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HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE SEARCH FOR A RELEVANT ECCLESIOLOGY IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THAILAND

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Introduction

At first glance, the subject of this consultation, "A Search for a Relevant Ecclesiology in Asia", strikes those who know the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), the subject of this paper, as rather irrelevant to the needs of its local churches. It sounds distant, academic, and quite removed from the realities of local church life. "We don't need a fancy ecclesiology (whatever *that* is)", the churches might say. "What we need is better leadership, more resources, and deeper commitment." And yet if we consider for a moment the history of one local, quite typical church in Thailand we will find that the "search for a relevant ecclesiology" is not itself so irrelevant after all.

The history of the Phraphornchai Church, located in northern Thailand some twenty kilometers north of Chiang Mai, reveals a dichotomy between its institutional growth and its theological self-understanding. After its founding as a small, very poor Christian community in the early 1930s, the congregation experienced marked institutional development in terms of physical plant, numbers of members, level of financial giving, variety of activities, and ability to lead itself. It grew into a relatively strong institution. Viewed theologically, however, the congregation showed little awareness of what it means to be the body of Christ or the people of God. Church leaders vied for power as a matter of honor and prestige rather than as an opportunity for service and sacrifice. Church members displayed little interest in activities which promote the Christian life, such as prayer, Bible study, and service to the community beyond the church. Only a few members could articulate even a rudimentary understanding of the Christian life.¹ The Phraphornchai Church, in short, quite ably main-

tained itself as a social and institutional entity but largely failed to act as the body of Christ. It did not understand what it means to be the body of Christ. It never thought of itself in those terms.

Viewed in this light, the need for a cogent ecclesiology seems less remote from the real needs of at least this one local Thai church. Nor is that church unique in its lack of a theological understanding of its own nature. The Rev. Brian Morgan, in a 1979 report, described the situation of rural CCT congregations, which, if anything, suggests that the Phraphornchai Church is somewhat more theologically articulate than the average congregation. Morgan found the churches suffering not only under poor leadership and limited resources, but also without any clear self-conception of what it means to be the church.²

This lack of an articulate ecclesiology did not simply "magically" take place. It has a history. In the case of the Phraphornchai Church, that history traces itself through a neighboring church that was initially responsible for the congregation back to the Presbyterian mission under whose auspices the congregation was started. The mission failed, in the first decade of the congregation's life, to provide Christian education and nurture for the congregation. Morgan also pointed to the American Presbyterian heritage of the CCT as the source of at least some of the problems facing local churches. My own study of the history of the church in northern Thailand from 1867 to 1920 argues that the structure, actions, and attitudes of Presbyterian missions resulted in a weak, inarticulate church in northern Thailand.³

The first missionaries of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the

United States of America arrived in Thailand in 1840 and by the 1870s the two Presbyterian missions, the "Laos Mission" in northern Thailand and the "Siam Mission" in central and, later, southern Thailand, encompassed nearly all Protestant work in the country.⁴ United in 1920 as the American Presbyterian Mission in Siam, Presbyterian missions continued to dominate Protestant work in Thailand until the 1950s. In 1934 the Presbyterian Mission led the way in founding the Church of Christ in Thailand, the first and still largest Protestant church in Thailand, and Presbyterian missionaries held key positions of leadership in the CCT from its inception into the 1970s and, in a few instances, the 1980s. Presbyterian missions, in short, played the leading role in creating both the structures of the CCT and the theological rationale behind those structures. Maen Pongudom, in his seminal study of Presbyterian missionary apologetics goes so far as to state that missionary Presbyterianism "...is the backbone of the Thai national church. It can be said that the CCT...is 'American Presbyterian-oriented' structurally, administratively and theologically."⁵

