

**Intercultural Victorians:  
The Challenge of Modern South  
Korean Protestant Mission**

**Amy E. Mormino**

Ph.D. Thesis

The University of Edinburgh

2006



**I hereby declare that this thesis constitutes my own research and writing, and it has not been submitted in any previous application for a degree. All quotations have been distinguished and the source of information acknowledged.**

---

**Amy E. Mormino**

**October 2006**



This thesis is dedicated with deep gratitude to my parents, whose unwavering support made my work possible, and to the South Korean Protestants whom I met and interviewed for their continual openness and honesty.

# Abstract

The modern South Korean Protestant Church, widely seen as the second largest sender of Christian missionaries in the world, has reached an important point in its development as a global missionary power. While there has been rapid growth in missionary numbers and some encouraging results, critics of South Korea mission (including those within and outside of the movement) are more aware than ever of the problems facing Korean missionaries on the field in areas like cultural adaptation and building effective relationships. This thesis proposes that South Korean mission can be analysed through two elements that are clearly seen through written and oral sources: the “Victorian” and the “Intercultural.”

On the “Victorian” side, clear similarities connect Korean mission and that of the West, especially the United States, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This resemblance can be seen in several facets. Imbued with a high sense of purpose and ambition, Korean missionaries are unencumbered by historical baggage. They also face some of the same difficulties in areas like cultural adaptation and the use of money. Moreover, some view Korean missionaries as heirs to the “Golden Age” of mission who can complete the task of evangelisation.

By “Intercultural,” I am referring both to the way that the word epitomises a sense of giving and taking within mission and the fact that it is currently the most fashionable of the terms used for cultural adaptation within mission. Furthermore, the term ties into the hope of Korean mission to act as an intermediary between Western and non-Western cultures. Aware of their problems with cultural adaptation, Korean missionaries are attempting to embrace the newest ideas about culture in mission, particularly through training. However, much remains to be done before the desired deeper relationships and reciprocity that interculturalisation suggests are brought about within Korean mission. The challenge for the Korean Church is to integrate the intercultural ideals of modern mission while maintaining the enthusiasm and purpose that has drive Korean mission forward.

# Acknowledgments

Many people made this thesis possible and deserve my gratitude and acknowledgment. First of all, my work would never have been possible if I had not met so many interesting, warm and open people within the South Korean Protestant churches. I am so thankful for the reception I received since my first time in Seoul in August of 2002 and for the willingness of so many people I have met to share their thoughts about mission work in South Korea.

From Onnuri (in its Seobinggo and Yangjae branches), I must acknowledge the help of Janelle Simmons, Sharon Giles, Rev. Leo Rhee, Jeon Ha Ra, Stuard Read and Ned and Seuljee. At Youngnak Church, I would like to especially thank two of their ministers, Bill Majors and Kim In. I am also grateful to Rev. Jeon Wook of the Sarang Mission Department and to the Friends of All Nations Church for their hospitality.

I appreciated the opportunities that I received to visit and do research at Yonsei University (through Samuel Kim) and Torch Trinity (through Eiko Takamizawa). Elaine Kim and the staff at Worldwide Evangelization for Christ Korea were also particularly gracious. I am indebted to all of my interview subjects, named and unnamed.

A significant amount of my research came from the three months I taught at the Missionary Training Institute for Seoul. I am indeed grateful to the staff and students at MTI for making me feel welcome during my time there. I would particularly like to thank MTI's acting director, Mihyang Choi, along with Diana, Chulhee, Jeremiah, Janny Van der Klis and numerous others, whose experience and wisdom were most appreciated.

My dissertation was shaped and written at the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World of New College in Edinburgh, at which it has been my privilege to study for the past three years. The facilities, staff, students,

faculty and atmosphere of diversity and criticism have provided a welcome environment for my research and writing. I am indebted to the Centre's founder, Professor Andrew Walls, whose class at Princeton Theological Seminary inspired me to pursue the study of non-Western Christianity and to consider the Centre. I have also benefited in many ways from the assistance and hospitable spirit of Margaret Acton, the Centre's secretary.

