

MARTEN VISSER

PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES
FOR CHURCH GROWTH
IN BANGKOK

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Table of contents

	Page:
Chapter 1 Introduction	
1.1. Objectives	1
1.2. Methodology	3
1.3. Design	11
1.4. Sources	12
Chapter 2 The people of Bangkok	
2.1. General information	24
2.2. Religion	26
2.3. Cultural values	29
2.4. Ethnicity	31
2.5. Economy	33
2.6. Summary	34
Chapter 3 Protestant churches in Thailand and Bangkok	
3.1. General information	35
3.2. Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT)	
3.2.1. Organization	36
3.2.2. Theology	38
3.2.3. Bangkok	39
3.3. Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand (EFT)	
3.3.1. Organization	41
3.3.2. Theology	43
3.3.3. Bangkok	44
3.4. Thailand Baptist Churches Association (TBCA)	
3.4.1. Organization	46
3.4.2. Theology	46
3.4.3. Bangkok	46
3.5. Relationships between churches	47
3.6. Summary	49

Chapter 4 Situation of the urban mission in Bangkok

4.1. Opinions	50
4.2. Goals and strategies	51
4.3. Implementation of strategies	54
4.4. The role of missionaries	59
4.5. Cooperation	62
4.6. Summary	64

Chapter 5 Problems of the urban mission in Bangkok

5.1. Introduction	65
5.2. Arithmetical problems	66
5.3. Geographical problems	67
5.4. Biological problems	68
5.5. Perceptive problems	69
5.6. Psychological problems	70
5.7. Analytical problems	71
5.8. Cultural-historical problems	72
5.9. Linguistic problems	74
5.10. Social problems	75
5.10.1. Social problems concerning non-Christians	75
5.10.2. Social problems concerning Christians	77
5.11. Economical problems	81
5.12. Aesthetic problems	82
5.13. Juridical problems	83
5.14. Ethical problems	84
5.15. Theological problems	
5.15.1. Spiritual problems	84
5.15.2. Dogmatic problems	88
5.15.3. Practical-theological problems	
5.15.3.1. Diaconal problems	89
5.15.3.2. Catechetic problems	90
5.15.3.3. Homiletical problems	91
5.15.3.4. Pastoral problems	91

5.15.3.5. Cybernetic problems	
5.15.3.5.1. Church organization	93
5.15.3.5.2. Church leadership	96
5.15.3.5.3. Evangelistic strategies	99
5.15.3.5.4. Cooperation	100
5.15.3.5.5. Missionaries	102
5.15.3.6. Liturgical problems	104
5.15.4. Theological problems concerning non-Christians	104
5.16. Summary	105

Chapter 6 Proposed solutions to church growth problems in Bangkok

6.1. Introduction	107
6.2. Arithmetical solutions	108
6.3. Geographical solutions	108
6.4. Biological solutions	110
6.5. Perceptive solutions	113
6.6. Psychological solutions	114
6.7. Analytical solutions	114
6.8. Cultural-historical solutions	115
6.9. Linguistic solutions	117
6.10. Social solutions	120
6.11. Economical solutions	123
6.12. Aesthetic solutions	124
6.13. Juridical solutions	124
6.14. Ethical solutions	124
6.15. Theological solutions	
6.15.1. Spiritual solutions	125
6.15.2. Dogmatic solutions	127
6.15.3. Practical-theological solutions	
6.15.3.1. Diaconal solutions	128
6.15.3.2. Catechetical solutions	129
6.15.3.3. Homiletical solutions	131

6.15.3.4. Pastoral solutions	132
6.15.3.5. Cybernetic solutions	
6.15.3.5.1. Church organization	133
6.15.3.5.2. Church leadership	137
6.15.3.5.3. Evangelistic strategies	139
6.15.3.5.4. Cooperation	139
6.15.3.5.5. Missionaries	140
6.15.3.6. Liturgical solutions	141
6.16. Summary	142
Chapter 7 Developing a holistic strategy for Bangkok	
7.1. Church growth: necessary and sufficient condition for the success of urban mission?	144
7.2. Boundaries for strategies	149
7.3. Strategies and strategy	153
Bibliography	169

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. Objectives

A few years ago the Lord called me on a mission conference to serve him as a missionary in Bangkok. Whether and, if so, which openings will appear to work in Bangkok is not clear yet. I am glad though that I had the opportunity to visit the Thai church and to do research in the period September till December 1992. This thesis is the partial result of my research in Bangkok; the other part being a thesis submitted to the faculty of Social Sciences at Utrecht University, in the field of cultural anthropology.

The consequence of my personal commitment to the church in Thailand, and especially Bangkok, is that this thesis is more than an academical exercise to me. It will reflect my perception of the situation, problems, and opportunities for the church in the city I have a vision for. Every challenge in this thesis, not only is a challenge to the church in Bangkok, but a challenge to me as a person, as a theologian, and above all as a Christian.

During my research I tried to get both a bird's eye and a worm's eye view on the church in Bangkok. I did this to avoid two extremes: on the one hand the danger of painting the overall picture in such broad strokes that visions, strategies, and plans based on it would have no relation with reality; on the other hand the risk of being so overwhelmed with the ideas and problems encountered on ground-level that the boldness of seeing through them would be lacking.

The main goal of this thesis is to combine different viewpoints -not only bird's eye and worm's eye, but also evangelical and ecumenical, evangelistic and diaconal viewpoints- in an analysis of obstacles and opportunities for church growth in Bangkok.

I am sure the thesis is full of evidence that someone too young, too inexperienced, and having stayed too short in Thailand to speak with authority, authored it. Despite that, it is my hope and prayer that it might be a contribution to the sake of Christ's church in Bangkok. The main focus of this contribution will be on the growth of churches. For it is my opinion that the heart of a congregation is its missionary nature, and its missionary actions are the heartbeat. This is not to say that evangelism is the only responsibility of the church. Living the gospel and preaching the gospel are equally important in congregational and personal life. Both is representing the Lord Jesus Christ on this earth -and both will attract people into the

fellowship of believers to "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11 NIV).

To reach my goal of contributing to the evangelization of Bangkok, I formulated the following research objectives:

1. Insight in Thai and Bangkokian society.

Christians do not live in a void. They live in, and what is more, are part of a culture. Sensitivity to cultural values and appropriateness was the first stage in understanding Thai Christianity; a stage though that never will be entirely completed.

2. An over-all-view on Thai and Bangkokian Christianity.

Knowledge of the history, the theological positions, the social-economic background, or even the mere existence of denominations and para-church agencies is essential. It makes one understand the patterns of relationships between different groups (or the lack thereof). It makes aware of different strong points in various churches. It makes one see the entire body of Christ, with all its members and all its functions.

3. A good impression of missionary activities.

Directly flowing from the second one, this objective is focusing on activities that are more at the heart of my research. This part was an investigation about what is actually done by the churches for the evangelization of Bangkok.

4. Knowing some churches at grass-roots level.

Theoretical discourses on evangelism often are not practically applicable. I wanted to avoid that by sharing the joy and sorrows of Bangkokian Christians in their work, their family or single life, and their church activities.

5. Understanding of the obstacles for church growth.

This should not just be a list of obstacles. I also tried to understand why, to what extent, in what situations, and how often a factor is an obstacle for church growth.

6. A contribution to a better use of opportunities and strategies in evangelism.

Both the negative approach of tackling the obstacles and the positive approach of grasping the opportunities is required here. This research objective can be regarded a conclusion from the other ones, and the penultimate goal of this thesis.

The ultimate goal can be nothing but the use of these findings in the proclamation of the

gospel in Bangkok's context. I am painfully aware though, that it is not the missiologist who leads people to Christ, but the missionary Christian. A missiologist claiming credit for an effective strategy is as foolish as a war reporter claiming credit for the victory. The real battlefield is out there, in the condominiums in Bangkok, the ghetto's of Johannesburg, the deserts of Australia, Utrecht's student societies, the slums of Madras, the Amazonian tropical rain forest, the plains of Arizona...And it is a battle not won by academical theses, nor by strategies nor by "power, nor by might, but by my Spirit says the Lord" (Zachariah 4:6 NIV).

1.2. Methodology

Methodology belongs to the prolegomena of missiology (and of all other sciences, for that matter). In my opinion it therefore does not belong to missiology as such, but to the epistemological questions preceding missiology -that is the philosophy of missiology. This, of course, is a different term from philosophy of mission, which contrary to the former is not a viable discipline (just like the philosophy of flowers is not a very fruitful academical enterprise, while the philosophy of biology is). Melting the two into one is bound to be cause of confusion, as is clear in the paragraph on "zendingsfilosofie" in the missiological handbook by Jongeneel (1986:99-102).

Missiology is not monolithic: it consists of various disciplines, often subdivided in mission science and mission theology. There are no principal objections against this, but it brings across the false impression a principal difference exists between the two. This is not the case. Missiology is an interdisciplinary science that includes mission statistics, mission geography, mission psychology, mission linguistics, mission history, mission sociology, mission law, perhaps mission pedagogic (though it might not be a good idea to include an interdisciplinary science in another interdisciplinary science), and mission theology all on equal footing (see Jongeneel, 1986, 1990; I do not acknowledge mission phenomenology as a distinct discipline).

Theology is a special case because it can be rightly demanded that the whole building of theology is missionary theology. Exegesis, hermeneutics and all its components (liturgics, catechetics, homiletics etc.), and dogmatics all have the God-given obligation to be missionary. However, this does not render all theology into missiology. While all theology

should be missionary, **missiology** is only interested in theology as far as it is theology concerning mission. As stated before, missiology is an interdisciplinary science. So it is not a science in the same way as theology, or history. It is more and less at the same time. It is psychology -as far as mission is concerned; it is sociology -as far as mission is concerned. It is theology -as far as missions is concerned. As a consequence, missiologists can have had a training in statistics, psychology, linguistics, theology, or in other fields. And the methods used in missiology are the methods used in the respective sciences.

Very emphatically I want to stress that there is not a very clear line between mission theology and the other disciplines of missiology in the sense that mission theology is prescriptive and the other disciplines descriptive. Far less it is a difference between objective, positive science and subjective science (as opposed to Jongeneel, 1990:108). In my view science is prescriptive as soon as humans and human behaviour are the object of study. The opinion about who man is and who is his Creator are essential in history, social sciences etc. Presuppositions stemming from a believing or unbelieving heart determine to a large degree methodology, description and analysis of a scientist and determine even more recommendations based upon his work. These presuppositions are not essentially different from the ones held in theology. So the line descriptive-prescriptive, if viable at all, should be drawn between the study of objects or processes and the study of humans or relations. The position that e.g. social sciences and history are descriptive sciences, leads to the illusion of objective science - and to smuggling away presuppositions; which will lead to an unaccounted emerging of the same principles tried to be denied, or to the unconscious adoption of the leading principles in that science.

In my research, I searched for knowledge to contribute to a development: the growth of the church in Bangkok. I did not confine my quest to certain aspects of life, as will be clear from chapters 5 and 6, and the corresponding scientific viewpoints. But: in all of them my faith had a large impact on the use of methods, the direction of analysis, and the search for solutions. As I made clear above, I think that is the most scientific stance one can take.

The methods I actually used, largely were those commonly used in the social sciences. For my methodological background mainly originates in the faculty of social sciences. Therefore the methods I used probably more resembled a social sciences approach than is usual among missiologists. Before reviewing the methods used, I mention the question of language, because it pervaded all methods. I do not speak or read Thai. This of course is a severe

handicap in a research project in Thailand. So I had to depend on the use of English and on interpreters. Most denominational leaders I wanted to interview, were capable of speaking English. Problems occurred in the relations with church members, 80% of whom only speak Thai. Luckily, the people who spoke English were very eager to translate, so that I had the opportunity to talk to the majority also. Sermons and speeches were mostly translated for me by missionaries or Thai nationals who had studied abroad. My written sources largely are in English. There are hardly any missiological papers and publications in Thai that I heard of that would be relevant to my research. The vast majority of missiological publications on Christianity are by missionaries and in English. That is hardly an encouraging sign for the Thai church, but it was very convenient for my research. Many of the church programmes and reports I encountered however were written in Thai. Several Thai friends were a great help in translating the most important ones.

During my research, the main methods I used were:

1. Literature

The use of this method started before my actual stay in Bangkok. First of all, the books that were useful in providing me general knowledge about urban mission and church growth. They gave me the context to which I could tie my Thai experiences and data. Besides that I tried to get informed on Thai culture, Thai Buddhism and Thai Christianity. Anthropological as well as missiological publications served me well.

In Bangkok I was provided with useful information in various ways. Foremost were:

1. Libraries of the most important universities (Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, and Ramkhamhaeng). They were especially useful in the field, of general information about culture, population and economic situation of Thailand in general and Bangkok in particular.
2. Christian bookstores (8) and printing companies (3). Most of the materials they published were in Thai and therefore not available to me, unless I went through the effort of a tedious translation. In several cases I did this, mostly to understand the contents of evangelistic tracts. Some of the publications however were in English and therefore more easily accessible.
3. Reports from churches and missionary organizations. These were very illuminating in that they clarified the advocated policies.
4. Libraries of Bible schools. There are many Bible schools in Bangkok, most of which I

visited. Especially the library of Bangkok Bible College proved to be a real goldmine. Besides the many books it contained on Thai Christianity, there was a section with unpublished papers and theses. Here I gained invaluable information for my research. Several papers elaborated on the subject of the confrontation between Thai culture and Christianity (e.g. King et al., 1981). Striking was the emphasis on church growth strategies (among others: Ford, 1982; Tablada, 1985; Mauren, 1986).

I imposed one limitation on myself: I gave very low priority to historical literature. That is, I read it to get a complete picture, but I will not use it very much in this thesis. The method I used is problem-oriented. In this thesis I signalize and analyze problems and try to solve them or give alternatives. Historical data will be used when appropriate, but will not be presented for their own sake.

2. Participant observation

Part of my research was founded upon participant observation. It played a role in my contacts with non-Christians, in my attendance of large Christian meetings, and most of all in my day-to-day participation in two churches, Huamark church and Immanuel Baptist Church, which belongs to the baptist association founded by the SBC.

A description of a participant observer is given by Becker: "The participant observer gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organization he studies. He watches the people he is studying to see what situations they ordinarily meet and how they behave in them. He enters into conversations with some or all of the participants in these situations and discovers their interpretation of the event he has observed". He adds "participant observation is not merely a method of conducting field research, but also a role that is used by the observer" (in: Burgess, 1982:45).

Though I used most data gathered in my participant observer role in my anthropological thesis I will elaborate on it here, both for the sake of methodological completeness and because it gives insight in the way I related to people and gathered material.

The OMF had offered me a room in a Christian men's hostel that more or less belonged to Huamark church, the largest OMF-related church in Bangkok. The boys living in this hostel introduced me to the church and the other church members. I was heartily welcomed and at once received invitations to formal church meetings and informal group activities. So from the beginning I was like one of the church members. Not so in the other church, Immanuel

Baptist Church. My first contact was with the pastor of the church, and this affected all the other contacts in the following months. The more so because the pastor showed much interest in me during the entire period I spent in his church, and because he tried to involve me in church work (preaching, evangelizing, etc.). Though the welcome I received was not less warm than in the other congregation, it surely made a difference. In Immanuel Baptist Church it happened several times that people called me 'Acharn' (teacher), a title reserved for religious leaders. The relations I had in this congregation tended to be more formal. This had the obvious disadvantage of less openness and less accessibility to the everyday life of people. The observation made here underlines the importance of the role of the observer for the outcome of the research, especially when it is maintained with Burgess that the researcher in participant observation is the main instrument of data collection (1982:45).

Another factor that affected my functioning in the two congregations, was the difference in age structure. In Huamark church the age range was mainly from 20 to 30. So I fitted in perfectly. (My age was 21 years, but most Thai estimated it to be higher). Immanuel Baptist Church was a somewhat older church, and had both elderly people and children. In this situation it was a little bit more difficult to study a group without changing their behaviour by my presence. The problem was not very big however, as soon as people found out I enjoyed taking part in any activity, be it playing basketball, singing in the church choir or discussing church affairs.

This brings me to the participant part of this research method. The first thing I did was to take part in as many church activities as I could. Often I had to choose between two meetings because I attended two churches. Especially at the regular church services on Sunday and the prayer meetings on Wednesday, I had to take turns: one week one church, the other week the other one. Both churches had several cell groups, and people often invited me to take part in informal activities; this resulted in a busy schedule. In both congregations I experienced a 'break-through', after which my contacts were more natural and people were more open. In Huamark church this already happened after two weeks. A group of people from the church went to visit some acquaintances, and I went along. Afterwards we had a meal and the whole group questioned me for about one hour. Then they gave an explicit approval of my person and the research I was doing. In Immanuel Baptist Church the break-through happened a few weeks later, after I had joined the youth of the church in some sport activities.

Several other factors that facilitated the acceptance of my person can be mentioned:

1. I am an evangelical Christian myself. So I had no problems in understanding and joining most church activities, which was very much appreciated.

2. I was often viewed as a missionary rather than a scientist. Because of the positive opinion most people have about missionaries, I did not try to change that, unless it interfered with my research.

3. I am young. In a society in which respect is only paid to the old, this had distinct advantages: I could befriend the youth, who saw me as their equal, and I was no threat to the others (especially: the church leaders), who were eager to teach a youngster like me.

4. Most people in Bangkok eat on the street or at least buy food there that already has been cooked. Therefore it was very easy to have lunch and diner together with people from the two congregations. This was especially true for Huamark church. Immanuel Baptist Church consisted more of families, who like to eat together in their homes.

5. I adopted more easily to the Thai lifestyle than most missionaries, who are more settled than I am.

6. In general I gave less presents than the Thai Christians gave me (free meals, bus fares, etc.). Without profiting too much, I mostly was in the position of debtor. This made it more attractive to the Thai to relate to me, especially because this is an unusual relationship between a Thai and a westerner. It had the added advantage that I could pay back by paying much attention to their personal lives and opinions, which yielded new valuable material.

A concluding remark on my role as participant: it had to be more participating than in most anthropological research, were it only for the fact that a church is a community, but not a geographic community. I could not step out of my door and then be in the middle of the action. I had to take action myself to make sure to visit church activities and church members in their home situations. As an anthropologist I deplored that; as a missiologist not, because it gave me more time and freedom to visit Christian institutions and interview Christian leaders.

So far I mainly reflected on my role as participant. Essential to a scientist is that he is also an observer. From the beginning I was very aware I had to beware not to be too much involved. For as a fellow-Christian I could easily identify with the group I studied. This awareness alone already helped me to keep a critical distance to the observed congregations. Besides that there were several measures I took to ensure a scientific observing role:

1. The use of a dictaphone. The use of a pen and notebook was too obvious, but the dictaphone was very handy to make some short remarks, even to tape my translator, and then write it down when I was home. The self-imposed necessity to register the things happening, made me reflect on what was going on.

2. Sometimes I chose not to have a translator. This made me more sensitive to non-verbal communication, which is very important to Thai people. The way they sat, looked, moved, and talked, made me see things that I would not have understood when I had to concentrate on a translator.

3. In my observations I tried to take my research objectives into account. This helped to focus on the really important things.

4. I wrote down my observations every night. It took me well over an hour a day, but it was definitely worth it. I tried to separate my notes in notes on Thai culture, on the two churches I visited, on the situation of protestantism in Bangkok, and on ideas for further investigation and elaboration.

5. To prevent the danger of a one-sided view, I tried to make my observations from different sub-groups within the congregations. This aim was better achieved in Huamark Church than in Immanuel Baptist Church, because in the latter more animosity occurred, and consequently it was difficult to take fully part in other groups once I was seen as linked to the pastor's group, as unfortunately happened.

3. Interviews

Interviews played also an important role in my research. It is not easy though to draw the line between interview and participant observation. I use the term 'interview' for the following situations in my research: 1. A conversation on an appointment that I taped on my dictaphone. 2. A spontaneous conversation during which I asked the informant permission to tape it. The main difference between the two was that in the second case I did not have the chance to prepare the interview. Besides that the conversation continued to be a little more informal than in the first instance.

In the line of my participant observer role I chose to do unstructured interviews in the two churches mentioned above, because that most resembles real life conversation. Of course it is the challenge then to find the right balance between flexibility and establishing a framework within which the interviewer gets his information (see Burgess, 1982:108). I strived

for this balance by on the one hand having written down the main points I wanted to discuss, and by on the other hand using as low a level of directiveness as possible to come to these points (see the six levels of directiveness by Whyte, in Burgess, 1982:112).

I interviewed many church leaders of different denominations as well as church members of the two churches I was involved in. People were very cooperative: during my stay in Bangkok only one Christian refused an interview. Very often interviewees provided names of other people I interviewed later. This snowball-method proved to be very worthwhile to secure additional information and to check information already received.

Something I found out very soon was that it is often very worthwhile to interview people who are, ~~one way or the other~~, somewhat marginalized. They are often ready to criticize the status quo and this helps to see through the polished stories of the establishment. Of course they give a (very) coloured view, but this often has been an eye-opener to me.

Another factor that improved the utility of the interviews was my custom to write them down the same week. This enabled me to take the most important points of the interviews into consideration in the interviews to follow.

5. Survey

I used questionnaires in the two churches I visited to get hold of quantitative data about socio-economic background and church participation. Because of the very high return rate it was very helpful in learning to know about the two congregations. Which in turn was very helpful in getting to know the entire Thai church by providing the worm's eye view as opposed to the bird's eye view I gained in talking to Christian leaders and reading publications about Christianity in Thailand.

Early on, in my research I became aware of a heavy drawback in my research: an English speaking, male, active Christian bias had developed. It seemed inevitable: it was natural that the opinion of the people I communicated most easily with, influenced me disproportionately. Even more so because many of the English speaking people were academicians and therefore understood what I was doing and tried to help me. The male bias occurred because most of the church leaders are male, though men are a minority in almost all churches.

The active member bias is also logical when a church situation is studied. Even so logical that it is easy to assume the most members are active and value church life equally high. The

only thing I could do to counter this tendency, was to realize it every day and try to counterbalance it by interviewing non-English-speaking, female and not so active church members. However, it would be too much to assume that the bias disappeared. The only consolation lies in the fact that this thesis is looking for answers. And I think I talked to the people who had the answers. My concern is that I probably missed some questions.

This thesis is an attempt to arrange orderly all the findings brought about by the application of the methods mentioned above. I am aware though that the Use of these methods do not necessarily left to these findings, that the findings not necessarily lead to my analysis, and that my analysis not necessarily leads to my conclusions. In all these steps there are presuppositions that play as important a role as facts. I will try to let these presuppositions emerge to make them clear. I will however in this context not account for them. That would ask for a more thorough theoretical reflection on the prolegomena of missiology -immensely interesting in a dissertation, but rather out of place in a practical thesis as this one is.

1.3. Design

In this introductory chapter some remarks are made on research objectives, methods and sources, and an outline of the design of this thesis is given.

Chapter 2 will focus on the people of Bangkok. Religious, cultural, social, economical, and other issues are dealt with. The aim of this chapter is that the reader will get some understanding of Thai society in general and Bangkok in particular.

Chapter 3 is a brief description of the protestant churches in Bangkok. The denominations encountered in the Church of Christ in Thailand, the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand, and the Thailand Baptist Churches Association will be introduced. Points of difference and points of resemblance will both be pointed out. The mutual relationships of the various churches will be shortly reviewed.

Chapter 4 will give a description of the actual situation of the urban ministry in Bangkok. Attention is given to the opinions, plans, goals, and activities of the various churches and agencies. A separate paragraph is devoted to the role of missionaries.

Chapter 5 will sum up and analyze obstacles to church growth in Bangkok. They will be arranged according to the "spheres of life" as they are known in the Calvinistic philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd. My own research results as well as numerous papers and

publications will be used in this chapter.

Chapter 6 lists solutions to church growth obstacles in Bangkok. Roughly the same approach will be used as in the preceding chapter.

The final chapter, chapter 7, is an attempt to make some viable remarks on effective church growth strategies. Boundaries are proposed that should be common to all evangelistic strategies. Special attention will be paid to evangelism among the poor and to the coordination of all the evangelistic efforts.

1.4 Sources

Here follows a complete list of oral and written sources that I used in my research. Publications referred to in the notes, can also be found in the bibliography.

1. Oral sources

1.1. Interviews

1.1.1. Thai Christian leaders

1. Mr. Sampan, coordinator of the Thai Protestant Church Coordinating Committee (TPC).
2. Mr. Tiewat, acting pastor of Wattana church, member of the TPC.
3. Rev. Winit, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, member of the TPC.
4. Rev. Chen, pastor of Huamark Church
5. Mr. Phanu, church worker in Huamark church and missionary to Macao.
6. Mr. Baw Tanee, executive of the CCT.
7. Miss Nantiya, teacher at BIT in systematic theology, ethics, and evangelism.
8. Dr. Sint, general secretary of the CCT.
9. Rev. Boonkrong, former pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church and former president of the Thailand Bible Society.
10. Rev. Wan, pastor of Romklao Church.
11. Rev. Virat, director of the Department of Evangelism of the CCT.

1.1.2. Other Thai Christians

1. Miss Pun, new convert in Huamark church.
2. Warnachai, staff worker at the World Vision Aids Centre.

3. Several students in **Thammasat University**.
4. Mr. **Pornchai**, elder in **Huamark church**, student at **BBC**.
5. Miss **Laied**, staff worker at **Huamark church**.
6. Several students at **Chulalongkorn University**.
7. Mr. **Virachai**, **American Baptist Bible school** student.
8. Mrs. **Wanee**, pastor's wife at **Immanuel Baptist Church**.
9. Miss **Pratib**, member of **Immanuel Baptist Church**.
10. Mr. **Mint**, member of **Huamark Church**, staff worker in **prison ministry**.
11. Mr. **Narongsak**, church planter for **Immanuel Baptist Church**.
12. Miss **Chaicha**, staff worker at **Immanuel Baptist Church**.
13. Miss **Noi**, doctor at **Bangkok Christian Hospital** and deacon in **Immanuel Baptist Church**.

1.1.3. Missionaries

1. Mr. **Harold Cook**, **Australian CCT-missionary**.
2. Mr. **Bill Merry**, **OMF-missionary** in **Huamark Church**.
3. Mr. and Mrs. **Richard and Jean Knox**, church planters for the **Church of the Nazarene**.
4. Miss **Mary Cook**, **OMF-missionary** in **Bangkok and Central Thailand**, participant in the early stages of **Hope of Bangkok**.
5. Mr. **John Butt**, **Presbyterian fraternal worker** with the **CCT**.
6. Mr. **Danny Hill**, **SBC church planter** in **Bangkok**.
7. Dr. **Bobby Nishimoto**, **pentecostal missionary** to **Thailand** for **40 years**.

1.2. Personal conversations

1.2.1. Thai Christian leaders

1. Dr. **Charan**, chairman of the **Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand (EFT)**, **World Vision Thailand**, and the **TPC**.
2. Executives of **Hope of Bangkok**.
3. Rev. **Tongchai**, director of the **Thailand Baptist Seminary**.
4. Mrs. **Ju**, leader of a **WEC house church** in **Tak province**.
5. Rev. **Lek**, female pastor of a **Chinese presbyterian church** in **Central Thailand**.

1.2.2. Other Thai Christians

1. Many members of Huamark Church.
2. Many members of Immanuel Baptist Church.
3. Student group at Ramkhamhaeng University.
4. Bible school students at Bangkok Bible College.
5. Teachers and students at the Pastoral School of Theology.
6. Secretary of the Korean Presbyterian Mission.
7. MrJ Marit, former judge and staunch Buddhist, staff worker in a home for street kids.
8. Several staff workers of the Thai branch of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students.
9. Members of the charismatic Romyen Church.

1.2.3. Missionaries

1. OMF-missionaries.
2. Fraternal workers with the CCT.
3. WEC church planter in North Thailand.
4. Korean missionary at BIT.

1.2.4. Non-Christians

1. Chinese shop keeper.
2. Students at Rarnkhamhaeng University.
3. Beggar attracted by open-air preaching.
4. Chinese elderly person.

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95 returned questionnaires from Immanuel Baptist Church.

Chapter 2 The people of Bangkok

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2.1. General information

Thailand

Thailand is situated in Southeast Asia between 5 and 21 degrees north of the equator and between 97 and 106 degrees east longitude. The land area comprises 514,000 square kilometres. The country is divided into four geographic regions: North, Northeast, Central, and South.

The North comprises mountain and forest areas, but also densely-settled valleys in which rice cultivation flourishes. The Northeast has a relatively infertile soil and irrigation is insufficient. It is the least developed region. The central region is the most developed and most densely settled area of Thailand. It is perfectly fit for rice cultivation. This region also contains the capital, Bangkok, and therefore the economic and political centre of the nation. The South is part of the peninsula extending southward to Malaysia. The climate here is suited for the cultivation of rubber, coconuts and fruit.

The economy of Thailand is booming in late years. The economic growth rate has averaged 7 a 8% since 1985. This brings about a gradual, but fast, change from a farmer society (until recently 90% of the Thai were farmers) to an industrial society.

Most inhabitants of Thailand are ethnic Thai: 77.7%. But the differences between the four subgroups (see the four regions) are considerable. Only the dialects of the groups differ as much as for example Spanish and Portuguese. Other major ethnic groups are: Chinese (mostly Thai-speaking), 12.1%; Malay, 4.0%; Khmer, 3.7%; hill tribes, 2%. The total population in 1990 was 55.7 million (Johnstone, 1993:530).

Bangkok

Bangkok, the popular name of Krung Thep, is the largest city in Southeast Asia. Bangkok proper has 5.6 million inhabitants. The Bangkok Metropolitan Area at least 8 million. The growth rate over the years has been phenomenal and is still continuing to be so, bringing Bangkok ever higher on the list of megacities. A striking feature of the city is that it has been the only fast growing urban centre of the country for a long time. This resulted in a primacy

rate of 33.4 over the second city of the country, Chiang Mai, in 1970 (Sternstein, 1979). Only afterwards this city, and still later Chiang Rai, started exploding too.

The growth of the city follows transportation lines, along which new districts are being developed. The upper class suburbs can be found in the north, the more western oriented elite is concentrated in the south-east, where also the universities, embassies and western-style business cooperations are. The west of the city is home to the marginally occupied urban workers. This part is full of bars, little stores and brothels. Squatter settlements can be found all over the city, with a concentration in the south- and northeast. In total about one million people are living in slums and squatter settlements, approximately 13% of the population of Bangkok. (Grigg gave a number of 1.2 million and a percentage of 19.8 for 1985 (1989:45; the number does not seem to grow in recent years though.) Notable is further Bangkok's cell-like structure. There are at least 50 sub-centres. Every area includes functions of the central area, repeated on small scale. In these cells there is no sense of neighbourhood. Social relationships are not made on geographical basis, but follow lines of family, work and ethnicity (see Caleb, 1988:11). Consequentially, the non-adequate road system of Bangkok is always overcrowded. At daytime, the speed of travelling in the bus often is not more than 5 kilometres an hour.

This overcrowdedness has its reasons. From its beginning, Bangkok was the centre of a network of political and ideological relations (see London, 1980). The harbour facilities of Bangkok are crucial to the development of Thai economy. And all Thai trade has its main base in Bangkok: "Large business groups tend to concentrate on the capital city... but in the Thai case, the concentration is carried to the extreme" (Krikkiat, in London, 1980:108).

The population growth of Bangkok has largely been by immigration. People from all over the country moved to Bangkok (Sternstein, 1975; see paragraph 2.3).

Bangkok's main social problem is prostitution. Figures of 500,000 or 600,000 prostitutes seem to be acknowledged accurate estimates outside Thailand, though I was not able to find a source for that. Probably the real figure is lower. It is a well-known fact that many young girls are lured into prostitution, sold by their parents or forced by physical violence. Many girls from rural provinces work as prostitutes to support their families. A university professor claims that about one quarter of the female students worked their way through university by being a prostitute.

No wonder AIDS, too long denied because of the bad effects it would have on the tourist

(sex) industry, is on the verge of becoming epidemic: 500,000 infections with the HIV-virus in 1992 (ACT-center). Politics is still half-heartedly in addressing this problem. It is significant that the under-minister co-responsible for the crack-down on illegitimate prostitution organized a party to which 20 call-girls were invited to entertain his party colleagues, members of parliament.

According to Viv Grigg (1989:50) addiction is another major problem in Bangkok. He gives an estimation of 500,000 addicts.

2.2. Religion

The religious situation in Thailand is dominated by Theravada Buddhism. Thailand prides itself with being Buddhism's heartland (though Sri Lanka would not concede to that claim). About 95% of the Thai people confess themselves to the Buddhist faith. Buddhism is so much constituent for the country, that it has become an often quoted saying that "to be a Thai is to be a Buddhist"; it is also telling that the white in Thailand's flag is often interpreted as representing Buddhism, next to the red of the people and the blue of the monarchy.

This is not to say however that the Thai people are concerned with a pure doctrine. It has often been observed that the actual religious situation is a blend of three elements: Buddhism, Brahmanism, and animism (e.g. Mulder, 1977; Smith, 1979; Kim, 1980; Davis, 1993). A high-ranking government official (a Buddhist), once commented on this phenomenon: "Imagine the combination of what I have stated, and you have Thai Buddhism. Go into a typical Thai house you first pass the small sprithouse near the entrance where the guardian spirit of animism has his headquarters to protect the house and its grounds. Walk to the front door, where you may enter under the chalked signs of a Hinduistic blessing put atop the door panel by a respected Buddhist monk during the house-warming ceremony. Inside the house somewhere, a Buddha image or a number of images going up to as much as a hundred, will be placed in a position of worship somewhere, maybe even in a special room for the purpose. Thai pay respect to all these religious objects, and call themselves true Buddhists" (Consensus, 1989:10). The added elements served Buddhism well in rendering it a religion with supernatural elements (though these are certainly not lacking in the original Buddhist scriptures!) attractive to the masses. And, because religion is not an academic matter, and not even necessarily an academically or logically consistent matter, these

elements were added "whether the additions would clash with the basic philosophy or not" (Consensus, 1983:10).

The three elements merged into one religious framework. The distinction between them has scientific value, but does not play a role in the life of the vast majority of the Thai. Their religion is centered around the following themes (Smith, 1977j:78-93):

1. Animistic influences

1.1. Spirits

1.1.1. Ghosts of the dead are feared.

1.1.2. Property spirits are seen as guardian spirits, and reside in the spirit houses found on almost all Thai compounds.

