

A Study of Christian Mission in Thailand

Saad Chaiwan*

I. Introduction

1. Acknowledgement

To arrive at this final stage of my study of the "History of Mission" I have fallen deeply into debt of many individuals and organizations.

First of all, my heartfelt thanks are due to Prof. Dr. Arthur W. Kinsler, who has conducted this course of study, from whom I have learned a great deal about the history of Christian mission in general and that of the Asian Church in particular. I have learned in this class as to how God is concerned for the redemption of "all the families of earth" (gen. 12:2, 3). This concern is repeatedly shown throughout the Old Testament, and supremely Jesus Christ as the Son of God declares God's concern by giving the Great Commission in the New Testament. From the Apostolic period to the present time Professor Kinsler has given a wonderful historical sketch of the Christian mission which is surely *Missio Dei*. The interaction between Christ and culture has also been taken into account in this course of study. Thus I am quite sure that all students in this class have learned a great deal from him. This course really challenges me to examine the Christian mission in Thailand closely and critically, if there is any Christian impact on Thai culture. I owe an everlasting debt of gratitude to Professor Kinsler for his highly academic ability, instruction, counsel, and good model of scholarship.

My studies at the Graduate School of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary would not have been possible without the financial aid of the Seminary, the Christian Conference of Asia, churches and organizations in Korea and abroad. To those who are concerned I express my profound and wholehearted gratitude for their scholarship assistance, encouragement and inspiration. In particular, to Prof. Dr. Cyris H. Moon, Director of the Third World Church Leadership Training Center, who works tirelessly for us as students from the Third World countries, I convey my overflowing thankfulness.

2. Reason for the Study

Christianity has been introduced to Thailand by two major Christian missions: Roman Catholic mission which has gained its foothold in Thailand since the second half of the sixteenth century, and Protestant mission which has begun its work since the first half of the nineteenth century. Though it is quite a long period of time of the establishment of Christianity in this country, its membership is still small. The writer, therefore, needs to investigate the attitudes and strategies of the missions which brought about its unsatisfactory results. The writer also wants to observe if there is any Christian impact upon the state religion and social values, despite its small number of believers.

* Saad Chaiwan is a member of the McGilvary Faculty of Theology, Payap College, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

3. Limitation

In order to obtain this significant information, the whole mission work including strategies, programs and activities must be taken into account. However, since the writer is limited by time and the length of the paper, this study will limit itself to, besides a brief historical sketch, two major programs: evangelism and education. In regard to evangelism, the writer will investigate the trends of theology of mission and their contributions to the church and society. The writer also will find out the importance of mission work in the field of education which might have rendered some Christian ideals and values to Thai culture.

II. A Brief History of Christian Mission in Thailand

1. Catholic Mission

The people of Siam (former name of Thailand) came into contact with the Christian world during the second half of the sixteenth century through the adventurous and enterprising spirit of the Portuguese. The earliest missionaries known in Siam were the Dominicans. The first missionaries to the kingdom of Siam were Friars Jerome of the Cross and Sebastian de Canto; both belonged to the Portuguese Dominican Order of Goa. They were sent by their religious and ecclesiastical Superior, Friar Ferdinand di S. Maria, who was also Vicar of Malacca, in 1567 during the reign of Pra Maha Dhamma Raja the King of Siam.¹ There was a sizable Portuguese community in Ayuthya the capital of Siam, the two priests therefore began to minister to the spiritual needs of their fellow countrymen. Later on Jerome of the Cross was killed, this was due to the instigation of the Muslims.