I would like to acknowledge the help and fellowship I have received from students at the Centre. I am thankful to Susan Allister and Shin Ahn for their occasional assistance as proof-readers. Andrew C.Y. Ha helped connect me with temporary housing and interview contacts at Younknak Church and I must express thanks to Jin Ki Young for first telling me about MTI. The friendly and hard-working computing staff of New College has also been a great source of assistance, with particular thanks due to Crystal Webster and Bronwen Currie.

Of course, I must recognise the substantial aid of my advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Koepping. Her careful editing and advice has helped me to overcome many of my bad habits in writing. I have received much benefit from her criticism and from her gracious hospitality. Gratitude is also due to the insights of my secondary supervisor, Dr. Jack Thompson.

Above all others, I must thank my family for helping me in every way through this process. My work would not be possible without the loving support, advice and encouragement of my parents, Lynne and Gary Mormino. I am also thankful for the welcome humour of my sister, Rebecca. Finally, I give thanks to God, the ultimate inspiration behind my work and that of the missionaries I have profiled.

## Abbreviations Used in the Thesis

ACTS	Asian Center for Theological Studies
GMS	Global Missionary Society
GMTI	Global Missionary Training Institute
IVCF	Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship
KCCC	Korean Campus Crusade for Christ
KRIM	Korean Research Institute for Mission
KWMA	Korean World Missions Association
MTI	Missionary Training Institute
PCK	Presbyterian Church of Korea
SIM	Serving in Mission
STM	short-term mission
UBF	University Bible Fellowship
WEC	Worldwide Evangelization for Christ
YWAM	Youth with a Mission

# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>I. The “Victorian” Aspect</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II. The “Intercultural” Aspect</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>III. Methodology</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>IV. The Structure of the Dissertation</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Part One-</b>	
<b>Chapter One- Historic Growth and Stagnation within the Korean Protestant Church</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>I. The Arrival of the Protestant Missionaries</b>	
<b>A. The Foundation of Mission in Korea</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>B. The Advantages and Problems of the Nevius Plan</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>C. Issues of Cooperation and Adaptation in the Early Korean Church</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>II. The Suffering Korean Church</b>	
<b>A. Political Advocacy During the Japanese Occupation</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>B. The Korean War and Its Aftermath</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>III. The Megachurches and the Boom Period</b>	
<b>A. Urbanisation and Church Growth</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>B. Key Factors in Korean Church Growth</b>	
<b>1. The Role of the Cell Group in South Korea and Overseas</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>2. Evangelism and Spirituality in the Church Growth Era</b>	<b>43</b>

<b>IV. The Stagnation of the 1990s and Today</b>	
<b>A. A Statistical Analysis of the Decline</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>B. The Root Causes of the Decline</b>	
<b>1. Competition and Societal Changes</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>2. Discontentment with the Churches and Their Leaders</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Chapter Two- Global and Cultural Attitudes in the Korean Protestant Church and Its Mission</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>I. A Global Solution to Domestic Church Stagnation</b>	
<b>A. Suggestions for Church Reform</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>B. Mission and Youth Appeal</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>C. The Potential of Renewal Through Global Mission</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>II. Globalisation and the South Korean Protestant Church</b>	
<b>A. The South Korean Reaction to Aspects of Globalisation</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>B. Globalisation and South Korean Protestant Mission</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>III. The Reaction of South Korean Christianity to Cultural Theories in Mission</b>	
<b>A. Korean Protestant Attitudes Towards Other Religions</b>	
<b>1. The Historic Influence</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>2. Modern Attitudes</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>B. South Korean Protestant Responses to Christian Cultural Theories</b>	
<b>1. Christian Cultural Interpretation in the Korean Protestant Academic Realm</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>2. Some Korean Protestant Interpretations of the Christian Cultural Message</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>IV. The Intermediary Role of the Korean Protestant Church</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Chapter Three- Korean Overseas Mission: Its History, Growth and Present State</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>I. The History of the South Korean Protestant Missionary Movement</b>	





