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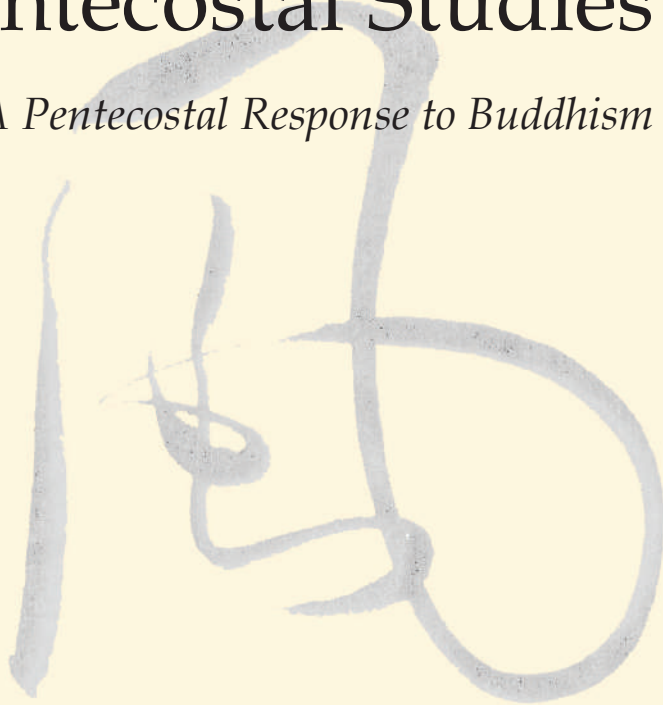
A Pentecostal Response to Buddhism

Mobilizing Laity to Witness: A Pentecostal Perspective
by Mark Rodli

Introduction

Martin Visser revealed that in Thailand only three out of one hundred lay Christians bring someone to faith in their lifetime; in other words, only 3.4% of all lay Christians.[1] Although it might be expected that the four major Pentecostal denominations would have a somewhat higher percentage than other churches, their conversion growth rate was only slightly higher than the general Thai conversion growth rate of 4.2%. Pentecostal churches reflect similar numbers to the non-Pentecostal groups.[2] This small conversion growth is an obvious impediment for the Thai church.

Increasing the witnessing of laity may be a big help in expanding the Thai church, However, the answer may also rest in Pentecostal theology and its orthopraxis. This paper examines how an implemented Pentecostal theology increases the efficacy of efforts in mobilizing laity for witness by looking at the theological notion of the priesthood of all believers, and probes Pentecostals driving impetus for witness through the radical inclusion of all peoples brought by the outpouring on all peoples.

Biblical Theology: 1 Peter 2:7-9

Pentecostal theology imbeds itself in a biblical theology that sees God's people as agents in the story of God's redemption of all peoples as seen throughout the Bible. 1 Peter 2:4-10 provides a clear example of a biblical theology of God's people in witness through their identity as followers of Christ.

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[1] Marten Visser, *The Growth of the Protestant Church in Thailand* (2008), 11. Of the 320,054 Thai lay Christians then, only 10,909 were a part of conversions which is 0.034 per person per year.

[2] Marten Visser, *Conversion Growth of Protestant Churches in Thailand* (Zoetermeer, The Netherlands: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2008), 102.

Identity from Old to New

Peter drew from the Old Testament where he "took the central concept of Israel's self-understanding and transferred it to the members of the communities to which he was addressing his letter: the idea of election."[3] The communities that Peter was addressing were scattered throughout Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). This election expands further as Peter shows that election came upon those who identified as aliens and exiles of the Dispersion (1:1-2:11).[4] Peter draws from powerful Old Testament imagery and history that identified Israel as aliens and exiles in the land for much of Israel's early history. Peter's audience consisted of Christian communities often ostracized by society. Thus, the words "chosen race" spoke life to communities that received the letter. The history of Israel and the church in 1 Peter dealt with a tension of blessings to the nations and confinement within Israel or the church itself. Valdir Steuernagel poignantly writes that "Fortunately, the letter is a document that helps to get balance between identity and mission: chosen yes, but not closed to outsiders. Chosen for witness, in word and deed."[5]

