

## A Comparison between the Education of Christian and Buddhist Clergy in Sri Lanka with Respect to Missionary Attitudes and Activities

John Mensing<sup>1</sup>

With the advent of Tsunami relief, Christian social welfare work has inundated coastal regions, exacerbating tensions between Buddhist fundamentalists and Christian evangelists, who have been at odds over the propriety of each other's missionary efforts, as is evidenced by the debate over legislation to circumscribe conversions. As part of a larger project examining differences in approaches to missionary efforts in the Buddhist and Christian traditions, this paper will look at how theological education is conducted in a sample of educational institutions where Buddhist and Christian clergy are trained.

We will look at Catholic, mainstream protestant, and fundamental evangelical seminaries to see what kinds of attitudes are inculcated regarding Christian missionary activities, and compare those approaches with the curriculum at a Buddhist University for the higher training of Buddhist monks. A variety of Buddhist and Christian seminary educators and students will be surveyed. Some terminology will be proposed for comparison, and an attempt made to formulate criteria by which Buddhist and Christian theological education may be evaluated. Some evidence from India, where a more extensive literature exists concerning the rationales for missionary activities, and the indigenous non-Christian responses to those activities, will also be surveyed. Some historical dimensions of the debate over the role of mission in each religion will also be highlighted.

Key Words: Christian, Buddhist, Missionary, Sri Lanka, Education

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Peradeniya , E-mail: johnmensing@gmail.com