

a community called ...

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Dissertation Abstract

This work is targeted on exploring human barriers in the process of evangelism especially with reference to the resistance of the Burman Buddhists to convert to Christianity. Burma is made up of different distinct ethnic groups with Burman people being the majority. Buddhism was first introduced from India first to the Mon people, and the Mons passed it onto the Burmans. Buddhism has been adopted and protected as a favored religion from the era of the Burmese kings to the successive Burmese rulers from U Nu (in 1948) to the present rulers. It has been strongly established through the fifth and the sixth Buddhist Councils in Burma and also through the strong *Sangha* community. Due to the British colonization, Burmans view Christianity as a *foreign religion* and also as an *ethnic other religion*. The contrasting figures between the small percentage (7%) of Christians and the large percentage of Buddhists (85%) in Burma indicate that Christian mission has not been successful in Burma in the previous two centuries.

Data are gathered from existing literatures, interviews, questionnaires and written testimonies using qualitative and quantitative research methods, and are evaluated and analyzed based on a tripartite theoretical construct of identity theories, conversion theories, and diffusion theories. The research results produce two types of major barriers: Buddhist barriers to becoming Christians (Indigenous Barriers) and Christian Barriers to witnessing to the Burman Buddhists (Missional Barriers). The first barrier type includes attachment barriers, ethnic barriers, fear-related barriers, socio-political barriers, and the other-religion barriers. The second barrier type contains cultural barriers, ethnic barriers, fear-related barriers, spiritual barriers, ethical moral barriers, and methodological barriers. A better suggested approach to overcome human barriers in witnessing to the

Burman Buddhists is a *polite-discreet approach*.¹ This proposed new method *polite-discreet approach* is the opposite of *aggressive-confrontational approach* which assumes conversion to occur only in *one definable moment*. Since conversion can be understood as process of series of events and a dramatic crisis, a *polite-discreet approach* will work in Burma and in any given context as well. Conversion is a combination of divine and human works (Matt 28:19-20; Rom 10: 14-17).

¹The author interviewed an informant who at the first meeting was still a Buddhist-Atheist. As a personal relationship develops with this informant, the author takes the opportunity to apply the *polite-discreet approach* with the view of conversion as a gradual process in the presentation of the gospel, the informant, Derrick, has made a decision to be baptized in Christ on May 15, 2010. The author is blessed to be a part of a group of people (his wife, his pastor and his church) who share the gospel to Derrick. By the grace of God, the *polite-discreet approach* is already effective in the presentation of the gospel.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation, entitled

BARRIERS IN CONVERSION (MISSIONAL AND INDIGENOUS BARRIERS):
*Identifying the Potential Barriers Contributing to the Stagnant Progress of
Evangelistic Works among the Burman Buddhists*

written by

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and submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

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A Dissertation

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Dedication

To

My Late Father

TUN ZA TUANG (1921-2005)

For

His leadership in our family devotions

His godly upbringing since my childhood

His personal love for God and His service

His personal attentions toward me as an important child

His exemplary life which he modeled before his children

His encouragement to attend Sunday schools and develop godly character

His motivational inspiration to acquire wisdom and knowledge since my childhood

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A. The Significance of the Research

I was born and brought up in the highland area of Burma, namely the Chin State which borders with India to the north. First of all, this study is personally significant to me. When I live among my ethnic group (Zomi¹), I feel very proud because I am a born-again Christian and Christianity is the majority religion (about 90 %) among my ethnic group. Conversely, Christians are only a tiny minority among the Burman majority of Myanmar. I intensely felt very small, isolated, marginalized and minoritized when I lived among the Burmans. I have lived and travelled across the country of Myanmar and have met many Burmans and other ethnic groups who adhere to the Buddhist teachings in Burma. For three years during high school, I lived among Rakhine people in Rakhine State. They are also ethnic people but they are staunch followers of Buddha's teachings. They even claim seniority over the Burmans as to the time of their adoption of Buddhism.

One day we were bowing before the Lord before our lunch and as soon as we finished our prayer, there stood a little five year old neighbor boy who responded to our prayer, "Oh! no, my neighbors' whole family is sleeping in their kitchen during the day." I can now look back and see how different my neighbor boy viewed our religious practice, but I deeply felt sympathy and compassion for their lost souls as a teenage boy. I was so impressed with the religious zeal of the Buddhists as a teenager, but I was also immensely confused and very disturbed by their resistance to Christianity. I have visited many other cities and villages in Burma where Buddhism

¹The official name of the state is "Chin State," but the people living in the state are called "Zomi."

has been integrated in the minds, the customs and land of the people of Myanmar for centuries. The whole delta areas of the county are dotted with Buddha's pagodas and images.

I did preliminary research in Myanmar in July and August 2007 by holding three different interactive mission conferences in three different places (Yangon, Kalaymyo, and Tedim). These conferences were conducted in the initial research stage to ask questions regarding missional barriers and gather information. I was surprised at how much enthusiasm I found among the few ministers I met in Myanmar and how they found the mission conference helpful for doing mission in Myanmar. Even though I was pleased to find out that a few good ministers and evangelists have been striving to reach the Buddhists in their own ways, the ineffective methods, the few numbers of ministers and the limited available resources were not effective enough to reach the whole country with the Gospel. Doing more in-depth research than just doing mission conference is very important for understanding the barriers in reaching the Burmans. This research work is, therefore, very important to the success of mission work in Burma.

The research effort is significant to the missiologists and Christians in Asia and around the world because Buddhism is one of the major religions in the world and it has been expanding into many continents including America. Since the concepts, teachings, and traditions of Buddhism have been ingrained in the mind of Asians, missiologists and Christians need to know how to reach the Buddhists in Asia. This research work is, therefore, very important to the success of mission work in Burma. The research findings with reference to reaching the Burmese Buddhists will be very helpful to missionaries, ministers, evangelists, believers, and missiologists in

Myanmar, Asia and around the world. The research on reaching the Burmese Buddhists will also contribute to the building of the kingdom of God because it will give new ways to reach the lost people for the kingdom of God. Therefore, I believe that the research work is very important to carry out.

B. Statement of the Problem

The most pressing missiological issue in Myanmar is the problem of the slow progress among Burman Buddhists in converting to Christianity. Humanly speaking, the Burmans are difficult to reach with the gospel because of human barriers (while the work of the Holy Spirit should not be neglected). Some suggested general barriers in reaching the Burmese Buddhists are as follows: Christianity being seen as a foreign religion, Western religion, colonial-British religion, and Buddhism being a government-sponsored and favored religion, nationalism, the inseparableness of Burmese culture and Buddhism, and its strong traditional beliefs and established religion. These are rather general assumptions. While these barriers are not invalid, not all these barriers can be automatically attributed as real barriers for the Burmese people without doing further research. The real problem to be addressed in this study is to discover the barriers causing lack of success among the Burmese people with the gospel of Christ.

The first Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson came to the shore of Burma about two centuries ago, yet the majority of the people in Burma, out of over 50 million people, are still Buddhist. The percentages of the population of Burmese people by their religious groupings are as follows: 89.3 percent Buddhists, 5.6 percent Christians, 3.8 percent Muslims, 0.5 Hindus and 0.2 animists.² Clasper wrote in 1961

²Ministry of Information, *Facts and Figures 2002* (Union of Myanmar, Myanmar: March, 2002), 4-5.

that the largest group of so-called "Burman Christians" numbers about 5,000 members after roughly 140 years of activity.³

The most recent study indicates that the Christian population in Myanmar was about 3.4 million in 2001.⁴ The number of Burman Christians estimated in 1997 was 16, 018 according to statistics from the Myanmar Baptist Churches Union in June, 1997.⁵ Based on these estimated numbers, the population of Burma is around 50 millions and Christian percentage in the country can be estimated about 7 or 8 %.⁶ With these estimated statistics available, the ratio of Burmese Christians to the non-Burmese Christians in Myanmar would roughly be 1: 212. This means there is only one Burmese convert for every 212 non-Burmese converts.⁷ My professor Terry Muck and Frances S. Adeney, in their most recent book, estimate the percentage of

³Paul D. Clasper, "The Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Burma," *Review & Expositor* 58, no.1 [Jan 1961] 42.

⁴Barrett et al. ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 518.

⁵Lazarus Fish, "Reclaiming the Zayat Ministry: Witness to the Gospel among Burmese Buddhists in Myanmar," [DMiss diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2002], 12-13. The US Census Bureau estimates the population of Burma in 2008 as 47,382,633 [<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/country/bmportal.html>]. Terry Muck and Frances S. Adeney estimate the percentage of Buddhists in Burma as 73 % and that of Christians as 8 % [Terry Muck and Frances S. Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions: The Practice of Mission in the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 9]. No official census has been taken since the 1983 Official Census, these statistics are just estimated numbers and it is very difficult to claim any number dogmatically.

⁶ In July 2009 *The World Book Factbook* estimated the population as 48, 137, 741 [<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>]. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates the population in Burma as 49,200,000 in July 2009 [<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a6452c932.html>] [accessed 25 January 2010]. Various sources provide various estimates and percentages of the population; cf. George Thomas Kurian ed. *Encyclopedia of the World's Nations and Cultures*. Vol. III (New York: Facts On File, 2007), 1664; David Levinson and Karen Christensen, eds. *Encyclopedia of Modern Asia*. Vol. 4 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002), 246. Donald M. Seekins, *Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar)* 59 vols. In *Historical Dictionaries of Asia, Oceania, and the Middle East*, ed. Jon Woronoff (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006), 7.

⁷Fish, *Reclaiming the Zayat Ministry*, 13.

Buddhists in Burma as 73 % and that of Christians as 8 %.⁸ While these figures are just estimates, they still represent a rough idea of how difficult it is to reach the Burman Buddhists. Although Christianity has witnessed some progress among the Burman Buddhists, it is a very minimal progress compared to the progress of Christianity among the other ethnic groups in Myanmar. Therefore, discovering the barriers is paramount to the success of mission among the Burman Buddhists.

C. Research Purpose and Research Questions

The question is, “What are the barriers causing the slow progress of mission work among the Burman Buddhists?” The purpose of the research is to find out the barriers causing the ineffectiveness of mission work among the Burman people.

In order to find out the barriers, I will wrestle with these question clusters:

Cluster #1: What are the attitudes of Burman Buddhists toward Christianity?

Cluster #2: What happen when the Burmans are converted to Christianity?

Cluster #3: What happen after the Burmans are converted to Christianity?⁹

Cluster # 1: Pre-Conversion Experience Questions

Asking the question “What are the attitudes of Burmese Buddhists toward Christianity?” will help in exploring the barriers before a Burman can convert from Buddhism to Christianity. The kinds of relationships developed between Burman Buddhists and ethnic Christians are important factors in the pre-conversion stage. What are (“were” for the new converts) the Burmese attitudes, stereotypes,

⁸Terry Muck and Frances S. Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions: The Practice of Mission in the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 9.

⁹Questions 2 and 3 are also important in discovering the barriers because knowing what happens at conversion and after conversion will help ministers know the do’s and don’t’s in approaching the Buddhists. For example, some new converts face strong condemnations and negative reactions from family members. Because of family’s negative reactions, people are afraid to convert to Christianity. Therefore, this is a barrier.

impressions, and reactions toward Christianity before they had an encounter with Christians or Christianity? Answers to these questions will point out how the Burmese respond (positively or negatively) to Christianity and Christians.

Evangelism¹⁰ involves a relationship encounter between groups or individuals in a particular setting or context. It involves personal interactions which include culture, customs, beliefs, behaviors, practice and manners. Asking probing questions will point to the barriers causing the slow diffusion of the gospel among the Burman people. As evangelism involves communications and interactive relationships between groups of people or individuals, the attitudes of Myanmar Christians toward Burmese people and Buddhism also contribute to the failure of Christian mission among the Buddhists. Therefore, asking questions which relate to Christian attitudes toward the Burmese and Buddhism will lead to discovering barriers causing to reach the Burmese with the gospel. How do Myanmar Christians relate to their Burmese friends, neighbors, classmates, and office-mates? Do they view them as hopeless pagans and idolaters heading toward hell? Do Christians see Burmese as people like themselves who need God and salvation in Christ? Do Myanmar Christians have hope about reaching the Buddhists? How do they as ethnic minorities view the Burmans? Questions of this type are to be asked by Christian ministers, missionaries, evangelists, and Christian laymen to explore the possible barriers.

Asking Burman Buddhists the right questions about their attitudes toward Christianity and its adherents and asking Myanmar Christians the right questions about their attitudes toward Buddhism and its adherents will disclose some information about the barriers causing failure to reach the Buddhists for Christ.

¹⁰The term 'evangelism' here refers to sharing the 'gospel' interactively in a particular cultural setting.

Cluster #2: Conversion Experience Questions

The next question is, “What happened when a person was converted to Christianity?” This question has to do with what happens when someone decides to convert to Christianity. This will include questions around the conversion experience. What kinds of Christian contacts and exposure has a person had? What kinds of positive experience have influenced him/her to decide to become Christian? What kinds of negative exposure and experience has the person had with Christianity? What kind of message or presentation has he/she heard? To what kinds of Christian events did he/she go? How did Christians approach him/her?

In my preliminary research in July-August 2007, I asked Burmese converts to write their testimonies in about two to three written pages. Some expressed themselves and their conversions clearly while others simply said that they had become Christian at some point. Therefore, it is very important to ask the right questions and to follow up testimonial writings with personal interviews to find out the details of their conversion experience. Some people became Christians through the consistent presentation of the gospel and visitation of some Christians while others heard the gospel through media and literature. Asking the right questions will reveal what makes the Burmese Buddhists decide to become Christians or to refuse Christianity. What happens during and around their conversion events will shed light on what barriers cause failure in evangelism and will provide information on how to better reach the Burmese with the gospel. Information and answers for these questions will be gathered through personal interviews, personal testimonial essays, surveys, and group interviews.

Cluster #3: Post-Conversion Experience Questions

Evangelism does not end with a person's conversion. It blends in with discipleship, which includes post-conversion experience. The post-conversion experience and the new believer's identity and expression as a new believer in Christ affect his/her relationship with family, friends, and community. Therefore, asking proper question with reference to the post-conversion experience will also provide information needed for barriers. What kinds of temptations does he/she face after conversion? What types of reactions did he/she receive from family, friends, relatives, and the Burmese community at large? How did he/she inform them about his/her new faith? What can be changed or what could have been done to improve their reactions in a positive way? How has his/her view about Christianity changed since he/she become a convert? What can Christians do to change the image of Christianity for Buddhists? How has their attitude toward Christianity changed after encountering Christianity or Christians? In what ways or areas and why? Information and answers for these questions were gathered through personal interviews, personal testimonial essays, surveys, and group interviews.

The researcher attempts to discover cultural attitude¹¹ of the Buddhists (monks and laymen) toward Christians and cultural attitude of the ethnic Christians (missionaries, ethnic leaders, and Christians in Burma) toward Buddhism, Burmese Buddhists, and the Burmese Buddhist worldview. The information gathered and collected will provide information needed for barriers. The purpose of the study is to discover the underlying cultural issues and barriers causing the slow progress in the

¹¹The term *cultural attitude* here refers to the kind of attitude which has existed down through the centuries between the Burman majority people and the ethnic minority people reciprocally. It is an enduring animosity toward each other which is a result of majority-minority relationships, government-backed Buddhism, colonial supported Christianity, nationalism, minority insurgencies and social and cultural distances and differences among the groups in Burma over long period of Burma's history.

diffusion of the Gospel into the heart of the Burmese Buddhists. Therefore, field research is necessary in order to explore barriers in reaching the Burman Buddhists with the gospel.

After asking the pre-conversion questions, the conversion questions and the post-conversion questions through testimonial data, questionnaires and interviews, the researcher discovered two types of major barriers: Buddhist barriers to becoming Christians (Indigenous Barriers) and Christian Barriers to witnessing to the Burman Buddhists (Missional Barriers). The first barrier type includes attachment barriers, ethnic barriers, fear-related barriers, socio-political barriers, and the other-religion barriers. The second barrier type contains cultural barriers, ethnic barriers, fear-related barriers, spiritual barriers, ethical moral barriers, and methodological barriers. Based on the research findings, a better suggested approach to overcome the potential human barriers in witnessing to the Burman Buddhists is a *polite-discreet approach* which is the opposite of *aggressive-confrontational approach*. Since conversion is both a *process* and a *definable experience*, a *polite-discreet approach* will work in Burma and in any other given context as well.

D. Parameters of the Research

1. Delimitations and Limitations

The research is more focused on qualitative method while quantitative method is also employed to supplement it. In the process of data collection, there are some vague responses such as blanks, question marks, and unsure notes. Leaving answers blank can be either the person does not know how to response or he/she does not want to reveal the truth to save face. One can expect unclear discrepancies when dealing with Asian culture including dishonesty, hesitancy, indirectness and saving face.

Burmese people (monks and Buddhists) seem reluctant to express their honest assessment of Christianity. Some people refuse to fill up the questionnaires and others deny personal interviews to avoid direct sharing of their opinions. Still other do not express their real feelings or honest assumptions or beliefs about things or people for personal reasons which would vary from an individual to another.

Some general conclusions are called for in gray situations and they are treated on a case by case basis. Unexpected changes and readjustment in planning and scheduling occur due to unavoidable circumstances and the change of heart and mind of the people who initially show certain signs of willingness to comply with the research requirements. Since interviews cannot be done in Myanmar except through questionnaires due to limited funds available for travel and research, access to a variety of informants is, therefore, limited. The samples for interviews are chosen based on convenient available samples and therefore, the research cannot be claimed an exhaustive work. However, with whatever convenient samples and resources available, the findings are very encouraging, beneficial and productive for the kingdom of God and the research project.

2. Ethical Conduct Commitment

The procedure and purpose of the research was explained to the participants before the interviews. Their names and addresses or personal information will not be shared publically. The personal information of interviewees and respondents are used solely for evaluation and analysis but are kept confidential. They will become anonymous participants throughout the process and beyond. There is no discrimination based on color, ethnic origin, or religious belief in interacting with people from various ethnic groups and various religious backgrounds. The

respondents are treated with kindness, respect, honor and gratitude by setting up meetings at their convenient times and locations.

E. Definition of Significant Terms

Before proceeding further, certain important terms should be defined. These terms includes *Burman vs. Burmese*, *Burma vs. Myanmar*, *Ethnic Christians*, *Burman Christians*, and *Myanmar Christians*, *aa'na* (အားနာ), *naa'le hmuh* (နားလည်မှု), *anicca* (အနိစ္စ), *anatta* (အနတ္တ), *dukkha* (ဒုက္ခ), *karma* (ကမ္မ), *kutho-kan* (ကုသိုလ်ကံ), *sangha* (သံဃာ), *bartarzi swei*, *nat* worship, *bamahsan chiin* and *worldview*. Understanding these specific terms will provide readers a better understanding of Theravada Buddhism, Burmese culture and religious worldviews in Burma.

Burman vs. Burmese

The term *Burman* when used as a noun refers to the majority who make up 69 percent of the national population in the 1983 census. The native term used for the same group is *Bama* which represents a distinct ethnic group. Both *Burman* and *Burmese* can also be used as adjectives qualifying the specific people groups.¹² The term *Burmese* is a confusing term because it has been used in various ways by different authors. Some authors such as Melford E. Spiro¹³ and Hugh Tinker¹⁴ use it exclusively with reference to the majority of Burma whereas some other authors

¹²Jean Michaud, *Historical Dictionary of the Peoples of the Southeast Asian Massif* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006), 53.

¹³Melford Spiro, *Burmese Supernaturalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996).

¹⁴Tinker uses 'Burman' "for all the indigenous peoples of Burma, and 'Burmese' for the majority community whose mother-tongue is Burmese" (Hugh Tinker, *THE UNION OF BURMA: A Study of The First Years of Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), xi) in following the usage in the 1953 Census of Burma while he himself does not exclusively claim the consistent usage of this terms in this sense.

including Edna Ledgard¹⁵ and Helen G. Trager¹⁶ use *Burmese* interchangeably with *Burman* referring to the majority people.

D. R. SarDesai uses the term *Burmese* in the political sense when referring to rulers (e.g kings), territories, history, administration, capital, and wars whereas he uses the term *Burman(s)* to refer to the majority in Burma.¹⁷ In order to avoid confusion, the term *Burman(s)* is used in this work to refer to the majority in Burma and *Burmese* is used when referring to the political system, common language and non-human objects which apply to all people in Burma. Sometimes *Burmese* could refer to all people in Burma as well.¹⁸

Burma vs. Myanmar

The term *Myanmar* was the new name chosen by the military junta to replace the old name *Burma* when it emerged to rule the country after the 1988 political upheavals.¹⁹ The new name *Myanmar* is not recognized by many authors and many Western countries including the United States and some European countries. The word *Burma* is used for the country and the word *Burmese* is used as an adjective or noun to represent the citizens of the country. The word *Myanmar* is more inclusive representing all ethnic people in the country and the word *Burmans (Bama)* generally

¹⁵Edna Ledgard collected and retold, *The SNAKE PRINCE and Other Stories BURMESE FOLK TALES* (Brooklyn, NY: Interlink Books, 2000), 9-12.

¹⁶Trager, *Burma Through Alien Eyes*, 4, 50.

¹⁷D.R. SarDesai, *Southeast Asia*, 1997, 74-81.

¹⁸Seekins, *Historical Dictionary of Burma*, 2006, xiii, 129-130; Levinson and Christensen, *Encyclopedia of Modern Asia*, 2002, 247; Furnivall, *Political Economy of Burma*, 1957, 11.

¹⁹Jean Michaud, *Historical Dictionary*, 173.

refers to the majority Burman people.²⁰ The majority of *Burman* people are generally Buddhists through birth, tradition, and practice.

Ethnic Christians, Burman Christians, and Myanmar Christians

The term *Ethnic Christians* refers to non-Burman Christians who come from different minority ethnic backgrounds such as Kachin, Karen, Chin, and other ethnic groups in Burma. The term *Burman Christians* refers to those who have been converted from Buddhist background into Christianity. The term *Myanmar Christians* refers to all Christians in Burma in spite of their ethnic identities. These terms are used not for the purpose of discriminating one group from the other, but for the purpose of clarifying and identifying people according to their ethnic origin to avoid confusions.

Aa'na (အာနာ)

The term *aa'na* means feeling hesitant to ask any help or to receive any favor from others or to hurt someone's feelings. This is a common practice among Burmese. A Burmese author Saw Myat Yin refers to this term as a feeling that is often understood as a national trait and defines the term this way: "It is a feeling of not wanting to impose on others, wanting to give in when one can, not wanting to cause trouble or loss of face."²¹

Naa'le Hmuh (နားလည်မှု)

Another term that requires a definition is "*naa-le muh*," which literally means "understanding." This word is difficult to translate because the meaning of this word

²⁰Mary P. Callahan, *Political Authority in Burma's Ethnic Minority States: Devolution, Occupation, and Coexistence* (Washington D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2007), x.

²¹Saw Myat Yin, *Culture Shock!* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2007), 41.

is more than just “understanding.” It is a relational term which describes an understood idea when someone can read the mind of the other and know the expectation (especially the preferences) of that individual. Behind the concept of “*naa’le hmuh*,” there is an invisible relationship between the two parties involved. The relationship exists through blood-tie, social status, and social relationships including friendship or monetary exchange. The word is used in government services and business transactions. If there is someone who is in need of help or a favor from another person, that person gets the favor if there is “*naa-le hmuh*” between the two individuals. When there is no “*naa-le hmuh*,” there is a barrier between the two individuals in carrying out any kind of business.

Anicca (အနိစ္စ)

The term *anicca* means “impermanent.” Everything in the universe including gods, men, animals, and matter is fleeting and temporary in its existence. One’s existence is only for a moment in its present form only to wait for the next existence.²² This term is the basic philosophical concept of Theravada Buddhism.

Anatta (အနတ္တ)

This word *anatta* means “no soul” or “no self.” The idea is that there is no real existence of soul and no essential identity of one’s own existence. This doctrine of *anatta* is one of the core teachings of Theravada Buddhism, and it denotes “a flat denial of any abiding personality, consciousness, self, or soul.”²³

²²Winston L. King, *A Thousand Lives Away: Buddhism in Contemporary Burma* (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1990), 17-18.

²³Ibid., 18-19.

Dukkha(ဒုက္ခ)

The word *dukkha* derived from the Pali term meaning “pain,” “suffering,” “sorrow,” or “misery.”²⁴ Spiro says, “Suffering, to conclude, is inescapable. So long as there is life there is desire (*tanha*; literally, thirst) and so long as there is desire there will be suffering.”²⁵ Suffering is indeed the bulk of Theravada teaching because it is the first noble truth: life is full of suffering.

Karma (Kutho-Kan)(ကုသိုလ်ကံ)

Manning Nash defines Kan in these words:

Kan is “the bundle of ideas tied in with destiny, fate, luck, and life chances. It means to the villager the whole sum of his past deeds, the moral balance of good and evil which goes on from existence to existence, now taking one corporeal form, now another. A person’s *kan*(ကံ) is strengthened by adding *kutho* (ကုသိုလ်) and weakened by accumulating *akutho* (အကုသိုလ်). *Kutho* is merit, and *akutho* is demerit.”²⁶

The word *karma* is a Pali term which signifies a “volitional action” that produces either merit (*kuhto*) or demerit (*akutho*). So good *karma* produces merits, and bad *karma* produces demerits.²⁷ Spiro observes, “Good karma can be changed into bad karma by the accumulation of additional demerit; bad karma can be changed into good karma by the accumulation of additional merit.”²⁸

²⁴Walpola Sri Rahula, *What Buddha Taught* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1959), 17.

²⁵Melford Spiro, *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes* 2nd expan. ed. (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1970), 38.

²⁶Manning Nash, *The Golden Road to Modernity: Village Life in Contemporary Burma* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago, 1965), 106.

²⁷Rahula, *What Buddha Taught*, 32.

²⁸Spiro, *Buddhism and Society*, 119.

Sangha (သံဃာ)

The word *sangha* literally and originally means “a crowd” or “gathering,” which eventually refers to the community of monks and nuns.²⁹ Wijayaratna further elaborates the term *sangha* and writes, “The monastic Community is made up of two groups: *bhikkhu-sangha* (the order of monks) and *bhikkhuni-sangha* (the order of nuns); together they are called *ubhatosangha*, ‘the twofold community.’”³⁰

Wijayaratna summarizes the relationship of the *sangha* to the lay community in these words:

Buddhist monks and nuns may seem to have been radically cut off from lay society, because of their attitudes, customs and behavior. Their way of life was in one sense completely different from that of lay people, and they remained on the margins of the world’s affairs. But in religious matters, they were very close to lay people, in three different ways: they depended on them for their subsistence, they encouraged their faith and support by providing examples of good behavior, and they acted as their religious advisers.³¹

The monks and the nuns are respected in the Burmese society because of their sacrifice, exemplary life, spiritual discipline, and knowledge about the religion.

Batazi Swei (ဘာသာရေးဆွယ်)

The word *batazi* (ဘာသာရေး) means “religion” and the term *swei* (ဆွယ်) literally means “persuade,” or “entice” or “convince.” There is no dynamic equivalent term, but the concept of the meaning of the term is drawing or pulling the other to one’s own group or camp. If the Burmans feel that Christians are trying to *batazi swei*, they tend to withdraw from having good relationship with Christians, or they feel

²⁹Mohan Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life according to the text of Theravada tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid, 128.

threatened about their religious security. This could happen especially when Burmans are approached with the Western method of aggressive evangelism. An English equivalent term for *batazi swei* would be “proselytize.”

Nat Worship

Nats are spirit beings contributing good fortunes and bad fortunes to the Burman people. The good nats benefits the people while the evil nats harm the people. Steven Martin and Mic Looby defines the Burmese *nat* this way: “Originally animistic—associated with hills, trees, lakes and other natural features—Burmese nat have evolved into a spirit that may hold dominion over a place (natural or human-made), person, or field of experience.”³² Since King Anawratha failed to suppress *nat* worship when he became the king of Burma in the 11th Century, he not only allowed the continual existence of thirty six *nats* but also incorporated a 37th *nat*, namely, *Thagyamin*, which “outranked the previous nat king, Mahagirinath (Lord of the Great Hill, a reference to Mt Popa).”³³

Even though *nat* worship is frowned upon by the monks and the more conservative lay Buddhists, *nat* shrines and *nat* alters are seen at the base of pagodas, at the grounds of monasteries and in the house of many Buddhists alongside of *Buddha* images and alters. Burmans have different *nats* ranging from house *nat*, village *nats*, guardian *nats* to personal *nats*, mother’s side-father’s side *nats*, and public works *nats*.³⁴ The Burmans generally regard and worship Buddha for the

³²Steven Martin and Mic Looby, *Myanmar (Burma)* (Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2002), 59.

³³*Ibid.*, 60.

³⁴For further detailed explanation on the *nat*, please refer to Spiro, *Burmese Supernaturalism*, 1996.

benefits of their next life while they fear and appease the *Nats* for their immediate deliverance from danger, sicknesses, and troubles. *Nat* worship is inseparably linked with Burman society and daily activities.

Bamahshan Chiin (Burmanness)

Saw Myit Yin defines *bamahsan chin* this way: “*Bamahsan chin* is a complex term and can represent a variety of things. It includes behaving with respect towards elders, being able to recite scriptures (at least the more important ones), being able to converse in idiomatic Myanmar language (which is very difficult and differs greatly from the written word), being indirect and subtle rather than loud and direct, dressing with modesty, being discreet in relations with the opposite sex and generally showing a knowledge of things Myanmar.”³⁵ Since Burmanness requires recitation of Buddhist scriptures and observance of Buddha’s teaching, the Burman Buddhists cannot regard a Burman Christian convert as a real and authentic Burman any more.

Worldview

Charles Kraft defines worldview thus:

Worldview, the deep level of culture, is the culturally structured set of assumptions (including values and commitments/allegiances) underlying how a people perceive and respond to reality. Worldview is not separate from culture. It is included in culture as the deepest level of presumptions upon which people base their lives.”³⁶

Worldview is the unseen part of culture which governs the thoughts, speeches, and behaviors of the people in their particular cultural context. For the Burmans, their worldview is a mixture of Theravada Buddhism, Nat worship and traditional elements.

³⁵Yin, *Culture Shock!*, 2007, 36.

³⁶Charles Kraft, “Culture, Worldview, and Contextualization,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader* 3rd ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2002), 385.

Contextualization

Darrell Whiteman defines contextualization as “an attempt to communicate the gospel in word and deed and to establish the church in ways that make sense to people within their local cultural context, presenting Christianity in such a way that it meets people’s deepest needs and penetrates their worldview, thus allowing them to follow Christ and remain within their own culture.”³⁷ Contextualization is “a direct result of ascertaining the meaning of the biblical text, consciously submitting to its authority, and applying or appropriating that meaning to a given situation.”³⁸ Contextualization, therefore, has to do with cultural, religious, social, ethnic, political and spiritual aspects of a particular group at a given period of time in an indigenous given situation at a local geographical setting in the process of presenting the gospel in a cross-cultural environment.

³⁷Darrell Whiteman, “Contextualization: The Theory, the Gap, the Challenge,” In *New Direction in Mission & Evangelization 3: Faith and Culture*, ed. James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 43-44.

³⁸David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2000), 202.

Chapter II

Background Information of Burma: Its People and Its Religions

Before going further into the research project, a selected review of the history of Burma is indispensable to understanding the context of the project.



Map 1: Map of Burma

(<http://www.mapsofworld.com/burma/burma-political-map.html>)

A. Burma: Ethnic and Religious Makeup of Burma

Burma (Myanmar)³⁹ is located in Southeast Asia and is one of the Asian countries that is largely populated by Buddhists. In general, Burma is historically made up of eight major ethnic groups consisting of Kachin (ကချင်), Kayar (ကယား), Kayin or Karen (ကရင်), Chin (ချင်း), Burman (ဗမာ), Mon (မွန်), Rakhine (ရခိုင်), and Shan (ရှမ်း). Burmans make up about 68 percent, Shans about 9 percent, Karens around 7 percent, Rakhine 4 percent, Chinese 3 percent, Mon 2 percent, Indians 2 percent, and other smaller ethnic groups make up 7 percent.⁴⁰ The late colonial era survey claims more than 67 indigenous ethnic groups and 242 separate languages and dialects spoken in Burma, and the recent official division records the national races (*tai'yiinta lumyu-* တိုင်းရင်းသားလူမျိုး) as “135 ethnic groups.”⁴¹ Some critical observers argue that the number is “9” (which is a numerologically auspicious number for U Ni Win) instead of “135,” because “135” is more of a fancy, superstitious number rather than a factual number when each digit is added up (1+3+5=9).⁴² The country is divided into

³⁹The term *Burma* refers to the country whereas *Burmese* is used for the people of *Burma*. The name of the country was changed from *Burma* to *Myanmar* in 1989 by the military government after the military took over power in 1988. Most Asian countries recognize the new name whereas the United States and several European countries have not accepted it due to human rights abuses and the military's failure to release the National League Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi who won the national election with a landslide victory in 1990 from house arrest. See, Mary P. Callahan, *Political Authority in Burma's Ethnic Minority States: Devolution, Occupation, and Coexistence* Policy Studies 31 (Southeast Asia) (Washington D.C.: East-West Center Washington, 2007), x.

⁴⁰George Thomas Kurian ed. *Encyclopedia of the World's Nations and Cultures*. Vol. III (New York: Facts On File, 2007), 1664. Cf. David Levinson and Karen Christensen, eds. *Encyclopedia of Modern Asia*. Vol. 4 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002), 246.

⁴¹Mikael Gravers ed. *Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Burma* (Copenhagen S, Denmark: NIAS Press, 2007, 4.

⁴²Donald M. Seekins, *Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar)* 59 vols. In *Historical Dictionaries of Asia, Oceania, and the Middle East*, ed. Jon Woronoff (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006), 7.

seven states and seven divisions; the seven states are geographically distributed according to their racial make-ups, namely, Chin state, Kachin state, Karen State, Kayah state, Mon state, Rakhine state, and Shan state respectively. The seven divisions are Pago(ပဲခူး), Yangon(ရန်ကုန်), Mandalay (မန္တလေး), Sagaing(စစ်ကိုင်း), Magway (မကွေး), Ayeyarwady(ဧရာဝတီ) and Thanintharyi (တနင်္သာရီ), divisions. Among the ethnic people Mon, Shan, Rakhine and Bama⁴³ (Burman) are predominantly Buddhists, whereas the majority of Kachin, Chin, and Karen are Christians. Other smaller ethnic groups are Naga (နဂါး), Palaung (ပလောင်), Padaung (ပဒေါင်း), Lisu (လီဆူ), Wa (ဝ), Danu(ဓနု), Lahu (လာဟူ), Lashi (လာရှီ) and Yaw (ယော). Other ethnic groups classified as non-indigenous group are Indian and Chinese-immigrants.⁴⁴

B. Burmans and Mons: Their Origins, Religions and Cultures

The Burmans were former inhabitants of the northeastern Chinese province of Kansu who were driven out by the indigenous Chinese. They migrated to Burma from the eastern Tibet via Yunna province over centuries arriving around the second century A. D. in the delta region of Kyaukse (ကျောက်ဆည်).⁴⁵ The Mons, from whom the Burmans adopted their Buddhism and culture, migrated to the Kyaukse plains before the beginning of the Christian era. The Mons had already established their religion and culture before the Burmans arrived there, but historians differ in their opinions

⁴³The word "Brahma" was the term used in Buddhist sacred writings referring to the most ancient inhabitants of the world. The Indian settlers gave this name to the people whom they called "Brahma" with a another variation of usage "Mramma," generally pronounced as "Bama" [Sangermano 1969: 45-46; cf. Arthur P. Phayre, *History of Burma* (London, 1883)]. Therefore, the term "Burman" or "Bama" is the contemporary version of the ancient word "Mramma" or "Brahma."

⁴⁴Saw Myat Yin, *Culture Shock!*, 2007, 28.

⁴⁵D. R. SarDesar, *Southeast Asia, Past & Present* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003), 33-34.

about the origin of the Mons, as to whether they came from Southwest China or from Northeast India.⁴⁶ The Mons later settled down into two areas, namely, Lower Myanmar and to the east of Salween in Thailand. The Mons were the first ethnic people in Burma who had initial contacts with Indian traders and religious promoters. The Mons learned trade, Buddhism combined with Hindusim, *nat* worship, literature such as Sanskrit and Pali (ပာဠိ) and other cultural practices from the people of India.⁴⁷ Sanskrit and Pali are the two main languages with which the Buddha's teachings are preserved and translated into other languages today.

Indian and Chinese cultures infiltrated into Southeast Asia, including Burma under the reign of Shi Huang Di in China and of Ashoka Maurya in India.⁴⁸ French scholar Reginald Le May observes the Sino-India cultural demarcation as:

On the side of Asia, there is a range of mountains running down the spine of Annam, and this range marks the boundary or dividing line between Chinese and Indian culture. Everything North and East of this range is culturally based on China, while everything West and South is based on India, and the two neither overlap nor clash.⁴⁹

SarDesai notes that "most of Southeast Asia followed the Indian cultural patterns" and "Indian culture was welcome in Southeast Asia because it came without political strings."⁵⁰ Indian traders and adventurers first introduced Indian culture and religion to the Mons and Emperor Ashoka sent two Buddhist monks to Burma to

⁴⁶Ibid., 11.

⁴⁷Ibid., 32.

⁴⁸Ibid., 16.

⁴⁹Reginald Le May, *The Culture of South-East Asia* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1954), 9.

⁵⁰SarDesai, *Southeast Asia*, 17.

spread Buddhism.⁵¹ The Burmans first embraced Mahayana Buddhism as the dominant religion of Upper Burma until the middle of the eleventh century. Initially, Burma was politically influenced by China and religiously, socially and culturally by India.

C. Historical Background of Theravada (ထေရဝါဒ) Buddhism In Burma

According to S. Radhakrishnan, Buddhism is not "an independent religion" but "It was an offshoot of the more ancient faith of the Hindus, perhaps a schism or a heresy."⁵² While this may be somewhat of an overstatement, it is true that Buddhism sprung out of Hindism; in other words, it originated in opposition to Hinduism. According to the Ceylonese Chronicles, Emperor Asoka (c. 273-236 B. C.) sent two Buddhists monks, Sona (စုဠ) and Uttara(ဥတ္တရ), to Suvarna-bhumi(သုဝဏ္ဏဘူမိ) (most likely Burma) to spread Buddhism. However, there are no archeological or historical evidences to prove the named location was Burma. Tradition claims that the two missionaries came to Thaton, the capital city of the Mons, preaching Buddha's gospel to the Mon people.⁵³

Archeological evidences confirm that Theravada Buddhism, which Indian missionaries brought, flourished in the kingdom of Pyus (ပုယ) in the fifth century A.D.⁵⁴ The Pyus were the first migrant group to establish their own kingdom at Prome. The Mons drove the Pyus back to the North, and the Burmans founded the

⁵¹Ibid., 32.

⁵²S. Radhakrishna, *2500 Years of Buddhism*, ed. P. V. Bapat (Faridabad: Publications Division, Government of India Press, 1964), xii.

⁵³Kenneth W. Morgan, ed. *The Path of the Buddha: Buddhism Interpreted by Buddhists*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1956. 56.

⁵⁴Radhakrishna, *2500 Years of Buddhism*.

city of Pagan in A. D. 847.⁵⁵ Buddhism took root in the Thaton (သထုံ) area and spread to other parts of Burma. Alongside of Theravada Buddhism, which was waning out, Mahayana Buddhism also entered into Burma from China, Cambodia, Malaya, and northern India⁵⁶ allowing the two sects to exist side by side for centuries. The influence of the latter forced the former to disappear slowly.

D. The Officialization of Buddhism under King Anawrahta (အနေဝရထာ)

Besides the two types of Buddhism in existence in Burma at the time, Hinduism, nat (နတ်) worship, naga (နဂါး) worship, and *ayiikiyi* (အရည်းကြီး) worship, being introduced from India and Tantrayana (သန္ဓေရာန) from Tibet, became popular at the same time.⁵⁷ According to Maung Htin Aung, the Ari monks, being well versed in Buddhism, synthesized the different cults of magic, sorcery, astrology and alchemy into one conglomerated unit of cult.⁵⁸ These Ari monks were influencing the social and religious sphere of the Burmese society with their own “Do’s and Don’t’s” as they tried to diminish Buddhism. Therefore, Buddhism in Burma became a very tainted religion.⁵⁹ This was the kind of religious atmosphere King Anawrahta (Burman king) inherited when he became the first king in 1044 A. D. to unite Lower Burma under the Pagan Dynasty [1044-1287]. An Arhan (အရဟံ) (Shin Araham-ရှင်အရဟံ) a monk from Thaton, and a few other monks with the invitation of the new king

⁵⁵Yin, *Culture Shock*, 1990, 19-21.

⁵⁶Morgan, 57.

⁵⁷Po Kya, *A Brief Modern History of Burma* (Yangon: Myanmar Gon-yi Sar-ok Hta-na, 1937), 35-37.

⁵⁸Maung Htin Aung, *Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 1.

⁵⁹Po Kya, 36-37.

attacked the impure religions by preaching and establishing the pure Theravada Buddhism in the Pagan kingdom.

Anawrahta saw the need of canonical texts and sent messengers to Manuha, the Thaton King, to request for the sets of Tripitaka (သီရိပိဋက). In retaliation of the denial, Anawrahta captured Thaton King and brought all the monks, learned men, skilled professionals in art and craft (about 30, 000 captives)⁶⁰ and thirty two elephants' loads of relics to his kingdom. Thus, the kingdom of Pagan (predominantly Burmese) "adopted the religion, language, literature and script of the Mons."⁶¹ Anarrahta propagated and spread Theravada Buddhism throughout his kingdom by building numerous pagodas and monasteries, making Buddhism the state religion, adopting Pali language to become the sacred language of the Burmese empire and adapting Mon scripts to be the Burmese written language.⁶² Since Anawrahta failed to suppress the pre-Buddhist cults and *nat* worship due to people's attachment to them, he had no other choice but to incorporate the *nats* into Buddhism.⁶³ Since the time of Anawrahta to the present day, Burman Buddhism is a synthesis of Theravada Buddhism, *nat* worship, and cult practices. So, Burman people do not desire to add another religion (Christianity or Islam) to their existing mixed Folk Buddhism.⁶⁴

⁶⁰Frederica M. Bunge, ed. *Burma: A Country Study* (Washington DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 5.

⁶¹Radhakrishnan, *2500 Years of Buddhism*, 78.

⁶²Daniel George Edward Hall, *Burma* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1950), 15-16.

⁶³Aung, *Folk Elements*, 4.

⁶⁴A Buddhist monk enthusiastically testified about this to the author in 2006 over at a religious discussion at a house in Louisville, KY.

E. The Continual Expansion of Buddhism after King Anawratha

After the death of Anawratha (အာနော်ရထာ), Kyansittha (ကျန်စစ်သား) (1084-1112), who became king of Pagan in 1084, also followed his father Anawratha's religious practice by building the famous Ananda (အနန္တဘူရား) temple in Pagan and by propagating Theravada Buddhism in the country.⁶⁵ King Alaung Situ (အလောင်းစည်သူ) (1112-1167 A. D) was very famous in his might, exploration, and power but not in the religious realm. The Shans invaded the kingdom of Pagan in 1287 and occupied it for about two hundred years.⁶⁶ All of the kings (Shans or their descendents) of Ava except the non-Buddhist king Tho-han-bwa (who reigned 1527-1543 and killed over 300 monks out of 1, 300 monks for fear of threat from the monks) were Buddhists who one way or the other supported the Theravada Buddhism.⁶⁷

While the Theravada Buddhism survived through the two centuries following the destruction of Pagan Dynasty, it witnessed the ineffectiveness of the Sangha and displacement of the people and their beliefs. Several Bhikkhus travelled to Ceylon for Buddhist studies and returned to Burma to establish Theravada schools which lasted for many centuries. King Dhammaceti (ဓမ္မဇေတိ) (A.D. 1460-1491) revived Buddhism by bringing Bhikkhus from Ceylon to reordain the Burmese Bhikkhus (15, 666 reputable monks ordained under Dhammaceti's reign)⁶⁸ into one sect contributing to the firm reestablishment of Theravada Buddhism in Burma. In the last century,

⁶⁵Radhakrishnan, *2500 Years of Buddhism*, 78.

⁶⁶Josef Silverstein, *Burma: Military Rule and the Politics of Stagnation* (London: Cornell University Press, 1977), 5.

⁶⁷Hla Pe, *Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life and Buddhism* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 191.

⁶⁸Ibid., 192.

Buddhism was so rooted and grounded in Burma that Bhikkhus from Ceylon came to receive prestigious ordination from Burman Bhikkhus.⁶⁹

The Taungoo (တောင်ငူ) Dynasty (the second Burman dynasty lasted 1531-1752 A.D) was established by King Tabinshwehti (တပင်ရွှေထီး) (ruled 1531-1551) who occupied Ava (the capital of the Shans) in 1555 and Pegu (the capital of the Mons) by taking advantage of the fighting between the two groups, thus uniting the lower and upper Burma. Bayin Naung (ဘုရင့်နောင်), one of the Taungoo dynasty kings (1551-81), claimed to be a great Buddhist king and built pagodas and monasteries in all his conquered territories.⁷⁰ King Nanda Bayin (နန္ဒဘုရင်) (ruled 1581-1599) did not promote Buddhism as his father Bayin Naung did.

The Konbaung (ကုန်းဘောင်) Dynasty (1753-1889 A.D) was followed by one hundred fifty years of weak Burman kings after the death of Bayinnaung. Trading companies from the British, French, and Dutch were established when the capital was moved from Pegu to Ava (အင်းဝ) during the 17th century. While the Shans forces waned, the Mons occupied Ava in 1752 and captured one of the the last kings of the Taungoo Dynasty with help from the French.⁷¹

Alaungphaya (အလောင်းဘုရား), Shwebo (ရွှေဘို) village headman, defeated the Mons who conquered Ava and tried to rule over Burma, and he reestablished the Burman kingdom as the Konbaung Dynasty. He invaded central Burma and Pegu all the way to Dagon (which he renamed as “Yangon,” meaning “no more enemy”). Alaungpaya

⁶⁹Morgan, 120.

⁷⁰Trevor Ling, *Buddhism, Imperialism and War: Burman and Thailand in Modern History* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), 26.

⁷¹Helen G. Trager, *Burma through Alien Eyes* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1966), 6 and Yin, *Culture Shock*, 22.

called himself to be "the Great Lord, Buddha-to-be." ⁷² King Bodaw Paya (ဘိုးတော်ဘုရား) (the fourth son of Alaungpaya; ruled 1782-1819) attacked the Arakan kingdom and confiscated the big, famous Buddha statue from the Maha Muni (မဟာမုနိ) temple. Just like his father, he also called himself "a *bodhisattva*" or a *"Buddha to be."*⁷³ The American Baptist missionaries arrived in 1813 during his reign. The other sons of Alaungpaya, Hsinbyushin (ရှင်ဖြူရှင်) (1763-1776) and *Bodawpaya* (1781-1819), expanded their western territories by attacking Shan State, Laos, Thailand and the eastern territories such as Arakan state, Manipur (currently part of India), Kachar, and Assam (currently part of India) where they were confronted with the British East Indian Company.⁷⁴

F. The Firm Establishment of Buddhism through the Buddhist Councils

The first three Buddhist Councils were held in India, and the fourth was convened in Ceylon. The fifth council was held in Mandalay in 1871 A.D under the direction of King Min-donmin (မင်းတုန်းမင်း) to canonize the Pali Canon and record it on marble slabs (729 slabs laid at the foot of Mandalay Hill)⁷⁵ with 2,400 professional monks and teachers in attendance. The sixth council was convened in 1954 in Rangoon, and 500 learned monks from Burma and many other educated monks from India, Ceylon, Nepal, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and Pakistan participated in the council to re-examine the Tripitaka texts. The meeting lasted until 1956, which is the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddha's *mahaparinirvana*. The hope of the anniversary

⁷²Ling, *Buddhism, Imperialism and War*, 41.

⁷³Trevor Ling, *Buddhism, Imperialism and War: Burman and Thailand in Modern History*. (London: George Allen & Unwin,) 1979, 49.

⁷⁴SarDesai, *Southeast Asia*, 76-77.

⁷⁵Morgan, 1956, 38.

celebration was to bring Buddhist revival and universal peace around the world.⁷⁶ The whole plain area of Burma is dotted with pagodas and shrines across the country, and Burma is called the country which builds the most pagodas, images and shrines in the Buddhist world.⁷⁷ The number of Burma's pongyis (Sangha ဘုန်းကြီးသံဃာ) was estimated at 250,000 during World War II by Dr. Ba Maw (the Prime minister).⁷⁸ The estimated numbers of monks residing in Burma in June 2001 were 466, 524 monks (including temporary monks who are ordained for a short period of time and permanent monks who are ordained for life).⁷⁹

⁷⁶Radhakrishnan, 46-47; Morgan, 121.

⁷⁷Morgan, 131.

⁷⁸D. Hinners, *British Policy and the Development of Self-Government in Burma, 1935-48* (Chicago: University of Chicago), 1946, 152. Cf. Fred R. von DER Mehden. *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia: Burma Indonesia the Philippines* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1963), 116.

⁷⁹Steven Martin and Mic Looby, *Myanmar*, 57.

Chapter III

Colonial Impacts on Religions and Ethnicities in Burma

A. British Colonial Interruption of Burmese Society and Buddhism

The first known contact of the Burmans with the European world was in the 16th century when Diogo Soares de Mello (a Portuguese adventurer) helped Bayinnaung regain his crown in 1551 A. D.⁸⁰ The second known account of encounter with the westerners was when the British, French, and Dutch trading companies were established during the 17th century. During the 18th century, France helped the Mons occupy Ava and captured one of the last kings of the Taungoo Dynasty in 1752.⁸¹

The next big waves of European invasion, occupation, and colonization in Burma were witnessed in the successive three Anglo-Burmese wars. Paradoxically and unfortunately, the three glorious Burman kingdoms were consecutively followed by the three gruesome Anglo-Burman Wars. The three wars, in 1824-1826, 1852, and 1885, between the British colonial forces and the native Burmese army were motivated by the British's economic and political interests. After the death of General *Maha Bandula* (မဟာဗန္ဓုလ) in April 1825, the British won the first war after immense casualties on both sides and the Treaty of Yandaboo(ရန္တပုံ) was signed by both sides in 1826 allowing the British to claim the province of Arakan and Tenasserim (the coastal strip convenient for trading post) as part of the British India colony. The second war broke out in 1852 due to the dispute over the increasing tax collection of the Burmese from the British in Yangon, the increasing export of teak, and bullion (prohibited by the Treaty) from Yangon by the British, which the Burmese claim as their royal asset. The British army marched, conquered, and annexed Lower Burma, including Yangon

⁸⁰Hall, *Burma*, 1959, 224.

⁸¹Trager, *Burma Through Alien Eyes*, 6 and Yin, *Culture Shock*, 22.

and the Irrawaddy Delta in 1852, without much resistance from the native forces to British India. The third, and last, war began when the British officials were threatened by the secret Franco-Burmese trading treaty. In 1885, the British army marched for fifteen days to the capital city Mandalay and captured King Thebaw (သီရိစင်စင်) in his palace, giving him only forty five minutes for packing, and exiled him and his family to Western India. Only with the loss of ten lives, Upper Burma (the independent kingdom of Ava) sadly became part of the British colony in 1886.⁸² Even though the British did not interfere in the religion of the Burmans, their policy, presence, and practices impeded the ethnic relationships and religious interactions in the country of Burma down through the centuries.

B. Nationalistic Movements Against the Colonial British

The reasons that incited the emotionally loaded nationalistic activities include the oppressive presence and rule of colonizers; special favor allotted to the Indians and ethnic minorities, especially the Karens, by appointing them to civil service posts, and the exclusion of Burman people for civil posts; exploitation of natural resources only for the benefits of foreigners; migration of Indians to fill labor shortages in the rice fields; unfair dealings of India moneylenders who charged excessive rates of interest even up to 50 percent; and opening of mission schools which were regarded as cultural encroachments and threats to Buddhist solidarity and operation of educational and cultural developments by the Sangha.⁸³

The Nationalistic movements expressed themselves in different forms and sizes. The YMBA (Young Men's Buddhist Association) was organized in 1906 to combat the YMCA (Young Men Christian Association) and mission schools by

⁸²SarDesai, *Southeast Asia*, 2003, 110-124 and Yin, *Cultural Shock*, 24.

⁸³Ibid., 176-77 and Ibid., 24.

opening schools with counter-curriculums and lesson plans. The YMBA was used as a platform for education, social activities, religious expressions and political propaganda. The association was renamed as the General Council of Buddhist Association (GCBA) to demand political reform in Burma. The Saya San Revolt (the peasant uprising came right after the 1930s depression) led by a former monk and former leader of GCBA tried to restore the Buddhist monarchy by marching in the countryside and killing British officials and Indian moneylenders.

The other movements such as the Shiinyetha party (ဆင်းရဲသားပါတီ - The Poor Man's Party) led by Dr. Ba Maw, the Dohbama Asiayone (တို့ဗမာအစည်းအရုံး - We Burmans Association) in 1929, and the Thakhin Party (သခင်ပါတီ - The Mother's Party) in 1943 were organized to express and fight for the free and fair economic, religious, cultural and political expressions and reforms. Aung San (former Thakhin leader) served as the president of Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) and led the revolt on March 27, 1945 which included all national soldiers and political activists. The courageous and unwavering leadership and zeal of General Aung San and his famous Thirty Comrades led the fight for independence of Burma from the British and Japanese occupations. Though General Aung San, with six cabinet ministers, was assassinated by his political rivals on July 19, 1947, his fights and negotiations for independence resulted in a victory on January 4, 1948, from the repressive rule of British colonialists.⁸⁴

C. Religious and Ethnic Conflicts Since the Independence

U Nu served the country of Burma as the first premier from 1948 to 1958. During his premiership U Nu revitalized the religious spirit of the previous Burman

⁸⁴Ibid., 177-81 and Ibid., 24-25.

kings. U Nu took great pride in his support for Buddhism publicly as it was apparently clear in his Parliament statement when he gave the first reason for establishing a Buddhist State: "... there arose in me the overpowering desire to perform urgently, after the great deed of merit of successfully and gloriously convening the Sixth Great Buddhist Council, another equally great meritorious deed of making it possible for Buddhism to become the State religion"⁸⁵ U Nu's effort for Buddhism to be the State Religion was a good aspiration short of fulfillment because he encountered criticism and opposition from within and without Buddhist circles, even though the majority of Buddhists accepted the idea.⁸⁶ U Nu treated Buddhism as a favored religion by visiting pagodas, repairing and restoring pagodas, gathering Buddhist scholars worldwide for re-examination of the Tripitaka texts which lasted 1954 to 1956, and hosting the 2500th Commemoration of Buddhism in 1956.

In March 2, 1962, General Ne Win seized power and ruled the country until 1988. Ne Win, just like U Nu, also supported and protected Buddhism, making it a favored religion.⁸⁷ The military crushed the 8888 Demonstration (the date 8/8/88) of the people of Burma against the government and formed the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) which continues to rule now. The SLORC changed the name "Burma" to "Myanmar" in 1989 and denied transfer of power to the 1990 national election winner Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the pro-Democracy movement (National League for Democracy party). She has been placed under house arrest since July 20, 1989. The relationship between the SLORC and the Sangha has been severed,

⁸⁵Fred R. von DER MEHDEN, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia: BURMA, INDONESIA, THE PHILIPPINES* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1963) 21.

⁸⁶Ian Harris ed. *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia* (New York: PINTER, 1999), 34 and SarDesai, 239.

⁸⁷SarDesai, *Southeast Asia*, 237-246.

which can be seen in the public demonstrations of the Sangha against the government in August 1988 and October 2007 and many other smaller occasions in skirmish conflicts and demonstrations.

The conflicts between the Burman majority and the ethnic minorities have existed since the beginning of Burmese history. The Mons were subdued and slowly incorporated into the Burman race against their will. The other ethnic minorities still exist as distinct groups. The animosity between the Burmans and the Karens has continued after the Independence to the present partly due to favors given to ethnic minorities, especially the Karens, by the colonialists in giving civil service and military positions to the exclusion of Burmans and the Karens' struggles for claiming an independent state. The relationship between Karens (the first Christian group in Burma) and Burmans (the majority population following Buddhism) plays a major role in the relationship between Buddhism and Christianity in Burma. U Tun Pe, the Minister of Information sadly noted, "It is therefore disheartening to find that there are people who still persist in the belief that because one is a Burman he must be a Buddhist, that because one is a Karen he must be a Christian."⁸⁸ The percentage of Christians among the total Karen population is estimated at around 25 percent. The number of Christians has grown among other ethnic groups from the Kachin and Chin (80% Christians).⁸⁹ Christianity is not only a Karen religion any more, but it has also become a Kachin religion and a Chin religion. Therefore, most Burmans view Christianity as an Ethnic Religion, in addition to their view of Christianity as a Foreign Religion, because of the British colonial occupation.

⁸⁸Burma, *Burma Speaks* (Rangoon: Gov't. Printing Office, 1950), p. 85.

⁸⁹Seekins, *Historical Dictionary of Burma*, 147, 247.

D. The Encounter of Christianity with Buddhism in Burma

Christianity has not been at home in Burma since the beginning. Christianity has taken residence in Burma over two centuries, not as a citizen of the country, but as a resident alien trying to make its way around the country and getting used to the culture of Burma. Unfortunately, Christianity has not been warmly welcomed by the Burmans⁹⁰ who make up the majority population of the country. The ethnic groups⁹¹ are much more receptive to the gospel than are the Burman people.

Christianity and Buddhism have lived side by side for two centuries, but there has been minimal contact and interaction between the two great religions and their adherents. Burmese Christians share public schools, public transportation, public offices and public housing complexes with the Burmese Buddhists. They drink from the same wells as the Buddhists do. They breathe the same air and enjoy the same beautiful creation of God just as much as the Buddhists do because the goodness and benevolence of God are impartially distributed to all races, tongues, ethnicities, and religions. However, the progress of Christianity has been very slow in the Buddhist countries, including Burma. Many foreign missionaries have risked their lives for the cause of Christ in Burma, but very few successes have been witnessed in the conversion of Burmese Buddhists to Christianity.

Christianity came to Burma as early as the sixteenth century. The first missionaries to tread on the soil of Burma were Portuguese Roman Catholic chaplains ministering exclusively to the Portuguese people. The next group who came were the

⁹⁰The word *Burmans* is used here with reference to the majority group who adhere to Buddhism and who are called themselves *Bama Lumyu* (literally, Bama Race).

⁹¹Ethnic minorities (preferable term 'nationalities' or 'national races' by themselves) are made up of Karens, Kachins, Chins, Shans, Rakhines, Mons, Wa, and Paloung. Ethnic people mostly live in the hilly, undesirable and unproductive areas in Myanmar whereas the Bama Lumyu live in the productive delta area.

Italian Roman Catholic missionaries; Father Sangermano and Joseph Amato arrived there in 1783. They ministered among the Burmese people, the tribal groups, and foreigners. The number of Christians by the end of the eighteenth century was estimated at about 2, 000. Unfortunately, there were no native Burmese converts among the 2, 000 people at the time.⁹²

The first Baptist missionaries (Adoniram Judson and his wife) landed in Burma in 1813. After five years of learning about the culture, the language and the people, Judson won the first Burman convert. Judson's initial converts were a result of his new indigenous method through the *Zayat* (ဧရာဝတီ) ministry.⁹³ According to Maung Shwe Wa, there were approximately a total of 207 Burmese Christians by 1836 after twenty-three years of mission work.⁹⁴ Christian mission was carried on by the new converts reaching the ethnic people.

In 1960, the government expelled all foreign missionaries, and Christianity struggled to survive within Burma with native believers without the aid of outside missionaries. Even though Christianity made its way into the lands and hearts of the ethnic people, mission work among the Burmese majority has been unsuccessful. Different speculations and generalizations have been made as to why Christianity could not penetrate into the heart of Burmese society. Christianity has been given different names among the Burmese people: foreign religion, colonial religion, western religion, white religion, or ethnic religion. And until today, many Christians

⁹²Trager, *Burma Through Alien Eyes*, 10-13.

