

**PRELUDE TO IRONY THE PRINCETON THEOLOGY AND THE PRACTICE
OF AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN MISSIONS IN NORTHERN SIAM, 1867-1880**

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**CHAPTER FOUR
Theology, Ideology, and Evangelism**

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Introduction

The nine pioneer members of the Laos Mission took with them to Chiang Mai a number of advantages that should have stood them in good stead as they sought to communicate the Christian message to the people of northern Siam. By 1867, Protestant missionaries had accumulated nearly forty years of experience in Siam. They knew the language, the religion, and the culture of the people, and while northern Siam differed from Bangkok in all these respects, it was not *that* different. The missionaries themselves were well educated and highly motivated, had supplies of modern medicines, and the good will—initially—of the Chiang Mai government. They also had the interest and respect of the general populace and the support of the Bangkok government.[1] In spite of these advantages and its later success as an agent of Westernization, the Laos Mission apparently failed to take advantage of its favorable position, particularly in the field of evangelism.[2] As we have seen, later generations of missionaries, church leaders, and scholars have tried to explain that failure in various ways. Contemporary historiographical approaches, as we have also seen, direct our attention to the deeper sources of behavior found in the system of doctrines and meanings that the early members of the mission also took with them to northern Siam, a system that both paralleled and had direct links to the Princeton Theology. When one turns to the history of the Laos Mission between 1867 and 1880, it becomes apparent that three facets of the mission's work provide the clearest evidence of the role of theology and ideology in that work. Those three facets include the mission's evangelistic efforts, relations with the northern Thai church and society, and program of education. We begin here with evangelism and leave education and ecclesiastical relations for the following chapters.

Baconian Evangelism

Introduction

During their first months in Chiang Mai in 1867, the McGilvary family lived under appalling conditions, crowded into a public “sala,” a porch-like building, located on a main thoroughfare leading into the city. They had little privacy and few amenities. Their personal goods stood stacked and piled about, and they had to contend with constant crowds of people who came to watch them and talk to them. For all of its inconveniences, however, the McGilvarys did not regret their situation because it gave them a multitude of opportunities to teach people about the Christian faith. They guided every conversation towards that end, and, strange as it may seem to later generations, they found that teaching the rudiments of Western science to their auditors frequently offered them the best avenue for introducing their religious message. McGilvary later remembered that in those earliest days, “We could often, if not usually, better teach religion—or, at least, could better lead up to it—by teaching geography or astronomy. A little globe that I had brought along was often my text.”[3]

Unless we have an understanding of the McGilvarys' theological heritage, using a globe and discussing science with the good citizens of Chiang Mai would appear to be a rather curious way to approach them with the Christian message. Daniel's professors at Princeton, however, would have approved and seen his use of scientific knowledge for evangelistic purposes as a practical application of Archibald Alexander's claims that, “The internal evidence of revelation is analogous to the evidence of the being and perfections of God from the works of creation...” and that, “there is in the structure of the world, the most convincing evidence of the existence of an all-wise and all-powerful Being.”[4] McGilvary apparently accepted the Princeton view that there is a clear relationship between the natural sciences and a saving, rational faith, believing that if he could convince the people of the truth of science they would themselves see that the truths of science lead up to and confirm the greater truth of Christianity.[5] The initial progress of their scientific and cosmological dialogue with the people of Chiang Mai encouraged the McGilvarys with its potential for spreading the Christian message, especially after one of their partners in those discussions found their arguments from scientific to religious truth challenging and, ultimately, persuasive. His name was Nan Inta, the first—and as far as we know, the only—convert the Laos Mission ever obtained directly through the application of “Baconian evangelism,” that is, by using science information and theories to validate the truth of the Christian religion.

***Nan Inta* [6]**

Among the great number of people who visited the McGilvary family in their first weeks in Chiang Mai, McGilvary recalled most clearly Nan Inta, a tall, handsome, thoughtful looking man, who called on them ostensibly to obtain medicine for a severe cough. He actually came more out of curiosity about their strange religious message than anything else. He was roughly forty-nine years old, had seven children, and had been an abbot at one time; people knew him to be a devoutly religious individual with a studious, logical, active mind and a personality that McGilvary described as honest, frank, and sincere. After his first visit, Nan Inta began to drop by frequently and to read manuscript copies of the few tracts that the missionaries had translated into northern Thai. Although he had ceased to find his own religion satisfying, he also found it difficult to accept the patently alien religious message of the missionaries. McGilvary reports, “We had some arguments, also, on the science of geography, on the shape of the earth, on the nature of eclipses, and the like. What he heard was as foreign to all his preconceived ideas as was the doctrine of salvation from sin by the death of Christ.”[7] Over the course of this debate, Nan Inta grew increasingly intrigued by the plausibility of the biblical account of the creation of the world as well as the Christian “plan of salvation,” but he could not decide how true they were. McGilvary, meanwhile, continued to argue that Christianity provided a better understanding of the physical world, under the assumption that if he could prove that point Nan Inta would accept the religious truth of Christianity as well.

Having failed to bring Nan Inta to a definite decision concerning the truth of Western religion and science, McGilvary employed a new tactic in place of debating cosmology. He knew from his almanacs that Siam would experience a solar eclipse on 18 August 1868, and about a week before the event, he informed Nan Inta of the coming eclipse. McGilvary wrote that Nan Inta later stated his feelings about this prediction as follows,

His sacred books had taught him that it [the eclipse] is occasioned by a huge monster devouring the sun. Of course therefore such a thing as predicting before-hand the day and the hour is impossible. We accounted for it on natural principles, and as an evidence of their correctness told beforehand the very hour of its occurrence...It seemed to him a bold venture in us as if we were staking all on a single event, and were willing to rest the falsity of Buddhism on the issue.[8]

Nan Inta agreed that a correct prediction would disprove his former beliefs about the nature of the world because McGilvary could not possibly predict when a huge monster would devour the sun. He also allowed that a correct prediction of the solar eclipse would suggest that he had been misled in religious as well as scientific matters.

McGilvary's correct prediction threw Nan Inta into an even deeper quandary, facing him with the probability that his whole worldview, including his religious faith, was wrong. McGilvary claimed that Nan Inta faced "a sea of uncertainty," because his trust in his own merit and the foundation of his religious faith had shown themselves built not on rock but on "the drifting sand." Nan Inta then had to deal with the question of whether or not he should accept the Christian message and diligently set himself the task of finding an answer to that question.[9] He studied all of the literature the missionaries could provide him and learned to read central Thai so he could study the Bible and other literature the Siam Mission had produced in that script. McGilvary observes,

He soon gave evidence that he sought by prayer to be guided into the knowledge of the truth. Having need of a teacher and writer I employed him in that capacity, with the design in part, of having him under our immediate instruction. He accompanied me on a tour to Lampon, the 1st of November. This gave us more opportunities of conversation, than we had even at home. During that tour he expressed his full conviction on the truth of Christianity.[10]

Nan Inta received baptism in January 1869 and in later years proved to be the most important northern Thai leader of the church up until his death in 1882.

McGilvary, of course, expressed his personal sense of joy with Nan Inta's conversion, writing, "Well may we exclaim, What hath God wrought! It is well calculated to inspire us with faith in God's promises that he can and will gather in his own chosen ones." [11] It was not so much, however, the simple fact of that conversion that impressed McGilvary as the role his cosmological arguments, capped by the prediction of the eclipse, played in Nan Inta's decision. McGilvary wrote of Nan Inta,

The explanation of it [the eclipse] seemed to him so natural and beautiful and rational compared with what their books teach, that it led him to a clear and firm foothold on which he feels and knows that he is safe. And now almost daily he uses the same argument to his countrymen. He feels in reference to it as you do when you have been deceived once by an individual, that you cannot be caught again. So Nan Inta argues, Buddh has lied there I know. How can I believe him in more important matters? If he has deceived me when he teaches me that an eclipse is caused by a huge monster devouring the sun—how can I trust him when he tells me that the worship of his image will save me? When I come to think of it, the one is as

ridiculous and as absurd as the other.[12]

Whether or not these sentiments faithfully summarize Nan Inta's own interpretation, they do accurately reflect the Baconian message McGilvary delivered to him, a message that precisely paralleled Princeton's systems of theology and meaning. McGilvary challenged Nan Inta with a dualistic choice between what he presented as the unconditional, a-historical, and enlightened truth of Christianity as over against the false superstitions of the northern Thai, such as the belief in sun-eating monsters.[13] In the process, he exhibited a Baconian faith in the truth of science and its value as a “handmaiden” to Christian faith, particularly relying on Newtonian principles to demonstrate the rational nature of both science and faith. The whole process was a mental one based on McGilvary's favorable impression of Nan Inta's intellectual qualities and on a fundamental, Enlightenment trust in human cognition. He, more specifically, argued with Nan Inta on epistemological grounds that further demonstrated McGilvary's quiet confidence in the human intellect to discern the truth and make rational, methodical choices based on a careful weighing of evidence. He was as much a Reformed scholastic as he was an enlightened Baconian, bent on laying before Nan Inta a set of irrefutable principles in a patently apologetical mode. McGilvary called Nan Inta to faith by calling on him to understand the nature of the Newtonian universe and its implications for his traditional cosmology and religious beliefs. He did not begin with Scripture, but with a little globe, and only brought Nan Inta to the study of the Bible after he had scored substantial debating points in the cosmological arena.