1.1.2. Guardian spirits are territorial spirits, which are usually worshipped at shrines.

1.1.4. Nature spirits exist in connection with all kinds of natural phenomena, and deserve due respect.

1.2. Supernatural objects. Many objects are **sacralized** by religious specialists. These objects are not personally owned, but theoretically common property. This could be the reason that it is normally not allowed to export Buddha images from Thailand. Supernatural power is to be found in:

1.2.1. Powerful objects, especially Buddha images.

1.2.2. Sacred clothes.

1.2.3. Tattoos.

1.2.4. Sacred incantations.

1.2.5. Holy water.

2. Brahmanistic influences

2.1. A pantheon of supernatural beings

2.2. The soul-spirit concept, which enabled ceremonies that filled a gap in "rites de passage".

2.3. Most Thai rituals. The Thai new year, the festival at the end of the rainy season, all fertility rituals and some house blessing rituals have a Brahmanistic origin (for an extensive description of these rituals, see Wells (1975:175).

2.4. Astrology, which is very popular in Thailand.

2.5. Traditional healers, using both natural and supra-natural means.

3. Buddhist influences

3.1. An ethos stamped by the main Buddhist doctrine, the four noble truths: 1. Being is suffering. 2. The cause of suffering is desire. 3. The cure of suffering is the extinction of desire. 4. The way to be freed from desire is the eightfold path: right views, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right means of livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

3.2. Merit. Merit-making could be considered the core of the religious concern of the Thai. Merit is acquired by maintaining the Buddhist monkhood, giving alms, etc. The five precepts that should be held by the Thai lay people are: do not kill, do not steal, do not have illegitimate sexual relationships, do not lie, and do not use drugs.

3.3. The temple. Temples play an important part in social life, though less and less so because they lost many functions such as school, hospital, etc.

3.4. Priesthood. Young men are expected to be a monk for a certain period, though this is also rapidly changing, especially in Bangkok.

3.5. Ceremonies. Five festivals have a truly Buddhist background: 1. Festival of Buddha's first sermon. 2. The beginning of the Buddhist lent. 3. The end of the Buddhist lent. 4. The presentation of new robes to the monks. 5. Festival in remembrance of the gathering of 1250 of Buddha's early disciples.

The above picture is true for the whole of Thailand. Some of it has to be relativized for urban situations though. Especially in the capital Bangkok the pace of life is such that the Buddhist temple no longer fits in. Craving for material wealth is the norm in this economically booming city. Traditional healers give way to western medicine. Many people do not know the five precepts, and do not seem to care either. When the monks walk the streets of Bangkok, very little people provide food.

But there is also another side. Especially in Bangkok there is a growing movement in the middle and upper class to go back to the roots of Buddhism. There are three distinct reformational movements that try to achieve that, which have prominent adherents (see Davis, 1993:41). Thai national Value Surveys disclose Bangkokians place significantly less value on religious and spiritual life, when compared with the rest of the country (Komin, 1991:85-91).

However, it is my opinion that the religion and the religious ethos of the Bangkokians

influence their value system on a deep level. It would be interesting to study the question to which extent the differences between the Thai value system and the western value system reflect differences between Buddhism and Christianity.

2.3. Cultural values

Many social scientists already wrote about the organization of Thai society. They used almost as many different theoretical frames to explain it. Suntaree Komin summons seven of these frames (1991:3-16). After an extensive review of data provided by several National Thai Value Surveys, she continues with commenting on the Thai "national character" (1991:132) in nine value clusters. The most important trait of the Thai people according to Komin is the "ego orientation" (1991:133). Among the values self-esteem and independency rank highest. This top concern for the ego results in 'face saving'; losing face, that is: losing dignity, is the one thing that should be avoided most. The untranslatable concept *krengjai* is telling in this respect (also see King et al., 1981:8). Its closest meaning is "to be considerate to take every measure not to cause discomfort or inconvenience for another person" (1991:136). To be *krengjai* is a basic social rule, that is not only important in superior-inferior relationships, but in all relationships.

A second important characteristic that shapes Thai society are *bunghun* relationships (1991:139). These relationships are often lasting and involve true friendship. On the other hand is *bunghun* used to manipulate people into dependent positions; this can be done because Thai are too *krengjai* to refuse kindness. However, in this case, "the grateful relationship turns into a 'power' dominated relationship....(and) becomes a 'transactional interaction' relationship where there is no deep psychological bond, the 'ego' is kept intact and independent, and the duration of the relationship has no meaning" (1991:142). These are the relationships that constitute the Thai clientele structure: "Each leader held his followers to himself with an ongoing stream of favors they could not repay, thereby building a moral debt of *bunghun* which receivers felt morally bound to repay by fidelity, loyal support, and other sacrifices...Each leader avoided accepting favors from the other, to avoid developing the inferior's sense of moral obligation to the other (Zehner, 1987:7). This system shapes all levels of Thai society (see Klausner, 1983:263-265).

Thirdly Komin mentions that Thai have a "smooth interpersonal relationship orientation"

(1991:143). This is characterized by the "preference for a non-assertive, polite and humble type of personality". High value is placed on smooth interpersonal relationships. Therefore it is natural that the expression of negative emotions is restrained.

A fourth high-ranking value is flexibility and adjustment. This accounts for the various descriptions of Thai as being 'unpredictable', 'non-committing', 'opportunistic', etc.(1991:163). The person and the situation always are more important than principles and system. The last point that should be made, is the to a Westerner notably low score on achievement and task orientation (1991:197). According to Komin this does not mean Thai are not hard-working but it means a western-style task achievement value is inhibited by social relationship values.

These aspects of Thai culture are certainly very important. It is my impression though, that Komin is not enough aware of the fact that the data she uses reflect values, not actual behaviour. This could be part of the reason of the difference between her interpretation of the Thai social system and that of other scholars, for example on the point of deep personal relationships and opportunism (see e.g. Mulder, 1979).

This whole review has been a review of the national value system. The picture as a whole is surprisingly consistent all over the country. However, Bangkokians appear to have (slightly) different opinions on some issues than the other Thai. Therefore I will make some remarks on the differences in the value systems of rural Thai and inhabitants of Bangkok, as it has been investigated in the Thai Value Survey (Komin, 1991:85-91). For terminal values there is no difference between urban and rural people in their evaluation of freedom, happiness/inner harmony, and equality. But Bangkokians place higher value on true friendship, success in life, and family happiness than rural people. The reverse is true of religious-spiritual life, national security, and a world at peace. In the area of instrumental values there is no significant difference in the marking of, among other things, self-controlledness, calmness, responsiveness to situations, education, honesty, and politeness. Values that were in higher esteem by rurals than by Bangkokians included interdependency and gratefulness; the values capability and open-mindedness were valued higher by the Bangkokians. These findings can help us to understand the difference between Bangkok and rural Thailand. Differences are substantial in several areas. Most significant however may be the equal value placed on the values that contribute to the Thai core value of smooth relationships.

To conclude this paragraph, I will stress two other points that make the actual behaviour of Thai people, according to several scholars, deviate from the values found in the national Value Surveys, which is congruent with my own experience. Firstly, this is the concept of *sanuk* ('fun'). A situation is in the first place judged on the amount of *sanuk* derived from it. So even when other higher regarded values are at stake, the pursuit of *sanuk* is often more important. Commitments are made for as long as they provide fun and comfortability. King et al. expressed it this way: "Fun is something to be sought, while those things that are not fun are to be ignored...It is an accurate commentary in the standard of value (in a general way) for the Thai as well as an accurate determinant and prescription of behavior" (1981:9). A second remark I would like to make is that *ti f'vatoWIMted* to smooth interpersonal relationships often work against the also highly valued detachment. "Never mind" is a sentence very often used, but not nearly as often meant. The cultural threshold to express negative emotions often in the long run hampers good relationships within families and social groups.

2.4. Ethnicity

The whole spectrum of Thai citizens can be encountered in Bangkok. The original inhabitants of Bangkok are the central Thai, or Thai Teh. This group historically held the political power in Bangkok. They often work as government officials and middle class professionals. People from Central Thailand who came to live in Bangkok adopt very well. They have, unlike people from the rest of the country, little barriers between them and a successful city life. The largest group of Thai migrants comes from the North-east. They make up well over half of Bangkok's migrants (Caleb Project, 1988:20). They come from the poorest region, and also have poorly paid jobs in Bangkok. A great disadvantage for them is that they have to learn Central Thai when they come to Bangkok. This sometimes even requires language lessons. The migrants from the North form the smallest group. One of the reasons for that is that the North has its own cities: Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai. They do not have many problems in adapting themselves because they are culturally and linguistically the most close to the Central Thai. Migrants from the South also generally assimilate well, though they tend to stick together. A distinct group from the South are the Malay-Muslims. There is a Muslim minority of 226,617 in Bangkok according to official 1988 statistics (CAMA, 1991:151).

Another part of the migrants stem from the hill tribes, especially Mon, Karen and Shan. They generally do not live in very favourable circumstances, though the Mon seem to have a good position in the gold and jewelry trade. Most of them do not emphasize their background, though they stick together, and insist on being called Thai.

The largest and most influential group has not been mentioned yet: the Chinese. It is impossible to strictly differentiate between Chinese and Thai; most of the inhabitants of Bangkok are somewhere on the spectrum between Thai and Chinese, because they have mixed ancestors. An estimated 65 % of the people in Bangkok is Chinese Thai (Caleb Project, 1988:44). So this group is immensely important in Bangkok. Therefore I will review some of the differences between the Thai and the Chinese now. It must be kept in mind though that I describe stereotypes of pure Thai and pure Chinese, while most people in Bangkok, as mentioned before, are somewhere in the middle.

The most important trait of the Chinese is that they are businessmen. It is hard to find any store that is not owned by a Chinese; it is almost as hard to find a Chinese who is not, one way or the other, involved in business. The result of this is that they hold much of the economic wealth and power in Bangkok. On the other hand they are not allowed to government offices. This made one Thai student say to me: "They (i.e. the Chinese(-Thai)) own the city, but we reign the land". One of the reasons for the success of the Chinese can be found in the national Value Survey (Komin, 1991:299). Among ethnic Thai the lowest ranking value from 23 is ambitious-hardworking, with a median ranking of about 18.5. For the Chinese however, the median ranking is 12.5. So they are far more ambitious than the Thai.

Another factor that accounts for the many from rags to riches stories in the Chinese community, is the style of leadership. Their style, compared to the Thai style, is far more aggressive and dynamic. Ethnic Thai leaders are more focused on smooth relationships. Their non-directive style yields less results in the material sphere than the style of the strong Chinese leaders (see also Caleb Project, 1980:37-40; Zehner, 1987).

The religious life of the Chinese definitely is different from the Thai's. Their religion is Mahayana Buddhism, with its own festivals, own temples, and own dogmas. The single most important difference is the importance of ancestor worship among the Chinese. While there is a spirit house at every Thai house, an ancestor shrine can be found in each Chinese house. This is one of the things that forms a strong sense of family obligation in the Chinese

community. It is also the most important remainder of their Chinese heritage, though they place lower value on religion than the Thai (see Komin, 1991:291). Language is not a part of it anymore. Most younger Chinese do not even speak it as a second language. Their names also have been 'Thai-ified' in their conscious attempt to become as well assimilated as possible.

Even more than the Thai, the Chinese display regional differences. Six Chinese dialects are being spoken among them. Teochiu is their primary business language (Caleb project, 1988:25)

Concludingly, it can be stated that there are no serious tensions between the different ethnical groups. Some though are clearly more in an advantageous position than others, which can create feelings of envy. And it is true social circles are often organized along ethnical and regional lines; not only among the working and middle class, but even in government and army circles.

2.5. Economy

The most obvious feature of Bangkok to any visitor nowadays is the economic development. High rise buildings are constructed at a tremendous speed; news papers have daily supplements in which new or expanding companies ask for personnel; new condominiums and housing development projects can be found all over the city and for years now the economical growth percentage has been well over 7%, among the highest in the world. Most of this new wealth is accumulated in Bangkok. There is almost no country in the world in which both administrative and economic power have been so centralized as in Thailand.

This development seems to pervade the city with a spirit of expectation. Opportunities loom just around the corner. What can be achieved today, should not rest until tomorrow. One of the consequences is that the Thai make very long hours. Security men for example often work in a 12-hour shift, with one free day every two weeks. Another consequence is that the interest in western consumption goods is staggering.

Because of the rapid growth, economic mobility is great. It is a common sight to see very neatly dressed people emerge from a slum, and take a bus to their work. For sure, in one year they will inhabit an apartment in a condominium.

In the mean time, the economic development does not seem to slow down. On the contrary:

the thesis that the world economy will be centred around the Pacific no longer is a prediction but a certainty. Bangkok is the main candidate for a leading roll in south-east Asia; and Thailand is, after Malaysia, probably the country most on track of the four NICs (Newly Industrializing Countries), South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. This industrializing process will cause enormous changes. As a friend told me when I was in one of the northern provinces: "This town is the way Bangkok was 20 years ago. Bangkok is how this town will be in 20 years." Who will tell how Bangkok will look like by then? The only certainty is that a booming economy also will have had its influence on other spheres of life.

2.6. Summary

Bangkok is the fast growing capital of the South-east Asian country Thailand. It has over 8 million inhabitants, many of whom are migrants from other parts of the country.

Infrastructural problems are rampant, which is the more inconvenient because social relationships are not based on geographical neighbourhood. The most obvious social problems are prostitution and drug addiction, with each of them an estimated 500,000 people involved.

The Buddhism encountered in Bangkok, consists of three layers: animism, Brahmanism, and Buddhism. Most important in daily life are the dealing with spirits and good-luck charms from the former two, and merit-making from the latter. The original Buddhist goal of reaching *nirvana* has been replaced by this-worldly concerns.

Important cultural values held by the Thai are: to never lose face; to avoid conflicts in personal relationships at all costs; and to be flexible in all situations. Actual behaviour may deviate from the professed values. In real life the main consideration seems to be how much 'fun' something is. And the avoidance of showing negative feelings does not preclude that they are there and will be shown in an indirect way.

The regional differences play an important role in Bangkok. Northerners, and even more tribal people, are among the poorer inhabitants. The Chinese generally are economic successful. Most people in Bangkok have a mixed Thai-Chinese ancestry.

The economy is booming. Bangkok is in a rapid development process, that demands the utmost from the city's social fabric. The changes bring about expectancy as well as uncertainty.

Chapter 3 Protestant churches in Thailand and Bangkok

3.1. General information

The history of mission in Thailand is not a success-story. Only limited results can be shown after 160 years of missionary work.

It is hard to give an exact figure of protestant Christians in Thailand. In 1987 the official Thai government statistics gave a number of 282,422 Christians, or 0,53% of the population (CAMA, 1990:159). However, this includes both Roman-Catholics and protestants. Barrett has a figure of 1.1% Christians, of which 0.4% protestants. The Bangkok survey of CAMA quotes Pradit as saying there were 146,800 believers in Thailand in 1989. Johnson states there are 226,000 protestants (1993:530). Several missionaries claimed government officials used a number of 120,000 protestants, but I could find no source for it. The churches themselves do not have exact figures either. The Thailand Protestant Churches Coordinating Committee made the following estimate in 1991: 45,042 communicant members in the CCT, 13,992 baptized members in EFT churches, 2,028 members in the TBA, about 900 groups within EFT with an average attendance of 30, and 6,000 members of Hope of Bangkok, makes a total of 94,062 believers, being 0,18% of the population. Because these are communicant (CCT) or baptized (other denominations) members, the total protestant community is much larger. The Christian and Missionary Alliance for example, which seems to be an extreme case, gives a baptized membership of 2,810, but an inclusive membership of 8,430 for its churches (Mauren, 1986:77). This brings some scholars to the conclusion that the actual percentage of Christians is 2 or even 3. In my opinion, this is wishful thinking not substantiated by the facts. Chung maintains that the government gives a number of 320,905 protestant Christians over 1991 (1992:16). I Could not find a confirmation of these figures, and I question them because they put the number of protestant Christians, contrary to all other information, 1.5 times as high is the number of Roman-catholics. So it is impossible to give a conclusive answer to the question how many Christians live in Thailand.

The same problems occur when trying to fix a number for Bangkok Christians. My own estimation of communicant membership (which is less than the Christian community) is: 10,000 CCT members (see 3.2.), 10,000 members of EFT-related churches (see 3.3.), 2,000 TBCA-members (see 3.4.) and 6,000 Hope of Bangkok members (see 3.3.), totalling 28,000.

District 7 is a larger district than district 6. The Chinese Presbyterian churches in Bangkok together form district 7. They have 4,825 members in 30 churches and 16 evangelistic posts, which are served by nine ordained ministers and 37 acting pastors/evangelists (biannual report district 7, 1992). Though they do not have that many ordained ministers, they do not have a serious problem in leadership. This is largely because the district operates its own seminary, the Bangkok Institute of Theology (BIT). Besides graduated students, who also serve in other districts, their churches are also served by students of BIT, who often do their internships in district 7 churches. The main reason that so little ordained ministers are found in this district as compared to acting pastors and evangelists, is that the Chinese, contrary to the Thai Presbyterian districts, do not allow women as ordained ministers though they can serve as acting pastors.

District 7 has a firm financial basis, because of the many business men among its members. It is able to pay pastors for every church and preaching point, and even to build and expand church buildings whenever they feel it is needed. There is often some friction between this Chinese district and the Thai districts, because their way of operating is different from the ethnic Thai's.

The main churches in this district are the Cantonese speaking Sathorn church and the Teochiu speaking Sapan Luang church. Sathorn church has hundreds of members, Sapan Luang even over a thousand. These churches are the mother churches of most other churches in the district. Besides that they both operate schools, originally out of concern for the education of their children in the Chinese language. Nowadays, Chinese is slowly disappearing. Both Sapan Luang and Sathorn are bilingual now, with a translation from Chinese to Thai or Thai to Chinese in the service. Many members of the younger generation do not speak Chinese anymore.

The last Bangkok-based district of the CCT is district 12. Actually it is not all Bangkokian. District 12 consists of Maitrichit Chinese Baptist Church with its daughter churches. Maitrichit Church was founded in 1837 and prides itself with being the eldest Chinese church in Asia. The 1992 biannual report gives the following numbers for district 12: 3,829 members in 25 churches with nine ordained ministers and 45 acting pastors/evangelists. It works with the Thailand Baptist Missionary Fellowship. Its official link with the CCT is not quite as strong as that of the Presbyterian churches.

Finally, there are all kinds of CCT-institutions in Bangkok. I will not review them in

extension, because they are less interesting to the scope of this thesis. However, it can not be denied that some of these institutions had a large impact on Thai society. Even so much, that it made Akkapia say: "Christianity in Thailand, if it is evaluated in terms of converts...it would be a total failure. But on the contrary, in terms of social concern, it is a success beyond any measure" (quoted in Kim, 1980:117). Among these institutions are prominent Bangkok Christian College, which produced six prime ministers, Wattana school, which has been the school for high class girls, and Bangkok Christian Hospital, which was the first modern hospital in Thailand. Other activities of the CCT include a few bookshops, a publishing house, and many activities related to the departments of the CCT. Important to mention further is that the head office of the CCT, and therefore most CCT leaders, of course reside in Bangkok.

One aspect of the ownership of all these institutions should not remain unmentioned: because of the booming land prices in Bangkok, the worth of the CCT assets in Bangkok is roughly estimated 500 million US dollars. The church is looking for ways to handle this sudden wealth wisely.

3.3. Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand (EFT)

3.3.1. Organization

Compared to the CCT, the Evangelical Fellowship is a very loose organization. It does not have any authority over its members. It has a small staff (about six people); most of them are clerks, only the general secretary has his main responsibilities in the area of policy. The latest general secretaries -Rev. Seth and since mid-1993 Dr. Charan Ratanabutra, who is also chairman of the EFT, as acting secretary- have been gifted men, but they also have responsibilities as pastors of their own church.

The EFT was founded in 1969 (Chung, 1992:17) or 1970 (Smith, 1977:104). It became an umbrella organization for all evangelical missions that did not want to affiliate with the CCT. In the first years not all evangelical missions joined. The Christian directory of 1973 lists 234 independent missionaries next to 418 missionaries in EFT-organizations. Later on the government regulations tightened, and all Christian workers had to be under one of the five organizations recognized by the government: Roman-Catholics, CCT, EFT, the Foreign

about one third of the EFT-members belong to pentecostal/charismatic churches. Many other churches stress the work of the Holy Spirit, for example in the sanctification of the believers, but do not acknowledge speaking in tongues as a gift of the Holy Spirit. And though all churches believe in the power of the Holy Spirit to heal people also from physical afflictions, many do not endorse faith healing sessions as organized by other EFT-members.

The position of women also differs from church to church. Almost all churches have some restrictions, but they vary from merely nominal in churches where women may do anything, including preaching, to very severe ones in churches where women can not hold offices or bear any real responsibility. In most churches principles are more strict than practice, or the principles are adjusted to the practice, because women form a significant majority of active members in most churches.

Finally, the worship atmosphere is everywhere freer than in Presbyterian CCT-churches. But also in this area there are huge differences. Ever more churches are influenced by a charismatic style of worship, especially in Bangkok. Bass guitars, drums, use of overhead projectors, and the raising of hands is common in many churches. Others hold to a more sober style with organ, piano or acoustic guitar and the old hymns.

3.3.3. Bangkok

Though the rest of the country is more or less divided between the different missionary organizations, in Bangkok most organizations are represented. In this section I will ignore all organizations that only have their headquarters in Bangkok, and highlight some of the churches and agencies actively involved in evangelistic and/or social work. OMF has planted 12 ACT-churches in Bangkok, all of them after 1980. Most of them have national pastors with missionaries in an assisting role. They mostly do not have more than 30 members, and seem to have troubles to grow any further. Huamark church is the largest ACT-church in Bangkok, with about 80 members. It is the first ACT-church that tried to plant a daughter church without missionaries being responsible.

CAMA has a little less churches. They have the same size as most OMF-churches. The CAMA-churches belong to the Gospel Church of Christ (GCT). Mauren states that, though missionaries play a key role in the GCT churches "an important part of the labour force in Bangkok includes other Asian missionaries and strong Thai leaders" (1986:73). WEC also has some missionaries stationed in Bangkok who are involved in church planting. Some of

them try to start a church among high class Bangkokians. Several Korean agencies that try to be involved in church planting, have difficulties. The cause of it generally is seen in their attitude that one missionary expressed as follows: "They say western missions were imperialistic; if they were imperialistic for 5%, the Koreans are for 50%".

Most of the successful new church starts are led by Thai Christians. It is mainly owing to them that churches in Bangkok have been multiplying so fast over the last 15 years or so. An undated Southern Baptist report gives a list of 112 churches in Bangkok. It does not list all CCT-churches however, and some other churches are lacking also. A more complete list can be derived from the CAMA-mastermap, that gives the place of 130 churches in Bangkok.

As this map was made in 1989 or 1990, the actual number now is even higher.

Besides this rapid growth in the quantity of small (house) churches, there also has been a growth in the quantity of members of some large churches. Especially four Pentecostal churches come to mind, two related to respectively the Assemblies of God and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, and two independent churches without any ties to missionary organizations. The pastors of these churches are very powerful, charismatic men. Two of them were discredited by reports of sexual immorality. One of them refused to step down. His church, Hope of Bangkok, is by far the largest in Bangkok with 6,000 members. This church was excluded from the EFT in 1987 (Zehner, 1987:78) because of on-going complaints about sheep-stealing. The conduct of this pastor and the radicalization of the church alienate Hope of Bangkok even further from the other EFT-churches, including the pentecostal ones.

It is impossible to give an idea about all Christian activities. Only in the area of Bible institutes and seminaries, there are nine EFT-related institutions in Bangkok (the largest and best equipped one being Bangkok Bible College, a joint operation of OMF and CAMA). In social work, much emphasis is given to slums and squatter settlements. World Vision Thailand is the most active organization in this respect. Only two missionaries I know of (one in OMF, one with the Servants to Asia's Urban Poor) target prostitutes. In general, there is no coordinated effort in any area. Each mission, even each congregation, sets its own goals, also in social work, without relating to other agencies and churches.

3.4. Thailand Baptist Churches Association (TBCA)

3.4.1. Organization

The reason to review the Thailand Baptist Churches Association (TBCA) separately from the other evangelical churches, is not because it has so many distinctive traits. It is because its founding agency, the Foreign Mission Board (FMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) managed to receive recognition by the government (Ronald Hill, 1982). So the TBCA is in the position to function separately from the other evangelical churches, though its inclination to do so is diminishing. For this reason, I will review the TBCA, but much shorter than CCT and EFT.

The TBCA is an association nowadays independent of its founding agency. The relation between pastors of the TBCA and the SBC-missionaries is described and experienced as "colleagues" by both parties. The missionaries however still (partly) control the Thailand Baptist Seminary, a publishing house and a vacation camp. The TBCA churches are ministered by Thai pastors, while the missionaries are primarily involved in the planting of new churches. The TBCA in 1991 had a total membership of 3,279 in 39 churches and 54 groups (FMB-statistics).

3.4.2. Theology

The SBC, and also the TBCA are the prototypes of a conservative evangelical church, to such an extent that Kim refers to them as having declared themselves "standard bearers of the Bible-believing church" (1980:197). No wonder they view the Bible as God's inerrant revelation. Their doctrine of the church is congregationalistic, though with a rather important role for the pastor. The congregations have deacons, but no elders. On baptism they have the strong position to be expected in a Baptist church. The charismata of speaking in tongues and healing are not accepted. Some pastors though begin to display more charismatic influences. Women can be deacons in TBCA-churches; some women are even called "acharn", the title for a (religious) teacher. In the church I visited, once a year a woman preaches: on Mother's day. The worship atmosphere is sober. The translated SBC-hymnbook is used in the services.

3.4.3. Bangkok

The core of the TBCA-churches in Bangkok consists of the two oldest, largest and richest SBC-founded churches in Thailand. The Chinese speaking Grace Baptist church and the Thai speaking Immanuel church. They both have a membership of almost 200. Besides these two,

over ten other churches and several groups are based in Bangkok. 21 missionaries or missionary couples serve as SBC-missionaries in the city.

3.5. Relationships between churches

The relation between the different denominations in Bangkok can generally be described as warm, but not close. I shall illuminate this statement.

On the one hand is a strong sense among the churches that they together form a tiny minority with a mission in Thai society. The differences between the churches are conceived as not important. Church leaders and members from many denominations told me that the existing differences are historical rather than dogmatic. Churches do not feel there are barriers

between them (except for some pentecostal churches), so relationships can be warm, as between brothers and sisters in the Lord. On the other hand they are often not close, because most denominations have a very independent mind. They do not feel the need to cooperate with or even be informed of other churches.

Most contacts that exist, are on an informal level. Almost all Christians have friends across denominational borders. This phenomenon has many reasons: transfers from one to another denomination are frequent; Christian institutions have employees from various church

backgrounds; people get to know each other at all kinds of meetings; etc. These informal contacts form a network linking all CCT, EFT, and TBCA-churches. A factor both following and strengthening these links, are the many courtships across congregational and denominational lines.

The theoretical dogmatical differences between the churches (see the preceding paragraph) do not play a role in these relationships. This is true both for the relatively many Christians who have a Bible school education and for the other members. The only point in which friends from different churches see a difference, often is the worship atmosphere.

On a formal level, contact between churches are fewer and more difficult for several reasons. First of all, churches are not very much interested in other churches, because they have a very full programme of themselves. Secondly, the structure of several denominations is so different, that it is very hard to work together. And thirdly it is difficult because of the cultural position of leaders. They can not appear to be 'under' the leader of another church, lest they lose face in the eyes of their followers. For the same reasons it is very hard to

make important decisions in lower committees: if the leaders are not involved, they loose face.

Important in the formal relationships is the Thailand Protestant Churches Coordinating Committee (TPC). It is the successor of the Thailand Church Growth Committee, and was founded in 1988 (Sampan, interview). The CCT, EFT, and SBC each have 5 representatives in this committee. Almost all the church leaders in the TPC live in Bangkok. They meet on a monthly basis. The TPC has a threefold goal: 1) To establish unity among protestant churches. 2) To encourage joint evangelistic efforts. 3) To represent the protestants before the government.

The committee has not much power. The CCT-representatives can not speak on behalf of the CCT as a whole. The EFT-representatives have no control whatsoever on what their member-churches are doing. Consequentially, the committee is as one member describes it "a paper tiger". Sometimes however the TPC is responsible for the organization of a big event. Examples are a Luis Palau crusade a few years ago, and more recently the fourth Thailand Congress on evangelism. The latter was held in May 1993, and was attended by 300 CCT, 300 EFT- and 100 SBC-representatives.

Regularly it occurs that the CCT does not join EFT and SBC in a certain plan, brought into the committee. Sometimes it is because they do not agree with the suggested project; but mostly the problem seems to be that the CCT as a well-structured church plans long in advance, and that new plans do not fit in in the already established schedule.

Frictions among the churches especially occur, as hinted before, between certain charismatic/pentecostal denominations and the others, especially the presbyterian churches. While most churches and missionary organizations at least divide the areas to focus on in the provinces outside Bangkok, the strategy of these churches is to start in urban centres where other churches already operate. Their more enthusiastic style often draws Christians out of their own churches. The frictions are not as bad as in the 1980's though. The charismatic churches seem to be a bit more considerate, and the other churches came to understand them better.

A case of its own is Hope of Bangkok. Planted in 1981, it is the largest church in the city with approximately 6,000 members. It has been an internationally well-known example of church growth in an unresponsive area. But it was expelled from the EFT because of blatant and on-going sheep-stealing. Since its founding pastor was discredited by immoral behaviour,

the gap with the other churches became wider. The members of Hope of Bangkok totally cut themselves off from contacts with other Christians now, a situation deplored by many.

It is clear that the heart of interdenominational contacts will continue to be on ground-level: revivals, schools, congresses, wedding parties, daily contact with friends, etc. On a leadership and organizational level, the following quotation from a missionary I interviewed applies: "I don't see a lot of fighting in Thailand, it's just that most of us are too involved in our own activities to cooperate". Most leaders do not seem to care a great deal about the consequential lack of efficiency.

3.6. Summary

Protestant Christianity in Thailand is a tiny majority. In Bangkok the protestant churches have an estimated total communicant membership of 28,000.

The CCT-churches in Bangkok are divided in three groups: Thai Presbyterians, Chinese Presbyterians and Chinese Baptists. Their churches are comparatively rich. The CCT has a very ecumenical attitude. In the last decades the evangelical wing is more influential than the liberal wing. Their traditional worship services and acceptance of female ministers are distinctive traits.

The EFT is a very loose confederation of independent Thai and mission-founded churches. The large majority of churches in Bangkok is EFT-related. Most of them are very small. Their common distinctive is their view of the Bible as the infallible Word of God; but there are huge differences, as the EFT-members vary from traditional conservative to (extreme) charismatic.

The smallest group is formed by the TBCA-churches, that theologially belong to the evangelicals. As in the CCT, the distinction Thai-Chinese is important in these churches.

Relationships between and across churches are strongest on grass roots level. Cooperation is not frowned upon, but neither sought. The TPC plays an important role in the formal relationships between the three groups mentioned before.

-Having 600 Thai missionaries" (Thailand National Meeting Report, 1989:2).

In a meeting later that year, the TBCA declared a goal of 9,000 members, and CCT representatives a goal of 70,000 members. This means the EFT would be responsible for another 521,000. They never set this or another goal for themselves. The CCT as an organization never sets goals, so their number is not official policy (Sint, interview). The EFT is not a policy-making organization, so their goals are just the sum of the goals of their member-churches. Despite this, the goals stated above are well-known in protestant churches. Strategies to reach them however are non-existent.

Yet all churches recognize the importance of strategies. Though some authors (among others: Ford, 1982:20,21) discuss the value of strategies and methods, no one eventually questions they are necessary. The following quotation from Hill reflects a common opinion: "Planning dependent on God's instructions in the Bible and on his guidance through prayer and the holy Spirit is not 'getting in the way of the holy Spirit' and 'working against God'. The opposite is true. When we fail to plan, we frustrate what the holy Spirit is trying to do through us" (1982:52).

Notwithstanding the general support for the use of well-thought-out strategies, many churches in reality do not have them. Most strategies, whether they are put down in an academic paper or even as official policy, do not trickle down to ground-level.

CCT-congregations for example, in large majority do not have clear strategies for evangelism. They concentrate on 'internal affairs'. On district level, more strategies exist, and on department level yet more. Local churches consciously or unconsciously have the opinion this situation is okay. They are "looking always to higher church offices to care for local evangelism" (Kim, 1980:159). The Department of Evangelism (DE) is responsible for the equipment of local churches for evangelism. Because of its small staff however (not more than five people, not counting clerks and secretaries), it can only perform a few of its many tasks, that include: the organization of revivals, cooperation with each district, supporting local churches in their evangelism, production of books, tracts, and audio-visual materials, training of lay leaders and pastors, and the education of Thai missionaries.

The main strategy of the Department is evangelistic weeks at schools that are under the direction of the CCT. Local churches in Bangkok are not very much involved in this. The training provided by the DE proves not to be enough to encourage most churches to develop their own strategy. Districts think about strategies; but they are far more involved in

managing the existing churches well. Finding enough pastoral care and finances distract attention from evangelism. This is especially true in district 6. District 7 has more little churches and preaching points besides two very large churches and gives more priority to the starting of new churches. District 12 traditionally has a strong evangelistic effort.

As far as they use strategies, the Thai churches stress more numerical growth of the existing churches. The Chinese stress a double approach: growth of the existing large churches, and the planting of new ones, without having the vision that they also grow to the same size.

Within the EFT, a large quantity of evangelistic strategies exist. They have to things in common. Firstly the great emphasis on church planting. The urge church leaders feel to plant churches, was expressed to me in different ways: "There are still areas without churches";

"Each condominium could have its own church"; "planting a new church is the fastest way to grow mature Christians". Most churches emphasize the planting of daughter churches more than the growth of their own church. It is not unusual for a church of 40 members to be quite satisfied about its size, and attempt a new church start. The concept of too many churches is a strange one to them: "It's impossible to overchurch a city of 10 million people". Secondly, the use of cell groups. This strategy was made popular by the immense success of Paul Yonggi Cho's Full Gospel Church in Seoul, which grew to over half a million members. Cell groups have the twofold aim to build the members up in the Christian faith, and to attract new people to the Christian community. Great differences exist between cell group approaches of churches. In some churches cell groups hardly follow a plan; in other churches they are planned and led "like military units" (Wan, interview, about the cell groups in his church). Pentecostal churches are the ones that most try to involve all church members in their evangelism activities. The strategies they endorse are very **activistic**. As another pentecostal pastor, Virachai, declares: "Before we worked with an attitude 'wait things to happen' but we changed to 'make things happen', from passive faith to active faith." (Ruohomäki, 1988:137).

It is also a distinct trait of the pentecostal churches, especially Romyen, Jaisaman, Rom Klao, and Hope of Bangkok, that they, like some CCT-churches, try to establish strong central churches. Unlike in the CCT-churches this large, central church is strongly tied to the person of the leader.