2. Accessibility and the Advantage of International Reputation	166
--	-----

**Chapter Five- Problematic Issues in South Korean Protestant Mission**

Introduction	169
I. The Problem of Korean Inexperience in Mission	171
II. The Problem of Money in Korean Mission	
A. Issues with Korean Protestant Wealth in the Mission Field	176
B. The Historic Foundation Behind Issues of Mission and Money	180
III. The Problem of Cooperation in Korean Mission	
A. Issues in Relationships within the Local Community	182
B. Issues in Relationships with Other Koreans and Foreign Missionaries	187
C. Issues of Bias and Prejudice Against Korean Missionaries	192
IV. The Issue of Culture	
A. Cultural Conversion in Korean Mission	194
B. Monocultural Missionaries in a Multicultural World	198
V. Profiles in Korean Missionary Problems: China and Japan	
A. China	200
B. Japan	204

Introduction to Part III- Korean Mission and the Intercultural Connection	209
---	-----

**Chapter Six- Interculturation in Action within South Korean Mission**

Introduction	212
I. Training and Education	
A. The Global Vision	214
B. Importing Students and Teachers	217
C. Overseas Study and Mission Training	219
II. The Role of Foreign Residents in South Korean Mission	
A. English and Foreign Language Services	227
B. Migrant Ministries and Mission Connections	231

C. The Korean Diaspora as a Mission Resource	236
<b>III. Intercultural Communication Overseas</b>	
A. Short-term Mission and Cultural Sampling	239
B. The Changing Role of International Agencies in Korean Mission	244
C. Establishing Relationships in the Field	
1. Different Approaches to Beginning Relationships	247
2. From a Formulaic to a Friendship-Based Evangelism	250
<b>Chapter Seven- Constructing a Future Identity for Korean Protestant Mission</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	253
<b>I. Seven Signposts for the Future of South Korean Protestant Mission</b>	
A. Keeping a Strong and Practical Vision for Mission	255
B. Paying Attention to the Lessons of the Past	257
C. Reconciling Korean Identity with a Global Vision	259
D. The Potential and Danger of Social Change in Mission	261
E. Distinguishing Between Superficial and Genuine Missionary Identification	264
F. Fostering Respect and Cooperation	267
G. Embracing the Intermediary Potential for Mission	269
<b>II. Changing Korean Missionary Attitudes in the Field</b>	
A. Japan: Signs of a New Approach	271
B. China: Equipping the Future	273
C. Mongolia: South Korea as a Role Model	277
<b>Conclusion</b>	282
<b>Bibliography</b>	286
<b>Interview Information</b>	304
<b>Tables</b>	320
<b>Pictures</b>	327

# Introduction

The heavy involvement of Korean missionaries in foreign mission has been called, “one of the biggest surprises in the history of mission movements.”<sup>1</sup> The surprise lies not only in the numerical growth of Korean mission in the past two decades, impressive though that is, but in the increasing scope and ambition of Korean missionaries. As the statistics in Table 1 demonstrate, the number of South Korean missionaries (the great bulk of whom are mainstream Protestants) rose from 1,645 in 1990 to 10,745 in 2002. Furthermore, the movement has evolved from focusing upon overseas Korean communities, which 75% of Korean missionaries did in 1986, to 91.6% engaging in cross-cultural ministry in 2000 (see Table 2).<sup>2</sup>

In light of these remarkable developments for a society that has long been viewed as closed-off and monocultural, it is little wonder that certain difficulties emerged, especially in the area of cultural adaptation and communication. But even within the short history of mass-scale cross-cultural mission by South Korean missionaries, there has been demonstrable change. Much of this has been positive as the quality of training improved, broader definitions of mission are being considered and with Korean missionaries giving more serious thought as to precisely what they wish to contribute to global evangelism.

My chief aim in this dissertation is not to provide a history of Korean missionaries or an overview of their problems and successes, though these elements will all be covered. Making use of a term popular in Korean Protestant mission, I am seeking to give a sense of the vision of the movement at this time when it seems to be entering a new stage in its development. More experienced Korean missionaries have offered their suggestions for future improvements. At the same time, commentators from other countries are giving their opinions ranging from dismay

---

<sup>1</sup> Steve S.C. Moon. “The Recent Korean Missionary Movement: A Record of Growth, and More Growth Needed,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 27, no. 1 (January 2003): 12.

<sup>2</sup> Jang Yun Cho, “Factors Contributing to the Development of the Modern Korean Missions Movement: A Historical Analysis” (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, May 2002), 4.

over the perceived mistakes of Korean missionaries to great optimism over the potential of Korean mission to reach new areas for Christ.