The Catholic Church in Thailand was not built, of course, by only one order of missionaries. Some Franciscan Fathers came to preach the Gospel in Siam in the year 1583, but without great success. In 1622 King Song Tham granted to foreigners the right to practise their religion. He even had requested Gonzalve de Silva, Bishop of Malacca, to send a priest to take care of the spiritual affairs of the Portuguese colony settled in Ayuthya. In 1624 Jules Cesar Margico, a Jesuit Father arrived and attempted to establish a parish at the capital of Siam. He was welcome by the king as well as by the officials of the kingdom.²

There was an urgent need in the oriental missions to create a national clergy. Father Alexander de Rhodes, a French Jesuit, who had spent seven years in Tonkin and Cochichina, suggested the ideas to the Pope that it be necessary to establish a national clergy with national priests and bishops. The Pope then appointed two bishops in 1658, Bishop Francois Pallu, Titular Bishop of Heliopolis, to be in charge of Tonkin with jurisdiction over some provinces in China, and Bishop Lambert de la Motte, Titular Bishop of Beritus, to take care of Cochinchina and five other provinces in China. The third bishop, nominated by Bishop Pallu, was Bishop Ignatur Cotelendi, to

-
1. Rocco J. Leotilo, "The First Catholic Missionary Endeavour in Thailand" in *Saengtham Parihat* (The Light of Dhamma Perspective), No. 1, (Nakorn Prathom: Lux Mundi Seminary, January-April, 1977), p. 90.
 2. Joseph van Khoi, *A Study of the Impact of Christian Missionaries on Thai Education, 1662-1910*, (Bangkok: La Salle School, 1975), p. 34.

take the responsibility for Nan-kin with the administration of Peking and some other in China.³ It is noted that Siam was not included in any of these Bishops' jurisdictions.

Before leaving for their responsibilities in the Asian missions, Bishop Pallu and his colleagues established the Society for Foreign Mission of Paris in 1660 for the purpose of training clergy for the Asian countries. In 1662 when Bishop Lambert arrived in Ayuthya there had already been four Jesuit Fathers, two Dominican Fathers, two Franciscans and three secular clergy to take care of 2,000 foreign Catholics in four churches. But some Portuguese authorities forced Bishop Lambert and his companies to leave the Portuguese compound. The French missionaries therefore had to seek refuge in the Dutch settlement where they were warmly welcome by the Protestant leaders and group.⁵

Though Siam was not their destination the French missionaries felt that Siam was a challenging and promising country. Moreover, the routes to Chinese Empire were blocked. They, therefore, asked to be allowed to preach the Catholic faith to all his subjects to encourage them to embrace Catholicism. As a matter of fact, the King did not prevent anyone from becoming a Catholic, he even gave land and built a church and other facilities for the Catholic mission. However, the French Bishop felt that it might be more successful if the King of France could send an ambassador to the court of Siam as the Dutch had successfully done. King Louis XIV, therefore, sent a French diplomatic mission under the leadership of Chevalier de Chaumont to Siam in 1685. In sending this diplomatic mission, Louis XIV's primary aim was to convert the King of Siam to the Catholic faith. If he had been converted, the French King thought, the whole kingdom of Siam would have become Christian. But he failed, as George B. Bacon states:

“The king refused to be converted and was able to give some signified and substantial reasons for distrusting the religious interest which his ‘esteemed friend, the King of France’, had taken in an affair which seems to belong to God and which the Divine Being appears to have left entirely to our discretion.”⁶

The diplomatic mission seemed to fail to some extent, however, the “Religious Toleration Treaty” was granted.⁷ Missionaries had the right to preach the Gospel throughout the Kingdom of Siam. The King also allowed his subjects who embraced the Catholic faith to observe Sundays and feasts of the Church; the Christian converts could be exempted from public service if they were sick or infirm. From the end of King Narai's reign until the destruction of Ayuthya in 1767 the church was very weak, this was due to political circumstances, and Siam had almost no contacts with the western powers.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

4. Saad Chaiwan, “The Christian Church in Thai Society”, an MS sent to the Christian Conference of Asia for publication, p. 9.