Since local society tended to reject Peter's audience, Peter constructs Israel's identity in Christ. Peter points to an identity in which status comes from God, not society. Joel Green argues that while dealing with the shame/honor concept, "1 Peter 2:4-10 is a profoundly theocentric text, with human valuations dismissed in favor of divine, and with God's valuation regarded as decisive and ultimate (e.g., vv. 4, 5, 9, 10). Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the measures so important for determining status in the wider world of 1 Peter are irrelevant."[6] This changes status from being determined by human valuations to being determined by God. Peter reveals that freedom comes through the individual's identity in Christ, which puts faith at the forefront. Therefore, as Green asserts, "Faith, then, has a hermeneutical role, allowing one to see what could otherwise not be seen. From a point of view illumined by conventional wisdom, Jesus and his followers are humiliated, rejected, ostracized, but from a perspective radiated by the passion of Jesus, they are God's elect, honored."[7] Peter focuses on developing the identity of

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[3]Valdir R. Steuernagel, "An Exiled Community as a Missionary Community: A Study Based on 1 Peter 2: 9-10," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 40, no. 3 (2016): 199.
[4]Ibid.
[5]Ibid., 202.
[6]Joel B. Green, *1 Peter*, *Two Horizons New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 57.
[7]Ibid., 58.

his audience through the imitation of Christ. Peter's audience exists already as an imitation of Christ by being "the living stones," rejected by humans in God's perspective, elect in God's perspective and honored.[8] Hence, Peter sketches "an interpretive canopy under which to relish in their corporate status before God, a status that is theirs not so much in spite of their having experienced rejection in the world, but on account of it."[9] Peter's development of identity conceptualizes the status before God as an honored one because the rejection of the world has far-reaching implications for the church.

<div align="center">Revealers of God to the Nations</div>

In 1 Peter 2:4-10, the Apostle draws from Exodus 19:2-6 to reveal Israel's identity as a priestly nation. Significantly, in the Old Testament, priests functioned as stewards of the knowledge of God.[10] Priests mediated between God and the rest of the people. This means that "priests are leaders in the religious establishment. They represent the people to God and sustain the life of their religious community by exercising ritual and symbolic authority."[11] However, God did not intend only Levites to receive the role of priests, rather God intended his people to carry a certain priestly role as people to the nations.[12] This makes the law important. God purposed the law to help Israel live out an attractive lifestyle before the nations.[13] Peter's use of Exodus 19:3-6 highlights the parallel of the audience's priesthood identity and their role of bringing the knowledge of God to the nations.

Peter wants his audience to know that they, as God's people, already function as revealers of God to the nations. 1 Peter 2:9a tells the audience who they are by building an understanding of their role to the nations from Exodus 19:3-6. Digging deeper, Peter focuses on the declarative mandate of witness. Peter emphasizes that as a people of God, his audience is responsible to proclaim the gospel to the nations. For this reason, Pentecostals are tasked to live this proclamation out as lay

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[8]Ibid., 60.

[9]Ibid., 55.

[10]Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Academic, 2006), 124.

[11]Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religions: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999), Loc. 6011, Kindle.

[12]Wright, 331.

[13]Michael W. Goheen, "The Biblical Story of Narrative Theology," in *Contemporary Mission Theology: Engaging the Nations*, ed. Robert L. and Paul Hertig Gallagher (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017).

persons and pastors, informed by a rooted biblical theology of witness through their identity in Christ, drawn first from scriptures like 1 Peter 2:4-10 and enhanced by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit as seen in the book of Acts.

Pentecostal Theology: Acts 2:16-21

The empowerment for witness in Acts 1:8 drives Pentecostal theology and experience. Luke speaks of the Spirit as the impetus behind the witness of the early church.[14] The Spirit's driving impetus for witness should increase the efficacy of those empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness by the radical inclusivism of all peoples so that nothing prohibits the believer from witnessing. Acts 2:16-21 clearly establishes this.

