

Conversion Growth of Protestant Churches in Thailand

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PREFACE

My wife Esther and I arrived in Thailand as missionaries in 2000. After about one year my curiosity got the better of me. I found out that nobody had compiled statistics on Thai Protestant Christians since 1978. In my innocence I decided to start counting. Had I known what an enormous task it was I probably never would have started. And, but for the interest that the Thai churches and the missionary community showed in the initial results, I would soon have given up.

Because I was working as a church planter the next set of questions popped up. What kind of people become Christians? How? What kind of churches grow? I decided to do some surveys to get answers to these questions.

During our first home assignment, in 2002, I met up with my mentor, professor Jongeneel. I had enjoyed being his research assistant during my student years, but had continuously turned down his recurring suggestion to write a dissertation: "I'm going to be a missionary, not a scientist." But now he prevailed. He convinced me that it would be beneficial to the church in Thailand, and to me, to answer my questions with academic rigour.

Besides being my mentor, and goading me into writing a dissertation, I have one more important thing to thank Professor Jongeneel for: turning 70 (he, not I) at the end of 2008. Because age discrimination is still not forbidden in The Netherlands this personal milestone is inevitably reached 5 years after mandatory retirement and it means losing the right to supervise promotions. However unfair this may be it became my impetus to get serious with writing. Most of my home assignment in 2006 was taken up with writing down my research results. Most of my evenings since then have been spent by trying to get the statistics right and writing it in such a way that Professor Jongeneel approved.

I would also like to thank the co-sponsors of this dissertation. Prof. Dr. Manat Phaituncharoenlap was the first real-life statistics Professor I have ever met and, as a Buddhist, he graciously agreed to be the second reader of this missiological dissertation. Prof. Dr. Michael Phillips is another real-life statistics Professor, whom I however never met. Yet he helped me immensely with all the statistical procedures. I especially appreciate his untiring devotion in explaining to me the advantages of a three sample approach, which I ended up not using at all.

My sincere thanks are due to everybody who has helped me with this research. Partly it was a personal quest. I will never forget the insights, thoughts, and experiences many Thai church leaders and veteran missionaries shared with me. I hope it made me a better missionary. The help of Rev. Yuttasak Sirikul was especially appreciated. He helped open the door to many churches through his role as chairman of the Thailand Evangelism Committee. This research project would not have been possible without the help of many research assistants. I want to thank Waranya Pitisan, Phuangkew Plainate, and Charoenphon Thaopilat for their secretarial help. Several Dutch students came to help with interviewing and surveying a few weeks or months. Peter Duitman, Sijmen den Hartog, Hester den Hartog, Claske Honcoop, Ton van der Horst, Anneke Mantel, Herman Paul (who finished his own Ph.D. thesis much sooner than I), and Willem van der Voet all helped in the beginning stages of the research.

A special word of thanks should go to a few missionary colleagues who have done much to ensure that this research will continue to help the Thai church. Bruce

Rowe is the one who changed my simple Excel-file into a church database that can do the most amazing (and unexpected) things. He also helped me to make the layout of this manuscript look like what I wanted it to look like. Dwight Martin has taken over the responsibility for this database and will continue to update it, helped by his Thai staff. Tim Martin produces maps that make the church statistics visible at a glance; he made a few for this publication as well. Mark and Becky Leighton, Trish Bekker, and Dianne McIvor, as well as Professor Dr. Mike Phillips, checked my academic English, which was a humbling experience. Any ugly words and sentences still left probably crept back in when I made the final changes to this manuscript.

Grants by the department of Utrecht University, Stichting Zonneweelde, Stichting Aanpakken, the Gereformeerde Bond, and Fonds Ad Pias Causas made this research and its publication possible.

Because of all the help from the people mentioned above, this study is not as bad as it could have been. Because of all my own limitations it is not as good as it could have been. Yet I hope it will be of help to the Thai church.

ABBREVIATIONS

AACGR	Annual Average Conversion Growth Rate
AAGR	Annual Average Growth Rate
AC	All Converts
ACCM	American Churches of Christ Mission
ACT	Associated Churches in Thailand
AEC	Anglican Evangelical Church in Thailand
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Countries
BC	Before Christ
BFC	Bond of Fellowship Churches
BIMI	Baptist International Missions, Inc.
BLS	Beulah Land Services
BMA	Bangkok Metropolitan Area
CBMG	Christian Brethren Missionary Group
CC	Church Converts
CC/DC	Christian Church / Disciples of Christ
CCC	Campus Crusade for Christ
CCPCG	Center for Church Planting and Church Growth in Northeast Thailand
CCT	Church of Christ in Thailand
CD-ROM	Compact Disc Read-Only Memory
CEM	China Evangelistic Mission
CLC	Christian Life Center Churches
CMA	Christian and Missionary Alliance
CN	Church of the Nazarene
COC-NI	Churches of Christ (Non-Instrumental)
COGWM	Church of God World Mission
CPM	Church Planting Movement
CTTM	Christ to Thailand Mission
ECC	Evangelical Covenant Church
ELC	Evangelical Lutheran Church
EFT	Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand
FEBC	Far Eastern Broadcasting Company
FCT	Full Gospel Church in Thailand
FFFM	Finnish Free Foreign Mission
FGA	Full Gospel Assemblies of Thailand
FGC	Full Gospel Churches in Thailand
FSQ	Foursquare Gospel Church
GCT	Gospel Church of Thailand
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GNP	Gross National Product
HC	Hope Churches
HDI	Human Development Index
IBFT	Independent Baptist Fellowship Thailand
IMB	International Mission Board
KBC	Karen Baptist Convention

KMC	Korean Methodist Church
LBC	Lahu Baptist Convention
LMT	Lutheran Mission in Thailand
Ln	Natural logarithm
M	Total Membership
M10	Total Membership 10 years ago
MEM	Mekong Evangelical Mission
MM	Marburger Mission
MTC	Muang Thai Churches
N	Sample size
NCD	Natural Church Development
NIDA	National Institute for Development Assistance
NLC	New Life Churches
NRM	New Religious Movement
ns	not significant
NSO	National Statistical Office
NTM	New Tribes Mission
OMF	Overseas Missionary Fellowship
OW	<i>Operation World</i>
PAOC	Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada
PC	Plukchit Churches
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church in the United States of America
RKC	Romklao Churches
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
SDA	Seventh-Day Adventist Church
TAOG	Thai Assemblies of God
TBCA	Thailand Baptist Churches Association
TE	Thai Ezra Churches
TCC	Thailand Covenant Churches
TMC	Thailand Methodist Church
TPCCC	Thailand Protestant Churches Coordinating Committee
TV	Television
USA	United States of America
VFG	Vision Full Gospel Churches
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCD	World Christian Database
WCE	<i>World Christian Encyclopedia</i>
WEC	World Evangelization for Christ (formerly World Evangelization Crusade)

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GLOSSARY

Amphur muang: Capital district of a Thai province.

Anicca: Impermanence.

Bodhisattva: In Mahayana Buddhism someone on the way to enlightenment, who still is incarnated to help others reach enlightenment as well.

Buddha: Enlightened one.

Bun: Moral goodness.

Bunkhun: Indebted goodness.

Conversio gentium: Conversion of the peoples.

Decha: Amoral power.

Dharma: In Buddhism the teaching and doctrine of the Buddha.

Ecclesiola in ecclesia: 'Little church in the church', small groups to promote piety.

Gloria et manifestatio gratiae divinae: The glory of God and the manifestation of God's grace.

Glossolalia: Speaking in tongues.

Kammic: Pertaining to *karma*.

Karma: The result of all deeds. This causes the cycle of being reborn. In Thai Buddhism *karma* is normally only used of wrong deeds.

Khaw Bansa: The beginning of the Buddhist lent.

Kreng jai: To be considerate.

Magha Puja: Buddhist festival in remembrance of the day when 1250 disciples of Buddha, all enlightened, are said to have congregated, without prior invitation or knowledge, 3 months before the Buddha died.

Moh lam: Singer of traditional Northeastern Thai songs.

Muang: Settlement, town.

Nibbanic: Pertaining to *nirvana*.

Nirvana: A state of mind in which all striving has ceased and therefore escape from the wheel of rebirth is achieved.

Ohk Bansa: The end of the Buddhist lent.

Phi: Spirit(s).

Phra Kathin: Buddhist festival during which robes are given to the monks.

Plantatio ecclesia: Planting of the church.

Pondok: Islamic religious school.

Prima facie: On first appearance

Rite de passage: Ritual that marks a change in social status.

Sangha: The Buddhist order of monks.

Sola gratia, sola fide, solus Christus: (Salvation is by) God's grace only, faith only, Christ only.

Thetsabaan: Urban area

Thewada: Angelic being, god.

Tipitaka: Pali canon of Buddhist scriptures.

Visakha Puja: Buddhist festival in remembrance of the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha.

Wan phra: Holy day, occurs four times every lunar month.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of the problem

1.1.1. Main problem

The main mission of the Church is the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. All through church history Christians have rejoiced when adherents of other religions and worldviews embraced the biblical message about God, the world, and man, and committed their lives to the Lordship of Christ. The growth of the church has always been a major focus of missionary work, and the church at large has eagerly welcomed this growth, and often interpreted it as a proof of God's grace.

The present author is a Protestant missionary¹ involved in church planting in Thailand since 2000. He has joined in celebrating the growth of the church in Thailand. He has also struggled with the question of what makes churches grow, or not grow, in Thailand. This question, immediately relevant to the daily life and ministry of the author, became the starting and focal point for this study. The main problem that will be addressed in this study is which factors are conducive for conversion church growth in Protestant Thai churches.

Missiology is the discipline that studies missions, and therefore also the growth of the church. Amazingly, in the European missiological tradition, relatively little attention has been given to the process of church growth. In this study research into church growth is assumed to be a legitimate concern of missiology. However, in the opinion of the present author most church growth studies that have been undertaken so far have a common weakness: there is a lot of counting, but statistical analysis is lagging behind. Samuel Wilson states:

Secular research, since 1939, has distinguished four levels of measurement that determine the appropriate use of data analysis and modeling techniques. And the simple truth is that very little has been done in missions that goes beyond the first two levels, namely, nominal, naming a category, unit of analysis, or phenomenon; or ordinal, ranking units (agencies, nations, etc.) in some ordered sequence. Further, very few attempts are made to relate variables to one another in conditional or causal hypotheses, even at these modest levels of measurement, usually referred to in research literature as qualitative methods. One reason for this is that the data collected are fodder for building dependent variables. Counting the results has absorbed missionary activists.²

¹ The word 'missionary' is used differently by different people. Some apply it to church planters wherever they are; some to Christian workers who work cross-culturally; some to Christian workers sent outside their homelands. In this study the word is used in the last sense. So a missionary in Thailand is any non-Thai citizen doing Christian work in Thailand. This definition is for convenience and is in line with the usage by Thai Christians. It does not lay claim to being the 'right' one.

² Samuel Wilson, "Quantitative research", p. 803-804, in: Scott A. Moreau, (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Missiology*, Grand Rapids, 2000, p. 803.

This study is a statistical analysis of hypotheses about conversion and church growth, and therefore takes the study of church growth one step further than is usually done in missiological studies. Besides this general contribution to missiology, the present study specifically contributes to the body of knowledge about the Thai Protestant church. This is the first study about its growth since Alex Smith's *Siamese Gold: the Church in Thailand*, published in 1982.³ Smith's work is excellent, because he combines painstaking archive research for the older history with interviews providing data about the younger churches. The current study builds on what Smith has done. There is also a significant difference between the two. Siamese Gold is a diachronic study, tracking the growth of the Thai Protestant church through history, and looking for historic events, both in the church and in wider society, to explain church growth. The current study mainly uses a synchronic approach. It describes the current state of the Thai Protestant church, and uses this description to analyze factors hypothesized to contribute to church growth. The advantage of Smith's approach is that it is possible to take into account historic explanations and the contributions of individuals. The advantage of the approach used in this study, hopefully, is that it will be possible to analyze whether missiological intuitions are factually based.

1.1.2. Limitations

It should be noted that the above statement of the main problem limits the field of research in various ways. First, this is a study about the church. It looks at how people come to faith in Christ and become church members. It is not looking into how and why the vast majority of people, who have heard the Christian message, have not responded by becoming Christians. Neither is it looking into how and why significant numbers of people have accepted elements of the Christian message but stay outside the church. It might be good to add a short explanation, here, of how the terms 'church' and 'churches' are used in this study. The term 'Church' (with a capital) refers to the theological concept of all believers who are spiritually united as Christ's body. The term 'church' refers either to the worldwide or national community of people who identify themselves as Christians, or to a local body of Christians who meet together. In the latter case it is possible to talk about various local bodies and the plural 'churches' will be used. While this usage may seem to be confusing, it actually reflects the way in which the word 'church' (*ekklesia*) is used in the New Testament. The believers of all places are seen as the church, while at the same time the believers meeting together in one place are also called church: they are a full local expression of the church universal. When the universal or national church is meant the present author speaks about '*the church*'; when a local church is meant he uses the term '*a church*'. In the latter case sometimes the term '*local church*' is used. Wherever the plural 'churches' is used, the meaning is 'more than one local church'. Some groups of local churches have a common identity and belong to the same national organization. They are called 'denominations' in this study.

Second, this is a study about church growth. Its emphasis is not on church health and not on doctrinal purity. The quality of a local church depends on many factors, and most Christians would agree that faithfulness to God's Word is the main one. Among other things this is worked out in how church members make their faith

³ Alex G. Smith, *Siamese Gold: a History of Church Growth in Thailand: an Interpretive Analysis 1816-1982*, Bangkok, 1982.

practical in their personal life, their family life, among their friends and in their workplace, and in society as a whole. Other factors include prayer, worship, godly leadership, and fellowship of the believers. All these qualitative factors will be touched upon in this study, both because qualitative and quantitative characteristics are not independent, and because missiologists can never be interested in numbers without probing what the spiritual reality behind those numbers is. They want to know to what extent growing churches result in changed lives.

Yet this study has chosen to focus on verifiable phenomena. Consequently, in this study, 'Christian' is a sociological term. A Christian is someone who identifies himself as belonging to the Christian religion. In this study, for brevity, often the term 'Christian' is used where the fuller description would be 'Protestant Christian'. For practical reasons the research project was limited to those Christians that are church attenders. So when the noun 'Christian' is used in the discussion of the research findings based on the present author's dataset, it means 'church attending Protestant Christian'. This methodological limitation should not be construed to mean that the present author is more interested in the quantitative growth of the institution 'church' than in lives being transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Third, this is a study about conversion growth. Biological growth of the Christian community and transfer growth of denominations are not part of the main question. An effort will be made to derive the biological growth rate in order to be able to determine how much of the total growth is biological growth and how much is conversion growth. Growth or decline of churches and denominations due to transfers of members is very common in Thailand, which makes it difficult to draw *prima facie* conclusions about evangelistic effectiveness from the changes in membership of the various denominations. Of course, transfer growth does not influence conclusions about the growth of the total Christian community, because by definition it is a phenomenon that takes place within that community. But it has much influence in the analysis of local church data. Therefore, an effort needs to be made in this study to find out how much of the growth of any given church is conversion growth in contrast to transfer growth.

The use of the term 'conversion' in the paragraph above implies that conversion in this study is mainly used as a sociological term. Its meaning is conversion to Christianity (affiliation) and not necessarily implies conversion to God (life transformation on a deep level). So 'conversion' and 'becoming Christian' will be used interchangeably.

Fourth, the factors that contribute to conversion church growth are defined here as characteristics, behaviours, and experiences of individuals, churches, and societies. Motivations for conversion, another interesting field of study, are not the focus of this study.

Fifth, this is a study about ethnic Thai churches. The research subjects are churches among Thailand's majority people, the ethnic Thai. The churches among the many ethnic minorities in Thailand, like the Karen, the Hmong, the Akha, and the Lawa are not part of the research. That the patterns of conversion among them are probably quite different from the pattern of conversion among the ethnic Thai is suggested by the fact that among several ethnic minorities 10% to 50% of the population is Christian, while among the ethnic Thai it is less than 0.5%. Bringing these very different communities together in one study would lead to findings that would not throw light on either of them.

It needs to be added that in this study the definition of ethnic Thai churches includes ethnic Chinese, and ethnic Chinese Thai churches. Because of the continuing and increasing assimilation of the Chinese minority, and the increasingly mixing of the ethnic Thai and ethnic Chinese communities, it is not helpful or even possible to distinguish between Thai and Chinese Thai churches. Another reason for this decision is linguistic. The tribal churches worship in their own language. Churches with a Chinese influence worship in Thai (though there are still a few that have a second service in the Chinese language). This is one more indication of how much more the Chinese are assimilated into Thai society than are the tribal groups. Though there is no compelling reason to distinguish between the two groups on a church level, in this study some attention will be paid to the question whether distinction between Thai and Sino-Thai is still helpful on an individual level to explain conversion probability.

Sixth, this is a study about the Protestant church of Thailand. The Roman Catholic Church and marginal groups (Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Seventh-Day Adventists) are not included. Just as the tribal groups are so different linguistically and culturally from each other and from the ethnic Thai that they cannot be studied as a single community, these groups of Christians are so different theologically and socially that the same can be said about them. There clearly is a Protestant community in Thailand. Protestants know and visit each other's churches. Christian organizations have employees from many different denominations. Membership transfer between the various Protestant denominations takes place as a matter of course. All this is absent with the Roman Catholic Church and the marginal groups.

1.1.3. Sub-items of the main problem

As stated above the main problem that will be addressed in this study is which factors are conducive for conversion church growth in Protestant Thai churches. The main problem is divided in four items as follows:

1. The growth of the Protestant church of Thailand. This deals with the actual growth and growth rate of the Thai church over the last few decades. To analyze and understand patterns of growth it is important to have a clear picture of the total population of Thai Christians. This question is addressed in chapter 4.
2. The kind of people that convert to Christianity. How does knowing the background of people, both on a personal level and broader, help to understand which people are more likely to convert? This is explored in chapter 5.2 through 5.4.
3. The way people convert to Christianity. Even if a certain background makes someone more likely to become Christian, this still says little about the actual process of converting. The process itself is analyzed in chapter 5.5. and 5.6.
4. The type of churches which grow through conversion growth. Conversion is a personal issue strongly embedded in a social setting. However, it is not enough to just look at the convert and his context without also giving attention to the church that receives the convert. Which internal church factors contribute to conversion church growth is the subject of chapter 6.

1.2. Structure of the study

After this introductory chapter, six more chapters will follow. Chapter 2 is a general chapter about the country of Thailand discussing the context in which this research takes place. A short paragraph about geography (2.1.) is followed by paragraphs about the history (2.2.), people (2.3.), economy (2.4.), culture (2.5.), and religion (2.6.).

Chapter 3 discusses academic studies of conversion and church growth. Chapter 3.2. reviews studies in the field of sociology and cultural anthropology. Chapter 3.3. looks at the same issue from a missiological point of view. A theoretical discussion about the nature of mission and missiology is followed by a discussion of the Church Growth movement initiated by Donald McGavran and of later developments in this field. Chapter 3.4. proposes a model that is able to encompass the research interests of both sociology and missiology in the areas of conversion and church growth. This completes the theoretical framework of the present study.

Chapter 4 is about the Protestant church in Thailand. Chapter 4.2. gives a short history and is followed by a paragraph about how Thai Protestantism features in studies in the social sciences (4.3.). Chapter 4.4. is a paragraph with current statistics of Protestant Christianity. Chapter 4.5. describes how Protestant Christians are distributed ethnically and geographically. Chapter 4.6. is an overview of the major denominations among the ethnic Thai, highlighting their histories, theological convictions, and statistics, while chapter 4.7. places the data in historical perspective.

Chapter 5 is the first chapter that presents the core findings of this research project. In chapter 5.2. through 5.6. the factors proposed by the theoretical model as relevant to understanding conversion are reviewed. These factors, which serve as paragraph headings, are context, personal background, distance, communication, and perceived direct intervention by God. Falsifiable hypotheses pertaining to each factor were gleaned from a literature review, identified in interviews, or were suggested by the theoretical framework. These hypotheses are accepted or rejected based on statistical analysis.

Chapter 6 likewise presents research findings based on hypothesis testing, but this chapter focuses on church growth rather than on conversion. In chapter 6.2. the hypotheses about the identity of churches are reviewed, followed by chapter 6.3. with hypotheses about the people in churches, and by chapter 6.4. with hypotheses about the organization of churches. Chapter 6.5 brings all this together in a mathematical model describing church growth. Chapter 7 is a concluding chapter.

1.3. Methodology

In this study historical methods are used in chapter 2, the introductory chapter on Thailand, and in chapter 4.2., on the history of the Protestant church in Thailand. Systematic research methods are the mainstay of chapter 3 and are employed to build a systematic theoretical framework which undergirds this study. In the rest of this study comparative methods take pride of place.

This study mainly stands in the tradition of sociology of religion. Therefore research methods common in sociology are the main ones to be found here. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are used. The qualitative methods are mainly supporting and leading up to the main thrust of this study. They were employed in

the exploratory phase to get an overview of the study field and to suggest possible hypotheses. The core of this study is quantitative research.

A wide variety of applied research methods are found in this study. The following sub-paragraphs list the most important applied methods used in the research process.

1.3.1. Literature

Literature gave insights into the broader context of this study. Works on the country of Thailand; on the church in Thailand; on the Church Growth School; and on quantitative research in social sciences informed the research process. The literature study also helped to identify factors proposed by other researchers as either contributing to or hindering church growth in Thailand.

1.3.2. Interviews

Interviews were used to provide insight into the history of denominations and to obtain membership statistics for denominations and churches.⁴ In this way, oral history complemented the available literature.

1.3.3. Database building

A database was built with the relevant information about all Thai churches, as far as these data could be found. A major effort was made to get membership statistics from the various denominations in Thailand. This proved to be difficult, because many denominations do not have membership statistics, and a majority of all churches are not listed with a telephone number.

Five different ways were employed to track down membership statistics. The first step was enquiry at the denominational headquarters. Most of the headquarters were approached by the present author, but some were visited by short-term research assistants. The second step was to call all those local churches with a listed telephone number. This was mainly done by a research secretary. The third step was to visit all local churches with a listed address. 70 staff members of Campus Crusade helped with this effort, and tried to visit all Thai churches in April 2004. The fourth step was to try and get a reliable estimate of the number of members in the churches that had not been reached through the first three steps. Thai church leaders or missionaries who knew the local church well were approached for that. The fifth and final phase of this part of the research was transferring the database to be managed on a professional basis by PACTEC Asia, a Christian service organization based in Thailand. PACTEC Asia has provided staff members on a permanent basis to maintain and update the statistics by repeating steps one, two and four of the process. This allows Thai churches and mission organizations to continue to have access to up-to-date statistics about the Thai church also after the current research project is finished. In the end, this process resulted in membership data for 3263 from a total of 4061 Protestant churches. The covered churches include 2635 ethnic Thai churches.

Several causes exist for the fact that even using this five-step approach, hundreds of churches did not provide data. Only a small minority of all Thai churches

⁴ For a theoretical discussion of the place of interviews in the research process, see e.g. Robert G. Burgess, (ed.), *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, London, 1989 [1982]; especially William Foote Whyte, "The Unstructured Interview as a Conversation", pp. 107-110, and Thomas J. Cottle, "Interviewing in Field Research", pp. 111-122.

have a church phone number. Some denominations did not provide addresses for their churches, so they could not be approached. Many free churches that do not belong to any denomination could not be reached either. However, in most cases total membership numbers per denomination, or reliable estimates, were available, so that the statistics about the total number of Protestant Christians in Thailand presented in this study are even more reliable than the 80% response rate of individual churches suggests.

The database contains all known Protestant churches in Thailand, not just the ethnic Thai churches. It was only during the research process that it was determined which churches were ethnic Thai, and which churches were tribal.

1.3.4. Hypothesis building and testing

Starting from the literature research and the interviews, hypotheses were formulated about factors influencing church growth through conversion in Thailand.⁵ Only hypotheses that could be tested using survey data would be considered. These hypotheses could be falsified by quantitative research. Hypotheses about conversion were tested using various sources. The main ones were data from a survey among Thai Christians for testing hypotheses about conversion and data from a survey among Thai church leaders about their churches for testing hypotheses about church growth.

1.3.5. Survey

A survey designed to get as much information about the personal background of Protestant Thai Christians as possible was distributed before church services.⁶ Respondents handed it in immediately after the service, to be sure of a high response rate. A church leader was asked to fill in another questionnaire. These two surveys were the core instruments used for the research presented in this study, although one additional survey, discussed later, was used for parts of this study.

Survey design

The main survey needed to be quick and easy. This was done by limiting the number of questions to what could be fitted on one page A4 as well as by making most questions multiple-choice. This resulted in a questionnaire that could easily be filled in within 10 minutes, but still gave information on 26 different items (see appendix 2.1. for the questionnaire, appendix 2.2. for the English translation, and appendix 2.3. for the survey results). The church leaders received one extra page with some additional survey questions about the church (see appendix 3.1. for the questionnaire, and appendix 3.2. for the English translation).

Sample selection

A representative sample of both church members and church leaders were surveyed. For meaningful statistical analysis comparison groups need to be similar, otherwise comparison may not have much value. For example, if a group consisting of Thai and Dutch citizens were compared on religion and income, the outcome would be

⁵ For a discussion on hypothesis building and testing, see e.g. Andy Field, *Discovering Statistics using SPSS*, second edition, London, 2005.

⁶ For a discussion of survey research, see Peter M. Nardi, *Doing Survey Research: A Guide to Quantitative Research Methods*, Boston, 2002. For survey research in missiology see Viggo Sogaard, *Research In Church and Mission*, Pasadena, 1996.

that Christians are richer than Buddhists, a finding with no meaning since the difference in average income between the two countries was not been taken into account. In the example nationality would be a far more important explanation than religion.

The same could happen in Thailand. There seem to be two important factors that could interfere with the statistical analysis: theology and geography. In the area of theology a three-fold division was used. The first group of churches is the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT). This is the umbrella of the older Protestant churches in Thailand, mainly Presbyterian and Baptist, and member of the World Council of Churches (WCC). The second group of churches includes the churches in Pentecostal denominations. These are the churches that emphasize charismatic gifts, especially speaking in tongues and healing. The last group is comprised of all other denominations outside the CCT. They share an evangelical, non-charismatic identity, and are, generally speaking, younger than the churches in the CCT.

In the area of geography a three-fold division was also used. The first group of churches consists of those that are located in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area (BMA). The second group consists of the churches in the capital district of provinces outside the BMA. These districts are known under the name 'muang', which means 'city'. The last group is comprised of the churches in rural districts. When these two complementary ways of classifying churches are taken as a matrix, every church falls into one of nine possible groups, as is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of churches classified by theology and geography

	CCT	Pentecostal churches	Other churches	Total
Bangkok	141	193	305	639
Muang	63	77	200	340
Other districts	411	541	704	1,656
Total	615	811	1209	2635

Source: own research.

To leave open the possibility of data analysis within, and in between, groups of churches, 10 churches were randomly chosen from each of the nine groups, making a total of 90 churches that were selected to be surveyed. Partly because of the official support of the Thailand Evangelism Committee, a joint committee with leaders from the major Protestant denominations, the survey process went smoothly. Most surveys were administered by students from Thai Bible schools. A few were administered by short-term Dutch research assistants. The only significant setback was that one charismatic denomination, with a history of problems with other denominations, refused to allow its churches to be surveyed. Only one other local church refused cooperation, and that because of internal problems. Some other churches were not reached because the surveyor became ill or could not locate the church. Some other churches turned out to be tribal, and therefore their data were not included. In the beginning all independent churches were classified as charismatic, but when surveyed most of them proved to be non-charismatic.

A second round of surveys was done in those church groups that had low absolute numbers of respondents or that were strongly underrepresented. This second round of surveys was administered in the same way, but no research assistants were

involved. Churches were asked to send back the questionnaires by post. This resulted in a lower church response rate of about 50%.

In the end, a total of 3197 usable questionnaires were provided by 94 churches. On average, 84% of the worshippers filled out a questionnaire. This high rate was achieved because a) the survey was handed out before church services, with an accompanying pencil, b) there was an official announcement made during the church services; and c) the questionnaires were collected immediately after the services.

The distribution of returned questionnaires is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Returned questionnaires by church group

	CCT	Pentecostal churches	Other churches	Total
Bangkok	410	261	560	1232
Muang	381	182	304	866
Other districts	437	195	467	1099
Total	1228	638	1331	3197

Source: own research.

After the second round of surveys, the data were weighted to compensate for the remaining overrepresentation of some church groups. All in all the final sample provides a good representation of the total community of Protestant Thai church members.

Statistical analysis

Several statistical procedures are used to test the pre-existing hypotheses. Statistics like frequency counts and cross-tabulations describe the raw data. Often Pearson's correlation⁷ describes the correlation between conversion church growth and other variables, and sometimes one-sample t-tests are used. Linear regression analysis helps develop a mathematical model that best describe the factors influencing church growth in Thailand. The author is aware that model building is unusual in missiological studies. However, because of the large number of hypotheses tested, it is important to measure the extent of overlap that may exist between the various factors for a good understanding of the data. For example, research might find that Pentecostal churches grow twice as fast as non-Pentecostal churches, and that urban churches grow twice as fast as rural churches. Readers not trained in statistics might be tempted to conclude that urban Pentecostal churches will grow four times faster than rural non-Pentecostal churches. But if there is a correlation between Pentecostalism and urbanism (as indeed there is), they might only grow 2.2 or 2.6 times faster. To make clear how strong the interplay between various variables is (multicollinearity), a mathematical model is built in which only the most relevant variables have a place. Regrettably mathematical modelling was only possible to describe church growth and not to describe conversion, because no observations on the general population were available in the database nor could they have been reasonably

⁷ Pearson's correlation reflects the degree of linear relationship between two variables. It ranges from +1 to -1. A correlation of +1 means that there is a perfect positive linear relationship between variables, a correlation of -1 a perfect negative linear relationship. A correlation of 0 shows there is no linear relationship between the two variables.

obtained. All statistical analysis was done using SPSS 13.0 software. In order not to burden the main text with too much statistics, most of the statistical information underlying the hypothesis testing was placed in an appendix (Appendix 10: Technical appendix).

This study focuses on conversion church growth. Therefore it was crucial to find a way to measure conversion growth. The Average Annual Conversion Growth Rate (AACGR) of churches was chosen as the variable representing conversion growth.

Analysis of the data showed that, if the Annual Average Growth Rate (AAGR) of 4.2% for ethnic Thai churches (see chapter 4) is taken as a base, most of the growth is explained by conversion growth. Biological growth is comparatively small. And even when biological growth would be greater, it is not clear whether that would result in larger churches, more churches, or both. Therefore the best estimate of the number of members 10 years ago, for any given church, would be the current membership minus the number of members who became Christian during the past ten years. To get to the AACGR not all converts from the past ten years should be taken into account, but only the converts who became Christians in the current church, since converts from other churches constitute transfer growth, not conversion growth. The data show that 21% of all people who became Christians during the last ten years are not still members in the church where they first became Christians. Therefore a correction factor of 1.27 (1 / 0.79) is used to estimate the real number of converts in a church. While this results in a too low AACGR for churches that lost more than 21% of their converts, and in a too high AACGR for churches that lost less than 21%, the great advantage is that the overall AACGR for the Christian population is not artificially low because transferred members are not taken into account. Moreover, the estimate is a robust one because 79% of all decadal converts did not transfer since their conversion. A further indication of the robustness of the estimate is the extremely high correlation between AACGR and AAGR in the church data of .92**. (All through this study ‘***’ will be used to indicate a correlation that is significant on the 1% level, while ‘**’ will be used to indicate a correlation that is significant on the 5% level.)

This procedure leads to the following formula to calculate AACGR:

$$\text{AACGR} = ((1.27\text{CC} * \text{M} / (\text{M} - \text{M10})) * \text{AAGR}) - 1$$

- AC: All Converts: fraction of the total membership that became Christian in any church during the last ten years
- CC: Church Converts: fraction of the total membership that became Christian in the present church during the last ten years.
- M: total Membership
- M10: estimate total Membership 10 years ago ($\text{M} - (\text{AC} * \text{M})$)
- AAGR: Annual Average Growth Rate $((\text{M}/\text{M10})^{0.1} - 1)$

National Church Development survey

An additional data source that was used was the Thai version of the Natural Church Development (NCD) survey. The NCD organization did not release its raw data for this research project, but did share the correlations found in Thailand between the various variables in its questionnaire. A subset of all Thai churches that had done the NCD survey was used to ensure it formed a representative sample of all Thai

churches, representing the theological and geographical categories outlined above. Three characteristics of the NCD data dictate that its results should be interpreted with a bit more care than the results from the main survey. First, the NCD data are not based on a random sample but on a convenience sample. Second, the NCD data can be analyzed for growth, but conversion growth cannot be singled out. Third, the growth data are based upon self-reporting about the past.

1.4. Sources

1.4.1. Primary sources

The primary sources of this study are everything written or said by Thai people included in this study. Many oral primary sources were helpful in obtaining statistics about the Thai Protestant church. This matter has already been discussed in chapter 1.2.4.

The most important primary source was the set of 3197 completed questionnaires for church members from 94 churches and the 84 completed and 10 partially completed questionnaires for church leaders from the same 94 churches. Two other surveys yielded more primary sources that were used in parts of this study: the NCD survey discussed above, and a survey of 97 churches exploring where their members live.

Written primary sources include Virat (1990), who describes the evangelistic plans of the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT); Kriengsak (1991), who describes his experiences as founding pastor of the largest church of Thailand; Nantachai (1997), who emphasizes the need for an evangelistic approach geared to Thai cultural values; and Suragarn (1999), who interviewed Thai university students about obstacles that prevented them from becoming Christians.

1.4.2. Secondary sources

The secondary sources of this study include everything written or said by non-Thai about Protestantism in Thailand that is used in this study. The most important secondary source was *Siamese Gold* (Smith, 1982), the last effort before the present study to give an overview of all Protestant churches in Thailand. It provides the back-drop for the present research.

The main sources for hypotheses about church growth in Thailand were missiological publications that described the experiences within one denomination of the Thai church. Helpful published sources were Eakin (1956), who provides a lot of the accumulated wisdom from decades of Presbyterian missions work; Smith (1977), who gives insight into the growth of rural churches; Kim (1980), who gives a Korean perspective on the strategies used in Thailand's oldest churches; Hill (1982), who focuses on the metropolitan environment of Bangkok; and Caleb Project (1988), with a strong emphasis on ethnic variety.

Many other written sources hypothesizing about factors that influence the growth of the Thai church were not published in book form. The more important ones included Zehner (1987), who gives some important insights into leadership styles in Thai churches; Visser (1993), who lists 183 perceived obstacles, mainly gleaned from literature, to church growth in Thailand, and 197 proposed solutions; Zehner (2003) who gives an emic description of conversions in Thailand; and DeNeui (2005), who emphasizes the importance of contextualization.

1.4.3. General literature

The general sources for this research fall into four major groups. The first group includes the general resources about Thailand. To mention a few of the important studies in this group: Komin (1991), about the psychological characteristics of the Thai people; Mulder (2000) for anthropological insights into Thai society; and Alpha Research (2004) for statistical information about Thai economy and society.

Handbooks and dictionaries relevant to this study in a more general way are included in the second group of general literature. Verkuyl (1978), Jongeneel (1995), Moreau (2000) and Field (2005) are examples of this.

A third cluster of general sources includes publications about conversion and church growth from a sociology of religion viewpoint. Several publications authored or co-authored by Rodney Stark (e.g. Lofland and Stark, 1965; Stark and Bainbridge, 1987; Stark, Iannaccone, and Finke, 1996; and Stark and Finke, 2000) were most influential in shaping the current study. Montgomery (1986) wrote an interesting article about missiological and sociological views of conversion. Malony and Southard (1992), Rambo (1995), and Gossman (2005) wrote or edited major works on conversion. Keyes (1993) provides interesting viewpoints from the Thai situation. Roozen and Hadaway (1993) focus on the institutional factors that facilitate conversion.

The fourth and final major group of general resources is missiological publications dealing with church growth theory. Still the best and most authoritative discussion of the subject is McGavran (1980). Dayton and Fraser (1990) are used as source in thinking about strategy and planning in missions. Winter and Hawthorne (1992) edited a volume that brings together much of the most important thinking in the field. McIntosh (2004) is used as source to discuss the newest insights coming from the Church Growth scene, while Garrison (2004) represents a new paradigm of church growth thinking.

CHAPTER 2: THAILAND

This chapter is a general chapter about Thailand. With the exception of chapter 2.6.3., this chapter does not contain original research, but is a summary of other publications. It will allow the reader to get a basic grasp of Thailand and Thai society. This chapter provides the context for the rest of this study. The first paragraph gives some basic facts about Thailand's geography. Thereafter paragraphs about history, people, economy, culture, and religion follow.

2.1. Geography

Thailand is a sovereign kingdom in South-East Asia. The total area of Thailand is 514,000 km². Thailand borders the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand. It has common borders with Burma (1,800 km), Cambodia (803 km), Laos (1,754 km) and Malaysia (506 km).

Thailand has a tropical climate with three seasons. There is a rainy season from June to October, a cool season from November to February, and a hot season from March to May. 29% of the country is arable land, with another 6% listed as having permanent crops. There are few natural hazards; primarily droughts in the Northeast.

The traditional heartland of Thailand is the central plain where the capital, Bangkok, is located. The Northeast of the country consists of the Khorat Plateau. The rest of the country is mountainous. The highest mountain of Thailand is Doi Inthanon in the North, at 2,576 meters elevation.

2.2. History

The periodization in this paragraph uses dates that are generally accepted as milestones in Thai history.¹ The early period of Thai history, and the origin of the Thai people are shrouded in mystery, because the oldest written source is from at earliest 1283 AD.

2.2.1. Prehistory and Sukhothai era (1238-1376)

Around AD 1000 Tai peoples started to migrate from southern China into the area what now is Thailand. Tai is the term for the Tai race, comprised of various ethnic groups, among which are the modern ethnic Thai, the Shan, and the Tai Dam. These groups slowly replaced the older Mon and Khmer civilizations, intermingling with them in the process. The first Thai centers of civilization were located in north Thailand, and in the course of a few centuries they extended to central Thailand and what is now Laos.

By the end of the 13th century there were two main Thai kingdoms. Lanna (meaning: a million rice fields) was located in the north with Chiang Saen, and later

¹ The information in this paragraph is mainly based on David K. Wyatt, *A short history of Thailand*, second edition, New Haven, 2003, and Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: the History of the Geo-body of a Nation*, Honolulu, 1994.

Chiang Mai, as its capital. To the south of that was Sukhothai, founded as a Thai kingdom in 1238 with an influence all the way down to the Malaysian peninsula. Several other states existed as well, including Phayao and Lopburi. The ruling elite in all these kingdoms were Thai, but the inhabitants came from many different ethnic backgrounds, including Mon, Shan, Lawa, and Khmer. There was a complex web of vassal relationships between the various city-states. States were not thought of as mainly territorial, but as a group of people under a common ruler. The whole region was sparsely populated, and there were large swathes of uninhabited jungle between the cities, which were located on river banks.

Official Thai history, with its central Thai bias, places great importance on the short-lived centralized kingdom of Sukhothai under king Ramkhamhaeng (1279-1298). A famous inscription from his reign proclaims 'there is fish in the water and rice in the fields'. Until today, this phrase is often used to describe Thailand, with the silent satisfaction that Thailand is a good country where everything that is needed for the sustenance of life, is easily available. Sukhothai, however, was quickly overtaken by a new pretender and by 1376 had to accept the sovereignty of Ayutthaya.

2.2.2. Ayutthaya era (1376-1767)

In 1351, Ayutthaya was founded by the son of a Chinese merchant, a testimony to the far-reaching influence of Chinese throughout Thai history. Ayutthaya was destined to become the main Thai kingdom. It overtook Sukhothai as the leading city, and many other Thai principalities, like Nan, Phrae, and Nakhon Sawan also fell under the sovereignty of Ayutthaya. But to the north, Lanna would remain a powerful rival for centuries to come. To the east there was another major Thai kingdom, Lan Sang.

After 1550, Burmese armies raided and conquered all major Thai kingdoms. Whole areas were laid waste. In 1569 Ayutthaya was sacked. In the decades after that, the Khmer also raided large parts of Thai territory. King Naresuan was the one to first organize the defence against the Khmer, and then win independence from the Burmese. In 1598 he confirmed Ayutthaya's place as the premier Thai kingdom by placing Lanna under its suzerainty. After that, Ayutthaya continued to grow in size, importance, and splendour.

During this period the first foreign relations with European powers began. The first Siamese diplomatic mission to Europe was to the Netherlands in 1608, and for almost 200 years the Dutch were the main international trading partners of Siam. Under king Narai (1656-1688), the Dutch influence slowly waned, and the French became more important. In 1688, after a tumultuous period involving the Dutch, the French, and the English, there was a backlash against the foreign influence. Ayutthaya had developed economic, bureaucratic and legal institutions that enabled it to control a large territory and to sustain a metropolis of about one million inhabitants. Its weaknesses, however, were lack of "mechanisms of the transfer of political power from one generation to the next" and its "inability readily to mobilize its labor".² These weaknesses led to the eventual sacking of Ayutthaya by a Burmese army in 1767.

² Wyatt, p. 120.

2.2.3. Thonburi-Bangkok era: absolute monarchy (1769-1932)

The reconstruction of the Thai kingdom fell to the Sino-Thai governor of Tak, Taksin (1769-1782). He was the only one who organized meaningful resistance against the Burmese after the fall of Ayutthaya. He conquered Thonburi, a small port close to the sea, and made that into the new capital in 1769. However, Taksin eventually developed paranoia, mistreated his subjects and even family members, and got extreme religious ideas that threatened a schism in Thai Buddhism. In 1782 Taksin was put to death in a palace revolution, and the army leader, another Sino-Thai, who was on an expedition to Cambodia and may or may not have been involved in planning the execution of Taksin, was invited to become king.

The new king was Rama I (1782-1809), the first of the dynasty that is on the Thai throne to the present. Rama I moved the capital to the other side of the river, where he changed the small village of Bangkok into the new city of Krungthep (the Thai name of Bangkok). From the beginning, the new king supported Buddhism by restoring the monkhood, building temples, and reestablishing many Buddhist state ceremonies. Additional battles with Burma followed, but those proved to be the last time that Burma threatened the existence of the Thai kingdom.

During the 19th century the kingdom of Siam more and more developed the bureaucracy needed to centralize power. The vassal-kings, who had been largely independent, were increasingly pulled into the system and became more accountable to the Bangkok hierarchy. Bangkok's influence in the peninsula and in the north grew. In the east, the king of Vientiane rebelled and made a move for Bangkok that took him all the way over the Khorat plateau to Saraburi, only 100 kilometers from Bangkok. But the Siamese army responded in time, recovering the lost cities and even occupying Vientiane. During this period new cities were founded on the Khorat plateau, which had been extremely sparsely populated up to that time.

The reign of king Mongkut (1851-1868), Rama IV, was the beginning of a new period. Mongkut had been a monk for many years, and had strong ideas about restoring Buddhist orthodoxy. He was also interested in modern developments in the world. At the same time it was clear that in the future the main political tensions would no longer be with the Burmese, Khmer, and Vietnamese, but with the colonial powers of England and France.

In 1855 the Bowring treaty was signed, after England threatened Siam with the use of force. In the treaty Siam promised to lower import duties and export taxes considerably, and the government's trading monopolies were ended. These had been the mainstay of government income and the source of wealth for the ruling elite. However, after just one year, "the difference was made up mostly by strengthening excise monopolies in opium, gambling, alcoholic spirits, and the lottery"³. At that time it was not possible to differentiate between the personal and government business of the government officials. The peasant population was just seen as servants of the state officials. The further opening up of Thailand to foreign trade through the Bowring treaty led to the commercial planting of rice, which quickly became the primary export commodity.

Soon after the Bowring treaty comparable treaties were made with other countries. This was a conscious effort on the part of the king to guarantee that Siam would not be dependent on just one of the colonial powers. Mongkut tried to use diplomacy to keep England and France out of his sphere of influence, but could not

³ Wyatt, p. 169.

prevent their nibbling on the edges of the kingdom. France took over Cambodia, a long-time vassal. The English had their way in some of the Malaysian states for which Siam used to be suzerain.

In 1868 Mongkut died, and his 15 year old son Chulalongkorn succeeded him. Suriyawong, a member of the Persian family that for generations had held important posts in the Thai government, acted as his regent. Once Chulalongkorn started to take the affairs of state in his own hands it soon became clear that he was a reformer. He issued royal decrees to make the bureaucracy more efficient and worked on the abolition of slavery. In 1892 he instituted the first cabinet, mainly staffed by younger brothers and later some of his many sons (in total he had 77 children). In 1893 the most humiliating experience of Chulalongkorn's reign occurred. He was forced to give up suzerainty over Laos because of French land hunger in South-east Asia. This was part of a pattern that had started earlier. According to Wyatt the kingdom of Siam ceded 456,000 square kilometers of territory from 1867 to 1909,⁴ almost half of its total. Winichakul however convincingly argues that that claim is not true,⁵ because during that period there was no strong sense of territory. There was not yet a 'geo-body' that could be mapped, and Bangkok's hold on some of the ceded territories was tentative. The historical construct of an ideal Thailand, that in reality never existed, redirects attention from the victims of Bangkok's expansionism (the minor kingdoms, regional powers, and ethnic minorities) to Thailand as a victim of the colonial powers. It would be more correct to portray the emerging state of Thailand as a regional colonial power. When Chulalongkorn died in 1910 Thailand had assumed its current shape, and had grown into a centralized state, with Bangkok having the possibility to project its power all over the kingdom. After Chulalongkorn's death, an elite civil society started to develop. A hunger for more democracy existed, particularly among civil servants who had studied abroad.

2.2.4. Modern Bangkok era: constitutional monarchy (1932-present)

In 1932, a bloodless coup took place to demand a constitution, and the king decided not to resist. Thus came the end of absolute monarchy in Thailand. Democracy did not come easily though. Before long the influence of the military, the only well-organized body, was paramount. Phibun, the most forceful of the military party, became prime minister in 1938. He was an authoritarian leader who espoused nationalistic policies. During World War II Phibun more or less reluctantly decided to give the Japanese free passage through Thailand. Towards the end of the war he was removed from office to allow others to take part in the typical Thai maneuvering between the major powers, to come out of the war as unscathed as possible. In 1948 however, Phibun grabbed power again, and this time he remained Prime Minister for 9 years.

During these years, and also in the decades afterwards, the military held most of the real power. The many coups in this period were mainly results of quarrels about the division of spoils between the various cabinet ministers and high military officers. During the same time Thailand became more and more an integral part of the global community, as signified by Thailand's acceptance as a member of the United Nations in 1946, the second year of the UN's existence.

⁴ Wyatt, pp. 192-193.

⁵ Thongchai, pp. 150-152.

The Prime Minister decided to bring the king back into the spotlight in 1958. Since 1932 the monarchy had vanished from the public eye. But now it became clear that the young king Bhumibol (1946-present), Rama IX, was extremely popular, and was still revered almost as a god. In the following decades the presence of the king proved to be a moderating factor in national life. Several times the king played a role in restoring law and order to the country. In 1972 he intervened on the side of democracy; in 1976 he supported the military suppression of protests by radical students.

In 1992 another military coup occurred. By now the middle class in Bangkok had grown so much that this was no longer acceptable. After protests, and a new intervention by the king, elections were held. For fourteen years after that Thailand was governed by civil governments. Cabinets filled with businessmen and with what the Thai media euphemistically call 'influential persons' who built up parties, or factions within parties, based on patronage rather than on any perceptible differences in political philosophy. Thaksin Shinawatra became the first Thai politician to gain a majority in the legislature for his own party in 2001. In the next elections in 2005 he received a larger majority than before, mainly because his populist policies were attractive to rural voters. However he lost favour with the middle class because of his brusque personality and allegations of corruption. In 2006 a military coup, supported by the middle class and legitimized by the king, prevented Thaksin from winning another election victory. However, at the end of 2007 new elections were held and Thaksin's old party, re-organized under a new name, swept back to power.

2.3. People

Ever since the end of the 19th century Thai governments have tried to build a strong national identity based on 'being Thai'. In 1894 king Chulalongkorn commanded every citizen in the kingdom to describe himself as 'Thai' in the census, and prohibited the use of other ethnic designations. In the Northeast the following proclamation was issued:

From this time forward all officials from every level and every department, whether they are heads of large *muang* or small, whenever there is a survey of families or whenever a citizen comes requesting some official documentation from the government representative, be informed that you are to perform your duties in a new way. In the column for nationality you are to write only 'Thai Siamese' in all cases. It is now absolutely forbidden to use or write in the column for nationality 'Lao', 'Khmer', 'Say', 'Phi Tai', or the name of any other nationalities formerly employed. His majesty has proclaimed that all are 'Thai' nationals and in fact have been since the beginning of recorded time and has thus made this decision through the Ministry of the Interior.⁶

Though in recent history the government is not taking things to such an extreme, the emphasis on being Thai is so strong that it is very common to see people from other ethnic groups hide their background, especially when moving into the cities. At the

⁶ Quoted in Paul H. DeNeui, *String-tying Ritual as Christian Communication in Northeast Thailand*, Ph.D. thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, 2005, p. 78.

same time it is quite clear that ethnic distinctions exist in Thailand. Table 3 presents statistics for the main groupings.

Table 3. Percentage of population per ethnic group in Thailand

Ethnic group	Percentage of population
Thai	77.3
Central Thai	32.2
Isaan	26.6
Northern Thai	10.6
Southern Thai	7.9
Chinese	10.5
Malay	6.0
Khmer	2.4
Other ethnic minorities	3.0
Foreigners*	0.8

Source: World Christian Database

* The number of foreigners does not include temporary guest workers and illegal immigrants.

The Thai are the largest ethnic group in Thailand. They are not monolithic. The central Thai, about 20 million strong, traditionally have been the dominant group in society. From their midst came almost all government officials. The northern Thai, about 6 million, are heirs to the heritage of the Lanna kingdom in Chiang Mai. The southern Thai, living on the peninsula, have been influenced by living close to the Malay. Both the northern and the southern Thai speak a dialect that is quite different from that spoken by the central Thai from Bangkok, which is taught in schools throughout Thailand.

The fourth group of Thai, besides the central, northern and southern Thai, is the Isaan. They are almost as numerous as the central Thai. The reason they are called 'Thai' rather than 'Lao' is more political than ethnographic. They are descendants from Lao people flocking into Northeast Thailand, and many still call themselves 'Lao', though many people, including the younger generation Isaan, nowadays consider that to be a pejorative term. The Isaan are the poorest of all Thai, living on the relatively dry and infertile Khorat Plateau. Their language is closely related to Lao, but has been influenced more and more by central Thai because of the school system and television. They are looked down upon by the other Thais. All four sub-groups of Thais are the subject of research in this study.

The second largest ethnic group in Thailand is formed by the Chinese. Chinese have been part of Thai society for many centuries. Bangkok has always been a city that is in majority ethnic Chinese. In the beginning of the 20th century street signs in Bangkok were in Chinese, and Teochiu, a Chinese dialect, was the main language. The start of World War II ended the Chinese immigration, and after the war consecutive governments tried to assimilate the Chinese into Thai society. Even today probably a majority in Bangkok, and significant numbers in other cities, have some Chinese ancestry. The Chinese have adopted Thai family names, and most Chinese

nowadays speak Thai at home. In the 2000 census, only 120,000 people were found who still use Chinese at home. There also has been significant intermarriage between the Thai and the Chinese communities, to the extent that there is not a clear distinguishing line between Thai and Chinese.

The third largest ethnic group in Thailand is the Malay. The large majority of Malay people are living in the deep South, close to the border with Malaysia. In the past they have been part of small Malay kingdoms, but in the course of history they ended up in the kingdom of Thailand. That this still is not accepted by everyone is proven by on-going separatist violence in the South.

The fourth largest ethnic group is the Khmer, living in Northeast Thailand close to the border of Cambodia. They are looked down upon even more than the other inhabitants of Isaan.

There are over 50 other ethnic minorities in Thailand. The largest of these groups is the Karen. Others include the Hmong, the Lahu, the Lawa, the Mon, the Phuthai and the Shan⁷. Most of these ethnic groups are tribal, and listed by the Thai government as 'mountain people'. They mainly live in villages in the mountainous jungle area along the border with Burma. All have their own culture and heritage. Their distinct ways of life, though rapidly changing, make their villages a major draw for tourists.

While the Chinese are being absorbed into Thai society and adopt the Thai language, this is not the case with the other ethnic minorities. Though all youth are fluent in Thai because that is the language they are educated in, the ethnic minority communities are strong enough to maintain the use of their own languages. They are increasing in relative size. The language tables of the national census show that among the youngest age group the percentage of Malays, Khmer, and tribal people is about 1.5 times higher than among the general population.⁸

2.4. Economy

Since the middle of the 19th century until recent decades, Thailand was an agricultural rice exporting economy.⁹ Year after year large stretches of new paddy fields were brought into production. One half of the economic story of Thailand, from roughly 1855, when the first international treaty was signed and international trade began in earnest, to 1970, when almost all land fit for agriculture had been placed into use, is the change of large areas of swamps and jungle into paddy fields. These growing numbers of paddy fields were worked by peasants who during that period grew in number from a few hundred thousand to forty million. The other half of the story is the emergence of a Chinese business class, fuelled by immigration from south-east China.

Up till the present day economic and political processes in Thailand are dominated by interactions between the rural masses, which still retain some peasant char-

⁷ Raymond G. Gordeon, (ed.), *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 15th edition, Dallas, 2005.

⁸ National Statistical Office, *The 2000 Population and Housing Census: the Whole Kingdom*, Bangkok, 2002: Population Table VII.

⁹ This paragraph is based on Pasuk Phongpaichit, Sungsidh Piriyarangsarn, and Nualnoi Treerat, *Guns, Girls, Gambling, Ganya: Thailand's Illegal Economy and Public Policy*, Chiang Mai, 1998; Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thailand: Economy and Politics*, New York, 2002; and Alpha Research, *Thailand in Figures: 2003-2004*, 9th edition, Bangkok, 2004.

acteristics, at least in the Northeast where one third of the population lives, on the one hand and the mainly Chinese business elite on the other hand. The popularity of Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai party was mainly due to populist policies for the rural areas and the lower class in urban areas. Its political effectiveness was mainly due to their serving the interest of the largest business conglomerates in Thailand, harnessing their monetary power to buy politicians among the elite, and votes among the masses.

Another important aspect of Thailand's economy is the illegal sector. A detailed study estimates it to be 20% of Thailand's GNP in 1995, while noting that it uses conservative estimates.¹⁰ Gambling constitutes over half of the illegal economy. Prostitution has a significant share. The drugs trade, smuggling, illegal arms trade, and human trafficking are the other major contributors. This has obvious moral consequences for the country, because so many people are part of the illegal economy, either as clients or as entrepreneurs. But the debilitating consequences go even further. The same study shows that all different branches of the illegal economy are interconnected, and that there is a very strong link from the illegal economy to legal national institutions: "...we also uncovered a regular pattern of linkages to powerful figures in the bureaucracy, military, police, and politics who provide protection to businessmen engaged across the whole range of the illegal economy."¹¹

Thailand today is a strong player in the world economy. It was a founding member of the Association of Southern Asian Countries (ASEAN), and plays a key role in the growing importance in the world economy of the countries along the Pacific Rim. Thailand holds the 23rd position on the list of world's largest exporters, between Sweden and Australia, and is 22nd on the list of largest importers, between Australia and India. In 2001 Thailand had a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of \$1,940, slightly more than Russia, and slightly less than Turkey. The income is unequally distributed, both between regions and between professions. In Bangkok the average wage per month in 2001 was 10,065 Baht, while in the Northeast it was only 2,976 Baht. Employees in professional positions on average earn about six times as much as employees in vocational or unskilled occupations. Much of the non-agricultural economic activity in Thailand is concentrated in Bangkok and surrounding provinces. This leads to significant disparity in income levels. The average household income in 2002 in Bangkok was 29,589 Baht, while in the province with the lowest income, Yasothon, the average was 6,045 Baht.

In recent decades the agricultural character of Thailand's economy has changed. In 2002, 40% of all employed persons were employed in the agricultural sector. However they only contributed 10% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Of the agricultural products rice still is the mainstay. Rubber, sugar cane, cassava, maize, and fruit combined are slightly more important than rice. Chicken raising, shrimp farming and fisheries are other agricultural activities that contribute significantly to the economy.

Industrial products account for 32% of the Thai economy. The most important sector is textiles, followed by vehicles, petroleum products, beverages, electronic products, and food. Tourism is another important contributor to the Thai economy. The number of foreign tourists arriving in Thailand grew from almost 7 million in 1995 to almost 11 million in 2002 with a similar increase in tourism spending.

¹⁰ Pasuk, Songsidh, and Nualnoi, p. 8.

¹¹ Pasuk, Songsidh, and Nualnoi, p. 9.

2.5. Culture

A lot has been written about Thai culture.¹² The first anthropological model that was widely used to explain Thailand was the 'loose structure' model by John Embree in 1950. He stated that the Thai do not have a strong sense of duty and obligation in family and social relationships, and that there is little regularity and discipline in Thai life. This basic statement has influenced the discussion about Thai culture ever since, with some scholars affirming this model, and others vehemently denying it. Phillips reinforced Embree's main conclusion, and emphasized how the individualism of the Thai results in a loosely structured society. Komin helpfully explains that the individualism described by this group of authors is not the same as Western individualism. According to her it is similar "in the emphasis on the self and the fluidity in the loyalty to others"¹³, but different in that Thais are much lower on four attributes that indicate individualism: a sense of separate personal identity, striving for self-actualization, internal locus of control, and principled moral reasoning.

Other scholars like Titaya discovered more structure in the villages where they did research than the 'loose structure' thesis would allow for. However, they did their research in North and Northeast Thailand, which raises the question whether these results reflect a difference between Central Thai culture and the rest of the country. In the present author's opinion this question is not given enough consideration in the various anthropological discussions on the subject. His own observations of village life in Central Thailand and Northeast Thailand lead to the thought that there might be some real and deep differences between the two.

Thai anthropologists writing on the subject deny the 'loose structure' thesis. They describe stronger interpersonal relationships and emphasize the way Thai people are dependent on each other.

In a highly influential study Mulder describes the basic structure according to which Thais interact with each other as having two core elements: *Bun* (moral goodness), that determines relationships in the group of insiders and is built on trust; and *Decha* (amoral power), that determines relationships with outsiders and is built on fear. In both settings a major concern is to find out who is the higher one in the hierarchy.¹⁴

The present author does not feel competent to take a position in the discussion outlined above. It is significant to observe that the foreigners tend to describe Thai society as 'loosely structured', whereas the Thai scholars take the opposite approach. This might mean foreign observers missed, or did not recognize as significant, the way Thais structure their social relationships.

A significant development in the study of Thai culture was the landmark research of Komin (1991). Komin is associate professor of social and cross-cultural

¹² The most important source for this paragraph is Suntaree Komin, *Psychology of the Thai People: Values and Behavioral Patterns*, Bangkok, 1991. Other sources are John F. Embree, "Thailand: A Loosely Structured Social System:", in: *American Anthropologist*, 52:2 (1950), pp. 181-193; Stanley J. Tambiah, *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand*, Cambridge, 1970; Titaya Suvanjata, "Is Thai social system loosely structured?", in: *Social Science Review*, 1976, pp. 171-187; Niels Mulder, *Everyday life in Thailand: an Interpretation*, Bangkok, 1979; and Niels Mulder, *Inside Thai Society: Religion, Everyday Life, Change*, Chiang Mai, 2000.

¹³ Komin, p. 8.

¹⁴ Mulder (1979).

psychology at the National Institute for Development Assistance (NIDA). She correctly stated about the various anthropological publications about Thailand:

...many of these data lack empirical support. Some are speculations, others are observations based on limited sources, whole still others are bound by theoretical perspectives, scope of coverage and level of analysis...many still need empirical proof.¹⁵

She goes on to present her research into the value system of the Thai people. Because her research is based on surveys, it has the obvious advantage of being grounded in data rather than purely theoretical constructs.

In her study Komin identified nine value clusters that are important to the Thai, ranking from most to least important. Following is a summary of her findings.¹⁶ The clusters are listed in order of importance as reported by Komin.

1. *Ego orientation*. "Thai have a very big ego...they can be easily provoked to strong emotional reactions, if the "self"... is insulted" (133). Values that belong in this cluster are face-saving, criticism-avoiding, being considerate (*kreng jai*), the last concept roughly meaning being hesitant to impose on others.
2. *Grateful relationship orientation*. The most important term in this cluster is *bunkhun* (indebted goodness). This "is a psychological bond between someone who, out of sheer kindness and sincerity, renders another person the needed helps and favours, and the latter's remembering of the goodness done and his ever-readiness to reciprocate the kindness" (139). *Bunkhun* must be returned continuously. It is not a simple debt; it is a lasting social relationship. This value can be exploited by politicians or other people with power. They will provide help to people, and use that as leverage to manipulate and exploit them afterwards.
3. *Smooth interpersonal relationship orientation*. "This orientation is characterized by the preference for a non-assertive, polite and humble type of personality...as well as the preference of a relaxed, and pleasant interaction which accounts for the "smiling" and "friendly" aspects of the Thai people" (143). Values that belong in this cluster include being caring and considerate, being kind and helpful, being responsive to situations and opportunities, being self-controlled, being polite and humble, being calm, and being contented. A very significant finding was that these values, in the literature often linked with Buddhism, are not significantly related with religion. Moreover, Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims scored the same on these values. Komin adds "the present finding is also substantiated by an early study of the effects of Buddhism on the personality traits, particularly on the dimension of "maintaining equanimity or staying uninvolved", which found there was absolutely no significant difference found between Buddhist and Christian tenth grade (M.S. 3) students in Chiangmai" (145). An implication of these values is that in the Thai context, to be successful the most important thing is not to be capable, but rather to have a "polite appearance, presentation and approach" (146).
4. *Flexibility and adjustment orientation*. 60% of the national sample "preferred to describe themselves as "ever-flexible" than "truly honest"...This is more so for

¹⁵ Komin, p. 16.

¹⁶ Komin, pp. 132-213.

- Bangkokians, for government officials and for higher educated groups” (163). The person and the situation always take precedent over principles and systems.
5. *Religio-psychical orientation*. Religion is an important value to the Thai, though less so for Bangkokians, students, and the highly educated. Chapter 2.6. will be exclusively devoted to religion.
 6. *Education and competence orientation*. Thai value education at a medium level. Education is valued more as a means of getting more prestige and more salary than it is for getting knowledge. This “indicates that the Thai people value and give importance to form more than content of substance” (186). Thais value academic degrees more than academic competence. Because the Thai value good form and appearance so much, getting in debt to show off, or to keep in step with what is considered as ‘modern’, is common.
 7. *Interdependence orientation*. This cluster of values, including ‘brotherhood spirit’ and ‘being mutually helpful’, is much stronger in the rural setting than in the cities. To a certain extent it negates the ‘loose structure’ thesis.
 8. *Fun and pleasure orientation*. Thailand is often described as the “Land of smiles”, with a stronger emphasis on having fun than valuing work. Komin’s research found that the private sector and the lower classes valued work over fun-loving and pleasure. For Bangkokians and government officials it was the other way around. Komin’s finding indicate that ‘fun’ is not a very high value, and is more a “means to support and maintain the more important interpersonal interaction value...the end result is the easy-going, relaxed, and superficial interaction, with limited revelation of the individual psychological depth” (192-193).
 9. *Achievement-task orientation*. ‘Ambitious and hard-working’ consistently is the lowest ranked value for all Thai groups, with the exception of the Chinese Thai, who hold it as an intermediate value. Relationships are more important than work. This result is even stronger for government officials than it is for farmers. Often Buddhism is mentioned as an explanation because it advocates detachment from material goods and encourages fatalism. However, Komin shows that the Thai are “this-worldly oriented” (205), and do value material possession. But she states that the nature of achievement for Thais is different than for Americans, and that this explains the low value placed on work. “...while the Americans having task itself and professionalism as achievement goals with self assertive efforts as means, the Thai give prestige and social recognition as goals for success in life, with work and relations as necessary means... achievement in Thai is more social in nature. Also it is very rare that work alone would lead one to the Thai sense of achievement” (208).

Komin’s work offers a deep insight into the Thai psyche. It is especially helpful in explaining how stereotypes like smiling, relaxing, and having fun function to serve the much deeper felt values of ego orientation and grateful relationships. For people with a more western value system, it is important to note how consistent relational values are ranked higher than values linked to work and achievement.

Some remarks need to be made. Firstly, though Komin did her survey among a cross-section of Thai society, it certainly was not a representative sample. In the first sample, 42% of the respondents were government officials and 38% were students. In the second sample, 38% of the respondents were government officials. There is clearly a bias towards the higher educated, urban, and higher income population in her samples. It can be surmised from the study that this affects the results. Komin’s analysis shows that farmers, when compared with government officials, place a

much higher value on being mutually helpful, being self-controlled and on being forgiving. To a lesser degree farmers also rate being caring-considerate and being grateful more highly. It is far less important to them to be independent, responsible, educated, and capable. It would be worthwhile to re-analyze Komin's data and adjust the total sample for occupation.

