

**Northern Thai Protestant Attitudes Towards Other
Faiths: Analysis of a Questionnaire**

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Abstract

This study reports and analyzes the data collected from a questionnaire on northern Thai Protestant attitudes towards people of other of faiths, which was distributed in early 2004. The purpose of the questionnaire, in a narrow sense, was to discover the patterns in pluralist and exclusivist thinking and attitudes on the parts of the respondents. More generally, the data collected from the questionnaire also gives insights into the ways in which northern Thai Protestants accommodate their Buddhist pluralist and Protestant exclusivist ideas and attitudes to each other. A total of 726 forms were returned, and on the basis of the data contained in those forms it may be concluded that the respondents hold both pluralist and exclusivist attitudes. In general, it may be said that they tend to be more pluralist in their general thinking about people of other faiths but more exclusivist in their reluctance to participate in the religious rites of other religions.

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapters 1 through 3 present the data and commentary for each of the fifteen main questions on the questionnaire. Chapter 4 provides further analysis of those questions by trying to determine if exclusivist and pluralist "core groups" can be located from the data. The chapter concludes that only roughly each of these two core groups form only about 10% or a little more each of the sample. Chapter 5 presents the data from the seven questions on background information, the variables.

The report includes 81 tables, and each of the first four chapters has a section on reflections. The purpose in presenting this study on herbswanson.com, however, is to give researchers access to more data than can be included in the published papers and articles that may result from this study. Only a few secondary works are cited in the body of the study.

Northern Thai Protestant Attitudes Towards Other Faiths: Analysis of a Questionnaire

Introduction

What follows is an exhaustive analysis of data on northern Thai Protestant attitudes towards other religions and their neighbors of other faiths collected by means of a questionnaire entitled, "Questionnaire About Christians and People of Other Faiths" (see Appendix). In the process of writing a paper on the data gained from the questionnaire, it became clear that I did not have a clear grasp of the data itself, let alone what it all meant. I began this analysis as a way to better understand the data itself, and it became quickly apparent that I was actually writing up a larger report on the results of the survey on northern Thai Protestant attitudes towards people of other faiths. I decided to "kill two birds with one stone," as it were, and shape my analysis into a somewhat more formal report for inclusion on this website. It is not my purpose here to place this analysis in a larger scholarly context. There are no footnotes, and I make many assertions of fact and interpretation that are not documented, primarily because to engage in the process of doing a larger academic analysis would turn this report into a task of months rather than weeks. Readers, thus, may want to treat this whole report as an academic resource rather than a scholarly piece in and of itself, if such a distinction has any meaning. I, obviously, believe that I have reason to make the assertions of fact and interpretation contained in this report, the actual documentation of which mostly appears in other things that I have written.

The project behind the questionnaire had two main purposes: first, it was a class exercise that intended to give the eight students enrolled in the McGilvary Faculty of Theology course on research methods for M.Div. students, second semester 2003-2004, (TS 571) practical experience in quantitative research and analysis. Second, it was part of a larger research project studying northern Thai Protestantism in its Buddhist cultural setting, which project was headed up by Dr. Donald Swearer and funded by the Luce Foundation.

The purpose of this report, then, is to make available as much of the data obtained by means of the questionnaire on northern Thai Protestant attitudes towards people of other faiths as possible to those who are interested in the subject of Christian-Buddhist relations in Thailand or related topics.

The survey instrument itself was developed by the eight M.Div. students and myself with some input from Dr. Swearer. The eight students are Boonrak Suriwong, Jureerut Saetang, Patompong Boonyakert, Ratsamee Arkharasavast, Rungtiwa Mamo, Suradej Wisutichon, Teerakit Suesan, and the Rev. Theerapan Khopchai. It was distributed by the students, Dr. Swearer, members of the staff of the Office of History, and myself (with the assistance of several members of local churches) to some 17 churches in four districts of the CCT and to various groups during the months of January to April 2004. We collected a total of 726 returned forms.

This report examines the data collected from each of the fifteen questions individually and in sequence. I have tried to use a similar format and set of tables for reporting the data for each question in what I hope is a clear manner. The following two sections on "Background and Issues" and "The Questionnaire" set the stage for the actual presentation of the data.

Background

I designed the "Questionnaire About Christians and People of Other Faiths" in conjunction with the McGilvary students in order to discover how northern Thai local church people make sense out of their dual religious heritage. Virtually all of the research I do, qualitative or quantitative, is based on the assumption that northern Thai Protestantism (meaning, here, the northern Thai churches belonging to the [Church of Christ in Thailand](#)) has grown out of two grand streams of religious tradition, namely Theravada Buddhism and Protestant Christianity. There are many differences as well as not a few similarities between the two, but they do come out of very different historical backgrounds and each has its own unique approach to the questions of faith and practice. Local northern Thai Protestants encompass, that is, a

unique blend of Buddhist and Protestant, Asian and Western ways of thinking, values, attitudes, and practices. They are both northern Thai and Protestant, which means that they are not quite like other northern Thais and not quite the same as other Protestants.

One of the key issues that arises out of this dual heritage is the question of how northern Thai Protestants relate to their Buddhist neighbors. Briefly, the American Presbyterian missionaries who introduced the Christian faith into northern Thailand in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought with them an extremely negative attitude towards people of all other faiths than their own, including Catholics as well as Buddhists. They were religious exclusivists who believed that ultimate salvation is available only through the Christian faith in its Protestant form. Crassly but accurately stated, they believed that if you are not a Christian when you die you are going to hell. Thai Buddhism makes no such exclusivist claims for itself and, historically, has shown a large degree of tolerance for other religions. The goodness of all religions is assumed, acknowledged, and even celebrated—albeit in a rather passive manner. Thai Buddhism is pluralistic not only in its willingness to borrow from other religions what it finds useful in them, but also in its readiness to accept other religions as legitimate in themselves.

This dual Western Protestant-Asian Theravada heritage poses serious questions. For northern Thai Protestants, the most important questions have to do with behavior. Basically, the missionaries taught the church to reject Buddhism, which has meant rejecting the heart and soul of their mother culture and, specifically, breaking away from the religiously grounded life ways of their communities. Northern Thai culture, on the other hand, gives high valuation to communal unity and overtly smooth interpersonal relations; it does not matter what religion other people are, but they must show unity and respect for the religion of their neighbors and relatives. Over the decades, this difference in attitude towards people of other faiths has been a source of ongoing, sometimes intense tension between Buddhists and Christians. The question before us here is how do the people in the pews resolve this tension?

What we might call "mainline" scholarship has made some progress over the last quarter of a century or so in describing the relationship of Thai and northern Thai Protestantism to their cultures. Beginning with Maen Pongudom's doctoral thesis in 1979, followed by the work of Philip Hughes and myself in the early 1980s, scholars have identified the tensions inherent in the historical context of the Thai and northern Thai churches and have shown that culture plays a very important role in the thought and practice of Protestant churches in Thailand. That scholarship, however, has largely labored under a "unilateral" model of the relationship of culture to the church that sees culture as the context for the church. This model has at least two important implications. First, it assigns great power to Thai and northern Thai culture, seeing culture as being almost acidic-like in its ability to transform imported Western Protestantism. Second, there is an unspoken tendency to see Protestantism in a negative light, as if it is "the problem" or the "bad guy" in the relationship. Protestantism is assumed to pose the problem that Thai culture must solve. Evangelical researchers, mostly missionaries, who have studied the question of church and culture in Thailand, accept this model just as much as the mainline scholars, but they put a different twist to it. From their perspective it is culture that is the "bad guy." The encounter of the Christian faith with Thai culture, they feel, poses the theologically life-threatening danger of syncretism, which is any adaptation to culture that corrupts the purity of the Gospel. They still assume the unilateral model, the only difference being a different valuation of Thai culture as opposed to Western Protestantism. (I have borrowed the term "unilateral model" in the sense I am using it here from Boyung Lee, "From a Margin Within the Margin: Rethinking the Dynamics of Christianity and Culture From a Post-Colonial Feminist Perspective," *JTCA: The Journal of Theologies and Cultures in Asia* 3 (2004): 12.)

By and large, so far as I know, this model for conceptualizing the relationship of indigenous Thai Buddhist culture to imported Western Protestantism has gone unchallenged among scholars and researchers. Mainline or evangelical, we have all (including myself) worked on the problem of how the imported foreign faith fits into the indigenous culture. My sense now is that the unilateral model obscures as much as it explains. However much, northern Thai Protestants share in the larger culture of their region, they are not like other northern Thais in many important respects. As one simple but highly important example, women in most Protestant churches play a much more important leadership role in the life of the church than do Buddhist women in the life of their local temples. Or, again, Protestant "monks" marry and, especially in urban churches, do not even live in the church compound, which compound is not conceived of as being sacred ground as are various precincts within Buddhist temples. The unilateral model can account for these differences only by positing an incomplete or a failed indigenization of the Christian faith

into Thai culture. The acids of culture have either failed to dissolve certain aspects of Western Protestantism or, perhaps, are still quietly eating away at those aspects. The fact, however, that, to return to our original example, women's leadership is, if anything, growing in northern Thai churches, suggests that the unilateral model is perhaps inadequate to explain at least some developments in the relationship of the Asian and Western elements found in northern Thai Protestantism.

The model assumed in this study is different and is taken from recent research done into the relationship between "globalization" and "localization." Students of the process of globalization have increasingly discovered that globalization is not a single process by which global forces invade and overwhelm local culture. There is a flip side to globalization, which is usually termed "localization." Even as global forces reshape local culture, so local forces also give a distinctive shape to global themes in a two-way process that creates something new out of the interaction between global and local elements. What is important in this globalization-localization model so far as we are concerned here is not to identify culture with localization and Protestantism with globalization, which we could arguably do. What is important is the model of two previously independent cultural agencies, Theravada-based northern Thai culture and Western-based Protestant culture, influencing each other in *a process of mutual accommodation*.

The perspective taken in this article, then, is that northern Thai Protestants are engaged in an ongoing process of accommodating northern Thai Buddhist and Western Protestant religious cultures and consciousness to each other. The process is a complex one that involves choices, compromises, and conscious rationalization. While it surely has sub-conscious or semi-conscious elements to it, the process of accommodation is assumed here to be very much a conscious and rational one.

Approach

The issue of the relationship between culture and church in northern Thai Protestant thinking and practice is impossible to encompass in a single study. The approach to that relationship I have taken here is to examine it in terms of Protestant attitudes towards their Buddhist neighbors. As already stated, this is a key issue for local church people because the great majority of them come into frequent contact with Buddhist neighbors, cultural practices, and rites. Individual Christians, for the most part, cannot avoid making conscious decisions about their relationship with their Buddhist neighbors, which decisions reflect their understanding of their own faith. The problem they face, also as we have already said, is that their Protestant heritage is "exclusivist" and their Theravada heritage is "pluralist."

The concepts of exclusivism and pluralism will be defined in a somewhat piecemeal fashion in the commentary on the data obtained from the questionnaire. In general, exclusivism is understood to be the Western Protestant rejection of other religions and the insistence that only Christian faith provides the means, by the grace of God, for salvation. Pluralism is understood to be the Thai Buddhist acceptance of the value of other religions and the understanding that there are many paths to salvation. To the argument that ecclesiastical pluralism could also be a result of the influence of Western Protestant ecumenical ("liberal") thinking, I can only reply that my own study of numerous local CCT churches in northern Thailand suggests that Western ecumenical thinking has had little or no impact on the local churches. One might expect, for example, that theology students would be particularly exposed to ecumenical thinking, but, as we will see in what follows, the pastors who took part in this study tend to be more exclusivist than do church members in general.

The specific purpose of the questionnaire is to distinguish pluralism from exclusivism in the beliefs and attitudes of the respondents, to see how they make use of each, and to discern the relationship between exclusivism and pluralism in their thinking. I have consciously tried to avoid assigning historical or cultural priority to either Protestant exclusivism or Buddhist pluralism.

The Questionnaire

The eight students in TS 571 initially constructed the questionnaire (see the Appendix), and I added questions and rephrased some of their questions in light of insights generated by a consultation with northern Thai Protestant evangelists in February 2002 on the subject of Christianity in Buddhist contexts that was sponsored by the Luce Foundation. (See the article, "The Wiang Pa Pao Consultation on

Evangelism in the Northern Thai Context" in [HeRB 11](#)). Each student was asked to submit five questions for the questionnaire, which we then went over in class and from which we produced a preliminary questionnaire that I then revised. I also added questions of my own, notably Question 13. The class went over the revised instrument, and then each student submitted it to two or more individuals outside of the class for their critical comments. We discussed problems in class, and on the basis of that discussion I again revised the questionnaire.

The students distributed the questionnaire in a variety of settings, including to local churches, to employees of church agencies, among friends, and at church meetings and conferences. I also distributed the questionnaire to more churches with the assistance of the staff of the Office of History and others. In all, we received 726 returned questionnaires, not including a small number that were so poorly filled out as to be useless.

The sample is not scientific. It is, however, broadly inclusive of northern Thai local church members in the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT). Only a small number of questionnaires were distributed to members of one church outside of the CCT. The sample includes respondents from four of the seven ethnic northern Thai districts of the CCT, namely Districts One (Chiang Mai-Lamphun), Four (Phrae-Uttaradit), Five (Nan), and Fifteen (Phayao). It includes members from at least 17 CCT churches and the 1 non-CCT church. The sample comprises a good mix of rural and urban church members as well as of women and men, various age groups, and different educational backgrounds (see Chapter 5).

Because the sample is not scientific and the study itself is unique, so far as I know, the data presented below must be taken as somewhat preliminary and interpreted with some caution. In defense of the data, I will say that it was clear from the first batch of forms collected to the last, as I entered the data, that the percentages were generally consistent throughout. There were no wild swings or major discrepancies, and even in the case of two churches that are distinctive (Chiang Mai Chinese Church and Suwanguangrit Church), the differences are consistent within themselves and clearly parallel to the over all figures. My sense is that the sample is adequately representative of local church thinking, if interpreted with the aforesaid degree of caution.

The Data

The questions on the questionnaire are grouped in three general sections, and the results of the data are reported here by section and question. Section One, Questions 1 through 5, seeks to determine the respondent's beliefs about people of other faiths, particularly whether or not they can attain salvation within their own faith. Section Two, Questions 6 through 10, seeks to determine the respondent's attitudes towards people of other faiths. Section Three, Questions 11 through 15, seeks to determine the respondent's attitudes towards participation in Buddhist rites. The Wiang Pa Pao consultation mentioned in the Introduction particularly informed this last section.

<p>The percentages presented throughout this report are "valid percentages," that is they represent the total number of people who responded to the particular question and <i>not</i> the total number of all respondents. The number of respondents answering each question is always indicated.</p>
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Chapter 1

Analysis of Questions 1 – 5

Introduction

The purpose of the questions in this section is to gain insights into the thinking of the respondents concerning people of other faiths. All five questions deal with cultural and theological attitudes towards people of other faiths.

Questions 1 & 2

Introduction

The purpose of these two questions is to establish whether or not the respondents tend to be more exclusivist or pluralist in their beliefs about people of other faiths.

Question One asks, "Do you agree that every religion is able to teach people to be good?" One of the most widely held religious attitudes in Thailand is that every religion teaches people to be good. One hears this truism affirmed repeatedly whenever religion is discussed, and it is pervasive in the general culture. Do northern Thai Protestants agree? An affirmative answer to this question is assumed to be pluralistic, a negative answer exclusivist.

Question Two asks, "Do you agree that Christian teachings are the only correct religious teachings?" While this question may not logically be the opposite of Question 1, the attitude underlying it does stand in contradiction to the first question. It assumes that Christian teachings are superior to those of other religions. An affirmative answer to this question is thus assumed to be exclusivist, a negative answer pluralistic.

Before presenting the data, it is important to consider whether or not the statements in Questions 1 and 2 actually do contradict each other. When we discussed the data for these two questions in class, the students argued with some conviction that there is no contradiction between the two statements. They felt that Christians can both agree that Buddhism is able to teach people to be good and that only Christian teachings are religiously correct. One of the students reasoned that other religions have some teachings that are similar to Christianity and, therefore, they can use such Christian-like teachings to teach people to be good. Private discussions that I had with several other northern Thai Protestants concerning this question received similar replies; none of them saw the statements in Questions 1 and 2 as being inherently contradictory. If placed in historical perspective, however, they are contradictory. Until roughly 1920, all but one or two Presbyterian missionaries in northern Thailand would have rejected the first statement's assertion that all religions can teach people to be good out of hand, and all but those same one or two wholeheartedly accepted the premise of the second question that only Christian teachings are true. One of the central tenets of missionary exclusivist ideology well into the twentieth century was that Buddhism is an atheistic religion based on merit-making and, as such, incapable of teaching true morals to its adherents. Thai church leaders, even today, occasionally make similar statements. Missionary writings, in any event, provide a multitude of examples of what they considered to be northern Thai and Thai immorality to prove the supposed moral inadequacy of Buddhism. That is to say, the churches were originally taught to see these two questions as being contradictory, and the fact that my informants on the subject do not see a contradiction between them may in and of itself suggest the influence of pluralism.

If the respondents were consistently pluralistic, in sum, it is assumed that they would have answered Question 1 affirmatively and Question 2 negatively. If they were consistently exclusivist, the opposite would be the case.

Question 1

As can be seen in Table 1, 88.4% of the respondents affirmed the pluralistic, cultural truism that all religions are able to teach people to be good. They are, if our assumption is correct, markedly pluralistic in terms of this question.

Table 1
Frequency Distribution for Question 1
Every religion is able to teach people to be good

	Number	Valid %
<i>Disagree Entirely</i>	14	2.0%
<i>Disagree</i>	45	6.3%
<i>Disagree Somewhat</i>	14	2.0%
<i>Agree Somewhat</i>	65	9.1%
<i>Agree</i>	393	55.0%
<i>Agree Entirely</i>	173	24.2%
<i>Uncertain</i>	10	1.4%

N = 714

Regarding of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position in the church* (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), and whether or not the respondents were *born into a Christian home* (Question 21) or have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22), the only variable that shows an important difference is gender. As shown in Table 2, women affirmed the statement that Christian teachings are the only correct religious teachings 7.0% more frequently than men.

Table 2
Summary of Frequency Distribution for Question 1 by Gender
Christian teachings are the only correct religious teachings

	Total Sample	Women	Men
<i>Disagree</i>	10.2%	7.7%	14.2%
<i>Agree</i>	88.4%	91.0%	84.0%
<i>Number</i>	714	401	282

The only other set of variables that shows much is for whether or not the respondents live in the same home with people of other faiths. Of the respondents, 91.9% of those who have people of other faiths residing in their homes answered in the affirmative, while 86.4% of those who do not answered in the affirmative. The difference is 5.5%. None of the other variables show a difference greater than 5.0%. In sum, the respondents show considerable agreement in their affirmation of Question 1; the only other question that the respondents showed a similar level of unanimity is Question 12.

Question 2

As can be seen in Table 3, 72.8% of the respondents agreed with the belief that Christian teachings are the only correct religious teachings. They are, if our assumption is correct, markedly exclusivist in terms of their response to this question.