Joel 2:28-29

The Pentecostal driving force for witness in Acts 1:8 plays out in Acts 2:16-21. In Acts 2:16-21, Peter's use of Joel 2:28-29 is poignant. Daniel Teier shows that Joel 2 is foundational to Peter's sermon because the "beginning explains the outburst of revelatory activity in light of Christ's pouring out the Spirit."[15] Peter stresses the empowerment upon on all flesh. The Spirit falls on all believers, and it insinuates an equality in the diverse outpouring of the Spirit upon genders, economic situations, and social positions. In Acts 2:16-21, Peter expresses that nothing should prohibit any believer from proclaiming the gospel because the Spirit poured out on all flesh, diversely.

Gender Issues

The Spirit's outpouring brings equality to gender issues. Joel's prophecy "declared the eradication of any gender barrier in the spirit of prophecy."[16] In an age where women were considered below men in nearly all respects, equality for women was unique for the Jewish and Hellenistic cultures. Yet, the outpouring on women proved vital for the early church. There are many instances of women ministering in the New Testament. Just in Romans 16 alone, women count for ten out of twenty-

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[14]William W. Menzies and Robert P. Menzies, *Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 97.

[15]Daniel J. Treier, "The Fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32: A Multiple-Lens Approach," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 1 (/ 1997): 21.

[16]Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary V 1 Introduction and 1:1-2:47* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 882.

six individuals that Paul commends. The Spirit ministered through lay women empowered by the Spirit.

Social and Economic Barriers

Both the Apostle Peter and the Prophet Joel spoke words concerning economic and social barriers. The gift of the Spirit came upon anyone of any situation. Peter mentions specifically slaves on several occasions because they represented the lowest class economically. People owned slaves yet slaves, too, equally shared in the same inheritance of the Spirit. Philemon 1:12-16 illustrates this beautifully.

While people often regarded slaves in economic terms, other social barriers are unearthed through the term "slave." For instance, since slaves made up the lower class, class barriers plainly existed. Likewise, power barriers displayed the fact that slaves still possessed little or no power. Yet, the Spirit removed class barriers and power-distance, and slaves found freedom in the Spirit to witness. Again, Philemon 1:12-16 proves a great example.

Whether a person was a victim of prejudice or not, God's spirit poured out on them. In fact, Peter's use of Joel's prophecy denotes those that were not male, those of any age, those without money or property, and those without power. Frank Macchia writes, "Tongues allow the poor, uneducated, and illiterate among the people of God to have an equal voice with the educated and the literate."[17] God's Spirit poured out declares everyone sits equally at the table of God's people. Pentecostal theology enlightens the church, showing that God's people hold the power of the Spirit for witness to the peoples of the earth, equally. As Luke wrote Acts 2, he believed that empowerment needed to characterize the entire church.[18] The church, equalized by God's Spirit, speaks to a world full of inequality by first being a community of God living in equality and witnessing in equality.

Community of Believers

A true Pentecostal theology constructs itself on the concept of a community of believers unmarred by gender inequality, racial inequality, power inequality or social and economic inequality. The Spirit of

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[17]Frank D. Macchia, "The Struggle for Global Witness: Shifting Paradigms in Pentecostal Theology," in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, ed. Murray A. Dempster, Bryon D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen (Oxford: Regnum Bks, 1999), 19.

[18]Keener, 881.

prophecy arose for all the community of God's people, which differs from the former days (Old Testament) when only chosen leaders received the charismatic gifts of the Spirit.[19] Yet, Pentecost fulfilled a contrasting story of the gift for all humankind.

As Joel 2 promised the Spirit poured out on the whole nation, now Pentecost promises the Spirit poured out on all people belonging to God, no matter their gender, race, social, or economic statuses. This universal outpouring of the Spirit fell not just on Israel but on all who believe. In fact, those present to hear Peter's sermon represented a diversity of peoples. Many different people from numerous nations received Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit birthed and nurtured Gentiles (i.e. Parthians, Medes, Elamites, etc.) in the body of Christ.[20]

Moreover, the intention of the Spirit being poured out on all flesh was to draw a new community together for a purpose—to witness. Robert Muthiah writes that the practice of witnessing actually built up the priesthood of believers by first pursuing witness as a group, and that corporate witness solidified their identity as priests, and secondly, by actual expansion through people coming to Christ through their corporate witness.[21] Witness, generally stated, should be done as a community, which the church should exemplify. Paul proves to be another great example. Paul never goes alone. He constantly surrounded himself with a community of believers as they preached and taught the gospel.

