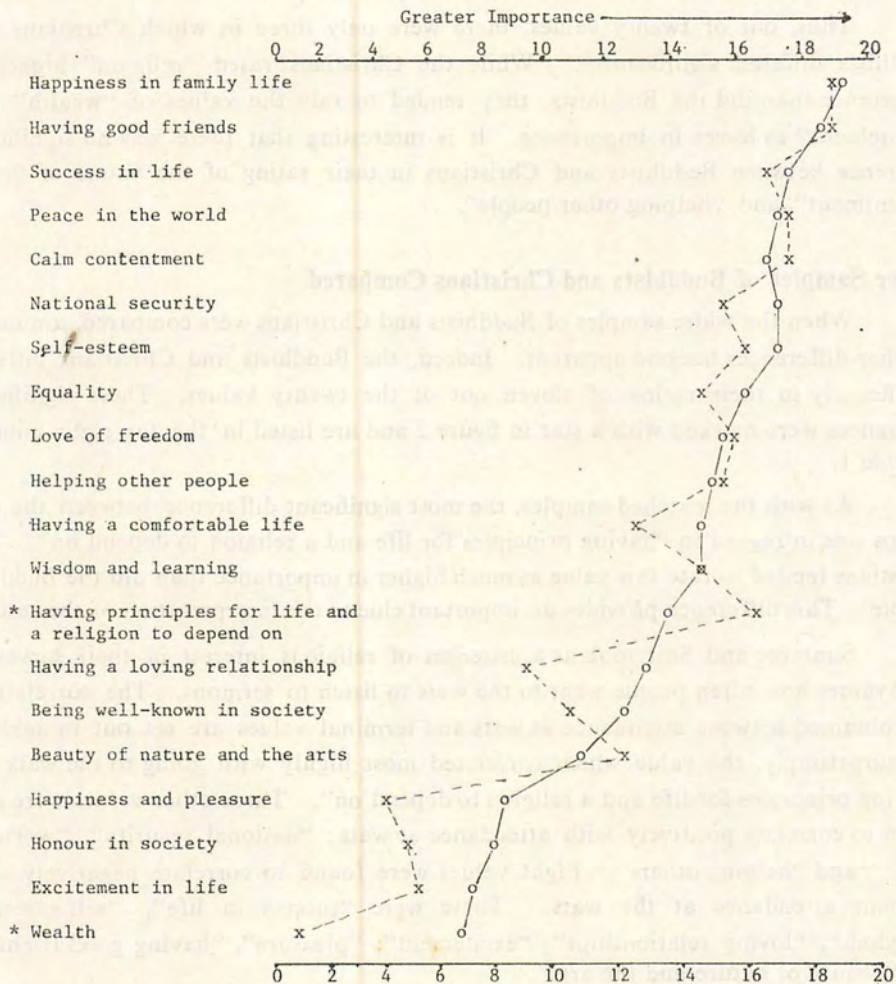
The results of the matched groups are summarized in figure 1. In general, most values were rated similarly by Buddhists and by Christians. Over eighty percent of both groups of students rated "happiness in family life" and "having good friends" as being very important to them. Between seventy and eighty percent rated "success in life" and "self-esteem" on the one hand, and "peace in the world" and "calm contentment" as being very important. Thus, the most important components of a worth-while existence for these groups of Christians and Buddhists can be described in terms of having good relationships among family and friends, of self-actualization in terms of success and having a sense of self-esteem, and having a sense of inner peace and harmony in a world at peace.

A secondary set of values reflected ideas about the sort of environment which the respondents considered desirable for achieving a worth-while life. Between fifty-five and seventy percent of both Christians and Buddhist groups rated as very important an environment in which there is security and development, equality and freedom, and in which there is a spirit of co-operation in which people are willing to help each other. The values of wisdom and learning were rated also as very important by a small majority of both Christian and Buddhist respondents.

There were a number of values which both Christians and Buddhists tended to rate as important or of some importance. These included "having a comfortable life", "having a loving relationship", "being well-known in society", and "the beauty of nature and the arts". The four values which appeared as least important to both Christians and Buddhists were "being honoured in society", "happiness and pleasure" in the sense of entertainment, "having an exciting life", and "wealth in money and possessions".