I wish to answer a number of questions within my dissertation that relate to the overall missionary vision. First, what concrete steps are Korean missionaries and church leaders taking to address the concerns that have emerged? In light of the great body of missionaries and the resources that they have at their disposal, what does Korean mission hope to give to the world? And, perhaps just as importantly, what can the diverse cultures of the world in which Korean missionaries operate contribute to the Korean Church and its mission? Finally, as there are clear similarities between Korean churches and missionaries and those from both Western and non-Western nations, is there a distinctive Korean identity of mission? Is this distinctiveness a disadvantage or potentially a great asset to Korean missionaries in their work?

Drawing upon written works and interviews, I intend to describe the vision of contemporary South Korean Protestant mission through two aspects: the “Victorian” and the “Intercultural.” Before going into further detail about these two terms, some clarification should be given about what I mean by “South Korean Protestant” and “mission.” Tables 1 and 3, while showing different figures, both concur that Protestantism is by far the dominant form of the Christian religion in South Korea.<sup>3</sup> Unlike a number of non-Western nations where independent churches have proliferated, traditional mainline denominations such as the Methodists, Baptists and particularly Presbyterians are the largest groups, albeit with a tendency towards schisms. Furthermore, these mainline denominations are the leaders and trendsetters in overseas mission, with the Presbyterians once again being the most notable.

When people speak of Korean missionaries, they are almost always referring to Protestants. This does not mean that Roman Catholic and the nebulous “Independents” do not engage in mission, but their numbers are still much lower. For instance, in 2001 the Catholic Archbishop of Seoul was quoted as saying that

---

<sup>3</sup> Statistics on Korean religion can differ greatly, due to such factors as multiple religious affiliations and poor record-keeping on the part of some churches.

“we are ready for mission” and spoke of his plans to engage in mission in North Korea, Mongolia and China at a time when there were already thousands of Korean Protestant missionaries on the field.<sup>4</sup> Given the current vigour of Korean Catholicism, the work of their missionaries merits future research, as do the mission activities of the widespread Korean migrant communities. But for the purposes of this dissertation the words “Korean Church” will refer exclusively to South Korean Protestantism.

I have taken a few liberties in describing “South Korean Protestant mission” as a whole entity. Significant diversity within the Protestant denominations and mission agencies in terms of their approaches to mission exists and I attempt to convey this variety. In addition, the majority of my interview subjects and churches that I profile come from South Korean Presbyterianism. However, there is enough consensus among my sources and enough contributions from other denominations for me to be confident that my conclusions describe popular trends and attitudes. I am also following in the steps of the numerous Korean and Western authors who write of Korean Protestant mission and religion as a whole.

For further clarification, the “mission” referred to within this dissertation will be limited to overseas work. However, domestic mission projects are often linked to foreign ones within Korean Protestant congregations and I will assert that overseas mission ultimately benefits the Korean Church as a whole and could help it to overcome the current decline in church growth. Part One, particularly Chapter Three, will provide details as to how Korean Protestants define mission.

### *I. The “Victorian” Aspect*

While the Victorian period technically encompasses Great Britain in the years 1837 until 1901, my “Victorian” model involves a somewhat looser framework. I use the United States in the late nineteenth century as a main point of comparison, largely due to the greater historical links between the U.S. and Korea. “Victorian” is

---

<sup>4</sup> “Archbishop of Seoul: we are ready for mission to the North, China, Mongolia.” *Catholic Mission*. 30 (March 2001); accessed 10 July 2006; available from <http://www.catholicmission.org/MissionNews-033001SouthNorthKorea.html>; Internet.

thus defined within this thesis as a more general description of the West in the late nineteenth century and as a symbol of pre-war mission at its height.

The noted Christian historian Kenneth Scott Latourette's 1945 book, *The Great Century, A.D. 1800-A.D. 1914, Europe and the United States of America* goes into some more detail about the kind of mission the Victorian era epitomised. In that work, he stated that the period, perhaps best exemplified by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, merited the title of the "Great Century" because it became, "the age of the most extensive geographic spread of Christianity."<sup>5</sup> He ended the book in the year 1914 because the onset of the world wars destroyed much of the confident optimism (or arrogant conquest, depending upon one's point of view) once found within the West. Since Latourette's time, the criticism of these missionaries has greatly increased to the point where many of the presentations at conferences I have attended seem to revolve around both ridiculing and denouncing the cultural practices and assumptions of Victorian mission. At the same time, the declining churches and missionary agencies in much of the contemporary West present an ever more obvious contrast to the vibrant sense of purpose found in the Victorian churches.