Table 3
Frequency Distribution for Question 2
Christian teachings are the only correct religious teachings

	Number	Valid %
<i>Disagree Entirely</i>	30	4.3%
<i>Disagree</i>	78	11.1%
<i>Disagree Somewhat</i>	51	7.3%
<i>Agree Somewhat</i>	48	6.8%
<i>Agree</i>	259	36.8%
<i>Agree Entirely</i>	205	29.2%
<i>Uncertain</i>	32	4.6%

N = 703

In terms of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position* in the church (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), and whether or not the respondents were *born into a Christian home* (Question 21) or have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22), there is a striking difference between Questions 1 and 2. Where there is a good deal of consistency among all of the variables in Question 1, the responses for Question 2 show considerable variation. The two greatest contrasts are found in terms of church office, shown in Table 4, and educational status, shown in Table 5.

In Table 4, we see that local church elders affirmed the statement that "Christian teachings are the only correct religious teachings" considerably more often (82.9%) than did other church officers or the general membership. Pastors disagreed far more often (36.4%) than did other church officers or the general membership. Elders, on the other hand, show a marked tendency towards exclusivism. It is worth noting, however, that the elders in our sample affirmed in Question 1 that "Every religion is able to teach people to be good" to a somewhat higher degree (90.0%) than did pastors (86.4%). That is to say, based on our data here elders display a very strong tendency to affirm both their pluralist and their exclusivist heritages.

Table 4

Summary of Frequency Distribution for Question 2 by Church Office as Valid Percents
Christian teachings are the only correct religious teachings

	Total Sample	Pastors	Elders	Deacons	Members
<i>Disagree</i>	22.6%	36.4%	15.3%	23.0%	24.2%
<i>Agree</i>	72.8%	63.6%	82.9%	74.7%	70.2%
<i>Number</i>	703	22	111	87	447

Table 5 shows that respondents with a lower education affirmed the statement in Question 2 much more frequently (82.6%) than did those with a medium education (71.7%) or a higher education (68.2%). Education, thus, seems to be an important factor in increasing the respondents' affirmation of cultural religious attitudes as opposed to those received from the missionary era.

Table 5

Summary of Frequency Distribution for Question 2 by Educational Status
Christian teachings are the only correct religious teachings

	Total Sample	Low Education	Medium Education	High Education
<i>Disagree</i>	22.6%	14.4%	23.0%	27.3%
<i>Agree</i>	72.8%	82.6%	71.7%	68.2%
<i>Number</i>	703	167	265	242

Note: Low education includes the first three responses in Question 20; medium education includes responses four, five, and six; and, high education includes the last two responses.

In terms of the other variables, gender made little difference; women responded affirmatively to Question 2 at about the same rate (71.0%) as men (74.2%). Respondents born into Christian families also responded affirmatively to the question at a rate (71.8%) similar to those who are converts to Christianity (74.7%). Interestingly enough, respondents who have Buddhists living in their homes affirmed the idea that "Christian teachings are the only correct religious teachings" somewhat higher (76.6%) than did those who have no Buddhists living in their homes (70.7%). One might have expected the opposite to be the case.

Reflections on Questions 1 and 2

If the argument that the statements in these two questions are historically incompatible is correct, the data generated by Questions 1 and 2 virtually sets the parameters for interpreting the whole body of the data. We are evidently faced with a situation in which the respondents, taken as a group, demonstrate both strong pluralist and exclusivist tendencies. Nearly three-fourths (73.8%) of those who affirmed Question 1 also affirmed Question 2.

At this point, all that we can say is that, apparently, the respondents show a tendency according to the data from Question 2 to think like the old-time Presbyterian missionaries who introduced Protestant exclusivism into northern Thailand. They also show a tendency according to the data from Question 1 to think like Theravada Buddhists, and of the two tendencies the Buddhist one is somewhat more pronounced. All of the various groups surveyed affirmed the statement that "Christian teachings are the only correct religious teachings" by a score of 84% or more, most of them showing scores of 87% to 91%. The responses for Question 2 show, as we saw above, much more wider variations among the groups surveyed and are not as consistently high as is the case for Question 1.

The data from Questions 1 and 2, in sum, indicate that northern Thai Protestants have tendencies towards both Buddhist cultural pluralism and Western Protestant exclusivism.

Question 3

Question 3 asks, "Do you agree that God loves those who believe in Him more than those who do not?" The original intent of the question was to test the degree of theological prejudice that northern Thai Protestants might have towards people of other faiths. In a sense, it is a trick question because it, unlike other questions on the questionnaire, has a correct answer. Theologically, God loves all people equally because they are all part of God's creation and because in Christ divine grace encompasses all of them. I have to say that it was not our original intention that Question 3 be a trick question, it definitely not being our intention to test the theological savvy of the respondents. In any event, an affirmative answer to this question is assumed to be exclusivist. In light of the fact just mentioned that this question has a "right answer," we cannot judge negative answers because those who are theologically knowledgeable are likely to reject the statement in Question 3, whether or not they are exclusivists.

Question 3

Table 6 shows that a total of 61.0% of the 711 respondents who answered this question rejected (disagreed entirely, disagreed, or disagreed somewhat) the statement that "God loves those who believe in Him more than those who do not." Still, a sizeable minority of 35.7% agreed with this statement in spite of its being a wrong answer according to widely accepted Protestant theological norms.

Table 6
Frequency Distribution for Question 3
God loves those who believe in Him more than those who do not

	Number	Valid %
<i>Disagree Entirely</i>	140	19.7%
<i>Disagree</i>	231	32.5%
<i>Disagree Somewhat</i>	63	8.9%
<i>Agree Somewhat</i>	35	4.9%
<i>Agree</i>	124	17.4%
<i>Agree Entirely</i>	95	13.4%
<i>Uncertain</i>	23	3.2%

N = 711

In terms of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position* in the church (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), and whether or not the respondents were *born into a Christian home* (Question 21) or have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22), there is considerable variation in responses, especially in terms of age and education.

Table 7 shows that respondents aged 61 and older showed a much stronger tendency to agree that God loves believers more than others. Just over one-half (50.7%) agreed, a considerably higher figure than for younger people (31.3%) or middle-aged individuals (34.6%). In this case, then, older respondents show a marked tendency towards exclusivism.

Table 7
Summary of Frequency Distribution for Question 3 by Age
God loves those who believe in Him more than those who do not

	Total Sample	11-30	31-60	Over 60
<i>Disagree</i>	61.0%	65.9%	61.5%	49.3%
<i>Agree</i>	35.7%	31.3%	34.6%	50.7%
<i>Number</i>	711	208	413	67

Table 8 shows that those with a higher level of education tend to disagree (72.3%) with the statement that God loves believers much more than others than do those with a lower education (50.9%).

Table 8
Summary of Frequency Distribution for Question 3 by Educational Status
God loves those who believe in Him more than those who do not

	Total Sample	Low Education	Medium Education	High Education
<i>Disagree</i>	61.0%	50.9%	57.4%	72.3%
<i>Agree</i>	35.7%	46.7%	39.3%	24.0%
<i>Number</i>	711	169	270	242

Note: Low education includes the first three responses in Question 20; medium education includes responses four, five, and six; and, high education includes the last two responses.

In terms of the other variables, gender again made little difference. Women rejected the statement that "God loves those who believe in Him more than those who do not" at virtually the same (61.9%) as men (62.5%). Pastors, as we would expect, disagreed with this statement at a rate higher than any other group (81.8%) because of their theological training. Respondents born into Christian families tended to disagree more often (65.4%) than those who converted to Christianity (53.2%), and interestingly enough people who are living with Buddhist in their home were less apt to reject the idea that God loves believers more than others (55.8%) than were those with no Buddhists in their homes (64.0%).

Reflections on Question 3

The fact that respondents over the age of 60 showed a much more pronounced tendency to agree that God loves believers more than others might be an indication that earlier generations of local church people were more exclusivist in their thinking than those under the age of 60 are today. We should note that in Question 2, above, respondents over the age of 60 also showed a more pronounced tendency towards exclusivism. Some 80.6% of them agreed that Christian teachings are the only correct ones while only 67.8% of those in the ages 11-30 category did so. It is possible, thus, that there is a trend towards pluralism in northern Thai Protestant thinking about people of other faiths. Or, it is also possible, although I think it less likely, that older people always tend to be inherently more exclusivist in their thinking.

The matter may also be related to educational status. As can be seen in Table 9, respondents above the age of 60 are less well-educated than are those in the lower age groups, and we have already seen in Question 2 that better educated respondents tend to be less exclusivist in their views than poorly educated respondents. It should not be forgotten that higher education in Thailand has been expanding rapidly for some time now and that Protestants, generally, tend to be better educated than the general population. This means that the older generation of church members may well have been more exclusivist and that education is a key factor in "re-socializing" northern Thai Protestants into mainstream northern Thai pluralistic thinking.

Table 9
Frequency Distribution for Ages Over 60
Compared to Educational Status

	Low Education	Medium Education	High Education	Number
<i>Total Sample</i>	25.5%	39.3%	35.3%	695
<i>Ages over 60</i>	56.7%	32.8%	10.4%	71

Note: Low education includes the first three responses in Question 20; medium education includes responses four, five, and six; and, high education includes the last two responses.

The question concerning whether or not previous generations of Protestants were more exclusivist is a significant one. If they were more exclusivist, that would mean that the Presbyterian missionaries were relatively successful in their attempts to change northern Thai attitudes about people of other faiths from a pluralist acceptance to an exclusivist lack of acceptance of those people. The situation facing us today would then be that, for whatever reasons, cultural pluralism is increasingly reasserting itself as the era of missionary exclusivism and influence recedes.

To this point, in any event, it does appear that education is one of the factors promoting pluralistic thinking among northern Thai Protestants.

Questions 4 & 5

The purpose of these two questions is two-fold. First, they seek to test the degree to which the respondents accept or do not accept a central premise of exclusivist Western Protestant thinking, namely that only Christians are saved. Second, they seek to distinguish the personal views of the respondents from the teachings of their churches, as the respondents understand those teachings.

Question 4 asks, "What does your church usually teach concerning the salvation of people of other faith?" Question 5 asks, "What do you think about the salvation of people of other faith?" The respondents were asked in each question to select just one answer from the following four possibilities, which are the same for both questions: [a] "they will go to hell because salvation is found only in Christianity"; [b] "some people of other faiths might be saved, but most will not; but most Christians will be saved"; [c] "people of other faiths who are good will be saved the same as good Christians"; and [d] "I'm not sure on this question." It is assumed that the first response is exclusivist and the third response is pluralistic. The second response is designed to be a compromise or median response. Readers will appreciate the difficulty of designing a compromise response given the fact that the question of salvation is a dualistic one. People either are or are not saved. In effect, selecting the second response suggests some degree of pluralism, however slight, yet it could also be taken as leaning rather heavily towards exclusivism.

Question 4

Table 10 shows that 32.4% thought that their church teaches that people of other faiths are going to hell. A nearly equal number (30.9%) agreed with the statement that their churches teaches that all good people are saved irrespective of religion, while one-fifth (20.0%) of the sample chose the "compromise" response that only a few non-Christians can be saved.

Table 10
Frequency Distribution for Question 4

What your church usually teaches concerning the salvation of people of other faiths

	Number	Valid %
<i>Going to Hell</i>	232	32.4%
<i>A Few are Saved</i>	143	20.0%
<i>All Good People Saved</i>	221	30.9%
<i>Uncertain</i>	118	16.5%

N = 715

In terms of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position* in the church (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), and whether or not the respondents were *born into a Christian home* (Question 21) or have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22), there is considerable variation in responses, especially in terms of gender, locality, and position in the church. There is also an important difference in terms of education, which will be discussed under Question 5.

Table 11 shows that men, again, tend to be more exclusivist in their views on people of other faiths than do women, who conversely are more pluralist. The difference between the two for the first, exclusivist response is 9.9% with men being more exclusivist. The difference between the two for the third, pluralist response is 9.2% with women being more pluralist. We should also note that women were also somewhat more inclined to select "uncertain", a response that suggests an unsettled perspective and, perhaps, reflects a shift in thinking that is still in process.

Table 11
Frequency Distribution for Question 4 by Gender
What your church usually teaches concerning the salvation of people of other faiths

	Women	Men
Going to Hell	28.1%	38.0%
A Few are Saved	18.3%	21.5%
All Good People Saved	35.3%	26.1%
Uncertain	18.3%	14.1%
Number	406	285

Table 12 shows that urban respondents are considerably more exclusivist in their attitudes towards the salvation of non-Christians, especially compared to rural respondents. Urban respondents affirmed the statement that their church teaches that people of other faiths "will go to hell because salvation is found only in Christianity" much more frequently (46.6%) than did rural respondents (28.9%). Part of the reason is that the Fa Ham Chinese Church, an unusually exclusivist church with a distinctive ethnic Chinese heritage, somewhat skews the sample, but even when the members of that church are factored out, 39.0% of the remaining sample affirmed the statement that their church teaches that people of other faiths are damned.

Table 12
Frequency Distribution for Question 4 by Locality
What your church usually teaches concerning the salvation of people of other faiths

	Rural	Amphur	Suburban	Urban
<i>Going to Hell</i>	28.9%	31.2%	35.4%	46.6%
<i>A Few are Saved</i>	19.5%	21.7%	20.0%	18.2%
<i>All Good People Saved</i>	31.4%	34.1%	30.8%	20.5%
<i>Uncertain</i>	19.8%	13.0%	13.8%	14.8%
<i>Number</i>	318	138	130	88

Table 13 shows that pastors affirmed the statement that their churches teach that people of other faiths "will go to hell because salvation is found only in Christianity" much more frequently (68.2%) than did any other group sampled in this study.

Table 13
Frequency Distribution for Question 4 by Positions
What your church usually teaches concerning the salvation of people of other faiths

	Pastors	Elders	Deacons	Members
<i>Going to Hell</i>	68.2%	34.8%	33.7%	30.4%
<i>A Few are Saved</i>	13.6%	25.0%	19.1%	19.6%
<i>All Good People Saved</i>	13.6%	22.3%	30.3%	32.8%
<i>Uncertain</i>	4.5%	17.0%	16.9%	17.2%
<i>Number</i>	22	112	89	454

In terms of the other variables, there are only minor differences in the frequency distributions for those living with people of another faith in their home compared with those who do not and between those who were born into Christian families and those who were not.

Question 5

Table 14 shows the same general pattern of responses as seen in Question 4, above (see Table 10). As we will discuss in more detail below, however, when we compare the answers in Questions 4 (church's teachings) and 5 (personal belief) there is a roughly 6.0% shift away from exclusivism and a roughly 4.0% shift towards pluralism that holds to one degree or another for all groups surveyed in this study.

Table 14
Frequency Distribution for Question 5
What you think about the salvation of people of other faith

	Number	Valid %
<i>Going to Hell</i>	201	28.1%
<i>A Few are Saved</i>	140	19.6%
<i>All Good People Saved</i>	248	34.7%
<i>Uncertain</i>	126	17.6%

N = 715

In terms of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position* in the church (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), and whether or not the respondents were *born into a Christian home* (Question 21) or have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22), there is considerable variation in responses, especially in terms of gender, locality, church position, and education. In virtually all of the cases, however, these variations parallel the same ones discussed under Question 4, above. As we have already noted, the only difference is a consistent shift by a few percentages away from exclusivism and towards pluralism. The variation for the first response, which states that people of other faiths are damned, between Questions 4 and 5 is as low as 0.4% for those aged over 60 to as high as 9.1% for pastors. Since the trends for the other variables have already been described in tables under Question 4, we will here look only at the case of education.

Table 15 indicates that education does make some difference in the responses to Question 5. Overall, some 32.6% of those with a higher education believe that non-Christians are damned, as opposed to just 20.5% of those with a lower education. At the same time, 33.9% of the respondents with a higher education think that all good people are saved as opposed to 37.4% of those with a lower education. People

with a higher education, in sum, are more exclusivist in their responses to Question 5 than those with a lower education.

The figures in Table 15 contradict the analysis presented for Questions 1 through 3, where it appears that higher education results in a more pluralist point of view. As in the case of locality in Question 4, above, the uniquely exclusivist respondents from the Fa Ham Chinese Church also skew the sample for those with a higher education. The members of that church tend to be much more highly educated than the overall sample. If we remove the Fa Ham Church respondents, we see that the figures for those with a higher education are much closer to those for people with lower and medium educational levels. Minus the Fa Ham Church, people with a higher education again score highest in terms of pluralism, with 38.9% agreeing that all good people are saved. At the same time, they continue to score higher than people with a lower education in terms of the exclusivist response that all people of other faiths are damned. The respondents in the higher education category, whether including or excluding the Fa Ham Church respondents, are evidently more polarized in their views on the salvation of people of other faiths. Significantly fewer (14.5% or 13.9%) selected the more median position that a few non-Christians are saved than either the lower or medium education samples. They were also more likely to state that they are "uncertain" than the other two categories.

The data contained in Table 15, thus, suggests that people with a higher education are less likely to choose a compromise position on the salvation of people of other faiths and more of them are likely to be uncertain regarding their views. We should also note that even if the Fa Ham Church respondents are included, less than one-third of those with a higher education (32.6%) are still clearly exclusivist in their views on the salvation of people of other faiths.

Table 15
Frequency Distribution for Question 5 by Education
What you think about the salvation of people of other faiths

	Low Education	Medium Education	High Education	Higher Ed minus Fa Ham Church
Going to Hell	20.5%	28.7%	32.6%	26.0%
A Few are Saved	26.3%	20.6%	14.5%	13.9%
All Good People Saved	37.4%	35.3%	33.9%	38.9%
Uncertain	15.8%	15.4%	19.0%	21.2%
Number	171	272	242	208

Note: Low education includes the first three responses in Question 20; medium education includes responses four, five, and six; and, high education includes the last two responses.

In terms of the other variables, it should be noted that the respondents born into Christian families tended to be more pluralist, less exclusivist in their responses than converts. Some 26.7% of those born in Christian homes agreed that non-Christians are damned as opposed to 32.7% of those not born into a Christian home. Again, 37.7% of those born in Christian homes agreed that all good people are saved as opposed to 26.3% of those not born into Christian homes.

We find a similar pattern for those who are living with people of other faiths in their homes, who tend to be more pluralist, compared to those who are living in completely Christian homes, who tend to be more exclusivist. Some 25.6% of those with non-Christians in the home agreed that non-Christians are damned as opposed to 29.5% of those with no one of other faiths in the home. Again, 39.8% of those with people of other faiths in their homes agreed that all good people are saved as opposed to 31.9% of those with no people of other faiths in their homes.

Reflections on Questions 4 and 5

Two trends are apparent in the data obtained from Questions 4 and 5. First, in both questions a smaller number than might be expected chose the first response, that people of other faiths are damned,

which answer reflects a Protestant exclusivist heritage. It is especially noteworthy that only 28.1% of the respondents personally believe in Question 5 that people of other faiths are going to hell while 34.7% agreed with the overtly pluralist response. The responses to these two questions strongly reinforce the impression that the majority of the respondents tend, to one degree or another, towards an ideological pluralism that reflects their northern Thai and Buddhist cultural heritage. The matter should not be overstated, however. Nearly one fifth of the sample (19.6%) agreed to the statement that only a few non-Christians will be saved, a response that implies a strong residual undercurrent of exclusivist thinking. Only slightly fewer respondents (17.6%) stated, furthermore, that they were uncertain of their answer, suggesting that they did not know how to choose between the strictures of their Protestant and Buddhist cultural heritages. Perhaps it would be better to say that the responses to these two questions most clearly indicate a tendency away from exclusivism but not necessarily a clear trend towards pluralism.