There was one value which occupied a rather different position in the hierarchy of the Christians' values compared with its position in the hierarchy of the Buddhists' values. "Having principles for life and a religion to depend on" was rated as much more important by the Christians than by the Buddhists. It was sixth out of twenty in the Christians' hierarchy, and thirteenth out of twenty in the Buddhists' hierarchy. This was the only value which the two groups rated significantly differently at a level of greater than 0.5% chance.

Figure 1. The relative importance of twenty terminal values for matched groups of Thai Christians and Buddhists.



Key : o Thai Buddhists; x Thai Christians

\* two groups significantly different at  $\geq 1\%$  chance level.

Source : "Questionnaire about Life and Values", 1981.



While the value of "wealth" was rated as less important than any other value by both Christians and Buddhists, the Christians rated it significantly less important than the Buddhists at the 1% level of chance. "Having an exciting life" was rated more highly by the Buddhists than by the Christians at a level of significance of 2.5% chance.

Thus, out of twenty values, there were only three in which Christians and Buddhists differed significantly. While the Christians rated "religion" higher in importance than did the Buddhists, they tended to rate the values of "wealth" and "excitement" as lower in importance. It is interesting that there was no significant difference between Buddhists and Christians in their rating of the values of "calm contentment" and "helping other people".

### **Wider Samples of Buddhists and Christians Compared**

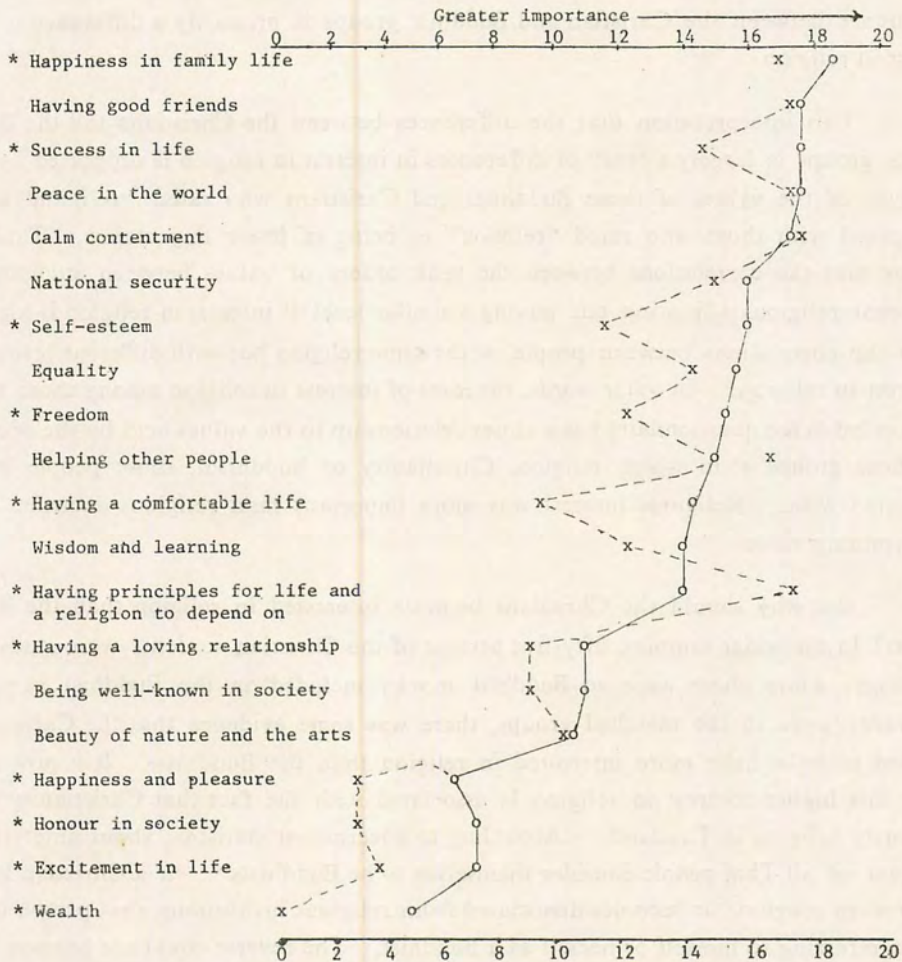
When the wider samples of Buddhists and Christians were compared, a number of other differences became apparent. Indeed, the Buddhists and Christians differed significantly in their rating of eleven out of the twenty values. These significant differences were marked with a star in figure 2 and are listed in the far right column of table 1.