Second, though Komin's publication is from 1991 the research stems from data collected in 1978 and 1981. Though the deeper values in a culture normally do not change dramatically over time, it cannot be assumed that all findings are still relevant after almost 30 years. Indeed, a research project in 2005 replicating Komin's work among university students gave a radically different ranking.¹⁷ Interdependence orientation and fun-pleasure orientation had risen to the first and second rank. Religio-psychical orientation had fallen from fifth to ninth rank, while achievement-task orientation had done the reverse. The most significant change of all is that ego orientation had fallen from the first to the eighth rank. This research suggests that the traditional Thai values of face-saving, criticism-avoiding, and being considerate have lost much of their significance in this group. This is an important change, though it is not certain whether these results would be true for the total population. Clearly this is an area for future research.

2.6. Religion

Thailand is widely known as a Buddhist country, and it remains true that a large majority of Thai citizens are Buddhist. Indeed Buddhism is recognized as the state religion and is supported by the government. Yet Thailand, both constitutionally and in practice, has a great degree of freedom of religion. Several other religions besides Buddhism have a presence in Thailand. Reference is only made to Islam, because the other religions have a relatively small number of adherents. Secularism is not reviewed separately, because almost all Thai claim adherence to a religion.

2.6.1. Past and present

Before the arrival of the Thai people in what is now Thailand, there already was a Buddhist and Hindu presence in Thailand.¹⁸ It is claimed that in the 3rd century BC Buddhist monks sent out by the Indian emperor Asoke reached Thailand. Though the exact origins of Buddhism in Thailand are lost in the fog of history, it is clear that when the Thai people arrived, there was a strong Theravada Buddhist influence from Burma and a mixed Mahayana Buddhist / Hindu influence from the Khmer kingdom.

The religion of the invading Thais is a matter of dispute, and it is not clear whether the Thai at that time were adherents of traditional religions or Mahayana Buddhists. The period when the first Thai kingdoms were established in the 13th century coincided with a revival of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Soon monks sent out from Sri Lanka, or possibly Thai monks who had studied there, established Theravada Buddhism in Thailand under royal patronage. Ever since Theravada

¹⁷ Teay Shawyun and Krisda Tanchaisak, "Core Values of Thai Undergraduates Revisited in 2005: A Case Study of Assumption University", in: *Warasaan Wichakaan*, 12:1 (2005), pp. 71-84.

¹⁸ This paragraph is mainly based on Karuna Kusalasaya, *Buddhism in Thailand*, Kandy, 1965; David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: a Short History*, second edition, New Haven, 2003; and Thanet Aphornsuwan, *History and Politics of the Muslims in Thailand*, Bangkok, 2003..

Buddhism has been the dominant religion in Thailand and has been closely intertwined with the state.

The acceptance of Theravada Buddhism did not replace other belief systems, but added to them. A substratum of spirit beliefs continued to exist. Hindu influence remained visible in many court sponsored ceremonies. The veneration of the king in Thai history can probably best be understood as seeing the king as a Mahayana *bodhisattva*. Generally, Thai Buddhists do accept all these influences and do not perceive a need to synchronize these different belief systems.

As early as the 9th century AD Muslim merchants settled in peninsular South-east Asia. Because of the prior establishment of Hinduism and Buddhism, Islam failed to take hold of a large part of the population. However, in the 15th and 16th century the Malay ruling elites converted to Islam and the Malay population followed. Some old Malay kingdoms ended up being part of Thailand and consequently Islam found a place in Thailand.

Christianity arrived rather late on the scene. The first Roman-Catholic priests arrived in the 16th century and mainly ministered to the foreign population. Thai converts were few, and even today the Roman-Catholic church in Thailand mainly has members of non-Thai ancestry. Protestant Christianity made its entrance in 1828, and likewise failed to make a big impression on the ethnic Thai.

These various religious influences in Thai history lead to a situation today where various different religions are a part of the national picture, though the Buddhists form an overwhelming majority. Table 4 lists religious adherence as reported in the National Census of 2000.

Table 4. Religious adherence in Thailand

	Adherents	Percentage
Buddhism	57,157,751	93.8
Islam	2,777,542	4.6
Christianity	486,840	0.8
Hinduism	52,631	0.1
Confucianism	6,925	0.0
Others	48,156	0.1
No religion	164,396	0.3
Unknown	222,200	0.4
Total	60,916,441	100.1

Source: The 2000 Population and Housing Census

The late-coming Muslim and Christian religions never made big inroads among the Thai people. Consequently, the large majority of ethnic Thai are Theravada Buddhist, as are the Khmer minority. Most Chinese Thai belong to the same tradition, though among them Mahayana Buddhism is found as well. Many of the hill tribes have become Buddhists in recent decades, though their state sponsored conversion often goes no further than accepting a Buddhist temple in the village while continuing to practice their traditional religions.

The number of Muslims is difficult to assess, partly because this has become a question with political implications. Though the census mentions 4.6% Muslims, Muslims in Thailand routinely claim the real number is 10%, and some Islamic

sources claim an even higher number.¹⁹ Based upon there seeming to be about 6% ethnic Malay in Thailand and over a million Muslims among the ethnic southern Thai, the present author estimates that the real value is around 8%. The same percentage is arrived at in the most extensive study on the Muslims in Thailand.²⁰

The number of Christians is also understated in the census. In reality, Christians comprise about 1.5% of the population (see chapter 4.2.). Interestingly, traditional religions are not mentioned in the census results. About 0.4% of the population adheres to a traditional religion.²¹ These adherents are mainly among the ethnic minorities in the mountain areas. Many others in these tribal groups have converted to either Buddhism or Christianity.

Thailand also has small groups of adherents of other religions, e.g. Hindus and Sikhs. These people are mainly immigrants. People who do not claim a religion are rare. Because Theravada Buddhists form the overwhelming majority in Thailand, and because this study focuses on converts from this group to Protestant Christianity, the remainder of this paragraph pays special attention to the beliefs and practices of Theravada Buddhists. In a separate sub-paragraph some remarks about Islam in Thailand are made.

2.6.2. Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama (563-483 BC) was the founder of Buddhism.²² Because the Buddhist scriptures were written hundreds of years after the life of Gautama, there are many critical problems in describing his life. The picture that arises from these scriptures, the *Tipitaka*, is as follows: Gautama was a prince in northern India, sheltered by his father from the harsh realities of life. When one day he became aware of the problem of suffering, he decided to leave behind his wife and child, his home, and his wealth to look for an answer. First he studied with Brahmin hermits, but was disappointed that they did not know how to escape the cycle of reincarnations. Then he lived as an ascetic for several years, only to find out that this did not help him reach his goal. Finally he claimed to have reached enlightenment after prolonged meditation. Hence the honorific '*Buddha*', which means the enlightened one.

Buddhism evolved in two major schools, Theravada and Mahayana. Theravada Buddhism claims to be the more orthodox of the two and emphasizes the teachings of the *Buddha*. Mahayana Buddhism came into existence later. It started to regard the *Buddha* as an eternal, omnipresent Principle or Being. At the same time it em-

¹⁹ E.g. 14% by Islamic Web, <http://www.islamicweb.com/begin/population.htm>, viewed 18 January 2008.

²⁰ Michel Gilquin, *The Muslims of Thailand*, Bangkok, 2002.

²¹ Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, *Operation World*, Carlisle, 2001, p. 619.

²² The main sources on Buddhism are Stanley J. Tambiah, *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand*, Cambridge, 1970; David Bentley-Taylor, "Buddhism", in: Norman Anderson, *The World's religions*, 4th revised edition, 1975; Kenneth Walls, *Thai Buddhism: its rites and activities*, 3rd rev. edition, Bangkok, 1975; B.J. Terwiel, "A Model for the Study of Thai Buddhism", in: *Journal of Asian Studies*, 35:3 (1976), pp. 391-403; A. Thomas Kirsch, "Complexity in the Thai Religious System: An Interpretation", in: *Journal of Asian Studies*, 36:2 (1977), pp. 241-266; Suwanna Satha-Anand, "Religious Movements in Contemporary Thailand: Buddhist Struggles for Modern Relevance", in: *Asian Survey*, 30:4 (1990), pp. 395-408; Pattana Kitiarso, "Beyond Syncretism: Hybridization of Popular Religion in Contemporary Thailand", in: *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 36:3 (2005), pp. 461-487; Pattana Kitiarso, "Magic Monks and Spirit Mediums in the Politics of Thai Popular Religion", in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 6:2 (2005), pp. 210-226; and the personal observations of the present author.

phasized the importance of *bodhisattvas*, more or less divine beings on the way to Buddhahood who devote themselves to the well-being of people. Mahayana Buddhism became the larger of the two schools, and has China as its heartland. Some of the ethnic Chinese in Thailand hold on to Mahayana Buddhism, but most now are adherents of Theravada Buddhism, which is the dominant school in Thailand.

Any student of Buddhism in Thailand soon discovers it is not a monolithic whole. Several ways to classify its different strains have been proposed. In this paragraph Melford E. Spiro's classification is followed, which distinguishes between *nibbanic*, *kammatic*, and apotropaic Buddhism.²³ Because the latter term never gained much traction, it is replaced here by 'folk Buddhism'. The distinctions made here between these categories are not necessarily understood that way by Thai Buddhists. B.J. Terwiel noted in 1975 that "informants were classifying merely to please the researcher; the categories under discussion had little relevance in their minds."²⁴ Though this has changed to a certain extent probably through the influence of state sponsored religious education in the schools, it remains true for many people.

Nibbanic Buddhism

Nibbanic Buddhism emphasizes the Buddha's message (*dharma*) about *nirvana*. The message that Gautama came to proclaim after his enlightenment, is known as 'the four noble truths'. The first truth is suffering. Life basically is suffering. The second truth is that desire is the cause of suffering. This includes worldly desires for possessions and enjoyment, but most of all it means the desire for existence as a separate entity. This desire is rooted in ignorance: not realizing that the self is imaginary and has no existence in reality. The third truth is that suffering ceases when desire ceases. When the lust for life, the passion to exist, has ceased, than suffering ceases as well. The fourth truth is the path which leads to the cessation of suffering, and is called the eightfold path. The eightfold path consists of right views, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right mode of livelihood, right effort (working towards universal love), right awareness (introspection), and right concentration. This last and highest step means concentrating on a single object, until all distractions have disappeared, and then going beyond "either pleasure or pain into a state transcending consciousness, ultimately attaining full enlightenment, which is the highest possible state of perfection"²⁵.

Three concepts are important to understand orthodox Buddhism: *karma*, *anicca*, and *nirvana*. *Karma* is the totality of actions in life. Good and bad deeds result in good and bad *karma*. This *karma* has to be lived out in the next life. This theory readily explains one's station in life and any good or bad thing that may happen to someone. Orthodox Buddhism emphasizes that it is the *karma* that is lived out in the next life. The soul is not reincarnated, because Buddhism does not believe in the existence of a permanent soul. This leads to the second concept: *anicca*, which means impermanence. According to Buddhism, there are only fleeting phenomena, but no objective reality. Even what people call their 'self' or 'soul' is forever changing, every moment different from the last, and therefore an illusion.

²³ Melford E. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes*, New York, 1970.

²⁴ Terwiel, p. 393.

²⁵ Bentley-Taylor, p. 173

Misery only doth exist; none miserable.
No doer is there; naught but the deed is found.
Nirvana is, but not the man that seeks it.
The path exists, but not the traveler on it.²⁶

The third important concept is *nirvana*. The eightfold path is said to lead to the cessation of suffering, the end of the cycle of incarnations, which leads to *nirvana*. There is no 'becoming' anymore; the illusion of self-hood has stopped. Gautama took pains to explain *nirvana* as a state that is neither existence nor non-existence.

While the teaching about *nirvana* forms the heart of the teaching of the Buddha, it does not play a major role in Thai Buddhism. It is widely believed that *nirvana* is unobtainable in this era for even the most revered of monks. It is cause for a heresy process if a monk claims to be a 'stream winner', which means to be in an incarnation that will, through consecutively better incarnations, eventually lead to *nirvana*. With *nirvana* out of the picture as a practical concern, Thai Buddhists have placed other concerns in the heart of their religion.

Kammic Buddhism

Because reaching *nirvana* is seen as impossible, a more attainable goal is to build up good *karma* to ensure rebirth in a better life. Building up good *karma* is mainly done through merit-making. The most certain way to do that is through taking care of the monks, both through giving food and through taking part in the main temple ceremonies. These and other rituals to make merit are the most important aspects of *kammic* Buddhism for almost all Thai.

From the beginning, Buddhism has been a religion centered on the *Sangha*, or the order of monks. Until today the over 260,000 monks in over 31,000 temples²⁷ are the centre of Buddhist life in Thailand. Every village has a temple. Every morning the monks walk around, and many women line up to offer food to them. Four times in every lunar month there is a holy day (*wan phra*) during which more people, again especially women, go to the temple to offer flowers, incense, and gifts to the monks. There is a service with Pali chanting, and a Thai sermon. Some very religious people will promise to keep the eight precepts during that day. Except the five general ones that every Buddhist should keep (refraining from taking life, stealing, unchastity, lying, and drinking alcohol) these include as extra ones refraining from eating after noon, from entertainment, and from sitting or lying on a mattress.

There is a perceptible difference between rural and urban religious life. In the villages the temple still is the core of the community, and most people in one way or another take part in the various festivals and ceremonies in the temple. In the cities many people do not go to the temple anymore, and even if they do the temple is not nearly as important a social function as it is in the rural areas.

During the year there are five major Buddhist festivals. The first one is *Visakha Puja*, which is in remembrance of the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha, all said to have taken place at full moon in the same month of the year. Sermons on this day will focus on the life of the Buddha. The second major festival is *Magha*

²⁶ Visuddhimagga, quoted in Bentley-Taylor, p. 176.

²⁷ National Statistical Office, *The 2000 Population and Housing Census: the Whole Kingdom*, Bangkok, 2002, table 3.7.

Puja, in remembrance of the day when 1250 disciples of Buddha, all enlightened, are said to have congregated, without prior invitation or knowledge, 3 months before the Buddha died. The third festival is *Khaw Bansa*, or the beginning of the Buddhist lent. This is the start of a three-month period in the rainy season during which the monks are not allowed to sleep outside the temple. In many villages they do not even go out to beg for food. Instead, the local population takes the food to the temple. It is a period of more intense religious study for the monks, and of more religious activities, including giving presents to the monks, for the lay people. This period ends with the fourth festival, *Ohk Bansa*, or the end of the Buddhist lent. The last major festival is *Phra Kathin*, during which robes are given to the monks.

These are all temple-centered ceremonies. Most temples have other ceremonies as well so that the people have the opportunity to provide the monks with the 'four necessities', shelter, food, clothing, and medicines.²⁸ Many temples have annual fairs. For example, in the Northeast of Thailand every village temple has an annual festival where a *moh lam* (singer of traditional songs) with his troupe will perform till day-break. The widespread drunkenness and fighting during these occasions seem to have little to do with Buddhism, but because the proceeds go to the temple, the whole festival is still considered as merit making.

Outside the temple there is an important role for the monks in several house ceremonies. Gautama did not prescribe any ceremony for the *rites de passage*. Inevitably this was seen as a need, and in Thailand the Buddhist monks filled that void, even though there is no sanction for this in the Buddhist scriptures. The main occasions where monks are invited for a house ceremony are for weddings (though they have no part in the actual wedding ceremony), dedication of a new house, and funerals. The funeral rites are the most elaborate and often last up to seven days. In all these ceremonies there is chanting by and presenting gifts to the monks. Holy water, consecrated white cords, and incense sticks play an important role in these rituals.

The position of the *Sangha* in Thai society is however not without its challenges. There is much talk about crisis in the *Sangha*.²⁹ The reasons most often mentioned are the inflexible top-down organization of the *Sangha*, as ordered by law and closely connected to the state, and the moral failings of some monks, which have resulted in several high profile sexual and corruption scandals. Urbanization also contributed to a lessening role for the *Sangha*, since life in the cities is less naturally centered on the temple and the monks than it is in the villages.

Reform movements like Suan Moke and Santi Asoke try to promote a Buddhism that places a major emphasis on the teachings of the Buddha, but these movements have been more successful in attracting attention from scholars than in becoming broad-based mass movements.

Folk Buddhism

Kammic Buddhism plays an important role in everyday life. Yet most Thai Buddhists are as often, and as intensely, concerned with the world of the spirits and spirit appeasement. These phenomena are best described as animistic. For a good

²⁸ Walls, p. 115

²⁹ For a short overview of authors covering this subject, see Pattana Kitiarsa, "Faith and Films: Countering the Crisis of Thai Buddhism from Below", in: *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 34:2 (2006), pp. 264-290.

understanding of Thai Buddhism it is important to realize that *nibbanic* and *kammic* Theravada Buddhism never exist in a society without this strong substratum of what is here called folk Buddhism. A. Thomas Kirsch wrote that “it has frequently been observed that Theravada Buddhism is never the sole religious component in these societies, that there are invariably ‘non-Buddhist’ religious elements present as well.”³⁰ The Buddha did not deny the existence of gods and spirits; he just taught that their existence is not relevant to obtaining enlightenment. This left open the possibility of engaging the gods and spirits. Their help is enlisted with the problems of daily living. Buddhist teaching about enlightenment does not address these issues directly. Folk Buddhism serves to fill that gap.

The two main contributing streams to folk Buddhism are Brahmanism and animism. Brahmanism probably became influential both as a survivor from pre-Buddhist history and through the Brahmanistic court rituals that are held until today. Brahmanistic practices focus on the *thewadas*, angelic beings or gods. Their help is especially asked to ensure health, prosperity, and good luck. All ceremonies at various points in the life cycle and in the cycle of the seasons are mainly Brahmanistic in nature.

Animism, the beliefs and practices that deal with spirits, is the second important strain of folk Buddhism. Spirit doctors play a role in appeasing the spirits and healing the sick. However, because the spirits are both capricious and cannot be controlled, animistic rituals are seen as less certain to produce the desired results than Buddhist and Brahmanistic rituals. Interestingly, “[m]any of these features associated with the animist rituals (use of whiskey, dancing, and trance-like state) stand in direct opposition to many paramount values of Buddhism (sobriety, self-restraint), and of Folk Brahmanism as well.”³¹

Yet generally no contradiction is felt between the magic of folk Buddhism and Buddhist teaching. On the contrary monks also play a central role in folk Buddhism. Terwiel noted that in the view of Thai villagers strong Buddhism leads to strong magical powers: “In the view of many farmers, strong [Buddhist] discipline is related to strong forces emanating from the members of the Sangha when they perform their rituals.”³²

The influence of folk Buddhism is found in many different ways. Most Buddhists wear amulets to be protected wherever they go. When a contingent of Thai soldiers was sent out on a UN mission they carried on average about 50 amulets on their bodies. Some amulets were officially issued by the military.³³ The most common amulets are Buddha images. The power ascribed to these amulets depends, among other things, on the spell used to prepare the amulet, and the monk who consecrated it. Much of the income of many temples in Thailand comes from selling amulets and holy water and other practices that are more animistic than Buddhist. The blessing of the most popular living Buddhist monk, abbot Khuun, was sought by many national level politicians. He grants his blessing by spitting on their head. Besides Buddha images many other amulets exist. They can be almost anything, from a splinter of wood, to seeds, to women’s underwear, to images of popular monks. Many men have amulets to increase their potency.

³⁰ Kirsch, p. 242.

³¹ Kirsch, p. 258.

³² Terwiel, p. 400.

³³ *Asia Times*, 11 September 2003.

In 2006 one kind of amulet created a craze in the country that had not been witnessed before.³⁴ Jatukam amulets originated in Nakhon Sri Thammarat in southern Thailand and display pictures of two legendary princes. Almost overnight these amulets became popular after people claimed they were miraculously protected or became miraculously rich because of them. Within one year hundreds of millions of dollars were spent on these amulets. Brochures were printed with choices of Jatukam amulets for purchase. An airline carrier arranged a special flight during which monks made the amulets so they would be especially powerful. A bank promised an amulet for everybody who opened a new account.

Fortune telling is also a major part of the folk beliefs of Thai Buddhists. There are many fortunetellers, many of them palm readers. For almost every ceremony a monk or a Brahmin priest will divine an 'auspicious time'. Other major occasions for animistic ceremonies center on new buildings. The ground-breaking ceremony, the ceremony of consecrating the main pillar to invite spirits to come and live there, and the house-warming party are all very much related to spirit beliefs.

Not only markets, but almost all Thai houses, have a spirit house on the compound for the spirits of the plot of land. Flowers, incense, and water (or whiskey) are offered to the spirits to ask for their protection. On special days there are offerings of food. Larger spirit houses are found alongside most markets and commercial buildings. The power of these spirits is believed to be local.

Another venue where spirit beliefs can be easily seen is the markets and shops. Many shops have an image of Mae Kwak, a Chinese goddess who invites customers to come in. Her food of choice seems to be red Fanta soda. Other shops have the Japanese equivalent, Maneki Neko, a cat-god whose paw is gesturing as long as its battery does not run out.

Ancestor worship is especially strong among the Chinese, and to a certain extent among the Isaan (Northeastern Thai), who will often have a spirit house for their ancestors instead of for the spirits of the land. In Bangkok many Isaan have the two spirit houses side by side.

Another interesting feature of religious life in Thailand is the worship of the spirit of king Chulalongkorn. In most Thai houses a picture of this king can be found. Sometimes this is just to show respect for the monarchy and for one of the great kings of Thailand, but more often than not, fruit and other gifts are offered to his spirit. Those most serious about his worship will refrain from eating beef.

The explicitly dark side of the spirit worship is that people will put curses on others and will offer their bodies to the spirits if the spirits help them. There are many spirit doctors offering these kinds of services. They also claim to be of assistance in casting out spirits.

A naïve evolutionary view of the history of religion might lead to the thought that folk Buddhism will grow weaker and orthodox Buddhism stronger. Newer research shows that this is not the case. Pattana Kitiarsa shows how in urban settings spirit mediums and all kinds of innovative folk Buddhist cults are getting stronger instead of weaker.³⁵ He argues against the older syncretism paradigm of Thai religion proposed by, among other, Terwiel and Kirsch. The syncretism paradigm em-

³⁴ See e.g. "A present help in adversity", in: *The Nation*, 27 January 2007, and "Jatukam fever reaches new heights", in: *Bangkok Post*, 10 June 2007.

³⁵ Pattana Kitiarsa, "Beyond Syncretism: Hybridization of Popular Religion in Contemporary Thailand", in: *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 36:3 (2005), pp. 461-487.

phasizes the paramount importance of Theravada Buddhism. Pattana states that this approach fails to give enough attention to developments in the total picture of Thai religion. Pattana prefers to talk about 'hybridization' rather than syncretism. He believes that the concept of a 'hybrid', a mixture from various origins, serves better to study the newer spirit-medium cults and other religious developments in their own right.

The hybridization of Thai religion means that more and more of the religious life of Thai people exists outside the purview of state-sponsored Buddhism. The *Sangha*, tied to laws governing its functioning, is not able to react in creative ways. Even less than in the past it can fulfill all the religious needs of the Thai people, particularly in the cities. As shown by the recent growth of spirit-medium cults, the religious situation in Thailand is open to change. The direction that change will take will become clear in the future.

2.6.3. Islam

Besides Buddhism there is one other religion that claims a sizeable part of the population. That religion is Islam. Most Muslims in Thailand live in the southernmost provinces of the country and are ethnic Malay.³⁶ Islam first got a firm hold in the Malaysian areas when Patani declared itself a Muslim kingdom in 1457. Patani, with some interruptions, accepted the suzerainty of the Thai kingdom. After some colonial maneuvering Patani finally became a fully integrated part of Thailand in 1909. The wish for autonomy however never disappeared. First it was mainly fueled by cultural differences, but in recent decades the religious component has become more important. Since 2004 a Muslim uprising exists in the three southernmost provinces (Narathiwat, Yala, and Pattani). These are the provinces that have a majority Malay population.

About one million Thai-speaking Muslims live in the South, mainly in Satun province. It is not clear whether these people are ethnic Thai who converted to Islam, or ethnic Malay who started to use the Thai language. There is a divide in the Muslim community between the Malay and the Thai speaking Muslims. The Malay-speakers, on the whole, seem to support the idea of an independent Muslim state, while the Thai-speakers do not.

Another sizable group of Muslims is found in and around Bangkok. The Bangkok Muslims are mainly descendants of southern Muslims who were forcibly removed in the 19th century, after punitive military expeditions, to serve as forced labourers in Bangkok. There are also various other ethnic minorities among them, e.g. Cham who originally came from Vietnam, and Persians who already had high court positions in the Ayutthaya kingdom. In the North there are Chinese Muslim communities, mainly from trading families who immigrated from Yunnan and from a battalion of Nationalist soldiers who fled China after the Communist take-over. In the rest of the country Muslims form a very small minority.

For a long time the Buddhist and the Muslim communities in southern Thailand coexisted peacefully on a local level. Both were influenced by pre-Islamic Hinduism, and shared several rituals and forms of spirit beliefs. Inter-marriage and conversions from Buddhism to Islam and from Islam to Buddhism were common. Tensions

³⁶ The main sources for this paragraph are Michel Gilquin *The Muslims of Thailand*, Bangkok, 2002, and Alexander Horstmann, "Ethnological Perspectives on Buddhist-Muslim relations and coexistence in Southern Thailand", in: *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, April 2004.

between the groups grew because of the Thai-ification efforts of the national government, and because of the growing Muslim awareness of being a part of world Islam.

Religious schools (*pondoks*) play an important role in teaching Islamic precepts to the youth. They strengthen the Muslim identity of the villages in the South, and increasingly espouse a fundamentalist version of Islam. The result is that there is a growing divide between the Buddhist and Muslim community. It is clear that the Muslim identity is stronger than the Buddhist identity. Inter-marriage is still taking place, but it is now almost exclusively Buddhist women who marry Muslim men and on marriage convert to Islam.

This is a sign of reinvigorated Islam. Since the 1980s Koranic studies have become more widespread. In the past few people understood the Koran. No translation was allowed or available. But in recent decades many Muslims from the South went to study in Islamic schools in Egypt, Pakistan, and other Islamic countries. On their return they became teachers at the *pondoks*. They taught competing strains of Islam. Typically this meant that a more conservative, and in some cases militant fundamentalist, form of Islam came to communities in which Islam for many centuries had been more of a cultural identity rather than a strongly held faith.

In this way Muslims in Thailand found an identity in the worldwide Muslim community as well as in the Thai nation. The presence of Islam in Thailand has not only a religious side, as with other minority religions, but also a political one.

On the national level the politics of religion has two driving forces behind it. Firstly Thailand is still seen as a Buddhist Kingdom and the state supports the extension of Buddhism as a nation building tool. Secondly regulation is done with an eye to the Muslim minority- sometimes to appease them, sometimes to limit their influence, but always to prevent problems with their fundamentalist elements and to thwart secessionism. The effect some of these regulations has on other minorities (notably Christianity) is mainly unintended.

CHAPTER 3 STUDYING CONVERSION AND CHURCH GROWTH

3.1. Introduction

Religious adherence is a dynamic phenomenon. Though most people adhere to their birth religion, a sizeable minority changes religious adherence one or more times during their lifetime. People may be born as Christians and become agnostic or atheistic, or the other way around. People may be born in a traditional religion, and become Hindus or Buddhists. People may be born as Muslims, become Christian, and revert back to Islam.

Under the influence of Auguste Comte positivistic science stated that society would evolve from a magical, through a religious, to a scientific stage.¹ Religion would slowly die. For a long time many scientists believed that religion would become progressively irrelevant. At the end of the 1960s Peter Berger wrote a very influential study in which he proposed this secularization thesis.² The hypothesis ran into trouble. The USA, the leading modern country, does not fit the bill of the secularization theory. Religion is an important aspect of American life³ and there is no trend towards secularization discernable. On the contrary, over the course of several centuries more and more Americans have become church members.⁴ In other parts of the world Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism all experienced major revivals during the second half of the 20th century. After the collapse of the communist system, either officially (Eastern Europe) or in practice (China), religion in many forms is on the rise. Western Europe is the only part of the world where secularization seems to have occurred, though even that is controversial. Newer studies state that northern Europe never was very religious, and that the existence of state churches portrayed a false picture of religiosity.⁵

Christianity has an interesting position in this worldwide picture of religious change. Christianity is becoming marginalized in public life in its old heartland, Europe. Therefore it could be assumed that it is becoming less of a force in the religious world. This seems even more likely because in the 20th century the population in non-Christian countries has, on average, grown much faster than the population in Christian countries. The remarkable fact however is that the percentage of Christians among the world population hardly changed during the 20th century.⁶ The losses in Europe and the slower growth of Christianized populations were offset by

¹ Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*, Paris, 1830-1842.

² Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 1969, New York.

³ Jos Becker and Joep de Hart, *Godsdienstige veranderingen in Nederland: Verschuivingen in de binding met de kerken en de christelijke traditie*, Den Haag, 2006, p. 14.

⁴ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*, Piscataway, 2005.

⁵ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*, Berkeley, 2000, pp. 63-68.

⁶ David B. Barret and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Trends AD 30 – AD 2200: Interpreting the Annual Christian Megacensus*, Pasadena, 2001, p. 4.

an unprecedented growth of the Christian church in majority non-Christian countries. Sub-Saharan Africa became largely Christian. In many Asian countries, notably Korea, China, and most recently India, the number of Christians grew rapidly through conversion from other religions.

This chapter looks at the phenomena that explain conversion to Christianity and the growth of Christian churches in many places and the lack thereof in other places. Sociological and anthropological approaches are reviewed first; missiological studies are then presented.

3.2. Sociology of religion and anthropology

The early study of religion in the social sciences was heavily influenced by philosophers who saw religion as a sign of an undeveloped mind.⁷ Auguste Comte, for example, in the 19th century, described the most primitive stage of cultural evolution as ‘theological’, which would be replaced first by the ‘philosophical’ and finally by the ‘scientific’ stage. Religion was seen as a product of a primitive mind. Though this proved untenable when actual fieldwork was done, many social scientists held on to a view of religion as an irrational phenomenon. Sigmund Freud described religion as a psychopathological condition.⁸

The view of religion as something pathological and irrational became problematic when many surveys found a positive correlation between education and religiosity (this is true in the USA, though in Europe the picture is less clear) and between mental health and religiosity. That the irrationality paradigm stayed popular so long, in especially psychology and anthropology, is only understandable when one notes that among all academic areas professors in these two fields are the least religious and the most actively opposed to religion.⁹

Several alternative theories accept the rationality of religion. Laurence R. Iannaccone, Rodney Stark, and Roger Finke are the main proponents of rational choice theory in the sociology of religion. Iannaccone proposes in his work that people make a cost and benefit analysis to maximize their benefits from religious involvement.¹⁰ Stark and Finke add exchange theory to rational choice theory when they state that religion includes an exchange relationship with a god or gods.¹¹ This approach takes religion seriously and results in an overarching theory and testable hypotheses.

Colin Jerolmack and Douglas Porpora find fault with the use of rational choice theory.¹² The main objection they have is that altruism and obedience to higher norms are reduced to selfishness of a higher order (e.g. a martyr dying for his faith because he values the heavenly reward more than he loathes the suffering). Unself-

⁷ Rodney Stark, Laurence R. Iannaccone, and Roger Finke, “Religions, Science, and Rationality”, in: *American Economic Review*, 86:2 (1996), pp. 433-437.

⁸ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, 3rd ed., New York, 1942.

⁹ Stark, Iannaccone, and Finke, p. 436.

¹⁰ E.g. Laurence R. Iannaccone, “Voodoo Economics? Reviewing the Rational Choice Approach to Religion”, in: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 34:1 (1995), pp. 76-88.

¹¹ Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*, Berkeley, 2000.

¹² Colin Jerolmack and Douglas Porpora, “Religion, Rationality, and Experience: A Response to the New Rational Choice Theory of Religion”, in: *Sociological Theory*, 22:1 (2004), pp. 140-160.

ishness is enveloped in selfishness, and therefore the term does not have any meaning left. Moreover they argue that the instrumental rationality ascribed by rational choice theory to religious beliefs fails to address the prior question of epistemological rationality of religion. As an alternative they suggest that the rationality of religious beliefs is rooted in experiencing the divine.

Another interesting argument, that defends the rationality of religious beliefs even without supporting evidence, is the Calvinist epistemologist Alvin Plantinga.¹³ Whichever theory of religion is accepted, the emerging consensus in social sciences is that religion is rational, not irrational or non-rational. At the same time it is becoming clear to most academic observers that religion is not a slowly dying phenomenon, but that, over time, the level of religious involvement in various societies in average is fairly stable. Peter Berger, for a long time the main proponent of the secularization thesis, was saying, by the end of the 1990's: "I think what I and most other sociologists of religion wrote in the 1960s about secularization was a mistake."¹⁴

Religion is here to stay, and religion is rational. Therefore it can be studied, and it is reasonable to look for reasons and not just causes of religious behaviour. With that understanding it is possible to turn to research on conversion and church growth, and this will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

3.2.1. Conversion

Studies in the field of the sociology of religion often take as their point of view conversion of the individual, which for the purpose of this study can be taken as the mirror image of church growth. In sociology of religion conversion became a subject of interest in the study of "new religions". Earlier studies assumed something needed to be wrong with a person to get them interested in religion. Psychopathological and social stress explanations were in vogue. In studies of this nature the convert was mainly seen as a passive object being manipulated by outside forces.

This partly changed with a seminal article by John Lofland and Rodney Stark in 1965.¹⁵ They presented a model of how converts joined a New Religious Movement (NRM). They described three 'predisposing characteristics' of potential converts that were in line with the older studies: perception of long-term tension, possession of a religious rhetoric and problem-solving perspective, and self-definition as a 'religious seeker'. To that they added four 'situational factors' that laid more emphasis on the convert as a subject and as being active in his own conversion: reaching a point where old patterns do not longer work, development of affective ties with members of the NRM, weakening of affective ties with non group members, and intensive interaction with group members. The emphasis they placed on affective ties and interaction served to start describing conversion as not just a psychological, but also as a highly social process.

Many studies researched whether Lofland and Stark's model adequately described conversion in other settings. Lofland himself said that the model was not

¹³ Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and belief in God", in: Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds.), *Faith and rationality*, Notre Dame, 1983.

¹⁴ Peter Berger, "Epistemological Modesty: An Interview with Peter Berger", in: *Christian Century*, 114 (1997), pp. 972-975, 978.

¹⁵ John Lofland, and Rodney Stark, "Becoming a World-Saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective", in: *American Sociological Review*, 30 (1965), pp. 863-874.

developed for universal use but as an example of how conversion models could be developed for different situations.¹⁶

The psychological explanation that relative deprivation drives people to accept religion mainly finds its evidence in the NRMs and is far less successful in explaining the far more common conversion to Christian churches. Stark and Bainbridge proposed the interesting theory that it is not mainly relative deprivation ('my neighbour has more money than I', or 'I am less happy than last year'), but absolute deprivation ('everybody has unfulfilled dreams and dashed hopes') that drives people to convert.¹⁷ In this way everybody becomes a potential convert, and the question becomes why many people do not convert.

Generally speaking later studies emphasized the volitional aspects of conversion more than the psychological ones.¹⁸ Scholars tend to shy away from the psychological aspects, and focus more on the social aspects of conversion. Therefore the word 'conversion,' that focuses on how a person changes, is sometimes replaced by the word 'affiliation' that focuses on behaviour.¹⁹ The two main social influence theories regarding conversion (or affiliation) are control theory and subculture theory.²⁰ These two theories are not competing, but complementary. Control theory holds that people will conform to the conventional social order as long as they have powerful bonds to it. People who experience a major disruption of their normal life (marriage, divorce, birth of children, moving house, changing jobs) are the most likely to affiliate with another religious group. This theory does not only apply to individuals, but also to societies as a whole. In societies that are in a state of change conversions are more likely.²¹ The observation that urbanites are more likely to be converts to new religious movements²² might be tied to the same theory, because there is often more stability for rural dwellers than for urbanites.

Subculture theory stresses that within a group people tend to develop the same convictions and thought patterns. Strong social relationships with members of a group (church) form a strong incentive to join that group (church). Both these theories have strong supporting evidence from sociological studies. One data item that has attracted social, psychological, and even physiological explanations is that in

¹⁶ John Lofland, "Becoming a World-Saver Revisited," in: J. T. Richardson, (ed.), *Conversion Careers*, Beverly Hills, 1978, pp. 1-23.

¹⁷ Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge, "Networks of Faith", in: *American Journal of Sociology*, 85 (1980), pp. 1376-1395.

¹⁸ E.g. Roger A. Straus, "Changing Oneself", in: John Lofland, (ed.), *Doing Social Life*, New York, 1976, pp. 252-273; Roger A. Straus, "Religious Conversion as a Personal and Collective Accomplishment", in: *Sociological Analysis*, 40 (1979), pp. 158-165; John Lofland and Norman Skonovd, "Conversion Motifs", in: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 20 (1981), pp. 373-385; James T. Richardson, "Conversion Careers", in: *Society*, 17:3 (1980), pp. 47-50; James T. Richardson, "The Active Versus Passive Convert", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 24 (1985), pp. 163-179; and James T. Richardson, "Studies of Conversion", in Philip E. Hammond, (ed.), *The Sacred in a Secular Age*, Berkeley, 1985, pp. 104-121.

¹⁹ E.g. Stark and Bainbridge.

²⁰ William Sims Bainbridge, "The Sociology of Conversion", in: H. Newton Malony and Samuel Southard, (eds.), *Handbook of Religious Conversion*, New Haven, 1993, p. 182.

²¹ Rodney Stark, *The rise of Christianity*, Princeton, 1996, pp. 73-94.

²² Rodney Stark, *The rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*, Princeton, 1996; and Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*, Berkeley, 2000.

almost all studies women prove to be more religious than men.²³ An interesting switch in how new religious movements are seen was made when the common assumption was challenged that converts tend to come from lower class backgrounds. Research data showed that, contrary to expectations, middle and higher class people are overrepresented in new religious movements.²⁴

Lewis R. Rambo wrote a book-length study about conversion entitled “Understanding Religious Conversion” in which he proposes a ‘sequential stage model’²⁵. Though he calls the model ‘sequential’, he does not claim that every convert progresses through the seven stages in the same way. The seven stages he describes are: context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, and consequences.

Anthropologists also studied the phenomenon of conversion. The first anthropologists were influenced by Max Weber. Weber was a political economist and one of the fathers of modern sociology whose publications in the first two decades of the 20th century were one of the first forays into the field of sociology of religion. He made a distinction between traditional religions and world religions, and noted that the world religions, in contrast with traditional religions, have a unified view of the world and systematized ethics.²⁶ This rationalization of world religions makes them more compelling than traditional religions. While this is an important insight, it is also a rather intellectualistic view on the difference between world and traditional religions. Anthropological field work makes clear the need to also incorporate social aspects. Robert Hefner writes:

The real force of the world religions lies in their linkage of these strict transcendental imperatives to institutions for the propagation and control of religious knowledge and identity over time and space. In other words, the most distinctive feature of the world religions or of, again, their most institutionally successful variants is something both doctrinal and social-organizational.²⁷

Many early anthropologists had a negative attitude towards religion, especially Christianity, and deplored changes in traditional societies.²⁸ Therefore it is hardly amazing that a strong strain of anthropology described conversion mainly as the result of structural pressures of society helped along by cynical missionaries.²⁹ This approach missed the importance of recognizing converts as actors in their own conversion, and fell into the trap of structural determinism.

Since the 1990s however, a new anthropological approach developed. Conversion is approached more sympathetically, and conversion to Christianity in particular has become a topic of interest. Books edited by Robert Hefner and Peter van der

²³ Rodney Stark, “Physiology and Faith: Addressing the Universal Gender Difference in Religious Commitment”, in: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41:3 (2002), pp. 495-507.

²⁴ Stark, 1996, pp. 29-47.

²⁵ Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, New Haven, 1993, p. 17.

²⁶ Maximilian C.E. Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Stuttgart, 1988 (9th printing).

²⁷ Robert E. Hefner, “World building and the Rationality of Conversion”, in : Robert E. Hefner (ed.), *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, Berkeley, 1993, p. 19.

²⁸ Claude E. Stipe, “Anthropologists versus Missionaries: The Influence of Presuppositions”, in: *Current Anthropology*, 21:2 (1980), pp.165-168.

²⁹ A discussion and bibliography of this issue can be found in Frank A. Salamone, “Missionaries and Anthropologists”, in: *Missiology*, 14:1 (1986), pp. 55-70, and in *Missiology*, 24:2 (1996).

Veer were main works that signalled the coming of age of anthropological studies on conversion to Christianity.³⁰ Hefner's volume offers descriptions of conversion and non-conversion in various settings, often with an emphasis on unique local factors. Van der Veer's publication mainly uses alignment to the demands of modern life as explanatory framework for conversion to Christianity.

Partly linked to the modernization theory is the observation that in many cases of rapid conversion among an ethnic minority a contested identity plays a role. Ethnic minorities are more responsive to the Christian message if, in the context of growing interconnectedness, the majority population is non-Christian and exerts pressure on the ethnic minorities. In those cases one aspect of conversion is that Christianity confirms and reinforces ethnic identity.³¹

The change in attitude towards studies in conversion to Christianity is described as follows by Joel Robbins:

A topic that was once a complete non-starter in disciplinary conversations, Christianity has become of late a subject one can raise without fear of eliciting blank looks or raised eye-brows. As an object of ethnographic attention, at least, Christianity is on its way to becoming established, its worthiness of attention taken for granted.³²

At the same time Robbins still shows some of the old state of affairs by assuming that the anthropologists he is addressing are irreligious.³³ This assumption was never valid, as witnessed by the fact there always has been a significant number of missionary anthropologists. But it is ever becoming less so. With the lessening animosity in anthropological circles towards Christianity, it is becoming less relevant as well. Christian and non-Christian anthropologists can and do publish together on conversion.³⁴

The anthropological emphasis on 'thick description' makes it difficult to make much of its contribution fruitful to this study which uses a more sociological approach. In addition most anthropological studies focus on push factors, either strong or weak, that push people away from old loyalties towards becoming Christian. These push factors are developments in society and many of them apply to the whole population. This is an important part of research into conversion, and is also partly addressed in this study.

Yet push factors on a societal level alone fail to explain who becomes a Christian and who does not, and why some churches grow and some do not. To get insight into these issues pull factors that attract people to Christianity and push factors on a personal level need to be studied as well. An interesting anthropological research project that includes these concerns is 'Pentecostal conversion' at the Vrije

³⁰ Hefner, 1993, and Peter van der Veer, *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity*, New York / London, 1996.

³¹ See e.g. Oscar Salemink, *Enclosing the Highlands: Socialist, Capitalist, and Christian Conversions of Vietnam's Central Highlanders*, workshop paper, 2003.

³² Joel Robbins, "Anthropology and Theology: An Awkward Relationship?", in: *Anthropological Quarterly*, 79:2 (2006), pp. 285-294.

³³ Robbins, p. 293.

³⁴ See e.g. Andrew S. Buckser and Stephen S. Glazier, (eds.), *Anthropology of Conversion*, 2003.

Universiteit in Amsterdam. It shows the further rapprochement of anthropological and sociological concerns.

From anthropological studies it is clear that any theoretical framework used to study and explain conversion will need to include both a view of church factors and of social factors, both of the decisions of the convert and of the context. The importance of local factors is an insight from anthropology that cannot be dismissed.

3.2.2. Church growth

The first sociological study on church growth was Dean M. Kelley's *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* in 1972. It was to dominate the discussion on the subject in the sociology of religion for decades to come. Kelley wrote his book in the wake of membership losses experienced in American old-line denominations in the 1960s, after two centuries of continuous growth. He compared that with stricter groups, such as the Southern Baptist Convention, the Assemblies of God, Seventh Day Adventists, and Mormons, which had continued to grow.

Kelley's main thesis was that strict churches are socially strong, and therefore grow. He defined strictness as absolutism, conformity within the own group, and fanaticism. Commitment, discipline, and missionary zeal were mentioned as evidences of social strength. Kelley, himself a staff member of the old-line National Council of Churches in the USA, maintained that ecumenical denominations could not be socially strong. The reason he gave for that was the value they place on relativism, diversity, and dialogue.

Kelley's study was hotly debated. In 1979 a volume was published that studied the same phenomenon and brought together various research projects that often explicitly tested Kelley's thesis.³⁵ This book made two important contributions to the field. First, it made explicit the distinction between contextual and institutional factors. Contextual factors are those outside the influence of churches, e.g. demographic changes and the cultural climate. Institutional factors are those determined by churches, e.g. worship style and theology. Second, it used rigorous statistical procedures to test hypotheses about church growth and decline.

One interesting chapter addressed the question that had come up in old-line denominations whether church growth was important at all, and whether churches are not called to focus on other areas that are more important to them. It was found that growth of churches was relatively weakly linked to other church goals such as religious commitment of the members, unity and support in the church, satisfaction and enthusiasm, and social witness. Yet growing churches were achieving these other goals somewhat better than non-growing churches.

An important assumption in the studies was that contextual factors are logically prior to institutional factors. So the variance in growth between denominations was first attempted to be explained in terms of difference in context, and for the remaining variance institutional factors were used as a possible explanation. Using this approach most studies came to the conclusion that contextual factors explained most of the variance, and that institutional factors explained some more. This was generally taken to mean that Kelley's strictness thesis was disproved.

In 1993 a follow-up volume was published with some of the same authors. While still giving most attention to contextual factors, institutional factors got more

³⁵ Dean R. Hoge and David A. Roozen, (eds.), *Understanding Church Growth and Decline: 1950-1978*, New York, 1979.

play this time around. C. Kirk Hadaway even ends his contribution with “Evangelism may be the most important one thing church leaders can do if they want their church to grow”.³⁶ Hadaway suggests several explanations for this finding that contradicted the results from earlier studies. The first possible explanation is that in earlier studies not enough growing churches were represented. This is a very likely explanation because the older research projects were all done in old-line churches, while the new research project was done in the faster growing Southern Baptist Convention. That this is part of the explanation becomes even clearer when considering that Hadaway found that evangelistic activities do distinguish between growing churches on the one hand and plateauing and declining churches on the other hand, but not between plateauing and declining churches.

The second explanation that Hadaway proposes, but does not explain, is a difference in methodology. This is without doubt the most important one. The conclusion that evangelism is the most important factor in determining church growth is made by doing a multiple regression on the variables that have the strongest correlation with growth. This procedure was never used in ‘Understanding Church Growth and Decline’, because in every analysis presented in that volume contextual factors were analyzed first, while institutional factors were only allowed to explain the residual variance. From Hadaway’s own article it can be gleaned that, had the same procedure been followed in this study, evangelism and all other institutional factors combined would have explained just 12% of the variance. With the new approach evangelism alone accounted for 21% of the variance.

In a later article Iannaccone took issue with the statistical procedures used in many of the research projects described in both volumes.³⁷ He showed that data-mining among the many variables used in church growth research potentially results in many false significant results, and advised that data be divided into two samples for independent analysis. Iannaccone also listed three other statistical pitfalls that previous research had not avoided and that resulted in a bias against finding institutional influence on church growth. These pitfalls include restricting the sample to a single denomination, measurement errors that especially affect institutional variables and stepwise hierarchical regressions that force institutional effects to follow contextual ones. He convincingly showed that “[e]ven if contextual factors are causally prior to institutional factors, the stepwise-hierarchical approach yields biased results that systematically underestimate the importance of institutions.”³⁸

Rodney Stark, who has played such a prominent role in the development of the sociology of religion since the 1960s, together with Roger Finke showed that the decline of the old-line churches that Kelley called attention to was not a new development.³⁹ The most respected churches are always in decline, and it is the younger upstarts that grow more vigorously. They also show that an emphasis on church unity is detrimental to growth because it stunts the entrepreneurship that is needed to start and grow churches.

³⁶ C. Kirk Hadaway, “Is evangelistic activity related to church growth?”, in: *Church and Denominational Growth: What does (and does not) cause growth or decline*, David A. Roozen and C. Kirk Hadaway (eds.), Nashville, 1993, p. 187.

³⁷ Laurence R. Iannaccone, “Reassessing Church Growth: Statistical Pitfalls and their Consequences”, in: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 35(3), 1996, pp. 197-216.

³⁸ Iannaccone, p. 206.

³⁹ Finke, Roger, and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*, Piscataway, 2005.

Stark writes extensively about institutional variables in his newer publications. In *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*, which Stark co-authored with Roger Finke, an important innovation to the theory of church growth is made in the emphasis placed on the 'religious economy'. Religious providers are competing for members. Stricter organizations have a competitive advantage. They are more costly in that they ask more of their members in terms of commitment, time, and money. But consequently they are also able to better serve their members, both on a religious and a social level, and therefore are more attractive than less strict organizations. Yet there is a natural drift towards becoming less strict because of second generation effects and upward social mobility of the members. Therefore churches tend to lose their zeal and growth potential over time.

In societies with a free religious market this will ensure that new churches with higher tension towards society will come into being (in sociological terms these new high tension churches are called 'sects'). These new churches mostly rely on lay leadership and not on professional clergy and they have a higher growth potential than the older churches. In societies where one organization has achieved a (near) monopoly with help of the state, religious participation will be low because the higher tension market, which forms the largest part of the religious market, is not catered for.

Stark and Finke also propose, and make a strong case based on data, that cults (religious organizations that are from traditions outside the religious mainstream in that society) are more likely to flourish in situations where the religious economy is stunted, and where therefore a bottled up demand for religious services exists. In later work Stark builds on several of the points touched upon in *Acts of Faith*. One major thesis is that monotheism has a competitive advantage over other religions because its conception of an omnipotent God who can give any reward, including eternal life, can build a loyalty and drive among its believers that is unparalleled in other religions. It is therefore only monotheism that births missionary movements.⁴⁰

A newer, mathematical based model, developed by John Hayward, emphasizes the important role of new converts, since enthusiasm for the faith wanes over time and social ties to non-Christians become less.⁴¹ It is unclear though whether this is just a theoretical argument or that it is based on underlying data.

In the newest research, the role of institutions tends to be emphasized. In a 2006 study Hadaway mentions two important contextual factors positively correlating with growth of American churches: location in the South of the USA and growth in number of households in the community where the church is located.⁴² All other factors mentioned after that are institutional. Factors that were most strongly correlated with growth were a recently established church, a small proportion of older members, a big proportion of men, absence of conflict, not having a worship service described as 'reverent', change of the worship style in the last 5 years, a church described as 'spiritually vital and alive', maintaining a church website, and follow-up of visitors.

⁴⁰ Rodney Stark, *One True God: Historical Consequences of Monotheism*, Princeton, 2003.

⁴¹ John Hayward, "A Dynamic Model of Church Growth and Its Application to Contemporary Revivals", in: *Review of Religious Research*, 43:3 (2002), pp. 218-241.

⁴² C. Kirk Hadaway, *Facts on Growth*, Hartford, 2006.

One reason for the stronger emphasis on institutional variables might be that this publication is less academic and more focused on being directly useful to local churches. Yet it is a significant shift from the earlier emphasis on contextual factors.

In recent years a new area of research opened up. The growth of pentecostal and charismatic churches in many areas of the world⁴³ has evoked special interest. David Martin published groundbreaking research that brought the rapid growth of pentecostal Christianity, already long discussed in missiological circles, into the consciousness of scholars in the social sciences.⁴⁴ Major research efforts triggered by the rapid growth of charismatic Christianity include the European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism and a project by the Pew Research Center.⁴⁵ The theories reviewed in this paragraph have been applied in trying to understand the growth, and often local circumstances have been used as explanation as well. So far a rigorous statistical analysis of the phenomenon is lacking, probably partly because of the problems to define and therefore count charismatic Christianity.

3.3. Missiology

In his encyclopedic overview of missiology, Jan A.B. Jongeneel defines missiology as consisting of three parts: philosophy of mission, theology of mission, and science of mission.⁴⁶ The present author holds the view that philosophy of mission belongs to the prolegomena of missiology, rather than that it should be considered a separate discipline within missiology. This leaves theology of mission and science of mission as the main disciplines within missiology.

Missiology investigates, describes, and analyzes mission. So a few words should be devoted to what mission is. Long and passionate discussions have been held on the subject, and this is not the place to review them. Suffice to say that this study is based on a classical understanding of mission that accepts the primacy of evangelism and church planting, which places this study in a long tradition that goes back to Gisbertus Voetius, the 17th century Dutch theologian who was the first Protestant to systematically think about mission.⁴⁷

According to Voetius the conversion of the peoples (*conversio gentium*) is the primary goal of mission. As the secondary goal of mission he mentions planting of the church (*plantatio ecclesia*). The glory of God and the manifestation of God's grace (*gloria et manifestatio gratiae divinae*) he considers the end goal of mission.⁴⁸ The two goals, conversion and church planting, should be seen as complementary.

⁴³ See e.g. David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, "Status of Global Mission", in: *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 32:1 (2008), p.30, which claims that there are over 600 million charismatics in the world, 28% of all Christians.

⁴⁴ David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*, Oxford, 1990.

⁴⁵ See e.g. The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Study of Pentecostals*, Washington, 2006.

⁴⁶ J. A. B. Jongeneel, *Philosophy, Science, and Theology of Mission in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Part I: The Philosophy and Science of Mission*, Bern, 1995, p. 71.

⁴⁷ Jan A.B. Jongeneel, "The Missiology of Gisbertus Voetius: The First Comprehensive Protestant Theology of Missions", in: *Calvin Theological Journal*, 26 (1991), pp. 47-79.

⁴⁸ Jan A.B. Jongeneel, *Missiologie*, Volume II, 's Gravenhage, 1991, p. 78.

Voetius already noted that the planting of the church flows from the conversion of people and that without prior conversion, the planting of the church is worthless.⁴⁹

Following this tradition, in its simplest form, a biblical valid definition of mission is 'making disciples of all the nations'. Using this definition, mission science can be said to be 'the empirical study of the process of making disciples of all the nations', and theology of mission 'the theological reflection on the process of making disciples of all the nations'. It becomes clear that missiology is both an empirical, descriptive science (science of mission) and a theoretical, prescriptive one (theology of mission).

The importance of Jongeneel's contribution is that he calls attention to the distinction of 'science of mission' and 'theology of mission'. Much of the misunderstanding between missiologists stems from not recognizing this distinction. Some missiologists are mainly interested in theoretical and theological discourses. They blame scientists of mission for being pragmatic. Other missiologists have an interest in other fields. Jongeneel is helpful here with an exhaustive list: linguistics, history, geography, sociology, ethnology, anthropology, economy, statistics, psychology, pedagogics, and phenomenology.⁵⁰ Mission scholars in these fields may blame theologians for being not practical. But there is a place for both approaches. They complement each other.

Van Rheeën not only includes theology and the social sciences in missiology, but takes strategy as the third discipline.⁵¹ The strong point of this approach is that it recognizes the importance of applying missiological insights to the mission of the church. The weak point is that it can easily lead to an approach that is lacking in scientific rigour and that jumps to strategizing without having studied the situation in depth. Therefore it is better to limit missiology to theology of mission and mission science. Mission strategy, though using the insights of theology of mission and mission science, cannot be regarded as a scientific discipline.

This study is limited to mission science. That it does not address theological issues should not be construed as theological naivety, but as a delimitation of a study in the field of mission science rather than theology of mission. That it does not directly address questions of mission strategy should not be understood as a lack of interest in the matter, but as being part and parcel of writing a scientific study.

Given the subject matter of missiology it is not surprising to note that conversion and church growth are not only studied by social scientists, but also by missiologists. The attention given to the subject in this field predated the interest of the social sciences by several decades. Though the research subject was the same, missiology and sociology of religion have never had an easy relationship. Missiologists are sometimes wary of the methodological agnosticism or atheism of sociologists, and are often not interested in the systematic explanations that sociology seeks. Sociologists fault missiologists who study church growth for a lack of proper research methods and an overly pragmatic focus on helping churches grow. As a result, there has been little discussion between the two disciplines. Missiological publications on conversion and church growth rarely refer to sociology of religion research. Sociol-

⁴⁹ Johannes Verkuyl, *Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingswetenschap*, 1975, p. 253.

⁵⁰ Jongeneel, 1995, chapter headings.

⁵¹ Gailyn Van Rheeën, *Missions: biblical foundations and contemporary strategies*, Grand Rapids, 1996, p. 137.

ogy of religion scholars seem even less aware of the contributions missiologists have made to the field.

3.3.1. Conversion

Conversion has been an important subject for missiologists. As noted above, Voetius mentioned conversion as the primary goal of mission. In the last decade of the 18th century missionary societies came into being. William Carey was the most important influence in that development, and the book that he wrote as a call to arms even had 'conversion' in the title: *An enquiry into the obligations of Christians, to use means for the conversion of the heathens*. 'Conversion' as a concept is very important to mission, and therefore much attention has been paid to it. However, in missiological studies typically discussions of conversion are under the theology of mission umbrella.⁵² The questions under review in this study, namely what kind of people convert and what factors in the context contribute to their conversion, are less often addressed.

Publications that focus on these personal and contextual factors are often based on less systematic case studies.⁵³ Yet it is possible to draw some interesting insights from them. The probability of conversion is tied to the perceived desirability of Christianity in a certain cultural context. This can be determined by the religious convictions of other ethnic groups in the vicinity. For example, Kraft describes how an ethnic group is open to conversion to Christianity because their traditional enemies are Muslims.⁵⁴ Another important point is that the likelihood of conversion is connected to whether or not the message is brought in such a way that it finds natural points of contacts with the hearers.

The conversion studies found that conversion can best be described as a long process. In that process personal contacts play a very important role. So also in missiological studies conversion is recognized as a process with important social dimensions. The importance of the message and direct experience of God's power are mentioned as well. David Greenlee summarizes his findings as follows: "[T]he three key factors influencing Muslims to come to faith in Jesus Christ are: the truth of Scripture, a sign of God's power, and a loving witness."⁵⁵

The realization that conversion is a long process, or part of a long process, can also be found in the Engel scale, developed by James F. Engel. It ranges from -8

⁵² See e.g. John R.W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, Eastbourne, 1986 [1975]; Johannes Triebel, *Bekehrung als Ziel der missionarischen Verkündigung; die Theologie Walter Freytags und das ökumenische Gespräch*, Erlangen, 1976; John A. Gration, "Conversion in Cultural Context", in: *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 7:4 (1983), pp. 157-162; George R. Hunsberger, "Conversion and Community: Revisiting the Lesslie Newbigin-M.M. Thomas Debate", in: *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 22:3 (1998), pp. 112-117; Richard V. Peace, "Conflicting Understandings of Christian Conversion: A Missiological Challenge", in: *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 28:1 (2004), pp. 8-14. See Jongeneel, 1995, for further references.

⁵³ See e.g. Charles H. Kraft, "Cultural Concomitants of Higi Conversion: Early Period", in: *Missiology: An International Review*, 4:4 (1976), pp. 431-442; Keith and Linnet Hinton, "Conversion Patterns in Asia", in: *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 25:1 (1989), pp. 40-44; Allen J. Swanson, "Decisions or Disciples? A Study in Evangelism Effectiveness in Taiwan", in: *Missiology: An International Review*, 17:1 (1989); Perry L. Glanzer, "Christian Conversion and Culture in Russia: A Clash of Missionary Expectations and Cultural Pressures", in: *Missiology: An International Review*, 29:3 (2001); and David Greenlee, "Coming to faith in Christ: Highlights From Recent Research", in: *Missionalia* 34:1 (2006).

⁵⁴ Kraft, pp. 433-434.

⁵⁵ Greenlee, p. 66.

(awareness of a supreme being, no knowledge of the Gospel) through 0 (new birth) to 4 and 5 (communion with God and stewardship).⁵⁶

One missionary anthropologist, Alan Tippett, offered another model of the conversion process.⁵⁷ The stages in his model are: period of awareness, point of realization, period of decision, point of encounter, and period of incorporation. In a later publication, after he had witnessed many reversals from the Christian faith, he added 'point of confirmation' and 'period of maturity' to his model. Tippett defines the point of confirmation as a "precise experience of the work of the Spirit"⁵⁸ that leads to sanctification and growth in grace that lasts a lifetime. Interestingly, by making his model of conversion open-ended, he addresses the same problem as the sociologists of religion who realized that becoming member of a religious group is not the same as experiencing a life-changing transformation and therefore started to speak of 'affiliation' rather than 'conversion'.

3.3.2. Early studies about church growth

From its inception missiology was interested in not just conversion but also in the growth of churches. For Voetius the planting of the church was the goal that immediately followed conversion. William Carey used statistics about Christian and non-Christian populations in different parts of the world to show the need for mission.⁵⁹ In preparation of the first World Mission Conference in Edinburgh, 1910, a *Statistical Atlas of Christian Missions* was published that listed numbers of Christians in various mission fields.⁶⁰ The third World Mission Conference, held in Tambaram in 1938, produced an entire volume on this topic, entitled *The Growing Church*.⁶¹

When the fifth World Mission Congress was held in Willingen in 1952, a change had taken place. Theological shifts in some of the Western churches that were members of the newly founded World Council of Churches (WCC) resulted in a new understanding of mission. Far less emphasis was placed on gospel proclamation and on conversion and church planting as goals of mission. Consequently studies about church growth almost entirely ceased to be done in missiological circles connected to the WCC. One missiologist steeped in the mission work of a WCC member church was to play an important role in grafting the old branch of church growth studies into the new stem of evangelical missions.

3.3.3. Donald McGavran and the Church Growth School

Donald McGavran (1897-1990) went to India as a missionary with the Disciples of Christ in 1923. He had extensive periods of being involved in typical mission institutions, for example a school and a leprosy ward. He was influenced by J. Waskom Pickett, a Methodist missionary who investigated mass movements to Christ in India. In a large majority of districts the growth of the church lagged even behind

⁵⁶ James F. Engel and J. Wilbert Norton, *What's Gone Wrong with the Harvest?*, Grand Rapids, 1975.

⁵⁷ Tippett, Alan R., "Conversion as a dynamic process in Christian mission", in: *Missiology*, (2), pp. 203-221, 1977; expanded model in Alan R. Tippett, "The Cultural Anthropology of Conversion", in: H. Newton Malony and Samuel Southard, *Handbook of Religious Conversion*, Birmingham, 1992.

⁵⁸ Tippett, 1992, p. 205.

⁵⁹ William Carey, *An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, New Facsimile Ed., London, (1792), 1962.

⁶⁰ Charles H. Fahs, and Dennis Beach, (eds.), *Statistical Atlas of Christian Missions*, Edinburgh, 1910.

⁶¹ International Missionary Council, *The Growing Church*, (Tambaram Series, vol. II), Oxford, 1939.

population growth. But in some others the church had doubled in just 3 years.⁶² This triggered the question that set the agenda for McGavran's life and for the Church Growth Movement he founded: what makes churches grow?

Because of his insistence on evangelism and church planting as the main responsibilities of a missionary organization, McGavran was not reelected as field secretary of his mission.⁶³ In the next phase of his career he went on as a moderately successful church planter, and meanwhile kept on researching the growth of the church. In 1955 he wrote *The Bridges of God*,⁶⁴ in which he condensed his research findings from the past two decades. The publication of this book is now widely regarded as the beginning of the Church Growth Movement. McGavran's wide-reaching influence began when he founded the Institute of Church Growth in 1961, and exponentially increased when the institute moved to Pasadena in 1965, where McGavran, at age 68, became the founding dean of Fuller's School for World Mission. In the decades following thousands of missionaries studied at this school. Most of them returned to their missionary work after their studies. In this way the School for World Mission had an influence on actual mission work that is unprecedented in the history of missiological institutions.

In 1970 McGavran published *Understanding Church Growth*, which can be considered the Magna Carta of church growth thinking. What follows in this paragraph is a discussion of the main points of this book, taken from the revised 1980 edition.⁶⁵ McGavran remained active in teaching and writing into his 90s. He died in 1990, at 93 years of age.

Theology of Church Growth

In *Understanding Church Growth* McGavran begins to state that God desires the growth of the church. Therefore Christians should tell the gospel. They are sent out to find the lost. "The Master Shepherd is not pleased with a token search; He wants his sheep found" (5). This introduces an important point in the missiology of McGavran. Mission should be interested in the results. Being faithful includes maximizing results. What the results should be is clear for McGavran: conversion and church growth. He mentions conversion to Christ first, which shows that in the final analysis McGavran is christocentric. The growth of the church is the result of conversion of people to Christ. Wholesome growth also means faithful obedience to God in developing churches "so solid in their human matrix that they can grow, but also so separated and holy that they remain pleasing to God" (6).

Counting responsible members of the church is making conversion operationable. McGavran is interested in the growth of the church because he believes that belief in Jesus Christ is necessary for salvation, and because belief in Jesus Christ goes hand in hand with responsible membership of a church.

A second important point in McGavran's theology is the term 'harvest theology'. For God searching is not enough. Mission is about finding. This flows from the nature of God, because God has a passion to find man. McGavran presents four

⁶² Thom S. Rainer, *The book of Church Growth: history, theology, and principles*, Nashville, 1993, p. 31.

⁶³ Elmer Towns, "Effective evangelism view: Church Growth effectively confronts and penetrates culture", in: *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: 5 views*, 2004, p. 36.

⁶⁴ Donald A. McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, New York, 1955.