The need for and nature of the search for a relevant ecclesiology in the CCT, given the dominance of American Presbyterian missions in the formation of the Thai church, cannot be understood, then, apart from its Presbyterian missionary heritage. The theological unity of that heritage reinforced its significance. Until the 1920s all but a very few Presbyterian missionaries in Thailand identified themselves with the "Princeton Theology" which took its name from Princeton Theological Seminary, the theological center of nineteenth and early twentieth-century conservative Presbyterianism in the United States. The Princeton Theology grew out of a number of intellectual currents, the most important of which included scholastic Calvinism and Scottish Enlightenment philosophy. It opposed radical revivalism, liberal theology, and all forms of unorthodox "speculation". The Princeton Theology sought, furthermore, to protect the church from theological error and to make its brand of conservative evangelicalism the dominant intellectual and spiritual force in American culture. It came to be particularly associated with the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture. The American Presbyterian missionaries who served in Thai-

land, then, shared a unity of theological understanding which did not begin to break down until the 1920s and 1930s. They shared, as well, a common understanding of the nature and purpose of the church. It was that understanding which comprised the effective ecclesiology by which Presbyterian missions established the church in Thailand.

I

The Presbyterian missionaries rooted their ecclesiology in a millennial vision of the Kingdom of God stated in a form known as "post-millennialism," the form which dominated American evangelical thinking until the end of the nineteenth century and remained influential among Presbyterians into the twentieth century. American evangelical postmillennialism's vision of the Kingdom held that Christ would not return until the end of the millennial age--this in contrast to pre-millennialism which believed the Second Coming would precede the millennium. Postmillennialism looked for a gradual progressive emergence of the millennium, thus combining biblical apocalypticism with western ideas of evolution and progress.⁶

While the Thailand missionaries only rarely stated postmillennial views directly, they frequently translated their millennial vision of the Kingdom into a "localized millennium" which looked and longed for the total Christianization of Thailand at a time in the more or less distant future. They often expressed that longing in the biblical images of sowing and reaping. Thus, the Rev. Jonathan Wilson, writing in 1868, spoke of his feeling that being a missionary was a privilege because the missionary had a great work to do in spreading Christianity. He wrote that the missionary's task, "...may be only that of sowing, but that is a great work. The sheaves God will gather in his own time."⁷ Mary L. Cort, referring to revivals taking place in the United States, expressed her longing for similar revivals in Thailand. She observed that "...there must be patient seed sowing and culture ere we can bring the "Harvest Home."⁸

That time when God would gather in the sheaves and bring the harvest home was the time when the Kingdom of God would encompass all of Thailand. The Rev. Gaylord Knox delivered a 1935 American Thanksgiving

sermon before the whole American Presbyterian Mission in which he urged the mission to give "the Nationals" greater voice and influence in mission councils. He felt that if the mission did so, "The rich harvest will be presented to the Lord of the harvest. The Kingdom of Siam will become the Kingdom of Our Lord and His Christ."⁹ Four years later in the midst of an enthusiastic period of revivalism just before the World War II, another missionary called on his readers to pray that the revival spirit would spread throughout Thailand so that the whole nation "shall be born into His Kingdom." He speculated that the "fire" so kindled in Thailand might spread over the whole world and lead to the Second Coming.¹⁰

The Presbyterian missionaries, then, fixed their goals and their hopes on a future time when their efforts would result in a Christian Thailand. This grand vision defined why they came to Thailand and what they hoped to accomplish here. While they concerned themselves deeply with the souls of individuals, fearing their eternal damnation and praying for their eternal salvation, these missionaries did not come simply to win some converts. They came to save a nation. The Rev. William P. Buell, one of the first missionaries to serve in Thailand, expressed this Presbyterian commitment to the whole Thai nation early on when he wrote of the need for the Presbyterian Church to work zealously for the salvation of the Thai people before millions more died without the "light of life."¹¹ Edna S. Cole, of the Laos Mission, spoke for the missionaries generally when she asserted that God was the true King of northern Thailand and would give that region to Jesus for his possession. She called for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the missionaries that they might work more faithfully and zealously for "the coming of our Lord."¹²