The training of leaders also is an important point in any evangelistic strategy. Many churches plan to employ bible school graduates as pastors and staff workers. Others try to find ways

to develop lay leadership. They have positions in church as elders, cell group leaders, counsellors, etc.

Many strategies consciously or unconsciously rely on existing networks. Members are encouraged to introduce family members, friends, and colleagues to the church. One method to do so is described by Smith, who named it the 'five finger personal evangelism strategy', and gives the essentials for any personal evangelism:

1. Pray for relatives and close friends specifically by name.
2. Witness to those prayed for using the Word of God.
3. Visit those who are most receptive frequently until they believe.
4. Nurture new believers in mature development in Christ.
5. Teach them to repeat the same process by personally applying steps one to five to their own relatives" (1977:212).

But churches also put a large part of their effort in less personal approach. Revival of a particular church or denomination, open air preaching, handing out tracts, radio and television broadcasting all are examples of this kind of method.

The last point to be stressed is the emphasis many lay on the responsive. Surprisingly, this is never explicitly encountered in actual missionary work, but very often in strategy proposals by missiologists (e.g. Blanford, 1975:63; Smith, 1977:203-207; Ford, 1982:5-9; Mauren, 1986:50-51; Cook, 1991f:1). Responsive groups that are often mentioned are: immigrants, lower class, north-easterners, students, and (Thai-)Chinese.

4.3. Implementation of strategies

Three white pigeons are sitting on a tree. One decides to fly off. How many are left? Answer: Three. The pigeon did not fly off, it just decided to.

There is a huge difference between strategies proposed by missiologists and strategies adopted by denominational leaders; between strategies adopted by denominational leaders and methods perceived by congregational leaders; between methods perceived by congregational leaders and plans made by church members; and finally there is a huge difference between plans made by church member and the things they actually do.

Therefore it is not enough to study strategies when one is interested in the real situation. strategies can even advocate the reverse of what is actually happening. This is not to say

strategies are useless; but they are useless unless there is a full-proof way to bring the ideas down to ground-level, where they can be implemented.

There are blatant cases both of success and failure of strategies in Bangkok. For one thing, the idea of church planting certainly took root in most evangelical churches. 51 churches were started from 1975 until 1985, which in the latter year had a combined membership of 2927 (CAMA, 1985). 15 of these churches were planted in the years 1975-1979 and 36 in the years 1980-1985, proving the growing speed at which churches are planted in Bangkok. Within the CCT, the main effort in evangelization coming from the central organization is the school evangelism mentioned before. Annually, over 200 children make a profession of faith in the evangelistic week in just one school (Virat, interview). The drop-back rate however is incredibly high. By most people it is estimated to be well over 90% within one year. This result is due to a very poor follow-up. This central strategy does not succeed in involving the local churches and church leaders in evangelism, though there are seminars led by the staff workers of the Department of Evangelism. The effect of their few visits to Bangkok churches is not clear. The training is not very goal-oriented, which makes it difficult to measure its success. To most Bangkok churches, the work of the Department does not seem essential to their evangelistic ministry. Districts 7 and 12 have an advantage over district 6 in the implementation of church planting strategies, because they have a source of additional personnel in respectively BIT-graduates and American Baptist missionaries.

An interesting difference between district 6 and 12 is that the former thinks it is the responsibility of the district to start new churches and preaching points, while in the latter district churches plant their own daughter churches. The figures of development in church membership reflect these different attitudes. The Thai churches in Bangkok tripled since 1959, when they had about a thousand members (Cressy, 1959:38). This growth is substantially slower than the growth of Bangkok's entire population. In the mean time, the combined Chinese churches grew to over six times their 1959 size of 1,400 (Cressy, 1959:38). Between the Chinese churches, the district 12 churches are the ones that most vehemently pursue their evangelistic strategies. In twenty years their membership quadrupled, while their presbyterian counterparts of district 7 grew 2.5 times as large (1972 figures in Blanford, 1973:35,55).

The most effective strategy to date has been developed by Dr. Kriengsak Chareonwongsak, founder of Hope of Bangkok. In an article in *Urban Mission*, he claims the following factors

contributed to the fast growth: -Targeting for a larger urban church. Thai enjoy big events. - mass evangelism. -Personal witnessing. -Follow up. The first fourteen days new believers are visited every day. -Cell groups. -Leadership training. -Membership participation. - Exemplary life style. -Expository preaching. -Spontaneous worship. -Miracles (Kriengsak, 1990:25-35). Mary Cook, an OMF-missionary who was active in Hope of Bangkok, stresses the importance of the cell group approach and the strong personal appeal Dr. Kriengsak has through his expository preaching ("a central store of charisma", Zehner, 1987:86-91). Though it remains an example much to be learnt from, it should be noted that Kriengsak's strategy from the beginning was at the expense of the membership of other churches, and eventually at the expense of his own integrity. Since about 1990 the organization of Hope of Bangkok seems to have reached its capacity of incorporating new members, and membership plateaued at 6,000.

The pastor of Bangkok's second largest church, uses a similar strategy as Hope of Bangkok, though less extreme. He lays particular emphasis on the church as a family. It is a primary social circle. The main strategy was described to me as "the Jesus-method: I know you, I try to convert you, after I convert you, I try to live very close with you, you become my close friend, we talk each day, we follow Jesus together; then, when a third person comes, we try to do the same, and a fourth, and so on" (Wan, interview).

Many non-charismatic church leaders however totally ascribe the success of the big pentecostal churches to faith healing sessions. A few times I witnessed the atmosphere in such meetings during the annual 'Power-festival', a big revival organized by several pentecostal churches. Once I saw about 75% of the thousands present raise their hands to say they needed healing. At another occasion, 200 people walked to the front, and after a prayer session two-thirds of them claimed to be healed. These meetings result in dozens of new converts, but can certainly not account for all the growth. The non-charismatic churches do not agree with this approach, that mainly appeals to the emotions. Boonkrong, one of the most prominent TBCA-leaders, expressed the feeling of most church leaders when he said: "First the healing of sin, physical healing will follow".

The churches that, in accordance with this theological position, stress the forgiveness of sins in their evangelistic outreach, grow much slower. Each enquirer has to go through a process of acknowledging some basic truths which are completely unknown to him. These basic truths could be summed up in the 'four spiritual laws': "1. God loves you, and has a

wonderful plan for your life. 2. Man is sinful and separated from God. 3. Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. 4. We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord" (Campus Crusade of Christ, n.d.). Missions like the SBC, CAMA, and OMF use this approach. Despite the lack of result following this strategy, they continue to use it because of their theological conviction this is the core of Christianity.

A method becoming more popular in late years is open air preaching. The most important development in this respect in the weekly preaching in Bangkok's best-known park, Lumpini. This has been going on for a long time, but only in the 90's results started to come. Every week now, people make decisions for Christ. The church most involved, Immanuel Baptist Church, recorded over 250 decisions and a same amount of interested people in less than two years. Unfortunately the follow-up is very poor. Not more than a handful of people stuck to their decision. This shows the need for a complete strategy, from finding the people to nurturing the church members.

Another method has the same problem: radio and television broadcasting. There is a lot of Christian broadcasting, and some programmes have great amounts of listeners, but it proves to be very difficult to incorporate enquirers into local churches. This method can serve as an excellent example of the principal unpredictability of any mission work, because we do not know how the Holy Spirit works. Knox, a missionary of the Church of the Nazarene described his radio ministry: "The radio went on for a long time with very few responses. you maybe got ten letters a week. At the most...And suddenly it changed to 10 or 15 a day. Just: boom! a tenfold increase, while the programmes and time slots were the same" (interview). Concludingly: methods can only be successful if enfolded in a complete strategy. Strategies only can be successful when supported and carried out by the whole church, and not only by the pastors, elders, deacons, and staff workers. Many churches realize that and emphasize that all church members are ministers. How this can take shape in a congregation, is illustrated by the following long quote from my anthropological thesis. It describes part of the evangelistic ministry of Huamark Church, the largest OMF-church in Bangkok: "In the field of evangelism, the church is also in a transitional process. The older members remember the begin years of the church as a golden era, in which the church members went out every Sunday to Ramkhamhaeng university to evangelize. Most of them have a certain feeling of guilt, because they do not do what they did then. Church leaders claim the church is doing better in recent months. They mean the monthly outreach on the campus. Every last

Sunday of the month a group of about twenty church members goes out in twos on the campus, distribute tracts and try to talk. This is a clinging to the past that does not help the church very much. Though it is possible this method was effective in the past, now at least three reasons cause that the result of this outreach is about zero: the church members are not students anymore, and lack both enthusiasm and knowledge of the students' situation to appeal to them; this outreach is not an integrated part of the total church policy; and the church has been moved to a place two kilometres away from the campus, already too long a distance to 'just drop by'... The conversion of non-Christians is an important issue in almost all church meetings. People are prayed for by name; clear goals are set (e.g. Huamark church prayed for 15 new Christians in 1992). Being a witness for Christ is very important.

It is important to the Christian, for so he can prove he is a good Christian, and it is important to the non-Christian, for he gets the chance to be saved. The witnessing is done while knowing that God has to help the Christian to persuade the other. The guidance of God in these matters is seen so much, that the western concept 'by accident' and the Thai concept 'by karma' is changed into 'by God's plan'. Because the church members see themselves as instruments of God in evangelistic talk, they let God talk, by reading Bible verses. Some members do this to 'show who God is', others to press someone to 'make a decision for Christ'. They often use well-known Bible-verses as "I stand at the door and I knock" (Rev. 3:20 NIV); "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28 NIV); "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 7:23 NIV).

This method is mainly used by the so-called 'mature Christians'. Others do not have enough Bible knowledge or freedom of speech to do this. But almost all members use the method of the 'testimony', that is they relate how, when and why they became Christians and what the difference was in their life. This testimony is so important, that all church members whom I asked to tell something about their background, immediately started to 'give their testimony'. The whole past is then reinterpreted in terms of becoming Christian. All things that influence their lives, whether are God's guidance or deceit by the spirits (equalled with demons). One of the most popular evangelistic tracts during the time I was in Bangkok, was one featuring a famous Thai singer, who just had become a Christian, give her testimony. It is not so that the church members only think about evangelizing other people. In most contacts religion is not an issue. But when contacts go deeper, this can not remain so. From

all the above it is understandable, that 'just being friends' with an non-Christian is impossible. The tension that (s)he should be a Christian, is always present in the contacts of Huamark Church members" (Visser, 1993:33-34).

4.4. The role of missionaries

The role of missionaries in the urban mission of the church can be twofold: a direct and an indirect role. A direct contribution to church growth is made by those missionaries who quantitatively build the church by church planting, open air preaching, tract distribution, radio programmes, etc. An indirect contribution is made by those missionaries who qualitatively build the church by teaching at a seminary, office work, theological education by extension (TEE), and also by those missionaries who equip evangelists or prepare evangelistic efforts. This distinction is not the same as between institutional and evangelistic missionaries (see e.g. Kim, 1980:106), which in my opinion is a false one. For a missionary who is for example working in a department for evangelism, with as responsibility equipping evangelists, also is in a very real sense an evangelistic missionary; though other institutional missionaries mainly work in the area of strengthening the church (church development) without directly or indirectly contributing to evangelism. Besides that it is important to note that many missionaries partly have a direct, and partly an indirect ministry.

The following diagram illustrates the concept:

Indirect (or insti-	nutional) work	Direct work
Church development	Evangelistic	work

Focus of work: Quality

Focus of work: Quality
with as goal quantity

Focus of work: quantity

Other distinctions that are important to clarify the role of missionaries are: Short term - long term missionaries. Short term missionaries are on the field only for a short period, anywhere between two months and two years. Long term missionaries are on the field for a longer period and are thoroughly trained in the language and culture of the people they will be working with.

General - specialized missionaries. General missionaries are often church planters, but they

can also be employed elsewhere, depending on the situation. Specialized missionaries come to a country to fulfil a specific task, often for a specific period of time.

Asian-western missionaries. The position of these two groups in Thai society is different, therefore their roles are different.

A large part of the missionary effort is a direct contribution to the urban church and an indirect contribution to the urban mission of the church. For all work that strengthens the church, strengthens also the capacity for a relevant witness for Christ. Especially in the CCT the large majority of missionaries is contributing indirectly to urban mission (see Kim, 1980:106). But also in other mission agencies many missionaries are doing indirect urban mission. A difference though is that among ~~EFT- and SBC-related~~ indirect missionaries there are more whose main goal of work is still evangelistic (e.g. someone develops a TEE-programme to equip church members for their missionary task) than among the fraternal workers of the CCT (e.g. someone in charge of the international ecumenical contacts of the CCT).

Direct urban missionaries are very few in the CCT, though a few can be found on district level. In EFT-missionary organizations they are more common. SBC, CAMA, OMF, KPM, Lutheran, and other missionaries are primarily known as church planters. Many have the idea, following the reasoning of the Church Growth School, that that is the only really missionary job. When a church is planted, the missionary should leave and start at another place. Ford, CAMA missionary in Bangkok, put it this way: "The (missionary; MV) teams must train local leadership, entrust them to the Holy Spirit and move on". He continues with a quotation from McGavran: "The word should never be 'Missionary go home', but rather 'Missionary, go on twenty miles and do it again' (1982:25).

In reality missionaries stay longer in a church than the maximum of two years that Ford mentions. It proves to be very difficult to develop Thai leadership in a church started and led by missionaries. When there is a Thai leader (not just a protege of the missionary) from the beginning, there are no problems and as a rule the growth potential is higher. I witnessed one church start headed by a missionary, that did not work out. When a new attempt was made under Thai leadership about a year later, there did not seem to be major problems.

For direct missionary work the distinction between western and Asian missionaries is important. The Asians' serving as missionaries in Thailand are mostly Koreans (Chung gives a number of 44 families for 1991; the number of Koreans is rising fast), but I also

encountered Indian, Japanese and Philippine missionaries. It is often claimed that other Asians have a cultural advantage over the westerners in relating to the Thai (e.g. Kim, 1980:97-99; Jung, 1985:104-153). In my research however I encountered much criticism on Korean missionaries on the part of Thai Christians. General complaints are: they do not learn the language well, they are paternalistic, and they splash around money. If this behaviour is not displayed, Korean and other Asian missionaries can play an important role as missionaries in Bangkok. The advantage of being an Asian and yet a Christian is not to be underestimated. Besides that there is a great admiration among Thai Christians for the explosive growth of the church in South-Korea, and for the personal devotional life of the Korean Christians.

World-wide the percentage of short-term workers among missionaries is rising. In Bangkok this is less pregnantly the case, because of the restricted visa policy of the Thai government. Yet many short-termers do missionary work. By far the largest regiment is Youth with a Mission, which has a permanent work force of over a hundred people; the vast majority is very young and stays for not longer than a year. Further it is always a big event when the Doulos or the Logos of Operation Mobilization visit Bangkok, and its young passengers/missionaries are in the city for a very short period.

The benefit for the Thai church of these kinds of missions is marginal. Short term workers can be useful in Bangkok, when they have a very specific assignment (e.g. research) and are closely cooperating with a Thai congregation. Often this is not the case.

Most of the missionaries in Bangkok especially in EFT-organizations, are of the general type. Church planters, but also institutional missionaries often have various ministries in the course of their missionary career. Their commitment is in the first place to the church in Thailand; the position in which to serve is secondary. Other missionaries belong to the group of specialized missionaries. This group mostly has a specific training. They come to teach a certain subject in a seminary, or to help in a certain part of an organization, or help to implement a certain evangelistic ministry. With the continuing development of Thailand and the Thai church, missionaries are no longer equipped to fulfil any position. Therefore these group is growing fast, especially in the CCT, but also in the EFT-organizations. A consequence is that the average stay on the field is considerably shorter than in the past. The majority of these missionaries leave 'after the job is done'.

In general, the Thai Christians have a very favourable opinion about missionaries. A general

feeling among them though is that they should be more willing to recognize the authority of Thai church leaders. Within the CCT the complaint is that they do not always follow organizational lines. In the EFT, the mission organizations operate alongside the denominations they founded (for example: there is a Thailand Baptist mission of the SBC, and a Thailand Baptist Churches Association; the Overseas Missionary Fellowship and the Association of Churches in Thailand). Partly this situation is due to the fact that these churches are far younger than the CCT is. But it contributes to the fact that the Thai Christians have little influence on what the missionaries do. Opinions among Thai church leaders what should be the main task for missionaries differ. Two opinions prevail, adherents of which can be found among all denominations. Firstly the opinion exists that missionaries above all should be church planters. This is the implicit or explicit opinion of almost all those who wrote about urban mission in Bangkok (Blanford, 1975; Smith, 1977; Hill, 1982; Jung, 1985; Tablada, 1985; Mauren, 1986; Ruohomäki, 1988; Chung, 1992). The same view is also held by many church leaders and almost all church members. Secondly there is the minority opinion of some church leaders that missionaries are most useful in building and equipping leaders. Some stress the importance of good teaching at the seminaries. (One of the major problems of the CCT is that 80% of the graduates from McGilvary Faculty of Theology do not go into the ministry. One of the major problems of the EFT is that there are so many Bible institutes that all of them have too little students.) Others call attention to the need of long standing relationships to build leaders.

Jung shows an interesting middle way. The missions' task is described by him as successively "pioneer, parent, partner, participant and prompter". This description is taken from Winter, who described phase 4 as follows: "A fully mature church assumes leadership. As long as the mission remains, it should use its gifts to strengthen the church to meet the original objective of Matt.28:19-20. Meanwhile the mission should be involved in phase 1 elsewhere" (1992: B37).

Whatever their role, missionaries will be participants in the urban mission of the church in a significant degree for years to come. Their sheer number (there are more missionaries than churches in Bangkok) guarantee that.

4.5. Cooperation

It was; already clear from paragraph 4.4 that the cooperation between protestant churches in

Bangkok is not very well developed. Not surprisingly, the same is true for the coordination of and the cooperation between different evangelistic ministries. The occasional coordination there is often seems to be accidental or haphazard. An example of this is the open air preaching in Lumpini Park. People from several churches come here and evangelize together. But there is no joint plan; no appointments are made. Another sign of the willingness of churches to cooperate is that they often invite preachers from other denominations to revivals or church camps.

More organized combined efforts in the field of evangelism are rare. One of the notable exceptions is the annual 'Power-festival' (see chapter 4.3.). The large pentecostal churches involved cooperate both in the preparation and the activities of the festival. Problems sprung up though in recent years, causing Hope of Bangkok and Royal Klao Church to withdraw from the programme.

Another one is the prison outreach. Originally a Southern Baptist programme, now people from different denominations are involved. It is remarkably successful, especially in the Bung Khwang prison in which are 450 baptized Christians.

The only way to cooperate for the majority of churches is through the TPC. Their activities however are mostly indirect evangelistic (e.g. the organization of seminars on church growth). About the only direct evangelistic input they so far had in Bangkok, was the organization of a Luis Palau crusade in 1989.

So the over-all picture is a blatant lack of coordination, especially between churches in the same part of the city and between people with similar ministries. A few examples that caught my eye were: at least five churches within one kilometre on the same road were in the pioneering phase. They hardly knew of each other's existence, and knew nothing about target groups or strategies of the other churches. -Of these preaching points, two changed in exactly the same period from hostel to church start and back to hostel, without any consultation. - Missionaries with ministries among street kids and prostitutes were not interested in others with the same ministry.

Informal cooperation mainly stems from the many informal interdenominational contacts I described in chapter 2.4. It is not unusual for friends to take part in the evangelistic outreach of each other's churches. The importance of these contributions is limited however, because the most effective evangelistic activities take place in a relational context, which needs more than a one-day involvement.

4.6. Summary

A large majority of the Christians in Bangkok view evangelism as one of the top-priorities of the church. CCT-leaders also emphasize quality of the church a great deal, while EFT and SBC are more concerned about quantity.

Goal setting plays an important role in the leadership of many denominations and missionary organizations. Strategies to reach these goals are not seldom clacking. In the CCT historically evangelism on schools has been important. The EFT priorities are the use of cell groups and the planting of new churches.

For several reasons there is a notable difference between developed strategies and actual evangelism. Within the CCT the Chinese churches over the years proved to be the most successful in implementing their strategies. The most successful strategies in Bangkok are used by some large charismatic churches. Their emotional appeal and strong organization proves to be very effective. Emphasis in evangelism on Jesus Christ as Redeemer of sins produces slower growing churches.

Many different methods are used by many different churches. Their success depends on their being embedded in a total strategy.

Missionaries form a significant part of the urban mission work force. They contribute directly, but even more indirectly to the urban mission of the church. Missionaries with a specific task are becoming more and more common; so are Asian missionaries. Both developments can contribute to a better fulfilment of the urban mission in Bangkok. The value of short-term missionaries is more questionable. The main responsibilities for missionaries in the future are regarded by Thai Christians to be church planting and leadership training.

Cooperation between evangelistic efforts in Bangkok are incidental. Lack: of interest in and knowledge of the ministries of other denominations/congregations/organizations/persons prevail, though a large majority does not disapprove of cooperation.

Chapter 5 Problems of urban mission in Bangkok

5.1 Introduction

It is not easy to sum up all the problems of the Thai church in Bangkok. For that is the real subject of this chapter: all problems. Any problem, in whatever area, has a direct or indirect effect on the capacity and effectiveness of a congregation in the field of urban mission. And the problems in this city and in this country, sometimes dubbed the hardest mission field outside the muslim world, are many. In the literature I read and the interviews I held, I encountered 169 distinct problems. Still, I felt the need to add more...

When there are so many problems, it is hard to make a lucid classification. I devised several that were not satisfactory. For example, I considered a classification in external (non-Christians and demons) and internal (church leaders, missionaries, and church members) problems; and one dividing the problems in situational, methodical and personal ones. But eventually I came to the conclusion that it should be made clear that in almost every facet of life factors exist, that prevent a rapid growth of the church in Bangkok.

At this point I decided to use the classification provided by the calvinistic philosophy of Herman Dooyeweert. This classification lists all basic facets of life: the arithmetical, spatial (or geographical), chemical, physical, biotic (or biological), psychological (both perceptive and sensitive), analytical, cultural-historical, linguistic, social, economical, aesthetical, juridical, ethical, and pistic (or theological) aspects of life (see Van Woudenberg, 1992:75-112).

In this chapter I skipped the chemical and physical aspect because they are relatively unimportant. Two aspects on the other hand receive extra attention, because they are so often mentioned in literature and interviews. Firstly this is the social aspect. It has been subdivided in problems for Christians and problems for non-Christians. Secondly this is the theological aspect, that has to do with faith. This paragraph has been subdivided into different theological disciplines: dogmatic, cybernetic, catechetical, liturgical, homiletical, pastoral, and diaconal problems.

In this classification I mainly follow the curriculum of the Dutch theological faculties. I consider this classification to be both overlapping and incomplete. Yet it is the best practical way I know to subdivide issues concerning the faith of Christians. I omitted ethics, that I

reviewed before theology. I added spirituality, because this very important aspect of church life is not covered by the other disciplines (see Jongeneel, 1991).

Over a third of the problems mentioned, are in the field of cybernetics. Cybernetics is derived from the Greek verb 'kubernao', which means 'to govern'. It studies the way churches are governed and organized. Because of the attention paid to problems studied in this discipline, I devised sub-paragraphs about church organization, church leadership, strategies and methods for evangelization, cooperation, and missionaries.

One consequence of my approach is that the different paragraphs are of very unequal length. However, I regard this as an advantage. It gives insight in how important the different aspects of life are in regard to the multiplication of congregations and believers in Bangkok; or, to be more precise, how important they are perceived to be by the Thai church leaders and especially by the missionaries who did the bulk of the research in the Bangkok churches. My classification does not imply that a problem has only one aspect. I try to list the issues under the aspects that are foundational to them; at the same time acknowledging that e.g. a biotic issue has far-reaching emotional, social, economical, etc. consequences. Neither does it imply that e.g. a geographical problem necessarily needs a geographical solution. But that issue shall be dealt with in the following chapter. This chapter is confined to the analysis of the problems in the urban mission of the church in Bangkok.

5.2. Arithmetical problems

Arithmetical problems are the problems that have to do with figures. The most obvious arithmetical obstacle for church growth concerning non-Christians is the very small amount of Christians (1). Their number does not seem enough to constitute a 'critical mass' that automatically leads to other reactions. Less than 1% of the Bangkokians are protestant Christians. This means that there are many people who do not have one single Christian friend or acquaintance.

Another arithmetical issue is the lack of valid church statistics (2). When there is no good description of the work force, the work will suffer. This is what is happening in Bangkok, though the situation there is a little better than in the rest of the country. Many churches are trying hard to use a church data bank. But the recorded enquirers, decisions, baptisms, members, transfers, attendants, etc. often are not helpful (e.g. I know of one church that

recorded hundreds of decisions within 2 years, but incorporated less than a handful into the church), or even not true (inflated membership figures boost the prestige of a denomination or mission organization). On the other hand it is often assumed that governmental agencies keep the official figures low (Gross, interview; see the 0.5% 'crypto-Christians' Barrett assumes (1982:664)).

5.3 Geographical problems

Geographical problems are the problems that have to do with the use of land and space. One factor that causes problems, both preventing the non-Christians to be reached and the Christians to reach out, is that there is no sense of neighbourhood (3). Bangkokians do not have a 'territorial identity' (Caleb project, 1988:13; also: Blanford, 1975:105; Cook, 1990-d: 12; Hill, interview). Therefore proximity churches are often not very successful (4) (Cook, n.d.:1). This causes major problems in the evangelization efforts of many churches.

A related problem for church leaders and church members is that, because of the just mentioned lack of territorial identity, most churches have members scattered all over the city (5). Pastors and church workers need lots of time to visit, and to the members it is always an effort to go to any church activity. Especially so because Bangkok is one of the cities with the most traffic jams (6) in the world (Winit, interview).

Another problem is the migration pattern (7) of church members (Smith, 1977:184-185). Bangkok is a city with many migrants. Christians among them often do not find a church where they want to worship regularly. National denominations, especially the CCT, have an advantage in this respect. Many churches have a large percentage of students. This is a very mobile group, so this can lead to transfer losses. Though it is also very well possible that students continue to worship in the same church; for most of them do not move out of Bangkok. Another problem is that the migrants still feel Northerner, Northeasterner, or Southerner (8), even when they live in Bangkok for quite a while. So they do not mix without problems. Especially the Northeasterners (Isaan) are not easily accepted by other groups.

The next geographical problem to be mentioned is the lack of churches in some areas (9). Despite there is almost no sense of neighbourhood, this is perceived as a problem by many church leaders. Mainly because of the transportation problems, and because the missionaries

can not get rid of their territorial attitude. An opposite **problem** in my opinion (an opinion not shared by many Christians in Bangkok) is that there are too many churches in other areas (10). This is especially true in those cases where these churches have the same target group. The last problem that should be mentioned here is the feeling of many Thai that a church should have a building from the start (11). This is virtually impossible, especially in late years, because land is extremely expensive in Bangkok. This problem was noted by Hill (1982:70). Fortunately, since he wrote this idea underwent drastic modification. Other opinions, like house churches and renting, have become more normal. The largest church of Bangkok, Hope of Bangkok, met in many consecutively rented places with ever bigger amount of seats, until they finally built their own church building with an auditorium of several thousand seats.

5.4. Biotic problems

Biotic problems are those problems that have their foundation in biological structures. One problem in this area is the unbalanced sex ratio (12) in the Bangkok churches (e.g. Boonkrong, Hill, and Tiewat in interviews). In almost all of them, women outnumber men. A 2:1 ratio is more rule than exception in church services. Furthermore, women are not only more numerous than men, they often are also more active. It is astonishing that such a significant feature is not reviewed in any study on the Thai church I read. Both church members and church leaders accept the phenomenon as almost natural. A missionary asked me: "Is it any different in any country in the world?" One female student gave the following explanation, that I think is lucid in its simplicity: "Most boys think they can help themselves. They don't want the help of God". Besides the obvious social repercussions this biotic problem has, it is even more disadvantageous because women are not accepted in all levels of church leadership, whether officially (in most EFT-churches) or unofficially (in the CCT). Personally I endorse this for biblical-theological reasons, but it should be realized that it excludes the largest and most active part of the church members from many responsible positions.

A direct consequence of the unbalanced sex ratio is the shortage of eligible men (13) for Christian girls and the problem of Christian wives with a non-Christian husband (14).

A second cluster of problems is family-related. I mention them here because I consider the

family as a biotic structure, rather than a social one. The main problem to non-Christians is the family solidarity (15) (Smith, 1977:178), that prevents them from becoming Christian; the main problem a Christian family poses for church growth, is that Christians are often not interested in evangelism anymore, once they have started a family (16).

The third biotic factor causing a lot of problems in the churches in Bangkok, is ethnic. It is one of the basic tenants of the Church Growth School that church growth is best achieved along ethnical lines. Therefore it is not **surprising** that many of the evangelical missionaries recognize the importance of ethnical distinctions (e.g. Cook, n.d.:2; Ford, 1982:16). Caleb Project even devoted a whole publication to the peoples of Bangkok (1988). But also within the ~~ecumenical CCT~~ the importance of these distinctions are realized; Chinese and Thai churches are organized in different districts. Mentioned distinction between Thai and Chinese is the most important one in Bangkok, though the majority of the inhabitants is neither completely Thai nor completely Chinese. Chinese people do not feel at home in Thai churches and vice versa (17). And tribal people have difficulties fitting in in either group of churches (18). The strong sense of ethnic identity (though only implicit; explicitly people confess the unity of being Thai) results in the following problems: some churches have an ethnically mixed membership, but internal tensions (19); some churches have a mono-ethnic constituency, and only reach out to their own people group (20); and some ethnic groups do not have any church in which they can feel at home (21). The biggest problem in this last area surprisingly lays with the so-called Thai Teh, the autochthon inhabitants of Central Thailand and Bangkok. Almost all churches have a distinct Chinese or Chinese Thai flavour. The researchers of Caleb Project did not even find one Thai Teh church leader in Bangkok (1989:49). I only met one myself. Though the claim of Caleb Project that "the Chinese community in Bangkok is not significantly more open or responsive to the Gospel" (1988:50) is lightly ridiculous in the light of the missionary history in Bangkok (see Blanford, 1975:63), it is true that group dynamics and evangelistic methods pose a bigger problem to the Thai Teh than they should.

5.5. Perceptive problems

Perceptive problems are those problems that are caused by an (incorrect) perception of people, objects or phenomena. The first ones I mention here are problems caused by the

Thai perception of the world (world view; (Ford, 1982:10; Jung, 1985:37; incorrectly so: Mauren, 1986:50-53)), which is closely tied to psychological factors, cultural values, and religion, which all will be reviewed in other paragraphs). These problems include the perception of the world as a cyclical and nice and easy-going place (22). This takes away the urge to change for non-Christians and the urge to see others changed for Christians. However, this is less and less true in Bangkok, that is very much achievement oriented these days.

The perception of Christianity by non-Christians also causes big problems in evangelism. People have the most distorted images of the Christian faith, due to fables (23). During my research a popular newspaper printed an age-old fable about Christians drinking blood. An old pastor told me some people are still afraid to enter a church because they have been told a Buddha-image is buried under the threshold. The appearance of all kinds of sects (24) is even more confusing to Bangkok inhabitants. During my stay in Bangkok a Korean sect was very active in proclaiming Jesus Christ would return October 1992.

A perceptive problem unique to missionaries, is that it is very hard for them to recognize a real response to the gospel (25) (Jung, 1985:118). Thai often give a positive response to a question out of politeness. It is also possible that people want to become Christians because of the benefits they expect from it. When I witnessed a disabled man praying a prayer of repentance and conversion with an experienced missionary, the missionary afterwards told me: "I have to send a Thai pastor, for I can't possibly tell how serious he is". For Thai Christians it is far easier to see through the motives of enquirers.

5.6. Psychological problems

Many researchers hold the position that the Thai people have some psychological characteristics that prevent the evangelization of Thailand (e.g. Kim, 1980:7-11; King et al. 1981:7-13; Hill 1982:90-91; and Jung, 1985:39-44). I suspect that many of these characteristics are not necessarily problems, but that missionaries and westernized Christians did not find the right way to relate to them. On the other hand I agree that the Thai as a people probably have some characteristics that make it intrinsically difficult to become a Christian. Among others these are: Avoidance of confrontation (26) (e.g. Smith, 1977:75), which makes it hard to make a clear decision, especially against the will of others. Fun as

measure of value (27) (e.g. Kim, 1980:9), which makes it hard to meet the sacrificial demands of Christianity. The 'never mind' attitude (28). (e.g. Jung, 1985:40-41), which relativizes everything.

A last characteristic I mention hampers the active participation of Christians in evangelism. It is the lack of responsibility (29) (e.g. King et al., 1981:7) the Thai have for anything or anybody not **directly concerning** their own well-being.

The importance of the psychological characteristics mentioned by many missiologists is questionable. It is mainly based on anthropological research from the 1950s and 1960s by Wendell Blanchard (1957) and Herbert P. Phillips (1965). Moreover, it is about a rural and not an urban community. When newer research, and urban research, were taken into account,

I think new psychological characteristics would emerge. They would pose new questions to the church.

A totally different psychological problem concerns the church itself. According to Kim (1980:113-116) the Christians have a "minority complex" that has four components. There is fear (30) for a possible hostile reaction of the majority to the Christian message. There is self-satisfaction (31) because of what they are or what they have achieved. There is frustration (32) because of the decline of the secular position of the church and because of the small numerical growth. Finally Kim mentions a feeling of dependence on western Christianity (33). In my opinion these indeed have been the most important psychological barriers for Christians until today. Of course not all of them are to be found equally strong in all churches.

5.7. Analytical problems

Analytical problems are problems connected to rational **thinking**. The biggest analytical problem concerning non-Christians is that they don't go through the trouble of making a rational comparison between Buddhism and Christianity (34). Christianity is not seen as a viable alternative to the life they are currently living.

It was mentioned to me as a problem for Christians that they do not know Buddhism (35). "They view Buddhists as the other camp. They really don't know much about it. And they think: we're not supposed to, because they're the enemy" (Butt: interview). However, I question this observation. Many Christians have been Buddhists themselves. The others live in a society soaked with Buddhism. They know what it is. The objection of Butt: "That's a

derogatory version of Buddhism. You do not convert from something you respect and see the value of", is not to the point. For this is the form of Buddhism people know and people live. Not the academical form of Buddhism mainly made up by western scholars (see Zehner, 1990:14).

But the he largest problem in the analytical field is the weakness of research (36). Interestingly, research is often mentioned as a solution to problems, but never as a problem in itself. In my opinion however, there are several flaws in the research on church growth in Bangkok. Not in the sense that there is too little research. But many Of the research done lacks academical level. Furthermore, much of the research is done (and this thesis is an example of this phenomenon) by outsiders or starting missionaries. More experienced missionaries do not write, they just work. And research by Thai nationals is even rarer. As a consequence, research results are not used and not usable, because they are too general, too far from reality, written by people who are not in the position to follow or implement their own recommendations, and not accessible for a majority of church leaders and members, because they are written in English. Another weak point is that in most research, much attention is given to the church leaders, at the expense of church members and the people to be evangelized.