A.N. Wilson declared that, "The Victorians are still with us" because the "radical transformation" that they brought to the world through industrialisation and the blurring of national lines very much endures.<sup>6</sup> Victorian notions are alive in today's South Korea because of the modernising influence of the first Westerners in Korea, especially Americans, in the late nineteenth century and the fact that South Koreans are dealing with similar issues of coping with a recently industrialised world increasingly free from previous boundaries.

I want it made clear that I do not intend the "Victorian" elements of Korean mission to be negative in contrast to the positive aspects of all that is associated with the term "Intercultural." My thesis does not involve a movement from one earlier set

---

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Great Century, A.D. 1800-A.D. 1914, Europe and the United States of America* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1945), 1.

<sup>6</sup> A.N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 1.

of values to a superior contemporary one, but presents the hope of an integration of both models in a fusion of the traditional and the modern.

While I include a chapter dealing with Korean missionary difficulties in the Victorian section, I also point out more positive characteristics of Korean missionaries with Victorian parallels. Some of these include the fervent desire of Korean missionaries to engage with the world and make a difference, to the extent of hastening the Second Coming in some cases, and the lack of the historic baggage that can cripple Western missionaries in areas like the Middle East. Indeed, much of my inspiration for pursuing the Victorian connection came from a comment from James Huntley Grayson that Korean missionaries resembled those of the Victorian era to him, not only in their problems but in their sense of confidence and vision.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond these links to Victorian characteristics, I will also explore the sense that Korean missionaries want to fulfil the work of Western mission in furthering and even finishing the work that past missionaries began. While opinions differ as to whether the West will still play a major part in determining the future course of world mission, it is evident that the non-Western churches are taking on an increasingly active role. Of these churches, none has a larger presence on the mission field than South Korea. The various steps being taken by Korean missionaries to assume greater authority in global mission, with some hoping that the Korean Church will be the overall world leader in mission, will be one of the major themes of this dissertation.

But if South Korean missionaries are following in the footsteps of past missionaries, they, as recipients of some of the most extensive training to be found in modern mission, are also aware of the backlash against late nineteenth and early twentieth century mission. To operate effectively in today's world, new ideas need to be introduced to build better relationships with those from different cultures. For Koreans, this task becomes all the more challenging because of their country's history of isolation from much of the world.

---

<sup>7</sup> Interview Subject Number 32



## II. *The “Intercultural” Aspect*

To represent the most current thinking about culture in mission, I am using the word “intercultural.” Other terms have been utilised within recent mission to explain the process in which the Gospel is presented to those from different cultures and implanted into new societies, including contextualisation, inculturation and cross-cultural communication. Interculturation is not necessarily the best word describing the process of Christian communication in mission, but it does encompass the ideal of a cutting-edge ability to work between different cultures that many Korean missionaries aspire to.

Such words have been developed largely to explain the movement that began in the early and mid-twentieth century which changed the way in which mission was performed as well as the relationship of the Christian message to the cultures it encountered. Andrew Walls describes this change as the evolution from the “Age of Expanding Europe” to the current “Age of Cross-Cultural Communication.”<sup>8</sup> Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, culture was often seen as the equivalent of civilisation, as in Matthew Arnold’s quote that culture is, “the best that has been thought and said of the world.”<sup>9</sup> The world of culture dominated by Western Christianity contrasted with the supposedly dark and ignorant non-Western realms. There was hope for the less blessed nations in the form of missionaries who could give benighted societies the benefits of Christianity and civilisation, though whether one should be stressed over the other was a controversial matter.