Pentecostal theology increases the efficacy of mobilizing efforts by the Spirit's outpouring on all peoples. Its equalizing effect wipes away all inequality and power struggles for the purpose of witness. It takes a community of believers to accomplish it.

Implications

A Pentecostal theology derived from a diversity of outpouring for witness rooted in biblical theology speaks to everyone. The increasing efficacy of the biblical mandate to witness expressed through Pentecostal theology carries significant implications. Probing Thai culture furnishes a clearer understanding of the implications.

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[19]Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke's Charismatic Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 69.

[20]Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(S): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions*, vol. 20, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 42.

[21]Robert A. Muthiah, "Christian Practices, Congregational Leadership, and the Priesthood of All Believers," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 182.

Power Issues

Every culture deals with power issues. Anita Koeshall notes, "The distribution of power lies at the heart of any human social organization and shapes all interactions and relationships."[22] The church has also struggled with power issues since its inception. The disciples fought over who the greatest was in Luke 22:24-30. Sadly, Christians also chase after power.

Power-distance

Geert and Gert Hofstede and Michael Minkov's seminal work, *Cultures and Organizations* provides insights into various different cultures. They designate power-distance as one of the several different primary features of cultures and describe power-distance as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally."[23] Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov's Thailand score of 64 establishes Thailand as a high power-distance nation.[24] This means Thais expect inequalities because equality does not truly exist.

Thailand's high power-distance permeates Thai culture. Thais generally avoid proactive behavior because they wait for those of senior status and authority to make a decision. As a socially legitimate method of leadership, decisions originate from the top and must be followed. Those that speak up or who are against change challenge the one in power in Thai culture.[25] This hierarchical feature dominates much of Thai life. Thus, for Thais, power is constructed not by influence or personality, rhetoric, or education, rather, the culture creates power through position and the status associated with that position or rank.[26]

Thailand's high power-distance presents a problem for the Thai church. Koeshall points out how church structures can mimic the

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[22]Anita Koeshall, "Navigating Power: Liquid Power Structures for Molten Times," in *Devoted to Christ: Missiological Reflections in Honor of Sherwood G. Lingenfelter*, ed. Christopher L. Flanders (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019), 66.

[23]Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind: Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival*, 3 ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2010), 61.

[24]Ibid., 58.

[25]Douglas Rhein, "The Workplace Challenge: Cross-Cultural Leadership in Thailand," *International Studies in Educational Administration* 41, no. 1 (2013): 45-46.

[26]Theerasak and Brian Corbitt Thanasankit, "Understanding Thai Culture and Its Impact on Requirements Engineering Process Management During Information Systems Development," *Asian Academy of Management Journal* 7, no. 1 (2002): 108.

culturally-accepted hierarchies.[27] Thailand's strong hierarchy often stifles equality and the calling of lay workers. Subsequently, laity are not proactive, but expect the pastor to perform the witnessing. As a result, high power-distance contributes to small laity-assisted conversion growth.[28] This counters the power-restructuring of Pentecost that saw God's Spirit fall regardless of power, gender, age, social or economic class, and did not allow human power constructs to asphyxiate witnessing. Peter's focus on the priesthood of all believers reminds us of the role of all Christians to proclaim the gospel. The clear hierarchy for us is Jesus as High Priest (Heb. 7).

Theology of Power

Koeshall campaigns for the development of a theology of power. God's plan for humanity was that at creation, "God entrusted humans with the power to make decisions . . . the ability to make a difference in their environments, and to act 'otherwise' or outside of a predetermined pattern."[29] God created human beings to think and make decisions. However, with sin came the manipulation of power, which meant the desire to have dominion over other people (Genesis 3). However, Jesus taught differently. Koeshall writes, "The call to His [Jesus'] followers consists of a life where the power that one possesses is to be expended that others can live."[30] Much like Jesus, Christians must be power-givers, who seek to use their power for the glory of God alone. Instead, Koeshall advocates for a redeemed power which is, "embodied in redeemed agents invested in a lifestyle of self-emptying for the sake of others."[31] It would be advantageous in my opinion for the Thai church to seek such redeemed power in its own Thai culture.