⁹³Zayat is a Burmese-style gazebo built by the road and used for casual meetings and socializing purposes among villagers. Adoniram Judson built a gazebo and used it for connecting and conversing with the Burmese. Cf. Lazarus Fish, *Reclaiming the Zayat Ministry: Witness to the Gospel Among Burmese Buddhists in Myanmar* (Wilmore, KY: Asbury Theological Seminary, 2002), 8-9.

⁹⁴Maung Shwe Wa, *Burma Baptist Chronicles* (Rangoon, Burma: Board of Publications, Burma Baptist Convention, 1963), 129.

have assumed that the barriers are too difficult to break and, therefore, have given up hope of reaching the Burmese Buddhists while a few faithful Christians have experienced minimal success among the Buddhist.

Chapter IV

Relevant Literature Review

A good number of books and articles concerning Christian mission among the Burman Buddhists have been written in the past. However, the methods, the developments, and the problems facing mission work in Burma have not been written about widely. It is, therefore, very difficult to depend on the existing materials. Most books and articles about mission work in Burma were written by foreign missionaries and outsiders. There are very few books and articles written by the native leaders among Burmese Christians, and they are not readily available for reference. A few books written by the Burmese Christians were recent dissertations by new missiologists, who were predominantly educated in the West, and some native scholars. Even these materials written by the native Christians are not readily available for reference. The available literature review is as follows.

A. Books on Folktales of Burman people

The book *The Snake Prince and Other Stories: Burmese Folk Tales*⁹⁵ collected and retold by Edna Ledgard reveals that many Burman folktales have the recurring themes on “fear of snake and dragon” or “fear of *nats*.” These common themes are part of the Burmese worldview. Burmans are infested with “fear of the spirits (*nats*)” and “fear of snake and naga” that dominated the folktales of Burmese people and the daily lives of the Burman folks. In the story of *The Snake Prince*, Naga acted as an ordinary python and behaves just like a human being would. The summary of the story goes like this:

⁹⁵Edna Ledgard , *The SNAKE PRINCE*, 2000.

The Naga was married to the youngest girl of the three sisters. As an old woman went to pick up figs in the forest, she saw a Naga wrapped around the tree. Frightened, she promised the Naga could marry her daughters if the Naga threw down the figs. The youngest daughter married the Naga for her mother's sake. The Naga looked like a handsome young man when he was out of his snake skin. The old woman burned the skin in fire while the man slept with her daughter. The young man woke up in pain and said to his young wife: "I am a Naga Prince. But, as she has burned my skin I must remain in this form, a mortal like you. Like you, I will now grow old as the years pass, and one day, like you, I will die. But with you at my side, dear, kind Ma Htwe, I know my years will be happy."⁹⁶

This kind of folktale influences the minds and behaviors of Burman people.

The worship and appeasing of the *nats* is part of the activities of Burman people today because of their fear of revenge and bad fortunes. The origin of the *Nats* is found in the story of Nga Tin De and His Beautiful Sister: The Mahagiri *Nats* (မဟာဂီရိနတ်). The summary of the story reads this way:

Once upon a time, a handsome blacksmith and his sister lived near the city of Tagaung. The man was very handsome and was called Nga Tin De, or Mr. Handsome. The sister was beautiful as well and was called Shwemyethna (ရွှေမျက်နှာ), or Golden Face. The brother and sister were very popular and well liked by people of their town, so the King of Tagaung conspired to kill Nga Tin De for fear of losing his throne. The King married the sister and asked the queen to invite her brother to visit the palace. The King finally persuaded the queen to invite her brother to the palace. As soon as the brother came, the king commanded him to be bound to a saga tree and set on fire. Through love and courage, the sister jumped into the fire to die with her brother, but the brother and sister became angry *Nats* dwelling in the saga tree. Many misfortunes and diseases fell on the people, and they began to pray to these nats for appeasement. The angry king chopped down the saga tree and threw it into the Irrawaddy river from which King Thinlikeyaung rescued the floating tree, carved it into colorful images, and carried them to the top of Mount Pop with a grand ceremony to be placed in the shrine where they have become benevolent nats to many pilgrims until today. They are known as the Mahagiri *Nats*.⁹⁷

Burman people celebrate the Taungbyon (တောင်ဖြူနတ်) Festival (*Nats* Festival) three times a year in December, August, and March near Mandalay. The *Nat* Pwe

⁹⁶Ibid., 84-90.

⁹⁷Ibid., 192-95.

usually lasts from five to fifteen days of celebration involving drinking, dancing, and revelry. The *nat kadaw* (နတ်ကတော်) (literally, nat-wife) as a medium enters in a trance during the ceremony. Worshipers offer coconuts, bunches of bananas, cigarettes, alcohol, and perfumes at the Mahagiri *Nat* (မဟာဂီရိ) Shrine on Mount Popa.⁹⁸ Ghosts and demons are real in Burmese societies and *Nats* are appeased out of fear more often than out of gratitude for their benevolent deeds. It is customary to hang a green coconut in the corner of the living room to appease the *nats* and to offer bananas, coconut, and tobacco leaves to the spirit of the arts before stage performances such as making movies and playing in orchestras.

The *Folk-tales of Burma* is a collection of folktales from different ethnic backgrounds of Burma. The tales from the Burmese are relevant to this study. For example, the tale “Win-leik-pya” (ဝင်းလိပ်ဖြူ–the soul-butterfly) carries the idea of Buddhist teaching about reincarnation and the existence of some sort of soul in the Burmese worldview. The summary story reads:

A little five-year-old girl lived with her mother in Amarapura (အမရပူရ), near Mandalay. There was a neighbor who built a fence around his house to separate it from the little girl’s garden. The fence was built with split bamboo interwoven in broad strips to fence off wild animals. There was a little hole in the fence eaten by white ants, just big enough for a small pig to fit in. Mee Pyu (မီးပျူ) was wondering if her soul-butterfly might want to see what the pigs were doing when she fell asleep. According to Burmese tradition, it is believed that the leik-pya (soul) leaves the sleeping body to roam away from it and sudden waking from the sleep could disrupt the leik-pya to return to the body. She told her mother, “Amay(အေမေ), I came through the fence last night. I was a little pig and came through the hole in the fence by the tamarind tree.” The mother denied her statement. As the daughter insisted the incident was true, the mother worried that her daughter might be bewitched and literally turned into animals. The old grandpa acknowledged the possibility of a person having become a pig in the previous existence because he heard the elders said that the pig which has lived a good life could transform into human being in the next existence. The priest said, “There is no harm. For the passage of souls

⁹⁸Pauline Khng, *Countries of the World: Myanmar* (Milwaukee, WI: Gareth Stevens Publishing, 2000), 52-53.

from one creature to another is the path to Nirvana.” Mee Pyu eventually walked on four legs and disappeared into the jungle only leaving her four-footed footprints outside of the fence leading into the jungle.⁹⁹

This is what Burmese Buddhists believe about the existence of soul after life.

Burman people are very conscious of good omens and bad omens. Statements such as “Bye-bye, I’m going away and not coming back again” and similar expressions are considered omens of death and bad luck. Praising children in their good looks, fatness and, healthiness are believed to cause the spirits to get the *nats* jealous and cause them to get sick. People visiting or passing by cemeteries should not say, “Come along everyone,” whereas people taking shelter under trees and bushes mentally should ask for forgiveness from the spirits who might live in those places. As the concept of rebirth is part of the Burmese worldview, many children born with distinct traits and looks tend to tell stories of their previous existence, and animals which express human-like behaviors and characteristics are believed to be “near kin to human existence.”¹⁰⁰ Edna Ledgard stresses the prevalence of nat beliefs and nat worships in Myanmar in these words: “*Nats* are found less often in Burmese folk tales than in the everyday lives and behavior of the people.”¹⁰¹

B. Books on Customs and Traditions of Burma

Books on Burman culture are rare to find. In *Culture Shock! A Survival Guide to Customers and Etiquette: Myanmar*, Saw Myat Yin, a native Burman, spells out basic, yet comprehensive, guidelines for a visitor to Burma in this small and concise

⁹⁹A. Eggar, “Win-leik-pya: or, the soul-butterfly” in *The Folk-tales of Burma*, compiled by Gerry Abbott and Khin Thant Han (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2000), 153-58.

¹⁰⁰Saw Myat Yin, *Cultures of the World: Myanmar* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2002), 80-81.

¹⁰¹Edna Ledgard, *The SNAKE PRINCE*, 107.

book. She outlines the do's and don't's in Burman culture. This book provides a historical timeline of the politics in Burma starting with the founding of Bagan (ꠘꠊꠞ) Dynasty in 849 A.D. and ending with the passing of 2006 UN resolutions for human rights abuses in Burma. Yin acknowledges that the majority of Burmans considers their ethnic identity "in terms of religion first" as they generally think of the Caucasians as "being the same as Christians."¹⁰²

This book is the most concise, yet comprehensive, book on Burmese culture. The book deals with *Kan* (the concept of good and bad deeds with their resulting consequences), *Kutho* (merits) and *Akutho* (demerits), and superstitions.¹⁰³ The book also touches on relationships between superiors and juniors, males and females, and parent and children in Burmese culture. Parents keep their relationships with their married children. There is a reciprocal expectation between siblings. The elder siblings normally dominate the younger siblings while the younger siblings submit to and expect help and protection from the elder siblings. As in most Asian societies, males are the dominant figures in Burma society as well. A boy has a potential to become a Buddha and enter into monkhood temporarily or permanently. Women are brought up and trained to be quiet and submissive. Women socialize with other women, and men do things with other men. There is not mixed gender socialization in Burma except for close relatives. Friendship is greatly prized, and close friends and good neighbors are as admirable as close relatives. Friendships are built on expectations, and when the expectations are not met, friendships tend to collapse.

¹⁰²Saw Myat Yin, *Culture Shock*, 31.

¹⁰³Ibid, 31-36.

Loss of face is causing someone to feel bad or ashamed due to criticism, disagreement, or contradiction from a junior.¹⁰⁴

Attitudes toward foreigners are positive and negative depending on the situations and the people involved. Foreigners are always regarded as foreigners. People who don't speak Burmese are looked down upon while young Burmans are dying to learn English from foreigners at the same time. Yin notes, "... a whole generation of Burman people has reached its mid-twenties without having set eyes on many foreigners or had any interaction with them."¹⁰⁵ More exposure between Burman people and foreigners at home and abroad will change the attitudes of Burmans to foreigners.¹⁰⁶

A book called *Myanmar Yinkyi'muh-Mya* (ယဉ်ကျေးမှု.များ), (Burman Customs written in Burmese) gives detailed information of domestic customs such as sitting posture, standing posture, walking posture in front of seniors, eating etiquette and manners in telephone conversations.¹⁰⁷ The second section has to do with greetings, introducing someone, and giving respect to others. The third chapter deals with customs conducted in public that includes manner of dress, dress for work, dress for festivals, dress for women and dress for men. Chapter four covers customs for blessed occasions such as engagement ceremonies, wedding ceremonies and *shinpyu* (ရှင်ပြု)

¹⁰⁴Ibid, 37-41.

¹⁰⁵Ibid, 56.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷*Myanmar Yinkyi'muh-Mya* (Yangon, Myanmar: Pyi'nya Kyimong Sapyi, 1334), pp. 1-15.

(initiation) ceremonies.¹⁰⁸ Chapter five describes customs used for festivities and Chapter six addresses customs for travels. Reading Burman customs in Burmese language is very unique and authentic.

C. Books on Theravada Buddhism and Folk Buddhism

In the book titled *Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism*, three different authors contribute to the understanding of Buddhism and Animism in Burma.¹⁰⁹ David E. Pfanner¹¹⁰ deals with the studies of the Buddhist monk in rural Burman society. He describes the lifestyle and teachings of the monks and their relationship with the lay Buddhists. This is a helpful source because it provides Christian ministers an understanding about the relationship between the monks and the laity. An article in the same book titled “Ritual and Ceremonial Cycle in Upper Burma” by Manning Nash¹¹¹ explains the ritual and ceremonial cycles in Burman society. Knowing the background of Burmese culture such as seasons, farming system, and ritual practices are valuable information. The third article by June C. Nash¹¹² describes animism and *nats* (spirits) worship in Burma. According to Nash, “Crises and misfortunes are interpreted in terms of the *nats*’ likes and dislikes”¹¹³ in Burman society. While the pious Buddhists try to confront the misfortunes and crises

¹⁰⁸*Shinpyu* ceremony, also called novitiation, is performed for Buddhist boys between ten and twenty years of age at the monastery where they spend three to nine days to a month to learn Buddha’s teachings. An equivalent ceremony for Buddhist girls is ear-piercing ceremony.

¹⁰⁹Manning Nash et al., *Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism*, ed. Adriene Suddard (New Havens, CT: Yale University, 1966).

¹¹⁰*Ibid*, 77-96.

¹¹¹*Ibid*, 97-115.

¹¹²*Ibid*, 117-136.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, 133.

in their lives by taking their five precepts daily, the impious Burman laymen try to appease the *nats* by offering sacrifices and hanging a coconut at the southeast corner of the house.¹¹⁴ This is the type of Lay Buddhism practiced in Burma.

A more thorough and more analytic approach to Burman animism is the work of Melford Spiro, *Burmese Supernaturalism*.¹¹⁵ Spiro conducted anthropological research on Burma on Burman supernaturalism (*nats*) and its operations. He argues how supernaturalism influences the Burman worldview in his book. According to Spiro, Buddhism deals with suffering as an “ultimately existential problem” which could be solved only “at the end of the long cycle of rebirth, with the attainment of nirvana” while the *nat* religion deals with suffering as a pragmatic problem (dealing with illness, loss of cattle, destruction of crops, and the like) which could be solved by “practicing various types of ritual.”¹¹⁶ Spiro deals with four types of supernatural beings which are harmful and are more powerful than men: ghosts, demons, witches, and *nats*. He observes that Buddhism and nat religion exist side-by-side in Burmese society even though they are very incompatible to each other. It is a very helpful tool for this research because it gives the background of supernatural belief and everyday practices in Burmese society. Many Burman Buddhist monks also practice witchcraft and sorcery which are part of animism. Many Burmese Buddhists still have their *Nat* shrines along side of their Buddha alters in their houses. Burman people who practice animism believe that sickness and misfortune are caused by evil spirits (evil *nats*) and they need to be propitiated through sacrifices and ritual practices. On the other hand,

¹¹⁴The five precepts includes: To refrain from taking life, to refrain from stealing, to refrain from immoral sexual behavior, to refrain from lying, and to refrain from intoxicating drinks. Besides, they go to the temple to pray and offer donations.

¹¹⁵Melford Spiro, *Burmese Supernaturalism* , 1996.

¹¹⁶Ibid., xxxviii-xxxix.

Burman Buddhists believe sickness or misfortune is a result of bad karma. There is a discrepancy in their belief system itself.

Buddhist teaching is based on the Four Noble Truths: the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of cessation of suffering, and the truth of the path leading to cessation of suffering.¹¹⁷ Suffering is defined in the text this way:

This is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, sickness is suffering, dying is suffering, sorrow, grief, pain, unhappiness, and unease are suffering; being united with what is not liked is suffering, separation from what is liked is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in short, the five aggregates of grasping are suffer.¹¹⁸

Since human beings suffer because of desire, desire should be suppressed or eliminated. Buddha found the Middle Way to get rid of desire which will lead to Nibbanna. The Middle Way leading to *Nibbana* (နိဗ္ဗာန်) is the Eightfold Path. The Buddhist gospel is redemption from the suffering while the Christian gospel is redemption from sin.¹¹⁹ Buddhism considers ‘suffering’ as an inherent human characteristic which can be overcome by meditation whereas Christianity offers deliverance from sin. According to the teaching of Buddha, suffering has no practical benefits at all to human beings.¹²⁰ Buddha teaches that suffering is real, it is caused by desire, and it can be evaded through meditation: the Eightfold Path.¹²¹ Spiro defines:

¹¹⁷Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of BUDDHISM* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 57.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹¹⁹The Buddha’s way is trying to escape from suffering through following the eightfold paths; the Jesus’ way is facing suffering through His death to claim victory over sin (because sin causes suffering) [cf. Gen 3; I Cor 15:45-57].

¹²⁰Melford Spiro, *Antropological Other Or Burmese Brother?: Studies in Cultural Analysis* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 76-77.

¹²¹The noble eightfold path(s) are right view, right intention (the first two paths relate to wisdom), right speech, right action, right livelihood (the third-the fifth path relates to conduct), right

“The desire is ‘the craving’ for what we do not have and the ‘clinging’ (or attachment) to what we do have-- is the cause of that perpetual restlessness and discontent that is known as suffering.”¹²² The answer to the suffering is the eight paths which will lead to *Nirvana*.¹²³

Karma is the underlying principle that governs the lives of the Burmese. Spiro notes: “Now karma is neither fate nor luck; it is rather, the net balance of merits (Burmese, *kuzou*; Pali, *kusala*) and demerits (Burmese, *akuzou*; Pali, *akusala*) acquired in all of one’s rebirths, including the present one. Merit, in turn, is acquired by three means: charity (*dana*-ဒါန), morality (Burmese, *Qila*; Pali, *sila*), and meditation (Burmese, *bauwana*; Pali, *bhavana*).”¹²⁴ Winston L. King¹²⁵ presents Theravada Buddhism in terms of a series of seven concentric circles numbering from the center to the outer circles: 1. Nibbana, 2. The Buddha, 3. Meditational Discipline, 4. The Sangha, 5. Conservative Scriptural Orthodoxy, 6. Pagoda Religion, and 7. Popular cults and *nat* worship. People move from one stage to another in order to get to their destination: *Nibbana* (နိဗ္ဗာန်). A monk can return to a normal human life (human-hood) from monk-hood or a man can become a monk to join the *sangha*. According to King, Nibbannic (နိဗ္ဗာန်နှင့်သက်ဆိုင်သော) hope is attainable from any level either directly or indirectly depending on the person’s level of commitment and spirituality.

effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration (the sixth-the eight path relates to meditation) [cf. Rupert Gethin, 81].

¹²²Melford Spiro, *Antropological Other*, 77.

¹²³The term ‘Nibbana’ and ‘Nirbanna’ can be used interchangeably since they are transliterated words from the Pali and Sanskrit.

¹²⁴Melford Spiro, *Anthropological Other*, 96.

¹²⁵King, *A Thousand Lives Away*, 67-72.

The order in which *kutho* (good work) is assessed and deposited into the *Kuthokan-bank* is outlined by Nash in the following order of the hierarchy of meritorious acts of self-sacrifice:

- to build a pagoda (ဘုရားတည်)
- to give a shinpyu (ရှင်ပြု/နားသ) (act as sponsor for a novice monk)
- to build a monastery (ကျောင်းဆောက်)(and donate it to a monk)
- to donate a well or bell to a monastery (အလှူဒါနပေးကမ်း)
- to give a hsungywe(ဆွမ်းကျွေး) (to feed a group of monks)
- to feed and give alms to monks
- to feed and give hospitality to laymen

In order of merit or *kutho* accumulation these are the ranked statuses:

- presiding monk(ကျောင်းထိုင်ဘုန်းကြီး) of a monastery
- pongyi(ဘုန်းကြီး-monk)
- koyin (ကိုယ်ရင်-novice)
- nun (သီလရှင်)
- lay person (ဓမ္မမိတ်ဆွေ)¹²⁶

Burman Buddhists, thus, depend on their *kaungmu kutho* (ကောင်းမှုကုသိုလ်-good deeds) to experience *Nirvana or* at least to become a being higher than a dog or an animal in the next world.

Theravada Buddhism in Burma is a syncretism of “Formal or High Religion” (Buddhism) and “Folk Religion” (*Nat* Cultus, Astrology, Witchcraft, Magic and Amulets).¹²⁷ Formal Religion, in this case Theravada Buddhism, asks ultimate questions about the destiny of human beings and the cure for human sufferings, whereas Folk Religion, such as *Nat* Cultus and Witchcraft, deals with immediate

¹²⁶Nash, *The Golden Road to Modernity*, 116.

¹²⁷Paul Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 49-51.

issues such as sickness, possession, drought, barrenness of wombs, and misfortunes.¹²⁸

D. Books on Christian Mission in Burma in the Past

Few articles have been written on the mission development in Burma. In an article titled "The Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Burma," Paul D. Clasper discusses ways to encounter Buddhists in Burma.¹²⁹ Clasper explains the conservativeness of Buddhism in Burma in these words:

It is the home of some of the most conservative and authentic Buddhism in the world, perhaps the closest in spirit and actual detail to the intention of the Lord Buddha. Burmans, and many Buddhists throughout the world, feel that here the doctrines and practices of Theravada Buddhism can be seen in near pristine purity.¹³⁰

The attitude of Burmese Buddhists about their conservative root of Buddhism makes it harder for Christianity to penetrate Burmese society. Burma is a place where Christ and Buddha or Christians and Buddhists dwell together in the same neighborhood, yet they hardly interact each other.

A number of books have been written on the mission work of Adoniram Judson and his wives. Courtney Anderson, in his book *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson*,¹³¹ articulates the detailed account of Judson's life from his birth to his death including his call, his ordination, his trip to Burma from India, a detailed record of his mission work among the Burmans, his sufferings from sickness and

¹²⁸Ibid, 74.

¹²⁹Paul D. Clasper, "The Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Burma," *Review & Expositor* 58, no. 1 (1961), 35-49.

¹³⁰Ibid., 35.

¹³¹Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1987).

unjust jail term, his struggles to get Burman converts, and his success in Bible translation and making a Burmese-English dictionary. She also notes how Judson tried to approach the Burman people by using the traditional method of *Zayat* (ဧရဇ်) building to attract visitors and city dwellers to listen to his message. Another book, *Memoir of Mrs. Ann H. Judson*,¹³² is a compilation of letters and correspondences between Judson and his wife with their families in the United States and missionaries in Burma and in other places, and a detailed account of their daily activities and ministries. It contributes much information about the mission work in Burma.

W. C. Purser,¹³³ in *Christian Missions in Burma*, starts with the short history of Buddhism in Burma and gives a summary report of different mission agencies in Burma such as Roman Catholic Mission, Baptist Missions, and Anglican Missions and work among English, Eurasians, Burmese, Karen, and Chin. He discusses the Buddhist Revival which was motivated by the European intellectuals and the national religionists. While God's great work among the Karen in Burma was tucked away in the corner of the earth, Rev. Edward N. Harris calls the attention of Christians to God's mighty work among the Karen through his book *A Star in the East*. Harris traced the origin of the Karen people, their religion, their reception to the Gospel, and the more needed works to be done in Burma. It is a resourceful material for missions in Burma.¹³⁴

¹³²James D. Knowles, *Memoir of Mrs. Ann H. Judson* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987).

¹³³W. C. B. Purser, *Christian Mission in Burma* (Westminster: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1913), 216-17.

¹³⁴Edward N. Harris, *A Star in the East: An Account of American Baptist Missions to the Karens of Burma* (New York, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920).

The book *Economic Development in Burma 1951-1960* written by Louis J. Walinsky¹³⁵ is a good source of information for political, social, economic, cultural, and agricultural development in Burma. This background information helps one to understand the people, the country, and the religion of Burma as a whole. D. R. SarDesai in his book *Southeast Asia*¹³⁶ summarizes the history, the culture, the political (colonial) rule and influence, the kingdoms, the governments, the nationalist movements, and the struggles for democracy in Burma. This book also provides the interwoven structure of Burmese Buddhism and Burmese Nationalism which makes it hard for Christianity to penetrate the Buddhist society.

*Religion and Politics among the Chin People (1896-1949)*¹³⁷ by Lian Sakhong, focuses on the period of coming of the colonial power and introduction of Christianity into Burma by the Westerners. He also touches on the impact of Anglo-Burmese Wars in spreading Christianity. Even though Sakhong's emphasis is on the Chin state, he still provides political, social, and religious background information about Burma. He also describes the indigenous Church movement in Chin Hills. The book titled *In Search of the Karen King* penned by Anders P. Hovemyr¹³⁸ focuses on mission works among the Karen. Hovemyr traces the historical background of the spread of Christianity in Burma and Siam (Thailand) and the indigenous self-

¹³⁵Louis J. Walinsky, *Economic Development in Burma 1951-1960* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1962).

¹³⁶D. R. SarDesai, *Southeast Asia: Past & Present*, 1997.

¹³⁷Lian H. Sakhong, *Religion and Politics among the Chin People in Burma (1896-1949)* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2000).

¹³⁸A. P. Hovemyr, *In Search of the Karen King: A Study in Karen Identity with Special Reference to 19th Century Karen Evangelism in Northern Thailand* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1989).

supporting churches. This book provides helpful information on the growth of Christianity among the Karen people.

The book *Burmese Baptist Chronicle* by Maung Shwe Wa provides information on mission history and mission strategies since the early years of Burman Christian Mission. The saying, “To be a Burmese is to be a Buddhist or vice versa” is a commonly held view of the Burmese people from the ancient times to the present days. King Bagyidaw asked Judson if the new converts were real Burmese who dressed like Burmese because perhaps the king knew earlier that any Burman who became a Catholic became a Portuguese. The Burman Christians at the time of Judson did wear Burman dresses and did not change their names or their styles of dress after becoming Christian. However, over the years Christians in Burma followed western style dresses which made them distinct from the Burman Buddhists. Some even forsake all their cultural make-ups when they convert to Christianity.¹³⁹ Judson’s methods of doing mission includes 1. Literature (Bible translation and tract distribution); 2. Preaching the Word of God; 3. Circulating religious tracts; and 4. Promoting the instruction of native children.¹⁴⁰ This book gives insight on how Judson changed his mission strategy by building a zayat (a gazebo) near the main road to interact with the Burmese travelers and townspeople. Judson saw success in the zayat ministry and won new converts, but wars and deaths in his family disrupted his ministry. However, he, along with new Karen converts, reached the Karen people who became Christians in groups, villages, and tribes.

¹³⁹Maung Shwe Wa, *BURMA BAPTIST CHRONICLE* (Rangoon, Burma: Board of Publications, Burma Baptist Convention, 1963), 42-43.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 13.

E. Books and Articles on Evangelism to the Buddhists in the Present

1. **Evangelization to Buddhists in the Context of Asia**

In *Communicating Christ in the Buddhist World*, Alan R. Johnson has an article titled “Exploring Social Barriers to Conversion Among the Thai” in which he suggests three social barriers which keep Thai people from converting to Christianity: 1. An unwillingness to create problems by changing their normal life; 2. Family pressures (i.e. inconsiderate of hurting mother’s feelings); and 3. Fear of losing friends.¹⁴¹ Johnson offers some other suggestions in reaching the Buddhists: 1. Asking the Thai converts what it means to be Thai and Christian and come up with an apologetic for personal and public presentations of the Gospel; 2. Working with Thai Christians on what it means to cooperate with others in Thai society; 3. Encouraging Thai theologians and pastors to write about Thai Christian identity; 4. Dealing with specific social issues such as temple attendance, merit-making, the pressure to enter monkhood, and providing guidance; 5. Developing Christian ceremonies and celebration of faith; and 6. Developing venues where the Gospel is presented naturally in a group without directing it at the non-believer.¹⁴²

An article written by Paul H. DeNeui, “Contextualizing with Thai Folk Buddhists,” suggests four areas from which evangelization should be done: 1) a need for a wholistic approach (physical, spiritual, and social aspects); 2) a realization that communication must involve all major signal systems (seeing, hearing, music, touch, sense of taste and smell, and spatial and the temporal signal systems); 3) a recognition that the major barriers to allowing Christ to fully enter into a culture are primarily

¹⁴¹Alan R. Johnson, “Exploring Social Barriers to Conversion Among the Thai,” in *Communicating Christ in the Buddhist World*, ed. by Paul De Neui and David Lim (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2006), 140-41.

¹⁴²Ibid., 141-47.

social and not religious; and 4) an honest awareness of the realities of the spirit world.¹⁴³

Michal Solomon Vasanthakumar interestingly compares Qoheleth's *hebel* and Buddha's *dukkha* in the article "An Exploration of the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Light of Buddha's Four Noble Truths" in *Sharing Jesus Holistically with the Buddhist World*. The word *dukkha* means suffering, but it could also mean impermanence because Buddha understands happiness also as impermanence.¹⁴⁴ The word *hebel* also carries the idea of "impermanence" from the translation "vanity" and "chasing after the win" or "meaningless." Buddha and Qoheleth both understand life as being filled with frustration, suffering, and impermanence. For Buddha, the root cause of suffering is desire (the second noble truth), while human cravings or desires are human will or selfish motivations for Qoheleth. Human desires bring sorrows and sufferings (Buddha) and human desires are selfish motivations (Qoheleth). Escape from desire is following the Middle Path (or the Noble Eight-fold Path: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration) leading to the ultimate blissful non-existence (*Nirvana*). Everything under the sun (without God) is meaningless, but life with God brings fullness, joy and fulfillment for Qoheleth.¹⁴⁵ Human beings need divine wisdom to deal with life issues and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of

¹⁴³Paul H. DeNeui, "Contextualizing with Thai Folk Buddhists," in *Sharing Jesus in the Buddhist World* ed. by David Lim and Steve Spaulding (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2003), 130-38.

¹⁴⁴Michal Solomon Vasanthakumar, "An Exploration of the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Light of Buddha's Four Noble Truths," in *Sharing Jesus Holistically with the Buddhist World* ed. by David Lim and Steve Spaulding (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2005), 155.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 156-66.

wisdom. The spiritual quest of man is only found in finding God who is the source of life and eternity.

A dissertation written by Ubolwan Mejudhon, *The Way of Meekness: Being Christian and Thai in the Thai Way*,¹⁴⁶ is a helpful source for doing mission work in Myanmar because Thai and Burmese people share similar cultures and religious backgrounds. Mejudhon argues that Thai people can be Thai and Buddhist at the same time if the gospel is presented to them in the Thai way. The thesis argues that the Thai way of meekness is the best contextual method for discipling Thai Christians, and it is in agreement with biblical teaching on the subject of meekness. The author stresses that Westerners are more concerned with “information and words,” whereas Thai people are more concerned with “relationship and being.”¹⁴⁷ One piece of advice which is impressive is that Thai Christians should not be loaded with more information than what they ask for, need, or can handle.¹⁴⁸

In dealing with immediate family and relatives, new converts should slowly and patiently reveal their new faith by honestly telling them as they confess and make reconciliation with them before moving forward.¹⁴⁹ Mejudhon provides three practical approaches in discipling methods: incarnational teaching which allows disciplers to study learners’ lives, non-verbal teaching through rituals, symbols and ceremonies and verbal teaching through narration, dialogue, questions-answers, role-plays, and

¹⁴⁶Ubolwan Mejudhon, “The Way of Meekness: Being Christian and Thai in the Thai Way” [DMiss diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 1997].

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 344.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 345.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 350.

case-studies.¹⁵⁰ The non-aggressive, but meek, way is the method of doing evangelism and discipleship in Thai culture. The same method can be applied in Burman culture as well.

Another dissertation, *Meekness: A New Approach to Christian Witness to the Thai People* by Nantachai Mejudhon, also suggests the use of meekness in approaching the Thai people. The author compares Western culture (American culture) and Thai culture and provides practical suggestions. The meekness approach requires humble attitudes; a new attitude toward Thai culture; a long-term, genuine, and sincere relationship with Buddhists with no strings attached; a gospel presentation which brings benefits and help, but challenges and threatens; a time for diffusion of the gospel; and indigenous strategies for cross-cultural communication of the Gospel.¹⁵¹ The themes that run through this dissertation are building relationships, taking time to develop relationships, approaching the Thai in a non-aggressive manner, and humble approaches. The same kinds of approaches will be appropriate in the context of Burma.

2. Evangelism to Buddhists in the Context of Burma

Adoniram Judson's successors were offered great opportunities in the mission enterprise to contribute to the growth of Christianity in Myanmar. Missions within Burma survived through their hard work in the midst of wars and isolation from the outside world and missionaries' guidance and assistance. They possessed zealous passion for missions, but they needed new and effective methods to do the mission

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 364-65.

¹⁵¹Nantachai Mejudhon, "Meekness: A New Approach to Christian Witness to the Thai People" [DMiss diss, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1997], 321-64.

work. Ruth Armstrong (the daughter of Burma missionaries Gustaf and Edna Sword) addresses the significance of the mission of Judson's successors by saying, "[T]he 1890s missionary enterprise was unparalleled in opportunity though overburdened by success."¹⁵² While Armstrong acknowledges the zeal and sacrifice of Judson's successors, she constructively criticizes them as lacking "humility and discernment," because "it seemed inappropriate to try to adapt to the lifestyle of the indigenous people" to many missionaries.¹⁵³

Armstrong makes three important observations regarding mission work in Burma. First, the imposition of western ways from the structures of the church to the styles of music contributes to ineffectiveness of mission work among the Burman Buddhists. Paraphrasing Peter Wagner's concept on this, Armstrong writes that "[C]hurches developed with less foreign influence grow faster than non-indigenous ones, and that paternalism reduces their effectiveness."¹⁵⁴ Second, she observes the separateness of missionaries within their fenced and secluded compounds created barriers in reaching the people in the community. The third barrier Armstrong observes is the emphasis given on "western individualism in a group oriented culture."¹⁵⁵ The comparison now is not between foreign missionaries and native Burmans, but it is between ethnic missionaries and native Burmans. Their separateness is a different separateness which includes cultural and ethnic differences.

¹⁵²Ruth Armstrong, "Judson's Successors in the Heyday of Burma Missions" *Missiology: An International Review* 23, no.1 (January 1995): 61.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, cf. Peter C. Wagner, *On the Crest of the Wave* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1983), 149.

¹⁵⁵Armstrong, 68.

Samuel Ngun Ling touches on the relationship between social identity and religious identity. He writes, "...the concept of 'favored religion' implicitly condones the idea of 'favored adherents' against other adherents of un-favored religions so that this concept brings about discrimination between religious people, at least at the individual or ethnic level."¹⁵⁶ He argues that the distinction between Buddhism as a favored religion and other religions, including Christianity as disfavored religions creates an unfavorable psychological and social conflict between religious groups. This conflict is most evident when a Burman Buddhist becomes Christian because the new convert is considered as abandoning his/her social-cultural identity as a Burmese citizen and therefore "disloyal to the Buddhist society and to the nation as well."¹⁵⁷ This reaction is due to the nationalistic mindedness of the Burmese people. For fear of religious persecution and ethnic conflicts, Christians are not able to exercise their limited religious freedom to propagate the gospel freely and openly, thus limiting themselves on the level of individual and small group interactions with the Buddhists.¹⁵⁸

Ling acknowledges the three-selves movement (self-support, self-propagation and self-governance) as part of the process of deconstructing Westernized Christianity and reconstructing indigenized Christianity in Myanmar, which is a big challenge for doing mission work in Myanmar.¹⁵⁹ Ling proposes an ecumenical approach in which he suggests that "solidarity between churches and denominations of different mission

¹⁵⁶Samuel Ngun Ling, "The Encounter of Missionary Christianity with Resurgent Buddhism in Post-colonial Myanmar" [paper presented at the International Conference on Religion and Globalization, Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand, July 28-Aug. 2, 2003], 2.

¹⁵⁷Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 1-3.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., 3.

traditions" is a better way of doing mission in Myanmar than the imported "divided trend" of doing mission.¹⁶⁰ Solidarity between denominations is a difficult approach to suggest, because it is practically impossible unless churches are willing to sacrifice their stand on certain moral and biblical issues and compromise with others' beliefs and practices.

I agree with Ling in his concerns for the lack of indigenous elements and methods in doing ministry in Myanmar, but I am hesitant to adopt his ecumenical and dialogical approach leading to being shaped by inter-religious experiences. Ling observes that western ways of doing mission such as direct confrontation method, conquest-mission approach, and a holier-than-thou attitude are not effective ways of doing mission in Myanmar. He suggests a servant approach which genuinely cares and loves the people by "being there and caring" for the people rather than "going there and unloading" the western gospel stuffs.¹⁶¹

A contextual approach of Myanmar Water Festival (Thingyan) is done by Do Sian Thang. The title of the work is *Towards A Theology of The New Year Water Festival (Thingyan) In Myanmar* which deals with the Burman Buddhist tradition that distinguishes the new year from the old year.¹⁶² Thang tries to construct a theology of redemption through *Thingyan*. He draws similarities and differences between the Burmese *Thingyan* and the Israelite *New Year Festival of Tabernacles*. He uses a contextualized approach in terms of rice in redemption (rice being the staple food in Burma that the food monks collect in their bowls and Jesus the Bread of life), fish in

¹⁶⁰Ibid., 4. Cf. Simon Pau Khan En, "Solidarity Amidst Diversity" [an unpublished lecture given on Prayer Day, Myanmar Institute of Theology, Insein, Yangon, Myanmar, July 4, 2003].

¹⁶¹Ibid., 6-7.

¹⁶²Do Sian Thang, "Towards A Theology of The New Year Water Festival (Thingyan) In Myanmar" (Th. D. diss., Southeast Asia Graduate School of Theology, Singapore, 1995), 4.

redemption (the fish is a Buddha symbol of liberation and Jubilee is a time of liberation), and bull in redemption (the god who comes during Thingyan rides on the bull and bull is used for sacrifice) to point out that the principle (redemption) comes before the practice (rice, fish and bull).¹⁶³ This is helpful information on how one tries to contextualize the gospel, but this method is not practically helpful in the Burmese mission context.

Paul D. Clasper observes the attitude of Burman people toward Christianity as a foreign religion and ethnic religion. Clasper heard his Buddhist host saying to another Burmese visitor, "Christianity was the religion of Americans and Karens."¹⁶⁴ It is also my observation that most Buddhists who encounter Christianity through an ethnic person assume that Christianity is the religion of that particular ethnic group, whether it is Karen, Kachin, or Chin. Christian activity is interpreted as the residue of the colonial expansion. Adherence to the Christian faith is seen as "allegiance to a foreign faith,"¹⁶⁵ therefore this makes it difficult for ethnic Christians and new Burman Christians to assimilate to Burman Buddhist culture. Clasper observes that spiritual pride is damaging to mission work. The Christian attitude of "everything to give and nothing to receive" endangers reaching people. Christian mission, which is "a learning and listening faith as well as a proclaiming faith," is most productive.¹⁶⁶

Clasper envisions a real encounter between the loyal Burman Buddhists and the loyal Burman Christians when each group represents a world religion, whether it

¹⁶³Ibid, 254.

¹⁶⁴Paul D. Clasper, "The Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Burma," 42.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 44.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 47.

is Buddhism or Christianity. This vision has been slowly fulfilled in Burma now. The biggest need is to train the new Burman converts to be zealous and effective evangelists to reach the Burman Buddhists and to disciple them so that they can express themselves in Burmese ways in their service and worship. Clasper made two suggestions for mission in Myanmar. First, he suggests to dealing with the "Oriental Mind."¹⁶⁷ Second, he suggests that Burmese Christians develop the Buddhist ways of meditation, prayer, discipline, and devotion to authenticate Christianity in Asian and Burmese contexts.¹⁶⁸

Lazarus Fish in his dissertation *Reclaiming the Zayat: Witness to the Gospel Among the Burmese Buddhists in Myanmar* argues for the use of the contextualization approach in the Burman context. He proposes using indigenous methods, such as Judson's, to approach the Burmans through interaction with them by means of the zayat ministry. A zayat is a gazebo located near the main road in which Judson and Burman visitors engaged in social and religious conversations.¹⁶⁹ Fish suggests adapting the gospel message to the worldview of Burmans and using Burman cultural forms such as native dress, native customs, native arts and music, native architectures, and native style of worship.¹⁷⁰ This is a good work on contextualizing Burman cultural forms for Christian practice.

Khin Maung Din argues that the use of local cultural forms such as presenting biblical stories in the cultural style of Burmese drum, dressing up the nativity scene in

¹⁶⁷This term is an obsolete term and is no longer used in modern literature. A better term would be an "Asian Mindset."

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁶⁹Fish, "Reclaiming the Zayat Ministry," 7-11.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 234-77.

Burmese costumes, using indigenous musical instruments and melodies for religious hymns and songs, etc. were merely attempts to put the Gospel wine into Burmese cultural bottles.¹⁷¹ He is more concerned with changing the “wine” (the gospel, the content, the theology) itself rather than the “bottle” (the methods and forms). Din argues for changing the wine to fit into the Burmese bottles. Biblically and theologically speaking, the gospel is an unchangeable truth about the good news of God. Therefore, people should not change or compromise the core and content of the gospel. The focus of the research will be not on the content of the gospel, but on the specific barriers causing the slow progress among Burman Buddhists. However, all of the books mentioned in this section will be helpful tools of information in one way or the other in the process of this dissertation.

¹⁷¹Din, Khin Maung, "How to Feed His Lamb: The Problem of Burmese Christian Theology Today," *International Review of Mission* 65, no. 258 (April 1976), 152.

Chapter V

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for exploring the barriers causing the slow progress of Christian mission among the Burman Buddhists will be built by a tri-theoretical construct: conversion theories, diffusion of innovation theories, and social identity theories. Each theory will be briefly presented for implementation in the research process. The researcher has no intention to prove or disprove the theories presented here; however, these theories will be treated as guides and gauges in discovering the barriers causing the slow progress of Christianity among the Burman Buddhists.

A. Conversion Theories

John Lofland distinguishes two kinds of religious converts, verbal converts and total converts, to distinguish the professed converts from the committed converts.¹⁷² He also suggests two types of conditions in conversion: pre-disposing conditions and situational contingencies; the former has to do with background information and personal attributes of pre-convert conditions, whereas the latter refers to conditions, which lead one into converting to the new religion, created through direct confrontation and interaction between the potential convert and the existing religious members. A person who has successfully passed through the pre-disposing conditions may have been exposed to the teaching of the new religion, but he/she may not convert because the proper situational conditions were not met.¹⁷³ Lofland comes up with seven steps in the process of conversion as they are laid out accordingly:

¹⁷²John Lofland, *Doomsday Cult: A Study of Conversion, Proselytization, and Maintenance of Faith* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), 33.

¹⁷³Ibid., 33-34.

1. Experience enduring, acutely felt tensions;
2. within a religious, problem-solving perspective;
3. which lead to defining himself as a religious seeker;
4. encountering the cult at a turning point in his life;
5. wherein an affective bond to adherents is formed (or pre-exists);
6. where extra-cult attachments are low or neutralized;
7. and where, to become a “deployable agent,” exposure to intensive interaction is accomplished¹⁷⁴ [conditions from 1-3 are background factors while from 4-7 are situational or interactional elements].

John Lofland and Norman Skonovd together come up with six “conversion motifs” along with five major variations corresponding to each motif.¹⁷⁵ The six “conversion motifs” are as follows: 1. In intellectual conversion, a person gains religious knowledge through books, television, internet, articles, lectures, and other media of communication which are void of personal contact; 2. Mystical conversion includes a sudden and traumatic experience of sight, insight, visions, voices, or other extraordinary experiences (e.g. Pauline Damascus Conversion); 3. Experimental conversion motif involves low degrees of social pressure exerted upon a new religious seeker but he/she is given a “try-it-out” option including free exploration of religious options, practices, and beliefs. Intensive interactions between beliefs and practices occur before one can fully embrace a new religion; 4. Affectional conversion has to do with interpersonal relationships developed between a seeker and the religious members and its leaders. The personal relationship with the religious members attracts the seeker and that relationship bonds the two parties together resulting in conversion. John Saliba notes the importance of emotional bond between members by saying that “... the emotional ties between members are more important than the intellectual acceptance people eventually make of their new faiths” because the social network

¹⁷⁴Ibid., 7-8.

¹⁷⁵John Lofland and Norman Skonovd, "Conversion Motifs," in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 20, no. 4 (1981): 373-85.

relationships “lead the individual to make the initial commitment and to retain membership;”¹⁷⁶ 5. Revivalist motif is an experience in which an individual is directly or indirectly influenced by the atmosphere of the meeting, the emotional arousal of the crowd, the dynamic power of the preaching and of the music, and the social influence and pressure exerted by family and peers; and 6. Coercive motif is rare due to the fact that it happens only in special circumstances. Other labels given for this motif are “brainwashing,” “programming,” “mind control,” “coercive persuasion,” “thought reform,” and “menticide.”¹⁷⁷ The authors summarize the coercive persuasion in these words: “The coercive persuasion entails an extremely high degree of external pressure over a relatively long period of time during which there is intense arousal of fear and uncertainty, culminating in empathetic identification and even love. Belief, of course, follows participation.”¹⁷⁸

The five variations relating to each motif suggested by Lofland and Skonovd are degree of social pressure, temporal duration, level of affective arousal, affective content, and belief-participation sequence.¹⁷⁹ Both Lofland and Skonovd acknowledge the complexity of conversion and the possible variations of conversion experience in different contexts, situations, and religious experiences. These conversion motifs and variations presented above will be useful in determining what happened before, at, and after conversion in the Burman Buddhist context.

¹⁷⁶John A. Saliba, *Understanding New Religious Movements*, 2nd ed, (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003), 111.

¹⁷⁷Lofland and Skonovd, 381.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 383.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 375.

Lewis R. Rambo defines conversion in three ways: “(a) conversion is a process over time not a single event; (b) conversion is contextual and thereby influences and is influenced by a matrix of relationships, expectations, and situations; and (c) factors in the conversion process are multiple, interactive, and cumulative. There is no one cause of conversion, no one process, and no one simple consequence of that process.”¹⁸⁰

Rambo also proposes a sequential stage model in the process of conversion:

First, context has to do with the situation or condition in which the process of conversion occurs, whether it is historical, religious, social, cultural, or personal. In Rambo’s own words, context is “the total environment in which conversion transpires,” and he adds, “Context continues its influence throughout the other conversion stages.... Context shapes the nature, structure and process of conversion;”¹⁸¹ Second, crisis refers to situations such as sickness, near-death experience, stress, loneliness, fear, desperation, and dissatisfaction in life in which a potential convert is found; Third, quest has to do with experience of people when they are searching for meaning and purpose in life. Rambo notes, “Under abnormal or crisis conditions this search becomes compelling; people actively look for resources that offer growth and development to ‘fill the void,’ solve the problem, or enrich life. Quest is an ongoing process, but one that will greatly intensify during times of crisis.”¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 5.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 56.

Fourth, encounter has to do with the point of contact between the potential convert and a new religious enterprise. This is an encounter between advocate and convert in which “[i]nitial reactions to an advocate can change over time; positive reactions can turn negative and vice versa. The advocate also may change over time, altering strategy in response to what is learned through interaction with the potential convert. The potential convert can also be modified and/or adopt new strategies through the interplay”¹⁸³ Rambo cites Keshari N. Sahay’s useful set of five categories which describes the process of interaction between the potential convert and the advocate and the integration process of the new faith. They are oscillation (a stage when new converts oscillate between the old religion and the new religion due to lack of understanding and strong commitment), scrutinization (a stage when new converts eliminate old traditions in order to be distinguished from the nonbelievers), combination (a stage when old traditional forms are brought in to be incorporated into Christian practices), indigenization (incorporation of Christian traditions into the local manner of doing things) and retroversion (re-adopting old traditions which are compatible with Christian principles).¹⁸⁴

Fifth, interaction stage takes place between the advocate and the potential convert in a more intense and complex way than the previous stage. This stage intensifies the persuasion and teaching of the new faith. The sphere of influence has been orchestrated by encapsulation (developed by Arthur Greil and David Rudy) which includes four processes: relationships (to create solid emotional bonds), rituals (to identify with and connect to the new way of life), rhetoric (to give meaning and

¹⁸³Ibid., 87.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 100-01, cf. Keshari N. Sahay, “The Impact of Christianity on the Uraon of the Chainpur Belt in Chotanagpur: An Analysis of Its Cultural Processes,” *American Anthropologist* 70 (1968): 923-42.

guidance to the new convert), and roles (to incorporate by giving responsibilities).¹⁸⁵

Sixth, commitment phase includes decisive moments, of making decisions, embodying new commitments, and constituting a new identity with the religious groups. Commitment rituals are baptism and public testimonies, and they “both express a person’s transformation and allow the person to participate in that transformation.”¹⁸⁶

Seventh, in the stage of consequences, the new convert is exploring, experimenting, and negotiating new possibilities and experiences. The consequences a new convert experiences may include a drastic change of life-style, a new dimension of beliefs and actions, a new meaning and new purpose in life, and a new security and tranquility. For others, the consequences may involve bad experiences such as manipulations and forceful decision for conversion.¹⁸⁷

In assessing whether conversion is sudden or gradual, Saliba observes, “Sudden and gradual conversion are possibly complementary and could represent two ways of viewing the same religious and personality change.”¹⁸⁸ Saliba draws his conclusions on conversion by saying that “there is no one generally accepted theory that satisfactorily explains the mechanism of conversion that leads a young adult to join a new religious movement.”¹⁸⁹ These conversion theories will be useful tools in

¹⁸⁵ Arthur L. Greil and David R. Rudy, “Social Cocoons: Encapsulation and Identity Transformation Organizations,” *Sociological Inquiry* 54 (Summer 1984), 20-78.

¹⁸⁶ Rambo, 124.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 170.

¹⁸⁸ Saliba, 110.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 112.

order to understand the barriers preventing the Burman Buddhists from accepting Christianity.

B. Diffusion of Innovation Theories

A religious conversion involves a diffusion of a religion. Before dealing with religious diffusion theory, it is essential to discuss the diffusion of innovation theory, since religious diffusion theory is directly influenced by diffusion of innovation theory. Everett M. Rogers defines diffusion as “the process by which (1) an *innovation* (2) is *communicated* through certain *channels* (3) over *time* (4) among the members of a *social system*.”¹⁹⁰ Innovation is “an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption.”¹⁹¹ Diffusion is not understood as an instant act but as a process as seen in Rogers’ presentation of innovation-decision process in five different stages: 1. Knowledge (exposure to a new idea, thing, or religion); 2. Persuasion (individual’s favorable or unfavorable attitude to the innovation); 3. Decision (moment of judgment about either adopting or rejecting the innovation); 4. Implementation (practical application of the new idea or new subject); 5. Confirmation (reinforcement of the already made decision of whether to continue or discontinue with the innovation).¹⁹² These five stages are relevant and applicable to religious diffusion, and these stages will help formulate research questions and provide directions in personal interviews.

The change agent’s success (a change agent is someone who influences clients’ innovation-decisions) is related to eight things in relation to the adopters: 1.

¹⁹⁰ Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*. 5th ed. (New York: Free Press, 2003), 11.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 169.

Degree of contact, 2. A client orientation, 3. Compatibility with client's needs, 4. Empathy expressed by innovators, 5. Homophily with clients (similarity with clients), 6. Credibility of change agent, 7. Mediatory assistance from opinion leaders (opinion leaders are those who influence others in adopting an innovation), and 8. Client's ability to evaluate innovations.¹⁹³ These eight qualities used in diffusing an innovation will help to explore the barriers that exist between Burman people and ethnic minorities in the process of presenting the gospel in Burma. The introduction of a new religion to a new region or a new group of people is one kind of diffusion.

Ronald W. Perry categorizes the diffusion process into different groupings such as "the innovation-decision process, innovation characteristics, and adopter characteristics and opinion leadership."¹⁹⁴ Robert L. Montgomery renames Perry's "innovation characteristics" and "adopter characteristics" as "background variables"¹⁹⁵ since they are the pre-existing conditions before innovation takes place. The "background variables" are independent variables which can influence the diffusion of religions. The quality and kinds of relationships between the religious innovators and religious adaptors are very important in the process of diffusion of religions.¹⁹⁶ When the relationships between the two groups are strain, that strained relationship becomes a barrier in the process of diffusing the religion. Montgomery stresses that "interrelations are crucial in determining the direction from which a new

¹⁹³Ibid., 400.

¹⁹⁴Ronald W. Perry, "Diffusion Theories" in *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, eds. Edgar F. Borgatta and Mrie L. L. Borgatta (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1992, 490.

¹⁹⁵Robert L. Montgomery, *The Diffusion of Religions: A Sociological Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1996), 12.

¹⁹⁶Ibid.

religion may come,”¹⁹⁷ either upward or downward on the social class scale (dominant groups to marginal groups or vice versa). Montgomery also observes two conditions, namely, conducive and non-conducive conditions. These are the independent variables which can influence the process of the diffusion of a religion either for receptivity or resistance to the new religion depending on the relationships between the sending groups, the receiving groups, and the surrounding groups. When the introduced religion is considered as “being part of a threat to the moral order of their group” and also as “weakening or devaluing valued aspects of social identity,”¹⁹⁸ the condition is non-conducive, and the diffusion of religion will be difficult. However, when the new religion is non-threatening to the social identity but promising to sustain the social identity and elevate the social self-image, the condition is considered conducive, and the diffusion of the new religion will be easier.¹⁹⁹

One example of the non-conducive conditions in Burma is the political atmosphere of the country mingled with Buddhism. This is one of the alleged barriers in reaching the Burman Buddhists. Even though Burma’s religious affairs are run by Buddhist-backed government, there is still hope whenever God chooses to change the political situation in Burma just like what happened in Korea even when Korean political situation did not warrant such a change as James H. Grayson identifies the issue in Korea: “Although core values of a society offer the greatest hindrance to the acceptance of new beliefs, dramatically altered political and cultural circumstances create conditions which tend toward easier acceptance of such new beliefs in spite of

¹⁹⁷Ibid., 30, cf. 8.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., 31-32.

¹⁹⁹Ibid.

any contention with the core values.”²⁰⁰ The political relationship of the Burmese government and Buddhism is an assumed existing barrier which is to be explored in the research work.

C. Identity Theories

Richard Travisano concisely defines conversion in relationship to identity as “a radical reorganization of identity, meaning, and life.”²⁰¹ When a person is converted from one religion to another, he/she starts to identify with different beliefs and different religious groups. In religious conversions, maintaining ethnic identity and social identity is very important for many people groups. These identities can be either barriers or stepping-stones for religious conversions. These two terms will be explained along with their respective theories.

1. Ethnic Identity Theory

Before explaining ethnic identity theory, a definition of “ethnicity” is necessary. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith define “ethnicity” (developed from Richard Schermerhorn’s definition)²⁰² in six main features:

1. a common *proper name*, to identify and express the ‘essence’ of the community;
2. a myth of *common ancestry*, a myth rather than a fact, a myth that includes the idea of a common origin in time and place and that gives an *ethnie* a sense of fictive kinship, what Horowitz terms a ‘super-family’ (Horowitz, 1985: ch.2);

²⁰⁰James H. Grayson, *Early Buddhism and Christianity in Korea: a study in the emplantation of religion* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1985), 142. Cf. Montgomery, 9.

²⁰¹Richard Tavisano, “Alternation and Conversion as Qualitatively Different Transformations,” ed. Gregory Stone and Harvey Faberman, *Social Psychology through Symbolic Interaction* (Waltham, MA: Ginn-Blaisdell, 1968), 600.

²⁰²Richard Schermerhorn, *Comparative Ethnic Relations* (New York: Random House Inc., 1970), 12.

3. shared historical memories, or better, shared memories of a common past or pasts, including heroes, events, and their commemoration;
4. one or more *elements of common culture*, which need not be specified but normally include religion, customs, or language;
5. *a link with a homeland*, not necessarily its physical occupation by the *ethnie*, only its symbolic attachment to the ancestral land, as with diaspora peoples;
6. *a sense of solidarity* on the part of at least some sections of the *ethnie's* population (A. D. Smith, 1986: ch. 2).²⁰³

Burman people as an ethnic group share these six features constituting them as a social ethnic unit. Various theories have been proposed by social scientists and anthropologists in order to make sense of the real meaning of ethnicity and its implication, but only some relevant theories will be mentioned in this study.

a) Primordialist Theory

A proponent of this theory is Clifford Geertz. He argues that the cultural 'givens,' which includes blood ties, region, religion, language, race, and customs, are the determining factors for ethnic identity and he believes that every person has "some attachments" to these cultural 'givens' naturally: "But for virtually every person, in every society, at almost all times, some attachments seem to flow more from a sense of natural – some would say spiritual – affinity than from social interaction."²⁰⁴ According to Max Weber, political aspect is the determining factor for ethnic identity and formation: "Ethnic membership (*Gemeinsamkeit*) differs from the kinship group precisely by being a presumed identity, not a group with concrete social action, like the latter. . . it is primarily the political community, no matter how artificially organized, that inspires the belief in common ethnicity."²⁰⁵

²⁰³ John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds. *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1996), 6-7.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 42.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 35.

In attacking the primordialist position, Jack Eller and Reed Coughlan writes: “The fact, and it is a problematic fact at best, that ethnics experience their identities as such, or that ethnic sentiments ‘are able to pass from practice to practice without going through discourse or consciousness’²⁰⁶ lends no support to primordial theory and does not call into question the social origins of ethnic attachments.”²⁰⁷ Thus, the primordial position fails to account for the changing nature of cultural elements, people’s motives, feelings, and customs over the years.

b) Instrumentalist Theory

The instrumentalists argue that ethnicity serves social, political, and cultural purpose as a means for gaining resources in a given society. Abner Cohen argues that ethnic organization exists for the purpose of serving political agenda and meeting psychological needs of the people.²⁰⁸ Therefore, this view proposes that ethnicity exists to carry out political issues and social needs of a particular ethnic group. Instrumentalist theory is a subcategory of constructionism which is used by Ted C. Lewellen.²⁰⁹ The weaknesses of this theory are (1) its failure to account for the uniqueness of the primordial ties or identities, and (2) its undermining the affective aspects of ethnicity.

²⁰⁶P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, UK: CUP, 1997), 87.

²⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 50.

²⁰⁸Abner Cohen, “Introduction: the lesson of ethnicity,” in *Urban Ethnicity* ed. Abner Cohen (London: Tavistock, 1974a). Cf. Abner Cohen, *Two-dimensional Man* (London: Tavistock, 1974b).

²⁰⁹ Ted C. Lewellen, *The Anthropology of Globalization: Cultural Anthropology Enters the 21st Century* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2002), 109. Lewellen classifies ethnic theory into three major types: primordialism (neo-primordialism), constructionism (instrumentalism, cultural constructionism, political constructionism, and radical historicism), and relationalism. Lewellen’s classification of ethnic theory is another way of understanding ethnicity in a more complex way.

c) Barthian Ethnic Theory

Fredrik Barth has been criticized by instrumentalists as being ‘primordialist’ for his seemingly classifying ethnicity as rigid and concrete which is primarily based on primordial ties of religion, language, blood, region, and customer. However, a closer look at Barth’s ethnic theory reveals that his view is much broader than the alleged primordialist view of ethnicity.

Fredrik Barth considers ethnic groups to be treated as units of ascription, “A categorical ascription is an ethnic ascription when it classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background.”²¹⁰ According to Barth, actors (participants in an ethnic group) form ethnic groups by categorizing themselves and others for the purposes of interaction.”²¹¹ With reference to ethnic boundary, Barth writes, “If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signaling membership and exclusion.”²¹² Barth concludes his idea by saying that “ethnic boundaries are maintained in each case by a limited set of cultural features,”²¹³ thereby arguing that not all cultural features are durable and relevant to ethnic identity but only “a limited set of cultural features,” namely, the core cultural traits that continue to form one’s ethnicity. So, people naturally define their identity for themselves by who they are as a group of people and how they relate to other groups of people.

²¹⁰ Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 1969), 13.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 15.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 38.

d) Subjective and Objective Views of Ethnic Identity

Anthropologists attempt to understand ethnic identity in both subjective and objective ways. Barth's view of ethnic identity would be classified as a subjective view in which the group determines their ethnic boundary and identity. On the other hand, the objective view argues that ethnicity is mainly determined by observable characteristics of social organization, large-scale historical processes, and power differences in the social structure.²¹⁴ This view supports that ethnicity is solely determined on contemporary social issues instead of historical and cultural contributions.²¹⁵ Barth is, however, not entirely opposed to the objective view as he allows for ethnicity to be effected by circumstances: "The incentives to a change in identity are thus inherent in the change in circumstances."²¹⁶ Anthony Giddens attempts to fuse the subjectivist and objectivist views of ethnicity by saying that social life entails duality which contains agency and structure, or in other words, freedom and constraint.²¹⁷

Finally, it boils down to the fact that ethnic identity is either a choice or constraint. Eriksen summarizes ethnic identities and writes, "Ethnic identities are neither ascribed nor achieved: they are both. They are wedged between situational selection and imperatives imposed from without."²¹⁸ With reference to the threat of

²¹⁴ Abner Cohen, *Urban Ethnicity*, 1974a.