Fred J. Hood has aptly tied this concern for peoples and nations, reflected in missionary thinking in Thailand, to Presbyterian postmillennialism in the United States. That millennialism, he notes, sought an idealized society completely subservient to the will of God. Presbyterians believed that without the Christian religion human societies necessarily degenerated. Only Christianity could produce the pure,

progressive society that would herald the millennium. And only evangelical Christians, especially Presbyterians, could lead the nation in the direction of the millennial society. Thus, most Presbyterians believed that God called upon them to gain control over American society in order to reform and renovate it in anticipation of the millennium. American Presbyterians believed, furthermore, that their nation would lead the world into the millennium, which meant that the rest of the world would adopt American religious, social, and political characteristics before it began.¹³ Hood concludes that socially, politically, and economically, "...the Presbyterian ideal of the millennial state was a religious domination of existing structures."¹⁴

Conservative American Presbyterianism looked upon culture, then, as an arena in which they contended with evil for the control of human life. They believed that all human cultures must be restructured so that God could be truly worshipped and glorified. The Kingdom of God would emerge only as God, through the agency of evangelical Christianity, pervaded and purified human cultures.¹⁵

Presbyterian missionaries in Thailand applied this conservative Calvinistic approach to Thai culture in both a positive and a negative manner. On the one hand, they identified the idea of "civilization," by which they meant Western civilization, with Christianity. Christianity and civilization reinforced each other so that by disseminating Christian influence throughout Thai society the missionaries believed they actually "civilized" the nation. In a like manner, they believed that the introduction of elements of Western civilization into Thailand would lead to its eventual acceptance of Christianity. The Rev. Daniel McGilvary, one of the guiding lights of Presbyterian missions in Thailand, wrote that God was behind the introduction of "improvements" of "Western arts and sciences" in Thailand to the end that they would help spread Christianity to the glory of God. The introduction of the "blessings and improvements of a temporal nature" proved the superiority of Christianity to the Thai people. Christianity, McGilvary contended, by its very nature instilled dissatisfaction with the social and moral conditions of "half civilized

nations" such as he held Thailand to be.¹⁶

The missionaries, however, more often expressed the relationship of Christianity to culture in Thailand negatively, seeing Christianity as necessarily leading to the destruction of Buddhism and Thai Buddhist culture. Writing at a time when Buddhism appeared to be losing its grip on Thai society, the Rev. John N. Culbertson noted that "Young Siam" was rejecting Buddhism, quite appropriately, but had not yet learned that true civilization could not exist without Christianity. He affirmed not only that the coming of civilization would eventually bring Christianity with it; but also that the "Spirit that throbs through Christendom" would break the spell by which Buddhism held sway over Thailand. The "pagan gloom," he asserted, must give way to the light that would lead to the "eternal perfect day."¹⁷

The Presbyterian missionaries, in sum, came to Thailand with their attention focused on the people and nation of Thailand. They believed that God called them to foment a quietly radical cultural transformation by which Thailand would become both Christian and civilized. They looked upon their work as sowing the seeds of Christianity and of civilization with the full expectation that God would reap for them a great harvest. The missionaries expected that in as much as they sowed Christianity they sowed also the destruction of Buddhism. In the end, they worked for the coming of the Kingdom in Thailand.

II

The Presbyterians came to Thailand for the primary purpose of converting the whole Thai nation in every facet of its life to Christianity. They did not come, primarily, to start churches, although they did see that as part of their larger task. Dr. Alexander A. Hodge of Princeton reflected their attitude when he argued that the Kingdom of God on earth was "not confined to the mere ecclesiastical sphere" but sought supremacy in every sphere of life.¹⁸ For Dr. Hodge and for his compatriots in Thailand, the church was an adjunct to the Kingdom. It remained in the theological shadows of what they took to be a grander vision. The missionaries, in fact, derived their ecclesiology from their millennial, visionary expectation of

the coming Kingdom in Thailand.