Change ensues not just from the top down but from the grassroots, also. By re-locating itself among the lay workers, the Thai church eliminates the disconnect that previously ensnared Thai evangelistic forms. Now, each denomination and each church serve as a covering

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[27]Ibid., 70.

[28]It must be acknowledged other factors including in what way Christians present the gospel may contribute to these low numbers.

[29]Koeshall, in *Devoted to Christ: Missiological Reflections in Honor of Sherwood G. Lingenfelter*, 70.

[30]Ibid., 73.

[31]Ibid., 76. "Redeemed power is (1) the capacity and ability to act (dynamis) made possible by Spirit baptism, physical strength, talents, and intellectual and material resources that have been developed through discipline and maturity; and (2) the freedom (exousia) made possible when the community recognizes the Spirit's gifts in individual members and creates space for them to develop their gifts and to function in service to others."

and a structure for releasing. Tension will likely occur at first, but if all parties seek a redeemed power embodied in redeemed agents as seen through the Pentecost event, then the Thai church will see increasing growth through its pastors and its lay leaders, resulting in strong churches and new church plants. It does not eliminate hierarchy, nor does it make an egalitarian structure to only re-create a power structure. Rather, it looks at a biblical use of power to empower and release others to be the priestly people of God.

The missionary's task is to walk with the Thai church in redeeming its power structure. By exemplifying a redeemed power in their own organizational structures, missionaries can help the Thai church ask questions about the Thai church's own power structures. It entails deep dialogue about implicit Thai structures and requires deep relationships and friendships with the Thai church in order to seek God's best for his church.

Thai examples

Thai perceptions of an empowering prototypical ideal leader exist. One prototype, Larry Person's suggests, emanates from within the facework form of *barami* or accumulated goodness. The meaning of accumulated goodness clusters into two general categories: virtue and hegemony or raw dominance.[32] Persons believes most Thais view *barami* as a true accumulated goodness due to virtue. *Barami* originates in the truly virtuous person who selflessly uses social capital to empower and mobilize others to work together for good of the collective.[33] Thus, for Persons, a *barami*-style leader truly cares for others not themselves.

Persons builds his view from David Conner's concept of *barami.[34]* Conner posits that *barami* begins in the moral goodness or virtue of the individual and makes the case for *barami* as the culturally-desired foundation for leadership.[35]

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[32]Person, 54-55.

[33]Ibid., 57.

[34]Much of the idea of *barami* in leadership originated from Thai scholar Sunataree Komin's work that suggests *barami* as a unique leadership trait to Thais, and *barami* allows the leader to command respect, love, loyalty and sacrifice from others Suntaree Komin, "Value Added Perception of Thai Effective Leadership." (paper presented at the 23rd International Congress of Applied Pyschology, Madrid, Spain1994), 35.

[35]David William Conner, "Personal Power, Authority, and Influence: Cultural Foundations for Leadership and Leadership Formation in Northeast Thailand and Implications for Adult Leadership Training" (Northern Illinios University, 1996), 240, 74-76.

However, Alan Johnson encourages caution in the use of *barami* as a preferred leadership prototype. First, in Johnson's research amongst urban poor people in a slum,[36] *barami* often carried a negative sense.[37] Second, Johnson points out that Conners acknowledges some negative meaning prescribed to *barami*.[38] Johnson believes, rather, that Conner downplayed or dismissed "evidence of linguistic diversity and multiplex usages, particularly as it relates to *barami*."[39] Persons admits a possible negative meaning[40] but unconvincingly sides with Conners suggesting Conner downplayed the negative meanings because many of their informants "claimed that it represented a case of false attribution."[41] However, Johnson correctly feels discomfort with "telling native speakers what is the correct understanding of a term that they seem to have quite definite ideas about."[42]

Johnson provides an alternative prototypical leader in the value of trustworthiness (*chuathuu*). Johnson believes trustworthiness creates a stronger link to the prototypical model as it provides "the conceptual link between the prototypical model and how people actually construct leadership in daily activities."[43] Trustworthiness, then, became a preferred model because it opened the door for a broader group of people to be involved in leadership, and it is much more connected with observable behavior which better lends itself to the complexities of daily life.[44]