Equally important is the difference in responses to the two questions. As can be seen from Table 16, the total sample shows a slight shift away from the perceived teachings of the church. The respondents, that is, collectively indicate that their local churches tend to teach exclusivism more than pluralism and that they are more inclined towards pluralism than are their churches. The shift is not dramatic. The personal shift away from overt ecclesiastical exclusivism towards overt pluralism is only 3.8%. We should note, however, that this shift holds true for every one of the groups surveyed and varies from less than 1.0% to nearly 10.0%, depending on the group. It appears, in sum, that there is a slight shift away from the received ecclesiastical teaching of exclusivism towards the cultural attitude of pluralism.

Table 16
Comparison of Frequency Distributions for Questions 4 & 5

	Question 4 Church teaches	Question 5 You think
<i>Going to Hell</i>	32.4%	28.1%
<i>A Few are Saved</i>	20.0%	19.6%
<i>All Good People Saved</i>	30.9%	34.7%
<i>Uncertain</i>	16.5%	17.6%

N = 715 for both questions

We should also note that the respondents showed a strong tendency to select the same response for both questions. Table 17 compares the responses to Question 5 with those to Question 4 for each of the 4 responses, thus for example 84.1% of those who stated in Question 5 that they believe that people of other faiths are going to hell also stated in Question 4 that their church teaches the same thing. Even in the case of those who in Question 5 were uncertain of their own position, 54.8% also chose "uncertain" in Question 4 concerning what their church teaches. The majority of respondents, in sum, believe that they hold the same position on the question of the salvation of people of other faiths as that of their church. They do not seem themselves as being innovative.

Table 17
Frequency Distributions Comparing Responses in Questions 4 to Question 5

Respondents believe ↓	Church teaches Going to Hell	Church teaches A Few are Saved	All Good People are Saved	Uncertain what church teaches
<i>Going to Hell</i>	84.1%	16.5%	7.8%	15.9%
<i>A Few are Saved</i>	7.0%	61.9%	9.0%	15.1%
<i>All Good Saved</i>	1.5%	15.1%	73.4%	13.5%
<i>Uncertain</i>	7.5%	6.5%	9.8%	54.8%
<i>Number</i>	201	139	244	126

Explanation: of all of those who agreed in Question 5 that non-Christians are going to hell, 84.1% agreed to the same proposition in Question 4, while of all of those who agreed in Question 5 that non-Christians are going to hell, 7.0% stated in Question 4 that a few are saved. Of all of those who agreed in Question 5 that non-Christians are going to hell, 1.5% stated in Question 4 that all good people are saved. And so on.

It is also notable, however, that of those who chose the first or exclusivist response in Question 5 only 1.5% stated in Question 4 that their church teaches a pluralist point of view. Of those who chose the third or pluralist response in Question 5, on the other hand, considerably more (7.8%) stated that their church teaches an exclusivist point of view. The percentages in both cases are small, but they do suggest that some of those who adhere to a pluralist perspective concerning people of other faith believe that they are innovative in doing so. There is almost no sense, conversely, that exclusivism is an innovative position. It appears, in sum, that local churches are somewhat more exclusivist than a portion of their members and that, perhaps, historically they have also been more exclusivist than pluralist in their thinking about people of other faiths.

What may be even more significant regarding the data contained in Table 17 is that so many people think that their churches teach religious pluralism. Of those who chose the second response, which is a compromise response between exclusivism and pluralism, in Question 5 some 15.1% claimed in Question 4 that their church teaches pluralism. Again, of those who were "uncertain," in Question 5, a total of 13.5% stated in Question 4 that their church teaches pluralism. If the opinions of the respondents are at all reflective of the actual situation in the churches, it is apparent that northern Thai Protestant local churches do communicate to their members at least some pluralist attitudes regarding people of other faiths.

Finally, we should mention the answers pastors gave to these two questions. In Question 4, some 68.2% of the pastors affirmed the first response, namely that their churches teach that people of other faiths are damned, that figure being more than 20.0% higher than for any other group surveyed. In Question 5, as already noted above, 59.1% of pastors selected that same response as reflecting their own thinking, which again is much higher than for any other group. On the face of it, pastors appear to be much more exclusivist in their thinking about people of other faiths than other church officers and church members generally. One possible interpretation is that for those with theological training the first response to these two questions seems to be the more correct answer theologically. They would be able to point to a number of places in the Bible that seem to affirm that only Christians are saved. In other words, the pastors answered Questions 4 and 5 in the same way that they answered Question 3, that is according to the received theological wisdom of the church as they understand it. If so, the shift in thinking of pastors away from exclusivism of the church and towards personal pluralism as indicated by their responses to these two questions is an important one. It is made in the face of the pastors' sense that the church teaches exclusivism and reconfirms the slight but noticeable shift of the whole sample away from exclusivism and towards pluralism, which we have already noted.

Conclusion

The data obtained from these five questions suggests that the respondents, as a group, retain a strong inclination towards both pluralist and exclusivist thinking. If anything, the pluralist tendency appears to be slightly stronger. Our data also suggests that pluralism is promoted to some extent by higher education, and that—if there is a trend in one direction or the other—that trend is slightly towards pluralism.

In light of the data for Questions 6 and following, it should be emphasized that these first five questions test only the area of beliefs or ideology. They lead to the conclusion, however, that theologically and ideologically northern Thai Protestants who are members of CCT churches do not, collectively, share in the ideology of the old-time Presbyterian missionaries. There is some indication that they did agree in the past more than they do today. At the same time, missionary exclusivism has not disappeared, but it should be recognized that so far as we can tell from the data, relatively few respondents are consistently exclusivist or pluralist. The sample tends to be both pluralist and exclusivist to varying degrees depending on the question asked (see the discussion in Chapter 4 on core groups).

Chapter 2

Analysis of Questions 6 – 10

Introduction

The general purpose of these five questions is to test how the respondents look upon their relationship with people of other faiths. It deals with the important question of evangelism as an element in that relationship (Questions 6 and 7), how people of other faiths view Christians as the respondents see it (Questions 8 and 9), and who is the source of friction between Christians and people of other faiths (Question 10). One of the goals of these questions, particularly the last three, is to see whether or not the respondents feel constrained in any way in their attitudes towards people of other faiths and their religion. We will find that the data suggests that they do feel somewhat constrained by the traditional Protestant emphasis on evangelism. On the other hand, they evidently do not feel constrained socially by being members of a small religious minority.

(Readers are again reminded that all of the percentages contained in this report are valid percentages, that is they include only those respondents who actually answered the particular question under consideration.)

Questions 6 & 7

These two questions test the respondents understanding of how evangelism relates to their attitudes about and relations with people of other faiths. From the missionary era down to the present, northern Thai Protestants have placed special emphasis on evangelism as being the first and most important of all of the ministries of the church. As an outreach ministry, evangelism presumably has a major impact on the ways in which Protestants look on their relationships with people of other faiths. These two questions are also related to Questions 4 and 5, it being assumed originally that the responses in both sets should mirror each other. That is, respondents who gave pluralist responses in the first two questions will likely give the same response in these two questions; and, by the same token, those who tested exclusivist in Questions 4 and 5 should give similar responses here.

Question 6

Question 6 begins with the statement, "The Bible teaches us to love our neighbors." It then asks, "What does loving our neighbors of other faiths mean?" Five possible responses are provided: [a] "do everything, both in speaking and acting, to bring them to faith in God"; [b] "share in their joys and sufferings with the hope that they will know God; but do not emphasize conversion"; [c] "show them compassion as Thai brothers and sisters without expecting anything in return"; [d] "this is not a matter to worry about or think a lot about"; and, [e] "I'm not sure on this question." Respondents were asked to select only one response.

It is assumed that the first response is exclusivist and the third is pluralist in intent. The second response is taken to be a compromise response but probably is inclined slightly towards pluralism. It is intended to capture the position of those who see good deeds, rather than verbal presentations of the Christian message, as central to evangelism. The purpose of the fourth response is to see whether or not the respondents even feel that the question of evangelism is personally important to them.

Table 18 shows that the respondents were almost evenly divided between those who stated that loving one's neighbor means overtly evangelizing them (38.3%) and those who agreed that loving one's neighbor means showing them compassion without any thought of converting them (36.2%). Overall, 58.0% agreed to statements in Question 6 that eschew overt evangelization of people of other faiths (that is, responses two and three). It should be noted that only 1.1% of the sample agreed that one should not worry about loving one's neighbors, suggesting that the issue of how to relate to one's neighbors is an important one for virtually all of the respondents. It should also be noted that just 2.5% of the respondents felt uncertain on this question, indicating that the great majority of them have thought about the question and formed an opinion about it.

Table 18
Frequency Distribution for Question 6
The Meaning of Loving our Neighbors of Other Faiths

	Number	Valid %
<i>Evangelize Them</i>	272	38.3%
<i>Share & Hope</i>	155	21.8%
<i>Show Compassion</i>	257	36.2%
<i>Not Important</i>	8	1.1%
<i>Uncertain</i>	18	2.5%

N = 710

In terms of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position* in the church (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), and whether or not the respondents were *born into a Christian home* (Question 21) or have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22), there is an important degree of variation in three categories, namely position in the church, educational status, and whether or not one was born into a Christian home.

Table 19 shows that on the whole pastors (55.0%) and elders (50.0%) more frequently selected the first, exclusivist response, which holds that loving one's neighbor of another faith means evangelizing them than did the general membership (34.9%). Elders were the least likely (21.4%) to agree to the pluralist statement that loving one's neighbor means showing them compassion without hoping they will convert .

Table 19
Frequency Distribution for Question 6 by Positions
The Meaning of Loving our Neighbors of Other Faiths

	Pastors	Elders	Deacons	Members
<i>Evangelize Them</i>	55.0%	50.0%	42.5%	34.9%
<i>Share & Hope</i>	20.0%	26.8%	19.5%	21.2%
<i>Show Compassion</i>	25.0%	21.4%	36.8%	38.9%
<i>Not Important</i>	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	1.3%
<i>Uncertain</i>	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	3.8%
<i>Number</i>	20	112	87	453

Table 20 shows that 43.4% of less well-educated respondents tend to equate love of neighbor with uncomplicated compassion where respondents with both medium and higher education show a greater inclination to love their neighbors by evangelizing them. In terms of how one expresses Christian love of neighbor, in other words, the higher the educational level the more likely are respondents to equate that love with overt evangelization of neighbors of other faiths. In every case, however, the majority of respondents do not affirm the exclusivist choice of the first response, evangelism. If we accept the premise that the second choice of sharing in the sorrows and joys of people of other faith is conscious but covert evangelism and a step away from an exclusivist commitment to evangelization, then the old-time missionary approach to people of other faiths remains the favored choice of only roughly 30% to 40% of the sample when the variable of educational status is considered. Table 20 also shows that the percentages for the total urban sample does not differ greatly from that of the particularly exclusivist Fa Ham Church and, in fact, are even slightly more exclusivist.

Table 20
Frequency Distribution for Question 6 by Education
The Meaning of Loving our Neighbors of Other Faiths

	Low Education	Medium Education	High Education	Higher Ed minus Fa Ham Church
<i>Evangelize Them</i>	30.6%	39.0%	43.1%	40.6%
<i>Share & Hope</i>	21.4%	23.8%	20.1%	21.9%
<i>Show Compassion</i>	43.4%	33.5%	34.7%	34.9%
<i>Not Important</i>	2.3%	0.7%	0.8%	1.0%
<i>Uncertain</i>	2.3%	3.0%	1.3%	1.6%
<i>Number</i>	173	269	239	192

Note: Low education includes the first three responses in Question 20; medium education includes responses four, five, and six; and, high education includes the last two responses.

Table 21 shows that those respondents who were born in Christian homes tend to be more pluralist in their responses than do those who were not born in Christian homes. Some 47.7% of the latter, thus, equated love of neighbor with overt evangelization while only 35.4% of those born in Christian homes did so. On the other hand, the differences between the two groups in terms of the pluralist response of showing one's neighbor uncomplicated compassion is not that great. The reason is that 7.3% more of those born in Christian homes chose the medium response of covert evangelism (24.0%) than did those not born into Christian homes (16.7%).

Table 21
Frequency Distribution for Question 6 by Birth in a Christian Home
The Meaning of Loving our Neighbors of Other Faiths

	Born in a Christian Home	Not Born in a Christian Home
<i>Evangelize Them</i>	35.4%	47.7%
<i>Share & Hope</i>	24.0%	16.7%
<i>Show Compassion</i>	36.1%	33.8%
<i>Not Important</i>	1.3%	0.9%
<i>Uncertain</i>	3.2%	0.9%
<i>Number</i>	466	216

Regarding the other variables, women showed a stronger tendency to show uncomplicated compassion (39.5%) compared to the men (30.2%). Rural Christians also showed a less inclination towards overt evangelism (35.8%) than did urban Christians (50.0). There was only a slight difference among age groups with people ages 11-30 tending to be just a little more pluralist (37.1% selecting the third response) compared to those ages 60 and above (39.7% selecting the third response).

Question 7

Question 7 asks, "Do you agree that it is not necessary for Christians to evangelize people of other faiths?" The question is phrased negatively for two reasons: first, to reduce the chance that respondents would go through the questionnaire selecting one response automatically; and, second, to encourage the respondents to stop and reflect on their evangelistic commitment. Responses disagreeing with the statement in this question are taken to be exclusivist; responses affirming the statement are considered pluralist.

As is seen in Table 22, the respondents, in general, strongly affirmed the necessity of evangelizing non-Christians. Some 79.6% of the total sample disagreed to one degree or another with the statement that Christians need not evangelize people of other faiths, a particularly strong response esp. given the negative and perhaps slightly awkward wording of the question. Only 19.0% agreed.

Table 22
 Frequency Distribution for Question 7
 It is not necessary for Christians to evangelize people of other faiths

	Number	Valid %
<i>Disagree Entirely</i>	237	33.1%
<i>Disagree</i>	279	38.9%
<i>Disagree Somewhat</i>	55	7.7%
<i>Agree Somewhat</i>	36	5.0%
<i>Agree</i>	71	9.9%
<i>Agree Entirely</i>	29	4.0%
<i>Uncertain</i>	10	1.4%

N = 717

In terms of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position in the church* (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), and whether or not the respondents were *born into a Christian home* (Question 21) or have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22), there is a noteworthy degree of variation in the categories of age and educational status.

Table 23 shows that younger people, ages 11-30, disagreed with the idea that evangelism is unimportant at a rate (85.1%) considerably higher than those ages 60 and over (69.6%). Of all of the variables sampled, those over the age of 60 agreed with the proposition that evangelism is unimportant at a rate (30.4%) higher than for any other category.

Table 23
 Summary of Frequency Distribution for Question 7 by Age
 It is not necessary for Christians to evangelize people of other faiths

	Total Sample	11-30	31-60	Over 60
<i>Disagree</i>	79.6%	85.1%	79.9%	69.6%
<i>Agree</i>	19.0%	13.5%	18.7%	30.4%
<i>Number</i>	717	208	418	69

Table 24 shows that those with a higher education disagreed with the idea that evangelism is unimportant at a rate (84.9%) higher than those with a medium education (80.1%) or with a lower education level (72.1%). That is, as in the case of Question 6, there is a positive correlation between level of education and valuation of evangelism.

Table 24
 Summary of Frequency Distribution for Question 7 by Educational Status
 It is not necessary for Christians to evangelize people of other faiths

	Total Sample	Lower Educatn	Medium Edn	Higher Education
<i>Disagree</i>	79.6%	72.1%	80.1%	84.9%
<i>Agree</i>	19.0%	26.7%	19.1%	13.1%
<i>Number</i>	717	172	272	245

Note: Low education includes the first three responses in Question 20; medium education includes responses four, five, and six; and, high education includes the last two responses.

In terms of the other variables, women disagreed with the statement that evangelism is not important at a rate (80.1%) slightly lower than men (81.6%). Rural respondents tended to agree that evangelism is not important at a higher rate (24.1%) than those living in amphur centers (15.7%), suburbs (11.7%), or cities (11.2%). Pastors, again, disagreed with the statement that evangelism is not important at a much higher rate (95.5%) than those holding other positions in the church, particularly the general

membership (79.1%). In their high valuation of evangelism as reflected in Question 7, there are not appreciable differences between those born in Christian homes and converts or between those who have people of other faiths living with them in their homes and those who do not.

Reflections on Questions 6 and 7

The data obtained from Questions 6 and 7 begin to reveal the complexity of northern Thai Protestant pluralist and exclusivist thinking about and attitudes towards people of other faiths. Theologically or ideologically, as we have seen in the first five questions, Protestants in northern Thailand are apparently somewhat more pluralist in their thinking than exclusivist, and the trend seems to be somewhat away from exclusivism.

The data from Question 6 seems to confirm that trend. As we saw in Table 18, only roughly two-fifths (38.3%) of the respondents affirmed the overtly exclusivist response that loving one's neighbor means doing "everything, both in speaking and acting, to bring them to faith in God." Most of the remaining three-fifths (58.0%) selected the second and third responses to that question, which affirm either covert or overt pluralism. While the matter is made more complicated by the fact that the second response may also be taken to be somewhat exclusivist, the fact remains that the solid majority of respondents did not choose the historical missionary position of overt, aggressive evangelism. In spite of the fact that evangelism is still highly valued by the leadership of most local churches and widely believed to be the most important ministry of the church, a strong minority of 36.2% affirmed the pluralist response, which uses the more Buddhist than Christian term of "compassion" (*maeta karuna*) to describe loving relationships with one's neighbors of other faiths.

The data from Question 7, however, suggests that a strong commitment to evangelism remains central to the respondents understanding of their relationship to people of other faiths. Virtually four-fifths (79.6%), as we saw from Table 22, disagreed to one degree or another with the statement in Question 7 that it is not necessary to evangelize people of other faiths. While many of the respondents may have an understanding of evangelism that is not overtly exclusivist, as the data from Question 6 suggests, it is important to understand that the respondents continue to value evangelism highly even when we would expect differently. It might be assumed, for example, that those who agreed in Question 6 that the best way to love one's neighbor is by uncomplicated compassion would not value evangelism. Such is not the case. Table 25 shows that 73.9% of all of those who chose the pluralist response of uncomplicated compassion in Question 6 still affirmed, to one degree or another, the importance evangelism in Question 7.

Table 25
Comparison of the Total Frequency Distributions for Question 7 with the
First and Third Responses in Question 6 to Question 7

	Question 7	Question 6 Exclusivist Response	Question 6 Pluralist Response
<i>Disagree Entirely</i>	33.1%	46.1%	23.3%
<i>Disagree</i>	38.9%	35.2%	42.0%
<i>Disagree Somewhat</i>	7.7%	6.4%	8.6%
<i>Agree Somewhat</i>	5.0%	1.9%	7.4%
<i>Agree</i>	9.9%	5.2%	14.8%
<i>Agree Entirely</i>	4.0%	4.9%	1.2%
<i>Uncertain</i>	1.4%	0.4%	2.7%
<i>Number</i>	717	267	257

Explanation: Column 1 shows the responses to Question 7. Column 2 shows how those who chose the first, exclusivist response in Question 6 answered Question 7. That is, 46.1% of those who answered Question 6 with the first response, answered Question 7 with the response of "disagree entirely." And 35.2% of those who answered Question 6 with the first response, answered Question 7 with the response of "disagree." And so on. Column 3, in the same manner, shows how those who chose the third, pluralist response in Question 6 answered Question 7.

