

THE POSSIBILITY OF RELIGIOUS MATERIALITY
IN DISCIPLING CONVERTS FROM THAI FOLK BUDDHISM

Any movement for the growth of indigenous Churches must recognize the importance of having a theology that can critically reflect and articulate the Christian faith within the social and cultural frameworks of the indigenous community. Thus this paper presents a model for contextualized discipleship, with a focus in religious materiality when discipling converts from Thai Folk Buddhist background.

Religious material expressions in a Thai Folk Buddhist worldview are prevalent, such as altars, amulets and statues. Learning from Christian tradition and history, Christianity has the answer to bridge into the inclination of Thai Folk Buddhist converts towards religious material expressions. Exploring the Bible, there are redemptive expressions for Christianity in the material culture. Like how religious materials are a reflection of one's spiritual allegiance and how it helps in renewing one's interpretation of the world.

As such, the paper proposes practical applications to the possible use of religious materials in discipling converts from Thai Folk Buddhism. Materiality in discipleship teaches the importance of replacement instead of removal of religious material culture. Materiality in discipleship helps to give new meanings to old practices and also provides new solutions to old problems.

The emphasis of materiality in discipleship among converts from Thai Folk Buddhism is driven by the innate need in these converts to understand their new allegiance in ways and forms that they are accustomed to. Religious materials are a necessary first step in the discipleship of these converts, but they are not sufficient, and should not be an end in itself.