Both *barami* and trustworthiness (*chuathuu*) exemplify a prototypical leader that conveys, albeit in different socio-economic groups, a somewhat empowering preferred leader. While *barami* has merit as a prototype model amongst certain groups in Thailand, the trustworthiness model provides a more tangible example that addresses community life. Trustworthiness seeks to bring more people into the decision-making arena, where *barami* still tends to be reserved for a select few, exacerbating an already-existing power-distance and

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[36]Lang Wat Pathum Wanaram Community (LWPW).

[37]Alan Johnson, *Leadership in a Slum: A Bangkok Case Study* (Oxford: Regnum Bks Intl, 2009), 92, 188. *Barami* is often coupled with the term *jao pho* (mafia or mogul). Interestingly, Alan Johnson's research was done amongst the urban poor in a slum community in Bangkok. Both Conner's and Person's research engaged upper tiered leaders in middle-class to upper class situations.

[38]Ibid., 92. See where Conner's admits to some informants seeing *barami* as negative Conner, 261.

[39]Johnson, 92.

[40]Person, 54-55.

[41]Larry S. Person, "The Anatomy of Thai Face," *MANUSYA: Journal of Humanities* 11, no. 1 (2008): 65-66, http://www.manusya.journals.chula.ac.th/files/paperonline/Larry_ThaiFace_Final_p53-75.pdf. (accessed October 14, 2020).

[42]Johnson, 92.

[43] Ibid., 108.

[44]Ibid., 115, 18. Trustworthiness was also the dominant term used for considering leaders.

unempowering problem. *Barami* and trustworthiness give the best examples of what power-giving and empowerment could look like in the Thai culture outside of Jesus and could breathe life into the development of a Thai Christian identity.

1 Peter 2:4-10 Revisited: Re-facing by Creating a New Christian Identity

Each culture endeavors to create its own unique identity. There is little to no discussion, however, on Thai Christian identity or that a formation of one exists. Thai Christian leaders seem to think little about a Thai Christian identity. Consequently, most Thais wrap their identity around Buddhism. The common Thai saying goes, "To be Thai is to be Buddhist." Even if they love Jesus, being a Buddhist entangles itself into their Thai identity, and Thais feel that following Jesus requires them to give up being Thai.

Christianity's "foreignness" coupled with a Buddhist Thai identity generates a divide between Thai Christians and the ninety percent of the population of Thailand that regards itself as Buddhist. This may just give Thai Christians a sense of a loss of face (*sia na*).

Thai identity is swathed in face or facework. "Face," as Christopher Flanders refers to it, is "a metaphor representing a type of interpersonal social honor and identity projection."[45] Everyone desires to be a "face person" or as Flanders expresses it, "an individual who is recognized, holds some level of status and honor, is distinguished or outstanding in some particular fashion."[46] Sunatree Komin expresses how important this "face-saving" value is for Thais by suggesting it is, "the first criterion to consider in any kind of evaluative or judgmental action. To make a person 'lose face', regardless of rank, is to be avoided at all cost, except in extreme necessity."[47] Therefore, face in Thailand dominates the social scene, and becomes a tool for Thais to evaluate who "fits in" to their society. Persons believes "face" consists of five different modes.[48] However, it is the last one, endogenous worth, that drives the rest of the concept of face because it is the "essence of being your own

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[45]Christopher L. Flanders, *About Face: Rethinking Face for 21st-Century Missions*, vol. 9 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 1.

[46]Ibid., 122.

[47]Suntaree Komin, "Culture and Work-Related Values in Thai Organizations," *International Journal of Psychology* 24 (1990): 691. Thais value face as one of their highest values.

[48]Ibid., 74. They are prestige (*nata*), honor (*kiat*), public acclaim (*chuesiang*), accumulated goodness (*barami*), and endogenous worth (*saksi*).

person."[49] Endogenous worth, drives Thais' view of self-worth and identity, and forms the link to an individualism in a collective society.