Implicit in not only the method of his delivery of the Christian message to Nan Inta but also in McGilvary's attitude was the dualistic assumption that the transfer of knowledge should go in only one direction. He believed that he knew and preached the one, universal, and objective truth that leads to salvation, and it surely never entered his mind that Nan Inta's perception of reality had anything positive to teach him. “The Buddh,” after all, had “lied” to Nan Inta about the nature of the physical world, a “fact” that threw into serious doubt the whole belief system of northern Siam. In that sense, McGilvary lived in a doubly Newtonian world in which both physical and religious reality could be understood and events in each predicted. Equally to the point, he equated the activity of God with the fact that he persuaded Nan Inta to change his religious allegiance and affiliation. What, he asked in wonder and astonishment, had God wrought? In seeking to understand why the pioneer members of the Laos Mission introduced an apparently alien religious message to the people of northern Siam without attempting to adapt the message to the audience, this point requires emphasis. Daniel McGilvary did not seek to enter into a dialogue with Nan Inta, and all of his discussions with Nan Inta involved a one-way transfer of data that Nan Inta eventually found compelling. Newton the Scientist and Paul the Apostle were both right. The Buddha and northern Thai cosmology were both wrong, and the only way one could become a Christian was to cross over the sharply defined boundary between northern Thai cosmology and religion on the one hand and the Newtonian-Pauline-Augustinian system of doctrines and meanings on the other.

McGilvary made the necessity of cleanly stepping across that border between faiths and cosmologies abundantly clear when Nan Inta sought to avoid making a public declaration of his faith, arguing that he would have more success in bringing others to Christianity if he did not have to openly reject Buddhism. Among other things, he did not want to give up the advantages and special privileges that pertained to being a former abbot. McGilvary rejected his suggestion out of hand and later wrote, “But the assurance that duty was his—consequences God's—that he was able to take care of his own cause, decided him early in December to delay no longer.”[14] We will find in later chapters that McGilvary's unwillingness to allow Nan Inta and the other early converts the choice of remaining private believers was a momentous decision for the early history of the Laos Mission and its embryonic northern Thai Christian community. For the moment, it is important because it reaffirmed the radically dualistic, rigidly closed system of

meanings and doctrines that shaped McGilvary's practice of missions.

In this mix of doctrine and ideology, Nan Inta eventually achieved what can only be called an evangelical conversion experience, albeit one laid on the foundation of many hours of intellectual struggle with a new worldview. McGilvary remembers,

While the truth dawned gradually on his mind, the full vision seemed to be sudden. His own account was that afterwards when walking in the fields and pondering the subject, it all became very plain to him. His doubts all vanished. Henceforth for him to live was Christ; and he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Him.[15]

Nan Inta knew the truth. He had no doubts. He had become a man of faith, a conservative evangelical cast in the same mold as McGilvary himself, or so McGilvary leads us to believe. McGilvary alluded to his own Reformed heritage once again by observing, as we saw above, that Nan Inta's conversion demonstrated that he was one of God's chosen people.

Nan Inta was the Laos Mission's first baptized convert, and his conversion marked an important step forward in the mission's history, ranking second in importance only to the founding of the mission itself. More immediately, it confirmed for McGilvary that his Baconian approach to evangelizing the northern Thai was a useful, correct one. Where the Presbyterian Siam Mission required some nineteen years to gain its first Thai convert, the Laos Mission achieved that same end in less than two years.[16] McGilvary had every reason, thus, to continue to use scientific information to convince northern Thais that they should convert to Christianity.

After Nan Inta

Nan Inta's conversion validated McGilvary's commitment to Baconian evangelism as a key model for the evangelization of the northern Thai. For his own part, as we saw above, Nan Inta immediately began to use McGilvary's Baconian, scholastic arguments on other northern Thai, suggesting that he had accepted missionary theology and ideology as his own. He found McGilvary's explanation of the eclipse "so natural and beautiful and rational" in comparison to his former religious beliefs that it convinced him to convert to Christianity and to try to convince others to take the same step. McGilvary also began to use the lesson of the eclipse and in after years kept a close eye on his almanac, announcing the approach of every eclipse in the hope of winning others to the Christian faith.[17] Eventually, he ceased his attempts to reach the northern Thai through the direct presentation of scientific data for the simple reason that no other northern Thai ever followed in Nan Inta's footsteps. It took several years, however, for McGilvary to drop Baconian evangelism, and in the years after 1869 he turned to it on a significant number of occasions, leaving the impression that he maintained an important cosmological "dialogue" with several members of the northern Thai educated elite.

Although Nan Inta's conversion was his only successful application of Baconian evangelism, McGilvary did come close to gaining a convert through scientific arguments in at least one other instance. In 1872, he and Dr. Vrooman made an extensive tour that included Nan, another of Bangkok's dependencies in the North. There he renewed his friendship with Chao Borirak, a member of Nan's ruling elite who McGilvary had come to know in Chiang Mai and who had an active interest in cosmological and religious topics. In the course of this visit, McGilvary had opportunity to predict a lunar eclipse, and he managed to impress Chao Borirak both with the event itself and with Western scientific ideas. The following year McGilvary returned to Nan with the specific aim of continuing his discussions with Chao Borirak. He later claimed that his friend, "...seems to be fully convinced of the truth of our system of geography and astronomy, and has but little doubt as to the truth of Christianity." [18] McGilvary realized that this high official's conversion would greatly facilitate the founding of a mission station in

Nan, but, as McGilvary wrote years later, “Our walks by day and our talks by night are never to be forgotten. But the convenient season to make a public profession never came. He lived in hope of seeing a station in Nan, but died not long before the station was established.”^[19] The tantalizing possibility of Chao Borirak's accepting the Christian faith, however, evidently further reinforced McGilvary's commitment to Baconian evangelism during the 1870s.

Some three years later, in February 1876, McGilvary once again took up his Baconian cudgel by entering into an extended debate with a prominent northern Thai individual he described as being “zealous in merit-making.” McGilvary discussed with him, among other topics, “the sphericity and rotary motion of the earth on its axis.” He particularly emphasized the fact that the North Star remains stationary in the night sky while other stars revolve around it, a fact that he argued was, “utterly inconsistent with Buddhistic teaching on the subject of geography and astronomy.” He reported that the man stayed up all night one night to verify for himself the truth of McGilvary's astronomical views and that, as a consequence, “He was evidently much struck with the fact and explanation given of it, and also of the explanation given by means of a small globe and lamp of the phases of the moon.” Although McGilvary won his point, he failed to persuade his partner in these scientific debates to convert, and he could only remind his readers (and himself), after the fashion of Princeton, that the Holy Spirit alone can lead people to know the truth and enable them to embrace it.^[20] The following May found McGilvary arguing geography and astronomy with a “high prince,” a man of great intelligence and broad-mindedness. This prince resolutely defended the existence of Mt. Meru, which his religion taught him stood at the center of the earth, reached a height of 42,000 miles, and was the pillar that held up the heavens. On this occasion, McGilvary loaned the prince a small sea glass that he had brought with him in 1867, and eventually the prince concluded for himself that the skies are not constructed as he had been taught to believe. McGilvary recorded that, “He has finally given in that Buddh, or more probably his disciples, must be wrong in their report of his teachings.” ^[21]

McGilvary clearly invested a considerable amount of time in these debates, apparently under the assumption also made by a number of members of the Siam Mission, located in central Siam, that the introduction of Western thought and technology would necessarily result in the destruction of Thai Buddhism. The Rev. James W. Van Dyke of the Siam Mission's Phet Buri Station noted in 1874 that Siam was experiencing an increase in “wickedness” that he attributed to an increase in the “spirit of inquiry” that “has lead people to distrust their own religion while they have not as yet accepted that which is taught by the servants of Christ.” Van Dyke looked for a time in the near future when the people would accept Christianity in place of their superstitions.^[22] The Rev. John N. Culbertson, working in Bangkok, agreed. He believed that Westernization had a negative influence on the people's perception of the Buddhist Scriptures because those Scriptures were being proven false and their authority undermined. Making his own Baconian, scholastic leap from reason to reverence, he concluded, “When Buddhism ceases to command [the] confidence of sober reason, it must th[en] cease to inspire reverence and faith.” Intelligent individuals could not, he felt, continue to put their confidence in a religious system that science proved to be false in so many of its particulars.^[23] The people of Siam, however, did not accept Culbertson and Van Dyke's logic, primarily because they were not Reformed scholastics who put such great store in the links between doctrine, knowledge, science, and religion.