⁶⁵ Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, fully revised edition, Grand Rapids, 1980.

kinds of biblical evidence to support this. The final and most convincing argument for 'harvest theology' is to base it on "the revelation of God culminating in Christ" (35). McGavran writes:

The cross is the measure of God's desire for the eternal salvation of myriads yet uncounted by man, whose very hairs are numbered and known to a loving God; and of the priority of salvation over the comforts or even the necessities of temporal life. To God, as He has thus revealed Himself, proclamation is not the main thing. The main thing is the salvation of persons. This is so obvious, it is almost embarrassing to state. Is it conceivable that God our Savior is more interested in the form than in the actual saved men and women? Is He more pleased by 'grateful witness to the fact of Christ'- or by lost sons and daughters welcomed to the Father's house? The proclamation of the Gospel is a means. It must not be confused with the end, which is that men- multitudes of them- be reconciled with God in Christ (36).

Social work in mission

According to McGavran, social work can have a role in mission. It is a real and an important role, but it should not become paramount. McGavran squarely places social work on a secondary and auxiliary level, when he states:

In the proportioning of service and church planting, the degree of growth being achieved must always be taken into account. God's servants carry on mission in a fast-moving world and must constantly adjust the proportions of service and evangelism, as the Church grows from a few scattered cells to Churches forming substantial majorities of the population, so that *maximum finding occurs*" (25) [italics in original].

Research

After laying the groundwork of Church Growth thinking by stating that church growth is God's will, and by presenting some facts about the growth of the church, or lack thereof, in various situations, McGavran goes on to highlight the role of research. "Research should look for *reproducible patterns of growth*, possible to ordinary congregations, ordinary pastors, and ordinary missionaries" (119) [italics in original]. In the same breath, McGavran states that "research should be *concentrated on growing churches and growing denominations to find out why they are growing*" (118) [italics in original].

Strategies for church growth

A significant part of *Understanding Church Growth* is devoted to describing those strategies that are the most promising to achieve church growth. McGavran reviews six main strategies.

First, he advocates church planting in all population segments. McGavran maintains that the social structure of a society has great influence on the growth of the church. National identity, ethnicity and language, marriage and sex customs, power and land distribution all are important factors that can help or hinder the growth of the church (207-220). Especially where there is a crisis in society, there is potential for church growth. He continues to say that churches normally grow within one social homogeneous unit, and that it is hard for them to attract people from outside that

unit and to extend beyond it. So to reach all people the existence of a national church is not enough. There needs to be a church in every homogeneous unit.

Second, McGavran advocates focussing on the receptive. He shows that there are huge differences in receptivity between countries, ages, and population segments. Factors that often positively affect receptivity are identified as migration and personal freedom. Important factors that, depending on the circumstances, can work either positively or negatively are war, nationalism, and acculturation. McGavran states that receptivity is not a stable situation, but can change quickly (175-178). When the harvest is ripe the labourers cannot afford to wait. People movements to Christ can be squashed because of unwise church or mission policy. The window of opportunity may be lost forever.

Third, McGavran supports a special emphasis on reaching the masses. He distinguishes between the classes and the masses rather than between higher, middle, and lower class to drive home the point that in the largest part of the world the 'middle class' is quite high up the social ladder, and that a large majority of the population is lower class. McGavran notices that missionary organizations favour the classes, mainly because of the middle class background of most missionaries (281-282). He maintains it is a bias they cannot have learned from God or from the Bible. He goes on to show that on the whole the masses are much more responsive to the gospel than the classes.

Fourth, McGavran proposes to use missionary methods that are reproducible. He identifies three common approaches that are irreproducible (310). These are the mission station approach, where there are missionaries, a school, a hospital, a church, and an agricultural center; having ordained ministers who are paid, directly or indirectly, by mission funds; and payment of church buildings by the mission. One reproducible pattern he suggests is the use of house churches. The cost of a church building is not a problem; each new house church exposes a new segment of society to the Gospel; and it is easier to find leaders for the church (217).

McGavran adds an entire chapter on 'indigenous church principles'. These principles are based on the work of John Nevius (1888) and Roland Allen (1912, 1962) and ultimately go back to the work of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson in the 19th century. The Nevius-approach has often been summarized as the three-self principle: self-governing, self-financing, and self-propagating. Nevius himself describes six principles: believers stay in their own professions; unpaid lay leaders shepherd the churches; churches meet in homes or simple structures; missionaries and paid evangelists oversee several churches, give extensive training; churches plant daughter churches.

McGavran has much sympathy for these indigenous principles because "it multiplied sound, self-propagating churches" (377). He sees great potential for people movements (see below) and indigenous church principles to reinforce each other. But he does not support indigenous principles without qualification. Where indigenous principles do not result in growing, multiplying churches, McGavran is not against limited mission subsidy for pastors and evangelists. His main question, as always, remains: does it work? In this pragmatic framework, indigenous principles are often helpful, but they are not normative.

Fifth, McGavran wants to foster people movements. This is another important concept in church growth theory. McGavran gives the following definition:

A people movement results from the joint decision of a number of individuals-whether five of five hundred- all from the same people, which enables them to become Christians without social dislocation, while remaining in full contact with their non-Christian relatives, thus enabling other groups of that people, across the years, after suitable instruction, to come to similar decisions and form Christian churches made up exclusively of members of that people (335).

McGavran insists that people movements should be understood as “multi-individual, mutually interdependent conversion” (335), and maintains that they are essential for the future growth of the church. They should be sought over and against the one-by-one conversions so often typical in Protestant mission work. They are important quantitatively, because “it is inconceivable that any other pattern will bring the nations to faith and obedience” (336). He states that Europe’s peoples became Christian through a series of people movements. They are also important from a qualitative point of view. When whole communities become Christian there is no social dislocation. There is an intact structure, including leaders; discipline can be maintained in an indigenous way; communal decisions about giving up community sins can be made.

Sixth, McGavran emphasizes the importance of working within social networks. One of the final church growth concepts discussed in *Understanding Church Growth* is the same as the title of one of the author’s earlier works: *The Bridges of God*. These bridges of God are family networks (they can also include close friends) that play a vital role in the growth of the church. McGavran mentions the importance of recognizing possible ‘bridges of God’ both within the community and to other communities untouched by the gospel as one of the important principles in strategizing for the growth of the church (395-411).

Criticism

McGavran’s formulation of church growth theory attracted a lot of criticism. In the early years of the Church Growth movement McGavran often worked with WCC member churches, but over the years they grew apart. The liberal side of the debate rejected the emphasis on church growth out of hand.⁶⁶ Some people who shared McGavran’s passion for evangelism also questioned what they saw as his single-minded emphasis on growth.

Leslie Newbigin, an evangelical missiologist who was involved in many WCC meetings, mentioned three main points of concern.⁶⁷ First, in the Bible numerical growth is never mentioned as an explicit goal and as driven by a strategy, but is portrayed as the result of faithful proclamation of the Gospel. Second, he is concerned about the distinction McGavran makes between ‘discipling’ and ‘perfecting’, and argues that ethical questions about how to live a Christian life are part and parcel of conversion as well, and therefore ‘discipling’ and ‘perfecting’, and also proclamation and social service, cannot be separated. Third, he accused McGavran of having a too positive view of culture, which results in accommodation to the un-Christian elements in various cultures. This is related to McGavran’s emphasis on church planting among ‘homogeneous units’. Many theologians disagreed vehemently with

⁶⁶ E.g. Robert K. Hudnut, *Church Growth Is Not the Point!*, New York, 1975.

⁶⁷ Leslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology*, Grand Rapids, 1978, pp. 135-180.

McGavran over this approach. They had the conviction that it denied the spiritual and practical unity of the Church across ethnic borders.⁶⁸

Even among missiologists who sympathized with McGavran, concern arose over the shallow theological underpinnings of church growth theory. Charles Van Engen, who would become Professor of Biblical Theology of Mission at the School of World Mission that McGavran founded (nowadays known as the School of Intercultural Studies), wrote his doctoral thesis about the ecclesiology of the Church Growth movement.⁶⁹ He showed that in Church Growth theory numerical growth often functions as a mark of the true Church.⁷⁰ He goes on to suggest that it is not growth itself, but 'yearning for numerical growth' that should function as a mark of the true Church.⁷¹

The most important criticism leveled against Church Growth theory is that its pragmatism cannot be reconciled with dependence on God. According to René Padilla, an Argentinian missiologist, the approach advocated by the Church Growth movement changes the gospel into a product.⁷² While Padilla represented the left flank of the evangelical movement, in more recent years this kind of criticism has become more mainstream in evangelical missiological circles.⁷³ Samuel Escobar's description of 'managerial missiology, in particular,'⁷⁴ struck a nerve, though he took care to distinguish between McGavran's intentions and extreme forms of managerial missiology that developed later.

From a social sciences perspective it can be said that the Church Growth emphasis on studying growing churches is methodologically unsound. When only growing churches are studied, they cannot be compared to other churches, and the supposed reasons for growth cannot be more than hypotheses. Another methodological flaw that, as far as the present author is aware, has not been noticed before, is McGavran's emphasis on reaching the receptive. Following this advice will, because of social and mathematical factors, sometimes result in a smaller, and not a greater, number of Christians (see Appendix 9 for a technical discussion).

3.3.4. The Church Growth movement in the USA

The major concern of McGavran was to see the gospel take root among the non-Christian billions of the world, especially among those out of the realm of existing churches. When the Church Growth movement became popular among evangelical missionaries American pastors started to take note. It did not take long before others joined McGavran in trying to apply the lessons from all over the world to the American church scene. A key date was 1973, which saw the foundation of the Institute for American Church Growth (now Church Growth, Inc., based in Monrovia,

⁶⁸ See e.g. Victor Hayward and Donald McGavran, *Missiology*, 2:2, (1974), pp. 203-224.

⁶⁹ Van Engen, Charles, *The Growth of the True Church: An Analysis of the Ecclesiology of Church Growth Theory*, Amsterdam, 1981.

⁷⁰ Id., pp. 359-402.

⁷¹ Id., pp. 448-453 and 486-507.

⁷² Padilla, C. René, *Mission between the times: Essays*, Grand Rapids, 1985, p. 16.

⁷³ See e.g. William D. Taylor, *Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue*, Grand Rapids, 2000; James F. Engel and William A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong?*, Downers Grove, 2000; and Craig van Gelder, Gailyn van Rheenen, and Howard Snyder in *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: 5 views*, Grand Rapids, 2004.

⁷⁴ Samuel Escobar, "Evangelical Missiology: Peering into the Future", in: William D. Taylor, *Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue*, Grand Rapids, 2000, pp. 109-112.

California) by Win Arn. McGavran served as chairman of the board. Gradually the Church Growth movement took on a more American and less missionary face.

This shifting perspective resulted in an extremely significant change of the main question Church Growth was trying to answer. In the missionary stage the main question was: how can we help the church grow? The church was seen as a whole, and multiplication of churches to reach the entire population of a country was a major emphasis. In the American stage the main question became: how can I help my church grow? The church had now become the local congregation.

While this new emphasis led to some helpful new insights the overall result was that North American Church Growth thinking became less relevant for the mission of the church worldwide. Another consequence of the shift was that principles of growth became less important, and that growing megachurches were held up as a model instead. Again this diminished the significance of the Church Growth movement for the church universal. The most important consequence was that the emphasis in church growth studies shifted from conversion growth to transfer growth. Church Growth studies with subjects from the developing world mainly described situations where Christian churches were competing with other religions. In the USA churches are mainly competing with each other for the favour of people who are already Christian. Church growth is seen as a goal, and rarely a distinction is made between biological, transfer, and conversion growth.

Still in some areas principles were formulated that were helpful in building on the earlier foundation of theories on the growth of churches. These include the importance of the following four items: leadership, lay participation, small groups, and signs and wonders.

In the area of leadership the pastor was shown to be a key person for the potential growth of a church. Peter Wagner was the first church growth theorist to emphasize the important role of the pastor.⁷⁵ Later a whole industry around Christian leadership came into being, with George Barna⁷⁶ and John Maxwell⁷⁷ as influential authors on the subject.

The flipside of the emphasis on the leadership role of the pastor was an emphasis on the participation of all members. The new style of leadership is empowering and equipping the members for ministry. Accompanying this was a new teaching on spiritual gifts that stressed all church members have spiritual gifts that they can use for the well-being and the growth of their church.⁷⁸

Small groups have played a part in missionary strategy for a long time (e.g. the *ecclesiola in ecclesia* of the Herrnhutters, and the house groups that John Wesley formed). The modern interest in this, though very strong in American Church Growth studies, was mainly triggered by the growth of the Full Gospel Church of Paul Yonggi Cho in Seoul. He used small groups as the cornerstone for his church strategy, and the church grew to be the largest in the world. In almost all church growth strategies nowadays there is an important role for small groups. There are four main approaches. First, in house churches the small group is the church. Sec-

⁷⁵ E.g. C. Peter Wagner, *Leading your church to growth*, Ventura, 1984.

⁷⁶ E.g. George Barna, *Leaders on Leadership: Wisdom, Advice, and Encouragement on the Art of Leading*, Ventura, 1997; and *The Power of Vision*, Ventura, 2003.

⁷⁷ E.g. John R. Maxwell, *Developing the Leader Within You*, Nashville, 1993; John R. Maxwell and Zig Ziglar, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, Nashville, 1998.

⁷⁸ E.g. C. Peter Wagner, *Your spiritual gifts can help your church grow*, Glendale, 1979.

ond, in cell churches the main group is the small group, but the groups come together for teaching and celebration. Third, there are churches that try to incorporate all their members in small groups. And fourth, there are churches that offer small groups as one of several ways to be active in church.

Many students of church growth became impressed by the rapid growth of charismatic churches. Wagner's theological outlook shifted dramatically over the years from anti-charismatic to extremely charismatic. Very influential in furthering the 'signs and wonders' emphasis in the Church Growth movement was John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard churches. Though this emphasis is controversial and, in many of its forms theological problematical, it is important to mention it here. Firstly it is the perspective of a significant part of the church that is growing globally. Secondly it is a reminder that real church growth is not produced by people.

3.3.5. Christian Schwarz and the Institute for Natural Church Development

An important European off-shoot of the Church Growth movement is Christian Schwarz's Institute for Natural Church Development, based in Emmelsbuell, Germany. In his main book Schwarz claims there is an important difference between his approach and classical Church Growth.⁷⁹ He is quite critical about the pragmatism of Church Growth, and focuses on church health instead. Church health in its turn will help the church grow. In the final analysis, though Schwarz's different use of language may indeed help to avoid the dangers of pragmatism, the difference is not very significant. The European proclivity for principles as compared to the American preference of models seems to be the main difference between Schwarz's approach and the American Church Growth he does not want to be part of.

The academic significance of Schwarz's work lies somewhere else. Underlying his book is "the most comprehensive research project of the causes of church growth ever undertaken".⁸⁰ 1000 churches in 32 countries on 5 continents using 18 languages were involved. It is to be deplored that his findings are only presented in his book piecemeal, so that other scholars cannot duplicate or check his work, or even get the complete picture from the total data. Schwarz does not explain how he got his sample. Neither does he say anything about differences between countries and cultures. Because of the lack of clarity of the research process and of the very partial availability of underlying data, Schwarz's conclusions need to be checked in other situations.

Schwarz states that eight different areas are important to have a healthy, and therefore growing, church. These areas are spirituality, relationships in the church, ministry by church members, leadership, structure, worship services, small groups, and evangelism. He states that churches that are above average in all of these areas without exception are growing churches.

Some tentative but important conclusions come to the fore that are highly significant for those interested in church growth. These conclusions include that theological education of the pastor (23), traditionalism (29), and liberalism (46) are all strongly negatively correlated with church growth. On the other hand there is a strong positive correlation between laughter in the church and growth (37). By far the most important outcome of his research is that there is an extremely strong nega-

⁷⁹ Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural church development: a Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*, Carol Stream, 1996

⁸⁰ Schwarz, p. 18.

tive correlation between size of the church and church growth as a percentage of the membership (47-48). This point deserves some more explanation. Schwarz's findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Relationship between church size and church growth

Church size	1-100	100-200	200-300	300-400	1000+
Average membership	51	136	226	330	2856
Growth in 5 years	32	32	39	25	112
Growth %	63	23	17	7	4

Source: Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, p. 47.

This clearly shows that the relative growth potential of a church diminishes with its size. Schwarz suggests that the average megachurch, that wins 112 people in 5 years, would statistically have won 1792 people if it had formed 56 churches of 51 members each. This is an extreme outcome. It justifies the old Church Growth emphasis on multiplication of churches over and against the new emphasis on growing existing churches.

3.3.6. David Garrison and church planting movements

One man who, over the years, continued to stress the importance of church multiplication is the American missionary George Patterson. Through his work in rural Honduras about 200 small rural churches were planted. He went on to produce simple handbooks to teach church multiplication principles to barely literate people.⁸¹ While his books are not academic they clearly set forth a highly conceptualized idea of church growth by multiplication.

A similar concept has virtually swept the evangelical mission world since 2000. That is the concept of church planting movements. It traces its line of parentage back to Venn and Anderson with their three-self formula, Nevius' indigenous church principles, Allen's spontaneous expansion of the church, and McGavran's people movements. There are yet some aspects of church planting movements that make it deserve separate treatment.

The term 'church planting movement' (CPM) was coined by David Garrison. He worked at the head office of the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention in Richmond, Virginia. This is the largest denominational mission in the world, with over 5000 missionaries on the field. The IMB has a strong focus on church planting among unreached people groups. In the end of the 1990s the IMB started to notice several remarkable phenomena on their mission fields. The booklet *Church planting movements*, first published in 1999, was the first description. It soon became highly influential, not only among IMB missionaries, but also among other missions and churches all over the world. Within four years the booklet was translated in over twenty languages, a unique accomplishment for what basically was a missiological text. In 2004 David Garrison followed the booklet up with a book-length publication under the same title.⁸² It is this book that is used here for a short review of church planting movements. Garrison gives the

⁸¹ See e.g. George Patterson, and Richard Scoggins, *Church Multiplication Guide: The Miracle of Church Reproduction*, (revised edition), Pasadena, 2001; and www.trainandmultiply.org.

⁸² David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is redeeming a lost world*, Midlothian, 2004.

following definition for a CPM: “A Church Planting Movement is *a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group of population segment*” (21; italics in original). Garrison emphasizes the following about CPMs: They grow fast; they do not just add, but multiply churches; the first church or the first few churches in a CPM may be started by outsiders, but soon insiders take charge; churches are planted by churches; they occur within a people group, but it need not stop there (22-23).

Garrison devotes a large part of his book to the description of actual CPMs. The examples range from thousands of converts over a few decades to hundreds of thousands of converts within three years. Some questions can be asked about whether all the described instances in the book have so many similarities that they can usefully be caught under the same name. The North-American examples do not seem to fit very well with the rest of the book, and seem to have been added to show CPMs are a world-wide phenomenon. The current author knows from personal observation that the Dutch story (140-144) is based on bogus reporting.

In spite of this there still seems to be ample evidence of a real phenomenon attested to by different sources. The more spectacular rapid multiplication seems to take place in people groups where there were almost no churches to start with, e.g. in India and China, rather than in populations that already have a sizeable Christian presence. In his book Garrison describes traits most CPMs have in common. The ones not yet mentioned before, and relevant for this study, are listed here.

The first one is prayer (172). Garrison says that CPMs are birthed in an atmosphere of prayer. He mentions prayer for the missionaries, for the unreached people group, and for the new believers; but also the importance of a prayer life modelled by the missionary and by the new believers.

The second one is the authority of God’s Word (182). In all CPMs the believers have a high view of the Bible.

The third one is that churches are planting churches (193). This is not to be wondered at as it is part of the definition, but it is important to note that, according to CPM-thinking this is a vital sign for successful church planting work. CPM-missionaries follow a Model, Assist, Watch, Leave process, in which they first model evangelism and church planting, and then help the new believers do these things by themselves and teach it to others. In this way church multiplication is possible, and the number of new churches that can be planted is not dependent on the number of professional church planters.

The fourth one is immediate enlistment of new believers (229). New believers are trusted and entrusted with much responsibility from the beginning. “In India, an elderly Bhojpuri man planted 42 churches in his first year as a believer; nobody told him he needed to mature in his faith first!” (229).

The fifth one is on-the-job leadership training (234). New leaders are constantly being trained. New leaders are not sent off to institutions, but rather mentored in the situation where they will serve.

3.4. An interdisciplinary model

The sociological models reviewed in chapter 3.2. give some good pointers to factors that are relevant to understanding the conversion growth of the church. None of them are, however, capable of encompassing all possible factors contributing to that

growth and they are especially weak in the area of institutional factors. Most missiological studies do not have this blind spot, but they go to the other extreme and almost exclusively focus on church factors. Many case studies are also taking into account the conversion process, but are not systematic. Few missiological studies, with the notable exception of the work of Christian Schwarz, offer any model.

An interdisciplinary model is needed⁸³ that can take into account all factors that influence the conversion growth of the church. Such a model is proposed in this paragraph. In this newly developed model six different factors play a role in whether people become Christians and church members. These six factors can be summarized as context, personal background, distance, church, communication, and God.

So far the two key concepts in this study have been 'conversion' and 'church growth'. Two of the proposed factors (personal background and distance) mainly relate to conversion. Only one (church) relates mainly to church growth. The remaining three (context, communication, and God) influence both conversion and church growth. Because they are more easily studied on an individual than on church level, they will be included under the heading 'conversion' rather than 'church growth' in this study. An explanation of each of the factors follows next.

Context

'Context' is the socio-religious context in which the church exists and where the potential new Christian lives. Many issues decide how likely it is that in a given context people become Christians and members of the church. Examples are: Does the potential convert belong to the same social group as people in the church or even to the same ethnic group? What is the percentage of Christians in the society? How 'likely' or 'probable' is the Christian worldview considered to be by the general population? How strongly is the majority religion held by the population? Is the perception of Christians positive or negative? Are Christians persecuted or not? Are there special needs in society that make people open for change? Are special needs in society met by a Christian organization involved in social work?

Personal background

'Personal background' of the potential new Christian encompasses all the points that describe how that person is. Is someone male or female? Young or old? Does he have a high or a low education? Does he like or resist change? Is he rich or poor? All these issues are potentially relevant to the likelihood of conversion and church membership.

Distance

'Distance' is the physical distance between the potential new convert and the church. This factor is often overlooked in studies, but is certainly relevant. If a potential new Christian lives 100 kilometers from the church, it is almost impossible that he will hear about the church and become a member. If he lives 10 kilometers away, in most cases (urbanites with cars excepted) he will need a high level of interest to regularly come to the church. If he lives 1 kilometer away, he has a good chance of knowing about the church and knowing some of its members. If he lives 100 meters away, he is bound to meet many of the church members and see the life

⁸³ On interdisciplinarity, see Thompson Klein, Julie, *Crossing Boundaries: Knowledge, Disciplinarity, and Interdisciplinarity (Knowledge, Disciplinarity and Beyond)*, Detroit, 1990.

of the church. So it is clear that physical distance can be an important determining factor of the likelihood of conversion. Distance could, strictly speaking, be seen as belonging to the context factor. It is deemed helpful, however, to distinguish the two. The items listed under 'context' are mainly relevant to potential converts because they influence the perception of Christianity and therefore the desire to become a Christian. Distance is relevant because it influences opportunity to become a Christian and even more strongly the opportunity to become member of a church.

Church

'Church' encompasses the different aspects of the church of which the potential convert may become a member. Most of the suggestions from Church Growth studies are in this area. What is the theology of the church? What is the evangelistic strategy of the church? Is the church large or small? Is the church old or new? What is the ethnicity of the church? Does it have a gifted pastor? Is it intentional in planting new churches or not? Does the church use house groups? Is prayer an important part of church life? Issues like these are potentially important in determining whether or not someone is likely to become a member in the church.

Communication

'Communication' refers to the communication taking place between the potential convert and the church. Do the church and the potential new Christian speak the same language? Do they use language in the same way? What kind of communication channels are used to preach the Gospel? Is the gospel message contextualized so that it is understandable? Are the forms the church uses in evangelism and in worship good vessels for communication? Is the non-verbal communication of the church welcoming? Is bonding taking place? How often is the potential convert in contact with the church? Do most of the church members belong to the same social group as the potential convert? Questions like these concerning the communication process taking place between church and potential converts could well be predictive about the growth of the church.

God

'God' means God's direct intervention, in the perspective of the potential convert, to convince him of the truth of the Christian message. For every new Christian his conversion is something that happened between himself, the Christian community, and God. Any model of conversion therefore should include all three actors, even though in social sciences God and God's acts cannot be the object of research, but rather people's perception of them. To exclude God from the equation to start with would be unacceptably reductionistic. It is important to include questions like the following in the research process: Did God do a miracle to attract your attention or convince you of the truth? Did you have a dream that prepared you for hearing the Gospel? Did God directly work in your heart so you had a strong realization of the existence and / or the love of God?

Note that the importance of realizing this is from the perspective of the convert. That qualification is not meant as a cynical way of saying converts can claim those experiences but they do not have a basis in reality. It is entirely possible that the claims are true. But social sciences have a very limited capacity to verify claims of that nature, so it is better in scientific studies to talk about the perception of a miracle than about the miraculous itself. This does not preclude that social sciences can

study what causes people to perceive something as miraculous. In that way science comes closer to the event itself. Chance, self-deception, fraud, and a real miracle are possible explanations of events perceived as miraculous. However this is a totally different kind of research that is not part of this study.

Another remark needs to be made here to prevent misunderstanding the place of God's work in this model of conversion. To a Christian the miraculous is just one aspect of God's work in conversion. God works through all the various factors listed above to prepare some people for the gospel. This sixth and last factor focuses on a special and direct work of God that is not included in the other factors, but God's work is emphatically not limited to this factor.

3.5. Final observations

This chapter provided the background of general theories about conversion and church growth. It was shown that in sociology of religion theories that take the rationality of religion seriously, are gaining popularity in recent decades. In studies of conversion the volitional aspects are receiving more attention, and parallel with that, social aspects of the conversion process are emphasized more than psychological ones. Rambo and, in the field of missionary anthropology, Tippett, were mentioned as examples of scholars who developed models of conversion in which both aspects get their due.

Sociological studies on church growth were reviewed, with special emphasis on the discussion started by Kelley whether strictness makes churches strong. Early studies in reaction to Kelley's book emphasized contextual factors, but later ones confirmed the importance institutional factors have on church growth. The necessity of using the right statistical procedures was emphasized.

After the review of sociological and anthropological studies, attention was given to missiological studies in the field of conversion and church growth. It was shown that it has been a matter of interest to missionaries and missiologists from very early on in the Protestant missionary movement. During the 20th century that interest waned in ecumenical circles. Donald McGavran was instrumental in both bringing back that focus into the missionary and missiological community, and in suggesting a research program to further develop it. The work of McGavran gives some pointers towards what kind of people are likely to become Christians. He mentions the importance of realizing there are various population segments; the probable receptivity of the masses; the importance of family networks in the spread of the gospel; and the possibility of people movements.

Besides the question as to what kind of people are likely to become Christians, another question relevant to Church Growth theory is what kind of churches are likely to grow and / or multiply. McGavran's work, and publications by later authors like Peter Wagner, Christian Schwarz, and David Garrison, list intra-church factors contributing to church growth. These factors include prayer, authority of the Bible, leadership, on-the-job leadership training, lay participation, immediate enlistment of new believers, small groups, reproducible methods, signs and wonders, theological education of the pastor, traditionalism, and size of the church.

The studies reviewed in this chapter offer a wealth of theory and information about how people convert and how churches grow. As much as possible this will be used to build hypotheses about conversion and church growth in Thailand later in

this study. These hypotheses can be classified according to a new model that was proposed in this chapter. This model has the capacity to take into account all factors that are relevant to conversion and church growth.

Finally it should be noted here that the way in which the terms 'conversion' and 'church growth' are used here, implies that they are two different ways of looking at the same phenomenon. The theological and psychological aspects of conversion are not the main emphasis of this study. Conversion is here mainly described as the act of becoming a member of a Christian church. This directly results in church growth. This study specifically focuses on conversion growth and does not take into account transfer growth that grows one church while at the same time diminishes another. Therefore there is a one on one relationship between conversion and the church growth researched in this study. They are two sides of one medal. Conversion looks at factors on a personal level, while church growth looks at factors on a community level.

CHAPTER 4: PROTESTANTISM IN THAILAND

4.1. Introduction

Before applying the insights from sociology of religion, anthropology, and missiology to Protestantism in Thailand, an overview of it is needed. This chapter is devoted to that. As the main focus of this study is not historical, the historical paragraph (4.2.) is rather short. The next paragraph reviews what has been written about Thai Protestantism in the social sciences (4.3.). Chapter 4.4. is devoted to giving a reliable count of the number of Protestants in Thailand. This paragraph presents some of the results of the research project of the present author.

The main question of this study limits itself to ethnic Thai. Since not all Protestants in Thailand are ethnic Thai, a separate paragraph is devoted to their ethnic and regional distribution (4.5.). Within Thai Protestantism many different denominations can be distinguished. Most of them track their origin to missionary organizations that each started their own denomination. Others are independent and have Thai founders. Because the differences between denominations are, potentially, an important factor in understanding the differences in growth rates between churches, one paragraph describes the main ethnic Thai denominations (4.6.). A paragraph placing the growth of Protestant churches in historical perspective (4.7.), both in comparison with earlier growth and in comparison with the general population, is followed by final observations (4.8.).

4.2. History of the Thai Protestant church

The first Christian presence in Thailand was probably in the 7th century, on the peninsula that is now southern Thailand. This was at a time when the Thai people did not yet exist. The first proven contact of the Thai people with Christianity was in 1553 when Roman Catholic priests entered the country. The Roman Catholic presence became permanent only after 1655. In 1770 the Roman Catholic Church had only a little over a thousand members, all of them with a foreign background.¹

The first Protestant missionary to work among the Thai was Ann Hesseltine Judson, who evangelized Siamese war captives in Burma from 1813 till 1826. The first Western Protestant missionaries entered Thailand in 1828. One year later the first Karen missionary from Burma came to Thailand to work among the Karen.

The pioneers of this period focused their efforts on the Chinese population. In 1833 the first baptisms took place. Soon after that, Maitrichit church, the first Prot-

¹ The information in this paragraph is mainly based on George Bradley McFarland, *Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam 1828-1928*, Bangkok, 1999 [1928]; Kenneth E. Wells, *Protestant Work in Thailand: 1828-1958*, Bangkok, 1958; Alex Smith, *Siamese Gold: The Church in Thailand*, Bangkok, 1982; Nantachai Mejudhon, (ed.), *175 pii: phanthakitkhristsaatsanaaprotestaen-najprathetthaj (1828-2003), (175 years: The Ministry of Protestantism in Thailand)*, Bangkok, 2003; and Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia: Volume II, 1500-1900*, Maryknoll, 2005. The information about the period since 1978 is based on research by the present author.

estant church in Thailand and the first Protestant Chinese church in the world, was instituted. In 1840 the Presbyterian Mission entered Thailand. For over a century it would remain the main missionary organization. Both Baptists and Presbyterians succeeded in planting churches that grew very slowly. A diplomat noted that in 1855 there were probably fewer than 10 Protestant Christians in the country. Not until 1860 was the first ethnic Thai woman baptized.

An important development was the start of mission work in northern Thailand by Daniel McGilvary, an American Presbyterian missionary. The first baptism there took place in 1867. After a slow beginning, church growth in the North took off in the 1880s. By 1914 there were almost 7,000 communicants in North Thailand, while the Presbyterian churches in the Bangkok region still had not reached a thousand adult believers. After 1914, though, church growth leveled off to a trickle, even slower than population growth. According to Smith lack of shepherding was the most important cause of the arrested growth.² A large emphasis on schools and hospitals was detrimental to the core work of the church. Preoccupation with organizing the existing church also played a role in the diminishing energy spent on evangelizing and church planting. In 1934 the Church of Christ in Siam (later Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT)), a conglomerate of churches planted by various denominational missions, became independent of direct mission control.

Meanwhile other missions had come in. Among these were the British Churches of Christ, who saw some fruit among Chinese in Nakhon Pathom, the Seventh Day Adventists (SDA), and the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA), which focused on Isaan (Northeast Thailand). There was also limited Baptist church growth among the Karen and Mon.

During World War II the Thai churches started to experience official persecution. Missionary activity had to cease, many churches were confiscated or closed, and pressure was applied to revert to Buddhism. As a result, up to 40% of Protestant Christians did not stand firm in their faith during the war years, including the moderator of the CCT. Most, however, came back and were restored to the church after the war.

In the 1950s, after all missions were expelled from China, many new missions came to work in Thailand, and most of them chose to work outside the CCT. This led to the interesting phenomenon that the CCT, by far the largest church, had relatively few missionaries, and that the large majority of missionaries had very few Thai Christians to work with, though most of the early leaders in the other denominations had their roots in CCT churches.

Among the new missions the number of pentecostals and charismatics was significant. The Pentecostal Churches of Norway (later joined by other Scandinavian Pentecostals), the Finish Foreign Mission, the Assemblies of God, and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada all started new denominations. Other evangelical missions entering during this period were the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), World Evangelization Crusade (WEC), and Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF). Other missions, like New Tribes Mission (NTM) and the American Churches of Christ Mission (ACCM), focused on the tribal population. All of them ended up founding new denominations. In 1970 the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand was founded, and during the 1970s limited cooperation between all these missions and denominations developed.

² Smith, p. 157.

Alex Smith's extensive research counted a total number of 58,953 adult members in Protestant churches in 1978. Half of them were members of the CCT. Over 8,000 others were members of the Karen Baptist Convention (KBC) and the Lahu Baptist Convention (LBC). Five Pentecostal denominations combined accounted for 6,700 members. Almost 4,000 were in SDA churches, and the other 10,000 were in other Protestant denominations, most of them conservative evangelical. In 1978 independent Thai churches with no link to any mission organization had less than 1,000 members. Several authors noted that outside North-Thailand ethnic Chinese were still disproportionately represented among Thai Protestants.³

After 1978 many more missionary organizations entered Thailand. As before, most of the ones that focused on church planting founded their own denominations. The numbers of missionaries did not change much. The most significant change was that the number of Korean missionaries grew to over 200. In the beginning there was a lot of enthusiasm to learn from the Koreans, because they came from an Asian context with rapid church growth. Most of them, however, struggled even more than Western missionaries to adapt to the situation in Thailand.

The Thai church continued to grow. The ethnic Thai church spread to all 76 provinces and to a majority of the almost 1000 districts, but remained a tiny minority in all of them. The tribal church grew much faster. In many cases whole villages became Christian. More and more leadership positions were taken up by Thai nationals. This happened not just in the CCT, but also in the younger denominations and in para-church organizations. The increasing confidence of Thai Christians and the diminishing role of missionaries can also be observed from the birth of many independent local churches and independent denominations.

Most independent churches are members of the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand (EFT). In 2004 the EFT decided that only denominations could be members. This led to new denominations being formed by groups of independent churches. Other independent churches became members of existing denominations. Most former independent churches agreed to this because a link to the EFT (or another recognized Christian umbrella) is needed for the highly valued government recognition of the church. This recent move towards denominationalism is purely caused by outside forces; no theological convictions or organizational needs are behind it so it remains to be seen how important these denominations in reality are going to be.

The most striking example of an independent denomination is the Hope Churches. Founded in the beginning of the 1980s, the Hope Churches spread out over the whole country within twenty years. To other denominations they are both a source of frustration because of the problems they caused, and a source of fascination because of their, at least in Thai history, unprecedented growth (see 4.4.6.).

Since 2001 a movement to jointly evangelize Thailand has taken root in the Thai churches. National leaders came up with a plan they called 'Vision 2010'. The main goals are to have a church in every district, a group of Christians in every sub-district, and the Gospel preached in every village. This was not the first national plan, but it was the first time that the grassroots took some ownership. More and more local churches in various denominations made plans to plant daughter churches. Some of the large national training seminars connected to 'Vision 2010'

³ E.g. Carl E. Blanford, *Chinese Churches in Thailand*, Bangkok, 1972, and Caleb Project, *Reaching the Peoples of Bangkok*, Pasadena, 1988.

only featured Thai speakers. This was a first in Thai church history, and another testimony to the growing maturity of the Thai church.

4.3. Thai Protestantism in the social sciences

Because Protestantism forms only a tiny minority of the population in Thailand, relatively little study has been made of it by social scientists. Most of the research in this area focuses on Protestantism among the ethnic minorities. Cornelia Kammerer wrote about conversion among the Akha.⁴ The complexity of the Akha traditional system, of which religion is one aspect, first prevented conversion to Christianity. But economic stress and closer contact with Thai society made the traditional system hard to maintain. Christianity was adopted by many Akha as a cheaper alternative. Though Kammerer claims that conversions of conviction are relatively rare, at the same time she maintains that Christianity replaced the traditional system among converts, and that relatively little syncretism is to be found.

Ronald Platz studied conversion to Christianity among the Karen.⁵ Most Karen in Thailand are classified as Buddhists. Platz writes that the change from the traditional religion to Buddhism is a relatively minor one. It means only forsaking the main ancestor worship ritual, that is already in decline because of the complexities and taboos connected with it. It is not rare for Karen to first convert to Buddhism, and later convert to Protestant Christianity. Protestantism is more affirming of a separate Karen identity than Buddhism, because Karen is used as the religious language, while in Buddhist ceremonies Thai or Pali is used. In Karen villages it is not uncommon for traditional religionists, Buddhists, Roman Catholics and Protestants to live together. However, the author does not know of examples of different religions within one family.⁶

Other authors published works about conversion to Christianity among other ethnic minorities in Thailand.⁷ Though the existence of movements towards Christianity among many of the tribal minorities in Thailand is well established, it should be realized that in spite of these movements over the last few decades, Christians still form a relatively small minority even among tribal people (see paragraph 4.5.1.). This attests to the fact that also among ethnic minorities, where push factors are helping Christian churches to grow, conversion to Christianity in the first place

⁴ Cornelia Kammerer, "Customs and Christian Conversion among Akha Highlanders of Burma and Thailand", in: *American Ethnologist*, 17:2 (1990), pp. 320-333; "Discarding the Basket: The Reinterpretation of Tradition by Akha Christians of Northern Thailand", in: *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 27:2 (1996), pp. 320-333.

⁵ Ronald Platz, "Buddhism and Christianity in competition? Religious and Ethnic Identity in Karen Communities of Northern Thailand", in: *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 34:3 (2003), pp. 473-490.

⁶ Platz, p. 481.

⁷ E.g. Peter Kunstadter, "Animism, Buddhism, and Christianity: Religion in the Life of Lua People of Pa Pae, North-Western Thailand", in: *Highlanders of Thailand*, John McKinnon and Wanat Bhruksasri, (eds.), Kuala Lumpur, 1983, pp. 135-154; Nicholas Tapp, "The Impact of Missionary Christianity upon Marginalized Ethnic Minorities: The Case of the Hmong", in: *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 20:1 (1989), pp. 70-95.

should be understood as a series of individual or household decisions. The context influences the likelihood of conversion, but does not determine conversion.

Most attention in social scientific literature has been given to conversion among tribal minorities. Yet the ethnic Thai have not been totally disregarded. In 1993 Charles Keyes gave attention to Protestants among the ethnic Thai, or more accurately, the lack of Protestants.⁸ He mainly addressed the question as to why the Thai are not becoming Christians. Even in his article he focuses more on conversion among tribal people (and he overestimates the number of Christians among them⁹). When he reviews the situation among the ethnic Thai, Keyes argues that the failure of Christianity to attract many people can be attributed to the earlier arrival of Buddhism, which offered, partly in explicit response to Christian missionary work, a rationalized worldview on par with Christianity. A second, and even more important, reason he gives is that Christianity “at least until quite recently... has never been able to shed its mantle of ‘foreignness’.”¹⁰

Unpublished research looked into the role of media in conversion. About 30% of the respondents did not mention any media in their conversion story. Of the ones who did, about half said the media played a direct role, and about half said the media did not play a direct role in conversion. Printed media were mentioned far more often than other media. This is in line with findings from an earlier area in a limited geographical area.¹¹

In almost all cases where printed media were directly influential, respondents had at the same time a long-term personal contact with Christians. This may be the most important pointer towards the explanation of the success of printed media. They are easily used in the social networks that are the primary vehicle for conversion. However, even among the cases where media were not mentioned as directly influential in conversion but merely as the first contact point with Christianity, printed media were mentioned far more often than other media.

The most important contribution from the social sciences to the study of ethnic Thai Protestantism comes from anthropologist Edwin Zehner. Zehner spent four years at Hope of Bangkok, the largest church of Thailand, and regularly visited after that time. His work resulted in a dissertation and a few articles.¹² From the observation of the present author his findings on the conversion process and the relationship between the Buddhist past and the Christian present of his respondents are representative of Thai Protestantism as a whole, even though his fieldwork was done in a neo-pentecostal church. Slightly more problematic is the bias towards young and well-educated respondents. This is a feature of the church Zehner did his fieldwork in, and is exacerbated by the fact that he interviewed Bible school students. So while his results are interesting and ring true to people who know Thai Christianity, it is

⁸ Charles F. Keyes, “Why the Thai are not Christians: Buddhist and Christian Conversion in Thailand”, in: Robert W. Hefner, *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, Berkeley, 1993.

⁹ Keyes, p. 272; cf. paragraph 4.5.1.

¹⁰ Keyes, p. 277.

¹¹ Alex G. Smith, *Strategy to Multiply Rural Churches*, Bangkok, 1977, p. 186.

¹² Edwin Zehner, “Thai Protestants and Local Supernaturalism: Changing Configurations”, in: *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 27:2 (1996), pp. 293-319; *Unavoidably Hybrid: Thai Buddhist Conversions to Evangelical Christianity*, (unpublished dissertation, Cornell University), 2003; and “Orthodox Hybridities: Anti-Syncretism and Localization in the Evangelical Christianity of Thailand”, in: *Anthropological Quarterly*, 78:3 (2005), pp. 585-617.

not improbable that respondents with different age and educational backgrounds would emphasize other concerns and experiences.

In his dissertation *Unavoidably Hybrid: Thai Buddhist Conversions to Evangelical Christianity* Zehner describes evangelical Christianity as a globalizing force that tries to transmit supralocal truth content, while at the same time it has an ideal of localization in its concern that local churches would be self-governing and self-propagating. Zehner argues that forces of modernization in Thai society lead to the need to shape new identities. He suggests that this is especially important to younger people, and that the perceived link between modern achievements and Christian countries makes Christianity a more viable option (pp. 67-70). In an article he takes a slightly different track, by suggesting that social dislocation, cultural crisis, and growing religious pluralism within Buddhism opened the door to faster growth of Christianity.¹³

Zehner also calls attention to the important role that is assigned to conversion prayers in Thai Protestantism as boundary markers between the Christian and non-Christian community, taking the place of what historically in Christianity was ascribed to baptism (pp. 78-83).

Zehner claims that the actual conversion stories do not fit the model of punctiliar conversion that evangelicals theoretically adhere to. Based on interviews, he distinguishes between various types of conversions (pp. 84-93). He describes:

1. Gradual conversions: people cannot say when they became Christians
2. Experimental conversions: answered prayer plays a decisive role
3. Drifting conversions: people who were committed church members in the past, drifted away, and come back
4. Emotional conversions: overwhelming feelings are interpreted as being touched by God
5. Social conversions: people followed respected family members or friends
6. Conversions following observation of Christians: people were impressed by the life of Christians, or how they changed after conversion, or appreciated how they were treated by Christians
7. Combination type conversions: two or more of the above factors play a role.

The rest of Zehner's dissertation and his newer article are mainly devoted to an exploration of the two main conversion themes that came out of his interviews. These themes are love and power. As Zehner notes, these themes "may lie at the core of transnational Christian identity",¹⁴ yet find a local expression that make them distinctly Thai. This is true to a certain extent for the love theme, but much stronger for the power theme. Evangelical worldview has a place for spirit belief, which plays such an important role in Thai folk religion. Evangelicals in Thailand do not deny the existence of the spirits the Buddhists believe in, but they oppose them. In doing so, they domesticate

the Christian cosmology by assigning indigenous spirits to appropriate places in that cosmology. The rather shapeless evangelical notions of the supernatural are

¹³ Zehner, 1996, pp. 306-307.

¹⁴ Zehner, 2005, pp.596-597.

thereby given form by being extended directly into the relatively detailed local lore of spirits and their capabilities and characteristics.¹⁵

Zehner also shows that themes from the old worldview show up when new Christians tell their conversion story. The core of exclusive allegiance to God and Jesus Christ is strongly anti-syncretistic. But “because this core of Christian belief is fairly narrowly defined, a good deal of local variation can be built into the local experience and practice of evangelicalism”.¹⁶ This observation might go a long way to explain why evangelicalism can grow. Its message is distinct enough to be a real alternative to other religions, while at the same time adaptable enough to take on a local flavour.

The present author is less convinced than Zehner that the conversion prayer, as a new conversion ritual, is an integral part of international evangelicalism. Yet it is certainly true for Thai Protestantism. The conversion prayer might both be a consequence of, and a further catalyst for, Protestant activism in proclaiming the Christian message and pushing people to respond. It is questionable whether the actual conversion stories place as much doubt in the punctiliar conversion theory as Zehner suggests. However unrelated the conversion prayer might be to historic Christianity, the distinction between a point of conversion (regeneration in classic theological terms) and a process of growing interested in and studying Christianity is an uncontroversial one.

Besides the conversion typologies and themes that Zehner presents, his work is important in that it shows the central place that conversion has in Protestantism in Thailand. Conversion is a central concern, and new Christians are active in sharing the Christian message with family and friends. As the church Zehner did his field-work in is the fastest growing church in Thailand (see 4.5.), it may be assumed this feature is more strongly represented here than in the average Thai church. Yet the difference in the observation of the present author is one in intensity, not in nature.

4.4. The number of Protestant Christians in 2005

Until this current study there has been no research to update the work of Smith since its completion in 1978. Zehner reports research that gives statistics for 1986 and 1988, but the basis for the data is unclear, and especially the 1988 numbers seem to be unrealistically high.¹⁷ In 2002 the present author started to collect new data about church membership in Thailand. After a while the organizing committee for the Thailand Congress on Evangelism became interested and got involved in 2004. Staff of the International Mission Board, Thailand Campus Crusade for Christ, Itapon (a computer support company based in Chiang Mai), and PACTEC Asia (a company based in Chiang Mai offering data services to churches) also played important roles in further developing the database with statistics about the Thai churches. Because of the complexity of tracking all denominations, churches, and Christians in Thailand, it has been very hard to get consistent and reliable data. The data presented in

¹⁵ Zehner, 2005, p. 603.

¹⁶ Zehner, 2005, p. 610.

¹⁷ Zehner, 1996, p. 304.

this chapter are not perfect, but they reflect thousands of hours of research and are currently the best available.

4.4.1. Government data

The first possible source to find the total number of Christians in Thailand is from government data. Three different government agencies count religious adherents, and they provide widely varying estimates. The Population and Housing Census counted 486,840 Christians on a total population of 60,916,441 people in 2000¹⁸ (0.8%). For several reasons this does not seem to be a very reliable number. Entire households are classified as belonging to one religion. Even more important, one government official who was involved in getting the data, told the present author that quite often the data were not based on interviews with many individuals (even though that may be claimed officially), but were compiled by talking to the head of a village. It might well be the case that a standard answer like “everybody here is Buddhist” actually overlooks many Christians.

The second source is the Statistical Data Bank and Information Dissemination Division in Bangkok. This agency stopped collecting data after the year 2000. Table 6 presents its data for the number of Christians for the years up to 2000.

Table 6. Christians in Thailand

1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
322,749	326,919	328,724	810,775	820,576	1,012,871	991,600	1,012,871

Source: Statistical Data Bank and Information Dissemination Division, *Key Statistics: Whole Kingdom: Religion* [22], 2002.

These numbers are suspect for a number of reasons. From the huge jump in registered adherents it is clear there must have been new ways of gathering data in 1996 and 1998. Also, from 1998 to 1999 the reported number of Christians falls, while in 2000 it is reported to be the exact same number as in 1998. Many people, both in Christian and in government circles, assume that this official government number is based on data taken from Thai citizens’ identity cards. In the past these identity cards did not mention religion, but now that they do, the claim is that the real number of Christians has become clear. This is inherently improbable, as identity cards are only issued to citizens 15 years and over, while the total number for all religions adds up to the total population number of over 60 million people. Besides which the Local Administration Department in Bangkok confirmed, to the present author, that there is no central registration of the data about religion on the identity cards. This agrees with the finding that district offices issuing the identity cards have no way of telling how many adherents of each religion are living in the district. This suggests that there must be another explanation for the jump in reported numbers of Christians, but interviews with the officers of the relevant agencies failed to turn up an explanation.

The reported number of Christians at the provincial level provided by the same source is even more confusing. For 2000 there are no data for individual provinces, throwing suspicion on the countrywide data above. In most provinces the jump from 1995 to 1996 appears, but the jump from 1997 to 1998 is only reported in a few

¹⁸ National Statistical Office, *The 2000 Population and Housing Census: the Whole Kingdom*, Bangkok, 2002, table 5.

provinces. In some provinces it is hard to detect any pattern at all. For example, the following numbers are given for Nongbualamphu in years 1994-1999: 1794; 1813; 31; 30; 36,310; 13,970. There are two provinces that have a very high and suspect number of Christians in 1999: Khon Kaen 126,667 (over 7% of the population) and Udon Thani 68,939 (4.5% of the population). It proved impossible to check the source of these data. Several departments and divisions said they obtained the data from each other; in the end some claimed the data were gathered in each province. A visit to several provincial halls failed to locate even one official who knew anything about religious statistics. At this writing the source for these data remains cloudy. It seems safe to assume that the number of Christians is inflated by at least 150,000 in the combined provinces of Khon Kaen and Udon Thani. It is hard to assess how reliable the data for the other provinces are.

The third main, but largely unknown, government source for data on religious adherence is the Ministry of Education in Bangkok. On their intranet site this ministry gives numbers of Christians for most districts in Thailand¹⁹. The official in charge of this part of the intranet claimed that the Ministry of Education gets its information from each provincial branch. Though it has not been possible to locate people on the provincial level who gather this kind of information, this source has less obvious flaws, and the strong point is that it goes back to district level, one down from the provincial level. Data for Bangkok and for several districts in other provinces are lacking, suggesting that the data that are presented, are real. So this seems to be the most reliable government source. When adding the Bangkok number from the “Key statistics”, these data give a total number of 820,594 Christians for the year 2002.

The best official source for the total number of Christians in Thailand can be used to make a first estimate of the total number of Protestants as follows in Table 7.

Table 7. Estimated number of Protestant Christians

Ministry of Education number of Christians (adjusted)	820,594
Roman Catholic Church	278,480
Seventh-Day Adventist	16,772
Jehovah's Witnesses	4,305
Mormons (Latter Day Saints)	12,560
Estimated number of Protestant Christians ²⁰	508,477

Sources: Ministry of Education; Catholic Calendar; SDA; Watchtower.org; Thailand Bangkok Mission.

If these government statistics, and the statistics provided by non-Protestant denominations, are correct, and if all Christians would be affiliated with a church, the total church membership of Protestant churches would be around 500,000.

4.4.2. Christian sources

The most well-known source for Christian statistics is the second edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* (WCE) compiled by David Barrett and Todd Johnson (2001). After the publication of WCE the data were made available on the internet,

¹⁹ Ministry of Education, intranet, <http://203.146.15.235/eis7/index.htm>, viewed 1 November 2002.

²⁰ The estimated number of Protestants is the total number of Christians minus the numbers for Roman Catholics, Seventh-Day Adventists, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

and updated data for 2005 are also available.²¹ The data for Thailand in 2005 are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Christians according to WCE 2005

Christians of which	1,092,463
Crypto-Christians	625,000
Professing Christians	467,463
Evangelicals	192,000
Renewalists of which	586,000
Pentecostals	66,352
Charismatics	47,178
Neocharismatics	472,470
Orthodox	0
Catholics	290,000
Anglicans	400
Protestants	299,320
Independents	565,140
Marginals	17,170

Source: *World Christian Database*; total of Orthodox + Catholics + Anglicans + Protestants + Independents + Marginals is slightly higher than the total number of Christians because of double affiliation.

These data are problematic on several levels. Firstly the number of Christians seems to be high. Secondly over half of all reported Christians are listed as ‘crypto-Christians’. The reason for this becomes clear from WCE’s list of definitions. Professing Christians are those who show themselves to be Christians by self-disclosure, often in a national census. So the number of professing Christians is in all probability based on the national census reviewed in the paragraph above, which is a defective source. It is clear to everybody in Thailand, a country with almost absolute freedom of religion, that the number of Christians hesitant to disclose their religion is much lower than claimed in WCE. Thirdly, the present author regards the distinction made between ‘Protestant’ and ‘independent’ in WCE as not helpful. There are no theological characteristics that would make a denomination Protestant or independent, so independents can without problem be seen as part of the Protestant tradition. Therefore in this study the term ‘Protestant’ is used more broadly to include independent Christians and also the Anglicans. This is in line with the use of the word in Thailand itself, where all Protestant churches, including the ones listed as ‘independent’ by WCE, have a joint committee with the name ‘Thai Protestant Churches Coordinating Committee’ (TPCCC). Fourthly the number of neocharismatics is suspiciously high.

The WCE offers the opportunity to go down a level and see what the breakdown between denominations is that makes up the total number of Christians. As this study is focusing on Protestant Christians Table 9 only mentions Protestant (according to the definition used in this study) denominations. The category ‘hidden

²¹ World Christian Database, <http://worldchristiandatabase.org>, viewed 18 August 2006.

Buddhist believers in Christ' has been added to that, because WCE lists them as independents, which as stated above is not a separate category in this study.

Table 9. Protestant Christians per denomination according to WCE 2005

Denomination name	Members 2005
Anglican Church (D Singapore)	400
Assemblies of God	8,200
Assembly Hall Churches	3,200
Baptist International Missions	670
Believers Churches	3,100
Bonds of Fellowship	5,000
Children of God	170
China Evangelical Mission	830
Chr Nationals Evangelism Commission	190
Christian Brethren	360
Christian Churches/Churches of Christ	25,000
Church of Christ in Thailand	65,000
Church of God (Anderson)	2,900
Church of God (Cleveland)	560
Church of God of Prophecy	3,900
Church of the Nazarene	3,300
Churches of Christ (Non-Instrumental)	9,700
Ev Lutheran Ch in Thailand	2,600
Evangelical Covenant Church	8,800
Evangelical Gospel Church of Thailand	7,200
Finnish Free Mission Churches	16,500
Full Gospel Church Foundation	12,800
Fundamental Baptist Church	510
Hidden Buddhist believers in Christ	200,000
Hope of God International	47,900
Intern Ch of the Foursquare Gospel	5,400
Isolated radio churches	70,000
Karen Baptist Convention of Thailand	40,000
Korean Presbyterian Chs	4,200
Lahu Baptist Convention of Thailand	15,500
Lutheran Church in Thailand	1,600
New Apostolic Church	55,000
New Tribes Mission	3,600
Northern Christian Mission	4,600
other indigenous churches	1,200
other Protestant denominations	43,300
Overseas Missionary Fellowship	21,800
Seventh-day Adventist Church	18,300
Thai Ezra Churches	120,000
Thai Full Gospel Fellowship Church	7,800
Thailand Baptist Churches Association	9,200
True Jesus Church	2,800

Denomination name	Members 2005
United Pentecostal Church of Thailand	11,200
World-Wide Missions of Thailand	570
doubly-affiliated	-98,203
Total:	766,657

These data include some serious flaws. The Church of Christ in Thailand is listed, and then several denominations are listed that are part of the Church of Christ (i.e. Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, Karen Baptist Convention of Thailand, Lahu Baptist Convention of Thailand, and Northern Christian Mission). Three denominations that are listed as having a combined membership of over 185,000 members are, in reality, tiny with each just a few hundred members (i.e. Thai Ezra Churches, New Apostolic Church, and United Pentecostal Church of Thailand).

The 70,000 members in ‘isolated radio churches’ do not exist. There might be a few instances of people meeting together around Christian radio teaching, but it does not happen in these numbers, and these groups do not function as churches. The director of FEBC Thailand, the largest radio ministry in Thailand, states: “I am not aware of isolated radio churches.”²² Finally, the category ‘hidden Buddhist believers in Christ’ is methodologically highly suspect. It is questionable whether someone identified as a Buddhist should be counted as a Christian. It is also questionable whether in a country with freedom of religion like Thailand the term ‘hidden believer’ is even a viable concept. There has been no research in Thailand into the existence of this group, so there can be no basis for the number claimed in WCE. Taken together, this criticism of the WCE data shows they are fundamentally flawed and cannot be taken as a reliable source for the number of Christians in Thailand. When the obvious flawed numbers are removed from the list, and when assumed that when that is done there are no significant numbers of doubly affiliated’ members left, a new number of 324,000 Protestant Christians is arrived at.

The second major Christian source for church statistics is *Operation World* (OW), a prayer guide published in 2001 filled with statistical information about all countries in the world, compiled by Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk. Like WCE, OW came out of ten thousands of hours of data compilation by a dedicated team, but struggles to give valid information on denominations on a country level because of the difficulties involved in this huge operation. OW was published in book form and on CD-ROM. The data presented in Table 10 are from the more complete CD-ROM.

²² Georgina Stott, e-mail to author, 21 August 2006.

Table 10. Number of Christians according to OW

Christians	Denominations	% of population	Total membership (1000)	Annual Growth
Protestant	48	0.47	290	+3.4%
Independent	28	0.43	266	+7.3%
Anglican	1	0.00	0	-0.7%
Catholic	1	0.42	255	+0.6%
Marginal	3	0.02	12	+4.7%
Unaffiliated		0.28	171	n.a.

Source: Johnstone and Mandryk, *Operation World CD*, GMI/country/thai/owtext.htm#rel, 2001.

Using the broader definition of 'Protestant', OW counts 554,000 affiliated Protestants in Thailand. Table 11 lists their subdivision in denominations.

Table 11. Number of Protestant Christians per denomination according to OW

Denominations	Churches	Communicant members	Total members
Ch of Christ in T (CCT)	481	50,000	69,000
Karen Baptist Conv	88	16,730	30,000
Chr Chs/Chs of Chr	140	12,500	22,000
Lahu Baptist Conv	108	8,130	20,325
Hope of God Intl	500	10,000	18,000
Chs Related To OMF	229	8,000	16,000
Finnish Free Mission	63	6,000	15,000
Full Gospel Ch Found.	32	5,000	10,000
Thai Bapt Chs Assoc	48	3,771	8,372
Gospel Church of T	112	4,004	7,195
Evang Covenant	330	3,400	7,140
Full Gospel Fell Ch	39	3,600	7,000
Chr Fellowship (AoG)	89	4,000	6,500
Bonds of Fellowship	95	1,600	4,000
Other denoms [63]	1,859	124,300	295,600
Total Protestant Christians	4,213	261,035	536,132

Source: Johnstone and Mandryk, *Operation World CD*, GMI/country/thai/owtext.htm#rel, 2001.

Analysis of the list of denominations, and of the sources, reveals many problems indicating that OW cannot be considered an authoritative source on the number of Christians in Thailand. Firstly, some denominations are listed twice. The largest Protestant denomination, the CCT, includes the Karen and Lahu Baptist Conventions and the Christian Churches / Churches of Christ. Secondly, in most cases the number in the column 'affiliates' is derived from the number in the column 'members'. In the present author's experience, however, most Thai churches do not have a

list of communicant members. They normally count, or estimate, the total church community. So in several cases (e.g. Finnish Free Mission and Evangelical Covenant Churches) the number in the column 'members' actually should be in the column 'affiliates'. Thirdly, in almost all instances the sources providing membership numbers are old. Quite a few go all the way back to Alex Smith's work in 1978, many others are from 1990-1995. Then an (often quite optimistic) expected growth percentage is applied to the old source to get a derived statistic for the year 2000. This is an unreliable method and someone who knows the situation in Thailand can easily see it leads to several patently wrong statistics. Fourthly, Johnstone and Mandryk give a number of 180,000 adherents in free churches, without giving a source. The current research (see next paragraph) found that this number is far too high. When these mistakes are corrected, and the free churches are not taken into account, the number of Protestants becomes 283,000. Because there are Christians in free churches as well this number is not too far removed from the adjusted WCE number of 324,000.

OW also lists estimates of number of evangelicals, pentecostals and charismatics. These statistics are given in Table 12.

Table 12. Evangelicals, pentecostals, and charismatics according to OW

Trans-bloc Groupings	Percentage of population	Total membership (x1000)	Annual Growth
Evangelical	0.7	437	+6.4%
Charismatic	0.6	345	+6.8%
Pentecostal	0.1	70	+9.3%

Source: Johnstone and Mandryk, *Operation World CD*, GMI/country/thai/owtext.htm#rel, 2001.

Evangelicals in OW are defined as

all who generally emphasize the following: 1. The Lord Jesus Christ as the sole source of salvation through faith in Him. 2. Personal faith and conversion with regeneration by the Holy Spirit. 3. A recognition of the inspired Word of God as the only basis for faith and Christian living. 4. Commitment to biblical witness, evangelism and mission that brings others to faith in Christ.²³

While this is a valid and important group to distinguish from other Christians, it is less helpful to do so in the Thai context. Almost all Protestant Christians in Thailand, with the exception of a relatively small liberal group within the CCT, are evangelical. In this study the term Protestant will be used throughout, and not the term evangelical.

The term 'charismatic' is defined in OW as follows: "Those who testify to a renewing experience of the Holy Spirit and the present exercise of the gifts of the Spirit such as *glossolalia*, healing, prophecy and miracles."²⁴ In the sources given there is no indication as to how the number of charismatics was determined. The present author regrets this, because he is of the opinion that the high number of

²³ Johnstone and Mandryk, *Operation World CD*, 2001, GMI\appendix\glossary.htm.

²⁴ Idem.

charismatics mentioned in both WCE and OW (for Thailand and other countries) is a systematic error in the research. As is clear, to anybody with a basic knowledge of Thai Protestantism, the large majority of charismatic Christians are found in the Pentecostal denominations, and the majority of all Protestant Christians are non-charismatic. This is a totally different picture from the one given in the table above. The number given for 'charismatics' by Johnstone and Mandryk has no scientific value whatsoever.

In the above paragraphs it has become clear that neither the government statistics, nor the available statistics from the best known Christian sources, give valid numbers of Protestant Christians in Thailand.

4.4.3. Counting Protestant Christians

If research into the growth of Protestantism in Thailand is to be done, it is clear that a new effort needs to be made to count Protestant Christians. The most logical way would seem to be to contact denominational offices and ask for their statistics. This did not lead to a final result for several reasons. It is very difficult to get a complete list of all denominations. A database with over 80 different ones was built, but not all denominations could be reached. Quite a few denominations did not have any statistics available. Finally, even the available statistics were not always reliable. So an exclusively denominational approach did not lead to a reliable total number.

The only alternative was to try and contact all local churches. This was done with one important exception. Some churches are international. In Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Pattaya, and Huahin there are international churches, most of them using English. Some other churches can be found catering to one non-English language group, e.g. Burmese, Filipino, German, Japanese, and Korean. These churches were not the focus of the research. Their statistics are not presented in this paragraph, because these churches are catering to communities of international visitors who have not become part of Thai society. It is unlikely that it will change, because it is almost impossible to get Thai citizenship for people who are not born from Thai citizens.

During the first stage as many church data as possible were collected through telephone interviews. The second stage was visiting. In April 2004 a large team of Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC) staff spent one month trying to visit every known Protestant church. The third stage was complementation of the data by denominational sources. The fourth and final stage was interviewing leaders or members of other churches familiar with a church that had not provided data yet. 4061 local churches were identified. There are probably a few more independent churches that have not been included yet, but overall this number is a good approximation of the number of Protestant churches in Thailand. 3263 churches were reached and provided membership numbers. For the remaining 798 churches a conservative estimate was made. The estimate was either based on a known denominational total, or on an average membership of other churches in the same denomination or province.

One of the problems in collecting church membership data is that 'member' does not mean the same in every denomination. The main difference is whether the whole community is counted (like Roman-Catholics, Lutherans, and Presbyterians tend to do), or only adult members (like Baptists usually do). It was found that in Thailand the large majority of churches do not have a formal membership roll. When asked for their membership numbers, they tended to give a number for the whole community, even if they belonged to a tradition that usually only counts adult

members. An attempt was made to get a breakdown between adults and children, communicant members and affiliated members, and total membership and average attendance. All these data are partial, and therefore in this study only the number for the total community is used. This has an added advantage in that this number is most meaningful in comparisons with the total population.

The method described above resulted in a total count of 326,257 Protestant Christians for the whole of Thailand.²⁵ This number is based on the database from December 2007. Not all data are up to date, so this number can best be understood as total membership number for 2006. Over a total population of 60.6 million people that comes to 0.54% Protestants.²⁶

This number is significantly lower than the number arrived at in WCE and OW, but it is very close to the number adjusted for mistakes (see 4.3.2.). The number is also lower than what was derived from the Thai government statistics. A number of 502,418 was expected (see 4.3.1.) for 2002. This leads to the conclusion that there are probably around 200,000 unaffiliated Christians in Thailand, people who claim to be Christians but do not have any relationship to a church. It would be an interesting subject of study to try to find out more about these people: do they really exist? Are they former members of churches who do not attend anymore? Are they secret believers, or open about their religion? Do they have strong Christian convictions, or are they nominal? These people are not however, the subject of study in the current research which is focused on church growth. Unaffiliated Christians, by definition, are not church members.

4.5. Distribution of Protestants

Knowing the total number of Protestant Christians in Thailand is still of limited value. Ethnic, regional, and urban-rural distinctions are important to understand whether Protestantism in Thailand exists among all social groups, or whether it is confined to a sub-set of the population. This paragraph presents the statistics on these issues.