5.8. Cultural-historical problems

Cultural-historical problems are those problems that stem from the historically evolved cultural situation in Bangkok. The emphasis here is on history, because culture is not an irreducible concept. Culture also involves social, political, economical, etc. circumstances. One of the largest barriers between the Christian church and the Thai people is the foreignness of Christianity (37). 'To be a Thai is to be a Budhist', is the famous Thai saying repeated by many missiologists. And they are right. To be a Buddhist is very much intertwined with the national and family identity (King, 1981:32,33; Heckendorf, 1983:6; Jung, 1985:70; Tablada, 1985:43; Mauren, 1986:58; Caleb Project, 1988:6). Theravada Buddhism played an important role in the shaping of Thailand into a nation state. But especially in Bangkok the importance of this fact seems to be diminishing. A notable fact is that the missionaries are the ones who try to contextualize Christianity. The Thai Christians themselves are not very eager to do so. To them the undeniable foreignness of especially the

western worship style is one of the attractions of Christianity. In their new found identity as Christians, they do not desire to be as near to their former cultural forms as possible. King remarks about this: "This is because they have swallowed wholesale the idea the 'to be a Thai is to be a Buddhist' and the idea the 'Christ calls us away from our culture'. But Thai Christians must begin to assert that one can be truly Thai and yet not a Buddhist, and that Christ can indeed retain and transform many aspects of Thai culture!" (1981:30).

Interwoven with the problem mentioned above are the difficulties caused by Thailand's political history as an independent state (38). "Thais try to maintain a balance between the interests of various foreign powers, and thus seek to keep their freedom and security. These political aspects of Thai culture all influence how missionaries should interact with the national church" (Jung, 1985:28). The fact that Thailand was never colonized is one of the reasons Christianity is so much unknown in Thailand. But whether it is an advantage for the church to be supported by a colonial regime is a question open to dispute.

A cultural problem is that Christians are taught to use a decision-making process in evangelism, that emphasizes the need for an instantaneous decision (39). This type of decision-making is very western oriented. It may also appeal to the Chinese, who tend to stick to a commitment. But it is totally inappropriate with ethnic Thais (Caleb Project, 1988:61). Time and again missionaries are surprised by the ease Thai people forfeit a commitment. Their attitude and actions today seem to have little to do with what they did yesterday. In such a situation the missionary model in which the importance of a decision is stressed, is not a very relevant one, especially not when it is taken for granted that one sticks with his decision.

The next cluster of problems are those regarding the Christian community. First of all, most churches lack historical foundations (40). This is especially true for the EFT-congregations. The inherent danger is that it is easy to become heretic; or that a congregation is so much determined by one person, that it falls apart when this person leaves. But even when churches have roots in history, this poses its own problems. First, there is the problem that congregations about a decade after their foundation stop to be active in evangelism (41). Second, there is the problem that second generation Christians are not very evangelism-minded (42) (a fact many 'young' Christians complained about to me). Third, there is the problem that Christian institutions after some years get more attention than the congregations (43) (among others, Sint: interview). This is very clear in the case of the CCT. Their schools

and hospitals demand so much attention and management, that most talented church officials are not working in the church, but in church-related institutions.

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5.9. Linguistic problems

Linguistic problems are those problems that concern the use of language. Problems in this area can hardly be classified as problems for Christians and problems for non-Christians, because linguistic problems occur mainly in the communication between the two groups. The main problem here is that the Thai religious language is determined by Buddhism (44) to such an extent that it is hardly possible to explain the Christian gospel. Lausanne Occasional Paper no.15 "Christian witness to Buddhists" recognizes this when it states "the linguistic terms the Christian uses are inevitably loaded with Buddhist meanings" (1980:8) and that "the religious and educational language is heavily infiltrated with Buddhist terms, connotations, and concepts" (1980:7; see also Heckendorf, 1983). Koyama gave an excellent example of this: "Our dilemma is this: if we say 'salvation through the blood of Jesus, our Thai audience is completely lost. If we say 'salvation through the *dharmma*', they would see no difference between the Christian faith and Buddhism. Perhaps, the best possible way to avoid the difficulty and reach our goals to explain that the content of the *dharmma* is the sacrificial death of Christ. Of course, once again this raises the question of 'why such a sanguine *dharmma*?' How can the *dharmma* be *dharmma* when it has 'warm blood', the concept of the *dharmma* and 'blood' are mutually incompatible" (1970:77, quoted in Kim, 1980:132). This of course leads to miscommunication (45) (see Jung, 1985:77). Koyama was the first to try to bridge the gap between Christian and Buddhist words and concepts with his 'waterbuffalo theology'. Theologians in Thailand, however, agree on one point: it is totally incomprehensible for the Thai farmer. Wan, a Thai national and a former high ranking monk, also made an attempt to reach the educated Buddhists in their own terms (1975). But nowadays, he denounces his own work. A recent new attempt is found in Davis (1992, especially pp.38-55). However, none of these books are widely known or accepted among Thai pastors. Nor is there much attention for this problem of communication in the curriculum of the various Bible schools.

Besides these large problems there are also problems of a more practical nature. Illiteracy (46) is one of them (Kim, 1980:125, 207). In Bangkok the problem is not as urgent as in the

rest of the country, because almost all Christians there can read. But just because of that, this can prevent illiterate people from feeling attracted to a church. Another problem is that often only the Thai language is used (47). And then only the Central dialect. Immigrants from the North and South, but especially the Northeast, speak dialects that are very different from Central Thai. So the use of Central Thai already can be a barrier. Even more so for the tribal people and part of the Chinese community to whom Thai is not the mother tongue. Blanford states in (maybe too) strong words: "It is unrealistic and self-defeating to attempt to approach all these diverse groups through the medium of the Thai language" (1975:65). The last problem that deserves to be mentioned is the language problem! for missionaries (48). Thai is a tonal language and it is very hard to speak it fluently. Among the approximately 1000 missionaries in the country, allegedly none could pass for a Thai on the telephone. So the language remains a problem. The more so because ever more missionaries go out for shorter terms. It takes time to learn Thai and to be an effective missionary. Most organizations try to take that line. It is questionable whether the exceptions, like Youth with a Mission, do any good.

The media which are used to communicate, are also linguistically based. Many of them are problematic, because they are impersonal (Mauren, 1986:77).

Examples of these are tract distribution (49), open air preaching (50), institutional work (51), and radio and television evangelism (52). Thai people want to be approached on a personal basis. Because of the modernization of Bangkok, these methods are becoming a bit more successful. Still, any strategy that has not an element in it of face-to-face contact, is severely handicapped. Impersonal strategies are also a big obstacle to a proper follow-up, which will be listed as one of the major pastoral problems (chapter 6.15.2.3.4). Virat mentions the weaknesses of large meetings (53) (in Thailand strangely enough often called 'revivals'), without emphasis on discipling afterwards (1990:170).

5.10. Social problems

Social problems are the problems tied to the organization of society.

5.10.1. Social problems concerning non-Christians

Thai society is organized in a way that does not make it easy to convert to Christianity. One of the most appreciated values in Thai society is to fit smoothly in the social fabric by being

krengjai (see chapter 2.1.). Because the Buddhist religion is so interwoven with the whole of society, conversion to Christianity is not an option because of the social rupture it would cause (54). Changing religions is a big step, that is almost never taken by superiors, friends and other social contacts. Therefore, in a culture where "one is taught to be obedient, polite, and subdued, not challenging, frank, or aggressive" (Jung, 1985:33), conversion is rare. It is a step too far out of the boundaries of the social fabric.

If the social disapproval is very strong, becoming a Christian can even mean persecution (55) (Lausanne, 1980:4). However, this should not be taken to include violence. The persecution new believers face, is of a social and often temporary nature. The nature of their persecution is described by Smith: "Friends and neighbours ridiculed seekers and new believers with sharp tongued criticism. This stirred up villagers in general to persecute those interested in Christianity, especially by socially unfriendly attitudes. Culturally such actions crushed and embarrassed the Thai recipient" (1977:178). This describes the situation on the Thai countryside 20 years ago, and not of Bangkok today, but it is still true. People in Bangkok even have to fear less than people in the rest of the country. Opposition is the fiercest in the high class families, because they fear to lose their family honour. A female student at Thammasat University, one of the two elite universities, told me: "My family is not Christian. But they know I am. Two years ago we had a big quarrel about it. And after that, I had to give it up." But after some time, when her opinion remained the same, she was reluctantly allowed to visit Christian meetings.

So it can be said that though some persecution exists, it is not a major problem that prevents people from becoming Christians.

Cook challenges the evangelization of individuals (56) (1990a), as this leads to a so-called 'gathered church' (57). i.e. a church consisting of converted individuals rather than families or whole segments of society. These gathered churches have low growth potential, because they lack the natural social cohesion that gives a natural soil for growth, based on a core of Christian families.

The following obstacle to be mentioned here, is one of a composite nature. There are no people movements (58) towards the church. The reasons for this are manifold, encompassing most of the problems narrated in this whole chapter. But the absence of people movements is not only a composite problem, it is also a problem in itself. For in most parts of the world, a majority of the converts come into the church in people movements (for a discussion

of the term, see McGavran, 1980:333-354). This is a major weak point of the church in Thailand in general (Kim, 1980:210-213), and Bangkok is no exception. It is justified to call this a weak point, because the converts prove in majority not to be able to lead their relatives and friends into the church. Each new convert is a hard struggle. Therefore the 'critical mass' of Christians, so that Christianity is a viable option for the Thai, is not yet reached. A related problem is that it is not easy to become Christian, because you are expected to follow the head of the family (59). The same girl as mentioned above said: "The Thai way is that the oldest in the family has to be the head of the family. We have to pay respect to them and obey them. My grandfather is head of the family. He is against my being a Christian". This problem is the more acute because so little heads of a family convert to Christianity (Boonkrong, interview).

Another consequence of this phenomenon is that women with non-Christians husbands sometimes are not allowed to go to church (60). I personally observed this in Immanuel Baptist Church and it seems to happen in many more churches.

One factor of the social network needs to be mentioned separately. This is the clientele system (61) (Jung, 1985:34; Zehner, 1987:5-13; Cook, 1990d:11). The patron-client system is the major factor patterning personal relationships in Thailand. It is described by Zehner as: "...control is exercised through networks of personal affiliation cemented through gifts and service, with allocations of downward-flowing benefits subject to the control of patrons at various levels" (1987:11). Because becoming a Christian is not very pleasing to most patrons, the system is a severe hindrance for people interested in Christianity. For they risk losing the material and social benefits their patron provides.

A problem, specific to Bangkok, on a totally different level, is the lack of community organization (62). Cook, a long time resident of Bangkok, says in one of her papers: "All the neighborhoods I'm familiar with are basically anomic, i.e. residents have no involvement with other people in the neighborhood. People are isolated and anonymous" (1990d:12; see chapter 5.3.). This observation is shared by many missionaries. So it is NOT easy to work in a certain street or block. For people living there do not have a feeling of togetherness. Social networks do not coincide with the geographical neighborhood. Therefore it takes time for a church planter to find the social network to relate to.

5.10.2. Social problems concerning Christians

The main social problem that Christians encounter in their outreach is one that they often are not aware of. Those responding to the gospel are members of the same social group as those evangelizing (63) (see Caleb Project, 1988:51 for this observation confined to ethnic groups). Students reach out to students, professionals to professionals, Chinese to Chinese, etc. This is a problem, because some groups are hardly or not at all reached. And very few people are aware of this. Evangelists say they reach out to 'everybody'. But when they do not clearly define their target group, 'everybody' is everybody within their own social group. From this general problem, several more specific problems flow forth.

The (upper) middle class is reached, but the lower classes are not (64). (Of course this American class distinction does not apply to the Bangkok situation. 'Middle class' is used here for convenience sake to describe the well-to-do professionals, that do not quite belong to the elite of society.) Sadly, this point is not recognized by most church leaders. On the contrary, they stress the importance of reaching the upper class, because that would in the long run positively effect the whole country. It was a strategy that did not work for the Dominicans many centuries ago in China, and it will not work now. In Thailand this approach led to a staunch Buddhist upper class that visited Christian schools, and a lower class that has had no relevant presentation of the gospel. And still Heckendorf dares to quote, with apparent approval. "Both Dr. Samuel Kim and Rev. Wan Petchsongkram maintain that in Thailand all outside influence...must first come through the ruling classes" (1983:8). Many of the protestant churches draw their members mainly from the middle class. Most of them are hardly aware of the fact that this restricts their natural area of outreach. This can have two consequences: either a church only ministers to 'its own kind', without realizing there are other groups too; or it reaches out to all (in evangelistic campaigns), but it does not take into account that people with different backgrounds do not naturally mix. This undoubtedly was one of the reasons of the high reversal rate in one of the churches I did research on. They gained many lower class converts, but lost them within a few weeks or months, because they did not fit in with the rest of the upper middle class church.

University students are reached, other young people are not (65). Many churches have programmes to reach the university students (e.g. Cook, n.d.:2). Several church planting projects are especially targeting students. Of course there is nothing wrong with that in a city with over 500,000 students. But it is a painful contrast with the almost total neglect of the over 500,000 prostitutes and the multitude of young workers.

The reason for this big difference can be found, in my opinion, in a bias favouring intellectuals of both the Thai church workers and the missionaries, rather than in a strategic choice. For the few attempt of evangelism and church planting among the lower classes I witnessed, did not seem less fruitful than student work. Unfortunately I could not find the quantification to affirm or contradict this impression.

As already could be derived from the example above, describing lower class converts in an upper middle class church, the problem with churches that win converts from all layers of society is that they do not express a natural social community (66) (Ford, 1982:16). As such, according to one of McGavran's basic laws (e.g. 1980:223-244) they have low potential for growth. This is one of his most disputed theses, though more for theological and ethical reasons than for sociological. Whether or not one chooses, on theological grounds, against a church based on homogeneous units, it is an indisputable fact that in socially mixed churches much more effort has to be invested in community building and outsiders are much less attracted to it. This is confirmed by observations of Caleb Project (1988) and Shin: "It had been a Thai-Chinese combined church for a long time when a group of Chinese Christians broke off in 1974. This author had witnessed that the division brought better functioning and growth to both afterwards" (n.d.:149).

A good strategy to preclude this problem is planting churches among interest groups. After some time it can encounter the difficulty of holding the membership together when the common interest has disappeared (67) (Cook, n.d.:1). Student churches are most liable to be damaged by this problem.

An opposite potential problem that Cook notes is that churches that have a strong internal cohesion, "may lack the ties to the larger community (68) that would give them access to its interests, resources and support" (1990d:11). I do not see this as a real problem because only a cohesive church can have ties to the outer world as a church. In a church with mixed membership there may be more ties among the members, but it is questionable whether the church will profit from that.

Another problem in the social area is that people in Bangkok think hierarchically (69). They obey their superiors (Kim, 1980:10,11; Jung, 1985:43). In church life, this can have two different consequences: when the pastor is recognized as leader, members do not feel responsible anymore. They await their 'orders'. When the pastor is not recognized a leader, e.g. because he is too young, he does not have enough weight to make the church members

enthusiastic about evangelism. He can not do anything without the support of the informal leadership.

A further set of sociological problems preventing Christians to be active and effective in evangelism, is connected to certain characteristics of church communities. Most churches are closed communities (70) (Cook, interview). Though they say and believe evangelism is important, they do not feel the need for new members, because they feel their church is going quite well as it is. Many people in church refuse to talk to newcomers "for I don't know them". Another problem in Bangkokian churches is that "they are under the absolute dominion of the main influential families" (71) (Kim, 1980:161). This has several serious drawbacks on the outreach. There is no spiritual authority to correct these families, if necessary; enthusiastic ideas of members outside this group are not heard; and the families in power often are more interested in maintaining the status quo than in evangelism. And even when the church leaders really have a heart for evangelism, it is often hard to show that in their actions. Because most of the time, the most successful men are church elders, and those are extremely busy (72) (Merry, interview).

Probably the single most important social reason that there is not more evangelistic outreach done by the churches, is loss of enthusiasm for evangelism after the first decade (73) of their existence. Surprisingly, Shin is the only author who mentions this problem (n.d.:90). That it is true can easily be seen from membership graphs of individual congregations and by plotting the age of the mother churches in relation to their daughter church(es). It is a phenomenon that can be observed in almost all churches: the first few years there is a highly motivated group, spending much time evangelizing, and winning new converts. But after eight or ten years their zealotness dies down because of perfectly understandable reasons. The members get older. They bear more responsibilities in society, and they start having children. Besides that the relationships within the church community get more fixed, and there is less felt need to draw in new members. This means that in any point of time the bulk of evangelistic work is carried by churches that were planted less than a decade ago. One of the great challenges of a missionary strategy for Bangkok is to find a way to use the knowledge and experience of the older churches in a great, new, evangelistic effort.

Another problem that is encountered mostly by the CCT, is a lack of qualified Christian personnel in hospitals and schools (74). These institutions form a large part of the outreach of the churches combined in the CCT, but over half of the teachers and nurses are non-

Christians. This has been a problem for a long time. I already has been noted by Blanford (1975:70), but it was an old problem even then. And it was still discussed at the CCT biannual assembly in 1992. When institutions are the main evangelistic tool, it really is a severe problem that they are not truly Christian institutions.

5.11. Economic problems

Economic problems for church growth of course are not the same as economic problems for a country. In fact, they can be just the opposite. This seems to be the case sometimes in Thailand. The Thai mentality is described as follows on an old Thai rhyme:

"In the paddy there is rice,
in the water there is fish.
Oh Thailand, the land of abundance..."
(Kim, 1980:24).

People are so satisfied with life that they do not feel the need for any change (75). So for the non-Christians, their economic prosperity, or their having enough to eat and drink, is an obstacle for church growth.

Materialism (76) is a big problem, for non-Christians. The craving for money, and the excitement of living in a booming economy make that most people are not prepared to listen to the gospel. They have to go ahead and work for their new apartment or hi-fi equipment. For Christians materialism is a big danger too. Smith already noted: "Preoccupation with getting money often led to backsliding" (1977:184) for the rural areas. This phenomenon is much stronger in Bangkok today, where people are so much more money-oriented than in the rural area twenty years ago. A CCT-church leader mentioned it as an important problem in the church: "The changes taking place around us, influence church members. Money concerns can withdraw people from church" (Tiewat, interview). So materialism is closely connected with: modernization (77). Due to the modernization process at the moment blazing through Bangkok, the pace of life is much faster than anything seen before in Thai history. People who are part of this process, and most people are in Bangkok, just do not have the time and the rest to contemplate spiritual matters. This is not only true for Christianity, but also for

Buddhism. Characteristic for this development is that when young men of about 20 or 25 years of age go into the monkhood, they do not stay there for three months, as they used to do. They often get out after only two days.

I only realized how important rest and silence is for spirituality, when I went with a pastoral worker on a visit in Bangkok. Somewhere at the outskirts of the city, yet in the middle of several high-rise buildings, we went off the road, and followed a track several hundred meters in some kind of bush. There we met a family living in a simple cottage. There, with all the sounds of the city around us hardly audible, we had a great talk. It was so refreshing because it was unhurried. Later on I heard they owned all this bush area, worth several millions of dollars... This easy-going mentality, once very Thai, is now almost completely lost in Bangkok. And partly lost with it is the interest in spirituality.

Another economic problem, seemingly in contradiction to those mentioned before, is that churches often lack money to support their evangelistic ministries (78). Wan, pastor of one of the largest congregations in Thailand, claimed to me: "If we have enough money, and get enough money from outside, we can start a church in every province within 10 years. It is easy for us, because Jesus taught his method how to work in Thailand to us" (interview). In other churches also, money is the bottleneck for evangelistic plans. The OMF for example has a principle of non-solicitation for funds, which means that it is not easy to start a new project. But in my opinion this problem is one of the lesser ones. For evangelism is done by persons, not by money. Money can help in certain situations, but it can also destroy ministries. The bad influence of money is to be seen in some churches that are too rich (79). This can be said of the CCT. The assets of the CCT are worth so much, that the CCT needs to be run more as a business than as a church. Besides that there is no need for the members to sacrifice financially for their church. This lessens the feeling of responsibility of the members for the church.

5.12. Aesthetic problems

The aesthetic problems that hinder church growth centre around music (80). The playing of traditional Thai instruments is often related to ancestor worship (Dierck, 1991:121). Therefore many Christian children are not taught how to play these instruments. This can

create a gap between Christians and non-Christians in their way of music-making. This problem is diminishing, because in Bangkok everybody is (becoming more oriented at western-style music. In most churches the worship service is accompanied by drums and electric guitar. This movement is led by Thai musicians. Missionaries often try to promote the traditional Thai (or traditional western: piano, organ) instruments, without much success. Another area in aesthetics in which Christians do not feel at home very much is dance (81). The traditional dance plays a prominent part in Thai cultural festivals. Christians lately are experimenting with expressing praise to God in these old forms. A last aesthetic problem that hampers church growth is that Christians to date did not yet develop their own style in art (82) and architecture (83). So there is no real alternative to the millions of Buddha statues, paintings of his life and the richly ornamented temple complexes. Therefore also by all outward appearances Buddhism remains the major (almost only) public religion.

5.13. Juridical problems

Juridical barriers to church growth in Bangkok are surprisingly few. There is total freedom of religion. Promotion of religion is not hindered, there are less restrictions than in most, or maybe even all, western countries.

One of the few important restrictions in the system of visa quotas for missionaries (84). At a certain point the government froze the amount of visas issued to missionaries. So every organization has a fixed amount of missionaries that can come into the country. This is seen as a problem within the CCT, that has a total of only 70 visa slots (Gross, interview). But most evangelical mission agencies do not have real problems, mainly because only one visa is needed for a missionary family. When the decree to freeze the visa quotas was issued, husband and wife both needed one. So there is still room for new missionaries. This is proven by some organizations that came in recently, like the Church of the Nazarene, after having 'borrowed' visa slots from other organizations. Especially the OMF still has some spare visa slots.

Other juridical obstacles are no more than normal rules to regulate public life: The use of microphones and indiscriminate tract distribution in some parks is prohibited (85). Further there is a rule in the constitution that is an obstacle for only one person: the king has to be a Buddhist (86). Of course this has its drawback on the entire population, because it so strongly communicates the opinion 'to be a Thai is to be a Buddhist'.

5.14. Ethical problems

Unethical behaviour of non-Christians need not to be considered an obstacle for church growth. People who are sinners, and know it, more readily convert to Christianity than those who are self-righteous. Only sins that have a strong addictive influence prevent people from becoming Christians, because they will not break with this particular sin. Alcoholism (87), drug abuse (88), and adultery (89), rank high among these sins.

Unethical behaviour of Christians of course always is a big obstacle for church growth. For "non-Christians...closely watch the way Christians live" (Kim, 1980:160). When they see that there is no big difference between the life of a Christian and the life of a non-Christian, they are of course not attracted to the church. Within the church adultery and sins in the handling of money (90) abound. This of course is not a strong witness to the outsiders. One example, that could be strengthened by many such cases, is that of the pastor of one of the largest pentecostal assemblies in Bangkok. He had to step down, shortly before my stay in Bangkok, because he cheated both his wife and the church's treasurer.

5.15. Theological problems for church growth

5.15.1. Spiritual problems

Spiritual problems are those problems stemming from the fact that Christians do not live near enough to God. The result is a weak Christian life. This observation is a very basic one for all Christian believers of all times and all places. In a relation between the holy God and a sinful human being it is in the nature of things that man feels he does not do what he should do, and that he is not what he should be. But this "falling short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23 NIV), also by Christians, is one of the major reasons why God's glory is not revealed on this earth as Christians would like to see it. And it is one of the major reasons for the lack of church growth, also in Thailand.

Of course, all problems mentioned before that are hampering Christians to contribute to church growth, have a spiritual aspect. Materialism, adultery, diminishing zeal for evangelism when a church gets older, the stress laid on institutions rather than church planting; they all have an important spiritual aspect. But they are based in the economic,

ethical, social, and historical aspects respectively.

There are also problems that are more directly connected to the contents of the Christian faith. E.g.: the idea that God works according to the rules of *karma*, the lack of social concern, the little knowledge of Christian doctrine. These all have an important spiritual aspect. Yet, these too, are not based in spirituality, but in dogmatics, diaconate and catechetics.

In this paragraph only those problems are named, that are primarily spiritual. I.e., they directly have to do with the relationship between a person and God the Father through His Son Jesus Christ. The most direct way of entertaining this relationship through prayer. According to King, "prayer on the part of Thai Christians is reported to be of the fox-hole type (91). Christians will often turn to God in prayer to avoid what they perceive to be a calamitous situation befalling them" (1981:19). I think this judgement is far too harsh. I was impressed by the emphasis all pastors laid on praying. Almost all churches have prayer meetings during the week, and several have a special night of prayer each month. I talked to several persons who regularly had a time of fasting and praying. One Baptist pastor even had experienced a 40-day period of fasting, "just like Moses and Jesus", he said. The objection could be raised that this does not paint a fair picture of the church as a whole; true, but it serves well to make the point that the Thai church as a whole is not less faithful in its prayer life than the church in many other countries. I grant though that lack of prayer is a spiritual obstacle to church growth. For our battle is a spiritual one. And it is no coincidence that the description of the armour of God (Ephesians 6:11-17) is directly followed by repeated exhortations to pray. With this in mind, it is a bad sign that prayer meetings belong to the least popular meetings in most churches.

Another spiritual problem is the lack of commitment (92). The Thai "try to avoid serious religious and personal commitment because it is too much bother and rather disturbing" (Kim, 1980:170). Following Christ also means taking up the cross. To understand and accept this, spiritual maturity is needed. This is sadly lacking in many Christians in Bangkok. It also goes against certain characteristics of Thai culture (*sanuk* oriented, clash avoidance, etc.; see chapter 2.3.). Connected to this is the lack of self-denial (93). King says: "Christ's selfless constraining love for others is utterly foreign to Buddhists" (1981:28). I would rather say: is utterly foreign to human nature. Yet it is needed for the Bangkokians to see the "servant role which awaits the true followers of Christ" (King, 1981:28). Even the supposed

spiritual leaders have set a dismal example in this. Very many pastors could not handle the temptations they encountered. The most shocking example may be the pastor who thought he did not earn enough, started a new career, became Thailand's leading racing driver, travelled widely over the world, and is now in an USA-prison because of drug-traffic.

The next problem is that most Christians in Bangkok hardly read the Bible (94) outside the church meetings. There are several reasons for this. Kim mentions one for the CCT-churches: "After the world war, the great emphasis of the CCT was focused on Christianization, rather than evangelization. Thus Thai Christians now think that lay Christians need not know the Bible or theological formulations" (1980:167). Though this is no longer the CCT-policy, as the CCT-leaders got more and more evangelical in recent decades, this attitude is still rampant in many churches. Another reason is the time factor. Employees in Bangkok make such long working hours (not seldom 70 hours a week, not included travelling time), that they hardly have spare time and the rest to read the Bible. A third reason lays in the laziness common in the human race. A well-known joke among evangelicals is: 'What is the easiest way to make a hall full of Christians blush? Ask who had his quiet time today.' This is a rather cynical and western joke, and reports from Korea and China suggest it would not be understood there. But it is my impression that at least in Thailand many Christians are not very faithful in their personal devotions.

All of the problems mentioned until now are on a personal level. But they certainly have their repercussions on evangelism and church growth. Because due to these problems, there is a lack of mature Christians. And because of this lack of mature Christians, there is lack of evangelists and church planters, both among church members and among church leaders. A second cluster of problems reveals itself on church level. The gifts of the Holy Spirit do not have their proper place (95) in most congregations. Cook severely criticizes the churches in Bangkok for their approach to the charismata: "In terms of spiritual gifts in general, churches in Thailand recognize only one spiritual gift and that is tongues. It is emphasized to the exclusion of all other gifts. There is no sense in proportion in regard to gifts...Groups that do not recognize the tongues gift, do not recognize any of the other gifts either. OMF theoretically accepts all gifts, but confines the gifts of tongues to private use. In actual practice, however, it doesn't help people to recognize, develop or use any of the spiritual gifts" (Cook, 1991f:4). I am convinced this wording is too strong. Yet she is right in signalling the problem that few people know and develop their spiritual gifts. A related

spiritual problem I found in the dissertation of Chung, who mentions the lack of a clear call of God (96). He makes the remark on Korean missionaries. I would personally express this thought a bit different, but the point behind it is important for all missionaries and Thai church leaders. For I am convinced that the best way to contribute to a healthy and enduring church growth is to be in the place God wants you to be.

A church that does not have many spiritually mature members and is not aware of the spiritual gifts, is bound to be a church poor in evangelistic outreach (97). This is often the case in Bangkok. Ford mentions this (1981:19), as well as Kim, who gives a generalization of the attitude of Thai (including Bangkokian) Christians: "Thus far most church members are still indifferent toward evangelism" (1980:154). When so little evangelistic zeal is found, it

is no wonder that spontaneous church planting is also absent (98). Roland Allen already saw "the spontaneous expansion of the church" (1912) as a sign of a healthy church. But Shin notes that "according to the author's experience and observation of Phak (i.e. district, MV) Eight of the CCT since 1973, there has never been a single case of church planting that was initiated by a spontaneous activity of the Phak churches...nationalization of spontaneity is believed to be a key to the problems that the Thai nationals face themselves" (n.d.:95). This certainly is a problem, because this observation does not apply to the Phak Eight churches only. It is true for most churches in Bangkok, with only a few exceptions. But in the last decade several independent churches were spontaneously planted by Thai nationals. These churches also have a vision for planting daughter churches.

Liberalism (99) also forms a hindrance for church growth. I classify this as a spiritual problem, because liberalism means not trusting God. A liberal Christian does not need a different viewpoint, which is an academical matter, but conversion, which is a spiritual matter. Liberalism is a problem mainly in the CCT. During the 1950s and 1960s, the CCT was heavily influenced by liberal missionaries. Since that time the CCT is becoming more and more evangelical, as the Thai leaders take over and the old-fashioned liberal foreigners move out. "However, nearly, two decades of wandering in the desert of the humanistic social Gospel caused considerable delay in Thai Church Growth" (Kim, 1980:175-176).

All of the above mentioned problems contribute to the last one I mention here: a lack of spiritually mature Christians (100). Because of this, the pastor has to concentrate all of his efforts in pastoral care. Only a few church members are willing and able to assist in building a fellowship that is caring for its members and attractive to non-Christians.

5.15.2. Dogmatic problems

The first problem in the area of dogmas is that so few Thai Christians are able to think in theological terms (101) (Kim, 1980:208,209). This is an obstacle to church growth because it means hardly any Thai Christians are able to analyze their own faith and present it in a good way. It also means heresies can not be fought effectively when they are forcefully presented by learned men.

Other problems lay in the dogmatic presuppositions Thai Christians often, consciously or unconsciously, have. King (1981:21-30) lists several issues, which I repeat here in my own wordings. God is without passion (102). The transfer of a Buddhist ideal to the God of Israel, leads to the false impression that values as non-confrontation are more important than evangelistic zeal. God cares about people, and therefore the preaching of the Good news is of ultimate importance. God behaves like karma (103) in punishing the bad and rewarding the good. This leads an impersonal view of God, which of course is a severe spiritual problem. It also leads to the thought of everything will be as it must be, so we are not responsible. This of course takes away human responsibility for evangelism. God's grace is cheap (104) (also Shin, n.d.:165). This thought can be understood from the Buddhist background. The free gift of salvation is in total contradiction to the Buddhist's efforts for his own salvation. So if salvation is free, it can not be worth much. Therefore a Christianity without a strong standard of holiness prevails. For it is God's job to forgive. This attitude makes it very hard to explain to outsiders why the free gift is so precious. God is not to be understood through logic (105). Of course this is true, but as a westerner I add: He certainly is not understood through lack of logic. God is more than our logic, but certainly not less. At the same time I recognize that the Thai mind is more appealed to stories, parables and symbols than to logical progression. Contrary to King (1981:29) I do not think this is an important problem. For it is possible to make God's claims on each man clear without strong logical progressions. And if another way fits the mind set of the Bangkokians better, why not use it?

A problem for church growth is that missionaries and church leaders do not reflect on ecclesiology (106). So there are still evangelistic campaigns that are hardly aware of the local churches. And there are many leaders who do not distinguish between preaching point and church. It is very important to envision a church as a mature community, in which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are building the body, and in which pastor and elders (and deacons) all

have their own place. When this vision of the church does not exist, a cell group already can be called a church, and this blurs the vision of the ideal that yet has to grow out of the cell group.

The final problem that needs attention here is that the church members also have little insight in the doctrine about the church (107) as a fellowship of believers, mutually accountable and deserving loyalty. They value their own personal freedom so highly, and are so apt to avoid conflicts by running away, that it is hard for a church to function as a body. The Body does not function well because all the members want to go their separate way. There is neither a joint effort to reach the unreached in the city, nor a strong attraction of outsiders towards this Body, because they can not think: "See, how they love each other!".

5.15.3. Practical-theological problems

5.15.3.1. Diaconal problems

Diaconate has been subject of many heated discussions among missionaries and missiologists. Some emphasize the priority of preaching the gospel; others argued that the beginning of Christian work should be to help people in their needs, compelled by the love of Christ. Both approaches were advocated and used in Bangkok. No wonder some totally contradicting problems emerged from the literature.

Kim (1980:17-18), Tablada (1985:42; quoting Smith), and Chung (1992:30) pointed to social work having priority over evangelism (108). They see this in the CCT-churches, where to date the budgets for several social projects are much higher than the total expenditure in evangelism. Indeed, when the figures, both in finances and personnel, of the CCT-biannual assembly of 1992 are scrutinized, one could get the impression that being a church is a side-line of the business.

The other side of the coin is represented by Cook. She resents the attitude of evangelical church leaders and missionaries, who eschew social criticism and do not have social concern (109) for the lower layers of society. "None of my mission's administrators were aware of or took any interest in my work with people with these types of needs. Fellow missionaries didn't recognize it as worthwhile either, even those working in the same churches I was. They were all interested in evangelism, Bible teaching, discipleship training of people without these social problems" (1991c:3).

5.15.3.2. Catechetic problems

Under the heading of catechetic problem I review all problems connected to Christian teaching in various stages, from enquirers to the equipment of Christian leaders. The first catechetic problem is that some churches, especially the traditional, set the standards for new

Christians too high (110) (Virat, 1990:106). It is not enough realized that: a person can not only grow into the church, but also within the church. Consequently, often the catechism for baptism is too long (111) (Van Dorp, 1987:31).