We should note, on the other hand, that those advocating uncomplicated compassion in Question 6 tended to be somewhat less strong in their response to Question 7 compared to the whole sample. As Table 25 also shows, they "disagreed entirely" with the idea that it is not necessary for Christians to evangelize people of other faiths less frequently (23.3%) than did the total sample in Question 7 (33.1%). The shift to a less strong response is especially clear when compared with those who answered Question 6 with the first, exclusivist response that loving one's neighbors of another faith means evangelizing them.

The matter of pluralism and exclusivism, in sum, is clearly more complex than we might have suspected. Each option remains embedded in northern Thai Protestant thinking about their non-Christian neighbors.

Questions 8, 9, & 10

These three questions seek to discover how the respondents view their relationships with people of other faiths, as opposed to Questions 6 and 7, which are normative questions dealing with how the respondents value evangelism. The intent, especially in Questions 8 and 9, is to ascertain whether or not a sense of being forced to submit to social prejudice or feelings of alienation might influence the respondents' attitudes towards people of other faiths. We should also note that these three questions are not classified according to pluralist or exclusivist responses. A comparison of answers to these three questions with Questions 5 and 6, categorized according to pluralist and exclusivist responses in those two questions, show only a slight correlation for Question 5 and virtually none for Question 6. The respondents, that is, show only the slightest of inclinations, if at all, to answer Questions 8, 9, or 10 on the basis of their pluralist and exclusivist attitudes as expressed in other questions.

Question 8

Question 8 asks, "Do you agree that generally the Thai people look down on Christians as ones who follow the religion of foreigners?" The purpose of the question is to determine the degree to which the respondents feel that their religion alienates them from their general society. In the past, Christians were widely criticized for taking up a foreign religion.

Table 26 indicates that virtually two-thirds (66.4%) of respondents did not agree, to one degree or another, with the proposition that their society looks down on them as followers of a foreign religion. Only 28.7% of the total sample agreed with that proposition.

Table 26
Frequency Distribution for Question 8
Thai people look down on Christians as ones who follow the religion of foreigners

	Number	Valid %
<i>Disagree Entirely</i>	177	24.9%
<i>Disagree</i>	212	29.8%
<i>Disagree Somewhat</i>	83	11.7%
<i>Agree Somewhat</i>	83	11.7%
<i>Agree</i>	91	12.8%
<i>Agree Entirely</i>	30	4.2%
<i>Uncertain</i>	35	4.9%

N = 711

In terms of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position in the church* (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), and whether or not the respondents were *born into a Christian home* (Question 21) or have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22), there is a strong degree of consistency throughout the sample. None of the categories within each variable vary by more than 10.0%, and there are no discernable patterns in those variations.

Question 9

Question 9 asks, "How willing are the Buddhists in your village or community to accept Christians?" This question parallels Question 8 and has the same general purpose of seeking to determine the extent to which Christians feel alienated from the general society. The word "accept" (*yom rub*), although somewhat nebulous in meaning, indicates a positive attitude lacking any prejudicial aversion against the person or group accepted. Table 27 shows a very large majority (85.1%) of the total sample agreed to one degree or another that the people of other faiths in their community accept Christians. Only 11.5% disagreed.

Table 27
Frequency Distribution for Question 9
Willingness of the Buddhists in your village or community to accept Christians

	Number	Valid %
<i>Disagree Entirely</i>	3	0.4%
<i>Disagree</i>	11	1.5%
<i>Disagree Somewhat</i>	69	9.6%
<i>Agree Somewhat</i>	227	31.6%
<i>Agree</i>	297	41.3%
<i>Agree Entirely</i>	88	12.2%
<i>Uncertain</i>	24	3.3%

N = 719

In terms of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position in the church* (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), and whether or not the respondents were *born into a Christian home* (Question 21) or have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22), there is again a strong degree of consistency throughout the sample—just as was the case in Question 8. Every category of every variable sampled, agreed at a rate of at least 80.0% that Buddhists in their community are willing to accept Christians. The highest rate of acceptance for Question 9 is among those aged 60 and over (91.4%). The lowest rate is among those with a lower educational status (82.2%). There are no clear trends apparent in the variables.

Question 10

Question 10 asks, "When Christians have problems have people of other faiths, do you agree that usually Christians are not the source of the problem?" The purpose of this question is to test the degree to which Christians feel victimized when there are tensions with people of other faiths. Table 28 shows that slightly more than half (51.7%) of the respondents agree that tensions between people of other faiths and Christians, where they exist, are usually not caused by Christians.

Table 28
Frequency Distribution for Question 10
Christians are usually not the source of problems with people of other faiths

	Number	Valid %
<i>Disagree Entirely</i>	37	5.3%
<i>Disagree</i>	119	17.2%
<i>Disagree Somewhat</i>	96	13.9%
<i>Agree Somewhat</i>	109	15.8%
<i>Agree</i>	201	29.0%
<i>Agree Entirely</i>	48	6.9%
<i>Uncertain</i>	82	11.8%

N = 692

In terms of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position* in the church (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), and whether or not the respondents were *born into a Christian home* (Question 21) or have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22), there is a strong degree of consistency throughout most of the sample—just as was the case in Questions 8 and 9. Every category of every variable sampled but one, agreed at a rate of at least 80.0% that non-Christians are usually the source of tensions between Christians and non-Christians. The only variable for which a larger degree of difference is apparent is that of whether or not the respondent was born in a Christian home.

Table 29 shows that respondents who were not born into a Christian home were less likely to agree that non-Christians are usually the source of friction with Christians.

Table 29
Frequency Distribution for Question 10 by Birth in a Christian Home
Christians are usually not the source of problems with people of other faiths

	Born in a Christian Home	Not Born in a Christian Home
<i>Disagree</i>	9.8%	15.4%
<i>Agree</i>	88.5%	78.3%
<i>Number</i>	470	221

As stated above, there is otherwise no major differences in the variables.

Reflections on Questions 8, 9, and 10

The responses to Questions 8 and 9 indicate that the respondents generally feel secure in northern Thai society. They do not feel that people look down on them because they are adherents of a foreigners' religion, and they generally feel accepted by their relatives and neighbors of other faiths. Only slightly more than one in ten (11.5%) stated that they do not feel accepted as Christians by the people of other faiths in their community (Table 27).

Things may not be quite as rosy as these figures suggest since, in my experience, northern Thai church members tend to look on questions regarding their relationship with their Buddhist neighbors as having a "right" and a "wrong" answer. The "right" answer is that everything is fine; we get along just fine. Admitting to tensions or problems between Buddhists and Christians is a "wrong" answer. The matter is partly one of not admitting weaknesses or failures, poor relationships within a community being seen as a failure and weakness. More largely, local people deeply value communal unity, so that it would be "wrong" to answer a question about communal unity negatively whatever the reality on the ground. On the other hand, many older Christians tell stories about how relationships used to be seriously strained between Christians and Buddhists in most communities, and they claim that things are much improved today. There is reason, then, to accept the respondents' overall claim that people of other faiths do not look down on them and do accept them, understanding that the situation may not be quite as definite or as positive as our data here suggests.

The responses to Question 10, however, suggest that the majority of the respondents still retain some sense that when there are inter-faith tensions, Christians are more likely to be the victims than the victimizers. Whatever the basis for this response, there is no indication from our sample that it is ideologically motivated, that is exclusivists seeing persecution where pluralists do not. Table 30 compares the responses to Question 10 with the exclusivist (first) and pluralist (third) responses to Question 5, where the respondents were queried concerning the prospects for salvation of people of other faiths. It shows that there is very little difference in Question 10 between those who answered Question 5 with a pluralist response or with an exclusivist response compared to the answers given by the total sample. Indeed, those who gave an exclusivist response to Question 5 actually disagreed that non-Christians are more often the source of tensions between Christians and non-Christians slightly more frequently (40.0%) than did those who gave a pluralist response (38.1%).

Table 30
Comparison of the Total Frequency Distributions for Question 10 with the
First and Third Responses to Question 5

	Question 10 Total Sample	Question 10 compared to Exclusivist Response in Question 5	Question 10 compared to Pluralist Response in Question 5
<i>Disagree</i>	36.4%	40.0%	38.1%
<i>Agree</i>	51.7%	52.3%	50.8%
<i>Number</i>	692	195	236

Explanation: Column 1 shows a summary of the responses to Question 10 itself. Column 2 shows how those who chose the first, exclusivist response in Question 5 answered Question 10. That is, 40.0% of those who answered Question 5 with the first, exclusivist response disagreed with Question 10, while 52.7% who answered Question 5 with the first response, exclusivist response answered agreed with Question 10. Column 3 shows, in the same manner, how those who gave a pluralist response in Question 5 answered Question 10.

It is hardly surprising that the respondents more often feel that generally non-Christians are the sources of inter-faith tensions rather Christians. What may be somewhat surprising is the relatively large percentage of the respondents (36.4%) who disagree with that proposition—who recognize, that is, that Christians can be as much a source of those tensions as people of other faiths. It may well be a mark of the general sense of security in their Christian identity that allows nearly two-fifths of the sample to be so self-critical.

By and large, by way of summary of the data for Questions 8, 9, and 10, a solid majority of the respondents feel comfortable socially with their identity as Protestants. Experiences of social coercion or a sense of being ostracized are not factors in their attitudes towards people of other faiths. A substantial minority is even capable of seeing Christians as being as much of a source of inter-faith tensions as are people of other faiths. The fact that the respondents do not seem to feel constrained or pressed upon by their social environment suggests that the exclusivist and pluralist strands in the respondents' thinking are largely cultural and historical in nature. They are not shaped by a contemporary sense of being an oppressed minority.

Conclusion

The responses to Questions 6 through 10 establish two important general facts. First, they indicate that the inter-mixing of pluralist and exclusivist themes in northern Thai Protestant thinking is more complex than the responses to the first five questions, above, might have led us to believe. Second, northern Thai Protestants are evidently not constrained by adverse social conditions in their understanding of people of other faiths.

Chapter 3

Analysis of Questions 11 – 15

Introduction

The last five questions in the survey instrument address one of the most pressing issues facing northern Thai Protestants, namely how they behave themselves in the context of Buddhist rites. This issue is raised virtually every time northern Thai Protestants discuss their relationship with people of other faiths, and at no point are the traditions of their culture and their religion more in tension than on the issue of participation in Buddhist rites. Northern Thai culture, on the one hand, values communal unity and frictionless interpersonal relationships. Failure to take full part in the rites of ones' neighbors is seen to be disrespectful of the neighbor. Protestants, on the other hand, have long been taught that participation in the rites of other religions violates the biblical commandments to worship and serve only One God and to refrain, specifically, from the worship of idols. For those not familiar with northern Thai culture and society, we should note that it is virtually impossible for Christians (or, anyone else) to avoid attending Buddhist rites; they are socially ubiquitous. The matter becomes particularly difficult in terms of funerals, for example, where Christians may be called upon to present robes to monks or light incense sticks before a casket—acts missionary teachings traditionally forbade them from doing.

To anticipate the data obtained from these five questions, we will see in this section that the respondents tend to be strongly exclusivist in their attitudes towards Buddhist rites. There seems to be a strong inclination to limit participation in those rites as much as possible and not a little antipathy towards any participation.

In what follows, two Thai terms having to do with gestures of respect are used. The first, *phanom mue*, signifies the physical act of pressing one's hands together at a level at least chest high or higher in an attitude that Westerners associate with prayer. In contemporary Thailand, it is both a social act of greeting and of showing the respect of a person of lower social status to someone of comparable or higher status. Buddhist rites frequently call on the faithful to *phanom mue*. The second term, *wai*, is both a noun and a verb. As a noun it has the same meaning as *phanom mue*. As a verb, it is the act of *phanom mue*-ing. The terms are used interchangeably in Thai, and while *wai* is the more commonly used term both are widely used and entirely understood. It is worth noting that in the past northern Thai Protestants normally did not *wai* or *phanom mue* during their own worship services, but in more recent years, especially in the North, it has become common for many Christians to *wai* during times of prayer and at the time of the benediction.

It should also be noted that beginning with Question 12 the number of valid responses drops below 700 for the remaining four questions. Two reasons are likely. First, many of the respondents are unfamiliar with the mechanics of filling out a questionnaire, and it is likely that they became fatigued even by this deliberately short form. Although we estimated that most people should be able to complete the form in 15 to 20 minutes, the students reported that it took many people, especially in the rural churches, as much as 45 minutes to complete it. Second, Questions 13 and 14 appear complicated on the form and were difficult for many to comprehend and fill out. Some respondents, apparently, became discouraged and gave up.

Questions 11 & 12

These two questions, as will be seen below, explore two different aspects of Christian participation in Buddhist rites. The purpose of these two questions is to establish the boundaries of such participation in terms of both cultural issues of communal unity and theological issues of proper Christian conduct.

Question 11

Question 11 begins with the statement that, "Buddhists sometimes feel that Christians destroy brotherly and sisterly unity with them because they do not show respect (*phanom mue*) during Buddhist ritual." It then asks, "What do you think?" Respondents are provided with five responses, of which they

are to choose only one: [a] whatever others think, Christians absolutely may not *phanom mue*; [b] although we empathize with them, Christians for the most part may not *phanom mue*; [c] actually, Christians should be broad-minded and *phanom mue*; [d] this is not an important matter and we can do whatever we want; and, [e] I'm not sure on this question. The first response is taken to be exclusivist, and the third response is intended to be pluralist. The second response is designed to be a medium position, but leans towards exclusivism. The fourth response intends to discover whether the respondents see this question as being worth expressing an opinion.

Table 31 shows that an explicit appeal to the Thai pluralist value of broad-mindedness (*chai kwang*) received very little affirmation (6.7%) while statements saying that Christians either absolutely may not *phanom mue* during Buddhist rituals or may not in most cases were selected 63.5% of the time. On the other hand, just over one respondent in five (20.6%) agreed with the statement that the issue raised in Question 11 is not important at all.

Table 31
Frequency Distribution for Question 11
Should Christians *phanom mue* during Buddhist Rituals?

	Number	Valid %
<i>Christians absolutely may not phanom mue</i>	285	40.5%
<i>Christians usually may not phanom mue</i>	162	23.0%
<i>Christians should be broad minded</i>	47	6.7%
<i>Not Important</i>	145	20.6%
<i>Uncertain</i>	65	9.2%

N = 704

In terms of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position in the church* (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), and whether or not the respondents were *born into a Christian home* (Question 21) or have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22), there is an important degree of difference in terms of age, position in the church, and education.

Table 32 shows that respondents over the age of 60 tended to be more exclusivist regarding the question of whether or not Christians should *phanom mue* or not during Buddhist Rituals. Young people, ages 11-30 tended to be less exclusivist but more uncertain about the issue compared with the older age groups.

Table 32
Summary of Frequency Distribution for Question 11 by Age
Should Christians *phanom mue* during Buddhist Rituals?

	Total Sample	Ages 11-30	Ages 31-60	Ages 61 & Above
<i>Christians absolutely may not phanom mue</i>	40.5%	38.6%	40.1%	48.6%
<i>Christians usually may not phanom mue</i>	23.0%	20.8%	24.8%	17.1%
<i>Christians should be broad minded</i>	6.7%	9.2%	5.6%	4.3%
<i>Not Important</i>	20.6%	18.4%	22.1%	21.4%
<i>Uncertain</i>	9.2%	13.0%	7.3%	8.6%
<i>Number</i>	704	207	411	70

Table 33 shows that church officers, particularly pastors and deacons, tended to be more exclusivist in their answer to Question 11 than did church members in general. Pastors, on the other hand, also more frequently saw this question as being unimportant compared to either elders or deacons.

Table 33
Frequency Distribution for Question 11 by Positions
Should Christians *phanom mue* during Buddhist Rituals?

	Pastors	Elders	Deacons	Members
<i>Christians absolutely may not phanom mue</i>	47.6%	42.7%	50.0%	38.6%
<i>Christians usually may not phanom mue</i>	9.5%	24.5%	18.6%	23.5%
<i>Christians should be broad minded</i>	4.8%	5.5%	3.5%	7.5%
<i>Not Important</i>	23.8%	18.2%	17.4%	21.7%
<i>Uncertain</i>	14.3%	9.1%	10.5%	8.8%
<i>Number</i>	21	110	86	456

Table 34 shows that those with a higher education tend to be somewhat less exclusivist in their responses to Question 11 than either those with a lower or a medium level education. They also tended to see the question raised in Question 11 as being an unimportant one, particularly when compared with those who have a lower educational status.

Table 34
Summary of Frequency Distribution for Question 11 by Educational Status
Should Christians *phanom mue* during Buddhist Rituals?

	Total Sample	Lower Education	Medium Education	Higher Education
<i>Christians absolutely may not phanom mue</i>	40.5%	48.9%	41.4%	32.9%
<i>Christians usually may not phanom mue</i>	23.0%	24.7%	26.5%	18.8%
<i>Christians should be broad minded</i>	6.7%	7.5%	5.6%	6.7%
<i>Not Important</i>	20.6%	13.2%	18.3%	29.2%
<i>Uncertain</i>	9.2%	5.7%	8.2%	12.5%
<i>Number</i>	704	174	268	240

Note: Low education includes the first three responses in Question 20; medium education includes responses four, five, and six; and, high education includes the last two responses.

In terms of the other variables, women tended to be slightly more exclusivist than men. They chose the first response, Christians absolutely should not *phanom mue* during Buddhist Rituals at a rate of 41.6% compared to 38.2% for men. The other variables of geographical location, whether or not one was born a Christian, and whether or not they were living with people of other faiths all show little difference in the responses given.

Question 12

Question 12 begins with the statement, "Some people say that there is no problem with Christians showing respect (*wai*) to Buddha images." It then asks, "Do you agree?" This question addresses specifically the question of Buddhist images, which northern Thai Protestants even today frequently refer to as "idols" (*rub kao rob*). It was assumed from the beginning that a large majority of the respondents would reject the idea that Christians may *wai* Buddha images, and the question is purposely phrased in such a way

as to imply that agreement to this questions is the preferable answer. As can be seen below, the invitation to a positive answer was overwhelmingly rejected. That is, I knew ahead of time that the response to this question would be overwhelmingly negative and purposely slanted the question against a negative response as a test to see how strong the respondent's attitude against *wai*-ing Buddha images is. It is strong.

Table 35 shows that 90.5% of the total sample disagreed, including a strong 55.0% who disagreed entirely, with the proposition that, "There is no problem with Christians showing respect to Buddha images." Only 7.6% of the respondents agreed with that statement. It is the decided opinion of the respondents (and of northern Thai Protestants generally) that Christians may not *wai* Buddha images.

Table 35
Frequency Distribution for Question 12
There is no problem with Christians showing respect (*wai*) to Buddha images

	Number	Valid %
<i>Disagree Entirely</i>	370	55.0%
<i>Disagree</i>	211	31.4%
<i>Disagree Somewhat</i>	28	4.2%
<i>Agree Somewhat</i>	22	3.3%
<i>Agree</i>	25	3.7%
<i>Agree Entirely</i>	4	0.6%
<i>Uncertain</i>	13	1.9%

N = 673

In terms of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position* in the church (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), and whether or not the respondents were *born into a Christian home* (Question 21) or have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22), there are only minor disparities among these variables. The only exception is age.