As with the matched samples, the most significant difference between the two groups was in regard to "having principles for life and a religion to depend on". The Christians tended to rate this value as much higher in importance than did the Buddhist sample. This difference provides an important clue to the interpretation of the results.

Suntaree and Snit took as a criterion of religious interest in their survey of Thai values how often people went to the wats to listen to sermons. The correlations they obtained between attendance at wats and terminal values are set out in table 1. Not surprisingly, the value which correlated most highly with going to the wats was "having principles for life and a religion to depend on". Three other values were also found to correlate positively with attendance at wats: "national security", "world at peace", and "helping others". Eight values were found to correlate negatively with frequent attendance at the wats. These were "success in life", "self-esteem", "freedom", "loving relationships", "excitement", "pleasure", "having good friends", and "beauty of nature and the arts".

If one uses a different criterion of religious interest, namely, the rating of the value of the importance of religion, similar results are obtained. There are seven values which Suntaree and Snit found to correlate either positively or negatively with the value of "religion" at a level of .20 or higher. There is only one value in this list which was not in the previous list of those values correlating with attendance at the wats: "happiness in family life".

Figure 2. The relative importance of twenty terminal values for all Thai Christians compared with all Thai Buddhists who completed the 'Questionnaire about Life and Values'.



Key: o Thai Buddhists; x Thai Christians

\* two groups significantly different at  $\geq 1\%$  chance level.

Source: "Questionnaire about Life and Values", 1981.



Out of the seven values which appear in both lists, including the value of "religion" itself, five of these appear in the list of values differentiating Christians from Buddhists. Out of the other six values which are correlated with "interest in religion" just using one criterion, three are found in the list of values differentiating the Buddhist sample from the Christian sample. It would appear then that the difference between the Christian and Buddhist groups is primarily a difference in interest in religion.

This interpretation that the differences between the Christians and the Buddhists groups is largely a result of differences in interest in religion is supported by an analysis of the values of those Buddhists and Christians who rated "religion" high compared with those who rated "religion" as being of lesser importance. Table 2 shows that the correlations between the rank orders of values between students of different religious affiliation but having a similar level of interest in religion is higher than the correlations between people of the same religion but with different levels of interest in religion. In other words, the level of interest in religion among those who responded to the questionnaire has a closer relationship to the values held by the people in those groups than which religion, Christianity or Buddhism, those people were affiliated with. Religious interest was more important than religious doctrines for determining values.

But why should the Christians be more interested in religion than the Buddhists? In the wider samples, fifty-five percent of the Christian students were studying theology, while there were no Buddhist monks included in the Buddhist sample. However, even in the matched groups, there was some evidence that the Christians tended to be a little more interested in religion than the Buddhists. It is probable that this higher interest in religion is associated with the fact that Christianity is a minority religion in Thailand. According to government statistics, about ninety-five percent of all Thai people consider themselves to be Buddhists.<sup>4</sup> If a Christian loses interest in religion, or becomes dissociated from religious institutions, that person may begin referring to himself or herself as a Buddhist. The reverse could not happen, for it takes a definite decision to begin identifying oneself with a minority group. A nominal Buddhist who has little interest in religion would not begin referring to himself or herself as a Christian. For that reason, one would expect that there would be more nominalism among Buddhists than among Christians in Thailand.

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4. Government of Thailand, *Statistical Yearbook: Thailand No. 31, 1974-1975*, Bangkok: Government of Thailand, 1975.