Three images inferred from the millennial vision of the Kingdom dominated missionary thinking about the church. In the first place, the missionaries viewed the church as the "first fruits" of a coming great harvest. They, however, did not speak of the church directly in this manner but rather described conversion and church membership as the fruits of the harvest. They, for example, frequently referred to Christian converts as jewels in the crown of Christ, as the fruit of the missionaries own labor, as the harvest already gathered into heaven, as the good seed which had taken root, or as gathered sheaves, Eula Van Vranken, writing in 1911, stated that, even when potential converts postponed converting the missionaries must keep "storming the fortress of superstition and unbelief" in order to "reap" converts.¹⁹ The convert church, furthermore, symbolized and gave a foretaste of the millennium. The Rev. Noah McDonald called converts, "These occasional mercy drops," which "prevent us from despairing of our work. May they be but the forerunner of a great and copious rain."²⁰ The missionaries, thus, did not value the church in and of itself, but rather valued it for what it would lead to. They looked forward to the time when there would be great increases in church membership and God would rule Thailand.²¹

The missionaries' second image of the church reinforced the identification of the church with the millennial Kingdom of God. In this image, the missionaries largely conceived of the church as a missionary and evangelistic agency slated to join them in the great work of winning Thailand to Christ. Daniel McGilvary stated the missionaries' general position when he proclaimed that missionary work was "the great work of the church." He felt that the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 provided the church with its primary duty, the preaching of the Gospel to the unsaved.²² The Rev. Stephen Mattoon, recalling millennial themes, argued that God gathered the church for the specific purpose of fulfilling God's promise to give the heathen to Christ for his possession (Psalm 2:8 KJV). God could have used the angels, he reasoned, but chose to use the church instead.²³ Thus, the church

became a divinely appointed agent for bringing the Kingdom of God to realization among the people of Thailand.

These views reflected the conservative Presbyterian understanding of culture, an understanding which emphasized the idea of gaining control over culture and society in order to facilitate and hasten the progressive arrival of the millennium. The emphasis on social control, expressed in the idea of the church as evangelistic agency, led the missionaries to a third image of the church. Both of the previous images of the church as harvest and as missionary agency set the church apart from Thai Buddhist culture and put the church in the role of subversive counter-culture. Church membership required of members a total break with culture because Thai culture, for the missionaries, meant "heathen," "idolatrous," and "immoral" Buddhist culture. Recognizing Buddhism's profound influence over all of Thai society, the missionaries dared not allow the church to remain closely linked with Thai culture.²⁴ The Rev. Chalmers Martin, a member of the Laos Mission in the 1880s, later published a book on foreign missions in which he described in detail the influence "heathen" religions has on society. According to Martin, heathenism infected the intellectual, social, and political life of non-Christian, non-Protestant nations to the extent that heathens lived dishonest lives filled with lies, foul impurities, horrid cruelties, and hopeless miseries. As in biblical times, false religions affected every aspect of heathen character and life to the extent that those religions became interwoven with human nature itself in heathen nations.²⁵

The Presbyterian missionaries viewed conversion and church membership as a two-step process whereby the convert first rejected Buddhism and, by extension, all of Thai culture, and then joined the church. The Rev. Paul A. Eakin, writing in 1917, described a special pledge for catechumens used by the Phet Buri Station of the Siam Mission. That pledge required catechumens to give up Buddhist practices entirely and promise to practice instead the "duties" of the Christian life. Eakin observed that catechumens received baptism only after they had proven the genuineness of their Christian faith by living up to the pledge.²⁶

The missionaries invested considerable concern in protecting the "purity" of the church in its separateness and worried continually that church members might revert to the idolatrous and immoral state of heathenism. They frequently called church members to task for committing a variety of sins, including breaking the Sabbath, taking part in Buddhist or spirit-propitiation activities, and engaging in a range of "immoral" acts. The missionaries often suspended or excommunicated those who did not show penitence for their wrong-doings.²⁷

It is proper, in sum, to speak of a missionary "ecclesiology" only if it is understood that the Presbyterian missionaries in Thailand derived their three key images of the church from their understanding of the millennial Kingdom of God. Although they only rarely explicitly equated the Kingdom with the Church itself, through the vision of the Kingdom they understood that the church represented the first fruits of the Kingdom in Thailand. It, furthermore, functioned as an agency for the conversion of the rest of the nation. And it, finally remained apart from society so that it would remain undefiled by the heathenism from which it had been saved and so that its could impart its purity to the rest of the nation.

