

TOWARDS A CLEAN CHURCH

**A Case Study in Nineteenth-Century
Thai Church History**

Herbert R. Swanson

**Office of History
Church of Christ in Thailand**

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TO THE CHURCH

The Church History

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PREFACE

This modest book grew out of an article I wrote for a collection of Thai-language articles recently published by the Office of History of the Church of Christ in Thailand.[1] After putting that article aside in its "completed" form, new thoughts and additional insights kept coming to mind, and I decided to rewrite the article in English in a slightly longer form. The process of further reflection and review has finally led to something larger than an article and smaller than a full-length book, which it seemed best to publish in a book format.

The story this case study analyzes is an important one for understanding the Protestant experience in Thailand. It sheds further light upon the great twin failures of nineteenth-century Protestant work in Thailand: the failure to win a large constituency; and the failure to establish strong local Christian communities. Analysis of events in the Phet Buri Station between 1880 and 1900 also brings to light the work of two highly influential missionaries in Phet Buri, neither of whom have received the attention they deserve, namely the Rev. E. P. Dunlap and the Rev. D. G. McClure. Dunlap's career, in particular, should be the subject of close scrutiny. He represents that most enlightening phenomenon of the creative maverick whose unique qualities highlight the more ordinary thoughts and actions of others.

Church history in Thailand is always an intellectual adventure because of the uniquely precarious position of the church historian. The church historian here studies the history of an institution widely regarded as alien to Thai society. The church historian quite naturally draws upon ideas and perspectives taken from the Christian tradition. Thus, a church history written within the context of and about the Thai church appears suspect to a large segment of its potential audience. It addresses subjects of interest to Thai religious history, but in an