TABLE 1

Differences in Ratings of Values by Christian and Buddhist Groups who Completed Questionnaire Compared with Differences Found to Correlate with Interest in Religion by Suntaree, Snit, and Rokeach

	Values Correlating with Attendance at Wats by Buddhists	Values Correlating with Rating of Importance of Religion by Buddhists	Values Correlating with Rating of Importance of Salvation by Christians	Values Correlating with Attendance at Church by Christians	Values Differentiating Buddhist and Christian Groups which Completed Questionnaire
Values Correlating Positively with Interest in Religion	Religion National security World at peace Helping others	National security World at peace		Salvation  Helpfulness	(Rated as more important by Christians) Religion
Values Correlating Negatively with Interest in Religion	Success in life Self-esteem Freedom Loving relationship Exciting life Pleasure  Good Friends Beauty	Success in life  Loving relationship Exciting life Pleasure  Happiness in family	Sense of accomplishment  Exciting life Pleasure Comfortable Life	Sense of accomplishment*  Exciting life Pleasure Comfortable Life  World of beauty*	(Rated as more important by Buddhists) Success in life Self-esteem Freedom Loving relationship Exciting life Pleasure Comfortable Life Wealth  Happiness in family Honour in society
Degree of Significance	1%	Correlation .2 or greater	Correlation .2 or greater	1%	1%
Source	Suntaree and Snit, <i>Thai Values and Value Systems: A Survey Instrument</i> , Bangkok: Nida, 1979. (In Thai) p. 140		Rokeach, <i>The Nature of Human Values</i> , New York: The Free Press, 1973. p. 44.	Rokeach, "Value Systems in Religion" <i>Review of Religious Research</i> , II, 1969. pp. 16-19. *college samples only	Questionnaire distributed by Phillip Hughes in northern Thailand in 1980 and 1981.



TABLE 2

Correlations of values associated with difference in Religion Compared with difference in interest in Religion among Matched groups of Thai Buddhists and Christians, as Measured by Spearman's rank Correlation Coefficient

a. Correlations of Adherents of Different Religions with a Similar Level of Interest in Religion.

		Buddhists	
		'Religion' rated 'very important'	'Religion' rated 'important' or 'of some importance'
Christians	'Religion' rated 'very important'	0.996	
	'Religion' rated 'important' or 'of some importance'		0.977

b. Correlations of Adherents of the Same Religion with Different Levels of Interest in Religion.

		'Religion' rated 'very important'	
		Christians	Buddhists
'Religion' rated as 'important' or 'of some importance'	Christians	0.701	
	Buddhists		0.780

Source: "Questionnaire about Life and Values", 1981.

Note: 1.0 represents a perfect correlation in which there is complete agreement in the ordering of values. 0 represents no correlation.

The actual differences in values between the Christian and Buddhist groups show something of the nature of religion in Thailand. The Christians are similar to the Buddhists who are interested in religion in that they are less concerned about freedom than those who are not interested in religion. One of the qualifying phrases used to describe freedom in the questionnaire was "independence".<sup>5</sup> The corollary of this is that both Christianity and Buddhism promote dependence on something other than oneself. A common theme of Christian sermons in Thailand is the importance of following God's will, rather than one's own will, and depending on God rather than on one's self. In contrast to Christianity, there is a promotion of independence and self-reliance in the doctrines of Buddhism. According to doctrinal Theravada Buddhism, the Buddha is not in a state in which he knows what people are doing or can hear their prayers. Nevertheless there is some dependence on the Buddha in popular Buddhism. In the villages, prayer to the Buddha is common. When one anthropologist, Herbert Phillips, asked villagers in central Thailand to complete the sentence "If one is frightened, the best thing to do is....", thirty-one percent answered in terms of dependency, mainly on the Lord Buddha.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, fifty-five percent of the students who completed the questionnaire this researcher distributed said that calling on the Three Gems, the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, helped them in facing personal problems.

Those Christians and Buddhists who were interested in religion tended to consider the hedonistic values of pleasure and excitement as less important than did those who were not so interested in religion. The ideal of asceticism in Buddhism is evident in the image of the monk. People entering the monkhood renounce such pleasures as going out to entertainments. The rules of the Sangha forbid the luxury of enjoying kapok mattresses on which to sleep. Devout Buddhist lay-people who vow to keep the eight precepts during the Lenten period or on Buddhist holy days undertake to observe the rule of abstinence from dancing, music, visiting shows, flowers, make-up, the wearing of ornaments or decorations, and the rule of abstinence from using a "tall, high sleeping place".<sup>7</sup>

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5. Suntaree and Snit also found that interest in religion correlated negatively with the separate value of "independence". See p. 141.
  6. Herbert Phillips, *Thai Peasant Personality: The Patterning of Interpersonal Behaviour in the Village of Bang Chan*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970 p. 181.
  7. B. J. Terwiel, *Monks and Magic: An Analysis of Religious Ceremonies in Central Thailand*. Bangkok: Craftsman Press, 1975, p. 197.