Within the Christian context, children most of the time receive their catechetic teaching during Sunday schools. Often no special curriculums are available (112) to teach the different groups. This especially forms a problem when the leader is not well-equipped to teach the group. When teaching materials are available, most of the time they have an American background and are not very well adapted to Thai culture (113) (see Dierck, 1991). Practical information, e.g. on how to behave in the Buddhist ceremonies school children are obliged to sit in, is needed.

Older members in churches do not get any catechetical input (114). So they do not grow in knowledge of Christ. Even in most mid-week meetings the emphasis is sharing rather than learning. Here the opportunity is missed to give missionary catechism. That would help church members to share their faith not just with each other, but also with others.

The lack of leadership training (115) was also mentioned (Chung, 1992:29). Jeng even devoted an entire thesis to "leadership training programme" (n.d.). But the existence of such training programmes is not enough. Jung writes: "Evidently, the Central Bible School (connected to CAMA-mission, MV) was not producing the right kind of leadership" (1985:69). So wrong leadership training also is a problem. Leadership training is not always given in the right context (116). This can also be derived from what Kim writes about the reception of seminary and bible school students in the congregations (1980:143-151; see also Virat, 1990:106). Seminary students, though, or better: because of, having a higher academical standard, are less fit for the ministry. Leadership training can also be given in the wrong place (117). This is true for students who study abroad. For these students tend to grow away from their background and have a hard time to relate in a wise way to their congregation members. It is even so that the Bible schools, most of which are in Bangkok, are not very good in preparing leaders for the churches in the countryside: the students just do not want to leave Bangkok when they have graduated.

5.15.3.3. Homiletical problems

Homiletical problems were not mentioned in the literature. Yet, as the sermon is an important (many would say: the most important) part of a church service, it can be maintained that a crisis in the church most of the time includes a crisis in the sermon. In Bangkok there is a desperate need for more powerful and expository preaching (118). Many pastors lack homiletical skills- both in the area of rhetoric and in the area of exegesis. It is no coincidence that dr. Kriengsak, the leader of the most successful church (in terms of membership) time and again is honoured for his preaching talent. Also the people who do not agree with his style and methods, acknowledge that he is the best expositor in all Thai churches.

Zehner, an anthropologist who started as a researcher but ended as a full-time church worker in Kriengsak's Hope of Bangkok, is a good example of his own words: "Kriengsak has a preaching style so effective that it is a rare listener who remains unmoved" (1987:85). Another evidence for this is that in at least three consecutive years there has only been one Sunday in which there were no people responding to the habitual invitation to come forward and receive Christ, after the sermon in Hope of Bangkok.

Another problem that should be noted here, is that Thai pastors preach relatively few evangelistic sermons (119). The sermons often are cosy talks, with lots of personal experiences. But they do not stress the urgency of evangelism by all the congregation. Of course there are exceptions to this. In Immanuel Baptist Church the pastor even preached one missionary sermon each month. He hoped this would stimulate his church members to become missionaries in- or outside Thailand.

When the sermon is performed by missionaries, they are often misunderstood (120). I once witnessed a missionary preaching to a large and seemingly attentive church audience, who according to my translator was hardly intelligible. Another missionary told me the funny story that he had used the wrong tone for the word 'tod', so that he had not said: "And the Lord said to Moses from the burning bush: 'Come over and take off your shoes', but: 'Come over and fry your shoes'".

5.15.3.4. Pastoral problems

There are too little pastors (121). This problem is mentioned by many authors and will be more extensively reviewed in chapter 5.12.3.5.2. Kim is the one who most emphatically lists

the "lack of pastors" as one of the discouraging aspects of the Thai church (1980:206). I would like to defend the dissident viewpoint that there is no shortage of pastors, at least not in Bangkok, which this thesis is about. I do not think the Thai churches can realistically expect that a higher percentage of their members is spiritually and intellectually able to minister to the churches. I do not think most churches can independently finance more pastors. Moreover, I do not think more pastors are needed. By stating this, I do not deny the pastoral problems. But I do not hold a lack of pastors to be an important part of this problem, or more pastors to be the solution for it (see chapter 6.15.3.4.).

People need very much pastoral care (122) in Bangkok. When I uttered my surprise that so many churches plateau at 30 or 40 members, the answer was: "That is all one pastor can handle". Here we see the claim on the pastor by the members competes with the evangelistic outreach to non-members. This is worsened by the fact that pastors and elders do not have much time for their church work (123). Even pastors are not always serving full-time. And especially elders "can only give a marginal part of their time and effort to the work of the church" Cressy already wrote (1959:49). Since then, this problem has only grown worse. A pastoral problem of the first magnitude is the follow-up on new converts (124). Many of the people who make a decision for Christ, never get into a church. Far too little attention is paid to these people, especially when they are converted in a campaign of one kind or another. The most fruitful evangelism of the CCT takes place in evangelistic campaigns at secondary schools. but within a year over 80% of the enquirers do not come to church anymore (Virat, interview; see Kim, 1980:155). The open air preaching in Lumpini park has even more discomfoting figures. Within two years, over 350 people took a decision for Christ there. Of these, only a score or so were baptized. And of these, only a few (less than five) were still in church.

Like follow-up is the problem from the side of the church, reversal of new converts (125) is the other side of the coin (Mauren, 1986:69). That so many converts revert, has to do with a poor follow-up. Of course, peer pressure also plays an important role. But also the kind of outreach is important. In OMF-churches for example the reversal rate is much lower, because most new members are brought in through individual contacts.

A last problem that needs to be mentioned is the fighting within churches (126). Nowhere in the literature this is named as a problem, though several authors describe tensions, e.g. between leprous and non-leprous (Ford, quoted in Jung, 1985:68), or liberals and

evangelicals (Kim, 1980). However, these are tensions between congregations and not within congregations. This is also true for Zehner's thesis (1987). But in my opinion fighting within churches forms a severe problem, because it breaks up fellowship, diminishes evangelistic zeal and most of all, it hurts people. The source of tension can be a lot of things: disagreement within the leadership, gap between old and new membership, changes in liturgy (songs, music instruments), family vetes, etc. These conflicts are especially damaging when the pastor is part of it, so he can not pastor and counsel the members out of this trouble. The consequence of a situation like this, which unfortunately is very common, is that the church is inward looking rather than outward looking.

5.15.3.5. Cybernetic problems

5.15.3.5.1. Church organization

The form in which an organization is organized, is a very important decision. In Bangkok several house churches (127) can be found. According to Van Dorp (1987:30) this is not a good idea, because in Thai culture other people will remain guests in this house, and thus guests within their own church.

Several forms to organize a congregation are possible. It is important that they include fellowship on three levels: micro level (about 10 people), meso-level (about 40 people) and macro level (at least 100 people). Many churches do not provide fellowship on all three levels (128). Some because they are too small; some because they do not know how to do that; others because they do not know the importance of fellowship on various levels.

Another set of organizational problems is not encountered on congregational level, but on denominational level. Most evangelical denominations (e.g. ACT, linked to OMF; GCT, linked to CAMA; TBCA, linked to SBC) are too small (129). They all have a few thousand members, so they are not able to formulate on all-over ministry. The churches within the denominations can not help each other because of differences in situation, personal problems between leaders, or just plain lack of time. But the denomination is too small to have a denominational headquarters with staff. So a denomination can not fulfil all of its functions, like mutual assistance and support, policy-making, teaching, and contacts with other denominations. The evangelical umbrella organization EFT is also too loosely organized to take over these functions (130). Unfortunately, this problem is not recognized as a problem by evangelical leaders. They are too busy building their own denomination and too proud of

their independence. Only CCT-leaders (Sint, Tiewat: interview) mentioned this as a problem. The evangelical fear for a stronger denominational organization is understandable when the situation within the CCT is considered. It is the exact opposite of the EFr. Within the CCT the regional and national levels are too powerful (131). This results in apathy on the side of the local churches. Kim notes: "The local church members always look up to the district office or CCT head office for all kinds of help", and "There must be an end to the local churches passivity in evangelism, looking always to higher church offices to care for local evangelism" (Kim, 1980:125,159). Twenty years before Cressy stated the same: "There is a need for change of emphasis from the district to the individual local church" (1956:16). Almost another twenty years later, the need is still there.

The CCT is slow to change, mainly because of the power of the institutions (132). This power is as well formal (a large minority of the delegates in the general assembly is from the institutions) as informal (the bulk of the money and the best educated leaders are in the institutions). The stakes of this power game are high as is clear from the observation that the leader of a school or hospital earns up to a hundred times as much as a village pastor. The assembly of 1992 showed something of the slowly shifting balance of power. There, almost for the first time, church leaders dared to speak out against the institutional leaders. Because of the honour and money involved, it is logical that talented leaders go into the institutions (133) rather than into the pastorate. So much of the brains and energy is not poured into the mission of the church, but into subsidiary ministries.

The CCT is hardly involved in any church planting in Bangkok (134) (see Shin, n.d.:90).

This is an organizational weakness, because almost all CCT-leaders nowadays hold that church planting is important. The general-secretary of the CCT said to me: "Any church should be involved in church planting in Bangkok. Because the people in Bangkok need God" (Sint: interview).

Church organizations often are too dependent on mission organizations (135). For the CCT this is no longer the case, but for most other denominations it is. This is seen in the Bible schools, that were started and are still largely staffed by missionaries. It can be concluded from the fact that many denominations have less (ordained) pastors than the supporting missionary organization. Most telling may be that a majority of new church planting projects, is still carried on by missionaries. (At least, according to my counts; I may have missed independent, Thai-led churches that could also be actively involved in church planting.) This

dependence is partly in the nature of things, since there are so many young churches. But it is a well-known fact that the fastest growing churches are one church away from a missionary.

A related problem is that some churches still do not emphasize the need for self-support (136). All mission organizations I encountered handled this in a very responsible way. Still, some churches and church members think it easiest to lean back and receive from the denomination or the mission organization. However, this is perceived as a problem by all leaders involved. For a church that is not financially self-supporting, is also not taking its responsibilities in other areas, including church planting.

One of the weakest points of the church organization, is that they almost all have a western organizational pattern (137) (see Zehner, 1987:37). The districts of the CCT, the democratically chosen deacon of the TBCA, the assembly of the OMF-churches, they are all examples of it. Missionaries try to lead the Thai Christians to understand the Bible on their own. But the organizational patterns are often consciously but sometimes unconsciously superimposed on them. This is a hindrance for church growth, because this pattern is not easily used by the Thai Christians. It takes a long time before they can take over such an organization, and even then the traditional Thai way of relationships and hierarchy still plays a role. This is a disadvantage for the organization, because two different sets of organizational patterns are intermingled. Tasks and responsibilities are not very clear then.

A short-coming of most churches is that they can not avoid a plateauing membership (138). A group has a certain maximum that their organization can handle. Strategies do not provide solutions on how to enlarge the organizational maximum. They should though, if the goal is growing churches. A missionary who was in the Hope of Bangkok right from the start, told me that the first thing Kriengsak did, was to hire a business manager. But his vision is rare. Many churches plateau already at a membership of 30 or 40. This is about the maximum one pastor can provide pastoral care for, when he has to work all by himself. After that, many churches plateau at about 80 or 90 members. More than that do not fit into a large town house. When these two barriers are levelled, it seems possible to grow larger. To end this paragraph with: church statistics are not very wisely used (139). Many churches in Bangkok have a surprising accurate and exact church administration system. It would be even better if all churches would differentiate between migrants, transfers, and conversions/reversals. Quite a number already do. The only problem is that these figures are

not known to the members of the church, or, if they are known, not used to change programme or attitude.

5.15.3.5.2. Church leadership

The subject church leadership has been touched on several times already. It is also often brought up in conversation among missionaries and Thai church leaders. That is logical: for then they are talking about themselves, about the things that is in their power to change. I am convinced however that too much emphasis on the role of the church leadership would only reinforce the fable of a controllable church. Yet, church leadership of course is part of the evangelization crisis of the church in Bangkok.

As already mentioned in the paragraph on pastoral problems, many people hold the view there are too little pastors. The seminaries need more students, they say, who can go into the ministry (Cressy, 1959:42; Blanford, 1975:95; Smith 1977:145; Kim, 1980:106-112, 206; Jung, 1985:63; Mauren, 1986:48; Shin, n.d.:166; Tiewat, Wan: interview). This has been a problem for the Thai church for a long time. Kim wrote about the situation immediately after World War II: "...the church was starving for lack of leadership" (1980:72-73). It was still the main concern of the CCT at the General Assembly in 1992. No wonder it received much attention in the missiological thinking of many people (see above). Mauren seems to voice the general opinion, when she states: "...the lack of leadership is the main dilemma facing the national church today" (1986:48). Blanford sees a need for more leaders in two areas: "1. personnel for the administration of the church and the nurture of Christians and 2. personnel for evangelization" (1975:95). Kim holds that reflection is also needed, and therefore adds the need for more theologians (1980:208).

As I already defended before, I do not think this is the real problem. Sending an ever higher percentage of church members to seminary or bible school, would mean sending immature members. This never can be a solution. I hold that the real problem is a too narrow definition of leadership (140). The only one who explicitly stated this to me was a missionary from the Church of the Nazarene: "The only concept they (i.e. Thai church leaders, MV) have of a minister is of a full-timer with a degree from Bible college. tllmost all of them have to be subsidized. There is a real shortage there, and there are not enough students in Bible schools to even come close to what they're aiming at" (Knox: interview).

My opinion that the real problem not is too little students in the seminaries is reinforced by

the problems that arise even when pastors holding a degree are available. First of all age related problems (141) arise. The seminary graduates are too young to gain the respect of older church members (Cressy, 1959:49; Blanford, 1975:99; Kim, 1980:46; Shin, n.d.:167). They can not act as the real leaders of the church.

The following point that arises is that not all ministers know how to act in responsible positions (142). Negligence of pastoral work, adultery, and corruption are no rare vices when a position of relative power is reached. Virat even gives the example of a whole department of the CCT that had to be closed down because of corruption (1990:76).

Even when the integrity of a leader can not be challenged, he not automatically is a good leader. In Bangkok the pastorate is not viewed as a high calling (143) in many churches (see Shin, n.d.:104,105). Especially among the Chinese, many of whom earn big money in business, often the least talented child is sent to seminary. This only reinforces the idea that pastors are not to be very highly regarded. Because there is no challenge and no honour in being a minister, mediocre leadership is developed. Therefore the observation is not strange the pastors do not have the skill for leading large churches (144). One of the determining factors how large a church can grow, is the leadership capacity of the pastor. Only very few pastors in Bangkok can manage a big church. For, as Cook remarked, "a large church is not a small church larger" (interview). The group processes are entirely different, that pastor can not have a personal relationship with all members, etc.

So strong leaders do not abound in the church in Bangkok. And even when there are some promising leaders, they often were not employed in church planting, but rather in maintenance and institutional work (145) (see Virat, 1990:105). This is especially true for the CCT with its many institutions, but it also is a danger to the EFT-denominations. There talented students are tempted to strive e.g. to be teacher in a Bible college.

The problems concerning leadership also include the tensions between leaders (146). Disagreements can arise between two leaders within one congregation. I personally experienced several of this situations. The reasons were very divergent: Thai-Chinese tensions, conflicting personalities and ambitions, different view on the ministry, and male-female relationships. Differences of opinion can also arise between leaders of different denominations. This phenomenon is scarcer, because they have less opportunity to meet each other. When problems arise this is mainly about sheep-stealing (see chapter 5.15.3.5.4. on cooperation) and about who should pay respect to whom. j

But one of the most important problems, one that is also responsible for a large part of the tensions between leaders, is that different systems of leadership are functioning within one denomination (147): 1. The official church organization, headed by e.g. a general-secretary. 2. The traditional Thai clientele system, headed by one man who is recognized as patron. He can have a high position within the official organization, but not necessarily so. 3. The charismatic leadership. This is mostly a church pastor, who receives special honour. He displays the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including healing in the pentecostal churches. He is also admired for his exemplary lifestyle and devotion (see Zehner, 1987:81ff. on the example of Kriengsak, the strongest charismatic leader Bangkok churches ever saw). This type of leadership often becomes intertwined with the second (see Zehner, 1987:91ff.). 4. The missionary leadership. Though the missionaries in many cases withdrew from the official church leadership, they are still very influential in the church in which they participate. Especially if they were part of the church planting team.

So the allegiance of church members can be drawn into different directions. They want to respect at the same time e.g. the pastor, who is the official leader; the eldest deacon, who is a mighty businessman and employs many of the church members; the former pastor, who is retired but is still regarded a spiritual authority; and the missionary, who has been around longer than most church members and whose counsel is often sought. Which one of these four will get the most respect is dependent on the situation and hardly predictable. These different leadership patterns make a church less transparent and less easy to guide in the direction of evangelism and church planting. Agreement among formal and informal leaders is needed.

The leadership style is also a source of problems. In Thai churches "leaders value harmony and therefore go to great lengths to avoid conflict" (148) (Caleb Project, 1988:37). I might have a too western bias on this, but my opinion is that extreme conflict avoidance can be as damaging to a church as extreme conflicts. When the tensions, which I listed as problems above, are never point of discussion, people eventually will leave the church. And much sooner the church will stop being effective in its outreach. For tensions; damage trust between church members, and they will not have one common goal.

The leadership style of the Chinese however differs quite much from the Thai style. "Within the Chinese community, the leaders are much more prominent, domineering and competitive" (Caleb Project, 1988:40). So when Chinese enter a Thai church, within a short period of

time they begin to rise in the ranks of leadership, and finally replace the Thai leadership (149). This is a **problem**, because when it happens, the whole congregation gets a Chinese flavour and is not attractive to the Thai anymore (Caleb Project, 1988:52). And it happens so often, that it is not so easy to **find church leaders who are not Chinese or Thai Chinese**. Another weakness in leadership, especially notable among charismatic leaders, is that some churches and activities are wholly dependent on one person (150). A strong example for this is the pentecostal pastor who was forced to step down at his old church, went away and planted a new one. Within a year and a half his old church started to wither and he gained a following of approximately 200 in his new church, which is an outstanding result in Bangkok. Likewise, several evangelistic ministries seem to be more the hobby of one missionary or pastor, than that it is church-backed. The strength of this approach, the enthusiasm of one person, is also its weakness. When this person falls away, the ministry or even the whole church falls with him.

To end this paragraph with, a big problem of the leadership is the existence of a laity (151). Principally speaking, no such thing exists in a protestant church confessing the priesthood of all believers. In reality, many churches do not know how to mobilize their members for the church work. Of course this puts a strain on the leadership, and it diminishes the time spent in evangelism. A concept of leadership in which leaders do everything there is to be done in the church community, is most damaging for church growth.

5.15.3.5.3. Evangelistic strategies

The first problem encountered in the area of planning and strategy, is that often no clear strategy exists (152). Some mission-organizations fail in this respect (see Chung, 1992:1; Jung, 1985:7; Mauren, 1986:70). The same applies to many denominations and congregations. They do not have a strategy, but just go out evangelizing. The strategic thinking is expected to be done by missionaries, and in some cases, the denomination. The exception to this rule is formed by pastors of the larger pentecostal churches and some other pastors. These pastors all have many international contacts (USA, Korea). They plan ahead for five to ten years (Wan, Winit: interview).

The lack of strategy is sometimes concealed by the enthusiastic announcement of new goals. However, even when there are goals, strategies are absent (153). A telling example of this are the widely published goals for church planting and new pastors, set by the TPC in

connection with Lausanne II in Manila. The goals for the CCT are not even officially recognized by the CCT-leadership (Sint: interview), let alone be implicated in policy. The EFT, as a loose organization, subscribes the goals, but the member churches do not have their own goals set. So here also, the goals are just goals and have no relationship to reality whatsoever. Many missionaries recognize this as a problem (e.g. Cook, 1991f:6; Knox: interview). Only the TBCA is using the goals in its official policy. I heard them even quoted in a sermon, as challenge to the congregation.

Yet, even when they are developed strategies are not always implemented (154). Kim already touched on this problem (1980:153). It is hard to take strategies down from the meetings of the leaders' board into the churches. And even harder to get them into use. But even strategies in full operation do not guarantee success, for they can be the wrong strategies. A cultural problem is that Christians are taught to use a western decision-making process in evangelism. Many strategies heavily emphasize the need for an instantaneous decision (155). This type of decision-making is very western oriented. It may also appeal to the Chinese, who tend to stick to a commitment. But it is totally inappropriate with ethnic Thai (Caleb Project, 1988:61). Time and again missionaries are surprised by the ease Thai people forfeit a commitment. Their attitude and actions today seem to have little to do with what they did yesterday. In such a situation the missionary model in which the importance of a decision is stressed, is not a very relevant one, especially not when it is taken for granted that one sticks with his decision.

All these above mentioned problems of course do not deny the importance of strategies. They rather emphasize the need for good strategies. But even good strategies wear out (156). Strategies are useful, but only in a certain situation during a certain period. Medical care may have been a good base for evangelistic outreach. But it stopped being so a long time ago. Hope of Bangkok had a very effective strategy. But it did not work outside Bangkok; it could not even be repeated inside Bangkok. And even within Hope of Bangkok, the success of the strategy touched its limits: Hope of Bangkok plateaued, though at the amazing level of 6,000 members. This statement needs to be made with some caution, however. It is not impossible that the strategy would have permitted an even larger church, were it not for the spiritual and ethical problems within the church.

5.15.3.5.4. Cooperation

When I did my research in Thailand, 53 mission organizations and 53 Thai organizations and denominations were members of the EFT. The CCT also combines several mission organizations and churches of various backgrounds. This is reason for praise, because so many people serve Christ in so many ways. But at the same time this displays an evident lack of unity (157) among both mission groups (Heckendorf, 1983:8) and Thai churches (Jung, 1985:127; Kim, 1980:202-204; Zehner, 1987:77-78). This is hindering church growth in Bangkok, both because it has negative consequences on the public image of Christianity and because it makes an overall policy of church planting impossible.

Even worse is that some church leaders told me there is no real fellowship (158) between the various denominations. However, I do not regard this to be an important problem. A large majority of the protestant Christians in Bangkok are more or less evangelical and recognize each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. The only problems are with a tiny minority of liberals within the CCT and some extreme pentecostals, who both have a quite different agenda than the majority.

However, mutual recognition and appreciation does not necessarily imply there is much cooperation (159). Actually, everyone is doing his own thing, without even knowing what the others are doing. Several Thai church leaders mentioned this to me as a huge problem (Sampan, Tiewat, Sint, Winit, Nantiya, Charan: interview). In the neighbourhood where I lived were church planting projects in three consecutive streets. None of them flourished, and none of them was aware what was going on in the other two. They did not even know where the other buildings, may be 300 metres further on, were located.

When churches decide to work together, e.g. in the TPC, most of the time they do not stumble upon differences of opinion. But there are differences in style and priorities. Because of this, the CCT often does not want to join in an evangelistic campaign (Sampan: interview). So cooperation is not easy (160). It is especially difficult to make appointments with some pentecostal churches. Both EFT and CCT leaders complain about that. It is reinforced by the complaints of sheep-stealing (161), lodged against Hope of Bangkok and other pentecostal churches. They organize such almost fanatic drives, and plant churches so indiscriminately also in towns where other denominations operate, that much of their gains are losses of the other churches. Hope of Bangkok, for example got about 35% of its new members from other churches, according to a survey by Zehner (1987:113). The actual figure might even be a bit higher. Though this figure contradicts statements that the

pentecostal churches only grow to the expense of others, it is understandable that it does not help to improve relationships between the pentecostal and the other churches.

Even without obvious sheep-stealing, competition (162) between churches or mission organizations can be a reason not to cooperate. The Korean missionaries in Thailand are known for that (Chung, 1992: 32,33).

Another hindrance for cooperation arises when churches are so dogmatically different that they do not want to cooperate or even regard other churches as sects (163). Some CCT-members, even evangelicals, view all pentecostals as sectarians. Kim has a paragraph in his book that is entitled "The pentecostals and other sectarians..." (1980:202). Seventh Day Adventists are another example of a church that is regarded by and regards other churches as so different, that cooperation is not possible. Lately there is a tendency to regard Hope of Bangkok as sect too, since Kriengsak is saying things like 'the members of the church get to know God's will for their lives through me'.

5.15.3 5.5. Missionaries

Many problems concerning missionaries were reviewed before in other paragraphs. Here only those problems come to the fore that were not listed before. They are linked to the cybernetic structure of the church. There are too few missionaries in Bangkok (164). Many mission organizations would like to have more missionaries in Bangkok. These include OMF, CAMA, WEC, KPM, and even the CCT would welcome more fraternal workers, though they are short on visa slots (Virat: interview; see Chung, 1992:30; Ford, 1982:15). However, when missionaries are available, they do not always contribute to the growth of the church in Bangkok. Several reasons for this already have been mentioned before. Several others will be named now. First of all, some missionaries are lazy (165). Or maybe better: they have no discipline. Nobody is checking up on what they do, and each time it is an effort to go out and make visits, make new friends, etc. Many Thai Christians regard the missionary life as an easy one. Missionaries do not by a far stretch make the same working hours as the Thai do. Especially missionaries with little children are hard pressed to make time free for their ministry. Missionaries also do not contribute to church growth when they pastor a Thai church (166) (Chung 1992:30). Thai leadership is not developed then, and the church is not very appealing to the Thai people. Luckily, this is hardly happening anymore. In most cases missionaries are neither helping the Thai church to grow when they are

institutional missionaries (167) (but see my opinion in chapter 4.4.). Especially in the CCT this has been a problem over the decades (see Jung, 1985:82), who quotes someone noting this problem in 1939). But also within some EFT-organizations there is a disproportionate amount of missionaries involved in ministries that **do not contribute** to the evangelization of the country. They teach (in far too many bible schools), they do pastoral work, they run supporting ministries, but they do not enough evangelism and equipment of evangelists.

Another problem among missionaries is "a lack of professional skills (168) to focus on special areas of ministry in partnership together. Instead most people are generalists and end up getting too involved in each other's overlapping ministries" (Chung, 1992:33). More professional skills could help in many areas: media evangelization, TEE programmes for evangelists, drama groups, cultural adjustment of missionaries, the organization side of campaigns and follow-up, etc.

Another danger for missionaries is to try and go for quick success (169), without laying the proper foundation for a ministry or a church that can last (Chung, 1992:33). One of the ways to reach this is the use of money (170) to 'buy' church leaders and members. One of this most amazing examples I heard was that one new Bible school even promised air-conditioned sleeping rooms to the students. Another example of the search for quick success is the phenomenon of short-term missionaries (171). Youth with a Mission literally has a shipload of them in Bangkok, far over a hundred young people. It is not very clear what they are doing, with so many people who hardly speak Thai and do not have specific skills. The general impression is that it is a nice way to have a long vacation, but that it has not much to do with missionary work.

The effectiveness of missionary work is also being diminished when missionaries are too long involved in one ministry (172). Some work in the same church for many years in a row. Then it gets harder and harder to nationalize this church. Ironically, one of the biggest problems missionaries face is that they often can not find able Thai people to work with (173) (Boonkrong: interview).

Another irony is that a reason for the ineffectiveness of some missionary work, is that missionaries also can be too short involved in one ministry (174) (Jung, 1985:12C 121). Some of the mission organizations, especially the younger ones, often change policy and therefore replace missionaries. Many ministries do not get time to develop or do not get a chance to develop because of insufficient research, support, and personnel.

A last point to be mentioned here, is that the effectiveness of missionaries in church planting and evangelism is also dependent on the relation with the (daughter) denomination that is started. Tensions between these two cost much energy and is damaging the evangelistic outreach of both. But when they work together as partners, they can accomplish much!

5.15.3.6. Liturgical problems

When a minority religion in a missionary situation develops its own worship forms, it is influenced by at least three factors: the worship forms of the dominant religion, the contents of their own faith, and the tradition of the missionaries. All three play a role in Thai churches. Some churches have a western-style liturgy (175) that is entirely the same as the one used by the founding denomination overseas. This of course is not very attractive to the Thai people. Yet it is hard to develop culturally relevant worship forms (176) (Jung, 1985:63). This is a problem in most denominations. According to Cook (1990c:1) chances are missed in the liturgy by not using the example of Buddhist temples (177). She names a.o. drama, dance, music seating, and preaching as areas in which Buddhist forms could be adopted. It must be said though that fascination by western culture is abundant now in Bangkok, especially among the youth. So a very western liturgy is also attractive to many people. Cultural relevant forms of liturgy are not the same in Bangkok and a Thai farmer village.

Another interesting point is made by Wan, when he says that liturgy in many churches is only one or two hours a week (178) (interview). All the other hours the church is closed. This is too little. In his church, he strives to give people much more contact hours with each other and with God. Liturgy is something for the whole week.

5.15.4. Theological problems for non-Christians

The basic religious conviction of the people in Bangkok was described in chapter 2.2. All of the layers mentioned there (animism, Brahmanism, and Buddhism), pose problems. The fear for spirits (179) is a problem, because the Bangkokians avoid things that could displease the spirits. The best example for this I encountered when a western business agency could not find employees to work in its office. Only when they placed a spirit house in front of it, as all Thai houses have, the problem was solved. The power of the spirits is very real.

Therefore, not only the fear for, but also the power of the spirits (180) is an obstacle for church growth. Even the first night I was in Bangkok, I met a young man whose ears started to hum as soon as he heard the gospel. This seemed to be the consequence of taking part in a certain Buddhist-animistic ceremony. Other men that I met, who participated in this ceremony, became very sleepy in the middle of the day when Christians started to talk about the gospel. Most Christians in Bangkok ascribe this to **demonic** influences. I agree. As Weerasingha notes, a very important and difficult step in the conversion of a Buddhist is "when he makes the shift from spirit worship and veneration of idols" (1989:66).

The Brahmanistic rituals also form a problem (181). Almost all festivals and rituals are **Brahmanistic**. When people become Christians, they lose these things. The Christian substitutes in rituals (baptism and Holy Supper) and festivals (Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost) are fewer and not so interwoven with Thai culture and society as the Buddhist ones.

The third. Buddhist layer (182) forms a problem in evangelism, because it provides people with an alternative and encompassing world view. It has **such** different answers to the important questions of life than Christianity, that it is really difficult to convey your **message**. 'There is no self opposed to the value of ma who will be resurrected at the Day of judgement. 'Life is pain' opposed to life as a good creation bestowed upon us by a merciful God. 'The highest ideal man is capable of is aloofness, distachment', opposed to a God of love who asks his children to love Him and to love their neighbours. In a culture and language shaped by Buddhism, the strangeness of the Christian message is one of the hardest things to be conquered, before a Bangkok inhabitant comes to the Lord.

Finally, the syncretism (183) already implied by the different layers of the Thai religion (Lausanne, 1980:4; Heckendorf, 1983:6; Jung, 1985:54; Dierck, 1991:114-116) is also a problem. It is very difficult to communicate the urgency of the gospel message and the need for conversion. For "Thai people generally believe that all religions are equally good and have the same goals and purposes. Therefore, they don't think that they have to segregate any religion but can accept everything. They think the more religions you mix together, the more effective your salvation" (Kim, 1980:16).

5.16. Summary

The problems for church growth in Bangkok are manifold. They can be found in all spheres of life, from geography to faith, from psychology to culture and many others. There are problems that prevent Christians from evangelizing their non-Christian environment; there are problems that prevent non-Christians from becoming Christian; and problems in the relationships between both groups, which diminish the attraction of the Christian faith to unbelievers. Some problems are obvious and clear to everybody; others only recognized by a few. Some problems are facts that can not be changed; others form a challenge to church leaders and members to put up their act. Some problems are leadership problems; others apply to the whole church. Some problems are new; others exist for ages. Many problems are based in social processes; even more are linked to church administration, organization and policy. Some problems are caused by demons; some by people; others by situations; most of them probably by a combination of these factors.

Without much effort this list of distinctions could be enlarged. One thing is clear: when the church in Bangkok is facing so many various problems that endanger its growth, it is clear that the solution can not be simple. Fortunately, not all problems occur in all situations. Yet in any situation there will remain enough problems to contemplate, analyze, struggle with, pray over, and defeat. And we may do this under the blessing of God the Father, in the love

of God the Son, empowered by God the Holy Spirit. For in one sense God is not Western at all: He likes to have a big family!

Chapter 6 Proposed solutions to church growth problems in Bangkok

6.1. Introduction

The problems of the **church** in Bangkok are overwhelming, as chapter 6 showed. It may be ascribed to the optimistic outlook on life by missionaries and church leaders, that they manage to propose even more (partial) solutions to these problems. Many of the solutions are in the area of church policy. But also in most other aspects of life changes of direction have been suggested by one or more researchers. This confirms the need for a 'holistic approach'. This term often has been abused as some kind of magic spell. In fact, it merely is a formal concept that is only comprehensible when the constituting factors are clear. In this chapter it will be shown that a holistic approach of mission includes geographical, psychological, social, linguistic, homiletical, and strategic issues, as well as many others. However, recalling my strict purpose in this thesis, these issues are only addressed in as far as they contribute to church growth. To some observers it may seem contradicting that on the one hand I confine my research in urban mission to church growth, and on the other hand that I consider all aspects of life. However, this only stems from the recognition that while life is more than religion, religion affects all life.

When we compare the solutions that are proposed in this chapter to the problems mentioned in the last chapter, we note several significant things: -Some problems do not have solutions. They are confining boundaries in the missionary enterprise. E.g. laws, in the juridical area, or barriers between groups, in the social area, are data. Christians have to work around them. -Some problems are addressed by several solutions. Sometimes these solutions are complementary, sometimes competing, sometimes even contradicting. -Some solutions cope with several problems at once. -'Solution' actually is not the right word to use, since all problems mentioned in chapter 5 are still problems.

Solutions do not completely solve. Yet, they are not worthless either. For the 182 problems mentioned could be enough to make any evangelist despair. Still, churches are planted and are growing.

I would like to propose an analogy to describe the role of solutions. When we describe church growth as a hurdle race, all the problems are hurdles. An effective solution is diminishing the height of the hurdles. But seldom the hurdle entirely disappears. A very radical solution- a new strategy- could even point to a different track in which, hopefully,

less and lower hurdles are encountered. So this is the importance of solutions to church growth problems: they make the race easier and they make new records possible. But at the same time, the main ingredient remains: athletes on the track, who have power, technique and stamina.

6.2. Arithmetical solutions

The only church growth tool that was proposed in the area of arithmetics was to improve church statistics (1). Cressy stressed the importance of accurate and complete figures about "baptism, membership, and contributions" and he continues: "Only in this way is it possible for the individual churches and for the CGT as a whole to set definite goals for advance and to be in a position to know whether they are actually achieving these goals or not" (1959:79).

6.3. Geographical solutions

The first proposal for church growth in the geographical area to be reviewed here, is to use strategic locations for church buildings (2). It is important for a church to be easily found. The people in Bangkok do not expect to have to go away from the main road. In the main road all important facilities are found: schools, theatres, bus stops, department stores, other shops, etc. Small shops and eating facilities are found in side-streets. Apartments and houses are located further away from the main road. For churches it is important to be recognizable as important religious centres. They should, whenever possible, be located on or very near to the main road. Unfortunately land prices are so high today that this is hardly possible. Yet it is important for churches to be visible to many people.