²¹⁵ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2002), 54.

²¹⁶ Barth, 25.

²¹⁷ Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1979). Cf. Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 198).

²¹⁸ Eriksen, 56.

ethnic identity, Eriksen observes, "... social identity becomes most important the moment it seems threatened."²¹⁹ He further acknowledges the malleability of ethnic identity as he notes, "It is true that ethnicity is a social creation and not a fact of nature, and ethnic variation does not correspond to cultural variation"²²⁰ Joane Nagel also agrees with the malleability of ethnic identity and describes ethnicity as "a socially constructed, variable definition of self or other, whose existence and meaning is continuously negotiated, revised and revitalized."²²¹ The ethnic identity theory is helpful information for studying ethnic Burman people and their relationships with other ethnic minorities in Burma. This theory will be helpful in discovering what issues affect the formation of and change of ethnic identity with reference to Burman people. Ethnic identity theory is one way of understanding groups. Another similar but different way of looking at a group is by social identity theory.

2. Social Identity Theory

The primary advocate of social identity theory Henri Tajfel defines the theory thus:

For the purposes of this discussion, social theory will be understood as that *part* of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.... 'Social identity' as defined here is thus best considered as a shorthand term used to describe (i) limited aspects of the concept of self which are (ii) relevant to certain limited aspects of social behavior.²²²

²¹⁹ Ibid., 68.

²²⁰ Ibid., 69.

²²¹ Joane Nagel, "Constructing ethnicity: creating and recreating ethnic identity and culture," in *Majority and Minority: The Dynamics of Race and Ethnicity in American Life*, ed. N. Yetman (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1991), 2.

²²² Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 255.

According to social identity theory, people identify themselves either in terms of their uniqueness compared to other individuals (personal identity) or in terms of their membership in social groups compared to other groups (social identity).²²³ In determining social identities, comparative terms are used. An individual in one group is not compared with other individual members in another group but “It is rather how we as a whole compare to you as a whole.”²²⁴ Reiner also notes how we react to a group is affected by how we categorize and define ourselves and others.²²⁵ How we view and understand people affects how we treat them and how we view and treat others affects how they respond to us. On the other hand, how they view us and understand or misunderstand us affects how they treat us and respond to us. So how missionaries and ethnic evangelists view, understand and treat people affects how the Burman Buddhists respond to the presentation of the gospel. How Buddhists view and understand Christians also has great impact on how they response, reject or ignore to the presentation of the gospel.

Intergroup relationship is a very important concept in social relationships. If the intergroup relationship is not harmonious, this relationship itself can become a barrier between the two groups for communication and interaction. Groups that live side by side are directly or indirectly inter-related to one another. Robert L. Montgomery notes this fact: “All groups, whether small or large enough to form societies, are in multiple relationships with other groups.”²²⁶ The importance of

²²³Stephen Reicher, “The Context of Social Identity: Domination, Resistance, and Change” in *Political Psychology* 25, no. 6, (2004): 928.

²²⁴*Ibid*, 929.

²²⁵*Ibid*, 930.

²²⁶Montgomery, *The Diffusion of Religions*, 12.

intergroup relationships is pivotal in determining diffusion of religion especially when it comes to the decision-making process.

Montgomery recognizes macro (intergroup relations) and micro (individual motivation) level relationships.²²⁷ The source of independent variables on diffusion of religions is “the quality of the relationships between groups.”²²⁸ He continues “... domination and resistance to domination in intergroup relations affect reception, rejection, and change in religion, as well as the development of religions in the first place.”²²⁹ This is true in Burma. The resistance to Christianity is due to strained relationships between colonizers and Burmese people and between ethnic people and Burman people. Relationships between different groups (e.g. Ethnic people and Burman people) and between individuals from different groups (e.g. an ethnic evangelist and a Burman Buddhist) have to do with diffusion of religion.

According to Montgomery, “primary indicator of acceptance or rejection of a religion is the self-identification of adherents, whether others consider them “true” believers or not.”²³⁰ A good test for the genuineness of a Burman convert is his/her self identification with Christianity. It is very important to train new Burman believers to identify themselves as Burman Christians in order to reach the mass Burman populations. Work needs to be done to disengage the idea of assuming a Burman Christian as one who has become an ethnic believer. When enough Burmans form themselves as new and authentic believers, they will be able to express

²²⁷Ibid., 13.

²²⁸ Ibid., 19.

²²⁹ Ibid., 49.

²³⁰ Ibid., 15.

themselves as Burman Christians and perhaps they will be able to attract other Burman people to join them in their new found faith. This process will contribute to changing the image of Cristianity so that it will appear to the Burman population not as a foreign religion or an ethnic religion, but a Burman local religion.

Montgomery makes a very interesting comment: “The new believers identify themselves as adherents of the introduced religion, but the changes they make set the new religion apart from the original religion and, in particular contribute to the religious distinction of the receiving group from the sending group.”²³¹ He defines “religious identification” as “a means of participation in groups that formulate and reformulate moral orders.”²³²

Part of the research processes is to find out what kinds of relationship barriers exist between the ethnic groups, the Burmans and the Burman Christians. Social identity will help explore the tensions, relationships, and barriers between these groups in Burma in order to expose the specific barriers hindering the Burmans from converting to Christianity. Based on the findings of data with reference to the pre-conversion question, conversion question, and post-conversion question, specific cultural issues and barriers are gathered, analyzed, and interpreted in light of the theories presented earlier in this chapter.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid., 32.

Chapter VI

The Research Design

A. Data Collection Methodology

Data collection was done through library research, written testimonies, interviews and questionnaires. The research involved the use of laptop computer, recording device (for voice recordings) and writing utensils. The research was carried out by the help of family members, friends, and ministry partners and minister friends. The research respondents ranged from Buddhist monks and Christian ministers to Buddhist lay people and Christian lay people. Respondents are ethnically diverse groups of Burmans, Chins (or Zomis-ꯀꯂꯃꯅ), Karen, Shan, and Chinese.

1. Library Research

Library Research helped researcher find information on Burman Folktales, Burman Folk Religion, Burman Theravada Religion, Burman culture, Evangelism methods in Asia and in Burma, Contextualization in Asia and Burma, and other relevant resources which will provide theories or ideas contributing to the research work. Other relevant resources include literature from the fields of cultural anthropology, behavioral science, missiology, cross-cultural communication, ethnic theory, social theories, religious conversion theories, diffusion of religions, world religions and other sources which are relevant to the dissertation subject.

Literature collections were done in the form of books, encyclopedias, reference books, dictionaries, Journal and magazine articles, online articles, dissertations, micro files, and documents. Local libraries accessible for research are located at Asbury Theological Seminary, Asbury College, Lexington Theological

Seminary, University of Kentucky, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Lexington Public libraries. Much information was gathered through the library loan system via Asbury Seminary Info Commons (Library) and through Asbury Scholar.

2. Questionnaires

Questionnaires were distributed through the mail, through persons, via internet and over the phone. They were given to informants at the beginning of personal interviews in the research initial stage. Since this is time consuming for interviewees, the researcher discontinued the use of questionnaires for interviewees at a later stage in the research process. Two different questionnaires were distributed to two different groups. The first questionnaire was designed for Burman Buddhists to gather information on their attitude, experience, and understanding about Christianity. The second questionnaire was formulated for Myanmar Christians which includes the Burman majority group and all other ethnic Christians in Burma to find out their attitude, experience, and understanding about the interaction between Buddhism and Christianity. Most of both of the questionnaires for Buddhists and Christians were distributed under the leadership of the author's wife in Burma. The author distributed some questionnaires to Christians and Burman Buddhists in the United States, but only a few of them were returned to the researcher. Some Christians were very helpful while others were not so helpful in trying to connect with Burmans. The questionnaire distribution statistics are as follows: out of 316 distributed to the Buddhists, only 125 were completed; out of 202 sent to Christians, only 85 of them were completed.

3. Testimonial Data

Testimonial data were collected in Burma in the summer of 2007. The researcher conducted two mission seminars; one was with eighteen ministers working among Buddhists in Kaley Myo (Upper Burma) on July 17, 2007, and the other was with fifty ministers serving among Buddhists in Yangon (Lower Burma). Twenty attendees in the two seminars willingly submitted their conversion testimonies. All testimonies were from Burman converts except four of those whose ethnic origins do not qualify them for their use in this study. These testimonies are indispensable to the research topic. Respondents who were Burman Buddhist converts were asked to write their pre-conversion, conversion and post-conversion experiences. This provided a data set and a pool from which some could be for a more personal and more intensive interview to dig out more information from the new converts from Buddhism. The author will analyze and interpret these sixteen testimonial data in the following section.

4. Interviews

The original plan was to do the majority of the research including interviews in Burma. However, due to financial crisis and political insecurity, the majority of the research was done in the United States where Burman people live collectively for easy access to them. The researcher traveled to Lexington in Kentucky, Columbus in Ohio, Fort Wayne in Indiana, Miami and Fort Lauderdale in Florida, New York City, Niagara Falls, Buffalo, Syracuse, Utica, and Albany in New York State, and Washington D.C. area, Gaithersburg and Baltimore in Maryland and Tyson Corner in Virginia to do personal interviews and distribute questionnaires.

The majority of interviews were conducted in person and a few of them were done through telephone. A good number of Christians helped the author in connecting with their Burman friends and acquaintances, whereas other Christians including some pastors were not so helpful in the process. The reasons for Christians' unwillingness to help include their lack of interest to reach the Buddhists, their lack of time, their narrow-mindedness, their concerns for the Burmans' feelings and misunderstandings. Personal interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder with the permission of the respondents as researcher took notes on paper or on a laptop computer whenever the situation allowed. Researcher observed the non-verbal expressions of the interviewees such as facial expression, smiles, tears, fear, sadness, direct and indirect look, and verbal expressions ranging from excited voice, monotone voice and caring voice to sad voice, crying voice and short period of silence. The purposes of the interview were to find out Burmese people's attitude toward Christianity and Burmese Christians, and Christians' attitudes toward Buddhism and Burmese people.

The categories and counts of the interview informants from the United States are as follows:

1. Buddhist monks (3)
2. Lay Buddhists (13)
3. Lay Buddhist Converts (23)
4. Christian Fulltime Ministers/Evangelists among Burmese (6)

B. Reports on the Collected Data

1. Literature Review Data

Different authors describe the missional barriers that contribute to the stagnation of Christian mission among the Burman Buddhists. Ruth M. Armstrong constructively criticizes missionaries in Burma as lacking "humility and discernment" because "it seemed inappropriate to try to adapt to the lifestyle of the indigenous people" to many missionaries.²³³ Armstrong spells out three major barriers in Burma mission, which are, "the imposition of western ways, the separateness of missionaries within their fenced and secluded compounds, and the emphasis given on "Western individualism in a group oriented culture."²³⁴ Samuel Ngun Ling's suggested missional barriers include Buddhism being a favored religion and Christianity unfavored one, social and religious conflicts between majority Burmans and minority ethnic people, social identity, religious identity, nationalistic spirit of Burmans, Christians' fear of persecutions and conflict with the majority Burmans, and lack of religious freedom.²³⁵

According to Paul D. Clasper, the barriers in reaching Burmans involve the assumptions that Christianity is both a foreign religion and an ethnic religion, Christian activity being interpreted as the residue of the colonial expansion and adherence to Christian faith is seen as "allegiance to a foreign faith," cultural pride and spiritual pride of Christians who claim to have "everything to give and nothing to

²³³Armstrong, "Judson's Successors in the Heyday of Burma Missions," 68.

²³⁴Ibid.

²³⁵Ling, *The Encounter of Missionary Christianity*, 2003, 1-3.

receive,"²³⁶ and Christian missions being understood as western 'invasion' of their cultural and spiritual realm,²³⁷ and Burmans' attachment to Buddhism (love for Buddha), and Nat worship (fear of Nats) at the same time (syncretistic Buddhism).²³⁸ Adoniram Judson and his wife Nance had their own shares of missional barriers as pioneer missionaries to the Burman Buddhists. Courtney Anderson explains, "When Adoniram told the men about Jesus' atonement for their sins they replied politely that "their minds were stiff." When Nancy spoke to the women, they said, "Your religion is good for you, ours for us. You will be rewarded for your good deeds in your way—we in our way."²³⁹ These are the kinds of barriers existing literature on Burman mission have to say about the issues.

2. Pre-field Research Data

In July 17, 2007, the author conducted a pre-field research by facilitating a mission conference with eighteen ministers among the Burman Buddhists in attendance in Kaley Myo, Upper Burma. The participants and the facilitator came up with a list of resolution concerning barriers (difficulties), weaknesses, and strengths in doing Christian mission among the Burman Buddhists in Burma. Barriers and difficulties in Burman mission from the Kaley Mission Conference are:

1. The people of Myanmar are classified according to the language they speak. For example, the Kachin people speak Kachin and thus they are called Kachin people.
2. Buddhism literally means "Buddha's Religion" (Buddha Bata) .The word *Buddha* in Pali means "no similarity, no comparison." Buddhists are taught

²³⁶Clasper 1961, *The Buddhist-Christian Encounter*, 44, 47.

²³⁷Clasper, 43.

²³⁸Clasper, 38.

²³⁹Anderson, *To the Golden Shore*, 183.

Buddh's scripture as soon as they are able to read and write. So they are "so used to" saying "Bodha Bata" (the incomparable religion) and therefore, other religions become pale and nothing in comparison to their "Bata."

3. The origin of Buddhism: Under the reign of King Anawratha, he purified Buddhism from other cult practices such as *ayiikiyi* and *nats* worship and popularized the way of Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism by building pagodas and monasteries throughout the country. Buddhism not only has become a host religion but it also has become an indigenous religion to majority Burman people. Buddhism has been ingrained in the minds of the people down through the centuries.
4. Burman-ness and Buddhist-ness: The concept of "To be a Burman is to be a Buddhist" is deeply rooted in the mind of Burmans since their childhood (e.g. shinyu initiation for boys and ear-piercing initiation for girls), and Buddhism has become an addictive religion to Burmans. Thus, Buddhist-ness and Burman-ness are inseparably intertwined together.
5. Burmans and their customs: Burmans have better cultural traits than other ethnic groups in Burma in the area of innate traits such as *titsa*, *mitta*, *hmuhdihta*; faithfulness, loving-kindness, respect, helping, sacrificial giving, putting other people first, and unwillingness to face shame are exemplary cultural traits. These cultural traits are so in line with Buddha's teachings and people and are therefore addicted to them. So they accept Buddhism as an indigenous religion.
6. Progress of mission works in Burma: Christianity has been popular only among the ethnic people who live in the remote, difficult-access areas of the country after only many sacrifices such as sicknesses, deaths, winding roads, rough climates, and food shortages have been made. The effects of the sacrifices are witnessed first among the ethnic minorities and then slowing among the Burman majority group as a result of prayers, giving, and ministries of different denominations there. Nevertheless, there are more failures than successes in Myanmar ministry: waste of time, money, and energy without proper effective and relevant methods.

According to the findings from the mission conference, general weaknesses of ministers among the Burmans include:

language barriers, character and moral barriers, non-exploration of mission field (no clear focus groups), lack of suitable approach to respective officials, lack of spiritual power (within and outside the church), ignorance of host cultural teachings and practices, aggressive (non-humble) approach, and lack of multiple-creative approaches (limiting to spiritual evangelism approach only). As denominations, the following weaknesses are evident: taking too much pride in the fact of "sending" someone (name's recognition), fighting

among Christians and gossiping before non-believers, lack of seeing the real needs (beyond basic needs such as a table, a paper, and a pen) to carry out mission, lack of follow-up on new converts (no systematic follow-ups or integration of new converts), and lack of training, evaluation and care for physical, emotional and spiritual health of the ministers.

A second mission seminar conducted in July 23, 2009 revealed common barriers evident in ministry among the Burmans as follows:

1. unfriendly encounters, 2. ignorance of language, 3. ignorance of customs, 4. ignorance of Buddhism, 5. blind approach, 6. non-exploring-learning spirit, 7. non attentive (disinterest) attitude, 8. one-directional approach, 9. focus on preaching three points sermon, 10. non-reciprocal interaction (un-opening oneself-up; e.g. sharing one's life story of struggle and conversion), 11. no participation in community activities, 12. no *naa'le hmuh* with civil officials (not able to relate to respective officials), 13. non-adaptive to customary manners, 14. no interest and sensitivity to their feelings (e.g. birthdays, funerals, weddings, etc), 15. lack of follow-ups (no systematic plans and practices), 16. lack of structure for helping ostracized new converts, 17. critical approach of their religion and cultures, 18. insensitive approach to favorable/non-favorable situations (being unwise situationally/contextually), 19. non-sensitive terms (e.g. using terms such as "good news" instead of "the gospel"), 20. lack of same-gender communication approach (vs. cross-gender communicational approach), 21. lack of exemplary lifestyles, 22. lack of the power of God (lack of prayer and commitment), 23. non-native convert-based approaches (not recruiting Burman converts to reach the Burmans), 24. No respect for group leaders before unbelievers, 25. impatience in the process of interactions with them (3 months, 6 months or more), 26. lack of social services (as a means to bridge to their spiritual needs), 27. stinginess in sharing with others in their real needs (being generous with especially kids by distributing candies and chocolates), and 28. unclear and long presentation of the gospel (vs. short-to -the point message delivery).

C. Analytical Framework: Data Analysis

1. Analysis and Interpretation of the Collected Data

I used questionnaires, interviews, and testimonial stories in my field research in order to find out the barriers in reaching the Burman Buddhists. These different

data are analyzed and grouped together in themes and categories. The development of themes and categories from the coding process are converted into patterns, theories, or generalizations about behaviors, events or beliefs of the Burmese Buddhist people.

Table 1. Questionnaire Data Sheet									
Questionnaires for Buddhists					Questionnaires for Christians				
No.	Name	Sen t	Retur n	Los t	No	Name	Sen t	Retur n	Los t
1	N-Hoih	35	24	11	1	N_hoih	22	16	6
2	Syam Su Myat	10	9	1	2	Sir L Khai	15	20	0
3	U Zam	10	5	5	3	KTKhain& U Cing	31	12	19
4	KT Khain & U Cing	40	37	3	5	MaYu	20	8	14
5	Sir L Khai	25	9	16	6	U Cing (Mogok)	20	2	11
6	Ma Yu	20	14	6	7	Sya Mang	24	24	0
7	Ucing(mogok)	20	11	9	8	Ma Beauty	20	0	20
8	U Mung Pi	5	5	0	9	U Manlun	5	0	5
9	Sir Mang	20	3	17	10	Ni Boh	10	0	10
10	KP(Ukhai Zi)	14	6	8	11	ZogamZi	5	3	2
11	Ma Beauty	20	0	20	12	Sir Ako	20	0	20
12	U ManLun	10	0	10	13	SirSuan(SHALOM)	10	0	10
13	Ni Boh	20	0	20		Total	202	85	117
14	Kim	20	2	18					
15	Sir Ako	20	0	20					
16	Sir Suan (SHALOM)	10	0	10					
17	Ma Khin Htay	17	0	17					
	Total	316	125	191					

Data analysis and interpretation took place throughout the whole process of data gatherings, not simultaneously but at the end of the days and at the end of the weeks. I asked analytical questions and wrote memos throughout the study. Open-ended method is used. The data analysis involves open coding (generating categories

of information), axial coding (paring categories) and selective coding (explicating a story from the interconnectedness of these categories). The normal procedure for data analyzing and interpreting I follow is as follows: 1. I organize and prepare the data (interview notes, surveys, transcription of audio data) for analysis; 2. I read through all the data to get a general sense of the information as a whole; 3. I begin detailed analysis with a coding process; 4. I use the coding process to generate a description of the setting, people, categories, and themes for analysis and then interconnect the themes into theories or generalizations; 5. I advance how the descriptions and themes are represented in the qualitative narrative 6. I analyze and interpret the data based on my personal interpretation, meanings derived from the literature, with the help of the informants and findings that confirm the assumed theories or develop new theories.²⁴⁰

2. Post-field Research Analysis

Based on pre-field research findings and literature review results, the author prepared questionnaires and interview protocols for the field research. Testimonial data are collected from former Buddhists who have converted to Christianity.

a) Questionnaire Data Analysis and Interpretation

Questionnaires were distributed through different contact persons. For Christian questionnaires, 13 contact persons were involved, while 17 people were involved for Buddhist questionnaires. The total returns out of the 316 questionnaires sent out were 125 from Buddhist respondents, but only 112 questionnaires are fit for use due to some unclear and inappropriate use of forms by respondents. In the same way, 202 questionnaires were sent out and only 80 questionnaires are appropriate for use with five of them being unfit due

²⁴⁰John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2003), 185.203.

to inappropriate entries and incorrect forms.

The total loss of Buddhist questionnaires are 191 and of Christian questionnaires are 117. There are different reasons for the loss of questionnaires. The reasons include disinterest in Christianity, disinterest in doing surveys, reluctant to express one's opinion for fear on the basis of security involved, and for fear of offending Christians or the researcher, and unwillingness to help, support, and cooperate with the research. The last reason is sadly common among Christians and even among ministers.

According to this table, the strongest barrier for Burmans to convert another religion is their Buddhishness or religiousness (there devoutness to Buddhism; R.B=100). The devoutness here does not mean their ability, discipline and morality to follow and master their religion but this rather refers to their emotional and traditional attachment to Buddhism.

Table 2. Analysis of Most Positive and Most Negative Occurrences²⁴¹

112	The most occurrences of (-) for Buddhists	80	The most occurrences of (+) for Buddhists
1	R.B= 100 [Reasons for Being Buddhist]	1	Fhip=99 [Friendship]
2	Dep=80 [Decision Pattern]	2	Co=97 [Compassion]
3	Ra= 69 [Racism]	3	Mo=88 [General morality of believers]
4	Hum=59 [Humility]	4	Hel=85 [Helping]
5	B1=49 [Buddhism is only true religion]	5	Ki=80 [Kindness]
	The most occurrences of (-) for Christians		The most occurrences of (+) for Christians
1	W.Pry=57 [Weak in prayer]	1	GW=72 [God's will]
2	SR.B=57 [Serious racism of Buddhists]	2	Pry=70 [Pray]

²⁴¹The positive (+) represents Burmans' favor toward Christianity and the negative (-) represents Burmans' disfavor toward Christianity. In order words, the positive (+) numbers are the scores for attractiveness and the negative (-) numbers are the scores for unattractiveness (or barriers).

3	Rel.A= 51 [Religious attachment]	3	Inv= 68 [Invite]
4	Explr=50 [Exemplary lifestyle]	4	Shr=60 [Sharing]
5	W.Giv=42 [Weak in giving]	5	Frns=46 [Friendship]
Total Buddhists Respondents=112		Total Christian Respondents=80	

The respondents were asked in the questionnaire “what are their reasons for being Buddhist?” with different options (A. Because of parents; B. Because of being Burman; C. Because of personal choice; D. Because I did not get opportunity to learn other religions). Among 112 respondents, 100 people chose one of the first three options (A-C) for being Buddhists leaving the 12 respondents for the last option or no response. The first two options (through parents and being Burman) are the strongest reasons for their being Buddhists. This can be asserted as the strongest barrier because Burman culture and Burman Buddhism (Theravada Buddhism) are inseparably linked together. Many interviewees admit that they do not want to change their religion because of their attachment to their parents’ upbringing and inheritance of religion passed down to them as children.

The second strongest barrier from the responses of the Buddhist questionnaires is the decision pattern of Burmans. Decision making is a very difficult thing for Burmans because they live in a close-knit community where making decisions affect the family, the kinship community, and religious community. The third strongest barrier according to Buddhist responses is strong racism of minority ethnics (most of them are Christians) against Burmans (most of them are Buddhists). This is how Burmans (mostly Buddhists) view ethnic minorities Christians (mostly Christians) in Burma. This strong ethnic attitude and spirit (racism) between majority Burmans (Buddhists) and minority ethnic groups (mostly Christians from Karen, Chin, Kachin and other tribal groups) is a very strong barrier for the slow progress of mission work

among the Burmans. This is an undeniable fact from the research finding and from real life experiences and interactions as well.

The fourth strongest barrier as a result of the research from Buddhists' responses is Christians' lack of humility [Hum=59]. Since the opposite of humility is pride, assessment can be made in which Christian attitude toward Buddhists (Burmans) has caused the slow progress of mission work among Burmans. The fifth most negative occurrence has to do with Burmans' view of their religion as the only true religion. Even though most Burmans are not active in their religious practices, they would still say that their religion is the best and the only true religion in their known world. This is partly due to their royalty and their attachment to the teaching of Buddha. This is the religious prejudice they conceive in their minds by making Buddhism the only true religion while considering other religions as non-religions. This is another strong barrier.

Many Christians admit, according to the questionnaire responses, that their weakness in prayers (first, W.Pry) and Burmans' racial attitude toward ethnic minorities (first also, SR.B) are the most negatively affected barriers in reaching the Buddhists. The next negatively affected barriers from Christian responses are religious attachment of Burmans to Buddhism (second to the first two, Rel.A.), failure in moral exemplary lifestyles (third, Explr) and weakness in giving for mission (fourth, W.Giv). These are causal barriers in the propagation of the gospel among Burman people. By way of comparison, The first (Being Buddhists through family and Burmanness) and fifth barrier (Buddhism as the only true) from Buddhist could be explained as Burman attachment to their religion which is also the second in the order of negatively affected barriers from Christian responses. This means that

Buddhists and Christians agree that Burman attachment to Buddhism is the strongest barrier in the process of conversion to Christianity.

On the positive side, Buddhists think Christians are generally friendly (Fship), compassionate (Co), morally good (Mo), help others (Hel) and are kind (Ki) in their dealings with Burmans in general. This positive evaluation needs support and clarifications from other research data because these results seem to contradict the negative results across the spectrum. Even though questionnaires support the positive side of Christianity and Burman favoritism of Christians and their religion, interview results from ministers working among the Burmans and some honest Burman interviewees suggest the opposite of these positive attributions. However, qualification needs to be made to further clarify the confusion. The reasons for the positive evaluation may have resulted from the indirectness, politeness, dishonesty, and hesitancy from the part of Burmans. Another possible contributor to the positive attitude is the real fact that some Christians who have interactions with Burmans are generally nice and good people and this is the reason for the positive assessment of good qualities of the minority of Christians because other data (persona interviews from Buddhists and Christians) mostly suggests for the negative sides contributing barriers.

On the positive responses from Christian Questionnaires, most respondents admit that they believe that conversion for Burmans is God's will (72 out of 80 Christians) and they are praying about their conversions (70 out of 80 Christians). Christian respondents 68 out of 80 claim to invite Burman friends to church or Christian events, 60 out of 80 claim to share the gospel with Burmans and 46 out of 80 tends to develop friendships with Burmans. The positive side of Christian

responses and the positive side of Burman responses are not really in stark contrary to the negative side of both sides' responses. But these positive responses from each side could be understood as an encouragement and hope for the conversions of more Burmans in the future if Christians persist in the good things they are doing and correct the non-effective methods they have used. The positive responses indicate that the mission situation in Burma is not absolutely hopeless, but it motivates that there is still hope and God will work through the willing obedient servants who utilize biblically sound and culturally relevant methods.

b) Testimonial Data Analysis and Interpretation

The testimonial data is collected from 13 individuals with a Burman Buddhist background. In all of the 13 cases, all respondents experienced some kind of crisis in their lives. The crisis ranged from intense sickness, nightmare, fear, crying, and acute pain to accidents, social pressing needs, and personal needs. In all of the instances, every convert had a personal encounter with one or more Christians at some crisis-point in their lives. Most of these people met Christians after the age of twenty, at and after marriage and around at the age of 30+ with one person after retirement. All of the informants except one (who did not mention any prayer) prayed to God specifically for their pertinent crisis and God answered all of them.

More than fifty percent of the respondents testified that their answered prayers for their critical needs, offered to God as a test for God's existence and power, are the dependent variables for their conversion to Christianity. All but one experienced some sort of divine revelations and miracles such as dream, vision, healing, ability to read instantly, deliverance and peace. All but one expressed emotions related to God's miracles and their crisis in the form of love, joy, peace, freedom, deliverance,

rejoicing, happiness, and even crying. Out of the 13 people, only 3 respondents were able to quote specific verses related to their conversion while the rest of them --- except one who was converted through reading the Bible--do not mention specific verses of the Bible. At least 11 participants had encounters with ministers or evangelists in the process of their conversion along with other lay Christians.

Four respondents mentioned severe reactions from their immediate family members as a result of their conversion. This is a very common reaction for new converts in Burma. The failure of all but four to mention family reaction could be due to unpaid attention to this issue at the time of writing their testimonies or less severe reactions from the family. All 13 cases indicate that conversion is a process and it is a very slow process especially for Burman Buddhists.

Some important incidents stand out as missiological issues which need attention. One is the time of exposure respondents have with Christians, which is after the age of twenty. These late exposures suggest a few things. It is a non-free society where children and young people are controlled and monitored by their parents, elders, and monks in the society. On the other hand, it could be assumed that Christians have not tried or found ways to reach people under the age of twenty. One is a situational barrier and the other is a methodological barrier.

c) Interview Data Analysis and Interpretation

In the process of the research project, three groups of people are interviewed separately: 13 Buddhists, 23 Buddhist-Christian converts, and 6 Christian ministers serving among the Burman Buddhists. The interviews were transcribed and translated at the same time. I replayed the recorded interviews, transcribed, and translated them as the interview was being played. After this process, I separated the three different

interview groups into three different categories, namely, Interview Evaluation for Buddhists, Interview Evaluation for Buddhist-Christian Converts, and Interview Evaluation for Christian Ministers Among Buddhists.

Each of these interview groups were evaluated in different columns with different titles and themes. First, the Interview Evaluation for Buddhists was divided into four columns respectively: Attractions, Barriers, Means-Methods, and Themes-Quotes-Questions (See Appendixes: A, C, D, E, L, and M). Second, the Interview Evaluation for Buddhist-Christian Converts consists of Attractions, Crisis-Test, Barriers, Methods, and Themes-Quotes (See Appendixes: B, G, H, I, J, K, and N). Third, the Interview Evaluation for Christian Ministers among Buddhists included Barriers, Assets and Attitudes, Methods, and Quotes and Odds and Ends. This stage was still an initial stage of raw data analysis with groupings and labeling. The next stage of analysis was the process of dividing different themes into various categorical barriers. These barriers are: Ethnic Identity Barriers, Cultural Barriers, Attachment Barriers, Phobic Barriers, Moral-Ethical Barriers and Methodological Barriers. These categorical barriers were divided into two major barriers consisting of Burman Buddhist Barriers (Burman Buddhist Indigenous Barriers) and Myanmar Christian Barriers (Myanmar Christians Missional Barriers).

Chapter VII

Division of Barriers Based on Research Findings

The two major types of barriers are outlined in the followings: Burman Buddhist Barriers to becoming Christians and Myanmar Christian Barriers to witnessing to Burman Buddhists.

A. Burman Buddhist Barriers (Indigenous Barriers) [*Myanmar Buddha Bata Ahan-ataa mya* - မြန်မာဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာဝင် အဟန့်အတားများ]

A socio-centric person is one who is holistic or other-oriented as opposed to one who is individualistic or self-oriented. A holistic person does not exist alone or separate from the community, society, or clan in which he/she belongs as a member of that group. A socio-centric person lives, thinks, behaves, and speaks within the social context she/he is a part of, and the social situations and interactions take place with reference to that group the person belongs.²⁴² Burma is a socio-centric society. Thus, Burmans operate their daily lives in the socio-centric realm. Missionaries in Burma must be aware of the socio-centric contexts in which the Burmans conduct their daily chores. Based on the research findings, identifiable potential indigenous barriers are outlined as follows.

1. Attachment Barriers [*Sweilaan Hmuh Ahan 'ataa mya*—စွဲလန်းမှုအဟန့်အတားများ]

John Bowlby is the founder of the 'attachment theory' which he published in 1969.²⁴³ Bowlby describes his theory in these words:

²⁴²Richard H. Robbins, *Cultural Anthropology: A Problem-Based Approach*. 4th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2006), 198-99.

²⁴³J. Bowlby, *Attachment and loss*, vol 1 (New York: Basic Books), 1969.

[M]any of the most intense emotions arise during the formation, the maintenance, the disruption and the renewal of attachment relationships. The formation of a bond is described as falling in love, maintaining a bond as loving someone, and losing a partner as grieving over someone. Similarly, threat of loss arouses anxiety and actual loss gives rise to sorrow while each of these situations is likely to arouse anger. The unchallenged maintenance of a bond is experienced as a source of security and the renewal of a bond as a source of joy.²⁴⁴

Attachment theory is further explained by Kirpatrick²⁴⁵ in terms of paternal bonding relationship between a child and a parent figure. Attachment theory is also used to explain the emotional-bonding relationship between God (who is labelled as ‘attachment figure’) and His worshiper(s).²⁴⁶ The word, ‘religion,’ according to Fern, originally comes from the Latin term *religare*, meaning ‘being bound’ or *relegare*, meaning ‘gather together.’²⁴⁷ In any religion, there exists an emotional bonding between the worshipers and the object(s) or person(s) of worship. This is also true for Burman Buddhists as is evident in the following cases:

- a) Attachment to Buddha, his Teaching and Buddhist Lay theology [Bodah Taya Tontinchin neh Bodah Tapehdaw Taya Sweilan-hmuh -ဗုဒ္ဓတရား သွန်သင်ခြင်းနှင့် ဗုဒ္ဓဝင်တပည့်တော်တရား စွဲလန်းမှု]²⁴⁸

The Buddhist children are taught Buddhist scriptures as soon as they are able to read and write. The children hear, watch, and imitate their parents’ recitation of Buddha’s scriptures in their childhood. The monks teach children the Buddha’s ways at the monasteries. The Buddhist boys learn the scriptures during the Shinpyu

²⁴⁴ _____. *Attachment and loss*, vol. 2 (New York: Basic Books), 1980, 40.

²⁴⁵ Lee A. Kirkpatrick, *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion* (New York: Guilford Press, 2005), 31-36.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 52-53.

²⁴⁷ V. Fern, *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (Secaucus, NJ: Poplar, 1945); quoted by Kirkpatrick, 2005.

²⁴⁸ Buddhist Lay Theology means what an average Burman Buddhist knows and believes about Buddhism.

initiation ceremony, which could last from one week to four weeks or more depending on the parents and the sponsor's consensus along with the monks' advice. Therefore, attachment to Buddha's scripture is so strong that an interviewee (a strong Christian now) admitted the temptations and incidents of spewing the Buddha's scripture out of his mouth accidentally in the earlier months of his conversion.²⁴⁹

Buddhists are also very much attached to their lay theology. A Buddhist respondent says, "Buddha's teaching is simpler to follow: If you do good, you will get benefits; if you do bad, you will reap the consequences."²⁵⁰ *Kan* is a concept that permeates Buddhist's mind and society. As the Buddhist saying goes, "Kan is the mother, kan is the father, kan is our only true possession."²⁵¹ The most common response Buddhists give to religious discussion is, "All religions are the same."²⁵² Others say, "I read the Bible and Buddha's Scripture and found that both scriptures are good."²⁵³ A monk referring to Jesus says, "Good teaching is good for any one...it does not matter who gave it."²⁵⁴ This is the Buddhist lay theology they are clinging to as an attachment to their soul and life. They really have a hard time accepting "Salvation by grace" and, therefore, are strongly clinging to their "Kan Doctrine" which emphasizes doing good as the way to *nirvana*.

²⁴⁹ Soe Win, interview by author, Albany, NY, November 28, 2008.

²⁵⁰ Tun Tun, interview by author. Columbus, OH, November 8.

²⁵¹ Yin, *Culture Shock*, 2007, 32.

²⁵² Tun, Tun. 2008. interview by author. Lexington, KY, November 16.

²⁵³ Saw Myo Tanh, interview by author, Columbus, OH, November 11, 2008 and Tun Tun, interview by author. Columbus, OH, November 8.

²⁵⁴ Monk Kheminda, interview by author, Buffalo, July 17, 2008.

b) Attachment to *Nat* and Cultic practices [*Nat kookwei chiin neh athetlan auhlan laihsaachin Sweilan-hmuh*- နတ်ကိုးကွယ်ခြင်းနှင့် အထက်လမ်း/အောက်လမ်းလိုက်စားခြင်းစွဲလန်းမှု]

The Burman Buddhists' attachment to the *nats* is so prevalent that a Burman writer Maung Htin Aung notes, "*Nat* worship is part of the Buddhist faith and the Burmese (Burman) want to worship *nats* without ceasing to be good Buddhists."²⁵⁵ The common emotional attachment of *nat* worship is so strong that Clasper mentions the informal methodological classification of Buddhism in Burma as "one part Buddhism and four parts 'spirit worship'" and he continues by quoting the old saying, "the Burman loves the Buddha but fears the 'nats' (spirits)."²⁵⁶ A Buddhist monk himself admits that most Burman Buddhists have strong attachment to *nat* worship.²⁵⁷

c) Attachment to Parental Upbringing [*Miibah Napaa Tontin-hmuh Sweilan Chin* - မိဘနှစ်ပါး သွန်သင်မှု စွဲလန်းခြင်း]

Parents play a significant role in Burman Buddhist culture and religion. Parents are listed as one of the five most important Buddhist essentials. Children bow at least two times daily (getting up in the morning and evening before bed) before their parents. One interviewee admits the significance of parents, "Parents are the most important people."²⁵⁸ Most of the interviewees admit that they become Buddhist because of their parents, and it is so hard to go against the will of their parents in converting to other religions. One respondent emphasizing the importance and

²⁵⁵ Aung, *Folk Elements*, 73-75.

²⁵⁶ Paul D. Clasper, "The Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Burma," *Review & Expositor* 58, no. 1 (Jan 1961): 35-49.

²⁵⁷ Monk Kheinda, interview by author, Buffalo, July 17, 2008.

²⁵⁸ Taakyi, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 10, 2008.

attachment to parental upbringing says, “If I were adopted by Christian parents right after my birth, I would have become a Christian.”²⁵⁹ Another interviewee admits his dilemma between two choices of religions and says, “I really like Christianity, but I cannot convert right now because if I do, I [his brother is a Christian now] would be unfaithful to my mother’s upbringing who breastfed me as she hummed and recited Buddha’s scripture over me.”²⁶⁰ Derrick speaking of his struggle and attachment to his mother says, “I cannot convert my mother and I cannot leave my mother alone.”²⁶¹ Undoubtedly Buddhists from Burma have a strong attachment to their parents which keep them from converting to other religions.

d). Attachment to Close-Knit Community (*Socio-Emotional Attachment*)

[*Atai-awei neh hthit tawiahchiin Sweilan-hmuh*-အသိုင်းအဝန်းနှင့် ထိတွေ့ခြင်း စွဲလန်းမှု]

Burman society is a very close-knit community where every individual is related to and interacts with the family, the relatives, and the surrounding community in so many social and concrete ways. A monk participant confesses that the difficulty of Burmans to change their religion is based on the “influence of the surrounding community, complacency or comfortability of self in one’s own religious, cultural, communal setting.”²⁶² Therefore, Burman Buddhists are so attached to their community that whatever decisions they have to make (e.g. conversion) are communal-conscious decisions. Before they make any major decision, they have to think how the family and community would react to it and what kinds of good and bad consequences the decision would entail. A Buddhist admits his dilemma as this,

²⁵⁹Saw Myo Tanh, interview by author, Columbus, OH, November 11, 2008.

²⁶⁰Myat Soe, interview by author, Silver Spring, December 23, 2008.

²⁶¹Myat Soe, interview by author, Silver Spring, December 23, 2008.

²⁶²Monk Kheminda, interview by author, Buffalo, July 17, 2008.

“Not that I am not interested in Christianity but [I could not decide it on my own] my wife has not come here [USA] at the time”²⁶³ Speaking of the dilemma after his wife’s arrival in the United States he says, “My wife told me ‘our family had followed this tradition and we have to stick with it.’”²⁶⁴ This is the kind of social thread of relationships in which Burmans find it hard to make decisions easily. This is one of the barriers in the process of one’s conversion to Christianity.

e). Attachment to syncretistic multiple religious belongings

[*Suhpawng myapia daw Barta-kyinh'tayar Sweilan-hmuh* —စုပေါင်းမျိုးပြားသော ဘာသာအကျင့်တရား စွဲလန်းမှု]

Buddhists in Burma are strongly attached to different kinds of superstitions which dominate their society and its environments. Attachment to dual religions (syncretism) is a very common concept among them, “Can I, as a Buddhist, follow Buddhism and Christianity at the same time?” A Buddhist who is married to a Christian wife says, “I read the Bible and Buddha’s Scripture and found that both scriptures are good; I think Jesus and Buddha would recognize the good thing I do.”²⁶⁵ No doubt, it is not difficult to see how they are so attached to their own religion, but it is evident that they are somewhat attached to other religion as well. This is what Buddhism is all about, being open to inclusivism as it is clear that Buddhism in Burma allows spiritism (*nat* worship), and cult practices (black and white magic, witchcraft and other practices such as palm reading, fortune telling, and alchemy) in addition to Theravada Buddhism.

²⁶³Tun Tun, interview by author, Lexington, KY, November 16, 2008.

²⁶⁴Ibid.

²⁶⁵Tun Tun, interview by author, Columbus, OH, November 8, 2008.

2. Ethnic Identity Barrier [*Lu-myoo chiana-hmuh Ahan-ataa* –လူမျိုးခြားနားမှု အဟန့်အတား]

a) Cultural-Religious Barriers [*Burman-ness=Buddhish-ness*] [*Bartaryii yinkyemuh ahan-ataa-mya* –ဘာသာရေးယဉ်ကျေးမှု အဟန့်အတားများ]

The inseparableness of Burman culture and Burman Buddhism (religio-cultural solidarity) is the hardest barrier to overcome in the process of conversion. One of the participants who is a minister working among the Burman says, “They assume Buddhism is their custom or culture, and therefore they find it very hard to abandon their culture.”²⁶⁶ The core concept of “To be Burmese is to be Buddhists” is ingrained in the mind of the Burmans since their childhood and youth through parental instructions and examples at home, monastic instructions at monasteries, history books in grade schools, and the successive governments which advocate this agenda as they try to promote their own philosophical political agenda. This concept of the religio-cultural solidarity has been an issue since the time of the initial encounter between Christianity and Buddhism. Myit Soe frankly asserts, “The concept of ‘To be Burmese is to be Buddhist’ is a political statement.”²⁶⁷ Tun Tun admits his attachment to Burman identity, “I will always be a Burman even if I become a US citizen or a Christian.”²⁶⁸ Each side has its own proponents concerning this concept about “Being a Burman is being a Buddhist.” Buddhist writer Saw Myat Yin admits that “being a Myanmar is synonymous with being a Buddhist” is a common saying, and she further clarifies this as she writes, “[Myanmar Buddhists] tend to think of their identity in terms of religion first.”²⁶⁹ Burmans do not want to

²⁶⁶ Abraham, interview by author, Fort Wayne, IN, November 21, 2008.

²⁶⁷ Myit Soe, interview by author, Silver Spring, December 23, 2008.

²⁶⁸ Tun Tun, interview by author, Lexington, KY, November 16, 2008.

²⁶⁹ Yin, *Culture Shock*, 2007, 31.

admit that they have this concept in their mind. They just shift the blame to the government, the uneducated people, and rural inhabitants. Unfortunately, it is evidently clear that this concept of religio-cultural solidarity of the inseparableness of Buddhism and Burmanism still exists in the mind of most Burmans and it is, therefore a strong barrier for their conversion to another religion.

b) Ethnic Conflict Barrier [*Lumyuu sentkyinmuh ahanata* – လူမှုဆန့်ကျင်မှုအဟန့်အတား]

The ethnic conflicts between the Burman majority and the ethnic minorities have existed since the beginning of Burmese history. The Burmans overpowerd the Mons and incorporated them into the Burman race against their will. The other ethnic minorities still exist as distinct groups. British government is also partly responsible for the ethnic conflicts between the minority groups and the majority groups (along with the Burmese government) in Burma. The animosity between the Burmans and the Karens has continued after the Independence to the present partly due to favors given to ethnic minorities, especially the Karens and other minorities, by the colonialists in giving civil service and military positions to the exclusion of Burmans and the minorities' struggles for claiming independent states. U Kyaw Than, quoted by Anderson, also accuses British colonialism as a contributing factor in ethnic conflicts in Burma: "... the separate treatment of certain communities [by the British colonialists] perpetuated the psychological and cultural distances already existing between the various groups... In the eyes of nationalists, particularly Buddhists, the church was associated with those forces which generated hindrances to the

unifications of the country or to the integration of ethnic and frontier communities within the mainstream of Burmese national life.”²⁷⁰

The relationship between Karens (the first Christian group in Burma) and Burmans (the majority population following Buddhism) plays a major role in the relationship between Buddhism and Christianity in Burma, since Karens were the first adherents of Christianity from foreigners (westerners). Now the relationship is more complicated by the other minorities converting to and associating with Christianity. Thus, to the eyes of the older Burman generation, Christianity is an ethnic religion. This research indicates that the concept of Christianity as an ethnic religion is stronger than that of Christianity as a foreign religion probably due to the time span difference from colonial era to the present era. The interactions and experiences of the younger Burman Buddhists are more realistic in the present with ethnic Christians in Burma than the bad memories of the older Burman generations about the colonialists in the past. The younger generation expresses milder feelings against the colonialists than the older generation who went through the colonial period themselves.

c) Majority-Dominant Attitude Barrier [Lumyo-gyi Luanmoechiin Ahanataa - လူမျိုးကြီးလွှမ်းမိုးခြင်း အဟန့်အတား]

When the presenters of the new movement or religion are from the minority group, it is difficult to diffuse easily. Burman Buddhists relate to the difficulties and wisely observe the comparison between Buddhism in Burma and Christianity in America this way: “Just as it was hard for the majority Burmans to become Christians, it is also hard for the majority American to become Buddhists in the

²⁷⁰ Anderson, Gerald H., ed. *Asian Voices in Christian Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1976.

States.”²⁷¹ A Burman Monk similarly says, “Just as there are many churches in the United States, so are many pagodas in Burma.”²⁷² Even from a Christian perspective, Pastor Abraham admits, “Minority status to majority status mission is difficult because they look down upon us.”²⁷³ This is undeniably clear that majority dominant spirit is a strong barrier for Buddhists to convert to Christianity.

Additionally, Buddhists generally have a strong negative attitude toward Christians and Christianity. Some of the Buddhist attitudes are expressed vividly in the interviews: “Burmans think that ethnic people are incomplete people because they are minority and worshipers of *nats*. That’s why it is hard from Buddhist perspective to accept religion presented from a minority ethnic group.”²⁷⁴ This statement was made by a convert from Buddhism to Christianity. Bo Ye honestly criticizes Christianity in front of a Christian group during an interview by saying that Missionaries could easily gained converts from the ethnic people because they gave chocolates to organize [siizone] the ethnic groups.”²⁷⁵ Most of the interviewee Burman Buddhists who live in the United States seems to have a more positive attitude toward Christianity than Buddhists in Myanmar. For example, two of the Burman interviewees expressed that they have many positive things to say about Christianity. Tun Tun is very impressed with Christianity and even considered converting to Christianity, but his wife told him to keep his parent’s religion.²⁷⁶ Myant Soe whose brother is now a Christian shares many positive feelings about

²⁷¹Tun Tun, interview by author, Lexington, KY, November 16, 2008.

²⁷²Monk Md, interview by author, Silver Spring, MD, August 10, 2009.

²⁷³Abraham, interview by author, Fort Wayne, IN, November 21, 2008.

²⁷⁴ Myit Soe, interview by author, Silver Spring, December 23, 2008.

²⁷⁵ Bo Ye, interview by author, New York, NY, January 3, 2009.

²⁷⁶Tun Tun, interview by author, Lexington, KY, November 16, 2008.

Christianity, but he could not desert Buddhism in honor of his mother who brought him up with Buddha's teachings and prayers.²⁷⁷

Another Buddhist expresses his attitude in these descriptive words:

“[Christians are] fear-motivated, looking down on other people and their religions [making people resentful], converting others, using material resources to convert others, bias against other people's personal beliefs, depending too much on pastors and doing too little on their own, too confrontational messages, failures to relate with people of all backgrounds and lack of proof of evidence.”²⁷⁸ Since these kinds of negative attitude toward Christians exist among Burman Buddhists, they become causal barriers in reaching them with the gospel.

3. **The Alien Religion Barriers** [*Tachiadaw Bata Ahan'ataa mya* တခြားသောဘာသာ အဟန့်အတားများ]

a) Foreign Religion Barrier [*Taitaba barta Ahanatamyar*–တိုင်းတပါးဘာသာ အဟန့်အတားများ]

As a result of colonial invasion, nationalistic sentiment²⁷⁹ has been the major contributor to the slow progress of Christianity in Burma. Nationalistic movements have expressed themselves in many shapes and forms as noted earlier in this works. This patriotic and nationalistic spirit still lingers in the mind and blood of the older generation, and this becomes a very strong barrier for the Burman Buddhist to be even open to the possibility of interest in and discussion about Christianity, which most of them still assume as a foreign religion.

²⁷⁷Myat Soe, interview by author, Silver Spring, December 23, 2008.

²⁷⁸ Derrick, interview by author, Tyson Corner, VA, July 29, 2009.

²⁷⁹This could be labeled as one of the barriers but it is subsumed under foreign religion barrier since it is related to it.

Through his personal interaction with a Burmese Buddhist host and another Buddhist visitor at the host house, Clasper concludes that Burmese Buddhists believe that Christianity is the religion of foreigners or other ethnic people when his Buddhist host says to another Burmese, "Christianity was the religion of Americans and Karens."²⁸⁰ Christian activity is interpreted as the residue of the colonial expansion, and adherence to Christian faith is seen as "allegiance to a foreign faith," making it difficult for Christians to assimilate to Burman Buddhist culture.²⁸¹ With reference to racial and western dominion, Hendrick Kraemer notes, "To the economic and political 'invasion' they had to submit, but in the cultural and spiritual sphere they could resist, but were deeply wounded by the pretension of racial and cultural superiority made by the white domination. Christian missions were looked upon as part of this western 'invasion' of their cultural and spiritual realm; and there were many reasons for this being so."²⁸²

A participant concludes that the concept of Christianity being viewed as a foreign religion has to do with the older generation as she observes, "Only older people assume Christianity as a foreign religion."²⁸³ Two other interviewees argue that the notion of foreign or ethnic religion has to do with one's knowledge, "Only the uninformed people would say that Burmans become Chins because of conversion to their religion."²⁸⁴ This is an acceptable opinion, but the younger generation and the

²⁸⁰Clasper, "Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Burma," 42.

²⁸¹Ibid., 44.

²⁸²Hendrik Kraemer, *Religion and the Christian Faith* (Cambridge: James Clarke Lutterworth, 2002), 26.

²⁸³Mi Mi, interview by author, Lexington, KY, November 15, 2008.

educated ones also have more or less their share of the blame in holding the same opinion.

The stink of colonial stigma makes it harder for the older generation in Burma to accept a religion which has a colonial taste, smell, and form. In the eyes of older Burmans, Christianity is the religion of the western colonialists, and they are not attracted to it at all, because of the bad experiences, unforgettable memories, and unforgiving spirits about the western invasion, and the occupation which interrupted their social lives, economic and religious stability, and their development and golden era of Burman Kingdoms.

b) Ethnic Religion Barrier²⁸⁵ [*Taiyintarbarta Ahanatamyar*-တိုင်းရင်းသား ဘာသာအဟန့်အတားများ]

Besides Christianity being viewed as a foreign religion (the other outsider religion), most Buddhists who encounter Christianity through an ethnic person assume that Christianity is the religion of an ethnic group (the other ethnic religion or the other insider religion), whether it is Karen, Kachin, or Chin. The new Burman converts to Christianity are accused of becoming the “ethnic others” [e.g. “ethnic Chin,” “ethnic Karen,” “ethnic Kachin”] to whoever group Christianity is associated

²⁸⁴San Htud, interview by author, Lexington, KY, November 15, 2008 and Tun Tun, interview by author, Columbus, OH, November 8, 2008.

²⁸⁵A word of clarification is necessary here with reference to the seemingly overlapping barriers. For example, ethnic religion barrier can go under ethnic identity barriers because ethnicity in some ways is inseparable from religion. However, the focus here is that the classifications are done based on social-ethnic aspects and religious aspects and therefore, the religious barriers and ethnic barriers are classified differently even though they are interrelated. Since all of the barriers listed in this work are somewhat related to each other either directly or indirectly, classifications of barrier are a big challenge. Different people might classify them differently depending on their worldview lenses. The task is almost like the possibilities of slicing a pie into different forms and shapes but the taste, smell, and texture are still the same in its original pie while different people may make different comments based on their feelings, moods, likes, and dislikes. Similarly, people may differ in their classifications of the barrier here, but the individual barriers are as real whether they are listed under one or the other heading and the barriers taken together as a whole still contribute to the slow progress of mission work in Burma.

with. An interviewee says, “Burman converts cannot be called authentic Burman anymore.”²⁸⁶ The negative view of Christianity being associated with ethnic identity (Karen, Chin, Kachin) is less common among younger generation Burmans and those Burmans who live abroad because their narrow view of Christianity has been broadened as they have become more exposed to Christianity outside of Burma and through books, media and internet. Most Burman interviewees from the United States do not consider Christianity as an ethnic religion any more.

4. Fear Related Barriers²⁸⁷ [*Kyaukyon-chin Saiyar Ahanataamya* – ကြောက်ရွံ့ခြင်း ဆိုင်ရာ အဟန့်အသားများ]

Fear is a major barrier for Burmans to convert to Christianity. The Burman people experience all kinds of fear. They are very conscious of issues, relationships, and societies around them, and these things are strong barrier-contributors to the success of Christianity in Burma. The kinds of fear Burmans experience in reference to their conversion are outlined as follows:

a) Fear of persecution [*Nyinpaan-neihsetchiin kyaukyon-hmuh-* ညှဉ်းပန်း နှိပ်စက်ခြင်း ကြောက်ရွံ့မှု.]

New Christian women and children converts in the outskirts of Yangon city pretended to go shopping on Sunday when they went to church to worship in order to avoid persecutions from their employees and husbands.²⁸⁸ More than half of the

²⁸⁶ Mi Mi, interview by author, Lexington, KY, November 15, 2008.

²⁸⁷ The numbers of fear lists and the barriers lists in general might overwhelm the readers, but they are very important to this research because they are directly related to the Dissertation Topic. The categorizations of the barriers might very much look like random shopping lists people carry on their shopping cards in Wal-Mart, but each category is important in its own contribution to the research and to the mission work among the Buddhists. The clearer and the more specified the barriers, the better in assessing the slow progress of mission work and improving specific areas of approaches for the furtherance of the gospel among Buddhists and even in many parts of the world.

²⁸⁸ Conversion with author, Yangon, Burma, August, 2007.

interviewees mentioned some kinds of fear associated with their family and surrounding community. Fear of persecution can be expressed in three different ways.

First, fear of ridicule (*Laungpyaungkehyeh-chiin kyuaqyon-hmuh*-လောင်ပြောင်ကဲ့ရဲ့ခြင်း ကြောက်ရွံ့မှု) is one kind of social, emotional persecutions Burman converts experience. Burmans have a really hard time converting to Christianity because they are afraid of their friends' and relatives' ridicule if they do convert. Burmans would ridicule the new converts as following the western ways or becoming an ethnic other, whether it is Karen, Kachin, or Chin. Another way they would ridicule is to label the new converts as dollar follower or money driven believer. A good number of convert interviewees admits that they have been ridiculed as following their wife's religion, becoming an ethnic other supposing that he/she has abandoned his/her own Burman culture, and tradition and has followed the other's traditions and thus has become one of them.²⁸⁹

Second, fear of criticism (*Weiphan-pyawso- chiin kyuaqyon-hmuh*- ဝေဖန်ပြောဆိုခြင်း ကြောက်ရွံ့မှု). Fear of criticism is similar to fear of ridicule, but their fear of criticism is more intense than their fear of ridicule. It is one of the hardest emotional pains they can experience in Burman society. As Yin affirms, “[C]riticism is nearly always taken as a personal insult.”²⁹⁰ When someone is criticized for being a new convert to other religion, he/she is automatically removed from social engagements and interactions with the Burman community in most cases. Criticism of the new convert will float around behind his/her back and even in his/her face at times. For

²⁸⁹Soe Win, interview by author, Albany, NY, November 28, 2008 and Kaung Yan, interview by author, Albany, NY, November 29, 2008.

²⁹⁰Yin, *Cultural Shock*, 2007, 40.

this reason, many Buddhists who admire Christianity and Christians dare not convert to Christianity.

Third, fear of ostracism (*Sonpe-khanya-hmuh kyuaqyon-chin* - စွန့်ပစ်ခံရမှုကို ကြောက်ရွံ့ခြင်း). This is the abandonment and separation by the immediate family due to one's conversion to Christianity. Fear of social pressures from the Buddhist community is a very strong contributor to Christians' failure to succeed in a Buddhist country like Burma. Many of the interviewees have experienced severe kinds of ostracism from those they love dearly. A professional lady convert was ostracized for five straight years by her own family until the birth of her new born baby with her Christian husband.²⁹¹

b) Fear of nats and witches [*Nat neh Sone-ma pyauhsar-chiin chiin kyuaqyon-hmuh*-နတ် နှင့် စုန်းမ ပြုစားခြင်း ကြောက်ရွံ့မှု]

In the situation of Burmans, it would be their fear of *nats*, especially fear of their revenge if they do not and are not able to appease them by offering flowers, food, and fruits to the *nat* shrine or at the base of pagodas. If their children get sick, most Buddhist parents would immediately blame *nat* for the harms and afflictions. When Burman Buddhists are contemplating converting to Christianity, this is one of the issues with which they grapple. Thus, this fear is a barrier to their conversions.

Fear of witches and witchcraft (*Sone-ma neh pyauhsar chiin co kyuaqyon*'hmuh-စုန်းမနှင့်ပြုစားခြင်းကိုကြောက်ရွံ့မှု) is closely related to the fear of demons or *nats* in Burma. Burmans follow and worship Buddha for their next life leading to nirvana, while they follow and appease nats and witches for their immediate needs and crisis. A person who does not get along with his neighbor or friend will be bewitched by a

²⁹¹Sandar, interview by author, Washington D.C, June 29, 2009.

witch doctor at the request of an unhappy friend or neighbor. There are people who would go to witch doctors for sickness, lost properties, and other crises in their lives that require answers and resolutions. These kinds of people are so attached to their witch out of fear that the witch will take revenge on them if they break relationship with the witch by withdrawing their support or their regular dependence on its treatments. A concrete biblical example of this kind of incident is found in the book of Acts Chapter Eight where Peter and John encountered Simon the sorcerer who deceived the people. This is a common fear among the villagers in Burman, and this is a great barrier to ministry.

c) Fear of making decisions [*Songphiatchet chiahbuh kyuaryon-chiin-*
ဆုံးဖြတ်ချက်ချဖို့ကြောက်ရွံ့ခြင်း]

Burmans naturally find it difficult to make decisions. As it is evident in the previous classification of barriers, Yin reveals the difficulty of even grown up children to make their own decision because parents are “making or trying to make their decisions for them even as adults.”²⁹² It involves more than one person and more than one issue at hand whenever they are in the situation of making important decisions. The issues involved in making decision are attachments, fears, social relationships and government. Missionaries and ministers among the Burman Buddhists are not aware of these clusters of issues surrounded around making decision in Burman society and this has become a real big barrier in promoting Christianity in Burma.

There are different reasons which contribute to Bumans’ fear of making decisions. Fear of strict rules and regulations (*Siimyin Upadi kyuaryon-hmuh*-စည်းမျဉ်း

²⁹²Yin, *Culture Shock*, 2007, 37.