III

Presbyterian missionary ecclesiology, as described briefly above, grew out of and reinforced a set of attitudes about the church which formed the theological context out of which the Church of Christ in Thailand emerged. First of all, the missionaries, while affirming the theoretical importance of the church, generally looked over and beyond the church in the pursuit of their millennial visions. In their enthusiasm for spreading the Gospel, they looked constantly towards the next evangelistic frontier. They devoted vast amounts of energy to the expansion of the Kingdom while failing to devote anything like the same amount of concern and energy to pastor and nurture the churches already established. By the same token, the Presbyterian missions created extensive networks of hospitals and schools, in great part on the premise that these networks would help spread Christian influence leading, ultimately, to the destruction of Buddhism

and the triumph of Christianity. Again, vast amounts of time, energy, and resources went into these institutional networks thereby taking missionary attention away from the churches.²⁸ The missionaries, in general, wanted something much more than a "mere ecclesiastical institution" that would take its place in a pluralistic Thai society. It sought, rather, complete control over the whole nation. Taking all of this into account the Board of Foreign Missions, in a 1934 report, reminded the mission in Thailand that, as good as their other work in other fields, such as education and medicine, was "...the matter of a vital Christian church should be constantly in the thought and plans of the Mission."²⁹

Secondly, the missionaries tended to look upon the church as a product or as a crop rather than as a living community. Individual conversions represented victories and God-given achievements, triumphs of good over evil. Given this perspective, the Presbyterian missionaries generally put conversion, the transfer of allegiance from Buddhism to Christianity, at the center of the Christian life. They did not act as if the Christian life was a life-long process of nurture and growth in faith nor did they value the nurturing aspects of Christian communal life. The church functioned not as a community but rather as a secured, purified holding place for souls until those souls were "called to be with God."

The missionaries, in the third place, emphasized evangelism as the key activity of the church at the expense of other activities. Thus, the churches under missionary leadership relied upon the rhetoric of a narrowly-conceived evangelism in their preaching, their administration, their relationships with each other within the church, and in their relationships with those beyond the church. The missions utilized the most capable local church elders as itinerant evangelists, thus removing them from active leadership in their own churches. Statistical growth in the number of members added to the church's rolls tended to replace growth in the personal and communal understanding of the Christian life as the measure of the "alive" church.³⁰ This evangelistic concern even dominated the churches' understanding of Scripture to the extent that, in the Laos Mission,

the mission translated and printed first those parts of Scripture deemed most useful for evangelism. The missionaries looked upon the Bible as a key element in their missionary campaign, and in their teaching of the Bible they normally taught church members how to use the Bible for evangelistic purposes.³¹ All of this led Mr. B. Carter Millikin, Educational Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions who made a survey of Presbyterian work in Thailand in 1923, to take the mission in Thailand to task for its failure to nurture those it had evangelized. He called on the mission to make greater provision for following up on converts, cultivating the church, and training local church leadership.³²

As a fourth point, the missionary understanding of the church as a counter-culture removed the church from participation in the socio-cultural life of the nation thus alienating the church from its own cultural context. Others perceived the church as an alien presence. And the missionaries themselves, out of their concern to reform, renovate, and Christianize Thai culture, encouraged the church to set itself apart from society.³³ The missionary program, in fact, so emphasized the evil "heathenism" of Thai Buddhist culture that it effectively programmed the church to seek and hold a purposely irrelevant ecclesiology, one that preserved the purity and separateness of the church. Under missionary direction, the church evolved its own social and institutional structures, its own educational and medical systems, and even its own patterns of employment. Christians frequently coalesced into their own villages or sections of villages. Western forms of worship, architecture, and church life further distinguished the Thai churches from Thai society.