4.5.1. Protestants per ethnic group

One of the challenges of the research presented here has been to identify the ethnic background of churches. Because of the nationalistic propaganda in Thailand there is a hesitancy to call the ethnic background of the church members anything else but Thai. However, through telephone conversations, interviews, and comparison of church addresses with government lists of tribal villages it was possible to distinguish between Thai and tribal churches. This was essential to the research project, because it focuses on ethnic Thai churches. The ethnic minorities that were counted as tribal were Akha, Bruu, Kachin, Karen, Khmu, Lahu, Lawa, Leu, Lisaw, Lisu, Mien, Mon, Mong, Pakawyaw, Palaw, Palong, Pra, Shan, So, Thin, Yao, and

²⁵ Because of classification problems for 39 churches, reported subtotals can add up to slightly lower numbers.

²⁶ National Statistical Office, *The 2000 Population and Housing Census: the Whole Kingdom*, Bangkok, 2002. When corrected for population growth after 2000, the percentage becomes 0.52. Throughout this study the census numbers from 2000 will be used, because they are the last ones available that give a reliable breakdown per province, ethnicity, and for urban and rural dwellers.

Malabri. The Chinese, Khmer, and Malay minorities were included in the Thai numbers. The Thai and tribal totals arrived at in this fashion are given in Table 13. Appendix 7 gives a complete listing of ethnic groups with the numbers of Christians.

Table 13. Thai and tribal Protestants

	Population	Churches	Protestants	Percentage of population
Thai	59,506,947	2,646	185,741	0.31
Tribal	1,100,000 ²⁷	1,376	137,307	12.5
Total	60,606,947	4,022	323,048	0.53

Source: Own research.

The table shows that 42% of all Christians in Thailand are tribal. That is an amazingly high number, as there are only about 1,100,000 tribals in Thailand. Over 12% of all tribal people in Thailand are Christians, while only 0.31% of non-tribals are. The tribal churches are heavily concentrated in mountainous areas in the northernmost provinces, and to a lesser extent close to the western border with Myanmar (see also Appendix 1, map 3).

4.5.2. Protestants per region

The statistics gathered during this research make clear that Christians are not evenly distributed over Thailand. Table 14 gives the breakdown per region.

²⁷ The number of tribal people in Thailand is an estimate mainly based on the statistics in Krompatthanasangkhomlesawatdikaan, *Highland Communities within 20 provinces of Thailand*, 2002.

Table 14. Protestants per region

Region ²⁸	Inhabitants	Protestants	Percentage Protestant
Bangkok ²⁹	10,159,211	47,804	0.47
Central ³⁰	15,722,986	45,566	0.29
North ³¹	5,907,333	185,545	3.14
Northeast ³²	20,759,899	32,413	0.16
South ³³	8,057,518	14,929	0.19
Total	60,606,947	326,257	0.54

Sources: Population and Housing Census 2000 (provincial data); own research.

* The percentage ethnic Thai Christians is the percentage among the whole population, including tribals. Because the number of tribals is so low, this hardly distorts the percentage. Only for the North the percentage would be about 1/8 lower if reliable numbers of tribal population were available.

The provincial data (see Appendix 6) show that Christians are heavily concentrated in provinces with a large tribal population, and to a lesser extent in Bangkok. (See also Appendix 1, maps 1 and 2.)

4.5.3. Protestants in Bangkok, provincial capitals, and the rest of the country

Another way to look at the distribution of Christians is to look at the urban – rural distribution. Bangkok, as the prime city, takes a special position. In fact all 71 provincial capitals outside the Bangkok Metropolitan Area (BMA) combined have 60% less inhabitants than the BMA. The next level down from Bangkok is the capital cities of each province. These vary in size from 6,760 inhabitants for Maehongson to 222,425 inhabitants for Udon Thani.³⁴ The next level down is the countryside. To make the comparison between the urban and the rural ethnic Thai, the tribal churches have been taken out of the equation.

To produce Table 15 population statistics from the Housing and Population Census 2000 were used, as these are the most recent ones available that distinguish between urban and rural population. The population number for provincial capitals is not based on the population per capital district (*amphur muang*), because the capital districts include large swathes of rural areas as well. The number given here is the number of people living in the urban area (*thetsabaan*) of the capital districts.

²⁸ Here the traditional regional classification is followed rather than the new classification the government uses. The old regions more closely follow ethnic-cultural boundaries, and are therefore more relevant to missiological studies.

²⁹ Bangkok, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Samut Prakan, and Samut Sakhon.

³⁰ Ang Thong, Chachoengsao, Chai Nat, Chanthaburi, Chon Buri, Kamphaeng Phet, Kanchanaburi, Lop Buri, Nakhon Nayok, Nakhon Pathom, Nakhon Sawan, Phetchabun, Phetchaburi, Phichit, Phitsanulok, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Prachin Buri, Ratchaburi, Rayong, Sa Kaeo, Samut Songkhram, Sara Buri, Si Ayutthaya, Sing Buri, Sukhothai, Suphanburi, Tak, Trat, and Uthai Thani.

³¹ Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lampang, Lamphun, Mae Hong Son, Nan, Phayao, Phrae, and Uttaradit.

³² Amnat Charoen, Chaiyaphum, Kalasin, Khon Kaen, Loei, Maha Sarakham, Mukdahan, Nakhon Phanom, Nakhon Ratchasima, Nong Bua Lamphu, Nong Khai, Roi Et, Sakon Nakhon, Ubon Ratchathani, Udon Thani, Yasothon, Buri Ram, Si Sa Ket, and Surin.

³³ Chumphon, Krabi, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Phang Nga, Phatthalung, Phuket, Ranong, Satun, Songkhla, Surat Thani, Trang, Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala.

³⁴ National Statistical Office, *The 2000 Population and Housing Census: the Whole Kingdom*, Bangkok, 2002, provincial data.

The number of Christians in the provincial capital is a derivation. From the addresses of churches it is not clear whether they are in the urban area of the capital district or not. Most of them are, but some are located in the rural areas. Added to that most churches in urban areas have some members coming in from rural areas. To get an estimate of the number of Christians in the provincial capital it was assumed that the percentage of Christians in the rural areas of capital districts was the same as in rural areas outside the capital district.³⁵

Table 15. Ethnic Thai Christians in Bangkok, provincial capitals and the rest of the country

	Population	Ethnic Thai Christians	Percentage Christians
Bangkok	10,159,211	45,885	0.45%
Provincial capitals	4,145,194	36,291 (derived)	0.88%
Rural parts of capital districts	6,645,700	14,621	0.22% (assumed)
Rest of the country	39,656,842	89,107	0.22%
Total	60,606,947	185,904	0.31%

Sources: Population and Housing Census 2000 (provincial data); own research.

The table shows that Christianity among the non-tribal citizens of Thailand is heavily urban. How much of that is because of the oft quoted greater openness of the ethnic Chinese and the Sino-Thai, who almost exclusively live in urban centers, to become Christians is not clear yet at this point of the study. Remarkably, the provincial capitals have relatively twice as many Christians as Bangkok. The reason for this could very well be that denominations and missions are almost always targeting provincial capitals before the rest of the province. This table shows that in doing so they are both not realizing how tiny the church in the metropolis of Bangkok is and failing to make an impact among the rural masses that make up 76% of the population.

4.6. Denominations

Another way to look at the number of Protestant Christians is to compare denominations. Six groupings of denominations are distinguished here. The first group consists of the Presbyterian districts in the CCT. They actually are just one denomination, and the districts can be compared to presbyteries. The second group is all the non-Presbyterian districts in the CCT. These districts have more denominational traits, as they come from various theological and ethnic heritages. This group includes Thai, Lahu, and Karen Baptists, districts founded by the Disciples/Churches of Christ and by the Marburger Mission, and a district that split off from the Gospel Churches of Thailand. The third group is the non-charismatic mission-founded denominations. These denominations include two denominations founded by interdenominational mission organizations and many others founded by a mission organi-

³⁵ For Songkhla province the urban area of Hatay has been taken into account instead of the provincial capital, because Hatay is the dominant city in that province.

zation from a foreign denomination. The fourth group is the non-charismatic independent denominations. These are the few non-charismatic denominations that do not have a founding mission, but were founded by Thai Christians. The fifth group is charismatic mission founded denominations and the sixth group charismatic independent denominations (see Appendix 6 for a list of all denominations). In the following table, but not in the discussion below, two extra groups can be found. A seventh group is not a group of denominations, but consists of all churches that do not belong to a denomination. Finally there is a small group of churches that did not give data about their denominational affiliation. Churches in both of these groups can be either mission-founded or independent; and charismatic or non-charismatic. The statistics for each of these groups are presented in Table 16.

Table 16. Protestants per denominational grouping

Denominational grouping		Denominations*	Churches	Members	% of total Protestants	AAGR members since 1978**
CCT Presbyterian Districts	Thai	11	407	49,314	15	1.2
	Tribal	9	133	15,695	5	12
	<i>Total</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>540</i>	<i>65,009</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>2.1</i>
CCT non-Presbyterian districts	Thai	5	194	20,194	6	7.6
	Tribal	5	590	77,522	24	6.6
	<i>Total</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>784</i>	<i>97,716</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>6.7</i>
Non-charismatic mission founded Denominations	Thai	34	669	32,126	10	5.1
	Tribal	27	412	28,146	9	10.2
	<i>Total</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>1,081</i>	<i>60,272</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>6.6</i>
Non-charismatic independent Denominations	Thai	4	58	2,364	1	9.0
	Tribal	9	68	4,513	1	N/A
	<i>Total</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>126</i>	<i>6,877</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>13.8</i>
Charismatic mission founded denominations	Thai	12	340	23,114	7	3.6
	Tribal	9	40	3,082	1	N/A
	<i>Total</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>380</i>	<i>26,196</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>4.1</i>
Charismatic independent denominations	Thai	4	493	30,952	10	16.8
	Tribal	2	4	352	0	N/A
	<i>Total</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>497</i>	<i>31,304</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>16.9</i>
Non-denominational Churches	Thai	N/A	385	22,008	7	9.9
	Tribal	N/A	99	6,359	2	N/A
	<i>Total</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>484</i>	<i>28,367</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10.8</i>
Churches of unknown affiliation	Thai	N/A	100	5,669	2	N/A
	Tribal	N/A	30	1,638	1	N/A
	<i>Total</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>7,307</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>N/A</i>
Total	Thai	70	2646	185,741	57	4.2
	Tribal	61	1,376	137,307	43	8.0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>4,022</i>	<i>323,048</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>5.4</i>

Source: own research.

* In the case of the CCT the number of districts is listed instead of the number of denominations. The total of denominations in each category typically is lower than the sum of the number of denominations with Thai and the denominations with tribal members, because many denominations have both Thai and tribal members.

** AAGR: Average Annual Growth Rate

Several remarkable points can be gleaned from the table. Since 1978 the CCT has lost both its Presbyterian and its ethnic Thai majority. The number of Christians in denominations that are not connected to a missionary organization has sky-rocketed. Independent denominations, both charismatic and non-charismatic, had a much higher growth rate than mission-founded denominations. It needs to be taken into account that both split-offs from mission-founded denominations and the small starting base of the independent churches contribute to that.

The proportion of charismatic Christians is much lower than suggested in both WCE and OW, and is extremely low among tribal Christians. Mission-founded non-charismatic denominations even display a higher growth rate than mission-founded charismatic denominations. When the growth rates of charismatic and non-charismatic denominations are compared among all non-CCT churches, non-charismatic denominations have a slightly higher growth rate (6.9%) than charismatic denominations (6.6%). The non-Presbyterian CCT-districts have a comparable growth rate (6.4%).

This means that different groups of denominations in Thailand are growing at about the same rate. The exception to this rule is the Presbyterian districts that are growing only slightly faster than the population (2.1%), and this only thanks to tribal growth. Among the ethnic Thai, however, charismatic churches are growing faster than non-charismatic ones. Sometimes it is claimed that the faster growth of charismatic churches is because they win their members among the membership of other churches. Whatever the truth of that claim may be in other countries, in Thailand it is not an important part of the explanation. The survey data from this research shows that 85% of the membership of charismatic churches became Christian in a charismatic church. While this percentage is slightly lower than the 89% in non-charismatic non-CCT churches and the 95% in CCT churches, it shows that the large majority of charismatic growth is internally generated.

To get a better understanding of the denominations that make up the various groups in Table 15, a short description of the history and theology of the largest denominations is given below. The descriptions are limited to those denominations that have an ethnic Thai membership of more than 300 members. This means that some of the largest denominations are not reviewed here, because their membership is overwhelmingly tribal. The denominations are classified according to the first six groups mentioned above. Independent churches are not reviewed, since it is impossible to make general remarks about them. Where possible the start date of each denomination will be given, the number of churches and church members, and the AAGR since 1978. In some cases, notably the smaller denominations, not all these data could be found. For denominations that were not yet in existence in 1978, or were very small, another base year for which statistics were available was sought. This also was not always possible.

4.6.1. CCT Presbyterian districts

The largest denomination in Thailand, the CCT, is subdivided into 19 districts. These districts can be compared to presbyteries. Some districts are ethnically based (10, 16, 18, and 19). They are not reviewed in this study because they are comprised of ethnic minorities. Some districts are theologically and historically defined (11, 12, 13, and 15).

The remaining districts are all Presbyterian. They are geographically defined, with the exception of district 7, which consists of originally ethnic Chinese churches. In recent decades these distinctions have become vaguer. The various districts influence each other theologically, and several districts have planted churches over ethnic and geographic boundaries yet incorporated these new churches into their own district.

1. CCT districts 1-9, 14, 17 (*Saphaa khristajak naj Prathet Thai Phak 1-9, 14, 17*)

In 1840 the first American Presbyterian missionaries came to Thailand from the Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA).³⁶ The Presbyterian church governance places the authority in the church in the hands of the elders, who, according to Presbyterian theology, are both elected by the church and called by God. A group of churches is organized into a presbytery that is responsible for oversight of the churches. This organizational scheme can still be detected in the CCT. The districts basically function as presbyteries, though CCT is more centralized than Presbyterian churches normally are.

Presbyterian churches are calvinist. This theology is often summarized by the 'five points of calvinism': total depravity of man, God's unconditional election of sinners to eternal life, Christ's atonement is limited to the elect, God's grace is irresistible in working repentance and faith in the heart of the elect, and perseverance of the saints in the true faith for all eternity. In the 20th century the PCUSA, and the missionaries it sent out, became more liberal. There was less emphasis on the need for repentance and faith. In some cases, interreligious dialogue took the place of evangelism.

For over a century the American Presbyterian Mission was the largest mission in Thailand. The beginnings were extremely slow. The first converts were Chinese, and only a few Thai showed any interest in the gospel. The first Thai convert was baptized in 1859, after 19 years of mission work. From 1861 onward the mission started to expand outside Bangkok. Most significant was the opening of the work in North Thailand under Daniel McGilvary, who would become the most famous missionary of all time in Thailand. McGilvary initiated a program of itinerant evangelism. Significant growth followed, far outstripping the growth in the southern field of Bangkok and Petchaburi. By 1915 there were a little over a 1000 communicant members in the southern field, while the northern field had 6000.³⁷ This was the first time in the history of both Roman-Catholic and Protestant missions that significant numbers of ethnic Thai became Christians.

³⁶ This paragraph is partly based on Samuel Kim, *The unfinished mission in Thailand: The Uncertain Christian Impact on the Buddhist Heartland*, Seoul, 1980; and Prasit Pongudom, *Prawattisaatsaphaakhristacak-najprathetthaj*, (*History of the Church of Christ in Thailand*), Bangkok, 1984.

³⁷ See Alex G. Smith, *Siamese Gold: a History of Church Growth in Thailand: an Interpretive Analysis 1816-1982*, Bangkok, 1982, p. 99.

Much of the missionary energy, especially in the south, went into founding and maintaining schools and hospitals. Up until today the institutions connected to the denomination tend to overshadow the churches. In 1934 the national church was institutionalized. There are strong indications that the nationalization of the church, and the accompanying energy spent on organization, was detrimental to the growth of the church.³⁸ After World War II the Presbyterian churches displayed a slow but steady growth at about the same rate as the population. The main strength of the Presbyterian churches is still in North Thailand.

Some of the Thai church leaders, mainly the ones who studied in the USA, followed the trend in the American PCUSA and became proponents of a liberal view. But by and large the Thai church continued to hold to more traditional Christian views, though the urgency to evangelize is clearly less felt in the Presbyterian churches than in most other denominations. It is hard to say whether that is a theological issue, or whether the main reason is that the Presbyterian churches are older and have more second and third generation believers.

In the past the Presbyterian churches formed the bulk of all Christians in Thailand. This has dramatically changed. Even within the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), formed in 1932 as an almost exclusively Presbyterian church, the Presbyterians form a minority (though a strong majority among the ethnic Thai). They still retain most of the denominational power positions, and it is telling that informally ‘CCT’ and ‘the Presbyterians’ are still used interchangeably by some.

Much of the leadership in other denominations, especially the older generation of leaders, has their roots in the Presbyterian churches. This adds to the sense that many Christians in Thailand, even outside the CCT, regard the Presbyterians as the ‘original Thai church’.

In 2006 the Presbyterian districts in the CCT had 407 ethnic Thai churches with a total of 49,314 members. Their Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR) since 1978 is 1.2%.

4.6.2. CCT non-Presbyterian districts

Though the majority of the districts in the CCT are Presbyterian, there are several that have their roots in other traditions: Baptist, Disciples, German pietism, and Church and Missionary Alliance. Some of them joined early in the CCT’s history, others are more recent additions to the CCT church family.

2. CCT district 12 (Saphaa khristajak naj Prathet Thai Phak 12)

The American Baptist mission was the first mission organization that came to Thailand to stay. Baptist churches first came into being in England in the 17th century. Baptists differ from most early Reformation churches in that they reject baptism of infants and only baptize people on confession of faith. They de-emphasize the importance of the sacraments and have a congregational ecclesiology. Both calvinism and arminianism can be found among Baptists.

In 1833 the first Baptist missionaries arrived from America.³⁹ In 1837 the first church, Maitrichit church, was instituted. This was both the first Protestant Chinese church in the world and the first Protestant church in Thailand. Though they also started work among the Thai, the Baptists saw little fruit and abandoned the Thai

³⁸ Smith, pp. 183-184.

³⁹ The information in this paragraph is mainly based on Smith, 1982.

work in 1868 to focus solely on the Chinese. In the 1870s, and the beginning of the 1880s, the Baptist churches grew rapidly to 500 members, but declined even faster to just 13 members in 1889.

Maitrichit church continued to exist. Slowly it started to grow again. Today Maitrichit is still one of the leading churches in Bangkok. It is the largest church within the CCT, and it has planted numerous daughter churches, both among Thai and among ethnic minorities. The vigour of Maitrichit church is often quoted as a major reason why district 12 has been growing considerably quicker than the Presbyterian districts within the CCT.

In 2006 district 12 of the CCT had 106 ethnic Thai churches with a total of 13,465 members. Its ethnic Thai AAGR since 1978 is 7.3%.

3. CCT district 11 (*Saphaa khristajak naj Prathet Thai Phak 11*)

District 11 of the CCT consists of churches formerly connected to the Christian Church / Disciples of Christ (CC/DC). CC/DC originates in the Restoration Movement in the beginning of the 19th century.⁴⁰ Led by Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell churches started to unite around a commitment to be known simply as Christians and not as members of a certain denomination. From very early on there were differences of opinion in the movement, eventually leading to an official separation in 1906, when the churches that did not agree with the founding of a missionary society and the use of musical instruments asked to be registered as Churches of Christ in the USA census. This denomination, Churches of Christ (Non-instrumental), is also represented in Thailand (see 4.3.16.). After a further split in which the more conservative part of CC/DC left, the denomination became more and more liberal.

In 1903 Churches of Christ missionaries from the UK, from the same tradition as CC/DC, started work in Thailand and planted a church in Nakhom Pathom, west of Bangkok. Later on the work was handed over to the American CC/DC. The mission work of the Disciples met with very limited success. Infighting in the district posed a significant problem, so that by the end of the 1980s, district 11 was not even allowed to send representatives to the bi-annual meeting of the CCT. For a very long time now District 11 has been stagnant.

In 2006 CCT district 11 had 10 churches with a total of 909 members. Since 1978 its AAGR has been 0.7%.

4. CCT district 15 (*Saphaa khristajak naj Prathet Thai Phak 15*)

District 15 of the CCT consists of churches planted by the Marburger Mission (MM).⁴¹ The Marburger Mission has its roots in the German pietistic movement within the state church. Also in Thailand, where it started work in 1953, MM chose to work within the national church, in the case of Thailand, the CCT. Churches planted by MM missionaries in the Phayao region eventually formed their own district within the CCT in 1983.

⁴⁰ See e.g. Douglas A. Foster, (et al.), *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement: Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, Churches of Christ*, Grand Rapids, 2004.

⁴¹ This paragraph is partly based on Wolfgang Winkler, personal interview, 16 May 2005.

Herb Swanson distinguishes three periods in the history of the MM work.⁴² In the first period missionaries focused on personal conversion with little regard for pastoral care within the church. During the second period missionaries took a paternalistic role and provided various services in the church and in the community. This was a period of fairly rapid church growth. In the third period MM emphasized self-support and withdrew funds from the churches. After that the churches stagnated. They have not been able to overcome this problem.

In 2006 district 15 of the CCT had 25 churches with a total of 2724 members. Its AAGR since 1975 is 2.0%.

5. CCT district 13 (Saphaa khristajak naj Prathet Thai Phak 13)

In the 1960s conflicts arose between some congregations of the Gospel Church of Thailand (GCT) and their founding mission, the CMA. Thai church leaders were of the opinion that the CMA missionaries were too paternalistic and that they were pushing too hard for self-support. The problems came to a head in the province of Udon Thani, and 12⁴³ or 19⁴⁴ churches decided to leave the GCT in 1973. In 1974 these churches combined to form the 13th district of the CCT.

Theologically district 13 has its own place within the CCT as it still holds to the same theology as the GCT (see 4.4.3.). District 13 has grown faster than both the GCT and the Presbyterian districts of the CCT. In 2006 district 13 had 33 ethnic Thai churches with 2941 members. Its AAGR since 1974 is 6.6%.

4.6.3. Non-charismatic mission founded denominations

Originally only two denominations declined to become part of the CCT as the national united church. After World War II many more missionary organizations started work in Thailand. They often had a more conservative outlook than the older missions, and were strongly opposed to the World Council of Churches (WCC). Most of them started independent denominations, and only in the late 1960s started limited partnership within the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand (EFT). Most of the denominations reviewed in this paragraph fall into this category, though some of the most conservative ones with the strongest emphasis on independence are not even members of the EFT. The denominations are reviewed in the chronological order in which the founding missions started their work in Thailand.

6. Plymouth Brethren (Pheenong)

The Plymouth Brethren came into being in England in the 1830s. Their theology emphasizes the imminent return of Christ, who will usher in the millennial Kingdom. They stress the importance of the local congregation, and hold that all believers in a locality should meet as one body, without denominational distinctions. During their church services, all men can have a contribution as the Holy Spirit leads them. The Lord's Supper is celebrated each week.

The mission work of the Plymouth Brethren in Thailand started in the South, on the island of Phuket, in 1882. After several years the missionaries left. Others from

⁴² Herb Swanson, HeRD#46 and HeRD#48, <http://www.herbswanson.com/herd/herd1995.php>, viewed August 31, 2005.

⁴³ Kim, p. 199.

⁴⁴ Paul H. DeNeui, *The development of a multi-dimensional approach to contextualization in Northeast Thailand*, unpublished paper, 2002.

the same group re-entered in 1952 and found a tiny group of Christians still meeting in the original place. The English Brethren, who started the work, were later replaced by Koreans.⁴⁵ The organization supporting these missionaries is called the Christian Brethren Missionary Group (CBMG).

In 2006 the Plymouth Brethren had 6 ethnic Thai churches with a total of 434 members. Its ethnic Thai AAGR since 1978 is 1.9%.

2. *Gospel Churches of Thailand (Sapha Khristajak Phrakittikhun)*

The Gospel Churches of Thailand (GCT) were founded through the work of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. The Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) was founded in the USA by a Presbyterian minister, Albert B. Simpson (1843-1919). It was not founded as a denomination, but as a society to work for the spiritual needs of the masses both in the USA and abroad. Slowly CMA started to function more as a denomination. An emphasis on missions still is a distinguishing feature, as well as the emphasis on physical healing and on sanctification ('the deeper life').

CMA entered Thailand in 1929 and started to work in the Northeast.⁴⁶ They started with widespread evangelism, travelling through the countryside by bus, ox-cart, bamboo rafts, and horse. In 1941, when the missionaries left the country or were interned, the church had only 85 adult members. After World War II until 1961 the church had a high growth rate. In the middle of the period an abrupt self-support program was enforced by the mission, which heavily strained the church – mission relationship, but did not affect the growth the church.

In the 1960s and 1970s growth stagnated. Conflicts arose within the church and between church leaders. Missionaries became involved in oversight rather than outreach. The "Jesus Only" Pentecostal movement caused a lot of division. During this period many churches in the Udon area left the GCT and applied for membership with the CCT (see 4.3.14).

In the beginning of the 1980s a shift in mission policy, originating at the international headquarters of the CMA, caused almost all missionaries to withdraw from the Northeast and resettle in Bangkok. Bangkok became the new main mission field for the CMA. The churches in the Northeast, in Bangkok, and later among the Hmong tribal population, and churches planted by the Chinese CMA, form four separate groups in the denomination that do not cooperate closely. The churches in the Northeast, mostly without missionary presence and help, still form the plurality of the membership in the GCT.

Because of the historic CMA emphasis on God as healer, the GCT is more open to charismatic influences than other non-Pentecostal denominations. At the same time charismatic phenomena like speaking in tongues, though not resisted theologically, are not the norm in most churches.

In 2006 the GCT had 89 ethnic Thai churches with a total of 3863 members. Its ethnic Thai AAGR since 1978 is 1.8%. The total number for the GCT includes about 800 members in churches planted by the Chinese CMA that initially formed a different denomination and only later merged with the GCT.

⁴⁵ The information in this paragraph is partly based on Supong Wongsittiset, interview, 16 May 2005.

⁴⁶ The information in this paragraph is mainly based on Norman Ford, *A brief history of the C&MA work in Thailand*, unpublished paper, 2001, and on Norman Ford, interview, 16 May 2005.

8. *Bond of Fellowship Churches (Khristajak Samaansamakkhi)*

The Bond of Fellowship Churches (BFC) was founded by the Worldwide Evangelization for Christ (WEC), which started work in Thailand in 1947.⁴⁷ According to the comity arrangement of the 1950s the WEC was responsible to plant churches in the provinces of Sukhothai, Tak, and Kanchanaburi. WEC started work both among the Karen and among the Thai. It's a poignant reminder of the difference in openness between the Karen and the Thai that the number of church members among Karen and Thai are about equal, while all during the history of WEC work in Thailand dozens of missionaries were working among the Thai, and only one or two couples among the Karen.

WEC is an interdenominational mission. Consequently BFC has no strong theological identity besides a generic evangelicalism. WEC strongly emphasizes self-support. Neither pastors nor church buildings have been subsidized. Most BFC churches are led by lay leaders. The churches tend to be very small. The ministry of WEC is different from most other missions in that the missionaries fulfill pastoral roles for long periods of time. Most of the BFC churches have had missionary input since their founding.

In 2006 the BFC had 51 ethnic Thai churches with a total of 1029 members. Its ethnic Thai AAGR since 1978 is 2.5%.

9. *Thailand Baptist Churches Association (Sahakit Bebtit naj Prathet Thai)*

The Thailand Baptist Churches Association (TBCA) was born out of the work of the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The SBC is the largest Protestant denomination in the USA, and the IMB is the largest denominational mission in the world. The SBC is evangelical, and in recent decades the leadership of the church has become more conservative. For a long time the IMB was known as one of the richest mission organizations in the world with little or no interest in cooperation with other organizations. In 1995 a shift in policy took place that emphasized cooperation with other 'Great Commission Christians'. The interest in mission circles in church planting movements originated in the IMB, and as a consequence, IMB missionaries are pronouncedly less likely to use heavy foreign funding in their evangelistic programmes.

The IMB started work in Thailand in 1951 among the ethnic Chinese in Bangkok.⁴⁸ Many TBCA churches in Bangkok still have a strongly Chinese flavour. In years following the IMB sent Baptist missionaries to other regions of the country. Still about half of all members are living in Bangkok. The eastern seaboard is the other region that saw significant growth of the TBCA churches. Though the TBCA has a history of being strongly focused on church growth,⁴⁹ it has hardly grown faster than the average denomination.

An interesting feature of the TBCA is that it is recognized by the Thai government as a stand-alone Christian denomination. Therefore the TBCA has no need to be a member of the EFT. This results in a high visibility of the TBCA in joint Christian efforts, because there is often one representative each from the CCT, the EFT,

⁴⁷ The information in this paragraph is partly based on Steven Verhorst, e-mail to author, 27 August 2005.

⁴⁸ Ronald C. Hill, *Bangkok: An Urban Arena*, Nashville, 1982, p. 37.

⁴⁹ See e.g. Pracha Thaiwatcharamas, *A Church Growth Plan for the Thailand Baptist Churches Association*, Th.D. dissertation, Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary, Baguio City, 1997.

and the TBCA, even though there are several denominations within the EFT that are larger than the TBCA when tribal members are included in the count.

Though the IMB in the last decade has shifted its emphasis towards house churches and church planting movements, the TBCA has not followed suit and remains a very traditional denomination with emphasis on pastor's education and church buildings.

In 2006 the TBCA had 101 ethnic Thai churches with 8398 members. Its ethnic Thai AAGR since 1978 is 4.9%.

10. Associated Churches of Thailand (Khristajak Samphan naj Prathet Thai)

The Associated Churches in Thailand (ACT) developed from the ministry of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF). OMF is an interdenominational mission with a conservative evangelical history, but becoming less conservative. OMF entered Thailand in 1951.⁵⁰ They concentrated on several unreached areas: the central plains, the four southernmost provinces, and several ethnic minorities in the north. Among most tribes there was significant growth of the church after a slow beginning. Church planting in the central plains, and especially in the south, proved to be more difficult. In both these areas the OMF was the first mission to have resident missionaries, and ACT churches, though small, are the dominant Protestant force there. In the 1970s the OMF also established a presence in Bangkok. Since the late 1990s OMF missionaries are involved in ethnic Thai work in North Thailand.

The formation of ACT as a denomination followed an unusual pattern. Because of the interdenominational nature of the OMF, and the congregationalist church view of most OMF members, forming a denomination was not a priority. Several years after the first churches were planted, churches started to be brought together on a district level. Only later these districts were joined into a national denomination. Because of this history the denomination is very weak organizationally. In 2005 the national office did not even have one full-time worker.

The ACT does not have a strong theological identity, probably due to the wide variety of denominational backgrounds of OMF missionaries. The denomination is based on Christian fellowship, not on theological convictions. It practices only believer's baptism and, with the exception of a few churches, is non-charismatic.

Most ethnic Thai ACT churches were planted with the help of missionaries. A remarkable characteristic of the ACT is that among the large number of member churches there are very few large churches. There is only one ethnic Thai church in the ACT with a membership of over 200 people. This is a church that was planted without help either of OMF missionaries or of an ACT pastor. Only a handful of other churches have more than 100 members.

Up till the present day missionaries are involved in a large majority of new church plants in ACT. The link between OMF and ACT is still strong, but ACT now also has partnerships with other missions. When tribal churches are included in the count the ACT is the largest denomination within the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand (EFT). When only taking into account ethnic Thai Christians, as in this study, there are several denominations that are larger.

In 2006 the ACT had 110 ethnic Thai churches with 4,250 members. Its ethnic Thai AAGR since 1978 is 5.2%.

⁵⁰ This paragraph is based on personal knowledge from the present author, based on meeting various OMF missionaries who have lived in Thailand for a long time.

11. Churches of Christ (Non-instrumental) (*Khristajak khong Phrakhrut*)

The Churches of Christ (Non-instrumental) (COC-NI) is a fundamentalist denomination that separates itself from other denominations because it considers itself to be the only true church. The COC-NI originates in the 19th century restoration movement in the USA (see paragraph 4.4.2.).⁵¹ It does not accept any creed, but adheres to a very literal understanding of the Bible. The COC-NI deviates from other Protestant churches in teaching that baptism by immersion and good works are essential to salvation. The “non-instrumental” in their name points to their rejection of the use of musical instruments in worship. Many evangelical observers count the COC-NI as a cult.

The COC-NI was first introduced in Thailand through American soldiers in 1968. It mainly grew through transfer growth.⁵² It is hard to get reliable data about the COC-NI, partly because they do not cooperate with other churches, and partly because they have a congregationalist system with very few central institutions. Some data suggest that in recent decades it has been a stagnant denomination. The number of churches slowly declined from 62 in 1973 to 60 in 1979⁵³ and 57 in 2002⁵⁴. One spokesman claimed that about 10,000 were on the membership rolls of the various churches. He claimed a total of almost 100 churches, though another source said it is less than 50. The large discrepancy in numbers may have to do with the fact that many members in the COC-NI seem to drop out of the church after a while. That may be illustrated by the fact that the attendance in their largest church in Bangkok is slowly dropping from an average of 175 in 2002 to 135 in 2005, though about 20 new members a year are being baptized.⁵⁵ COC-NI in Thailand was split into two groups over a disagreement about whether Christians who divorced when not yet believers have the right to remarry.

The current research found that in 2006 these two COC-NI groups had 55 ethnic Thai churches with a total of 1458 members. Its ethnic Thai AAGR since 1978 is 0.6%.

12. Church of God (Anderson) (*Khristajak khong Phracaw*)

Church of God (Anderson) is part of the holiness movement.⁵⁶ It emphasizes sanctification of the believers through the power of the Holy Spirit, but it is not part of the Pentecostal movement. ‘Anderson’ in the name refers to the town where the American denomination is headquartered, to prevent confusion with other denominations with the same name. Its mission started to work in Thailand in 1968.

In 2006 it had 20 ethnic Thai churches with a total of 635 members. Its AAGR since 1978 is 7.0%.

⁵¹ See e.g. Douglas A. Foster, (et al.), *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement: Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, Churches of Christ*, Grand Rapids, 2004.

⁵² Smith, p. 253.

⁵³ Smith, p. 255.

⁵⁴ <http://www.churchzip.com/countrysummary/TH>, viewed 24 May 2005.

⁵⁵ Somprasong, <http://www.somprasong4.org>, viewed 15 August 2005.

⁵⁶ See e.g. Barry Callen, *The First Century: the Church of God Reformation Movement*, 2 vols., Anderson, 1979.

13. Thailand Covenant Churches (*Khristajak Phrakhun khong Phracaw*)

The Thailand Covenant Churches (TCC) were planted by the mission of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC). ECC has its roots in a pietistic movement within the Swedish Lutheran church, members of which emigrated to the USA. The ECC likes to bill itself as 'biblical, but not doctrinaire'. An interesting characteristic is that both infant and believers baptism are practiced within ECC.

In 1971 the ECC worked under the CCT. But a conflict developed over the training of Bible school students. James Gustafson, together with two gifted Thai evangelists, Banpote Weckama, and Tongpan Phommedda, moved the mission from the CCT to the EFT umbrella.⁵⁷ ECC started its own work with the Center for Church Planting and Church Growth in Northeast Thailand (CCPCG) in 1977. The large majority of the TCC churches are located in Northeast Thailand.

From the start ECC stressed the importance of contextualized forms of worship and holistic development. Mission funds were used to build large agricultural institutions. In the beginning of the 1980s rapid reproduction of churches and house groups took place. Gustafson claimed that in 1993 there were already 40 mother churches and 252 daughter churches.⁵⁸ In the definition of most denominations these daughter churches would rather be labeled house groups, since most of them were very small and often consisted of just one family. In the 1990s the growth of the TCC stalled, and later even went into decline.

ECC missionaries refuse to be involved in church work on a grass-roots level. To minimize the perceived foreignness of Christianity they focus exclusively on enabling Thai Christians to be good church leaders. Theologically there is a strong emphasis on the grace of God. TCC church leaders do not emphasize Christian 'rules for living' because they are afraid of legalism. They would rather have new believers work through for themselves what behaviour is suitable for 'children of God'. They try to avoid the term 'Christian', because of its foreignness.

In 2005 a split occurred between the older and younger leaders in the TCC. Since they have not officially formed two separate denominations yet, the numbers for both groups are presented here. In 2006 the TCC had 64 ethnic Thai churches with 2494 members.

14. New Life Churches (*Khristajak Chiwit Mai*)

The New Life Churches (NLC) started in 1972. OMF missionaries were involved in planting Makkasan Church.⁵⁹ Gifted leadership was developed in this church and, within five years, five daughter churches were planted. Makkasan church sent some its members and leadership to all of the daughter churches. The NLC broke fellowship with the OMF in 1978 when OMF missionaries changed the strategy without consulting them. One of the daughter churches of Makkasan, Suan Plue, started to plant daughter churches in the Northeast of Thailand. In the 1980s the vision for church planting weakened, and few new churches were planted after that. Today about half of the New Life Churches are in Bangkok and the other half are in the

⁵⁷ DeNeui, Gretchen, *The Making of a Sodality in Northeastern Thailand: An introduction to The Center for Church Planting and Church Growth in Northeast Thailand and the Issaan Development Foundation*, (unpublished paper), 1993, p. 4

⁵⁸ James Gustafson, *The integration of evangelism and development*, (unpublished paper), 1993, p. 6.

⁵⁹ The information in this paragraph is partly based on Thawi Chinwong, personal interview, 23 September 2005, and on Mary Cook, *Strategies and tactics*, (privately published), 2005.

Northeast. Theologically the New Life Churches are non-charismatic evangelical, though in Suan Plue Church there are more charismatic influences.

In 2006 the NLC had 17 ethnic Thai churches with 1098 members. Its AAGR since 1978 is 5.5%.

15. Independent Baptist Fellowship Thailand (Khristajak Samakkhitham Bebtit naj Prathet Thai)

The Independent Baptist Fellowship Thailand (IBFT) is a very loosely organized denomination grown from mission work by several American independent Baptist missionaries, starting in 1975.⁶⁰ Most of these churches are still pastored by missionaries. The IBFT has an extremely conservative theology. Most of the missionaries in the IBFT hold that in the English language only the Authorized Version is God's Word. They hold to a strong calvinist theology.

Characteristic of the IBFT is the strong emphasis on the authority of the local church. Several other independent Baptist churches that share the same theology even take that as the reason not to form or join a denomination at all. Independent Baptists strongly emphasize separation from other churches that do not believe exactly the same way they do. Therefore they by choice stand apart from the large majority of other Christians in Thailand. In 2006 the IBFT had 7 ethnic Thai churches with a total of 220 members.

16. Evangelical Lutheran Church (Khristajak Lutheran naj Prathet Thai)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) is the main Lutheran denomination in Thailand. Lutheranism started with the work of Martin Luther in the 16th century, which was the start of the Reformation. The central point in Lutheran theology is the doctrine of justification, and is expressed in *sola gratia, sola fide, solus Christus*: salvation is by God's grace alone, through faith alone, and based on Christ's merit alone.

The Lutheran Mission in Thailand (LMT) began its ministry in 1976.⁶¹ The first two constituting missions were the Norwegian Mission Society and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission. In later years Lutheran missions from Hong Kong and Singapore also joined. The first church planting efforts were in Bangkok, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) came into existence.

In 1985 the first church outside Bangkok was planted in the Ubon Ratchathani province in the Northeast. Those two areas, Bangkok and the Northeast, particularly Ubon Ratchathani and Nakhon Ratchasima, are still the main areas of operation for the ELC. The LMT is not only involved in church planting. It places a high emphasis on social and development work.

Some of the missionaries consider the ELC a mainline church that is a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand, and therefore can fulfill a bridge function between CCT and EFT. The Thai pastors do not perceive significant differences between the ELC and other EFT members. In 2006 the ELC had 33 ethnic Thai churches with 1824 members.

⁶⁰ The information in this paragraph is mainly based on Ricky Salmon, personal interview, 16 May 2005.

⁶¹ The information in this paragraph is partly based on Witsanukorn Upama, personal interview, 15 September 2005.

17. China Evangelistic Mission (Prakaat Phrakittikhun Phuea Chaw Chin Phak Phayap)

The China Evangelistic Mission (CEM) started its ministry in 1976. Paul Kuo, the co-founder of the mission in Hong Kong, became its first missionary among Chinese refugees in northern Thailand. Later on CEM also started work among ethnic Thai.⁶² In 2006 the CEM had 11 ethnic Thai churches with 543 members. Its combined tribal and Thai AAGR since 1978 is 4.3%.

18. Korean Presbyterian Mission (Kawli Presbiterian naj Pratheet Thai)

The Korean Presbyterian Mission (KPM) was the first Korean mission that came to Thailand to start its own denomination.⁶³ The KPM is the mission of one of the two main Presbyterian denominations in South-Korea. The largest part of the denomination, and all of its mission organization, is evangelical and traditionally Presbyterian (see 4.3.3.).

The KPM arrived in 1979 on invitation from the Thailand Church Growth Committee.⁶⁴ During that period there was much excitement over the rapid growth of the church in Korea, and the Thai church hoped to learn from the Koreans. However the KPM, and almost all Korean missions that followed, struggled to adjust to the Thai situation.

A recurring pattern was that they tried to duplicate Korean church customs in Thailand. This failed to attract the Thai people. Another pattern that proved detrimental to new church planting efforts was the practice of using a lot of money to build church buildings and hire Thai pastors, but keep control firmly in the hand of the Korean missionaries. KPM churches are still very dependent on missionary support and do not have an independent evangelistic outreach. The KPM missionaries tend to work in the Bible school founded by the KPM rather than in the churches. In 2006 the KPM had 15 ethnic Thai churches with a total of 582 members.

19. Independent Baptist Churches connected to the Baptist International Missions, Inc. (Khristajak Bebtit Isara)

This group of churches started with the work of Baptist International Missions, Inc. (BIMI) missionary Philip Pope from the USA. The first church came into existence in 1983. These churches call themselves fundamental Baptists. On their website BIMI states that it takes “a separatist stand against Neo-orthodoxy, Neo-evangelicalism, the Ecumenical movement and the modern tongues movement.”⁶⁵ That they take this seriously became clear when the BIMI missionary refused to answer questions by the present author and his research team. In 2006 there were 9 ethnic Thai BIMI churches with 505 members.

⁶² Jenny Kwok, interview with author, 22 May 2008.

⁶³ The information in this paragraph is partly based on Suraphan Suntrawirat, interview with author, 12 May 2005.

⁶⁴ Chana Seung Hoi Chung, *A study on church planting strategy of Korean missions in Thailand*, (unpublished dissertation), 1992, p. 27.

⁶⁵ BIMI, <http://www.bimi.org/content/abDoctrines.php>, viewed August 31, 2005.

20. *Chantamit Churches (Chantamit)*

The Chantamit Churches were planted by Beulah Land Services (BLS) and started in 1983.⁶⁶ BLS is a mission that is working among leprosy patients, and the Chantamit Churches, for the most part, consist of (former) leprosy patients and their families. Their work is concentrated in two provinces, Roi Et in the northeast and Chantaburi in the east of the country. In 2006 there were 3 Chantamit churches with 410 members.

21. *Thailand Methodist Church (Phantakit Maethodit naj Prathet Thai)*

The Thailand Methodist Church (TMC) was founded by the mission agency of the Korean Methodist Church (KMC). The KMC, unlike its mother church in the USA, is a strongly evangelical denomination.⁶⁷ The Wesleyan tradition in the denomination is strong, as becomes clear from the confession of faith it adopted in 1997. In it the church confesses that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and makes perfect, and that the believers “participate in God's work of salvation by being forgiven and sanctified by the grace of God through our faith.”⁶⁸

The mission arm of KMC started work in Thailand in 1985. They started to plant churches both in tribal and in Thai areas. Like many Korean missions the KMC often starts with purchasing a building and hiring a Bible school graduate to plant a church. In this way they are able to make a quick start. Most of the churches in the denomination continue to be small and struggling, with few leaders being raised up within the churches and attendance significantly lower than the membership numbers. In 2006 the TMC had 24 ethnic Thai churches with 1088 members.

22. *Church of the Nazarene (Khristajak Nazarene naj Prathet Thai)*

The Church of the Nazarene (CN) in Thailand was founded after the first Nazarene missionaries arrived in 1989.⁶⁹ CN is part of the Holiness tradition and grew out of the Methodist church in the USA in the second half of the 19th century. It labels itself as ‘Wesleyan-arminian’ and strongly emphasizes holiness, free will, and the possibility that a Christian can lose his salvation. It is an international church, so the church in Thailand is not an independent denomination but a branch of the international church. With a base of 1.2 million members in the USA, CN sends out over 650 missionaries to over 100 different countries.

Nazarene missionaries in Thailand set up various ministries, like radio ministry, Bible correspondence school, and a Bible school. Most ethnic Thai churches were planted by Thai pastors who were supported by the mission. In 2006 CN had 8 ethnic Thai churches with a total of 304 members.

23. *Anglican Evangelical Church in Thailand (Khristajak Anglican naj Prathet Thai)*

The Anglican Church is the established Church of England. Some regard the Anglican Church as neither Protestant nor Catholic (see e.g. *World Christian Encyclope-*

⁶⁶ This paragraph is partly based on Kanchana Udhaikan, interview with author, 18 May 2005.

⁶⁷ The information in this paragraph is partly based on Oh, Sea Kwan, interview with author, 31 August 2005, and also on Korean Methodist Church, http://www.kmcweb.or.kr/eng/sub01_04.html, viewed 19 August 2006.

⁶⁸ Korean Methodist Church.

⁶⁹ This paragraph is partly based on Siriporn Malakoon, interview with author, 31 August 2005.

dia, where it is listed as a separate group), though others claim it is both. In this study the Anglican Church is counted among the Protestant churches, because of the Protestant nature of its confessions, and because it is a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand (EFT). The Anglican Church differs from most other Protestant denominations in that they have retained the office of bishop and the idea of apostolic succession. The archbishop of Canterbury is the head of the worldwide Anglican Church. Therefore the Anglican Church in Thailand, strictly speaking, is not a denomination on par with most other denominations reviewed in this chapter, but a branch of a worldwide denomination.

The history of the Anglican Church in Thailand starts with the opening of the first international church in Bangkok in 1864 on a plot of land granted by king Mongkut.⁷⁰ For over a century the Anglican Church remained a church of expatriates. Thai services were started only in 1990. (Therefore in this paragraph 1990 is used as the year of foundation of the Thai Anglican church). Since that time the Thai work was extended to other places. During the same period church planting among the tribal population began. The Anglican Evangelical Church in Thailand (AEC) has a strong charismatic influence, starting with the ministry of Gerald Khoo from Singapore, the first Anglican pastor ministering among the Thai. In 2006 AEC had 3 ethnic Thai churches with 396 members.

24. Mekong Evangelical Mission

The Mekong Evangelical Mission (MEM) was founded by Chansamone Saiyasak.⁷¹ Theologically the MEM churches are conservative Baptist. Chansamone was a Lao-tian boy who moved to the USA when aged 11. He became a Christian there and felt called to go back to Asia to proclaim the gospel in Laos and northeast Thailand. He planted several churches in Ubon Ratchathani province.

After the tsunami, at the end of 2004, MEM received a lot of money from supporters in the USA to help in relief work. This marked the first time MEM was active outside the northeastern region. In 2006 MEM had 11 ethnic Thai churches with a total of 607 members.

4.6.4. Non-charismatic independent denominations

Most non-charismatic churches can be found in denominations started by mission organizations. Since about 1970 independent churches, not connected to any mission organization, came into existence. Typically these churches were founded by Thai pastors who did not see the necessity for a connection to a mission founded denomination. Most of the independent churches remained solitary. Some of them grew into denominations, either as a result of joining together, or because a church succeeded in planting daughter churches.

Most of these independent denominations are charismatic. There are also a few cases of non-charismatic independent denominations, which will be presented in this paragraph.

⁷⁰ The information in this paragraph is partly based on Banthit Wechapakorn, *Prawatisaathkhrisacakenglikan ipiscopoelhengprathetthai*, (*History of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Thailand*), B.Th. thesis, Bangkok Bible College and Seminary, Bangkok, 1994.; Christ Church Bangkok, *Spiritual oasis: 125 years of worship 1864-1989*, Bangkok, 1994; and Chuwi Kokaew, interview with author, 19 May 2005.

⁷¹ The information in this paragraph is partly based on Chris Jensen, interview with author, 19 May 2005.

25. *Muang Thai Churches*

The group of Muang Thai Churches (MTC) was founded by the pastor couple Nantachai and Ubolwan Mejudhon in 1976. Both of them received doctorates in missiology from an American University (Asbury Theological Seminary) on the contextualization of the gospel in Thailand. They strongly emphasize the need to communicate the Christian faith in a non-offensive way.⁷² They maintain that missionaries have taken a far too confrontational approach, and that that has rubbed off on the Thai Christians. They are modelling, with some success, an approach in which people who are interested in the gospel involve their family members from the beginning, and make a conscious effort to show respect to Buddhist relatives. The church has a significant outreach in a slum area in Bangkok, and has planted several daughter churches.

Nantachai, the senior pastor of MTC, received his training at Asbury, a seminary in the Methodist tradition. MTC does not strictly belong to a theological tradition though. It is non-charismatic. In 2006 MTC had 12 ethnic Thai churches with 529 members.

26. *Thai Ezra Churches*

Thai Ezra Churches (TE) came into existence in 1978. During that period Campus Crusade for Christ toured the northeast of Thailand with the Jesus-film. The normal practice of asking people 'to receive Jesus' led to claims of many converts. An article was written claiming: "From 1983 to the end of 1988, 2,338 house churches were planted in northeast Thailand through these mobile training centers. As of December, 1988, 134,228 people belonged to these house churches and to 16,632 new life groups. An average of 178 new life groups are added every month."⁷³ Though the author of this article published this in good faith, it is clear that the numbers are based on shameless overreporting and that at the very best numbers of raised hands were counted, not viable new Christian fellowships. In all probability this article is partly responsible for the overreporting of the number of Christians in Thailand by the *World Christian Encyclopedia*.

The Campus Crusade ministry in the Northeast was not totally without fruit. The Thai Ezra Churches were the main result. In 2006 TE had 11 ethnic Thai churches with 495 members.

4.6.5. Charismatic mission founded denominations

An important part of the history of the Christian church in the 20th century is the astounding growth of the charismatic movement. Charismatic influences only came to Thailand after World War II. It brought many controversies into Thai Protestantism, but also some of the most vibrant denominations. The earliest charismatic denominations were the ones founded by mission organizations, though as a general rule Thai Christians seemed to take a leading role in these denominations earlier than in non-charismatic mission founded denominations.

⁷² Nantachai Mejudhon, *Meekness: A New Approach to Christian Witness To the Thai People*, D.Miss dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, 1997; and Ubolwan Mejudhon, *The Way of Meekness: Being Christian and Thai in the Thai Way*, D.Miss dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, 1997.

⁷³ Rosedale, Roy, "Mobile Training Centers: Key to Growth in Thailand", pp. 402-406, in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 25:4 (1989), p. 403.

27. Full Gospel Churches in Thailand

The Full Gospel Churches (FGC) is the oldest charismatic denomination in Thailand. It was founded by missionaries from the Finnish Free Foreign Mission (FFFM).⁷⁴ The FFFM, today known as FIDA International is connected to one of the most mission minded denominations in the world: the Finnish Pentecostal Churches. In 2003, with less than 50,000 members, it had 415 missionaries on the mission field.⁷⁵ The Finnish Pentecostal Churches have a traditional Pentecostal theology, with emphasis on the need to repent and believe, and to receive the Holy Spirit as a second blessing, evidenced by speaking in tongues.

In 1946 the FFFM missionaries Verner and Hanna Raassina arrived in Thailand. The first church they planted was in Thonburi. Within a few years, other FFFM missionaries came as well. After a few years the Raassinas moved to Phetchabun, a central Thai province bordering both the North and the Northeast. This province has become the first FGC stronghold in the country.

The growth of the FGC was helped by the fact that from the beginning pastors from other churches joined them. The first was Boonmak Kittisan, moderator of the CCT. He was instrumental in starting several FGC churches, often by taking over Presbyterian churches or parts of them, after he introduced the 'full gospel' there. After a while Boonmak progressed further into the heterodox United Pentecostal Church, and left the FGC.

Another important impetus to the pentecostal/charismatic movement was a crusade by T.L. Osborne in 1956. During his crusade both a Presbyterian and a Baptist church leader experienced healing and baptism by the Holy Spirit.⁷⁶ They went on to take the message of the Holy Spirit to existing churches in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, and several church splits followed. Some regarded the FGC tactics as sheep stealing, others maintain it was just organizing groups that already had been forced out of their own churches.⁷⁷ An area where FGC did pioneer work to plant new churches were the provinces of Buriram and Surin in Northeast-Thailand⁷⁸.

In 1960 a Full Gospel Bible College was founded. Several of the first students became important leaders in the newer Pentecostal denominations, not just in the FGC. With over a hundred churches the FGC is one of the largest charismatic denominations in the country. FGC does not, however, take a prominent place in the Christian community in Thailand because of the lack of a large church with a famous pastor, as most other charismatic denominations have.

In 2006 FGC had 101 ethnic Thai churches with 6151 members. Its aggregate ethnic Thai and tribal AAGR since 1978 is 1.9%.

⁷⁴ The information in this paragraph is mainly based on James Hosack, "The arrival of Pentecostals and Charismatics in Thailand", in: *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 4/1 (2001), pp. 109-117, and Pathum, personal interview with author, 15 September 2005.

⁷⁵ FIDA, <http://fida-en.eyhdistys.fi/cgi-bin/linnea.pl?document=00010565>

⁷⁶ Hosack, p. 113.

⁷⁷ For contrasting views see Samuel Kim, *The unfinished mission in Thailand: The Uncertain Christian Impact on the Buddhist Heartland*, Seoul, 1980, pp. 202-203, and Hosack, p. 114.

⁷⁸ Ruohomäki, Jouko, *The Finnish Free Foreign Mission in Thailand in 1946-1985; a descriptive history*, (unpublished paper), 1988, pp. 99-103.

28. *Full Gospel Church in Thailand*

The Full Gospel Church in Thailand (FCT) resulted from the work of several Scandinavian Pentecostal mission agencies that came to Thailand independently.⁷⁹ Theologically they do not differ from the other Pentecostal denominations. In 1951 missionaries from the Swedish Free Mission and the Norwegian Free Foreign Mission came. (Many new mission agencies entered Thailand in 1951 and the years immediately following because they were forced out of China after the communist takeover.) In 1973 they combined under the name Scandinavian Pentecostal Mission.⁸⁰ Most FCT churches are in the south of Thailand. Smith mentions quick growth for the FCT from 1962 to 1976,⁸¹ though FCT sources challenge this. Since the 1980s, the number of SPM missionaries dropped significantly, from 37 in 1979 to 8 in 2005.

The spokesman for the mission mentioned three factors that, according to him, contributed to the fact that the FCT did not grow as much as some other charismatic denominations that arrived later: starting the work in the countryside, and not in Bangkok; a lack of strong church leaders; and church members moving to Bangkok, where they join other denominations.

In 2006 FCT had 43 churches with 2400 members. Its ethnic Thai AAGR since 1978 is 0.2%.

29. *Full Gospel Assemblies of Thailand*

The Full Gospel Assemblies of Thailand (FGA) was founded by the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC).⁸² They entered Thailand in 1961, and for over 10 years saw very limited growth. In 1972 Jaisamaan church started to grow very quickly. Ever since this one church has been the mainstay of the denomination. One important factor contributing to the growth of Jaisamaan was its gifted pastor Nirut Chantakon. The PAOC sent most of its missionaries to Jaisamaan to help the development of the church. At the end of the 1980s, after being disciplined by the denomination, Nirut left Jaisamaan and took some 10 churches with him to form his own denomination.

Jaisamaan Church has intentionally split into four different branch churches in Bangkok, and planted nine daughter churches in the Bangkok Metropolitan area. Jaisamaan and its pastors are looked upon as exemplary, both in charismatic and non-charismatic denominations. Not all FGA churches originate from Jaisamaan. Both missionaries and Thai pastors planted churches in other areas of the country as well. Theologically FGA is indistinguishable from the other main Pentecostal denominations that were founded by mission organizations: TAOG, FCT, and FGC.

In 2006 FGA had 43 churches with 5339 members. Its ethnic Thai AAGR since 1978 is 5.7%.

30. *Thai Assemblies of God*

The Thai Assemblies of God (TAOG) were founded after Wirachai Kowae, a member in the FGC, went to study in Malaysia and there became convinced that Thai

⁷⁹ The information in this paragraph is partly based on Gørel Krohn, interview with author, 16 May 2005.

⁸⁰ Hosack, p. 113.

⁸¹ Smith, p. 251.

⁸² The information in this paragraph is partly based on Peter DeWit, interview with author, 18 May 2005.

Christians should plant and support their own churches.⁸³ The Finnish missionaries in the FGC did not share that vision, so he decided to set up his own organization. He sought affiliation with the American Assemblies of God in 1968. Their first missionaries started to work together with Wirachai Kowae, who as of this writing is the pastor of the largest TAOG church, Romyen Church in Bangkok. Wirachai is a respected pastor, also highly regarded outside his own denomination. He has a clear vision for church planting, and often releases leaders from his own church to plant new churches in other areas.

Anuphap Wichitnan became a second key person in the TAOG. He is pastor of the second largest TAOG church in Bangkok. He mainly has a vision to build his own local church. To do that, he thoroughly trains members in his church. Because of his forceful personality many of these trained leaders go on to other areas of service, at a later stage. In this way two centers have developed within the TAOG that produce Thai church planters. 25 of the TAOG congregations had full-time missionary help in being planted, which means that 78 did not have full-time missionary support.

The TAOG holds a classical pentecostal theology with an emphasis on speaking in tongues as evidence of baptism with the Holy Spirit. A remark by a TAOG pastor of a small church, to the present author, is an interesting comment on the urban character of Pentecostalism: "If people want to receive the Holy Spirit, we go to Romyen Church, because it's not easy to receive the Holy Spirit in a small church."

In 2006 TAOG had 103 ethnic Thai churches with 6975 members. Its ethnic Thai AAGR since 1978 is 8.7%.

31. Christian Life Center Churches

The Christian Life Center Churches (CLC) were planted by the Christ to Thailand Mission (CTTM).⁸⁴ CTTM started its work in 1976, and mainly works in the North-east of Thailand. It has the vision to raise up church planters who can multiply indigenous churches. To do that CTTM seeks to partner with various denominations, though along with CLC it also has founded its own denomination.

The CTTM missionaries bring a strongly pentecostal message, as becomes clear from the following quote from a CTTM missionary about a chance encounter while travelling: "She offered us a coconut and Vivi offered her the Holy Spirit. We received our coconut and she spoke fluently in tongues after we prayed for her in her front yard."⁸⁵ This kind of approach makes it hard for them to be accepted among non-charismatic denominations. In 2006 CLC had 18 churches with in total 680 members.

32. Plukchit Churches

Plukchit Churches (PC) were planted by the Church of God World Mission (COGWM), the mission of the Church of God (Cleveland). The Church of God (Cleveland) originates in the Pentecostal holiness movement that knew three defin-

⁸³ The main sources for this paragraph are Hosack; James Hosack, e-mail to author, 12 August 2006; Alan Johnson, interview with author, 31 August 2005; and Alan Johnson, e-mail to author, 11 August 2006.

⁸⁴ The information in this paragraph is partly based on Sonny Largado, interview with author, 16 May 2005.

⁸⁵ Stafford, John, <http://disciplingleaders.multiply.com/journal>, viewed 16 August 2006.

ing moments.⁸⁶ In 1886 a church was organized that wanted to be free from creeds and only base itself on the New Testament. In 1895 this emerging movement was deeply influenced by the holiness movement. And in 1908 the denominational leader had a charismatic experience and led the Church of God into the Pentecostal movement. The Church of God maintains that the church became apostate very early in its history, and that the restoration of the true Church, started with Luther, was continued in the Great Awakenings and completed with the founding of the Church of God. Consequently the Church of God taught, for some time, that it was the only true church. This doctrine is no longer held by the majority of the members. A strict Christian lifestyle is expected from the members. In addition to baptism and the Lord's Supper, feetwashing is considered as a third ordinance of the church.

Minor differences within the Church of God led to several splits. Two of those denominations are now represented in Thailand: The Church of God of Prophecy with less than 300 members, and the Church of God (Cleveland). This latter denomination is known in Thailand as Plukchit Churches. COGWM started work in Thailand in 1978. Plukchit Church in Bangkok is the first church in the denomination, and most churches that were founded afterwards have 'Plukchit' in their name. Most churches in the denomination are located in the Northeast of Thailand. In 2006 PC had 10 ethnic Thai churches with a total of 746 members.

33. Foursquare Gospel Church

The Foursquare Gospel Church (FSQ) in Thailand is connected to the international Foursquare Church, founded by the controversial Pentecostal evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson from the USA in 1923.⁸⁷ The "Foursquare" in the name point towards four points of doctrine that are foundational to the church: Christ as Saviour, Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, Healer, and Soon-coming King. In 2006 FSQ had 7 ethnic Thai churches with in total 389 members.

4.6.6. Charismatic independent denominations

After charismatic mission organizations had worked in Thailand for several years independent charismatic churches came into existence as well. In most cases they are organizationally independent, but have strong historical ties to other charismatic denominations, either in Thailand or abroad. This is one more indication that the current usage of 'independent' as a term used on the same level as 'Roman Catholic' or 'Protestant' is misleading and fails to do justice to the fact that the independent denominations are part of the Protestant community in a way that is not different from mission-founded denominations.

34. Romklao Churches

Romklao Churches (RKC) were founded by Wan Petchsongkram. Wan was a Buddhist monk of high rank before converting to Christianity.⁸⁸ Shortly after his conversion he wrote an interesting book on how to approach Buddhists with the Gospel. Initially he became a baptist pastor, but after a charismatic experience he founded his own charismatic church in 1978. He totally abandoned the contextualized ap-

⁸⁶ See e.g. Roger G. Robins, *A. J. Tomlinson: Plainfolk Modernist*, New York, 2004.

⁸⁷ Epstein, Daniel M., *Sister Aimee: The Life of Aimee Semple McPherson*, New York, 1993.

⁸⁸ Wan Petchsongkram, *Talk in the Shade of the Bo Tree*, Bangkok, 1975.

proach he had advocated in his book and started very emotional charismatic worship services.

Initially his church grew very fast and it became the largest church of Bangkok. By the end of the 1980s it had 2000 members. Several daughter churches were started in other provinces, most of them comprising of members of other churches who were persuaded by the pentecostal message. From the beginning of the 1990s the church has known internal problems and Wan Petchsongkram became a controversial figure. The main church dwindled to about 500 worshippers. In 2006 the RKC had 23 ethnic Thai churches with 3736 members.

35. Hope Churches

In 1981 Kriengsak Charoenwongsak planted the Hope of Bangkok Church. He was joined by several OMF missionaries who saw great potential in this promising young leader who had just finished doctoral studies abroad.⁸⁹ After about a year they were asked by the OMF to leave Hope of Bangkok because Kriengsak expected the missionaries to be accountable to him rather than to the mission. Several missionaries were so impressed by what was going on in Hope of Bangkok that they left the mission over this issue. What had happened was unique in Thai church history. The church grew from the first week. During the first six years there was only one Sunday that there were no new converts.⁹⁰ By that time Hope of Bangkok had already grown into the largest congregation in the country. Kriengsak led the church with a strongly charismatic theology with emphasis on the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit.

From the beginning Kriengsak proclaimed to have a vision to start a church in every district of Thailand by the year 2000. Because he believed this was a God-given vision, and other denominations were not doing nearly enough to evangelize the nation, he had no qualms in recruiting leaders from other churches. This led to complaints of sheep-stealing, and in 1987 the Hope Churches (HC) were suspended from the EFT. This partly showed and partly caused a tremendous and lasting rift between HC and the rest of the Christian community. The tendency to see themselves as the only true church grew stronger among HC members. When HC started to plant churches in other provinces, the usual strategy was to focus on members of other churches first.

Kriengsak set an example of working extremely hard, and he expected the same of his church members. He set up a very well-organized follow-up system and from the beginning spent much effort in training leaders. The church grew, however, ever more authoritarian and tried to control the daily lives of the members to an unhealthy degree. By the end of the 1980s questions surfaced about Kriengsak's marital integrity. Kriengsak expelled all his critics, several of them senior leaders, from the church.

In the middle of the 1990s Kriengsak stepped down as pastor to pursue other interests. He became a member of parliament for the Democrat Party and was sometimes mentioned as a future Democrat Party leader before he left the party. His incredible giftedness is shown in the fact that he purged all his Christian activities

⁸⁹ Henry Breidenthal, interview with author, 22 June 2006.

⁹⁰ Zehner, Edwin, Church growth and culturally appropriate leadership: three examples from the Thai church, unpublished paper, 1987, p. 71.

from his personal website,⁹¹ but there is still enough left that would take other people several lifetimes to accomplish. Kriengsak published over a hundred books on economics, politics, and futurology, and lectured at about twenty different universities in various countries.