ဥပဒေကြောက်ရွံ့မှု) is one reason why Burmans experience difficulty in making decision about conversion. Although Buddhist theology teaches strict adherence to disciplines, meditations, and Buddha's ways filled with rules and regulations, these rules are practically applicable to the monks and the few devout Buddhists.²⁹³ The rest of the mass Buddhists roam around freely in the name of Buddhism without strictly following the rules and regulations imposed to them by their religious teachings. Therefore, they are afraid of Christianity which, they think, imposes too many rules and regulations on followers of the religion.

Fear of changes to official doctrine or of radical deviation (*Tontinchet-tayaa Sonlohuh kyuaqyon-hmuh* -သွန်သင်ချက်တရား စွန့်လွှတ်ဖို့ကြောက်ရွံ့မှု) is also a decision making barrier for Burmans. Changing from the old ways or old traditions to the new ones is a very hard decision for most Burmans to make because they prefer to stick to the old ways, no matter what the new innovations might bring. Saw says, "We feel that we commit sin ... we are brainwashed ... and so we feel like we will go to hell if we change our religion."²⁹⁴ One Buddhist monk defends Buddhism thus, "We have our great and noble religion, why would we want to adopt your new religion which has little to offer to our already established religion."²⁹⁵

Fear of new things or ideas (*Atit lee-poh kyuaqyon-hmuh*-အသစ်လဲဖို့ ကြောက်ရွံ့မှု) is not as strong as the other ones, but it still is an undeniable issue among the Burmans. It is part of the ancient Asian cultural makeup which has a tendency to be fearful of new things and unfamiliar ideas or concepts. To most Asian minds, the old and original is the best and the new idea or thing is not as good as the old and original one.

²⁹³Unfortunately, the same is more or less true for Christians and other religions as well.

²⁹⁴Saw, interview by author, Fort Lauderdale, FL, November 28, 2008.

²⁹⁵Rakhine Monk, dialogue with author, Louisville, KY, 2006.

Therefore, Burmans have this fear of the new and foreign Christian religion, and they have found it very difficult to accept because it is a new thing, a new religion, or a new idea rather than the old, original, or familiar religion. Most Burmans think that Buddhism originated from Burma and, thus, belongs to Burma preserved and set apart in the pristine form of Theravada Buddhism (www.nibbana.com).

d) Fear of strangers or foreigners [*Taitapa kyuaqyon-hmuh*- တိုင်းတပါး ကြောက်ရွံ့မှု.]

Fear of strange people is not uncommon to most people in the world. This is so prevalent among the Burmans due to the foreign invasion and occupation of Burma, which lasted from 1824 to 1848. Since Burma has been a “closed country” since the 1960s, “a whole generation of Myanmar people has reached its mid-twenties without having set eyes on many foreigners or had any interaction with them” except “from television, translated books or magazine articles.”²⁹⁶ Fear of foreigners is not limited to the people in Burma. It is also experienced among the Burman refugees in the United States. An American minister went to visit Burman refugees in Ohio to help them with their social needs but as soon as the Burman people saw the American, they started blaming the person who brought in the foreigner. After careful explanation of how the American pastor had helped Burman refugees with their paper work, they were able to ease their tension against the foreign intruder.²⁹⁷ Therefore, fear of foreigners is a real issue, especially among the older generation and the rural outskirt areas of Burma. The strange experience and unhealthy attitude toward foreigners will eventually change “as the number of Myanmar going abroad grows

²⁹⁶Yin, *Cultural Shock*, 2007, 56.

²⁹⁷James, interview by author, Fort Wayne, IN, November 22, 2008.

and the number of visitors to Myanmar does likewise.”²⁹⁸ Fear of foreigners is a different form of anti-foreignerism.

e) Fear of Chistianness [Khrityan Ahmuh Kyauk-yon chin-ခရစ်ယာန်အမှု ကြောက်ရွံ့ခြင်း]

When Buddhists think about Christians, they associate them with the church. First of all, fear of church (*Payakyang kyaukyon-hmuh*-ဘုရားကျောင်း ကြောက်ရွံ့ခြင်း) is related to the fear of regulations. When the Buddhists think of the church, they imagine strict rules of conduct and morality, rigid demand of giving (e.g. tithe), and unceasing activities and services at the church and at homes. At least two interviewees (Burman Buddhists) share their honest criticism against Christians as having too many activities and too overwhelming meetings and services.²⁹⁹

Fear of Christian(s) (*Khrityan-myaa-kyaukyon-hmuh*-ခရစ်ယာန်များ ကြောက်ရွံ့မှု) is similar to fear of church in that Burmans do not like Christians going around door to door to sell books and other religious stuffs, putting imposition and pressure on Burmans to buy their religious stuffs. Jehovah’s Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists are good examples of this kind of approach. To the minds and eyes of Buddhists, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists are Christians like the rest of the Protestant Christians. A Burman convert speaks to the Christian approach before her conversion this way: “Christians sold books...and asked for money for building church ... etc...”³⁰⁰ She even says that Buddhists are afraid of being asked

²⁹⁸Ibid.

²⁹⁹Derrick, interview by author, Tyson Corner, VA, July 29, 2009 and Bo Ye, interview by author, New York, NY, January 3, 2009.

³⁰⁰Saw, interview by author, Fort Lauderdale, FL, November 28, 2008.

for money or to buy books. Because of these kinds of approaches, Burman Buddhists often shun Christians as much as possible.

Fear of sermons (*Tayar Haw kyua kyon-hmuh*-တရားဟော ကြောက်ရွံ့မှု) is another barrier related to fear of church and fear of Christians. Buddhists do not like sermons targeting them as idol worshipers and hopeless people heading to eternal hell or sermons with critical contents about Buddhism and Buddhists themselves. According to a participant (Burman convert), preaching is proselytizing.³⁰¹ Buddhists generally like singing and friendships of Christians, but they do not like to listen to sermons, especially those that target them as an outsider. One Burman convert, who knows very well about the Burman mindset, attitudes and feelings about preaching and sermons, suggests inviting Buddhist folks with a clear indication of sermon time, singing time, and social time (eating and chatting) at Christmas events.³⁰² According to his experience, most Buddhists show up for the last two sessions rather than the first session of preaching and sermons. This is a reality Christian ministers are facing today in Burma and even in United States. Fear of Christianness can be termed “anti-Christianism” or “anti-Christianity” as well.

f) Fear of proselytism [*Bartarswei-chiin kyua kyon-hmuh*-
ဘာသာဆွယ် ခြင်း ကြောက်ရွံ့မှု]³⁰³

The word “proselytism” is used with reference to Russians’ reaction to Pope John Paul II’s visit to Russia for proselytism purposes.³⁰⁴ This word “proselytism” is a very common word and common saying among Burman Buddhists when it comes to

³⁰¹Ibid.

³⁰²Soe Win, interview by author.

³⁰³This is a significant key word mentioned in the definition of terms section. The terms *bartarswei-chiin* and *bartarzi swei* have the same meaning which is the dynamic equivalent term for “proselytism” in English.

³⁰⁴<http://www.krotov.info /engl/2001/2001pope.html>.

their relations and interactions with Christians in general. Anything Christians do, say, or act is viewed and considered as having the motive of proselytism. A Buddhist convert shares her pre-conversion experience and says, “When friends invited us to Christmas ... we thought they wanted to proselytize us to their religion... especially when they shared their salvation message... and were preaching at us.”³⁰⁵ Many Buddhists do not want to talk to, come to church with, or meet Christians because they are afraid of proselytism. In other words, they are anti-proselytism. This is an outer layer barrier in trying to reach the Burman Buddhists with the gospel.

5. Socio-political Barriers [*lumuhyii neh nainganzi ahan'ataa mya* – လူမှုရေးနှင့် နိုင်ငံရေး အဟန့်အတားများ]

a) Social survival barriers [*Sawotnizii Khetkhehmuh Ahan'ataa mya* – စားဝတ်နေရေး ခက်ခဲမှုအဟန့်အတားများ]

While most people in Burma are struggling daily for the unmet, pressing needs for the daily survival of their family, religion is second or third to the primary needs. People who have more money and more resources are able to give more time and more resources to and for the purpose of religion. These well-to-do people are not at all open to the gospel or outside religious influence. And the majority of working class people are busy struggling for their food, and they do not have time and energy to concentrate on religions. A Burman Buddhist honestly reveals his struggle: “We are struggling for survival and we have no time for religion.”³⁰⁶ Another Buddhist admits the same struggle: “The pressing issue is survival before religion.”³⁰⁷ When the social felt-needs are critical issues in Burmans' lives, the possibility level of exploring another religion is low.

³⁰⁵Ibid.

³⁰⁶San Htud, interview by author, Lexington, KY, November 15, 2008.

³⁰⁷Tun Tun, interview by author, Lexington, KY, November 16, 2008.

b) Political barriers [*Nainganzii Ahan 'ataa mya* -နိုင်ငံရေး အဟန့် အတားများ]

King Asoka was the prominent king responsible for the early spread of Buddhism in Asia. Asoka appropriates Buddhism as “providing *moral guidance* for ruling a diverse people and creating social solidarity.”³⁰⁸ Asoka established the policy of *Dhamma* which includes toleration and non-violence directly extracted from Buddha’s teachings. The kings and the political leaders of Burma adopted the policy of Asoka’s toleration and non-violence in executing orders and restorations. Many political activists in and outside of Burma believe that the government uses religion, in this case Buddhism, as a means for propagating their political agenda in order to control the country, while the officials appear to be pious and religious Buddhist believers on the periphery at the same time.

Juliane Schober asserts her similar opinion, “Since independence, the state under U Nu in the 1950s, under Ne Win in the 1980s, and again under the SLORC in the 1990s, sought to reshape Buddhists piety and social morality in the image of political ideologies in order to legitimate its rule.”³⁰⁹ A monk interviewee echoes the same idea and says, “Government used Buddhism for the promotion and advancement of their policy.”³¹⁰ The government advocates freedom of religion without any discrimination for all people in Burma in the policy of the country;³¹¹ yet, Buddhism is undeniably still a protected and favored religion, having a special distinctive status without question in real life. The Christian churches operate in the shadow of the humongous pagodas in Burma with no official building or location in the country.

³⁰⁸Robert L. Montgomery, *The Spread of Religions: A Social Scientific Theory Based on the Spread of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam* (Hackensack, NY: Long Dash Publishing, 2007), 54.

³⁰⁹Juliane Schober, “Buddhist Visions of Moral Authority and Modernity in Burma,” In *Burma at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*, Monique Skidmore ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 117.

³¹⁰Monk Md, interview by author, Silver Spring, MD, August 10, 2009.

³¹¹Burman, *The New Light of Myanmar*, January 5, 2003.

Since Christianity is not able to express itself freely due to governmental restriction, the government is undoubtedly a big barrier for the growth of Christianity in Burma.

B. Myanmar Christian Barriers (Missional Barriers) [*Myanmar Christian Ahanatamya-Tartanaviiva Ahanata-mya* – မြန်မာခရစ်ယာန် အဟန့်အတားများ – သာသနာရေးရာ အဟန့်အတားများ]

1. Cross-Cultural Barriers [*Yuuya Dalih Thone-san Ahanatamya*-ရိုးရာဓလေ့ထုံးစံ အဟန့်အတားများ]³¹²

Cultural barriers encompass a very broad spectrum across Burman society, interactions between ethnic people and different religious groups. Cultural barriers could be summarized as a concept which is opposite to the concept of ‘*Bumahsan chiin*’ (behaving in a ‘Myanmar’ way) which the native author Yin describes in detail saying: “It includes behaving with respect towards elders, being able to recite scriptures (at least the more important ones), being able to converse in idiomatic Myanmar language (which is very difficult and differs greatly from the written word), being indirect and subtle rather than loud and direct, dressing with modesty, being discreet in relations with the opposite sex and generally showing a knowledge of things Myanmar.”³¹³ Yin further explains “Bumahsan chiin” as focusing on “maintaining religious customs, native language and traditional behavior as far as possible.”³¹⁴ People from far and near (foreigners and ethnic minorities) who are not sensitive and not able to adapt to the manner of Myanmar (“Bumahsan chiin”) are “looked down on because their customs, language and dress do not allow them to

³¹²Many of the following barrier categories could fall under “cultural barriers” since culture engulfs a wide range of issues and elements in society, but the divisions are intentional for the purpose of drawing specific attentions for specific barriers so that these specific barriers can be addressed distinctly and reduced to the most possible levels using with new and better approaches.

³¹³Yin, *Culture Shock*, 2007, 36.

³¹⁴Ibid.

integrate fully into society.” So, this is an existing and ongoing barrier in presenting the gospel to the Burmans in Burma.

a) Language Barrier [*Bartarsakar Ahanatar*-ဘာသာစကား အဟန့်အတား]

Language is a major barrier in bringing the gospel to the Burman people in Burma because most ministers and evangelists serving among them are by and large from ethnic minority groups such as Chin, Kachin and Karen who are not very fluent in Burmese. As the spoken language of Burmese is drastically different from the written language, ethnic ministers find it very difficult to cross the language barriers, whether they like to admit or not. As Myanmar spoken language is unique and, thus, difficult to learn on its own, it is very difficult to master by the outsiders and even by those ethnic people who grew up near and around the Burmans. Different ways of addressing different people depending on the relationships, ranks, social classes and emotional closeness involved are described in *Culture Shock*.³¹⁵ Therefore, language is undoubtedly a huge barrier in the process of presenting the gospel to the Burman Buddhists.

b) Etiquette Barriers [*Yinkyii-hmuh ahanatamyaa*-ယဉ်ကျေးမှု အဟန့်အတားများ]

Among etiquette of Burmans, cross-gender communication is a very uncommon interaction among the Burman people. Non-Burmans tend to approach Burmans of the opposite sex as a common interaction³¹⁶. This can create a big issue among the Burmans because men and women do not interact in public generally. Other indiscreet (impolite) manners which are offensive to the Burmans include

³¹⁵Yin, *Culture Shock*, 2007, 75-80.

³¹⁶Ibid, 37-43.

women facing the Buddha's altar with their back, putting legs on the table, addressing people with the wrong title, and using impolite words in conversing with them. Approaching someone without first familiarizing with him/her is another offensive barrier. This can be called a blind approach, and it could lead to an awkward and uncomfortable situation and even to dangerous situations such as violent reactions from the villagers or communities.

c) Relational Barriers [*Setnwe Pattatmuh Ahanatamyar*-ဆက်နွယ်ပတ်သက်မှု အဟန့်အတားများ]

The absence of interaction between Buddhists and Christians is the first and most important barrier which not only paralyzes, but disconnects the process of conversion. First and foremost, without exposure and interaction (the genesis of conversion), there is no reason for a Buddhist to learn about God and the plan of salvation because “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Rom 10:14). Another ineffective approach is a one-directional approach which is non-interactive and non-reciprocal in its nature of communication. This barrier is attested by the author's mission conference held in Burma in 2007. Another barrier is a “no give-and-take” with the respective officials [*no naalehumy*, literally means *no understanding*]. It is an inability to approach respective officials at the rural and county levels with a culturally acceptable manner and gift.³¹⁷ Even though the government sets rules and regulations and there is no religious freedom for minorities and their religions, there are “many ingenious ways to get around the rules and regulations”³¹⁸ if one is alert and able to play with the

³¹⁷cf. Burman respondents R.25 and R.51.

³¹⁸Yin, 2007, 58.

culture. Yet another offensive manner is cross-gender interaction. Yin writes, “One can hardly find a woman in a gathering of men; women tend to group together. In public, men and women tend to gather with members of the same sex.”³¹⁹ These are relational barriers which hinder the communication of the gospel to the Burman people.

2. Ethnic Barriers [Lu-myoyii Ahanatarmyar-လူမျိုးရေးအဟန့်အတားများ]

a. Ethnic Identity Barrier and Ethnic Conflict Barrier

[Lu-myoo chiana-hmuh Ah-hanataa neh Lumyo Taihkhaih Muh Ah-hanataa-လူမျိုးခြားနားမှု အဟန့်အတား နှင့် လူမျိုးရေး တိုက်ခိုက်မှု အဟန့်အတား]

Members of each society or each group attribute *a positive identity* (which characterizes good and desirable qualities) to their own group and a *negative identity* (which characterizes bad and undesirable qualities) to the other groups.³²⁰ People do not feel that they are given the right identity which belongs to them; instead they are given different identities, definitions, or meanings about themselves by others who dominate them. Anthony F. C. Wallace and Raymond Fogelson quoted by Robbins say, “identity struggles--- interactions in which there is a discrepancy between the identity a person claims to possess and the identity attributed to him or her by others.”³²¹ Christian religion gives a collective identity among minority ethnic groups in Burma, but they are far from united as one collective minority group or religious minority group in Burma. Each ethnic group struggles for its own definition, place of existence, and identity within the Burmese society.

³¹⁹Ibid., 39.

³²⁰Robbins, *Cultural Anthropology*, 202.

³²¹Ibid., 219. Cf. Anthony F. C. Wallace and Raymond D. Fogelson, “The Identity Struggle,” In *Intensive Family Therapy* eds., I. Boszormenyi-Nagy and J. L. Framo (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

According to Mikael Gravers, the Karens were “convinced that the British would reward their loyalty and sufferings during the Second World War with an autonomous state;”³²² however, this expectation has been met with wars and struggles with the Burmese government over the decades. The ethnic minority groups, which include Karens, Kachins, and Chins, with Christian background identify themselves differently from the majority Burmans because of ethnic and religious differences. In the same manner, the Burmans identify themselves as Buddhists, while they identify other ethnic groups generally as Christians. Therefore, Buddhism is generally classified as Burman Religion while Christianity is more or less characterized as Ethnic Minority Religion. The boundary between religious identity and ethnic identity is blurred due to close relationship and association of religion and ethnicity in the history of Burma in the minds and practices of the ethnic people. Therefore, ethnic identity is a barrier in the presentation of the gospel because the gospel or Christianity is often associated with the ethnic minority (Karen, Kachin or Chin), and it is, therefore, not appealing to the majority Burman people. Because of the distinct and different ethnic identities developed in Burma, there exists ethnic solidarity and ethnic isolation within each ethnic group. These two concepts are also contributing factors in defining barriers associated with ethnic identity in reaching the Burman Buddhist with the gospel.

b. Minority Introduced religion barrier [Lu-myu-nge 'suh Meihset daw Bar Ahan'ataa-လူမျိုးငယ်စု မိတ်ဆက်သော ဘာသာအဟန့်အတားများ]

Khin Maung Din agrees that evangelism in Burma from a minority approach is a difficult task. He says “[T]he difficulty is largely due to the fact that Christians in

³²²Graves, *Ethnic Diversity in Burma*, 230.

Burma have to live and evangelize as a minority in the context of another major faith, which, we must never forget, is also a living faith.³²³ A minister respondent sadly notes, “Minority status to majority status mission is difficult because they look down upon us.”³²⁴ A Burman convert reveals, “Burmans think that ethnic people are incomplete people because they are minority and worship *nats*. That is the reason that it is hard from Buddhist perspective to accept religion presented from a minority ethnic group.”³²⁵ Bo Ye comments on how Christianity is more vulnerable to Christian influence and enticement than Buddhism, “Missionaries share chocolates and it is easier for them to organize [*siizone*] the ethnic groups than Burman majority.”³²⁶ These are the kinds of view Burmans have with regard to Christianity and ethnic minorities who adopt it. Thus, introducing a religion from a minority status is difficult and, therefore it becomes a stumbling block for Burmans to convert to Christianity.

c) Attitudinal Barriers [*Ah-mu ah-yar Neh saida daw Ahanatamya-*
အမှုအယာနဲ့ဆိုင်သော အဟန့်အတားများ]

Ethnic Christians’ offensive attitudes toward Buddhists are also major contributors to the ineffectiveness of mission work among the Burman Buddhists. These attitudes include cultural and religious ignorance about Buddhism and Burmans, belittling and looking down upon them due to their idol and *nat* worship, and criticizing Burmans for their religious practices. Since perceptions in Burman

³²³Khin Maung Din, *Collections of Professor U Khin Maung Din's Papers & Articles* (Yangon: Myanmar Council of Churches, 2002), 174 .

³²⁴Abraham, interview by author, Fort Wayne, IN, November 21, 2008.

³²⁵Myat Soe, interview by author, New York, NY, January 3, 2009.

³²⁶Bo Ye, interview by author, New York, NY, January 3, 2009.

culture are generally “emotional” and “subjective,” according to Yin, “[C]riticism is nearly always taken as a personal insult.”³²⁷ Lack of humble approaches, an unwelcome spirit and unfriendly attitude of Christians (sour spirit and attitude toward Burmans), lack of passion, lack of love for them as fellow sinners, and not trusting the Burmans to have their own ways of worship and ministry development (indigenous church) are additional barriers contributing to the lack of progress in reaching the Burmans.³²⁸ Critically condemning, targeting, and attacking messages are very offensive to the Burmans. Spiritual pride is another damaging barrier. Clasper observes that the Christian attitude of “everything to give and nothing to receive” endangers reaching people, but Christian mission which is a “learning and listening faith as well as a proclaiming faith” is most productive.³²⁹

3. Fear-Related Barriers [*Kyaukyonh-chin Saiyar Ahan’ataa-mya*-ကြောက်ရွံ့ခြင်း ဆိုင်ရာ အဟန့်အတားများ]

a) Fear of the Government [*Ah-suuyah Kyaukyonh-chiin Ahanata* -အစိုးရကြောက်ရွံ့ခြင်း အဟန့်အတားများ]

The political barrier has been discussed previously with reference to Burman Buddhist barriers. Emphasis here will be placed on how Christians’ fear of the government affects Christian mission progress in Burma. The government in Burma has been the backbone of Buddhism in Burma to propagate, protect, and provide the necessary supports. The government sponsored religion launched different missions against the ethnic minorities in the past and recently. The *Taungtan Tartana (Hilly Mission)* targeted against the ethnics who live in the hills did not succeed because the monks could not survive since those ethnic people did not support the monks by

³²⁷Yin, *Culture Shock*, 2007, 40.

³²⁸Author’s Kaley Mission Conference, 2007.

³²⁹Clasper, *Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Burma*, 47.

giving alms. Another program targeted minority Christian young women. These women became the subjects of Burman soldiers' promotional incentives. Under this program, any soldier who succeeds in marrying a Christian girl is compensated with monetary reward and immediate promotion. The government was also very active in demolishing Christian crosses raised on the hills, especially in Chin State in 2004 and 2005 spreading fear and havoc among Christians.³³⁰

Though the constitution of the government allows for religious freedom for all people, it is just a promise held in a broken jar. Christians are not free to worship, to build churches, and to propagate their religion through tracts, books and media. So, they operate in the apartment buildings and private homes for worship and fellowship. Since Christianity is not able to express itself freely without restriction, the government is undoubtedly a big barrier for the growth of Christianity in Burma. One can only pray that God will be merciful to the government and Christians in Burma.

Since the government only supports Buddhism, Christians are afraid to do aggressive witnessing (not to be confused with confrontational approach here) and open proclamation of their faith because of their fear. The government can question any Christian operation in Burma any time at any place to any Christian. The government can put anyone they suspect of any things they deem contrary to their policy into jails. For fear of the government, Christianity, humanly speaking, has not spread freely or in great numbers.

³³⁰ <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/71335.htm>. This US government's website is a strong supportive document for the religious discrimination and minority discrimination in Burma.

b) Fear of persecution [*Nyinpaan-neihset Yan, Kyaukyonh-chiin Ahanata-*
ညှဉ်းပန်းနှိပ်စက်ရန် ကြောက်ရွံ့ခြင်းအဟန့်အတားများ]

Fear of persecution from Buddhist communities is one of the reasons Christians do not witness to Burmans. There has not been any known formal persecution against Christians by the Buddhists in the past. However, Christians have experienced small skirmishes of different forms and shapes of persecution through the centuries of their existence as upholders of a minority religion among the majority Buddhists in Burma. On the one hand, Christians are not willing to suffer persecution from the Buddhists, and they are being careful as they try to live peacefully with the Buddhists, on the other hand. Either way, it is a fear motivated decision one has to make. This fear has caused the slow progress of mission work among the Burmans because Christians are afraid to talk about their religion and to propagate it. Practically not much can be done about this, but Christians need “to be wise as a serpent” and live as a harmless dove knowing how to get in and out of the situations they are in unless they are ready for martyrdom or severe persecution.

c) Fear of evangelism barrier [*Kal tin chin Wei-ngah Buh Kyaukyonh-chiin Aha nata* -ကယ်တင်ခြင်းဆင့်ဖို့ ကြောက်ရွံ့ခြင်း အဟန့်အတား]

Related to fear of government is fear of evangelism. While many older ministers have given up hope on the conversion of Burmans because of their strong resistance and their unfavorable reaction, a few ministers and evangelists are trying to reach the Burmans with the gospel of Christ. However, the majority of Christians does not evangelize because of their fear of evangelism. Some do not evangelize for fear of rejection of their message, while others do not do it for fear of speaking to people about religion. Others are reluctant to witness for fear of the government.

4. Ethical and Moral Barriers [*Ah-kyinh' Sareit-tah Ahan'ataa*-အကျင့်စာရိတ္တ အဟန့်အတားများ]³³¹

The indifferent moral character or the worse-than-Buddhists moral character of Christians is one of the greatest barriers in evangelizing among the Burman Buddhists because many devout Buddhists are morally very pure and good compared to Christians. One of the cries of ministers working among the Buddhists is the lack of moral attributes among Christians. Interviewees express their concern over this critical issue. A Muslim-Buddhist expressed her view saying, “Christians are not different from Buddhist. People are generally good at the surface level, but human nature is the same at the deepest level (normally bad).”³³² A Burman Buddhist evaluates Christians critically saying, “Christians follow only one (worship) out of the Ten Commandments.”³³³ In addition, a Buddhist monk honestly and openly says, “Christians (in the US) are weak in morality and meditation.”³³⁴ These are the kinds of pictures Christians paint about themselves in the public arena before people of other faiths. Drinking and sexual misconducts are the most common moral issues among Christians. One minister sadly admits about the irresponsible lifestyles of Christians this way, “Many Christians drink and many Buddhists do not drink”³³⁵ This moral barrier is a really huge killer in the progress of Christian work among the indigenous Burmans.

³³¹This barrier could fall under other related barrier categories, but this ethical moral deserve a separate barrier classification because it is one of the major causal issues contributing to the slow progress of church growth among Burmans.

³³²Mi Mi, interview by author, Lexington, KY, November 15, 2008.

³³³Bo Ye, interview by author, New York, NY, January 3, 2009.

³³⁴Monk Md, interview by author, Silver Spring, MD, August 10, 2009.

³³⁵Abraham, interview by author, Fort Wayne, IN, Nov, 2008.

5. **Spiritual Barriers** [*Weitnyin-pai Saiyar Ahan 'ataamyā*–ဝိညာဉ်ပိုင်းဆိုင်ရာ အဟန့်အတားများ]

If I were forced to divide barriers in conversion into just two types, they would be spiritual barriers and human barriers. Therefore, spiritual barrier deserves a separate title. Barriers in the spiritual realm are common casual barriers in Christian missions, and they are not uncommon causes for the stagnation of Christian progress among the Burman Buddhists. First of all, there is an undeniable spiritual warfare (Eph 6:10-20) going on in the unseen world, and Satan is the global tribal rebel leader against the kingdom of God in any corner of the world. Lack of the power of God and lack of prayer and spiritual dedications are contributing factors in the slow progress of mission work in Burma.

When Christian ministers fail to confront the power of spiritual darkness expressed through idolatry, witchcraft, sorcery, *nat* worship, and other cultic practices in Burma with the spiritual power given to them through the Holy Spirit, loss of spiritual battles becomes a major contributing factor in the slow progress of mission among the Burmans. Many questionnaire respondents and many interviewees admitted Christians' lack of prayer as a major contributing barrier. Christians need to be challenged by the word of God, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty" (Zech 4:6). Most of the converts interviewed have experienced some kind of signs or wonders (miracles) during their social crises which lead them to conversion. The deliverance of people from their sickness, fear, and social troubles by the powerful God is quite evident among the Buddhist interviewees. The powerful stronghold of the invisible

forces in the universe is undoubtedly a major barrier in the process of conversion for Burman Buddhists.

A divine intentional act, which includes God's hardening of the heart of the people for His own chosen purposes and reasons. The hardening is, in part, meant for His own glory, for the testing of the faith, and for the strengthening of Christian faith which will result in their more effective usefulness in God's kingdom in the near future. A classic example is God's hardening the heart of the Pharaoh (Ex 9:12) before the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites. The Bible indicates that Pharaoh himself hardened his heart seven times in the book of Exodus (7:13, 22; 8: 15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34), and God hardened Pharaoh's heart seven times (9:12, 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10: 14:4, 8). The purpose of the hardening is seen in these passages (9:16; 10:1; 11:9; 14:4, 17) that his name would be exalted. Whatever the cause of the resistance it may be, whether it is human cause, or divine cause, we are responsible to pray for the harvest and to work hard for the harvest.

6. Methodological Barriers[*Tartanar lohthong lohnee Ahan-atar'mya*-သာသနာ လုပ်ထုံးလုပ်နည်း အဟန့်အတားများ]

a) Uninformed Barriers [*Ma 'lihlar Chin Ahan'ataa-mya* - မလေ့လာခြင်းအဟန့်အတားများ]

Uninformed barriers include lack of proficiency in language usage, lack of proficient knowledge of Buddhism, lack of Burman customs, manners and traditions, and lack of knowledge about the do's and don't's of the present cultural, religious, political, and social situations. Out of 50 ministers, only 18 people responded to the question of their level of knowledge about Buddhism. Out of 18 respondents, 11.11 % are high, 44.4 % are medium, and 44.4 % are low in their knowledge about Buddhism. This means that much less than 50% of the ministers (only 11.11 %) are

well acquainted with the knowledge of Buddhism. Therefore, knowledge of Buddhism is a major uninformed barrier. If the percentage of ministers who has good knowledge of Buddhism is only 11.11%, how much worse the percentage would be for lay Christians in Burma.³³⁶

b) Ineffective Strategic Barriers [*Mah 'thihyauh Daw Si-mankeng Ahan'ataa-myath*ထိရောက်သော စီမံကိန်း အဟန့်အတားများ]

One of the concerns evangelists among the Burmans mention is the church's lack of support structure for ostracized new converts.³³⁷ The other strategic voids are lack of systematic follow-ups on earlier contacts, potential converts, and new converts, and lack of evaluation, training, and care for physical, emotional, and spiritual health, and needs of the ministers. One minister voices another concern of no relevant and effective mission strategies, the ineffective single founder or president mission strategy.³³⁸ Another related barrier with the founder-president strategy is a family-clan based strategy. The critical issue is that the founder or the leader of the Christian mission (church, Bible college, or orphanage) would pick co-laborers mostly from his immediate family or his own clan irrespective of their academic, spiritual, and theological qualifications. Other commonly stated lacking strategies include blind approaches (non-strategic approaches, no preparations) and non-indigenous approaches (non-native-based approach in evangelism and discipling).³³⁹

³³⁶ Author's Yangon Mission Conference, 2007.

³³⁷ Author's Two Mission Conferences in Burma, 2007.

³³⁸ Christian Questionnaires R. 61.

³³⁹ Author's Two Mission Conferences in Burma, 2007.

c) Environmental Setting Barriers [*Niyardetah Patwin-kyin Ani 'ahtaa Ahan' Ataa-mya* - နေရာဒေသ ပတ်ဝန်းကျင်အဟန့်အတားများ]

Burman Buddhists are very conscious about where people go to socialize or worship. Those Burmans who attend Christian churches on Sundays are ridiculed, and people gossip about them. Someone who goes inside of the church on Sunday is considered by the Burman Buddhists as somewhat already entering into Christian community, even if the visitor might be just exploring or visiting for other reasons than a real interest in converting to Christianity. It is much easier to invite a Burman to come to a house warming service (e.g. home cells, occasional-religious gatherings, Christian festivals, parties, concerts, birthdays, and other thanksgiving dinner/prayer parties) than inviting the same person to attend Sunday services. They feel more relaxed and more compelled to join Christians when the settings are visitor and others friendly. Inviting friends to church services could really be a barrier if one does not understand the level of his/her friend's interest in learning and exploring other religions. Many Burman Buddhists and Burman converts indicate that they feel more comfortable going to occasional Christian activities than regular Sunday worship services. One last issue with the setting is that a Burman will not attend a meeting if they know that someone with whom they do not get along well will attend the meeting. These are issues and barriers Christian ministers should keep in mind in planning meetings and invitations.

d) Materialistic-Selfish Mindset Barrier [*Siiseng Ohsa Kokyuu Ahtwet Atonpiuh-chiin Ahan'ataa*-စည်းစိမ် ဥစ္စာကိုယ်ကျိုးအတွက် အသုံးပြုခြင်း အဟန့်အတားများ]

Materialism is generally a common barrier in mission work, and it is a problematic barrier in mission work in Burma. Many ministers are so dependent on foreign aids that the only mission method that will work (in their minds) is through

the powerful money (dollar) method. Many ministers become depressed because they believe that their ministries will not prosper if they do not get such-and-such amount of money as so-and-so ministers. Money has its own place, but money is not the main thing for success in mission work. The other side of the coin is the abuse of mission funds by some ministers, which includes the inappropriate personal use of mission funds. A Rakhine Buddhist friend asks the author, “How much salary would I receive if I become Christian?”³⁴⁰ A money-oriented mission approach brings more damage to the progress of mission work than benefits. But, the wise use of godly resources is an asset to the progress of mission work.

e) Socially Non-Engagement Barriers [*Lu'muhzii mar..ma-pawin chiin ahan-ataa-mya*-လူမှုရေးမှာ မပါဝင်ခြင်း အဟန့်အတားများ]

Most Christians in Burma are viewed as non-real citizens because they are not involved in community development and social affairs of their communities. They have no interests in the welfare and life events of their Burman neighbors, friends, or co-workers (e.g., birthdays, funerals, weddings, etc.), avoiding those events with the conviction that they are associated with idolatry and Buddhism. Most Christians do not contribute to community development funds and do not participate in community affairs and social events such as helping the poor and the outcasts. They avoid attending social gatherings of people from other religions. Many Christians also entirely avoid political involvement for fear of the government and religious compromise. When Burmans view Christians as not part of their real community, they interact with them differently. Therefore, this develops a social barrier leading to a

³⁴⁰ Friends, conversation with the author, Kyaukdaw, Arakan State, 1986.

missional barrier in reaching them for Christ. Fish also touches on this issue in his dissertation.³⁴¹

f) Abuse of Limited Religious Freedom Barrier [*Kantat Daw Lot-lat khuanh Ma-tongtat chiin a han 'ataa-mya-* ကန့်သတ်သော လွတ်လပ်ခွင့် မသုံးတတ်ခြင်း အဟန့်အတားများ]

Even though there is religious freedom officially for Christians, there is limited existence, exercise, and expression allotted to Christians in Burma. This is not a legal or documented freedom. It is an understood social understanding of the government. To a certain degree of leniency, the government pretends not to acknowledge the illegal gatherings of Christians for worship and activities in apartment buildings which are legally meant for residential, private, and family use only. This limited freedom has been ongoing for almost half a century. According to the rules and regulations of the country, religious gatherings must be conducted in the designated and licensed areas, locations, or buildings. There are a few Christian churches, which are the remains of the colonial period, where Christians can worship freely within their church arena. However, these few churches are not enough to accommodate the numbers of Christians in Rangoon. So, Christians are allowed to meet in apartment complexes for worship with the understanding that they do not interfere with other religions and other residents in and around the buildings.

Unfortunately, Christians have taken their limited freedom of religion a step further by conflicting with neighbors and social clubs in the region. When Christians are in conflict with people in the neighborhood, word spreads to the government officials about the illegal meetings of Christians in apartment complexes. As a result,

³⁴¹Lazarus Fish, *Reclaiming the Zayat Ministry*, 256-261.

Christians have been ordered not to meet in apartment buildings. This is an ongoing issue with Christians because of their abuse of the limited freedom allotted to them. When Christians meet in those apartment complexes they break their limited freedom contract by using loud music, Pentecostal-Charismatic loud dancing and shouting, and soliciting near and around the meeting places before and after their services, thereby interfering with the traffic flows of the city and the community's residential activities. These kinds of Christian activities are not exemplary in the unbeliever's world, and there are very few reasons why the Burmans will be attracted to these kinds of Christian attitudes and manners.

g) Communicational Barriers [*Settwimuh niilan lo-utchet Ahanataa-mya-*
ဆက်သွယ်မှု နည်းလမ်း လိုအပ်ချက် အဟန့်အတားများ]

An unclear message is a barrier when Christians present and display unclear messages about themselves, Christianity, and their God through their words, moods, attitudes, and deeds, they are very confusing to the Burmans. A Burman Buddhist questions, "Will all Christians [with good or bad habits] automatically go to heaven?"³⁴² Another Buddhist similarly questions, "Christians do bad stuffs and still go to heaven?"³⁴³ The first problem with this is the non-exemplary lifestyles of Christians, which the Buddhists observe. The second problem is the unclear message the Buddhists are hearing. The message must clarify that not all Christians will automatically be saved, but only those (whether Christians or Buddhists) who acknowledge Jesus as their Savior will be saved.

³⁴²Win Naing, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 20, 2008.

³⁴³Tun Tun, interview by author, Columbus, OH, November 8, 2008.

The untimely, insensitive and irrelevant use of theological terms and messages are terminological barriers (*Wallhar-ra aton anon Ahan'ataa-mya*-ဝေါဟာရ အသုံးအနှုန်း အဟန့်တားများ). They can also be called “message-content barriers” or “religious content barriers.” Since Buddhists have no concept of the Creator God or living God, wise usage of terms is in order. For example, Buddhists use the word “god” (phaya) in many ways. The monk is addressed as “god” (phaya), and Buddha is also worshiped as “god” (*phayaa*-ဘုရား). It is not a matter of what to include and what to exclude, but it is, rather, the issue of when and how to use which word. It is the timing or order of the word usage and the manner of presenting it to the people. The other thing is the difficult terms employed in the Burmese Bible which are hard to understand for Burmans and new believers. A respondent³⁴⁴ brings up the difficult terms he found in the Bible when he was still a Buddhist. These terms include “paradise” and “the gospel” (instead of “good news”). Another Buddhist raises questions about a seemingly “too easy and too cheap gospel message” to be true, as he finds it hard to believe that “God forgives every sin ... God forgives their sins every Sunday”³⁴⁵ no matter what Christians do and how bad they live their lives. Christians’ presentation of the gospel tends to focus on too many positive messages that blur the gospel’s intended purpose (God’s grace) and God’s standard of righteousness (God’s judgment for sins and demand for righteous living). Christians should make their message clear about what God expects in return of his forgiveness and salvation. Explaining God’s desire for good works and righteous lifestyles will make good connections with the

³⁴⁴Min Taih, interview by author, Baltimore, MD, December 24, 2008.

³⁴⁵Win Naing, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 20, 2008.

Buddhist's attempt to do good works and live a good life. Christians can do that without diluting the core message of the gospel.

The instant approach of conversion is an annoyance to Burman Buddhists. This can be called “The instantaneous-confrontational Barrier (*Chiatchiin Bartarsweimuh Ahanata*-ချက်ခြင်း ဘာသာဆွယ်မှု အဟန့်အတားများ).” The confrontational approach is adverse to the slow processing Asian mindset and Asian time frame. The instantaneous-confrontational approach has not worked in the past, is not working in the present, and will not work in the future in approaching the Burman Buddhists. The confrontational method is the instantaneous approach, and the instantaneous approach is the confrontational method. Another name for this is forceful approach, which most people do not like. One strong Buddhist (a close friend of the author) honestly expresses his dislike about this method saying, “I don't like when they try to force me to commit.”³⁴⁶ Another Burmese Chinese living in the States reacts strongly to the confrontational method saying, “I do not like being forced to convert; It is a selfish way of doing religion. I believe in leaving people alone, no convincing or influencing. I cannot force my mom to change or convert. It is easy for people to say ‘change your religion’ but impossible. People have their own practices.”³⁴⁷

h. Individualistic Approach Barrier [*Ta-ooh-chin Chiinkat-nee Ahanataa*-တစ်ဦးခြင်း ချဉ်းကပ်နည်း အဟန့်အတားများ]

The western style of individual approach has witnessed some success with individual converts among the Burmans, but success in great numbers and in people movements (group conversions), humanly speaking, is dependent upon a collective

³⁴⁶Taakyi, interview by author, Lexington, KY, September 10, 2008.

³⁴⁷Derrick, interview by author, Tyson Corner, VA, July 29, 2009.

approach rather than an individualistic approach. Burma is not an individualistic and independent society. It is a conglomerate society of multiethnic groups with their own demarcation based ethnic origins, geographical locations, and religious beliefs.

In the Graeco-Roman world of the first century era, kinship was the major form of social organization. Burma and its ethnic groups operate in similar ways to a kinship society. Moxnes says, “The clans were groups of households with a mutual obligation to assist each other in times of need, which thus was a form of subsistence guarantee.”³⁴⁸ Burman people also operate their society in the same manner as clanship in which they share “mutual obligation to assist each other in times of need,” and the social network is their “subsistence guarantee” for their survival in time of crises and difficulties. When evangelism is targeted on the individual rather than the family or group, the individual converts experience severe conflicts with their families and relatives and even ostracism. Even though individual approach has seen some success among Burmans, it is in some ways a barrier to the growth of the ministry because it is much more difficult to diffuse the Gospel by individual converts than by group converts. In the case of individual conversions, they have to go through different barriers and temptations to overcome as loner converts from their societal ethnic group. Most of the Burman convert interviewees indicated that they experienced separation, conflict, and ostracism as they tried to make their new identities as new believers in a new religion within the surrounding community of their unsaved Buddhist families and friends.

³⁴⁸Halvor Moxnes ed. *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 27.

A word of clarification is needed here, because the author is not denying that individual approach is wrong and not to be used at all. The point I try to make here is that the individualistic only approach is not widely effective. Therefore, this should not be used as the only viable option of evangelistic approach. The issue at stake here is targeting responsive individuals in the Burman society. A natural way of relating to and sharing the gospel to interested individuals is the natural way to do evangelism.

i) Proselytizing or Christianizing Barrier [*Bartar-swei-chin Ahanata-*
ဘာသာ ဆွယ်ခြင်း အဟန့်အတား]

Proselytism is a common criticism Christians received from the Burman Buddhists. It is like a basketball the Burmans like to pass around to shoot at Christians behind their backs. Anything from speaking about God, Christianity, and going to church to inviting to church, preaching which targets at the Burmans, and Christians' social works of any kind (giving chocolates, food, drink and rice) is validly or invalidly assumed by Burmans as proselytism. The word for proselytizing in Burma is "Bata swei" which literally means "induce religion" in a negative sense. This issue is not a major barrier but an unavoidable and undeniable barrier which exists among the Burmans. Therefore, missionaries and ministers among the Burmans need to approach them discreetly to avoid being accused of proselytism as much as possible.

Chapter VIII

Theoretical Implications on the Research Findings

A. Theoretical Interaction with Identity Theories

Ethnic identity can be understood from subjective and objective points of view. In the subjective view, a particular group determines its own boundaries and identity, whereas in the objective view the observable characteristics of social structures, historical developments, and power variations determine the kinds of ethnicity.³⁴⁹ The Burmans determine their own ethnicity by asserting their Burmanness, and their Buddhishness which are intertwined and cannot be separated. The ethnic minority groups also ascribe their own identities based on their origins and their religious affiliations. In this case, most ethnic groups (Karens, Kachins, Chins, and Others) assume their own racial distinctions with their distinct languages but a shared religious identity, which is Christianity. To the eyes of Burman Buddhists, all ethnic people having Christian religious affiliation are considered as “ethnic others” who differ from them first in religion and then in ethnic make ups. The Burmans generally view (objective view) ethnic groups as Christians. Therefore, they associate Christianity with minority ethnicity, and they are not interested in minority religion because it is an incomplete and disestablished religion compared to their established indigenous Buddhism. They assume that ethnic people are more vulnerable to outside influence than the Burman majority because they do not have a strong religious system like Burmans do. Since Burmans despise ethnic people ethnically and

³⁴⁹Abner Cohen, “Introduction: the lesson of ethnicity,” In *Urban Ethnicity*, ed. Abner Cohen (London: Tavistock, 1974a).

religiously, they are not interested in Christianity. The reason for this is due to Burman objective view of ethnic minorities.

Ethnic people also view the Burman majority objectively. They morally look down on Burmans because they view them as idolaters, with the assumption that Burmans are more sinful than they are because of their idol practices. Just as the Jewish people of the first century era viewed the Gentiles as sinners because they were idolaters, ethnic minorities look down upon Burmans as sinners because they are idol worshipers. Just as most Burmans assume all ethnic minorities to be Christians, ethnic minorities assume all Burmans to be Buddhists. There exists a double identity, religious identity and ethnic identity, on both sides.

On summarizing Barth's theory,³⁵⁰ Victor King writes, "... it is in social interaction and cultural encounter that identities are created, maintained and transformed because they are part of a system of categories and groupings, and they cannot be formed nor sustained in isolation."³⁵¹ In social theory, people identify themselves either in terms of their uniqueness compared to other individuals (personal identity) or in terms of their membership in social groups compared to other groups (social identity). Reicher also notes how we react to a group is affected by how we categorize and define ourselves and others.³⁵² How we view and understand people affects how we treat them, and how we view and treat others affects how they respond to us. On the other hand, how they view us and understand or misunderstand us

³⁵⁰Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 9-10.

³⁵¹ Victor T King, *The Sociology of Southeast Asia: Transformations in a Developing Region*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 131.

³⁵²Stephen Reicher, "The Context of Social Identity: Domination, Resistance, and Change," *Political Psychology* 25, no. 6 (2004): 928, 930.

affects how they treat us and respond to us. So, how missionaries and ethnic evangelists view, understand and treat people affects how the Burman Buddhists respond to the presentation of the gospel. How Buddhists view and understand Christians also has great impact on how they respond to, reject, or ignore the presentation of the gospel. Since Buddhists (mostly Burmans) and Christians (ethnic minorities in Burma) view each other negatively, it affects their relationships. Therefore, their negative relationship affects the progress of mission work. So, the negative attitudes of Christians toward Burmans cause barriers for the Buddhists to convert to Christianity, and the negative view of Burmans of minority ethnic Christians is a contributor to the stagnation of Christian progress in Burma.

According to Montgomery, “[P]rimary indicator of acceptance or rejection of a religion is the self-identification of adherents, whether others consider them “true” believers or not.”³⁵³ A good test for the genuineness of a Burman convert is his/her self identification with Christianity. It is very important to train new Burman believers to identify themselves as Burman Christians in order to reach the mass Burman populations. Missionaries must try to correct the assumption that a Burman Christian convert is also converted to another ethnic group. When enough Burmans form themselves as new and authentic believers, they will be able to express themselves as Burman Christians and, therefore, will be able to attract other Burman people to join them in their new found faith. This process is to make Christianity appear to the Burman population not as a foreign religion or an ethnic religion, but a Burman local religion.

Montgomery makes another very interesting comment. He says, “The new believers identify themselves as adherents of the introduced religion, but the changes

³⁵³Montgomery, *The Diffusion of Religions*, 15.

they make set the new religion apart from the original religion and, in particular contribute to the religious distinction of the receiving group from the sending group.”³⁵⁴ He defines “religious identification” as “a means of participation in groups that formulate and reformulate moral orders.”³⁵⁵ A new believer identifying with the new religion is a good sign of conversion and commitment to the new faith. The new religion should be distinct from the old religion but not so distinct as to be considered by others a foreign religion imported to them. The problem arises when the new believers disconnect themselves in social contacts and interactions with their former Buddhist friends and relatives. An indigenized church with Burmese expressions is what needs to happen in Myanmar. This is what needs to happen when a church becomes a localized, native, and indigenous church. Thus, the lack of indigenous expression is a possible barrier to be explored.

There are three distinct socially identifiable groups in Burma: Burman Buddhists, Burmese ethnic Christians (even though they divide into distinct ethnic groups), and Burman Christians. New Burman converts go through different processes of identification. First, since they were born as Burman and Buddhist, they are identified as Burman Buddhists. Second, once they have become Christians, they are considered as “converting to ethnic Christian social group” and are generally viewed as partly ethnic Christians (by the Burmans) while also being viewed as Burman converts (by ethnic Christians). They belong to either group (Burman and Ethnic), but they do not belong to either group completely. As for the Burman converts, it is partial social identification either with the Burmans culturally and

³⁵⁴Ibid.

³⁵⁵Ibid.

ethnically or partial identification with the ethnic Christians religiously. They belong to both groups, but they belong to neither group completely. One option they have is to stay away from society by creating a monastic community in the remote areas, but this is not Christian to do. The other and best option they have is to create a new community separated from the Burmese society and the ethnic society not to the point of excluding interactions, contacts, and fellowships but for the purpose of expressing themselves as a new and unique socio-religious group.

The present situation for Burman converts is that they play a bi-social role between the Burmans and ethnic Christians. Culturally they can relate to Burman people well, while they can also relate to ethnic Christians religiously. Since they cannot mingle and feel at home in either group completely, they are forced to create a new social identity. In fact, a new social identity has been created as soon as they have become Christians, but they have not been officially able to express themselves as such. So, they are in the limbo stage struggling to protrude out of that bi-social identity role to make their own mono-social identity group. This is partly the barrier causing slow growth among Burmans in Burma.

B. Theoretical Interaction with Diffusion Theories

Everett M. Rogers defines diffusion as “the process by which (1) an *innovation* (2) is *communicated* through certain *channels* (3) over *time* (4) among the members of a *social system*.”³⁵⁶ Rogers further describes ‘innovation’ as “an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption.”³⁵⁷ Diffusing Christianity is a process in which the gospel is communicated

³⁵⁶Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 2003, 11.

³⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 12.

through the channels of ethnic ministers laboring among the Burmans for two hundred years. The success of this new innovation of Christianity is slow due to many barriers found from the research.

Diffusion is not understood as an instant act but as a process as seen in Rogers' presentation of the innovation-decision process in five different stages: knowledge (exposure to a new idea, thing, or religion), persuasion (individual's favorable or unfavorable attitude to the innovation); decision (moment of judgment about either adopting or rejecting the innovation), implementation (practical application of the new idea or new subject), and confirmation (reinforcement of the already made decision whether to continue or discontinue with the innovation).³⁵⁸

Similarly, conversion is not an instant event but a process which passes through five stages. Knowledge is the first important thing in order to diffuse the gospel to the Burmans. Without the knowledge of God, sin, and salvation, they cannot convert from Buddhism to Christianity. The Bible testifies that someone needs to have contact with and knowledge about the gospel before he/she can believe and accept it: "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? ..." (Rom 10:14-15).

Second, persuasion is another important step in conversion. If the potential convert has no favorable attitude toward the new innovation (the gospel) and the presenters, they likely will reject the gospel. This is the case in Burma where Burmans do not develop a favorable attitude toward the gospel and the bearers of the gospel

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 169.

(ethnic Christians). There is a barrier in the diffusion of the gospel because Christians in Burma fail to present the gospel before Burmans as a favorable and attractive new innovation. Thus, they are not able to persuade Burmans to adopt Christianity.

Third, decision is another important step in the process of conversion. The innovation of the gospel is not successful among Burmans because their decision is based not just on an individual basis. Their decision range spans from individuals to parents, siblings, and close relatives and to their surrounding community including friends, other Buddhist believers, and monks. In addition to this string of relational decision structure, Burmans are conscious of their social situations, their relations with others, and the consequences they will encounter if and when they make the decision to convert to Christianity.

Fourth, many Burmans rarely pass beyond the decision stage because they find that Christianity is not favorable and not relevant for their needs at the outset. Those who have more exposure and more contacts with Christians and the gospel have the opportunity to learn more about the gospel and to ask more questions by interacting with Christians. At this stage they are met with the opportunity of testing God's responsive activity and power to answer and meet their critical needs. Those who test God through prayer for their crises eventually convert to Christianity, because they are able to implement and experiment with who God is and His greatness and power. Most people who have made it to the implementation stage make it to the next stage.

Fifth, at the confirmation stage, new potential converts are able to develop stronger faith and increase their experience with and knowledge about God through Bible studies and reading, interaction with and guidance of Christians, and exploring further into Christian worship, service, and giving. At this stage, most new converts

are able to continue with the innovation of the gospel and incorporate into Christian community by publicly testifying of their new found faith in Christ through baptism followed by discipleship. Many new converts are confronted with social pressures from family and the surrounding community because of their new decision, but most converts are able to continue and resist the temptation of going back to Buddhism.

Intergroup relationship is a very important concept in diffusing a new religion. If the intergroup relationship is not harmonious, this relationship itself can become a barrier between the two groups for communication and interaction and, therefore, for adoption of the new religion. The ethnic majority and ethnic minorities in Burma live side-by-side, and they are directly or indirectly inter-related to one another. Robert L. Montgomery notes, "All groups, whether small or large enough to form societies, are in multiple relationships with other groups."³⁵⁹ The importance of intergroup relationships is pivotal in determining the diffusion of a religion, especially when it comes to the decision-making process. Montgomery recognizes macro (intergroup relations) and micro (individual motivation) levels of relationships and acknowledges that the source of independent variables on diffusion of religions is "the quality of the relationships between groups."³⁶⁰ The relational quality between Burmans and other ethnic minorities is not good enough to promote the adoption of Christianity. Rather, it contributes as a barrier in the process of innovating Christianity. Montgomery qualifies this concept as he says, "... domination and resistance to domination in intergroup relations affect reception, rejection, and change in religion, as well as the development of religions in the first place".³⁶¹ This is true in Burma. The resistance to

³⁵⁹Montgomery, *Diffusion of Religions*, 12.

³⁶⁰Ibid., 13, 19.

Christianity is due to strained relationships between colonizers and Burmese people and between ethnic people and Burman people. Relationships between different groups (e.g. Ethnic people and Burman people) and between individuals from different groups (e.g. an ethnic evangelist and a Burman Buddhist) have to do with diffusion of religion.

According to Rogers, the change agent's success (a change agent is someone who influences clients' innovation-decisions) is related to eight things in relation to the adopters. The success and failure of Christianity among Burmans can be understood in terms of Rogers' eight characteristic relational qualities in the process of presenting the gospel. The first is degree of contact. This is a very important first and essential step in the process of innovation. Without exposure to Christianity and Christians, Burmans have no way of adopting the new Christian religion. According to the research regarding the exposure level of Burmans to Christians and Christianity, out of 112 Burman Buddhist respondents, 4 are high (3.5%), 72 are medium (64.2%) and 36 are low (32.1%). The respondents are from urban, suburban, and rural areas where Christians and Buddhists live together. Some of these places are locations where Christians operate ongoing ministries. One of the barriers for conversion among Burmans can be, therefore, attributed to low or insufficient exposure of Christianity to Burmans in general.

Second is a client orientation. This is another way of saying receptor orientation or consumer orientation. Mission methods in Burma are in some ways client oriented targeting the Burman populations, but the research indicates that the methods and the attitudes of Christian orientation are barriers to success in Burman conversions. Third is compatibility with the client's needs. Since the methods being

³⁶¹Ibid., 49.

employed in mission to Burmans are not compatible with the needs of Burman people, there are very few instances of success in conversion among them generally. Effective Christian ministers incorporating the crisis evangelism approach should relevantly meet the needs of Burmans.

Fourth is empathy expressed by innovators. Christian mission among Burmans witnesses success stories when ministers identify with the needs and sufferings of the people to whom they minister. There are many examples of this kind of successful approach, especially when ministers stick with the people in times of storms and crisis (e.g. Nargis Cyclone in Burma). Fifth is homophily with clients (similarity with clients). The issue of not sharing similarities with the clients is a major barrier for Burmans' conversion. Foreign missionaries and ethnic missionaries in Burma are not homophilic with Burman Buddhists because they have distinct language, religion, and culture which are drastically different from those of the Burmans.

Sixth is credibility of change agent. The religious version of this is the exemplary testimony of Christians and ministers among the Burmans. The research reveals that lack of exemplary lifestyles among Christians is a huge barrier in Burman conversions. Regarding Christian contributions to the stagnant progress among Burman mission, Christian respondents admit that lack of moral character is the third (lack of prayer and Buddhist religious attachment being the first and the second) in the five most negative affects in conversion of Burmans.

Seventh is mediatory assistance from opinion leaders (opinion leaders are those who influence others in adopting an innovation). This is one of the weak areas among Burman missionaries. The mission does not prosper because ministers fail to train new Burman converts for evangelism and discipleship, and they are reluctant to

transfer power and management to the new Burman Christian community to operate and express on its own in its indigenous ways. The new converts and the Burman converts are the best opinion leaders who can influence Burman Buddhists in their decision about conversion to Christianity. Lack of follow-up, lack of proper discipleship program and lack of indigenization are common barriers expressed from interviewees, respondents of questionnaires and mission conference attendees.

The eighth and final quality in the diffusion process is client's ability to evaluate innovations.³⁶² In this situation, Christians are partly responsible to approach, educate, and help the Burmans in making decisions about conversion to Christianity. Christians need to inform and convince those Burmans who have little education, little exposure to Christianity, and those from remote areas in their decision for conversion. In addition, Christians must be able to answer and solve any questions and confusions the more educated and more exposed Buddhists might have regarding Christianity in order to convince them to convert to Christianity. The eight characteristic relational qualities in the process of presenting the gospel based on Rogers' innovation characteristics are very helpful steps in assessing the barriers of Christian conversion among the Burman Buddhists.

C. Theoretical Interaction with Conversion Theories

Lofland lists seven steps in the process of conversion. They are laid out accordingly:

1. Experience enduring, acutely felt tensions;
2. within a religious, problem-solving perspective;
3. which lead to defining himself as a religious seeker;
4. encountering the cult at a turning point in his life;
5. wherein an affective bond to adherents is formed (or pre-exists);

³⁶²Rogers, *Diffusion of Religions*, 400.

6. where extra-cult attachments are low or neutralized;
7. and where, to become a “deployable agent,” exposure to intensive interaction is accomplished (conditions from 1-3 are background factors while from 4-7 are situational or interactional elements).³⁶³

A similar pattern to the above sequence can be observed in the conversions of Buddhists according to the research findings. Rambo proposes sequential stages in the process of conversion:³⁶⁴ context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment and consequences. First, context refers to the situation or condition in which the process of conversion occurs, whether it is historical, religious, social, cultural, or personal. Conversion cannot occur in a vacuum, and without contact and knowledge conversion is impossible. This is a very important initial stage which can set the stage for the process of conversion. This stage overlaps with Lofland’s second stage “within a religious, problem-solving perspective.” It is the religious setting in which the encounter occurs. If the context is favorable to the receiver, the likelihood is that he/she will develop more interest in Christianity, which could lead to conversion.

Second, crisis refers to situations such as sickness, near-death experience, stress, loneliness, fear, desperation and dissatisfaction in life in which a potential convert is found. This stage is similar to Lofland’s “acutely felt tensions” (first stage). Crisis is a very common experience in religious conversion. This is also proven by the research results in which most Burman converts (except 4 (17%) out of 23 interviewees) experienced some kind of crises in their lives from which God delivered them when they tested the power of God through their prayers. Eighty three percent of

³⁶³Lofland, *Doomsday Cult*, 7-8.

³⁶⁴Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversions*, 20-164.

the interviewees experienced a crisis before their conversion (See APPENDIX K: Burman Convert Evaluation Chart).

Third, quest is the time when people are actively seeking for answers to fill the voids and problems in their lives. Rambo notes that quest is an ongoing process, but one that will greatly intensify during times of crisis.³⁶⁵ This is similar to the third stage of Lofland in which the person turns into a “religious seeker.” The research results indicate that quest is a companion to crisis. When people are going through some crisis situation in their lives, they look (quest) for solutions and all the convert interviewees found their answers to their crisis situations. All the convert interviewees found their answers to their crisis situations in God through their answered prayers and God’s revelation to them in unique ways. Many people do not seek God when things are going well in their lives. Yet when they experience unmanageable crisis in their lives, they are open to exploration of religious answers which could eventually lead to their final conversion to Christianity. This is a common phenomenon among the Burman interviewees.

