

THESIS TITLE : A Differential Approach to the 'Christian Understanding' of 'Buddhist Detachment'

NAME : Jaime M. Rivera

THESIS ADVISOR : Dr. Veerachart Nimanong  
Prof. Kirti Bunchua  
Dr. Robert Magliola

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### ABSTRACT

The dilemma, to dialogue or not to dialogue comes at the heels of tragic events in the history of Buddhism's encounter with Christianity alongside a compelling need to get actively involved with one another in the context of globalization— Arnold Toynbee has predicted that the encounters between the two religions shall usher a new era in human history.

Among the many proponents of dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity, a number have advocated a dialogue based on 'common ground.' But as one Postmodern writer submits: "Christianity [and for that matter, Buddhism] can only learn from dialogue with other religions if it learns to find what in them is 'other.'

Thus, this thesis tackles two currents of Dialogue based on differences. One is represented by Aloysius Pieris, S.J.'s "core-to-core dialogue," the other by Robert Magliola's "Differential" approach which employs Postmodernism and Derridean Deconstruction. An attempt will be

made to further Pieris' brand of difference-oriented dialogue by using the Differential Approach. In the process, this thesis hopes (1) to demonstrate how such an approach can work in relation to Pieris' main thesis, the dialectical interplay between Gnostic Wisdom and Agapeic Love, and (2) to clarify misunderstandings and to facilitate alternatives which may prevent an impasse between the two religions.

Apropos, Chapter One, aside from giving the backdrop of dialogue based on differences, recapitulates Pieris' core-to-core dialogue. In the spirit of Pieris' call for Christians to have empathetic apprehension of the real nature of Buddhism's core, Chapter Two provides a detailed although not exhaustive exposition of the different nuances of what many a Christian takes collectively as "detachment" or "indifference." More than serving as an expanded glossary, Chapter Two paves the way for a logocentric as well as a differential approach to the Christian understanding of Buddhist detachment presented in Chapter Three and Four respectively. Chapter Five attempts to apply what has been gathered from the preceding chapters to probe instrumentality as operating in Christianity. This is in keeping with Pieris' thesis that instrumentality as *lack* can be resolved through the accommodation of Buddhism's core in Christianity's theological formulations. Chapter Six provides the summary, conclusions, and recommendations by way of contributing to the 'Contextual Method' of Graduate School of Philosophy and Religious studies of Assumption University.