There has also been a tradition of opposition to pleasure in Christianity. In an article on evangelism in northern Thailand, written before World War II, it was reported that one of the objections given to becoming a Christian was that it would mean giving up the life of pleasure. The understanding that Christianity was opposed to pleasure was reflected in a survey of Catholics in Thailand in the early 1970s. To the statement "Novels, motion pictures, plays and radio harm one's chances of salvation", ten percent of the Catholics responded that this was true, fifteen percent that this was false, and seventy-one percent that it depended on circumstances. To the statement that "People who are happy in this life will have difficulty in obtaining salvation" seventeen percent replied that that was true. But twenty-seven percent of the Catholic laity affirmed it.<sup>8</sup> The idea that pleasure is opposed to religion is not held universally, but is affirmed by some.

In the responses to the questionnaire, Christians rated "having a comfortable life" and "wealth" as significantly less important than did the Buddhists. Both of these values have to do with the possession of material goods, and can be described as "materialistic values". Rokeach found a similar negative correlation between interest in religion and having a comfortable life among American Christians.<sup>9</sup> Rokeach does not have a comparable with Suntaree and Snit's value of "wealth" in his list. (However, Rokeach uses the word "materialistic" in relation to the value of "a comfortable life" in *The Nature of Human Values*, p. 128.) However, these values of "wealth" and "having a comfortable life" do not appear on the lists of values that Suntaree and Snit found differentiated Buddhists who were interested in religion from those who were less interested.

Suntaree and Snit found that the Thai rural people tended to rate "wealth" and "having a comfortable life" significantly higher than urban people.<sup>10</sup> If Rokeach is correct, that the rating of values reflects, in part, perception of needs,<sup>11</sup> then this difference between Thai rural and urban people may reflect the comparative poverty of the rural sector in Thailand and the felt need for more material goods. The rural

8. Francis Xavier Bell, *A Socio-Religious Survey of the Catholic Church in Thailand 1974*, Bangkok: Catholic Research Centre of Thailand, mimeographed, tables 18 and 22, pp. 11 and 13.

9. Milton Rokeach, "Value Systems in Religion", *Review of Religious Research*, ii, 1969, p. 16. Rokeach does not have a comparable with Suntaree and Snit's value of "wealth" in his list. However, Rokeach uses the word "materialistic" in relation to the value of "a comfortable life" in *The Nature of Human Values*, p. 128.

10. Suntaree and Snit, p. 95.

11. Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values*, p. 20.

people also rated religion as being much more important to them than did the urban people. Therefore, it is possible that if socio-economic status had been kept constant in the reporting of the differences between those interested in religion and those not interested, Suntaree and Snit would have found a negative correlation among Buddhists between interest in religion and the values of wealth and having a comfortable life. They do, in fact, report a negative correlation between "wealth" and "religion" of  $-.14$ .<sup>12</sup>

The claim that Buddhism, as well as Christianity, tends to discourage interest in material goods, despite the lack of differentiation reported by Suntaree and Snit, is supported by the results of the questionnaire. The Buddhist students who rated religion as "very important" to them tended to rate wealth as less important than those who rated "religion" as being of less importance.

If Buddhism, as well as Christianity, tends to discourage interest in material wealth, the difference between the Christians and Buddhists who completed the questionnaire in their rating of "wealth" and "having a comfortable life" is not likely to be due to a peculiarly Christian emphasis. The difference between the Christians and Buddhists reflects their difference in interest in their respective religions, rather than differences in teachings between the two religions.