Fourth, encounter has to do with the point of contact between the potential convert and a new religious enterprise in which “[t]he potential convert can also be modified and/or adopt new strategies through the interplay.”³⁶⁶ This encounter is similar to Rogers’ first step of “knowledge” (out of his five steps) and the qualities of the “degree of contact” and “knowledge” among Rogers’ eight essential qualities in the process of the diffusion of innovation³⁶⁷ and Lofland’s fourth stage of

³⁶⁵Ibid., 56.

³⁶⁶Ibid., 87.

³⁶⁷Rogers, 400.

“encountering the cult at a turning point in his life.” This is the important stage where the presenter of the gospel has a great opportunity to attract, present, impress, and inform the potential convert with clarity, humility, and persuasiveness. In Burman context, this is the opportunity many people blow away when they are not able to greet, interact and discuss with Buddhists and are unable to carry on their friendship connection to move toward to more meaningful relationship building which could lead to conversion of the other. Without knowledge and encounters with Christianity, people will not believe the gospel. Without hearing the gospel from the people, people will not believe in the gospel because “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom 10: 17; cf. vv. 14-16).

Fifth, interaction is more intense and takes place in the direction of persuasion and teaching of the new faith. The encounter and interaction stages could be overlapping each other. Again this stage is comparable to Lofland’s fifth stage “wherein an affective bond to adherents is formed” (or pre-exists) and Rogers’ second stage of “persuasion.” In this intense interaction, Rogers’ fourth characteristic “empathy expressed by the innovator” and sixth characteristic “credibility of change agent” are very important ingredients for the receptor to adopt or reject the innovation (the gospel). Through empathy and credibility, the presenter of the gospel can impact the receptor and persuade him/her to the next level of decision and commitment for conversion.

In the transition stage (pre-commitment stage),³⁶⁸ Rogers’ “decision” and “implementation” stages should be inserted before moving to Rambo’s commitment stage. At this stage, a potential convert weighs in advantages and disadvantages of

³⁶⁸This author adds this transition stage to bridge Rambo’s interaction and commitment stage.

becoming Christian and tests the available possibilities. This is the same stage as Lofland's sixth stage where "extra-cult attachments are low and neutralized" and seventh stage "where, to become a 'deployable agent,' exposure to intensive interaction is accomplished." At this stage, the potential convert is at the "deployment-ready stage" to launch out for a final decision of conversion. In Burman context, potential converts test God's existence and power to see if God will respond to their critical crisis situations. If and when God reveals Himself as real and powerful to meet their needs, Burmans go to the next step of commitment for conversion.

Sixth, the commitment stage is another similar stage with Rogers' "confirmation" stage. This phase includes a decisive moment of making decisions, embodying new commitments, and constituting a new identity with the religious groups expressing the transformation in the ritual forms of baptism and public testimonies.³⁶⁹ A potential convert becomes a real convert at this stage. The seventh stage is consequences. The consequences a new convert experiences may include a drastic change of life-style, a new dimension of beliefs and actions, new meaning and new purpose in life, and a new security and tranquility. This is a post-conversion experience which could be positive and negative depending on the situation of the new convert.

In Burman context, most new converts encounter extreme conflicts and ostracism from their families as reactions to their new found faith, which the families views as a desertion of one's own family, race, culture, and religion. One convert interviewee testified that the oppositions from his people and former religion are encouragements for him and are the motivational factors making his faith stronger in

³⁶⁹Rambo, 124.

God.³⁷⁰ On the positive side of the conversion, most of the converts interviewed became active witnesses for the kingdom of God serving in full-time ministry as evangelists, pastors and ministers, and lay active evangelists testifying to the goodness of God and the grace of God given through Christ Jesus for all mankind.

D. Critical Assessment of the Employed Theories³⁷¹

Interactions with diffusion, identity, and conversion theories provide very helpful and better understanding of barriers in the conversion process in the context of Burman Buddhists. However, this does not mean that the author completely agrees with the theories because these theories do not perfectly fit into the context of Burma in the process of conversion. Stages provided in these theories are very helpful in understanding the whole process of conversion and are comparable to the stages in the process of Burman conversions, but the order of the stages is questionable when applied to the Burman specific context. For example, the author, when using Rambo's conversion process pattern, inserts a new stage called "transition stage" (or pre-commitment stage) between commitment and interaction stages (context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment and consequences)³⁷² because this stage is missing in Rambo's conversion pattern.

Lofland lists seven steps in the process of conversion which are helpful in understanding the whole process of conversion, but the order of the stages is practically not applicable for Burman conversions. For example, a person may have a

³⁷⁰Soe Win, interview by author, Albany, NY, November 28, 2008.

³⁷¹This section is added as a result of the suggestion of my mentor who advised me to challenge the existing theories with reference to my research findings in the context of Burma. I am very grateful for this challenge which stretches my elastic thinking zone wider.

³⁷²Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversions*, 20-164.

personal interest (which may be related to intellectual and scientific curiosities) in Christianity without first having experienced “acutely felt tensions.”³⁷³ An interviewee admits that he visited a Christian church not as a “religious seeker,” as Lofland would have classified him, but he came to the church as a “girlfriend seeker” who eventually got interested in Christianity and finally converted to it.³⁷⁴

Rogers’ five steps of innovation-decision process (knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation)³⁷⁵ are helpful in assessing the conversion process, but the exact order cannot be followed in the context of Burman conversion. A Burman Buddhist may oscillate between the decision stage and the implementation stage. Or, the order of these two may be reversed in a Burman context. One might first implement Christianity and then make a decision if he or she really finds Christianity beneficial to present and/or future needs. For example, many Burman interviewee converts testified that they first tested God’s power to answer their prayers, and then they would make a decision to convert to Christianity if God really answered their prayers.

Rogers also affirms that the change agent’s success is related to eight characteristics in relation to the adopters.³⁷⁶ Each of these qualities is very important in the conversion process for Burman Buddhists, but not every successful conversion story consists of all these good qualities. It is good to strictly follow human successful

³⁷³Lofland, *Doomsday Cult*, 7-8.

³⁷⁴Maung Kyii, interview by author, Utica, NY, July 20, 2009.

³⁷⁵Rogers, 169.

³⁷⁶1. Degree of contact, 2. A client orientation, 3. Compatibility with client’s needs, 4. Empathy expressed by innovators, 5. Homophily with clients (similarity with clients), 6. Credibility of change agent, 7. Mediatory assistance from opinion leaders (opinion leaders are those who influence others in adopting an innovation), and 8. Client’s ability to evaluate innovations, *Ibid.*, 400.

methods, but God can also work without perfect qualities of service. This assessment does not negate the importance of these qualities, but it clarifies the divine involvement in the process of conversion in spite of failed human means.

Any strict order of development in the process of conversion does not always fit every situation in every conversion for every convert. This is especially true in Christian conversion because God interacts with the human situations and the conditions of a particular potential convert in different times in different orders with multiple incidences working against natural orders, principles, and theories by miraculously intervening the conversion process at His will.

Chapter IX

Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Implications on the Concept of Conversion

Since conversion is a very broad subject, no one theological word contains and expresses the whole spectrum of the concept of conversion. Different Old Testament and New Testament authors use various words to describe the event or process of conversion. The NT concept of conversion somewhat differs from what is found in the OT. Different theologians and authors view and describe conversion in different ways. Many theologians, such as A. H. Strong, Louis Berkhof, Millard Erickson, and others, consider repentance and faith as the two elements of conversion. Others have more than these two elements. Gordon T. Smith views conversion as having seven elements:

belief: the intellectual component, repentance: the penitential component, trust and assurance of forgiveness: the emotional or affective component, commitment, allegiance, and devotion: the volitional component, water baptism: the sacramental component, reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit: the charismatic component, and incorporation into Christian community: the corporate component.³⁷⁷

This is quite a comprehensive list for the elements of conversion. Looking at this list, the broadness of Smith's classification of conversion almost equates the concept of salvation, which seems much broader than conversion.

Generally, Christian conversion can be understood or explained in one of two ways. First, the term 'conversion' can be used as an equivalent term for 'salvation.' In this sense, explaining conversion will cover a broad spectrum, involving election, predestination, foreknowledge, calling, the initial exposure to the gospel, initial

³⁷⁷Gordon T. Smith, *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion & Authentic Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 138-141.

turning, justification, repentance, faith, regeneration, sacrificial death, atoning death, redemption, and sanctification. This view covers both divine and human aspects of salvation. This classification is stretching the concept of conversion to be a little more than what it really is. On the other hand, dealing with conversion in a more defined and narrower way means strictly focusing on the human aspects of salvation in the process of conversion. This is what this dissertation is trying to focus on: the human side of salvation. Conversion as a process and an event involves many important theological elements. Before proceeding further, the definition of conversion is in order.

A. Definition of Conversion

Conversion generally is a turning away from something or someone in order to turn to another thing or another person. George E. Morris defines, “Biblical conversion is a fundamental reorientation of the whole person, a reorientation which requires concrete obedience. It is the total turning of the total person towards the God who acts in history to redeem.”³⁷⁸ Millard Erickson defines conversion as “the act of turning from one’s sin in repentance and turning to Christ in faith.”³⁷⁹ Friedrich Schleiermacher also defines conversion in this way: “Conversion, the beginning of the new life in fellowship with Christ, makes itself know in each individual by Repentance, which consist in the combination of regret and change of heart; and by Faith, which consists in the appropriation of the perfection and blessedness of

³⁷⁸George Morrison, *The Mystery and Meaning of Christian Conversion* (Nashville, TN: The World Methodist Council, 1981), 37.

³⁷⁹Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 1998), 946.

Christ.”³⁸⁰ The two previous definitions stress the fact that conversion involves both repentance of sins and faith in Christ.

According to Wayne Grudem, “Conversion is our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation. The word *conversion* itself means “turning”—here it represents a spiritual turn, a turning *from* sin to Christ. The turning from sin is called *repentance*, and the turning to Christ is called *faith*.”³⁸¹ As for Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce D. Demarest, conversion has to do with the Gospel:

Conversion is the general term encompassing conscious belief of the Gospel, turning from sin in repentance, and trusting Christ. We *define* conversion to Christ as that conscious experience of sinners who believe the truth of the Gospel, repent of their sins, and rely on the crucified and risen Messiah for justification and newness of life.³⁸²

All four definitions can be understood as theological definitions of conversion which includes the two themes in common: repentance and faith.

According to Warren S. Brown and Carla Caetano, biblical explanation of conversion “emphasizes changes in belief, worldview, affect, and behavior.”³⁸³ Worldview has to do with the nature of change taking place within the new convert, when “the old has gone and the new has come” (II Cor 5:17) occurring “some discernible discontinuity in the person” as he/she is being “set free from sin,” [Rom

³⁸⁰Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1999), 480-481.

³⁸¹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 709.

³⁸²Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce D. Demarest, *Integrative Theology: Historical, Biblical, Systematic, Apologetics, Practical* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 102.

³⁸³Warren S. Brown and Carla Caetano, “Conversion, Cognition, and Neuropsychology,” In *Handbook of Religious Conversion*, ed. H. Newton Malony and Samuel Southard (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1992), 148.

6:22; 8:22] while “walk(ing) not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit,” [Rom 8:4] and “walking in newness of life” [Rom 6:4], because “Once [he/she] was blind, now he/she sees” [John 9:25].”³⁸⁴ This definition is different from the previous four definitions because it deals with the missional aspect (worldview) which is the unseen part of the iceberg in the process of conversion.

Conversion also involves emotion, which is “a feeling of the profound significance of the decision” resulting in “[j]oy, ecstasy, a sense of well-being, or the excitement of discovery” which are the “affective experiences”³⁸⁵ of conversion. Change of behavior is a major element in conversion as it is described thus: “This change of “nature” is evidenced in a change in behavior described biblically as the “fruits of the spirit” [Gal 5:22-23]. Fundamental changes in attitudes lead in some cases to sudden-and-dramatic, but more typically progressive-but-noticeable, changes in one’s behavior.”³⁸⁶

Warren S. Brown and Carla Caetano carefully summarize biblical conversion in four points:

1) changes in sincerely made verbal expressions of belief; 2) changes in the broader, largely ineffable, life-perspectives on the basis of which attitudes are formed and behaviors expressed; 3) some degree of positive affective experience particularly in the case of more sudden and dramatic conversions, and 4) some consequent changes in observable behavior.”³⁸⁷

Conversion is both a process and an event, which involves changes from old beliefs, worldviews, decisions, and emotions to the new ones.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 148-49.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 149.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

B. The Uniqueness of Christian Conversion

Christian conversion is a religious conversion similar to other religious conversions. It is distinct in the objective aspects, though many of the subjective aspects of it may be similar to conversion in other religions. David F. Wells explains the uniqueness of Christian conversion this way:

Conversion is not uniquely Christian, but Christian conversion is unique and uniquely true. If we focus on behavioral changes, Christian conversion may be difficult to distinguish from some other types of conversion. If we focus on Christ to whom the sinner has turned in faith, Christian conversion is as different from other forms of conversion as Christ is from the founders of other faiths.³⁸⁸

Christian conversion as compared to other religious conversions is generally viewed only in the subjective sense as “changed behavior,” which obscures the uniqueness of Christian conversion in the “objective realities of conversion—its divine origin, supernatural change, and eternal results.”³⁸⁹ While the fact that Christian testimonies of changed lives are effective means of evangelism cannot be denied, similar stories of changed lives in the other world religions challenge the uniqueness of Christian conversion. On the other hand, the other pressing issue is that many Christians are not always better in moral character and behavior than many of the religious people in other world religions. One Christian minister interviewee sadly admits, “Many Buddhists do not drink but many Christians drink.”³⁹⁰ In the moral area also, Christians are not much better than other religious people of other faiths.

³⁸⁸David F. Wells, *Turning to God: Biblical Conversion in Modern World* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: W. E. F., 1997), 23.

³⁸⁹*Ibid.*

³⁹⁰Abraham, interview by author, Fort Wayne, IN, November 21, 2008.

In order to display Christian conversion as unique compared to other religious conversions, the uniqueness of the founder – His message, His life, His death and resurrection and His mysterious yet real relationship and bond with His followers – should be stressed in Christian evangelism. The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes” (Rom 1:16). God has revealed Himself “which may be known of God” (Rom 1:19) to people of all races, religious backgrounds and geographical locations through the general revelation throughout the ages. David Wells further comments, “But conversion is not an experience that stands alone. It is the doorway to the building of salvation. And God does not want us to stand in the doorway, marveling at the threshold. He wants us to enter the building and marvel at what is inside.”³⁹¹

The uniqueness of Christianity is that it cannot be understood completely by mere outside observations. One has to be the insider to understand and experience the full uniqueness of God’s rich and full redemptive blessings imparted to those who turn to Him in faith. The unique nature of Christianity from other world religions will be more evident when Christ will return to receive His own unto Himself and leave out those who deny Him. No more explanations will be necessary then when it really happens. This is an undeniable truth, which is hard for non-believers to see and understand (the Gospel).

The truth is the mystery of the Gospel to the natural mind (I Cor 2:14; II Cor 4:3, 4; Rom 8:5-7). Therefore, God called believers to be witnesses and agents of conversion “to open the ears so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins and an

³⁹¹Wells, *Turning to God*, 25.

inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in [God]” (Acts 26:17, 18). The unique nature of Christian conversion is the mystery of God’s Spirit working in the hearts of the converts during the process of conversion. Other religious conversions do not have the unique divine involvement and enabling in the process of Christian conversion.

C. The Relationship between Conversion and Regeneration

According to Schleiermacher, conversion comes before regeneration and repentance precedes faith. To him, “Repentance and faith, then, are to be taken as covering the whole experience of conversion.”³⁹² Lewis and Demarest stress the distinction between conversion and regeneration by saying that conversion is human act and regeneration is divine act:

(1) Conversion is primarily a human act; regeneration is exclusively an act of God the Holy Spirit. (2) In conversion the Holy Spirit works indirectly or mediately through human witnesses; in regeneration the Spirit works directly and immediately, wherever he pleases, like the wind (John 3:8). Whereas conversion involves conscious travail, regeneration occurs beneath the level of consciousness. (4) Conversion takes a longer or shorter period of time; the gift of new life is received at a specific point in time (though we may be unable to identify it). (5) Conversion expresses an initial response to Christ; regeneration permanently renews the moral image of God and provides for a lifelong perseverance.³⁹³

Augustus H. Strong differentiates regeneration from conversion in the following words: “Regeneration, or the new birth, is the divine side of that change of heart which, viewed from the human side, we call conversion. It is God’s turning the

³⁹²Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 483.

³⁹³Lewis and Demarest, 104.

soul to himself -- conversion being the soul's turning itself to God, of which God's turning it is both the accompaniment and cause."³⁹⁴

According to Strong, the soul is both passive and active in regeneration as he explains:

God changes the governing disposition, -- in this change the soul is simply acted upon. God secures the initial exercise of this disposition in view of the truth, -- in this change the soul itself acts. Yet these two parts of God's operation are simultaneous. At the same moment that he makes the soul sensitive, he pours in the light of his truth and induces the exercise of the holy disposition he has imparted... In regeneration there is no chronological succession. At the same instant that God makes the soul sensitive, he also draws out its news sensitivity in view of the truth.³⁹⁵

Strong understands repentance negatively as "the turning from sin" and faith positively as "the turning to Christ," and he further explains interconnectedness of regeneration and conversion this way:

Conversion is the human side or aspect of that fundamental spiritual change which, as viewed from the divine side, we call regeneration. It is simply man's turning. The Scriptures recognize the voluntary activity of the human soul in this change as distinctly as they recognize the causative agency of God. While God turns men to himself (Ps. 85:4; Song 1:4; Jer. 31:18; Lam. 5:21), men are exhorted to turn to themselves to God (Prov. 1:23; Is. 31:6; 59:20; Ez. 14:6; 18:32; 33:9, 11; Joel 2:12-14). While God is represented as the author of the new heart and the new spirit (Ps. 51:10; Ez. 11:19; 36:26), men are commanded to make for themselves a new heart and a new spirit (Ez. 18:31; 2 Cor. 7:1; cf. Phil 2:12, 13; Eph. 5:14).³⁹⁶

Salvation undoubtedly involves both the responsibility of man (conversion) and the divine act (regeneration). According to Strong, conversion "chronologically

³⁹⁴Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology: A Compendium Designed for the Use of Theological Students* (Valley Forge, PA: The Judson Press, 1907), 809.

³⁹⁵Ibid.

³⁹⁶Ibid., 829.

accompanies regeneration, though it logically follows it.”³⁹⁷ For Erickson, conversion comes before regeneration.³⁹⁸ As far as Lewis and Demarest are concerned, “Spiritual conception (calling and conversion) precedes the spiritual birth of a child of God (I Cor. 3:6).”³⁹⁹

Different theologians have various opinions about the order of conversion and regeneration, but it is safe to say that they occur simultaneously, and it is not always easy to pinpoint the time of regeneration or conversion in many cases, for it is hard to predict the manner and direction of the blowing of the wind (cf. John 3: 8). Even if there is a logical order of the different elements of conversion process, it is not easy exactly to nail down which order is the most biblical order. To be sure and safe, God only knows if there is a specific order to be followed. Most of the theologians, quoted so far in this project, differ in the order of conversion and regeneration, but most of them believe that conversion is a human work, and regeneration is a divine work.

D. Relationship between Repentance and Faith in Conversion

Speaking of the human side of salvation, many theologians concur that conversion involves repentance and faith. These two elements are inseparable twins in the process of conversion. Grudem defines Repentance as: “a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ.”⁴⁰⁰ He understands repentance in three different ways as he views faith as involving the intellect, the emotion and the will of a person: “Repentance, like faith, is

³⁹⁷Ibid., 831.

³⁹⁸Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 955.

³⁹⁹Lewis and Demarest, 104.

⁴⁰⁰Grudem, 712.

an intellectual *understanding* (that sin is wrong), an emotional *approval* of the teachings of Scriptures regarding sin (a sorrow for sin and a hatred of it), and a *personal decision* to turn from it (a renouncing of sin and a decision of the will to forsake it and lead a life of obedience to Christ instead).⁴⁰¹ He adds, “Of course, genuine repentance will result in a changed life ... We can call that changed life the fruit of repentance.”⁴⁰²

A.H. Strong understands repentance in three different ways: first, change of view intellectually, which is the “recognition of sin as involving personal guilt, defilement, and helplessness (Ps. 51:3, 7, 11), second, change of feeling which involves “sorrow for sin as committed against goodness and justice, and therefore hateful to God, and hateful in itself (Ps. 51:1, 2, 1014),” and finally, change of purpose which is “inward turning from sin and disposition to seek pardon and cleansing (Ps. 51:5, 7, 10; Jer. 25:5).”⁴⁰³ Strong identifies different Greek words for these three changes of repentance: he uses *epignosis amartias* for the change of view (cf. Rom. 3:20; 1: 32); *metamelomai* for the change of feeling (Matt 27:3; Lk. 18:23; II Cor 7:9, 10); and *metanoia* for the change of purpose (Acts 2:38; Rom. 2:4).

Strong makes a distinction between “repentance” and “fruit worthy of repentance” as he writes: “True repentance is indeed manifested and evidenced by confession of sin before God (Luke 18:13), and by reparation for wrongs done to men (Luke 19:8). But these do not constitute repentance; they are rather fruits of repentance. Between ‘repentance’ and ‘fruit worthy of repentance,’ Scripture plainly

⁴⁰¹Grudem, 713.

⁴⁰²Grudem, 713.

⁴⁰³Strong, 832- 833.

distinguishes (Mat. 3:8).”⁴⁰⁴ Strong provides a list of “Fruit worthy of repentance, or fruits meet for repentance” as follows: “1. Confession of sin; 2. Surrender to Christ; 3. Turning from sin; 4. Reparation for wrong doing; 5. High moral conduct; 6. Profession of Christian faith.”⁴⁰⁵

Grudem believes that repentance and faith occurs simultaneously as he comments:

Scripture puts repentance and faith together as different aspects of the one set of coming to Christ for salvation. It is not that a person first turns from sin and next trusts in Christ, or first trusts in Christ and then turns from sin, but rather that both occur at the same time. When we turn to Christ *for* salvation from our sins, we are simultaneously turning *away* from the sins that we are asking Christ to save us from. If that were not true our turning to Christ for salvation from sin could hardly be a genuine turning to him or trusting in him.⁴⁰⁶

There are different scriptures that emphasize repentance more than belief or vice versa. However, this seemingly different emphasis does not need to create problems for believers. Lewis and Demarest comment on this:

Certainly God commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). Repentance is not something separate from conversion, for a turning *to* Christ necessarily involves turning *from* other masters. The term “repentance” need not be mentioned for the concept to be implicit in the command to first-century Gentiles to turn from their idols to receive Christ. To receive Christ as the light of the world is to turn from darkness (John 8:12)... In the first century, conversion to Christ involved a radical break with moralistic legalism, pride of status, idolatry, and occultism. In that setting texts in John that simply call people to “believe” point up the need for knowledge, assent, and a commitment to Christ that repudiate bondage to the Deceiver.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁴Strong, 834-835.

⁴⁰⁵Strong, 835.

⁴⁰⁶Grudem, 713.

⁴⁰⁷Lewis and Demarest, 113-114.

While the Scriptures that stress the importance of repentance do not negate the necessity for faith, the Scriptures that emphasize faith more than repentance do not object to the need for repentance. Where one Scripture lacks the mention of the faith, it is assumed that by “By faith alone, one can be saved” and where other Scripture lacks the mention of repentance, it is assumed that “By turning from sins, one can enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Strong further stresses the importance of the inseparableness of true repentance and true faith,

The true penitent man feels that his repentance has no merit. Apart from the positive element of conversion, namely, faith in Christ, it would be only sorrow for guilt unremoved. . . . That true repentance, however, never exists except in conjunction with faith. . . . Hence all true preaching of repentance is implicitly a preaching of faith (Mat. 3:1-12; cf. Acts 19:4) and repentance toward God involves faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21; Luke 15:10, 24; 19:8, 9; cf. Gal. 3:7). . . . That, conversely, wherever there is true faith, there is true repentance also. Since repentance and faith are but different sides or aspects of the same act of turning, faith is as inseparable from repentance as repentance is from faith.⁴⁰⁸

The theologians quoted in this section have differing opinions about the order of repentance and faith, but the view that they occur simultaneously seems to be the most reasonable and simplest option to accept. Repentance and faith are unquestionably the two cornerstones in the process of conversion and one of the two is assumed to exist alongside of the other even when the other is not specifically mentioned in the Scriptures. A more careful investigation of the biblical teachings about the human aspects of conversion reveals that there are more elements of conversion, in addition to faith and repentance, which are also human actions or responsibilities in the process of conversion. They will be treated in the next section

⁴⁰⁸Strong, 836.

following repentance and faith with their definitions and respective usages and theological concept in the Bible.

E. Repentance in Conversion

1. Repentance in the Old Testament

The word שׁוּב (*shub*) is the most prominent term denoting conversion in the Old Testament which occurs about 1056 times, with 118 religious renderings. It could be translated as “to go back again,” “to return” or “to turn about” depending on the context.⁴⁰⁹ The term *shub* is the twelfth most frequently used verb in the Old Testament. It denotes the concept of twofold turning in repentance “to turn from evil and to turn to the good.”⁴¹⁰ Likewise, conversion can be understood in two ways, “There are two sides in understanding conversion, the free sovereign act of God’s mercy and man’s going beyond contrition and sorrow to a conscious decision of turning to God. The latter includes repudiation of all sin and affirmation of God’s total will for one’s life.”⁴¹¹ The Hebrew term *shub* is used at least 129 times in “passages dealing with the covenant community’s return to God (in the sense of repentance), or turning away from evil (in the sense of renouncing and disowning sin), or turning away from God (in the sense of becoming apostate).”⁴¹² Different usages of the term ‘turn’ is further explained:

The LXX uses *metanoia* only 5x, most notably in Wis. 11:23; 12:10, 19 with reference to God, who shows mercy and patience so that people will

⁴⁰⁹E. Würthwein, “μετάνοιέω μετάνοια,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 4: 984.

⁴¹⁰Victor P. Hamilton, “שׁוּב (*shub*),” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980, 2: 909.

⁴¹¹*Ibid.*

⁴¹²*Ibid.*

repent. The vb. *Metanoeo* is used either of God (cf. I Sam. 15:29; Jer. 18:8; Joel 2:13-14; Amos 7:3, 6) or of humans (Jer. 8:6; 31:19=LXX 38:19) as a transl. of the Heb. *niham*. The thought of turning round, preached by the prophets with the Heb.v. *sub*, is rendered by *epistrepho* in Gr. (Amos 4:6; Hos. 5:4; 6:1;→2188). The prophetic call to turn presupposes that the relationship of the people and the individual to God must be understood in personal terms. Sin and apostasy disturb and break the relationship. Turning means turning away from evil and turning to God.⁴¹³

The prophetic concept of conversion, however, is

“the concept of conversion” which emphasizes positively the fact that penitence involves a new relation to God which embraces all spheres of *human life*, that it claims *the will*, and that man cannot make good this or that fault by this or that measure... This question of man’s position before God is the question of existence. Everything else depends on it, the relation to fellow-men, the cultus, the state, politics etc.”⁴¹⁴

Joel on behalf of God demanded, “‘Yet even now,’ declares the LORD,

‘Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning’” (2:12;

cf. Is. 22:12) and “And rend your heart and not your garments. Now return to the

LORD your God” (2:13). There is a sense of inner turning of the heart present in the

Old Testament times. The reciprocal return is mentioned in II Chronicles 30:6,

“Return to the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that he may return to you who are left.”

Hosea pictured the relationship of Israel to God as an unfaithful wife to her husband, Isaiah depicted it as a rebellion son to his father and Jeremiah viewed it as forsaking Yahweh. Würthwein summarizes this concept of the personal view of sin in the prophetic era, “All these expressions show that sin is simply turning away or

⁴¹³Verlyn Verbrugge ed., *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words: An Abridgement of New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 819.

⁴¹⁴E. Würthwein, “μετάνοιᾶ μετάνοια,” in *TDNT*, 4: 984-985.

apostasy from God.”⁴¹⁵ The prophets (Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah) “regard penitence as a converting or returning to Yahweh.”⁴¹⁶ The prophetic concept of conversion is

a turning to Yahweh with all one’s being, an absolutely serious reckoning with Him as Israel’s God in all decisions... Turning to Yahweh... demands unconditional trust in Him and the renunciation of all human help (coalitions), of false gods and idols.... Conversion to Yahweh naturally carries with it a new attitude to everything else. This is displayed negatively in a turning away from all evil and ungodliness.”⁴¹⁷

Amos was sent to prophesy against Israel about God’s judgment (7:15)

without any hope of deliverance by the conversion of the people to Yahweh (7:8; 8:2).

Hosea had very little confidence and hope for the people to turn to God because of the seriousness of their sins, “Their deeds will not allow them to turn back to their God”

(5:4). At the same time, Hosea hoped that the people would be ready for conversion

(2:8; 3:5, 14:2) after they had learned their lesson through God’s judgment, which

carries the promise of salvation (14:5). Isaiah hoped for the possibility of conversion

only for the small remnant which would escape God’s judgment when they will return to Yahweh in faith while the majority of the people would perish because of the

hardening of their hearts (6:9, 10). Jeremiah had two conflicting issues in his

ministry. On the one hand, he prophesized the possibility of conversion of the people

with the hope that Yahweh would change his proposed judgment (26:3; 36:3, 7) and

would forgive their sins (36:3). On the other hand, Jeremiah preached a pessimistic

message about the wickedness of the people, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil”

(13:23). Even though Jeremiah was perplexed about the unpredictability of the

⁴¹⁵Ibid., 985.

⁴¹⁶Ibid.

⁴¹⁷Ibid., 985-986.

conversion of the people, he, by faith, looked forward to the true inner conversion of the heart when the Lord would give new hearts to His people (31:33).⁴¹⁸ The prophecy about the new heart is fulfilled in the New Testament, and will be discussed in the following section (cf. II Cor 5:17).

2. Repentance in the New Testament

Repentance is a common theological term used in the New Testament. The process of repentance, penitence and conversion is

expressed in the NT by three word-groups which deal with its various aspects: *epistrepho*, *metamelomai* and *metanoeo*. The first and third both mean turn round, turn oneself round, and refer to a man's conversion... *metamelomai* expresses rather the feeling of repentance for error, debt, failure and sin, and so it looks back. Hence, it does not necessarily cause a man to turn to God. *epistrepho* is the probably the widest conception, because it always includes →faith. We often find *pisteuo*, believe, expressly used with *metanoeo*, since faith complements repentance.⁴¹⁹

Ceslas Spicq notes: "In the NT, *metanoeo* and *metanoia* (56 occurrences) retain this basic meaning, "change opinions, regret, be grieved about something," but they are used almost new theological density; they form an essential part of the kerygma lexicon, urging "conversion" to Christianity."⁴²⁰ The preposition "meta," can mean "after," "with," or "around" while the cognate verb "no,ew" means to know. The combination of the prefix and the cognate verb means literally "to know after," or "to know later." In classical Greek and *koine* Greek, it can also mean "to change one's mind," "to adopt another view," or "to change one's feelings." *meta,noia* could mean "later knowledge," "subsequent emendation," or "change of mind" which could

⁴¹⁸Ibid., 987.

⁴¹⁹F. Laubach, "Conversion," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 1: 353-354.

⁴²⁰Ceslas Spicq, "μετάνοέω, μετάνοια," in *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 2:475.

affect the feelings, the will, and thought. The noun form also could mean “regret” or “remorse.”⁴²¹ In the pre-Christian Greek world, the term *metanoia* did not carry the concept of “a radical change in a person’s life as a whole.”⁴²²

J. Behm comments on the New Testament’s distinctive usage of the terms *metavnoe,w* and *meta,noia* by saying that “*metavnoe,w* and *meta,noia* are the forms in which the NT gives new expression to the ancient concept of religious and moral conversion.”⁴²³ Conversion (repentance) is the main doctrine of John the Baptist (Mk 1:4; Mt 3:2, 8; Acts 13:24; 19:4; Lk 1:16). The preaching and baptism of John the Baptist is about conversion, which is for all people:

It is demanded of all, not just of notorious sinners (Lk. 3:12f.) or Gentiles (Lk. 3:14). Conversion is required of righteous Jews who do not think they need it (Mt. 3:7 ff.). It implies a change from within. This change must be demonstrated in the totality of a corresponding life (Mt. 3:8: a life of ποιήσατε οὖν καρπὸν ἄξιον τῆς μετανοίας, cf. v. 10), a life of love and righteousness in accordance with the will of God (Lk. 3:10-14). With the preaching of conversion John connects the baptism of conversion (βάπτισμα μετανοίας, Mk. 1:4 par.; Ac. 13:24; 19:4), a sacramental act of purification which effects both remission of sins (εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, Mk. 1:4 par.) conversion (ἐγὼ μὲν ὑμᾶς βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι εἰς μετάνοιαν (Mt 3:11). The meaning is that the complete change of man’s nature for the coming *aeon* is God’s work in baptism. Through the eschatological sacrament of John’s baptism God fashions for Himself a community of the converted who are given a place in the coming salvation. μετάνοια is both God’s gift and man’s task.⁴²⁴

Jesus completes the message of John the Baptist in His baptism of the Spirit. Just like John the Baptist, Jesus also preached repentance in the imperative sense – “Repent”, with no apology (Mk. 1:15; Mt. 4:17). The author notes: “But Jesus does

⁴²¹J. Behm, “μετάνοιό μετάνοια,” in *TDNT*, 4: 976-978.

⁴²²Verlyn Verbrugge ed., *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 819.

⁴²³J. Behm, “μετάνοιό μετάνοια,” in *TDNT*, 4: 1000.

⁴²⁴J. Behm, “μετανόεω, μετάνοια” in *TDNT*, 4:1001.

not merely repeat the call of the Baptist. He modifies and transcends it by making conversion a fundamental requirement which necessarily follows from the present reality of the eschatological basileia in His own person. To call to conversion is the purpose of His sending (Lk. 5:32).⁴²⁵ This conversion “affects the whole man, first and basically the centre of personal life, then logically his conduct at all times and in all situations, his thoughts, words and acts (Mt. 12:33ff. par.; 23:26; Mk. 7:15 par.).”⁴²⁶

The similarity between the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus is that they both preached an identical message “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt 3:2; 4:17), but the notable difference between them is “that Jesus did not, as did John, look for one to follow him (cf. 3:11). He saw in his own coming the beginning of God’s decisive work (11:6; Lk. 11:20; 17:21), which explains the woes addressed to the towns that were not ready to repent (Matt. 11:20-24 par.).”⁴²⁷ The stark difference between the Old Testament’s repentance and Jesus’ call for repentance is that “Repentance is now no longer obedience to a law [as it was in the Old Testament] but to a person [Jesus Christ the Messiah and the Savior]. The call to repentance becomes a call to discipleship.”⁴²⁸ Jesus explains true conversion by comparing it with the humble characteristic of children, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 18:3).

To be a child (→ παιδίον) is to be little, to need help, to be receptive to it. He who is converted becomes little before God (cf. v. 4→ταπεινώω), ready to let

⁴²⁵Ibid.

⁴²⁶Ibid., 1002.

⁴²⁷ Verlyn Verbrugge ed., *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 819.

⁴²⁸Ibid.

God work in him. The children ... are those who simply receive from Him. He gives them what they cannot give themselves (cf. Mk. 10:27 par.). This is true of *μετάνοια*. It is God's gift... Behind the call for conversion... there stands the promise of the transformation which He effects as the One who brings in this rule (cf. Mt. 11:28ff.)... It awakens joyous obedience for a life according to God's will. This is because *μετάνοια* here is no longer Law, as in Judaism, but Gospel.⁴²⁹

The sermon of Peter at the Pentecost stressed the connection between conversion and baptism (Acts 2:38). Conversion is a turning from evil (Ac. 8:22, cf. 3:26; Hb.6:1; Rev. 2:22; 9:20 f.; 16:11) and a turning towards God (Ac. 20:21; 26:20; I Pet 2:25; Rev. 16:9). It is man's responsibility (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; 26:20) and God's gift (Acts 5:31; 3:26; 11:18; Rev. 2:21) based in the finished work of Christ on the cross (Acts 5:31). Repentance as the work of the Spirit (Acts 10:45; 11:15, 18) is to be understood in light of Jesus' fulfillment of John's promise concerning the baptism of the Spirit. The urgency of conversion is stressed in Revelation in view of the imminent end of the world (2:5, 16; 3:3, 19) and this addresses the enduring aspect of salvation in the challenging evil world. The repentance leading to eternal life (Acts 11:18) is associated with the forgiveness and cleansing of sins (Lk 24:47; Acts 3:19; 8:22) and also with baptism (Acts 2:38) and with faith (Acts 10:43).⁴³⁰

The various usages of different aspects of conversion require an explanation. The gospel writers, Paul, and other New Testament authors use their own choices of words to express conversion in their own context.

If in Jesus conversion includes faith, in Paul *meta, noia* is comprised in →πίστις, the central concept in his doctrine of salvation... John avoids the loaded terms, but he, too, has the matter itself no less definitely than Paul.

⁴²⁹J. Behm, "μετανοέω, μετάνοια" in *TDNT*, 4:1003.

⁴³⁰*Ibid.*, 1004.

For him, too, faith (→πιστεύω) includes conversion. The preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus' own preaching in this Gospel, and the exhortation of John himself in 1 Jn. all press for faith in Jesus and thus demand conversion to Him. The reverse side, turning from evil, is self-evident in view of the sharp line which the Johannine Jesus and the author of 1 Jn. draw between light and darkness, truth and falsehood, love and hate, life and death, God and the world [The concept of birth from God as the way into God's kingdom (Jn. 3:3-8; cf. Mt. 18:3) is the Synoptic message of Jesus concerning conversion]. There is an inner continuity of the idea of conversion throughout the NT.⁴³¹

The possibility of conversion being expressed in different terms by different authors is further explained:

There are many passages in which the word *metanoe* does not appear, but in which the thought of repentance is clearly present (e.g., see Matt. 5:3; 18:3, 10, 14; Lk. 14:33). ... The fact that this group of words [repentance and conversion] occurs seldom in Paul's letters (only 6x) and not at all in Jn.'s Gospel or letters does not mean that the idea of conversion is not present there, but only that a more specialized terminology developed. Paul speaks of a person, through faith, as being in Christ, as dying and rising with Christ, as a new creation, or as putting on the new self. John represents new life in Christ as new birth, as a passing from death to life or from darkness to light, or as the victory of truth over falsehood and of love over hate.⁴³²

Therefore, different authors of the New Testament are speaking of the same aspect of salvation even when they use different terms such as repentance, faith, new birth, remission of sin, turning and other related words to describe the same process of conversion. The exclusive use of one term over the other does not negate the importance of conversion, but the terms complement each other, because the usage of a particular term (e.g. repentance) assumes the inclusion of the concept of the other terms used by other writers (e.g. faith).

⁴³¹Ibid., 1005.

⁴³²Verlyn Verbrugge ed., *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 819-820.

F. Faith in Conversion

1. Faith in the Old Testament

The Hebrew word אָמַן *'aman* is the word used for faith. The same word is used in Isaiah 7:9, “If you will not believe, you shall not be established” (RSV). The word *bata* is also used in the OT referring to men’s false security (Hab 2:8; Hos 10:13) and God’s trustworthiness (Jer 39:18; II King 18:30). The interaction of the OT faith and the NT faith is seen in passages such as Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3, 9, 22; Gal 3:6; Jas 2:23). The noun form of faith is rarely used in the Old Testament except for a few places (Hab. 2:4; Deut. 32:4; Ps. 36:5; 37:3; 40:11). However, the New Testament’s quotations of the Old Testament (cf. Rom 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38) seem to suggest that Habakkuk used it in the noun form of faith. The Old Testament verb form for “believe” is *he’emin* which is the hiphil form of *'aman*. The meaning varies according to the grammatical forms associated with it:

In *qal* it means “to nurse” or “to nourish”; in *niphal*, “to be firm” or “established,” “steadfast”; and it *hiphil*, “to consider established,” “to regard as true,” or “to believe.” The word is construed with the prepositions *beth* [referring to a confident resting on a person or thing or testimony] and *lamedh* [signifying the agreement given to a trustworthy testimony]... The word next in importance is *batach*, which is construed with *beth* and means “to confide in,” “to lean upon,” or “to trust”... In distinction from *he’emin*, which is generally rendered by *pisthomi*. The man who trusts in God is one who fixes all his hope for the present and for the future on Him. There is still another word, namely, *chasah*, which is used less frequently, and means “to hide one’s self,” or “to flee for refuge.”⁴³³

Speaking of the usage of the term in Hiphil, Weiser writes:

This leads us to the simplest definition of the הִאֲמִין (“to believe”), which the LXX renders 45 times by πιστεύειν, 5 by ἐμπιστεύειν, and once each by καταπιστεύειν and πείθεσθαι (→197, 1ff.). It means “to say Amen with all the consequences for both obj. and sugj.” It expresses both recognition of the

⁴³³Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* 4th rev. & enlarged ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941), 493.

objective relation of object to reality and also recognition of the subjective relation of the believing subj. to the obj... Thus in secular usage “to believe” a word, account or report is first to take cognizance of the matter and to accept that it is true... Confidence in the vassal (1S.27:12), the friend (Mi.7:5; Jer. 12:6), the flatter (Prv. 26:25), the servant (Job 4:18), the saints (Job 15:15) implies on the one side a recognition of the claim inherent in such terms a “friend,” “servant,” etc. and on the other the validity of the claim for the one who trusts. Inherent in **האמין** (then is not a single relation but the reciprocal relation which makes trust what it is. A further pt. is that the OT uses **האמין** only for the personal relation, for behind the word which is believed is the man whom one trust.⁴³⁴

The term **האמין**, is “never used for the relation to other gods, whereas **בטח** and **טסה**, eg., can be uninhibitedly applied to idols.”⁴³⁵ Bultmann further explains about biblical faith in God: “This faith in God is not just general trust. It is grounded in what God has done in the past. Hence it has its own firm relation to the past; it is also faithfulness, →188, 29. The trusting man (**נאמן** = πιστεύων) is also the faithful man (**נאמן** = πιστός). Similarly, faith has a firm relation to the future, →187, 23 ff. It is the assurance that God will do what He has promised.”⁴³⁶

In the Old Testament where covenant relationship existed between God and Israel, the relationship was a trust-based reciprocal relationship between the two parties involved in the covenant. This is also true for the relationship established in the New Testament between God and believers. There is a binding relationship between God and believers. What God promised, He will fulfill and what believers believed, he/she will continue (persevere) to the end (I Tim. 4:6; Rev. 14:12). In

⁴³⁴A. Weiser, “πιστεύω κτλ,” in *TDNT*, 6: 182-183.

⁴³⁵*Ibid.*, 188.

⁴³⁶R. Bultmann, *TDNT*, 6:198.

Judaism, God's words and His promises are the subject of faith and therefore, "Faith in God becomes a monotheistic confession."⁴³⁷

2. Faith in the New Testament

The Greek verb *pisteuein* is the equivalent term for the Hebrew word *he'emin*, which carries the concept of faith in the "sense of assent to the Word of God and of confident trusting in Him."⁴³⁸ There are eight cognate forms of πιστις. First, πιστεύω: the verb form "πιστεύειν" means "to rely on," "to trust," or "to believe," which is usually construed with the dative of person, or thing, or accusative of thing. The verb form normally is associated with the objects ranging from the Scripture (Jh. 2:22' cf. Acts 24:14) to the prophets and their witnesses and messages (Lk. 24:25; Jh. 5:46; Acts 26:27; cf. Mk. 11:31; Mt. 21:32) and angelic messages (Lk. 1:20, 45; Acts 27:25). Second, πιστός means "faithfulness," "trust" or "faith," and "trust" and "faith" occurs only in religious usage. Third, πιστώ which means "faithful" (more commonly used in secular sense) or "trusting" (I Cor 4:2, 17; 7:25; Rev. 2:10, 13). Fourth πιστόω means "to be made believing" (II Tim. 3:4); it is only used in the passive sense "to remain faithful to..." Fifth, ὀπιστος means "faithless" which is the opposite of faithful (Lk. 12:46, cf. v.42). Luke seems to use it in the sense of "unbelieving" or "non-Christians." Sixth, ἀπιστεύω means "to be unfaithful" (Rom 3:3; II Tim 2:12) and "not to believe" (Lk. 24:11, 41; Acts 28:24). Seventh, ἀπιστία means "unfaithfulness" (Rom 3:3; Heb. 3:12) or "unbelief" (Mk. 6:6; 9:24; Mt. 17:29;

⁴³⁷R. Bultmann, *TDNT*, 6: 200.

⁴³⁸Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 494.

Rom 4:20). Eighth, ολιγόπιστος means “little faith” which is only found in the synoptic gospels (Mt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; cf. Mt. 17:20).⁴³⁹

According to Grudem, true saving faith includes knowledge, approval, and personal trust. First, commenting on knowledge he writes, “Of course *it is necessary that we have some knowledge of who Christ is and what he has done*, for “how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?” (Rom 10:14).”⁴⁴⁰ Second, he stresses the fact that mere knowledge and approval are not enough for one’s conversion. Nicodemus’ acknowledgement of Jesus as a teacher coming from God (John 3:2) was not enough faith to save him, just as King Agrippa’s belief in the prophets did not lead him to a saving faith (Acts 26:27, 28). Third, personal trust must accompany the other two elements of saving faith since “Saving faith is trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God” with the emphasis on “personal trust in Jesus to save me.”⁴⁴¹ Grudem prefers to use the word “trust” over “believe” due to the possible misuse and misunderstanding of the term “believe” because one can believe something or someone without personal commitment or dependence.⁴⁴²

The term “faith” is used for trust in God who raises the dead (II Cor 1:9). This term has to do with expressing the contrast between obedience (*peitharcheo*) (Acts 5:29) and disobedience (*apeitheia*) to God in contrast with faith (Lk 1:17; I Pet 2:7, 9; cf. Rom 2:8). Becker argues that “lack of trust, obedience, faith and acceptance of

⁴³⁹Bultmann, *TDNT* 204-205.

⁴⁴⁰Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 709.

⁴⁴¹Grudem, 710.

⁴⁴²Grudem, 710.

God's will is the normal situation of man (Rom. 11:32). Only God himself can save man by having mercy on him and granting him faith."⁴⁴³ Faith with relation to God's mission is attested in Exodus 4:1-9, 27-31. O. Michael writes, "Faith is here related to a mission which is expressly confirmed by divine authentication."⁴⁴⁴

Michel summarizes the salvific aspect of faith in the NT:

hoti-sentences (believe that ...) which relate faith to a particular event in the history of Jesus (1 Thess. 4:14; Rom. 10:9), or to a christological statement (Jn. 20:31), are significant for the linguistic usage of the Hel. church... More important is the pointed use of *pistis* in the context of Pauline Theology to denote the reception of Christian→ proclamation and the saving faith which was called forth by the gospel (Rom. 1:8; I Thess. 1:8). For Paul *pistis* is indissolubly bound with proclamation.⁴⁴⁵

Since faith is inseparably linked to salvation, it plays a major role in the process of conversion.

3. Different Types of Faith

Different types of faith can be observed in the New Testament as different measure of faith is given to each believer (cf. Rom 12:3). They include weak faith (Rom. 14:1), steadfast faith (Col. 2:5), increasing and growing faith (I Cor. 10:15; II Thes. 1:3), enduring and persevering faith (Col. 1:23), full of faith (Acts 6:5), abounding faith (II Cor 8:7), laboring faith (I Thes. 1:3), unifying faith (Eph. 4:13), love mixed with faith (Eph. 6:23), grace filled with faith and love (I Tim. 1:14), faith associated with love and holiness (I Tim.2:15), exemplary faith (I Tim. 4:12), mutual (relational) faith (Rom. 1:12), non-offensive faith (Rom. 14:22), successive faith

⁴⁴³O. Becker, "Faith," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 1: 593.

⁴⁴⁴O. Michel, "Faith," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 1: 596.

⁴⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 599.

“from faith to faith” (Rom 1:17), unifying or harmonious faith “the same spirit of faith” (II Cor 4:13), common faith (Titus 1:4), dead faith (James 2:17, 26), useless faith (James 2:20), denial of faith (I Tim 5:8), sincere faith (I Tim 1:5; II Tim 1:5), mysterious faith (I Tim 3:9), shipwrecked faith (I Tim 1:19), fallen and wandering faith (I Tim 1:4; 6:10, 21), offensive and perishable faith (II Tim 2:18).

Speaking of the aftermath of conversion with reference to faith, Lewis and Demarest notes: “There may be temporary lapses of faith and obedience, but in the long term “godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret” (2 Cor. 7:10). There are instances of converted people yielding to sin; but the first instance of genuine belief, repentance, and faith leads to the irrevocable gift of everlasting life.”⁴⁴⁶ The GPS (Global Positioning System) of faith points backward to the past and forward to the future at the same time. This is explained by Bultmann, “Faith does not escape the provisional nature of historical being. It actualizes eschatological being in temporality. For, as it is always referred back to what God has done in Christ (R. 10:9), it is also oriented to the future, to what God will do (R. 6:8: πιστεύομεν ὅτι καὶ συζήσομεν αὐτῷ).

Berkhof notes three successive stages of faith as follows: “(a) general confidence in God and Christ; (b) acceptance of their testimony on the basis of that trust; and (c) yielding to Christ and trusting in Him for the salvation of the soul. This last is specifically called saving faith.”⁴⁴⁷ Faith is figuratively expressed in different ways in the New Testament. It is spoken of as looking to Jesus (Jn 3:14, 15; cf. Numb. 21:9); it is referred to as hungering, thirsting, eating, and drinking (Matt 5:6;

⁴⁴⁶Lewis and Demarest, 104.

⁴⁴⁷Berkhof, 494.

Jn. 4:14; 6:50-58); and faith is also mentioned as coming to Christ and receiving Him (Jn. 1:12; 57:37, 38; 6:44, 65).⁴⁴⁸

Faith is described as “the fundamental principle of the religious life” in the Bible with the “sense of continuity” (John 5: 46; 12:38, 39; Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; 10:16; Gal 3:11; Heb. 10:38), regarding “Abraham as the type of all true believers” (Rom 4; Gal. 3; Heb. 11; Jas. 2) and “those who are of faith as the true sons of Abraham” (Rom 2:28, 29; 4:12, 16; Gal. 3:9), from the Old to the New Testament without much distinction given between the two testaments except that “the progressive work of redemption” is developed further in the New Testament⁴⁴⁹ with the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies through Christ’s death and resurrection (I Cor 15:13).

4. The Exclusive Use of “Faith” over “Repentance” or Vice Versa in the New Testament

While there are verses that focus on the importance of both repentance and faith (e.g. Acts 20:21; Heb. 6:1), there are other verses, which focus exclusively on one of the two aspects of conversion to the exclusion of the other. On the one hand, there are many verses that emphasize that faith alone, not repentance, is the essential thing for salvation (John 3:16; Acts 16:31; Rom 10:9; Eph. 2:8-9). On the other hand, there are other passages that seem to emphasize only on the repentant aspect of conversion (Luke 24:46-47; cf. Acts 2:37-38; 3:19; 5:31; 17:30; Rom 2:4; II Cor 7:10).⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁸Berkhof, 495.

⁴⁴⁹Berkhof, 498.

⁴⁵⁰Grudem, 716.

Grudem writes: “When we realize that genuine saving faith must be accompanied by genuine repentance for sin, it helps us to understand why some preaching of the gospel has such inadequate results today. If there is no mention of the need for repentance, sometimes the gospel message becomes only, “Believe in Jesus Christ and be saved” without any mention of repentance at all.”⁴⁵¹ A careful look at the context of the Scripture gives a clearer understanding of the whole picture of conversion. For example, Acts 16:31 which reads “They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household’” is followed by the explanation of the Scripture as it is evident, “Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house”(16:32). It can be concluded from this incident that Paul shared more than what Acts 16:31 says about conversion which seems to omit the repentant aspect of conversion.⁴⁵² Lewis and Demarest stress the importance of repentance as it relates to faith this way:

Certainly God commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). Repentance is not something separate from conversion, for a turning *to* Christ necessarily involves turning *from* other masters.... In the first century, conversion to Christ involved a radical break with moralistic legalism, pride of status, idolatry, and occultism. In that setting texts in John that simply call people to “believe” point up the need for knowledge, assent, and a commitment to Christ that repudiate bondage to the Deceiver.⁴⁵³

The relationship between faith and repentance is obvious when they are placed side by side in the same context. When faith is not clearly present alongside of repentance, its presence is assumed or vice versa. Therefore, the assumption of the presence of one element of conversion (e.g. faith) alongside of the other element (e.g. repentance)

⁴⁵¹Grudem, 716.

⁴⁵²Grudem, 716.

⁴⁵³Lewis and Demarest, 113-114

indicates the existence of their conceptual relationship and interrelatedness in the process of conversion.

G. Other Elements of Conversion

A closer investigation of the biblical and theological concept of conversion reveals that there are more elements of conversion in addition to faith and repentance. art of the process of conversion. These elements of conversion will be presented one by one.

1. **Verbal confession and faith in Conversion**

a) The concept of “Call” in Conversion

The meaning of the word is קָרָא (*kara*) and its Greek equivalent term καλέω (*kaleo*) in English is “call,” “name” or “invite.” The terms *kaleo* (about 300 times), *epikaleo* (about 150 times), and *proskaleomai* (11 times) are used in the LXX as a direct rendering of Hebrew word קָרָא. The word *kaleo* is used in relation to naming places, persons, animals and qualities (Gen 1:5, 8; Gen 2:19; Gen 25:26; Ex 12:16; Is 35:8; 65:15).⁴⁵⁴ The term *epikaleo* is also used for naming (Num 21:3) and with reference to possession and protection. This word *epikaleo* is also used in the LXX as the most important term for calling someone’s name (Gen 4:26), calling or naming the alter as “the mighty God of Israel” (Gen 33:20), calling out or crying out to God (I Chr 4:10; cf. I King 17:21), and calling on the name of God (Gen 13:4; Deut 14:23; Is 64:7; Jer 10:25; cf. Prov 18:10). The term *kaleo* and *proskaleo* are used in cases where a superior individual addresses or calls on the inferior person with a command and an expectation for a response (Gen 24:58; Ex. 1:18; 12:21; Job 13:22). People are free to refuse to obey the call of God (Is 65:12; Jer 13:10), to hear the call (Is 50:2;

⁴⁵⁴L. Coenen, “Call: καλέω” in *NIDNTT*, 1: 272-273.

Jer. 7:13), or to avoid it (Ex 3:11; 4:1; Jer 1:6). The word *kaleo* was used eleven times in the dialogue between God and Samuel (I Sam 3:4-10).⁴⁵⁵

The usage of the term “call: καλέω” and its cognate forms in the Old Testament and in the LXX provides two major contributions relating to the subject of conversion. First, God calls on people for special tasks and responsibilities. After Adam and Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit and ran away from the presence of God, the LORD called to the man, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9). This is the first evangelic call ever pronounced since the beginning of the world. Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” (Gen 4:9). This call was made after the first human blood was shed on the earth. God cares for every soul, and God expects everyone to be responsible brother (or sister) or neighbor or fellow human being. Secondly, people call on God in response to God’s call through prayers and in praises. People started to worship God, “At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD” (Gen 4:26b). This is the kind of reciprocal interaction between God and human beings we observe in the Old Testament times. God is always the One who initiates the relationship.

In the New Testament, the term *kaleo* is used about 148 times; it occurs 43 times in Luke, 18 times in Acts, 29 times in Pauline Epistles, and 26 times in Matthew. *Epikaleomai* is found 30 times, *klesis* is used 11 times and *kletos* occurs 10 times in the New Testament.⁴⁵⁶ Among the many different occurrences and usages, attention will be given to usages that relate to conversion. The term *kaleo* “to invite” is used 9 times in the parables of the great banquet (Lk 14:16-25) and 5 times in the

⁴⁵⁵Ibid., 272-273.

⁴⁵⁶Ibid., 1: 273.

marriage feast (Matt 22:2-10). In the previous examples and in most of the NT usage, the term *kaleo* is used in the sense of Jesus who “came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matt 9:13; Mk 2:17; Lk 5:32), inviting sinners to the divine offer of salvation, while providing opportunity for people to respond and act by turning to Jesus to be their Savior and Lord. The word *proskaleo* is used to refer to the divine call to divine service for Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2). The term *kaletos* is also used in the statement “For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt 22:14). The term *kaleo* is used of the divine calling Paul mentions in Romans 8:29 and Romans 9:11 with reference to the elect according to God’s purpose. The Corinthians are reminded by Paul to consider their calling, not based on their intellect, status, and nobility (I Cor 1:26) but on God’s sheer grace and mercy. Believers are addressed as “called ones” *kletoi* (Rom 1:6, 7; 8:28; I Cor 1:2, 24).

The term *epikaleomai* is used for calling on God or his name (Acts 7:59; 9:14; Rom 10:12; I Cor 1:2). The double usage of the term is found in I Corinthians 1:2 when it refers to those who are “called” to be holy (divine call) and those who “call on the name of Jesus Christ” (human call). In Act 22:16, right after Paul received his sight, God used Ananias to ask Paul to call on Jesus’ name while he was yet in the process of his conversion. “The fact that God is the *καλῶν* and that Christians are the *κεκλημένοι*, with no qualifying addition, makes it clear that in the NT *καλεῖν* is a technical term for the process of salvation.”⁴⁵⁷ The reciprocal nature of the calling of God and the calling of sinners for salvation is quite evident in the Scriptures. The calling of God and that of man is, therefore, an important step in the process of conversion.

⁴⁵⁷K. L. Schmidt, “καλέω” in *TDNT*, 3: 489.

b) The Concept of “Confess” in Conversion

Another word which is closely related to the term “call” is “confess.” The religious usage of the term confess “was then transferred from the solemn confession of wrong-doing before a court of law to the confession of sin to the deity.”⁴⁵⁸ The Hebrew word *yadah* means “to praise, give glory and confess an offense” (Jos 7:19; I King 8:33-36; II Chr 6:24-27). In the Old Testament, the confession of sins is usually linked with the praise of God (Ps. 107: 11, 17, 15, 21; cf. Jos. 7:19 and Ezr. 10:11). Repentance and confession go hand in hand in offering prayers (Dan 9:3-19).

The word *ὁμολογέω* is used 26 times in the New Testament occurring 10 times in the gospel of John alone. The noun *homologia* is strictly used for Christian confession (II Cor 9:13; I Tim 6:12; cf. Heb 3:1; 4:14; 10:23). The term *homologeō* in I John 1:9 is the confession and acknowledgement of one’s own personal sins.

“Confession is a sign of repentance (→Conversion) and thus a mark of the new life of faith. This is seen particularly clearly in Mk. 1:5 par., where, as in the Pss., public confession of sins means also being set free from them.”⁴⁵⁹ The public confession of Timothy is stated in I Tim 6:12 which is directly related to his eternal life.

Commenting on verbal confession of inner belief in Romans 10: 8-10, Fürst writes, “When belief and confession, heart and mouth, are in unison, there is a promise of justification and salvation for eternity (Rom. 10:8ff.). It seems certain that a primitive Christian confessional formula lies behind v. 9. Obedience with regard to the confession (*hypotage homologias*, 2 Cor. 9:13) is demonstrated in practical loving

⁴⁵⁸D. Fürst, “Confess” in *NIDNTT*, 1:344.

⁴⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 346.

action (2 Cor. 9:6-13).⁴⁶⁰ Open confession of Christ as the Messiah was a risky act which could result in ostracizing out of the synagogue (John 9:22; 12: 42).