The Chiang Mai prince mentioned above had already begun to adjust his views of Buddhist Scriptures by claiming that errors had been made in the transmission of some of the Buddha's teachings. That “fact” did not seem to undermine his faith, in spite of the inconsistencies between northern Thai Buddhism and Western science. McGilvary, like his counter-parts in the Siam Mission, only gradually came to realize that winning cosmological

arguments with members of the educated elite did not mean that they or the general populace would feel compelled to reject Buddhism and convert to Christianity. He himself tells the story of one man who came to Chiang Mai to take part in a public works project and seriously considered converting to Christianity. Not long after he returned home, however, he declared that he had decided he would never worship Jesus and would be saved or lost with his own people. McGilvary stated, “Some, of course, have real doubts as to the entire falsity of Buddhism—some hold back to see if the authorities will make any opposition—while others cannot storm the opposition of their own families.”^[24] Which is to say that those northern Thais, not a great number in any event, who felt compelled to make a decision about conversion, did so on the basis of political, personal, and other factors unrelated to Baconian evangelism; the assumption that a successful cosmological attack on traditional religion would result in conversions did not bear out in practice.

The failure of Baconian evangelism as a specific evangelistic strategy suggests that the whole of the Laos Mission's crusade to win the minds and hearts of the northern Thai faced inherent difficulties, for even where McGilvary did not preach Baconianism openly, his theological and ideological assumptions encouraged him to pursue a generally scholastic strategy modeled on Baconian evangelism. His autobiography provides a detailed case in point. As he tells the story, McGilvary visited the Prince of Chiang Mai's palace on New Year's Day 1877, to pay his respects, and he found Princess (*chao mae*) Tip Keson, the Prince of Chiang Mai's wife and a friend and supporter of the Laos Mission, in an unusually pensive mood. Normally she vigorously entered into extended debates with him over points of philosophy and religion, and McGilvary called her an enjoyable antagonist, a person with a sharp, quick mind. On this day, however, she dropped the adversarial guise and asked McGilvary straight out why the missionaries rejected Buddhism. In response, he embarked on a long theological monologue, the record of which comprises as complete a statement of his theology as can be found in any one place in his writings. The core of his argument remained dualistic, a contrast between Buddha, the man who failed to provide an adequate solution to the dilemma of human sin, and Jesus, the divine-man and self-existent First Cause of all that is. McGilvary appealed to the Princess as a rational person, avowing that the missionaries came as seekers of the truth. He strongly affirmed Jehovah as Creator and sovereign Lord, and employed rational arguments to affirm that the orderliness and complexity of the natural world gives clear evidence of the creative Mind behind it. He presented her with Princeton's idea that humanity shares in God's divine attributes, if only on a mundane plane. He expounded on the doctrines of original sin, Christ's forensic sacrifice on the cross to pay for human sins, free grace, and eternal salvation. Chao Mae Tip Keson mostly listened^[25] Although McGilvary did not explicitly mention Baconian science or draw on the analogy between science and religion, his evangelistic strategy with her remained the same. He appealed to the mind with an objective, reasonable, and commonsense truth. He emphasized doctrines. Where his auditors might concede the validity of some or all of his views, he reciprocated only in the most superficial way with generalities about the good intentions of the Buddha. McGilvary confronted the Princess with a Reformed Enlightenment message devoid of any considerations of the northern Thai context or how one might shape the message to fit the audience.

In this case, the Princess admitted for the first time that his message contained considerable truth, and McGilvary added her name to a long list of those who accepted his doctrines but never found it convenient to convert. Of them he could only write, "the Lord knoweth them that are His."^[26] The actual course of events proved that the northern Thai were not going to be won for Christ through the study of the stars, debates over the existence of Mt. Meru, or presentations of Reformed theology in an Enlightenment mode.

Conclusion

In November 1874, the McGilvary family visited Japan on their way home to the United States, and in a brief article published in the *North Carolina Presbyterian*, Daniel remarked in passing that, "Here is a field where Christianity and science —twin sisters —or the mother and the daughter are both in demand." [27] His casual comment not only shows how he viewed the relationship between faith and science as one in which faith is the superior, but also it reveals once again how closely he allied these two branches of knowledge, entirely in keeping as we have seen with Princeton's own deep interest in science. The historical record, however, contains no evidence that the people of northern Siam found his cosmological arguments for religious change on the basis of scientific information a persuasive one, excepting only Nan Inta. In his autobiography, McGilvary relates an amusing incident that took place in 1872 in Phrae, another of the major cities of the North and the next stop after his visit to Nan, mentioned above. In Nan, we will remember, he predicted a lunar eclipse; the eclipse actually took place while he was in Phrae, and he announced the fact of its coming with the expectation that he would impress the people of that city with the superiority of Christian scientific knowledge. Normally, the northern Thai reacted to eclipses with a great commotion of noise making intended to scare off the monster that was eating the sun or moon. This time, however, the people of Phrae apparently assumed that this particular eclipse belonged to McGilvary, and the city remained completely, comfortably silent. [28] Its citizens utterly failed to make the connection between science and religion that was so important to McGilvary, and they readily adjusted their understanding of the eclipse without giving up their traditional ways of thinking and believing. We can only assume that incidents like these led McGilvary to quietly discard the Baconian approach to evangelism in later years, after having invested considerable attention to it in during the mission's pioneer era.

So far as can be told from the records of the Laos Mission, only McGilvary among the pioneer members of the mission consciously employed Baconian evangelism to reach the people of northern Siam with the Christian message. The fact that most of the mission's evangelistic work fell to him, however, lent his use of that strategy a crucial significance to the early life of the mission. McGilvary's Baconian evangelistic strategy, moreover, reflected a more basic mindset linked to a combination of doctrinal and ideological themes drawn from Reformed confessionalism, the Enlightenment, and evangelical piety. McGilvary's Baconian strategy for the evangelization of the northern Thai, in other words, influenced his more general orientation to the conduct of evangelism. He inclined to the presentation of objective information delivered in the course of intellectual debate based on the dualistic assumption that Western learning and religion were God's truth in opposition to northern Thai superstitions and ignorance. These same themes, in sum, appeared in other guises as elements of the Laos Mission's efforts to evangelize the northern Thai, most especially in its use of Western medicine.

Baconian Medicine

Introduction

From the very inception of the Laos Mission, medicine played a key role in attracting people to the missionaries. Where the general populace seemed little enough interested in the mission's imported cosmology, the people did show a desire for missionary medicine and its apparently miraculous cures of a variety of diseases, some quite deadly. When conducted under the direction of a Wilson or a McGilvary, however, Western medicines and medical procedures amounted to nothing less than Baconian evangelism in another guise. The mission believed that Western medicine functioned as a carrier of their epistemology and, when properly understood by the people, destroyed their confidence in their superstitious beliefs and practices. The mission used Western medicine in two ways. First, it relied on medicine as a theoretical way to establish the truth of the Baconian, scientific worldview in opposition to tradition northern Thai cosmology. Second, it utilized medical care as a practical way for gaining the sympathy and trust of the people, to the end that they would convert to Christianity.

The Theory

From June through August 1869, the North Carolina Presbyterian published a series of articles by McGilvary that shared the general title of "Medical Missions and Missionary Physicians." In these articles, McGilvary presents in carefully thought out steps his rationale for the employment of missionary medicine as a key element in the practice of foreign missions. The articles also provide important witness to McGilvary's commitment to Common Sense Philosophy and Baconianism and represent a remarkable exercise in the inductive method of enlightened common sense reasoning.[29]

In article No. I, McGilvary lays down two key foundational principles upon which his argument and conclusions proceeds, that is, first, that missionary work is "the great work of the church" and was commanded by Jesus and, second, that as faith is necessary to salvation, so knowledge is necessary to faith. He then works through a carefully reasoned examination of key biblical passages that provide "warrant" for these principles. In articles No. II and No. III, he surveys a significant amount of primary data, often quoting directly and at length, from sources in Siam, Burma, China, and India that demonstrate the validity of the biblical passages concerning the use of medicine for evangelism as borne out in the actual experience of missionaries on the field. When viewed together, the line of argument in these first three articles adheres strictly to a Baconian inductive approach in which McGilvary begins with biblical principles, presents a mass of detailed data, engages in a minute, patient examination of the facts, and establishes the truth and meaning of the general principle those facts prove. It is a process of reasoning, as we have seen, that the Princetonians advocated and that Hodge considered God's way for leading humanity "along the paths of knowledge." [30] The three articles, at the same time, reflect that same mix of other themes and traditions, which, along with Scottish Realism and Baconianism, is a "marker" of the Princeton Theology. McGilvary's emphasis on knowledge as the precondition to faith and salvation places him firmly in the mainstream of Princeton's Reformed confessional heritage. His concern for strengthening the missionary movement itself stood entirely in line with Princeton and with American evangelicalism's abiding concern to save souls.