Table 36 shows that 10.8% of young people ages 11 to 30 agreed with the idea that Christians may show formal respect to Buddha images where as only 3.2% of those over 60 agreed. While the difference is large, with about three times as many young people agreeing as older people, the figures are still small. The overwhelming majority of people ages 11 to 30 (85.7%) joined their elders in rejecting that proposition.

Table 36
Summary of Frequency Distribution for Question 12 by Age
There is no problem with Christians showing respect (*wai*) to Buddha images

	Total Sample	11-30	31-60	Over 60
<i>Disagree</i>	90.5%	85.7%	91.9%	96.8%
<i>Agree</i>	7.6%	10.8%	6.6%	3.2%
<i>Number</i>	673	203	396	62

Regarding the other variables, as stated above there are only minor differences in responses. All categories reject the proposition that Christians may *wai* Buddha images with percentages ranging from a low of 88.1% for men (women scored 92.2%) to as high as 94.0% in the case of deacons.

Reflections on Questions 11 and 12

The data obtained from Questions 11 and 12 raises the important question of whether or not that data reflects a larger pattern of ideological response. Using the exclusivist and pluralist responses to Question 5, again, as a control we can see in Tables 37 and 38 that there is an ideological element involved in the responses to Questions 11 and 12.

Table 37 indicates that over three-fifths (62.9%) of those who agreed with the exclusivist attitude in Question 5 that all non-Christians are damned also agreed in Question 11 with the exclusivist attitude

that Christians absolutely may not *phanom mue* during Buddhist rituals. Only one-fourth (25.3%) of those who agreed with the pluralist statement in Question 5 that all good people of every faith are saved, on the other hand, agreed with the exclusivist attitude in Question 11 that Christians absolutely may not *phanom mue* during Buddhist rituals. The difference between them is 37.6%, a substantial difference, which indicates that distinct exclusivist and pluralist sentiments informed the respondents' answers to Question 11.

We should note, however, that only a relatively small percentage (11.2%) of those who answered Question 5 in a pluralist way also agreed with the overtly pluralist statement that Christians should be broad-minded and *phanom mue* during Buddhist rituals. Far more of those who answered Question 5 in a pluralist way (33.6%) opted for the response that this issue is not an important one, and many of them (21.6%) chose the more mildly exclusivist statement that usually Christians may not *phanom mue* during Buddhist merit-making rituals. In the context of Buddhist rites, that is, the great majority of the respondents eschewed an explicit appeal to pluralism, and those who had taken a pluralist stand in Question 5 chose in Question 11 to mute their pluralism in ways that did not explicitly deny exclusivism. We should also emphasize that the majority of the respondents did not select the most clearly exclusivist option in Question 11, indicating the continuing presence of an important tendency towards pluralism.

Table 37
Comparison of the Frequency Distributions for Question 11 with the
First and Third Responses to Question 5

	Question 11 Total Sample	Question 11 compared to Exclusivist Response in Question 5	Question 11 compared to Pluralist Response in Question 5
<i>Christians absolutely may not phanom mue</i>	40.5%	62.9%	25.3%
<i>Christians usually may not phanom mue</i>	23.0%	16.5%	21.6%
<i>Christians should be broad minded</i>	6.7%	3.1%	11.2%
<i>Not Important</i>	20.6%	11.9%	33.6%
<i>Uncertain</i>	9.2%	5.7%	8.3%
<i>Number</i>	704	194	241

Explanation: Column 2 shows the response to Question 11 of those 194 respondents who also answered Question 5 with the first, exclusivist response. Column 3 shows the response to Question 11 of those 241 respondents who also answered Question 5 with the third, pluralist response.

Table 38 helps us to understand the overall strength of the respondents' exclusivist disinclination to be involved in formal Buddhist ritual. Again, there is some difference between those who answered Question 5 in an exclusivist and in a pluralist fashion with regards to their responses in Question 12. The difference is not as great, however, as might be expected. Over four-fifths (82.5%) of those who agreed with the pluralist statement in Question 5 that good people of all faiths are saved still disagree in Question 12 that there is no problem with Christians *wai*-ing Buddha images. The opportunity presented in Question 11 to affirm an overt pluralist attitude still meets with only a small response (14.4%) among those who voiced a pluralist perspective in Question 5. Again, we should note that there is a distinct difference in their response to Question 11 between the pluralists and exclusivists of Question 5; but it is not a large difference in light of the overwhelming disinclination of the respondents to *wai* Buddha images.

Table 38
Comparison of the Frequency Distributions for Question 12 with the
First and Third Responses to Question 5

	Question 12 Total Sample	Question 12 compared to Exclusivist Response in Question 5	Question 12 compared to Pluralist Response in Question 5
<i>Disagree</i>	90.5%	95.7%	82.5%
<i>Agree</i>	7.6%	4.3%	14.4%
<i>Number</i>	673	188	229

Explanation: Column 2 shows the response to Question 12 of those 188 respondents who also answered Question 5 with the first, exclusivist response. Column 3 shows the response to Question 11 of those 229 respondents who also answered Question 5 with the third, pluralist response. Note that the total numbers for columns two and three are different from those in Table 37 because the numbers of people not answering Question 11 and Question 12 differ.

The pattern that emerges from the data obtained by Questions 11 and 12 in comparison to our earlier data, particularly Questions 1 through 5, is that there is a marked tendency among a significant number of the respondents towards ideological pluralism. The tendency is not consistent and it varies in strength, but it is clearly present. A varying majority of the respondents tend, overall, to think about their relationship to people of other faiths much as do other northern Thais. When it comes to participation in Buddhist ritual, that tendency towards pluralism is greatly diminished even among those who may be counted as pluralists on the basis of their previous responses. I would like to return to the issue of northern Thai Protestant participation in Buddhist rites in the conclusion of this section, since we will see that the results discussed here are manifest throughout Questions 11 through 15.

We should note, finally, that Questions 11 and 12, because they are similar, provide something of a check on the consistency with which the respondents filled out the questionnaire. Of those who chose the first, exclusivist response in Question 11, namely that Christians may no *phanom mue* during Buddhist rites, 97.4% disagreed with the pluralist proposition in Question 12 that Christians may *wai* Buddha images, and only 2.6% agreed. On these two questions, at least, there is a high level of consistency in response.

Question 13

Question 13 asks, "What do you think if Christians take part in the following Buddhist rites?" and then provides seven items for response. They include participation in: [1] Merit-making (*phanom mue*); [2] Merit-making (don't *phanom mue*); [3] Temple processions; [4] Accepting alms; [5] Presenting robes; [6] Respecting a deceased body; and [7] Greeting (*wai*) a monk.

Many of the respondents found this question complicated and difficult to respond to. Many of them simply answered one line out of the seven, assuming that earlier directions to select only one response on one line (such as in Question 11) applied to Question 13 as well. Others, evidently, simply found the question too big and complex. The total sample, it will be remembered, is 726 respondents. Still, the great majority of respondents were able to complete the question.

There is a high degree of consistency in the responses to these seven items, and general discussion of the results of the question is left for the section "Comparison of Data for Question 13," below. A summary table is included in that section, and differences among the variables will be discussed there. Briefly summarized, the data obtained from Question 13 shows the respondents express a strong inclination to refrain from participation in most forms of Buddhist rites.

Data From Each Line Item

Line 13.1

Line 13.1 asks if Christians should take part in formal Buddhist merit-making rituals including raising their hands (*phanom mue*) in formal respect. Table 39 shows that nearly four-fifths of the

respondents who answered this item (79.1%) stated that Christians should not participate in Buddhist rituals including showing formal respect (*wai*).

Table 39
Frequency Distribution for Line 13.1
Should Christians take part in Buddhist ritual including *phanom mue*?

	Number	Valid %
<i>Should Not</i>	515	79.1%
<i>Situational</i>	76	11.7%
<i>Always May</i>	11	1.7%
<i>Unsure</i>	18	2.8%
<i>Unconcerned</i>	30	4.6%

N = 651

Line 13.2

Line 13.1 asks if Christians should take part as observers in formal Buddhist merit-making rituals while refraining from raising their hands (*phanom mue*) in formal respect. As can be seen from Table 40, the respondents show much more willingness to attend formal Buddhist ritual if they do not *phanom mue*, but (49.4% still felt that Christians should never take part while only 15.7% agreed that Christians may always take part. We should note here, in any event, that the physical act of *phanom mue* or to *wai* is an important issue. In the context of Buddhist ritual, the respondents generally associate it with worship.

Table 40
Frequency Distribution for Line 13.2
Should Christians take part in Buddhist ritual but not *phanom mue*?

	Number	Valid %
<i>Should Not</i>	308	49.4%
<i>Situational</i>	119	19.1%
<i>Always May</i>	98	15.7%
<i>Unsure</i>	30	4.8%
<i>Unconcerned</i>	66	10.6%

N = 623

Line 13.3

Line 13.3 asks if Christians should take part in Buddhist processions (*hae krua tan*). Such processions generally involve the temple faithful bringing donations to the temple for the monks. These donations generally include "money trees" (*ton krua tan*), bamboo frames that have something like the shape of a tree and from which are hung donations of various sorts including money. Table 41 shows that 61.2% of the respondents who answered this item stated that Christians should not take part in such processions.

Table 41
Frequency Distribution for Line 13.3
Should Christians take part in Buddhist religious processions?

	Number	Valid %
<i>Should Not</i>	383	61.2%
<i>Situational</i>	109	17.4%
<i>Always May</i>	44	7.0%
<i>Unsure</i>	34	5.4%
<i>Unconcerned</i>	53	8.5%

N = 626

Line 13.4

Line 13.4 asks if Christians should take part in Buddhist alms giving (*ruam rongthan*), which giving can involve giving to people in need. Table 42 shows that the respondents who answered this item were somewhat more inclined to agree (13.3%) that Christians may always take part in alms giving in a Buddhist context. Still, nearly half (48.5%) stated that Christians should not do so.

Table 42
Frequency Distribution for Line 13.4
Should Christians take part in Buddhist alms giving?

	Number	Valid %
<i>Should Not</i>	300	48.5%
<i>Situational</i>	152	24.6%
<i>Always May</i>	82	13.3%
<i>Unsure</i>	42	6.8%
<i>Unconcerned</i>	40	6.5%

N = 618

Line 13.5

Line 13.5 asks if Christians should take part in presenting robes to monks (*wang pha bangsakun*) as a part of Buddhist funeral rites conducted just prior to cremations. This is one of the most frequent moments in which Christians are confronted with the difficult choice of participation or non-participation. Table 43 shows just over half of the respondents who answered this item (51.0%) stated that Christians should not take part in giving robes to monks at funeral rites. A somewhat larger number than usual (29.4%) agreed that what one does depends on the situation.

Table 43
Frequency Distribution for Line 13.5
Should Christians take part in giving robes to monks at Buddhist funerals?

	Number	Valid %
<i>Should Not</i>	324	51.0%
<i>Situational</i>	187	29.4%
<i>Always May</i>	52	8.2%
<i>Unsure</i>	37	5.8%
<i>Unconcerned</i>	33	5.2%

N = 635

Line 13.6

Line 13.6 asks if Christians should light incense sticks in respect of a deceased's body (*chudthub waisob*). Normally, incense sticks are available for lighting at the foot of the casket, and the act of lighting the stick and *wai*-ing the casket is seen as an act of respect for the deceased. Buddhists do not consider it as an essentially religious act. Table 44 indicates that the majority of respondents who answered this item (55.6%) do see it as potentially a religious act that Christians should not engage in.

Table 44
Frequency Distribution for Line 13.6
Should Christians light incense sticks in respect of a deceased's body?

	Number	Valid %
<i>Should Not</i>	351	55.6%
<i>Situational</i>	123	19.5%
<i>Always May</i>	82	13.0%
<i>Unsure</i>	43	6.8%
<i>Unconcerned</i>	31	4.9%

N = 631

Line 13.7

Line 13.7 asks if Christians should greet monks by *wai*-ing them. There was, apparently, some misunderstanding among the respondents concerning this item. The intention of the item was to ascertain if the respondents agreed or not that monks may be greeted socially with a *wai*, the greeting universally acceptable in Thai society. However, many respondents seem to have associated the act of greeting monks with formal ceremonial occasions, especially given its location at the end of a list of such occasions. As a result, the data shown in Table 45 is somewhat difficult to interpret. It is not clear whether or not those who answered that Christians should not *wai* Buddhist monks (34.3%) associated the question with participation in Buddhist ritual or not. It is doubtful that such a large percentage would say that Christians should never greet monks, as individuals, according to the proper forms of Thai society. On the other hand, the confusion involved in this question does reinforce the sense that the respondents, as a body, are sensitive to the "dangers" involved in any form of participation in Buddhist rites—or of involving themselves with anything having to do, however remotely, with rites.

Table 45
Frequency Distribution for Line 13.7
Should Christians *wai* Buddhist monks?

	Number	Valid %
<i>Should Not</i>	219	34.3%
<i>Situational</i>	178	27.9%
<i>Always May</i>	168	26.3%
<i>Unsure</i>	36	5.6%
<i>Unconcerned</i>	33	5.2%

N = 638

Comparison of Data for Question 13

Table 46 compares the results obtained from Question 13, which shows that with the exception of Line 13.7, socially greeting monks, large majorities of the respondents agreed that Christians should not participate in all of the rites listed. They found participating in formal merit-making rituals including *phanom mue* (Line 13.1) and taking part in Buddhist merit-making processions (Line 13.3) to be particularly objectionable. Giving alms (Line 13.4) and attending merit-making rituals without *phanom mue* (Line 13.2) were considered the least objectionable. The percentages of those who were either unconcerned with the issues raised or uncertain about their views are not large, suggesting that most of the respondents who answered Question 13 had thought about the issues of participation raised by the question and had opinions about them.

Table 46
Comparison of Frequency Distributions for Question 13

	13.1	13.2	13.3	13.4	13.5	13.6	13.7
<i>Should Not</i>	79.1%	49.4%	61.2%	48.5%	51.0%	55.6%	34.3%
<i>Situational</i>	11.7%	19.1%	17.4%	24.6%	29.4%	19.5%	27.9%
<i>Always May</i>	1.7%	15.7%	7.0%	13.3%	8.2%	13.0%	26.3%
<i>Unsure</i>	2.8%	4.8%	5.4%	6.8%	5.8%	6.8%	5.6%
<i>Unconcerned</i>	4.6%	10.6%	8.5%	6.5%	5.2%	4.9%	5.2%
<i>Number</i>	651	623	626	618	635	631	638

In terms of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position* in the church (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), and whether or not the respondents were *born into a Christian home* (Question 21) or have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22), the data for Question 13 shows important differences for age, gender, position, and educational status. It would, unfortunately, require an inordinate number of tables to display all of the data for all seven items according to each variable. The following tables, thus, contain only the percentages for respondents who felt that they should not engage in the listed activity, that is the first response ("should not") in each item.

Table 47 shows that the responses by age vary considerably and do not seem to fall into a consistent pattern. Those ages 11-30 responded to the first three items (13.1-13.3) with the response that Christians should not participate less often than the other two age categories. The difference for these first three lines between the young peoples' responses and those of the other two age groups is slightly more than 10.0% for each question. That is to say, those aged 30 years or younger seemed less resistant to taking part in merit-making activities than those over the age of 30. In the final four items, however, their percentages are more in line with the other two age groups, and those aged 30 or less were actually more resistant to take part in presenting robes to monks at funerals (Line 13.5) than the other two age groups. The data in Table 49, thus, suggests that age is not a consistent variable for ascertaining how northern Thai Protestants feel about participation in various Buddhist rites. If the data in this table reflects the actual attitudes of local church members, there is no consistent trend towards a more pluralist viewpoint among younger people.

Table 47
Summary of Frequency Distributions for Question 13 by Age
For the First Response, "Should Not" engage in the listed activity

	13.1	13.2	13.3	13.4	13.5	13.6	13.7
<i>11-30</i>	71.7%	41.9%	53.1%	46.4%	55.1%	51.3%	42.0%
<i>31-60</i>	82.5%	51.6%	65.1%	49.6%	50.7%	60.1%	32.1%
<i>Over 60</i>	81.8%	62.3%	60.4%	47.1%	41.1%	40.0%	25.5%
<i>Number</i>	642	617	619	612	629	625	629

Table 48 shows that women more frequently agreed that Christians should not participate in five of the seven activities listed. The differences are not large, the largest being for Line 13.3, taking part in Buddhist merit making processions which shows a difference of 7.8%. The data in this table confirms the findings for Questions 11 and 12, where it was also seen that women rejected *wai*-ing during merit-making ceremonies or to Buddha images more frequently than men. We should remember that the responses of women to the first five questions on the questionnaire, having to do with ideological perspective, showed that women tended to be somewhat more pluralist ideologically than men (see Chapter 2). In this last set of questions, we find that they tend to be more exclusivist concerning actual participation in Buddhist rites. That is to say that women are slightly more reflective of both the ideological trend towards pluralism and trend in participation towards exclusivism than are the men. Why this might be is, at this point, a matter of speculation.

Table 48
Summary of Frequency Distributions for Question 13 by Gender
For the First Response, "Should Not" engage in the listed activity

	13.1	13.2	13.3	13.4	13.5	13.6	13.7
<i>Women</i>	77.7%	49.9%	64.0%	49.0%	53.4%	55.5%	37.7%
<i>Men</i>	81.2%	47.6%	56.2%	46.6%	48.1%	56.3%	30.0%
<i>Number</i>	632	611	612	606	621	616	623

Table 49 shows that church leaders quite consistently affirmed the proposition that Christians should not participate in the various activities listed in Question 13 than did the general membership. While the differences are not great, usually amounting to between 5.0% to 8.0%, the data in this table does reinforce the sense that church leaders generally tend to be somewhat more exclusivist than the general church membership. In all cases but Line 13.7, having to do with greeting monks socially, pastors score consistently high in terms of their reluctance to participate in Buddhist rites. Why this is so is not certain, but pastors, because of their theological training, may have more of an inclination to equate those rites with biblical concepts of idolatry and the long-standing Protestant rejection of merit making.

Table 49
Summary of Frequency Distributions for Question 13 by Position
For the First Response, "Should Not" engage in the listed activity

	13.1	13.2	13.3	13.4	13.5	13.6	13.7
<i>Pastors</i>	81.8%	54.5%	76.2%	54.5%	59.1%	77.3%	27.3%
<i>Elders</i>	87.5%	52.9%	64.8%	40.7%	38.7%	57.6%	27.5%
<i>Deacons</i>	87.2%	59.5%	71.1%	56.0%	49.4%	64.9%	28.6%
<i>Members</i>	76.3%	46.7%	58.5%	48.9%	54.2%	53.1%	38.1%
<i>Number</i>	635	610	614	606	620	617	621

Table 50 shows that, generally speaking, a greater number of the less well educated respondents and those with a medium level of education tended to agree more often that Christians should not participate in the activities listed in Question 13 than did those with a higher education. In only one instance, Line 13.5 concerning giving robes to monks at funerals, did the more highly educated sample agree that Christians should not participate (51.5%) at a greater rate than did those with lower education status (45.7%). On the whole, however, more highly educated respondents tended to be more pluralist in their responses to Question 13 than did people in the medium or lower education categories. This data fits with that found for Questions 11 and 12, where higher educated respondents tended to be somewhat more pluralist. Again, the differences in percentage are not generally large, but they are consistent. We should also note, however, that large percentages of those with higher education still respond in an exclusivist way to all of these questions and items even if they do so somewhat less frequently than the total sample. In any event, we must conclude that those with a higher education are somewhat more inclined towards pluralism.