Another proposal in regard to church buildings is to assist local churches in building programmes (3). This is an old and difficult discussion in mission organizations. Also in Bangkok there are examples of church buildings that were totally paid by the mission, and of others that did not get any outside funding. Most mission organizations now provide some help (e.g. CAMA (Ford, 1982:25; OMF), some others not at all (e.g. WEC). Some independent churches have proven that it can be done without help. E.g. Rom Klao, the largest church in Bangkok besides Hope of Bangkok, claims to have no financial help from outside (Wan, interview). But in churches planted and led by missionaries, I have not seen any successful church building project without mission aid.

A last solution for church growth problems that has to do with the building, is an old one

from Cressy (1959:29). He proposes to enlarge a church (4). The underlying idea of a 'protestant cathedral' is not very practical nowadays. But it is good to mention here, because too often the size of the auditorium is regarded as the maximum size of a church. Of course it is not always possible to enlarge a church. But it should be kept in mind as an option in those situations where enlargement is possible.

A strategy for church growth in Bangkok that was geographically based, was the BUS-strategy (Bangkok Urban Strategy) developed by SBC-missionaries. This is one of the most developed strategies for Bangkok to date, and is described by Hill (1982). This strategy is mentioned in this paragraph because it basically was a neighbourhood approach (5). Hill: "We must identify people in their homogeneous neighbourhood... zeroing in' on the target neighborhood instead of scattering all over the city' (1982:56). Despite the enthusiastic description by Hill, the strategy never worked. According to Boonkrong, pastor of the church it originated from, it did not succeed in planting even one daughter church (interview). The reason for this was that the missionaries could not find Thai co-workers. But probably also important was that the idea of a 'homogeneous neighbourhood' is mistaken in Bangkok, and therefore a neighbourhood approach is set for failure (see chapter 5.3.).

A related idea is to assign responsibility for a certain geographic area to a certain church (6) (Cressy, 1959:40). Of course this has the same drawbacks as other territorial 'solutions', but this suggestion has two advantages: 1. It could mean all people in a certain area are targeted, also the ones no-one is interested in right now. 2. It could be helpful in the follow-up of enquirers after e.g. open-air preaching, radio programmes, and revival meetings. Now it often happens that enquirers do not get any counselling because they live too far away.

Another geographic solution that is often proposed, is for denominations to concentrate on Bangkok (7). The idea behind it was already formulated by Cressy in 1959: "Only in cities and towns can the type of strong individual local churches that will provide a solid foundation for future growth and outreach be developed. Only cities and towns have the financial potential to develop such churches" (1959:18). The same policy is now advocated by several pentecostal denominations, which want to plant strong churches in Bangkok and other urban centres, and from there reach the rest of the country. It is clear that such a policy benefits church growth in Bangkok. I am not convinced however, that it also contributes to the building of the church in Thailand as a whole. Urban churches are not the best equipped ones to be involved in rural church planting projects, as also can be derived

from the many failures Bangkok churches experienced in this field.

A proposal concerning the geographic position of missionaries could contribute to continuing church growth. It is the call for itinerant missionaries (8), who already played a major role in Thai church history (Jung, 1985:79). Smith sees a role for them in the countryside as

"mobile task forces" (1977:115). Ford applies it to the situation in Bangkok. He agrees with McGavran, when he says: "The word should never be 'missionary go home', but rather 'missionary go on twenty miles and do it again' (quoted in Ford, 1982:25). It is my

impression, though I stand open for correction, that this could even be taken one step further. Also in the early stages of a church planting project, the missionary should not be there all the time. For this is creating a dependence on the missionary that is harmful for the church even after he is left.

Another method that is geographically based, is the beach head method (9). A nucleus of believers is sent into a neighbourhood as the beginning of a new church. Watchman Nee had this vision of migration evangelism in the 1920s. This approach can be used on a neighbourhood scale in Bangkok. It can be successful, if it is not linked to a neighbourhood approach, but to a target group approach. Essential for this approach is enough support from the mother church to start the ministry, and at the same time enough independence to develop into a separate church. A successful example were the 'new life houses' which were student hostels supported by OMF-missionaries. They developed into several independent churches (Cook: interview; Jung, 1985:63; Hill, 1982:99-100).

A last proposal that is based on geographical distinctions, is to differentiate between migrant groups (10). Especially the Northeastern Thai deserve special attention as a separate group. To; focus on migrant networks, especially new migrants, in my opinion is a very promising potential for church growth. This also is the underlying assumption of the Caleb Project, that entirely focuses on the people of Bangkok (1988).

6.4. Biological solutions

The main strategy that has been used throughout the centuries in the field of biology, has been addressing biological needs through hospitals (11). This strategy has been used in Bangkok too. There are still hospitals run by churches or mission-agencies. The CCT has Bangkok Christian Hospital, and the mission of the SBC and the SDA both have their own hospital. However, these institutions have lost much of their significance since government

and private hospitals provide medical care that is just as good. Except among the Adventists, in whose message health and a healthy life-style play an important role, the hospitals are often considered relics from the past, not really contributing to church growth in Bangkok. (The situation in some parts of Thailand is different). Only Hill lists hospitals among the outreach institutions "which are not absolutely essential to the life of the churches" but "yet are valid and effective means of extending the Christian witness" (1982:43)

Another proposal relating to a biological factor is to focus on family evangelism (12). In family evangelism the whole family is confronted with the gospel and is invited to take a corporate decision for Christ. Van Dorp wrote a thesis about family evangelism in Thailand (1987). She states that in the Thai situation, the family is the "bridge of God" (see McGavran, 1955). Because of the strong social solidarity among the Thai it is not wise to win converts one by one. The only way a Christian movement can gain momentum is by decisions of larger groups, first of all families. Though there is a lot of talk among missionary strategists in Bangkok for the need of people movements and family evangelism, I could not find one church that was actually engaged in family evangelism. All ministries focused on winning single converts, so reinforcing the image of the churches as 'gathered people groups' (see chapter 5.10.1.). This shows several things: 1. What people say, is not the same as what they do. 2. Family does not play such an important role in Bangkok as it does in the countryside. 3. Family evangelism is not as easy in real life as it seems on paper. 4. Churches in Bangkok lay a lopsided emphasis on approaching people outside their family situation. Though family evangelism may not be such an important tool in Bangkok as in other places, it is my conviction that it could be used more. Even in cases when there is one enquirer, it is important to maintain rapport with his family (13) (Lausanne, 1980:13).

To be attractive to families, churches should not only focus on families in their outreach, but also be more family-oriented in their programmes (14). Eventually, this is inevitable for any church. For student churches it often is difficult when their members start families. The process of becoming family-oriented often stops the growth of the church (Cook on the example of Makkasan Church, n.d.:2). But a church that chooses to be family-oriented from the beginning, may attract a new kind of converts.

A last solution concerning families that could spur church growth in Bangkok, is to develop more strong Christian families (15). There are so few Christian families, that not many people understand how important they are. In one case, of the Sapan Luang church, strong

families were mentioned as one of the reasons for a consistent church growth (Blanford, 1975:78). I think far more emphasis should be given to winning families and to teaching on Christian family life. This could give a consistency to the Bangkokian churches that many of them badly need. Families of missionaries could function as role models, if missionaries are willing to integrate their household in Thai culture. Even more important is the emerging of Thai role models. For the family is the cornerstone of society. In the Church there is of course only one corner stone to build on (see Ephesians 2:20). But it is hard to overrate the importance of healthy families for this building.

A biologically defined group that is targeted in some evangelistic outreach, is youth. Focus on youth (16), is the message of Virat (1990:72). Special youth meetings (17) are used to

develop this focus (Kim, 1980:230-231; Jung, 1985:69; Hill, 1982:40). This approach is not entirely compatible with the family approach mentioned before. The reversal rate of over

80% within one year of the young converts won in CCT-schools (see chapter 4.3.1.) suggests that the focus on youth alone is not satisfactory. Focus on youth as a bridge to the family could be used as a slogan for a strategy that at the same time adapts to the apparent openness of the youth, to the instability of their decision (often due to family pressure), and to the need to reach entire families. But some missiologists entirely reject the youth as a focal point. Blanford advocates family evangelism among the Chinese and quotes with approval a Chinese pastor who said: "Do not emphasize youth work. Youth rarely manage to lead their parents to the Lord. Their conversion often results in rejection or persecution by their parents, thereby closing the door to future contact with the parents' (1975:107). However, in my opinion this view is too dim. I saw too much examples of the contrary, even among the Chinese.

The focus on youth as a target group is reinforced by the mobilization of youth (18) for the evangelization task. Virat cites a telling example how a youth meeting set into motion the entire CCT (1990:73). My own observation was that in several churches I visited the older

youth (about 15 to 25 years of age) were the dominant force in evangelism, as well in quantity as in enthusiasm and time available. When churches use and lead this resource in a wise way, young Christians can play an important role in reaching their peers.

The last set of problems mentioned in chapter 5.3. were those of ethnic groups. One solution to these is suggested by Caleb Project: separate groups (19): Each ethnic group has its own church (1988:57). Against the reproach of a segregationist stance, Caleb states: "The

incarnation gives the example, and the implicit command, to the church to contextualize the gospel to each specific culture". Within the limitations of fundamental openness to other groups, there should be space for churches with a strong ethnic profile. An alternative is a compromise solution, in which a church embraces all people groups in its worship services, but has cell groups based on ethnic background (20) (Caleb Project, 1988:58). I witnessed one successful example in Immanuel Baptist Church, where a Khmer cell group exists for over 10 years.

The ethnic background of missionaries also can play a role. Especially the Korean missionaries state the their Asian background is an advantage (21) (Kim, 1980:92-100; Jung, 104ff.) This may be true to some extent. However, Korean culture is very different from Thai culture. Moreover, Korean missionaries encounter much more practical and motivational problems. Probably because the Koreans do not have a long history yet as a sending country. It was in no way confirmed, whether by my own observation or those of others I talked to, that Asian missionaries are more effective than Western. But hopefully more and more Asian missionaries will be able to use the advantages they undoubtedly have in the (near) future. To make a complete shift in viewpoints, we turn now to 'work' (a biological process). Hard work (22) has been called a key ingredient for church growth by Ford (1982:26). And rightly so. Because "if no one is being added to the church, it may be because Christians are doing nothing for the conversion of people" (Blanford, 1975:75).

6.5. Perceptive solutions

The first help to church growth in the field of perception would be creating a proper public image of Christians (23). Christianity should be viewed as a Thai religion, not as an scary Western invention. A high visibility of churches in the public life could contribute to that. E.g. the wide-published conversions of a popular pop-singer and of a state governor, taking part in national festivals to honour the royal family, and Christian broadcasting are helping to show the Thai citizens that Christianity is nothing extraordinary. It is also important for missionaries to understand how Thai perceive the world (24). When a missionary has got insight in the Thai world view, he will know what needs can be addressed in his ministry, and what concepts can be used (see Ford, 1982:10, Hill, 1982:56). Finally, the world view should not only be understood, it should also be changed (25). Weerasingha names 12 ideas

that are principal to the Buddhist world view, and suggests a Christian approach (1989:78-84; also see Zehner, 1989:105). It is only realized how profound this process is, when it is realized that this change in world view is not just instrumental in conversion, but that it is conversion itself. For what else could it be named if the "supremacy of the *kammic* process" (Weerasingha, 1989:19) is replaced by a personal God?

6.6. Psychological solutions

The Christian message of free grace often has been understood as cheap grace. To break this barrier, it is necessary to challenge the Thai (26) (Kim, 1985:149). Christianity should be presented as something that is costly yet worthwhile. This is better psychology than 'it is free and you can try'. Wan writes: "If the Christian message is made to appear too easy or presented in too simple a form people will only trample upon it" (1975:124).

A second psychological proposal to enhance church growth in Bangkok, has been for evangelists and church planters to 'tranquillize' themselves (27) (Shin, n.d.:106,107). By this is meant that it is important to appear serene and calm. This is one of the most appreciated characteristics in Thai culture, so it is important that this is learnt. It is significant that the first four qualification that Eakin lists as the most important for missionaries to Thailand, all are related to this subject: Courtesy and gentleness, patience, firmness without over-rigidity, and continuity of character (1960:63,64).

The right use of role models (28) can also be a help in leading people to Christ. Several people who had experienced a conversion in their life, told me how important role models had been to them. This is a very natural psychological process. Though it is impossible to impose a role model on someone, it should be made possible for him or her to identify with a person or group of persons. Of course it should be kept in mind that the ultimate role model we have is Christ, and that being "conformed into (his) likeness" (Rom. 8:29 NIV) is not a psychological, but a spiritual process.

6.7. Analytical solutions

Research (29) is often mentioned as one of the things that could contribute to church growth (Cressy, 1959:66,67; Blanford, 1975:79; Smith, 1977:115; Hill, 1982:56; Jung, 1986:75;

Boonkrong, interview). But this research is only practical if it can be put into use by the researcher himself. For history teaches, that existing denominations and mission agencies will not use research results from Others. They are too busy minding their own business. An adjacent area of study is the study of church growth trends (30). Many missionaries try to do this. The CCT even has an Institute for Evangelism and Church Growth. One of its purposes is to be engaged in this study. I am convinced this can be very fruitful. It is necessary though to find ways to adapt the findings to the situation in Bangkok.

A last analytical endeavour assisting churches to grow is goal setting (31). Examples of goal setting for membership abound in many denominations that are linked with the EFT. But also within the CCT goal setting has a history (e.g. Cressy, 1960:20; Kim, 1980:226; Virat, 1990:179-184). So goal setting is an accepted practice. However, they only are useful when at the same time it is made clear how to reach the goals. Otherwise disillusion will certainly follow. Or even worse, disillusion will not follow, because everybody knew from the beginning it was just propaganda. It might be time to quit concentrating on goals and start concentrating on action, policy, and evaluation. In that order.

Inconsistencies of Buddhism (32) are mentioned by Heckendorf (1983:9) as a possible point to use in evangelism. I think though, this can not be used in most situations. People who are not interested in doctrine, do not care about inconsistencies. And the people who are interested in doctrine, probably have less inconsistencies in their belief system. Besides, any analytical tool is of very limited use in evangelism. The real battleground is somewhere else.

6.8. Cultural-historical solutions

The main cultural-historic solution for church growth problems that is proposed in the literature is adapting the forms in which the Christian faith is moulded to Thai culture. 'Indigenization' is the word that is still used by many church leaders. The more recent term 'contextualization' is also used, by Dierck (1991), Davis (1993), Jung (1985:150ff.), and Shin (n.d.:171ff.). The content of the word indigenous or contextualized depends on the personal experience and taste of each author. Hill for example compares the Thai independent church to African independent churches because it did not want to be called 'Baptist' (1982:99). More meaningful use of the word indigenous is made when the use of indigenous parables and symbols (33) is proposed (Lausanne, 1980:9). Another way to get closer to Thai

culture could be the use of special attributes which are also used by Buddhist temples, e.g. banners, flags, parades, and formal invitation cards (34) (Cook, 1990c:2). The confusing mix of Thai and western culture many churches display, is illustrated by Cook's observation that churches use worship services at special occasions (35): some very Thai, e.g. engagement ceremonies, some very American, e.g. Valentine's day and even, according to Cook, Thanksgiving (1990c:2). Special services are examples of functional substitutes (36), i.e. finding Christian counterparts for Buddhist rituals. The importance of these substitutes are stressed by several authors (Blanford, 1975:84-94; Van Dorp, 1987:34; Weerasingha, 1989:87-97; Cook, 1990c; Shin, n.d.:175-176). Most extensive on this point is Davis, who presents an elaborate design of "Christian functional equivalents for incorporation into the traditional Thai marriage ceremony" (1993:102).

Another cultural solution to church growth problem caused by missionaries is to adjust to the Thai life style (37) (Jung, 1985:71). Clothes, food, transportation, housing, and time management are areas in which many missionaries, especially those with kids, are as western as they can. 'Living as a Thai', as some missionaries try, is one of the biggest compliments Thai Christians give to missionaries. This is the main reason for the general appreciation of OMF-missionaries. One group of missionaries, the Servants of Asia's urban poor, go several steps further and actually live in slums. Some people told me this goes too far. Apparently it was not effective. The slum dwellers know these missionaries could afford to live somewhere else. So they are just plain crazy. Besides, you look for help to someone who is powerful enough to help. Not to fellow slum dwellers. If this reaction is true (it did not come from slum dwellers), it points out that there are limits to meaningful adjustment. That is the same as Kim says. He claims that indigenization should not be exaggerated (38). He proposes: "In order to avoid syncretism, attempts at indigenization or adoption of local cultural forms should not be carried out by any foreign worker. However, foreign missionaries can encourage the national or native Christians to take up the task" (Kim, 1980:134).

An adjacent point, that does not appeal to culture, but to the westernization of so many people in Bangkok, is the need for nice buildings and equipment (39) that Wan sees (interview).

School evangelism (40) (schools are cultural-historical defined institutions; I will not elaborate on that, because it would go too deep into philosophical disputes) has played an

important role in Thai church history (see e.g. Cressy, 1960:51-63). It still is the main major mode of outreach within the CCT (Kim, 1980:154-155; Virat, interview). The same problems of course occur as in targeting youth (see chapter 5.3.). Therefore it is my opinion that the schools run by the CCT are more a hindrance than an asset. They contribute to the growth of the church, but they also contribute to the fact that the CCT is a slow-growing church. But also outside the CCT schools play a part in evangelistic outreach. E.g.: During week-days, Immanuel Baptist Church functions as a nursery and kindergarten. The idea behind it has been evangelistic from the beginning, but just as within the CCT-institutions it hardly worked. It would be interesting to investigate why schools of the SDA, just like their hospitals, contribute to church growth, while they do not do that in other denominations.

The last education-based outreach to be mentioned here, is to students (41). They are regarded as may be the single most responsive group in Bangkok by many church leaders that I interviewed (see also Jung, 1985:75, Kim, 1980:138, 230; Virat, 1990:71-72). This opinion is reflected in the work: many church planting projects focus on students. A special kind of student outreach is called the student centre (42), a building in which students can feel at home, socialize, and also can be involved in bible study groups, etc. (Hill, 1982:43; Jung, 1985:72). An organization that is totally focused on students is the Thailand branch of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. The almost 10 IFES staff workers supervise little student groups on most universities. Their weakest point is that they are not connected to churches.

There is nothing wrong with student work, but I think the student bias is too strong. The emphasis on student evangelism contributes heavily to the fact that many churches in Bangkok are churches with relatively rich members. The poorer segments of society are too often passed by.

6.9. Linguistic solutions

Transformation of religious terms (43) has been offered as a solution to the problem that it is very hard to make clear Christian concepts in the Thai language. Dierck provides a case study in a catechetical situation (1991:122ff). Wan, with his background of eight years in the monkhood, has some deep insights in the transformation of religious terms for scholarly

Buddhists (1975).

Awareness and use of different languages and dialects (44) in evangelism is also a linguistic tool that supports church growth. Of course the languages largely follow the geographical and ethnic lines (see chapter 5.3. and 5.4.)

Continuing language education for missionaries (45), including teaching on (Buddhist) religious terms could further reinforce their effectiveness. According to Thai church leaders, too many missionaries are struggling with the language, even after their first term. The other side of the coin, that almost all Bangkokians struggle with English, can be used as a church growth stimulus. English classes (46) are popular (Hill, 1982:38; Mauren, 1986:56; Cressy, 1960:33). I estimate that about half of the missionaries are engaged in one or more English teaching classes. It is a good method to build relationships. But I doubt the worth as an evangelistic tool, because it does not attract the people who are interested in the Christian faith. That is even without considering the ethics of offering someone to be taught reading English, and using the Bible as text book, as some missionaries do.

The question how to communicate the gospel also deals with the media through which the gospel is communicated. Therefore I hold the media to be linguistically based, so they are reviewed in this paragraph. Publishing (47) is a popular medium in Christian circles (see Hill, 1982:42; Jung, 1985:74; Virat, 1990:125). Several Christian publishing houses and heavily subsidized Christian book stores bear witness to this fact. This is surprising, because all missiological research done in Bangkok points out that it does not affect many people. Surprisingly, there is one exception: a Thai sociological report, that was not available to me, ranked Christian literature as the second most important factor for conversions. So more research might be useful to find out what the impact of Christian literature is.

Wide agreement exists that one special kind of publishing, tracts (48), does not draw people into a church. However, it is still widely used (see Hill, 1982:50). In the short period I lived in Bangkok, I probably saw more different evangelization tracts than I have seen in the Netherlands all my life. Scripture distribution (49) is highly acclaimed by Hill and from the 17 million portions of scripture that were distributed in 1979, he draws the conclusion "...Thai people have shown their interest in the message of the Bible" (1982:91). But that is too optimistic. Boonkrong, former general-secretary of the Thai Bible Society told me: "Thai people want to listen. They are too lazy to read a book. I found out in the Bible Society, if people get a New Testament, they put it somewhere but don't read it" (interview).

This is one of the reasons he resigned as **general-secretary**. Advertising (50) was advocated by Cressy (199:41). As far as I know, this has hardly been used, except for large campaigns. Radio programmes (51) have been part of the thrust for church growth for a long time. FEBC/FEBA has programmes in Thai. Many mission agencies and churches have their own programme (Hill, 1982:42; Jung, 1985:74, Mauren, 1986:80; Virat, 1990:125). But the problem of follow-up is immense. To get the picture, here is a description of the radio ministry of the Church of the Nazarene, that was only a couple of years old during this interview: "The problem with radio is, you can not limit it. It covers all the greater Bangkok Area and even the surrounding provinces. We get a lot of ppst from an area 40 or 50 kilometres on the other side of the river. We have absolutely no way to follow them up... We try to follow up specifically the ones from the area, in terms of visiting and contacting. We have a part-time man whose job is only to write letters to answer responses from the radio... We get 10 to 15 responses a week" (Knox, interview). Some interesting points can be noticed: 1. People listen. 2. People are interested, for they respond. 3. Often there is no follow-up. 4. Most enquirers do not become church members, even when they live in the neighbourhood and are personally contacted. The paradox of radio evangelism is that results without follow-up are not lasting, but that follow-up does not produce results. For a successful radio ministry it is necessary to incorporate the enquirers into churches. I do not believe in the 0.5% crypto-Christians Barrett assumes for Thailand (1982:664), who supposedly were converted mainly through mass media. But the positive responses call for a better coordination among all broadcasters to do proper follow-up, so enquirers can be led into the church and be spiritually nourished.

TV-broadcasting (52) is another option since TV-time is still relatively cheap in Thailand. Of course it has the same drawbacks as radio. Yet it might be useful to use more TV, since this medium is more penetrating than radio. Correspondence courses (53) is another example of non-personal communication. Several missionaries report encouraging results. Again, just as in mass media ministries, the challenge emerges to tune up the impersonal communication to a personal encounter. Why this is so difficult is an interesting subject for further research. One modern medium that includes at least a minimum of personal contact, is the movie (54) (Hill, 1982:50; Van Dorp, 1987:26). There is a meeting, and people see a team that is responsible. Yet the results until now of this approach have been negligible. It still is not personal enough, but another problem is that it is not used in the context of a local church

outreach. Campus Crusade for example made the ludicrous claim 250,000 people decided for Christ in North-East Thailand after seeing the Jesus-film. However, one would be hard pressed to find even a few of them in the churches. Large campaigns (55) is another medium that is sometimes used. They are not very popular, because they are not very successful. It could be claimed that the annual Power-conferences are the exception. This is a large campaign organized by the larger pentecostal churches, in which healing plays an important role. It draws thousands of people each year, but the large majority are Christians. One evening I attended a meeting. Some 50 people came to the fore when a decision for Christ was asked. But I suspect, several of them were not first-time deciders, and several others probably had forgotten their decision the next morning. I doubt even this campaign contributes significantly to church growth in Bangkok.

A last medium I would like to mention here is drama (56). Drama is a very culturally appropriate form in Thai culture (Van Dorp, 1987:26). Within the CCT there is a group specialized in drama that plays in school evangelism events. To follow their example would probably be appealing to the more traditionally oriented Thai in Bangkok.

6.10. Social solutions

To see the structure of society (57) is a great help in developing evangelistic strategies (Ford, 1982:11; Hill, 1982: 56). Since most missionaries are heavily influenced by McGavran, who holds that the main obstacle for church growth is social and not theological (see e.g. 1980, 207ff.), they agree with this statement. But many missionaries still have to learn a lot in this respect, both in leaving their naivete behind in their social behaviour, and in getting acquainted with sociological studies, also those not made by missiologists.

The importance of people movements (58) (e.g. Jung, 1985:69,71) already was implicit when the social problem of the lack of people movements was reviewed (see chapter 5.10.1.). So all measures in the social area that would facilitate a people movement, would benefit church growth. One of these measures is to organize socially homogeneous groups (59) (Cressy, 1959:34; Ford 1982:26; Jung, 1985:76; Caleb Project, 1988:57; Shin, n.d.:148-149). People feel at home easier when they are among their social equals. Another social proposal to enhance church growth is to foster a strong fellowship in a Christian atmosphere (60) among church members. This point is very much stressed in Rom Klao Church: "Because the

Christians are cut off from the old worldly fellowship, they must take care of each other. The church members must build a new and good fellowship between themselves" (Ruohomäki, 1988:139-140). Part of this is a full day of church activities on Sundays (61) (Wan: interview). This can be very attractive to non-Christians as well as stimulating for the church members. Yet examples exist of churches where an attitude of apathy toward these activities can be noticed (e.g. Suan Plue Church, Cook, n.d:2). Apparently, it depends on the enthusiasm and family situation of the church members whether or not an all-Sunday programme is successful.

Network evangelism (62) is a term to describe evangelistic efforts focused along natural, social connections. "As each new believer comes in his or her unsaved contacts should be focused on immediately in prayer and visitation" (Ford, 1982:24-25). Networks are not less important among Christians. Some key persons can play an important role in stirring up evangelistic efforts (63) in a whole congregation, denomination or even country. Their personal network, but not less their zeal and charisma is used to enthuse others. Puang Akkapin and Tongkham Pantupaong were examples of this within the CCT (Kim, 1980:152-153). Such key persons can also be found in some denominations nowadays. Fellowship between those leaders (64) is necessary before coordination between denominations is possible. Sampan, secretary of the most important coordination committee, the TPC, emphasized this when I interviewed him. Only when the leaders like and trust each other, joint efforts are possible.

Before the gospel is preached, it is important to know the people and be known by them. This process of socializing (65) is of the utmost importance for church planters. It is often called "pre-evangelism" (Jung, 1985:76; Hill 55). Van Dorp lists, among others, the following issues that are important in pre-evangelism: 1. To live among the local people; 2. Informal conversations; 3. To be hospitable; 4. To help in difficult situations. (1987:25). Afterwards, when the gospel is presented, it is important to hold on to relational initiative rather than event orientation (66) (Caleb, 1988:63). Within the context of personal relationships, meaningful evangelism is far more likely than in evangelistic rallies of whatever kind. Therefore, friendship is a significant social phenomenon to be used in church planting and evangelism.

Sometimes anthropologists think up very intricate reasons for people to do things together, while the simple answer is: because they like each other. Friendship is a so basic, non-

reducible concept that emphasis on friendship evangelism (67) is logical (Lausanne, 1980:10; Hill, 1982:144; Jung, 1985:79; Mauren, 1988:74; Cook, n.d.:2). Because friendship is so basic it should be clear to everybody 'friendship evangelism' should mean evangelizing friends and not making friends to evangelize.

Another social phenomenon that can be used as an evangelistic approach, is visiting or visitation (68) (Cressy, 1959:38; Blanford, 1975:78; Kim, 1980:201; Van Dorp, 1987:26; Cook, n.d.:2; Knox: interview). This has the face-to-face value that the Thai appreciate so much, so it is an outstanding tool once a good reason is found to do the visiting. In general I think Thai Christians should be more alert to the possibilities of visitation. For it is far more effective to visit an acquaintance for a reason, than visiting a total stranger, because the whole street is visited. Creativeness in finding time and opportunities to visit should be promoted.

Smith mentions that repeated contacts (69) are necessary (1977:141). Conversion takes time for Thai people, more time that many American missionaries realize, is a complaint of Thai church leaders. Therefore during this time it is of paramount importance people with a real interest in Christ stay in contact and regularly socialize with Christians.

Another social item to be addressed here is concerned with the working times of church personnel. They should work in the evening (70), because during the day people are at work. This is a difference with work in the country side, where people are far more often available during the day. Another way to intensify church planting; and evangelistic efforts is to intensively use members' time (71). A famous, or maybe better notorious example of this is Hope of Bangkok (Zehner, 1987:71). It should be kept in mind here that one of the natural things (not even 'rules') in a Christian church is that members are free. They should not be pressed or manipulated into evangelism. When this rule is broken, a big step is taken on the road from church to sect. Members can be invited to take part in the church programmes. But their enthusiasm to share the gospel should stem from their own experience as saved sinners. This enthusiasm is often best shown in the natural social environment, not in very time intensive church campaigns.

Finally, some social groups are sometimes singled out as promising segments of society. Several missionaries told me this is the upper (middle) class (72), because of their strategic position. I think it already has become clear that I heartily disagree. The empiric facts from an extensive survey held in Bangkok support my position. "Even more significant for a

strategy to win Bangkok people to Christ is the fact that the common man has a better understanding of the gospel than the upper classes. Only 22 percent of the working class think there is no god, compared to 68 percent of the students" (Hill, 1982:94). So I would sympathize more with the ones who, like Hill, would like to target the poorer working classes (73), including the factory workers (Blanford, 1975:107).

Other social groups will be reviewed in chapter 6.15:3.1.1. because of the importance of diaconal work among them.

6.11. Economical solutions

The first and rather unusual economic solution to church growth problems comes from Chung, who pleads that "mission agencies need to use their financial resources more freely (74) in assisting the churches to become stronger. This will not create dependency, but will show trust in the Thai leadership and bring encouragement to get over the difficult beginning stages" (1992:36). This argument is open to much dispute and the thought of mission agencies freely using their financial resources is not very reassuring to most church leaders and missionaries. The inherent danger by far exceeds the short term advantages. Yet I do not totally denounce the idea. Money should not be a limiting factor in evangelism. Neither should money buy evangelistic opportunities. The former undoubtedly is the most sympathetic and the less damaging mistake of the two. Yet it is a mistake, and I can not help feeling some faith missions make this mistake because of their very strict financial policy, and some church missions make the same mistake by financing about everything, except evangelism.

The opposite viewpoint, which is far more popular, advocates the financial independence and self-support (75) of the churches (Cressy, 1959:24; Kim, 1980:219-222; Ruohomaki, 1988:145; Shin, n.d.:172-174). All church leaders and missionaries that I talked to took it for granted that this is of vital importance for the Thai church. Self-support teaches churches and church members to be responsible for their own programmes. And responsible churches are mature churches.

A principle that is taught in most churches outside the CCT, to make self-support possible, is tithing (76) (see Cook, n.d.:1, Ruohomaki, 1988:137). Of course it is hard to tell whether the church members really tithe. But nobody seems to doubt it. And the relatively large amounts of money offered, suggest that tithing is done by a large part of the membership.

In the example of Immanuel Baptist Church, less than 200 people, among them probably about 70 contributing members or families, raise a weekly offering of 50,000 Baht (\$2,000)-a surprising example of sacrificial giving.

The last economical solution for church growth problems, is for missionaries to live on the same economic level as most Thai people (77). This helps to get in contact with the people. Moreover, the Thai relate religious authority to the renouncing of worldly things (Shin, n.d:109).

6.12. Aesthetic solutions

The possible solutions in the aesthetic realm are congruent with the problems mentioned in chapter 5.12. The development of Christian music (78), dance (79), art (80), and architecture (81) would help to create an atmosphere in which Christianity becomes an option to the Thai people.

6.13. Juridical solutions

There are no juridical solutions to church growth problems that the churches could implement.

6.14. Ethical solutions

The first suggestion to use ethics to enhance church growth is: encourage the Buddhists to keep their own ethical system (82) (Lausanne, 1980:6). This is impossible, so may be Christianity becomes an alternative, seems to be the idea. In my opinion, this approach is too cynical. And it does not recognize the power of the Buddhist system. Another reason why this suggestion was never repeated in the Thai situation, is that the Thai are fully aware that they can not fulfil the five precepts. And they do not care.

A solution that is far more acceptable, stresses the ethical integrity of the Christian messenger (83) (Lausanne, 1980:13). "The life of the advocate propagating the Gospel is often a key to effective evangelism... The demonstration of love, fellowship, and concern among the Christian community, small though it may be, made an impact on society at large...The Christian messenger is a living example, a walking epistle for God, by word and

action" (Smith, 1977:162-163). The same is repeated in likewise words by Jung (1985:71), Mauren (1988:79), and Shin (n.d.:103).

6.15. Theological solutions

6.15.1. Spiritual solutions

As conversion is a spiritual process, spiritual solutions are important to stimulate church growth. That I list so many solutions under various headings in this chapter, bears witness to the fact that conversion as a spiritual process is heavily influenced by environmental factors. That I also list spiritual solutions, makes clear that conversion is not reducible to these environmental factors.

The first proposal in the spiritual realm is that it is necessary to understand and address the spiritual needs (84) of the people of Bangkok (Van Dorp, 1987:28; Weerasingha, 1989:59-60). Ford pleads to try to discern the felt needs of the people, and not to work on the needs missionaries or even Thai Christians see as the most urgent. He suggests that the main 'felt need' in Thailand would be fear of the supernatural (1982:10-11). Another solution to the slow church growth now experienced in Bangkok is that all church members should be enthusiastic to evangelize (85). Real evangelistic mood can only be given by God, and therefore this solution dependent on the spiritual solutions on a more personal level that will follow now.

Prayer (86) is often mentioned as the key to church growth (Smith, 1977:140-141; Kim, 1980:70,224; Ford, 1982:25; Hill, 1982:65; Van Dorp, 1987:31; Chung, 1992:37; Shin, n.d.:100). Not as a psychological incentive, but because God answers the prayers of his people. And it is hard to think of any single development that could be more instrumental in bringing people to Christ, than a spirit of prayer sweeping through the Thai church.

Bible reading (87) is also a spiritual solution (see Kim, 1980:223). As Christians read the Bible, they get to know the heart of a missionary God. This undoubtedly positively influences the readiness to share the gospel with others.