In the fourth article in the series, No. IV, McGilvary extends his line of argument to include the common sense of all of humanity. He states, "What is thus supported by Scriptural illustrations and divine example and the acknowledged influence that the healing art and medical missions have exerted in all countries where the experiment has been made, is found in accord with the common ideas of most nations." We have already noted in Chapter Three the Princeton circle's habit, drawn from Common Sense Philosophy, of substantiating its debating points by citing the commonsense beliefs of one or another "majority." McGilvary employs this same tactic in article No. IV. Following the standard approach of the Princeton apologetical method, he then goes on to assert as common sense the fact that the healing arts are invariably associated with religion and priesthoods—among "rude peoples" as well as civilized nations. He claims that "there is a natural congruity between the two professions" of doctor and priest. McGilvary reaches, with that claim, a pivotal point in his whole line of reasoning, for it is on the assumption of that "natural congruity" that he claims that doctors and priests carry out analogous roles, the one ministering to the body and the other to the soul. McGilvary believes that this analogy provides a "window of opportunity" for reaching people, through the use of medicine, who are uninterested in their own spiritual needs. He asks, rhetorically, "Need we be surprised that one who has tested the superiority of our bodily remedies should listen with deeper attention to the remedy of the soul?" This last point from article No. IV requires emphasis. It indicates that McGilvary used medicine to reach the northern Thai with his evangelistic message in the same way that he used astronomy. Each provided him with a body of scientific knowledge that he could use to break down northern Thai resistance to his understanding of the truth and the Christian religion. In that sense, McGilvary's explanation of the facts of the heavens to the

intellectual elite and his medicating the general populace with quinine constituted one activity, not two. Article No. IV then moves McGilvary's argument a step closer to his goal of proving the worth of medical missions by observing that no missionary agency is so likely to touch the human heart as missionary medicine, for medical missions reach out to help people at their hour of greatest suffering. People find it hard to resist the kindness shown them at such times of need. Citing the example of Jesus, McGilvary states in article No. IV that,

The great characteristics of human nature are the same the world over. And the means that were seen adapted to reach the heart of the Jews of our Saviour's time will be equally available wherever the sons and daughters of suffering and sorrow are found. And these are the inevitable concomitants of man, as man, in his present state.

The ideas of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy abound in this brief statement: Human nature is one. What worked in the past will work just as well today. Human nature is necessarily what it is. It can be nothing else. McGilvary shared with his mentors at Princeton that same mixed perception of history that demonstrated a sensitivity to the events of the past and the passage of time and, yet, asserted a oneness of all time and places that allowed them to hurdle across the ages without having to change their doctrines, values, attitudes, strategies, or actions since What Was, in essence, Still Is. McGilvary, in this particular case, advocates the general use of missionary medicine because medicine reaches the human heart absolutely, in all times and contexts.

In the midst of all of these Baconian, common sense arguments in article No. IV, McGilvary drops back into a Reformed theological mode long enough to assert the importance of a Calvinistic worldview for missionaries working on the field. Calvinism, he claims, helps them to see and understand the "moral desolation" found in "heathen" lands and to see how that moral desolation confirms the doctrine of total depravity. The grand Calvinistic doctrines of divine sovereignty, covenantal theology, and the assurance that God sees and is satisfied by the travail of the missionary soul, also help to sustain the missionary in times of distress or discouragement. We should note yet again how large a role cognition, information, and knowledge played in McGilvary's own missionary life as he found solace in the great doctrines of Reformed confessionalism. In a sense, these Reformed theological sentiments feel almost out of place in amongst all of the Scottish philosophy that McGilvary otherwise applied to his evangelistic task, but it seems clear that they provided him with a set of ideas and principles that gave meaning to all of his work. They helped him to define himself, his northern Thai audience, and the relationship between them.

Scholars of the Princeton Theology have applied a number of images to try to make sense out of the relationship between Reformed confessionalism and Enlightenment philosophy. Loetscher gives pride of place to Reformed theology and views eighteenth-century Common Sense Philosophy as a "graft" on the stock of seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy. Kennedy argues that the Princetonians used common sense thought as an apologetical tool for defending their Reformed confessionalism. Vander Stelt claims that, "Princeton conservatism entered into a courting relationship with 'a moderate form of Enlightenment rationalism,' and this courtship has continued to be evident in the development and problems of nineteenth-century Presbyterianism..." Stewart envisages Princeton's Reformed heritage as being "tethered to common sense philosophy." [31] To one degree or another, all of these images assume the primacy of Reformed confessionalism, and most of them imply that the result of Princeton's use of Common Sense Philosophy was problematic. Ahlstrom's groundbreaking article on the impact of Common Sense Philosophy on American Presbyterian theology set the tone for many that have followed him. In his article, Ahlstrom claims that Scottish realism rendered the doctrines of conservative American Calvinism static, lifeless, and drove out the "fervent theocentricity of Calvin." [32] If McGilvary's articles on missionary medicine are any measure, however, the

Reformed and Enlightenment strands of his thinking were more seamless and organic as well as less troubled with the scholarly desire to "make sense" of the relationship between them. It was as if he looked out on reality with two eyes, to make use of a natural image of the type so beloved by Princeton. Although each eye had its distinct point of view, together they provided him with a single, coordinated prospect on the world—not quite enlightened, not quite Reformed, but a blend or a single image that seemed well focused to McGilvary.[33] Thus, in the midst of his commonsensical apologetics for missionary medicine he still affirmed the importance of his confessional heritage. It seemed "natural," "sensible," and "right" to do so.

McGilvary's next article, No. V, reveals precisely this two-eyed, coordinated perspective on the role of science, in general, and medicine, in particular, in missionary evangelism. In a key section of that article, he writes, "No one thinks for a moment that the church is out of her sphere when teaching science in connection with Christianity in Christian lands. They are in fact so intimately connected that they cannot be separated. They are both revelations of God, the one in His word, the other in His works." In "heathen lands," he continues, the teaching of science and Christianity must first overthrow the indigenous "gigantic systems of error" before they can lay down their own foundations. He states in article No. V,

And when we take into consideration that teaching the very first principles of geography and astronomy that matter has not existed from all eternity, and the true theory of the motions and revolutions of the heavenly bodies, the very foundation of Buddhism and other false systems is effectually undermined, who would advocate the rejection of these invaluable handmaidens of religion?

McGilvary concludes, "Some of the simplest truths of western science, when taught to the adult overthrow his system of idolatry, when to the young they can no longer embrace it." McGilvary then returns to his advocacy of missionary medicine, demonstrating how the use of Western medicine tends to undermine northern Thai superstitions about the causes of illness. His point: Western medical care proves conclusively that diseases have natural, not supernatural causes, and that the northern Thai have a wrong view of reality. Medical care made, that is, the same point as his little globe, the North Star, and predictable solar eclipses. With his Reformed eye, McGilvary saw the depravity and sin of the northern Thai, which his Enlightenment eye brought into even sharper focus as superstition. Meanwhile, with that Enlightenment eye he saw the possibilities of using science and medicine to attack that supposedly vast system of error, a vision aided by the Reformed confessional eye's inclination toward a reliance on human cognition.

Some might object that McGilvary's rationale for the practice of missionary medicine sounds utterly devoid of humanitarian concern. In the dark days after September 1869 and the persecution of the infant Chiang Mai Church when the Wilsons and McGilvarys lived in some fear for their lives, McGilvary gave his answer to that objection. Chao Kawilorot told the missionaries at that time that they could stay if they would "merely" practice medicine and refrain from teaching Christianity. McGilvary replied, "We were willing to do all we could for the bodies of the people and to advance their temporal interest. But still all the king's money would not have induced us to come here for any other purpose than to teach Christianity—that it is now and must always be our principle business here." [34] In his autobiography, McGilvary described with some apparent satisfaction the "temporal" value his lay practice of medicine had for the people of Chiang Mai, but from the very first when people asked the McGilvarys why they came they always answered, "We were come with messages of mercy and with offer of eternal life from the great God and Saviour. We were come with a revelation of our Heavenly Father to His wandering and lost children." [35] McGilvary valued the humanitarian healing provided by missionary medicine, but he placed his first concern with the soul rather than the body. In this as in so many other ways, McGilvary's theological and ideological orientation heavily influenced his understanding of his work, defining medicine thus as a tool for undermining northern Thai

"superstition" as well as the means for reaching the people's hearts.