This emphasis on the separateness and purity of the church leads to a fifth observation. That emphasis caused the missionaries to display anxiety about and a generally critical attitude towards the churches. They were, for example, seldom satisfied with the level of Christian commitment they found in the churches nor did they trust church members to "behave" as they should. The Rev. Noah McDonald spoke for many missionaries over the years when he wrote, in the midst of discouragement over events in the Bangkok congregation, "...the

care of a native church is attended with great anxiety. It is like living upon a volcano not knowing what moment an eruption may take place."³⁴ The Siam Mission report for 1860-1861 explained that the degraded state of Thai society with its attendant immorality had an injurious influence on the converts which "... often gives us great anxiety as to the reality of their piety."³⁵

Edna S. Cole expressed both the anxiety and the perplexity the missionaries often felt about the converts and church members in general. At times she emphasized the positive, noting that in spite of their exposure to the "satanic chains" of fear and superstition the converts did convert. Such conversions, she reasoned, must be the work of the Holy Spirit. At other times, however, Cole felt quite pessimistic. She knew that the missions had to accept converts, but she fretted over their failure to understand vital parts of Christianity. The converts seemed to her dead and without real understanding of what Christ had done for them.³⁶ The Rev. Stephen Mattoon, writing in 1856 of a convert who had reverted to a life of gambling and opium-smoking, despairingly wondered when the missionaries might see "real conversions" in Thailand. And even in later years, the missionaries often felt anxious about church members lack of understanding of the nature of sin and of central Christian doctrines.³⁷

One of the most notable ways missionary anxiety regarding the church expressed itself was in their reluctance to place Thai church leaders in positions of responsibility independent of missionary supervision. A pattern emerged by which the missions utilized church leaders as their assistants and only over the course of many years began to put some Thai leaders in positions of independent trust. The missions dominated local church leadership through an informal system of mission-appointed "bishops". Well into the twentieth century the missionaries, with only a few notable exceptions, believed that Thai church leaders did not have the ability and understanding needed to lead churches.³⁸

In sum, the missionary "theology of the church" generally looked beyond the church rather than to it for the establishment of the

Kingdom of God in Thailand. It limited the activities and concerns of the church to a narrow evangelism which tied the voice and the self-understanding of the church to the rhetoric of evangelism. That ecclesiology walled the church off from the larger society within which it found itself. It looked upon church members as trophies symbolic of even more trophies to come. And it expressed a fundamental distrust of the church in its real-life forms.

IV

One cannot fault the Presbyterian missionaries, in a sense, for their ecclesiology. They were in a great haste to prepare the way for the Kingdom of God in Thailand. They sacrificially burdened themselves with the structures they created to bring the Kingdom. They longed for more resources to get the job done. They travelled great distances and devoted their lives to spreading their faith. They themselves recognized that converting a nation was an awesome task, one that could be accomplished only within the providence of God. Whatever particular work they undertook as individuals, nearly all of the missionaries viewed themselves primarily as recruiters for the Kingdom. They worked to create the conditions by which the Kingdom would come to Thailand. They pursued, in sum, a noble dream.

And yet, in spite of their vision and dedication, they failed to nurture, cherish, and give honor to the churches they founded. Their vision constantly pulled them away from the church. The experience of the First Presbyterian Church in faraway Hastings, Nebraska, strangely enough, highlights the limitations of this visionary missionary ecclesiology in Thailand. The organizing pastor of the Hastings church, founded in 1873, was a zealous and staunch Calvinist who had wanted to go to the foreign mission field but could not for reasons of health. He became, instead, a frontier "home missionary" and, in that capacity, founded the Hastings Church. When it came time in 1876, however, for the Session of the church to consider engaging him as pastor for another term, the Session commended him for his zeal and his friendship to the church but declined to rehire him. The congregational historian observes, "The Hastings church was well-established by now and no

longer required the services of a crusading organizer."³⁹ The congregation recognized that the ministry of the crusading missionary had its place, but that place did not include the day-to-day task of pastoring churches.