Pitsanunart Srithawong, Kriengsak's brother-in-law, became his successor as senior pastor. Under his leadership HC is trying to get back into fellowship with other denominations. It has sworn off the practice of targeting the membership of other churches. The level of distrust between HC and other churches is slowly diminishing, resulting in acceptance, in 2008, of HC as an associate member of the EFT. The research project presented here was the first time that Hope was willing to provide membership data. It also has become part of the 'Vision 2010' movement (see 4.1.).

Hope of Bangkok has continued to grow and currently has about 10,000 members in several locations in Bangkok. Outside Bangkok growth has been less spectacular, though still impressive when compared to most other denominations. The total membership outside Bangkok is about 15,000. These members can be found in small churches in 430 of the country's over 900 districts. The pattern seems to be that the Hope churches in the provincial capitals are quite strong, but that the churches in the outlying districts are small and struggling. HC has an intensive outreach program that does not have an equal in Thailand. The high expectations placed on its members and the exuberant worship style, however, seem not to sit well with the rural population.

It is the current author's personal observation that many of the groups labeled churches in HC's official statistics would not be labeled such by most other denominations because of their lack of leadership and their lack of stability. At the same time it must be acknowledged that HC has done an impressive job of training indigenous leadership for churches over the whole country. Every three months there is a leader's meeting with about 500 attendants. One attendant told the present author that all of them are full-time ministers, and the large majority are ministering outside Bangkok.

36. Vision Full Gospel Churches

The Vision Full Gospel Churches (VFG) were founded by Nirut Chantakon. He was one of the first leaders in the Pentecostal movement in Thailand,⁹² and became pastor of Jaisamaan Church. He helped Jaisamaan grow into one of the largest churches of Bangkok through his visionary leadership. At the end of the 1980s Nirut was put under discipline by his church. Though he accepted the discipline he did not accept the two-year period imposed on him to not preach and lead the church. He left and founded his own church, attracting many members from his old church. His new Vision Full Gospel Church extended into other provinces to form its own denomination. In 2006 VFG had 22 ethnic Thai churches with 1278 members.

⁹¹ Kriengsak Chawoenwongsak, www.kriengsak.com, viewed 12 May 2005.

⁹² Hosack, p. 115.

4.7. Growth in historical perspective

The data presented so far cannot be easily compared to the data Smith compiled for 1978. His data concerns adult membership; what is presented here is data regarding the total community. During the research, however, an attempt was made to distinguish between adult membership and total community. On average the reported total membership was 1.33 bigger than the adult membership. If the same multiplier is applied to Smith's numbers from 1978, with a correction for districts 13 and 15 of the CCT that do not seem to be included in Smith's 1978 numbers, this results in an estimate of 74,284 total membership for 1978 (excluding SDA). So Protestant Christianity has grown in the years 1978 to 2005 from 74,284 to 326,257 adult adherents. The average growth per year has been 5.4%. During the same period, the total population grew from 45,221,625⁹³ to 62,520,000,⁹⁴ or 1.2% per year. The church as a whole grew significantly faster than the population. Table 17 gives the historical perspective.

Table 17. Average Annual Growth Rate of the Protestant church

Years	Annual growth rate of church	Annual growth rate of population	Conversion growth rate
1950-1960	4.7	3.0	1.7
1960-1970	4.0	3.0	1.0
1970-1973	5.6	4.0	1.6
1973-1978	6.8	2.5	4.3
1978-2006	5.4	1.2	4.2

Sources: Smith, 265 (growth rate of church until 1978); own research.

This table shows, more than anything else, the greater openness to the Christian message in Thailand since the 1970s. It is easier to have a high growth rate starting from a small base, but in Thailand the growth rate accelerated even as the base grew.

It should be noted that a disproportionate part of the growth has taken place among the tribal population. Careful analysis of Smith's 1978 data allows splitting the number into Thais and tribals. Again using the multiplier 1.33 to get an estimate of the total membership, Smith has 15,713 tribal and 58,515 Thai Protestant Christians. As stated in paragraph 4.4.1., these numbers grew to 136,494 and 186,554 respectively. This means that the tribal church grew 8.0% per year, while the ethnic Thai church grew 4.2% per year.

A time analysis of the survey among ethnic Thai church members was performed to see whether the survey data would confirm this. The number of Christians and the number of converts were analyzed in various ways. The number of Christians (and also the number of converts) observed in each year group is 5.3% higher than the previous year (see appendix 10.1.). Mortality among the general population has a long time average of 0.6%.⁹⁵ When adjusted for the proportion of the population that is older than 15 (because those are the people who took part in the survey), and for the higher average age of converts, the estimated mortality is 0.9%. This

⁹³ Alpha Research, *Thailand in Figures: 2003-2004*, 9th edition, Bangkok, 2004, p. 39.

⁹⁴ Institute for Population and Social Research, *Mahidol Population Gazette*, vol. 15, (2006), p. 1.

⁹⁵ Alpha Research, *Thailand in Figures: 2003-2004*, 9th edition, Bangkok, 2004, p. 60.

results in an average annual growth rate of 4.4% (5.3%-0.9%). This is very close to the growth rate calculated from the denominational totals, so gives confidence that the rate found here is a valid result.

The biological growth rate, not taking into account mortality, found for the Christian community is 1.7% over the last 30 years (see appendix 10.1.). Taking into account a mortality rate of 0.8% for the population aged 15 and older, this results in a biological growth rate of 0.9%. Compared to the 1.2% biological growth rate of the general population over the same period this suggests that most children growing up in Christian families become worshippers in church. Using the assumption that Christians have the same number of children as non-Christians, a total retention percentage for children born in Protestant families was found of 85% (see appendix 10.1.).⁹⁶ The retention rate for girls is higher than for boys. The numbers used in this study resulted in a calculated retention rate of 98% for girls and 72% for boys. Because of rounding, life cycle effects on attendance, and some statistical uncertainty, this should not be taken as hard numbers. More research is needed in this area. Yet it is at least obvious that a large majority of all girls born in church attending families become worshippers themselves, while there is a significant proportion of boys who do not.

With 0.9% biological growth the remainder of the annual growth, 3.5%, is conversion growth. So most of the growth of Protestantism in Thailand is through conversion. This is in line with the finding that 65% of all respondents were born to non-Christian families.

4.8. Final observations

The Christian church has struggled to find a strong foothold in Thailand. The only time that Protestantism made significant inroads among the ethnic Thai population was at the end of the 19th century through the ministry of Daniel McGilvary. For a long time the main denominations in Thailand were Presbyterian and Baptist, who decided to merge, establishing the CCT. After WWII many new missionary organizations entered Thailand and many other denominations came into being. The influx of new missionary organizations never stopped and the number of imported denominations is still growing.

The available statistics on Thai Protestantism were shown to be unreliable, and better statistics, based on an extensive research project, were presented. In Thailand there are around 325,000 Protestant Christians in over 4,000 churches. A little over 40% of them are tribal Christians, and it was shown that the growth rate among tribal Christians is higher than among ethnic Thai Christians. Isaan, Central and South Thailand each have a comparable and very low percentage of ethnic Thai Christians. In these areas there is one Christian for every 600 people. The percentage in the North is higher, but even there it is not much higher than 1%. Many Christians live in provincial capitals.

A significant number of Protestants can be found in denominations not connected to missionary organizations. When compared to earlier research, done in 1978, this is a new development. Independent denominations as a whole grow much

⁹⁶ For this analysis, if 50% of the children in a family with only one Christian parent become church attenders, a retention rate of 100% is calculated.

faster than mission-founded denominations. At the same time it can be noted that newer mission-founded denominations grow at a higher rate than older ones. This suggests that it is not being independent that makes denominations grow. The probable explanation is that most new denominations recruit members and leaders from existing denominations, and so both jumpstart their own growth and diminish the growth of the older denominations. However, this is only a hypothesis that should be tested in further research.

Contrary to what handbooks like WCE and OW claim, charismatic Christianity plays a minor role in Thai Protestantism, especially among tribal Christians. Among ethnic Thai the growth rate of all charismatic denominations is much higher than the growth rate in the Presbyterian districts of the CCT, and slightly higher than the growth rate of other non-charismatic denominations. Regrettably, the fastest growing denomination of all is not a subject of this study because it refused to take part in the survey. If the 200 members of Hope of Bangkok in 1982 are taken as base, this denomination has achieved an AAGR of over 20% for 25 years.

The growth of the number of Christians is clearly higher than that of the population as a whole. Though the Christian community has some problems in keeping the boys born in Christian families as active church members, a rather high annual conversion growth rate of 3.5% per year results in continuing growth, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the population.

CHAPTER 5 CONVERSION

5.1. Introduction

In the next two chapters hypotheses will be formulated about what kind of people convert to Protestant Christianity, how that happens, and what kind of churches grow. These hypotheses will be tested using various statistical methods.

Normally in the social sciences a limited number of hypotheses are tested. However, there have been very few missiological studies to statistically test hypotheses about conversion church growth. Some studies in the field of sociology of religion have focused on church growth (see chapter 3), but church growth is not the same as conversion church growth. Most studies that used advanced statistical procedures were done in the USA. So it is probable that studies of church growth are mainly measuring transfer of members within Christianity rather than conversion from a different religion. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that research findings in the Christian context of the USA are relevant to the non-Christian context in Thailand.

In most studies it is possible to limit the number of hypotheses because much is already known about the field. That is not the case about the growth of Protestant churches in Thailand. Therefore, in this chapter, and also in the next one about church growth, many hypotheses are suggested and tested. The advantage of this is that the whole field of study comes into play. The disadvantage is that the outcome of the study becomes statistically less reliable, because it is difficult to determine the 'noise' between the variables. To counter this problem, in the chapter on church growth (chapter 6) statistical modelling will be employed to find out the independent contribution of each variable to the explanation of church growth. In chapter 5, on conversion, modelling is not possible because the survey data are limited to Christians, and observations on the general population are lacking. However, this disadvantage is common in a new field of study. The present author is convinced that this approach results in more new knowledge than a more limited study, even if the outcomes need to be refined in further research.

The hypotheses in these chapters have four different sources. The review of studies on conversion and church growth in chapter 3 resulted in a wealth of hypotheses. This is the first and most important source. Over half of all hypotheses in the next two chapters are either directly taken or deduced from this literature review. Even hypotheses that were proven to be correct in other studies will be treated as hypotheses here, and not as proven facts, because none of these studies has Thailand as the subject.

In the past, others have written about conversion and church growth in Thailand. Some of these studies were done by social scientists and were reviewed in chapter 4.3. Other work has been done by missiologists. Besides the already oft-quoted work of Smith,¹ most of them studied only one church or denomination, and often their evidence is more anecdotal than analytical. This is not to deny the quality

¹ Smith, Alex G., *Siamese Gold: a History of Church Growth in Thailand: an Interpretive Analysis 1816-1982*, Bangkok, 1982.

of some of the work. Good field workers draw better conclusions than bad statisticians. However, in a study of this kind their conclusions should be treated as hypotheses, because statistical evidence is still lacking. These more specific studies about the church in Thailand are the second source for hypotheses in this chapter. The third source is hypotheses offered by Thai church leaders and by missionaries working in Thailand. These hypotheses never found their way into scientific literature, but some of them seem promising and have been made part of this study. The fourth source of hypotheses is original thinking triggered by the proposed model. One of the advantages of a comprehensive model is that it tends to show the holes in the research done to date.

For each hypothesis it is explained which of these four sources led to this particular hypothesis. For completeness' sake and as a reminder notes refer to the underlying literature, even though in all cases this literature has been reviewed in chapter 3 or 4.

The hypotheses are ordered according to the categories of the model outlined in chapter 3.4. In the subsequent sections of this chapter hypotheses pertaining to context, personal background, distance, communication, and perceived direct intervention by God are discussed. The first three (context, personal background, and distance) answer the question what kind of people are becoming Christian. The last two answer the question of how people become Christian. The single remaining factor, church, is about church growth rather than about conversion, and the research related to this factor is presented in chapter 6.

Not all hypotheses that were found in the exploration phase became part of this study. Some suggested hypotheses could not be researched statistically, or there were no data with which to test them.

Many of the hypotheses that became part of the study have the following general structure: 'people from group x are less likely to become Christians than people from group y'. In this form, the hypothesis is about what is actually happening: less people from group x are becoming Christian than from group y. The form 'less likely' was chosen rather than 'more likely' to highlight the fact that so far in history it has been very unlikely that Thai people have become Christians.

The focus of this study is not just how many people are becoming Christian, but is also about the relative openness to the Christian message. Therefore an equally relevant question is which people are less likely to become Christians *given the same opportunity*. It is obvious that this second form of the hypothesis is more difficult to test, for it is almost impossible to quantify evangelistic effort. But that is not always needed. In those cases where it is possible, the second form of the hypothesis ('given the same evangelistic input per person') will be taken into consideration as well.

When a hypothesis is accepted, the differences in conversion probability between various groups will be presented in tables in the text. When the hypothesis is not accepted, it means no significant differences were found and, therefore, no table is given. For each hypothesis it is still possible to get the exact numbers from the technical appendix (appendix 10).

It should not be a surprise that in missiological studies, which form the majority of sources for this study, most hypotheses are about the church. Though the context and the personal characteristics of the potential new Christian might be more important in predicting who becomes a Christian, these factors can hardly be influenced by outside actors, if at all. There is some interest in the distance factor through em-

phasizing the need for church planting in unreached areas, and for God's direct intervention, especially in charismatic circles. But most attention has been given to the two factors that can directly be influenced by Christians. In the missiological literature the largest group of hypotheses is about the church, followed by hypotheses about the communication process between the church and potential new Christians. This will be reflected by the number of hypotheses in each category in this study as well.

5.2. Context

The first group of hypotheses about conversion relates to the socio-religious context. The context includes religion, society, and economy. Context factors are among the most difficult to research because no conclusions can be drawn from observations in a single context (Thailand). Comparisons between different contexts are needed. Moreover, it is not always easy or even possible to determine what the relevant factors in a comparison are. In this paragraph an attempt is made to find relevant data from outside sources that can be compared to the Thai situation.

5.2.1. Religion

An important part of a person's context is religion. The majority of ethnic Thai are staunchly Theravada Buddhist,² though there are many influences from traditional religions (see chapter 2.6.2.).

Hypothesis 1: People with a linear worldview are less likely to become Christians than people with a cyclical worldview.

This hypothesis is deduced from the Weberian thesis that some religions offer a more rationalized view of the world than others, and that these are the more attractive alternatives.³ It assumes that linear worldviews are more rationalized than non-linear. (This point is debatable for orthodox Theravada Buddhism, but this form of religion hardly exists in the real world - see paragraph 2.6.2.). The Judaeo-Christian worldview and its Islamic and secular-atheistic offshoots are the only worldviews that are linear. From church history it is clear that mission has been least successful among Muslims, and among Jews and secular atheists only slightly more so.

Ideally, this hypothesis would be tested by comparing the growth rate of Christianity relative to population growth in each people group in the world. This was not feasible in the context of this study. A more limited comparison on country level was attempted. A database was built of all countries in the world in which Christians form a minority. The reason to limit the database to minority Christian countries was that in countries with a high percentage of Christians even a high conversion growth

² See for the importance of religious background of the Thai on conversion probability Suragarn Tangsirisan, *Factors Relevant to Conversion Among Thai University Students: A Comparative Study of Christian and Non-Christian Ethnic Thai University Students*, Ph.D. thesis, Trinity International University, 1999.

³ Cf. discussion in Robert W. Hefner, "World Building and the Rationality of Conversion", in: *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, Berkeley, 1993, pp. 3-44.

rate of non-Christians to Christianity results in a relatively low conversion growth rate of Christianity. Some countries, mainly Gulf countries, were excluded from the database because their Christian population is mainly expatriate. For each of the remaining 57 countries a conversion growth rate was calculated by subtracting the population growth rate from the Christian growth rate. The conversion growth rate was taken from Johnston's *Operation World* (OW). In chapter 4.2.3. it was shown that the numbers in OW are not reliable, but they are the best ones available. In this study the OW numbers are used rather than those from the *World Christian Encyclopedia* (WCE), because WCE tends to include more 'hidden Christians', which is methodologically problematic (see 4.2.3.).

Finally, each country was coded as having a linear or a cyclical worldview. In a few cases OW made it clear that most converts to Christianity came from a population segment with a cyclical worldview, and these cases were coded as cyclical even if the majority population has a linear worldview.

A strong negative correlation was found between having a linear worldview and the conversion growth rate of Christianity ($r = -.412^{**}$). Therefore, it is clear that holding a cyclical worldview is positively correlated with becoming Christian. The hypothesis is accepted. The difference between the two groups can be read from Table 18.

Table 18. Worldview and conversion growth of Christianity

Worldview	Conversion growth rate of Christianity	Correlation	N
Linear	-0.9%	-.412**	35
Cyclical	1.8%	.412**	22

Source: Operation World, own research.

When a cyclical and a linear worldview meet, a profound clash occurs, and a lot of communication is needed to change from one to the other. But, history shows this is not uncommon. How the positive correlation between living in a society with a cyclical worldview and the probability of becoming a Christian should be explained, is not immediately clear. It could be that linear worldviews are more logical, strong, and / or attractive than cyclical worldviews, so that when confronted with the Christian message it is more appealing to a person with a cyclical worldview. Giving life a goal and a direction, which is only possible with a non-cyclical worldview, might be an incentive to people with cyclical worldviews to become Christian. Another explanation that also starts from the inner strength of a linear worldview is Rodney Stark's thesis that monotheism, with its view of an almighty God, is better able to foster commitment and willingness to sacrifice than other religions and worldviews and, therefore, has more growth potential.⁴

Another explanation would be that societies with a cyclical worldview in the modern world are becoming more influenced by linear thinking. In particular, the people who already have been influenced in this way are becoming Christians and are aligning their faith with their emerging worldview. The fact, however, is that the probability of becoming a Christian is relatively high among tribal people who have been less influenced by linear thinking than the urban elite. This can be observed in

⁴ Rodney Stark, *One True God: Historical Consequences of Monotheism*, Princeton, 2003.

many countries in the world, and also holds true for Thailand (see under hypothesis 2). This strongly suggests that it is not acceptance of a linear worldview that leads people to become Christians, but that people who become Christians are also accepting a linear worldview. Whether this also holds true within the group of ethnic Thai is not clear from the available data. A reliable way should be developed to measure how strongly linear elements have entered the value system of ethnic Thai, and how that relates to the probability of becoming Christian. That is a huge undertaking, and not part of this study.

Hypothesis 2.1.: Buddhists are less likely to become Christians than adherents of traditional religions.

This hypothesis is deduced from the same principle that adherents of rationalized religions are less likely to convert. Charles Keyes explains, as noted in chapter 4.3., that Buddhism, partly in response to Christian missionary work, offered a rationalized worldview in a way that traditional religions did not.⁵

The hypothesis can be tested generally by comparing percentages of Christians among Buddhists, and traditional religionists among the different peoples in the region where Buddhism is strong (east and south-east Asia). A database was built with 978 ethnic groups from the Buddhist world. They were either in majority Buddhists or in majority traditional religionists before the arrival of Christianity. The data were taken from the World Christian Encyclopedia. Among traditional religionist ethnic groups the average percentage of affiliated Christians is 10.9%, while under Buddhist ethnic groups it is 2.7%. A negative correlation between Buddhism as the majority religion and the percentage of affiliated Christians was found. Table 19 shows the difference between the two groups.

Table 19. Original religion and percentage Christians

Original religion	Affiliated Christians	Correlation	N
Traditional	10.9%	.194**	685
Buddhism	2.7%	-.194**	293

Source: World Christian Database, own research.

For Thailand specifically the thesis can be tested by comparing percentages and growth percentages of Christians among ethnic Thai and Sino-Thai (Buddhists) and tribal groups (originally traditional religionists).

In chapter 4.3.1. it was shown that among ethnic Thai 0.31% is Christian, while it is 12.4% among tribal people who used to be adherents of traditional religions. The AAGR over the last 25 years has been 4.2% among ethnic Thai, and 8.0% among tribal people. From these numbers it can be calculated that a tribal person in any given year has a probability of becoming Christian that is 87 times greater than an ethnic Thai.

⁵ Charles F. Keyes, "Why the Thai Are Not Christians: Buddhist and Christian Conversion in Thailand", in: *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, Berkeley, 1993, p. 277.

The hypothesis is accepted. Adherents of traditional religions are more likely to become Christian than Buddhists. This was found both in Thailand and in the wider Buddhist world.

Hypothesis 2.2.: Buddhists of all traditions are less likely to become Christians than adherents of traditional religions given the same opportunity.

Traditional religionists are more likely to become Christians than Buddhists. The question is whether that is because they have more opportunities to become Christians, or because they are more inclined to. The easiest way to measure differences in openness is to look at yearly growth rates (ideally adjusted for biological growth). Religion spreads along social lines. Therefore, a higher growth rate indicates more willingness among the population to become Christian. The database with all peoples in the Buddhist world did not contain growth rates. For Thailand, as mentioned above, growth rates were calculated for this study: 4.2% among ethnic Thai and 8.0% among traditional religionists. When it is assumed that ethnic Thai and tribal churches are equally active in evangelism, their respective AAGRs can be taken to approximate the difference in responsiveness. Using this measure, tribal people are 1.9 (8.0/4.2) times as likely to become Christians as ethnic Thai given the same evangelistic input. The hypothesis is accepted.

The staggering difference between 87 (see discussion hypothesis 2.1.) and 1.9 is explained by the higher percentage of Christians among tribal people. This could raise the question of how this higher percentage was reached. A contributing factor probably is that for a long time the growth rate of the ethnic Thai church was lower than the rate it is currently growing at. Over the period 1913-2007 the AAGR has been 3.2%. The main explanation is the power of exponential growth. Because of the higher AAGR among tribal people, the Christian base is growing more rapidly, so the percentage of evangelists and of people hearing the Christian message grows more rapidly as well. This means that within decades, from a similar base, a difference in likelihood of becoming Christian can change from 1.9 to 87.

Hypothesis 3.1.: Theravada Buddhists are less likely to become Christians than Mahayana Buddhists.

This hypothesis is deduced from the same principle again that adherents of rationalized religions are less likely to convert. Generally, Theravada Buddhism is seen as a purer form of Buddhism than Mahayana Buddhism, which incorporates many non-Buddhist deities in its pantheon. Thus, it can be claimed that Mahayana Buddhism, while being a more recent development than Theravada Buddhism, has more traits of traditional religions than Theravada Buddhism and is less rationalized.

This hypothesis can be tested generally by comparing percentages of Christians among Theravada Buddhist, Mahayana Buddhist, and traditional religionists among the different peoples in the region where Buddhism is strong (east and south-east Asia). The database of all Buddhist peoples in the world showed that the average percentage of affiliated Christians among Theravada Buddhist peoples is actually significantly higher than among Mahayana Buddhists (see Table 20).

Table 20. Forms of Buddhism and percentage Christians

Original religion	Affiliated Christians	Correlation	N
Mahayana	2.7%	-.134*	685
Theravada	4.0%	.134*	293

Source: Operation World, own research.

In the case of Thailand, the difference between the probability of becoming Christian between Mahayana-influenced Chinese and Theravada-influenced Thai is difficult to calculate. See under hypothesis 9 for an extensive discussion. Suffice to say that the posed hypothesis of greater likelihood to become Christian among Mahayana influenced Buddhists in Thailand can be accepted. Yet the hypothesis is rejected. Theravada Buddhists are not less likely to become Christians than Mahayana Buddhists. Even though in Thailand the data support the hypothesis, this is not true when all Buddhist peoples are taken into account.

Hypothesis 3.2.: Theravada Buddhists are less likely to become Christians than Mahayana Buddhists, given the same opportunity.

Because of the lack of data on growth rates among all Buddhist peoples, only the Thai case can be taken into account. In Thailand, the difference between the probability of becoming Christian between Mahayana-influenced Chinese and Theravada-influenced Thai is difficult to calculate. See under hypothesis 9 for an extensive discussion. Suffice to say that the posed hypothesis of greater likelihood to become Christian among Mahayana influenced Buddhists in Thailand given the same opportunity is not supported by the data.

The hypothesis is rejected. Theravada Buddhists are not less likely to become Christians than Mahayana Buddhists given the same opportunity.

5.2.2. Society

The social expectations placed upon people are another part of the context in which they live. In a Buddhist society these expectations may be expected to militate against conversion. It proved difficult to research this quantitatively. Two factors were found that could be meaningfully researched.

Hypothesis 4.1.: People living in a province with a low percentage of Christians are less likely to become Christians than people in a province with a higher percentage.

This hypothesis is deduced from Keyes' observation that Christianity's foreignness is an obstacle to its growth.⁶ As the number of Christians grows and a certain critical mass is reached, it might be expected that Christianity is more acceptable and it becomes easier to convert. This hypothesis was tested by looking at the relationship between the percentage of Christians in a province and the Annual Average Conversion Growth Rate (AACGR) of churches, using the church survey. A significant ($r = -.194$)* negative correlation between the percentage of Christians in a province and AACGR was found. The hypothesis was also tested excluding the churches in

⁶ Keyes, p. 277.

Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, the two provinces with the highest percentage of Christians. Without these churches no correlation was found.

The correlation between AACGR and percentage of Christians is rather weak, and without Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, even non-existent. Since churches in provinces with many Christians are growing at roughly the same rate as churches in provinces with few Christians, the absolute probability for someone in a province with many Christians to convert to Christianity is greater. The hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 4.2.: People living in a province with a low percentage of Christians are less likely to become Christians than people in a province with a higher percentage given the same opportunity.

The second form of the hypothesis, less likelihood given the same evangelistic input, is rejected. There was even some suggestion in the data that the reverse hypothesis may be true, and that the percentage of Christians is negatively correlated with conversion probability given the same evangelistic input. However, because this relation was not found when Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai were excluded, it is also possible that this finding is related to factors unique to these two provinces.

Hypothesis 5: The social tranquility of Thailand makes Thais less likely to become Christians than they would when society would be in upheaval.

In various studies, both from the sociology of religion and Church Growth perspective, it is suggested that social upheaval is an important factor in facilitating religious change.⁷ This hypothesis can be tested in the two regions that experienced social upheaval in recent years: the three southernmost provinces where people are dying almost daily due to Muslim insurgency; and Phang-ga province on the southwestern sea coast that was devastated by the tsunami of 2004. If the hypothesis is true, one would expect to see Protestant churches grow in the two affected areas. How strong the growth is as compared to other areas could give a first indication of the relative importance of this hypothesis.

In the three southernmost provinces the church is extremely weak. In terms of Christian percentage of the population, the percentages in these three provinces are the lowest, third, and twelfth lowest among the 76 provinces of Thailand. According to available statistics there is little or no church growth in these three provinces. The other example, Phang-ga, was thirteenth lowest on the list. Before the tsunami all Protestant churches combined had fewer than 100 members. A little over two years later there were 20 new churches or preaching points with a combined membership of over 200 new Christians. This is by far the highest percentage growth of all provinces. However, it should be taken into account that this growth is not just internal growth from the Phang-ga churches, but that it is mainly driven by the many new Christian workers, both Thai and foreign, who went to the area after the tsunami.

The evidence concerning this hypothesis is not uniform. There is one extreme case of non-growth and one extreme case of growth when there is no social tranquility. So the hypothesis in this form has to be rejected. To take into account the case of

⁷ E.g. Rodney Stark, *The rise of Christianity*, Princeton, 1996, pp. 73-94; Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, fully revised edition, Grand Rapids, 1980, p. 220.

fast growth, a slightly more focused hypothesis seems more promising: in cases of social upheaval where Christians can show Christian compassion, Thai people are more likely to become Christians.

5.2.3. Economy

The economy is another part of the context that has the potential to influence church growth.

Hypothesis 6.1.: In rich societies people are less likely to become Christians than in poor societies. In Thailand, a country which is not poor, people are not likely to become Christians, though not as unlikely as in richer countries.

This hypothesis is deduced from Donald McGavran's assumption that the masses are more responsive than the classes.⁸ It assumes this is true not only within countries, but also between countries. This hypothesis can be tested by comparing Thailand with other countries in the world. Whether people in rich societies are less likely to become Christians can be tested by taking the Human Development Index (HDI) ranking for each country and compare that with the conversion growth rate (church growth rate minus annual population growth rate).

To test this hypotheses first a database was built of 121 countries with a population of over 1 million people for which all of the following data were available: GDP growth, HDI, protestant growth rate, and population growth rate. The Protestant rate used is a composite of what OW lists as Protestants, Independents, and Anglicans. 19 countries were removed because their Protestant community is centuries old, and predates their wealth. Rwanda was removed from this list because it produced some outliers.

The data mentioned above were used to also calculate the Protestant growth rate over the population growth rate. This is a better way to measure the vitality of Protestantism, because it factors out the differences in biological growth.

A positive correlation was found between the Protestant percentage of the population and a low HDI ranking (Spearman's rho .309*). Thailand had a ranking of 34 out of 101 in the HDI index, which corresponds with the 67th percentile of expected Protestant percentage of the population. Thailand had a ranking of 78 out of 101 in the probability to become Christian, which is the 78th percentile.

These findings seem to lead to acceptance of the hypothesis. However, analysis of the data yielded other results that showed the wealth or poverty of nations is not the explanation of Protestant growth. If there would be a causal relationship between development and the percentage of Protestants, it should be possible to find this same tendency among subsets of countries. Within cultural groups however (Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the West) the correlations between Protestant percentage of the population and HDI ranking are not consistent. Some are significantly positive, some are significantly negative, and some are non-significant. This shows that the relation between development and Protestantism is not a straightforward one. The hypothesis is rejected.

⁸ Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, fully revised edition, Grand Rapids, 1980, p. 281-282.

Hypothesis 6.2.: In rich societies people are less likely to become Christians than in poor societies, given the same opportunity. In Thailand, a country which is not poor, people are not likely to become Christians, though not as unlikely as in richer countries, given the same opportunity.

No correlation was found between Protestant growth rate over population growth rate and a low HDI ranking. The hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 7.1.: In economically slow-developing countries people are less likely to become Christian than in economically fast-developing countries like Thailand.

This hypothesis looks a lot like hypothesis 6. The difference is that in this hypothesis it is stated that not the absolute level of wealth is important to predict the growth of the church, but the rate at which the country is developing. The direction of the relationship is deduced from control theory.⁹ People in fast developing countries are more likely to experience major disruptions in their lives, and therefore are thought to be more likely to convert.

This hypothesis can be tested in a similar way to hypothesis 6. Only the HDI as a measure is replaced by the GDP growth rate. The GDP growth rate for 2003 was used in this analysis.

No significant relation between GDP growth and either Protestant percentage of the population or yearly probability to become Protestant was found. The hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 7.2.: In economically slow-developing countries people are less likely to become Christian than in economically fast-developing countries like Thailand given the same opportunity.

No significant correlation was found between GDP growth and Protestant growth over population growth. The hypothesis is rejected. The rejection of all hypotheses linked with economic development show that economy is not an important factor in predicting conversion to Protestant Christianity on country level.

5.3. Personal background

Besides contextual factors, personal factors also can play an important role in predicting conversion probability. It is not just society as a whole that influences people, but groups within society can differ in the way they respond to the Christian message. Personal factors can be divided in birth, attained, and temporary characteristics. This paragraph explores the various characteristics in these three subgroups.

⁹ See e.g. William Sims Bainbridge, "The Sociology of Conversion", in: H. Newton Malony and Samuel Southard, (eds.), *Handbook of Religious Conversion*, New Haven, 1993, p. 182.

5.3.1. Birth characteristics

Some of the personal characteristics are innate and not subject to change during a person's life. Several of these characteristics have been suggested as partial explanations for the differences between groups in conversion rates.

Hypothesis 8.1.: Men are less likely to become Protestant Christians than women.

This hypothesis is based on prior general research. Higher religious observance among women is a well-established fact.¹⁰ Moreover, the same observation is routinely made by pastors and missionaries in Thailand. The survey data confirms this. Among first generation Christians, women form 64% of the respondents. The higher number of women found in the survey cannot be explained by more faithful church attendance of Christian women, since that effect was not found in the survey. The hypothesis that women are more likely to become Protestant Christians is therefore accepted. The odds for a woman to become Christian are 1.8 times greater than for a man.

Hypothesis 8.2.: Men are less likely to become Protestant Christians than women given the same opportunity.

For this hypothesis it may be assumed that the addition 'given the same opportunity' does not change the outcome. Men and women live together, and, therefore, it seems fair to assume that their chance of hearing the Christian message and becoming Christian is about equal. That men are really less likely to become Christians than women is confirmed by the finding that even among Christians born in a Christian family, women form a majority of 57.5%. Time analysis of the survey data results in an estimate of 72% retention rate for boys born in Christian families, and 98% for girls (see chapter 4.5.). Therefore this form of the hypothesis is accepted as well. The best way to understand this is to connect it with risky male behaviour. Men are more violent than women, men drive faster than women, and men are more willing than women to take the risk that this life is all there is.¹¹

Hypothesis 9.1: People born in the South, Central, or the Northeast are less likely to become Protestant Christians than people born in the North, who are less likely to become Protestant Christians than people born in Bangkok.

This hypothesis is based on remarks by many pastors and missionaries that churches in Bangkok grow faster. Zehner also mentions rapid growth especially in Bangkok.¹² But a majority of the ethnic Thai Christians live in the North (see chapter 4). This has its roots in an unprecedented, for Thailand, influx of new Christians into the church in the two decades around 1900. The question is whether people in the North are still becoming Christian at a higher rate than people from other regions in Thai-

¹⁰ Rodney Stark, "Physiology and Faith: Addressing the Universal Gender Difference in Religious Commitment", in: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41:3 (2002), pp. 495-507.

¹¹ Stark, 2002.

¹² Zehner, Edwin, *Unavoidably Hybrid: Thai Buddhist Conversions to Evangelical Christianity*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 2003, p. 39.

land or not. Because Bangkok is more often mentioned as a region where many people become Christians, in the hypothesis the North is ranked between Bangkok and the rest of the country.

The probability per year for people in the various regions to become Christian was calculated by multiplying the AACGR for a region with the Christian percentage of the ethnic Thai population in that region. The results can be found in Table 21.

Table 21. Probability of becoming a Christian per region

Region	AACGR	Percentage Christian	Probability per year of becoming a Christian as percentage	Odds of becoming a Christian
Bangkok	4.2%	0.42	0.018	2.3
North	0.9%	1.20	0.011	1.4
Central	6.6%	0.15	0.010	1.3
Isaan	5.2%	0.16	0.008	1.1
South	5.1%	0.15	0.008	1.0
Whole country	4.7%	0.28	0.013	

N=84

Source: own research.

The hypothesis is accepted, though the differences between the regions with the exception of Bangkok are not big.

Hypothesis 9.2.: People born in the South, Central, or the Northeast are less likely to become Protestant Christians than people born in the North given the same opportunity. People in the North are less likely to become Protestant Christians than people born in Bangkok given the same opportunity.

It is also possible to analyze the likelihood of becoming Christian given the same opportunity. Assuming that the churches in the various regions are equally active in evangelism, their AACGR should be the same when the population in the various regions is equally open to becoming Christian. Table 19 shows that the population in Central Thailand is more open to the gospel than other regions, and that both Isaan and the South are more open to becoming Christian than Bangkok. The population of the North, the traditional stronghold of Protestant Christianity, now seems far less open to becoming Protestant Christian than the rest of the country. On first sight it seems likely that it could be explained by the age of the churches in the North. They are, on average, far older than churches in the rest of the country. Below it will be shown that age has a strongly negative effect on AACGR. But controlling for age hardly changed the strong correlation between North and lower church growth.

The first half of the hypothesis is rejected and the opposite is accepted: people in Central, Isaan, and the South are more, not less, likely than people both in Bangkok and the North to become Christian given the same opportunity. The second half of the hypothesis is accepted: people in the North are less likely to become Christian

than people in Bangkok given the same opportunity. This conclusion, however, needs to be treated with care. CCT churches, which make up the bulk of the churches in the North, have some characteristics that cause lower growth. In this research project the random sample taken in the North only included CCT churches. So it is unclear whether the lower responsiveness found in the North is a valid result, or whether it is a function of the type of churches there.

Hypothesis 10.1: Thai-Thais are less likely to become Protestant Christians than Sino-Thais.

This hypothesis is based on the prevalence of Christians of Chinese ancestry that has often been noted among students of the growth of Protestant churches in Thailand.¹³ The problem is that it is hard to quantify because there is no standard question that meaningfully distinguishes between Chinese and Thai ancestry. Many people do not like to identify themselves as not fully ethnic Thai, so some care has to be taken in approaching this issue. In the end the best way to find data about this subject was to ask how many grandparents of the respondent were born abroad. In non-tribal churches in almost all cases that will mean 'China'. This gives a partial insight into Chinese ancestry, though it has to be recognized that descendants of the first large wave of Chinese immigration in the 1900s and in the beginning of the 20th century are not 'caught'. So the actual Chinese-ness of the church is higher than becomes clear from the survey data.

Moreover, there has been extensive intermarriage between Thai and Chinese, to the extent that it is not possible to clearly distinguish between the two groups. There are no useful official statistics available of people of Chinese heritage. Some publications assume a percentage of about 10% Chinese in Thailand.¹⁴ In this study this number is used as the best estimate of the Sino-Thai population in Thailand.

A survey is not a very good instrument to determine Chinese heritage. The way it is done in official Thai documents, asking for nationality and ethnicity, results in fewer and fewer people who fill in 'Chinese', because it is tied to how long ago the Chinese ancestor immigrated to Thailand. In the survey used in this research, only 3.6% filled in 'Chinese'. When this was found out in the pilot, an additional question was asked about the number of grandparents born abroad. 25% of the respondents had at least one grandparent who was born abroad. These people will be taken to be the Chinese Thai in this study.

Among respondents born in Christian families, 33% are Sino-Thai. This implies that until one generation ago, if the measure taken here approximates the measure to determine the national average, the odds of a Sino-Thai being a Christian were 4.4 times that of an ethnic Thai. However, this is not a hard number since it is not known in how much the one-grandparent measure coincides with other measures to calculate the Sino-Thai. But it is safe to at least conclude that in the past Chinese were more likely to become Christians than Thai, and in all probability was also more likely to become Christians given the same evangelistic input.

Among first generation Christians, 19% are Sino-Thai. The odds of becoming Christian during the past generation, again under the same assumption as described

¹³ E.g. Carl E. Blanford, *Chinese Churches in Thailand*, Bangkok, 1972, and Caleb Project, *Reaching the Peoples of Bangkok*, Pasadena, 1988.

¹⁴ E.g. Johnstone, Patrick, and Jason Mandryk, *Operation World*, Carlisle, 2001.

above, are 2.1 greater for Sino-Thai than for Thai. The difference in Chinese heritage between first generation Christians and other Christians cannot be explained by generation effects, because the average age of first generation Christians in the survey is higher than the average age of Christians born in Christian families.

The hypothesis is accepted. But it should be noted that the difference in likelihood of becoming a Christian between Thai-Thai and Chinese Thai has more than halved in one generation.

Hypothesis 10.2.: Thai-Thais are less likely to become Protestant Christians than Sino-Thais given the same opportunity.

Analysis of the survey data shows that the role of relatives in becoming Christian is not significantly different for Thai and Sino-Thai. When assumed that Sino-Thai focus all their evangelistic efforts on Sino-Thai, and Thai on Thai, and that Sino-Thai and Thai are evangelizing at the same rate, then the odds for a Thai becoming a Christian are actually 2.1 larger than for Sino-Thai given the same evangelistic input.

When assumed that only the influence of relatives is focused on their own ethnic group, and that all other evangelistic activities are proportionally focused on Thai and Sino-Thai, the odds of Sino-Thai becoming Christians through evangelism by someone other than relatives given the same evangelistic input, are 1.9 greater than for Thai. Both extremes, which give the outer boundaries of the relative openness to become Christians of both ethnic groups, are unlikely. Sino-Thai are so integrated into Thai society that it cannot be assumed Sino-Thai Christians only evangelize other Sino-Thai. Although Sino-Thai are still concentrated in certain areas and jobs. So Sino-Thai are still more likely to meet, and therefore evangelize, other Sino-Thai than Thai are. The conclusion must be that, if there is difference in openness between Sino-Thai and Thai, it is not large. The hypothesis that Sino-Thai are more likely to become Christians given the same opportunity is rejected.

The combination of the acceptance of hypothesis 10.1. and the rejection of hypothesis 10.2. leads to the conclusion that in all probability the receptivity of the Sino-Thai for the Christian message has declined, possibly in an absolute sense, but certainly in comparison with the Thai-Thais. The Sino-Thai are also becoming Christians in smaller numbers than both Chinese on the mainland and Chinese minorities in other countries.¹⁵ This shows that receptivity among the Chinese is not mainly tied to a shared Chinese culture, but more to localized political and cultural factors. In Thailand, a relatively stable country where the Sino-Thai are well-integrated and even hold many of the politically powerful positions in the country, there is less receptivity for the Christian message among the Chinese than in countries where the position of the Chinese in society is more contested (Indonesia and Malaysia) or where there is widespread disillusion with the dominant philosophy (China and first generation immigrants in the USA). That the receptivity of the Sino-

¹⁵ On China: Anthony Lambert, *China's Christian Millions*, Littleton, 1999; on the USA: Fenggang Yang, "Conversion to Evangelical Christianity: The Importance of Social and Cultural Contexts", in: *Sociology of Religion*, 59:3 (1998), pp. 237-257; on Malaysia: Lim Yeu Chuen, "An Analysis into the Growth Factors of the Chinese Churches in the Assemblies of God Malaysia", in: *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 10:1 (2007), pp. 78-90.

Thai has declined during the period that they have become more integrated into the life of the nation underlines the plausibility of this analysis.

Hypothesis 11.1.: Urban people are more likely to become Protestant Christians than rural people.

This hypothesis is based on the work of Rodney Stark, who states that Christianity, like other religious innovations, in its beginning stages in a society is mainly an urban phenomenon.¹⁶ This thesis can be tested using survey data and combining them with the national Christian statistics. Though a higher AACGR was found for rural Christians (5.7%, as opposed to 3.9% in Bangkok and 3.8% in provincial capitals), this was not a statistically significant finding. Table 22 gives the odds for people to become Christians, both using the difference in AACGR that was found in the survey, and not using it because of the statistical insignificance.

Table 22. AACGR in urban and rural areas

	AACGR	Percentage Christian	Odds of becoming Christian when AACGR taken into account	Odds of becoming Christian when AACGR not taken into account
Bangkok	3.9%	0.41	1.3	2.0
Provincial capital	3.8%	0.81	2.6	3.9
Rural areas	5.7%	0.21	1.0	1.0

N=84

Source: own research.

Whether or not AACGR is taken into account, it is clear that urbanites are more likely to become Christians than rural people. This is a statistically significant finding. The hypothesis is accepted: urban people are more likely to become Protestant Christians than rural people.

Hypothesis 11.2.: Urban people are more likely to become Protestant Christians than rural people given the same opportunity.

The other form of the hypothesis was tested with data from the church survey. No significant correlation was found between AACGR and living either in Bangkok, provincial capitals, or rural areas. The hypothesis is rejected.

Testing hypotheses 11.1 and 11.2. gave an interesting contrast in findings. While the expected greater probability in urban areas to become Christian was observed, no corresponding greater openness of urban populations was found. This suggests that the reason that religious change starts in urban areas, at least in this

¹⁶ See e.g. Stark, 1996; and Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*, Berkeley, 2000.

case, is the greater likelihood that agents of change start work in urban centers rather than any difference between urban and rural populations. Urbanites are becoming Christian in greater numbers because they have more opportunity, not because they are more disposed to convert.

5.3.2. Attained characteristics

Not all personal characteristics are given at birth. Many other characteristics are attained in the course of life. This group of characteristics also includes several that have been mentioned as relevant to understanding the growth of the church.

Hypothesis 12.1.: Non-migrants are less likely to become Protestant Christians than migrants.

This hypothesis is based on Donald McGavran's thesis that migrants, especially recent migrants, are more likely to convert than others.¹⁷ From the church member survey data it can be determined who has migrated between provinces during his life and how long after migration the person became a Christian. From these data it is possible to analyze whether recent migrants are more open to the gospel than people who have migrated earlier. Comparison between national statistics about migration (life time and 5-year) and survey data make it possible to know whether migrants are more open to the gospel than the general population. Migration data are presented in Table 23.

Table 23. Migration

	2000 Census	Born in Chris- tian family	First generation Christians
5 year migration percentage	6.3	12.1	16.1
Lifetime migration percentage	16.3	48.3	62.4

N=2033.

Sources: *The 2000 Population and Housing Census*; own research.

The first thing that strikes the eye is that the number of migrants among Christians is much higher than among the general population. This cannot only be caused by the posed greater openness among migrants to become Christians, for the same is true for respondents born in Christian families.

The survey data show that the government statistics miss about 15% of the Christian migration. The numbers for migration among Christians is also slightly inflated because there are no 0-14 year olds in the sample. Excluding them from the government statistics would bring the lifetime migration percentage among the general population up to 20%. Still, a significant gap remains for which no explanation could be found. Either Christians are part of a social group that is more mobile, or Christianity makes people more mobile.

Making the adjustments, the odds for a lifetime migrant to become Christian are 5.3 times that of a non-migrant using the government statistics, and 1.8 using the Christians from the survey as a base. For people who migrated within the last 5

¹⁷ E.g. McGavran, pp. 218-219.

years, the numbers are 1.9 and 1.4 respectively. These are significant differences. The hypothesis is accepted. Migrants are more likely to become Christians than the general population. Since Bangkok has a high percentage of migrants among the population, it is remarkable that no greater openness for conversion was found in Bangkok. This might point towards a greater than average resistance to the Christian message among people born in Bangkok. Further research into this is needed.

35% of the life time migrants converted before migration, about 25% within 5 years after migration, and 40% more than 5 years after migration. This shows that migrants are especially open to become Christians during the first few years after migration, but that openness continues also after that. The same can be concluded from the higher odds of becoming a Christian among lifetime migrants than among 5 year migrants. Secondly, an amazingly high number converted before migration. An explanation for that might be that the migrant's personality contributes to his greater openness to becoming Christian.

Hypothesis 12.2.: Non-migrants are less likely to become Christians than migrants given the same opportunity.

For this hypothesis it seems fair to assume there is no difference between the two forms of the hypothesis. Migrants mingle with the rest of the population, so it is improbable that evangelistic efforts will reach migrants more or less often than other people. This form of the hypothesis is accepted as well.

Hypothesis 13.1: Low educated people are less likely to become Christians than high educated people.

This hypothesis is based on the emerging consensus in the sociology of religion that in new religious movements in a society, the middle and higher class are overrepresented,¹⁸ even though in missiological circles the most common assumption seems to be that lower class people are more likely to convert than middle and higher class people.¹⁹ In this study the level of education of the respondents is the best measure for class distinctions. The church member survey includes a question about educational level. This was compared to national data about education to test the hypothesis, as can be seen in Table 24.

¹⁸ See Stark, 1996, pp. 29-47.

¹⁹ E.g. McGavran, p. 256.

Table 24. Educational achievement in percentages

	General population	First generation Christians (N=1205)	Odds of becoming Christian	Other Christians (N=701)
Grade 4 or less	43.5	27.3	1.0	19.2
Grade 6	19.8	13.9	1.1	14.4
Grade 9	12.3	13.7	1.8	15.8
Grade 12	15.5	19.2	2.0	21.2
Vocational	2.6	4.4	2.7	5.0
Bachelor's	5.8	18.6	5.1	20.7
Higher than bachelor's	0.5	2.9	9.2	3.8

Source: *The 2000 Population and Housing Census*, table 10; own research.

The data in this table lead to acceptance of the hypothesis. The odds of someone with a Bachelor's degree becoming a Christian are 5.1 times greater than for someone who only has a Grade 4 education.

Hypothesis 13.2.: Low educated people are less likely to become Protestant Christians than high educated people given the same opportunity.

Whether people with a higher education are more likely to become Christian given the same opportunity is less clear-cut. The level of educational achievement among Christians born in Christian families is slightly higher than among first generation Christians. This might mean Christians are mainly evangelizing among their own social group. Since most churches are more uniform in educational achievement as could be expected from a random distribution, it is to be expected that churches with a high percentage of highly educated people would grow faster than average, if the hypothesis that people with a higher education given the same opportunity are more likely to become Christian were true. But no meaningful correlation between AACGR and educational achievement was found. The hypothesis is rejected.

The combination of accepting hypothesis 13.1. and rejecting hypothesis 13.2. leads to the conclusion that people with a college degree are far more likely to hear the gospel than people with no higher than a fourth grade education. Because the educational gap largely coincides with the urban – rural divide, this finding is in line with the findings under hypothesis 11. The explanation of the different rate of becoming Christian is a difference in opportunity, not a difference in disposition.

Hypothesis 14: People who do not have strong relationships with Christians are less likely to become Protestant Christians than people who have strong relationships with Christians.

This hypothesis is based on subculture theory, that holds that within a group people tend to develop the same convictions and thought patterns.²⁰ In a sense the hypothesis is self-evident. If people influence each other, it cannot be doubted that being around Christians makes it more likely for someone to become a Christian himself. A more interesting question is how much of a difference a strong relationship with Christians makes to the odds of becoming Christian. From the survey data and the percentage of Christians among the general population it is possible to calculate approximate odds for people with and without Christian relatives.

In the survey respondents were asked the number of Christian and non-Christian relatives that they have. The outcome is not very easy to interpret, because of two problems. Firstly, close to 10% of the respondents who answered the question for the number of non-Christian relatives did not fill in a number for Christian relatives. In most cases this probably means these respondents did not have Christian relatives, but it is impossible to know for sure. Second, 10% of the respondents answered that they had 'many' non-Christian relatives, an answer that hardly ever was given about the number of Christian relatives. Without taking the 'many' answer into account and without adjusting for the difference in response rate, the percentage of Christian relatives for Christians born in non-Christian families is 37. When adjusted for the problems noted, the real percentage probably is about 28. This is a probability of .28 that a Thai with a Christian relative will become a Protestant Christian himself. The probability for an average Thai to become a Protestant Christian is 0.0017. So the odds for a relative of a Christian becoming a Christian are 229 times greater than for an average ethnic Thai. However, the 'average ethnic Thai' is a composite that includes both the Thais with and without Christian relatives.

It is more difficult to calculate the odds in comparison with someone who does not have Christian relatives. Only 4.8% of respondents indicated they had not one single Christian relative. But another 37% did not answer the question at all, probably because they did not have Christian relatives. Taking a high estimate, this could mean that 20% of all first generation Christians do not have Christian relatives. Of the remaining 80%, 16% can be assumed to be the first Christian among their relatives, since the average number of relatives that are Christian among first generation Christians is 5. So only 33% (high estimate) of new converts do not have any Christian relatives. This means that the probability for an ethnic Thai without Christian relatives to convert is only 0.0006. The odds of a Thai who has Christian relatives of becoming a Christian over a Thai who does not have Christian relatives is 694.

In this case there is no hypothesis 14.2. stating "People who do not have strong relationships with Christians are less likely to become Protestant Christians than people who have strong relationships with Christians given the same opportunity." That would be a nonsensical hypothesis, because Christianity is spreading through social networks, so it is logically impossible for people without relationships with Christians to have the same opportunity as people with strong relationships with Christians.

5.3.3. Temporary characteristics

Some personal characteristics are neither given with birth nor permanently attained during life, but are temporary characteristics during a phase of life.

²⁰ Bainbridge, p. 182.

Hypothesis 15.1.: Older people are less likely to become Protestant Christians than youth.

This hypothesis is based on Zehner's suggestion that in Thailand young people have more reason to convert.²¹ Pastors and missionaries in Thailand also often mention youth as a group that is more open to becoming Christian than older people.

This hypothesis can be tested using data from the church member survey. Of course it is not possible to base the analysis on the absolute number of respondents. Youth will be over-represented in the survey, as is clear from the following example. In a new church, every year 10 20-year olds become Christian, and 10 100-year olds. After 10 years, there will be close to 100 people in church who became Christians when 20, while there will be far less who became Christians when 100, because most of these converts will already have died. When doing a survey and analyzing the absolute numbers, one would come to the erroneous conclusion that people of 20 years of age are much more likely to become Christians than people of 100 years of age. Therefore, it is necessary to compensate for age. In this research this was done by assuming that a convert would be a church attender until age 75. The different sizes of the age brackets in the general population were also taken into account. This resulted in the odds shown in Table 25.

Table 25. Odds to become Protestant Christian per age bracket

Age bracket	<10	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Odds	0.3	0.6	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.8

N=1223

Source: own research

This is a surprising outcome, as the odds are the reverse of what is often claimed. It appears that older people are more likely to become Christians than younger people. Because this outcome was contrary to the expectations, it was double-checked by comparing each age bracket only with the next one. That corrects for possible reversion taking place, for the method used would overestimate the odds for older people becoming Christians if there are many reversions. However, this second analysis gave the same outcome as the one presented here.

When looking at the ages of converts in only the last 2 years before the survey, the outcome is slightly different. The trend among recent converts is that teens (10-19) are overrepresented by a factor of 1.2 among recent converts, while the odds for the other age groups slowly diminish to 0.5 for the 60+ bracket. Rather than undermining the conclusion reached earlier, this is an indication that the real odds might be even more favorable to older people, as it suggests that there is more reversal among younger converts. So the hypothesis is rejected, and the opposite is accepted: younger people (less than 30 years of age) are less likely to become Protestant Christians than older people (over 30 years of age).

Hypothesis 15.2.: Older people are less likely to become Protestant Christians than youth given the same opportunity.

²¹ Zehner, 2003, p. 67.

Whether older people are also more likely to become Protestant Christians than younger people given the same opportunity is hard to calculate. It cannot be assumed that old and young people have the same opportunity to hear the gospel. Though they live together in society, they are not attracted to the same kind of events and their social interaction follows different patterns. There seems to be more evangelistic activity geared towards youth than towards older people. It might, therefore, be expected that, even if openness would be the same, more youth are becoming Christians than older people. So it seems probable that the greater openness of older people to becoming Christian might be even greater than suggested by the odds. However, this is based on a subjective estimate of evangelistic effort to reach older and younger people. More research would be needed to effectively quantify the evangelistic efforts targeting older people and youth.

Hypothesis 16.1.: Non-students are less likely to become Protestant Christians than university students.

This hypothesis claims that people are especially likely to become Christians during their student years. This is not the same as hypothesis 13, which stated that people with a higher education are more likely to become Christian. It is based on claims made by Christian workers in Thailand with experience among students.

This hypothesis can be tested by looking at the age of conversion of new Christians with a university degree. The 18-24 bracket can be compared with other age brackets within the same group, and the groups with and without a university degree can also be compared per age bracket.

The survey data show that among Bachelor degree holders 34.2% became Christian between 18 and 24 years of age. Among people without a degree this was only 17.6%.

It was deemed possible that the outcome was influenced by age effects, because people who did not become Christians as students have a medium conversion age of 31. Yet when only respondents aged 40 and over were taken into account, the same difference persisted. People with a university degree are significantly more likely to have become Christian in the age bracket 18-24 than people without a degree. The hypothesis is accepted.

When the earlier finding that the odds that a degree holder becomes a Christian rather than someone who has studied no higher than Grade 4 were 5.1, are also taken into account, the odds that a student becomes Christian are 10.8 times those of a 18-24 year old with no more than Grade 4.

Hypothesis 16.2.: Non-students are less likely to become Protestant Christians than university students given the same opportunity.

Under hypothesis 13 it was found that there is little reason to assume that the greater probability of people with a higher education to become Christians also reflects a greater openness to convert. Likewise the popularity of student work could explain the greater odds for students even over other people with a high education. Many missionaries work in student ministries. Several organizations, like Campus Crusade and Thai Christian Students, are mainly working with university students. Many urban church plants are focussing on students. So it seems obvious that students are overtargeted by Christian ministries. Yet there seems little support in the data for

this idea. About the same percentage of converts among students was converted through the influence of parents and other relatives (not including children and spouses) as among the general first generation Christian population. But the number of converts among them is higher. The odds that parents and relatives influence students to become Christians are 2.4 times greater than during the rest of their lives. The hypothesis is accepted.

This is an interesting finding, because it goes against the conclusion drawn above that older people are more likely to become Christians. This is a validation of student ministry that is working under the assumption that the student years are a window of special opportunity.

Hypothesis 17.1.: People who did not recently experience a major disruption in their life are less likely to become Protestant Christians than people who did experience a major disruption.

This is a general hypothesis that is best reviewed together with the other form of the hypothesis, namely:

Hypothesis 17.2.: People who did not recently experience a major disruption in their life are less likely to become Protestant Christians than people who did experience a major disruption given the same opportunity.

Both hypothesis 17.1 and 17.2 are deduced directly from control theory, which says that people will conform to the conventional social order as long as they have powerful bonds to it.²²

These hypotheses include hypotheses 5, 12.1, and 12.2. Hypotheses 12.1. and 12.2 were accepted, and a qualified version of hypothesis 5 as well. So it is justified to provisionally accept hypotheses 17.1 and 17.2 as well. Acceptance of 17.1. is connected to the greater chance of people connecting with Christians when they are in a crisis situation because of the well-documented social care given by Christians. Acceptance of 17.2. points towards the likelihood that crises turn people into religious seekers and, possibly even more important, that social control structures which in normal situations prevent most people from converting to another religion, are losing their strength during or after a crisis.

It would be good to include other major disruptions (marriage, birth of a child, divorce, new job, death of a family member) in future research. That would make it possible to change this container hypothesis into predictions for more specific situations.

5.4. Distance

The fourth factor in the model of conversion church growth proposed in this study is the distance between church and potential new Christians. Common sense suggests there is a relationship between the proximity of a church and the chance of becoming a Christian. Because the distance to the church became part of the theoretical framework towards the end of the research process, a separate telephone survey

²² Bainbridge, p. 182.

among 97 churches was done to test the hypotheses in this paragraph (see appendix 4.1. for the survey questions and appendix 4.2. for their English translation). Regrettably, it was not possible to link the data from this survey with the other survey data.

In the design of the survey a distinction was made between the four levels of governance in Thailand below the national level: province, district, subdistrict and village. When the data were analyzed it became clear that the subdistrict was not a helpful level of analysis. There was no difference between churches in villages that are the seat of a subdistrict and churches in other villages. Therefore, these two categories were combined.

Hypothesis 18: People in a village with a church are more likely to become Christians than people in a village without a church.

This hypothesis is a straightforward deduction from subculture theory,²³ and seems self-evident. A more interesting question is how strong the relationship is between living in a village with a church and becoming a Christian. This was tested by checking how many people in churches live in the village or town where the church is located, and how many come from other villages. These numbers were combined with the total number of Christians known from the research. This results in an estimate of 7.0% Protestant Christians in villages with a church, and a maximum of 0.1% Protestant Christians in villages without a church. The 0.1% is a maximum, because it assumes all Christians who travel from outside a village or town to church are living in villages without a church.

Therefore the odds of a Thai living in a village with a church becoming a Christian are at least 84 times greater than the odds of someone living in a village without a church. The hypothesis is accepted. The extra hypothesis (people in a village with a church are more likely to become Christians than people in a village without a church given the same opportunity) in this case obviously makes no sense. Other than the presence of the church there is no difference between the two groups. It is clear that it is not the openness of the population, but the presence of the church that makes the difference. This suggests that there is openness among ethnic Thai for the number of Protestant Christians to grow to at least 7%.

Hypothesis 19: People in a district with a church are more likely to become Christians than people in a district without a church.

This hypothesis is structurally the same as hypothesis 17, and can be tested in the same way. The only difference is that 'village' has been substituted with 'district'. Districts have an average of about 67,500 inhabitants.

It proved difficult to get reliable telephonic information for the number of members living in a district other than the district where their church is located. That makes testing this hypothesis difficult. If all the church members living in villages without a church would also live in districts without a church, the percentage of Christians for districts with and districts without a church would be about the same (0.3%). To anybody familiar with the situation of the rural church in Thailand, however, it is clear that a large majority of these people are living in the same district as the church. Furthermore, a large majority of the ones living in another district still

²³ Bainbridge, p. 182-184.

live in a district with a church as the majority of Christians live in areas where (almost all) surrounding districts have churches as well. If 10% of the 36,000 ethnic Thai Christians who live in villages without a church are living in districts without a church, the odds of people living in a district with a church becoming a Christian are 9 times higher than for people living in a district without a church. 10% probably is still too high an estimate. 2% might be closer. In that case, the odds would be 46 times higher. The hypothesis is accepted, though more research would be needed to get a more reliable calculation of the odds.

5.5. Communication

The fifth factor in the proposed model of becoming Christian is the communication process between the church and the potential convert. How to communicate the Christian message is a prime concern of churches and Christians. Many hypotheses have been proposed either in general literature or in studies on the church in Thailand, or are ‘floating around’ the Christian community in Thailand.

In this study, the communication factor is subdivided into four groups. The first group is hypotheses concerning the effectiveness of various communicators of the Christian message. The second group consists of hypotheses about the effectiveness of various communication methods. The third group contains the hypotheses about effectiveness of communication means or media. The last group mentions the hypotheses about noise in communication taking place and how that affects the communication of the Christian message.

5.5.1. Communicators

Since conversion overwhelmingly takes place within social networks, the question as to who are the most effective communicators of the Christian message is a very relevant one. The next group of hypotheses delves into this issue.

Hypothesis 20: Parents are more effective evangelists than children.

The issue addressed in this hypothesis is suggested by the model used in this study. As a result of the respect that children owe their parents in Thai culture, it is hypothesized that it is hard for children to convince parents to become Christians, while it is easier for parents to convince children.

The following table shows the results of the survey among church members regarding the influence of parents and children. Table 26 shows the percentage of first generation Christians that lists a parent or a child as the most important influence in their conversion.

Table 26. First generation Christians influenced by parents and children

Influenced by	Parent	Child	Other
Percentage	12.4	4.0	83.6

N=1219

Source: own research.

The average conversion age of someone influenced by a parent is 18 years, while for someone influenced by a child it is 50 years. Assuming that people on average have

the health to attend church until age 70, a correction factor of 2.6 should be applied. This means that the odds that someone will be influenced by a parent to become a Christian are 1.2 greater than that he will be influenced by a child. The hypothesis is accepted, but it is a marginal finding. The number of converts who are influencing their children to become Christians (usually before the children turn 40) is not much higher than the number of converts influencing their parents to become Christians (usually after the parents turn 40).

Hypothesis 21: Wives are more effective evangelists than husbands.

This hypothesis is based on a study by Mary Cook. She claimed that the wife is the leader in religious affairs in the family, and that it is therefore easier for wives to convince their husbands to become Christians than the other way around (though she writes that this would not be true for Northeastern families).²⁴

In the survey, as high a percentage of men as women mention their spouse as the main influence in becoming a Christian. Among converts with a Christian spouse, the number of people who say the husband was the first to become Christian is almost exactly the same as the number saying the wife was first. Yet there is one significant difference. While 38% of married female converts have a spouse who is not a Christian, only 13% of married male converts have. It could still be possible that this is because female converts who are not married yet cannot find a spouse because of a shortage of men and end up marrying a non-Christian. Further analysis of the data reveals that this is not the case. When only the people who became Christians after the age of 30 are taken into account, the findings are similar: 13% of married men have a non-Christian spouse, while the same is true of 30% of married women. So husbands are 1.2 times more effective evangelists than wives; or more strikingly, the chance that a wife has not yet influenced her husband to become Christian, is 2.3 times greater than the chance that a husband has not yet influenced his wife to become Christian. The hypothesis is rejected, and the opposite is accepted: Husbands are more effective evangelists than wives.

The most remarkable outcome, though, might be the high percentage of cases where a spouse becomes Christian if the other spouse converts first. In 69% of all cases when wives became Christian first, their husbands followed (also 69% when only the women who became Christian after age 30 are counted). The same is true for 88% of all cases when husbands became Christian first (82% when only the men who became Christian after age 30 are counted). Another remarkable outcome is that there is often a considerable time gap between the conversion of two spouses. While 37.5% of the respondents said husband and wife became Christian at the same time, and another 11.4% within one year of each other, for the rest it took longer. In 28.6% of the cases there was a period of between one and ten years between the conversion of the two spouses, and in 22.6% of the cases conversion was even more than 10 years apart. This last percentage partly reflects the fact that some respondents married someone born in a Christian family. However, this can only be a very small number since the number of converts that had been Christians longer than their spouse is about the same as the number whose spouses had been Christians longer.

²⁴ Mary Cook, *Strategies and Tactics*, (privately published), 2005, p. 17.

The numbers become even more poignant when it is taken into account that over half of all respondents from non-Christian families have been Christians for less than 10 years, so that the eventual percentage of spouses who will become a Christian more than 10 years after their husband or wife is even higher. Eventually probably close to 90% of all husbands and well over 90% of all wives will become Christians.

Hypothesis 22: Relatives are more effective evangelists than friends.

This hypothesis is based on the importance of family and relatives as 'bridges of God', as was already emphasized in the first Church Growth publication.²⁵ This seems to be applicable to Thai people. Deep friendships are rare; the bond between relatives is strong.

This thesis was tested using data from the church member survey. The percentages of new Christians who were mainly influenced by relatives and by friends were compared.

The survey showed that for 40.3% of all converts a relative (including spouse) was the most influential person in their conversion, while for only 10.6% a friend was most important. This is a statistically significant difference. The hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 23: Older people are more effective evangelists than younger people.