For both Christians and Buddhists, there is some ambivalence to wealth. For Christians, wealth may be considered as a blessing which God bestows, just as Buddhists may consider wealth as the consequence of religious merit-making. The idea that material well-being is a result of religious piety is found among both Christians and Buddhists. Nevertheless, there are also strong traditions in both Christianity and Buddhism which discourage attachment to material goods.<sup>13</sup>

One other value which is discouraged directly or indirectly by both Christianity and Buddhism is "success in life". In Thailand, "success" involves the idea of meeting the expectations of others and achieving an honourable status in society. It is also associated with gaining material wealth. Self-esteem is closely related to success in as far as self-esteem is achieved, in part, by being successful. Self-esteem is also found by

12. Suntaree and Snit, p. 41.

13. These opposing ideas are discussed in relation to Buddhism in Thailand by Charles F. Keyes, "Buddhist Economics in Practice", *Visakha Puja*, B.E. 2522 (1979), pp. 19-25. It is significant that in a recent symposium on religious dialogue it was a Buddhist who spoke approvingly of the Christian teaching that wealth is a barrier to the Kingdom of God, and who argued that the failure to follow this teaching was a weakness among Christians today. See Donald G. Dawe and John B. Carman, editors, *Christian Faith in a Religiously Plural World*, Maryknoll, New York : Orbis, 1980, p. 41.



being independent and self-sufficient. The person who can cope with situations by himself and without depending on others finds a sense of self-esteem in doing so.<sup>14</sup>

To some extent, all of these values which correlate with interest in religion reflect one general distinction. This is the distinction between the "body" and "worldly preoccupations" on one hand, compared with the "spirit" and "spiritual preoccupations" on the other hand. This distinction is made by many people in Thailand, both Christians and Buddhists. It is held that religion has to do with the internal things of the spirit and the heart, rather than with the external things of the body and the world. Pleasure and excitement, wealth and comfort, success and self-esteem have to do with the external things of the body and the world. Those people who are more attracted to religion are less concerned about worldly pleasures, wealth, and success. Both Christianity and Buddhism in Thailand encourage an interest in the internal state of one's spirit or heart, in contrast to one's material status and one's status in the world.

This dichotomy between the worldly side of life and the spiritual side of life was apparent in interviews conducted by the researcher in the churches in northern Thailand. When asked about "the meaning of life" and "aims in life" some respondents asked whether the interviewer wanted to know about the spiritual side of life or the worldly side. This distinction between the spiritual and worldly spheres was reflected to some extent in the survey of Catholics in Thailand. Catholics were asked if "one must flee from the flesh and the world to save his soul". Of 460 Catholic laypeople who responded, eighteen percent said that this statement was true, thirty-two percent that it depended on circumstances, and forty-four percent that it was false.<sup>15</sup> In other words, one-sixth of the Catholic laity saw the spheres of the world and of the spirit or soul in opposition to each other. Many others would see them as distinct spheres, even if they do not consider them to be in mutual opposition.

Another similarity between Buddhism and Christianity was that both religions appeared to promote the value of "helping others". The total Christian group which completed the questionnaire rated "helping others" as more important than did the

14. This value is illustrated in L. M. Hanks and Herbert Phillips, "A Young Thai from the Countryside: A Psychosocial Analysis" in Bert Kaplan, editor, *Studying Personality Cross-Culturally*. Illinois: Row, Peterson, 1961, p. 651. They describe a young Thai man, forced by circumstances to return to his father's home and become dependent on his father again after a period of work in the city. The loss of independence, as well as the failure at work, was deeply felt. It was expressed by the young man in terms of how other people would see him. They would have no respect for him and would criticise him.

15. Francis Xavier Bell, Table 16, p. 10.

total Buddhist group, but the difference between the two groups was significant only at a 2.5% level of chance. This difference between the Christians and Buddhists reflects the different levels in religion in the two groups, rather than differences of emphasis or teaching between the two religions.

The significant difference between Buddhists and Christians who completed the questionnaire in the rating of the value of "having a loving relationship" is of particular interest. This value was eighth in the missionaries' hierarchy of values, and was considered by them as one value which Christianity emphasizes. Buddhism, in contrast, may be understood to discourage the importance of loving relationships through the emphasis on detachment. Therefore, it might be expected that Thai Christians would tend to place "having a loving relationship" higher in their scale of values than the Buddhists. In fact, for the Thai Christians "having a relationship" was fifteenth in importance, and for the Thai Buddhists, fourteenth.