An "outpouring of the Holy Spirit's power" (88) (Hill, 1982:96) is the following solution that could drastically change the course of events. Christians should be more aware of the richness of Christ promised to them in the new life in the Spirit. At the same time do

Christians not control the work of the Holy Spirit. He always is a divine surprise. And the great things that happen in revivals around the world should Christians make hungry for Him to work with power in Bangkok. In the assurance that the Holy Spirit wants to work through us, several authors opt for power encounters (89) to show God is more powerful than the spirits. According to Weerasingha "it is the presentation of the gospel message in terms of Christ being Lord over all other powers, that is most meaningful to the needs of the animist. It is the proclamation and the assertion of the Lordship of Christ, rather than his Saviourhood, in the first instance, that strikes the heart of the individual held by bondage and fear to demonic powers" (1989:63). In daily life, most Bangkokians act more as animists than as Buddhists. Therefore, this approach is supported by many missionaries in Bangkok (see e.g. Jung, 1985:71, Tablada, 1985:61; Mauren, 1986:81). However, if power encounter is to be used in evangelism, there should be answers to the question: How? It is significant that though everybody seems to be talking about power encounter, no examples are given how to arrange them. In my opinion, power encounters 'just happen' in some missionary settings. It is possible that demons manifest themselves, and it is good for Christians, especially evangelists, to know how to handle these situations. Power encounter is meaningful (though not at all easy!) when it is thus described. But the best way to challenge the 'powers of this world' is not to call out to them, but to preach the gospel.

A right use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (90) is also contributing to church growth . People should be taught to discern their spiritual gifts, and they should have the opportunity to exercise them to build up the church. The most important dispute among evangelical Christians of course also centres around the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal churches use speaking in tongues, prophecy, and healing (91) in a way that is not accepted by other evangelicals. In Bangkok healing sessions are probably one of the most important explanations for the fast growth of some pentecostal churches. Many churches need more openness for the work of the Holy Spirit. We can not prescribe what the Holy Spirit can do and what not. But an unmistakable sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit, is not that miracles happen, but that there is a longing for holiness, a display of the fruit of the Spirit (Colossians 5:22). To many Thai church leaders and missionaries, as well as to myself, the example of the pentecostal churches would be far more convincing if there were less human emotions and more holiness.

A Spirit-filled life displays an absolute and uncompromising faith (92) (see Kim, 1980:128-

129). Such a faith is instrumental in bringing others to Christ. To do this, church leaders should be willing to lead a sacrificial life (93) (Shin, n.d.:168) to exemplify the meaning of a servant-king. This wins the respect of both Christians and non-Christians. So Christians will gladly follow him in pursuing the evangelistic task of the church, while non-Christians are challenged to accept his spiritual leadership.

Another spiritual stimulus for church growth could be public conversions (94) (Kim, 1980:70). A public conversion calls for a higher spirituality than the luke-warm commitment of someone who wants to follow Christ, without telling it to his family and friends. It is more difficult in the beginning, but more rewarding in the end. A special case of public conversion is when someone gives his or her testimony (95). This tool is so common that it is not even mentioned in the literature or interviews. Yet it is one of the most powerful incentives to church growth. Few things are so convincing as to hear how Christ has changed the life of a man or woman. Especially if it is a person you trust. It is necessary however, that the testimony is a vibrant witness of a very real change, and not a story told so many times before. Probably for that reason the testimony of converts is the most powerful the first two years after their conversion.

6.15.2. Dogmatic solutions

The first dogmatic contribution to church growth that could be made, would be the contextualization of the gospel (96). This is something different from the contextualization or indigenization reviewed in chapter 6.6. There contextualization was about forms. Here contextualization is about content. In this area, very little has been published by Thai nationals. The attempts of Koyama (1970) and Davis (1993) are impressive. Yet the term 'contextualization' alone demands the work is done by Thai themselves, not by missionaries, however experienced they may be. The real contextualization of the gospel is taking place when new converts tell their friends and family about the good news they have heard. It could be helpful to church leaders, members and missionaries, when some converts gave account of this process on an academic level. That could help the Thai Christians to think about what the message of the gospel is, specific to and in their culture.

The right kind of academic contextualization could be a great help in the fight against syncretism (97). Dogmatics has a specific task in finding the wordings to explain the concepts essential to Christianity, and set them apart from the Buddhist concepts. When we believe

that the power of the gospel is enough to bring people to Christ, everything should be done to explain why the Christian faith is different than Buddhism (see e.g. Dierck, 1991:144-149).

A dogmatic position that has to be upheld to experience church growth is the priority of evangelism (98) in the mission of the church (Jung, 1985:71,117). If any church has other priorities, this immediately has its drawback on the growth of the church.

Dialogue evangelism (99) (Lausanne, 1980:8; Heckendorf, 1983:9) is a dogmatic conversation in which Buddhist and Christians talk about their faith. Dialogue is a good method to get to understand each other. It is not so well fit as an evangelistic tool. For those people interested in dialogue mostly have such strong convictions, that conversions are not to be expected.

A factor that could contribute to church growth is the recognition of the primacy of God's changing action in conversion (100). The realization God is at work in people and that it is not primarily our effort and hard work, is creating relaxation. This relaxation gives God the space to fulfil His work, without eager evangelists trampling all over it. And it creates more effective witnesses too, because they know to depend on God. The dogma of the church should be stressed (101). "The spontaneity for the task of church planting cannot be cultivated in the church until the church members realize the importance of the need for their local church for their own Christian life as well as others' salvation" (Shin, n.d. :97). Another dogma that needs special attention is the priesthood of all believers (102). Churches will grow once members realize that 'serving God' not means 'being a pastor', but that it is the privilege of each Christian. At the same time it should be explained that serving God is not the same as evangelizing. If that were so, the pastor would still be in an advantageous position, as a full-time Christian worker (and to a certain degree he actually is). As the student who had chosen to do social work said to me almost apologetically: "Not everyone has to be a prophet".

6.15.3. Practical-theological solutions

6.15.3.1. Diaconal solutions

Social ministries have a right on their own, and do not need to be justified. However, when the church is involved in any work, it should also include the preaching of the gospel. In this

paragraph we see some possibilities for diaconal ministries that could also be instrumental in bringing forth church growth.

Evangelicals often point to the fact that social work often replaced evangelistic work. Therefore they are liable to eschew it. While it is clear that social work can be detrimental to the mission of the church, it is even clearer that a lack of social concern betrays a lack of love for exactly those people Jesus ministered to most. Sociological and historical evidence time and again points to the fact that the poor are the most receptive segment of society. So social concern (103) (Lausanne, 1980:12) is not only a biblical mandate, it is also sound church growth strategy.

Grigg makes a passionate plea to be more involved in church work among the urban poor than the two churches and two house groups in slums, the two ministries to 600,000 prostitutes and the only ministry to drug addicts that he counted in Bangkok (1987:15-16). Slum dwellers (104), prostitutes (105), and drug addicts (106) are certainly groups that can be reached by the gospel through diaconal work. HIV-positives (107) could be added, just like street kids (108). Sadly enough there are many young boys and girls who fall into four categories at the same time. One remarkable ministry among street boys is run by an OMF-missionary, who has opened several houses for them. Most of the boys living in these houses become Christians. Another ministry that seems to be well under way in Bangkok, is to prisoners (109). Thousands of prisoners have been visited, several hundred have been baptized inside the prison walls. The Southern Baptists for example have worship services in several prisons. In two of them the average attendance is over 200 (TBCA-church statistics for 1991). Halfway houses (110) for these destitute groups to help them integrate in society can also be a fruitful diaconal ministry (Hill, 1982:74).

A last diaconal ministry to be mentioned here is a far more popular one, probably because it does not target the poor, but students. This is the hostel (111). Hostels were designed at winning students for Christ. It is a very good concept, but often after some years in most cases the evangelistic zeal is lost.

6.15.3.2. Catechetical solutions

Evangelistic home bible study groups (112) are the most important possibility to educate enquirers in the contents of the Christian faith. They are mentioned by many authors: Cressy (1959:38), Blanford (1975:108), Ford (1982:22ff.), Jung (1985:76), Ruohomäki (1988:141),

Cook (1990c:3, 1991ff.), and Shin (n.d.:125). Bible study is not the first step (Hill, 1982:57). People in Bible study groups do not appear out of the blue. They probably have been invited by friends. But once people are in a group, this method is very rewarding. Ford lists five reasons for that: 1. It fits the culture. 2. Thai Christians can lead groups without the help of 'experts'. 3. It brings together Christians and non-Christians. 4. It can be carried out with limited resources. 5. It does take into account the awareness and knowledge that the people already hold of the gospel (1982:23).

Another important catechetical principle is that the education of a new believer needs not to be completed before he is baptized. Education after baptism (113) is a good principle to make it possible to incorporate new believers in the church as soon as possible (Van Dorp, 1987:29). In the continuing education of Christians, laymen should be trained to evangelize (114) (Virat, 1990:125). The evangelization of Bangkok is only going to happen if all church members feel responsible for the task. Sunday schools (115) (Hill, 1982:41) are an opportunity to teach church members how to evangelize. Especially baptist churches have strong Sunday school programmes for all their members, but many other churches are using this tool too. Thus the principle of self-propagation (116) is worked out. The Nevius-method stressed the need for self-propagation "with every believer a teacher of someone and a learner from someone else better equipped than himself" (Beyerhaus and Lefever, quoted in Jung, 1985:137).

The solution to church growth problems that is mentioned more often than all others, is leadership training. (Cressy, 1959:52-59; Blanford, 1975:97; Smith, 1977:116; Hill, 1982:102-103; Jung, 1985:63,71,74,128; Ruohomäki, 1988:138; Virat, 1990:98ff.; Chung, 1992:38; Jeng, n.d.:44-46; Shin, n.d.:102). Jeng gives ten suggestions for leadership training that encompass all suggestions from the other authors. The first eight proposals are all very vital to an improvement of leadership training in Bangkok, and therefore to church growth. For a church without leaders has a very low growth capacity. 1. All leadership programmes should relate to church growth (117). 2. It must use a multi-level leadership training programme (118). 3. The curriculum of training should be ministry oriented (119). 4. Emphasize spiritual formation (120). 5. Emphasize quality of training rather than quantity of students (121). 6. Contextualize training for the Thai church (122). 7. Encourage more training programmes for those already in the ministry (123). 8. Training programmes should enable leaders to train others (124).

Jeng's second proposal, multi-level leadership training, deserves extra attention. Bible study leaders, elders, and pastors all have leadership roles on different levels. Every level should receive enough training to be able to fulfil its role. Not all leaders need a four-year bible school or even theological seminary. One of the most important developments in the last decades in leadership training has been the emerging of TEE -Theological Education by Extension (125). TEE-programmes aim at leaders who do not have the opportunity to attend Bible college, but who have time to study at home. Every few weeks a tutor visits the neighbourhood and a little group of students gather to discuss the study materials. Several Bible schools -the Baptist seminary, Bangkok Institute of Theology, and Bangkok Bible College- have developed TEE-courses that could well raise up a new kind of leader in Thailand. Though TEE is especially well fit for rural situations, it can be used in Bangkok too. Bible camps (126) are another possibility to train lower level leadership. Such camps are already used by the CAMA-mission (Jung, 1985:69) and the IFES. They are recommended by Kim for use in the CCT (1980:124).

Continuing education for church leaders that could contribute to church growth include church growth seminars (127) (Blanford, 1975:102-104; Virat, 1990:126) and regional conferences (128). (Smith, 1977:143).

6.15.3.3. Homiletical solutions

The first homiletical solution to church growth problems in Bangkok, is to direct the preaching primarily to the receptive segments of society (129). (Smith, 1977:197ff.; Jung, 1985:71; Tablada, 1985:61). The simple idea behind this is: "Ripe fields must be harvested" (Smith, 1977:199). To everyone who has a desire to lead people into the Kingdom, this is so obvious no further defense is needed.

The following solution for preaching to be more effective and lead more people to Christ, is to present the gospel straightforward. Kim advocates a strong revival preaching (130) (1980:59), as the Chinese revival preacher John Sung did in Thailand before World War II. Smith calls this uncompromising way of presenting the gospel "aggressive evangelism" (1977:163).

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There is little thought about the content of the preaching. This shows that dogmatic contextualization applied to the sermon is still largely absent. Only Eakin lists some subjects

that he deems important: God as Creator (131), because the Buddhist cosmology is not even believed by the Buddhists themselves. The fact of salvation, and immediate salvation (132). "The endless round of rebirths, the crushing sense there is; no forgiveness anywhere... finds instant relief when the gracious 'Come unto me...and ye shall find rest unto your souls' is accepted" (1960:62). Another approach could be for evangelistic sermons to take their starting point in points of contact between Buddhism and Christianity (133) (Tablada, 1985:54-61; also see "Thirty-three points of contact between Buddhism and Christianity", CCT, 1962). Examples of these are: emphasis on impermanence, high ethical standards, compassion, meditation and self-discipline, and inner peace. An interesting point of contact is the central tree symbol in both religions: the Bodhi tree in Buddhism, the cross in Christianity (see e.g. the title of Weerasingha's publication: 'the Cross and the Bo-tree', 1989). They signify perfection of knowledge against perfection of love; self-salvation against universal salvation; and detachment against involvement (Seamond, quoted in Tablada, 1985:56): the difference between the two religions caught in one symbol.

For the form of preaching the use of story-telling (134) and parables (135) is advocated (Van Dorp, 1987:27), because they fit in Thai culture. Van Dorp also mentions open-air preaching (136) (1987:26), and I saw (actually I preached in) a remarkable open-air preaching ministry myself. Yet Cook is very adamant in rejecting this kind of preaching as a-cultural. And it is true that in Bangkok this ministry had been pursued for about twenty years with very little result. But from one week to the other the response changed from about two decisions each year to two or three decisions each week. It would be foolish not to take into account the power of the Holy Spirit in this process; yet it would also indicate that now is a time for street-preaching in Bangkok. The severe difficulties in follow-up on the deciders warn for top hastily a conclusion though.

6.15.3.4. Pastoral solutions

In my view, pastorate is only concerned with the spiritual care for Christians, not for non-Christians. Still, good pastorate is important to church growth. For good pastorate builds a strong church and a strong church is an attractive church. Even more important is that good pastorate closes the back door of the church. It is not only important to get people into church. It is just as important to prevent drop-outs.

So pastors should be better aware of their duty as shepherd (137). When I asked pastor Winit from Immanuel Baptist Church what 'being pastor' meant to him, he immediately mentioned 22 principles of shepherding from **Ezechiel**. But this vision is rare.

Pastorate begins with follow-up (138) on those who made a decision for Christ (Cressy, 1960:39; Van Dorp, 1987:35-37). How important follow-up is, can be realized when it is taken in **that** the majority of people who once made a commitment for **Christ**, were never incorporated into the church. It is hard to give figures on this statement, but that is the strong impression received from talks to many church leaders and missionaries, and from reports on many evangelistic ministries. One of the explanations of the phenomenal growth of Hope of Bangkok, according to ~~Zenner~~ was that "its follow-up was persistent, and effective at incorporating converts with any degree of seriousness" (1987:75).

Follow-up is followed by pastorate on new Christians who are incorporated in the church community. Discipling (139) new believers is very essential in building a strong church (Smith, 1977:142; Hill, 1982:56-57; Tablada, 1985:64; Mauren, 1986:89; Van Dorp, 1987:41). 'Discipling aims to nurture new Christians to **matureness** as responsible members of the church. Many missionaries spend more time discipling than winning people for Christ. Though I subscribe the immense importance of discipling, I think it **should** be realized more that the best way of discipling is to let people evangelize.

Another principle that worked well in Hope of Bangkok has been to appoint a personal counsellor to each believer (140) (Ruohomäki, 1988:41). Pastoral visitation (141) (Shin, n.d.:145) for all believers is also a tool to build up the **members** and thereby equipping them to contribute to the growth of their church. To remind the church members that God is a holy God, strict discipline (142) is necessary (Jung, 1985:137). Discipline should always be exercised in love. Therefore it is mentioned here as a pastoral issue, not as an organizational one. Yet love should not lead to permissiveness. The only church that is blessed by God is a holy church.

6.15.3.5. Cybernetic solutions

6.15.3.5.1. Church organization

The first organizational adjustment that could spur church growth is autonomy (143) or self government of the Thai churches (see Jung, 1985:137). Shin even tries to prove that the history of the CCT shows that better growth is due to the autonomy of the church (n.d.:89).

He may be right, but as his argument is of a 'post hoc ergo propter hoc' nature, proof for this statement is totally absent. A better example is the emergence of independent churches, especially since 1980. They seem to have better growth rates than other, mission-founded churches, though more research would be needed to be sure of this.

One of the reasons the independent churches seem to do better could well be that they have the opportunity to devise an organizational pattern that is truly Thai (144), as well as biblical (also see chapter 6.15.3.4.2).

A measure that could benefit the CCT-congregations, would be a shift of power toward the local level (145). This could break down the apathy of many congregations by bringing back responsibility to where it belongs: on local level. Another, rather radical proposition to the CCT, but also to some mission agencies, is to cut off institutions that do not contribute to church growth (146). When for historical or other reasons this is impossible, they should be made autonomous within the church organization, without the possibility of influencing church policy. In my opinion, this is the only solution for the sometimes paralysing influence institutions have on the evangelistic outreach of a denomination.

Cressy proposes to appoint special workers for city-evangelism (147) (1960:21,39) to support the outreach of the local congregations. This is a good idea that already has been put to practice. It should be kept in mind that these workers have to initiate and support evangelistic ministries of the congregations, not take them over. Another point made by Cressy that is still of current interest, is the need for effective church offices (148) (1959:38). Not every church needs a full-time office secretary. And the average church in Bangkok is pretty well organized. Yet an effective office could help to run the church organization even smoother. The major group of proposed solutions to church growth problems connected to church organization, deals with the forms a church organization can have. First of all, the need for multiplication of local congregations by the planting of new churches (149) is almost universally acclaimed (Blanford, 1975:104-109; Smith, 1977:45; Hill, 1982:41; Ford, 1982:19; Jung, 1985:62,73,117; Chung, 1992:37; Cook, Sint, Wan, Merry, and Knox: interview). Shin even devotes his whole book to this subject (n.d.). It is obvious that church planting plays, and should continue to play, an important role in the mission of the church in Bangkok. Yet now there are almost 150 protestant churches in Bangkok, new church planting projects should think more about the questions 'where?', and 'for whom?'.
Immediately after the recognition of the need for more churches, the question pops up: what

kind of churches? The first answer to this question to be reviewed here is: Large central churches (150). According to Shin (n.d.:42ff.), it has great advantages in urban situations to form large central churches. It is stimulating for Christians, both members and non-members of this church, and attractive to many non-Christians. It can fulfil many functions and it has a great appeal all over the city. Somewhat in the same line of thought is Cressy's proposal for a 'protestant cathedral' (1960:29-30) that would put Protestantism on the map. Interestingly, this large central church idea is mainly used by the pentecostal churches, and with evident success. All other churches and mission organizations plant more and smaller churches. In terms of effectiveness, the central church idea seems to be the best. This is confirmed by the history of the Sapan Luang Church, a large central church that grew faster, both relatively and absolutely, than all its daughter churches combined over almost a 50-year period from 1925 to 1973 (Blanford, 1975:42). But the choice whether or not to have a large central church is not based on effectiveness. More basic to most denominations are the answers to the questions: What is a church? What functions should a church fulfil? What should the leadership structure of a church be?

Because of the danger inherent to large churches that members are spectators rather than participants, many churches are seeking other forms. One of them is to have a large central church connected with many house churches (151). There could be central meetings on weekdays, while on Sundays people would attend house churches in a much smaller group. This idea was already mentioned by Blanford (1975:105). No church so far actually used this model. The Church of the Nazarene, just a few years present in Thailand, has a vision for this concept: "We looked at several locations to have a central service church and from there out ten house churches in the neighbourhood around; the concept of a wagon wheel. The senior pastor in the central church; others, you could even have lay leaders, in the house churches around...That would solve the problem of land, and of travel, and of ministry at the same time" (Knox, interview).

Another possibility is to skip the central church altogether and plant house churches (Blanford, 1975:104; Ford, 1982:26). The idea is popular among missionaries, but because of the difficulties connected to house churches (see chapter 6.15.3.5.1.) I opt for rented property (152) to start a church. An often used option is to start daughter churches (153) from existing churches (Cook, n.d.; Cressy calls them 'branch churches', 1959:31). Most of the times they start as prayer groups or preaching points and hope to grow into churches.

The evident advantage of this approach is the involvement of a local church. The biggest disadvantage is that many of these projects seem to stay house groups forever. Yet it is a good approach; it could even be more effective when a project were moved to another area, if after two years there is no sign of an emerging new church. To avoid the pit fall of on-going preaching points and house groups never growing into churches, Ford advises to organize a church immediately (154) as soon as new believers come in. Sound advise, though I think some minimal requirements should be met before a gathering of Christians can be called a church.

It also should be an organizational policy to encourage newly planted churches to evangelize from the very beginning (155). Jung points out that this is one of the principles that led to the first wave of church growth in Thailand ever (1985:79,80). This is not only the duty of young churches, but all new believers have to take responsibility to evangelize (156) their own relatives, friends, and neighbours (Jung, 1985:79). New believers are the ones who have the most contacts among non-Christians. Yet the responsibility for outreach of the church is not confined to them. An all-member ministry (157) is needed. "We need a way to involve all Our constituency" writes Hill (1982:101). Wan told me: "We try to help all members to reach out every day" (interview). So a church that organizes its outreach can not only count with the church staff. It should also promote 'lay' (a word protestants should not use) involvement (Ford, 1982:26; Chung, 1992:378; Virat, 1990:176).

In preparing for an all-member ministry cell groups (158) can play an important part. Cell groups are a bit broader than the evangelistic home bible study groups reviewed in chapter 6.15.3.2. The programme for a cell group in Chai Samaan, a pentecostal church, consists of the following elements: Worship in the Spirit for 30-40 minutes; -Witnessing; -Discussion about the Sunday's message; -A short Bible study; -Use of spiritual gifts (Ruohomäki, 1988:138). Cell group meetings in non-pentecostal churches that I visited had a different formula:-Sharing; -Singing; -Bible study; -Praying. The cell groups especially became popular after the tremendous success of Paul Yonggi Cho in South-Korea, where he planted the largest church in the world by using cell groups. It is a cornerstone in the strategy of Bangkok's largest church, Hope of Bangkok. Cook gives an important reason for the success of cell groups: "The secret of the cell group is that it is divided often and this leads to growth" (1991f:1). The many small churches that also use the cell group method and stay small, prove that it is not a magic devise. Strong leadership, both an spiritual and

management level, is needed to make this approach work. Using cell groups is not a recipe for growth, but not using cell groups is a recipe for non-growth. A church that wants to grow, needs to find a way to provide fellowship in small groups. This is the major need in the CCT-churches, especially the Presbyterian among them, right now.

A last organizational aspect to be mentioned here is the need for team ministries (159) (Smith 1977:143; Ford, 1982:25; Jung, 1985:74; Virat, 1990:176). The major advantage of a team approach is that the team members can complement each other in all ways needed.

6.15.3.4.2. Church leadership

The main contribution to solving church growth problems in Bangkok that could be made on the field of church leadership, would be the developing of a truly Thai leadership style in churches (160). Independent churches are in the best position to do this. They do not have three or four conflicting leadership patterns (see chapter 5.15.3.4.1.), but can mould the charismatic leadership and the Thai patronage system into one system. That this is effective as well as dangerous can be seen in the success and following derailment of Dr. Kriengsak in Hope on Bangkok. This points to the necessity that the leadership not only has to be Thai, but also biblical. The first characteristic of biblical leadership is servanthood. And servanthood in the church should imply accountability for church leaders (161). That is what is often lacking for very strong leaders. This also may have marked the beginning of the downfall (at least in the eyes of most Christians in Bangkok) of dr. Kriengsak. In the beginning of Hope of Bangkok, Kriengsak was assisted by OMF-missionary Breidental. But when Breidental left on furlough, he had nobody to talk to on the same level. He was not accountable to anybody.

It is very interesting to note that most mission organizations are very inflexible in this area. However much talk there may be about contextualization, church leadership is not a point to be tampered with. It is more acceptable to reformulate a Christian dogma in a way that Thai can understand easily, than to contextualize leadership. This is the more sad because leadership training is still primarily done by missionaries. The rigidity of the mission organization in this matter is probably the reason why great Thai leaders often find it difficult to cooperate with the mission (e.g. Boonmak; Zehner, 1987:44-65).

Though it is also in the nature of leaders that working together is hard for them.

Another option is apparent from the work of Zehner (1987): Strong leadership (162). This is very much in line with Wagner's ideas (see e.g. Wagner, 1984). And it can play a role, but it should be bedded in at least two other principles: the priesthood of all believers and accountability (see above). Cressy's plea for a more democratic way of carrying on the administration of the church (162) (1959:83) is contradicting the strong leadership approach. I hold this to be one of these impositions of western leadership style mentioned before.

"Ordination of laymen" is one of Cressy's better proposals (1960:45). Though he mentions it as an "emergency measure", I think it should be a regular part of a further-going diversification of leadership roles (164) (see chapter 6.15.3.2.) The distinction pastor-church member is not by any means enough to equip the church to fulfil its mission in this world. Luckily leadership roles of elders, deacons, youth leaders, church music directors, evangelists, church planters, cell group leaders, teachers, administrators, etc. are more and more recognized and encouraged. Separately mentioned here is the possibility that even the pastor of a church is not a full-timer with a theological education. It can also be someone working in a secular job, who also pastors a church. This is called the "tent-maker concept of ministry" by Kim (1980:214-218), who deplores that this possibility has been shut off by the CCT. (Some examples of 'tent-maker' pastors within the CCT exist, but they are not ordained ministers.)

To ensure the growth of the church, it is important to have the right (wo)man at the right place. So a right selection of persons to lead the church (165) is essential (see Ruohomäki, 1988:138). The right people are often local leadership (166) (Smith, 1977:140; Chung, 1992:37), because they know the hearts and the needs of the people. Though more authoritative churches sometimes use the opposite method: providing a church with a leader they do not know. For in his own environment he would not have enough spiritual authority. Almost needless to say, the first option to me is preferable.

Another proposal to spur church growth is to prevent cultural blunders, by relying on Thai personnel (167) from a very early stage. This has been one of the characteristics of even the early examples of church growth (see Zehner, 1987:30). In recent times Ford pleaded for a revaluation of paid Thai assistants in church planting (1982: 17) besides the more accepted assistance of Bible school students (168) (see also Cressy, 1960:48). As far as I know, this advice has not been followed. I am not convinced it is an entirely bad idea though. The idea of an 'assistant' is, luckily, not in line with present mission policy. But a team of Thai

church planters, each responsible in his own project, counselled and coordinated by a veteran missionary, could yield good results.

A call for more staff (169) is often heard in churches (also see Cook, n.d.:2; Cressy, 1960:31). I already stated in chapter 5.15.3.5.2. that I do not unconditionally agree. I doubt whether more Bible school graduates are needed and are possible, if a high spiritual and intellectual standard is maintained. An all-member ministry as advocated above, combined with another approach to leadership roles which does not only reckon with full-timers, could solve most problems of being under-staffed. However, in some cases more staff is needed. Church planting projects for example demand an intensive labouring by at least one full-timer assisting the other members. This brings about the last point to be mentioned here, that more church leaders should be involved in church planting (170). Within the CCT much leadership potential is drawn into the institutions. But also within the other churches the example of a pastor giving up the pastorate in his church to plant a new one (Cook, n.d.:2) is rare.

6.15.3.5.3. Evangelistic strategies

Solutions in the field of evangelistic strategies are reviewed under the headings that are foundational to them. E.g.: Neighbourhood approach under geographic solutions, half-way houses under diaconate.

6.15.3.5.4. Cooperation

The atmosphere in Bangkok for cooperation is rather good. But each denomination and even congregation is so involved in their own activities, that coordination just does not come into the picture. Therefore the TPC (see chapter 3.5.) can play an important role in coordinating evangelistic outreach (171), but also other church activities. The idea of a coordinating committee with members from different churches was already uttered by Cressy (1960:39). An important point in the meetings of the TPC is that the church leaders get to know each other (172). This is a good basis for cooperation. Cooperation in leadership training (173) (Kim, 1980:196; Jenç n.d.:46), coordination in meetings and conferences (174) (e.g. Hill, 1982:41), and in evangelistic campaigns (175) (e.g. Shin, n.d.:193) could help build the churches. In the instance of evangelistic campaigns it should be noted however that these campaigns are even counterproductive when they supersede the normal evangelistic ministry of a church.

Another way of cooperation is helping other churches. this can happen for example by providing speakers (176) for (revival) meetings, or assisting in material matters (177) The material matters could include a mobile medical programme, a church building lot fun and a Christian cemetery service (Shin, n.d.:85ff.). The Department of Evangelism of the CCT even has the ambitious goal of being a "network centre to coordinate all the work of spreading the gospel" (178) (Virat, 1990:125). There are many points in which coordination of the work could contribute to church growth, which are not mentioned in the literature. It would not clarify much were I to repeat all evangelistic ministries in this chapter, to make clear they would benefit from coordination. Instead, I will develop an overall model for coordinating evangelistic efforts in chapter 7.3.

6.15.3.5.4. Missionaries

More missionaries (179) is a wish of many mission organizations and churches (see Mauren, 1986:48). Of course it is important, if these missionaries are to be a positive factor in church growth, that they do the right kind of work. Kim is of the opinion that missionaries should do pioneer work (180) (1980:105,111). He states this for the rural areas, but it probably also applies to church planting in Bangkok. Missionaries should NOT be involved in existing local churches. Others told me the most important task for a missionary is to build leaders (181). Winit had a very outspoken opinion on this issue: "Evangelizing to ordinary people along the street is hard work. You get discouraged, you don't see any fruit at all. You will be deceived. Someone says to you: I believe, I am a Christian, okay, can I get some money? I don't have any food". And when there is no more money, there is no more faith. Many missionaries make mistakes like that in Thailand. But if you want to be a good missionary, build a leader. God was incarnated as a human being, and he built 12 people. He even lost one. He lived with them, taught them, talked to them, showed them every corner of His mind. If you build a leader, you build a church" (interview). These two are not mutually exclusive. Planting churches with involvement of young Thai Christians is a way to link the two.

Another way of giving responsibility to Thai Christians and thereby building the church for the future, could be to shift positions every few years (182), so not a single ministry is solely tied to a foreigner.

6.15.3.6. Liturgical solutions

Most solutions to church growth problems that are related to liturgy, seek to contextualize the worship forms (see Lausanne, 1980:10). Cook mentions several proposals (1990c: 1-2). Some of them are practised in very few churches; others not at all: traditional Thai drama (183); traditional Thai dances (184) (both can be used to illustrate a Bible story, or to express a characteristic of God); traditional Thai instruments (185); the preacher sitting on a chair, instead of standing (186); using a Bible translation in Than classical literary forms (187); turn up loudspeakers so people in the neighbourhood can listen too (188); playing of tapes preceding and following services (189) as Buddhist temples do; use of four part harmony (190) to substitute the chanting of Buddhist monks. All of these proposals seem to suit the countryside of Thailand better than Bangkok. Yet they may be appealing to the group of Thai-Teh who are so resistant to the gospel until now.

But the approach that seems to be most attractive is almost the opposite one. The charismatic style worship, more openly appealing to sentiments of westernization than of traditional Thai culture, draws relatively many members. For example: Enthusiastic singing of choruses (191), including hand clapping; loud worship (192) (in the Power conference I visited, there was a time span of 20 minutes in which only the word "Hallelujah" could be heard, singing, shouting, whispering, or crying); and electric guitars and drums (193) all play an important part. This surprising display of emotions in a culture such extravagances are frowned upon, is explained by Wan when he says that the Thai people are taught to distrust emotions. "Love is sin. But in their life, they want love. If we talk about love, it is not good. But if we love them, it is very good" (interview). When the same is true for other positive emotions, this could explain the success of the charismatic type worship to such an extent that many evangelical churches are more and more influenced by it. At the same time, they also retain some Thai characteristics. The preacher, also in charismatic churches, is mostly soft-spoken. It would be interesting to do more research on this mix of western and Thai elements. Many churches do not agree with this type of worship because they deem it to be too much dependent on emotions and too little on faith. Whatever position held, I think it is clear more spontaneity (194) in church services would benefit most churches. On the one hand because it is more challenging to the church members; on the other hand because it is easier then to

meet the needs of newcomers.

Another liturgical solution could be the immediate baptism of converts (195) (Ford, 1982:25). This way, they feel accepted right away and there would be less danger of back-dropping. The idea is good. But it should not be so, that a large percentage of those baptized eventually revert. Waiting just a little bit longer, to know whether the faith has roots, may be better.

An important step forward would be if church services in general would be more sensitive to the needs of non-believers (196). Especially in churches older than a decade, the service is directed at teaching the members and not at the conversion of newcomers. This reflects the existing situation, in which almost all attendants are Christians, but mainly because it is a self-fulfilling prophecy. When a church does not seek to win new converts, it probably will accomplish that.

The last solution to be mentioned here, but the first in the order of the service, is a good greeting-system (197) (Zehner, 1987:75). An effective greeting system combines several things: newcomers feel they are welcome; church members are introduced to newcomers; and the address of newcomers is written down, so follow-up is possible. So this tool is an important link between inviting and keeping people.

6.16. Summary

Because so many solutions to the church growth problems of Bangkok were offered in this chapter, any attempt to summarize them is doomed to end in vague generalities. The best generality I can think of to describe the solution to church growth problems is: Evangelizing from the right base, under the right leadership with the right methods for the right people.

From the right base: This base is a self-governing church in which evangelism is a priority. It knows how to adapt Thai cultural forms for use in a Christian setting. It builds the spirituality of the members by providing fellowship on macro-, meso-, and micro-level.

Under the right leadership: The leaders depend on God and have management and teaching skills. They enthuse their membership and cooperate with each other as well as other churches. They have found a way to incorporate the work of missionaries into the ministry of the church without losing its Thai flavour.

With the right methods: The methods used recognize that obstacles for conversion occur in

all aspects of live. Therefore the combined methods form a holistic strategy to reduce the problems in all areas concerned. It works on a personal basis and aims to lead whole families or social networks to Christ in order to start a people movement. Follow-up is an integral part of the strategy.

For the right people: Special attention is paid to the poor and destitute. People groups from different ethnical and regional background are separately targeted.

Chapter 7 Developing a holistic strategy for Bangkok

7.1. Church growth: necessary and sufficient condition for the success of urban mission?

This thesis has focused on the methods and strategies for church growth that are used by churches and mission organizations in Bangkok. Before drawing out the contours of the holistic strategy that I feel is needed, it is necessary to say more about the term 'church growth'. Until now, I uncritically followed all authors who implicitly took for granted or explicitly stated that the goal of urban mission is church growth. But now two questions come to the fore: Is church growth necessary for the success of urban mission? And, secondly, is church growth sufficient for the success of urban mission?