5. A. Launay, *Histoire de la Mission de Siam, 1662-1811* (Paris: P. Tequi, 1920), p. 5.

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

7. Chaiwan, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

During the nineteenth century Catholic mission grew slowly. However, some missions became separate vicariates, such as, mission in Malaya (former name of Malaysia) which was formerly dependent upon the mission in Siam now became an independent vicariate in 1841. The evangelization of the Northeast began in 1881, and this area was later developed into the diocese of Ubon, while in the Southwest the mission became independent in 1930. And the Diocese of Chiang Mai, the Northern part of Thailand was established in 1960. By 1982, the 181,000 adults and children of the Catholic Church comprised about 70% of the Christian community in Thailand. Some 220 foreign priests of 12 different orders and around 150 Catholic nuns from 19 orders or communities were serving in Thailand. The percentage of Thai clergy is increasing. Half of the bishops are Thai. There are 10 dioceses in Thailand. By 1982, Thailand's first cardinal was appointed. Although for centuries the progress of church had been slow, the last half century has seen an accelerated pace in church growth. The church members increase 3% in 5 years.

2. Protestant Mission

Protestant work in Thailand was begun about 250 years after the Catholic mission was established in the country. The first Protestant missionaries to reach Thailand on August 23, 1828, were the Rev. Dr. Carl Augustus Friederich Gutzlaff, M.D., and the Rev. Jacob Tomlin of the London Missionary Society.⁸ Both of them received permission to work only among the Chinese. This was due to the fact that during the reign of King Tai Sara, the French bishops and Fathers attempted to use the Thai and Pali languages as medium of instruction of the Catholic faith. The King and Thai officials were afraid that the people would be converted to the Christian faith. The King thus promulgated the Edict of Religious Intolerance in October 1730.⁹ Its contents were as follows:

1. No Christian literature can be put into Thai and Pali languages.
2. No one is permitted to teach the Christian faith to the Thai, Mon and Lao peoples.
3. No one is allowed to convert the Thais, Mons, and Laos to Catholicism.
4. No one is allowed to criticize the Thai religion.

However, one hundred years later when the Protestant missionaries arrived, they realized the necessity of using Thai language to teach the Protestant Christian faith, although the Edict still existed. It might not have been as effective as before. Within six months of working in the country Gutzlaff and Tomlin translated the four Gospels and the Epistle to the Romans into Thai with the help of Mr. King, a Chinese, and Mr. Hon, a Burmese. The translation, of course, was imperfect and not satisfactory, because neither Mr. King nor Mr. Hon knew the Thai language well.¹⁰ After three years of labor, a Chinese, Mr. Boon Tee, was converted to Christianity, and then the two missionaries left for China.

8. K. E. Wells, *History of Protestant Work in Thailand* (Bangkok: the Church of Christ in Thailand, 1958), p. 5.
 9. *Prachoom Pongsawadan Shabab Hosamut Haeng Chart* (The Chronicles, the National Library Edition) vol. IX (13 vols), (Bangkok: Progress Publishers, 1964), p. 217.
 10. Saad Chaiwan, *The Christian Approach to Buddhists in Thailand* (Bangkok: Suriyaban Publishers, 1975), p. 16.

Later on there were many missionaries from various denominations including the American Baptist mission, the Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A. which attempted to gain foothold in the country.

In 1878 King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) pronounced the Edict of Religious Toleration. Since that time, every constitution of Thailand has recognized religious freedom. Missionaries have not been curtailed from coming to this land, though they are expected to come under the requirements of the immigration quota. The Thai government has allowed the people and missionaries to profess and proclaim their faith anywhere in Thailand. However, this does not mean there is no opposition or persecution of the Church. In fact, the majority of the Thai people feel that to be truly Thai means to be Buddhist. Consequently when someone becomes a Christian, or embraces another religion, he usually experiences considerable family pressure and village opposition, but he is rarely physically persecuted.

In recent decades, influences such as modern communications, broadening knowledge, and the goodwill of medical and educational ministries, have had a marked effect on the Thai people. There seems to be more general openness towards and inquiry after Christianity. In addition, the evangelistic impetus of the Church has been renewed by brief breaths of spiritual revival, by the influx of newer missions, and by growing cooperation in evangelistic campaigns and training programs. With these developments, the Thai church is expectant and hopeful for the advances of the Christian faith in the decades ahead. In 1979, 627 Protestant churches, most of which are small, plus approximately 560 small congregations existed.

The Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT.) is the largest denomination, accounting for 50% of all Protestant Christians. Almost one half of the organized churches belong to the CCT. At least 20 missions with 160 fraternal workers are affiliated with the Church of Christ in Thailand, including the United Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A., the Thailand Baptist Missionary Fellowship, the Marburger Mission, and the Christian Church Disciples of Christ. Several Asian church missions such as Korean International Mission (Hap-Tong) are also associated with the Church of Christ in Thailand.

It is significant to compare the growth of the church over the last four decades:¹¹

Year	Adult Communicants	Decadal Growth Rate
1940	10,674	
1950	15,534	45%
1960	24,539	58%
1970	36,348	48%
1980	65,000	79%

III. The Mission of the Church

1. Evangelism

Christianity came to Thailand with a threefold ministry: preaching, teaching and healing. These three functions of the church, however, have the

11. Suthep Chaviwan, *Thailand's Christian Directory 1982* (Bangkok: G. P. O. Box 1405, 1982), p. 127.

same purpose, which is to make the inhabitants of the country the disciples of Christ according to Christ's Great Commission (Mat. 28:16-20). Thus the evangelistic outreach is heavily emphasized particularly by the evangelical fellowship. Emphasis on prayer cell evangelism has brought encouraging results in some parts of Thailand, especially in north Thailand. Some missionaries and nationals regard personal evangelism, particularly to relatives and friends as a major emphasis. Though it seems to be very difficult to evangelize the Buddhist adherents, many efforts and strategies have been employed in order to make the gospel of Jesus Christ known among the beloved non-Christian believers. The methods used for spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ can be classified as follows:

1. Visiting. Personal family to family visitation is quite popular in Thailand.
2. Broadcasting. Hundreds of Christian programs, average of 20-30 hours daily were beamed across 49 radio stations in Thailand last year. Four Christian studios produce these programs in Thai as well as in the tribal languages.
3. Films. Following the travelling salesmen pattern at least five missions have film units operating to proclaim the gospel of Jesus.
4. Literature. In recent years at least five missions have produced and placed evangelistic articles or cartoon strips in the regular newspapers or magazines and in the hands of high school students across the country.
5. Evangelistic team ministry is also considered as one of the effective strategies to draw the non-Christians to Jesus Christ. Every year the faculty and students of McGilvary Faculty of Theology of Payap College are invited to hold a spiritual revival in mission schools and hospitals, and draw hundreds of students and adults to the Christian faith. In fact, the Christian teachers at the mission schools teach the Bible and exert a Christian influence on the Buddhist students every week. Apparently, the students accept the Bible teachings, but it is extremely difficult to lead them to make decision to become a Christian. Therefore, the decision-making and harvesting are mostly under the responsibilities of evangelistic teams from outside.

But the Catholic Church seems not to be interested in evangelism. From the writer's research it shows that only 2.1 percent or 6 out of 285 priests realized the significance of evangelism, and it was not the first or second priority of importance but the third. That is why the Catholic Church grows slowly. Nevertheless, the Catholics regard the permeation of society with Christian values as the most important aspect. This is an evaluation of the objectives of the Catholic Church in Thailand in 1981 when the writer conducted his research work among the Catholic priests.¹³

Evangelism, however, seems to be a critical issue in Thailand now. It is due to the fact that when some missionaries and national church leaders, particularly from ecumenical oriented group, have come into close contact with the existing and powerful state religion — Buddhism, through the

12. Alex G. Smith, *Siamese Gold: A History of Church Growth in Thailand* (Bangkok: Kanok Bannasan OMF Publishers, 1982), p. 96.