Other members of the mission shared McGilvary's proclivity for Baconian medicine to such an extent that it constituted the semi-official policy of the Laos Mission itself, rather than the private inclination of just one member. In the period leading up to the arrival of Dr. Vrooman, Wilson anticipated that long-awaited event with the thought that Vrooman's work would challenge, "the muttering of charms and the incantations of the spirit-doctors' means of cure." He too, in another statement, linked Vrooman's medical work to evangelism, observing that, "Triumph will succeed triumph until victory shall be complete on the side of the Christian physician." Medicine proved the superiority of Christianity, and Wilson triumphantly expected that Vrooman would open wide the doors of northern Siam to the Christian message through his practice of medicine.[36] Dr. Cheek gave particular heed to the relationship of Western medicine to science and how science and medicine stood in enmity with the vast superstructure of northern Thai superstition. He believed that the northern Thais' reasoning facilities had fallen under the power of an absurd, monstrous, and superstitious imagination, and he concluded that any scheme seeking to elevate and enlighten the northern Thai, or desiring their religious and intellectual regeneration, must necessarily include "efficient medical work." He claimed that the "rational treatment of diseases" represented the quickest way to overcome their superstitions.[37] Even the errant Dr. Vrooman appears to have caught something of the vision for Western medicine in Chiang Mai, if only momentarily. Upon his arrival, he wrote of his medical work that,

We hope that this department of our mission work will, in the future as in the past, be an avenue to the confidence and hearts of the people; and that by working together, we may become instrumental in the hands of God of establishing His kingdom in this land, and of turning a nation from the worship of evil spirits and dumb idols unto Him, whom to know is to love and adore.[38]

While lacking in the precise wording of scientific evangelism, Vrooman's sentiments still reflect the collective goal of the pioneer members of the Laos Mission to use medicine to the end that the northern Thai would take leave of their "superstitions" and accept a saving faith in the Christian religion.

When McGilvary wrote his series of articles on missionary medicine in early 1869, his family still resided in that tiny, cramped sala near a city gate, Nan Ina had just been converted, and the scenes and scents of "exotic" Chiang Mai surrounded him and dominated his waking hours. The people lived within a patron-client social structure rather than a society that (in theory) espoused democracy. They went to temples instead of churches, chanted the Dharma rather than sang Psalms. The very sights and smells of daily life were a far cry from McGilvary's native North Carolina. In that distant setting, nonetheless, he still took up pen and paper to lead his readers through a typical, even proto-typical operation of commonsense logic in defense of missionary medicine. The stark contrast between his articles and his social, cultural, and cognitive context suggests the breadth of the doctrinal and ideological chasm that separated him from the northern Thai, a distance made only wider by his assumption that the chasm did not even exist. In his view, Jesus' time and his, whether it was northern Siam or North Carolina, were essentially the same. Still, while the unvarnished practice of Baconian evangelism yielded up just one sure convert, Baconian medicine captured the attention of all levels of Chiang Mai's population and soon became the main avenue for gaining converts to the missionaries' new religion.

The Practice

The Laos Mission had the attention of the people of Chiang Mai, medically, from its earliest days. Nan Ina, we saw, first went to visit the McGilvays ostensibly for cough medicine. Noi Sunya, another convert, who himself practiced medicine in addition to tending a herd of Chao Kawilrot's cattle, went to see McGilvary the first time because he wanted a cure for goiter,

a swelling of the neck glands then common in Chiang Mai. He became a favorite of the McGilvays because he embraced the missionary message at his first encounter with it and agreed to cease all "idolatrous" practices immediately. He attended mission worship services faithfully, and by June 1869, it appeared that his whole family might also convert to Christianity.[39] Nan Chai, a friend and neighbor of Noi Sunya, went to see the McGilvays, not long after their arrival in Chiang Mai, seeking quinine. Thereafter, he proved himself a regular visitor who was soon employed by Wilson as a language teacher and scribe. Like Nan Inta, Nan Chai at first wanted to accept Christianity only secretly so that he could retain his social standing in his community. McGilvary and Wilson firmly pointed him also in the direction of his "duty," and he eventually made a public profession of his new faith.[40] At least two others among the first seven converts brought medical problems to the McGilvays, meaning that no less than five out of the first seven converts initially approached the missionaries for medical assistance.[41] From the first days of their arrival, furthermore, McGilvary devoted considerable time to medical activities, especially in vaccinating people for small pox and distributing simple drugs, most notably quinine. The commitment to medical missions that he articulated in his series of articles in the *North Carolina Presbyterian* reflected his own personal experience at least as much as any body of missiological theory.[42]

When Dr. Vrooman reached Chiang Mai in January 1872, Wilson and McGilvary hoped that he would significantly improve the efficiency of the medical outreach of the Laos Mission in fulfilling their vision for missionary medicine in northern Siam, and Vrooman's initial success seemed to prove the wisdom of pushing medicine into the forefront of the mission's work. He was literally called from the mission boat landing on his arrival to treat Nan Inta, who was suffering from acute dysentery and appeared close to death. Vrooman's timely arrival saved his life. After a few Western-style surgical operations, the first ever performed in Chiang Mai, Vrooman found himself with a wide reputation. The mission also erected its first "hospital" for him, a makeshift, temporary affair of bamboo huts built by the families of the patients themselves and located in the McGilvary compound. By April 1872, those families had constructed eight such huts.[43]

Things did not, however, work out well for Vrooman. His workload was heavy. He felt unable to meet all the demands for his services. He worked day after day, and there was frequently a crowd of people waiting at his door. By April, the pressure and the heat had markedly weakened him. In an attempt to regain his health, he joined McGilvary on the Laos Mission's first long exploration tour, but his health did not improve to any degree. After returning to Chiang Mai briefly, he took another trip, this time down to Bangkok. His health, again, did not improve. By November 1872, discouragement set in. Vrooman felt keenly the lack of a proper hospital, of facilities and equipment for surgery, and his own language limitations. He expressed a desire to be transferred to Japan, then decided to resign, and finally left Chiang Mai for the United States in June 1873, feeling soured not only on the prospects for medical practice in northern Siam but also on the future of the Laos Mission itself.[44] The disillusionment, as we have already seen, was mutual. McGilvary charged that Vrooman failed because he did not base himself thoroughly on the orthodox foundation of Charles Hodge's theology. Vrooman made a bad impression on others as well, including the influential Dr. House in Bangkok, who openly considered Vrooman his enemy and whose opposition contributed to Vrooman's leaving.[45]

Vrooman left discouraged, feeling that professional medicine had little immediate prospect in Chiang Mai. Much to Wilson and McGilvary's embarrassment, he did not hesitate to share his views with the Board, and McGilvary felt constrained to assure the Board that, in spite of his short stay, Vrooman's work proved the need for a doctor. McGilvary avowed, "I regard the success of the experiment as truly wonderful. I still believe that there is no mission connected with the Board where a physician of the right kind can exert so much influence for good as among the Laos." Vrooman, McGilvary argued, had simply not been the right kind of missionary

doctor to take advantage of the situation in Chiang Mai.[46] Apparently a wide ideological rift lay between the professional, formerly Methodist doctor and the professional, profoundly Old School evangelist, the one saying Chiang Mai held no hope for Western medicine and the other claiming a bright prospect for its practice among the northern Thai. We will find, shortly, that Dr. Cheek eventually shared several of Vrooman's concerns and similarly lost much of his enthusiasm for practicing medicine in Chiang Mai. McGilvary, on the other hand, remained a stout believer in missionary medicine throughout his missionary career. His confidence in the importance of *Baconian* medicine, as we have seen, was based on his Reformed confessional and Enlightenment understanding of the role of knowledge in salvation and the importance of an objective presentation of the one truth, universal and timeless.

The case of Noi Choi, who received baptism in December 1872, suggests the ultimate seriousness with which McGilvary and Wilson took the question of medicine and how fully they applied their system of doctrines and meanings to its use. Wilson tells the story. In June 1874, he felt compelled to suspend Noi Choi from communion for "complicity in spirit worship" because Noi Choi had allowed a spirit doctor onto the mission compound to care for his sick grandchild, who was visiting him. Wilson tells how he demanded that they leave after he caught them making spirit offerings and using holy water. When the spirit doctor tried to argue with Wilson and tell him Wilson misunderstood what was happening, Wilson took the blessed water and threw it out the window. Noi Choi also tried to explain that the rite did not involve spirit propitiation, but Wilson refused to listen to his reasoning as well, especially because he felt that Noi Choi had become indifferent to Christianity and suspected that he had converted only to get the missionaries to pay off his debts.[47] In his account of this event, Wilson makes it clear that Noi Choi had undergone a great deal of personal suffering both before and after his conversion. He had been accused of causing demon possessions. Several of his children had become debt-slaves to a local member of the governing class. Other members of his family had also been accused of causing demon possession and driven from their homes, only to have some of them die before he could clear them of the charges. Knowing all of this, however, did not influence Wilson's angry, physical response to Noi Choi's action, because, in his view, Noi Choi had crossed back across the boundary between Christianity and traditional northern Thai religion. He could not hear Noi Choi's attempts to negotiate the placement of that boundary or that Noi Choi sincerely believed the rite he sponsored did not violate his allegiance to Christ. From Wilson's perspective, Noi Choi had turned against God and the truth by allowing a demon-worshipping spirit doctor into the mission compound. However much he might sympathize with Noi Choi, he could not let him get away with such actions—for Noi Choi's own sake as much as anything else. Wilson, in this instance, drew hard, clear boundaries between Christianity and culture for reasons he perceived to be of dire necessity. He did not intend to treat Noi Choi harshly. Noi Choi, on the other hand, tried to draw the boundaries between Christianity and northern Thai culture more loosely (or, at least, in a different place), while seeking to solve a serious problem with the cultural and medical resources at hand. Noi Choi did not believe he was renouncing his Christian faith, and, after his suspension, he applied for readmission to the church three times. The church accepted him back into membership in 1876.[48]

A person's system of doctrines and meanings powerfully focuses that person's attention. Wilson did not see in Noi Choi a grandfather concerned for his grandson's health. He did not see a ceremonial application of traditional northern Thai medicine that might have been unrelated to matters of religious faith. He did not see, that is, a possibly harmless situation that might have been dealt with circumspectly and even afforded him an opportunity for further instruction of a new Christian. What he *thought and believed* he saw left him with no latitude in his response. Equally to the point, he did not see these events as an opportunity to learn more about the cognitive and spiritual world of Noi Choi. He saw, rather, devil worship taking place on mission premises and dealt forcefully, immediately to halt it. However we might view the different

interpretations Wilson and Noi Choi each gave to the rites of traditional medicine, they betray a vital difference in their understanding of medical care itself. Noi Choi wanted to heal his grandson. His act had, for him, no essential relationship to Christian faith. Wilson, however, equated northern Thai medical practices with animism. Noi Choi's act was packed with theological and ideological meaning.