But a new attitude towards culture and Christianity came in the twentieth century. Non-Western countries demanded independence from imperialist powers and their churches followed suit as the numbers of Christians outside of the West grew ever more quickly. In the field of anthropology, the idea that some societies were primitive in opposition to more developed ones was challenged. The new view of culture stated that it was, in the words of anthropologist, Clifford Geertz: “a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes

---

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), 21-23.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1882), 6.



towards life.”<sup>10</sup> Taking in these developments to varying degrees, missionaries and scholars began to consider how to communicate better with those from other cultures and encourage the growth of truly non-Western churches.

During the 1960s and 70s, two terms came into popular usage to describe the new understanding of culture: inculturation and contextualisation. While the former originated in Catholic circles and the latter among Protestants, the two have become almost interchangeable in recent years. Aylward Shorter defines inculturation in words that could also work for contextualisation as, “the ongoing dialogue between faith and culture or cultures.” This dialogue can result in a mutually creative and dynamic relationship which can transform both the cultures involved and even the expression of the Gospel itself.<sup>11</sup>

The term interculturalism was first coined by Bishop Joseph Blomjous in 1980 to fit his belief that Christianity was emerging from a period of transition in the 1960s and 70s from traditional mission concepts to a new and more mutual process of mission. David Bosch perceives interculturalism in this way,

The old dichotomies are transcended and the churches of the West discover, to their amazement, that they are not simply benefactors and those of the South and the East not merely beneficiaries, but that all are, at the same time, giving and receiving, that a kind of osmosis is taking place.<sup>12</sup>

The word rose to popularity in the 1990s and has become a favoured term among modern evangelicals, a group to which the great majority of Korean missionaries belong. For instance, the influential American seminary Fuller offers a Master of Arts degree in Intercultural Studies. It also has been a preferred term among many in the evangelical community for describing mission in a world affected by globalisation where theology, “stands today between the global and the local.”<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 89.

<sup>11</sup> Aylward Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994), 11-12.

<sup>12</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), 456.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology Between the Global and the Local*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), ix.

Aware of the awkwardness of many Korean missionaries within unfamiliar cultures, Korean mission is attempting to integrate Christian cultural theories into their policies and work. This is perhaps most evident at the training level. But there remains discomfort with these theories among many Korean Protestants who fear that overtly bringing culture into Christianity will compromise the Gospel message, which some believe to lie outside of culture. They are quite willing to embrace certain ideas of Western scholars and to travel overseas for education, but there is no desire to emulate the secularisation and declining missionary spirit of the West. Such hesitancy also ties into the determination, which has roots from the earliest days of Korean Protestantism, to accept once-foreign concepts on their own terms.

While the reader will probably identify similarities between the Korean Protestant Church and its mission with related developments in both Western and non-Western Christianity, South Korean Protestantism often does not fit well into people's perceptions of what either brand of Christianity should be. While still viewing South Korea as part of Asia and the larger non-Western world, there is also awareness within Korean mission of its distinctive identity. Some see this as an advantage and have conceived of an intermediary model of mission in which Korean missionaries could bring those from Western and non-Western nations closer together and evangelise areas once resistant to the Gospel. But for this hope to come to pass, the issues that still separate Korean missionaries from those in the North and South that they want to reach out to need to be addressed.

For the moment, interculturalisation remains more of a long-term ambition than a present reality within Korean mission, though real improvements have come about. While Korean missionaries can be fine churchbuilders, a great barrier to long-term success is the tendency to impose the practices of the Korean Church upon the new faith communities, a problem also common among Victorian missionaries. While improved education is resulting in a much better level of cultural knowledge among missionaries, the need for deeper and more mutual relationships continues. The challenge for South Korean Protestant missionaries is to build intercultural

relationships and to further define their attitudes towards cultural issues while keeping the enthusiasm and drive that lies at the heart of their efforts.

### *III. Methodology*

The seeds of this dissertation were planted, albeit in loose and unstructured form, in 2002 when I went to Seoul, South Korea for a year to teach English. In that time, I attended the English ministry at Onnuri, one of the megachurches profiled within this dissertation. Impressed by the emphasis on foreign mission in comparison to past churches I attended in the United States, I began to conduct interviews with some of the missionaries I met and went on two short-term mission trips to China and Cambodia.