This hypothesis comes from reflection on the model proposed in this study. As a result of the honour given to age in Thailand, older people are expected to be more effective evangelists. Some pastors and missionaries, however, argue that youth have more spare time than people with job and family responsibilities and are therefore more active and effective in church activities and in evangelism. Table 27 gives the survey findings on this subject which settle the issue.

²⁵ Donald McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, New York, 1955.

Table 27. Age of Christians and effectiveness as evangelists

Age	Percentage of respondents influenced by evangelists from this age bracket	Percentage of respondents in this age bracket	Effectiveness as evangelist
<10	1.7		
10-14	1.2	6.6	0.19
15-19	4.0	10.0	0.40
20-24	8.1	9.5	0.85
25-29	7.7	9.3	0.83
30s	21.7	18.1	1.20
40s	22.7	17.4	1.30
50s	16.4	13.1	1.25
60s	16.5	15.9	1.04

N=2033

Source: own research.

The hypothesis is accepted. The most effective evangelists are over 30 years of age. There is little difference in effectiveness from age 30-59. The 60+ bracket is slightly less effective, yet more effective than Christians younger than 30.

Hypothesis 24: New Christians are more effective evangelists than people who have been Christians for a long time.

This hypothesis is based on Hayward's contention that recent converts are the main drivers of continuing conversion.²⁶ New Christians are likely to have more non-Christian relatives and friends than older Christians and, therefore, are in a better position to proclaim the Christian message. A second reason that is mentioned as a reason for the theorized greater effectiveness of new Christians is that new Christians, especially in the first few years after becoming Christian, are more enthusiastic about the faith than older Christians.

Regrettably, it is very difficult to directly test this hypothesis. The survey questions used in this survey were not sufficient to give an equivocal answer. Two things of interest can be noted though. First, while it is true that new Christians have more non-Christian friends than people who have been Christians longer, the difference is not huge. People who have been Christians less than one year only have, on average, 2.0 Christians among their five closest friends. That number grows slowly. For people who have been Christians for 30 to 39 years, the average is 3.0. But since it was found that friends only play a minor role in influencing people to become Christians, this is probably not a very important finding. The negative correlation that was

²⁶ John Hayward, "A Dynamic Model of Church Growth and Its Application to Contemporary Revivals", in: *Review of Religious Research*, 43:3 (2002), pp. 218-241.

found between AACGR and number of Christian friends, though significant, was not important.

Secondly, the survey found that people who were born into a Christian family were slightly less likely to have evangelized anyone in the past month (28%) than people who were born into a non-Christian family (22%). Among Christians born into a non-Christian family, almost no difference in evangelistic activities was found between those who had been Christians longer than 10 years and those who had been Christians less than 10 years. The respondents who had been Christians for less than 2 years were less active in evangelizing than the others. While level of activity cannot be equated with effectiveness, it is remarkable that the supposed greater enthusiasm of new Christians for the faith cannot be found in the number of people evangelized.

The hypothesis is neither accepted nor rejected because of the lack of relevant data. There is some indication that new Christians might not be more effective, but more research is needed.

Hypothesis 25: Thai church workers are more effective evangelists than missionaries, who are, in turn, more effective evangelists than Thai lay Christians.

This hypothesis is based on Keyes theory that one of the things that prevent the growth of Christianity in Thailand is its perceived foreignness.²⁷ This idea is also widespread among pastors and missionaries in Thailand. One of the most common assumptions is that Thai nationals are more effective evangelists than foreigners. The hypothesis is often posed in general form: Thai Christians are more effective evangelists than missionaries. Taking into account that missionaries may be assumed to be more enthusiastic in evangelism than an average church member, and that missionaries are doing church work full time while most lay members have another job, it seems helpful to divide the Thai Christians in two categories. The hypothesis is that Thai church workers are more effective evangelists than missionaries, but that missionaries are more effective than Thai lay Christians.

The part that states that Thai church workers are more effective evangelists than Thai lay Christians is another example of a hypothesis that, though not logically necessary, is self-evident. It would be extremely surprising to find that church workers, who have more time to evangelize than church members, and may be expected to be among the most committed Christians, are not more effective in evangelism than lay Christians. So once again the question is not whether there is a correlation, but how strong the correlation is.

The different parts of these hypotheses can be tested using data from the church members' survey and the Thai churches database. In chapter 4.3.1. a conversion growth rate of 3.5% was calculated, which on the total ethnic Thai Protestant population of 186,554 means 6,529 converts. What this means for the evangelistic effectiveness of the various groups can be read from Table 28.

²⁷ Keyes, p. 277.

Table 28. Effectiveness of evangelism by Thai pastors, missionaries, and lay Christians

	Number	Influenced percentage converts from the last 5 years	Number of converts per year	Average converts per year	Effectiveness Ratio
Thai pastor	2,500	26.2	1711	0.68	28
Missionary	1,000	4.0	261	0.26	11
Lay person	184,054	69.8	4558	0.025	1
Total	187,554	100	6529		

N=2033

Source: own research.

The hypothesis is accepted. As expected, the found order is: Thai pastors are more effective evangelists than missionaries, who are more effective evangelists than Thai lay Christians.

There is a clear difference between Thai pastors and missionaries. However, it should be noted that not all missionaries are directly involved in church work. A partial list of missionaries that the author compiled showed that only slightly over half of all registered missionaries worked in a church. So the actual difference between missionaries in church work and Thai pastors is small. Whatever difference may exist between Thai pastors and missionaries, it is dwarfed by the difference between full-time ministers and lay Christians. It is interesting to note that, though converts per lay person are so low compared to converts per full time minister, the total conversion is still 70% lay-driven.

5.5.2. Communication methods

Communication methods are hotly debated. The main discussion is the relative importance of content and of relationships in the communication process.

Hypothesis 26: The life example of Christians is more effective in evangelism than their testimony, which in turn is more effective than Bible study, which in turn is more effective than sermons.

This hypothesis is deduced from subculture theory.²⁸ If social contacts are the main way that people influence each other, personal relationships (life example and personal testimony) should be more effective than content-focused activities (Bible study and sermon). Personal testimony is more content-based than life example, which leads to the expectation that life example is more effective. Sermons are less dialogical and therefore less personal than Bible studies, which leads to the expectation that Bible studies are the more effective of the two. Table 29 gives the survey data on these subjects.

²⁸ Bainbridge, p. 182-184.

Table 29. The importance of 4 experiences in conversion

Experience	Percentage of converts mainly influenced by it	Odds
Personal testimony	26	2.4
Bible study	20	1.8
Life example	16	1.5
Sermon	11	1.0

N=1180

Source: own research.

The numbers in the table do not add up to 100%, because ‘miracle’ and ‘other’ were possible answers to the same question. The hypothesis is accepted for the importance of personal testimony over Bible study and of Bible study over sermon. The hypothesis is rejected for the paramount importance of life example. The true order of importance is: personal testimony, Bible study, life example, and sermon. This confirms the importance of social relationships over one-way communication, but at the same time shows that communication of content is of paramount importance if religious conversion is to take place in the context of social relationships.

While there are obvious differences between the importance of the four experiences in influencing people to become Christians, it has to be said that all four played the most important role for at least 10% of all new Christians. Analysis of the data revealed an interesting difference between new Christians and Christians born into Christian families. The numbers given above are for new Christians. Remarkably, for Christians born into Christian families one experience was almost 3 times more prevalent than the next one: for 41% Bible study was the most important experience influencing them to become Christians.

5.5.3. Media

A lot of resources are spent on different Christian media. No research was done to determine the amount of time and money spent on these ministries. This means that the effectiveness of the various media can only be measured absolutely, and not relative to the input into each of them.

Hypothesis 27: Printed media are more effective in evangelism than other media.

This hypothesis is deduced from subculture theory, and reinforced by earlier research (see chapter 4.3.). Printed media (books and tracts) are most often used in personal relationships (though this is more true for books than for tracts), while other media (television and radio) are less personal and therefore less likely to influence people.

This hypothesis was tested using data from the church member survey. The percentages of new Christians for whom each of the four media types had been most important were compared. Table 30 presents the survey data.

Table 30. The importance of media in conversion

Media	Percentage of converts mainly influenced by it	Odds
Book	43	14
Tract	17	6
Radio	3	1
Television	7	2
None	30	

N=1288

Source: own research

This result is one of the most remarkable of this research. It confirms, to an amazing degree, the notion that printed media are more effective than television and radio. Christian books are mentioned 14 times more often than Christian radio, and even the often maligned tracts are mentioned 6 times more often. Even though many pastors and missionaries say that Thai people do not like to read and do not emphasize the importance of printed media, these results show that the printed media combined are 6 times more influential than the other media. That television is more influential than radio is also remarkable because Christian radio has a much stronger presence in Thailand than Christian television.

Unpublished research in Kazakhstan showed the same importance of printed media.²⁹ This might indicate that the findings in this research project about the importance of printed media also have relevance outside Thailand.

Two remarks need to be made about this hypothesis. Video was mistakenly not listed as a medium. It is therefore to be expected that some of the respondents who answered 'television' actually meant video. It is also not possible to factor out the influence of the widely used 'Jesus-film' from the data. However, because the Jesus-film is almost exclusively used on video, it is to be expected that its influence is included in the television percentage. Because the 7% of converts influenced by television also includes Christian television programmes and other Christian videos, it is a safe conclusion that the influence of the Jesus-film is extremely small.

The astoundingly frequent mention of books raises the question how often respondents meant the Bible and correspondence courses. In follow-up research this distinction should be made.

The hypothesis is accepted. Printed media are more effective in evangelism than other media. An interesting question for the future will be the impact of internet evangelism.

5.5.4. Noise in communication

Communication is a difficult process. Often the receiver does not hear what the sender tries to get across. This problem is notorious in communicating the Christian message as well. In Thailand the problem might even be especially challenging because of the deep differences between a Theravada Buddhist and a Christian worldview. Research in this area is important to understand the obstacles to conversion in Thailand. At the same time it is a subject that is not easily studied in surveys, but is

²⁹ Pieter Versloot, *EP Qualitative Research Report*, (unpublished paper), 2007.

better suited for qualitative research. For this reason this study features just one hypothesis in this important category.

Hypothesis 28: Setting high standards for admission as church members is less likely to convince people to become Christians than accepting low standards.

This hypothesis is deduced from Donald McGavran's emphasis on people movements.³⁰ People movements only seem possible when churches are willing to accept people as members whose knowledge of the Christian faith is still limited and whose lifestyle does not yet show the Christian ideals. Some pastors and missionaries claim that having a low standard, and therefore accepting people into the church who are not good examples of how Christians should live, is a reason that other people do not become Christians. A stronger strain in missiology follows McGavran in suggesting that high standards are detrimental to the growth of the church, and that it is better to accept people first and teach them about the Christian life afterwards. This is not just a strategic, but also a theological discussion, and how each church answers this question will therefore mainly be dependent on how they answer the theological question. In this study only the influence on the growth of the church is measured.

This hypothesis was tested by checking whether or not churches with a long time lapse between the moment of becoming Christian and the moment of baptism have a lower growth rate than churches with a short time lapse between these two moments. This is a valid way of testing the hypothesis, because baptizing soon after conversion implies that new members do not have to conform to a high standard, while baptizing after a long time implies the opposite. A negative correlation ($r = -.203^*$) was found between AACGR and the number of months before a new Christian is baptized. The hypothesis is accepted. How this works out for various categories can be seen in Table 31.

Table 31. Time between conversion and baptism and AACGR

Time between conversion and baptism	Average AACGR	Correlation with AACGR	N
0-3 months	6.4%	.214*	26
4-6 months	4.6%	ns	30
7-12 months	5.8%	ns	16
More than 12 months	3.5%	-.179 (marginally significant)	9

N=84

Source: own research.

5.6. Perceived direct intervention by God

The sixth and last factor in the model of church growth presented in this chapter is perceived direct intervention by God.

³⁰ McGavran, p. 335-336.

Hypothesis 29: Perceived miracles are as important in bringing people to a decision to become Christians as experiences within social relationships.

This hypothesis is based on Edwin Zehner's observation that experience of God's power, whether it is through healing, answered prayer, or exorcism, is an important theme in the conversion stories of Thai Christians, on par with the love experienced either from God or from Christians.³¹

This hypothesis was tested using the data from the church member survey. In one question church members were asked to choose whether a miracle, Bible study, a sermon, personal testimony of a Christian, the life example of a Christian, or something else had the most influence in deciding to become a Christian. The answer to this question serves to give insight into the importance of perceived miracles for the growth of the church. The data reveal that miracles were the most important experience for 21% of all people who became Christians, but that the rest of the respondents listed experiences with a clear setting within social relationships (personal testimony, life example, Bible study, and sermon; see hypothesis 26). The hypothesis is therefore rejected. Perceived miracles play a decisive role for a significant minority, but experiences directly set in social relationships are decisive for four times as many people.

Interestingly, no significant difference was found between the percentage of members in CCT, non-charismatic evangelical, and charismatic churches that reported a miracle was the most important experience in convincing them to become Christian. This suggests an interesting new research direction. The first question is whether the generally held conviction that Pentecostal churches emphasize miracles more than others is correct, and how a theology of miracles functions in charismatic and in other churches. The second question would be, if this indeed is the case, why do charismatics not report higher relative levels of miracles contributing to conversion than other churches.

Zehner offers an explanation why miracles might not be the important influence that could be expected from casual observation of the amount of times that Thai Christians pray for and talk about miracles.³² He notes that Christianity is but one of the many sources of supernatural power. A miracle does not necessarily forge an exclusive bond to Christianity, especially if it is not replicated. Several of his informants said that many people converted after a dramatic healing, but that most drift away after some time.

The findings from the survey used in this study strongly suggest that the point is not that people drift away from the Christian faith, but that Christians talk about 'converts' when they should be talking about 'people displaying an interest in the Christian faith'. Among people committed enough to faithfully attend church, the reversion claimed to happen among people who converted after being influenced by a miracle, is not substantiated by the data. Among people who converted in the last year, 21% were influenced by a miracle, exactly the same percentage as among all converts. This seems to give an empirical reason to limit the term 'convert' to people attending church and not to extend it to everybody who has shown some interest in Christianity, e.g. by praying a conversion prayer.

³¹ Zehner, 2003, pp. 152-245.

³² Zehner, 2003, pp. 163-164.

5.7. Final observations

This chapter looked at what kind of people are converting to Protestant Christianity, and how. It proved to be hard to find contextual factors that lend themselves easily to statistical analysis, though some conclusions could be drawn. People in societies characterized by non-linear thinking, traditional religions, and social upheaval that can be addressed by Christian care are more likely to convert.

The analysis of differences in personal background pointed towards significant differences in the probability to convert. Some of these were expected, like the outcome that women are more likely to become Christian than men, migrants more than non-migrants, and students more than non-students. One difference was expected, but was stunning in magnitude: relatives of Christians are about 700 times more likely to become Christians than people who do not have Christian relatives. Others were contrary to popular belief, like the conclusion that old people are more likely to become Christians than young people, and people in North Thailand less likely to become Christians than in the rest of the country (though there was a methodological problem connected to this conclusion).

An important finding was that often the conversion probability does not say a lot about the conversion probability given the same opportunity. Urban people, high educated people, and Sino-Thai are all more likely to become Christians than their counterparts, while there is no indication that they are more open to the Christian message. This points to either more Christian work among a group (probably urban and high educated people) or to a greater openness to the Christian message in the past (probably Sino-Thai).

Several findings point towards the importance of personal relationships, and therefore to the limited effectiveness of impersonal ways to evangelize. It was already noted in this paragraph that ethnic Thai with Christian relatives are hundreds of times more likely to become Christians than others. A comparable finding was done when the factor distance to a church was researched. People living in a village with a church are almost 100 times more likely to become Christians.

Analyzing the communication process between Christian churches and potential converts also pointed to the importance of personal relationships. 70% of all converts say that the main influence in their conversion was not a church leader, but a lay person. Finally, the effectiveness of printed media, which are fit to use within a social network, over non-printed media, which are more impersonal in nature, points in the same direction.

CHAPTER 6 CHURCH GROWTH

6.1. Introduction

In chapter 5 the focus was on factors that influenced individuals to convert to Protestant Christianity. The last remaining factor from the model presented in this study is the church. The factors reviewed in chapter 5 all addressed the probability that a person would convert to Protestant Christianity. The church factor is reviewed separately in this chapter because it is used in a slightly different way. Its connection to conversion probability is clear: some churches win many converts, some churches win none. However, the question addressed in this chapter is not conversion probability of the individual, but how church factors influence conversion growth of the church. In this chapter the Average Annual Conversion Growth Rate (AACGR; see chapter 1.2.5.) of a church will be an important measure to test hypotheses.

Studies in the field of sociology of religion often focus on one religious group and zoom in on personal characteristics of the potential convert and on the communication process between the group and the potential convert. There is often little interest in the characteristics of the religious group looking for new members. In Church Growth studies, however, the importance of the church is often stressed to the extent that the other factors are not taken into account at all. This study shows that both approaches are too narrow. From chapter 5 it became clear that church characteristics are certainly not the only factor in conversion. Yet they potentially play an important role, and this chapter is devoted to exploring that.

Because of the large number of hypotheses about the church factor, a subdivision was made into identity, people, and organization factors. Christian Schwarz's eight scales to analyze churches¹ are used within that framework. Theology has been added as an extra factor. This results in the following subdivision: identity consists of spirituality and theology; people consist of relationships, member ministry, and leadership; and organization consists of structure, worship service, small groups, and evangelism.

Before continuing to present the hypotheses about the church, it needs to be pointed out that two main recommendations coming from the Church Growth movement will not be encountered in this chapter. The first recommendation is to 'focus on the receptive'. This recommendation is foundational to Church Growth theory, but it should be noted that this is a theological statement which should be decided on theological grounds. Once the premise is accepted that the church should aim to grow numerically, the recommendation to focus on the receptive becomes a truism. There is neither need nor possibility to test it statistically. Receptivity can only be measured by how many people become Christians after a given amount of evangelistic activity. Therefore, the hypothesis 'churches that focus on receptive segments of society grow faster than other churches' does not make statistical sense, because it is based on a circular argument: churches grow because people are becoming Christians, and the group they are working among is receptive because peo-

¹ Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural church development: a Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*, Carol Stream, 1996.

ple are becoming Christians. The interesting point is not whether focussing on receptive segments of society leads to growth of the church, but whether that kind of strategic thinking is called for in Christian mission, and if so, which segments are receptive. The hypotheses about personal background (see paragraph 5.3.) addressed that last question.

The same point can be made about another important recommendation from the Church Growth movement: 'foster people movements'. It is an important insight that rapid church growth most often takes place through people movements, in which groups as a body decide to become Christians. But the hypothesis 'churches that foster people movements grow faster than other churches' does not have much meaning, because it is saying that 'churches in which large groups of people are becoming members, get more new members than churches in which that does not happen'. The interesting point is not whether people movements make the church grow, but how people movements come into existence. All six factors reviewed in this study need to be taken into account to start answering that question.

A basic conviction within the Church Growth movement is 'churches with a gifted pastor grow'. This is based on a circular argument, because the pastors are considered gifted because the churches they lead are growing. So this statement can also not be tested as a hypothesis. The question is not whether gifted pastors help their churches to grow, but what pastors of growing churches do to help their churches grow.

As in chapter 5, for those hypotheses with significant findings, the correlation between a variable and AACGR will be given and presented in tables. These numbers are not given for the rejected hypotheses, because in those cases no significant difference was found. This means that variation within a variable is random and there is no reason to report it.

6.2. Identity

The first issue that influences the capacity of a church to grow is its identity both in a spiritual (heart) and theological (head) sense. These are immensely important issues for churches. The spiritual life of Christians is about their connection to God. Authentic Christianity is not possible without spiritual life, and much of the activities of churches are focused on building the faith of their members so that they have authentic Christian spirituality.

Theology is the systematization of thoughts about God and the Christian faith. Differences in opinion on theology have led to different branches and denominations in Christianity. In this paragraph the question is not how Christian spirituality should be lived out nor what the right theological position is on various points. Rather, the question is how spirituality and theology influence church growth.

6.2.1. Spirituality

A church is a community of believers. Whether they are faithful to God and to his Word, that is to say their spiritual life, determines the quality of the church. It is an interesting question whether the quality of the spiritual life of the church has an impact on the growth of the church. Several hypotheses have been suggested.

Hypothesis 30: Churches with spiritually immature members attract less new Christians than churches with spiritually mature members.

This hypothesis is based on Christian Schwarz's thesis that spiritual maturity of the church members is one of the factors that predicts church growth.² It is difficult to measure spiritual maturity in a survey. Protestant Christians agree that the core of the Christian message is 'salvation by grace through faith'. One open question in the survey asked respondents to state what the core of the Christian message is. The respondents who, in whatever wording, mentioned salvation or the existence of God were, for the purpose of testing this hypothesis, counted as being spiritually mature. No correlation between acceptable wording of the core of the Christian faith and AACGR was found.

A church that is very successful in attracting new Christians precisely for that reason might have a high percentage of spiritually immature members. Therefore the hypothesis was also tested controlling for the number of years that the respondents had been Christians, and for being born in a Christian family. This did not change the outcome.

The data from the NCD survey indicate the same. All statements about spirituality (e.g. "I enjoy reading the Bible", "times of prayer are inspiring to me") had no meaningful correlation with church growth (in all cases $-0.1 < r < 0.1$; see appendix 11 for an overview of all NCD variables). Interestingly, in all but one of the cases the correlation between church growth and spirituality was even slightly negative. The hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 31: Churches where members do not pray much attract more new Christians than churches where members pray a lot..

This hypothesis is based on Garrison's statement that one characteristic of a church planting movement (and therefore of churches with many new Christians) is that the members pray a lot.³ The church member survey did not include a question about prayer, but the NCD survey did. The statement "I pray for my friends, colleagues and relatives who do not yet know Jesus Christ, that they will come to faith" is not meaningfully (but is slightly negatively) correlated with church growth. So the hypothesis is rejected. It is not possible to statistically prove God is answering these prayers. Furthermore, it indicates that the desire people have for non-Christian relatives and friends to become Christians does not influence the probability that these people will actually convert. This seems an unlikely outcome, and further research would be helpful to make sure this finding is valid.

Hypothesis 32: Liberal churches attract less new Christians than evangelical churches.

² Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*, Carol Stream, 1996.

³ David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is redeeming a lost world*, Midlothian, 2004, p. 172.

This hypothesis is based on Kelley's work.⁴ That conservative churches are the growing ones was already long suspected among evangelicals. After Kelley's publication it became established fact, and more well-known among sociologists. The notion is not surprising. It would not even be too strong to say that this hypothesis is self-evident. A well-known definition of an evangelical is someone who emphasizes the following:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ as the sole source of salvation through faith in Him.
2. Personal faith and conversion with regeneration by the Holy Spirit.
3. A recognition of the inspired Word of God as the only basis for faith and Christian living.
4. Commitment to biblical witness, evangelism and mission that brings others to faith in Christ.⁵

Evangelicals confess Jesus Christ as sole source of salvation through faith, liberals do not. Therefore evangelicals have an internal drive to evangelize, while liberals do not. Commitment to evangelism is even part of the definition of being an evangelical, while evangelism is something liberals normally eschew. So it would be remarkable indeed if a community that does not hold to the necessity of repentance and faith and does not emphasize evangelism would attract more new Christians than one that does both.

In Thailand there are a few liberal theologians and pastors in the Presbyterian districts of the CCT, but it is doubtful one could find even one single church in which the membership holds liberal views. How far removed liberal Christianity is removed from the Thai church situation becomes clear from the NCD data. In the worldwide survey of NCD there is a question that asks whether a church is liberal. But the Thai version does not even have a meaningful translation for the word. It is impossible to statistically test this hypothesis.

The fact that there are no liberal denominations and hardly any liberal churches can be taken as a confirmation of this hypothesis on a global scale. Most of the denominations were started by missionaries from abroad, and 100% of them were evangelical (not counting cults) and 0% were liberal. This confirms that evangelical Protestantism attracts more new Christians than liberal Protestantism, and the reason is clear: evangelicals try harder. The hypothesis is accepted as a general rule, though not applicable to the Thai church situation because there are no liberal churches.

6.2.2. Theology

While spirituality is the experience a believer has in his relationship with God, theology is thinking through the tenets of the faith. Different traditions have come to different answers for theological questions. Some of the most often discussed theological positions were addressed in the church survey.

Hypothesis 33: Churches that practice believers' baptism attract more new Christians than churches that practice infant baptism.

⁴ Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*, New York, 1972.

⁵ Johnstone, Patrick, and Jason Mandryk, *Operation World*, Carlisle, 2001, p. 756; based on David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, London, 1989.

This hypothesis became part of this study based on reflection triggered by the conversion model proposed in this study. One of the more contentious theological issues between protestant churches has been whether infants should be baptized, or that only people who can articulate a personal faith should be baptized. In Thailand most older Protestant churches practice infant baptism, because they belong to the Presbyterian tradition. Most churches that belong to the EFT practice believers' baptism. In EFT circles it is sometimes argued that believers' baptism is likely to positively influence church growth. It emphasizes a personal choice and personal responsibility, and therefore would less likely lead to nominal Christians.

This hypothesis was tested by looking at the correlation between infant baptism and AACGR. The church sample gives a negative correlation ($r = -.137$) that does not rise to the level of significance. The hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 34: Churches that accept female leaders attract more new Christians than churches that do not accept them.

Like the one above, this hypothesis also originates in reflection on the conversion model. Another point of theological discussion in Protestant churches is whether some New Testament texts that limit certain leadership functions in the church to men are applicable today. Internationally and in Thailand Protestant churches do not agree on this issue.⁶ In this research, 76 of 84 responding churches were found to have women on the church board, and 62 of 83 churches sometimes have female preachers. So women as pastors and elders are accepted among a large majority of Thai Protestant Christians. Several Thai denominations allow women to serve as pastors and elders while the founding missionaries come from denominations where this is not allowed.

It would be interesting to research whether this reflects the lead of the CCT, the responsible position of Thai women in society, or the fact that there is a dearth of active men in many churches. The predicted direction of the relationship between accepting female leaders and growth is positive, because churches that do not accept female leaders, exclude more than half of their membership from leadership positions.

The data show that there is a negative correlation between women in the church board and AACGR ($r = -.227^*$). The correlation between women preaching in the church and AACGR is however not significant. Interestingly, the correlation between women in the church board and female preachers is not very strong ($r = .186^*$). This leads to the conclusion that these two variables together are not good operationalizations of the hypothesis. Therefore the hypothesis is not accepted. At the same time, the finding that churches without women in the church board are growing faster cannot be easily discarded, as becomes clear from Table 32.

⁶ See e.g. Sommat Sathian, *Botbatkhongsatrinaikhrisacakthai, (The role of women in Thai churches)*, B.Th. thesis, Bangkok Bible College and Seminary, Bangkok, 1993.

Table 32. Women on the church board and AACGR

Women on the church board	Average AACGR	Correlation with AACGR	N
Yes	4.8%	-.227*	75
No	9.7%	.227*	8

N=84

Source: own research.

The numbers presented here are an interesting finding, as it negates the popular thought that churches need to have women in ministry because of the shortage of committed men. 4 of 8 churches that do not have women on the church board sometimes have female preachers. This reinforces the thought that it is not a more conservative theology that makes churches with an all-male church board grow faster. It rather seems to be a social phenomenon, though it is not clear how women on the church board negatively influence church growth, while female preachers do not. Two yes or no questions hardly do justice to the whole range of involvement of women in church ministry. A follow-up research project would therefore be useful to find out how exactly male and female leadership roles in churches influence church growth.

Hypothesis 35: Charismatic churches attract more new Christians than non-charismatic churches.

This hypothesis is based on the widely assumed fast growth of charismatic Christianity.⁷ One question in the pastor survey asked whether speaking in tongues is part of church life. This was taken as the marker for charismatic churches. A positive correlation was found between speaking in tongues and AACGR ($r=.202^*$), as can be seen in Table 33.

Table 33. Speaking in tongues and AACGR

Speaking in tongues	Average AACGR	Correlation with AACGR	N
Yes	7.4%	.202*	25
No	4.5%	-.202*	56

N=84

Source: own research.

The survey results showed that in 11 of 66 churches in non-charismatic denominations speaking in tongues was a part of church life. In 2 of 16 churches in charismatic denominations speaking in tongues was not a part of church life. It was found that the correlation between AACGR and being part of a charismatic denomination

⁷ See e.g. David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, "Status of Global Mission", in: *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 32:1 (2008), p.30.

was even stronger than the correlation between AACGR and speaking in tongues ($r=.309^{**}$), as becomes clear from Table 34.

Table 34. Membership of a charismatic denomination and AACGR

Member of a charismatic denomination	Average AACGR	Correlation with AACGR	N
Yes	9.1%	.309**	16
No	4.3%	-.309**	68

N=84

Source: own research.

When the CCT churches are excluded, the above described correlations hold at a lower level, though the correlation between speaking in tongues and AACGR becomes insignificant. This shows that CCT churches, non-charismatic non-CCT churches and charismatic churches are on a continuous scale, with CCT churches having the lowest AACGR, and charismatic churches the highest.

6.3. People

Churches consist of people, therefore church members are an important part of the mix of factors that make churches more or less attractive to potential converts. A church is a community in which many people play a role. Just by being present a church member already contributes something to the atmosphere of a church. How the members are involved in the activities of the church is important as well. Finally, special attention should be paid to the special category of members who fulfill leadership roles. Therefore in the following subparagraphs the relationships between members, the role of the members in ministry, and the role of church leaders will be reviewed.

6.3.1. Relationships

Relationships between church members have many sides, and could be approached from various angles. However, the quality of relationships is a subject that is not easily captured in quantitative research. Therefore this study has only one hypothesis in this category.

Hypothesis 36: Churches with warm relationships between members attract more new Christians than churches without warm relationships.

This hypothesis is based on Schwarz's research findings that churches with a warm atmosphere grow faster than churches in which members do not have warm relationships with each other.⁸ This aspect was not a part of the church member survey, and therefore cannot be tested from the main survey data. The NCD data show that asking other church members over for dinner and being asked over for dinner are both significantly correlated with growth ($r=.093^{**}$ and $.118^{**}$ respectively). The state-

⁸ Schwarz, p. 37.

ment “when someone does a good job in our church I tell them” is also correlated with growth ($r=.100^{**}$). However, the amount of time spent with friends from church; how much the atmosphere in the church is characterized by praise and compliments; and the amount of joy and laughter in church are not significantly correlated with growth.

There also might be a relationship between growth and the pastor statement ‘You would like to see less fights and more forgiveness in the church’ ($r=.194$), though, because of the low number of pastor data in the NCD database, this level of correlation is still not significant. But this statement is hard to interpret. It’s not clear whether people in churches with many fights are more or less likely to agree to this sentiment.

The more ‘outgoing’ variables which traditionally are not valued highly in Thai culture do not seem relevant to church growth. But showing appreciation and the non-verbal form of eating together are relevant. So the hypothesis is accepted, with the caveats that the correlation found is not very strong, and that warm relationships in Thailand do not necessarily take the same form as in other countries.

6.3.2. Member ministry

Not only are the relationships between church members relevant, but also their contribution to the total ministry of the church. Thai church leaders and missionaries often claim that a high level of member involvement in the church will lead to greater growth. Several hypotheses are posed here to research that notion.

Hypothesis 37: Churches with members who often attend church activities attract more new Christians than churches with members who do not often attend..

This hypothesis, like some others before, is deduced from subculture theory. Churches in which membership is an important aspect in the lives of the members could be more successful in attracting new Christians than churches in which membership is not so important. When membership is important, members will attend more church related meeting (or the other way around: when members attend more church related meetings, the church will become more important in their lives). The thought behind this hypothesis is that people who are more active in church are also more likely to evangelize and invite others to become Christians.

This hypothesis was tested by checking whether there is a positive correlation between attending church activities outside the main worship service and AACGR; and whether there is a positive correlation between faithful worship attendance and AACGR. This research found no such correlation, neither among respondents nor weighted for church attendance, with a higher weight assigned to those who attend less, so correction is made towards the whole Christian community. The hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 38: Churches with members who evangelize many people attract more new Christians than churches with members who evangelize few people.

This hypothesis was deduced from Hadaway's finding that evangelism is the most important thing churches can do to grow.⁹ It was tested by checking whether there is a correlation between the number of people evangelized by church members and AACGR. A positive correlation was found between the number of people evangelized and AACGR ($r=.112^{**}$). When different levels of evangelistic activity were compared, a significant negative correlation was found between having not evangelized at all and AACGR, and a positive correlation between several levels of evangelism and AACGR. Moreover, the average AACGR is consistently growing through the different levels of evangelism (see Table 35). The hypothesis is accepted.

Table 35. Evangelism and AACGR

Evangelistic activity	Average AACGR	Correlation with AACGR	N
No evangelism	3.8%	-.132**	399
Evangelized 1	4.5%	NS	197
Evangelized 2	4.7%	.046*	262
Evangelized 3-5	4.9%	.063*	408
Evangelized 6+	5.1%	NS	663

N=2033

Source: own research

Hypothesis 39: Churches that immediately give new believers the opportunity to participate in the ministry of the church attract more new Christians than churches that do not offer that opportunity.

This hypothesis is taken from Garrison's work on church planting movements.¹⁰ He claims that churches with high standards that new Christians have to meet before being allowed to take part in ministry, hamper their own growth.

This hypothesis was tested using the church leader survey data by checking whether there is a correlation between the time lapse between becoming a Christian and receiving baptism, and the growth rate of the church. While this strictly speaking is not the same as measuring whether new Christians are active in ministry or not, the time lapse between becoming Christian and receiving baptism is a good measure of whether or not a church has high standards for new Christians. A church that has high entrance requirements normally will also be hesitant to give ministry responsibility to new Christians. Moreover, in Protestant churches, baptism opens the door to full rights in the church, including the right to be involved in official church ministry.

The survey data on this issue were already presented under hypothesis 28 and confirm the expected relationship. A more direct way of measuring the participation of new believers in the ministry of the church is the statement in the NCD pastor

⁹ C. Kirk Hadaway, "Is Evangelistic Activity Related to Church Growth?", in: *Church and Denominational Growth: What Does (and Does Not) Cause Growth or Decline*, David A. Roozen and C. Kirk Hadaway (eds.), Nashville, 1993, p. 187.

¹⁰ David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World*, Midlothian, 2004, p. 229

questionnaire “We set great importance on integrating newly converted people into evangelistic work”. This statement gave the third strongest correlation with growth among all NCD variables ($r=.423^{**}$). This confirms and reinforces the findings from the survey done for this research project. The hypothesis is accepted.

6.3.3. Leadership

In church growth literature considerable attention is given to the importance of leadership. Several Thai Christian authors follow this pattern.¹¹ But not all conclusions are clear-cut and uncontroversial. The survey data allow for testing how leadership issues affect church growth.

Hypothesis 40: Churches with a Thai pastor attract more new Christians than churches with a missionary as pastor.

This hypothesis is deduced from Charles Keyes’ opinion that the foreignness of Christianity is one of the reasons for its slow growth.¹² It is supported by the thought among Thai pastors and missionaries that Thai nationals are better suited to lead Thai churches than missionaries. The limitations missionaries have in communicating due to their limited ability in the Thai language and their different cultural background means that most observers strongly believe that for churches with a missionary functioning as pastor, it is much more difficult to grow than for churches with a Thai pastor. Table 36 presents the survey data.

Table 36. Missionary and Thai pastors and AACGR

Presence of missionary and pastor	Average AACGR	Correlation with AACGR	N
Only pastor	3.5%	-.295**	37
Pastor and missionary	6.7%	.268**	30
Only missionary	8.2%	NS	4
Neither pastor nor missionary	6.0%	NS	9

N=84

Source: own research.

The survey data do not support the hypothesis. The number of churches with a missionary pastor in the survey was very limited so it is hard to draw firm conclusions. The available data rather point to the opposite of this hypothesis than towards accepting it. The hypothesis is rejected. It is possible though to conclude that churches

¹¹ E.g. Timothy Jeng, *Strategizing Leadership Training in Thailand*, D.Miss. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, 1983; Montri Mangkaew, *Withikaanfuekfonphunamkhrisacakthai*, (How to train leaders for Thai churches), B.Th. thesis, Bangkok Bible College and Seminary, 1992; and Worapong Jariyaphruttipong, *The relationship between Cognitive Styles, Leadership Styles, Preaching Styles, and the Rate of Growth in Thai Churches*, Master thesis, Wheaton College Graduate School, Wheaton, 1988.

¹² Keyes, Charles F., “Why the Thai Are Not Christians: Buddhist and Christian Conversion in Thailand”, in: *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, Berkeley, 1993, p. 277.

where Thai pastors work alongside missionaries grow faster than churches that only have a Thai pastor.

Hypothesis 41: Churches with a large pastoral staff attract more new Christians than churches with a limited pastoral staff.

This hypothesis is based on what Thai pastors often say. Lack of pastoral care and lack of leadership by fulltime pastors is often mentioned as a reason for slow growth of churches. Therefore churches with relatively more pastors and full-time Christian workers can be expected to grow faster. In the sociology of religion it has been proposed that professionalization of the clergy hinders rather than helps church growth.¹³ The theory is clear on how professionalization might prevent church multiplication. It is less clear whether it is also applicable to the growth rate of an individual church. The direction of the relationship in this hypothesis, therefore, is taken from the insights of people with local experience rather than following general theory.

The data show no significant relationship between the existence of Thai pastoral staff, either absolute or relative to the number of members, and AACGR. The hypothesis is rejected. If anything, there is a negative relationship, but it does not reach the level of significance. Further research with a larger sample could turn up more information on this issue. Missionary presence potentially muddles the issue. When only the churches without a missionary are taken into account, no correlation between AACGR and having a pastor was found.

There is a strong possibility, though it does not rise to the level of statistical significance in the sample of 37 cases, that churches with more than one pastor are growing faster than churches with only one pastor, independent of the pastor / member ratio. This would be in line with the finding that churches that have both a pastor and a missionary grow better than churches with only a pastor. So, while having a pastor is not contributing to church growth, once there is pastoral staff, it seems to be better to have more than one. Thai pastors might need a colleague to be effective. Pastors who are the only staff in a church are ineffective to the extent that they are detrimental to church growth, probably because of the disempowerment of church members that occurs when there is professional clergy.

Hypothesis 42: Churches with missionaries attract more new Christians than churches without missionaries.

This hypothesis is based on the thoughts of Thai pastors and missionaries. Missionaries come to Thailand to proclaim the gospel and to help the Thai church prosper. So the assumption shared by most Thai pastors and missionaries that they do what they came to do and indeed help the growth of the denominations they are connected to seems reasonable. It should be noted here that in most cases missionaries are not in the place of Thai pastors, but are working alongside Thai pastors (see Table 35). So this hypothesis emphatically does not compare the effectiveness of Thai nationals and missionaries as pastors, but mainly tests whether missionaries have an added value.

¹³ Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*, Berkeley, 2000, pp. 162-167.

It was found that there is a positive correlation between the presence of missionaries and AACGR ($r=.273^{**}$). The hypothesis is accepted. Whether the reason for the positive correlation is that missionaries contribute significantly to church growth or that missionaries are attracted to growing churches is not clear and would be an interesting subject for further study.

Hypothesis 43: Churches in which pastors have a lot of authority attract more new Christians than churches in which authority is shared among a group of people.

This hypothesis is deduced from the strong strain in studies on the growth of churches that suggests a pivotal role for the (senior) pastor.¹⁴ This leads to the thought that giving pastors the authority to set the direction of the church leads to more growth of the church.¹⁵ Some denominations invest the pastor with a lot of authority, reasoning that the person called by God should have the authority to lead the church as he sees fit. Other denominations opt for a plurality of leadership, arguing that this better reflects the biblical pattern and that it gives better guarantees that the pastor will not lead the church in an unbiblical way. It should be recognized that in the final analysis this, for many people, is a theological issue that cannot be settled by statistics. Testing this hypothesis gives a result as to which of the two options leads to more growth of the church. That is not the same as deciding which option is best.

The survey data show there is a marginally significant positive correlation ($r=.182$) between authoritarian leadership style and AACGR, as can be seen in Table 37.

¹⁴ E.g. C. Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth*, Ventura, 1984.

¹⁵ Jim Hosack, e-mail to author, 12 August 2006.

Table 37. Authority of pastor and AACGR

Leadership style	AACGR	Correlation with AACGR	N
Non-authoritarian	4.8	-.182 (marginally significant)	15
Authoritarian	7.3	.182 (marginally significant)	69

N=84

Source: own research.

The NCD data show the same direction for self-declared authoritarian leadership style, though it does not amount to significance ($r=.222$). The statement “It’s important that church members have as much say in church decisions as possible” is the statement that is most negatively related with growth of all 176 data items ($r=-.450^{**}$). The hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 44: Churches that do not require pastors to have a theological degree attract more new Christians than churches that require a theological degree.

This hypothesis is based on Christian Schwarz’s research that showed that a theological degree for pastors is one of the factors most strongly negatively correlated with the growth of the church.¹⁶ Samuel Kim noted that the requirement for pastors to have a theological degree stifled the growth of the church in Thailand.¹⁷

When this hypothesis was tested, it was tested on the churches that actually had pastors. The findings of Schwarz were not replicated in Thailand. No correlation between AACGR and theological education of the pastor was found. The hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 45: Churches where the founding pastor is still leading the church attract more new Christians than churches where the founding pastor is not leading the church anymore.

This hypothesis is deduced from the importance of the leadership of the senior pastor (see hypothesis 43). Normally, a founding pastor has a level of authority in the church that a successor will never attain. The founding pastor has been with the members and has led them from the beginning. A successor will often struggle to find his place and will find that people follow him less easily than they did the founding pastor. This leads to the thought that churches led by the founding pastor could be growing faster than churches led by others.

The survey data shown in Table 38 reveal a significant positive correlation between growth and the presence of the founding pastor ($r=.362^{**}$).

¹⁶ Schwarz, p. 23.

¹⁷ Samuel Kim, *The unfinished mission in Thailand: The Uncertain Christian Impact on the Buddhist Heartland*, Seoul, 1980.

Table 38. Founding pastor and AACGR

Founding pastor	Average AACGR	Correlation with AACGR	N
Not present	4.1%	-.362**	45
Present	8.0%	.362**	22

N=84

Source: own research.

This correlation becomes only slightly less when controlled for age of the church ($r=.306^*$). The difference in significance when controlling for age suggests that most of the variation in AACGR can be ascribed to a founder effect. The hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 46: Churches in which the pastor is home-grown attract more new Christians than churches in which the pastor came in from the outside.

This hypothesis is deduced from the same principle of the importance of the leadership provided by the senior pastor. It seems logical that it is more difficult for an outsider to get the authority needed to lead the church than for someone who came from within the church. An outsider would often be considered a 'hired help', while a pastor coming up from within the church itself would be someone whose spiritual authority was recognized even before becoming a pastor, and who was asked to assume leadership.

The survey data showed a different correlation to what was expected from the theory. Only the churches of which the founding pastor was no longer present were taken into consideration because a founding pastor can neither be considered home-grown nor an outsider. A negative correlation was found between AACGR and a home-grown pastor ($r=-.249$, marginally significant; see table 39). Controlling for age of the church does not change the outcome. The hypothesis is rejected. There might even be a small opposite effect, that churches where the pastor is home-grown attract less new Christians than churches where the pastor came in from the outside.

Table 39. Home-grown pastor and AACGR

Home-grown pastor	AACGR	Correlation with AACGR	N
Yes	2.5%	-.249 (marginally significant)	12
No	4.9%	.249 (marginally significant)	29

N=84

Source: own research.

Hypothesis 47: Churches with pastors who focus on evangelism attract more new Christians than churches with pastors who focus on pastoral care and equipping the church members.

This is a final hypothesis deduced from the importance of the position of the senior pastor. It assumes that the personal example set by the pastor is more influential than his indirect promotion of evangelism through equipping of the church members.

This hypothesis should be tested by comparing the annual percentage growth of new Christians added to the church in the tenancy of the current pastor in churches with a pastor who focuses on evangelism to the percentage in churches during the tenancy of a pastor who focuses on pastoral care and equipping of the church members. However, the tenancy of the pastor was not part of the church leaders' survey. Another problem was that half of all church leaders surveyed did not give enough information to be able to answer this question. The available data, however, did not show a correlation between AACGR and the amount of time a pastor spends in evangelism, and there was not much to suggest that that would change with a larger sample. The hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 48: Churches with an in-house leadership development programme attract more new Christians than churches without an in-house leadership development programme.

This hypothesis is based on Garrison's statement that churches which mentor new leaders within the church have a higher growth rate than churches which use external institutions (e.g. Bible schools) because dependence on seminary-trained leaders "means that the work will always face a leadership deficit."¹⁸ The mentoring model would better equip leaders for real ministry situations in the real world, while the institutional model would tend to insulate people and focus on knowledge while neglecting spiritual development and leadership skills.

This hypothesis was tested using the survey data. It was found that there is not a positive correlation, but a marginally negative correlation between the existence of a leadership development programme in the church and AACGR ($r=-.158$). When only the churches that do have a leadership development programme are taken into account, no significant relationship was found between the percentage of the members taking part and AACGR; the relationship that was found, though not amounting to significance, was negative. The hypothesis is rejected.

An explanation for the surprising finding that an in-house leadership development programme does not contribute to church growth and may even be detrimental, might be that it focuses on theoretical content and draws leaders out of ministry. If that is the case, a mentoring programme that is less formal might produce better results. As a result of these unexpected findings, more research in this area would be helpful to understand the issues involved.

6.4. Organization

So far attention has been given to the identity of a church (6.2.) and its people (6.3.). This paragraph focuses on organizational issues. The people who together constitute a church do things together. How they do it is a matter of organization. The first organizational issue that influences conversion growth is the structure of the church. Three activities that play an important role in the organization of a church, and have

¹⁸ David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, Richmond, 1999, p. 35.

been mentioned in chapter three as especially relevant to church growth, have been singled out for investigation. These are worship service, small groups, and evangelism. Subparagraphs are devoted to both structure and to these three church activities. Their impact on conversion growth will be explored.

6.4.1. Structures

One church factor that potentially influences the growth of churches is the structure of the church. For some denominations, especially those that emphasize the importance of church offices and sacraments, these structural issues are theological. Other denominations, especially the younger ones, take a more pragmatic approach.

Hypothesis 49: Churches that “go it alone” attract more new Christians than churches which emphasize unity.

This hypothesis is based on Roger Finke and Rodney Stark’s history of church growth in the USA, which showed that churches emphasizing co-operation and unity are growing less than other churches.¹⁹ This hypothesis contradicts the common claim among Christians in Thailand that disunity among churches prevents outsiders from joining any church, and that (spiritual) unity among churches helps all churches to grow.

The hypothesis was tested in two different ways. First, churches that are members of the World Council of Churches (WCC) historically have much interest in the unity among churches. In Thailand only the CCT is member of the WCC. A negative correlation was found between being a CCT church and AACGR ($r=-.349^{**}$), that became less when controlled for age ($r=-.199^{*}$).

A second way to test the hypothesis is whether pastors subscribe to the following sentence from the NCD survey: ‘You think it’s important for fulfilling the Great Commission that you are free to do your own thing and do not have to work together with other Christians who do not share your opinion’. It was found that there was a positive correlation between agreeing with this sentence and growth of the church ($r=.392^{*}$). Among 176 variables only four correlated stronger with growth than this one. So the hypothesis is rejected, and its opposite is accepted: churches which emphasize unity among Christians grow slower than other churches.

Hypothesis 50: Churches which plant daughter churches attract less new Christians than churches which do not plant daughter churches.

This hypothesis is based on the conviction of many Thai pastors that planting daughter churches limits the growth of their own church. One significant exception claims that involvement in mission actually helps to grow the sending church.²⁰ No correlation was found between planting daughter churches and AACGR. The hypothesis is rejected.

¹⁹ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*, Piscataway, 2005.

²⁰ Narin Sritandon, *A Study of the Relationship Between the Commitment to Missions and the Growth of the Church of Churches in Bangkok, Thailand, from 1998-2002*, D.Miss dissertation, International Theological Seminary, Los Angeles, 2003.

This finding should not be misinterpreted. Planting daughter churches does not have an effect on the conversion growth rate of the church. It still is possible that it has an effect on the absolute number of members, if existing members transfer to daughter churches. Yet in the present author's experience in most cases few members transfer to a daughter church, so it seems that planting daughter churches has very little impact on the growth of a local church.

Hypothesis 51: New churches attract more new Christians than old churches.

Research showed that in the USA the age of a church is one of the best predictors of church growth.²¹ Newly founded churches attract more new members than older churches. The survey data showed the same pattern for Thailand. The correlation between age and AACGR ($r=-.474^{**}$) is actually the strongest correlation found in this study. How this works out for the various church age brackets can be seen in Table 40.

Table 40. Age of a church and AACGR

Age of a church	AACGR	N	Odds
0-9	13.0%	9	7.2
10-19	7.8%	21	4.3
20-29	3.4%	21	1.9
30-49	3.0%	12	1.7
50+	1.8%	12	1.0

N=84

Source: own research.

If the number of Christians is the same among the various church age brackets, the odds of someone becoming a Christian in a church that is younger than 10 years old are 7.2 times greater than in a church that is older than 50 years. The hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 52: Small churches attract more new Christians than large churches.

This hypothesis is based on one of the most significant findings of Christian Schwarz's studies, namely the tremendous difference in growth rate between small and large churches.²² The survey data made it possible to test whether the same is true in the Thai context. Indeed a negative correlation between church size and AACGR was found ($r=-.157$, marginally significant). However, this correlation totally disappears when controlled for church age. So there is no size effect on AACGR besides age. Small churches are not more effective than large churches. The hypothesis is rejected.

²¹ C. Kirk Hadaway, *Facts on Growth*, Hartford, 2006, p. 2.

²² Schwarz, pp. 46-48.

Hypothesis 53: Socially homogeneous churches attract more new Christians than socially heterogeneous churches

This hypothesis is based on one of the more controversial tenets of the Church Growth School, namely that churches should be planted within all sociological groups, because in that way nobody has to cross barriers of prejudice before becoming Christian.²³ The thought behind this is that homogeneous churches attract more new Christians than heterogeneous churches.

This hypothesis cannot be fully tested for all social groups. It is possible to test it for class homogeneity. A variable was created in which the highest percentage of respondents in a church with the same level of educational attainment was taken as a measure of class homogeneity (e.g. if 20 of 50 members had a grade 4 education, and all other groups would be smaller, the number for the church would be 40). No correlation between class homogeneity and AACGR was found. The hypothesis is rejected.

Recent church growth studies in the USA also reject this hypothesis for one of its most controversial uses, namely in the area of race. Nowadays multi-racial churches are growing faster than mono-racial churches. In the past church policies based on this conviction have often been rejected because of theological concerns. The American research and the findings here show that there are also sociological reasons to doubt the universal application of this rule. While it seems very unlikely that a church trying to reach out to two or more different groups that do not speak the same language and hate each other will have high growth potential, at the same time care should be taken that social differences are not automatically interpreted as barriers to church growth.

Hypothesis 54: Non-traditional churches attract more new Christians than traditional churches.

This hypothesis is based on Christian Schwarz's claim that traditionalism is highly negatively correlated with church growth.²⁴ Traditionalism is a formal term, and ideally the constituent parts of what makes up traditionalism should be tested, rather than traditionalism itself. Several of the hypotheses in this study have a high correlation with traditionalism. Yet, preliminary exploration of the data showed that these variables did not explain all the variance in AACGR that can be explained by belonging to a traditional denomination.

It is hard to explain what exactly makes a church traditional. It has to do with being old and revered; with using pews and a piano instead of chairs and guitars; with singing hymns instead of praise songs; with having a pastor wearing a gown; with being inwardly focused; and with respecting position more than spiritual gifting. Because of the impossibility to dissect this whole field of meaning and capture it in separate hypotheses, in the end it was decided to test the correlation between traditionalism and AACGR. The viability of this approach was confirmed by the fact that there is near universal agreement on what the traditional churches are in Thailand, namely the CCT churches.

²³ Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, fully revised edition, Grand Rapids, 1980.

²⁴ Schwarz, p. 29.

As predicted in the hypothesis, a positive correlation was found between non-traditionalism and AACGR, as can be seen in Table 41.

Table 41. Traditionalism and AACGR

Traditional church	Average AACGR	Correlation with AACGR	N
Yes	2.4%	-.349**	24
No	6.4%	.349**	60

N=84

Source: own research.

The hypothesis is accepted. The correlation between traditionalism and AACGR is one of the strongest found in this study.

6.4.2. Worship service

The worship service is a central part of church life. While it can hardly be the prime mover of conversion growth, because people already have to have a significant level of interest before they attend a worship service, it is potentially very important in determining whether interested people will come back to church more often.

Hypothesis 55: Churches with a lively worship attract more new Christians than churches without lively worship.

This hypothesis is based on American research findings indicating that lively worship is an important predictor of church growth.²⁵ Because church growth in the USA is mainly reaffiliation rather than conversion, it is not clear whether the same applies to churches in Thailand. No good way was found to operationalize this. However, the NCD data did not show significant relationships between statements about worship and church growth. Though more research could give more insights in this area, so far there is no reason to accept this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 56: Churches with good preaching attract more new Christians than churches without good preaching.

This hypothesis is based on reflection on the conversion model proposed in this study, and reinforced by the Natural Church Development questionnaire, that includes statements about the sermon which purportedly are connected to church growth. The preaching of the Christian message traditionally takes place during the worship service on Sunday mornings. The sermon in almost all churches is still the main opportunity for the pastor of a church to communicate the Christian message to church members and visitors. This leads to the thinking that lack of good preaching prevents people from becoming Christians.

The survey done for this research did not cover this subject. The only relevant finding was that for 12% of new Christians, a sermon had been the most important evangelistic message. No meaningful correlation between becoming Christian through a sermon and AACGR was found.

²⁵ Hadaway, 2006, pp. 9-10.

The NCD variables include two statements about the quality of the sermon: “I enjoy listening to the sermon in the worship service” and “I feel that the sermon in the worship service speaks to my life needs”. Neither variables correlate with church growth. This is not definite proof that sermons are not important to church growth though. It is conceivable that good preachers draw more people - without the average satisfaction with the sermons being higher - than in smaller churches with preachers who are not as good. But this is speculative and more qualitative research is needed to gain more insight into the role of sermons in church growth. At this stage, however, there is no reason to accept the hypothesis.

6.4.3. Small groups

In many missiological publications house groups have been suggested as a main motor of church growth.²⁶ From there it follows that churches with a large percentage of their membership involved in house groups will grow faster than churches with few or even no members involved in house groups.

Hypothesis 57: Churches with many members in house groups attract more new Christians than churches with few members in house groups.

This hypothesis was tested using the church leader survey data. A correlation was found between the percentage of members involved in house groups and AACGR ($r=.195$, marginally significant). Further analysis revealed that it is difficult to discover a pattern in the lower brackets of percentage of church members that are members in a house group. However, once over 30% of the members are involved in house groups a clear pattern emerges as is shown in Table 42. The hypothesis is accepted. At the same time it is clear that house groups are not the single most important factor for conversion growth of a church.

Table 42. House groups and AACGR

Percentage of church members in house groups	Average AACGR	Correlation with AACGR	N
<30	4.7%	-.223*	61
>=30	6.6%	.223*	23

N=84

Source: own research.

6.4.4. Evangelism

In hypothesis 38, under the heading of member ministry, it was found that evangelism makes a difference to conversion church growth. In this paragraph some more specific hypotheses about how evangelism affects church growth will be investigated.

²⁶ E.g. McGavran, p. 217; Paul Yonggi Cho, *Successful Home Cell Groups*, Gainesville, 1981; Ralph Neighbour, *Where Do We Go From Here?: A Guidebook to the Cell Church*, Singapore, 1995; and Garrison, , p. 35.

Hypothesis 58: Churches that emphasize social service attract more new Christians than churches that do not emphasize social service.

This hypothesis is deduced from Donald McGavran's claim that a strong emphasis on social service is detrimental to church growth, because it takes away from the resources available for evangelism and church planting.²⁷ This seems more probable than claims by others who maintain that social service can enhance evangelism.²⁸ The hypothesis is stated in a stronger form than McGavran used. McGavran says that the level of resources committed to social work should be determined by the question of what is best for the growth of the church. Hypothesis 58 says that any use of resources for social work is detrimental to conversion church growth. This stronger form is used to make it a testable hypothesis.

With the available survey data it is possible to analyze whether churches that spend a lot of money on social work tend to grow slower than churches that do not. No significant correlation was found between percentage of church budget allocated to social work and AACGR. The direction of the finding in the various brackets is consistent with the theory, so it seems probable that with a larger sample a weak significant correlation could be found. However, it is clear that it is, at best, a weak effect. The hypothesis is not accepted.

The thought that involvement in social service hampers church growth has a high probability when applied to denominations and Christian organizations. Their resources are limited and spending in one area almost automatically affects spending in other areas. However, for local churches the negative relationship between social service and evangelism is less clear. It remains true that if you do one thing, you cannot do another. But there is also another side to it. When using church members as volunteers both social service and evangelism do not need to cost much. Social service and evangelism on a local level can be combined and do not necessarily need to be rivals. And many forms of social service can help build the relationships within the community that this study showed are so important to conversion growth of churches. Which of these two sides has a stronger influence on church growth is, quite likely, dependent on the local situation.

Hypothesis 59: Churches with a separate budget for evangelism attract more new Christians than churches with no separate budget for evangelism.

This hypothesis is based on remarks made by Thai pastors and missionaries. Almost without exception Protestant Thai churches will affirm the importance of evangelism. Often funds for evangelism are hidden in other budget items, e.g. the salary of a church worker who spends part of his time in evangelism, or the costs of children's ministry that also caters to children outside the church. Yet some church leaders and missionaries maintain that if a church does not have a clearly separate budget for evangelism, evangelistic work can easily become less of a priority and, consequently, the growth of the church suffers.

²⁷ McGavran, p. 25.

²⁸ See e.g. Mualrerddee Saeng-Apisuth, *A Study of the Relationship between Christian Social Ministry and Evangelism in the Thai Context*, D.Min. dissertation, International Theological Seminary, Los Angeles, 2004.

The survey data do not confirm the hypothesis, though it has to be noted that for this variable they are only partial. The hypothesis is rejected. Table 43 shows the difference between churches with and without an evangelism budget.

Table 43. Separate evangelism budget and AACGR

Separate evangelism budget	Average AACGR	Correlation with AACGR	N
Yes	4.9%	-.254 (marginally significant)	21
No	7.9%	.254 (marginally significant)	19

N=84

Source: own research.

The data reveal the opposite relationship to what was predicted in the hypothesis. A negative correlation exists between having a separate evangelism budget and church growth, though only marginally significant. If this is not a fluke in the data, the most likely explanation for this remarkable finding is that for churches without separate budget, evangelism is an organic part of church life, while for the other churches it is a separate department.

6.5. Final observations: a model of conversion church growth

In this chapter many hypothesis about conversion church growth were tested. It is now possible to give a list of variables that are significantly correlated with church growth. Worded in a way that they are all positively correlated to growth, these variables are:

1. No women on the church board
2. Speaking in tongues
3. Belonging to a charismatic denomination
4. Warm relationships between church members
4. Low percentage of members in church which does not evangelize
5. Low number of months before new believers are baptized
6. Presence of a missionary
7. Pastor has authority over the church board
8. Presence of founding pastor
9. Pastor is not home-grown
10. Young church
11. Belonging to a non-traditional denomination
12. Over 30% of members are members in a house group
13. No separate evangelism budget

These variables (with the exception of ‘warm relationships’, which was not part of the survey data gathered for this research) were entered into a linear regression analysis, using the forward method. To get a more reliable result, only the churches

with more than 30 respondents were included in the analysis. This resulted in the model presented in Table 44.

Table 44. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.785 ^a	.616	.577	.61132
2	.914 ^b	.836	.800	.42080
3	.956 ^c	.914	.882	.32326
4	.980 ^d	.961	.938	.23412
5	.991 ^e	.982	.966	.17297

a Predictors: (Constant), Age church, ln transformed

b Predictors: (Constant), Age church, ln transformed, traditional

c Predictors: (Constant), Age church, ln transformed, traditional, Charismatic

d Predictors: (Constant), Age church, ln transformed, traditional, Charismatic, Women on church board

e Predictors: (Constant), Age church, ln transformed, traditional, Charismatic, Women on church board, Founding pastor present

Source: own research.

97% of the variance in growth between churches is explained by five factors. Age is the most important one, explaining 58% of the variance. Younger churches grow faster. Another 22% is explained by whether or not a church is traditional. Non-traditional churches grow faster. An additional 8% is explained by whether or not a church is charismatic. Charismatic churches grow faster. 6% extra variance is explained by whether a church has women in the church board. A church without women on the board grows faster. Finally, 3% is explained by the presence of the founding pastor. When the first four factors have already been taken into account, the presence of a founding pastor slows church growth. This is the opposite to the effect found in this study, and is due to multicollinearity between the variables.

The coefficients for the variables in the found model are presented in Table 45.

Table 45. Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.129	.411		-.313	.765
Age church	-.657	.114	-.569	-5.745	.001
Traditional	-1.651	.196	-.507	-8.415	.000
Charismatic	.721	.147	.347	4.895	.003
Women in church board	-.740	.218	-.227	-3.388	.015
Founding pastor present	-.401	.153	-.220	-2.612	.040

a Dependent Variable: AACGRLN

Source: own research.

Table 46 shows how the model works out for the expected conversion growth of churches of various ages.

Table 46. Expected AACGR of churches

Age	Traditional	Non-traditional	Traditional, non-charismatic, women in board, founding pastor present	Non-traditional, charismatic, no women in board, founding pastor not present
5	5.9%	30.5%	1.9%	62.8%
15	2.8%	14.8%	0.9%	30.5%
25	2.0%	10.6%	0.7%	21.8%
40	1.5%	7.8%	0.5%	16.0%
75	1.0%	5.2%	0.3%	10.6%

Source: own research.

The model is clearly successful in distinguishing between growing and non-growing churches. The differences in expected growth between churches that are different on the variables included in the model are large.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This study set out to answer the question what factors are conducive for church growth through conversion in Protestant Thai churches. It is time to review what has been learned so far.

The first thing this study set out to do was to give an overview of the growth of Protestantism in Thailand. In their publications historians, sociologists, and cultural anthropologists have given scant attention to the small ethnic Thai Protestant community in Thailand. The Christian handbooks *World Christian Encyclopedia* and *Operation World* quote numbers of Protestants, especially charismatics, which are too high because of the inclusion of suspect statistics. This study provides a more reliable assessment of the number of Protestant church members in Thailand. Almost half of all Protestants are tribal people. Among tribal people 12% are Protestants. Ethnic Thai, on the other hand, have strongly resisted conversion. After 180 years of unhindered Protestant missionary activity only 0.3% of ethnic Thai, about 185,000 people, have become Protestants. Ethnic Thai Protestants are concentrated in urban areas, especially provincial capitals. Charismatic churches and churches without official ties to missionary organizations are among the fastest growing in the nation.

Though small, ethnic Thai Protestantism has shown a rather high annual growth rate of 4.4% over the last three decades. This consists of 0.9% biological growth and 3.5% conversion growth. Analysis of the biological growth shows that a large majority of girls born in Christian families grow up to become active church members. But at least 28% of the boys, and possibly more, do not become regular worshippers. Though Protestant families have some problems retaining their sons as active church members, a steady inflow of converts leads to growing churches and a growing number of churches. Due to a higher conversion growth rate, and a lower birth rate than in the past, the percentage of first generation Christians is higher than one generation ago. This is an indication of a vibrant community that continues to attract outsiders.

The second sub-item of the main question was what kind of people are likely to convert to Christianity. A new model proposed in this study distinguishes between six factors that influence conversion church growth. These are context, personal background, distance, communication, church, and perceived direct intervention by God. Based on literature review, and the new model, 29 hypotheses were formulated. A large majority of the hypotheses was verified or partly verified. Important in the context of conversion is that people in societies with a non-linear worldview are more likely to convert than people in societies with a linear worldview. Secondly, traditional religionists are more likely to become Christians than Buddhists. The conversion growth rate of ethnic Thai churches is relatively high yet much lower than of tribal churches, which is in line with this.

The personal background of people also proved to be an important predictor of conversion probability. It confirmed that some groups in society are more resistant to becoming Christians than others. The most important one may be that men are less likely to become Christians than women. It was already noted that men growing

up in Christian families are also less likely to become active church members than women. The best way to understand this is to connect it with risky male behaviour. Men are more violent than women, men drive faster than women, and men are more willing than women to take the risk that this life is all there is.

Other social groups showed a greater openness to become Christians than the general population. Students are more likely to convert than their peers. Migrants are more likely to convert than non-migrants. Old people are slightly more likely to convert than young people. This last finding was contrary to the expectation. It shows that conversion to Protestantism in Thailand is not driven by the modernization process and therefore lacks one of the most important push factors that results in rapid Protestant growth in some other countries. A very important finding is that relatives of Christians are hundreds of times more likely to become Christians than the general population. This confirms that among ethnic Thai pull factors are quite strong. Once people have Christians in their close social network there is a rather large chance that they become Christians as well. Yet push factors are almost absent. If Christianity is not present in their inner circle there is little or no impetus to seek an alternative to their present religion.