As an aside, Wilson's handling of Noi Choi testifies to the somewhat different way in which their systems of meanings and doctrines influenced McGilvary and Wilson. We have already seen, in Chapter Two, that McGilvary generally acted out of the moderate approach typical of several of the Princetonians, while Wilson seemed more prone to an emotional and sentimental attitude. At the risk of over-simplifying the matter, it does seem that McGilvary more consciously exemplified the Princeton Theology itself whereas Wilson more readily operated from the ideological substrata implied not only in Princeton but also in nineteenth-century American evangelical attitudes and values generally. As far as we know, McGilvary never acted harshly, abused northern Thai sensibilities so blatantly, or in any way behaved in a manner that could be labeled ungentlemanly. In this case, Wilson did behave harshly, abusively, and ungentlemanly, according to the customs of the northern Thai people.

In the years after Noi Choi's suspension from the church in May 1874, the Laos Mission continued to employ Baconian medical evangelism as one of its key strategies for winning northern Thai converts. In February 1875, it stood again on the verge of taking a major step forward in its medical program with the arrival in Chiang Mai of Dr. Cheek, its second professional physician. If his colleagues hoped for an immediate expansion of medical work, however, they were disappointed. Cheek's first year, 1875, repeated Vrooman's experience of 1872-1873. Cheek did perform some impressive operations and, in McGilvary's own words, "He has had a few very successful patients in the King's palace which will greatly aid his practice."^[49] Otherwise, however, he did little medical work, one reason being a lack of medicines to dispense.^[50] Cheek was not a Vrooman, however, and in spite of the problems he faced in taking up medical practice in Chiang Mai, he avowed in September 1875 that he expected to enjoy his work as a doctor. He had, by that time, also begun to articulate a vision for his work, one that included the construction of a hospital. In August 1875 he wrote to New York that,

I have been studying the language a part of the time; but I have not had an opportunity of doing any medical work since I came here. And, indeed the prospect in the future, I must say, is not cheering. Unless I have a hospital here, my medical work will be a failure. I may give out medicine to any who come for it and visit as many as I can; but this will do little good except to relieve suffering to a slight extent. I would be able to reach only a very few in this way. I could visit only a small number, and my practice would be very unsatisfactory both to the patient and myself. The people are scattered and few in number.

Cheek concluded, "A hospital is necessary if a medical man is expected to do enough work to justify keeping him here."^[51] He sounded just like Vrooman, and like Vrooman he had a very different attitude about the value of medical work from that of McGilvary and Wilson.

McGilvary seconded Cheek's desire for a hospital, nonetheless, but for quite different reasons. Where Cheek believed he could not be a successful doctor without a hospital, McGilvary felt much greater concern over the fact that when Cheek treated patients in their homes they also made use of animistic cures and, thus, did not give full and complete credit to missionary medicine for their recoveries. In a controlled institutional setting, the mission could prevent people from combining Western and indigenous medical treatments, a situation McGilvary much preferred because, as he wrote, the "One great object we expect to gain from medical missions

among the Laos is to break the superstitious belief in the power of charms and incantations."^[52] In the event, Cheek did establish a small, makeshift hospital composed again of grass huts, with evangelistic results that, to a degree, confirmed McGilvary's doctrinal and theological arguments for a medical institution. On the first Sunday of December 1876, for example, the church received four men into its membership, including Noi Wong, Nan Inta's son-in-law, and Noi Aliya, Nan Panya, and Lung (Uncle) Tooi. All four of these men had received treatment from Dr. Cheek at his bamboo hospital.^[53]

McGilvary's account of Nan Panya's conversion is especially helpful because it reflects both Nan Panya's feelings about his conversion and his neighbors' reactions to that conversion. Nan Panya had been a devout individual before his coming under Cheek's care, but, after his month in the hospital, he lost interest in his former religion. He stated, according to McGilvary, that his heart was no longer in the temple. McGilvary writes,

The villagers wondered what spell had come over him to keep him from the temple and his idols. There was a general mourning over his defection. That he should give up all his store of merit, the accumulation of a devotee of three score years and ten and become crazy over the notion of the foreign teachers was surely a sad comment on human fallibility from their stand point. He was the one man of the village of whom all of this would not have been expected.^[54]

During his long stay at Dr. Cheek's hospital, Nan Panya learned things and had experiences that encouraged him to become a Christian, to cross over, that is, the boundary between his former and his new religion. By taking the step of conversion, he acted according to the mission's ideological conception of the nature of truth, the exclusivity of Christianity, and the division of reality into antagonistic spheres of God and Satan, good and evil. His neighbors took a different view of the matter. His conversion surprised and dismayed them, and they considered him a fool, or worse for giving up all of the benefits of his own religion; it was foolish to become a Christian. His conversion, that is, alienated Nan Panya from his neighbors who took conversion to Christianity to be a negative, regrettable act, thereby divorcing the Christian religion from further consideration by them. Some may have changed their minds later, but generally people saw Christianity as an alien, competing, and regrettable religion—viewing it in much the same way that Chao Kawilorot had seen it less than a decade earlier.

If McGilvary's account is correct, it appears that both McGilvary himself and Nan Panya's neighbors fixed their attention on the same point, namely the fact that converts had to reject Buddhism and defect from their former religious practices. The point, for the neighbors at least, was not that Nan Panya became a believer in Jesus but that he defected from the temple. In this particular instance, McGilvary claimed that Nan Panya lost interest in Buddhism, implying that he himself was the one who decided to break away from Buddhism completely. As we have already seen, however, in other instances where converts, such as Nan Inta and Nan Chai, did not want to make a total, overt break the mission still insisted that they totally divorce themselves from their former faith. The records of the Laos Mission indicate thus that the medical and scientific strategies of Baconian evangelism intentionally built walls against rather than bridges reaching across to the people of Chiang Mai. The mission's reliance on hospitals, which in the decades after 1890 became a major component in its overall program, only strengthened the religious ramparts separating Christianity from the people. The strategy, indeed, calls to mind Gerald Grob's study of nineteenth-century American mental hospitals. According to Grob, many evangelical Protestants in the years before 1860 considered mental illness a moral problem caused by individuals failing to live up to the norms and values of rural, Protestant American culture. They saw the mental hospital as the perfect tool for retraining social deviants because it provided a controlled environment that allowed those in charge to carry out a scheme of "moral therapy" intended to cure the mentally ill person, a cure that emphasized placing the patient in a

safe, humane environment.[55] Dr. Cheek's little hospital, in like manner, provided a "safe" evangelical-Baconian haven where the mission could overcome the supposed moral, social, and religious deficiencies of its "heathen" patients through the exercise of full social control over them.

The mission's strategy of gaining converts through this process of placing them in a medical institution, as we observed above, did work to a limited extent; it faced the obvious problem, however, that the Laos Mission could only hospitalize a small number of individuals and only a certain number of those so hospitalized actually converted. This dilemma symbolizes the inherent problem the mission faced in its drive to evangelize the people of Chiang Mai through a Baconian strategy premised on Enlightenment epistemological assumptions. The application of Newtonian principles to religion and arguments based on an analogy between science and Christianity did not make sense to the great majority of people. Baconian evangelism failed in its efforts to teach them to mistrust the Buddha and give up the religious ways of their ancestors. It did not prove to them that their medical practices were superstitious. One had to accept an Enlightenment epistemology for Baconian medicine to make sense, and the mission had no way of instructing potential converts in that epistemology unless it could remove them from their every day world. The mission's records also contain no evidence for the years up to 1880, again excepting only Nan Inta, suggesting that those who converted to Christianity did so because they accepted the argument that Buddhism had a false cosmology and, therefore, they should convert. It is little wonder that Edna Cole later remarked, as we saw in Chapter Two, on the ignorance of the "native Christians," how they understood so little about the Christian faith, and how they still stood in need of "real life" in Jesus. The missionaries were quite unaware of how much they depended on Enlightenment thinking, one reason being that the Scottish Enlightenment itself assured them that humanity shares one common, fundamental nature, moral code, and religious consciousness. If, therefore, the northern Thai failed to comprehend the missionary message, it must necessarily be because of the people's failings and not due to any inherent problems in the delivery of the message.