Consequently, Thais create positions by the status associated with wealth, position, rank or popularity driven by facework. These entail statuses created through human valuation. However, in 1 Peter 2:4-10, Peter exhorts the believers to see themselves as those identified and honored by the valuations of God not humanity. Today, this means pastors and leaders should not view others as inferior, but as equals, regardless of culturally-determined statuses and positions since all belong to Christ. Leaders and laity alike received their endogenous worth not within themselves or from others but through Christ. As imitators of Christ, Thais received face (*dai na*) from God, not from humans and the social structures of culture. Our face coming from God realigns the church to focus not on individual statuses derived from human valuation but on a community whose identity comes from God.

Change Starts with Leadership

The prototype model leader through *barami* or trustworthiness provides an indigenous example. However, prototype leadership models, help little with actual change in leadership modes based on existing models of authoritative power. Leadership resides not in universal and macro-theories, but rather it is embedded in social setting. Johnson suggests that improving leadership starts in the, "disassembling and reassembling, the untangling of the explicit and implicit, and the challenging of conventional wisdom of leadership on the ground so that practitioners can see themselves and their setting with increased clarity."[50] This means that for leaders deeply embedded and implicit values like hierarchy form much of the leader's behavior. Sadly, these values are seldom brought into discussion. These implicit values continue to occur even if they are contrary to the ideal leader because they are pre-programmed into the Thai leadership model. Thus, leaders continue to "manifest behaviors that they themselves would be suspicious of in the follower role, and this creates a self-reinforcing cycle of behavior that feeds the suspicion."[51]

For the missionary, this phenomenon delivers major insight into training Thai leaders. Too often, universal, macro-strategies often based on non-indigenous paradigmatic or cognitive prototypes do not dig into

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[49]Ibid., 64.

[50]Alan R. Johnson, "An Anthropological Approach to the Study of Leadership: Lessons Learned on Improving Leadership Practice," *Transformation* 24, no. 3 (2007): 216.

[51]Ibid., 217.

implicit knowledge that remain assumed, hidden and unexplored. Therefore, the cycle of suspicion endures since the assumed, hidden and unexplored intricacies of Thai leadership continue without any helpful dialogue. The missionary is tasked with intentionally seeking understanding in Thai leadership. This means working within Thai churches creating the much-needed relationships and friendships required to speak into their lives. That takes time and effort of learning the language and culture all the while making relationships. It also means listening actively in order to learn how to train.

Following relationship-building, the missionary will need to employ the insights from the study of leadership to bring to the surface what is normally unexplored and unnoticed, which "involves facilitating people to dialogue about how and why they default to unproductive leadership patterns and why culturally-preferred behaviors remain for the most part ideals."[52] It takes a Thai church willing to explore those hidden, assumed and unexplored leadership traits which necessitates members to "find cultural resources that will help them to value and integrate into practice their own culturally-preferred forms of leadership."[53] Leadership training requires dialogue. Since, any change or growth will not happen overnight, the missionaries' role in dialogue is even more imperative. If the missionary creates deep relationships built on trust, dialogue may occur on issues that have remained hidden, assumed or explored, and the process of discovering and growth will follow.

Conclusion

Pentecost equalized all people through the outpouring of the Spirit for empowerment to witness. Rooted and informed in biblical theology through 1 Peter 2:4-10, Pentecostals draw on the empowerment of the Spirit poured out on all types of people of all levels as a priestly community. It is an empowerment of the whole church for witness, not just a selective few in church leadership. Biblical theology shows one's identity and status is under God's valuation not humanity valuation. For the Pentecostal movement whose identity and status is understood as under God's valuation and that sees all laity mobilized to witness, the implications are great because it draws from new dialogue and redeeming power by leadership in the Thai church. As Thailand Protestants, including Pentecostals, struggle to shed light on the scarcity of evangelism engagement, a fully implemented Pentecostal theology rooted in biblical theology, serves to realign the Thai church back into

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[52]Ibid., 219.
[53]Ibid.

the center of God's mission. If the Thai church allows the Spirit to empower and release the laity for witness, numbers like three out of one hundred lay persons bringing someone to faith will expand exponentially.

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