13. See Appendix, p. 21.

discussions and dialogues with Buddhist scholars, especially Buddhadasa a distinguished scholar monk, they felt that to say “Here and here alone is salvation” is fanatic talk. According to Buddhadasa, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, etc. are at the core of the same thing and have the same reality and Truth. It is like water, no matter what kind of water it is — river water, sewer water, and soup water, the pure water can be distilled out of it. It is the component of two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen (H₂O). He states that the division of Buddhism and Christianity exists due to the fact that the Truth has not been realized. Only the outer forms are being taken into account. He firmly holds that God in the Christian sense is the same category as that which is called “Dhamma” in Buddhism.¹⁴ For him, the difference is only in the matter of language. The everyday language is entirely different from the Dhamma language.

Thus some missionaries and nationals feel bad when they see those Westerners and Asians who are Western oriented eye non-Christians as “undeveloped” and “barbarian” people, to whom they must bring Christianity, civilization, and Western way of life. Therefore, the ecumenical oriented group suggest that one not simply look at the outer part of religion and say that it is the work of Satan unless he has really experienced it fully and deeply. Kosuke Koyama, a great Japanese theologian who had spent more than eight years in Thailand as a missionary, states in relation to a comparison of religions that:

In order to achieve such an enormous assignment, one must not only have a vast knowledge and a profound religious experience in relation to these religions, but must also stand at the top of Mount Olympus to make a solemn declaration that one is superior or the *best* one. None of us is equal to such a superhuman task. And in fact such an enterprise is senseless and useless as we live a religiously committed life. One can compare cars. But to compare the living reality of religious truth and life is a different story.¹⁵

Thailand Theological Seminary (McGilvary Faculty of Theology, Payap College) has taken an initiative to deepen Christian insight into Buddhism, its ideology, philosophy, vocabulary, etc. Since the year 1962 the Seminary has sponsored and published ten series of Thompson Memorial Lectures dealing with Christianity and Buddhism. It also established a Unit of Religion in Thai Society, though it is not very active because of the lack of personnel.

The Dhamma-Logos Project under the directorship of the Rev. Francis M. Seely and sponsorship of the Foundation for Interreligious Dialogue which is incorporated in the State of Delaware, U.S.A., was established for promoting understanding, sharing and mutual stimulation among the religions of Thailand, particularly between Christianity and Buddhism, by using different strategies and means. From these approaches, Christians may learn and deepen their insights into Buddhism.

Thus we may conclude that the ecumenical group and the Catholic Church have the same idea and attitude towards other religions. As J.

14. Buddhadasa, *Toward the Truth*, ed. Donald K. Swearer (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), pp. 87-109.

15. Kosuke Koyama, *No Handle on the Cross: An Asia Meditation on the Crucified Mind* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1976), p. 88.

Verkuyl quotes Pope Paul VI's proclamation of "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" that:

In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among men, indeed among nations, she [the church] considers above all in this declaration what men have in some common and what draws them to fellowship . . . The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the one she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men . . .

The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.¹⁶

However, the evangelical oriented group express their concern about the interreligious dialogue and collaboration with other religions which, for them, may give rise to the syncretization of Christ into the Buddhist structure. Some missionaries of this group even caution missionaries and nationals against such approaches. Alex Smith, a member of Thailand Church Growth Committee, is strongly against the ecumenical strategies saying:

This is a timely warning today for missionaries and nationals alike. In this present time cultural relativism, situational ethics, secularism, and humanism flood the communicational media bringing pressure on the Church and her emissaries to reduce the uniqueness of Christ, the authority of the Bible, and the necessity of the Christian Gospel to an "on par" level with all other world religions. Through this the Church is in danger of being swallowed up by a gross lie. Unfortunately sometimes seminaries perpetrate this lie. Professors teach it, and students are influenced to believe it. Christians must reject its error. Faithful missionaries, church leaders and Christians everywhere must resist this unscriptural philosophy.¹⁷

The conflict between the evangelicals and the ecumenicals is so great that the Body of Christ has been completely divided into two parts, and that there is no love among His disciples. We lack true Christian unity into which a convert can pass. If divided Christendom is the source of weakness in the West, in non-Christian lands it is a sin and a stumbling block.