Another of the weak links in the mission's exercise of Baconian medicine during the pioneer period was the two doctors themselves, Vrooman and Cheek. By 1877, a scant two years after Cheek's first arrival, McGilvary once again found himself responsible for most of the mission's medical program. In an April 1877 letter, laced with obvious irritation and disappointment, McGilvary informed the Board that Cheek, not long returned from Bangkok, had just left again for yet another trip down river. Cheek pleaded a hernia that needed quick and proper medical attention, but McGilvary point blank accused him of running off to Bangkok every time some little ailment appeared, threatened Cheek with Board displeasure at his frequent health trips, and required that he personally pay most of the expenses for his trip to Bangkok. McGilvary's disappointment was doubly keen because he felt Cheek had a promising medical practice that could be the means for converting many to Christianity. Cheek, for his part, began to contemplate the possibility of finding missionary work some place else in Siam besides Chiang Mai, which he considered an extremely unhealthy place to live.[56]

McGilvary, thus, had to take over the medical work—and this at a time when the mission's supply of quinine was low and the number of fever cases very high. When word got out that the quinine was nearly gone, there was a rush of patients so large that McGilvary could not handle them all. There were a few deaths, but McGilvary proved himself once again a capable lay physician. First, he noted that many of the ill he treated were suffering mostly from scurvy imposed on them by animistic medical procedures. He started feeding them fish and rice. He also whipped up from the mission's supply of drugs his own experimental substitute for quinine and found that it worked quite well in many cases. Nan Inta and another recent convert, Nan Suwan, helped him with this work and took the opportunity to discuss Christianity with many of the

patients McGilvary treated.[57] On the whole, however, McGilvary would have much preferred that Cheek carry out this work and put the mission's medical program on a secure, permanent footing. During the next three years, 1878-1880, Cheek did appear to settle down somewhat, worked in a more orderly fashion, and, thus, treated an increased number of patients. Wilson's annual mission report for 1879 indicates that many of those hospital patients who recovered were "disposed" to give the Christian religion a hearing.[58]

In the decades after 1880 and especially after 1900, the Laos Mission developed a relatively extensive network of hospitals and schools that came to dominate much of its efforts both in outreach and in Christian education.[59] Cheek's hospital, thus, was a portent of future developments in mission institutional work, both in its advantages and its limitations as a tool for evangelistic outreach. Social control, the temporary removal of potential converts from their cultural context, the implementation of the principle that Christians should live apart from that context, and the perception by northern Thai society that Christianity turned neighbors into strangers—all of this began in the mission's pioneer period. McGilvary's approach to evangelism, in particular, dug deep, permanent channels for the mission and set the pattern for future activities and behavior. Or, perhaps more correctly, McGilvary's strategy for using medicine as a tool for evangelistic outreach reflected deeper currents of thinking among Presbyterian missionaries over several generations. As late as 1891, Dr. William Briggs of the Lampang Station, informed the Board of Foreign Missions that God had blessed his medical work as an aid in breaking down superstition and gaining him access to the people's homes and hearts.[60] It seems, however, that later missionaries tended to replace Wilson and McGilvary's Baconian agenda and its emphasis on combating "heathen superstition" with a more practical perception that successful medical care opened peoples' hearts. Dr. Charles Crooks, writing in 1912, and the Rev. John H. Freeman, writing in 1910, both stressed the importance of the missionary doctor as an agent for relieving human suffering, bringing people new hope, and thus gaining their sympathetic attention for the presentation of the Christian message.[61] Even at that, mission doctors long retained their desire to place their patients in hospitals for evangelistic as well as medical reasons. In 1899, Dr. Mary Bowman wrote,

Promiscuous medical work does not seem to yield as satisfactory results as hospital work. If the patients come to remain a short time even, they come directly under Christian teaching, while if attended in their homes they can hear a very little of our faith and continue to worship the spirits, and very often combine the native treatment with that of the foreign physician.[62]

Although the Laos Mission's original Baconian agenda for its medical work quietly faded away, the behavioral pattern initiated in the years before 1880 remained in place. The mission engaged in an extensive range of medical activities, including the founding of hospitals in each of its stations, and medical care continued to be a key element in its overall program of evangelistic outreach. Medical outreach attained a climax during a widespread and serious outbreak of malaria that took place between 1911 and 1916. The mission added well over a thousand new members to its rolls, the result of the medical assistance it provided people in dire need.[63]

Conclusion

It is difficult to assess the impact of the Laos Mission's use of Baconian medicine for the simple reason that the missionary record fails to state with any clarity why those who benefited from missionary medicine converted. As the years went by, as we have just seen, the mission increasingly emphasized winning people's gratitude and giving them hope as the reasons for medical work. The cognitive approach with its goal of replacing the northern Thai worldview with an American Protestant one quietly dropped by the wayside, surely because it never appealed to the people. In any event, the mission did not carry out its program of Baconian

medicine as a series of discrete, frequent discussions in the manner of McGilvary's evangelistic strategy, and it seems doubtful that the missionaries sat down with patients and carried on an intellectual dialogue with them, explaining how the successes of Western medicine should teach them to reject Buddhism. McGilvary did not carry his globe into the bamboo wards of the mission hospital. It appears that the "natives" were left to make the connection between medicine and Christianity for themselves. They made the connection in terms of a feeling of gratitude, or relief, or because they found in the Christian God a new Spirit Guardian more powerful than other animistic spirits.[64] Those who converted, as far as we can tell from an admittedly spotty record, did not do so because they made an intellectual connection between the superiority of Western medicine and the religious truth of Protestant Christianity. If very many of them had, we would surely have heard about it in the Laos Mission's letters and papers.

Missionary medicine, premised on Baconian assumptions, in sum, contributed substantially to the modest levels of conversion gained by the Laos Mission—in spite of those assumptions, not because of them. While we are working towards the conclusion that the Laos Mission's system of doctrines and meanings contributed significantly to the mission's failure to contextualize the Christian faith in northern Siam, that does not mean that it was always a stumbling block. Sometimes, as the mission's medical experience suggests, that system was irrelevant. The point that follows is equally important, namely that even when the mission's system of doctrines and meanings was irrelevant to the people of northern Siam it caused the missionaries to expect results that would never come and hope for religious changes in northern Thai culture that have never taken place.

Conclusion

Four important points emerge from this chapter. First, the Laos Mission's evangelistic strategy played a key role in the pioneer period in determining how the mission addressed the people of Chiang Mai and which individuals received particular attention. The mission engaged the people in a debate over cosmological as well as theological issues, and, in the process, it gave particular attention to the small class of educated people who had an interest in arguing over matters of science and religion. Second, although the Baconian justification for evangelism and medicine gradually disappeared, the Laos Mission in later years continued to engage in medical activities originally designed to employ the analogy between science and religion to northern Thai evangelism. The system of meanings and doctrines shifted (at least somewhat), but the pattern of behavior remained the same. Third, the Laos Mission found it difficult to listen to other voices. It rejected Nan Inta, Nan Chai, and Noi Choi's urgent advice that it consider redefining its doctrinal and ideological boundaries in a way they felt better fit the northern Thai worldview. It could not accept the idea that one could worship Jesus and attend temple ceremonies or use holy water and still be a Christian. Finally, the Laos Mission built its evangelistic strategy, its directions for ministry, and its attitudes concerning northern Thai Christian advice on the foundation of its Baconian, Princeton-like system of doctrines and meanings, which system it brought with it from the United States.

Taken together, these four points lead us to the conclusion that the mission's evangelistic outreach directed some of its efforts and much of its attention to issues that did not concern the vast majority of northern Thais. They suggest, furthermore, that the mission's commonsensical, dualistic epistemology made it difficult for its members to understand that the vast majority of northern Thai made no connection between Western science and Christianity or that the northern Thai people could accept the science and some elements of Christianity and yet not feel compelled to convert. The Laos Mission functioned, thus, much more effectively as a carrier of modernization than of Christianity.

Notes

Abbreviations:

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| AHR | <i>American Historical Review</i> |
| AP | <i>American Presbyterians</i> |
| AQ | <i>American Quarterly</i> |
| BRPR | <i>Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review</i> |
| CH | <i>Church History</i> |
| JAH | <i>Journal of American History</i> |
| JER | <i>Journal of the Early Republic</i> |
| JPH | <i>Journal of Presbyterian History</i> |
| JSH | <i>Journal of Social History</i> |
| NCP | <i>North Carolina Presbyterian</i> |
| NCP NS | <i>North Carolina Presbyterian New Series</i> |
| LN | <i>Laos News</i> |
| PQPR | <i>Presbyterian Quarterly and Princeton Review</i> |
| SCJ | <i>Sixteenth Century Journal</i> |
| WJT | <i>Westminster Journal of Theology</i> |
| WWW | <i>Women's Work for Women</i> |

[1] See Edwin Zehner, "Church Growth and Culturally Appropriate Leadership: Three Examples From the Thai Church" (Unpublished paper, School of World Mission, 1987), 25ff.