Table 50
Summary of Frequency Distributions for Question 13 by Educational Status
For the First Response, "Should Not" engage in the listed activity

	13.1	13.2	13.3	13.4	13.5	13.6	13.7
<i>Lower</i>	82.9%	59.1%	62.2%	48.1%	45.7%	56.1%	33.3%
<i>Medium</i>	79.9%	48.1%	65.4%	52.3%	53.2%	57.1%	39.8%
<i>Higher</i>	74.9%	43.2%	56.2%	44.2%	51.5%	53.8%	29.2%
<i>Number</i>	634	608	611	605	621	615	623

Note: Low education includes the first three responses in Question 20; medium education includes responses four, five, and six; and, high education includes the last two responses.

In regards to the remaining variables, as noted above, there are no marked differences between those who were born into Christian homes as opposed to those who were not, and there were also no large

differences between those who have Buddhists living in their homes and those who do not. Geographical location is not an important factor.

Reflections on Question 13

As should be anticipated, the data obtained in Question 13 reinforces the impression gained from Questions 11 and 12, above. The respondents demonstrate a strong, consistent tendency towards exclusivism in their attitudes about participation in Buddhist rites. The data in Table 46 indicates that, first, they most strongly object to participation that involves the act of *phanom mue*, raising the hands in an attitude of respect, which they apparently interpret as an act of worship that violates biblical commandments concerning loyalty to God. Second, the summary data in Table 48 also shows that the respondents do not think Christians should participate in two acts related to funerals, namely giving robes to monks (Item 13.5) and lighting incense sticks as a sign of respect for the deceased (Line 13.6).

More study needs to be given to the issue of participation in Buddhist rites in order to understand more precisely the thinking of northern Thai Protestants generally on this issue. It does seem clear that the respondents were keenly aware of the widely taught injunctions against idolatry and the worship of false gods, and they do associate Buddha images, in particular, with idols. They do perceive that their Buddhist neighbors worship Buddha images in the Christian sense of the term, and that the theoretical argument that the faithful look through the image to the teachings of the Buddha is largely inoperative in reality. Some Buddhist reform movements and leaders in Thailand agree. The sense that participation in Buddhist rites violates biblical teachings may well be reinforced by the feeling among Christians that God relates to them much as a patron relates to his or her clients. Thus, to participate in the rituals of another religion seems to violate one's patron-client relationship of loyalty to one's own patron. On the other hand, I have heard a Christian who does go so far as to *wai* during Buddhist merit-making rituals justify his act by saying that it is all a matter of the heart or consciousness (*lao ta chitchai*). He does not believe such acts constitute a violation of his Christian faith. That is to say, there are cultural rationales for whatever stand one takes on issues of participation. Most of the respondents, apparently, believe that there is something objective about participation that goes beyond one's own consciousness, which constrains participation. Undoubtedly, there are other factors at work, and the matter does deserve much more study.

A possible explanation for the respondents' generally strong attitudes against participation in Buddhist rites may be found in an article by Eric Reinders entitled, "The Iconoclasm of Obeisance: Protestant Images of Chinese Religion and the Catholic Church" in *Numen* 44, 3 (September 1997): 296-322. Reinders argues that the missionary rejection of participation in various Chinese rites has its origins in the Protestant denunciation of Roman Catholic worship practices, particularly those showing physical obeisance. Protestants prefer to stand or sit at worship rather than kneel; if they kneel, the trunk of the body is still held upright. Protestants do not prostrate themselves and they do not show physical obeisance. Historically, Protestants have equated such obeisance with what they take to be the Catholic worship of saints and statues. When Protestant missionaries went to China (and Thailand) they applied their attitudes towards physical obeisance to the various forms of indigenous worship they found there. Reinders states, "Acts of obeisance were taken as sufficient signs of idolatry." (page 301) He argues that several other factors were involved including European prejudices against Orientals, the sense that physical obeisance is "low class," and the association of prostration with feminine inferiority. Reinders does not state that the Western missionaries communicated these attitudes to their converts, but it is impossible to believe that they would have failed to do so. Reinders, thus, provides us with a cogent and persuasive theory for explaining the marked reluctance of our northern Thai respondents to engage in Buddhist rites, which also include prostrating oneself before Buddha images and Buddhist monks. The very act of *wai*-ing would have, in this context, been associated with obeisance to idols.

While it is clear that the respondents, as a whole, show a strong tendency in their responses to the seven items in Question 13 towards an exclusivist attitude concerning participation in Buddhist rites, it is not an overwhelming tendency. Table 48 shows that a fairly sizeable minority for each item responded that participation is "situational" (*lao ta okad*), which may be taken as an alternative pluralist response. Those who professed themselves "unconcerned" by the issue of participation might also be included in the category of pluralist responses. That is to say, open acceptance of participation, was not the only option for those who did not agree with the exclusivist, first choice of non-participation. When combined in Table 51, below, it is evident that pluralist options remained a viable ones in terms of participation in Buddhist rites.

We note, again, the particular difference *wai*-ing or not *wai*-ing makes the data obtained from Lines 13.1 and 13.2.

Table 51 (based on Table 48)
Summary of Frequency Distributions for Question 13 by Exclusivist & Pluralist Choices

	13.1	13.2	13.3	13.4	13.5	13.6	13.7
<i>Exclusivist Choice 1</i>	79.1%	49.4%	61.2%	48.5%	51.0%	55.6%	34.3%
<i>Pluralist Choices 2,3, 5</i>	18.0%	45.4%	32.9%	44.4%	42.8%	37.4%	59.4%

As we have seen throughout this study, in sum, wherever one of the options of exclusivism or pluralism predominates, the other remains as an option for the minority of respondents.

Questions 14 & 15

These two questions are designed to ascertain how the respondents feel about participation in Buddhist rites, including whether or not they feel social pressure from other Christians to refrain from participation. It is assumed that northern Thai Protestant attitudes towards such participation has an affective element to it, and the purpose of these questions (esp. Question 14) is to discover the extent of those feelings.

Question 14

Question 14 asks, "Generally, when you have to attend the ceremonies listed in Question 13, how do you feel?" Three sets of emotional responses are then provided on separate lines. They are: [1] feelings of discomfort or comfort; [2] feelings of unwillingness or willingness; and [3] feelings of dislike or like. This question focuses on the respondents' feelings about a common interfaith situation in most of their lives, namely when they are socially bound to attend a wedding, a funeral, or some formal merit-making function. The events may have to do with Buddhist relatives, members of the same community, or colleagues at work. Negative feelings are taken to be an indication of exclusivism and positive feelings of pluralism.

Some respondents had the same difficulty answering this question that they had with Question 13, and some were evidently doubly confused by this questions' reference to Question 13. The purpose of referring back to question 13 was to give the respondents a clear idea of what types of Buddhist rites were to be included in their response to this question. From feedback gathered later, quite a few respondents, apparently, thought that all three line items in Question 14 should be applied separately to each line item in Question 13. They did not know what to do with this question, and nearly 200 respondents simply skipped over Lines 14.2 and 14.3. Still, the great majority of respondents did fill out this question correctly, and clear patterns in their responses do emerge, as will be seen below.

As was the case for Question 13, a general discussion of the results of the question is left for the section "Comparison of Data for Question 14," below. A summary table is included in that section, and differences among the variables will be discussed there. Briefly summarized, the data obtained from Question 14 shows the respondents as a whole tend to feel uncomfortable about attending Buddhist rites. They feel unwilling to attend, and they do not like to attend.

Data From Each Line Item

Line 14.1

Line 14.1 asks if the respondents feel comfortable or uncomfortable if they have to attend Buddhist rites as listed in Question 13. Table 52 shows that nearly half of the respondents (47.1%) who answered this question agreed that they feel discomfort or some discomfort when attending such events, whereas only 13.5% feel comfortable or somewhat comfortable. A large number of the respondents (35.7%) had no feelings on the matter.

Table 52
Frequency Distribution for Line 14.1
Feelings of Discomfort or Comfort when attending Buddhist events listed in Question 13

	Number	Valid %
<i>Discomfort</i>	180	28.7%
<i>Some Discomfort</i>	116	18.5%
<i>No Feelings</i>	224	35.7%
<i>Some Comfort</i>	22	3.5%
<i>Comfort</i>	71	11.3%
<i>Uncertain</i>	14	2.2%

N = 628

Line 14.2

Line 14.2 asks if the respondents feel willing or unwilling to attend the Buddhist rites as listed in Question 13 in situations where they feel they must attend. Table 53 shows that just at two-fifths (39.7%) felt unwilling or somewhat unwilling to attend even in situations where they must, while 23.4% were willing or somewhat willing.

Table 53
Frequency Distribution for Line 14.2
Feelings of Unwillingness or Willingness when attending Buddhist events listed in Question 13

	Number	Valid %
<i>Unwilling</i>	120	21.9%
<i>Somewhat Unwilling</i>	97	17.7%
<i>No Feelings</i>	187	34.2%
<i>Somewhat Willing</i>	50	9.1%
<i>Willing</i>	78	14.3%
<i>Uncertain</i>	15	2.7%

N = 547

Line 14.3

Line 14.3 asks if the respondents like or dislike attending the events listed in Question 13 when they feel constrained to attend. Nearly half (46.5%) agreed that they do not like or somewhat do not like to attend, while 21.6% stated they like or somewhat like to attend. The number who responded that they have no feelings on the matter (30.0%) is somewhat lower than in Lines 14.1 and 14.2.

Table 54
Frequency Distribution for Line 14.3
Feelings of Dislike or Like when attending Buddhist events listed in Question 13

	Number	Valid %
<i>Dislike</i>	161	28.5%
<i>Dislike Somewhat</i>	101	17.9%
<i>No Feelings</i>	169	30.0%
<i>Like Somewhat</i>	75	13.3%
<i>Like</i>	47	8.3%
<i>Uncertain</i>	11	2.0%

N = 564

Comparison of Data for Question 14

Table 55 compares the data obtained for the three lines of Question 14 and shows a general consistency in the feelings of those who answered this question concerning attendance of the various events listed in Question 13. The majority of the respondents in each case, expressed negative or somewhat negative feelings, that majority amounting to roughly two-fifths or slightly more of the total that answered the question. Roughly another one-fifth or slightly more expressed positive or somewhat positive feelings concerning attendance, and a figure of roughly two-fifths or slightly less stated that they have no feelings about or are uncertain about their feelings.

Table 55
Comparison of Frequency Distributions for Question 14

	Line 14.1 Discomfort or Comfort	Line 14.2 Unwilling or Willing	Line 14.3 Dislike or Like
<i>Negative Feeling</i>	28.7%	21.9%	28.5%
<i>Somewhat Negative</i>	18.5%	17.7%	17.9%
<i>No Feelings</i>	35.7%	34.2%	30.0%
<i>Somewhat Positive</i>	3.5%	9.1%	13.3%
<i>Positive Feeling</i>	11.3%	14.3%	8.3%
<i>Uncertain</i>	2.2%	2.7%	2.0%
<i>Number</i>	628	547	564

In terms of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position in the church* (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), and whether or not the respondents were *born into a Christian home* (Question 21) or have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22), there is some variation in the responses, the most important being between women and men.

Table 56 shows that women, on the whole, consistently agreed that they had greater negative or somewhat negative feelings than men. We should remember that in Chapter 2 women were generally more willing to accept people of other religions. When it comes to actual attendance, however, they feel greater discomfort, unwillingness, and dislike. The reason for these feelings are not clear from the study itself, but whatever they may be the reasons for these negative feelings are not because women are more ideologically conservative than men.

Table 56
Summary of Frequency Distributions for Question 14 by Gender
For Negative and Somewhat Negative Responses to the listed feeling

	Line 14.1 Discomfort or Some Discomfort	Line 14.2 Unwilling or Somewhat Unwilling	Line 14.3 Dislike or Dislike Somewhat
<i>Women</i>	51.2%	46.2%	48.1%
<i>Men</i>	41.4%	40.4%	43.5%
<i>Number</i>	613	536	552

Regarding the other variables, there are a number of particular differences of some degree for one of the three lines, but there are few distinguishable patterns. The most important pattern has to do with age. While young people, ages 11-30 feel roughly the same level of discomfort in attending Buddhist rites, Table 57 shows that they distinctly feel less willing and more dislike at attending than do middle aged people, and that their feelings about attending Buddhist rites more nearly parallel those of people over the age of 60. One possible explanation is that while older people more often feel that Christians cannot or should not participate in Buddhist rites, as seen in the responses to Questions 12 and 13, young people may simply not like having to sit through the rites because they are not interested in them.

Table 57
Summary of Frequency Distributions for Question 14 by Age
For Negative and Somewhat Negative Responses to the listed feeling

	Line 14.1 Discomfort or Some Discomfort	Line 14.2 Unwilling or Somewhat Unwilling	Line 14.3 Dislike or Dislike Somewhat
<i>11-30</i>	48.2%	44.1%	50.5%
<i>31-60</i>	46.7%	37.7%	44.1%
<i>Over 60</i>	48.2%	35.1%	46.8%
<i>Number</i>	618	542	702

Note: Low education includes the first three responses in Question 20; medium education includes responses four, five, and six; and, high education includes the last two responses.

A final pattern of some note has to do with the differences between those who were and were not born into Christian families. Table 58 shows that people who were not born into Christian homes felt more negatively or somewhat negatively about attending Buddhist rites in comparison to those born into Christian homes.

Table 58
Summary of Frequency Distributions for Question 14 by Family Religious Status at Birth
For Negative and Somewhat Negative Responses to the listed feeling

	Line 14.1 Discomfort or Some Discomfort	Line 14.2 Unwilling or Somewhat Unwilling	Line 14.3 Dislike or Dislike Somewhat
<i>Born into Christian Home</i>	43.2%	38.1%	45.8%
<i>Not Born into Christian Home</i>	55.7%	43.8%	49.1%
<i>Number</i>	611	540	558

Reflections on Question 14

The respondents who answered this question generally expressed either actively negative feelings about attending the various rites listed in Question 13 or indifference to attendance. On the whole, they showed relatively little positive feelings about attendance.

As mentioned above, we assumed that negative feelings towards attendance of Buddhist rites is an indication of an exclusivist perspective and positive feelings of a pluralist perspective. Table 59 compares the responses given in the three lines of Question 14 with those in Question 11 for those classified there as exclusivists (Response 1) and pluralists (all other responses). The first response in Question 11, we will remember, states that Christians may never *phanom mue* during merit-making rituals. The table shows that those who selected the exclusivist response in Question 11 were more likely to express negative feelings in Questions 14 about attending Buddhist rites. Thus, for example, for Line 1 of Question 14 some 47.2% of the total sample expressed discomfort or some discomfort when attending Buddhist rites. For those who gave an exclusivist response (Response 1) to Question 11, however, 56.5% expressed discomfort or some discomfort when attending Buddhist rites. The data for Lines 14.2 and 14.3 show a similar difference between those classified as exclusivists in Question 11 compared with the total sample in Question 14.

Table 59 also shows the differences between those who gave what were classified as pluralist responses in the Question, (all of the response except Response 1). To take Line 14.1, again, as an example, where 47.2% of the total sample expressed discomfort or some discomfort when attending Buddhist rites, 41.6% of the pluralists from Question 11 expressed discomfort or some discomfort when attending Buddhist rites. While that difference is not great, it is consistent.

Most striking is the fact clearly shown in Table 59 that there is a large difference between negative and positive feelings for those who scored as pluralists and as exclusivists on Question 11. The difference in negatives feelings between for Line 14.1 is 17.2%, for Line 14.2 is 19.1%, and for Line 14.3 is 16.7%.

The responses of positive and somewhat positive show similar differences, although the figures are much smaller. We should also note that the figures for those who feel somewhat negative and those who have no feelings about attendance one way or the other remain relatively consistent.

Table 59
Comparison of Frequency Distributions for Questions 11 and 14

	Question 11 Response 1 (Exclusivists)			Question 11 Other Responses (Pluralists)		
	Line 14.1	Line 14.2	Line 14.3	Line 14.1	Line 14.2	Line 14.3
<i>Negative</i>	39.3%	33.6%	38.3%	22.1%	14.5%	21.6%
<i>Somewhat Negative</i>	17.2%	19.2%	20.7%	19.5%	16.9%	15.9%
<i>Neutral</i>	34.4%	30.4%	23.8%	36.5%	36.3%	34.5%
<i>Somewhat Positive</i>	1.2%	7.9%	9.7%	4.8%	10.2%	15.5%
<i>Positive</i>	7.4%	6.5%	6.2%	13.3%	19.1%	10.1%
<i>Uncertain</i>	0.4%	2.3%	1.3%	3.5%	3.1%	2.4%
<i>Number</i>	285	285	285	419	419	419

We may conclude, then, that the respondents' attitudes about participation in Buddhist rites does have an affective component. Those who reject participation in Buddhist rites are more likely to feel uncomfortable when they have to attend, attend less willingly, and do not like to attend. This conclusion is hardly surprising, and it may be a measure of the place of pluralist thinking among northern Thai Protestants that those who feel adverse to participating in Buddhist rites is still not greater than an average of roughly two-fifths of the respondents who answered Question 14.

Question 15

Question 15 asks, "Do you agree that for the most part you don't want to go to the rituals of other religions because you worry about what other Christians will think?" The purpose of this question is to test whether or not northern Thai Protestants feel social pressure from within the Christianity community to refrain from attending Buddhist rites. The responses to this question are not classified as exclusivist or pluralist as such.

Table 60 indicates that only 27.8% of the respondents agreed to one degree or another that they feel reluctant to attend Buddhist rites because of worry about what other Christians think. Of that percentage, almost half (13.0%) responded with the relatively weak response that they agree only somewhat. We may conclude, then, that the reluctance northern Thai Protestants feel concerning attendance at Buddhist rites, as expressed in the responses to Question 14, are not generally caused by feelings of social constraint within the Christian community.

Table 60
Frequency Distribution for Question 15
Are respondents reluctant to attend Buddhist rites because of worry about what other Christians think?

	Number	Valid %
<i>Disagree Entirely</i>	111	16.2%
<i>Disagree</i>	228	33.3%
<i>Disagree Somewhat</i>	120	17.5%
<i>Agree Somewhat</i>	89	13.0%
<i>Agree</i>	84	12.3%
<i>Agree Entirely</i>	17	2.5%
<i>Uncertain</i>	36	5.3%

N = 685

In terms of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position in the church* (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), and whether or not the respondents were *born into a Christian home* (Question 21) or have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22), there are importance differences in the responses according to age, gender, education, and whether or not the respondents are living in their homes with people of other faiths.

Table 61 shows that young people worry more about what other Christians think about their attending Buddhist rites, while those respondents ages 31-60 worry about the matter somewhat less than the other two age groups.

Table 61
Summary of Frequency Distribution for Question 15 by Age
Are respondents reluctant to attend Buddhist rites because of worry about what other Christians think?

	Total Sample	11-30	31-60	Over 60
<i>Disagree</i>	67.0%	59.5%	70.7%	65.60%
<i>Agree</i>	27.7%	33.2%	24.8%	31.30%
<i>Number</i>	685	205	403	64

Table 62 shows that men worry more about what other Christians will think about their attending the rites of another religion than do women. This is in spite of the fact that, as we saw in Question 14, women have greater negative feelings about attending Buddhist rites than do men. Women's feelings against attending Buddhist rites, whatever the source, are evidently not based on feelings of social constraint within the Christian community.