2. Education

Religion and education have always been linked together in Thailand.

16. J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*, tr. ed. by Dale Cooper (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), p. 346.

17. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

In the late Ayuthya period (1629-1767) there was no doubt that religion and education were the same thing. Practically, outside the *wat* (temple) there was no other place of learning for the common people. The Buddhist temple has been regarded as a school for a long time. Buddhist monks, as a rule, must be able to read and write, and translate the Pali Scriptures into Thai language. Learning, however, was limited to the religious circle.

The most essential characteristic of the *wat* educational system was that it was open and relatively unstructured. A boy might enter upon his studies at any age, on any Thursday of the year;¹⁸ and he might remain in the monastery for a few weeks or months or for a lifetime. He could enter and leave at any time. The parents of the boy bore the responsibility for clothing him and for contributing liberally to the alms bowl of their son's teacher. The monk himself bore the responsibility for caring the boys committed to his charge. He was primarily responsible for educating them, teaching them to read and to write, and instructing them in the principles of Buddhism, and arranging for higher education elsewhere or for ordination as novice or monk. Thus in the Old Siam [Old Thailand] a well educated man was the one who had received his training in a monastery or *wat*.

The missionaries realized the significance of education which would contribute to the effective strategy of teaching Christian faith to the non-Christian believers. As Daniel McGilvary, a missionary to Siam in the second half of the nineteenth century wrote that:

“We cannot hope to build a church in this land without the aid of schools. So long as the only education in the country is in the hands of the [Buddhist] priesthood we cannot hope to have a permanent foundation for Christianity.”¹⁹

Thus when the French missionaries established their mission in Ayuthya they also had “a theological school, a school for boys sent by the King, and a small school for Christians”, built on the plot of land given by the King, Pra Narai the Great.²⁰ In regard to the theological school or seminary the principal objective, according to the Society for Foreign Missions, was precisely to train the national clergy. In the reports of the Society, this seminary is called “General College”, which included a school for preparing students for the seminary itself. The two programs were linked together and the procedure was conformed to the practice of the time in Siam. The General College and its school had existed without interruption since its foundation in 1665 until its last move to Penang in 1806.

Since the General College, although it served the sons of Siam, had an international scope, the Catholic missionaries therefore built a school close to the church. Gradually, as the field of their mission spread, they opened schools for boys and girls in many provinces since 1671. There are more than two hundred schools in Thailand now operated by the Catholic mission.

It was the merit of the Protestant missionaries to change the educational

18. Thursday is traditionally Teachers' Day. The *wan wai kru* or paying-homage-to-teacher day is on the first or second Thursday of June.

19. Daniel McGilvary, *Siam Letters* (microfilmed) December 31, 1870.

20. De la Motte, “Lettre à Mgr. Pallu, 17 Oct., 1666”, *Documents Historiques*, Vol. I, pp. 25-26.

philosophy and make instruction desirable in itself and valuable for present life. King Mongkut (1804-1868) of the present dynasty devoted his protracted period as an abbot in the monastery to the study of English from the Rev. Dan Beach Bradley, M.D., an American Presbyterian missionary.²¹ After becoming King of Siam he established a school in the palace precincts, and invited a missionary lady to teach English in this school. It was aimed at the instruction of the royal family only.

However, missionaries realized the significance of education for the commoners; they therefore established schools and demonstrated that one could get from education many temporal benefits. Their aim was to serve the common people. When they had a choice between a select group and a large one, they preferred the second choice. Miss Edna Cole, in order to be near the ordinary people, rejected King Chulalongkorn's invitation to establish a government school for girls.²² John Eakin expressed the same feeling toward the government authorities. P. A. Eakin states that:

John Eakin did not accept the post of chairman of English division of Suankulap School when he found out that "only the sons of princes and the highest nobles would be admitted." He felt that any scheme of education that did not include the sons of the common folk was a mistake.²³

Thus all the government schools and universities, like mission schools, have admitted sons and daughters of the royal family together with the children of the commoners ever since.