The theological and institutional dilemma facing the Thai churches is that in their first century of existence (and beyond) they never had, or at least did not feel that they had, the opportunity to dismiss their zealous, evangelism-oriented founders with thanks and then get on about the business of being the church, forever imperfect yet always an expression of God's grace in the world. The Thai Protestant church remained, instead, under the influence of an inferred and derived missionary ecclesiology that yearned for and worked for a visionary future while largely ignoring the church itself. In its very grandeur, that vision mitigated against the emergence of a more modest, but more effective understanding of the Kingdom of God located in a pluralistic world and in the communal life of the churches. In the vastness of its hope for the future, the missionary vision of the Kingdom communicated a sense of disappointment in the churches for not living up to their expectations of what the future would be like. In its pressing urgency, the missionary vision failed to work patiently, day by day with the churches, nurturing them, pastoring them, and instilling in them a sense of self-worth appropriate to the forgiven and forgiving people of God. In the breadth of its commitment to an entire nation and people, the missionary vision created huge institutional structures that drained away resources and attention necessary for the growth of the churches. Missionary visions inhibited rather than freed the church.

The ecclesiological heritage of the Thai churches, then, presents them with a real need to engage in a "search for a relevant ecclesiology," a search that will help local church members, such as those in the Phraphornchai Church, understand themselves and their churches to the end that they might be the church for their members and their neighbors. The search for a meaningful theology of the Thai church could take many different turns and any number of forms, but a truly relevant ecclesiology, whatever its form, will, more than anything else,

affirm the churches. It will value the churches. It will find in them God incarnate in the compassionate Christ. It will heal them of their sense of inferiority to the churches of other nations and show them that the Thai church need not "live up" to the model of the American church or the Japanese church or the Korean church. The search for a relevant theology, furthermore, will discover that a narrowly-defined evangelism is not the be-all and end-all of the church. It will discover, then, that people of other faiths are not to be feared as the enemies of Christ, but loved as neighbors of the church. Above all else, however, an ecclesiology truly relevant to the history and present condition of the churches of the Church of Christ in Thailand will tell them of God's gracious concern for them--not the wisest, nor the largest, nor the richest, nor the most impressive of churches in the world--yet nothing less than the people of God and the body of Christ.

NOTES

- 1 see Kummool Sriwichai, *Our Church: The History of Phraphornchai Church* (Chiang Mai: Office of History, Church of Christ in Thailand, 1989) [in Thai].
- 2 Brian Morgan, "A Brief Description of C.C.T. Rural Congregational Life." (June 1979, typescript, at the Payap University Archives, Chiang Mai).
- 3 Herbert R. Swanson, *Khrischak Muang Nua: A Study in Northern Thai Church History* (Bangkok: Chuan Press, 1984).
- 4 The "Laos Mission" took its name from the nineteenth-century Western and central Thai name for the people of the culturally distinctive northern Thai region, "Lao". "Siam" was the official name of Thailand until the late 1930s.
- 5 Maen Pongudom, "Apologetics and Missionary Proclamation: Exemplified by American Presbyterian Missionaries to Thailand (1828-1978), Early Church Apologists: Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, and the Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikku, A Thai Buddhist Monk-Apologist" (Ph.D. diss., University of Otago, 1979), 5
- 6 James H. Moorhead, "The Erosion of Postmillennialism in American Religious