Table 62
Summary of Frequency Distribution for Question 15 by Gender
Are respondents reluctant to attend Buddhist rites because of worry about what other Christians think?

	Total Sample	Women	Men
<i>Disagree</i>	67.0%	70.0%	62.7%
<i>Agree</i>	27.7%	25.1%	31.2%
<i>Number</i>	685	390	276

Table 63 shows that those with a higher educational status worry about what other Christians think when they attend the rites of other faiths than do those with a lower educational status. In some ways, we would expect the opposite since a high educational status should, supposedly, provide the respondents with a better understanding of themselves. We saw in Chapter 2, furthermore, that education had something of a positive correlation with pluralism, which should encourage people to feel comfortable in attending Buddhist rites. Such seems not to be the case.

Table 63
Summary of Frequency Distribution for Question 15 by Educational Status
Are respondents reluctant to attend Buddhist rites because of worry about what other Christians think?

	Total Sample	Low Education	Medium Education	High Education
<i>Disagree</i>	67.0%	74.1%	66.9%	62.3%
<i>Agree</i>	27.7%	20.5%	26.2%	34.3%
<i>Number</i>	685	166	263	239

Note: Low education includes the first three responses in Question 20; medium education includes responses four, five, and six; and, high education includes the last two responses.

Table 64 shows that people who live with people of other faiths in their homes feel more constrained in attending the rites of other religions than do people who live only with other Christians. The reason for people who live in the same home with people of other faiths do feel constrained may be because they are more likely to have occasion to take part in the rites of other religions, specifically, of Buddhism and more likely to feel they must take part. Living at the boundaries, at is were, of their Protestant religious

community may well put more, not less pressure on them as they are more frequently caught between the expectations of the non-Christians in their own home and the Christian community of which they are a part.

Table 64

Summary of Frequency Distribution for Question 15 by Residence with People of Other Faiths
Are respondents reluctant to attend Buddhist rites because of worry about what other Christians think?

	Total Sample	Living with Other Faiths	Not Living with Other Faiths
<i>Disagree</i>	67.0%	60.0%	70.8%
<i>Agree</i>	27.7%	34.6%	24.0%
<i>Number</i>	685	240	445

Reflections on Question 15

In general, as we have already seen, the respondents do not feel a great deal of social pressure from other Christians regarding attendance at the rites of other religions. By and large, feelings of social pressure do not seem to be an important element in the respondents' attitudes about attending the rites of other religions.

Conclusion to Chapter 3

One of the most important findings of this study is the difference between the respondents' attitudes towards people of other faiths, which tends to be somewhat pluralist, and their attitudes towards participating in the religious rites of other religions, which tends to be decidedly exclusivist. This contrast offers a key to understanding how northern Thai Protestants integrate their Thai and Western religious heritages into a useable, meaningful whole. Ideologically, the majority of them have apparently accepted to a greater or lesser degree the pluralist attitudes of their society, although we must never forget that a strong exclusivist "residue" remains. Ideological pluralism, however, has not translated into behavioral pluralism when it comes to the rites of other religions. In fact, although not so much in theory, northern Thai Protestants still tend to treat the rites of their neighbors of other faiths as if they are idolatrous and to treat Christian participation in them as an offense to God and the Christian faith. Again, we must remember that there is a definite "residue" of pluralism apparent in the behavioral attitudes of the respondents, although it is not as strong as the exclusivist ideological residue mentioned above. Only in Question 12, concerning *wai*-ing Buddha images, do we have an apparently overwhelming rejection of pluralism. Even Question 13, Line 1, regarding *phanom mue* while attending formal merit-making rituals, retains a rate of one fifth (20.9%) of the respondents who give a response that is more or less pluralist.

Why this configuration? It seems to me that the bulk of our respondents have worked out a compromise between the apparently contradictory strictures of Theravada pluralism and Protestant exclusivism. Their Thai heritage enjoins them to not think ill of people of other faiths, and they do not. Their Western heritage enjoins them to have no other gods but God, and they do not. As Protestants they physically embody their Christian loyalty to God by refraining from acts that might be construed as worship of another god. The old-time Presbyterian missionaries' teachings against obeisance in Buddhist contexts, in sum, was so effective that Protestants all but congenitally refuse to physically demonstrate respect for Buddha images and Buddhist rites. One problem facing northern Thai Protestants, as the data from Question 13 suggests, is how to define what acts really are idolatrous. Different individuals come to different conclusions, but they all face the same issue. As we saw in both Questions 12 and 13, however, the more overt the obeisance and the more worship-like the setting of Buddhist rites, the more Protestants have negative attitudes towards participation.

That is to say, theological and faith concerns play a central role in the thinking of the respondents. Those concerns guide their behavior even in the face of powerful socio-cultural attitudes that expect northern Thais to accept and be willing to participate in the religious acts of other religions. Within a Thai and northern Thai context, we need to remember that beliefs and attitudes are largely a private matter; the society does not particularly worry about what people think so long as they behave in the "right" ways. It is Western culture that puts such a heavy emphasis on theological or ideological correctness. In this context,

it does not matter a great deal whether a Protestant believer thinks that his Buddhist neighbors can attain heaven from within their own faith or not—although, admittedly, it is better if one does not say such things in public. What does matter is maintaining a faithful relationship with God, which northern Thai Protestants apparently interpret to mean refraining from participation in what may be construed as the acts of worship of another faith. The true power of traditional Protestant exclusivism in the thinking of northern Thai Protestants, then, may be seen in the way in which they continue to behave on its strictures against involvement in idolatry. Socially, rural Protestants continue to isolate themselves religiously from their larger communities by restricting their participation in Buddhist rites. They effectively put their neighbors of other faiths in a Protestant context and behave towards them out of that context, a fact that has caused a great deal of social tension and even overt persecution of Christians in the past.

My own personal sense is that this configuration of private pluralism and public exclusivism "works" well enough, but it does not resolve the inherent tension between the two. As we have noted earlier, whenever northern Thai Protestants talk about their relationships with people of other faiths they invariably discuss and worry over the boundaries of what they can do. They seem to be asking that question from both sides of the boundary between Thai cultural and Protestant religious expectations. As northern Thais they want to participate as much as possible in the religious life of their neighbors in order to preserve communal unity, but as Protestants they want to do only what is appropriate to their fundamental loyalty to God even if that means disregarding communal unity. What must be emphasized repeatedly is that different individuals make different decisions about these issues and clear strains of both pluralist and exclusivist thinking can be seen in the attitudes of nearly all of them as will be seen in the next Chapter. Yet, as the data from Question 12 suggests, we must also never forget the strength of their exclusivist attitude regarding Christian participation in Buddhist rites.

In the introduction to this report, I suggested that the relationship between Thai and Protestant cultural elements is not that of Thai context and Protestant intrusion, such as it usually thought of, so much as an intermingling of two cultural streams. With the data from all fifteen questions now "on the table," we begin to see the value of an interactive model that does not give theoretical priority to either element. It is just as possible and valid to think of Protestant culture as context from one perspective as it is to think of Thai culture as context from another perspective. The following chapter reinforces this sense of mutual influence by showing that it is very difficult to discern exclusivist or pluralist "core groups" of individuals who hold to a consistent line. The great majority of the respondents mix and match their views, as we have seen in these first three chapters.

Chapter 4

Core Groups

Introduction

One important question concerning the data presented in this report concerns the possible existence of pluralist and exclusivist "core groups." By "core group," I mean those two groups of individuals who consistently respond with, respectively, exclusivist or pluralist responses. As will be seen in what follows, it is not easy in actual fact to discern whether or not such core groups do exist. Virtually none of the respondents answered all twelve questions consistently in terms of pluralist or exclusivist responses. My approach has been to take a set of key Questions and to see, by a process of reduction, how many respondents answered those questions in a relatively consistently manner one way or the other.

The Pluralist Core Group

When all is said and done, roughly, one respondent in ten adhered to a pluralist perspective with some degree of consistency. As will be seen in what follows, the pluralists comprised a relatively large segment of the total sample until the respondents' attitudes towards participation in Buddhist rites was considered, at which point the size of the pluralist core group dropped off significantly.

Defining the Pluralist Core Group

As stated above the method used for defining the pluralist core group is a reductionist one. We begin in Table 65 with the data from Question 5, eliminating from that data only those who agreed with the first response that people of other faiths are damned because salvation is found in Christianity alone. The other three responses to Question 5 (see the Appendix) are taken to be explicitly or implicitly pluralist in intent, the premise being that any response that is not overtly exclusivist is implicitly pluralist. We find in Table 65 that 514 respondents answered Question 5 in a manner that we can broadly label as being pluralist.

Table 65
Frequency Distributions for Questions 5, 6, and 13.1
Eliminating Exclusivist Responses for Question 5

	Question 5	Question 6	Question 13.1
1	0.0%	28.9%	74.8%
2	27.2%	25.3%	14.1%
3	48.2%	41.6%	1.7%
4	24.5%	1.4%	3.7%
5	0.0%	2.8%	5.4%
N	514	502	460

Note: the categories of responses 1 – 5 in the first column refer to the responses in each question, which can be found in the questionnaire in the Appendix.

In Table 66, we perform the same operation as was conducted for Table 65 once again, this time with Question 6; this time, however, we eliminate exclusivist responses to both Questions 5 and 6. Question 6, we will remember, asked what it means to love one's neighbor, and the first response was to overtly evangelism them, which answer we have considered exclusivist. Table 66 shows the results of excluding those who chose the first response in Question 6 as well as the exclusivists from Question 5 from our pluralist core group. The number of that group is now reduced from 516 to 357.

Table 66
 Frequency Distributions for Questions 5, 6, and 13.1
 Eliminating Exclusivist Responses for Questions 5 and 6

	Question 5	Question 6	Question 13.1
1	0.0%	0.0%	70.7%
2	23.2%	35.6%	17.4%
3	52.7%	58.5%	1.6%
4	24.1%	2.0%	4.4%
5	0.0%	3.9%	6.0%
N	357	357	317

Note: the categories of responses 1 – 5 in the first column refer to the responses in each question, which can be found in the questionnaire in the Appendix.

Table 67 represents the results of our third reduction of the figure for the pluralist core group. Taking the group left from the first two "cuts," we now drop from the pluralist group all of those who answered Question 13.1 by agreeing with the first response that Christians should not take part in Buddhist rituals including raising their hand in an attitude of prayer-like respect (*phanom mue*). With this final "cut," we find that what we might call the inner or more rigorous core group consists of 93 respondents or 12.8% of the total sample of 726.

Table 67
 Frequency Distributions for Questions 5, 6, and 13.1
 Eliminating Exclusivist Responses for all three Questions

	Question 5	Question 6	Question 13.1
1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2	9.7%	31.2%	59.1%
3	69.9%	61.3%	5.4%
4	20.4%	2.2%	15.1%
5	0.0%	5.4%	20.4%
N	93	93	93

Note: the categories of responses 1 – 5 in the first column refer to the responses in each question, which can be found in the questionnaire in the Appendix.

It can be argued, however, that our total sample is skewed by the presence of two particular congregations. We have seen above that the Fa Ham Chinese Church is not representative of typical northern Thai congregations and that the Suwanduangrit Church in District One has a unique experience in reconciliation with its Buddhist neighbors that makes it also quite different from a "typical" northern Thai Protestant congregation. If we eliminate from our total sample the 105 members from these two churches, we are left with a sample of 621 respondents. Not surprisingly, none of the Fa Ham members are found among the 93 "pluralists" in Table 67, but 23 members of the Suwanduangrit Church are counted in that number and constitute 25.8% of the 93 pluralists. If we eliminate them as well, we are left with a pluralist core group of 70 individuals from a total sample of 621 respondents and the conclusion that 11.3% of our "typically" northern Thai Protestant sample is largely consistently pluralist.

If the above computations are at all valid, it seems that roughly one in ten of the total sample hold a fairly consistent pluralist attitude towards people of other faiths. They admit, or more often fully accept, the possibility that people of other faiths can be saved in their own faith. They do not agree to the idea that love of neighbors of other faiths involves the overt evangelization of those neighbors. They do not agree that Christians should not *phanom mue* during formal Buddhist merit-making rituals. Their views are not unlike pluralist northern Thai cultural attitudes when it comes to people of other faiths. However, if this reductionist procedure is pushed to the extreme of testing every question in the instrument that measures

pluralist and exclusivist perspectives, the pluralist core group virtually disappears. Rigid pluralists do not appear in the sample, which given the nature of northern Thai pluralism itself is not surprising.

A Brief Profile of the Pluralist Core Group

Tables 68 and 69 contain the frequency distributions for the pluralist core group (Table 68) and the total sample (Table 69) by five of the seven variables surveyed in this study. Readers will have to consult the tables in Chapter 5, Questions 16 through 22 for the specific categories numbered 1 through 8 in the first column of these two tables. To summarize the results briefly, the larger pluralist core group of 93 respondents (including the Suwanduagrit Church) tend to be younger in age, more female than male, more rural than urban, stronger among the general membership than among church officers, and more highly educated. The presence of the Suwanduagrit Church members skews the sample only for location.

Table 68
Frequency Distributions for the Pluralist Core Group by Five Variables

	16 Age	17 Sex	18 Location	19 Position	20 Education
1	9.9%	67.4%	44.8%	0.0%	0.0%
2	11.0%	32.6%	26.4%	6.8%	1.1%
3	24.2%	0.0%	13.8%	10.2%	19.4%
4	14.3%	0.0%	14.9%	83.0%	12.9%
5	18.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	15.1%
6	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.5%
7	6.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.5%
8	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	38.7%
Number	91	89	87	88	93

Note: the categories of responses 1 – 8 in the first column refer to the responses in each question, which can be found in the questionnaire in the Appendix.

Table 69
Frequency Distributions for the Total Sample by Five Variables

	16 Age	17 Sex	18 Location	19 Position	20 Education
1	4.0%	58.8%	47.1%	3.2%	0.3%
2	8.4%	41.1%	20.7%	16.8%	2.2%
3	17.2%	0.0%	19.2%	13.1%	23.0%
4	21.1%	0.0%	13.0%	66.9%	15.3%
5	23.6%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	18.4%
6	15.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%
7	7.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.2%
8	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	30.1%
Number	702	691	682	686	695

Note: the categories of responses 1 – 8 in the first column refer to the responses in each question, which can be found in the questionnaire in the Appendix.

The other two variables, whether or not the respondents were born into a Christian family and whether or not they live with in the same home with people of other faiths, showed relatively little differences.

The Exclusivist Core Group

The process for defining an exclusivist core group among the respondents is much the same as we used to define the pluralist core group with one important exception. Although we are using the same three items from the questionnaire, Questions 5, 6, and 13.1, in the case of the exclusivist core group all responses are eliminated that are not identifiably, overtly exclusivist. Exclusivism, as we have understood it in this study, was introduced into northern Thai Protestant thinking by Western missionaries and, as such, should share the same stricter sense of boundaries between its own views and those of others.

Defining the Exclusivist Core Group

Table 70 shows that after the first "cut," a potential exclusivist core group numbers 201 respondents.

Table 70
Frequency Distributions for Questions 5, 6, and 13.1
Eliminating Pluralist Responses for Question 5

	Question 5	Question 6	Question 13.1
1	100.0%	62.0%	89.1%
2	0.0%	13.0%	6.0%
3	0.0%	23.0%	1.6%
4	0.0%	0.5%	0.5%
5	0.0%	1.5%	2.7%
N	201	200	183

Note: the categories of responses 1 – 5 in the first column refer to the responses in each question, which can be found in the questionnaire in the Appendix.

Table 71 indicates that when those who gave pluralist answers in either Question 5 or Question 6 are eliminated from the total sample, the potential exclusivist core group is further reduced to 124 respondents.

Table 71
Frequency Distributions for Questions 5, 6, and 13.1
Eliminating all Pluralist Responses for Questions 5 and 6

	Question 5	Question 6	Question 13.1
1	100.0%	100.0%	91.2%
2	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%
3	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%
4	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
5	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%
N	124	124	114

Note: the categories of responses 1 – 5 in the first column refer to the responses in each question, which can be found in the questionnaire in the Appendix.

Table 72, finally, shows the results of our final "cut," by which all of those who gave pluralist responses to at least one of the three questions among Questions 5, 6 or 13.1 are eliminated. Some 103 respondents (14.3% of the total sample) remain in the core group. As in the case of the pluralist core group, however, we would do best to eliminate the members of the uniquely exclusivist Fa Ham Chinese Church and the unusually pluralist Suwanduangrit Church from this number. When we do so, we are left with a total sample of 621 respondents. It is no surprise to find that there are no members of the Suwanduangrit Church in the 104 exclusivist core group shown in Table 72. There are 23 members from the Fa Ham Church in that group and eliminating them leaves us with a final exclusivist core group of 81

respondents, which amount to 13.0% of the reduced total sample. This is only a slightly larger percentage than the 11.3% figure for the pluralist core group.

Table 72
Frequency Distributions for Questions 5, 6, and 13.1
Eliminating all Pluralist Responses for any one of the three Questions

	Question 5	Question 6	Question 13.1
<i>1</i>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<i>2</i>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<i>3</i>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<i>4</i>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<i>5</i>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<i>N</i>	104	104	104

We are left, then, with an exclusivist core group that is roughly the same size as the pluralist group, above. Each of them comprise roughly one-tenth of the total sample, allowing for extreme cases. That is to say, only about one respondent in five shows a relatively marked tendency towards consistently pluralist or exclusivist attitudes. The other four-fifths generally hold a mixture of pluralist and exclusivist attitudes, which we have already described as leaning towards pluralism in their thinking about people of other faiths and exclusivism when it comes to participation in Buddhist rites.

A Brief Profile of the Exclusivist Core Group

If we again compare the same five variables for the exclusivist core group that we used for the pluralist group, above, we find in Tables 73 and 74 that for the most part the exclusivist core group is only slightly different from the total sample. They tend to be slightly older and slightly more male. They also tend to be more urban and less rural and better educated than the total sample; in these two cases, however, the Fa Ham Church members skew the sample, which is closer to the norm for the whole sample if they are excluded. We should note that the one group that shows the greatest inclination towards exclusivism is the pastors. For the various categories represented in column 1 of both of these tables, the reader will have to consult the tables for Questions 16 through 20 in Chapter Five, below. Also, please note that Table 74 duplicates Table 69, above and is presented here again to simplify comparisons between Tables 73 and 74.

Table 73
Frequency Distributions for the Exclusivist Core Group by Five Variables

	16 Age	17 Sex	18 Location	19 Position	20 Education
<i>1</i>	0.0%	56.3%	38.2%	6.8%	1.0%
<i>2</i>	6.9%	43.7%	19.6%	18.4%	2.9%
<i>3</i>	23.5%	0.0%	21.6%	12.6%	10.8%
<i>4</i>	23.5%	0.0%	20.6%	62.1%	13.7%
<i>5</i>	25.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	18.6%
<i>6</i>	13.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%
<i>7</i>	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.9%
<i>8</i>	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.2%
Number	102	103	102	103	102

Note: the categories of responses 1 – 8 in the first column refer to the responses in each question, which can be found in the questionnaire in the Appendix.

