

Religion and Sustainable Development: A Comparative Study of Buddhist and Christian Farmers' Contribution to the Environmental Protection in Taiwan

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Abstract : The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development claims to be a comprehensive and integrated plan of action for prosperity for people and the planet, including almost all dimensions of human existence. Nevertheless, critics have pointed out the exclusion of the religious dimension from development discussions. Care for the earth is one of the vital aspects of sustainable development. Farmers all over the world contribute much to environmental protection. Most farmers are religious believers, and religious ideologies influence their agricultural practices. This nexus between faith and agriculture has forced policymakers to include religion in development discussions. This paper delves deeper into this religion and sustainable development connection. Buddhism and Christianity have contributed much to environmental protection in Taiwan. However, interviews conducted among 40 Taiwanese farmers (10 male and female farmers from Buddhism and Christianity) show that their faith experiences make them relate to the natural environment differently. Most of the Buddhist farmers interviewed admitted that they chose their religious adherence, while most of the Christian farmers inherited their faith. The in-depth analysis of the interview data collected underlines the close relationship between religion and sustainable development. More importantly, concerning their intention to care for the earth, farmers whose religious adherence is 'chosen' are self-motivated and more robust compared to those whose religious adherence is 'inherited'.

Keywords : Buddhism, Christianity, environmental protection, sustainable development

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