Romans 10: 9, 10 outlines the significance of verbal confession of inner faith as the demonstration of salvation: “That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.” There is a human tendency to undermine the importance of verbal confession of faith on the one hand, and to overemphasize the superficial belief of verbal confession on the other hand. Grudem clarifies this dilemma this way, “Such a spoken prayer does not in itself save us, but the attitude of heart that it represents does constitute true conversion, and the decision to speak that prayer can often be the point at which a person truly comes to faith in Christ.”⁴⁶¹ The most important thing with reference to verbal confession of faith is not primarily the verbal content of the confession but the attitude and genuineness of the inner faith in the heart. True conversion is the verbal proclamation of the inner faith, when the person believes that Jesus died for him/her and turns to Him for salvation. It is the heart-felt, personal confession of faith in Christ’s finished work on the cross that saves a person from his/her sins for salvation.

The word “confess” is a very important term in one’s conversion because it is the antithesis of the word “deny” as it is evident in Matthew 10:32, 33 “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven (KJV).” The use of the word “confession” in the

⁴⁶⁰Ibid., 347.

⁴⁶¹Grudem, 717.

Epistles is clear: “Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for *your* obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all...” (II Cor 9:13: NAS).

James Leo Garrett summarizes the New Testament aspect of confession well:

Confession of Jesus Christ according to his own words is necessary to valid discipleship (Matt. 10:32; par. Luke 12:8), and the threat of “religious and social ostracism” kept many Jews from confessing Jesus as the Christ (John 9:22; 12:42). Jesus himself offered confession of praise to the Father (Matt 11:25; par. Luke 10:21) and made “the good confession” before Pontius Pilate (1 Tim. 6:13, RSV, NIV). Early Christians were expected to confess, perhaps hymnically, that “Jesus is Lord” (Phil. 2:11), a confession made possible by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3). That confession must necessarily be oral, the outward expression of faith in the heart (Rom. 10:9-10). The confession could also be said to be that of the gospel (2 Cor. 9:13). Its public character may be associated with baptism (1 Tim. 6:12). “Confession: (RSV) or “profession” (KJV) became a synonym for the Christian religion (Heb. 3:1; 4:14; 10:23).⁴⁶²

The meaning of the actual “profession of faith” has been diluted over the centuries in the Church, and it has been used in the sense of a “spurious or superficial confession of Christ” in phrases such as “a mere profession of faith,” “professed Christians,” and “lip service.”⁴⁶³ Therefore, the word ‘profess’ with reference to one’s conversion needs special attention and a better word, for the sake of clarity, is ‘confess.’ A person must confess Christ as his/her Savior or must call upon the name of Christ for salvation. This confession is the confession of faith in Christ for His finished work on the cross for sinners. This confession of faith is a necessary part of conversion on the human side.

⁴⁶²James Leo Garrett, *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 2: 252.

⁴⁶³Garrett, 254.

c) Confession, Obedience, and Faith in Conversion

Bultmann explains the relationship between faith and confession in conversion this way:

This is why *πίστοις* and *ὁμολογία* belong together, as expressly stated in R. 10:9 (→209, 17 ff.). In *ὁμολογία* the believer turns away from himself and confesses Jesus Christ as his Lord, which also means confession that all he is and has he is and has through what God has done in Christ... Paul shows faith to be a historical rather than a psychological possibility. According to Paul, the event of salvation history is actualised for the individual, not in pious experience, but in his baptism (Gl. 3:27-29). Faith makes it his. Hence faith is not at the end of the way to God, as in Philo (→205, 36 ff.). It is at the beginning... Faith is *ὁμολογία*, (→205, 36 ff.) as well as *πίστις*. This is to say, it is acknowledgement of the day of grace and salvation which God has ordained.⁴⁶⁴

Bultmann explains the relationship between faith, obedience and confession:

Hence its acceptance—faith—is obedience, acknowledgment, confession. This is the reason why “grace” as well as “faith” can likewise be named as the opposite of “works” to designate the basis for rightwising... In his “confession” of faith, the believer turns away from himself, confessing that all he is and has, he is and has through that which God has done. Faith does not appeal to whatever it itself may be as act or attitude but to God’s prevenient deed of grace which preceded faith.⁴⁶⁵

Bultmann says, “[F]aith” is the acceptance of the Christian message.”⁴⁶⁶ He asserts that “Paul understands faith primarily as obedience; he understands the act of faith as an act of obedience. This is shown by the parallelism of two passages in Romans: “because your faith is proclaimed in all the world” (1:8) and “for your

⁴⁶⁴Bultmann, *TDNT*, 6: 217.

⁴⁶⁵Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), 1: 319.

⁴⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 314.

obedience is known to all”⁴⁶⁷ (16:19; cf. 1:8). Faith is “obedience in acknowledging the Gospel of Christ”⁴⁶⁸ (Rom. 11:30-32; cf. Rom 15:31; Gal. 5:7; II Cor. 9:13).

d) Proclamation of Jesus as Lord and Savior

Lewis and Demarest comment on the important role of both Lord and Savior in one’s life this way:

One does not *make* Jesus Lord but *confesses* that the crucified Jesus is Lord of creation and redemption. Christ’s lordship is inherent in the *apostolic Gospel*. The early Christians confessed that Jesus is Lord (Acts 2:21, 36; 16:31; Rom. 10:9-10, 12). Thomas... exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28)... Those who believe the Gospel believe in Christ as Savior and Lord.⁴⁶⁹

They continue:

Christ’s exclusive lordship is inherent in the meaning of *repentance*. The change of mind concerning Christ means a change of mind concerning previous masters... No one can be committed to two ultimate masters morally or spiritually. Christ’s lordship is also integral to the meaning of faith as unreserved trust in Jesus for life eternal. No one less than the eternal Lord of all could grant eternal life to believers.⁴⁷⁰

Understanding the breadth, the depth and the height of salvation and spiritual life in Christ is a process, which will take a life-time of learning, experience and growth. Therefore, emphasizing one aspect (savior) over another (lordship) in salvation or vice versa is not beneficial for Christians. The two aspects of salvation are essential needs for salvation and Christian life. But the application of and knowledge, and commitment to one over the other may differ from person to person

⁴⁶⁷Ibid., 314.

⁴⁶⁸Ibid., 315.

⁴⁶⁹Lewis and Demarest, 114.

⁴⁷⁰Ibid., 114.

depending on one's needs and spiritual levels of understanding and commitment. The overemphasis of one over the other should never be intentional, as some have made it.

Strong clarifies this:

Paul refers to a confession of faith in Rom. 10:9—"if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord." Faith, then, is a taking of Christ as both Savior and Lord; and it includes both appropriation of Christ, and consecration to Christ. The voluntary element in faith, however, is a giving as well as a taking... Only as we appropriate Christ, in connection with our consecration, do we realize the full blessing of the gospel.⁴⁷¹

Bultmann explains the Lordship of Christ this way:

This history is, however, salvation history. That is, the man who accepts the kerygma in faith recognises therewith that this history took place for him. Since Jesus Christ was made *Kurios* by His history, acceptance of the kerygma also includes acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as the *Kurios*. This is expressed in the formula πίστις εἰς τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν [faith in the Lord our Jesus] or the like. Hence πιστεύειν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ["to believe in Christ Jesus"] does in fact entail a personal relation to Christ analogous to the relation to God, though different from it. If the OT relation to God is described as faith in God, this faith in God is distinguished already from πίστις εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν [faith in Christ Jesus] by the fact that OT faith—as obedience and faithfulness—is directed to the god whose existence is always presupposed.... Faith embraces the conviction that there is this Lord, Jesus Christ, for it. For only in faith does this Lord meet it. It believes on the basis of kerygma.⁴⁷²

Bultmann continues to explain the correlation of faith in God and faith in Christ:

Moreover, the very fact that the NT does not speak in the same way of πίστις εἰς τὸν θεόν [faith in God] and πιστεύειν εἰς Χριστὸν [faith in Christ] shows that God and Christ are not set before the believer as two different objects of faith which are either co-ordinated or subordinated. On the contrary, God Himself meets us in Christ. But He meets us only in Christ. In Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 1:19; 2:9).⁴⁷³

Confession and proclaiming Christ as one's Lord and Savior turning from allegiance to Satanic realm and the system of this world to God who is the author of our faith and salvation. Verbal confession plays a vital role in the process of conversion.

⁴⁷¹Strong, 839.

⁴⁷²Bultmann, *TDNT*, 6: 211.

⁴⁷³*Ibid.*, 217.

2. Knowledge and Faith in Conversion

In the secular Greek, the term *ginosko* (γινώσκω) means “to notice, perceive, recognize a thing, person, or situation through the senses, particularly the sight... Thus the vb. also means experience, learn, get to know: what has been experienced becomes known to the one who has experienced it.”⁴⁷⁴ The term also means, “to distinguish”, “to know in a personal way,” “to judge,” “to express a relationship of trust between persons, i.e. to recognize as friend, love as a friend,” “to see,” “to gain insight,” and “to perceive intuitively.”⁴⁷⁵ Schmitz defines Gnosticism as “a general term denoting a manner of life which sprang from a denial of the validity of human existence in history and cosmos. It found expression for its belief in a syncretistic mythology, and expressed itself in the negation of ethics.”⁴⁷⁶ He explains, “In the OT, as with the common Gk. attitude, knowledge is derived through the senses; the thing to be known must present itself to the senses and so let itself be known.”⁴⁷⁷ The verbs of hearing and seeing are synonymously presented with the verbs of knowing (e.g. Ex. 16:6; Deut. 33:9; 1 Sam. 14:38; Isa. 41:20).

Schmitz summarizes the difference between the understanding of the Greeks and the OT about knowledge:

While the Gks. were concerned with detached knowledge and a speculative interest in the metaphysical nature of things, the OT regards knowledge as something which continually arise from personal encounter. When the OT makes statement about →God and →creation, we should not regard them as ontological deductions, but as declarations of faith in response to God’s →revelation. For knowledge of God is related to the revelation of God in the

⁴⁷⁴Schmitz, “Knowledge,” *NIDNTT*, 2: 392.

⁴⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 392-393.

⁴⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 394.

⁴⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 395.

historic past and the promised future, in the earthly sphere in which God's creatures have their being. As Israel continually inquired into God's revelation in the past, present and future, he discerned the purposes and demands of God in worship and in conduct.⁴⁷⁸

The Greek word *ginosko* is found 221 times in the New Testament. E. D.

Schmitz notes, "Where [the OT] expresses a personal relationship between the one who knows and the one known, the NT concept of knowledge is clearly taken from the OT"⁴⁷⁹ (cf. Matt 7:23; Mk. 14:71). The phrase "Jesus knew no sin" (II Cor. 5:21) does not suggest that Jesus did not have intellectual knowledge about sin at all.⁴⁸⁰ But it rather stresses the concept of personal experience or personal-experiential interaction with sin, which Jesus did not, and could not, have. The difference between knowing Christ as a historical human person and knowing him as divine person is evident in II Corinthians 5:16, "Even though we may have acquaintance with Christ according to the flesh," i.e. with the visible Christ as he was on earth, "we do not know him as such", but only with the invisible, risen Christ in whose service we stand. Because Christ had died and been raised for all he is the invisible Lord of all, and his lordship is externally inescapable."⁴⁸¹ Again, here faith and knowledge are inseparably linked, because without faith one cannot know and see the invisible God.

The paradox between the alleged lack of knowledge about the Law and the actual lack of knowledge about the Law Giver is evident in the Pharisees' statement about the crowd that followed Christ "But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed" (Jn. 7:49) and their own ignorance about salvation message of Christ

⁴⁷⁸Ibid., 396.

⁴⁷⁹Ibid., 398.

⁴⁸⁰Ibid..

⁴⁸¹Ibid., 399.

presented in the Law "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me" (Jn. 5:39; cf. 7:42, 51). The unbelievers who know God through His general revelation do not recognize Him as their Lord (Rom. 1:19; Jn. 1:10; I Cor. 1:21; Gal. 4:8). Again the knowledge of God, which leads salvation, is God's gift, "For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11). A relational, experiential, and personal knowledge is required in order to have true relationship with God as Paul writes, "For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge" (Romans 10:2).

E. D. Schmitz further explains the reciprocal nature and relational aspect of knowledge this way,

Before the *eschaton* we can know God only as we know Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:10; cf. Col. 2:2f.). But Christ is not to be known through theological speculation, but rather as one is met by him and as one acknowledges him as the Lord (Phil. 3:8). Such acknowledgment is the counterpart to having been known by God. Where it does not exist, it is useless to speak of knowledge; "if any one does not recognize this, he is not recognized" (1 Cor. 14:38)."⁴⁸²

It is Jesus who has given the opportunity to know God but it is the responsibility of the people to acknowledge Him as their Lord and Savior, "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). The *ginosko* "has a double application: it means knowing the love of God shown in the sending of his Son (Jn. 17:8; I Jn. 3:16), and the obedience of love based on it which is also described as obedience to the

⁴⁸²Ibid., 402-403.

message proclaimed (1Jn. 4:6). Such knowledge is already eternal→life here and now (Jn. 17:3), because it is a life in history derived from God's historical revelation."⁴⁸³

Knowledge and belief are associated as knowledge is followed by belief (1 Jn. 4:16; cf. Jn.3:16; Jn. 5:69). God is the One "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Christians are responsible to teach the unbelievers "with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 2:25).

It is possible for some people to know the truth and then reject it, "For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them" (2 Peter 2:21). The opposite of knowing God is not knowing God, "For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3). There are people who seems to worship the "Unknown God" who need direction to the "Known God" (Acts 17:23). Commenting on this Schmitz writes,

Paul addressed the Athenians as these who had until then honored the unknown God without knowledge, but whom he was now proclaiming as the revealed One. The unknown God among the gods is in fact the true and only One. He is the God of the OT and of salvation-history. The mention of ignorance was not intended to justify and excuse men; it was to introduce them to God's saving purposes and to lead them to the joy of repentance."⁴⁸⁴

Bultmann comments on the close relationship between faith and knowledge this way:

⁴⁸³Ibid., 402-403.

⁴⁸⁴Ibid., 407-408.

“Faith,” which arises from “what is heard” (Rom. 10:17), consequently contains a *knowing*. That is why Paul can, at times, speak as if knowledge were the basis of faith. For instance, Rom. 6:8f.: since we know that death no longer has power over the risen Christ, we *believe* that if we have died with him we shall also live with him (cf. II Cor. 4:13f.). But since this knowledge can be appropriated only in obedient... knowledge may also appear as arising out of faith [cf. Rom 5:3]... Ultimately “faith” and “knowledge” are identical as a new understanding of one’s self, if Paul can give as the purpose of his apostleship both “to bring about the obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5) and “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (II Cor. 4:6; cf. 2:14)... human “knowing” has its basis in a “being known by God” (Gal. 4:9; I Cor. 13:12).⁴⁸⁵

Berkhof acknowledges that faith has three observable elements: intellectual, emotional and volitional elements.⁴⁸⁶ Bultman comments on the relationship between faith and knowledge this way:

“Faith,” which arises from ‘what is heard’ (Rom. 10:17), consequently contains a *knowing*. That is why Paul can, at times, speak as if knowledge were the basis of faith. For instance, Rom. 6:8f.:since we know that death no longer has power over the risen Christ, we *believe* that if we have died with him we shall also live with him (cf. II Cor. 4:13f.). Since this knowledge can be appropriated only in obedient, comprehending faith, and hence contains an understanding of one’s self, knowledge may also appear as arising out of faith... Ultimately “faith” and “knowledge” are identical as a new understanding of one’s self, if Paul can give as the purpose of his apostleship both “to bring about the obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5) and “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (II Cor. 4:6; cf. 2:14; Phil 3:4-10)... “[K]nowledge” lies in the face that human “knowing” has its basis in a “being known by God” (Gal. 4:9; I Cor. 13:12).⁴⁸⁷

Bultmann explains the interchangeableness of faith and knowledge in conversion:

Faith must become an abiding in His Word ([Jn.] 8:31). Belonging to Him, abiding in Him, is dependent on the abiding of His words in them. To abiding, knowledge of the truth is promised (8:32), just as the movement of πιστεύειν [“to believe”] generally is elucidated by its relation to γινώσκειν [“to know”]. John cannot set πιστεύειν in antithesis to γινώσκειν as Paul sets πίστις antithesis to ἔργα νόμου, →219, 18 ff.... But the reverse order [of πιστεύειν

⁴⁸⁵Bultmann, *TNT*, 1: 35.

⁴⁸⁶Berkhof, 503-506.

⁴⁸⁷Bultmann, *TNT*, 1: 318.

γινώσκειν] is also possible (16:30; 17:8; 1 Jn.4:16). Here πιστεύειν seems to be the attitude which grows out of γινώσκειν... In antithesis to Gnosticism it is apparent it is apparent that knowledge can never take us beyond faith or leave faith behind. As all knowledge begins with faith, so it abides in faith. Similarly, all faith is to become knowledge.⁴⁸⁸

O. Michel also accepts the inter-relatedness between faith and knowledge:

Faith and knowledge (Jn. 6:69), knowledge and faith (Jn.17:8; 1 Jn. 4:6), are not two processes distinct from each other, but instructive co-ordinates which speak of the reception of the testimony from different standpoints. Faith alone which receives the testimony possesses knowledge; he who knows the truth is pointed to faith. The co-ordination of knowledge and faith is anti-gnostic and anti-speculative. The hearer should understand that both are involved in salvation: acceptance of the testimony as well as personal response and reformation that confirms to the testimony. This distinction in Jn. 4:42 is important.⁴⁸⁹

Faith believes in what is not seen “who have not seen and yet believe” (Jn 20:29; cf. I Pet 1:8). Faith is defined in Hebrews 11:1 in the context for the church under persecution and “the people of God are charged with acting upon faith.”⁴⁹⁰ So faith is a human responsibility to exercise for salvation and Christian living. Michael notes, “Jas. Is conscious of the need to prove faith (1:3; cf. I Pet. 1:7). He demands renunciation of all conduct that conflicts with living faith and confession (1:6 ff.). For him, faith and obedient conduct are inextricably linked. Faith understood merely as trust and confession is not able to save. Only through obedience and conduct which fulfills the commandments of God does faith come to completion (Jas. 2:22).”⁴⁹¹

G. Barth observes the link between faith and knowledge thus: John 6:40 brings seeing and believing together, 12:44f. uses them as complete parallels, and 1:14, 50f.; 14:19; 16:16 speak simply of seeing, clearly referring to a process of faith. This indicates that the structure of faith includes an

⁴⁸⁸Bultmann, *TDNT*, 6: 227.

⁴⁸⁹O. Michel, “Faith,” in *NIDNTT*, 1: 603.

⁴⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 604.

⁴⁹¹*Ibid.*

element of recognition and knowledge, which is why πιστεύω and γινώσκω (6:69; 8:31f.; 10:38; 17:8; 1 John 4:16; cf. οἶδαμεν in John 16:30) are also associated; and when the sequence is reversed, it becomes clear that knowledge is not a more advanced stage than faith, but is rather itself a structural element of faith.⁴⁹²

Morris writes, “In a very real sense conversion is awareness. Unless we are aware of ourselves, of God, of claims upon our lives as revealed in Christ, it is not meaningful to say that we are Christians.”⁴⁹³ This awareness is knowledge about Christ and the gospel. Knowledge is a very important element in the process of conversion.

3. Hardened Heart and Disbelief in Conversion

The New Testament uses *skleros*, *poros* (*peros*) and *pachys* to convey the meaning of being or making hard, firm, rigid and thick.⁴⁹⁴ The main Hebrew words used for “hardening one’s heart” are *qasah* and *hazaq*. The most outstanding example of hardening of heart is seen in Pharaoh’s hardened heart (Ex. 4; 7:13, 22; 8:15) where God is the one who hardens Pharaoh’s heart at the same time. The hardening of heart in the Old Testament, “results from the fact that men persist in shutting themselves to God’s call and command. A state then arises in which a man is no longer able to hear and in which he is irretrievably enslaved. Alternatively, God makes the hardening final, so that the people affected by it cannot escape from it.”⁴⁹⁵ God hardened the hearts of the Canaanites (Josh 11:20) and those of the Israelites also

⁴⁹²G. Barth, “πίστις,” in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids, MI: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 3: 96.

⁴⁹³Morris, *The Mystery and Meaning of Christian Conversion*, 126.

⁴⁹⁴U. Becker, “Hard, Hardened,” in the *NIDNTT*, 2: 153.

⁴⁹⁵*Ibid*, 154.

(Is. 28:12; 6:10). Because the people did not want to listen to God, they are unable to hear God's word because God had hardened their hearts due to their disobedience.

The Gentiles who had seen the general (natural) revelation of God (Rom 1:19, 20) around them still hardened their hearts, "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom 1:21). As a result of their ignorance and hardened hearts, God "gave them over in the lust of their hearts to impurity... to degrading passions... a depraved mind" (Rom 1:24, 26, 28). God eventually allows them to commit their sins to their heart's content as a sign of abandonment. The Jews, because of their "stubbornness and unrepentant heart," are "storing up wrath for [themselves] in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom 2:5). The term is also used in the imperative mood, "Do not harden your hearts" (Heb. 3:8, 15; 4:7) suggesting that people are responsible when they harden their hearts. People can harden their hearts at the preaching of the gospel (Acts 19:9), and Stephen calls his Jewish audience as "stiff-neck and uncircumcised in heart and ears" (Acts 7:51) to describe their stubborn attitude to the Messiah and to God's Word. The Jews who knew the Law were darkened in their understanding of the gospel (Mk. 3:5; 10:5; Matt. 19:8; Rom. 11:25; Eph. 4:18). People who are not open to the preaching and receiving of the gospel are considered to have hardened their hearts in the New Testament.

4. Prayer and Faith in Conversion

Even though the famous evangelical "sinner's prayer" is not found in the Bible, prayer plays a vital role in the process of conversion. God heard and answered sinners' prayer in the midst of storms (e.g. Jonah and the sailors). The OT is filled

with prayers offered to God, especially in the Psalms. Fathers in the Old Testament prayed and offered sacrifices on behalf of their families (e.g. Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Job) and prophets represented, and interceded on behalf of the people besides offering sacrifices for them (Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.). Prayers were offered to God in order to find God's way, "Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people" (Exodus 33:13; cf. Exodus 34:9; Ps. 1:6). Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah and I will pray to the LORD for you" (1 Samuel 7:5). Most people in the Old Testament times did not have direct access to God and had to rely on few intercessors (fathers, prophets and priests) to make their requests known to God.

God is known for his refusal to answer the prayers of the disobedient people, "Gather yourselves and come; Draw near together, you fugitives of the nations; They have no knowledge, Who carry about their wooden idol And pray to a god who cannot save. God vow not to hear and respond to the prayers of the disobedient people (Isaiah 45:20; cf. Jeremiah 7:16; 11:11, 14). In the New Testament, Jesus broke down the barriers (Eph 2:11-16) between Jews and Gentiles, and between God and people, by providing free access to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16) so that every believer (I Pet. 2:9) as an individual priest can pray to God for himself/herself and for other people as well. This is the privileged position and status granted to all believers in Christ. And this position is even offered to those outside the wall of Christianity who desire to pray to the living God.

Different kinds of prayers are mentioned in the New Testament. Generally, they presented as are "right prayer" and "wrong prayer". Jesus juxtaposed a Pharisee

who uttered “God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers...” and a tax collector who prayed, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner” (Lk. 18:10-13). Of the two prayers, the humble prayer of the tax collector is the right and acceptable prayer of which Jesus approved (v. 14). God also answered the unsaved sinner’s prayer. Cornelius and his family were devout and God-fearing people who gave generously and pray to God regularly (Acts 10:2). Acts Cornelius’ prayers were answered even when he was not yet a truly born-again Christian. (Acts 10:4 and 31). Paul prayed for the Ephesian this way, “the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Ephesians 1:18). Prayer and faith go hand in hand in the NT (Mk. 11:23-24), and prayer can save a faith that can fail as Jesus said to Peter, “But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail” (Lk. 22:32). Prayer plays a vital role in the process of conversion and Christian life.

Prayer guided by the Spirit is a sign of being the child of God (Rom 8:15, 16, 26). Schönweiss and Brown outline the role of prayer in conversion, “To Paul, prayer is ultimately the indwelling energizing→Spirit speaking with God himself, who “is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:17; cf. Jn. 4:23f.; Rom. 8:14)... The apostle emphasizes rather that assurance of salvation is both evidenced and increased by Spirit-wrought prayer (Rom. 8:15, 16).⁴⁹⁶ These kinds of experiences of non-believers praying to the living God for their personal, social and family needs have filled the interview materials of the author. Romans 10:9-10 can be viewed as a sinner’s prayer for conversion. Many of my interviewees were introduced to prayer before they became Christians. Prayer was the starting point of their conversion journey for many. Prayer and faith are inseparable and important ingredients in the cooking process of conversion.

⁴⁹⁶H. Schönweiss and C. Brown, “Prayer,” in *NIDNTT*, 2: 873.

5. Persuasion and Faith in Conversion

Persuasion has its role and place in the process of conversion. Paul admitted that he did not use *peithos* (persuasive art/art of persuading) to the Corinthians (I Cor 3:4). In the New Testament, *peitho*, *peithomai* and *pepoitha* are very common terms occurring predominantly in Pauline Epistles (22 times) and Acts (17 times). Paul used the active forms only twice while he used the perfect forms of *pepoitha* very frequently.⁴⁹⁷ Paul had persuaded (*peisas* - πείσας) aorist active participle from πείθω: Acts 19:26) much people throughout all Asia and in Ephesus to believe and turn to the only true and living God from the non-existing, man-made gods. The imperfect is used to influence a person to adopt a particular attitude or action. Paul and Barnabas persuaded (ἠείθουν) many of the Jews and the religious proselytes (Acts 13:43) to continue in the grace of God. The present participle is used when Paul was disputing and persuading (διαλεγόμενος καὶ πείθων [τὰ] περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ) concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 19:8). The evangelistic usage of the word (the present indicative usage) is evident in Acts 26:28, “And Agrippa *replied* to Paul, ‘In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian’”(Ἐν ὀλίγῳ με πείθεις Χριστιανὸν ποιῆσαι).

In other places in the New Testament, Paul persuaded people for the sake of the gospel (II Cor 5:11 and Gal 1:10). Paul used the means of persuasion in his ministry by reasoning with the unbelievers as he presented the gospel to them (Acts 17:2). Paul’s ministry of persuasion for the gospel paid off as it is recorded, “And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of

⁴⁹⁷O. Becker, “Faith,” in *NIDNTT*, 1: 589.

the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women” (Acts 17:4). In other places where Paul visited, “And some were convinced [*epeithonto*] by what he said, while others disbelieved [*epistoun*]” (RSV: Acts 28:24). The human responsibility to believe and accept the gospel is evident Luke 6:31, “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.” On the one hand, it is the responsibility of the presenters of the gospel to persuade people to believe in God, and on the other hand it is the responsibility of the hearers to believe and respond to the presentation of the gospel. Therefore, persuasion and faith go hand in hand in the process of conversion.

6. Seeing and Faith in Conversion

The Hebrew word for “see” is **הִיאֵר**. The eye represents the dearest, most loved, and most sensitive part of the body. The Psalmist asks the Lord, “Keep me as the apple of the eye” (Ps. 17:8; cf. Prov. 7:2; Zecha. 2:8). K. Dahn writes the important role the eye plays in relating to and communicating with others and the environment, “At the same time the eye is generally associated with man’s relation to God, his fellow men and the world around.”⁴⁹⁸ The eye can be used also for intellectual and spiritual perception (Ps. 33:9; 34:8; 88:49; 89:48). Seeing in the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek Septuagint can also refer to perception by means of other senses, e.g. “noticed” NIV, “observed” NAU (Jer 33:24), understanding “realize” NIV, “know and see” NAU (I Sam 12:17; cf. I King 20:7). The word “seeing” is also used for prophetic perception (I Chro. 21:9; II Chro. 9:29; cf. Gen. 15:1; Dan. 7:13). It is also used in the instances where God is the subject which “sees and watches” people or quality and character of people including the innermost soul

⁴⁹⁸K. Dahn, “See, Vision, Eye,” in *NIDNTT*, 3: 512.

of people (Lam 3:34; II Chro 24:22; Ex 3:7; Ps 100: 6; Jer 5:3; Ps 139: 3, 7, 16; I Sam 16:7).

On the one hand, God's glory was seen by people (Ezek 1:28; Ex 33:18; Num 14:22). On the other hand, "God's holiness and majesty prevent man from seeing his face. Man's consciousness of guilt leads to a consciousness of distance (Isa. 6:5)."⁴⁹⁹ Dahn comments: "The OT epiphanies express God's partnership. Biblical man sees himself as God's creature and at the same time knows himself to be called as a partner. The OT God is one who meets us and consorts with us and is known as such."⁵⁰⁰ The Greek terms *horao*, *opsomai* and *eidon* are used to refer to "seeing" or "perceiving" (Matt 28:27; Mk 16:7; Jn 16:16). These terms can be used figuratively for perceiving, recalling, ascertaining or realizing (Matt 13:14; I Cor 2:9). The term is used for the ability to see salvation: "However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him (I Cor 2:9)." It is also used in the spiritual and intellectual seeing: "In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving" (Matt 13:14).

The term *blepo* is used in the context where Jesus gave physical sight or the "capacity to see, of sense perception" and spiritual sight (Matt 12:22; Luke 7:21). The noun *ophthalmos*, eye, is used in Eph 1:18 as a reference to the eye of the heart/understanding (spiritual sight). Seeing/hearing and believing are inter-connected in John 2:11 as people saw the miraculous turning of water into wine which led to the disciples' belief in Jesus (cf. Jn. 6:40). Dahn calls it "Faith's seeing"⁵⁰¹ which is

⁴⁹⁹Ibid., 514.

⁵⁰⁰Ibid.

described in these words, “For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jh. 6:40). He who sees the Son also sees the Father (Jn. 12:45; 14:9) and whoever sees and believes Jesus who is the light in the world will not live in darkness, but in light (12:46). Eyewitness accounts are trustworthy account that can lead to one’s belief (John 19:35; I Jn. 1:1).

Hearing and seeing can be used interchangeably in relation to faith “hear and believe” (Jn. 5:24), “see or look and believe” (Jn. 6:40), “saw and believed” (Jn. 20:8 (cf. 2:11). Christians are the epistles people can read... they are living examples and living witness that can be watched, seen and observed, through which people can believe God. Paul writes, “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men” (II Cor. 3:2). The demand for signs and miracles is a sign of unbelief and hardened hearts (Jn. 2:18; 4:48; 6:26, 30). Jesus rebuked Thomas, saying “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen me and yet believe” (Jh. 20:29). G. Barth comments on this:

John repeatedly emphasizes that faith is bound to Jesus’ word or to witness concerning Jesus (1:7; 4:39, 41f., 50; 5:24, 47; 8:30f.; 17:20; cf. 10:3, 16, 27; 18:37). On the other hand, there is a faithful seeing, or a seeing in faith, for which Jesus’ miracles become signs for the gift Jesus is actually bringing. Thus John 6:40 brings seeing and believing together.⁵⁰²

The woman at the well in John 4:10 “perceived” that Jesus was a prophet and then finally believed that he was the Messiah. Dahn explains, “Faith recognizes the coming messiah. Here we have a situation involving decision. Seeing is thus as a whole an existential encounter with Jesus. But faith based on seeing has no advantage.

⁵⁰¹Ibid., 517.

⁵⁰²G. Barth, “πιστεύς,” in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3: 96.

Jesus expects faith without seeing (20:29).⁵⁰³ Seeing is the door to other spiritual blessings as it is observed, “Spiritual seeing is at the same time an experience (Lk. 2:26; Jn. 8:51) or the conceiving of or experiencing of God’s love (1 Jn. 3:1).”⁵⁰⁴ Many people who heard the same message from John the Baptist and Jesus did not believe nor perceive them Matt 21:32 and Mk 8:18; cf. Matt 13:13; Mk 4:12).

The importance of faith through seeing is evident in the disciples’ life: “In Jn. 20:25 the disciples come to believe through seeing the risen Christ (“We have seen the Lord”). These encounters lead to faith, to commitment, to witness and to sending. For faith one needs to behold both the crucified and the risen Lord”⁵⁰⁵ The restoration of the physical sight of the man born blind from birth (John 19:10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 26, 30, 32; cf. Mark 8:25) led to the restoration of the spiritual sight for him as well. Jesus in his sermon on the Mount preached: “Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). Looking to Jesus by faith leads a person to have an eternal life (cf. John 3:14-16).

God is invisible, but he came and lived among people. They lived with Him, saw Him and talked about Him. The disciples and early believers left their testimonies in the written Word that has been relayed to us today. We Christians today have to relay the same message and witness to the unbelievers we counter in our lives. The witness and testimony of believers about Christ in their lives should come in handy and be effective at the initial encounter with the unbelievers. The gospel relay of hearing and believing is like the relay of seeing and believing passing on from one

⁵⁰³Dahn, “See,” in *NIDNTT* 3: 517.

⁵⁰⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 518.

believer to the unbeliever who has never seen, heard, and believed Jesus and the gospel. This is the process of evangelism and the process of conversion as well.

7. Seeking, Finding and Faith in Conversion

The Hebrew words used for “seek” are בָּקַר (*baqar*) and בָּקַשׁ (*baqash*). In the Septuagint, they are rendered as the Greek word *zeteo*. The word *zeteo* means “to seek”, and *heurisko* means “to find.” They are used to express “man’s relationship to God; here *zeteo* lays its main emphasis on the anthropological side of it and *heurisko* on the theological and Christological.”⁵⁰⁶ In the theological contexts its objects are God (Isa 55:6), grace (Gen 18:3; Ex 33:13; Num 11:11) and mercy (Gen 19:19; Judg 6:17). Isaiah called out, “Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near” (Isaiah 55:6). The “combination of seeking and finding occurs make the point that God can or should be sought and found (Isa. 55:6; 65:1; cf. Rom. 10:20; Jer. 29[36]; 13; Prov. 8:17, Wis. 13:6).”⁵⁰⁷

The word *zeteo* (in the LXX) is used in a non-religious sense of Joseph seeking his brothers (Gen 37:16) and in a religious sense signifying the “conscious turning of the Israelites to their God with all their being, or that of Yahweh to his people”⁵⁰⁸ (cf. Isa 9:13; 31:1; Jer. 10:21). The disobedient and rebellious children are warned to see God and to be obedient to Him (Jer. 29:13; Deut. 4:29; Isa. 55:6). God is also pictured as a Seeker (Ezek 34:12-16), showing a reciprocal relationship between God and Israelites in their seeking for each other.

⁵⁰⁶B. Gärtner, “Seek, Find,” in *NIDNTT*, 3: 527.

⁵⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 528.

⁵⁰⁸H.-G. Link, “Zeteo,” in *NIDNTT* 3: 531.

There are several ways seeking and finding God occurs; seeking God happens through prayer as one seeks God by calling upon God (Isa 55:6) and coming to and praying to Him (Jer 29:12a). The finding God and His answering happen as a result of people's seeking and calling God (Isa. 55:7, 8; Jer. 29:12b-14). Gärtner comments on finding God, "... we must remember that, when God is found, he discloses himself to man and lets himself be found (Isa. 55:6; Jer. 29:14 → Revelation): "Here am I, here am I" (Isa. 65:1). God is only found through God himself."⁵⁰⁹ This is a very important theological statement because people cannot find God unless He willing reveals Himself to them. So people must seek and find God while He is revealing Himself.

In the New Testament, the term *zeteo* is used by the evangelists (Matt. 14 times; Mk. 10; Lk. 34; Jn. 10), in the Pauline writings (20 times) and in Acts (10 times).⁵¹⁰ Jesus asked his hearers to seek God "to put their whole life at the disposal of God's will and rule" (Matt 6:33; cf. 7:7; Lk. 11:9; 12:31). On the opposite end, the Jews were seeking Jesus' life as they tried to kill Him (Jn. 5:18; 7:1, 19; 8:37). People were seeking for their own righteousness (Rom 10:3) and their self-interest (Phil 2:21); the Jews were seeking for signs, and the Greeks were seeking for wisdom (I Cor. 1:22). The people themselves, their seeking attitudes and their self-interest objects become stumbling blocks to seeing and finding God. There are promises and possibilities of finding God for those who sincerely seek Him with their heart (Acts 17:27).

⁵⁰⁹B. Gärtner, "Seek, Find," in *NIDNTT*, 3:528.

⁵¹⁰H.-G. Link, "Zeteo" in *NIDNTT*, 3: 531.

People who are found in the book of life (Rev 20:15) are the direct opposite of people seeking death to escape the final judgment, but they will not find like anymore (Rev 9:6). Through personal evangelism, Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and *also* the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (Jn. 1:45). The purpose of Jesus' coming to the earth was to seek and find the lost, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19:10; cf. Lk 15:6, 8, 10). Paul stated his mission this way, "not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved" (I Cor. 10:33). There is great joy over those who have been found (Lk 15:7, 10, 23).

Gärtner notes, "The God who meets us in Jesus Christ seeks and finds the lost (Lk. 15:6, 8-10)... This divine finding which is a creative act is matched by returning on man's part (→Conversion) and by repentance (Lk. 15:7, 10, 21) and by so living out his life to the full."⁵¹¹ The responsibility of people to find life in God is clear in the Scriptures, "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27). This clearly stresses the responsibility of people to find God while He is near, available, revealing Himself to the people (cf. Matt 10:39; Rev. 9:6; Matt 11:29; Lk. 23:4; Matt 13:44; Matt 7:7). People are commanded to "ask, seek, and knock" with the promise of finding it (Lk 11:9, 10; cf. Heb 4:16). The diligent few will find the narrow path (Matt 7:14) and a resting place for their weary souls (cf. Matt 11:29; Jer. 6:16; Isa 28:12). The big question is, "Will the Son of man find faith when He return on earth?" (Lk 18:8; cf. Matt 24:46). The responsibility rests partly on Christians and those who

⁵¹¹B. Gärtner, "Seek, Find," in *NIDNTT*, 3:529.

should seek and find eternal life for themselves while it is made available to everyone who comes to God.

8. Opening and Faith in Conversion

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word *patah* is used in relation to men, and God is usually the subject who opens the womb (Gen. 29:31), the mouth (Ex. 4:12, 15; Num 22:28; cf. Ps. 81:10), the eye (Gen. 21:19; Is 35:5; 42:7), the ear (Isa. 50:5), and the hand (Ps. 145:16). In the New Testament, *anoigo* is found 78 times. The five foolish virgins who have the lamps but no oil (Spirit) with them cried, “Lord, lord, open up for us” (Matt 25:11) when it is too late. Jesus refers to the same incident of shutting the door of heaven to those who are not prepared but said “Lord, open up to use! Then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’”(Lk 13:25).

Jesus restored the physical eyesight of the blind man. The Pharisees asked him how he received his sight and he said, “The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash’; so I went away and washed, and I received sight” (John 9:11). The Pharisees were fed up with the boy who defended Jesus as a prophet from God and they put him out (v. 35a). Having heard the testimony and ostracism of the boy, Jesus approached him and said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” (v. 35b), the boy asked, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” (v. 36). Jesus answered, “You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you” (v. 37). And the boy responded, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped Him” (v. 38). Two blind men also had desires and prayers for their eyes to be open and Jesus opened their eyes and they followed Him (Matt 20:33-34).

Jesus not only healed the physical blindness, but He also healed the spiritual blindness of the boy. To him who is willing and ready to see, the spiritual eye is opened. But to those who think they see, but are blind, their eyes are shut because they pretend to see when they don't see it, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind" (John 9:39). According to the incident of the blind boy, people have a responsibility to open their eyes to spiritual things. The boy's conversion is a process beginning with very little knowledge about Christ, moving to knowing Him as a "prophet" (v. 17) and then to believing in Him as his "Lord" when he said, "Lord, I believe" (Jn. 9:38) which is his final decision.

Paul was spiritually so blind that he persecuted the church ignorantly (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1). Paul's spiritual blindness was clearly exposed when the light struck him (9:3) and he became physically blind as his eyes were open but could not see (9:8). After the Lord's messenger Ananias touched and spoke to Paul, he regained his physical sight. God wanted to show Paul that He is the One who can open the physical eyes as well as the spiritual eyes of people. Paul was charged with a commission to the Jews and the Gentiles "to open their eyes so that they turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:18; cf. vv. 13-18).

Paul in Rome explained about the fulfilled prophesy in their eyes and ears of the Jews: The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet: Go to this people and say,

You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly

hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them. Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen! (Acts 28:25-28).

The eyes, ears and hearts of the Jews were shut out to see, hear and believe the salvation presented to them because of their stubbornness and rejection of the Messiah. While God was closing the sensory systems of the Jews, they were responsible for their own closing to the offer of salvation. Therefore, the offer of salvation is open to the Gentiles universally.

Paul earnestly prayed that God would open a door of utterance for the mystery of the gospel (Col. 4:3; cf. Eph 6:19; II Cor 2:12). God indeed opened the door for Paul and his associates as Luke puts it this way, "... how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27), but Paul encountered enemies of the gospel as he writes, "For a great door and effectual is open unto me but there are many adversaries" (I Cor 16:9). Nevertheless, Paul has not kept anything back from the Corinthians (II Cor 6:11). Jesus pronounced woe to those who have the key of the knowledge of the kingdom of God and did not enter, but instead hindered those who were entering (Lk. 11:42). Jesus promised to come in to whoever opens the door (Rev. 3:20) while He asks to keep on knocking the door of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 7:7; 7:13) and promised it to be open. People are responsible both to knock and open at the same time in the process of conversion.

9. Hearing, Obedience and Faith in Conversion

In the Septuagiant (LXX), the Greek terms *akouo* and *akoe* are the direct translations of the Hebrew word *sama* (to hear). W. Mundle comments:

In biblical revelation hearing has a much more significance than in the Gr. Or Hel. Worlds. For God meets man in his word, and man therefore is charged

with hearing God's word... Likewise, the visions which are frequently described in the prophetic writings (e.g. Amos 7-9; Jer. 1:11ff.) requires interpretation. Here too seeing and hearing are a unity... Readiness to hear on the part of those who receive the revelation is expressed in I Sam. 3:10: "Speak, for thy servant hears."⁵¹² The importance of hearing is evident in the two common phrases in the Old Testament "Thus says the Lord" and "the word of the Lord came."⁵¹³

A term related to "hear" is "obey," which is also related to "believe." Bultmann observes, "The fact that "to believe" is "to obey," as in the OT (→199, 19 ff.), is particularly emphasised in Hb. 11. Here the πιστεύειν of OT characters has in some instances the more or less explicit sense of obedience."⁵¹⁴ Bultmann adds, "It is natural, however, that the πίστις of the OT characters in Hb. 11 should be trust as well as obedience."⁵¹⁵ Bultmann further describes obedience, "Faith, like unbelief, is, of course, a decision. It is thus an act in the true sense. There is unity between John and Paul in the fact that for both faith has the character of obedience."⁵¹⁶

While God hardened the hearts of the Israelites as it is evident in this verse, "But to this day the LORD has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear" (Deut 29:4). God used the prophets to warn the people to hear His words or else they would face the judgments from God (Isa 1:2, 10; Jer. 2:4; 7:2; 9:20). Israel did not hear, and was not willing, to obey God (Hos. 9:17; Jer. 7:13; Ezk 3:7), and therefore, judgment fell who did not heed God's warnings (Isa. 1:15; Ezk 8:18) because they "Hear and hear, but do not understand; see and see, but do not perceive" (Isa. 6:9; cf. Zech 7:8-14; Eza 9; Neh 9). People can only hear and

⁵¹² W. Mundle, "Hear, Obey," in *NIDNTT*, 2:173.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Bultmann, *TDNT*, 6: 205.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 206.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 225.

understand God's message when God allowed them to understand, but God gave the people over their own choices of those who obstinately rebelled against God.

The relationship between hearing and obedience is stressed in these verses (Ex. 19:5, 8; Deut 28:1; 30:11-14; cf. Matt 22:40; Lk 16:29). Just as God asked men and women to hear Him, He heard and answered their cries (Ps. 115;135:17; Ps. 16:6; 31:2; 86:1; Num 12:2; Ps. 3:4; 19:1, 6, 9). God made ears and He Himself is able to hear (Ps 94:9) but people's sin and guilt make God's ear unresponsive as if he was deaf (Is 59:1). Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom 10:17;c f. v. 16; cf. Gal 3:2, 5).

Considering and receiving the word of God through the apostles or ministers as directly coming from the Lord leads to faith in Christ Jesus (I Thes 2:13). The word preached and heard did not benefit people who heard it because of their lack of faith (Heb 4:2). Here it is evidently clear that human responsibility "to hear and believe" plays a significant role in one's conversion. Therefore, Jesus pronounces beatitudes to the seeing eyes and the hearing ears, "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear" (Matt 13:16; Lk. 10:23).

Because of Adam's disobedience (*parakoh*, from ακόω), many became sinners, "even so through the obedience of the One [Christ] the many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). Jesus' obedience (Phil 2:5, 8) unto death provides salvation for all and Adam's disobedience makes many to become sinners (Rom 5:19). People are receiving the gospel message with different senses (John 1:14; I John 1:1; Lk 2:20; Act 4:20). The apostles testified what they have heard with their ears, what they have seen with their eyes, and what they have touched with their own

hands concerning the Word of Life, namely Jesus Christ, who offered eternal life (I Jn. 1:1).

God has revealed the mystery of salvation through His Spirit which “no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor any human heart conceived” (I Cor 2:9). Hearing comes before believing (Rom 10: 14; cf. Ps. 19:4; Deut 32:21; Is 65: 1). This order (hearing and believing) is non-negotiable. Literal seeing (physical evidence) is not necessary for salvation but it is helpful for those doubting people like Thomas (Jn. 20:29a). According to Jesus, faith without seeing physical evidence is preferable to faith with/after seeing the evidence (Jn. 20:29b).

Hearing leads to knowing, which leads to obeying, or following, as Jesus says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (Jn. 10: 27; cf. v.14). Jesus likens those who hear His words and acts on them as “a wise man who builds his house on the rock” which will not fall (Matt 7:24). He also likens those who hear His words but do not act on them as “a foolish man who builds his house on the sand” which will not last but will fall (Matt 7:26). The mere hearers without spiritual knowledge and obedience are those unbelieving Jews who did not let the Law point them to Christ (Rom 2:13). The doers are the believing pagans, in whose hearts the law is written, who acknowledge the law as a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ (Gal. 3:24, 25; Rom 2:14; cf. Jer. 31:33). James 1:22 contrasts the doers of the word with the hearers. True faith does not merely result in hearing but doing and obeying is what the law says.

The parable of the sower demonstrates the possibility that hearing the word does not always lead to faith (Mk 4:16; Lk 8:13). Understanding must be present to bear fruit (Matt 13:23; 15:10). The negative attitude and the misunderstanding of the

message harden the hearts of the hearers (Is. 6:9; Matt 13:13; Mk 4:12, Lk 8:10; Jn 12:40; Acts 28:27; Rom 11: 8). There are warnings given to the hardened hearts (Heb 3:7-11; 4:3-11). Indeed, God is the one who opens the ears to hear (Is 50:5) but man is also responsible to hear. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Matt 11:15; 13:9; Mk. 4:9; Lk . 8:10). It is obedience to the preaching, which brings righteousness (Rom 6:16). Christians are called “children of obedience” (I Pet 1:2, 14) and non-Christians are called “children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2; 5:6; Col. 3:6). With reference to obedience and the message, there are two kinds of people: those who obey the message of faith (Acts 6:7) and those who refuse to obey (Rom 10:16; ; II Thes 1:8). Therefore, people are responsible to hear, believe and obey the message in the process of conversion.

10. Faith Functioning as a Means of Conversion

Strong explains faith acting as a medium in relation to regeneration, “Faith therefore is not chronologically subsequent to regeneration, but is its accompaniment. As the soul’s appropriation of Christ and his salvation, it is not the result of an accomplished renewal, but rather the medium through which that renewal is effected. Otherwise, it would follow that one who had not yet believed (i.e., received Christ) might still be regenerate, whereas the Scripture represents the privilege of sonship as granted only to believers”⁵¹⁷ (John 1:12, 13). Strong further stresses the instrumentality of faith:

Hence faith is not the procuring cause of salvation, but is only the instrumental cause. The procuring cause is the Christ, whom faith embraces... Faith stands as an intermediate factor between the unconscious and

⁵¹⁷Strong, 842.

undeveloped tendency or disposition toward God inwrought in the soul by God's regenerating act, on the one hand, and the conscious and developed affection toward God which is one of the fruits and evidences of conversion, on the other... The logical order is therefore: 1. Unconscious and undeveloped love; 2. Faith in Christ and his truth; 3. Conscious and developed love; 4. Assurance of faith.⁵¹⁸

As it has been observed, conversion is much broader than just faith and repentance. Conversion rather involves faith, repentance, verbal confession of faith, knowledge, prayer, persuasion, seeing, seeking, finding, opening, hearing, obedience, and faith expressed in work. This may not be the comprehensive list from the Bible, but one can see that conversion cover a vast spectrum involving different human responsibilities. Not all of these elements of conversion may be present in every instance of the conversion process, but knowing these elements will help ministers, evangelists, and Christians become better equipped to share the gospel.

11. Work and Faith in Conversion

Work is not a necessary human role in conversion, but it is necessarily and inseparately linked with faith. The role of work in Christian life is one of the most misunderstood concepts among Christians. Strong writes, "Good works are the proper evidence of faith. The faith which does not lead men to act upon the commands and promises of Christ, or, in other words, does not lead to obedience, is called in Scripture a "dead," that is, an unreal, faith. Such faith is not saving, since it lacks the voluntary element—actual appropriation of Christ (James 2:14-26)."⁵¹⁹

Lewis and Demarest clarify the issue this way, "For both Paul and James 'justify' means to declare righteous. In Paul's writings, it is God who declares the believer

⁵¹⁸Strong, 847.

⁵¹⁹Strong, 846.

righteous. In James's epistle, it is a man's works which declare him righteous by showing that he is a man of faith."⁵²⁰ In addressing the responsibility of a man or woman to exercise his or her repentance and faith in Christ, Strong writes, "... whenever God's Spirit works in regeneration, there is always accompanying it a voluntary change in man, which we call conversion, and that this change is as free, and as really man's own work, as if there were no divine influence upon him."⁵²¹

Paul exhorted the Philippian believers to "...work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). He did not say "work toward or for your salvation," but "work out your salvation" from their faith in Christ. Paul gave thanks to God on behalf of the Thessalonians as he prayed "remembering without ceasing [their] work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thes. 1:2). The New International Version reads the work of faith and labor of love as "our work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love" (1:2).

Commenting on James' theology of faith, Berkhof writes:

James had to rebuke the Jewish tendency to conceive of the faith that was well pleasing to God as a mere intellectual assent to the truth, a faith that did not yield appropriate faith. His idea of the faith that justifies does not differ from that of Paul, but he stresses the fact that this faith must manifest itself in good works. If it does not, it is a dead faith, and is, in fact, non-existent."⁵²²

Therefore, a true and living faith must express itself in good works with love. A faith that produces good works is a good evidence of true conversion.

⁵²⁰Lewis and Demarest, 97.

⁵²¹Strong, 830.

⁵²²Berkhof, 499.

H. The Difference between Conversion in the Old Testament and in the New Testament

People tend to turn to God in time of helpless conditions. The crisis that made people helpless beyond their control and beyond measure also forced people to pray to the living God they had never prayed to. When the people with Jonah were in great trouble in the midst of the troubled sea, everyone offered prayer to their own non-existent gods (Jonah 1:5, 6): “Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten *it* for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep”(Jonah 1:5). There was no response. After Jonah’s confession of his waywardness from the Lord, the people prayed to God before they threw Jonah overboard on Jonah’s request: “Then they called on the LORD and said, ‘We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased’” (Jonah 1:14; cf. 1:6; 16).

Jonah was a reluctant evangelist as he was running away from the Lord, and God still used him in spite of his unwillingness, fear, and disobedience. After the Lord’s power was displayed in quelling the storm in response to Jonah’s removal and the people’s prayers, the sailors responded to God this way, “Then then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows” (1:16). If Jonah had repented at the time of the storm, God would have changed the course of the journey, but he waited until after his punishment. The repentance of Nineveh’s citizens is another good example of people turning to God in the Old Testament. The point to be made here is that the Gentiles who are not part of the

chosen people (Israel) experienced true and definable conversion in the midst of crisis even in the Old Testament times. The people of Nineveh “believed God” (Jonah 3:5a) when Jonah preached to them. They turned to the living God in repentance by declaring “a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth” (3:5b).

David F. Wells notes the difference between OT conversion and NT conversion this way:

Thus although *shubh* is the closest Hebrew equivalent to our term *conversion*, it is used in a covenantal, not an evangelistic, context in the Old Testament. *Shubh* does not focus on a decisive “change of religion” or on a personal, religious transformation through a once-only crisis. Instead, *shubh* emphasizes maintaining an existing covenant relationship through continual “turning” from evil to God, a process in which both God and the individual (or more typically the community as a whole) have a part.⁵²³

David Wells divides turning into two types: Turning from the Outside and Turning from the Inside.⁵²⁴ The Thessalonians “turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God” (I Thess. 1:9) and Barnabas and Paul asked the Lycaonians “to turn from vain things [pagan gods] to a living God” (Acts 14:15). Paul was commissioned to the Gentiles “to open their eyes” that “they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in [God]” (Acts 26:18). Wells observes the conversion of Peter as a Jew this way: “In the case of Jewish evangelism, the line between insider and outsider conversion is necessarily blurred in the New Testament, the period during which Christian self-consciousness developed... If Peter had been a Greek, it might be easier to point to a specific time of

⁵²³Wells, *Turning to God*, 32.

⁵²⁴*Ibid.*, 33-39.

conversion. As a Jew, Peter responded to a call from a Jewish prophet and only gradually understood that the call was more fundamental than a return to Old Testament covenant obedience.”⁵²⁵ The conversion experiences of the twelve disciples (except Judas Iscariot [Matt. 10:4; 26:14]) were similar to the process of conversion Peter experienced.

Wells continues by explaining different approaches to the insiders and outsiders:

The ways in which insiders are approached with the gospel may be very different from the ways outsiders are approached. This is illustrated in the different preaching styles of Acts and in Paul’s explanation in I Corinthians 9:19-23 of the different ways he witnessed to Jews and to Gentiles. The salvation offered is the same, and this salvation results in ‘one new man in place of the two’ (Eph. 2:15), not in a community of Jews and another of converted Gentiles... The old covenant boundary no longer applies; all have become insiders in Christ.⁵²⁶

Wells explains the Gentiles’ situation:

“Godfearing” Gentiles like Cornelius figure elsewhere in Acts, and some of them seem to have been similarly responsive to the gospel (Acts 16:14; 17:4; 18:7). Generally speaking, the “conversion of the Gentiles” (Acts 15:3) must have involved a more clear-cut transfer of religious affiliation, one that led to an immediately perceived change of life and loyalty (cf. 1 Pet. 2:11-12; 3:13-17; 4:3-4, 14-16).⁵²⁷

True believing Gentiles generally should have more defining experiences than the so-called insiders who are Jews or nominal Christians. However, we should not undermine the possibility that Gentiles (outsiders) can be just nominal converts to Christianity without strong inner belief in Christ. The Jews are similar to children who

⁵²⁵Ibid.

⁵²⁶Ibid., 36.

⁵²⁷Ibid., 35.

are born in Christian homes and need to convert inwardly. The Gentles are similar to members of non-Christian religions such as Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and others.

Turning from the inside is the continuation call of the OT prophets with a different emphasis. John the Baptist calls for turning to God in repentance and faith because the kingdom of God is drawing near (Matt 3:2). Jesus came to “seek and save the lost sons of Abraham” (Lk. 19:9-10). Wells comments, “Jesus did not call his Jewish hearers to join a new religion but to rediscover the relationship with God that should always have been theirs.”⁵²⁸ It was not a call for a new religion, but it was a call for a “radical change” (Mk. 1:15; cf. Matt. 3:8-10).

Initially, the call to “repentance” did not require a change of religion, but this call forced the new Jewish converts to exist as a separate community of believers when the “non-Christian Jews recognized it as a rival to their own community” as Wells further explains:

By the mid-sixties, even the Roman emperor identified Christians as a distinct community. By about A.D. 85, the separation of Christians and Jews became so irrevocable that a “curse” on Christians and other heretics was included in the regular synagogue liturgy. Long before this date, the antagonism had developed to such an extent that John’s readers found no difficulty in understanding his reference to being “put out of the synagogue” because of loyalty to Jesus (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2).⁵²⁹

This separation caused first century Christianity to come into existence when the “disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). Therefore, new communities of believers in Christ are formed from different ethnic, religious and geographical backgrounds all over the world.

⁵²⁸Ibid., 36.

⁵²⁹Ibid., 38-39.

Jews and Gentiles turned to the same God, but which attributes of God they turned to might differ from one group to another. For example, the Jews had to turn to the Messiah who is Jesus Christ for salvation (Acts 2: 36-38; 13: 30-39) while the Gentiles had to turn to Jesus who is the Lord and Savior of the world “a living and true God” (I Thes. 1:9; cf. I Tim. 4:10). The subjects different groups turned from were different depending on their religious backgrounds. The Jews turned from self-righteousness, legalism and law-abiding backgrounds whereas the Gentiles turned from idolatries, immoralities, animism and other religious practices. Paul initially based his mission on Jewish pedestal in order to win the Jews, but finally turned to the Gentiles when the Jews rejected the gospel. Segal argues that Paul insisted that “the Jew as well as the Gentile must be converted, and the new community that Jesus founded must be a community of converts.”⁵³⁰ People in the Old Testament turned toward to the perfect Sacrifice to be offered on the Cross as they offered animal sacrifices by faith which covered their sins. Believers in the New Testament turned back to the perfect Sacrificed offered on the Cross by faith as they believe that Jesus died for their sins.

I. Biblical Barriers in the Process of Conversion

Barriers in conversion are not only open to the scrutiny of social-behavioral scientific theories, psychological assessments, cultural evaluations, and religious conversion theories, but they are also receptive to biblio-theological examination. The Bible is replete in dealing with barriers in conversion, specifically, and barriers in the spiritual work of God, generally. Paul, in defense of his apostleship and the right

⁵³⁰ A. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 113.

ministers have to receive supports from believers, says, “If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ (I Cor 9:11-12: NASV⁵³¹). The “hindrance” Paul is speaking about here is the human barrier that can prevent the furtherance of the gospel.

Paul also speaks of the spiritual barrier caused by the inherent sinful nature which divides the Jews and the Gentiles and people and God, “But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down *the barrier of the dividing wall...*” (Eph 2:13-14). Jesus strongly condemns the Pharisaic barrier as he pronounces it, “Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering” (Lk 11:52). This barrier can be termed as a legalistic barrier (practiced by so-called zealous but empty Christians) which hinders unbelievers to convert to Christianity. Jesus Himself experienced social barriers and resistance as recorded by Matthew who writes, “They took offense at Him,” followed by Jesus’ emotional expression of the rejection of his own family and his own social close-kin community, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household” (Matt 13:57).

⁵³¹New American Standard Version.

J. Divine Responsibility and Human Responsibility in Conversion Process

Man's responsibility and God's work in salvation exist on different sides of the same coin. With reference to dependence on God's work and power in conversion, Strong notes, "'Depend wholly upon God?' Yes, as you depend wholly on upon wind when you sail, yet need to keep your sails properly set. 'Work out your own salvation' comes first in the apostle's exhortation: 'for it is God who worketh in you' follows (Phil. 2:12, 13); which means that our first business is to use our wills in obedience; then we shall find that God has gone before us to prepare us to obey."⁵³² When people know and feel the need for their salvation, they should act by repenting and turning to God. By doing this, they will find out that God has already worked in their hearts concerning their salvation.

Regeneration is the beginning of the salvation process and it is not the point of perfection. Strong argues: "Since regeneration is not complete sanctification, and the change of governing disposition is not identical with complete purification of the nature, such subsequent turnings from sin are necessary consequences and evidences of the first (cf. John 13:10)."⁵³³ Man's responsibility in the process of conversion with reference to "belief" is clearly evident in Mark 6:5-6 where Jesus was "amazed at their lack of faith" since "He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them."

Faith in Christ is the act of those who believe in Christ (Rom 1:16; 3:22; 4:11; I Cor 1:21). The Corinthians believed in Christ's death, burial and resurrection (I Cor

⁵³²Strong, 830.

⁵³³Strong, 831.