An important sign that Protestantism will probably continue to grow is that people from a wide variety of social backgrounds are becoming Christians. Protestants are not confined to particular social groups or particular geographical locations, but are recruited from amongst all social groups and, more and more, in all geographical locations. Even in cases where some groups are hugely overrepresented in the Protestant community (northerners, Sino-Thai, urban people, and highly educated people) there is no indication that they are more likely to become Christians given the same opportunity. That Protestantism among some social groups forms such a tiny minority is not a problem of demand but a problem of supply. The only caution that needs to be attached to this remark is that most churches classified as rural in this study are located in district towns. Whether or not this conclusion is valid for rural villages as well as rural towns is an open question.

Distance to the nearest church proved to be a very important predictor of conversion probability. People in a village or district with a church in their locality, are tens of times more likely to convert than others. So a faster growth of Protestantism in Thailand will be all but impossible without starting churches in areas where so far there are none.

The third sub-item of the main question was the way people convert to Christianity. This item is addressed in the communication factor of the conversion model. This study found that some ways of evangelism are more likely to result in people becoming Christians than others. Generally speaking, personal ways of approach win out over impersonal ones. Printed media, which are mainly used in the context of a personal relationship, are far more influential than radio and television. Yet the life example of Christians ranked relatively low among experiences that influenced people to become Christians. This shows that in the personal relationships that are so important to conversion church growth, the verbalization of the Christian message plays an extremely important role as well.

Relatives proved to be the most effective evangelists. People over 30 years of age are more effective evangelists than people who are younger. Professionals, whether Thai or foreign, are far more effective evangelists than lay church members. Yet because of the far higher number of lay church members, total conversion growth is 70% lay driven.

The fourth and final sub-item of the main question was what kind of churches grow through conversion growth. This item is addressed in the church factor, the sixth and final factor in the conversion model. All kinds of people are becoming Christians. Yet some churches are more likely to persuade them than others.

Based on literature review, on opinions of Thai pastors and missionaries, and on reflection on the conversion model, 30 hypotheses were formulated. Only half of them were verified. As far as possible the proven hypotheses were entered into a mathematical model. This resulted in the finding that two main variables and three additional variables together explain almost all variance in conversion church growth among ethnic Thai Protestant churches.

The most important variable, trumping all others, is the age of a local church. Younger churches attract more new Christians. The continued growth of Protestantism in Thailand is tied to a vigorous planting of new churches. This becomes even more important when realizing that the planting of daughter churches does not have a negative impact on the conversion growth rate of the mother church. Churches do not have to choose between growth and planting daughter churches. The growth of the local church and the planting of daughter churches are independent from each other.

It makes a difference what kind of new churches are planted. The second main variable is traditionalism. Traditional churches, with a lot of church rules and emphasis on the role of the clergy, are less likely to grow. This is in line with the finding that the conversion of most new Christians is influenced by people in their own social network. A church that empowers its members is a church that will grow. These two variables together explain 80% of all variance in conversion growth.

Three additional variables are also independently correlated with growth. Charismatic churches, churches without women on the church board, and churches where the founding pastor is no longer leading the church, have more conversion growth. Each of these three variables adds a few percentage points in explained variance.

This study has some wider implications for the study of conversion and church growth. It shows that making a reliable count of the number of churches and Christians in a country is not impossible. Making such a count is a good way to start research. It clearly describes the field of research and, as such, is valuable of itself. It makes representative sampling possible. It counters possible biases of researchers. And it may open up new vistas that lead to new insights or research directions.

Methodologically a new way was developed to measure conversion church growth. This makes it possible to focus on the growth of the Christian community, not just the growth of a local church, which might be caused by transfer growth. An additional advantage of the method used in this study is that it makes it possible to determine conversion growth rates without having access to historic church data.

A time analysis of survey data, combined with census data, makes it possible to say something about conversion growth, biological growth, and the retention rate of children born in Christian families. This is a valuable tool that could profitably be used more often in missiology and the sociology of religion.

Statistical modelling of conversion church growth showed which variables were independently important, and which were redundant. This brought about a clear picture of the important predictors of conversion church growth. In this way it is shown that modelling, which so far has been virtually absent in missiology, is an important tool.

In the area of theory existing sociological theories proved useful in explaining conversion. Control theory, subculture theory, and rational choice theory were especially useful. At the same time, in line with emphases in anthropological studies, the Thai situation had enough unique features to defy a complete explanation by general theory. This shows that in any given situation both general theories and localized explanations need to be employed.

Both push and pull factors were shown to be vitally important in understanding conversion church growth. The context determines whether people have much or little reason to convert (push). Yet this study also showed that people are very unlikely to become members in some churches, and far more likely to join other churches (pull).

Push and pull factors are best understood as multiplicative, not as additive. If the pull is zero, no conversion is going to take place, regardless of how strong the push is. If the push is very low (because everybody has felt needs it is never zero), conversion church growth will remain low as well. Fast growth occurs where both push and pull factors are high. This study suggests that push and pull factors are not entirely independent of each other. High push factors reinforce the pull factors. The main pull factors in Thailand are new churches and non-traditionalism. Both are more likely to occur in situations with a high push factor: new churches because of the need to incorporate new Christians, and non-traditionalism because normal structures can be overwhelmed by the fast influx of new Christians.

The modest but real growth of Protestantism in Thailand takes place in the context of the multiplication of all kinds of cults, especially in urban Thailand. Though most of them do not officially place themselves outside the scope of Buddhism, it suggests that state-sponsored Buddhism does not satisfy the religious needs of the Thais. This is another indication of the further potential for growth of Protestantism. The growth of the cults, and the growth of Protestantism, takes place in the same social setting, and to the mind of religious seekers might even be parallel options.

In the long run Christianity may be better positioned to be accepted than the various semi-Buddhist cults. The cults do not ask for exclusive adherence. Many of them have clients rather than believers. They do not ask for commitment. They are 'cheap' religions. Protestantism is far more costly, especially in time. (Though almost all Protestant churches teach that their members should give 10% of their income to the church, only a small minority does so. Charms and services sold by cults can be expensive, so it is not clear whether in monetary terms Protestantism is a costly or cheap religious option.) Weekly worship is expected, and often also attendance at other meetings. The Christian faith, contrary to the popular cults, is also presented as something that affects conduct in all areas of life.

Costly religions (or denominations within a religion) are more likely to succeed. That is not because people like to pay the costs in time and money, but because the investment allows for a better religious 'product'. Costliness equals value. In Thailand the Hope Churches are a clear example. Hope Churches expect more of their members in terms of money and time contributed than other denominations. They also grow faster. Moreover, the costliness of Christianity is not contingent. Christianity is congregational by nature. This helps to build costly social relationships, rather than the one-off transactions that characterize most cults. Faith in an almighty God is also better suited to foster exclusive commitment than faith in a host of smaller deities. So it will not be easy for the new cults to reinvent themselves into a form that asks for more commitment.

One caveat to this assessment needs to be made. Charismatic churches are growing faster than other churches, and they are far more urban than non-charismatic churches. If Protestantism is to break out of its urban mold, either charismatic churches have to find ways to be effective in rural areas, or non-charismatic churches have to find ways to grow and multiply faster. If this does not happen the gap in percentage of Christians between the 76% of the Thai population living in rural areas and the urban population will grow.

Four points are essential to understand the growth potential of Protestant Christianity in Thailand. Firstly, conversion mainly happens within social networks. Relatives of Christians and people living in a town with a church are tens to hundreds of times more likely to become Christians than others. This shows that the Thai have not declined to become Christians because of active resistance, but because it has not been a live option for them in their own social network.

Secondly, though Christianity is not equally well represented among different social groups, in most cases there is no difference in receptivity to the Christian message. This again does not point to active resistance, but to a lack of opportunity. Taken together, these two observations bode well for the continuing growth of Protestantism in Thailand if Protestant churches make the conscious effort to reach out to all kinds of people in the whole of Thailand.

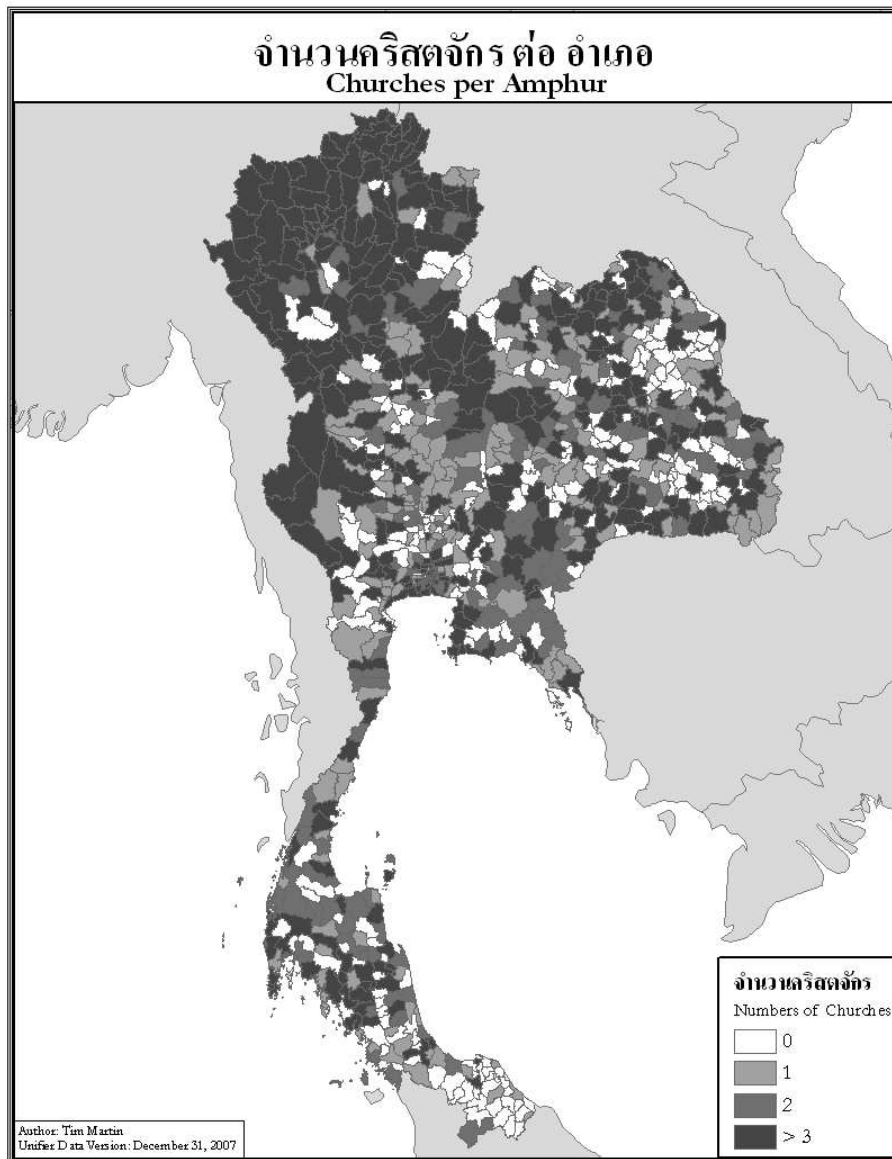
Thirdly, push factors in Thai society that cause people to seek religious alternatives are largely absent. If this remains the case, it is unlikely that the growth rate of Protestantism will greatly change.

Fourthly, notwithstanding the limits imposed by the context, churches can positively influence the conversion growth rate. The main ways to do this are to start new churches and to refrain from traditionalism that saps the enthusiasm of church members and limits their involvement in church ministry.

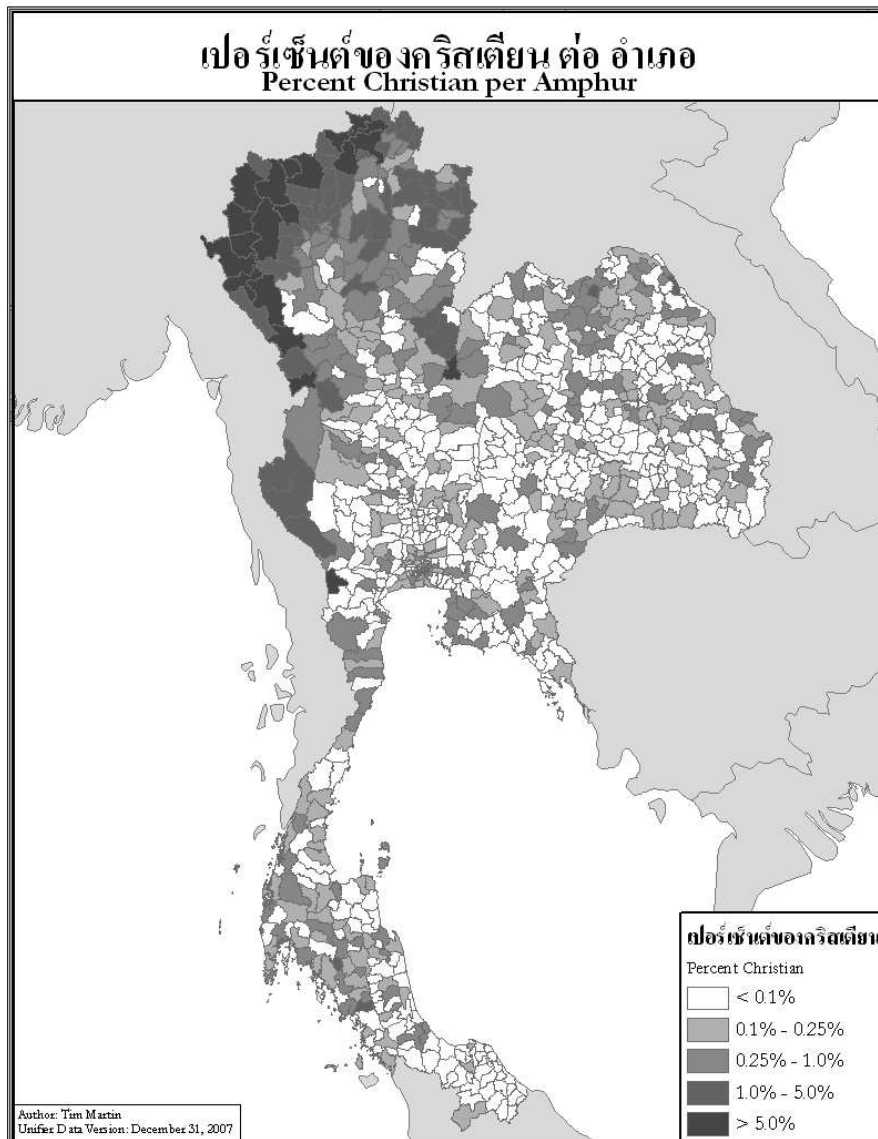
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: MAPS OF THAILAND

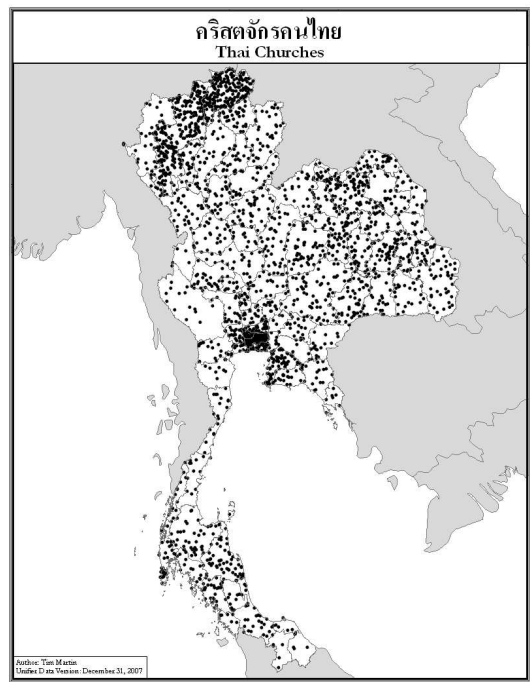
Map 1: Protestant churches per district



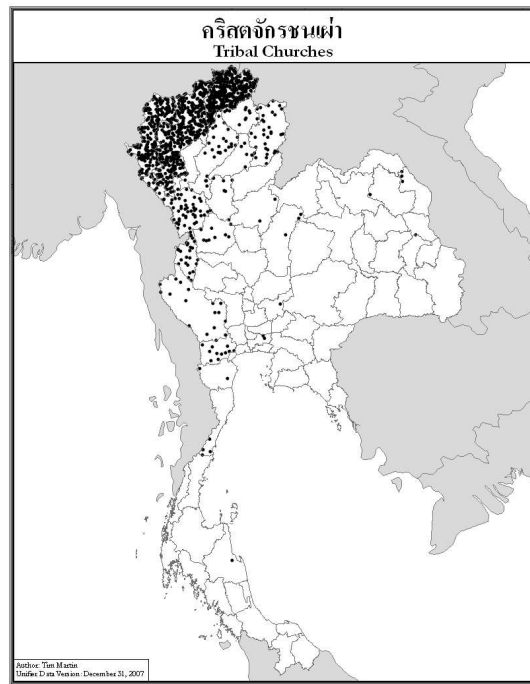
Map 2: Percentage Christians per district



Map 3.1: Thai churches



Map 3.2: Tribal churches



APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHURCH MEMBERS

APPENDIX 2.1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHURCH MEMBERS (THAI)

แบบสอบถามสำหรับสมาชิกในคริสตจักร

1. เพศ ☐ ชาย ☐ หญิง

2. อายุ _____ ปี

3.1 จังหวัดที่เกิด _____

3.2 ปัจจุบันคุณพักอาศัยอยู่ที่จังหวัดใด _____

3.3 คุณพักอาศัยที่นั่นนานเท่าไร _____ ปี

3.4 ทะเบียนบ้านของคุณระบุที่อยู่ในจังหวัดใด _____

4. ระดับการศึกษาขั้นสูงสุด

ประถมศึกษาตอนต้น	
ประถมศึกษาตอนปลาย	
มัธยมศึกษาตอนต้น	
มัธยมศึกษาตอนปลาย	
ป.ว.ช.	
ป.ว.ส.	
ปริญญาตรี	
สูงกว่าระดับปริญญาตรี	

5. คุณมีเชื้อชาติ _____ สัญชาติ _____

6. คุณมีญาติสายโลหิตที่นอกประเทศไทยทั้งหมดกี่คน

0	1	2	3	4

7. คุณเกิดในศาสนาอะไร

พุทธ	คริสต์	อิสลาม	อื่นๆ

8. คุณเริ่มเชื่อในพระเจ้าท่านเท่าไร _____ ปี _____ เดือน _____ ปี _____

9. สำหรับผู้ที่แต่งงาน

9.1 สามีหรือภรรยาของคุณเริ่มเข้ามาเป็นคริสเตียนนานเท่าไร _____ ปี _____ เดือน _____ ปี _____

9.2 ใครมาเป็นคริสเตียนก่อน

สามี	ภรรยา

10. คุณมีบิดามารดาและญาติพี่น้อง ที่เป็นคริสเตียนจำนวนกี่คน (โดยไม่นับตนเอง) _____ คน

11. คุณมีญาติพี่น้องที่ไม่ได้เป็นคริสเตียนจำนวนกี่คน _____ คน

12. เพื่อนที่สนิทกับคุณที่สุด 5 คน ในจำนวนนี้มีคริสเตียนกี่คน

0	1	2	3	4	5

13. ใครเป็นคนแรกที่เล่าเรื่องพระเยซูให้คุณฟัง เลือกเพียง 1 ข้อ

บิดามารดา	
บุตร	
สามี/ภรรยา	
ญาติพี่น้อง	
เพื่อน	
คริสเตียนทั่วไป	
ผู้รับใช้คนไทย	
มิชชันนารี	
อื่นๆ (ระบุ)	

14. ใครเป็นผู้ที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการมาเป็นคริสเตียนของท่าน เลือกเพียง 1 ข้อ

บิดามารดา	
บุตร	
สามี/ภรรยา	
ญาติพี่น้อง	
เพื่อน	
คริสเตียนทั่วไป	
ผู้รับใช้คนไทย	
มิชชันนารี	
อื่นๆ (ระบุ)	

15. บุคคลท่านนั้นในเวลาที่มีอายุประมาณเท่าไร _____ ปี

16. สื่อใดที่ทำให้คุณเกิดอยากเป็นคริสเตียน เลือกเพียง 1 ข้อ

โทรทัศน์	ใบปลิว
วิทยุคริสเตียน	ไม่มี
หนังสือ	

17. สิ่งใดเป็นสิ่งที่สำคัญที่สุดในการเริ่มเชื่อของท่าน เลือกเพียง 1 ข้อ

ปาฐกถา	
เรียนพระคัมภีร์	
คำพยานจากผู้อื่น	
สิ่งที่พบเจอจากเหล่าคริสเตียน	
อื่นๆ ระบุ	

18. คริสตจักรแรกที่ท่านเป็นสมาชิกชื่ออะไร

คริสตจักรในปัจจุบัน _____

อื่นๆ ระบุชื่อ _____

19. คุณมาโบสถ์กี่ครั้งในอาทิตย์ละครั้งหรือไม่

ทุกสัปดาห์	
ทุก 2 สัปดาห์	
ทุกเดือน	
น้อยกว่านั้น	

20. คุณเข้าร่วมในการทำกิจกรรมคริสเตียนกี่ครั้ง

สัปดาห์ละ 2 ครั้ง	
ทุกสัปดาห์	
ทุก 2 สัปดาห์	
ทุกเดือน	
น้อยกว่านั้น	

21. คุณได้เข้าร่วมกลุ่มสวดนมัสการ / กลุ่มตามบ้าน / กลุ่มเซลล์ หรือไม่

เข้าร่วม	ไม่เข้าร่วม

22. ท่านได้เล่าเกี่ยวกับเรื่องพระเยซู ให้ผู้อื่นฟังจำนวนประมาณกี่คนในเดือนที่ผ่านมา

ได้เล่าจำนวน _____ คน
ไม่ได้เล่า ()

23. สิ่งที่สำคัญที่สุดในความเชื่อของคุณคืออะไร _____

ขอขอบคุณที่ให้ความร่วมมือครับ

APPENDIX 2.2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHURCH MEMBERS (ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

Survey for church members			
1. Sex			
Male		Female	
2. Age _____			
3.1 Province of birth _____			
3.2 Province living now _____			
3.3 How long are you living here? _____ year			
3.4 What province are you registered? _____			
4. Level of education			
4 th grade lower			
6 th grade lower			
3 rd grade secondary			
6 th grade secondary			
Vocational			
Polytechnic			
Bachelor's			
Higher than bachelor's			
5. Ethnicity _____			
Nationality _____			
6. How many of your grandparents were born outside Thailand?			
0	1	2	3
7. Into what religion were you born?			
Bud-dhist	Chris-tian	Islam	Other
8. How long have you been a believer?			
____ year ____ months /Not yet ()			
9. For married people			
9.1 How long has your spouse been a christian?			
____ year ____ months /Not yet ()			
9.2 Who became Christian first?			
Husband	Wife		
10. How many Christian relatives do you have (not including yourself)			

11. How many non-Christian relatives do you have?			

12. How many of your 5 closest friends are Christians?			
0	1	2	3
13. Who was the first to tell you about Jesus? (Choose just one)			
Father or mother			
My child			
Spouse			
Other relative			
Friend			
Some Christian			
Thai church worker			
Missionary			
Other (explain)			
14. Who had the most influence in your becoming a Christian? (Choose just one)			
Father or mother			
My child			
Spouse			
Other relative			
Friend			
Some Christian			
Thai church worker			
Missionary			
Other (explain)			
15. What age had that person during that time?			
____ year			
16. What medium made you want to become a Christian? (Choose just one)			
TV	Tract		
Christian radio	None		
Book			
17. What was the most important for you in coming to faith? (Choose just one)			
Miracle			
Bible study			
Testimony of a Christian			
Something I saw in the life of Christians			
Other (explain)			
18. What was the first church you were a member?			
My present church			
Other (please write name)			
19. How often do you go to church?			
Every week			
Every 2 weeks			
Every month			
Less than once a month			
20. How often do you take part in other Christian activities?			
Twice a week			
Weekly			
Biweekly			
Monthly			
Less than once a month			
21. Are you member of a house group / cell group / care group?			
Yes	No		
22. How many people have you told about Jesus in the last month?			
____ people			
I didn't tell anybody ()			
23. What is the most important in your faith?			

Thank you for your cooperation!			

APPENDIX 2.3.: SURVEY RESULTS

Sex

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Sex	Male	283	436	719
		42.5%	35.6%	38.0%
	Female	383	788	1171
		57.5%	64.4%	62.0%
Total		666	1224	1890
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Age bracket

		Born in non-Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Age bracket	10-14	60	71	131
		8.7%	5.6%	6.7%
	15-19	107	93	200
		15.5%	7.3%	10.2%
	20-24	80	109	189
		11.6%	8.6%	9.6%
	25-29	65	119	184
		9.4%	9.3%	9.4%
	30-39	102	254	356
		14.7%	19.9%	18.1%
	40-49	106	239	345
		15.3%	18.8%	17.5%
	50-59	86	166	252
		12.4%	13.0%	12.8%
	60+	86	223	309
		12.4%	17.5%	15.7%
Total		692	1274	1966
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Region of birth

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Region of birth	Bangkok	76	161	237
		12.2%	13.7%	13.2%
	North	261	94	355
		42.0%	8.0%	19.8%
	Central	112	360	472
		18.0%	30.7%	26.3%
	South	45	127	172
		7.2%	10.8%	9.6%
	Northeast	110	423	533
		17.7%	36.1%	29.7%
	Abroad	17	8	25
		2.7%	.7%	1.4%
Total		621	1173	1794
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Region of living

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Region of living	Bangkok	116	280	396
		17.0%	22.3%	20.4%
	North	249	82	331
		36.5%	6.5%	17.1%
	Central	145	391	536
		21.3%	31.1%	27.6%
	South	50	150	200
		7.3%	11.9%	10.3%
	Northeast	121	354	475
		17.7%	28.1%	24.5%
	Abroad		1	1
			.1%	.1%
Total		681	1257	1940
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Ethnic group

			Born in Christian family		Total
			Yes	No	
Ethnic group	Thai	Count	616	1182	1798
		%	91.8%	95.6%	94.2%
	Chinese	Count	28	42	70
		%	4.2%	3.4%	3.7%
	Other	Count	27	13	40
		%	4.0%	1.1%	2.1%
Total		Count	671	1237	1908
		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Number of grandparents born outside Thailand

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Number of grandparents born outside Thailand	0	309	629	938
		66.7%	80.7%	75.5%
	1	23	35	58
		5.0%	4.5%	4.7%
	2	42	46	88
		9.1%	5.9%	7.1%
	3	13	13	26
		2.8%	1.7%	2.1%
	4	76	56	132
		16.4%	7.2%	10.6%
Total		463	779	1242
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Birth religion

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Birth religion	Buddhism		1272	1272
			98.8%	64.1%
	Christianity	695		695
		100.0%		35.0%
	Islam		6	6
			.5%	.3%
	Other		10	10
			.8%	.5%
Total		695	1288	1983
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

How long Christian?

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
How long Christian?	0-4.99 years	63	471	534
	5-9.99 years	54	225	279
	10-19.99 years	166	275	441
	20-29.99 years	102	146	248
	30-39.99 years	82	78	160
	40+ years	145	45	190
Total		612	1240	1852

Spouse Christian or not?

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Spouse Christian or not?	No	45	150	195
		15.5%	21.2%	19.5%
	Yes	245	559	804
		84.5%	78.8%	80.5%
Total		290	709	999
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Who became Christian first, husband or wife?

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Who became Christian first, husband or wife?	Husband	146	305	451
		48.2%	43.4%	44.9%
	Wife	135	364	499
		44.6%	51.9%	49.7%
	Together (not given as possibility)	22	33	55
		7.3%	4.7%	5.5%
Total		303	702	1005
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Christian relatives

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Christian relatives	0	8	62	70
		1.4%	7.6%	5.1%
	1	20	130	150
		3.5%	16.0%	10.9%
	2	28	123	151
		4.9%	15.2%	10.9%
	3-5	148	261	409
		25.9%	32.2%	29.6%
	6-10	145	166	311
		25.4%	20.5%	22.5%
	11+	222	69	291
		38.9%	8.5%	21.1%
Total		571	811	1382
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Non-Christian relatives

		Born in non-Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Non-Christian relatives	0	13	18	31
		3.5%	1.9%	2.4%
	1	36	54	90
		9.8%	5.7%	6.9%
	2	43	77	120
		11.7%	8.2%	9.1%
	3-5	83	296	379
		22.5%	31.4%	28.9%
	6-10	73	254	327
		19.8%	26.9%	24.9%
	11+	121	244	365
		32.8%	25.9%	27.8%
Total		369	943	1312
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

How many of your 5 closest friends are Christian?

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
How many of your 5 closest friends are Christian?	0	118	236	354
		19.8%	22.3%	21.4%
	1	77	186	263
		12.9%	17.6%	15.9%
	2	66	171	237
		11.1%	16.2%	14.3%
	3	77	121	198
		12.9%	11.4%	12.0%
	4	43	63	106
		7.2%	6.0%	6.4%
	5	216	280	496
		36.2%	26.5%	30.0%
Total		597	1057	1654
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Who was the first to tell you the gospel?

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Who was the first to tell you the gospel?	Parent	505	116	621
		74.0%	9.2%	31.9%
	Your child	3	49	52
		.4%	3.9%	2.7%
	Spouse	9	122	131
		1.3%	9.6%	6.7%
	Other relative	40	204	244
		5.9%	16.1%	12.5%
	Friend	18	176	194
		2.6%	13.9%	10.0%
	Other Christian	29	168	197
		4.3%	13.3%	10.1%
	Thai pastor	53	252	305
		7.8%	19.9%	15.7%
	Missionary	11	93	104
		1.6%	7.3%	5.3%
	Other	14	86	100
		2.1%	6.8%	5.1%
Total		682	1266	1948
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Who had the most influence in you becoming a Christian?

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Who had the most influence in you becoming a Christian?	Parent	477	152	629
		71.3%	12.5%	33.3%
	Your child	2	49	51
		.3%	4.0%	2.7%
	Spouse	9	147	156
		1.3%	12.0%	8.3%
	Other relative	37	144	181
		5.5%	11.8%	9.6%
	Friend	13	130	143
		1.9%	10.7%	7.6%
	Other Christian	22	128	150
		3.3%	10.5%	7.9%
	Thai pastor	61	294	355
		9.1%	24.1%	18.8%
	Missionary	25	68	93
		3.7%	5.6%	4.9%
	Other	23	108	131
		3.4%	8.9%	6.9%
Total		669	1220	1889
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Age evangelist

		Born in non-Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Age evangelist	<10	9	18	27
		1.2%	1.4%	1.3%
	10-19.99	20	54	74
		2.7%	4.2%	3.6%
	20-29.99	52	161	213
		7.0%	12.5%	10.5%
	30-39.99	134	222	356
		18.0%	17.2%	17.5%
	40-49.99	140	233	373
		18.8%	18.1%	18.3%
	50-59.99	79	168	247
		10.6%	13.0%	12.1%
	60+	96	169	265
		12.9%	13.1%	13.0%
	888.00	215	263	478
		28.9%	20.4%	23.5%
Total		745	1288	2033
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Which medium influenced you in becoming Christian?

		Born in non-Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Which medium influenced you in becoming Christian?	TV	59	76	135
		9.9%	6.6%	7.7%
	Radio	19	35	54
		3.2%	3.0%	3.1%
	Book	253	500	753
		42.4%	43.4%	43.1%
	Tract	53	193	246
		8.9%	16.8%	14.1%
	None	212	348	560
		35.6%	30.2%	32.0%
Total		596	1152	1748
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Which experience influenced you to become Christian?

		Born in non-Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Which experience influenced you to become Christian?	Miracle	77	246	323
		11.8%	20.9%	17.6%
	Bible study	265	232	497
		40.6%	19.7%	27.1%
	Testimony	88	311	399
		13.5%	26.4%	21.8%
	Life example	95	186	281
		14.5%	15.8%	15.3%
	Sermon	85	128	213
		13.0%	10.9%	11.6%
	Other	43	76	119
		6.6%	6.4%	6.5%
Total		653	1179	1832
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

First church ever member: 1 this church, 0 other church

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Where first member	Other church	190	332	522
		27.3%	25.8%	26.3%
	This church	463	871	1334
		66.6%	67.6%	67.3%
	Unknown	42	85	127
		6.0%	6.6%	6.4%
Total		695	1288	1983
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

How often do you attend a worship service?

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
How often do you attend a worship service?	Every week	513	937	1450
		75.2%	74.8%	75.0%
	Every two weeks	67	111	178
		9.8%	8.9%	9.2%
	Every month	61	107	168
		8.9%	8.5%	8.7%
	Less than monthly	41	97	138
		6.0%	7.7%	7.1%
Total		682	1252	1934
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

How often do you attend any church meeting?

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
How often do you attend any church meeting?	Several times a week	71	140	211
		10.7%	11.6%	11.3%
	Every week	369	585	954
		55.8%	48.5%	51.1%
	Every two weeks	47	88	135
		7.1%	7.3%	7.2%
	Every month	85	198	283
		12.9%	16.4%	15.2%
	Less than monthly	89	194	283
		13.5%	16.1%	15.2%
Total		661	1205	1866
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Member of a house group

		Born in non-Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
Member of a house group	Yes	467	807	1274
		71.4%	66.6%	68.3%
	No	187	404	591
		28.6%	33.4%	31.7%
Total		654	1211	1865
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Brackets of number of people evangelized

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
people evangelized	0	162	243	405
		28.5%	22.2%	24.4%
	1-2	167	313	480
		29.4%	28.6%	28.9%
	3-5	122	298	420
		21.5%	27.3%	25.3%
	6+	117	239	356
		20.6%	21.9%	21.4%
Total		568	1093	1661
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

What is most important in the Christian faith?

		Born in Christian family		Total
		Yes	No	
What is most important in the Christian faith?*	Salvation / eternal life	150	341	491
		26.1%	30.3%	28.9%
	God's help in this life	9	39	48
		1.6%	3.5%	2.8%
	Feeling	11	24	35
		1.9%	2.1%	2.1%
	Other	191	419	610
		33.3%	37.2%	35.9%
	How you behave	66	62	128
		11.5%	5.5%	7.5%
	God exists	42	81	123
		7.3%	7.2%	7.2%
	Jesus exists	50	76	126
		8.7%	6.8%	7.4%
	God's love	55	83	138
		9.6%	7.4%	8.1%
Total		574	1125	1699
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

* Open question; coded by researcher

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHURCH LEADERS

APPENDIX 3.1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHURCH LEADERS (THAI)

แบบสอบถามสำหรับผู้นำคริสตจักร

1. คนที่มาเชื่อใหม่โดยเฉลี่ยในคริสตจักรท่าน ใช้เวลานานเท่าไรในการรับเชื่อบัพติศมา	
2. มีการอบรมผู้นำในคริสตจักรหรือไม่ ถ้ามีประมาณกี่ท่านที่เข้าร่วมอบรม	
3. ในคริสตจักรของท่านมีการใช้ภาษาแปลกๆหรือไม่	
4. ใช้งบประมาณในสังคมสงเคราะห์ประมาณกี่เปอร์เซ็นต์ของทั้งหมด	
5. ในคริสตจักรของท่านเด็กทารกรับบัพติศมาหรือไม่	
6. ในคณะกรรมการคริสตจักรมีสุภาพสตรีหรือไม่	
7. ในคริสตจักรของท่านมีสุภาพสตรีที่เทศนาหรือไม่	
8. ในคริสตจักรของท่านมีผู้รับใช้ไทยกี่คน	
9. ในคริสตจักรของท่านมีมิชชันนารีกี่คน	
10. ปีที่ก่อตั้งของคริสตจักรปีพ.ศ.ใด	
11. คริสตจักรของท่านมีกลุ่มตามบ้านกี่กลุ่ม ถ้าหากว่ามีในกลุ่มเหล่านั้นมีสมาชิกทั้งหมดประมาณกี่คน	
12. ท่านได้สำเร็จการศึกษาระดับใดจากสถาบันใด	
13. คริสตจักรของท่านได้ตั้งคริสตจักรลูกหรือไม่ใน 20 ปีที่ผ่านมา ถ้ามีกรุณากรอรายละเอียด	

ชื่อ คริสตจักร	จังหวัด	อำเภอ	จำนวนสมาชิก ในปัจจุบัน	ปีที่ก่อตั้ง	จำนวนสมาชิกที่เคยเป็น สมาชิกในคริสตจักรแม่

APPENDIX 3.2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHURCH LEADERS (ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

Survey for church leaders

1. How long do new believers in your church in average take before receiving baptism?	
2. Do you train leaders in your church? If so, how many?	
3. Is there speaking in tongues in your church?	
4. How much of the church budget is used for social work?	
5. Are babies baptized in your church?	
6. Are there women in the church board?	
7. Do women preach in your church?	
8. How many Thai church workers does your church have?	
9. How many missionaries does your church have?	
10. When was the church founded?	
11. How many house groups does your church have? If your church has house groups, how many people are involved in them?	
12. What is your highest level of education? At what institute did you study?	
13. Did your church plant any daughter churches the last 20 years? If so, please fill in:	

Name of the church	Province	District	Current number of members	Year of foundation	Number of members transferred from mother church

APPENDIX 4: QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT DISTANCE TO THE CHURCH

APPENDIX 4.1: QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT DISTANCE TO THE CHURCH (THAI)

แบบสอบถามสำหรับผู้นำคริสตจักร - ระยะเดินทาง

วันที่ _____

ชื่อคริสตจักร _____

จังหวัด _____

ชื่อศิษยาภิบาล _____

คริสตจักรของท่านอยู่ใน

ตัวจังหวัด	
ตัวอำเภอ	
ตัวตำบล	
หมู่บ้าน	

คริสตจักรของท่านมีสมาชิกกี่คนในรายชื่อคริสตจักร	
โดยเฉลี่ยในคริสตจักรท่านมีสมาชิกกี่คนที่มาร่วมนมัสการในวันอาทิตย์	
มีสมาชิกกี่คนที่อยู่ในหมู่บ้าน / ตัวตำบล / ตัวอำเภอ / ตัวจังหวัด	
มีสมาชิกกี่คนที่อยู่นอกหมู่บ้าน / ตัวตำบล / ตัวอำเภอ / ตัวจังหวัด	

APPENDIX 4.2.: QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT DISTANCE TO THE CHURCH (ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

Date _____

Name of the church _____

Province _____

Name of the pastor _____

Is your church located in

A provincial capital	
A district town	
A subdistrict village	
A village	

How many members does your church have on the church roll?	
How many members worship in your church on an average Sunday?	
How many of your members are living in the provincial capital / the district town / the subdistrict village / the village?	
How many of your members are living outside the provincial capital / the district town / the subdistrict village / the village?	

APPENDIX 5: QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT RELIGION

APPENDIX 5.1.: QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT RELIGION (THAI)

แบบสอบถามเรื่องศาสนา		9. คุณคิดอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับคนที่นับถือคริสต์		15. คุณคิดว่าอะไรเป็นข้อเสียในศาสนาคริสต์																																						
1. จังหวัด _____		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>ดี</td> <td>เฉยๆ</td> <td>ไม่ดี</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		ดี	เฉยๆ	ไม่ดี				_____																																
ดี	เฉยๆ	ไม่ดี																																								
2. เพศ ชาย <input type="checkbox"/> หญิง <input type="checkbox"/>		10. คุณรู้จักคนที่นับถือคริสต์หรือไม่		16. คุณเคยไปโบสถ์คริสต์หรือไม่																																						
3. อายุ _____ ปี		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>รู้จัก</td> <td>ไม่รู้จัก</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		รู้จัก	ไม่รู้จัก					<table border="1"> <tr> <td>เคยไป</td> <td>ไม่เคยไป</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		เคยไป	ไม่เคยไป																													
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4. ระดับการศึกษาขั้นสูงสุด		11. คุณรู้จักคนที่นับถืออิสลามหรือไม่		17. ถ้าเคย ก็ครั้ง _____ ครั้ง																																						
<table border="1"> <tr><td>ประถมศึกษาตอนต้น</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>ประถมศึกษาตอนปลาย</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>มัธยมศึกษาตอนต้น</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>มัธยมศึกษาตอนปลาย</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>ป.ว.ช.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>ป.ว.ส.</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>ปริญญาตรี</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>สูงกว่าระดับปริญญาตรี</td><td></td></tr> </table>		ประถมศึกษาตอนต้น		ประถมศึกษาตอนปลาย		มัธยมศึกษาตอนต้น		มัธยมศึกษาตอนปลาย		ป.ว.ช.		ป.ว.ส.		ปริญญาตรี		สูงกว่าระดับปริญญาตรี		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>รู้จัก</td> <td>ไม่รู้จัก</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		รู้จัก	ไม่รู้จัก					ที่ปีที่ผ่านมา _____ ปี																
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รู้จัก	ไม่รู้จัก																																									
5. คุณนับถือศาสนาอะไร		12. คุณคิดว่าในขณะที่ประเทศไทยมีคนนับถือคริสต์มากกว่าหรือน้อยกว่าเดิม		ใครเป็นคนพาไป _____																																						
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พุทธ	คริสต์	อิสลาม	อื่นๆ																																							
มากกว่า	มากกว่า	เท่าเดิม	น้อยกว่าเดิม																																							
6. เดือนที่ผ่านมาคุณได้ไปวัด (มัสยิด, โบสถ์) หรือไม่		13. คุณคิดว่าพระเจ้าจะรักคนซึ่งมานับถือคริสต์		19. ถ้ามีการตั้งโบสถ์คริสต์ขึ้นในชุมชนของคุณ คุณจะรู้สึกอย่างไร																																						
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ไป	ไม่ได้ไป																																									
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มาก																																										
7. ในคนไทย 1,000 คนคุณคิดว่ามีกี่คนนับถือพุทธ อิสลาม และ คริสต์		14. คุณคิดว่าอะไรเป็นข้อดีในศาสนาคริสต์		20. ถ้ามีคนชวนคุณไปนับถือคริสต์ คุณจะคิดอย่างไร																																						
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>พุทธ</td> <td>คริสต์</td> <td>อิสลาม</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		พุทธ	คริสต์	อิสลาม				_____		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>ไม่ไป</td> <td>ไม่</td> <td>อาจจะไป</td> <td>น่าจะ</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ดีขนาด</td> <td>ไป</td> <td>ไป</td> <td>ไป</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		ไม่ไป	ไม่	อาจจะไป	น่าจะ	ดีขนาด	ไป	ไป	ไป																							
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ดีขนาด	ไป	ไป	ไป																																							
8. คุณคิดอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับคนที่นับถืออิสลาม		ขอบคุณที่ให้ ความร่วมมือครับ																																								
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APPENDIX 5.2.: QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT RELIGION (ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

Questionnaire about religion

1. Province _____

2. Sex

Male ☐ Female ☐

3. Age ____year

4. Level of education

4 th grade lower	
6 th grade lower	
3 rd grade secondary	
6 th grade secondary	
Vocational	
Polytechnic	
Bachelor's	
Higher than bachelor's	

5. What is your religion?

Bud-dhist	Chris-tian	Islam	Other

6. Did you go to the temple (church, mosque) last month?

Yes ☐ No ☐

7. Among 1000 Thai people, how many Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians do you think there are?

Bud-dhist	Chris-tian	Islam

8. How do you feel about Muslims (on a scale from 1 to 10) _____

9. How do you feel about Christians (on a scale from 1 to 10) _____

10. Do you know a Christian?

Yes ☐ No ☐

11. Do you know a Muslim?

Yes ☐ No ☐

12. Do you think there are more or less Christians than there used to be?

Much more	More	No difference	Less

13. Why do you think some people become Christian?

Brainwashed	
It's fashionable	
Why not?	
For personal benefit	
To feel at ease	
God helped them	
Know the truth	
Other	

14. What do you think is a good point in Christianity?

15. What do you think is a weak point in Christianity?

16. Have you ever been to a Christian church?

Yes ☐ No ☐

17. If yes, how many times? ____
How long ago? ____year
Who took you there?

18. How far do you have to travel to the nearest Christian church?
____minutes

19. How would you feel if a Christian church was opened in your neighbourhood?

Great	fine	Never mind	Don't like it	Would resist it

20. If somebody would invite you to become Christian, would you do so?

Certainly not	No	Maybe	Probably

**Thank you for
your cooperation**

APPENDIX 6: PROTESTANT CHRISTIANS PER PROVINCE

Province	Population	Churches	Members	Percentage Protestants
Amnat Charoen	370,360	21	705	0.19
Ang Thong	290,423	9	209	0.07
Bangkok	5,782,159	270	42,990	0.74
Buri Ram	1,545,779	47	2,154	0.14
Chachoengsao	649,758	13	532	0.08
Chai Nat	350,547	10	361	0.10
Chaiyaphum	1,136,508	51	1,723	0.15
Chanthaburi	506,011	20	970	0.19
Chiang Mai	1,595,855	734	70,713	4.43
Chiang Rai	1,274,214	684	67,183	5.27
Chon Buri	1,129,886	60	4,098	0.36
Chumphon	473,818	13	432	0.09
Kalasin	990,212	24	912	0.09
Kamphaeng Phet	768,130	35	2,176	0.28
Kanchanaburi	801,836	36	3,932	0.49
Khon Kaen	1,767,643	63	3,417	0.19
Krabi	377,954	17	761	0.20
Lampang	800,775	62	4,647	0.58
Lamphun	407,202	28	1,701	0.42
Loei	635,587	30	1,323	0.21
Lop Buri	767,985	16	652	0.08
Mae Hong Son	240,014	261	24,949	10.39
Maha Sarakham	942,909	29	939	0.10
Mukdahan	338,276	10	439	0.13
Nakhon Nayok	251,064	5	216	0.09
Nakhon Pathom	801,956	22	1,522	0.19
Nakhon Phanom	721,540	25	1,539	0.21
Nakhon Ratchasima	2,581,244	65	2,661	0.10
Nakhon Sawan	1,130,841	22	884	0.08
Nakhon Si Thammarat	1,533,894	55	2,481	0.16
Nan	487,742	72	6,436	1.32
Narathiwat	699,951	3	111	0.02

Province	Population	Churches	Members	Percentage Protestants
Nong Bua Lamphu	498,513	14	476	0.10
Nong Khai	909,543	43	1,828	0.20
Nonthaburi	905,197	25	1,486	0.16
Pathum Thani	708,909	28	1,250	0.18
Pattani	627,955	8	252	0.04
Phang Nga	239,401	15	393	0.16
Phatthalung	504,454	14	726	0.14
Phayao	508,554	51	4,771	0.94
Phetchabun	1,040,786	45	4,014	0.39
Phetchaburi	461,339	9	646	0.14
Phichit	591,953	13	491	0.08
Phitsanulok	867,685	46	3,747	0.43
Phrae	748,243	34	3,220	0.43
Phuket	485,121	18	1,043	0.21
Prachin Buri	270,438	20	324	0.12
Prachuap Khiri Khan	452,822	25	1,461	0.32
Ranong	488,477	11	275	0.06
Ratchaburi	163,160	30	2,600	1.59
Rayong	830,275	23	1,300	0.16
Roi Et	546,570	54	1,962	0.36
Sa Kaeo	1,322,864	18	717	0.05
Sakon Nakhon	539,107	29	1,164	0.22
Samut Prakan	1,107,752	29	1,449	0.13
Samut Sakhon	1,027,719	10	629	0.06
Samut Songkhram	442,914	5	81	0.02
Sara Buri	205,135	18	595	0.29
Satun	621,994	6	267	0.04
Si Ayutthaya	270,802	13	278	0.10
Si Sa Ket	1,458,969	26	965	0.07
SingBuri	223,352	8	293	0.13
Songkhla	1,271,067	31	2,633	0.21
Sukhothai	625,099	39	1,208	0.19
Suphanburi	863,304	21	970	0.11
Surat Thani	920,283	44	1,900	0.21
Surin	1,399,377	28	1,273	0.09

Province	Population	Churches	Members	Percentage Protestants
Tak	507,371	134	11,711	2.31
Trang	603,072	29	1,978	0.33
Trat	225,295	7	246	0.11
Ubon Ratchathani	1,792,774	43	2,208	0.12
Udon Thani	1,535,471	97	5,885	0.38
Uthai Thani	336,176	27	793	0.24
Uttaradit	484,984	30	1,925	0.40
Yala	459,659	6	216	0.05
Yasothon	553,864	25	840	0.15

APPENDIX 7: PROTESTANT CHRISTIANS AMONG ETHNIC MINORITIES

Ethnicity	Number of Protestants	Number of churches
Akha	15,896	190
Bruu	50	1
Burmese	235	3
Hmong	7,712	99
Kachin	658	2
Kamu	1,003	13
Karen	63,080	555
Kui	82	3
Lahu	33,045	315
Lao-Song	27	1
Laotian	16	1
Lawa	2,481	23
Lisaw	1,282	19
Lisu	1,729	29
Mawn	55	1
Mian	3,177	46
Pakawyaw	335	6
Palaw	61	1
Palong	45	1
Prai	12	1
So	115	3
Suey	32	1
Taileu	46	1
TaiYai	150	6
Ten	136	4
Tribal (Unspeci- fied)	5,051	50
Yellow Leaf	3	1
Total	136,494	1,376

APPENDIX 8: PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS IN THAILAND

Thai name	English abbreviation	Thai churches	Tribal churches	All churches	All members	Thai Members	Tribal Members	AAGR total since 1978	AAGR Thai	AAGR tribal
ภาค 01 (สภาฯ)	CCT1	80	6	86	11166	10234	932	0.3	0.0	
ภาค 02 (สภาฯ)	CCT2	74	61	135	21410	13500	7910	2.8	1.3	9.2
ภาค 03 (สภาฯ)	CCT3	16	3	19	2439	2086	353	0.5	-0.1	
ภาค 04 (สภาฯ)	CCT4	25	1	26	2709	2589	120	-0.5	-0.6	
ภาค 05 (สภาฯ)	CCT5	20	3	23	3473	2899	574	1.3	0.7	
ภาค 06 (สภาฯ)	CCT6	22	17	39	6267	4524	1743	2.2	1.0	
ภาค 07 (สภาฯ)	CCT7	76	10	86	10041	9210	831	4.2	3.9	
ภาค 08 (สภาฯ)	CCT8	8	1	9	806	779	27	0.0	-0.2	
ภาค 09 (สภาฯ)	CCT9	16	0	16	861	861	0	1.7	1.7	
ภาค 14 (สภาฯ)	CCT14	11	1	12	1205	1122	83			
ภาค 17 (สภาฯ)	CCT17	22	0	22	1926	1926	0			
CCT Presbyterian		370	103	473	65,009	49,314	15,695	2.1	1.2	12.0
ภาค 10 (สภาฯ)	CCT10	1	43	44	6,170		6,170	4.4		
ภาค 11 (สภาฯ)	CCT11	10	0	10	909	909		0.7	0.7	
ภาค 12 (สภาฯ)	CCT12	106	61	167	21,023	13,465	7,558	9.0	7.3	
ภาค 13 (สภาฯ)	CCT13	33	0	33	2,941	2,941		6.6	6.6	Base year 1974
ภาค 15 (สภาฯ)	CCT15	25	0	25	2,879	2,879		2.0	2.0	Base year 1975
ภาค 16 (สภาฯ)	CCT16	0	21	21	4,469		4,469			
ภาค 18 (สภาฯ)	CCT18	0	112	112	19,169		19,169	5.4		5.4
ภาค 19 (สภาฯ)	CCT19	0	304	304	40,156		40,156	6.5		6.5
CCT non-Presbyterian		175	541	716	97,716	20,194	77,522	6.7	7.6	6.6
All CCT		545	644	1189	162725	69508	93217	4.2	2.2	7.1
BIMI	BIMI	9	1	10	585	505	80			
Chinese Mission Overseas	CMO	2	4	6	399	250	149			
เกาหลีเพรสไบทีเรียน	KPM	15	21	36	1,962	582	1,380			

Thai name	English abbreviation	Thai churches	Tribal churches	All churches	All members	Thai Members	Tribal Members	AAGR total since 1978	AAGR Thai	AAGR tribal
มิชชันในประเทศไทย										
คณะอิมมานูเอล มิชชัน	IM	3	3	140	140					
คริสตจักรของพระ คริสต์	CoC-NI	52	2	54	1,408	1,360	48	0.6	0.5	
คริสตจักรพระคุณของ พระเจ้า	ECC	64	64	2,494	2,494			15.2	15.2	
คริสตจักรสัมพันธ์ใน ประเทศไทย	ACT	110	142	252	14,192	4,250	9,942	7.8	5.2	9.8
คริสตจักรอเมริกันใน ประเทศไทย	ACCM	1	15	16	1,741	150	1,591	7.0	2.6	7.9
คริสเตียนเบรเธอเรียน มิชชันนารี กู๋ป	CBMG	6	2	8	524	434	90	2.6	1.9	
แจกพระคัมภีร์ฉบับ กระเป๋าสตางค์แห่งประเทศ ไทย	PTL	1	1	2	54	19	35			
นอร์ทไทยแลนด์คริส เตียนมิชชัน	NTCM		3	3	484		484			
นิวไทรบส์ มิชชัน		2	10	12	290	38	252			
ประกาศข่าวประเสริฐ แก่ชาวไทยภูเขา ภาคเหนือ		3	4	7	630	270	360			
ประกาศพระกิตติคุณ คริสเตียนลาหู่			14	14	238		238			
ประกาศพระกิตติคุณ เพื่อชาวจีนภาคพายัพ	CEM	11	10	21	687	543	144	4.3		-1.4
พันธกิจเมโทดิสต์ใน ประเทศไทย	TMC	24	26	50	2,244	1,088	1,156			
ฟรีเมทโธดิสต์	FMC	2	2	35	35					

Thai name	English abbreviation	Thai churches	Tribal churches	All churches	All members	Thai Members	Tribal Members	AAGR total since 1978	AAGR Thai	AAGR tribal
มูลนิธิสภาคริสตจักร พระกิตติคุณ	CMA	89	20	109	5,171	3,863	1,308	2.9	1.8	
แลนค์มาร์คแบ็บติสต์	LB	1	19	20	936	83	853			
สหกิจคริสตจักรแบ็บ ติสต์ในประเทศไทย	TBCA	101	9	110	9,438	8,398	1,040	5.4	4.9	
สหพันธการ เสริมสร้างคริสตจักร ภาคอีสาน		6		6	329	329	0			
องค์กรคริสตจักร ของ พระเจ้าในประเทศไทย	COG	20		20	635	635		7.0	7.0	
องค์กรคริสตจักร แบ็บติสต์พระ กษณาธิคุณ		5	7	12	459	228	231			
องค์กรคริสตจักร พร เมตตา	MEM	11		11	607	607				
องค์กรคริสตจักร สห มิตร		6	1	7	251	171	80			
องค์กรคริสตจักร สันติสุขชาวไทย	STS	3		3	122	122				
องค์การคริสตจักร สมานสามัคคีใน ประเทศไทย	BFC	48	14	62	2,826	1,548	1,278	2.1	2.5	1.7
องค์การคริสตจักร สามัคคีธรรมแบ็บ ติสต์ในประเทศไทย	IBFT	7		7	220	220				
องค์การคริสตจักร แอ่งลิกันในประเทศไทย	AECT.	3	11	14	1,529	396	1,133			

Thai name	English abbreviation	Thai churches	Tribal churches	All churches	All members	Thai Members	Tribal Members	AAGR total since 1978	AAGR Thai	AAGR tribal
องค์การพันธทาระ	TMEC	6	1	7	318	291	27			
องค์การพันธมิตร	BLS	4		4	460	460				
องค์การบริหาร คริสตจักรนาชาวัน	NZR	8	16	24	1,518	304	1,214			
องค์การพันธกิจข่าว ประเสริฐในประเทศไทย	TMC/GA PCT	5	3	8	289	202	87			
องค์การพันธกิจ สรรเสริญประเทศไทย	PMT	7	2	9	420	260	160			
องค์การสภา คริสตจักรลูเธอรัน 	ELC	33	8	41	2,496	1,824	672	19.8		
องค์การอ้าคริสต เดียนในประเทศไทย		1	46	47	4,141	27	4,114	18.0		
Non-charismatic mission founded		669	412	1081	60272	32126	28146	6.6	5.1	10.0
ทาลิซาอุมิ			24	24	174		174			
เผยแผ่พระกิตติคุณ ไทยเอชรา	TE	11	2	13	558	495	63			
ศูนย์ข่าวประเสริฐอา ปา	AECT	3	6	9	550	120	430			
ศูนย์เจริญธรรมอม ก้อย	OC	13	0	13	813		813			
ศูนย์อบรมพระกิตติ คุณชาวอ้า	AMIT		4	4	426		426			
องค์การคริสตจักร กะเหรี่ยงเพื่อพระ คริสต์			21	21	1,982		1,982			
องค์การคริสตจักร ความรอด	SC	3	5	8	720	270	450			

Thai name	English abbreviation	Thai churches	Tribal churches	All churches	All members	Thai Members	Tribal Members	AAGR total since 1978	AAGR Thai	AAGR tribal
องค์กรคริสตจักร ชีวิตใหม่	NL	17	5	22	1,098	951	147	6.1	5.5	
องค์กรคริสตจักร เมืองไทย	MTC	11	1	12	556	528	28			
Non-charismatic independent		58	68	126	6877	2364	4513	13.3	9.0	
All non-charismatic non-CCT		727	480	1207	67149	34490	32659	7.0	5.3	10.6
Christian Outreach Centre		1	1	2	38	25	13			
ข่าวประเสริฐสมบุญ	FGC.	7	5	12	687	389	298			
คณะพระกิตติคุณ สมบูรณ์สัมพันธ์ในประเทศไทย	FGA	43	2	45	5,530	5,339	191	5.8	5.7	
คริสตจักรพระกิตติคุณสมบูรณ์ในประเทศไทย	FCT	43		43	2,400	2,400		0.2	0.2	
คริสเตียนสัมพันธ์ ประเทศไทย	TAOG	103	11	114	7,816	6,975	841	9.1	8.7	
วายแวม	YWAM	2	1	3	199	139	60			
องค์การคริสตจักรของพระเจ้าแห่งการเผยพระวจนะ	CGP	12		12	239	239				
องค์การพระกิตติคุณ สมบูรณ์ฯ	FGC	101	12	113	7,510	6,151	1,359	1.9		
องค์การพระคริสต์เพื่อชาวไทย	TNIC	3	2	5	152	89	63			
องค์การวิเคเตอร์แห่งประเทศไทย	VAM	7	4	11	361	257	104			
องค์การสังฆกรรมแห่งพระเยซูคริสต์	TJC	5		5	272	272				

Thai name	English abbreviation	Thai churches	Tribal churches	All churches	All members	Thai Members	Tribal Members	AAGR total since 1978	AAGR Thai	AAGR tribal
องค์การเอเชียนคริสเตียนมิชชั่น	ACM	3	2	5	246	93	153			
คริสตจักรปลูกจิต	COGWM	10		10	746	746				
Charismatic mission founded		340	40	380	26,196	23,114	3,082	4.1	3.6	
United Pentecostal Church	UPC	0	2	2	207	0	207	-2.3		
กลุ่มคริสตจักรศูนย์ชีวิตคริสเตียน	CLC	18		18	677	677				
ค.อ.	Hope	430		430	25,231	25,231				
คณะร่วมนิมิตในประเทศไทย	VFG	22		22	1,278	1,278				
องค์กรคริสตจักร ร่มเกล้า	RKC	23	2	25	3,911	3,766	145			
Charismatic independent		493	4	497	31304	30952	352	16.9	16.8	
All charismatic		833	44	877	57,500	54,066	3,434	6.9	6.6	
Free churches		330	95	425	28367	22008	6359	10.8	9.9	20.7
Unknown affiliation		92	26				1645			
Total		2,646	1,376	4,022	323,048	185,741	137,307	5.4	4.2	8.0

APPENDIX 9: FOCUS ON THE RECEPTIVE?

In *Understanding Church Growth* Donald McGavran advises that mission organizations send their missionaries to receptive areas (pp. 245-265). Accepting McGavran's basic thought that finding should be maximized, i.e. that mission organizations should aim to see as many people as possible convert to Christ and become responsible members of his Church, that is good advice for some circumstances. If the choice is between city A and city B, both with less than 0.1% Christians, and no resident missionaries, but in city A there is great eagerness to hear the gospel, then going to city A maximizes missionary effectiveness. But McGavran does not recognize that there are many situations that sending missionaries to receptive areas is not maximizing the growth of the church. There are several considerations that show great receptivity does not necessarily mean it is helpful to send in more missionaries.

First, influx of new missionaries, especially of big numbers of new missionaries, can kill off a people movement to Christ, both because of the growing foreign face of the Christian faith, and because national leaders will start to defer to foreigners.

Second, in most cases new missionaries will need several years in language and culture study before being able to minister effectively. The same level of receptivity may or may not be there after these years of preparation.

Third, receptivity normally is known because churches are already growing. Using that as reason to send more missionaries, is assuming that more missionaries can make the church grow even faster. Even without considering the danger mentioned above, that assumption may or may not be true.

Fourth, working in the most receptive community is not the only factor relevant for effectiveness measured in the long term. Consider the following illustration of two missionaries, both extremely gifted in evangelism and church planting. Missionary A works among a large, resistant people group. Through his ministry, the small church among them grows from 10 to 100 people. His direct contribution to the growth of the church is 90 people. Over the next 100 years, the church grows with 2% biological growth a year and 3% conversion growth. After the 100 years, the church has 13,505 members- contrasted with 192 if the missionary had not worked there. His indirect contribution to the membership of the church after 100 years is over 13,000 members. Missionary B works among a small, extremely receptive people group. Through his ministry, the church grows from 9,000 to 10,000 – everybody in the people group is now in the church. His direct contribution to the growth of the church is 1000 people. So he has been 11 times as effective as missionary A. But after 100 years, the picture has changed dramatically. The ethnic group, and with it the church, grows with 2% biological growth a year like the other. Conversion growth does not happen anymore, because the whole ethnic group is already in the church. After 100 years, the size of the church is over 72,000 people. If the missionary had not worked among this people, the size of the church in the unlikely case that no conversion growth would have occurred would have been over 65,000 people. In the far more likely situation that conversion would have continued for even a small percentage point a year if the missionary would not have worked there, the size of the church would be 72,000 people. So his indirect contribution to the membership of the church after 100 years is between 0 and 7000 members, more

likely towards the lower number. After 100 years the effectiveness of missionary A is several times greater than that of missionary B, instead of 11 times smaller. This rather technical illustration indicates that using receptivity as primary consideration for the placement of missionaries results in an undeserved bias against pioneer evangelism in unreached people groups and in larger people groups. This is a point McGavran probably never realized, as it goes against the ethos of most of his work.

Concludingly, McGavran's advice to send missionaries to the most receptive areas is valid if all other things are equal. But they never are. Therefore receptivity becomes one the factors to be weighed in the broader field of expected missionary effectiveness. It will remain impossible to both estimate that effectiveness beforehand and measure it afterwards with anything like scientific certainty. Placement decisions, even in the most advanced world thinkable, cannot be made by depending on statistical information

APPENDIX 10: TECHNICAL APPENDIX

APPENDIX 10.1.: CHAPTER 4.6.

Increase of number of respondents (only converts) per year group, based on time analysis of peak years (0, 10, 20, 30, 40):

Dependent Variable: LOG(NUMBER)				
Method: Least Squares				
Date: 02/10/08 Time: 15:09				
Sample: 1 5				
Included observations: 5				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	5.324510	0.189306	28.12641	0.0001
NEGTIME	0.053075	0.007728	6.867495	0.0063
R-squared	0.940194	Mean dependent var		4.263014
Adjusted R-squared	0.920259	S.D. dependent var		0.865464
S.E. of regression	0.244394	Akaike info criterion		0.309100
Sum squared resid	0.179185	Schwarz criterion		0.152876
Log likelihood	1.227249	F-statistic		47.16248
Durbin-Watson stat	2.065164	Prob(F-statistic)		0.006322

Increase of number of respondents (all Christians) per year group, based on time analysis of non-peak years (all years that are not multiples of 5):

Dependent Variable: LOG(XN_F+XN_M+NONXN_F+NONXN_M)				
Method: Least Squares				
Date: 02/13/08 Time: 14:17				
Sample: 1 83 IF PEAKYEARS+PEAKYEARS2=0				
Included observations: 53				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	5.617816	0.140354	40.02616	0.0000
NEGAGE	0.052671	0.002903	18.14571	0.0000
R-squared	0.865884	Mean dependent var		3.250620
Adjusted R-squared	0.863254	S.D. dependent var		1.019300
S.E. of regression	0.376929	Akaike info criterion		0.923486
Sum squared resid	7.245849	Schwarz criterion		0.997836
Log likelihood	-22.47237	F-statistic		329.2668
Durbin-Watson stat	1.856982	Prob(F-statistic)		0.000000

Increase of number of respondents per year group, based on time analysis of non-peak years (all years that are not multiples of 5), with dummy variables added for the peak years:

Dependent Variable: LOG(XN_F+XN_M+NONXN_F+NONXN_M)				
Method: Least Squares				
Date: 02/13/08 Time: 14:20				
Sample (adjusted): 1 69				
Included observations: 58 after adjustments				
White Heteroskedasticity-Consistent Standard Errors & Covariance				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	5.616946	0.128908	43.57334	0.0000
NEGAGE	0.052587	0.003136	16.76895	0.0000
PEAKYEARS	0.586996	0.136697	4.294137	0.0001
PEAKYEARS2	0.331003	0.142056	2.330089	0.0236
R-squared	0.884347	Mean dependent var		3.361914
Adjusted R-squared	0.877922	S.D. dependent var		1.057455
S.E. of regression	0.369471	Akaike info criterion		0.912984
Sum squared resid	7.371484	Schwarz criterion		1.055084
Log likelihood	-22.47654	F-statistic		137.6383
Durbin-Watson stat	1.756822	Prob(F-statistic)		0.000000

Growth of the annual number of attenders born in Christian families becoming 15 years, from 1976-2006.