Why did Thai Christians in fact rate "having a loving relationship" lower than Buddhists? Love has implications for the Thai Christians of sexual pleasure and passion. There was, in fact, a positive correlation between the values of pleasure and having a loving relationship in the responses of the Christians to the questionnaire. A negative correlation was found between the value of a loving relationship and the evil of following one's own ideas just for pleasure. Thus, "a loving relationship" appeared to be associated to some extent with selfish pleasure, and to be in opposition to religious spiritual concerns. With respect to this value, then, Christian ideas about pleasure have been interpreted in a Thai cultural manner, leading to attitudes which contrast noticeably with those of the missionaries.

There are a few values on which Christianity and Buddhism appear to be different, for which the differences between the Buddhists and the Christians cannot be explained in terms of differences in levels of interest in religion. In particular, "national security", and, to a lesser extent, "honour in society", were found by Suntaree and Snit to correlate positively with interest in religion among the Buddhists. "National security" did not, however, differentiate the Buddhists from the Christians, and "honour in society" tended to be rated lower in importance by the Christians than by the Buddhists.

Both of these values are associated with the ways in which people feel about the wider society and about their relationship to it. Nationalism has been closely associated with Buddhism in Thailand. The three aspects of nationalism are King, Nation and Religion. These aspects are represented by the three colours in the Thai flag. It is to these that every Thai school child declares his loyalty each day. Bud-



dhism has been closely linked to programmes promoting nationalism and to national security and development issues.<sup>16</sup>

Christianity, on the other hand, has not been linked with nationalism. Indeed, it has even been seen to be in opposition to nationalism. At times, Christians have been criticised for their rejection of the national religion.

Buddhism is also closely linked to the social establishment. One way that it is expected that high social status be expressed is by meritorious Buddhist acts, by attending Buddhist ceremonies, by giving food and robes to the monks, and by building wats. Christians in Thailand, on the other hand, have tended to be people marginal to society. The minority status of Christianity in society is expressed in this negative correlation for Christians of "religion" with "honour in society".

### Conclusions

Is, then, the Thai dictum that all religions teach people to be good born out by this study? The answer would depend on one's evaluation of the values which have been shown to correlate with interest in religion. However, it can be concluded that, in general, the evidence from the questionnaire suggests that similar values correlate with interest in religion among Christians as among Buddhists. The questionnaire results supported the claim that Buddhist and Christianity in Thailand both promote similar values, and, or, attract similar types of people.

In particular, both Christianity and Buddhism are associated with the discouragement of worldly values which benefit only the individual: values of success and self-esteem, of excitement and pleasure, of comfort and wealth.

There is some evidence to suggest that there are some similarities in the values of Thai Christians and Buddhists which distinguish Thai Protestant Christians from the American missionaries who brought Protestant Christianity to Thailand.<sup>17</sup> This was noted in regard to the value of "a loving relationship". Whereas it was placed very highly on the list of values of the missionaries, it was placed lower in the hierarchy of Thai Christians' values than in the hierarchy of Thai Buddhists' values. Thai Christianity reflects characteristics of Thai religious culture which were not part of the Christianity introduced to Thailand by the missionaries.

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16. For a discussion of the relationship between Buddhism and national development in Thailand, see Niels Mulder, *Monks, Merit, and Motivation: Buddhism and National Development in Thailand*, Illinois: Northern Illinois University, 1973.

17. No tests were made of the values of the French or other Roman Catholic priests who have brought Catholicism to Thailand.

Other examples of this are found when the values of the missionaries and of the Thai Christians are compared. For example, the second highest value for the missionaries was "helping other people", reflecting the importance that this value has had in American Christianity. "Calm contentment", on the other hand, was tenth in their list of twenty values. For the Thai Christians, "calm contentment" appeared as the highest value, along with the value of "religion" itself, and "helping other people" was sixth in the hierarchy, not significantly different from the place it had for the Buddhists.

There is no evidence that Christianity in itself has led to the adoption of new terminal values. Rather, Christianity has, to some extent, taken on characteristics of Thai religious culture. Interest in Christianity in Thailand correlates with similar values to those which correlate with interest in Buddhism.