Education for women was also introduced by Christian mission. As mentioned above, one of the most valuable services that Christian missionaries have rendered to Thailand is their endeavor to establish educational system for women. They spread the notion that education was indispensable to the improvement of womanhood, therefore it was necessary for women of all walks of life.

The missionaries had put their best efforts at the service of the girls of common rank. For the benefit of these girls and women, they tried to reverse the notion that education had no value for women. Gradually, the Siamese girls and women came to realize that education provides them with manifold advantages, especially an influence upon the whole status of womanhood. In the realization of the program of education for women, things did not go smoothly. The missionaries had to face and struggle with many obstacles. In order to get students, they had to pay for the girls' coming to school. They even ransomed girls who had been sold by their parents as theater dancing girls.²⁴

When their first school was open for girls, it was an object of scorn and contempt. There was even a rebellion of native male teachers who happened to be under the supervision of lady missionaries.

21. Abbot L. Moffat, *Mongkut the King of Siam* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1968), pp. 19-20.

22. Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

23. P. A. Eakin, *The Eakin Family in Thailand* (Bangkok: Prachandra Press, 1955), p. 19.

24. Khoi, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

After a great effort applied to this task, the idea of education for women was gradually accepted. At the commencement of the Harriet House School, the Minister of Education in Thailand once said:

The Siamese formerly had a proverb which was in every man's mouth: "Woman is a buffalo; only man is human." Through the influence of your school and the teaching of the American missionary women we have thrown the old proverb away and our own government is founding schools for the education of the girls . . .²⁵

Christian schools seem to have lost their way, according to many conservative Christians in Thailand. Though there are some religious activities operated by Christian teachers and students, there appear some weaknesses which are due to many circumstances. But Christian mission has rendered a considerable contribution to Thailand, especially Christian ideals and philosophy as mentioned above.

It might be possible that Christianity has made Buddhism play the role of follower rather than of leader or moulder of other cultural forces. One can see that Buddhism is now flexible and makes itself more relevant to new situations. If Christians have Sunday schools, so have Buddhists in Thailand. If Christians have seminaries, so have Buddhists. If Christians preach the gospel in the vernacular, so do Buddhists. That is why Bruce Morgan observes that "I suspect that Buddhism is facing important changes in Thailand, now and in the near future. I cannot imagine Thai Buddhism is dying."²⁶

Thus it might not be an exaggeration to say that, though there are small number of Christian converts in Thailand, Christian ideals and philosophy have permeated some sphere of life in Thai society.

IV. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the significance of the Christian mission in Buddhist society in Thailand. There are two major missions working in Thailand: the Catholic mission, most of missionaries from France, and the Protestant mission, from the United States of America. In this study the writer attempted to survey the history of missions from the beginning in order to get the whole picture of mission work in Thailand.

Due to the limit of time and the length of the paper, the writer paid more attention to the two areas of mission work, rather than the historical sketch. These two important areas are evangelism and education. It has been found that in the evangelical approach there are two schools of thought: the evangelical school and the ecumenical school. The evangelical school which made up of the minority of the Protestant groups sees the necessity of proclaiming the gospel to the non-Christian believers and attempting to make them the disciples of Christ. The ecumenical school, on the contrary, holds that God is also working among the non-Christian people. Therefore it is not

25. F. H. Feltus, *Samuel Renolds House of Siam: The Man With Gentle Heart, Pioneer Medical Missionary, 1847-1876* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1924), p. 137.

26. Bruce Morgan, *Thai Buddhism and American Protestantism*, in Sinclair Thompson Memorial Lectures, fourth series, (Chiang Mai: Thailand Theological Seminary, 1966), p. 84.

necessary to convert them to the Christian faith, but rather to spread Christian ideals and philosophy to the followers of Buddhism, and to seek collaboration with them in socio-economic realm as well as in religious ones.