Base: All respondents born in Christian families and all converts who have been Christian for at least 15 years.

Model 1: OLS estimates using the 30 observations 1-30

Dependent variable: xn_tot

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>t-statistic</i>	<i>p-value</i>
const	8.11056	2.43799	3.3267	0.00247***
biolbase	0.0168397	0.00251504	6.6956	<0.00001***

Mean of dependent variable = 23.3

Standard deviation of dep. var. = 7.75108

Sum of squared residuals = 669.828

Standard error of residuals = 4.89106

Unadjusted R^2 = 0.61555

Adjusted R^2 = 0.601819

Degrees of freedom = 28

Log-likelihood = -89.1555

Akaike information criterion = 182.311

Schwarz Bayesian criterion = 185.113

Hannan-Quinn criterion = 183.208

More observed Christians: 5.3% per year.

Biological growth rate, not counting mortality: 1.7% per year.

Mortality rate: 0.6% mortality (see Alpha Research, *Thailand in Figures: 2003-2004*, 9th edition, Bangkok, 2004, p. 80)

Mortality rate adjusted for 15+ (only respondents born in Christian families): 0.8%.

Biological growth: 0.9% (1.7 - 0.8)

Mortality rate adjusted for older average age of converts (all respondents): 0.9%

Annual Average Growth Rate: 4.4% (5.3-0.9)

Annual Average Conversion Growth Rate: 3.5% (4.4 - 0.9)

Retention rate:

0.9% biological growth rate

Population growth 1.2%

0.8% mortality

2.0% comes in each year (1.2+0.8)

Retained: 0.9% + 0.8% = 1.7%

Lost: 2.0% - 1.7% = 0.3%

Retained percentage: 1.7 / 2.0 = 85%

Respondents among Christians born in Christian family: 57.5% female, 42.5% male.

Retention percentage men: $85 * 0.425 * 2 = 72\%$

Retention percentage of women: $85 * .575 * 2 = 98\%$

APPENDIX 10.2.: CHAPTER 5

Hypothesis 1

Percentage of affiliated Christians

Worldview	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Linear	-.917	22	2.2003
Cyclical	1.777	35	3.0771
Total	.08484	57	2.8708

Correlations

		Linear worldview	Christian growth faster than population growth, ln transformed
Linear Worldview	Pearson Correlation	1	-.412**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	57	57
Christian growth faster than population growth, ln transformed	Pearson Correlation	-.412**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	57	57

AC%: Percentage active Christians

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis 2

Percentage of affiliated Christians

Original religion	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Ethnoreligionist	.10941	685	.219505
Buddhist or Chinese traditional	.02742	293	.059298
Total	.08484	978	.190251

Correlations

		Original religion	AC% ln transformed
Original religion	Pearson Correlation	1	-.194(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000

N		978	978
AC% In transformed	Pearson Correlation	-.194(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N		978	978

AC%: Percentage active Christians

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

AC%

Theravada	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
.00	.02278	214	.050941
1.00	.04001	79	.076535
Total	.02742	293	.059298

Correlations

		AC% In transformed	Theravada
AC% In transformed	Pearson Correlation	1	.138(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.019
N		293	293
Theravada	Pearson Correlation	.138(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	
N		293	293

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis 4

Correlations

		provpeln	AACGRln
provpeln	Pearson Correlation	1	-.192(*)
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.041
N		92	83
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	-.192(*)	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.041	
N		83	84

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Provpeln: Natural log transformed percentage of Christian in the province

AACGRln: Natural log transformed Annual Average Conversion Growth Rate

Correlations

		provpeln	AACGRln
provpeln	Pearson Correlation	1	.058
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.613
	N	85	77
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	.058	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.613	
	N	77	78

Hypothesis 6

Correlations

			Percentage Protestants (log transformed)	Protestant growth faster than population (log transformed)	HDI 2003
Spearman's rho	Percentage Protestants (log transformed)	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.188(*)	.309(**)
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.030	.001
		N	101	101	101
	Protestant growth faster than population (log transformed)	Correlation Coefficient	-.188(*)	1.000	.013
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.030	.	.448
		N	101	101	101
	HDI 2003	Correlation Coefficient	.309(**)	.013	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.001	.448	.
		N	101	101	101

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Correlations (Filter: Africa)

			HDI 2003	Percentage Protestants (log transformed)	Protestant growth faster than population (log transformed)
Spearman's rho	HDI 2003	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.361(*)	-.029
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.013	.430
		N	38	38	38
	Percentage Protestants (log transformed)	Correlation Coefficient	-.361(*)	1.000	-.142
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.013	.	.198
		N	38	38	38
	Protestant growth faster than population (log transformed)	Correlation Coefficient	-.029	-.142	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.430	.198	.
		N	38	38	38

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Corelations (Filter: Asia)

			HDI 2003	Percentage Protestants (log trans- formed)	Protestant growth faster than popula- tion (log transformed)
Spearman's rho	HDI 2003	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.297	.407
		Sig. (1- tailed)	.	.124	.053
		N	17	17	17
	Percentage Protestants (log trans- formed)	Correlation Coefficient	-.297	1.000	-.235
		Sig. (1- tailed)	.124	.	.182
		N	17	17	17
	Protestant growth faster than popula- tion (log transformed)	Correlation Coefficient	.407	-.235	1.000
		Sig. (1- tailed)	.053	.182	.
		N	17	17	17

Correlations (Filter: Eastern Europe)

			HDI 2003	Percentage Protestants (log transformed)	Protestant growth faster than population (log transformed)
Spearman's rho	HDI 2003	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.050	.367
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.449	.166
		N	9	9	9
	Percentage Protestants (log transformed)	Correlation Coefficient	.050	1.000	.250
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.449	.	.258
		N	9	9	9
	Protestant growth faster than population (log transformed)	Correlation Coefficient	.367	.250	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.166	.258	.
		N	9	9	9

Correlations (Filter: Latin America)

			HDI 2003	Percentage Protestants (log transformed)	Protestant growth faster than population (log transformed)
Spearman's rho	HDI 2003	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.448(*)	-.191
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.024	.210
		N	20	20	20
	Percentage Protestants (log transformed)	Correlation Coefficient	.448(*)	1.000	-.442(*)
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.024	.	.025
		N	20	20	20
	Protestant growth faster than population (log transformed)	Correlation Coefficient	-.191	-.442(*)	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.210	.025	.
		N	20	20	20

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Correlations (Filter: the West)

			HDI 2003	Percentage Protestants (log trans- formed)	Protestant growth faster than popula- tion (log transformed)
Spearman's rho	HDI 2003	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.165	-.121
		Sig. (1- tailed)	.	.295	.347
		N	13	13	13
	Percentage Protestants (log trans- formed)	Correlation Coefficient	.165	1.000	-.478(*)
		Sig. (1- tailed)	.295	.	.049
		N	13	13	13
	Protestant growth faster than popula- tion (log transformed)	Correlation Coefficient	-.121	-.478(*)	1.000
		Sig. (1- tailed)	.347	.049	.
		N	13	13	13

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Hypothesis 7

Correlations

		GDP growth 2003 (log transformed)	Percentage portestants (log trans- formed)	Protestant growth faster than population (log trans- formed)	Probability to become Protestant (log trans- formed)
GDP growth 2003 (log transformed)	Pearson	1	.014	.124	.008
	Correlation				
	Sig. (1-tailed)				
	N	99	99	99	99
Percentage Protestants (log trans- formed)	Pearson	.014	1	-.202(*)	.755(**)
	Correlation				
	Sig. (1-tailed)				
	N	99	101	101	101
Protestant growth faster than popula- tion (log transformed)	Pearson	.124	-.202(*)	1	.108
	Correlation				
	Sig. (1-tailed)				
	N	99	101	101	101
Probability to become Prot- estant (log transformed)	Pearson	.008	.755(**)	.108	1
	Correlation				
	Sig. (1-tailed)				
	N	99	101	101	101

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Hypothesis 8.1. and 8.2.

Sex (Filter: converts)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	436	33.8	35.6	35.6
	2	788	61.2	64.4	100.0
	Total	1224	95.1	100.0	
Missing	888	64	4.9		
Total		1288	100.0		

T-Test: One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Sex	1224	1.64	.479	.014

T-Test: One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 1.5					
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Sex	10.509	1223	.000	.144	.12	.17

Sex (Filter: Born in Christian family)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	304	40.7	42.6	42.6
	2	408	54.8	57.4	100.0
	Total	712	95.5	100.0	
Missing	888	33	4.5		
Total		745	100.0		

Correlations

		Sex	Attends less than weekly
Sex	Pearson Correlation	1	-.047
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.212
	N	712	712
Attends less than weekly	Pearson Correlation	-.047	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.212	
	N	712	745

Hypothesis 9.1. and 9.2.

AACGR

Region of living	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
1: Bangkok	.04200	383	.027457
2: North	.00875	288	.011215
3: Central	.06628	523	.056979
4: South	.05162	202	.045877
5: Isaan	.05099	487	.043796
Total	.04699	1882	.046146

Correlations

		Annual Average Conversion Growth Rate natural log transformed	Region live North
Annual Average Conversion Growth Rate natural log transformed	Pearson Correlation	1	-.670(**)
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	691	691
Region live North	Pearson Correlation	-.670(**)	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	691	745

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Correlations

Control Variables			Annual Average Conversion Growth Rate natural log transformed	Region live North
Age church, In trans-formed	Annual Average Conversion Growth Rate natural log transformed	Correlation	1.000	-.686
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000
		df	0	617
	Region live North	Correlation	-.686	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.
		df	617	0

Hypothesis 10

All grandparents born in Thailand and Influenced to become a Christian by a relative (any): Crosstabulation

		Influenced to become a Christian by a relative (any)		Total
		0	1	
All grandparents born in Thailand	0 Count	101	49	150
	% within All grandparents born in Thailand	67.3%	32.7%	100.0%
	1 Count	399	230	629
	% within All grandparents born in Thailand	63.4%	36.6%	100.0%
Total	Count	500	279	779
	% within All grandparents born in Thailand	64.2%	35.8%	100.0%

Odds that Chinese in last generation became Christian over Thai	2.11	(19/10)*(90/81)
Odds one generation ago that Chinese was Christian over that Thai was Christian	4.43	(33/10)*(90/67)
Percentage among first generation Christians	81	19
Percentage among Christians born in Christian family	67	33
Percentage in church	75	25
Percentage in population	0.9	0.1
Ethnicity	Thai	Chinese Thai

Thai relatives that convert for every Chinese relative that converts	1.97	(51/67)*(33/13)
Chinese more likely to convert than Thai through non-relative evangelism assuming evangelism equally distributed over ethnic groups, given the same evangelistic input	1.88	(6/30*(0.9/0.1)
How much from column E converted through others	29.97	6.27
How much from column E converted through relatives	51.03	12.73
Converts influenced by relatives	0.37	0.33
Odds that Thai become Christian over Chinese given the same evangelistic input, assuming evangelism only among own group	2.10	(33/19)*(81/67)
Ethnicity	Thai	Chinese Thai

Hypothesis 11

Probability of becoming Christian in Bangkok, capital districts and the rest of the country

	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Bangkok	Provincial capitals	Rural parts of capital districts	Rest of the country	Rural total (C+D)	Total (A+B+E)
Population	10,159,211	4,145,194	6,645,700	39,656,842	46,302,542	60,606,947
Ethnic Thai (and Thai-Chinese) Christians	41,707	33,714	13,956	83,699	97,655	173,076
Percentage Christians	0.41%	0.81%	0.21%	0.21%	0.21%	0.29%
AACGR	3.9%	3.8%			5.7%	4.7%
New Christians per year	1627	1281			5566	8135
Yearly probability of becoming Christian	0.016%	0.031%			0.012%	0.013%
Odds	1.3	2.6			1	

Correlations

		AACGRIn	Bangkok	Muang	Rural
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1	.076	-.075	-.004
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.490	.499	.971
	N	84	84	84	84
Bangkok	Pearson Correlation	.076	1	-.409(**)	-.605(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.490		.000	.000
	N	84	94	94	94
Muang	Pearson Correlation	-.075	-.409(**)	1	-.479(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.499	.000		.000
	N	84	94	94	94
Rural	Pearson Correlation	-.004	-.605(**)	-.479(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.971	.000	.000	
	N	84	94	94	94

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

T-Test: One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Rural	2033	.4892	.50001	.01109

T-test: One-Sample Test

Test Value = 0.764*						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Rural	-24.778	2032	.000	-.27478	-.2965	-.2530

*76.4% of the total Thai population is rural.

Hypothesis 12

Migration and conversion

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	Living outside prov- ince of birth	Living outside prov- ince of birth age 15+	5 year mi- gration					
Migrants	8,558,745	9,434,646	3,823,808					
Non-migrants	35,471,350	48,567,974	57,054,239					
Proportion migrants in government statistics	0.194	0.163	0.067					
Proportion migrants found in sur- vey among first generation Chris- tians	0.530	0.624	0.161					
Proportion migrants found in sur- vey among Christians born in Christian families	0.411	0.483	0.121					
Better odds that migrant becomes Christian (base: government statis- tics)*	4.7	8.5	2.7					
Better odds that migrant becomes Christian (base: Christian families in survey)**	1.6	1.8	1.4					

* Odds calculation example: $E/D \cdot (1-D)/(1-E)$

** Odds calculation example: $E/F \cdot (1-F)/(1-E)$

T-Test: One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Lifetime migrant	1201	.62	.485	.014

T-Test: One-Sample Test

Test Value = 0.483*						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Lifetime migrant	10.094	1200	.000	.141	.11	.17

* 48.3% of people born in Christian families are lifetime migrants

T-Test: One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
5 year migrant	1206	.16	.367	.011

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0.121					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
5 year migrant	3.739	1205	.000	.040	.02	.06

Hypothesis 13**Educational achievement**

	General population	First generation Christians	Other Christians
Grade 4 or less	43.5	27.3	19.2
Bachelor's	5.8	18.6	20.7

Example odds calculation: Odds that someone with a Bachelor's degree becomes Christian: $(18.6/5.6) * (27.3/43.5) = 5.1$

Correlations

		Annual Average Conversion Growth Rate natural log transformed	Education respondent
Annual Average Conversion Growth Rate natural log transformed	Pearson Correlation	1	.055(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.018
	N	1929	1810
Education respondent	Pearson Correlation	.055(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.018	
	N	1810	1906

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis 14

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
How many Christian relatives?	803	0	80	5.07	6.291
How many non-Christian relatives?	860	0	100	8.63	10.437
Valid N (listwise)	580				

Odds that someone with a Christian relative becomes Christian over that an average Thai becomes Christian: $0.28 / 0.0017 / 0.72 = 229$

0.28: Chance that someone who has a Christian relative is Christian.

0.0017: Chance that an average Thai has become Christian

0.72: 1-0.28.

Odds that someone with a Christian relative becomes Christian over that a Thai without a Christian relative becomes Christian:

$229 / 0.33 = 694$

0.33: (Estimate of) Proportion of first generation Christians that does not have Christian relatives.

Hypothesis 15

Conversion age and number

		Conversion age									Total
	Age bracket	<10	10-14.	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	
	10-14.	34	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	66
	15-19	14	46	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	92
	20-24	13	14	44	30	0	0	0	0	0	101
	25-29	5	11	29	41	28	0	0	0	0	114
	30-39	7	13	31	54	72	71	0	0	0	248
	40-49	2	13	22	32	32	78	46	0	0	225
	50-59	3	3	11	16	13	29	45	41	0	161
	60+	1	3	6	13	7	23	46	56	61	216
A	Total	79	135	175	186	152	201	137	97	61	1223
B	Will be in church x years	70	65	60	55	50	40	30	20	10	
C	A/B	1.1	2.1	2.9	3.4	3.0	5.0	4.6	4.9	6.1	
	Odds (=C/3.4)	0.3	0.6	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.8	

Age bracket of becoming Christian

(Filter: born non-Christian and became Christian <= 2 years)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<10	2	.6	.6	.6
	10-14.	37	13.0	13.2	13.8
	15-19	40	13.8	14.1	27.8
	20-24	30	10.5	10.7	38.5
	25-29	31	10.8	11.0	49.5
	30-39	49	17.1	17.3	66.8
	40-49	34	12.0	12.2	79.0
	50-59	32	11.0	11.2	90.2
	60+	28	9.6	9.8	100.0
	Total	282	98.4	100.0	
Missing	System	5	1.6		
Total		286	100.0		

Converts within last two years

Age bracket	Percentage of new Christians	Percentage of Population*	Over / under representation of age bracket
<10	0.6		
10-14.	13.2	11.1	1.2
15-19	14.1	11.4	1.2
20-24	10.7	11.9	0.9
25-29	11.0	11.9	0.9
30-39	17.3	23.2	0.7
40-49	12.2	20.1	0.6
50-59	11.2	15.4	0.7
60+	9.8	18.1	0.5

* From Table 10.1 of the Housing and Population Census 2000, projection for 2003.

Hypothesis 16

Better odds that someone with a Bachelor's degree becomes Christian between ages 18 and 24: $0.342/0.176*(1-0.176)/(1-0.342)=2.4$

0.342: Rate of converts with a Bachelor's degree who became Christian when aged 18-24

0.176: Rate of converts without a Bachelor's degree who became Christian when aged 18-24

Hypothesis 17

Converted age 18-24

University educated	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
No	.0997	791	.29975
Yes	.1824	146	.38752
Total	.1126	937	.31626

T-Test: One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Converted as student	146	.1824	.38752	.03204

T-test: One-Sample Test

	Test Value = .1126					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Converted student as	2.179	145	.031	.06983	.0065	.1331

Hypothesis 18

Christians outside BMA

Total	Provincial city	District town	Village with church	Village without church
Churches	419	971	728	
Number of Christians	37,298	41,657	24,507	36,983
Population	4,162,356	6,754,057	348,479	40,307,460
Percentage Christians	0.90	0.62	7.03	0.09
Number of settlements	71	854	600	69,400

Odds for people in a village with a church to become Christian over people in a village without a church:

$$7.03/0.09/0.93=84$$

Hypothesis 19

Christians in districts without church

	Popula- tion	Chris- tians certain	Chris- tians assumed with 10% as- signed to dwc	Chris- tians assumed with 2% assigned to dwc	% Chris- tians assumed with 10% as- signed to dwc	% Chris- tians assumed with 2% assigned to dwc
Districts with church	41,404,631	103,463	136,747	139,706	0.33	0.34
Districts without church (dwc)	9,989,417	0	3,698	740	0.04	0.01
Odds					8.9	45.6

Hypothesis 20

New Christians influenced by parents and children

Parent	Child	Other
12.4%	4.0%	83.6%

Correction factor:

70-50=20: Expectation of number of years in church for someone influenced by a child.

70-18=52: Expectation of number of years in church for someone influenced by a parent.

52/20=2.6: Correction factor for underrepresentation of parents in church.

2.6*4.0=10.4

12.4/10.4=~1.2: Greater chance that parents influence children than that children influence parents.

Hypothesis 21

Spouse Christian or not? and Sex: Crosstabulation

		Sex		Total
		M	F	
Spouse Christian or not?	0	30	113	143
	1	231	299	530
Total		261	412	673

Who became Christian first, husband or wife? and Sex: Crosstabulation

		Sex		Total
		M	F	
Who became Christian first, husband or wife?*	1	127	161	288
	2	119	230	349
	3	15	16	31
Total		261	407	668

*1=husband, 2=wife, 3=together (not given as possibility in the questionnaire)

Spouse Christian or not?

(Filter: Born in non-Christian family, male, husband became Christian first)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	12	9.6	11.6	11.6
	1	93	73.3	88.4	100.0
	Total	105	82.8	100.0	
Missing	888	22	17.2		
Total		127	100.0		

Spouse Christian or not?

(Filter: Born in non-Christian family, male, husband became Christian first, age >=30)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	9	14.2	18.0	18.0
	1	39	64.9	82.0	100.0
	Total	48	79.1	100.0	
Missing	888	13	20.9		
Total		61	100.0		

Spouse Christian or not?

(Filter: Born in non-Christian family, female, wife became Christian first)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	56	24.1	31.0	31.0
	1	124	53.7	69.0	100.0
	Total	179	77.8	100.0	
Missing	888	51	22.2		
Total		230	100.0		

Spouse Christian or not?

(Filter: Born in non-Christian family, female, wife became Christian first, age >=30)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	29	22.7	31.0	31.0
	1	65	50.4	69.0	100.0
	Total	95	73.1	100.0	
Missing	888	35	26.9		
Total		130	100.0		

Spouse longer Christian (brackets)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	204	15.9	37.5	37.5
	1	62	4.8	11.4	48.9
	10	156	12.1	28.6	77.4
	100	123	9.5	22.6	100.0
	Total	545	42.3	100.0	
Missing	888	743	57.7		
Total		1288	100.0		

0: Became Christian at the same time

1: Spouses became Christian not more than one year apart

10: Spouse became Christian between one and ten years apart

100: Spouses became Christians more than 10 years apart.

Missing: Everybody who is not married; whose spouse is not Christian; or did not answer one of the questions whether spouse is Christian; how long ago self became Christian; how long ago spouse became Christian.

Hypothesis 22

Influenced by relatives, friends and others

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Relatives	491	38.1	40.3	40.3
	Friends	130	10.1	10.6	50.9
	Others	598	46.4	49.1	100.0
	Total	1219	94.6	100.0	
Missing	888	69	5.4		
Total		1288	100.0		

T-Test: One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Influenced by any relative2	1219	.40	.491	.014

T-test: One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0.106*					
			Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	t	df			Lower	Upper
Influenced by any relative2	21.138	1218	.000	.297	.27	.32

* 10.6% of all converts was influenced by friends

Hypothesis 24

Correlations

		AACGRIn	How many of your 5 closest friends are Christian?
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1	-.042(*)
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.047
	N	1929	1607
How many of your 5 closest friends are Christian?	Pearson Correlation	-.042(*)	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.047	
	N	1607	1686

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Brackets of number of people evangelized * Born in non-Christian family
Crosstabulation

			Born in non-Christian family		Total
			0	1	
Brackets of number of people evangelized	0 people evangelized	Count	170	243	413
		% within Born in non-Christian family	28.3%	22.2%	24.4%
	1-2 people evangelized	Count	171	313	484
		% within Born in non-Christian family	28.5%	28.6%	28.6%
	3-5 people evangelized	Count	131	298	429
		% within Born in non-Christian family	21.8%	27.3%	25.3%
	6+ people evangelized	Count	129	239	368
		% within Born in non-Christian family	21.5%	21.9%	21.7%
Total		Count	601	1093	1694
		% within Born in non-Christian family	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Brackets of number of people evangelized and Convert last 10 years, any church: Cross tabulation
(Filter: born in non-Christian family)

			Convert last 10 years, any church		Total
			0	1	
Brackets of number of people evangelized	0 people evangelized	Count	116	118	234
		% within Convert last 10 years, any church	23.2%	21.1%	22.1%
	1-2 people evangelized	Count	136	167	303
		% within Convert last 10 years, any church	27.3%	29.8%	28.6%
	3-5 people evangelized	Count	129	160	289
		% within Convert last 10 years, any church	25.9%	28.6%	27.3%
	6+ people evangelized	Count	118	115	233
		% within Convert last 10 years, any church	23.6%	20.5%	22.0%
	Total	Count	499	560	1059
		% within Convert last 10 years, any church	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Brackets of number of people evangelized and chr0-.99: Crosstabulation (Filter: born in non-Christian family)

			chr0-.99		Total
			0	1	
Brackets of number of people evangelized	0 people evangelized	Count	185	25	210
		% within chr0-.99	19.7%	27.5%	20.3%
	1-2 people evangelized	Count	278	24	302
		% within chr0-.99	29.5%	26.4%	29.3%
	3-5 people evangelized	Count	258	28	286
		% within chr0-.99	27.4%	30.8%	27.7%
	6+ people evangelized	Count	220	14	234
		% within chr0-.99	23.4%	15.4%	22.7%
	Total		941	91	1032
	% within chr0-.99		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

chr0-.99: Has been a Christian for shorter than 1 year.

Brackets of number of people evangelized and chr1-1.99 vs5-10: Crosstabulation (Filter: born in non-Christian family)

			chr1-1.99		Total
			0	1	
Brackets of number of people evangelized	0 people evangelized	Count	192	18	210
		% within chr1-1.99	20.2%	23.4%	20.4%
	1-2 people evangelized	Count	279	22	301
		% within chr1-1.99	29.3%	28.6%	29.3%
	3-5 people evangelized	Count	261	24	285
		% within chr1-1.99	27.4%	31.2%	27.7%
	6+ people evangelized	Count	220	13	233
		% within chr1-1.99	23.1%	16.9%	22.6%
	Total		952	77	1029
	% within chr1-1.99		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

chr1-1.99: Has been a Christian between 1 and 2 years.

Hypothesis 25

Influence

Who had the most influence in you becoming a Christian?			
		<= 5 yr Christian	>20 year Christian
		Valid Percent	Valid Per- cent
	Parents	8.5	18.9
	Children	5.2	2.2
	Spouse	10.6	12.6
	Other relative	12.0	7.3
	Friend	13.1	9.7
	Lay Christian	11.7	6.6
	Pastor	26.2	21.4
	Missionary	4.0	13.6
	Other	8.7	7.6
	Total	100.0	100.0
	N	499	207

Hypothesis 28

Correlations

		AACGRln
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	
	N	84
Baptized after x months, log transformed	Pearson Correlation	-.203(*)
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.035
	N	81
Baptized after 0-3 months	Pearson Correlation	.214(*)
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.025
	N	84
Baptized after 4-6 months	Pearson Correlation	-.115
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.148
	N	84
Baptized after 7-12 months	Pearson Correlation	.049
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.330
	N	84
Baptized after 12+ months	Pearson Correlation	-.179
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.052
	N	84

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Means for AACGR: Baptized after 0-3 months

Baptized after 0-3 months	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.04673	58	.055627
1	.06431	26	.052316
Total	.05217	84	.054921

Means for AACGR: Baptized after 4-6 months

Baptized after 4-6 months	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.05561	54	.056130
1	.04597	30	.053039
Total	.05217	84	.054921

Means for AACGR: Baptized after 7-12 months

Baptized after 7-12 months	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.05076	68	.051039
1	.05813	16	.070765
Total	.05217	84	.054921

Means for AACGR: Baptized after 12+ months

Baptized after 12+ months	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.05417	75	.056112
1	.03545	9	.042635
Total	.05217	84	.054921

Hypothesis 29

Which experience influenced you to become Christian?
(Filter: Born in non-Christian family)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Miracle	246	19.1	20.8	20.8
	Bible study	232	18.0	19.7	40.5
	Personal testimony	311	24.1	26.3	66.9
	Life example	186	14.5	15.8	82.7
	Sermon	128	9.9	10.9	93.5
	Other	76	5.9	6.5	100.0
	Total	1180	91.6	100.0	
Missing	888	108	8.4		
Total		1288	100.0		

Which experience influenced you to become Christian?
(Filter: Born in Christian family)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Miracle	86	11.5	12.4	12.4
	Bible study	274	36.8	39.7	52.1
	Personal testimony	99	13.3	14.4	66.5
	Life example	98	13.1	14.2	80.6
	Sermon	90	12.1	13.1	93.7
	Other	44	5.8	6.3	100.0
	Total	690	92.6	100.0	
Missing	888	55	7.4		
Total		745	100.0		

CCT, non-charismatic, or charismatic church and Influenced by miracles:
Cross tabulation

		Influenced by miracles		Total
		0	1	
CCT	Count	179	44	223
	% within CCT, non-charismatic, or charismatic church	80.3%	19.7%	100.0%
non-charismatic	Count	454	128	582
	% within CCT, non-charismatic, or charismatic church	78.0%	22.0%	100.0%
charismatic	Count	301	74	375
	% within CCT, non-charismatic, or charismatic church	80.3%	19.7%	100.0%
Total	Count	934	246	1180
	% within CCT, non-charismatic, or charismatic church	79.2%	20.8%	100.0%

APPENDIX 10.3.: CHAPTER 6.1.-6.4.

Hypothesis 30

Correlations

		AACGRIn	Core of faith: Orthodox answers
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1	.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.772
	N	1929	1643
Core of faith: Good answers	Pearson Correlation	.007	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.772	
	N	1643	1737

Correlations

Control Variables			AACGRIn	Core of faith: Orthodox answers
Born in non-Christian family & How many years Christian	AACGRIn	Correlation	1.000	.021
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.399
		df	0	1562
	Core of faith: Good answers	Correlation	.021	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.399	.
		df	1562	0

NCD variables about spirituality

	Correlation with church growth
I enjoy reading the Bible on my own.	-0.082
I experience the transforming influences faith has in the different areas of my life.	-0.055
The word of God is the most important authority in the decisions of my everyday life	-0.024
Times of prayer are an inspiring experience for me.	-0.06
Very often, I have reason to thank God for His work in my life.	-0.023
Approximately what percentage of your gross income do you give in tithes and offerings for church support. missions?	0.098*
I know that other church members pray for me regularly.	-0.049

Hypothesis 31**NCD variable about intercession**

	Correlation with church growth
I pray for my friends. colleagues and relatives who do not yet know Jesus Christ. that they will come to faith.	-0.076

Hypothesis 33**Correlations**

		AACGRIn	infantbp
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1	-.137
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.219
	N	84	82
Infantbp	Pearson Correlation	-.137	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.219	
	N	82	83

Hypothesis 34

Correlations

		AACGRIn	womenboa	womenpre
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1	-.227(*)	-.039
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.020	.365
	N	84	83	82
womenboa	Pearson Correlation	-.227(*)	1	.186(*)
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.020		.047
	N	83	84	83
womenpre	Pearson Correlation	-.039	.186(*)	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.365	.047	
	N	82	83	83

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

AACGR

womenboa	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.09732	8	.075361
1	.04796	75	.050788
Total	.05272	83	.055021

Hypothesis 35

Correlations

		AACGRIn	tongues
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1	.202(*)
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.035
	N	84	81
tongues	Pearson Correlation	.202(*)	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.035	
	N	81	82

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

AACGR

Speaking in tongues	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.04488	56	.051045
1	.07370	25	.060083
Total	.05377	81	.055261

Speaking in tongues and megabl2: Crosstabulation

		megabl2		Total
		0	1	
Speaking in tongues	0	55	2	57
	1	11	14	25
Total		66	16	82

Megabl2: charismatic denomination

Correlations

		AACGRIn	megabl2
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1	.309(**)
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.002
	N	84	84
megabl2	Pearson Correlation	.309(**)	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.002	
	N	84	94

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

AACGR

megabl2	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.04314	68	.048444
1	.09053	16	.065336
Total	.05217	84	.054921

Correlations excluding CCT churches

		AACGRIn	tongues
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1	.123
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.181
	N	60	57
Speaking in tongues	Pearson Correlation	.123	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.181	
	N	57	58

Correlations excluding CCT churches

		AACGRln	megabl2
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	1	.267(*)
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.019
	N	60	60
megabl2	Pearson Correlation	.267(*)	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.019	
	N	60	68

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Hypothesis 37

Correlations

		AACGRln	Meets less than weekly ^{&}	Attends less than weekly ^{&}
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	1	.016	-.038
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.485	.092
	N	1929	1929	1929
Meets less than weekly	Pearson Correlation	.016	1	.528(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.485		.000
	N	1929	2033	2033
Attends less than weekly	Pearson Correlation	-.038	.528(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.092	.000	
	N	1929	2033	2033

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

& Correlation is inverse, with AACGRln i.e. a correlation with a negative sign means a positive correlation

Correlations weighted for attendance

		AACGRIn	Meets less than weekly ^{&}	Attends less than weekly ^{&}
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1	.008	-.051(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.584	.000
	N	5230	5230	5230
Meets less than weekly	Pearson Correlation	.008	1	.610(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.584		.000
	N	5230	5526	5526
Attends less than weekly	Pearson Correlation	-.051(**)	.610(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	5230	5526	5526

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

& Correlation is inverse, with AACGRIn i.e. a correlation with a negative sign means a positive correlation

Hypothesis 38

Correlations

		AACGRln
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	1929
Log transformed number evangelized	Pearson Correlation	.112(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	1618
does no evangelism	Pearson Correlation	-.132(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	1929
evangelized 1 person	Pearson Correlation	.013
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.565
	N	1929
evangelized 2 persons	Pearson Correlation	.046(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.044
	N	1929
evangelized 3-5 people	Pearson Correlation	.063(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005
	N	1929
evangelized 6+ persons	Pearson Correlation	.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.451
	N	1929

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Means for AACGR: does no evangelism

does no evangelism	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.04935	1530	.047387
1	.03809	399	.039927
Total	.04702	1929	.046159

Means for AACGR: evangelized 1 person

evangelized 1 person	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.04723	1732	.046461
1	.04516	197	.043484
Total	.04702	1929	.046159

Means for AACGR: evangelized 2 persons

evangelized 2 persons	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.04696	1667	.046886
1	.04739	262	.041314
Total	.04702	1929	.046159

Means for AACGR: evangelized 3-5 people

evangelized 3-5 people	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
.00	.04636	1522	.046296
1.00	.04949	408	.045614
Total	.04702	1929	.046159

Means for AACGR: evangelized 6+ persons

evangelized 6+ persons	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.04479	1266	.042880
1	.05128	663	.051616
Total	.04702	1929	.046159

Hypothesis 39

Correlations

		AACGRIn
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	
	N	84
Baptized after x months	Pearson Correlation	-.199(*)
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.037
	N	81
Baptized after 0-3 months	Pearson Correlation	.214(*)
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.025
	N	84
Baptized after 4-6 months	Pearson Correlation	-.115
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.148
	N	84
Baptized after 7-12 months	Pearson Correlation	.049
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.330
	N	84
Baptized after 12+ months	Pearson Correlation	-.179
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.052
	N	84

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Means for AACGR: Baptized after 0-3 months

Baptized after 0-3 months	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.04673	58	.055627
1	.06431	26	.052316
Total	.05217	84	.054921

Means for AACGR: Baptized after 4-6 months

Baptized after 4-6 months	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.05561	54	.056130
1	.04597	30	.053039
Total	.05217	84	.054921

Means for AACGR: Baptized after 7-12 months

Baptized after 7-12 months	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.05076	68	.051039
1	.05813	16	.070765
Total	.05217	84	.054921

Means for AACGR: Baptized after 12+ months

Baptized after 12+ months	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.05417	75	.056112
1	.03545	9	.042635
Total	.05217	84	.054921

Hypothesis 40, 41, and 42

Correlations

		AACGRIn
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	
	N	84
Number of pastors	Pearson Correlation	-.185
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.050
	N	80
Is there a pastor?	Pearson Correlation	-.046
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.342
	N	80
Is there a missionary?	Pearson Correlation	.273(**)
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.006
	N	84
No pastor no missionary	Pearson Correlation	-.064
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.285
	N	80
Only missionary	Pearson Correlation	.172
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.064
	N	80
Pastor and missionary	Pearson Correlation	.268(**)
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.008
	N	80

Only pastor	Pearson Correlation	-.295(**)
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.004
	N	80
More than one pastor	Pearson Correlation	.072
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.263
	N	80
More than one pastor, no missionaries	Pearson Correlation	.216
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.099
	N	37
Only one pastor, no missionaries	Pearson Correlation	-.216
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.099
	N	37
Number of pastors per 100 members	Pearson Correlation	-.168
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.068
	N	80

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Means for AACGR: Presence of pastor and/or missionary

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Missionary and pastor	.06693	30	.067556
Only pastor	.03496	37	.032217
Only missionary	.08198	4	.031894
Neither pastor nor missionary	.05912	9	.071014
Total	.05202	80	.054493

Correlations excluding churches with a missionary

		AACGRIn	Is there a pastor?
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1	-.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.747
	N	47	46
Is there a pastor?	Pearson Correlation	-.049	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.747	
	N	46	46

Hypothesis 43

Correlations

		AACGRIn	Pastor has authority
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1	.182
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.098
	N	84	84
Pastor has authority	Pearson Correlation	.182	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.098	
	N	84	94

Means for AACGR: Pastor has authority

Pastor has authority	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.04762	69	.053495
1	.07310	15	.058404
Total	.05217	84	.054921

Hypothesis 44

Correlations

		AACGRIn
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	
	N	67
educpas2	Pearson Correlation	.042
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.370
	N	64
No Bible school	Pearson Correlation	-.009
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.470
	N	67
Some training	Pearson Correlation	.041
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.370
	N	67
Bible school	Pearson Correlation	-.140
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.130
	N	67
Seminary	Pearson Correlation	.108
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.192
	N	67

Hypothesis 45

Correlations

		AACGRIn	founder
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1	.362(**)
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.003
	N	67	56
founder	Pearson Correlation	.362(**)	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.003	
	N	56	57

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Correlations

Control Variables			AACGRIn	founder
Age of church	AACGRIn	Correlation	1.000	.306
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.037
		df	0	45
	founder	Correlation	.306	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.037	.
		df	45	0

Means for AACGR: Presence of founder

Founder	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.04136	45	.037806
1	.07980	22	.060099
Total	.05398	67	.049324

Hypothesis 46

Correlations

		AACGRIn	Home-grown pastor
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1	-.249
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.058
	N	45	41
Home-grown pastor	Pearson Correlation	-.249	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.058	
	N	41	41

Correlations

Control Variables			AACGRIn	evermemb
Age of church	AACGRIn	Correlation	1.000	-.295
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.101
		df	0	30
	Home-grown pastor	Correlation	-.295	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.101	.
		df	30	0

Means for AACGR: pastor ever member

evermemb	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.04926	29	.043349
1	.02512	12	.019526
Total	.04220	41	.039292

Hypothesis 47

Correlations

		AACGRIn
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	
	N	84
% time spent in pastoral care (rest in evangelism)	Pearson Correlation	-.046
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.378
	N	47
67% or less in pastoral care	Pearson Correlation	.033
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.381
	N	84
68-99% in pastoral care	Pearson Correlation	.103
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.176
	N	84
100% time in pastoral care	Pearson Correlation	-.029
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.398
	N	84

Hypothesis 48

Correlations

		AACGRIn	training
AACGRIn	Pearson Correlation	1	-.158
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.078
	N	84	82
Training	Pearson Correlation	-.158	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.078	
	N	82	83

Correlations (Filter: Only churches that have leadership training)

		AACGRln	% receiving leadership training
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	1	-.160
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.116
	N	61	58
% receiving leadership training	Pearson Correlation	-.160	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.116	
	N	58	59

Hypothesis 49

Correlations

		AACGRln	megablcl
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	1	-.349(**)
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.001
	N	84	84
megablcl	Pearson Correlation	-.349(**)	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.001	
	N	84	94

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Correlations

Control Variables			AACGRln	megablcl
Age of church	AACGRln	Correlation	1.000	-.199
		Significance (1-tailed)	.	.045
		df	0	72
	megablcl	Correlation	-.199	1.000
		Significance (1-tailed)	.045	.
		df	72	0

Hypothesis 50

Correlations

		AACGRln	daugchur
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	1	-.040
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.717
	N	84	83
daugchur	Pearson Correlation	-.040	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.717	
	N	83	84

Hypothesis 51

Correlations

		AACGRln	Age of church, brackets
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	1	-.507(**)
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	84	75
Age of church, brackets	Pearson Correlation	-.507(**)	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	75	75

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Means for AACGR: Age of church

Age of church, brackets	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
1	.12967	9	.087001
2	.07822	21	.054379
3	.03400	21	.032226
4	.03020	12	.020958
5	.01867	12	.014393
Total	.05480	75	.057134

Hypothesis 52

Correlations

		AACGRln	logmemb
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	1	-.157
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.077
	N	84	84
logmemb	Pearson Correlation	-.157	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.077	
	N	84	94

Correlations

Control Variables			AACGRln	logmemb
Age of church	AACGRln	Correlation	1.000	.036
		Significance (1-tailed)	.	.382
		df	0	72
	logmemb	Correlation	.036	1.000
		Significance (1-tailed)	.382	.
		df	72	0

Hypothesis 53

Correlations

		AACGRln	Homogeneity of education level
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	1	.026
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.816
	N	84	83
Homogeneity of education level	Pearson Correlation	.026	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.816	
	N	83	92

Hypothesis 54

Correlations

		AACGRln	Traditional
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	1	-.349**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	84	94

Means for AACGR: Traditional

Traditional	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Yes	.06353	24	0.025212
No	.02376	60	0.059464

Hypothesis 56

Correlations

		AACGRln	Influenced by sermon vs Bible study
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	1	-.022
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.177
	N	1929	1785

Hypothesis 57

Correlations

		AACGRln
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	
	N	84
Percentage members in house groups	Pearson Correlation	.195
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.053
	N	70
No house groups	Pearson Correlation	-.009
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.468
	N	84
1-10% in house groups	Pearson Correlation	.035
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.377
	N	84
11-20% in house groups	Pearson Correlation	-.208(*)
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.029
	N	84
21-30% in house groups	Pearson Correlation	.069
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.266
	N	84
30+% in house groups	Pearson Correlation	.179
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.051
	N	84

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Means for AACGR: Members in house groups

30+% in house groups	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.04709	61	.057373
1	.06564	23	.046272
Total	.05217	84	.054921

Hypothesis 58

Correlations

		AACGRln
AACGRln	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	
	N	84
% of church budget for social work	Pearson Correlation	-.063
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.300
	N	73
Socwrlog	Pearson Correlation	-.140
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.119
	N	73
No social work budget	Pearson Correlation	.137
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.108
	N	84
1-5% of budget for social work	Pearson Correlation	-.021
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.423
	N	84
6-10% of budget for social work	Pearson Correlation	.028
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.401
	N	84
>10% of budget for social work	Pearson Correlation	-.126
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.126
	N	84

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Hypothesis 59

Correlations

			AACGRln	evanbudg
AACGRln	Pearson	Correlation	1	-.254
	Sig. (1-tailed)			.057
	N		84	40
evanbudg	Pearson	Correlation	-.254	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.057	
	N		40	41

AACGR

evanbudg	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
0	.07923	19	.063705
1	.04938	21	.047724
Total	.06356	40	.057175

APPENDIX 10.4.: CHAPTER 6.5

Model

Variables Entered/Removed

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Age church, In transformed	.	Forward (Criterion: Probability-of-F-to-enter <= .050)
2	TRADITIONAL	.	Forward (Criterion: Probability-of-F-to-enter <= .050)
3	Charismatic	.	Forward (Criterion: Probability-of-F-to-enter <= .050)
4	Women in church board	.	Forward (Criterion: Probability-of-F-to-enter <= .050)
5	Founding pastor present	.	Forward (Criterion: Probability-of-F-to-enter <= .050)

a Dependent Variable: AACGRLN

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.785	.616	.577	.61132
2	.914	.836	.800	.42080
3	.956	.914	.882	.32326
4	.980	.961	.938	.23412
5	.991	.982	.966	.17297

a Predictors: (Constant), Age church, In transformed

b Predictors: (Constant), Age church, In transformed, TRADITIONAL

c Predictors: (Constant), Age church, In transformed, TRADITIONAL, Charismatic

d Predictors: (Constant), Age church, In transformed, TRADITIONAL, Charismatic, Women in church board

e Predictors: (Constant), Age church, In transformed, TRADITIONAL, Charismatic, Women in church board, Founding pastor present

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.984	1	5.984	16.012	.003
	Residual	3.737	10	.374		
	Total	9.721	11			
2	Regression	8.127	2	4.064	22.948	.000
	Residual	1.594	9	.177		
	Total	9.721	11			
3	Regression	8.885	3	2.962	28.342	.000
	Residual	.836	8	.104		
	Total	9.721	11			
4	Regression	9.337	4	2.334	42.588	.000
	Residual	.384	7	.055		
	Total	9.721	11			
5	Regression	9.541	5	1.908	63.779	.000
	Residual	.180	6	.030		
	Total	9.721	11			

a Predictors: (Constant), Age church, In transformed

b Predictors: (Constant), Age church, In transformed, TRADITIONAL

c Predictors: (Constant), Age church, In transformed, TRADITIONAL, Charismatic

d Predictors: (Constant), Age church, In transformed, TRADITIONAL, Charismatic, Women in church board

e Predictors: (Constant), Age church, In transformed, TRADITIONAL, Charismatic, Women in church board, Founding pastor present

f Dependent Variable: AACGRLN

Coefficients

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.196	.752		-.260	.800
	Age church, ln transformed	-.906	.226	-.785	-4.001	.003
2	(Constant)	-.543	.527		-1.031	.329
	Age church, ln transformed	-.757	.162	-.656	-4.686	.001
	TRADITIONAL	-1.586	.456	-.487	-3.479	.007
3	(Constant)	-1.153	.464		-2.486	.038
	Age church, ln transformed	-.619	.134	-.536	-4.614	.002
	TRADITIONAL	-1.515	.351	-.465	-4.314	.003
	Charismatic	.637	.237	.307	2.693	.027
4	(Constant)	-.978	.341		-2.863	.024
	Age church, ln transformed	-.453	.113	-.393	-4.006	.005
	TRADITIONAL	-1.503	.254	-.462	-5.912	.001
	Charismatic	.854	.187	.411	4.559	.003
	Women in church board	-.837	.291	-.257	-2.873	.024
5	(Constant)	-.129	.411		-.313	.765
	Age church, ln transformed	-.657	.114	-.569	-5.745	.001
	TRADITIONAL	-1.651	.196	-.507	-8.415	.000
	Charismatic	.721	.147	.347	4.895	.003
	Women in church board	-.740	.218	-.227	-3.388	.015
	Founding pastor present	-.401	.153	-.220	-2.612	.040

a. Dependent Variable: AACGRLN

Excluded Variables

		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics
Model						Tolerance

		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics
1	Women in church board	-.085	-.378	.714	-.125	.841
	Speaking in tongues	.303	1.605	.143	.472	.932
	Charismatic	.344	1.760	.112	.506	.834
	Baptized after x months, log transformed	-.305	-1.609	.142	-.473	.924
	Is there a missionary?	-.129	-.556	.592	-.182	.762
	Pastor has authority	.115	.504	.627	.166	.796
	Percentage in church that does not evangelize	-.049	-.236	.819	-.078	.984
	Founding pastor present	-.180	-.646	.534	-.211	.528
	Pastor a member in church before	.154	.768	.462	.248	1.000
	30+% in house groups	.128	.630	.544	.206	.988
	Separate evangelism budget	.090	.382	.711	.126	.757
	TRADITIONAL	-.487	-3.479	.007	-.757	.930
	CCT, non-ch, ch	.566	4.219	.002	.815	.796
2	Women in church board	-.093	-.609	.559	-.211	.841
	Speaking in tongues	.214	1.636	.140	.501	.895
	Charismatic	.307	2.693	.027	.690	.829
	Baptized after x months, log transformed	-.038	-.208	.841	-.073	.621
	Is there a missionary?	-.185	-1.224	.256	-.397	.755
	Pastor has authority	.033	.204	.843	.072	.776
	Percentage in church that does not evangelize	-.215	-1.642	.139	-.502	.890

		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics
	gelize					
	Founding pas- tor present	- .364	- 2.308	.050	-.632	.495
	Pastor a mem- ber in church before	.088	.625	.549	.216	.979
	30+% in house groups	.098	.701	.503	.240	.984
	Separate evangelism budget	.093	.576	.580	.200	.757
	CCT, non-ch, ch	.391	2.693	.027	.690	.509
3	Women in church board	- .257	- 2.873	.024	-.736	.705
	Speaking in tongues	.161	1.570	.160	.510	.859
	Baptized after x months, log transformed	- .073	-.528	.614	-.196	.615
	Is there a mis- sionary?	- .109	-.870	.413	-.312	.704
	Pastor has au- thority	- .006	-.048	.963	-.018	.765
	Percentage in church that does not evan- gelize	- .132	- 1.163	.283	-.402	.794
	Founding pas- tor present	- .268	- 2.047	.080	-.612	.449
	Pastor a mem- ber in church before	.186	1.994	.086	.602	.896
	30+% in house groups	- .068	-.528	.614	-.196	.714
	Separate evangelism budget	.116	.971	.364	.345	.753
	CCT, non-ch, ch	.	.	.	.	.000
4	Speaking in tongues	.078	.852	.427	.329	.708
	Baptized after x months, log transformed	- .007	-.061	.953	-.025	.579

		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics
	Is there a missionary?	.134	1.092	.317	.407	.365
	Pastor has authority	.176	2.125	.078	.655	.546
	Percentage in church that does not evangelize	-.107	-1.325	.233	-.476	.784
	Founding pastor present	-.220	-2.612	.040	-.729	.436
	Pastor a member in church before	.045	.369	.725	.149	.427
	30+% in house groups	-.089	-1.002	.355	-.379	.709
	Separate evangelism budget	.014	.132	.899	.054	.618
	CCT, non-ch, ch	.	.	.	.	.000
5	Speaking in tongues	.048	.683	.525	.292	.685
	Baptized after x months, log transformed	-.046	-.590	.581	-.255	.555
	Is there a missionary?	-.004	-.029	.978	-.013	.247
	Pastor has authority	.078	.718	.505	.306	.285
	Percentage in church that does not evangelize	-.045	-.616	.565	-.265	.641
	Pastor a member in church before	.006	.064	.952	.028	.413
	30+% in house groups	-.001	-.008	.994	-.004	.520
	Separate evangelism budget	.010	.132	.900	.059	.618
	CCT, non-ch, ch	.	.	.	.	.000

a Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Age church, In transformed

b Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Age church, In transformed, TRADITIONAL

c Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Age church, In transformed, TRADITIONAL, Charismatic

- d Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Age church, In transformed, TRADITIONAL, Charismatic, Women in church board
- e Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Age church, In transformed, TRADITIONAL, Charismatic, Women in church board, Founding pastor present
- f Dependent Variable: AACGRLN

APPENDIX 10.5.: NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT STATISTICS

Notes:

1. Growth is the percentual growth over the last 3 years before the survey was taken, based on self-reporting.

2. The italic variables are from pastor surveys. The answers by pastors have been added to the member survey data, and were therefore duplicated for all members. This means the correlation for the numbered variables with growth in reality is lower than reported here. When compensated for the data duplication, the significance thresholds for the pastor and member variables is as follows:

Variables from the pastor survey:

0.05 level significance: .321

0.01 level significance: .412

Variables from the member survey:

0.05 level significance: .070

0.01 level significance: .093

Long variable name	Correlation with growth (Pearson's r)
<i>26. Our church has specialized ministries for new believers.</i>	0.513**
<i>52. It's important that church members have as much say in church decisions as possible.</i>	-0.450**
<i>67. We set great importance on integrating newly converted people into evangelistic work.</i>	0.423**
<i>42. You think mission work should only be supported after the church has taken care of its own problems.</i>	0.422**
<i>32. You think it's important to fulfill the Great Commission that you are free to do your own thing and do not have to work together with other Christians who do not share your opinion</i>	0.392*
<i>35. The leaders of the ministries of our church have frequent meetings for discussion.</i>	-0.376*
<i>69. The maintenance of relationships with individual church members is more important for me than planning or organizing activities.</i>	-0.368*
<i>79. What percent of your congregation is integrated into small groups?</i>	-0.340*
<i>40. You don't think it's a big problem if the church members have pop and sport stars as their heroes.</i>	-0.328*
<i>Emphasize teaching the basics.</i>	-0.325*
<i>47. Your church always follows up visitors.</i>	0.309
<i>31. For us, it is more important that a person attends a small group than the church service.</i>	0.298
<i>37. I know which individuals in our church have the gift of evangelism.</i>	0.278

<i>36.The leaders in all ministry areas are trained for their tasks.</i>	-0.265
<i>43.Your church is western.</i>	0.262
<i>45.You think dancing should be normal in worship.</i>	-0.254
<i>74.Did your church publicly announce a goal for the number of congregational members you would like to have by a given date?</i>	0.249
<i>Serving</i>	-0.232
<i>57.In the long term we are concerned that lay people take only those tasks for which they are gifted.</i>	0.224
<i>Authoritarian</i>	0.222
<i>64.I am the type of person who likes to do it all by myself.</i>	-0.221
<i>Pastor's Age</i>	-0.217
<i>Teaching</i>	-0.213
<i>Traditional</i>	-0.208
<i>71.How many friendships do you maintain with people outside your church?</i>	-0.207
<i>54.When you delegate work, you give a written description.</i>	-0.198
<i>25.I have a written, formulated plan for the next steps of our church growth.</i>	-0.196
<i>49. You would like to see less fights and more forgiveness in the church.</i>	-0.194
<i>Democratic</i>	-0.194
<i>Partnership</i>	-0.188
<i>53.You try hard not to let your church members behave according to the culture.</i>	0.167
<i>56.My work is regularly discussed and assessed by an outside assistant.</i>	-0.165
<i>51.You think it's important that church members open up and are transparent to you and others.</i>	0.164
<i>66.The leaders of small groups or ministries each have apprentice leaders.</i>	-0.162
<i>Charismatic</i>	0.157
<i>28.You think church members should not take part in cultural and religious ceremonies.</i>	-0.155
<i>Task-oriented</i>	0.151
<i>Pentecostal</i>	0.147
<i>Small Groups</i>	0.146
<i>50. You think God answers our prayers more if we pray in a certain way or use royal language.</i>	-0.144
<i>It is my experience that God obviously uses my work for building the church.</i>	0.143**
<i>I often tell other Christians when I have experienced something from God.</i>	0.138**
<i>MEMBERS</i>	-0.136
<i>61.The church leadership supports individual Christians in their evangelistic activities.</i>	-0.134

<i>Pastoral service</i>	-0.134
<i>30.You teach that it is important to have a good family life.</i>	-0.132
<i>Bible School</i>	0.131
<i>Leadership</i>	-0.128
<i>59.Our church reacts to change with skepticism.</i>	0.126
<i>27.You think there might be problems if you are too close with church members.</i>	-0.121
<i>Spontaneous</i>	0.121
<i>46. I think it is important that the church involve itself in other cultures.</i>	-0.120
<i>Worship songs</i>	-0.119
<i>How often have you been invited by church members for dinner?</i>	0.118**
<i>With organ</i>	-0.117
<i>I feel that the worship service has a positive influence on me.</i>	0.113**
<i>How long have you had a part in church ministry?</i>	0.111**
<i>65.The church leaders actively support evangelism and church growth.</i>	0.110
<i>68.I feel that church work is a burden.</i>	0.110
<i>CHILDREN</i>	-0.108
<i>Without instruments</i>	0.103
<i>55.I am sure that God wants our church to grow.</i>	0.101
<i>Other Training</i>	-0.101
<i>78.What percent of your congregation use their gifts for building up the church?</i>	-0.100
<i>When someone in our church does a good job I tell them.</i>	0.100**
<i>Approximately what percentage of your gross income do you give in tithes and offerings for church support, missions?</i>	.098**
<i>39. You think it's important that all believers tithe.</i>	0.097
<i>Songs with an evangelistic message</i>	-0.096
<i>How often have you invited church members for dinner?</i>	0.093**
<i>Organization</i>	0.092
<i>I consider our church to be traditional</i>	0.088*
<i>58.We have leaders for the individual ministries in our church.</i>	-0.086
<i>In my small group we spend lots of time with things which are irrelevant to me.</i>	0.086*
<i>In our church there is a leader for each ministry</i>	0.084*
<i>Pastor's Sex</i>	0.083
<i>I enjoy reading the Bible on my own.</i>	0.082*
<i>How much time do you spend in church activities</i>	0.082*
<i>Counseling</i>	-0.081*
<i>I could write down the organizational structure of my church</i>	0.081*
<i>Location</i>	-0.081*
<i>I feel my task in the church is a great challenge</i>	0.080*

The leaders of our church prefer to evade conflicts	0.079*
I pray for my friends, colleagues and relatives who do not yet know Jesus Christ, that they will come to faith.	0.076*
<i>33. I enjoy church work.</i>	-0.071
I enjoy the tasks I do in the church fellowship	0.071*
The tasks I perform in my church are in accordance with my gifts.	0.071*
I know what programs exist in our church which are particularly applicable to non-Christians	-0.068
<i>41. Our church members work together well.</i>	0.067
<i>62. It is important for me to regularly express praise and acknowledgment to the lay people.</i>	0.066
The leaders of our church have an inspiring optimism	-0.064
<i>29. Your church has a sign that clearly states the vision or the goal of the church.</i>	0.063
In our worship services new faces are a rarity	0.061
<i>Daughter Churches</i>	0.060
I am a member of a group in which others will pray with me and for me if needed	0.060
I enjoy bringing visitors to our church services	0.060
Times of prayer are an inspiring experience for me	0.060
Our pastor is a spiritual example for me	-0.059
<i>38. I know about the personal problems of the core lay people.</i>	-0.058
My most important motive for attending the church service is a sense of duty.	-0.058
I know my spiritual gifts	0.057
The music in the church services helps me worship God.	0.057
I experience the transforming influences faith has in the different areas of my life.	0.055
<i>LOCATION</i>	0.054
I know which goals our church will pursue in the coming years	0.053
How much time do you spend per week with friends from church?	0.050
I know that other church members pray for me regularly.	0.049
With percussion	-0.047
I am a member of a group where it is possible to talk about personal problems	0.046
There is a lot of joy and laughter in our church	-0.046
<i>48. Your church has special ministries for people who are lonely</i>	-0.045
In the groups I belong to it is easy for newcomers to be integrated	-0.045
<i>34. The volunteer lay leaders of our church are trained for their ministries</i>	-0.044
It is the declared goal of our small groups to reproduce themselves by starting new small groups	-0.043
The leaders of our church concentrate on the tasks for which they are gifted	-0.042
Goal-oriented	-0.041

People-oriented	0.041
It is my impression that the structure of our church hinders church life rather than promotes it.	0.039
<i>60.In our church we consciously promote the reproduction of small groups by dividing them.</i>	<i>0.038</i>
In our church the subject of evangelism is discussed at all possible opportunities	-0.038
It is my impression that the evangelistic activities in our church lack imagination	0.038
I know what value my ministry has in the total work of the church	0.037
I enjoy listening to the sermons in the worship service.	-0.036
New Christians find friends in our church quickly.	0.036
<i>Worship Services</i>	<i>-0.032</i>
I am a member of a group in our church in which we talk about spiritual issues	0.031
It is hard for me to sum up in a few phrases what faith means for me.	0.031
<i>Liturgical</i>	<i>-0.031</i>
Our pastor seems to feel at home in our church	0.031
The lay people of our church are trained frequently	-0.031
I feel that my church supports me in my ministry.	0.030
People in our church are highly motivated to do church work	0.029
Optimal care is given to our children in the church service.	0.028
I feel that the sermon in the worship service speaks to my life needs	-0.026
I'm often bored in the worship service	0.026
<i>Theology</i>	<i>-0.025</i>
In our church it is possible to talk with other people about feelings and problems	0.024
The atmosphere of our church is strongly influenced by praise and compliments.	-0.024
The word of God is the most important authority in the decisions of my everyday life	0.024
I find it easy to tell other Christians about my feelings	-0.023
Very often, I have reason to thank God for His work in my life	0.023
<i>72.How many time do you have for private affairs in the course of an average day?</i>	<i>-0.022</i>
Attending the worship service is an inspiring experience for me.	-0.022
Evangelism	-0.022
When new people come to church events, we approach them openly and lovingly.	0.022
When someone in our church has a different opinion from me, I prefer to be silent rather than to endanger peace.	0.022
Evangelical	-0.021
<i>24.Our church services attract visitors.</i>	<i>0.020</i>
<i>70.How many friendships do you maintain with people inside your church?</i>	<i>-0.019</i>

I firmly believe that God will act even more powerfully in our church in the coming years.	0.019
I enjoy bringing my friends, colleagues, or relatives to church.	0.017
I am a member of a small group in which I feel at home.	0.016
<i>63.I am disturbed that, in my area of responsibility, people without Jesus Christ are lost for eternity.</i>	-0.015
I can be as active as I like in my small group	0.015
Our pastor has too much work to do	-0.015
How many non-Christian friends do you have?	0.015
I am fully informed about our church plan for church growth.	0.014
I try to deepen my relationships with people who do not yet know Jesus Christ.	-0.014
Our pastor looks for help from lay people to complement those areas in which he is not gifted	0.012
Modern	0.011
In our church we often try new things.	-0.009
When a church member is obviously in the wrong, this is corrected with love, but firmly.	0.009
I am enthusiastic about my church.	0.008
The activities of our church are characterized by successful planning and organization	0.007
The leaders of our church prefer to do the work themselves rather than delegate it	-0.007
Our pastor gives a lot of church members the opportunity to help in organizing and conducting the church service	0.006
Your Gender	0.002
<i>44.I do not think clapping is appropriate in church services.</i>	-0.001
In my small group we show trust towards one another	0.001

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SAMENVATTING

Sinds in 1828 de eerste protestantse zendeling Thailand binnenkwam, is een gestage maar tegelijkertijd zeer beperkte stroom van etnische Thais protestants christen geworden. Dit leidt tot de vraag welke factoren in Thailand bijdragen aan kerkgroei door bekering tot het christelijk geloof.

Bekering en kerkgroei worden onder andere bestudeerd in de sociale wetenschappen en in de missiologie. Binnen de sociale wetenschappen komt steeds meer aandacht voor de eigen beslissingen die bekeerlingen nemen en voor het feit dat bekering ook belangrijke sociale componenten heeft. Binnen de missiologie bestaat een stroming die veel aandacht geeft aan welke factoren een kerk helpen te groeien.

Meer dan 4.000 protestantse kerken kunnen inmiddels in Thailand gevonden worden, met in totaal ongeveer 325.000 leden. 40% van hen behoort tot de stammenbevolking, die minder dan 2% van de totale bevolking uitmaakt. Onder de etnische Thais is het percentage protestantse christenen slechts 0,3%. Het protestantisme valt uiteen in drie hoofdstromen, die elkaar in grootte niet veel ontlopen. Ten eerste zijn er de kerken binnen de Church of Christ in Thailand. Dit is het oudste en meest traditionele kerkgenootschap, gedomineerd door de presbyterianen. Ten tweede zijn er niet-charismatische evangelische kerken, veelal na de Tweede Wereldoorlog ontstaan uit kerkelijke en genootschappelijke zending. Ten derde zijn er de charismatische evangelische kerken, die sterk vertegenwoordigd zijn in de steden. Omdat het aantal protestantse christenen per jaar 3,5% sneller toeneemt dan de bevolking, neemt het aandeel van het protestantisme onder de Thais toe. Dit is ook op te maken uit het feit dat tweederde van alle Thaise protestantse gelovigen eerste-generatiechristenen zijn.

Onder de Thais die lid worden van een protestantse kerk, zijn relatief grote aantallen vrouwen en migranten. Een opvallend verschijnsel is dat oudere mensen iets meer geneigd zijn christen te worden dan jongeren. Toch is het zo dat er over heel Thailand en in alle bevolkingsgroepen mensen zijn die christen worden. Onder bepaalde groepen, zoals mensen op het platteland en laag-opgeleiden zijn er relatief weinig bekeerlingen. Er zijn echter sterke aanwijzingen dat dit niet is omdat zij minder openstaan voor het christelijk geloof, maar omdat zij minder de gelegenheid hebben de christelijke boodschap te horen.

Het belang van persoonlijke relaties in de bekering van mensen kan moeilijk overschat worden. Zo blijkt een Thai met een christelijk familielid een honderden malen grotere kans te hebben om ook christen te worden dan een Thai zonder christenen in zijn familie. Het is bijna honderd keer zo waarschijnlijk dat iemand die in een dorp woont met een kerk, christen wordt, dan iemand die in een dorp woont zonder kerk. Ook op het gebied van de media is dezelfde trend waar te nemen. Voor 60% van alle bekeerlingen speelden gedrukte media, die vooral gebruikt worden in de context van een bestaande relatie, een rol in hun bekering. Slechts 10% noemde radio en televisie als invloed.

Sommige soorten kerken trekken meer bekeerlingen aan dan andere. De belangrijkste factor blijkt de leeftijd van een kerk te zijn. Meer dan de helft van het verschil tussen kerken in bekeringsgroei als percentage van het aantal leden, blijkt voorspeld te kunnen worden door de leeftijd van een kerk. Hoe jonger een kerk, hoe meer bekeerlingen er zijn. De tweede belangrijke factor is traditionaliteit. Traditionele kerken groeien langzamer. Twee andere factoren leveren een

ondergeschikte bijdrage aan de voorspelling van de bekeringsgroei van een kerk.
Charismatische kerken en kerken zonder vrouwen in de kerkenraad groeien sneller.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Marten Visser was born in Waalwijk, the Netherlands, in 1971. Since he was four years of age, he wanted become a missionary. He studied theology and cultural anthropology at Utrecht University and did the research for both of his Master theses in Thailand. In 1994 he founded Gave, a Christian organization ministering among refugees in the Netherlands. He remained its director until 2000. In 2000 he and his wife Esther were appointed as missionaries to Thailand by the Reformed Mission League and OMF-International. After a year language study they planted a church in Bangkok. In 2006 they moved to Northeast Thailand, where they planted another church. Marten Visser is currently OMF regional leader for Northeast Thailand. He and his wife have two children.

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