15:3-4). Even though faith is an act in itself, human works or efforts do not save a person. Faith is the gift of God (Eph 2:8, 9) by which no one can boast of their salvation (Gal 3:10, 23; Rom 3:27-31). Faith also leads one into hope (Rom 8:24; I Cor 13:13). There is a tension between the indicatives (who Christians are in Christ) and the imperatives (what they must do) of Christian life (Rom 8:4; Gal 5:16) because the position of a believer in Christ as a justified sinner is not an automatic ticket to good character or perfect holiness. The need for growth in faith (II Cor 10:5), faith working through love (Gal 5:6), steadfastness in faith (I Cor 15:58), and self-examination of one's own faith (II Cor 13:5) are necessary evidences which exhibit true conversion.

Richard Baxter carefully explains the balance between the two seemingly polar forces (divine and human work) in the process of conversion this way:

The work of *conversion* is sometimes taken actively for that work or act that converts us; sometimes passively for the change that is thereby wrought." As man is the subject, so is he also an agent in the actual turning of his own soul. So God and man are both engaged in this work...

So conversion taken actively, as it is the work of the Holy Ghost, is a work of the spirit of Christ, by which He effectually changes man's mind and heart and life from the creature to God in Christ. And conversion, as it is begun by the Holy Spirit working in the life, then becomes the work of man.

And conversion, taken passively, is the sincere change of a man's mind, heart and life from the creature to God in Christ—wrought by the Holy Spirit through the doctrine of Christ.

...It is not the Holy Spirit who believes, but He causes man to believe.⁵³⁴

⁵³⁴Richard Baxter, *Treatise of Conversion* (Waukesha, WI: Metropolitan Church Association, 1948), 11.

Conversion is a noble work which involves the co-operation of God and human beings. Schleiermacher advocates that God's preparatory grace and quickening power operate in the conversion process:

In this sense everything that in any way contributes to conversion, from the first impression made on the soul by the preaching of Christ onto its final establishment in faith, is the work of Christ... All that preparatory grace has already brought to pass within him of course cooperates, but this is itself part of the divine work of grace and not of his own action.⁵³⁵

He continues:

Spontaneous activity in living fellowship with Christ begins in the moment of being received into His fellowship. There is no interval. Conversion may be said to be just the evocation of this spontaneous activity in union with Christ. The lively susceptibility passes into quickened spontaneous activity. Every heightening of that lively susceptibility is a work of preparatory grace. The grace that effects conversion changes it into quickened spontaneous activity... In the same way our desire is heightened in conversion by the self-communication of Christ till it becomes a spontaneous activity of the self that constitutes a coherent new life.⁵³⁶

The grace of God works throughout the process of conversion and continues to operate in the lives of believers as they grow in the knowledge of God. Lewis and Demarest also agree with the concept of dualistic work in conversion process and write: "Conversion is not all of God nor all of sinners; it is a divinely enabled *conscious human determination*.... [C]onversion is not exclusively of God nor exclusively of humans; it is a divine-human concursive operation."⁵³⁷ These authors clearly explain the divine role and human role in conversion in a clear and concise way. God not only initiates the process of conversion but He also plays a vital role during the whole process as He enables people to believe and respond to Him. In the process of conversion,

⁵³⁵Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* 492- 493.

⁵³⁶*Ibid.*, 494-495.

⁵³⁷Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 103.

God's work and human's work co-operate and God's will is accomplished in saving souls as people respond to God by faith.

Corwin beautifully summarizes the interaction and cooperation of human instrumentality and divine sovereignty:

As with evangelism in general, God has chosen to use human beings as the primary messengers of his gospel. As his ambassadors, we can use effective or ineffective means just as we can go forth prayerfully in the power of the Holy Spirit or not. The lessons of the Scriptures and of history are that God uses the instrumentality of human efforts to achieve his purposes, and he honors those who strive for excellence in serving him effectively. Doing less is to dishonor him and is not a condition in which the true child of God can comfortably rest. In other words, within the parameters of God's sovereign work of drawing men to himself, the harder, the more prayerfully, and the more intelligently we work, the less resistant people will be.⁵³⁸

The bottom line is this: Both evangelism and conversion involve both the work of God and the work of man. Since man cannot do it alone, God chose to use man in the process to carry out His Great Commission along with the promises of His blessings, power and presence till the end of the world (Matt 28:29-30).

K. Various Emotions in the Process Conversion

God does not grant salvation because of our sorrows and tears. He has already offered salvation to people through Jesus Christ on the Cross. Human beings respond differently to the conviction of the Spirit in their respective sinful and needy situations. Some respond to the offer of salvation with their mind and will without much emotion involved while others respond to it with much emotion. Some people

⁵³⁸Gary Corwin, "Revising Assumptions about the Resistant," in *Reaching the Resistant: Barriers and Bridges for Mission*, ed. J. Dudley Woodberry (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1998), 16.

think that they have to cry or shed tears of repentance in order to be saved or to experience full and correct salvation. Not every Testament book demands of repentance (while each may assume it) from the unbeliever as a necessary condition for salvation. For example, the whole book of Romans does not even use the word ‘repentance’ except when it is used as a synonym for “salvation” (Rom 2:4; cf. II Cor 7:8-10).

Whether a particular conversion is an instant event or a process, it will involve different emotions ranging from high, medium, low, and very little to no emotion. Speaking of high and low emotional expressions in conversion, Schleiermacher writes:

In this connection two points can be made here. In the first place, the true change of heart, complete because covering all the ground from regret to faith, need by no means invariably spring from a flood of regret that almost wrecks the whole being by its painful emotions. On the one hand, the capacity of people for emotion is very various. What to an insusceptible nature is a very intense degree of excitement seems but a trifle to one more emotionally constituted, and in this respect the same person differs from time to time. In such a matter no definition or summary statement is possible. [Even the autobiographies of many great religious men] show that even if a shattering storm of feeling occur which is reckoned by themselves to be the moment of their conversion, often enough they sink back again into a state of futility and uncertainty; and so the supposed value of that moment seems entirely doubtful. Even in these cases steadfastness of soul comes only gradually.⁵³⁹

Lewis and Demarest describe conversion as a conscious struggle and liken it as a spiritual conception involving various emotional expressions:

Conversion involved a *conscious struggle* of the whole person, usually over a period of time. Any habitual sinner faces a conscious struggle with believing the Gospel, repenting of idolatry, and trusting Christ (as the spiritual “embryo” begins to move). C. S. Lewis recalls a turbulent time in his life when he came “kicking and screaming” into the kingdom. We suggest that belief and

⁵³⁹Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 487.

repentance are the first signs of life (kicking) during the spiritual gestation period (in the spiritual “womb”).⁵⁴⁰

Regarding the process of conversion, Lewis and Demarest likens it to the process of two people falling in love:

The conscious experience of conversion itself may be *momentary or gradual*. Some fall in love at first sight. Others realize their love over a longer period of time. Whether quickly or slowly, the new allegiance and commitment of the whole person clearly occurs when both say “I do.” However gradual one’s conversion may have been, any holistically depraved sinner makes a dramatic change from natural proclivities to affirm that Jesus is Lord. However long it may take, there remains no reasonable doubt if a prodigal son or daughter truly returns to his or her spiritual home.⁵⁴¹

These theologians are too sure about the dramatic change which, in reality, is difficult to discern in many conversion experiences. However, their comparison of the process of conversion with the process of falling in love is natural, helpful, and beneficial in understanding the process of conversion. While the existence of emotionally charged conversions cannot be denied, dramatic emotional experiences should not be demanded for every conversion experience. They are exceptions for some individuals, but they are not a standard measurement for all conversion experiences.

⁵⁴⁰Lewis and Demarest, 103.

⁵⁴¹*Ibid.*, 104.

Chapter X

Examples of Well-Known Conversion Accounts⁵⁴²

Christian conversion is both a process and a defining moment in people's experiences. The importance of the two aspects of conversion is validated by various experiences recorded by well-known Christians from different walks of life.

A. The Conversion of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

Jonathan Edwards was a tutor, a president of a college, a pastor, a theologian, a writer, and a puritan revivalist. Edwards explains the beginning of his dramatic conversion process: "I had a variety of concerns and exercises about my soul from my childhood, but had two more remarkable seasons of awakening before I met with that change by which I was brought to those new dispositions, and that new sense of things, that I have since had."⁵⁴³ In his youth, Edwards and his friends enjoyed the emotional excitement ("remarkable awakenings") of his father's congregation, but those affections wore off. He felt that he "returned like a dog to his vomit, and went on in the ways of sin."⁵⁴⁴ Edwards experienced the intense sinfulness of his wicked heart to the degree that he felt that God even shook him over the pit of hell. He tried to resolve this inner tension by any possible means but to no avail.

⁵⁴²The selection for these conversion accounts are based on the availability and the clarity of the conversion accounts.

⁵⁴³Jonathan Edwards, "Personal Narrative," in *Jonathan Edwards: Representative Selections, with Introduction, Bibliography, and Notes*, ed. Clarence Faust and Thomas Johnson (New York: American Book Company, 1935), 57.

⁵⁴⁴*Ibid.*

At the same time, Edwards also had a theological struggle with “God’s sovereignty” and writes, “from my childhood up, my mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God’s sovereignty, in choosing whom he would for eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased.”⁵⁴⁵ After a long journey of theological struggle, the light finally shone on Edwards when he read, “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen” (I Tim. 1:17). After reading this verse, Edwards did not find God’s sovereignty as troublesome a dilemma for his soul but as a delightful subject, reality, and conviction for his own soul. Edwards experienced “a new sense, quite different from anything I ever experienced before . . . sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine thing.”⁵⁴⁶

After having peace with God, he not only enjoyed divine sovereign truth and forgiveness, but he also understood the divine Person Himself in his glory and in His creation:

The appearance of everything was altered; there seemed to be as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost everything. God’s excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water, and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind.⁵⁴⁷

Commenting on Edwards’ conversion, Holte writes:

Two ideas central to Edwards’ thought emerge here. First, conversion is a process. Religious concerns and two seasons of awakening precede the change itself. Conversion for Edwards is not one moment, but rather an ongoing event. Second, the result of the conversion is a new disposition and a new sense. Specifically, Edwards uses the word “sense” in psychological terms;

⁵⁴⁵Ibid., 58.

⁵⁴⁶Ibid., 59.

⁵⁴⁷Ibid., 61.

literally this means that the converted person senses things in a new way: conversion transforms perception.⁵⁴⁸

Holte cements conversion as a process based on Edwards's conversion:

Edwards' autobiography clearly demonstrates that conversion is not an instantaneous phenomenon during which a sinner is transformed into a saint. Rather, as he looks back on his own life and conversion, Edwards sees a process of preparation leading up to a dramatic experience that was followed by an ongoing series of interrelated events.⁵⁴⁹

Jonathan Edwards's conversion undoubtedly confirms that conversion is a process as well as a definable moment. Since his youth, Edwards developed great interest in religious affections. Edwards sought God in his youth as he looked within himself, but he only found his intense sinfulness. God revealed Himself to him as the eternal, wise, and glorious God to answer his theological questions and provide him eternal life. Edwards started out as a religious seeker who was theologically confused at the same time. He finally found God when He revealed Himself to Edwards through His Scripture. This conversion is another process conversion which involves religious quest and conscious- decisive experiential moment.

B. The Conversion of John Wesley (1703-1791)

John Wesley grew up in Christian home as a normal Christian child who was miraculously delivered out of a devastating fire. He went on an adventurous mission tour to Georgia after he left Oxford University. He learned Christian doctrine and discipline and developed the passion to preach. To his surprise, he found that something was missing in his own life when he encountered the Moravians in Georgia who seemed to possess peace and assurance of their faith. John Wesley outlined the

⁵⁴⁸James Craig Holte, *The Conversion Experience in America: A Sourcebook on Religious Conversion Autobiography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 80.

⁵⁴⁹Ibid., 81.

steps or progresses of his conversion in *The Journal of John Wesley*, edited by Nehemiah Curnock.

Until he was ten years of age, Wesley held onto what he was taught: “universal obedience, by keeping all the commandments of God.”⁵⁵⁰ In his school years, he hoped to be saved by three things: “(1) not being so bad as other people; (2) having still a kindness for religion; and (3) reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers.”⁵⁵¹ In college, Wesley continued his religious normality by saying “prayers both in public and in private, and read, with the Scriptures, several other books of religion,” and yet he did not have his saving faith. He admitted, “I cannot well tell what I hoped to be saved by now when I was continually sinning against that little light I had...”⁵⁵² At age twenty-two, he practiced Kempis’s *Christian Pattern* which allowed him to see “that true religion was seated in the heart, and that God’s law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions.”⁵⁵³ After exercising one or two hour of vigorous inward religious inspection for holiness every day, he felt that he was righteous: “So that now, ‘doing so much, and living so good a life,’ I doubted not but I was a good Christian.”⁵⁵⁴

Wesley’s spiritual discipline become more rigorous as he tried harder to find God in his own effort. He confessed, “And by my continued endeavour to keep His

⁵⁵⁰Hugh T. Kerr and John M. Mulder eds. “John Wesley,” 55.

⁵⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵⁵²*Ibid.*, 56.

⁵⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁴*Ibid.*

whole law, inward and outward, to the utmost of my power, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of Him, and that I was even then in a state of salvation.”⁵⁵⁵ As Wesley continued his vigorous spiritual discipline, he “omitted no sort of self-denial which [he] thought lawful... omitted no occasion of doing good.”⁵⁵⁶ He admitted the futility of his efforts which almost led him to death:

Yet when, after continuing some years in this course, I apprehended myself to be near death, I could not find that all this gave me any comfort or any assurance of acceptance with God. At this I was then not a little surprised; not imagining I had been all this time building on the sand, nor considering that ‘other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid’ by God, ‘even Christ Jesus.’⁵⁵⁷

The more good things Wesley tried to do, the more he was troubled in his heart. Though he met twenty-six Moravians on the ship going to Georgia who he thought showed him “a more excellent way” than his self-righteous methods, he was too self-assured and too stubborn to listen to them. Wesley continued to preach his gospel of righteousness and law as he struggled within himself. In his struggle, he resembled Paul, who wrestled to quell two conflicting desires within himself (Romans 7). Wesley admitted that he went through this whole ordeal for more than ten years knowing that he “sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.”⁵⁵⁸

After returning to England in January 1738, he was at the point of death because of his struggle with his faith. He thought at the time that he “had not enough

⁵⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶Ibid., 57.

⁵⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸Ibid., 58.

of it.”⁵⁵⁹ Peter Böhler confronted him with a true faith in Christ which gave victory over sin, peace, and forgiveness, but Wesley vehemently rejected the offer. After Böhler brought three friends who also testified that true faith was the free gift of God they experienced in their conversion, Wesley was finally convinced. In his continual search for true faith, he stumbled on II Peter 1:4 which reads, “There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature.” On the evening of May 24, Wesley went to a Bible study where someone read Luther’s preface to the *Epistle to the Romans*. Wesley explained his moment of conversion this way: “while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.”⁵⁶⁰

This is the short account of John Wesley’s process conversion which resulted in joy, peace, and assurance. Wesley went through different stages of soul searching journey through self-righteous efforts and self-disciplines. He processed his own self-righteous redemptive theology in his own mind and practiced it through vigorous self-disciplines. Wesley was a self-assured religious person who later became a confused person and finally became a convinced person who experienced joy, forgiveness and assurance of salvation. Wesley’s conversion is a gradual process which includes a mixture of decisive-conscious moment and a moderate inner emotional experience of joy, peace and assurance.

⁵⁵⁹Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰Ibid., 59.

C. The Conversion of David Brainerd (1718-1747)

David Brainerd's religious experience develops from argument, confusion, and conviction to conversion with moderate emotional expressions. Brainerd was a religious person, yet he had four crucial religious issues which hindered his conversion. The first was the strictness of the divine Law. He writes, "I quarreled with the law of God, as unreasonably rigid. I thought, if it extended only to my *outward* actions and behaviors, that I could *bear* with it; but I found that it condemned me for my evil thoughts, and sins of my *heart*, which I could not possibly prevent."⁵⁶¹ The second struggle was that *faith* alone was the *condition of salvation*. He had a hard time accepting salvation offered by grace (cf. Mark xvi.16; Eph ii. 1.8) and wrestled with this issues as he confessed: "I could not bear, that all I had done should stand for mere nothing; as I had been very conscientious in duty, had been exceeding religious a great while, and had, as I thought, done much more than many others who had obtained mercy.... Hence I called what I did by the name of *honest faithful endeavours*; and could not bear it, that God had made no promises of salvation to them [good works]."⁵⁶²

The third issue he had was that he did not understand faith or how to believe in Christ. Brainerd explains: "For I was not yet effectually and experimentally taught, that there *could* be no way prescribed, whereby a *natural* man could, of his own strength, obtain that which is *supernatural*, and which the highest angel cannot give."⁵⁶³ The fourth theological issue Brainerd had was the *sovereignty* of God.

⁵⁶¹Hugh T. Kerr and John M. Mulder eds. "David Brainerd," 75.

⁵⁶²Ibid., 76.

⁵⁶³Ibid., 75.

Commenting on Romans, he noted “[The concept of Romans ix.11-23] destroyed my seeming good frames; for when I thought I was almost humbled, and almost resigned, this passage would make my enmity against the sovereignty of God appear It gave me a dreadful view of myself; I dreaded more than ever to see myself in God’s hands, at his sovereign disposal...”⁵⁶⁴

The conviction of the Spirit was so evident at this time in his life urging him “to relinquish all *self-confidence*,” making him realize his “*lost* estate,” and haunting him: “It is done, it is done, it is forever impossible to deliver yourself.”⁵⁶⁵ After all his contemplations, confusions and convictions, he felt that his efforts were in vain and concluded, “I was brought quite to a stand, as finding myself totally *lost*.”⁵⁶⁶ He blamed himself because he had not done more. He came to the next level of conviction in which he saw “no good news or merit in [his] duties,” but he admitted, “but now, the more I did in prayer or any other duty, the more I saw that I was indebted to God for *allowing* me to ask for mercy.”⁵⁶⁷ Thus he was able to see the disconnect between the merits of prayer and God’s grace in salvation. He came to acknowledge that his religious endeavor was “self-interest ... a vile mockery to God, self-worship, and a continual course of lies.”⁵⁶⁸ On July 12, 1739, he lost all interest in his previous religious exercises and thought that the Spirit had left him to himself. He experienced the vision of God’s *unspeakable glory* as he described it this way:

⁵⁶⁴Ibid., 76.

⁵⁶⁵Ibid, 76-77.

⁵⁶⁶Ibid., 77.

⁵⁶⁷Ibid., 78.

⁵⁶⁸ Hugh T. Kerr and John M. Mulder eds. “David Brainerd,” 78.

“My soul *rejoiced with joy unspeakable, to see such a God, such a glorious divine Being*; and I was inwardly pleased and satisfied, that he should be *God over all forever and ever....* At this time the *way of salvation* opened to me with such infinite wisdom, suitableness, and excellency... The sweet relish of what I then felt, continued with me for several days, almost constantly, in a greater or less degree. --- I could not but sweetly rejoice in God, lying down and rising up.”⁵⁶⁹ A week later on the next Sunday, “Not long after I was again involved in *thick darkness*, and under great distress; yet not of the same kind with my distress under convictions. I was guilty, afraid, and ashamed to come before God; was exceedingly pressed with a sense of guilt: but it was not long before I felt, I trust, true repentance and joy in God.”⁵⁷⁰

As it is evident from his own descriptions, Brainerd’s conversion was a process of struggles, self-righteousness, and insecurities leading him into final victory and providing him assurance, peace, and joy. Indeed, his conversion is a process conversion filled with emotions.

D. The Conversion of Fanny Crosby (1820-1915)

Fanny Crosby was blind since she was six weeks old through a doctor’s mistreatment. She is known to have written over 9, 000 hymns.⁵⁷¹ She started writing hymns at the age of forty-four. Her famous Hymns include “Blessed Assurance” and “Safe in the Arms of Jesus” which she wrote in thirty minutes by the request of

⁵⁶⁹Hugh T. Kerr and John M. Mulder eds. “David Brainerd,” 79.

⁵⁷⁰ Hugh T. Kerr and John M. Mulder eds. “David Brainerd,” 80.

⁵⁷¹ Samuel Fisk ed., “Fanny Crosby,” in *40 Fascinating Conversion Stories* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 37.

William H. Doane from Ohio who gave her a forty-minute notice before he caught a train to Cincinnati.⁵⁷²

By nature Fanny was a very timid person who avoided public speaking. She met a man (whom she called “Mr. Camp”) through her teacher. Fanny became acquainted with Mr. Camp, but he did not share the gospel with her. Later, in a dream, she saw Mr. Camp as a sickly person who wanted to speak with her at once. The dream went like this, “Fanny, will you meet me in Heaven?” “Yes, I will, God helping me,” she replied.⁵⁷³ Fanny was greatly disturbed by his question and wondered if she would really meet him or other acquaintances in heaven. A few weeks later, she attended a revival meeting at a Methodist church. Fanny admits:

On two occasions I sought peace but did not find the joy I craved until one evening it seemed to me that light must indeed come then or never; and so I arose and went forward alone. After prayer, the congregation began to sing the grand old hymn: *Alas, and did my Savior bleed, And did my Sovereign die?* And when they reached the third line of the fourth stanza, *Here Lord, I give myself away*, my very soul was flooded with celestial light. I sprang to my feet, shouting “Hallelujah!” and then for the first time I realized that I had been trying to hold the world in one hand and the Lord in the other.”⁵⁷⁴

Even though this is a brief account of Fanny’s conversion, it is still clear that her conversion was a process that spanned over a period of time. Her conversion began with fear and insecurity which finally resulted in joy and peace. Fanny experienced a process conversion that mixed emotions of fear and peace and that occurred during a definite event and time in history.

⁵⁷²Ibid., 38.

⁵⁷³Ibid., 39.

⁵⁷⁴Ibid.

E. The Conversion of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Charles Hadden Spurgeon grew up in a Christian home and learned the basics of Christianity from his parents and his Christian environment. He was struggling within himself and felt that he was inwardly miserable. He had knowledge of sin but did not have the cure for it, so he decided to visit different churches to find out the way of salvation. He admitted that every preacher he had heard never clearly preached salvation. On a snowy Sunday morning, he got stuck on the way to his church and ended up attending a little Primitive Methodist chapel (as he called it). Because of the snow, the minister did not come that morning to preach, but an unlearned layman walked up to the pulpit and started preaching from the text which reads: “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isa. 45:22).

The layman said, “It says, ‘Look.’” Now, lookin’ don’t take a deal of pains. It ain’t liftin’ your foot or your finger; it is just, ‘Look’....Anyone can look; even a child can look.”⁵⁷⁵ The layman went on with his preaching and he suddenly looked at the young boy and said, “Young man, you look very miserable...And you always will be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you don’t obey my text.”⁵⁷⁶ The layman finally challenged Spurgeon and said, “Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin’ to do but to look and live.”⁵⁷⁷

Spurgeon responded to the layman’s challenge as he witnessed:

⁵⁷⁵Charles H. Spurgeon, *My Conversion* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1996), 36.

⁵⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 37-38.

⁵⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 38.

There and then the cloud was gone; the darkness had rolled away. That moment I saw the sun... I have found solid joy and peace... That happy day when I found the Savior and learned to cling to His dear feet was a day I will never forget... I can testify that the joy of that day was utterly indescribable. I could have leaped. I could have danced.⁵⁷⁸

Spurgeon was a normal Christian child growing up in a normal Christian home. He traveled the conversion journey from being a guilty sinner and miserable man to being a happy sinner saved by grace through faith in Christ. His emotions changed from emotions of guilt, dissatisfaction, insecurities, fear, and unhappiness to emotions of clear conscience, contentment, security, boldness, and happiness after his conversion. This conversion was a process conversion which resulted in a changed event and changed life.

F. The Conversion of E. Stanley Jones (1884-1973)

E. Stanley Jones experienced process conversion in three different crises. He starts his conversion story by saying, "I am an ordinary man doing extraordinary things because I'm linked with the extraordinary."⁵⁷⁹ Jones described his first stage of religious experience as "the problem of the self-assertive self"⁵⁸⁰ because he, as a little boy, tried to get people's attention by untimely passing a collection plate in front of the chatting people at a Methodist church in order to get attention and compliments for wearing a brand new suit. This was his first memorable religious encounter in his childhood at age five.

⁵⁷⁸Ibid., 38-40.

⁵⁷⁹Hugh T. Kerr and John M. Mulder eds. "E. Stanley Jones," 181.

⁵⁸⁰Ibid.

The second incidental contact with religion for Jones occurred when he was fifteen years of age at the Memorial Church, where a preacher from John Bunyan's church delivered a message. The preacher pointed to the section where Jones and his young friends sat and said, "Young men, Jesus said, 'He that is not with me is against me'" which hit Jones's heart directly. Under great conviction, he went forward to the altar and wept. He explains: "I was guilty and estranged... I wanted the kingdom of God, wanted reconciliation with my heavenly Father, but took church membership as a substitute."⁵⁸¹

Jones thought he had experienced the real conversion. His mother even acknowledged his conversion by giving him a morning kiss before he got up from bed, but it was not yet the real one as he admitted:

But I soon found out I wasn't. I felt religious for a few weeks, and then it all faded out and I was back again exactly where I was before, the springs of my character and my habit formation unchanged. I had been horizontally converted, but not vertically. I was outwardly in, but not inwardly in. It was a sorry impasse. I could have lived out my life on that level the balance of my days, a cancelled-out person, neither here nor there.⁵⁸²

Jones viewed that second religious experience as a failure and called it "half-conversion."⁵⁸³ His real conversion came after two years when evangelist Robert J. Bateman preached at Memorial Church. He explained his last conversion experience meticulously:

I wanted the real thing or nothing. No halfway houses for me; I wanted my home. For three days I sought. During those three days I went to the altar twice. On one of these times my beloved teacher, Miss Nellie Logan, knelt

⁵⁸¹Ibid.

⁵⁸²Ibid.

⁵⁸³Ibid.

alongside me and repeated John 3:16 this way: “God so loved Stanley Jones, that he gave his only begotten Son, that if Stanley Jones will believe on him he shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” I repeated it after her, but no spark of assurance kindled my darkened heart. The third night came; before going to the meeting I knelt beside my bed and prayed the sincerest prayer: “O Jesus, save me tonight.” And he did! A ray of light pierced my darkness. Hope sprang up in my heart... I now believe he has done it, but I had been taught that you found him at an altar of prayer. So I felt I must get to the church to an altar of prayer. I found myself running the mile to the church... I went into the church and took the front seat, a thing I had never done before. But I was all eagerness for the evangelist to stop speaking, so I could get to that altar of prayer. When he did stop, I was the first one there. I had scarcely bent my knees when Heaven broke into my spirit. I was enveloped by assurance, by acceptance, by reconciliation... I had him—Jesus and he had me. We had each other. I belonged... As I arose from my knees, I felt I wanted to put my arms around the world and share this with everybody. Little did I dream at that moment that I would spend the rest of my life literally trying to put my arms around the world to share this with everybody.⁵⁸⁴

E. Stanley Jones experienced a process conversion climaxed in emotions of joy, peace and assurance. He passed through different stages of conversion from “self-assertive self” religious experience to “half-conversion” and finally to “the real thing” (true conversion). E. Stanley Jones’s conversion is a combination of gradual process, conscious decisions, emotional feelings, and climactic event.

G. The Conversion of C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)

The conversion of a man who progressed from atheist to Theist and then Christian believer with no observable emotional experience in his conversion is as follows. Clive Staples Lewis admits his struggles within himself this way:

The odd thing was that before God closed in on me, I was in fact offered what now appears a moment of wholly free choice. In a sense. I was going up Headington Hill on the top of a bus. Without words and (I think) almost without images, a fact about myself was somehow presented to me. I became aware that I was holding something at bay, or shutting something out... I could open the door or keep it shut; I could unbuckle... no threat or

⁵⁸⁴Ibid., 182.

promised was attached to either... The choice appeared to be momentous but it was also strangely unemotional... I chose to open, unbuckle, to loosen the rein... Then came the repercussion on the imaginative level. I felt as if I were a man of snow at long last beginning to melt. The melting was starting in my back—drip-drip and presently trickle-trickle. I rather disliked the feeling...”⁵⁸⁵

Lewis admits, “Really, a young Atheist cannot guard his faith too carefully....”⁵⁸⁶ He was faced with the reality of God: “He would not argue about it. He only said, ‘I am the Lord;’ ‘I am that I am;’ ‘I am.’”⁵⁸⁷ Lewis felt very uneasy about facing God because he did not want “to be interfered with” as he was trying “to call [his] soul [his] own.”⁵⁸⁸ Lewis encountered God night after night in his mind, and he described it as the “unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet.”⁵⁸⁹

Lewis admitted his reluctance to accept God as God: “That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.”⁵⁹⁰ He could not fully understand the love of God “which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape.”⁵⁹¹ He felt the goodness of God and reflected, “The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation... It must be understood that the conversion

⁵⁸⁵ Hugh T. Kerr and John M. Mulder eds. “C. S. Lewis,” in *Famous Conversion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 200.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 201-202.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 202.

... was only to Theism, pure and simple, not to Christianity. I knew nothing yet about the Incarnation. The God to whom I surrendered was sheerly non-human.”⁵⁹² At that point, he was a Theist who just had converted from Atheism.

It took him several months (close to a year) to get to the next step in his conversion. Even though he was against “the idea of churchmanship” because he was “anti-clerical” and “anti-ecclesiastical,” he started to attend his parish church on Sundays and his college chapel on weekdays as soon as He became a Theist.⁵⁹³ According to Lewis, the Gospels were too narrow and too literal without attractions or colorings such as the pagan myths around them. But the uniqueness of the incarnation is intriguing to him as he writes, “But if a god—we are no longer polytheists—then not a god, but God. Here and here only in all time the myth must have become fact; the Word, the flesh; God, Man. This is not ‘a religion’ nor ‘a philosophy.’ It is the summing up and actuality of them all...”⁵⁹⁴

His final step in his process conversion is explained in his own words:

I know very well when, but hardly how, the final step was taken. I was driven to Whipsnade one sunny morning. When we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo I did. Yet I had not exactly spent the journey in thought. Nor in great emotion. “Emotional” is perhaps the last word we can apply to some of the most important events. It was more like when a man, after long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake...”

For C. S. Lewis, conversion is a process which has three stages: atheist, theist, and Christian. In his own words, Lewis explains his conversion as “journey” which is

⁵⁹²Ibid.

⁵⁹³Ibid., 203.

⁵⁹⁴Ibid.

definitely a process. His conversion was mostly intellectual and theological without much emotional expression.

All these seven people whose conversion accounts have been discussed have one thing in common: process-event conversion. However, their conversions differ in their speed and intensity. Some are normal whereas others are dramatic. Some are slow while others are fast. Some are consciously acknowledged event while others are vaguely recognized experience. But the results are the same: assurance of salvation, changed behaviors, and transformed lifestyles. Based on these well-known conversion accounts, it is safe to say that conversion can be either a process or an event or both which involves more or less emotions and more or less conscious experiences and decisions.

Chapter XI

Conclusion

A. Conversion as Process of Series of Events and A Dramatic Crisis

The spiritual-decision process developed by James F. Engel and H. Wilbert Norton⁵⁹⁵ is helpful that the conversion pattern pictures conversion not as an instant event but as a process. However, their model is not effective for Burman context because the stages could overlap each other or one stage could come before the other one, not strictly following their pattern and order. They do acknowledge the work of God and the work of man in the process of conversion, which is very true and quite important.⁵⁹⁶ However, they seem to put too much responsibility on God when they write, “It is God’s sole responsibility to bring about awareness of the Supreme Being through general revelation.”⁵⁹⁷ This sounds like asking God to do too much for mankind. The general revelation is already given and displayed day and night from all corners of the world (Ps. 19:1-2). It is human responsibility to recognize and acknowledge God’s already revealed revelation around us.

Conversion has been viewed and treated in Christianity, especially among evangelical Christians, as an instantaneous decision leading to a dramatic event with a climax filled with emotions. Their picture of conversion is like a train moving in high speed with an emergency break pulling it into an instant and complete halt. Many

⁵⁹⁵Engel and Norton, *What’s Gone Wrong with the Harvest?* 45.

⁵⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 46.

⁵⁹⁷*Ibid.*

people treated conversion as consisting of repentance and faith. Few people have acknowledged conversion as having manner and speed or duration and direction. It is very important that conversion is also recognized as a process which includes speed, detours, bumpy roads, and mixed emotions. Conversion ought to be likened to a travelling train which travels with various speeds, making slow and sudden stops but getting to the destination eventually.

According to Schleiermacher, the beginning of the conversion process is fuzzy, because he sees conversion as having preparatory events and period as he writes:

The higher character which both possesses is only recognized from the simultaneous dawning of faith; and perfect and *effective* divine grace is seen only in the union of all three—regret, change of heart, and faith. There are similar preliminary approximations to faith.... [C]onversion cannot be distinguished either in and for itself, or by any particular mark, from the effects of preparatory grace... When therefore the Redeemer calls the decisive working of divine grace a new birth, we must take part of the meaning to be that just as in the natural life birth is not the absolute beginning, so here a period of hidden life precedes it....we must rest assured that even though neither we nor others can point out the very beginning of our new life, and its moments in time is as little to be determined as the point in space from which the wind begins to blow, still the fact of the distinction between the new life and the old remains, and of our share in the new we become ever more certain.”⁵⁹⁸

Conversion as a process of agonizing crisis is described by Schleiermacher: “Hence we can concede the reality of this conception of an agonizing crisis of repentance only as denoting the whole change of conditions, from the first challenging and preparatory effects of grace on to the unchangeable fixing of the heart in faith”⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁸Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 486-487.

⁵⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 488.

Conversion is both an instantaneous event and a gradual process. For some, the instantaneous aspect is decisive and recognizable whereas for others it is blended in the process of other series of events. James C. Holte writes:

Early studies of conversion, drawing on the recorded experiences of converts like the apostle Paul and evangelist Charles Finney, emphasized abruptness of the change and such physical and emotional manifestations as visions and voices. More recent scholarship has emphasized the long-term process of conversion, of which the dramatic moment is one aspect.⁶⁰⁰

Holte continues to explain the progress made in the modern understanding of conversion, “Contemporary studies of the conversion process stress that conversion need not be dramatic or sudden; rather, conversion often is a long-term process during which a person changes fundamental beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors.”⁶⁰¹ Holte balances his position by comparing the conversion of St. Paul and St. Augustine: “All conversions are dramatic, but some appear more suddenly than others. Paul’s blinding experience on the road to Damascus is perhaps the best known example of the dramatic conversion, whereas Augustine’s years of wrestling with his conscience is a classic example of the developmental conversion.”⁶⁰²

The conversions of St. Paul and St. Augustine are true conversions, but they differ in their speed. Paul’s conversion was sudden whereas Augustine’s conversion was gradual. George E. Morris also advocates conversion as both a process and an event, “Just because Christian conversion is a process we do not have to suppose there is no room for crisis points. Crisis points are rotted in the realities of human

⁶⁰⁰James Craig Holte, *The Conversion Experience in America: A Sourcebook on Religious Conversion Autobiography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), x.

⁶⁰¹*Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁰²*Ibid.*, 42.

experience...’’⁶⁰³ Joe Hale acknowledges the possibility of converts being able to acknowledge the conversion experience after the event has occurred and balances the two polar views:

One cannot talk about one without recognizing the other. This is the dual basis for our discussion.

1. There is no conversion so *instantaneous* that it completely happens overnight. 2. There is no conversion so gradual that the person is unaware of God’s working in him.⁶⁰⁴

Hale explains the awareness converts feel this way:

In a very real sense conversion is awareness. Unless one is aware of himself, of God, of claims upon his own life as revealed in Christ, it is not meaningful to say that he is a Christian... It is certainly true that *we grow toward understanding* and that the *capacity* for relationship is developed. However, *our growing toward relationship leads to awareness*, which in this case is the *initial step* in conversion. It may be helpful to think of the gradual turning Godward as the coming of the dawn. We may not know the precise moment, but we know that an hour ago it was dark and now it is light.⁶⁰⁵

To Hale, conversion process is also like an engagement which occurs long before the marriage and a courtship which climaxes in marriage. He adds, “In an individual relationship with God, the steps that lead us to commitment may come relatively thick and fast in a brief period or they may be a long line of graduations, a slow process, that prepares the way to the [conversion].’’⁶⁰⁶

Peter’s conversion experience was a cluster of different emotional and non-emotional incidences leading to his final confession of faith in Jesus, “Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life’” (John

⁶⁰³George E. Morris, *The Mystery and Meaning of Christian Conversion* (Nashville, TN: The World Methodist Council, 1981), 125.

⁶⁰⁴Joe Hale, *Design for Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: Tidings, 1969), 25.

⁶⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 30.

⁶⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 27.

6:68). Timothy's conversion also seems to be a gradual experience that began with by his grandmother teaching him the Scriptures: "For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well" (II Tim 1:5). There is a possibility that Timothy did not have a defining moment of conversion, but Paul regarded him as a sincere convert because of his authentic Christian family, faithful walk, and perhaps the observable fruits of Timothy's faith. If Timothy had a defining moment of conversion, but the Scripture does not reveal that to us.

Commenting on conversion as God's effectual calling which is a process taking place inside a person, J. I. Packer (forward note in the book *Richard Baxter and Conversion*) writes:

Though realization of the reality of the Savior's nearness, and consequent change in thought and behavior, may be sudden in the final decisive stage of conversion, as it was for Paul on the Damascus road and has been for very many since, the process as a whole takes time, and it is God, not we who labour for conversions, who will decide how quickly or slowly it will advance, and when it will come to fruition, in each particular case. Pressing on others the urgency of seeking the Lord in conversion, which we must ever do, is not to confer on them the power to instantly repent, confidently trust in Christ, and radically turn one's life around, changing everything from the inside out—only God can do that. We who evangelize must resist the temptation to put our trust in techniques for, in effect, speeding up, short-circuiting, and forcing forward the conversion process. Let God be God in evangelism, as in all else!⁶⁰⁷

Billy Graham talks about "many forms of conversion," suggesting that no two

⁶⁰⁷Timothy K. Beougher, *Richard Baxter and Conversion: A Study of the Puritan concept of becoming a Christian* (Scotland: Mentor Imprint, 2007), 8-9.

conversions are exactly the same in manner, speed, intensity, and consciousness. He also admitted that his wife Ruth Graham could not pinpoint the exact date and time of her conversion, but her life and her testimony demonstrated that she was a converted person.⁶⁰⁸ Jacob A. Loewen also concurs with the possibility of an unidentifiable dramatic moment or event in Christian conversion:

This “successive-stages” approach certainly also has experiential validity for “Christian socialization.” Most people looking back upon their Christian development can point to a number of stages in which their commitment was deepened and extended. Even conversion-preaching groups find that a certain percentage of their membership cannot point to a definite time and a definite place of conversion, but rather to a series of affirmations matching their emotional and intellectual maturation.⁶⁰⁹

On the other hand, Robert Raines emphasizes the decisive moment of making a decision to follow Christ:

We start in the direction of Christian discipleship when we say “yes” to Christ. One does not become a Christian overnight, but he may make the first step overnight or in a moment of decision ... there can be no growth unless and until there is a decision; one can make no progress along the road until one decides to take the road. As someone has written: “So many in our churches are busily continuing something they never anywhere decisively began.” One does not become a Christian by receiving secondhand the faith of his fathers; no one becomes a Christian in *absentia*, or in his sleep; one *decides* to follow Christ.⁶¹⁰

The two seemingly polar views of conversion are not really contradictory to each other. The non-conscious conversion option stresses the importance of discipleship which bears fruits, and the conscious conversion option focuses on the importance of making a clear decision to follow Christ.

⁶⁰⁸Billy Graham, “Conversion—A Personal Revolution,” in *The Ecumenical Review* (1967) no. 19:271-284.

⁶⁰⁹Jacob A. Loewen, “Socialization and Conversion in the Ongoing Church,” in *Practical Anthropology*, no. 16 [1969]: 1-17.

⁶¹⁰Robert A. Raines, *New Life in the Church* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 42.

Granted people on both sides are genuine converts, the non-conscious converts continue to live as Christians since their childhood without many damaging testimonies in their lives. This does not suggest that self-righteousness people who claim to keep the Law can earn salvation. The so-called converts are assumed to believe the basic teaching of the gospel and live accordingly (John 3:16; Rom 3:23; 6:23; Eph 2:8, 9; Rom 19:9, 10). The unclear defining moments of Jesus' disciples' spiritual journey seems to testify this conversion option. This would also be true for Billy Graham's wife Ruth who was a strong supporter of her husband's evangelistic endeavors. The danger to this first option is that some Christians, for different reasons (fear, shame, pride, guilt, overconfidence and ignorance), may pretend or assume to be true Christian converts, but their beliefs and their conducts might reveal otherwise. Jesus has warnings for those who pretend to be religious but are not real converts: "So then, you will know them by their fruits" (Matt 7:20). "Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham'" (Lk. 3:8).

Examples of conscious conversion are evident in the Bible. There are many Biblical verses which reveal decisive moments of conversion, but one outstanding event occurs in the book of Acts when 3, 000 people were saved on the day of the Pentecost. This event exemplifies the decisive moment of salvation (Acts 2: 41, 47). Another instance is seen after Peter heals the paralytic Aeneas in Lydda: "All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord" (Acts 9:35, cf. vv.32-35). Where God is at work, people believe and then turn to Him: "And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord"

(Acts 11:21). The Thessalonians “turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God” (I Thes 1:9).

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Crusades have been criticized by many people, even evangelicals and fundamentalists. They claim that many people who come to the altar calls at the Crusades repeat their behaviors without much change, and they say that the same people come forward again and again in the following Crusades. It is not the intention of this work to be critical of godly men like Billy Graham or Bill Bright who have won thousands of thousands of converts, but there are negative side effects to this conscious-decision conversion model. People may go to the altars but do not really mean it or do not have real internal changes. They may convert on the outside without experiencing inner conversions. They can be religious legalists just as the Pharisees were. Therefore, both sides of the conversion question have positive and negative side effects. Knowing conversion as a process of series of events and a dramatic crisis helps ministers and missionaries prepared better in approaching non-believers with the gospel.

B. Suggestions for Better Approaches

Mission should be done according to Burman religio-worldview and cultural-social mindset. Natachai Mejudhon suggests a better approach to Buddhists in Thailand as a meekness approach,⁶¹¹ which is the opposite way of an aggressive-confrontational approach. Similarly, Buddhists in Burma should be approached in such a way that they would appreciate the manners of approaches. I would suggest a discreet-polite approach in evangelizing the Burmans with the gospel. The word

⁶¹¹Mejudhon, *Meekness*, 1997.

“discreet” is chosen here for a good reason. Interviewees, including Burman converts and ministers working among Burman Buddhists, over and over again emphasize approaching the Burmans with care, consciousness, and humility. Therefore, a discreet approach should be applied to any kind of approach to Burmans, whether it is in social settings, religious gatherings, or personal interactions. The other important word which requires attention is “polite” because the phrase “yinkyii hmuh” (custom or manner) is a very important concept in Burman culture and society. The opposite word for “yinkyii hmuh” is rudeness or impolite manner. The word literally means “polite manner” or “courteous behavior.” By combining the two important words, we get “polite-discreet approach.” This concept is a biblical approach Jesus presented to his disciples in the Gospels: “Therefore be as shrewd as *snakes* and as innocent as *doves*” (Matt 10:16). Missionaries, ministers, and evangelists must be vigilant and meek at the same time in approaching the unbelievers.

Some suggestions for a better approach in evangelizing the Burman Buddhists or Buddhists in general are in order:

1. Polite-discreet relational friendship approach: Friendship is admired among Burman people, and this is the beginning for any relationship ranging from politics and social issues to religions.
2. Polite-discreet relaxed environment approach: Buddhists are more comfortable and more receptive to more relaxed situations (home settings) than church style formal services.
3. Polite-discreet non-public setting approach: This is similar to the preceding approach in which the setting is social in nature, but this one is different because it has to do with the religio-political atmosphere. This setting is comparable

to the underground church environment in China or the cell-group setting where people connect to each other on the relational close setting with minimal intrusion of public religious (Buddhism) and political (non-religious freedom issues) spheres. The more publicity the minority religion (Christianity) gains in the eyes of the dominant religious adherents (Buddhists) and government, which limits religious freedom for Christians, the more negative reactions (perhaps, persecutions) Christians would encounter. Therefore, it is better to exist and grow numerically in the backyard of Buddhism and the Burman public domain rather than on their front porch. It is very important that Christians are discreet about how and where they conduct themselves in their worship and services.

4. Polite-discreet no-string attached approach: Relationships in both ways should be clear from the beginning. Christians should not befriend Buddhists just for the purpose of Christianizing them. Christians should be clear that meeting social needs is not salvation. Salvation of the people is their main, biblical goal, not to entice people with social helps.

5. Polite-discreet socio-religious ceremonial approach: Buddhists tend to accept invitations to social events rather than to religious services at the church. So, inviting Buddhist friends to the socio-religious ceremonies in homes and church is a good way to attract them to hear the gospel.

6. Polite-discreet prayer-challenge approach: Many convert interviewees testify how God, whom they tested through prayer, met their needs physically, emotionally, and spiritually resulting in their conversion. Christians should encourage their Buddhist friends (or unbeliever friends) to challenge God in prayer for their needs to see if God would really respond to their heart-felt prayers.

7. Polite-discreet creative-comparison approach: Comparisons between the two religions should be used sparingly and discreetly. A good time to use comparison is when Christians get to know the people very well at the level of intimacy where friends can share their inner feelings to each other. Otherwise, it could backfire and be assumed to be an insult or attack on their religion.

8. Polite-discreet dialogical-reciprocal approach: Communication should be both ways, and sharing information and learning information should be interactional. Christians should learn to listen and learn from the Buddhist first, before presenting the gospel.

9. Polite-discreet oral story style approach: Burmans are oral-oriented People, and they like to listen to stories. In the process of presenting the gospel, one can start with the creation story, flood story, or with the story of Jesus and the story of Israel with reference to the world and world events.

10. Polite-discreet clear communication approach: Unclear presentation of the gospel and inconsistent Christian lifestyles create confusion among Buddhists. Burman interviewees are confused to think that all Christians will automatically go to heaven by just attending church on Sundays, even though they willfully and deliberately live sinful lifestyles of drunkenness and immorality. The Christian message should be clear that not all Christians, but only those (whether Christians or non-Christians) who repent and accept Jesus as their Savior, will go to heaven.

11. Polite-discreet long-term strategic approach: Having good strategies, such as good follow up methods on new contacts and new converts, are important for overcoming barriers. Having an organized social network or a plan to help those who are ostracized by their family is good long-term strategy.

12. Polite-discreet incarnational-identification style approach: Identity with the target people is a very important asset to overcoming barriers. Many evangelists identified with the suffering Burmans during the Nargis storm by staying with them through the storm and the night, and many people were converted to Christianity as a result.

13. Polite-discreet indigenous-led mission approach: Mission work should be led by indigenous people for effective success. Burmans know their culture and their people better than any outsider, and Burmans have better and easier access to their own people and their society than outsiders.

14. Polite-discreet socio-political approach: Someone who knows his/her way around in town knows how to move around and how to get things done, even when circumstances and political-social environments are unfavorable. In a closed country like Burma, the important thing is “who you know” and “how you approach” situations and people discreetly to carry out the Great Commission. This approach can be called *naa’le hmuh* approach because this term conveys the same concept as polite-discreet socio-political approach. The *naa’le hmuh* approach is a way of getting the job done by a polite-discreet manner in dealing with the Burman officials who have judiciary authority over the mission target area.

15. Polite-discreet religio-cultural well-informed approach: A minister among the Burmans must know the target religion and culture and his/her own religion well to be able to interact conversationally in matters concerning religions and their customs. Most Christians ministering among the Burmans lack adequate knowledge about their own religion or the target religion and the target culture. This is a big issue that comes up during the interviews over and over again.

16. Polite-discreet testimonial approach: One should be ready to share his/her own conversion story at the appropriate time when the circumstance favorably presents itself for such a time of sharing one's life journey. By sharing one's own story, a person can connect with others more relationally than presenting lists of do's and don't's with the King James Version approach.

17. Polite-discreet exemplary lifestyle approach: Moral barriers such as excessive drunkenness and immoral lifestyles are not attractive advertisement for inviting someone to convert to Christianity. This was also a major issue that came up very often during the interview process.

18. Polite-discreet humble approach: No human beings like to be approached arrogantly and humiliatingly. Even evil and proud people love humble people and want to make friendships with them. A holier-than-thou or a better-than-thou approach is very offensive to people. In stead, a polite-discreet humble approach should be used in dealing with the Burman Buddhists and the unbelievers in general.

19. Polite-discreet non-critical attitude approach: Burmans take criticism personally at face value, and it is a major killer for mission success among them. Criticizing Buddhism, whether in private or public settings, is detrimental to the testimony of Christians, Christianity, and Christian work. A non-critical approach is always a better approach for success in mission.

20. Polite-discreet non-racial stigmatic approach: Racial issue is a very sensitive subject in any culture, and Burmans are not the exceptions. Avoiding racially motivated discussion is a good method to follow because everyone from any

ethnic background already has some kinds of racial (negative) feelings toward other ethnic groups.

21. Polite-discreet non-proselytizing approach: A confrontational approach is considered proselytizing in Burman context. Those selling religious books and asking Buddhists to become Christians without prior contacts and interactions are good candidates for Buddhists' accusation of proselytizing. Once the Burmans assume that Christians are proselytizing them, not only will they withdraw themselves from Christian contacts and relationships, but they will also take their network friends and families along with them.

22. Polite-discreet linguistic approach: Fluency in the Burman language is necessary for effective ministry. Burmans look down on ethnic people (including ministers) with very strong and thick accents who are not fluent in Burmese. Burmans tend to tease and make fun of those people, even in their presence. For a minister who is not fluent in Burmese, there is a small chance that the Burman will attentively listen to him and his message. A person who lacks Burmese fluency needs the help of the Spirit in order to convince the Burmans a hundred times more than a person who is fluent in Burmese.

23. Polite-discreet tea-conversational approach: Tea is a very important condiment and good commodity in Burman culture. Tea is to Burmans as soda is to Americans. Therefore, tea plays an important social custom role in Burman culture. A tea conversation could be anything from family, sports (soccer), weather, politics (discreet discussion), and business that could eventually lead to religious discussions if one is discreetly conscious of the appropriate moment to insert religions during the conversation. Instead of directly sharing the gospel upfront, Burmans tend to be more

open to occasional insertion of religious subjects during conversation at mealtime or in other relaxed social settings. Tea conversation can take place at someone's home, a friend's or relative's home, or at a teashop. Indeed, tea conversation can be used for conversion means.

24. Polite-discreet social crisis approach: No one, young or old, rich or poor, beautiful or ugly, educated or dumb, master or servant, is exempt from crisis in real life. Everyone faces different crises at different times in life. A discreet Christian should know when and how to help and support their contacts and should take the opportunities to present God as the One who knows the feelings and hurts of the person and is able to help. In light of this, a new model of evangelism can be established: polite-discreet incarnational-crisis evangelism approach.

25. Polite-discreet *aa'na hmuh* approach: This *aa'na hmuh* approach is a very important method for effective witness because sensitivity to one's cultural situations and settings are paramount to ministry success in any given cultural context. Burmans are no exceptions in this situation. This sensitivity to cultural issues has to do with knowing what, how and when to say things and behaving culturally sensitive when interacting with the Burmans. For example, women sitting in Burman house with their backs facing the Buddha altar is offensive to Burmans and wearing shoes inside Burman house is rude and unacceptable. Missinaries and evangelists who effectively use the polite-discreet *aa'na hmuh* approach will find the opportunity to talk with Burmans issues ranging from weather, food, family issues and others which can lead to religious discussions.

The polite-discreet missional approach is the same kind of approach Jesus and Paul used in their effective ministries (John 1:11, 14; Phil 2:5-8; I Cor 9:19-23). As it was effective in the Bible times, it still is and will be still effective in this century.

C. Evangelism Beyond the Barriers

Hypothetically speaking, “How would evangelism look after all human barriers have been removed?”⁶¹² Humanly speaking, evangelism will look different and more effective after all the barriers have been removed. Again, this is a hypothetical situation. It will be very difficult to see all the barriers removed in the near future. But, as the barriers are being reduced slowly to their minimum possible levels, the focus of evangelism should be on the positive side of Christians and Christianity which is supposed to magnetically attract the Burman Buddhists. In addition to the above twenty-three suggested approaches and other possible relevant missional approaches that might exist now or later, a few more suggestions for doing evangelism are in order.

First, Christians should incorporate potential converts, wherever they may be in their knowledge, faith, and commitment of/to Christianity. This is by no means to suggest indiscriminate and uncensored adoptions of traditional customs and practices. Some may come with lots of doubts and questions about Christianity while others may bring their traditions of going to the temple occasionally. When Christians set very rigid requirements at the initial encounter, the new comers tend to get turned off and turn away from Christianity. The important thing at this point is a consistent, relevant presentation of the gospel for the unconvinced seekers and a consistent discipling for the new converts. As they are fully convinced of the Christian faith and

⁶¹²My dissertation committee member Dr. Irwin asked this important question at our meeting and this section is a response to her relevant input.

have a strong personal knowledge and relationship with God, the other clinging traditional baggage will fall off along the road. This is confirmed by many Burman convert interviewees, and it is also substantiated by the statements made by a missiologist whose speciality is in the areas of Asian Studies and World religions, especially Buddhism:

Together these two factors [relativity of the doctrinal element of Buddhism and the teaching of no-self, *anatta*] might mean that in our desire to make Christian identity the primary one in the Buddhists we meet, we probably don't need to be too concerned with residues of Buddhist identity that come along in the process. Since Buddhists consider those to be temporal identifiers anyway, they can fall away or not. Of course at some point Christian teaching demands full commitment.⁶¹³

A Thai missionary couple (Inchai and Ruth Srisuwan) who shared their ministerial testimonies at Asbury Seminary's Kingdom Conference in October 2009 also validated this claim as they said, "We did not stop them from going to Buddhist temples, but when they have found out that they [temple traditions] are no longer beneficial for them, they stop going there."⁶¹⁴

Second, Christians should make full use of modern technological developments to reach Buddhists wherever they are to be found in and outside of Burma. The increased social mobility and technological developments will help the previously unexposed Buddhists to be more exposed to Christianity in Burma and around the world. Since most of the world has become a global village and information can travel from one end of the globe to the other end within a very short time with high speed internet convenience and easy travel access and modern

⁶¹³Terry Muck, "Three Reasons Why Christian Witness to Buddhists Has Failed," In *Communicating Christ Through Story and Song: Orality in Buddhist Contexts*, ed. Paul H. De Neui (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 115.

⁶¹⁴Inchai and Ruth Srisuwan, interaction with the author, Asbury Seminary classroom, October 22, 2009.

mobilities, ministry opportunities also have increased everywhere in the world. With modern conveniences, the Burmans who still live in Burma are more exposed to information which is available outside of their social and religious worlds. As many younger Burmans are modernized at home and outside of home, they have more freedom in choosing religions and careers than ever before. Because of this, many barriers are being removed, and it is the responsibility of Christians to seize this opportunity to witness to the Buddhists.

Third, a new way of understanding the concept of conversion will help how we approach people in evangelism. Richard Peace correctly notes that “how we conceive of conversion determines how we do evangelism.”⁶¹⁵ Christians in Burma have been influenced by western Christian counterparts who have led them to the use of confrontational methods in evangelism with the expectation of instant conversions. Now it is the time to revisit this model of approach. Peace stresses the importance of a careful approach to potential converts. He argues that we need to assume “different people are at different places in their spiritual pilgrimages and that they need to be assisted in conscious reflection on that pilgrimage” by asking simple, yet careful, questions like, “Where are you in your spiritual pilgrimage and with what issue are you wrestling when it comes to God?”⁶¹⁶ Peace postulates the “holistic ways of outreach” since the “majority of people come to faith slowly, not suddenly.”⁶¹⁷ In light of his understanding of conversion as more of a process than an event, Peace proposes two forms of outreach methods: the first is encounter evangelism (where

⁶¹⁵Richard V. Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 286.

⁶¹⁶*Ibid.*, 286.

⁶¹⁷*Ibid.*, *Ibid.*

potential converts encounter Jesus just like Paul and the twelve did), and the second is process evangelism⁶¹⁸ with the purpose of assisting others “to continue on in their spiritual pilgrimages so that they eventually become conscious disciples of Jesus.”⁶¹⁹

Peace delineates the difference between encounter-oriented evangelism and process-oriented evangelism as he compares the two:

In encounter-oriented evangelism there is one call, one response, one commitment. Jesus is presented as the person to whom allegiance is due, here and now, in the moment. Either you believe in Jesus or you do not. For those who are at the point in their pilgrimages where they can respond, this is a life-changing call. For all others this single call fails to define how they need to respond to God. In process-oriented evangelism there are many calls to commitment, each of which moves a person closer to Jesus or further along as a disciple of Jesus... Furthermore the validity of conversion is not found in the speed of turning. It is found in the nature of commitment (to Jesus by repentance and faith).⁶²⁰

Even the examples of the New Testament conversions testify to the possibility of two kinds of conversion. Peace denotes the similarities and the differences between Paul’s and the Twelve’s conversion: “What happened to Paul [instant conversion] and what happened to the Twelve [gradual conversion] was identical in terms of theological understanding, though quite different experientially.”⁶²¹ Paul’s experience in his instant conversion was a mystical encounter with Jesus which cannot be planned but it only happens to few people “only on certain unpredictable occasions.”⁶²²

⁶¹⁸Ibid., 287.

⁶¹⁹Ibid.

⁶²⁰Ibid., 302.

⁶²¹Ibid., 10.

⁶²²Ibid., 303.

Christians should be ready, in season and out of season, to approach the unreached people with the gospel, having the two options open on their tables, approaching people however God would choose to lead them, either the encounter-oriented way⁶²³ or the process-oriented way. This approach seems similar to the old confrontational method but they are not the same. This is a more relational encounter approach rather than a one-sided confrontational approach. Therefore, I would suggest using a “relational encounter approach” and “a process-encounter approach” for effective evangelism.

Fourth, the Homogenous Unit Principle is a viable option for evangelism in the context of Burma with the purpose of building up enough Burman Christians who would reach the rest of the unreached people. Former Christian ministers use the term “resistant” to excuse themselves from engaging and reaching the unreached when in reality they simply do not know how to reach them, did not even try to reach them, and therefore, did not reach them at all. Burmans might not have been more resistant than other groups. The problem is lack of exposure to the gospel and Christianity as the resultant data show that lack of exposure is one of the barriers causing the slow progress as already noted earlier.

According to McGavran, resistance is due to compelling new contacts to change their ethnic identity to become Christian and identify with them. The homogenous unit principle by McGavran states, “[P]eople everywhere like to become Christians without crossing barriers of race, language, and class.”⁶²⁴ This principle has

⁶²⁴Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 223.

been strongly criticized by many evangelicals as carrying racial baggage with it. This kind of criticism may be valid and appropriate for some areas where Christian populations make the majority and most Christians are mature believers. But this HUP method may be useful in areas where Christianity is in the minority status and Christian population in the target group is still small. The use of HUP is advisable only where Christianity is in its infancy state among the target group. Otherwise, the support for the use of HUP in Christian populated areas will cause criticism of racial discrimination from other Christians as is the case in the United States.

Two kinds of people are on the radar here in this context of Burma: resistant people and unreached people. Resistant people are those who have been exposed to the gospel and have rejected it over a long period of time. The “unreached” are not necessarily people “unengaged by mission efforts” but rather “there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize the group to its margins.”⁶²⁵ Burmans, in this sense, can be considered the “unreached” according to the definition given above. There are not enough Burman converts to evangelize their own group so that the other Burmans can identify with the new Christians and be able to see Christianity as their own indigenous religion. This is an identity issue because those who have become Christians are considered as joining other ethnic groups (Karens, Chins, and Kachins). This issue was brought up when I conducted my mission conference in Kaleymyo in 2007. The new Burman Christian community expressed their strong desire to have their own indigenous Burman service and worship plan to express themselves as Burman Christians instead

⁶²⁵Edward R. Dayton and David A. Fraser, *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 29.

of being mingled with Chin Christians. Allowing Burmans to express themselves in unique Burman Christian ways will result in attracting more Burmans to Christianity.