So the first question is: Is church growth necessary for the success of urban mission? In other words, can urban mission be called successful if there is no church growth? To answer this question, a very clear concept of urban mission is needed. I would like to propose the following: A Christian in Bangkok, or in any other city, town or village, bears responsibilities in various circumstances and situations. One of them is church life. It is an important part of his or her life. But there are also other situations: family, friends, and work, to mention the most important ones. Of course, all these different areas are interconnected. And his Christian faith will undoubtedly influence the family life of a Christian. Yet this does not make Christian family life part of church life. It still plays its own separate role. So a distinction could be made between church life and the rest of the Christian life (hereafter simply called 'Christian life') with and among family, friends, and colleagues:



A dotted line is used to indicate the strong interconnections between church life and Christian life.

It is also possible to make another distinction. Some of the human activities benefit oneself, and can be described as personal development. Other activities are 'service to others':

Service
Personal development

When we bring these two distinctions into one figure, we see four areas, that represent the life of every Christian:

	Church life	Christian life
Service		
Personal development		

The area in which personal development and church life meet, is the spiritual development of the believer through 'church fellowship'. Personal development connected to Christian life, means the development of a strong Christian family, and dealing with friends and colleagues in a Christian way. This could be called the 'social life' of a Christian. The part of the Christian life that does not relate to personal development but to (urban) service, can be described as 'social action'. And finally, service to others in connection to church life, is 'evangelism'. When we fill in these terms, the picture is:

	Church life	Christian life
Service	Evangelism	Social action
Personal development	Church fellowship	Social life

Here we see clearly that social action is a Christian duty. Yet it is not a primary task of the church. On the other hand the dotted line indicates that there is not a strict separation between Church life and Christian life, between evangelism and social action. For a Christian has only one life, devoted to God, and both aspects are to be found in his life.

The following point to be decided on, is which of these four areas are to be called 'mission'. The only point in which most missiologists agree, is that social life is not part of mission.

But almost all other options are possible.

One opinion is that mission is helping churches in all three remaining areas. So missionaries can help to build the church by building the church (e.g. by teaching at a seminary or administrating the church), by evangelizing, and by addressing the social needs of the population (e.g. building programmes in a slum area; AIDS-prevention). Then this is the picture:

Mission is helping the local church in:

Evangelism	Social action
Church fellowship	

A more liberal point of view is to deny the necessity of conversion, and therefore the need for evangelism. This view can be illustrated as follows:

Mission is helping the local church in:

	Social action
Church fellowship	

Many evangelical say that social action does not belong to the missionaty task, but evangelism does:

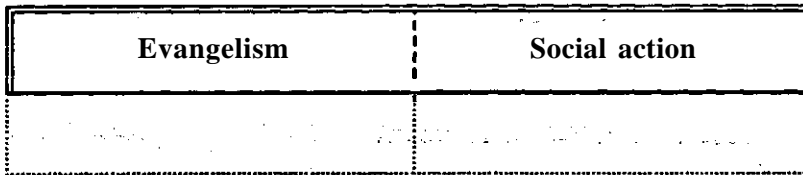
Mission is helping the local church in:

Evangelism	
Church fellowship	

All these opinions of mission are defined from a western point of view: 'What should missionaries do?' When the more profound question is asked: 'What is the Christian mission?' it is clear that mission is an external phenomenon, and that building the church, or working in the church fellowship, is not part of it. An alternative viewpoint can than be pictured as

follows:

Mission is:



Some evangelicals maintain that social action is not a part of mission, SO their view of mission shrinks to:

Mission is:



This is still felt as a dilemma in many missionary circles. I think the following answer could be the way out: Evangelism and social action are both part of the Christian mission: but the mission of the church is only evangelism. This statement acknowledges the differences between church life and Christian life. Just as all life is not church-related (though it certainly is Christ-related), not all duties are duties of the church (though they are duties of the Christians).

When this is clear, it should immediately be added that the distinction never can be very strict, because of the many interconnections that exist between evangelism and social action (see the dotted line in the illustration). A nice example is the ministry of Paul. His mission certainly was evangelistic, and his goal was conversion of the heathen. Yet he remarks about a request of the church in Jerusalem: "All they asked me was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do" (Galatians 1:10 NIV).

What has been said above about 'mission' in general, can also be said about urban mission. Urban mission is not principally different from e.g. rural mission. It is just different in practice, because in a city other needs will be encountered than in the countryside.

So now the question can be answered: Is church growth necessary for the success of urban mission? Yes, church growth is necessary for the success of the urban mission of the church.

And no, church growth is not necessarily a consequence of faithful and successful fulfilment of his task in urban mission by a single Christian. His main calling may be in the area of social action (though he always also shares in the responsibility for evangelism).

The second question to be addressed in this paragraph is: Is church growth sufficient for the success of urban mission? Or, in other words: If a church grows, is that proof enough for a successful urban mission? From the answer to the first question, the first conclusion should be: it can at most be proof for the success of the evangelistic part of the Christian urban mission. But is even that true? Is church growth sufficient proof of a successful urban mission of the church?

I suggest not. Success in the eyes of God is not just numerical growth. It is growing in obedience to His will. Not only growth is needed, but obedience as well. The objection that obedience can be concluded from growth, or that quality can be concluded from quantity, is not valid. This observation should be superfluous. But anyone who is familiar with Church Growth publications, knows it is not. An obedient church is a growing church. To conclude from there that a growing church is an obedient church, is an error in logic. (When it rains, the street is wet. When the street is wet...I may be washing my car.)

What we are looking for, is not church growth *per se*. We are looking for church growth with God's seal on it. When it is realized that a name written down on a church roll does not necessarily imply a name written down in heaven, the importance of this statement becomes clear. The same logical error sometimes appears here: Leading people to Christ is leading them to the church. Leading people to the church, is not always leading them to Christ. So besides growth, other characteristics are needed to call a church successful in its urban ministry. I suggest the following conditions, though there may be more:

1. Integrity. The leaders and members of the church should be genuinely and wholeheartedly seeking the will of God. They should be more willing to please God than to please people. The use of false emotions, psychological (and sexual) abuse of people, theft, and other temptations are endangering the integrity of church leaders; while these phenomena can be helpful to lure people into the church, the title 'successful urban mission' is hardly deserved.

2. Repentance. There has been not a single revival in church history without a profound feeling of sinfulness and following repentance. Shallow conversions can in some

circumstances lead to quick **growth**. Yet this is not desirable.

3. Sound doctrine of salvation. The reason even the most ardent church growth adherents are not glad with the rapid growth of some churches and sects, is that they distrust their theology. That is a good reason. Church growth **is** only reason for rejoicing if people **get** saved, not if they are merely tied up in some legalistic system.

To sum it up: church growth is **only** sufficient proof for successful urban **mission** when embedded in : sound doctrine of salvation; integrity of the church members and **leaders**; and repentance of the converts.

7.2. Boundaries for strategies

In paragraph 7.1. I concluded that church growth is the goal of the urban ministry of the church. Though not at any price. This helps us to develop a strategy for the urban mission in Bangkok.

All the problems of church growth in Bangkok mentioned in this thesis (see chapter 5) and not less all the solutions to these problems (see chapter 6), make clear that a strategy is more than a method. A strategy should take into account all possible problems and solutions before making an **all-encompassing** plan for ministry, that includes several methods. I mention this because too often remarks are made like 'open-air preaching is a good strategy'. What is meant is: 'open-air preaching is a good method'. And as a method it should be part of a broader strategy that is aware of geographic, social, economical, diaconal, homiletical, cybernetic, etc. advantages and disadvantages of the various methods, in relation to the target group.

It is clear that, just like there are effective and ineffective methods in a certain situation, there are also effective and ineffective strategies. It would be nonsense to think that there is only one good strategy for Bangkok. So it can not be my aim to **give** the strategy for Bangkok in this chapter. And it is of little use to develop a strategy for Bangkok, because I am not in the position to work on the implementation of that strategy. But what can be **done** here, is to provide some boundaries, which in my opinion should be common to all strategies used in urban mission in Bangkok.

So what follows here should not be considered as a strategy, but as a set of limiting conditions to any strategy developed for urban mission in Bangkok. These conditions are

formulated after careful consideration of the problems of and possible solutions for urban mission in Bangkok (see chapter 5 and 6).

The same slogan from chapter 6.15. can be used here again: Urban mission works from the right base under the right leadership with the right methods for the right people.

1. Urban mission from the right base

1.1. The right base- spiritually

Foremost in urban mission is the acknowledgement that the mission to this world is God's mission (*missio Dei*). Therefore it is of paramount importance that the urban mission of the church is fulfilled by people who have a living relationship with God. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a reality to the church members. Their faith is nourished by daily prayers and Bible reading, as well as regular fellowship with each other. In this way the power of God becomes manifest in the life of the church, and in the spiritual warfare against the "powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:11 NIV).

1.2. The right base- organizationally

The local church has different levels of fellowship. On macro-level (200 or more) a sense of communion has to be developed, a sense of belonging to a social group. The (weekly) meetings should be attractive and in a warm atmosphere. The teaching provided here should be profound and explain the Bible. On meso-level (about 40 people) some kind of peer-group should exist in which the members play a more active role. This group can organize activities of special interest to this particular group. On micro-level (about 10 people) a close fellowship exists between all members. In this group spiritual and daily problems can be talked and prayed through. Bible study is an important part of the programme.

The church also displays a sound balance between growth by extension (church planting) and expansion (growth of the local congregation).

Responsibility for the urban mission is taken by the local congregation. The denomination is assisting mainly in training and providing material.

1.3. The right base- financially

The church is financially independent. It has a healthy budget, because the members sacrificially give to their church. A large part of the budget is reserved for evangelistic purposes. Financial help for special evangelistic ministries is not declined, if the church's responsibility remains intact.

2. Urban mission under the right leaders

2.1. Leaders with the right education

Leadership education or training is provided on several levels, ranging from training of cell group leaders in house groups (e.g. a TEE programme) to theological seminary for some of the full-time pastors. Practical training in pastorate and church growth principles is more important than academical level.

2.2. Leaders with the right appointment

The church has a Thai leadership style, that is biblical at the same time. This can take all kinds of forms, but it probably means leadership that is less organizationally based than in western churches. Charismatic leadership plays an important role, and patron-client relationships are not excluded from the church community. Yet at the same time church members, including church leaders, are accountable to each other according to biblical principles.

2.3. Leadership with the right gifts

Church leaders can not only discern the needs of the members, they also know how to provide these needs. The gifts of the Holy Spirit to build the church are found among the leaders. Several leaders have tasks according to their gifts in teaching, preaching, organizing, evangelizing, and counselling.

2.4. Leadership with the right ethnic background

The pastor of the congregation is someone of the same ethnical background as the members. Missionaries can play a role in the education of leadership, and also in contributing to the evangelistic task of the church.

3. Urban mission with the right methods

3.1. The right methods in communication

Many methods are tried, and the most effective ones are constantly used. Personal methods of evangelism are preferred above impersonal ones. It is realized that problems in communication not only occur in the spiritual realm, but also in the geographical, social, economical, linguistic, etc. realms. So the methods used try to tackle these problems also.

3.2. The right methods in confirmation

The gospel is not just communicated once, its message is confirmed time and again. When someone is interested in the message, the church shows its interest in the person by friendships developing, on-going visitation and teaching, etc. While giving the enquirer all possible opportunities to come to Christ, the church and its members do not become pushy. Also after conversion a thorough follow-up is provided. Discipleship courses can play a role in that.

3.3. The right methods in cooperation

While the local church enthusiastically runs its own evangelistic programme, it is also eager to help other churches or to be helped by other churches to improve in their outreach. Cooperation is not many hours of meeting and discussions, but is adding to the hours spent at grass roots level in evangelism.

4. Urban mission for the right people

4.1. The right geographical group

The importance of the differences between the regions of Thailand (North, Northeast, South, and Central) are recognized. These groups are separately targeted. Especially the North-easterners need a special approach. The Central Thai (Thai-Teh) are considered an unresponsive people group. While new methods are developed and tried to reach them, the bulk of the missionary input is into the other geographical groups. Special attention is paid to the recent migrants, who often are open to the gospel.

4.2. The right ethnic group

The various tribal groups in Bangkok are separately targeted. The (Thai-)Chinese have been more responsive than the ethnic Thai. The large missionary input in this group is therefore maintained, while recognizing the need for development of evangelistic methods appealing to the ethnic Thai. Along the ethnic lines, language barriers form a diminishing but still-existent problem. This is recognized, and several languages and dialects are used.

4.3. The right social group

The church makes a huge effort in reaching the lower working classes, the poor, and the destitute poor. Special ministries are founded in slum areas and among prostitutes, drug addicts, and homeless children. The example of Jesus and the responsiveness of these groups are two compelling reasons for that. (Though it should be added that the responsiveness among the destitute poor all over the world is (much) lower than among the poor.) Among the middle class, students are singled out as a responsive group, though more social groups are targeted than students alone.

7.3. Strategies and strategy

In chapter 7.2. I described the boundaries for urban mission strategies in Bangkok. I explicitly stated that more than one good strategy is possible and implicitly assumed many strategies are needed. And this is true when the primacy of the local congregation is assumed, as I do. Each congregation, within the context of its denomination, is responsible for its own evangelistic strategy. I am convinced that this is the only way people at grass roots level feel part of the urban mission of the church.

However, these many strategies also contain a danger. All churches are so small compared to the hugeness of the city, that it is impossible for them to devise a strategy for all neighbourhoods and all people groups in the city. Even all churches combined would have a hard time doing that. So the apparent danger of all these strategies is that some work is done not efficiently by too many churches, and some work not at all. Examples of this can be found in this thesis. Cooperation of the protestant churches to link their strategies to each other, so that one large, over-all strategy emerges, would greatly benefit the urban mission in Bangkok. The idea definitely is not 'Big Brother watching you'. The responsibility of the

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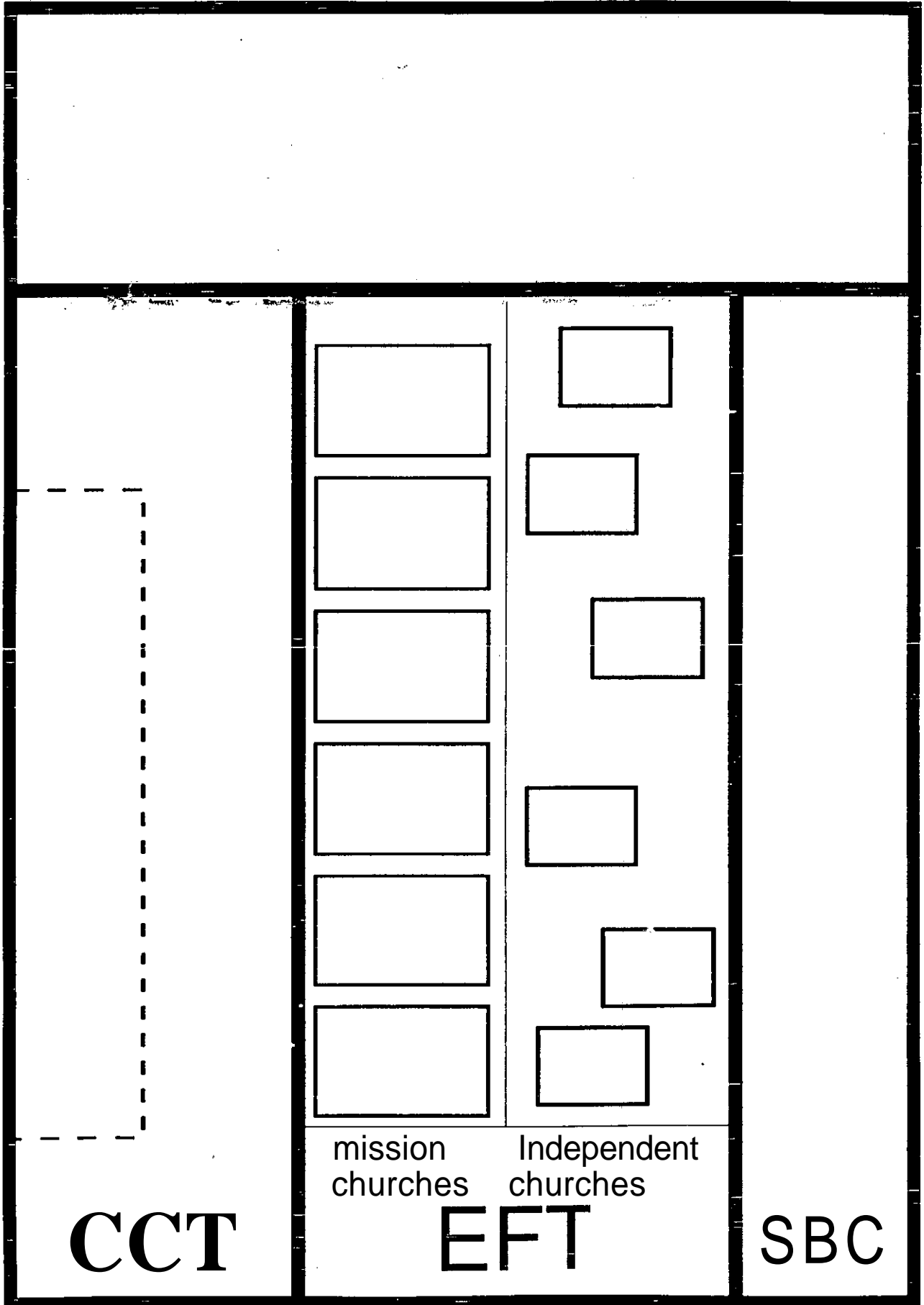
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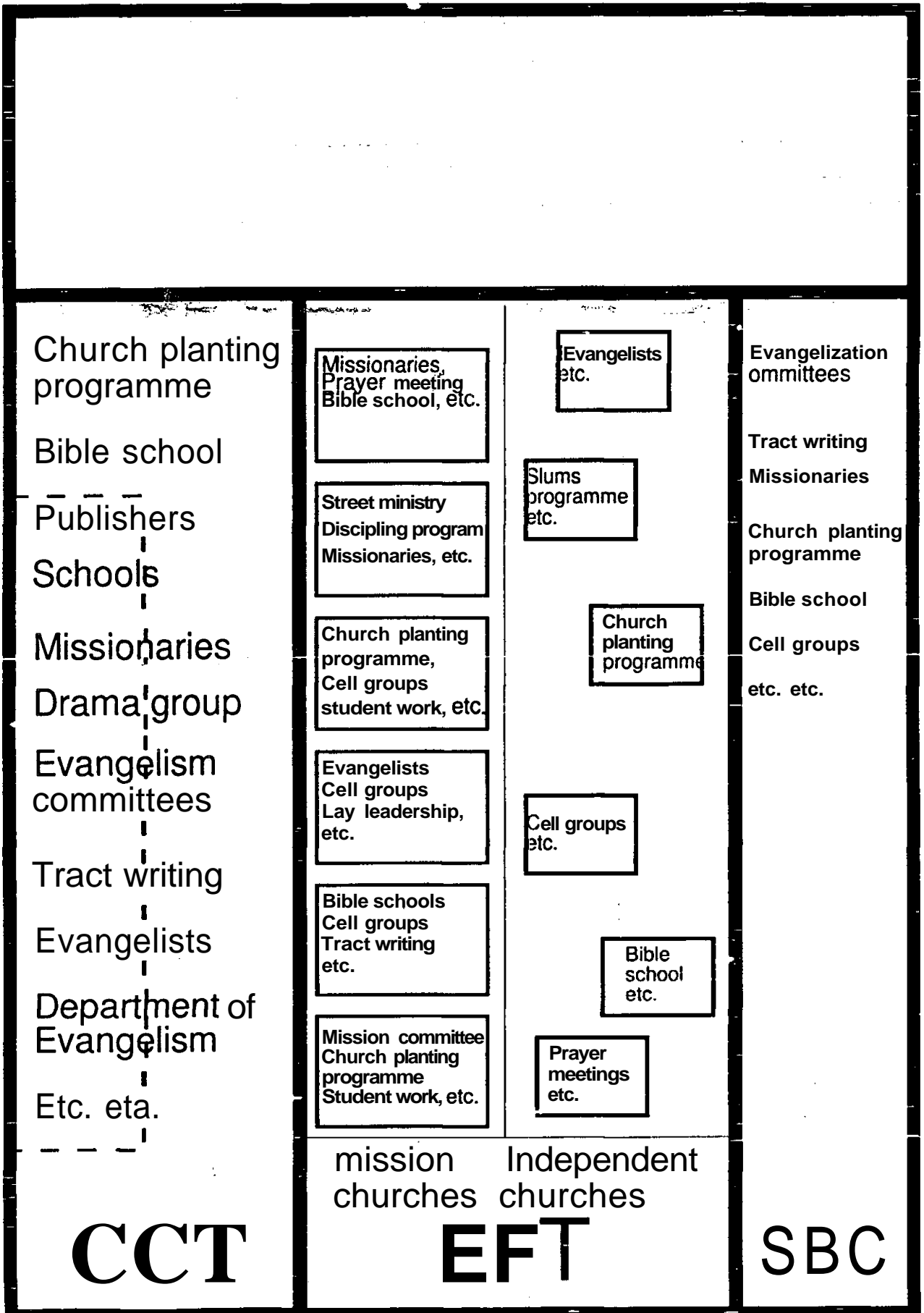
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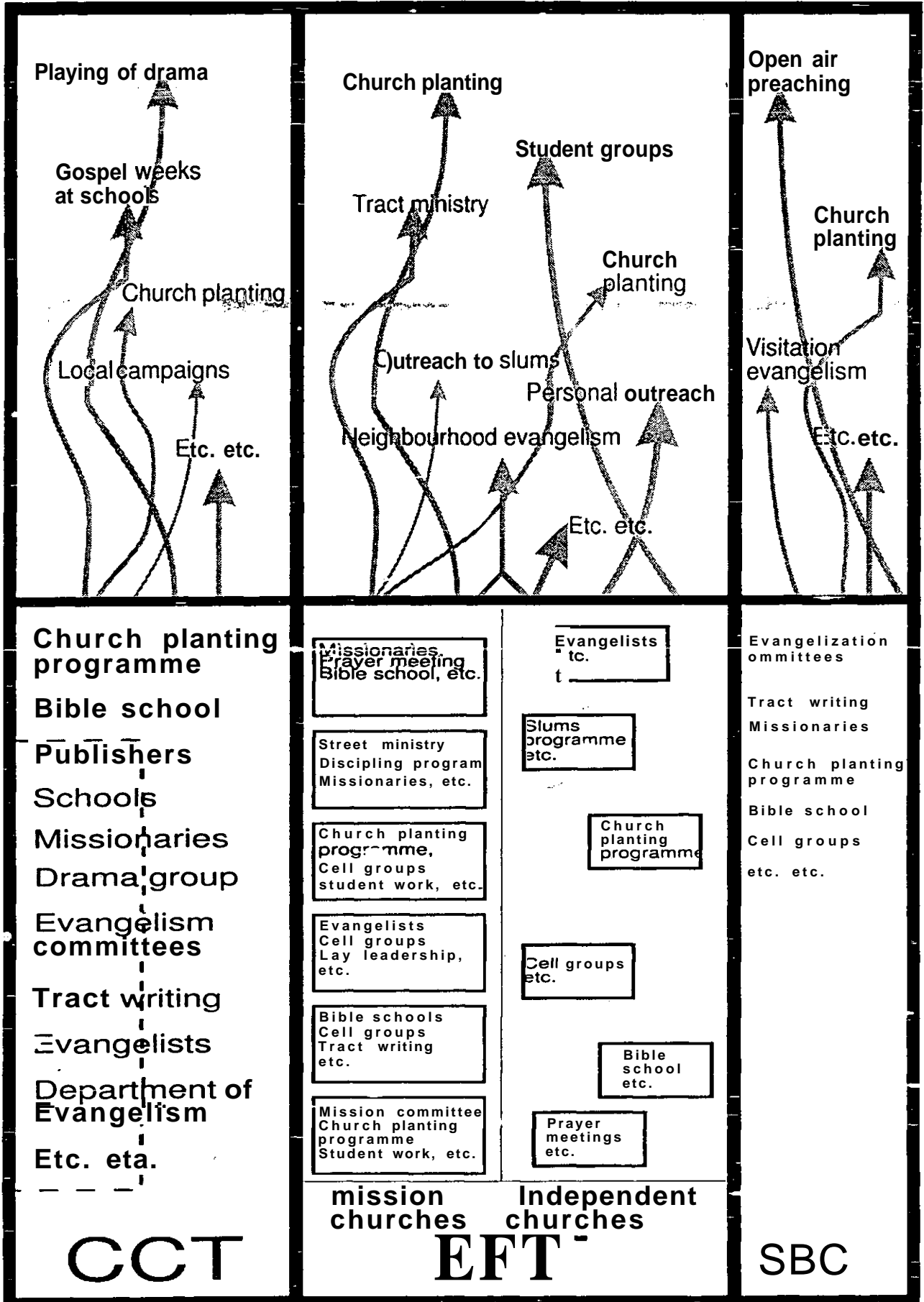
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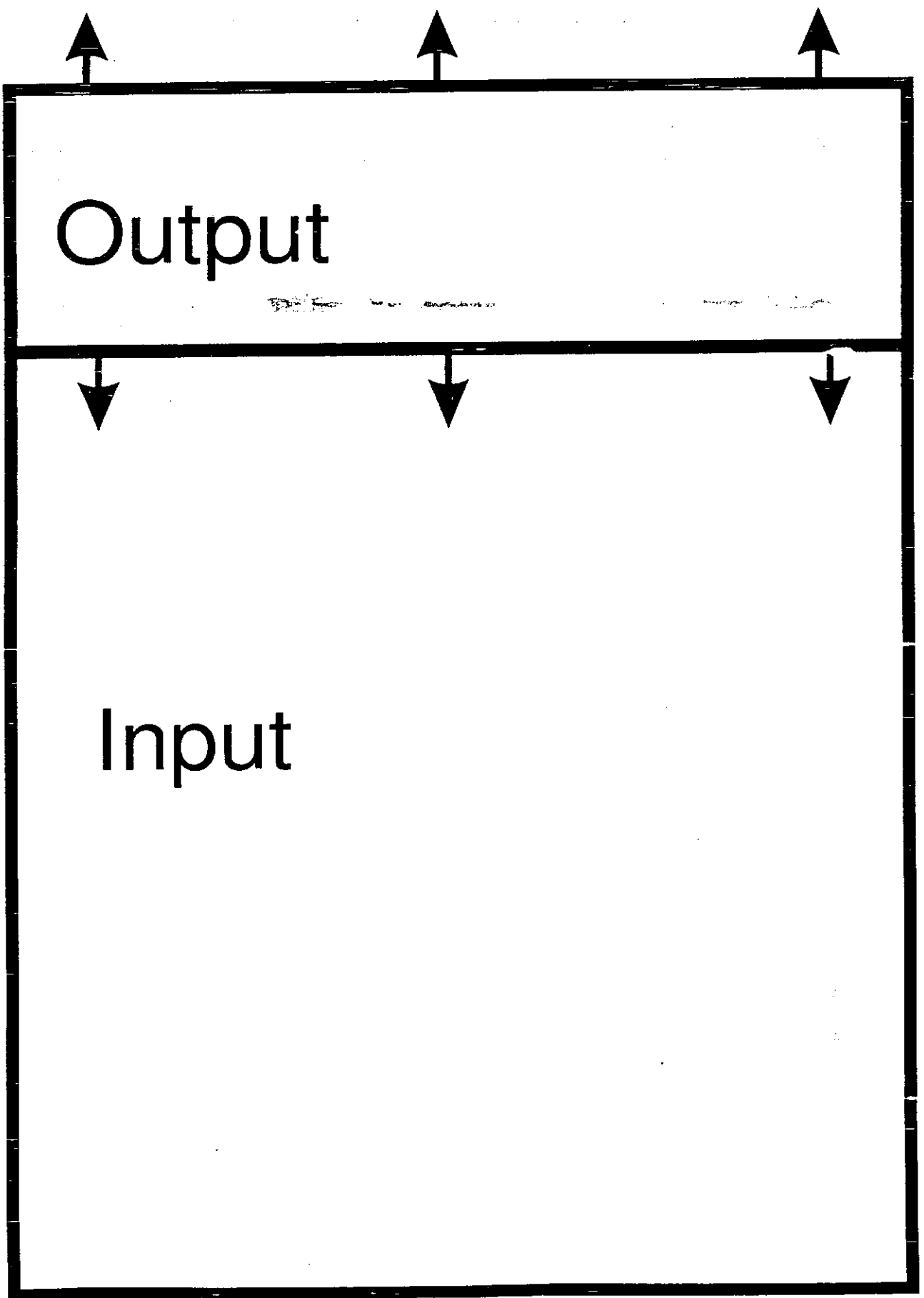
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Output (enlarged) - input



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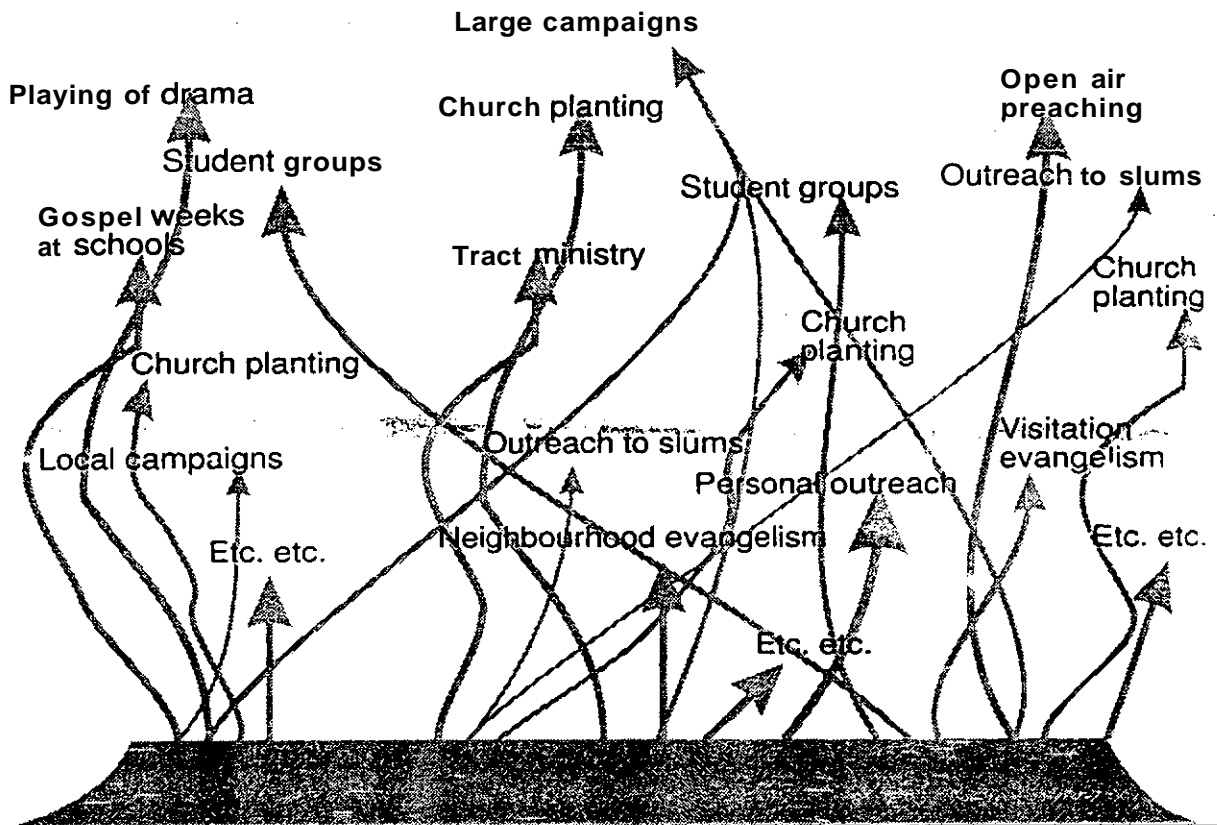
Page 164 shows that the 'output', that is the actual evangelistic effort, should be enlarged, while the **input**, that is the preparation needed for evangelistic work, should be diminished. This is possible **when** churches agree to cooperate. I suggest cooperation should follow these rules:

1. If you have, give!
2. If you **don't have**, ask!
3. If you both have, join!
4. If you both don't have, build together!

That is: congregations and denominations should be willing to share their ideas and experiences with **others**. They should not be too proud to receive advise from **others**. They should cooperate both in areas in which they are rivals right now, and in areas in which anyone of the existing denominations is too small to work **ON** its own.

Prayer

Output (real)



Input

Church planting programme
 Bible school
 Publishers
 Schools
 Missionaries
 Drama group
 Evangelism committees
 Tract writing
 Evangelists
 Department of Evangelism
 Etc. etc.

Missionaries, Prayer meeting, Bible school, etc.

Street ministry, Discipling program, Missionaries, etc.

Church planting programme, Cell groups, student work, etc.

Evangelists, Cell groups, Lay leadership, etc.

Bible schools, Cell groups, Tract writing, etc.

Mission committee, Church planting programme, Student work, etc.

Evangelists etc.

Slums programme etc.

Church planting programme

Cell groups etc.

Bible school etc.

Prayer meetings etc.

Evangelization committees

Tract writing, Missionaries

Church planting programme

Bible school, Cell groups, etc. etc.

CCT

mission churches Independent churches
 EFT

SBC

Page 167 shows the result of working according to the 'four rules'. (Note that the real output is much more than in the pages before.)

1. Methods and ministries are easier to reproduce by other churches. The preparing Work already has been done once, so now it can be used at once. So: the same input, more output.
2. Preparatory efforts are not unnecessarily duplicated. So: less input, the same output.
3. Ministries out of reach for any church, become possible by a joint effort. So: more input, more output.

Before the churches in Bangkok are ready to reap the fruits of this approach, they have to meet the following conditions:

1. Awareness of the work, **needs**, and talents of other churches. (See 1st rule.)
2. Awareness of their own needs and talents. (See 2nd rule.)
3. Recognition of other churches as sisters in Christ. (See 3rd rule.)
4. Awareness of the needs of the city. (See 4th rule.)

When these conditions are met and the 'four rules' are accepted as church policy, I am convinced this would greatly benefit the mission of the church in Bangkok. The institution that could make a start with the above principles, is the TPC (see chapter 4.5.), in which CCT, EFT, and SBC already cooperate. Unfortunately, the TPC is not strong enough (yet) to work on this vision.

Yet in my view this is the only hope for an over-all strategy for Bangkok. This strategy would be a very worthwhile complement to the many strategies employed by many churches and mission organizations. Then even more churches would be planted, more people would be reached, more methods would be used and more men, women, and children would get to know the Lord Jesus Christ. It would bring closer the ultimate vision: Christ for Bangkok- and Bangkok for Christ!

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