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- 7 Wilson, letter, in *Foreign Missionary* 27 (March 1869): 240. Emphasis in original.
- 8 Cort to John C. Lowrie, 6 April 1880, v.4, Records of the Board of Foreign Missions, Presbyterian Church USA. [hereafter cited as BFM]. microfilm at the Payap University Archives, Chiang Mai.
- 9 Gaylord Knox, "The harvest is rich, but the labourers few," (photocopy, November 1938, in the Research Papers of Maen Pongudom (hereafter cited as Mean Papers), at the Payap University Archives, Chiang Mai).
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- 11 Buell to Walter Lowrie, 31 August 1842, v.1, BFM.
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- 13 Fred J. Hood, *Reformed America: The Middle and Southern States 1783-1837* (University, AL: University of Alabama, 1980), 68-77.
- 14 Hood, *Reformed America*, 82.
- 15 Gary Scott Smith, *The Seeds of Secularization: Calvinism, Culture, and Pluralism in America, 1870-1915* (Christian University Press, 1985), 47-48.
- 16 McGilvary, letter dated 10 June 1858, in North Carolina Presbyterian [hereafter cited as NCP] 1 (2 October 1858): 2; and McGilvary. "For the Little Folks," NCP 3 (2 March 1870): 4.
- 17 Culbertson, "Report of Presbyterian Mission of Siam," 4 November 1874, v.3, BFM.
- 18 Quoted in Smith, *Seeds of Secularization*, 98.
- 19 Van Vranken, "Nan Station Report 1910-1911," Maen Papers.
- 20 McDonald to Irving, 4 August 1874, v.3, BRM.
- 21 McDonald, "Report of the mission of the Pres. Board at Bangkok Siam, 1 October 1862, v.2, BFM.
- 22 McGilvary, "Medical Missions and Missionary Physicians-No.1," *NCP New Series* 2 (23 June 1869): 1.
- 23 Mattoon, excerpts from a speech, in "Synodical Missionary Meeting," *NCP* 2 (19 November 1859).
- 24 Maen, "Apologetics and Missionary Proclamation," 156.
- 25 Martin, *Apostolic and Modern Missions* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1898), 106-107.)
- 26 Eakin to Arthur J. Brown, 31 March 1917, Maen Papers.
- 27 see the Sessional Records of First Presbyterian Church, Bangkok (1849-1896) and First Presbyterian Church, Chiang Mai (1868-1886), in the Records of the American Presbyterian Mission, at the Payap University Archives; and the Sessional Records of the Presbyterian Church of Phet Buri (1863-1899) and Bagnkaboon Church (1878-1918) in the Records of the Sripimontham Church, at the Payap University Archives.
- 28 see Swanson, *Khrischak Muang Nua*, particularly Part II, where the impact of missionary evangelistic rhetoric and institutional commitment is discussed at length.
- 29 "Siam Conference Held in New York, January 4, 5, 6, 1933." 18 January 1933, in Records of the American Presbyterian Mission.
- 30 see Swanson, *Khrischak Muang Nua*, 62ff.
- 31 see McGilvary to Irving, 26 April 1883, v.4, BFM; and Herbert R. Swanson, "Missionary Printing and Literature as Agents of Change in Northern Siam, 1882-1926," in *Change in Northern Thailand and the Shan States 1886-1940*, ed. Prakai Nontawasee (Singapore: Southeast Asian Studies Program, 1988), 175-208.
- 32 Millikin, "Report: Visit to Siam Mission, January 18th to February 15th 1923," 26, in Records of the American Presbyterian Mission.
- 33 see C.C. Zimmerman and Mrs. George B. McFarland, "Extracts From Report on Siam," 1931, in Maen Papers; and Philip J. Hughes, Proclamation and Response:

- A Study of the History of Christian Faith in Northern Thailand (Chiang Mai: Manuscript Division, Payap College, 1982), 30-31.
- 34 McDonald to Irving, 24 November 1874, v.3, BFM.
- 35 "Annual Report of the Presbyterian Mission Siam for the year ending Oct 1st 1861," v.2, BFM.
- 36 Cole, letters, in *WWIW* 10 (November 1880): 390: and 13 (March 1883): 83-84
- 37 Mattoon to House, 9 January 1856, v.2, BFM: J.A. Eakin, "Personal Report," 1917, Maen Papers: and F.C.Snyder, "Annual Report of Srithammarat Station," 1923, Maen Papers.
- 38 see Swanson, *Khrischak Muang Nua*, 94ff.
- 39 Dorothy Weyer Creigh, *The First Hundred Years: The First Presbyterian Church*, Hastings, Nebraska 1873-1973 (n.p., n.d.), 7.