Table 74
Frequency Distributions for the Total Sample by Five Variables

	16 Age	17 Sex	18 Location	19 Position	20 Education
1	4.0%	58.8%	47.1%	3.2%	0.3%
2	8.4%	41.1%	20.7%	16.8%	2.2%
3	17.2%	0.0%	19.2%	13.1%	23.0%
4	21.1%	0.0%	13.0%	66.9%	15.3%
5	23.6%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	18.4%
6	15.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%
7	7.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.2%
8	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	30.1%
Number	702	691	682	686	695

Note: the categories of responses 1 – 8 in the first column refer to the responses in each question, which can be found in the questionnaire in the Appendix.

We should also note that a higher percentage of those who were not born into a Christian family (Question 21) are found in exclusivist core group than is true of the whole sample. That is, of the whole sample 31.8% of the respondents stated that they were not born into a Christian family while 41.3% of the exclusivist core group stated that they were not born into a Christian family.

Reflections & Conclusions

A good deal of figuring and finagling has gone into the argument developed in this chapter, which I am sure can be challenged on a number of analytical grounds. Most importantly, obviously, choosing another three questions for determining the two core groups will result in different figures. For example, if we use Questions 1, 7, and 12 as our test for pluralism, we are left in the end with a scant 24 respondents (3.3% of the total sample) who fit the profile for pluralist, which number includes 9 members of the "ultra-pluralist" Ban Dok Daeng Church. Using the similar set of Questions 2, 7, and 12, as the test for exclusivism, on the other hand, results in a huge exclusivist core group of 381 respondents (52.5% of the total sample). It should be noted that there is no reasonable set of questions, the analysis of which will result in such a large pluralist core group. The problem with trying to discover a pluralist core group arises when we consider the respondents' attitudes towards participation in Buddhist rites, especially if the data from Question 12 is used. The data from Question 12 shows the strongest tendency towards of exclusivism of any the questions used to measure the respondents' attitudes, and if we use the data from that question as part of the screen for our two core groups it provides, as we have just seen, very lopsided results.

My own sense, however, is that using the combination of Questions 1 or 2, 7, and 12 to discern the two core groups is not as fair or realistic as the combination of Questions 5, 6, and 13.1. It does not reflect the inter-play between the exclusivist and pluralist options that otherwise suffuses the data. It takes the extreme case of *wai*-ing Buddha images as the single-most important test for deciding who is pluralist and who is exclusivist, and very few of the respondents are willing to go that far in the direction of pluralism—even among respondents who otherwise show pluralist proclivities.

It seems to me, thus, that the questions used in this chapter, Questions 5, 6, and 13.1 provide a more realistic picture of the relative strength of the two core groups, which are nearly equal in size as we have seen. They do not invite quite the heavy exclusivist response that the combination of Questions 2, 7, and 12 do, and they thus represent a fairer test of the two groups. The point of this exercise, in any event, is not to arrive a some concrete conclusion concerning the actual size of the two core groups. The point is, rather, to show that both exclusivism and pluralism are evident in the attitudes of the great majority of the respondents and that the whole matter of trying to discover meaningfully defined core groups of exclusivists and pluralists is difficult, at best.

An important observation revealed in this exercise is that however much we play with the data it does seem to be easier to identify an exclusivist core group than a pluralist one. That is what we would

expect, given the nature of exclusivism itself, which values ideological and behavioral consistency. Missionary exclusivism held a worldview in which there is right and wrong and nothing in between. Anything that could be construed as mixing right and wrong or compromising between them was taken to be compromising with evil. Only right and wrong exist in an exclusivist, dualistic worldview. It appears that something just over 10% of our total sample continues to think with the same exclusivist consistency that the old-time missionaries taught the church to hold. The actual percentage might be somewhat larger than 10%, but the important thing to note is that we can identify an exclusivist core group with a degree of certainty.

It is not as easy to pin down a consistent pluralist core group and that too is to be expected. Thai cultural pluralism does not value ideological consistency of thought nearly to the degree that Western dualistic exclusivism does. It recognizes gray areas, and it is willing to see the value in religions that are not Buddhist. However, there is a strong emphasis on right behavior. Orthopraxy is more important than orthodoxy, and it is in the arena of orthopraxy that the respondents show a decided inclination towards exclusivism. That is to say, that the exclusivist-pluralist mix we have found in this study makes a good deal of sense in light of the differing expectations of northern Thai Protestantism's dual heritage. Some 85-90% of Northern Thai Protestants are generally willing to accept people of other faiths, but some 90% of them are hesitant to participate in their rituals and ceremonies, a hesitation that has significant repercussions in pluralist northern Thai society because the larger society cannot see what northern Thai Protestants are thinking but does observe and disapprove of their unwillingness to take part in Buddhist rites.

What, still again, needs to be emphasized is that in all of this we are dealing with sets of tendencies and inclinations that admit to no hard and fast conclusions. Nowhere do we see this fact more clearly than in the attempt to locate those groups of respondents that are consistently one thing or another. What we find is that the most consistent group is the some 80% of the sample who "consistently" mix their thinking a behavior in varying combinations of exclusivist and pluralist ways.

Chapter 5

Analysis of Questions 16 – 22

Introduction

The following tables describe the number of respondents for each of the variables of *age* (Question 16), *gender* (Question 17), *locality* (Question 18), *position* in the church (Question 19), *educational status* (Question 20), whether or not the respondents were born into a Christian home (Question 21) and whether or not they have *non-Christians living in their homes* (Question 22).

Questions 16 through 22

Question 16

The numbers found in Table 75 are not reflective of the demographics of CCT churches in the North. People under the age of 15 were not encouraged to fill out a questionnaire, and many older people, especially in rural areas, found the exercise of filling out a questionnaire difficult.

Table 75
Frequency Distribution for Question 16
Age

	11-15	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	Over 70
<i>Number</i>	28	59	121	148	166	109	49	22
<i>Valid %</i>	4.0%	8.4%	17.2%	21.1%	23.6%	15.5%	7.0%	3.1%

N = 702

Question 17

Other surveys of local churches that I have been involved in show figures similar to those in Table 76 for relative numbers of men and women. In terms of gender, the sample is thus likely to be reflective of the CCT's northern Thai churches.

Table 76
Frequency Distribution for Question 17
Gender

	Women	Men
<i>Number</i>	406	284
<i>Valid %</i>	58.8%	41.1%

N = 691

Question 18

In terms of geographical location, as shown in Table 77, this sample is probably slanted slightly away from the rural churches, primarily because the students who participated in this study mostly took their samples from urban and suburban churches. Still, the rural sample is large enough to provide sufficient data on the views of rural church members. The categories contained in this table are imprecise and offer mostly an indication of how the respondents themselves classify their place of residence.

Table 77
Frequency Distribution for Question 18
Geographical Location of Respondent's Home

	Rural	District Center	Suburban	Urban
<i>Number</i>	321	141	131	89
<i>Valid %</i>	47.1%	20.7%	19.2%	13.0%

N = 682

Question 19

This sample, as shown in Table 78, may be slightly weighted towards church leaders, although the very small number of pastors does reflect the fact that many CCT churches in northern Thailand do not have pastors. Again, however, the sample is more than sufficient to indicate the views of those in each category.

Table 78
Frequency Distribution for Question 19
Position in the Church

	Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Member
<i>Number</i>	22	115	90	459
<i>Valid %</i>	3.2%	16.8%	13.1%	66.9%

N = 686

Question 20

This sample, as shown in Table 79 is surely weighted towards those with a higher educational status, although it does have to be kept in mind that Protestants tend to be better educated than the general populace. The general trend of the population, as well, is towards better education. Yet again, the sample is more than sufficient for most of the educational status categories to indicate the views of those in each category.

Table 79
Frequency Distribution for Question 20
Educational Status

	None	1-3 Gr	4-6 Gr	7-9 Gr	10-12 Gr	Technical Cert.	Technical Degree	Bachelors & higher
<i>Number</i>	2	15	160	106	128	39	36	209
<i>Valid %</i>	0.3%	2.2%	23.0%	15.3%	18.4%	5.6%	5.2%	30.1%

N = 695

Question 21

The data obtained for this question, as shown in Table 80, is particularly interesting in terms of the relatively high number of those not born into Christian families. The figures presented in this table depend on the respondents' personal sense of what constitutes a Christian family. We can assume that different individuals born into a mixed family where the parents hold different faiths responded to this question differently, some saying they were born into a Christian family and some responding they were not. It likely that a perhaps sizeable proportion of those who stated they were not born into a Christian family were still raised as Christians by a Christian parent.

Table 80
Frequency Distribution for Question 21
Whether or Not Born into a Christian Family

	Born into Christian Family	Not Born into Christian Family
<i>Number</i>	474	221
<i>Valid %</i>	68.2%	31.8%

N = 695

Question 22

Even more so than was the case for Question 21, above, the data obtained for Question 22, as shown in Table 81, suggests that questions concerning inter-faith relations and attitudes towards people of other faiths are immediate, virtually daily issues for slightly more than a third (34.1%) of the total sample.

Most Christians live in close daily contact with people of other faiths, and the data contained in Table 81 is one indication of that fact.

Table 81
Frequency Distribution for Question 22
Whether or Not Living in a Home with People of Another Faith

	Living with People of Another Faith	Not Living with People of Another Faith
<i>Number</i>	241	465
<i>Valid %</i>	34.1%	65.9%

N = 706

Conclusion

Our 726 respondents, collectively, agree with the pluralist assertion that all religions can teach people to be good (Question 1) and the exclusivist claim that Christian teachings are the only correct ones (Question 2). They generally do not agree that all non-Christians are going to hell (Question 5), thus showing a patently pluralist attitude towards the salvation of people of other faiths. Yet a majority of them still hope that non-Christians will convert to the Christian faith (Question 6), an exclusivist concern that is strongly supported by the respondents' strong commitment to evangelism (Question 7). When it comes to participation in Buddhist rites, the majority of the respondents take the exclusivist attitude that it is wrong for Christians to participate in most of those rites (Questions 11, 12, and 13), and they have strong feelings of antipathy towards participation (Question 14). The pattern we have discerned is that the respondents tend towards ideological pluralism and behavioral exclusivism. We must insist on the words "tend towards" because in every case where there is a pluralist or exclusivist majority on any particular question there too is found its opposite, sometimes nearly as large as the majority although occasionally surviving as only a tiny fraction of the sample. So long as we preserve the words "tend towards," we can conclude with some confidence that northern Thai Protestants show tendencies towards both exclusivism and pluralism, and we can discern a logic, a pattern to those tendencies.

Explaining the logic and the pattern is less easy. It seems evident, however, that northern Thai Protestants have preserved important ideological and behavioral attitudes from each of their two traditions and sought to accommodate those two sets of attitudes to each other. First, their Theravada Buddhist heritage has taught them that correct religious behavior, orthopraxy, is more important than correct religious thinking, orthodoxy. Our respondents, thus, have some freedom to think in ways quite different from their Protestant theological heritage with its massive emphasis on right belief as the foundation of a saving faith. While ideological exclusivism is still present in no small degree, it does not have a particular hold on the personal attitudes of the majority of the respondents. Second, the respondents' Protestant Christian heritage has instilled in them, as we have already seen, a strong fear of idolatry and an antipathy to the religious practices of northern Thai Buddhism. That fear defines for the respondents what it means to behave properly.

In his essay, "Universal and Local Elements in Religion" (in *Religious Inventions: Four Essays*, Cambridge, 1997, 81-104), Max Charlesworth states that every religious tradition has both universal and local elements and that, "both the universal element and the local element are essential in religion." (page 103). He argues that every religious tradition needs to find a balance between the universal and local because swinging too far in either direction leads to a break down of the tradition, a loss of its central themes and concerns. He also notes that religious traditions pass through cycles in which first the universalizing, centralizing elements and then the localizing, fragmenting elements are predominate.

Northern Thai Protestantism reflects just this mix of universal and local elements with one significant difference. Northern Thai Protestants have two sets of universal elements and two sets of local elements rather than one. Their tradition is heir to Universal Buddhism and Universal Protestantism and daily situates itself in proximity to local, village Buddhism and within its own local Protestant church community. Overtly, of course, northern Thai Protestant churches do not claim and even reject Universal and local Buddhism as settings for the development of Protestant thought and practice. Yet, equally of course, in fact of daily life they cannot escape either, all the more because Buddhism has helped to shape the values that they share with all northern Thais.

Out of the complicated mix of universal and local, Protestant and Buddhist, northern Thai Protestants shape their own range of personal theologies and personal ways of behaving. There is sufficient diversity and "local-ity" in the way they mix and match these universal and local themes from the two traditions so that it is difficult to reach clear, solid conclusions about how they accommodate each to the others. There is, at the same time, sufficient universality in the process so that we can conclude, very broadly, that northern Thai Protestants tend to think more like their Buddhist neighbors in some ways and to behave more like their Protestant compatriots in the West in other ways. That is to say that northern Thai Protestantism, if the 726 respondents to our questionnaire are any measure, is a new creation. Northern Thai Protestants, today, do not think like traditional missionary teachings taught converts to think, and it is not clear that the majority of them ever did. At the same time, northern Thai Protestants do not

think like their Buddhist neighbors and relatives, again if our sample is any measure. They are not as comfortable with religious pluralism as is their culture generally. They are particularly uneasy about how they should deal with participation in Buddhist rites, a patently exclusivist issue made all the more difficult by the pluralist expectations of those same Buddhist neighbors and relatives.

Perhaps the vitality and integrity of the manner in which northern Thai Protestants, speaking here specifically of those within the Church of Christ in Thailand, have accommodated their dual heritages to each other is the fact that no one around them accepts the result. Their Buddhist neighbors and even leading religious thinkers in Thailand criticize them for behaving in ways that are disrespectful of their neighbors of other faiths. Evangelical missionaries from other countries criticize them for being too syncretistic. Ecumenical missionaries criticize them for being too isolated from their own culture. I was once approached by a mission agency connected to the CCT asking my thoughts on how to go about creating a Thai church that is "really Thai." I asked the representatives of that agency if that was what they really wanted, and when they said that it was I reminded them that any truly Thai church is going to be heretical by the measure of most Western missionaries, even those who consider themselves ecumenicals. This mission agency was implicitly judging the Thai church as it stands today as being inadequate to the task of evangelizing Thailand because it is too foreign in appearance. That attitude, so far as I can see, is based on a failure to understand the issues facing anyone, any group that seeks to be at once Protestant and Thai, two heritages that are traditionally diametrically opposed to each other on the basic issues of how people are "saved," who is "saved," and what salvation even means. They are in particular tension with each other in their almost polar opposite attitudes towards other religions and towards people of other faiths. It is not easy to find any middle ground between these two traditions, but that is the task set before anyone who is going to be both northern Thai and Christian. That is the task we have been looking at in this study.

Appendix

The Questionnaire

A Questionnaire About Christians and People of Other Faiths

February 2004

This questionnaire was prepared by Masters' student at the McGilvary Faculty of Theology, Payap University in order to study the relationship between Christians and people of other faiths. It is a classroom activity. Please fill out this form according to your honest understanding of the questions.

Thank you for supporting this research project.

The Research Committee

Please answer every question by drawing a circle around your choice
Or by checking the boxes provided [] according to your choices

1. Do you agree that every religion is able to teach people to be good?
Disagree Entirely Disagree Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree Agree Entirely
Uncertain
2. Do you agree that Christian teachings are the only correct religious teachings?
Disagree Entirely Disagree Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree Agree Entirely
Uncertain
3. Do you agree that God loves those who believe in Him more than those who do not?
Disagree Entirely Disagree Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree Agree Entirely
Uncertain
4. What does your church usually teach concerning the salvation of people of other faith? (Please select only one response)
 they will go to hell because salvation is found only in Christianity
 some people of other faiths might be saved, but most will not; but most Christians will be saved
 people of other faiths who are good will be saved the same as good Christians
 I'm not sure on this question
5. What do you think about the salvation of people of other faith? (Please select only one response)
 they will go to hell because salvation is found only in Christianity
 some people of other faiths might be saved, but most will not; but most Christians will be saved
 people of other faiths who are good will be saved the same as good Christians
 I'm not sure on this question
6. The Bible teaches us to love our neighbors. What does loving our neighbors of other faiths mean? (Please select only one response)
 do everything, both in speaking and acting, to bring them to faith in God
 share in their joys and sufferings with the hope that they will know God; but do not emphasize conversion
 show them compassion as Thai brothers and sisters without expecting anything in return

this is not a matter to worry about or think a lot about

I'm not sure on this question

7. Do you agree that it is not necessary for Christians to evangelize people of other faiths?

Disagree Entirely Disagree Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree Agree Entirely
Uncertain

8. Do you agree that generally the Thai people look down on Christians as ones who follow the religion of foreigners?

Disagree Entirely Disagree Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree Agree Entirely
Uncertain

9. How willing are the Buddhists in your village or community to accept Christians?

Not at all Unwilling Somewhat unwilling Somewhat willing Willing Very willing Uncertain

10. When Christians have problems have people of other faiths, do you agree that usually Christians are not the source of the problem?

Disagree Entirely Disagree Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree Agree Entirely
Uncertain

11. Buddhists sometimes feel that Christians destroy brotherly and sisterly unity with them because they do not show respect (*phanom mue*) during Buddhist ritual. What do you think? (Please select only one response)

whatever others think, Christians absolutely may not *phanom mue*

although we empathize with them, Christians for the most may not *phanom mue*

actually, Christians should be broad-minded and *phanom mue*

this is not an important matter; we can do whatever

I'm not sure on this question

12. Some people say that there is no problem with Christians showing respect (*wai*) to Buddha images. Do you agree?

Disagree Entirely Disagree Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree Agree Entirely
Uncertain

13. What do you think if Christians take part in the following Buddhist rites?

Merit-making (*phanom mue*) shouldn't as the situation dictates always can unsure
unconcerned

Merit-making (don't *phanom mue*) shouldn't as the situation dictates always can
unsure unconcerned

Temple processions shouldn't as the situation dictates always can unsure
unconcerned

Accepting alms shouldn't as the situation dictates always can unsure
unconcerned

Presenting robes shouldn't as the situation dictates always can unsure
unconcerned

Respecting a deceased body shouldn't as the situation dictates always can unsure unconcerned

Greeting (*wai*) monks shouldn't as the situation dictates always can unsure
unconcerned

14. Generally, when you have to attend the ceremonies listed in Question 13, how do you feel?

- 14.1 Very Uncomfortable Uncomfortable Somewhat Uncomfortable Somewhat Comfortable
 Comfortable Entirely Comfortable Uncertain
- 14.2 Very Unwilling Unwilling Somewhat Unwilling Somewhat Willing Willing Entirely Willing
 Uncertain
- 14.3 Dislike Entirely Dislike Dislike Somewhat Like Somewhat Like Entirely Like Uncertain
15. Do you agree that for the most part you don't want to go to the rituals of other religions because you
 worry about what other Christians will think?
- Disagree Entirely Disagree Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree Agree Entirely
 Uncertain

16. Age 11-15 16-20 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61-70 71 & Over
17. Sex Female Male
18. Your current residence is rural amphur suburban urban
19. Position in the church Pastor Elder Deacon General Member
20. Education None G.1-3 G.4-6 G.7-9 G.10-12 Paw.Waw.Chaw.
 Paw.Waw.Saw. B.A +
21. Were you born into a Christian family? Yes No
22. Are there presently people of other faiths residing in your home? Yes No

23. If you have ideas concerning the relationship of Christians to people of other faiths that you want to
 share with the committee, please write them here

Again, Thank You