[2] For the Laos Mission's success in Westernization, see, Herbert R. Swanson, "Advocate and Partner: Missionaries and Modernization in Nan Province, Siam, 1895-1934," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 13, 2 (September 1982): 296-309.

[3] McGilvary, *Half Century*, 79.

[4] Alexander, *Evidences*, 176, 177.

[5] See, Bozeman, "Inductive and Deductive Politics," 714.

[6] The following discussion is based on McGilvary to Brother Sherwood, 31 December 1868, *NCP New Series* 2, 77(23 June 1869): 2; McGilvary, "Our First Convert," *NCP New Series* 2, 85 (18 August 1869): 4; McGilvary, undated letter in *FM* 28, 3 (August 1869): 58-63; and McGilvary, *Half Century*, 96-9. See also Curtis, *Laos of North Siam*, 264-65.

[7] McGilvary, *Half Century*, 97.

[8] McGilvary, "Our First Convert," *NCP New Series* 2, 85 (18 August 1869): 4.

[9] McGilvary, undated letter in *FM* 28, 3 (August 1869): 59.

[10] McGilvary, undated letter in *FM* 28, 3 (August 1869): 59.

[11] McGilvary, undated letter in *FM* 28, 3 (August 1869): 60.

[12] McGilvary, "For the Little Folks," *NCP New Series* 3, 106 (12 January 1870): 4.

[13] See McGilvary, "For the Little Folks," *NCP New Series* 1, 26 (2 July 1868): 4, where McGilvary refers to the Buddha as an "idol-god." For a more detailed description on McGilvary's views on Buddhism as superstition, see McGilvary, letter dated 21 February 1876, *NCP NS* 9, 440 (14 June 1876): 4. Also found in, McGilvary, "Warming of Buddh," *FM* 35, 4 (September 1876): 121-23.

[14] McGilvary, undated letter in *FM* 28, 3 (August 1869): 60.

[15] McGilvary, *Half Century*, 98.

[16] Concerning the Siam Mission, see McFarland, *Historical Sketch*, 50.

[17] *Half Century*, 158.

- [18] McGilvary, "For the Little Folks," *NCP New Series* 5, 280 (14 May 1873): 4. See also McGilvary, *Half Century*, 158ff; and McGilvary to Irving, 28 February 1873, v. 3, BFM.
- [19] McGilvary, *Half Century*, 163.
- [20] McGilvary, letter dated 21 February 1876, *NCP New Series* 9, 440 (14 June 1876): 4.
- [21] McGilvary, "The Laos Mission, *NCP New Series* 10, 485 (25 April 1877): 1.
- [22] James W. Van Dyke, "Report of the Station at Petchaburi for the year ending Sep 30th 1874," v. 3, BFM.
- [23] Culbertson to Irving, 10 November 1876, v. 3, BFM.
- [24] McGilvary, undated letter, *FM* 28, 9 (February 1870): 215.
- [25] McGilvary, *Half Century*, 180-86.
- [26] McGilvary, *Half Century*, 188.
- [27] McGilvary, "For the Little Folks." *NCP New Series* 7, 356 (4 November 1874): 4.
- [28] McGilvary, *Half Century*, 158-59.
- [29] The articles referred to are here cited in the text by their article number. See the Bibliography for the full citation of each article.
- [30] Hodge, *Way of Life*, 97.
- [31] Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment*, 161; Kennedy, "Sin and Grace," 144; Vander Stelt, *Philosophy and Scripture*, 287; and Stewart, "Tethered Theology," 268-69.
- [32] Ahlstrom, "The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology," 269.
- [33] This image is borrowed from John A. T. Robinson, *Truth is two-eyed* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979).
- [34] McGilvary to Irving, 17 February 1870, v. 3, BFM.
- [35] McGilvary, *Half Century*, 88-90, 78-9.
- [36] Wilson to Irving, 24 October 1871, v. 3, BFM; and Wilson, undated letter, *FM* 31, 10 (March 1873): 307. See also, Wilson, letter dated 7 July 1869, *FM* 28, 10 (March 1870): 232-33.
- [37] Cheek, "Treatment of the Sick," in *Siam and Laos as Seen by Our American Missionaries*, 515-16. More generally, see, Cheek, "Treatment of the Sick, 511-24; and Dr. and Mrs. Cheek, "Superstitions of the Laos," in *Siam and Laos as Seen by Our American Missionaries*, 504-10.
- [38] C. W. Vrooman, letter dated, 6 February 1872, *FM* 31, 2 (July 1872): 52.
- [39] McGilvary, "For the Little Folks," dated July 1869, *NCP New Series* 3, 107 (19 January 1870): 4; McGilvary undated letter, *FM* 28, 9 (February 1870): 212-17; and McGilvary, *Half Century*, 99-100.
- [40] McGilvary, "For the Little Folks," dated 1 September 1869, *NCP New Series* 3, 111 (16 February 1870): 4; and McGilvary, *Half Century*, 100-01, 114.
- [41] McGilvary, "For the Little Folks," dated July 1869, *NCP New Series* 3, 107 (19 January 1870): 4; and McGilvary, "For the Little Folks," dated 1 September 1869, *NCP New Series* 3, 110 (9 February 1870): 4.
- [42] See, McGilvary, *Half Century*, 86-8; and McFarland, *Historical Sketch*, 117.
- [43] C. W. Vrooman, letter dated 6 February 1872, *FM* 31, 2 (July 1872): 51-2; and McGilvary, letter dated 10 April 1872, *FM* 31, 5 (October 1872): 150-51.
- [44] Vrooman to Irving, 6 February 1872 and 7 November 1872, v. 3, BFM; McGilvary to Irving, 4 December 1872 and 28 February 1873, v. 3, BFM; McGilvary, *Half Century*, 150-59; Wilson, undated letter, *FM* 31, 10 (March 1873): 307-8; and McGilvary, "For the Little Folks," *NCP New Series* 5, 282 (28 May 1873): 4.

- [45] McGilvary to Lowrie, 8 November 1875, v. 3, BFM; Vrooman to Irving, 7 November 1872, and 15 April 1874, v. 3, BFM ; and House to Irving, 12 August 1873, v. 3, BFM.
- [46] McGilvary to Irving, 6 January 1873, v. 3, BFM.
- [47] Wilson to Irving, 5 June 1874, v. 3, BFM. Also found in Wilson, letter, 5 June 1874, *FM* 33, 7 (December 1874): 214-18.
- [48] "Sessional Records. The First Presbyterian Church of Chiengmai," in the Records of the American Presbyterian Mission (Payap University), 32, 41.
- [49] McGilvary, "For the Family," *NCP New Series* 9, 417 (7 January 1876): 4.
- [50] Cheek to Irving, 3 September 1875, v. 3.
- [51] Cheek to Ellinwood, 21 August 1875, v. 3, BFM. Emphasis in the original.
- [52] McGilvary, "For the Family," letter dated 1 October 1875, *NCP NS* 9, 417 (7 January 1876): 4.
- [53] "Sessional Records," 45-49; and McGilvary, "The Laos Mission," letter dated 5 December 1876, *NCP New Series* 10, 485 (25 April 1877): 1.
- [54] McGilvary to Irving, 4 December 1876, v. 3, BFM. Emphasis in the original.
- [55] Gerald N. Grob, "Mental Illness, Indigency, and Welfare: the Mental Hospital in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Anonymous Americans: Explorations in Nineteenth-Century Social History*, ed. Tamara K. Hareven (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 250-79. For a fuller treatment of the points made here, see Swanson, "This Heathen People," 128-29.
- [56] McGilvary to Irving, 21 April 1877, v. 4, BFM; and Cheek to Irving, 20 June 1877, v. 4, BFM.
- [57] McGilvary to Irving, 10 August 1877, v. 4, BFM; and McGilvary to Irving, 6 December 1877, v. 4, BFM.
- [58] Wilson, "Annual Report of North Laos Mission for the year ending Sept. 30th 1879," 30 September 1879, v. 4, BFM. See also, Cheek to Irving, [October? 1879], v. 4, BFM; Wilson to Brethren, [Annual Report], 30 September 1880, v. 4, BFM; and McGilvary, *Half Century*, 225.
- [59] See Swanson, *Khrischak Muang Nua*, 120-22.
- [60] Briggs to Mitchell, 21 August 1891, v. 9, BFM.
- [61] Charles H. Crooks, "Chas. T. Van Santwoord Hospital. Lakawn Dispensary," *LN* 9, 4 (October 1912): 142; and John H. Freeman, *An Oriental Land of the Free* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1910), 138-40.
- [62] Mary A. Bowman-Irwin, "Report of Nan Medical Work for the year 1899," v. 22, BFM.
- [63] Swanson, *Khrischak Muang Nua*, 138-41.
- [64] See, Hughes, *Proclamation and Response*, 19-20.