Fifth, starting out with a God-story rather than Jesus story is another option to do evangelism. This is not to deny Jesus or His uniqueness as God. The emphasis here is “how, where and when” to begin the talk with Buddhists in order to lead them to Christ eventually. Buddhists assume that Jesus is as good as their Buddha god, or even inferior to Buddha. Just by looking at Jesus’ suffering on the cross, it is so horrible for them to see because killing one’s life, even an ant, is a crime and against their Buddhist theology. Some Buddhists responded to Jesus’ death on the cross by saying, “Your god is so pathetic dying like that on the cross. He must have committed lots of sin to suffer like that.”⁶²⁶ Since a creation story is missing in Buddhism and Buddha himself avoided answering creation questions, the creation story is a good place to start by introducing the powerful God who created the heaven and the earth and all the non-living and the living beings, including men and women. The effectiveness of the use of God as a powerful Person who hears, listens to, and answers people’s personal prayers for their deepest socio-physical needs in preaching is very effective according to the experience of the author. After the author preached a sermon on Psalm 65 which states that God hears prayers and cares for His creations, about twenty-five Buddhist women and children responded to the altar call to invite Jesus as their Savior into their hearts. It happened in Rangoon in the month of July, 2007.

Sixth, another way to get the attention of the Buddhists is to connect world events such as Middle East crises with the biblical origin of the Israelites through

⁶²⁶Buddhist friends, conversation with author’s wife, Rangoon, 2008 and Buddhist friend with the author, Miami, FL, 2005.

Sarah and Abraham and the Arabs through Hagar and Abraham. The target audience for this kind of discussion is the more informed Buddhists who are aware of world history and current world events. My Buddhist interviewee and my current potential convert asked a question related to what would happen if the Middle East crisis became uncontrollable. This led me to direct his attention to the connection of the Jews with the Arabs through the biblical story of Abraham and then tied this with Jesus and the gospel.

Seventh, a good way and place to start where the people are theologically and emotionally, the ‘sin-suffering approach.’ Buddhists know very well about sin with reference to ‘man as doing sinner’⁶²⁷ for as the Bible declares, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). They understand this part of the Roman gospel because one of the main teachings of Buddhism is “to do good.” They know very well by experience that men generally ‘do not do good things.’

What they are missing in their theology is “man as being sinner,” which is clearly written in the Bible: “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Ps. 51: 4-6). This is the point where the concept of “suffering” comes in to play a role to connect them with the concept of “the being sinner” they cannot relate to. Buddhist teaching is based on the Four Noble Truths: the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of cessation of suffering, and

⁶²⁷Doing sinner is one who commits sins. In other words, it is one who does or performs sinful actions. He or she can be also called a ‘sinning sinner.’ This ‘doing’ emphasizes the ‘action’ sinner does as a result of being a sinner.

the truth of the path leading to cessation of suffering.⁶²⁸ Suffering is defined in the text as:

This is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, sickness is suffering, dying is suffering, sorrow, grief, pain, unhappiness, and unease are suffering; being united with what is not liked is suffering, separation from what is liked is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in short, the five aggregates of grasping are suffer.⁶²⁹

Since human beings suffer because of desire, desire should be suppressed or eliminated. Buddha found the Middle Way to get rid of desire which will lead to Nibbanna. The Middle Way leading to *Nibbana* (နိဗ္ဗာန်) is the Eightfold Path. The Buddhist gospel is redemption from the suffering while the Christian gospel is redemption from sin.⁶³⁰ Buddhists consider “suffering” as an inherent human characteristic which can be overcome by meditation, whereas Christianity offers deliverance from sin. According to the teaching of Buddha, suffering has no practical benefits at all to human beings.⁶³¹ Buddha teaches that suffering is real, it is caused by desire, and it can be evaded through meditation: the Eightfold Path.⁶³² Spiro comments on the relationship between desire and suffering saying: “The desire is ‘the craving’ for what we do not have and the ‘clinging’ (or attachment) to what we do

⁶²⁸Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of BUDDHISM* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 57.

⁶²⁹Ibid.

⁶³⁰ The Buddha’s way is trying to escape from suffering through following the eightfold path; the Jesus’ way is facing suffering through His death to claim victory over sin (because sin causes suffering) [cf. Gen 3; I Cor 15:45-57].

⁶³¹Melford Spiro, *Antropological Other Or Burmese Brother?: Studies in Cultural Analysis* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 76-77.

⁶³²The noble eightfold path(s) are right view, right intention (the first two paths relate to wisdom), right speech, right action, right livelihood (the third-the fifth path relates to conduct), right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration (the sixth-the eight path relates to meditation) [cf. Rupert Gethin, 81].

have-- is the cause of that perpetual restlessness and discontent that is known as suffering.”⁶³³ The answer to suffering is the eight paths which will lead to *Nirvana*.⁶³⁴

Allen R. Johnson also proposes starting out with “suffering” when communicating with Thai Buddhists as he notes, “...rather than trying to create a sense of wrongdoing, we should begin where they are, with an understanding of *dukkha* (Thai: *thuk*), which is suffering.... and we can begin to steer them in the discussion to see that this *thuk* arises from problems that are within us, rather than external to us.”⁶³⁵ A good biblical connection to follow-up on this concept of desire and suffering in Buddhism will be to exposit James 1:14-15 which states: “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own desire, and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” The main point to stress here is the main problem of “the being sinner” which naturally leads to “the doing sinner,” which will eventually lead to eternal condemnation.

Eight, a communal (vs. an individualistic) approach will be more effective than an individualistic approach. John Baillie comments on the importance of community, “A single individual cannot be a Christian in his singleness ... I cannot be a Christian all by myself. I cannot retire into my own shell or into my own corner and live the Christian life. A single individual cannot be a Christian in his singleness.”⁶³⁶ John Wesley vehemently opposes to the idea of solitary Christianity,

⁶³³ Melford Spiro, *Antropological Other*, 77.

⁶³⁴ The term ‘Nibbana’ and ‘Nirbanna’ can be used interchangeably since they are transliterated words from the Pali and Sanskrit.

⁶³⁵ Allen R. Johnson, “A Contextualized Gospel for Thai Buddhists” In *Sharing Jesus Holistically with the Buddhist World* ed. David Lim and Steve Spaulding (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2005), 197.

“To turn Christianity into a solitary religion is to destroy it.”⁶³⁷ Alan Tippett (1976) based on his studies of the conversion of animists in Oceania to Christianity. He suggests that there is a growing awareness in the pre-conversion period which may occur as natural development, as a crisis, or as a result of direct advocacy. Tippett writes:

I do not believe that conversion is ever purely an experience in individual isolation, although each individual must himself be an action. Conversion is a sociopsychological phenomenon in which an individual gives to and draws from other individuals and groups and activates his individualism within the limits of prescribed patterns.⁶³⁸

Stephen’s comment “At no point can the individual factor in conversion be eliminated,”⁶³⁹ is an important concept for conversion, but individualistic methods targeting just individuals, instead of community, create chaotic and destructive relationships in the social network structure. When only individuals are valued, there is no community into which the new converts can blend, get nourished, and be cared for. Hans Kasdorf balances the two polar concepts this way: “Conversion is always personal...but never individualistic.”⁶⁴⁰ Orlando E. Costas explains the importance of the individual new converts’ connection with the existing community:

The concept of multi-individual decisions gives a sociological orientation to the experience of conversion because it affirms that conversion, which depends on a personal act of faith in Christ, can take place in a group

⁶³⁶John Baillie, *Invitation to Pilgrimage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 119.

⁶³⁷John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley* ed. Thomas Jackson 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 5:296, 302.

⁶³⁸Alan Tippett, *The Phenomenology of cross-cultural conversion in Oceania* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller School of World Mission, 1976), 103.

⁶³⁹Stephen C. Neill, “Conversion” in *Focus on Evangelism*, ed. George Hunter (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1978), 47.

⁶⁴⁰Hans Kasdorf, *Christian Conversion in Context* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980), 116.

setting, where all the members of a given group (family, clan, tribe, or mutual interest group) participate in a similar experience with Christ after considering it together and deciding to turn to Christ at the same time.⁶⁴¹

Approaching new converts as detached individual souls to be won without careful consideration of the community in which they relate, thrive, and survive alongside of other members of their existing community only intensifies the inescapable and imminent negative reactions from family and community members. In many cases, the individual targets cannot be denied in situations where no access to communal authorities or opinion leaders is provided. But even in those kinds of situation, evangelists need good tactics to tackle both the indirect and elusive social structures and the organized solid social structures. Morris writes, “God wills not only a new person but a new community, a community of celebration, mutual support, serving, and witness.”⁶⁴² Since Burman society is a communal society in which social relationships are tightly knitted together, a communal approach will be much more effective than an individualistic approach. However, ministers of the gospel should not neglect the individuals who are open to the gospel when the community is not ripe for conversion.

Some helpful figure and tables which will help Christians in understanding Buddhism better and reaching the Buddhists better are presented as follows:

⁶⁴¹Orlando E. Costas, *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Press, 1974), 128.

⁶⁴²George E. Morris, *The Mystery and Meaning of Christian Conversion*, 137.

Figure 1. Theravada Buddhism and Folk Buddhism in Burma

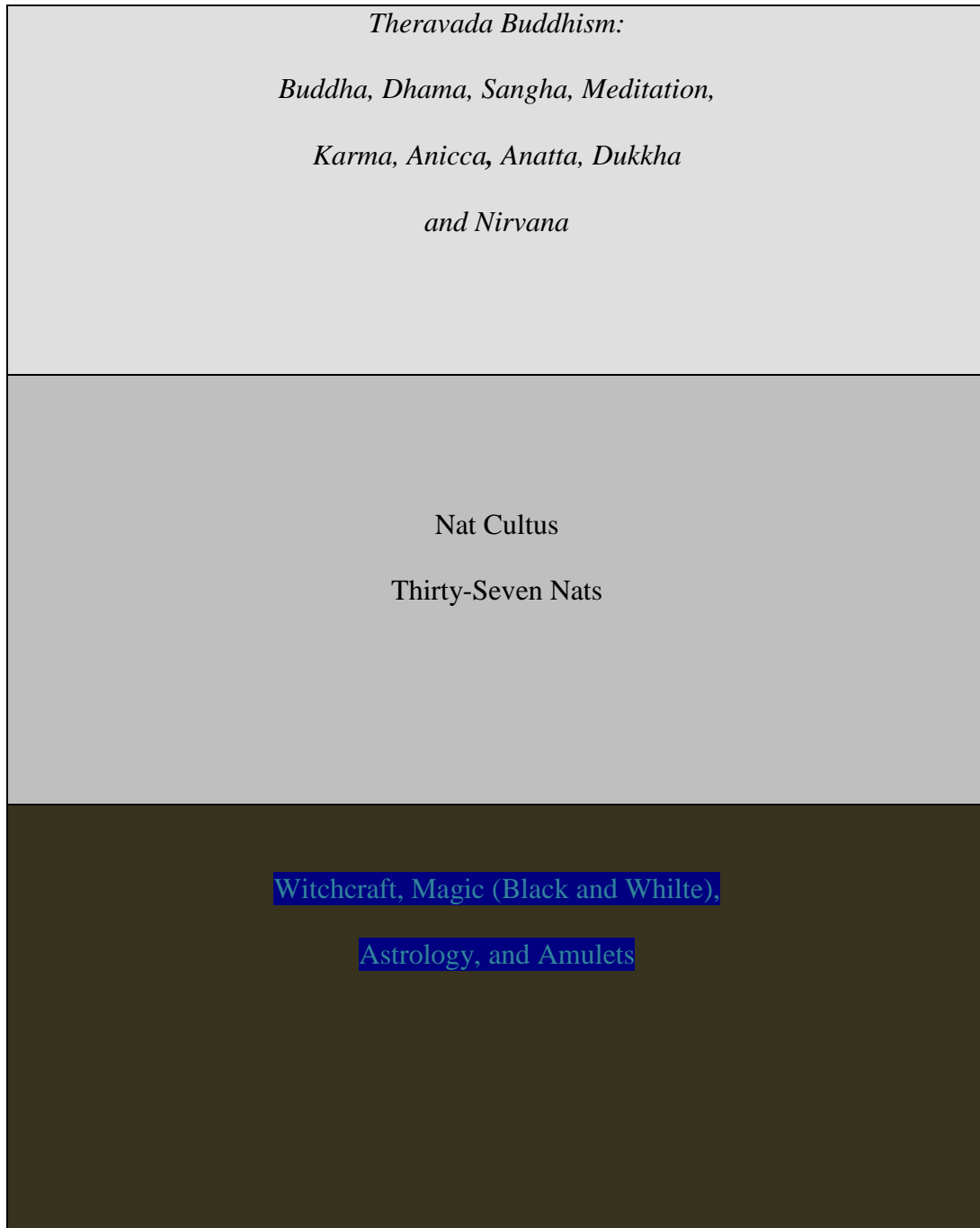


Table 3. Conversion Process and Pattern of Buddhists from Buddhism to Christianity			
<u>Pre- Conversion Zone</u>		<u>Conversion Zone</u>	<u>Post-Conversion Zone</u>
<u>Pre-Contact</u>	<u>Post-Contact</u>	<u>Types of Converts</u>	<u>Social Reactions</u>
Buddhists & Their-ism	Types of Buddhists	Individual converts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From family • From friends • From kin-community • From religious community
-Nominal lay Buddhists -Neutral groups -Moderate adherents -Strong adherents -Sangha *Buddha: teacher (not savior) -Buddhist Theology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not to do bad things • To do good things • Meditate 	Neutral candidate (No interest) Uninformed candidate (No exposure) Avoident candidate (Relativists) Adverse candidate (Opposers) Passive candidate (Followers of-boyfriend,girlfriend, husband,wife,relative s, and friends) Active candidat (Self-interest seekers) Serious candidate (Pre-deciding convert) Bonafide candidate (Prospect converts) Or (Deciding Convert)	Family converts Group converts Inter-marriage converts Lover (bf-gf) seeker converts Religious seeker converts Crisis-led converts Prayer-test converts Miracle converts Christian attracted converts Friendship converts Close-kin converts Missionary/evangelist - converts	
			Degrees of Reaction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral (Normal Relationshi) • Mild (Occasional Contacts) • Moderate (Contact Avoidances) • Severe (Ostracisms)

Table 4.
Social-Crisis Evangelism Process Model

- **Neutral phase:** nominal/devout Buddha-followers through parents (physical birth, human)
- No exposure/no exploration to/of Christianity (The only thing they have at this point is general revelation of creation around them (Rom 1)) :To get to the next level, how they view Christianity and how they understand, feel, and experience about Christians and Christianity are very important persuasive elements of Christianity.
- Introductory exposure through hearing, seeing, visiting, and interacting with Christians
- **Initial exploratory phase** (active or passive continual exposure from Christians and Christianity)
- Interest/disinterest: active intentional witness, inter-relational friendship, and encouragement from persistent Christians are very important at this phase.
- **Initial rejection phase** (neutral, mild, passive, active, strong)
- More exposures and more explorations (depending on the opportunities given to and persistence of Christians)
- **Comparison phase:** Looking at the two religions from a Buddhist worldview (weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each religion). Creative, conscious, insightful, relevant, and non-confrontational evangelism is very important at this point. This stage is a crucial point because many people either turn away from Christianity or move forward to receptivity of it. Continual steady friendship is important as well.
- **Crisis phase:** Social-emotional *intensified situations –sickness, fear, death, economic losses, family crisis, personal crisis, etc.*
- Introduction to challenge God’s power for real encounter/test: spouse or family or friends ask, “Why don’t you test God by starting to pray for your felt-needs.”
- **Testing phase:** He/she allows Christians to pray and also offers personal prayers to challenge God’s existence and ability to meet personal needs.
- Waiting on God’s power to display: Christian role is to be prayerful while maintaining a steady relationship.
- **Divine special revelation phase:** The living-powerful God reveals Himself through provisions, protections, healings, miracles, dreams, and visions.
- Decision for conversion: The plan of salvation (“saved by grace through faith in Christ”) is shared and explained through friends/Bible/literature/ministers/evangelists for clear understanding and commitment.
- **Identification with Christ and His body:** Baptism of identification with Christ’s death and resurrection (Becoming devout followers of Christ through second (spiritual) birth from above)
- Results: evidences of changed lifestyles and God’s blessings (joy, peace, love, provisions, and protections) manifested, and experienced, and testified by new converts.
- **Reactions:** ostracism, criticisms, ridicules, avoidance, persecutions, backbitings, etc. from family, friends, and community.
- Intensification and continuation of faith and practice through Bible, fellowship, worship, service, encouragement, witness, God’s power, and giving.
- **Continual growth** in knowledge, character, and service as fellow disciples of Christ alongside and among the believers.

D. Missiological Implications of the Barriers

The barriers evaluated in this research will be helpful in mission work not only for Burma but also for Asia and around the world for cross-cultural ministries today because Missional Barriers (outside barriers) and Indigenous Barriers (inside barriers) exist universally in any given context in world missions. The principles of the barriers will be the same in Burman and elsewhere. In any cross-cultural ministry, there will always be barriers in different dimensions, shapes, and sizes. As noted earlier in this work, mission barriers should be viewed in two major ways. First, the barriers exist in the indigenous community (thus, Indigenous Barriers) even before the missionaries and ministers arrive there. Second, with the arrival of the missionaries, barriers become more complicated. Therefore, they are even further multiplied depending on the relationship and attitude between the outsiders and the insiders. This research finding is not the final chapter or the complete and exhaustive guideline for doing mission today. This is just the framework that is set up and open for further explorations, criticisms, investigations, and improvements.

E. Suggestions for Further Research

The contribution of discovering the barriers in Burman context is just the beginning for more extensive works which should be pursued in the future. Having researched and explored the barriers in reaching the Burman Buddhists, the next step in the research work should be finding better ways to approach the Burman Buddhists. One such good topic would be to investigate what kinds of contextual-indigenous methods have been used and find out which ones are working and which are not working. Another good research topic would be social-ethnic identity with reference

to religious conversion among ethnic people in Burma. One more suggestion for further research is to discover the effectiveness of cross-ethnic marriage as a means for conversion to Christianity. Research should be done in the areas of indigenous ceremonies and rites (e.g. Shinpyu initiation rite), dramas, songs, and dances if they could be effectively incorporated into Christian worship and services. Another good research topic will be to find out how to effectively incorporate Buddhist worship styles, temple designs, and temple settings and atmospheres into Christian services in order to attract Burman Buddhists.

F. Hope on the Rise and On the Horizon

A new hope for Burman Mission is on the way. The stumbling blocks in reaching the Buddhists will one day turn into stepping-stones for evangelism. Christianity was a minority religion among the Romans, Greeks, and Barbarians. Yet, Christianity made its way through these societies in spite of its minority status. There were many barriers the early Christians had to overcome in order to reach the different ethnic people in the Roman Empire.⁶⁴³ Christianity is a minority religion in Burma, but there is hope for effective mission in Burma. These research findings on the barriers will shed some new light for doing mission among the Burman Buddhist and other unreached people all over the world. Without knowing the barriers for conversion in any context, it will be very difficult to succeed in mission works, humanly speaking. Human efforts and effective methods blessed by God will reap the fruits of the fields that are already white for harvest. *To God be the Glory for His Grace and Mercy enough for all the people in the whole world.*

⁶⁴³Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 51.53.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A: Questionnaire for Burman Buddhists

***Instruction:** Please kindly read and please tick off next to the appropriate options as you make your choices. This information is gathered strictly for academic research only. The researcher has no intention to promote racial, religious and political prejudices against any race or religion or party in these questions. Personal information will be kept confidentially. Thanks!

1. Name.....(optional) 2. Birth City..... 3. Present City:.....
4. Gender..... 5. Marital status..... 6. Education.....
7. Ethnicity..... 8. Religion..... 9. Age.....
10. Do you have any interest in other religion (e.g. Christianity)? A.... Yes B.... No.
11. If you are interested in Christianity, please mark all that apply:
A.Mere interest; B.Just for educational knowledge; C.....For more understanding of Christianity due to my intense interest in Christianity. D.To be able to discuss about religions.
12. Please note your experience with Christians:

A. I have ever been discussed about religion with them: Yes.... or No..... B. I want to discuss about religion with them: Yes Or No..... C. I Have Christian friends: No.....If yes, how many.....? D. I have been invited to Church: Yes..... No.....

E. How many times have you visited Christian Church? F. Have you ever been asked to convert to Christianity? Yes.... Or No..... G. Do you feel that they are trying to proselytize you? No..... Yes..... H. I want to learn more about Christianity: Yes.... No.....
13. I regard Christianity as an ethnic religion (belonging to Kachin, Karen, and Chin people) A. Agree..... B. Disagree.....
14. Christianity is a foreign religion (Western religion) that has nothing to do with Burman people. A. Agree..... B. Disagree.....C. I can't really tell.....
15. Every Burman should be Buddhist (To be a Burman is to be a Buddhist): A. Agree..... B. Disagree.....
16. Christianity can become the religion of every/any race (including Burmans): A. Agree..... B. Disagree.... C. I can't really tell.....
17. The probability of Burman Buddhist to become Christian:

A. Difficult..... B. Possible..... C.... Impossible.....
18. A Burman who has converted from Buddhism to Christianity can still be regarded as a real Burman: A. Agree..... B. Disagree..... C. I can't really tell.....
19. Reasons for being a Buddhist:

A. Because of Parents..... B. Because of being a Burman.... C. Personal choice.....
D. No other option and no opportunity to adopt other religions.....

20. Buddhism is the only true religion: A. Agree..... B. Disagree..... C. It is as true as other religions are.....

21. Christianity is also true: A. Agree..... B. Disagree.....

22. Who do you consult when making important decisions?

A. Parents..... B. Friends..... C. Trusted monks..... D. Relatives....E. Personal Decision..... F. Spouse

23. Generally speaking, Christians have good moral standard: A. Agree.....B. Disagree..... C. Indifference.....

24. Please mark your view on Christians:

A. Moral character: A. Good.... B. Bad..... C. Indifference.....

B. Niceness: A. Strong..... B. Weak..... C. Indifference....

C. Kindness: A. Yes..... B. No..... C. Indifference

D. Helpfulness: A. Good..... B. Bad.... C. Indifference...

E. Humble attitude: A. Yes.....B. No....C. Indifference....

F. Racism: A. Strong.... B. Not strong.... C. Not noticeable....

G. Friendly interaction: A. Strong..... B. Weak..... C. Impolite....

25. If you like anything about Christianity or Christians, please list them here:.....

26. If you notice any weakness or have any dislikes about Christianity or Christians, please list them here
:.....

APPENDIX B: Questionnaire for Myanmar Christians

***Instruction:** Please kindly read and please tick off next to the appropriate options as you make your choices. This information is gathered strictly for academic research only. The researcher has no intention to promote racial, religious and political prejudices against any race or religion or party in these questions. Personal information will be kept confidentially. Thanks!

- Background Information:
 1. Sex: Male___ Female___
 2. Age: a.15-18___b. 19-25___ c. 26-35___d. 36-45___e. 46-55___ f. 55-Above___.
 3. Occupation: _____Specify if ministers _____.
 4. Marital status: _____
 5. Town of Birth _____ and Town of Residence _____.
 6. Education: a. High School level___b. College Level___c. Post Graduate___ d. Other _____.
 7. Ethnic background: a. Bama ___ b. Kachin ___ c. Karen ___d. Chin___e. Shan.....
 - f. Mixed: _____ g. Other:_____.
- Experience with Burmese Buddhists
 8. How do you view Buddhists? a. Hopeless idolaters___ b. Lost souls like me___ c. Look down upon them ___ e. Discriminators_____.
 9. Do you have passion to reach them with the gospel? Yes___ No___.
 10. Do you have Buddhist friends? Yes___No ___.If yes, how many? _____.
 11. What kinds of Buddhist friends? a. Neighbor ___ b. Classmate___ c. Officemate___d. Others: Specify_____. a. Intimate friends?___ or b. casual friends?_____
 12. Do you develop continual friendship (after high school or college) with your Buddhist friends? No__Yes___.
 13. Have you ever shared the gospel with them? Yes___Never___; if never, explain why: _____.
 14. If yes to #16, how did they response? a. Listen with no interest___ b. Listen with interest___ c. Avoid to listen___ d. Hate to listen_____.
 15. Do you believe they are: a. "Unreachable"___b."We'll never reach them"___c. "I've given up on them"___d. "They are reachable"_____.
 16. What are their typical responses? a. "I have my own religion"___b. "They are all the same"___ c. "Are you trying to convert me?"___ d. or if others, specify: _____.
 17. What are the best ways to respond to those answers?
 18. How do you approach Buddhists? a. Press them for instant decision ___b. Befriend them first___c. Give tract, d.Share my own testimony___ e. Help them in crisis _____.
 19. What kinds of evangelism method do you use? a. Visitation (personal evangelism) ___b. Tract___c. Prayer___ d. Healing ___ e. Power-encounter___f. Home cells___g. Others, specify: _____.
 20. What gospel themes do you emphasize? a. Judgment ___b. Hell___c.Grace___d. Love and care ___ e. Forgiveness f. God's Power and Healing g. Everlasting & Living God ___ Others: _____.
 21. Do you believe Buddhists are reachable with the gospel? Explain why? _____.
 22. What are the reasons why Buddhists are not receptive to the gospel? Please list them: _____.
 23. What do you think are the barriers for Buddhists not becoming Christians? _____.

24. What kinds of change of attitudes on Christians toward Buddhists have to happen in order to better reach them with the gospel?
.....
25. What are your personal obstacles for doing evangelism to the Buddhists?.....

APPENDIX C: Burman Buddhist Evaluation Reference Code

4	1.	Gender=Gen	M/ F
7	2.	Race=Rac	Bur, Ch, Kar, Chi,Kach, Mon, Shan
3	3.	Residence=Res	Ygon, Kley,
6	4.	Education=Edu	No edu, high school, college
9	5.	Age	18 and above
10	6.	Interest Leve=In.L	A. -1 (no), B.0 (little), C.2 1 (a lots)
11	7.	Manner of Interest=M.In	A. 0 (normal), B. 0 (Knowlege), C. 1 (Interest in Christianity), D. 1 (Interest in Religious
12u	8.	Religious Discussion=R.	A. 1 (Have discussed) B.0 (Have not discussed)
12 c	9.	Desire for	A.1 (Want to discuss) B. -1 (Not want to discuss)
128	10.	Friends=Fhip	A. 0 (No) , B. 1 (Yes)
12 C	11.	Invite=Inv	A. 1 (Being invited) , B. 0 (Never invited)
12i	12.	Number of Visit=Nov	A. 1 (vists), B. 0 (no visit)
12 p	13.	Question=Que	A. 1 (Being asked) B. 0 (Never asked)
12q	14.	Proselytize=Prsy	A. -1 (Consider) B. 0 (Does not consider)
12Z	15.	More Interest=Mo.In	A. 1 (Learn more), B. 0 (No)
13	16.	Ethnic Religion= E. Re	A. -1 (Assume), B. 0 (Not assume)
14	17.	Foreign Religion=F. Re	A. -1 (Agree), B. 1 (Disagree), C. 0 (Can't tell)
15	18.	Buddha Burman=B. B	A. -1 (Assume), B. 1 (Does not assume)
16	19.	Christian for Burman= C.	A. -1 (Disagree), B. 1 (Agree). C. 0 (Can't tell)
17	20.	Probability =%	A. 0 (Difficult), B. 1 (Possible) , C. -1
18	21.	Religion-Culture= R-C	A. 1 (Agree), B. -1 (Disagree), C. 0 (Can't tell)
19	22.	Reasons for Buddhist=R.B	A. -1 (Parents), B. -1 (Burmans), C.-1 (Personal choice) , D. 1 (No opportunity to explore other
20	23.	Buddhism is the only true religion=B1	A. -1 (True). B. 0 (False), C. 1 (As true as other religion)
21	24.	Christianity is also true=	A. 1 (Assume), B. -1 (Not assume)
22	25.	Decision pattern= De.P	A. -1 (With parents), B. -1 (With friends). C. -1 (With Monks) D. -1 (With relatives) E. 0 (Self), F.
23	26.	General Character= G. C	A. 1 (good), B. -1 (bad), C. -1 (no difference)
24u	27.	Morality=Mo	A. 1 (Good), B. -1 (Bad), C. 0 (no differce)
24c	28.	Kindness=Ki	A. -1 (Hard), B. 1 (Soft), C. 0 (no difference)
248	29.	Compassion=Co	A. 1 (Yes), B. -1 (No), C. 0 (no differnce)
24C	30.	Helping=Hel	A. 1 (good), B. -1 (bad), C. 0 (no difference)
24i	31.	Humility=Hum	A. 1 (yes), B. -1 (no), C. 0 (no difference)
24p	32.	Racism=Ra	A. -1 (strong). B. 1 (no), C. 0 (not noticeable)
24q	33.	Friendship=Fshp	A. 1 (strong), B. -1 (weak), C. -1 (rude)
25	34.	Likes	A. 1 for each pts and 2 for more than 2 pts; B. 0
26	35.	Dislikes=D.likes	A. 1 (No), B. -1 for each pt.
	36.	Attitude=Att	+ or -
	37.	Exposture=Exp	High Mid Low

Assumption= negative =-1; positive/neutral= 0 , Negatives=-1, Positives=+1

Note: 1 is hopeful; 0 is neutral; -1 is barrier

P																
G. C	1	0	?	1	0	-1	?	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	?	?
Mo	1	0	?	1	0	?	-1	-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Ki	1	0	?	1	1	?	-1	-1	1	1	0	1	1	1	-1	1
Co	1	0	?	1	1	?	-1	-1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Hel	1	0	?	1	-1	?	-1	-1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
Hu m	1	0	?	1	-1	?	-1	-1	-1	1	-1	-1	1	-1	-1	1
Ra	-1	0	?	-1	-1	?	1	1	-1	-1	1	?	-1	-1	-1	-1
Fsh p	1	1	?	1	1	?	-1	-1	1	-1	1	1	1	1	1	-1
Lik es	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
Dis l	1	-1	?	?	?	?	?	?	1	1	?	?	1	?	?	?
Att	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Exp	M	L	L	L	L	L	L	M	M	M	H	L	L	M	L	L

APPENDIX E: Burman Questionnaire Analytic Chart

	0	1	-1	?	0%	1 %	- 1 %	?%	Ge n	Ed u	Res	Ag e	Ra
R1	4	15	5	5	13 %	51	17	17	M	III	KY	D	Bur
R2	17	6	5	1	58	20	17	3	F	III	KY	E	Bur
R3	9	5	3	12	31	17	10	3	M	III	Urb	E	Bur
R4	10	11	7	1	34	37	24	3	M	II	KY	D	Bur
R5	14	8	6	1	48	27	20	3	F	I	Rur1	C	Bur
R6	1	10	7	11	3	34	27	37	F	II	Urb	D	Bur
R7	7	7	11	4	24	24	37	13	M	I	Clu m	D	Bur
R8	9	7	9	4	31	24	31	13	F	II	Rur1	D	Krn
R9	9	12	8	0	31	41	27	0	M	II	Sub	A	Bur
R10	6	16	7	0	20	55	24	0	M	III	Urb	D	Bur
R11	5	14	7	3	17	48	24	10	M	II	Rur1	B	Bur
R12	6	9	3	11	20	31	10	37	F	I	Rur1	C	Bur
R13	6	15	5	6	20	51	17	20	F	III	Rur1	B	Bur
R14	4	11	5	9	13	37	17	31	F	I	Rur1	E	Bur
R15	2	7	7	13	6	27	24	44	M	I	Rur1	F	Bur
R16	12	8	7	2	41	27	24	6	M	III	Rur1	C	Bur
R17	11	8	7	3	37	27	24	10	F	II	Rur1	C	Krn
R18	8	18	2	1	27	62	6	10	F	?	Rur1	B	Bur
R19	5	6	5	13	17	20	17	44	M	I	Rur1	?	Bur
R20	2	13	5	9	6	44	17	31	M	I	Rur1	F	Bur
R21	1	1	0	27	3	3	0	93	M	I	Rur1	F	Bur
R22	8	10	6	5	27	34	20	17	F	I	Rur1	F	Bur
R23	5	8	4	12	17	27	13	41	F	I	Rur1	E	Bur
R24	12	4	5	8	41	13	17	27	M	II	Rur1	E	Bur
R25	15	8	5	1	51	27	17	3	M	II	Urb	D	Bur
R26	9	13	5	2	31	44	17	6	M	III	Urb	E	Bur
R27	7	14	3	5	24	48	10	17	M	III	Urb	E	Bur
R28	14	12	2	1	48	41	6	3	F	?	NY	C	Kch
R29	6	15	5	3	20	51	17	10	M	II	Urb	C	Bur
R30	7	17	4	1	24	58	13	3	F	I	Rur1	C	Bur
R31	9	8	8	4	31	27	27	13	F	II	Urb	A	Bur
R32	8	10	6	5	27	34	20	17	F	II	Urb	A	Bur
R33	7	11	8	3	24	37	27	10	F	II	Urb	A	Bur
R34	5	13	4	7	17	44	13	24	F	II	Urb	A	Bur
R35	13	8	6	2	44	27	20	6	M	II	Urb	A	Bur
R36	14	9	6	0	48	31	20	0	F	II	Urb	A	Bur
R37	10	14	5	0	34	48	17	0	M	II	Urb	A	Bur
R38	13	11	5	0	44	37	17	0	M	?	Urb	D	Bur
R39	6	11	5	8	20	37	17	27	?	III	Urb	B	Bur
R40	11	12	5	1	37	41	17	3	F	II	Urb	A	Bur

R41	7	10	9	3	24	34	31	10	F	III	Urb	C	Chn a
R42	4	6	7	12	13	20	24	41	M	III	Urb	B	Bur
R43	6	16	4	3	20	55	13	10	F	III	Urb	B	Bur
R44	5	11	9	4	17	37	31	13	M	III	Urb	B	Bur
R45	11	14	4	0	37	48	13	0	M	III	Urb	?	Bur
R46	10	8	11	0	34	27	37	0	?	?	Urb	A	?
R47	11	14	4	0	37	48	13	0	M	I	Urb	A	Rak
R48	8	12	6	3	27	41	20	10	M	?	?	B	Mon

Ko Zun Khai - Ph.D သုတေသနပြုလုပ်ရန်အတွက်ဖြစ်သည်။

ရှိသေးသေးစားအပ်ပါသော ခရစ်ယာန်ဓမ္မမိတ်ခေတ္တယုံကြည်သူများ၏ ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာဝင်များနှင့် ပတ်သက်သော ကိုယ်တိုင်အတွေ့အကြုံများနှင့်

ယုံကြည်သူထွက်များကို လွတ်လွတ်လပ်လပ် ဖော်ပြပေးပါရန် ခရစ်တော်၏ နာမတော်အားဖြင့် တောင်းပန်အပ်ပါသည်။

၁) အမည် မောင်ရွှေ ၂) မွေးရပ်ဇာတိ အိတ်တန်းကျေး ၃) နေရပ်မြို့ ကျောက်မီးပွား

၄) လိင် ကျား ☐ မ ☒ ၅) အိမ်ထောင် ရှိ ☐ မရှိ ☒ ၆) ပညာအရည်အချင်း ၁၀တန်းအောင် B. A. M. A. S.

၇) လူမျိုး ဗမာ ၈) အသင်းတော် ၅၆၄ ၉) ကယ်တင်ခြင်းဝေငွေရာတွင် (၁)လလျှင်ဘယ်နှစ်ကြိမ်ပိတ်ဘူးသလဲ ☐

၁၀) အသက် ၃၀ ၁၁) ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာဝင်မိတ်ဆွေရှိပါသလား မရှိ ☐ ရှိ ☒ ဘယ်နှစ်ယောက် ၈ ယောက်

၁၂) ခင်မင်ရင်းနှီးသော မိတ်ဆွေအမျိုးအစား

(က) အိမ်နီးနားခြင်း ☒ (ခ) အတန်းဖော် ☒ (ဂ) နှစ်လုပ်ဖော်ကိုင်ဘက် (ဃ) အခြား ☒

၁၃) သူတို့ကိုယ်တိုင်ကယ်တင်ခြင်းဝေငွေပေးသလား၊ ဝေငွေမပေးဘဲ ☒ မဝေငွေပေးပါ။ ☐ မဝေငွေပေးဘဲ အဘယ်ကြောင့်နည်း

၁၄) သူတို့ကို ဘုရားကျောင်းလာဘို့ မိတ်ဖူးတယ်။ မိတ်ဖူးတယ်။ ☒ မမိတ်ဖူးပါ။ ☐

၁၅) သူတို့ဘုရားကျောင်းကို လိုက်ဖူးတယ်။ လိုက်ဖူးတယ်။ ☒ မလိုက်ဖူးပါ။ ☐

၁၆) သူတို့ဘယ်နှစ်ကြိမ်လိုက်ဖူးတယ်။ ၅ ကြိမ်

၁၇) ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာဝင်မှ ပြောင်းလဲဖို့ မျှော်လင့်ချက် ရှိပါသလား။

(က) လုံးဝမရှိဘူး ☐ (ခ) အနည်းငယ် ☒ (ဂ) အသင့်တင့် ☐ (ဃ) အများကြီး ☐

၁၈) သူတို့ပြောင်းလဲဖို့ ဆုတောင်းပေးပါသလား။ ဆုတောင်းပေးတယ် ☒ ဆုမတောင်းပေးပါ။ ☐

၁၉) သူတို့ပြောင်းလဲဖို့ ဘုရားသခင်အလိုတော် မရှိဘူး။ ☐ ရှိတယ်။ ☒

၂၀) သူတို့ပြောင်းလဲဖို့ ခရစ်ယာန်များမှာ တာဝန် ရှိတယ်။ ☒ မရှိဘူး။ ☐

၂၁) ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာအကြောင်း လေ့လာမှုအတိုင်းအတာ

(က) မလေ့လာ ☐ (ခ) အနည်းငယ် ☒ (ဂ) ကောင်းစွာ ☐

၂၂) ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာဝင်များကို မည်ကဲ့သို့ မြင်ပါသနည်း။

(က) မျှော်လင့်ချက်မဲ့ ရွတ်တုကိုးကွယ်သူများ ☒ (ခ) ပျောက်ဆုံးမိသည့်များ ☒

(ဂ) ခရီးသွားရလျှင်လဲ ဂရုမစိုက်ဘူး ☒ (ဃ) ကျွန်ုပ်လက်လျှော့လိုက်ပြီ ☒

(င) ဘုရားသခင်က အစမ်းချစ်တဲ့ လူမျိုးဖြစ်တယ်။ ☒

၂၃) သင်၏ ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာ မိတ်ဆွေများနှင့် ပေါင်းသင်းဆက်ဆံမှု အဆက်မပြတ်ရှိပါသလား။ ရှိ ☒ မရှိ ☐

မရှိလျှင်အဘယ်ကြောင့်နည်း။

၂၄) ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာဝင်များ ခရစ်ယာန်ဖြစ်ဖို့ အဟန့်အတားများ ဖော်ပြပေးပါ။ အောက်ပါရေးထားသောအကြောင်းအရာ တစ်ခုစီကို သဘောတူလျှင် (က)တွင် အမှန် ပေးပြီး သဘောမတူလျှင် (ခ)တွင် အမှန်မဟုတ်ပေးပါ။ အဟန့်အတားဖြစ်စေလျှင် (ခ)တွင် အမှန်ပေးပြီး အဟန့်အတားမဖြစ်စေလျှင် (ခ)တွင် အမှန်မဟုတ်ပေးပါ။

	က	ခ
၁။ ဗုဒ္ဓဝင်များသည်လူမျိုးရေးစိတ်ဓါတ်ပြင်းထန်လွန်းတယ်။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၂။ ခရစ်ယာန်များ လူမျိုးရေးစိတ်ဓါတ်ပြင်းထန်လွန်းတယ်။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၃။ သူတို့က ခရစ်ယာန်များကို အထင်သေးတယ်။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၄။ သူတို့ပြောင်းလဲဖို့ ခရစ်ယာန်အများစု စေတနာ ကင်းမဲ့တယ်။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၅။ ခရစ်ယာန်များ ဆက်ကပ်ဆုတောင်းမှုအားနည်းတယ်။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၆။ ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာဝင်များသည် ဘာသာရေးစွဲလွန်းမှုပြင်းထန်တယ်။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၇။ ခရစ်ယာန်များ ပုံသက်သေ မဖြစ်နိုင်ဘူး။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၈။ ခရစ်ယာန်များ သွင်းပန်းနှိုင်းစက်ခံရမှု ကို ကြောက်ရွံ့တယ်။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၉။ ခရစ်ယာန်များ ယုံကြည်မှုအားနည်းတယ်။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၁၀။ သူတို့ပြောင်းလဲဖို့ ဘုရားသခင်အလိုတော်မရှိဘူး။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၁၁။ သူတို့ပြောင်းလဲဖို့ ဘုရားသခင်အလိုတော်မရှိသေးဘူး။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၁၂။ ခရစ်ယာန်များ စည်းလုံးညီညွတ်မှု မရှိဘူး။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၁၃။ ခရစ်ယာန်များအမှုတော်အတွက်အလှူပေးကမ်းမှုအားနည်းတယ်။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၁၄။ ခရစ်ယာန်များနောက်နိုင်ငံများနှင့်ပူးပေါင်းဆောင်ရွက်ကြတယ်။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၁၅။ ခရစ်ယာန်များ နှိပ်ချမှုမရှိဘူး။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၁၆။ ခရစ်ယာန်များ စိတ်ဓာတ်လက်ရှည် သီးသန့်စွမ်းမရှိဘူး။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၁၇။ ခရစ်ယာန်များက သူတို့ကိုယ်တိုင်အထင်သေးတယ်။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၁၈။ သူတို့နှင့်ရောရောနှောနှောနေထိုင် ဆက်ဆံမှုမရှိဘူး။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၁၉။ ကောင်းပြောဆို ဆက်ဆံမှုအခက်အခဲရှိတယ်။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၂၀။ သူတို့၏ လုံးဝအတိုင်း ယဉ်ယဉ်ကျေးကျေး မဆက်ဆံတတ်ဘူး။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၂၁။ နားလည်လွယ်ကူသောသူတို့နားလည်တာသာရေးအသုံးအနှုန်းများ ထည့်သွင်းတပ်မှု မရှိဘူး။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၂၂။ ခရစ်ယာန်များသည် ဖော်ဖော်ရွေရွေမဆက်ဆံတတ်ဘူး။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
၂၃။ ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာဝင်အများစုကခရစ်ယာန်ဘာသာသည်တိုင်းရင်းသား	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(က)အချို့ ကရင်၊ ချင်း)လူမျိုးများနှင့်သာ ပတ်သက်သော		
ဘာသာဖြစ်သည်ဟု ယူဆကြသည်။		
၂၄။ ခရစ်ယာန်ဘာသာသည် အနောက်နိုင်ငံသားများရဲ့ ဘာသာဖြစ်ပြီး ဝေလူမျိုးများနှင့်မသက်ဆိုင်သောဘာသာဖြစ်သည်ဟုအများစုကယူဆသည်။	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX F: Questionnaire for Christians

APPENDIX G: Christian Questionnaire Evaluation Reference Code

3	1.	<i>Res=Residence</i>	---
7	2	<i>Rac=Race</i>	---
8	3.	<i>Den=Denomination</i>	---
9	4.	<i>Invl=Involvement</i>	A. 1, B. -1
11	5.	<i>Frns=Friends</i>	A. -1, B. 1
13	6.	<i>Shr=Sharing</i>	A. 1, B. -1
14	7.	<i>Inv=Invite</i>	A. 1, B. -1
15/16	8.	<i>NoV=No. of Visit</i>	A. 1, B. -1
17	9.	<i>%=Percentage</i>	A.-1, B. -0.5, C.1, D.2
18	10.	<i>Pry= Pray</i>	A. 1, B. -1
19	11.	<i>G.W= God's Will</i>	A. -1, B. 1
20	12.	<i>C.R=Christian Responsibility</i>	A. 1, B. -1
21	13.	<i>Exp=Exposure</i>	A.-1, B. 0, C. 1
22	14.	<i>Att=Attitude</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C. -1, D. -1
23	15.	<i>C.Fshp=Continual Friendship</i>	A. 1, B. -1
24(1)	16.	<i>SR.B=Serious Racism of Buddhists</i>	A.-1, B. 1, C. 0
(2)	17.	<i>SR.C=Serious Racism of Christians</i>	A.-1, B. 1, C. 0
(3)	18.	<i>LdU=B. Look down upon C</i>	A.-1, B. 1, C. 0
(4)	19.	<i>N.Pas=No passion</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C. 0
(5)	20.	<i>W. Pry= Weak in prayer</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C.0
(6)	21.	<i>Rel.A= Religious attachment</i>	A.-1,B. 1, C. 0
(7)	22.	<i>Explr=Exemplary lifestyle</i>	A.-1, B. 1, C. 0
(8)	23.	<i>F.Per=Fear of persecution</i>	A.-1, B. 1, C. 0
(9)	24.	<i>W.Fai=Weak in Faith</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C. 0
(10/11)	25.	<i>G.W=God's Will</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C. 0
(12)	26.	<i>N. Uni=No unity</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C. 0
(13)	27.	<i>W.Giv= Weak in Giving</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C. 0
(14)	28.	<i>C.For= Christian and Foreign Relations</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C. 0
(15)	29.	<i>N. Hu= No Humility</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C. 0
(16)	30.	<i>N. Pat= No patience</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C. 0
(17)	31.	<i>Ld.C= C. look down upon B</i>	A.-1, B. 1, C. 0
(18)	32.	<i>N.Mix= No Mingling</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C. 0
(19)	33.	<i>La.B= Language barrier</i>	A.-1, B. 1, C.0
(20)	34.	<i>Cu.B= Cultural barrier</i>	A.-1, B. 1, C. 0
(21)	35.	<i>T.B=Terms Barrier</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C. 0
(22)	36.	<i>U.Frly= Unfriendly</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C.0
(23)	37.	<i>E. Re= Ethnic religion</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C.0
(24)	38.	<i>F. Re=Foreign religion</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C. 0
25	39.	<i>B.B=Burma =Buddhist</i>	A. -1, B. 1, C. 0
26	40.	<i>Prsy=Proselytize</i>	A.-1, B. 1, C.0
4	41.	<i>Gen=der</i>	---
10	42.	<i>Age</i>	---
6	43.	<i>Edu.cation</i>	---

APPENDIX H: Christian Questionnaire Evalutation Chart

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11
Gen	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>
Res	<i>Clbus</i>	<i>P.Pon</i>	<i>SheBo</i>	<i>NgaKu</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>Ygn</i>	<i>Al</i>	<i>Mia.M</i>	<i>Bmo</i>	<i>Thton</i>	<i>Ygn</i>
Rac	<i>Ch.sho</i>	<i>Krn</i>	<i>Bur</i>	<i>Chn</i>	<i>Chn</i>	<i>Chn</i>	<i>Krn</i>	<i>Bur</i>	<i>Bur</i>	<i>Chn</i>	<i>Zoto</i>
Den	<i>BT</i>	<i>BT</i>	<i>BT</i>	<i>shlom</i>	<i>GAG</i>	<i>GAG</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>MMC</i>	<i>BT</i>	<i>AG</i>	<i>EFC</i>
Edu	<i>BA</i>	<i>10Th</i>	<i>9th</i>	<i>4th</i>	<i>Col</i>	<i>Col</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>B.sc</i>	<i>Col</i>	<i>Col</i>	<i>B.Th</i>
Age	<i>84</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>23</i>
Invl	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
Frns	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
Shr	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>
Inv	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>
NoV	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>
%	<i>-0.5</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-0.5</i>	<i>-0.5</i>	<i>-0.5</i>	<i>-0.5</i>	<i>-0.5</i>	<i>-0.5</i>	<i>-0.5</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>-0.5</i>
Pry	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
G.W	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
C.R	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>
Exp	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>
Att	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
C.Fhp	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
SR.B	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>
SR.C	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>
LdU	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>
N.Pas	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>
W.Pry	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>
Rel.A	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>
Explr	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>
F.Per	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>
W.Fai	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
G.W	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>
N.Uni	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>
W.Giv	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>

C.For	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>
N.Hu	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>
N.Pat	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>
Ld.C	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>
N.Mix	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>
La.B	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>
Cu.B	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>
T.B	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>
U.Frly	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>
E.Re	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>
F.Re	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-1</i>

APPENDIX I: Christian Questionnaire Analytic Chart

	- 0.5	-1	0	1	2	(.5)%	(1)%	0%	1%	2%	Gen	Edu	Res	Age	Ra
R1	1	1	1	33	0	2	2	2	91	0	M	III	US	F	Chn4
R2	0	16	6	14	0	0	44	16	38	0	F	II	Rur1	F	Krn
R3	1	25	1	8	1	2	69	2	22	2	M	II	Rur1	E	Bur
R4	1	25	1	8	1	2	69	2	22	2	F	I	Rur2	B	Chn3
R5	1	6	9	20	0	2	16	25	55	0	?	III	?	B	Chn1
R6	1	12	6	17	0	2	33	16	47	0	F	III	Urb	B	Chn1
R7	1	22	8	5	0	2	61	22	13	0	?	?	US	B	Krn
R8	1	17	3	15	0	2	47	8	41	0	F	III	US	D	Bur
R9	1	11	15	9	0	2	30	41	25	0	M	III	US	F	Bur
R10	0	14	0	21	1	0	38	41	25	2	M	III	Rur1	C	Chn2
R11	1	25	1	9	0	2	69	2	25	0	F	IIIB	Urb	C	Chn4
R12	1	2	11	22	0	2	5	30	61	0	M	II	US	C	Bur
R13	1	11	15	9	0	2	30	41	25	0	M	III	Urb	E	Bur
R14	1	14	15	6	0	2	38	41	16	0	F	III	Urb	E	Chna
R15	1	18	8	9	0	2	50	22	25	0	M	IV	Rur1	C	Chn1
R16	1	20	5	10	0	2	55	13	27	0	M	IVB	Rur1	D	Chn1
R17	0	20	5	10	1	0	55	13	27	2	M	IVB	Rur1	D	Chn1
R18	0	10	16	10	0	0	27	44	27	0	F	III	Urb	E	Bur
R19	1	22	4	8	1	2	61	11	22	2	M	IIIB	Rur1	F	Chn1
R20	0	14	11	11	0	0	38	30	30	0	F	II	Urb	B	Chn1
R21	0	9	17	9	1	0	25	47	25	2	M	III	Rur1	E	Chn1
R22	0	25	1	10	0	0	69	2	27	0	M	III	US	E	Chn1
R23	1	9	13	13	0	2	25	36	36	0	F	I	Rur1	A	Bur
R24	1	19	3	13	0	2	52	8	36	0	F	IVB	Rur1	C	Chn3
R25	1	15	2	18	0	2	41	5	50	0	M	IVB	Rur1	B	Chn4
R26	0	22	8	6	0	0	61	22	16	0	F	IIIB	Rur1	B	Chn4
R27	1	14	4	17	0	2	38	11	47	0	M	IVB	Urb	D	Krn
R28	0	10	16	9	1	0	27	44	25	2	F	I	Rur1	A	Bur
R29	1	14	14	7	0	2	38	38	19	0	M	III	Sub	E	Chn1
R30	0	17	7	12	0	0	47	19	33	0	M	IVB	Rur1	C	Krn
R31	0	18	7	10	0	0	50	19	27	0	M	IVB	Rur1	B	Chn4
R32	0	9	17	10	0	0	25	47	27	0	F	I	Scb	C	Bur
R33	0	17	9	8	1	0	47	25	22	2	F	I	Urb	A	Lsu
R34	1	11	16	8	0	2	30	44	22	0	M	I	Sub	E	Chn2
R35	1	10	16	8	0	2	27	44	22	0	M	IVB	Urb	C	Chn1
R36	0	16	12	8	0	0	44	33	22	0	F	IVB	Urb	C	Chn1
R37	1	16	12	7	0	2	44	33	19	0	M	IVB	Sub	D	Chn1
R38	0	22	5	8	1	0	61	13	22	2	M	III	Urb	C	Chn
R39	0	28	4	4	0	0	77	11	11	0	F	I	Urb	D	Bur
R40	1	5	26	4	0	2	13	72	11	0	M	I	Rur1	D	Bur
R41	0	9	27	0	0	0	25	75	0	0	M	II	Urb	C	Bur
R42	1	6	23	6	0	2	16	63	16	0	M	II	Rur1	A	Bur

APPENDIX J: Comparative Analytic Table

Third Stage Analysis from Excel	
The most occurrences of (-) for Buddhists	The most occurrences of (+) for Buddhists
1.R.B= 100 [Reasons for Being Buddhist] 2.Ra= 69 [Racism] 3.Hum=59 [Humility] 4.Dep=80 [Decision Pattern] 5.B1=49 [Buddhism is only true religion]	1. Fhip=99 [Friendship] 2.Mo=88 [General morality of believers] 3.Ki=80 [Kindness] 4.Co=97 [Compassion] 5.Hel=85 [Helping]
The most occurrences of (-) for Christians	The most occurrences of (+) for Christians
1.W.Pry=57 [Weak in prayer] 2.Rel= 51 [Religious attachment] 3.Explr=50 [Exemplary lifestyle] 4.W.Giv=42 [Weak in giving] 5.SR.B=57 [Serious racism of Buddhists]	1. Inv= 68 [Invite] 2.Shr=60 [Sharing] 3. GW =72 [God's Will] 4.Pry=70 [Pray] 5.Frns=46 [Friendship]

APPENDIX K: Burman Convert Evaluation Chart

<i>N=Number; D= Demographic; R=Religious Observation; VS: very strong ; Expo=exposure ; Rj=rejection;</i>														
N	D	R	Exp o	Rj	Etr	Crisi s	T e	Mir	Mean	Emo	De	Rst	R A	C
1	R u	?	20	n/a	Dre am	Sev. T	P r	Drm	ICo 9:16	Joy, peace ,del	Ba	Wi	n/a	
2	U r	?	Mint r Jn3; Mt1 1:28	Xx. yrs	Mnt	Sev. T	P r	Drm	Lk 19:28- 31	Frdm,	Ba	Wi	n/a	
3	R u	?	Mint rs	ntl	Mnt	Ngm are	P r	Drm, visn	Jn 14:15; ITim5:1 0; Ps. 119:1-5	Pce, love	Ba	Wi/S er	Se	S
4	R u	V S	35	Ntl	C.lf	Sick	P r	Heal	?	Love	Ba	Wi/S er	?	S
5	U r	S	mnt	Xx	Vis n	Fear	?	Visn		Joy/p ce	Ba	Ch.L	Se	S
6	U r	M	Af. Mar riag e	X	Mnt /P	Need s/sic k	P r	Prov/h eal	?	Rejoi ce	Ba	Grat itude	Se	S
7	U r	S	20+	Xx	Mnt /Fa m/	Accd t	P r	Delv	Study	Joy/S afe	Ba	Wi/S er	No	S
8	R u	?	Mnt	+	Mir	Trbl,	P r	Delv/ Mir	Study	Ntr	Ba	Wi/S er	N/ A	N m l
9	U r	V S	Af.re tire/ mnt	Xx	Mnt /vis n/	Sick	P r	Heal/	Vist/pr	Pce	Ba	Wi/S er	Se	S
10	R u	V S	30/ Mnts	+	Bbl	No	N o	No	Bible	Pce, hpy	Ba	Wi/S er	N/ A	N m l
11	R u	N /A	Mnts	X	Mnt /Vis n	Sick	P r	Visn/H eal	Vist/pr	hpy	Ba	Wi/S er	N/ A	N
12	R u	M	Frns /mnt r	+	Dre am	No	N o	Dream /Readi ng	Ch/Bbl	Cries	Ba	Hlp Otrs	N/ A	N m l

APPENDIX L: Interview Evaluation Chart for Buddhists

No/ Na me	Atr ns	Re.F er	Barr	Exp	Rj	Ist Exp	C ri si s	Te st/ Pr yr	Mirl es	Means	Emo	R A	Rs l
										Metho d			
1.K oT wei	Son gs,	Nml	Eth /Frgr Rel.	No in Bur ma	M il d	Psv obs vr/ Gf	N/ A	N/ A	N/A	Mntr/Bi ble/pers iscency/ interact ion/	Love , diffe rent, hpy, light	M il d	
			Bur Rel., language, Burmanis m,attach ment, narrow minded,	/									
2.Sa w	Son gs wr m wlc m,p olit e/ni ce, inte st in Bud his m,B rnw sh relg	Nml	nats, fer of pscn,sepr te eth communit y, criticism, lack of clarity,fre n rel, ethni, rel,	Coll ege/ frie nds	M il d	Psv obs vr/b f/hs bn	Vi sa	Te st/ Pr ay	Ans wer pryr/ drem	Bbl, husb,	Peac e	O st ri ci ze ,	Wi tn es s
			No rel. fdom, fear of chg,covrn , prsyl, confronta l/agrs aprch										
3.K ham pi's wf	Qui et,p atie nt, forb eari ng, son g	Strg	Attmnt,ye ars of budhism,	Frn d in coll e.	Nt rl	Pss Obs vf	B us in es	Te st/ pry r	\$200 0 scho larsh ip	Mntr/Bi ble	N/A	Nt rl	5y rs

4.K aun g Zan	Non - chu rch Chr istia n acti vitie s, fune ral, chri stm as,	VS	Mentn of chrch, Les pryr,rel.f er, Eth lookdown ,no emplry life, no unity,no interactio n, bur- budht, no time, ignrn,crit icism, pride,hol ding onto its religion,s lowness, Bur- Buddht (Amyu Bata Tartana)	Wif e	Nt rl	Pss obv,	n/ a	n/a	n/a	Bible/m ntr/wife /interac tion/	N/A	N/ A	S
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APPENDIX M: Interview Evaluation Chart for Christian Ministers			
Name	Barriers	Assets and Attitudes	Methods
1.Abraham	<i>-Majority vs. minority status</i>	<i>Christians are more peaceful than Muslims</i>	<i>-focus on next generation (youth and kids)</i>
	<i>-looking down on us (3x)</i>	-	<i>-Equal or lesser social status approach</i>
	<i>-Children are more vulnerable</i>		-
	<i>-Ethnic people as religiousless people</i>		
	<i>-bad example of Christians</i>		
	<i>-Separate living ethnically</i>		
	<i>-100 Year project of ethnics becoming Buddhists</i>		
	<i>-Language barrier</i>		
	<i>-Moral barriers (many Buddhists don't drink, many Christians drink)</i>		
	<i>- lack of Buddhist familiar terms</i> -		

APPENDIX N: Interview Evaluation Chart for Burman Buddhists

No	Attractions/ Interests	Barriers	Means/Methods	Themes/Quotes/Questions
1.Win Naing	Issues of Israel, Christians' good helps and characters	To Belittle about Buddhism and Buddhists after one's salvation Syncretism Attachment to Kan "I must do something" "All Christians will automatically go to heaven" [Christians do not emphasize living a godly life (good life) is God's desire for every believer and we don't live godly lives. We make them think that	Creation/Flood stories Show in actions Parallel illustrations from Buddhism (discreetly) Need to present a clear message (e.g. not all Christians will automatically go to heaven)	"Good karma and bad will decide one's destiny whether in heaven or in hell" "We can understand and ok with Christianity but not with Islam" "Christians are genuine, caring, loving, compassionate, honest and considerate" "All Christians seems to go to heaven, they don't
2.Takyi	M.Terisa, Christian donations for the poor,	Non-interaction Separate ethnic community One-sided religion Ignorance of Buddhism is offensive to them	Relativism, Good work, Respect for each other's religion	"Mother Terisa will go to heaven because of her good work" "Buddhism becomes a native religion because it first arrived in Burma" "Any good Buddhist would say that Buddhism is the best religion" "I avoid religious discussion with Christian for fear of

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