In the educational approach it has been found that Christian missions both Catholic and Protestant have introduced, besides the Christian faith, modern secular education for boys and girls including adults. They have also introduced the Christian ideals related to the view of man, either considered as an individual or as a member of his society. Several reforms undertaken by the Thai authorities appeared to be the results of Christian teachings. By their activities, the Christians have also challenged Buddhism to change some of its outlooks.

Through the contribution of their yesteryear activities, Christian missionaries and nationals are still exerting a considerable influence on the Thai community.

V. Appendix

Objectives of the Catholic Church in Thailand in Their Order of Importance

Objectives	Order of Importance			
	First %	Second %	Third %	Total %
— To make existing Catholics more Christian.	43.2 (41)	23.2 (22)	14.7 (14.7)	27.0 (77)
— To preach the message of Christ.	26.3 (25)	31.6 (30)	18.9 (18)	25.6 (73)
— To permeate society with Christian values.	18.9 (18)	29.5 (28)	33.7 (32)	27.4 (78)
— To bear witness to Christ's love through involvement in development activities.	10.5 (10)	12.6 (12)	22.1 (21)	15.1 (43)
— To convert Buddhists.	— (0)	1 (1)	5.3 (5)	2.1 (6)
— Evangelisation of intellectuals.	1.1 (1)	2.1 (2)	5.1 (5)	2.8 (8)
Total	100 (95)	100 (95)	100 (95)	100 (285)

VI. Bibliography

- Becon, G. B. *Siam: The Land of the White Elephants As It Was and Is*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893.
- Buddhadasa. *Toward the Truth*. Edited by Donald K. Swearer. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971.
- Chaiwan, Saad. *The Christian Approach to Buddhists in Thailand*. Bangkok: Suriyaban Publishers, 1975.

- “The Christian Church in Thai Society.” A paper submitted to the Christian Conference of Asia to be published in the *Asian Church History*.
- Chaviwan, Suthep. *Thailand's Christian Directory 1982*. Bangkok: G. P. O. Box 1405.
- Eakin, P. A. *The Eakin Family in Thailand*. Bangkok: Prachandra Press, 1955.
- Feltus, F. H. *Samuel Renolds House of Siam: The Man With Gentle Heart, Pioneer Medical Missionary, 1847-1876*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1924.
- Khoi, Joseph van. *A Study of the Impact of Christian Missionaries on Thai Education*. Bangkok: La Salle School, 1975.
- Koyama, Kosuke. *No Handle on the Cross: An Asian Meditation on the Crucified Mind*. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1976.
- Launay, A. *Histoire de la Mission de Siam, 1662-1811*. Paris: P. Tequi, 1920.
- McGilvary, Daniel. *Siam Letters* (microfilmed), December 31, 1870.
- Moffat, Abbot L. *Mongkut the King of Siam*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1968.
- Morgan, Bruce. *Thai Buddhism and American Protestantism*. Fourth series of Sinclair Thompson Memorial Lectures. Chiang Mai: Thailand Theological Seminary, 1966.
- Motte, De La, “Lettre à Mgr. Pallu, 17 Oct., 1666”, *Documents Historiques*. Vol. I.
- Prachoom Pongsawadan Shabab Hosamut Haeng Chart* (The Chronicles, The National Library Edition). Vol. IX (13 vol.) Bangkok: Progress Publishers, 1964.
- Leotilo, Rocco J. “The First Catholic Missionary Endeavour in Thailand”, in *Saengtham Parithat* (The Light of Dhamma Perspective), No. 1. Nakorn Prathom: Lux Mundi Seminary, 1977.
- Smith, Alex G. *Siamese Gold: A History of Church Growth in Thailand*. Bangkok: Kanok Bannasan OMF Publishers, 1982.
- Yerkuyl, J. *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*. Tr. & ed. by Dale Cooper. Grand Rapids: William B. Erdmans Publishing Co., 1978.
- Wells, K. E. *History of Protestant Work in Thailand*. Bangkok: The Church of Christ in Thailand, 1958.