I was especially struck by the contrast between the high ambitions of the missionaries to reach out to some of the world's least accessible areas and their limited experience interacting with other cultures. I noticed that the works I had read on Korean missionaries often focused upon the problems they faced and upon the ever-increasing numbers, but not on how the missionaries were seeking to overcome their cultural difficulties and absorb modern ideas about communication and culture in mission. Once I began my studies at the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, this aspect gradually became linked in my mind to the similarities of the Korean mission movement to those of the past.

With my second trip to South Korea, I developed the general theories and structure of the thesis as it is today. I stayed in South Korea for four months in early 2005 with three months spent teaching English at the Missionary Training Institute in Seoul. In that time, I conducted a number of interviews with students and faculty and learned a great deal about the process of becoming a missionary and the challenges involved. I also benefited from the visits by former graduates and mission agencies seeking to recruit from the student body.

Though now an independent institution, MTI was formed in 1983 to aid the Hapdong denomination (one of the numerous Korean Presbyterian branches) in their

cultural and English language development, as even at that point concerns had emerged about the adaptation skills of Korean missionaries. The first director, Young J. Son, noted, “We [at MTI] have always been, from the very start, convinced that the Koreans need to shed their ethnocentric and nationalistic view of things for a well-rounded world view that appreciates the customs and cultures of other peoples.”<sup>14</sup> The school now operates independently with many of its candidates preparing for work within interdenominational agencies such as Serving in Mission and Worldwide Evangelization for Christ, though others were linked to denominational boards or were still searching for a sponsoring group.

The information and conclusions within this thesis are a combination of written materials, including articles, books, pamphlets and Internet sources, and the personal research I have conducted in the form of interviews and visits to churches and agencies during my two trips to South Korea. The footnotes should make clear when I am drawing upon my own research and when I am citing a written work. I conducted interviews with over 90 people (some in small group interviews), mostly Korean missionaries and scholars, but also those from different nationalities who shared their impressions of the Korean mission movement. Most of the interview subjects are anonymous, though a few have been named who gave their permission. Details such as the date and place for the interview and information about the person can be found in the Appendix section. All of my interviews were in English, due to my lack of fluency in speaking Korean. However, I can read Korean to a moderate extent and the dissertation includes some Korean-language written sources.

#### *IV. The Structure of the Dissertation*

The following work is divided into three sections. The first part concerns itself with the history of the Korean Protestant Church and an overview of its overseas missionary activities, while also focusing upon the views of the Church and its missionaries to the world around it. The three chapters in this section will provide a sense of the chief characteristics of the Korean Protestant Church and indicate how historic events affect the present. The first chapter tells of the work of Western

---

<sup>14</sup> Young J. Son, “MTI: The Missionary Training Institute Handbook,” Self-published booklet, 7-8.

missionaries within Korea, the remarkable period of church growth during the post-war years and the current decline in church growth which has resulted in much current reflection. This chapter will detail both the longtime influence of the United States and the West upon the Korean Church and the independent and enterprising spirit of Korean Protestants.

The second chapter looks at global and cultural attitudes of the Korean Protestant Church and of those within the missionary movement. It will be shown that interest in global matters within South Korea, especially among the young, has contributed to the growth of overseas mission and that mission has been proposed as part of the solution to the stagnation within Korean churches. The chapter then examines the mixed reactions of South Korean Protestants to issues of globalisation and cultural theories in relation to mission. While the desire to become more culturally and globally aware certainly exists, there is also a fear that relativism would result and that the Christian faith, at times assumed to be apart from culture, will suffer. The chapter will conclude with a consideration of how Korean missionaries hope to reach the world's most difficult countries by acting as intermediaries between the ideals of Western and non-Western nations, a lofty ambition in light of the hesitations and difficulties faced by many Korean missionaries in forming relationships with those from different cultures.

The third chapter features an overview of Korean mission from the first efforts in the early twentieth century to the deployment of the first significant numbers of post-war missionaries during the 1970s and 80s to the rapid rise in the 1990s and today. Some of the statistics behind Korean mission will be examined, including which countries are the most popular and what kind of work is being done. This chapter will also profile the people, churches and agencies behind Korean mission and how they define mission.

The two chapters within the second section focus upon the aforementioned Victorian elements of Korean mission and illustrate the similarities and differences between a major missionary-sending nation of the past and one of today. The fourth

chapter elaborates upon the similarities in vision between Korean and late nineteenth century missionaries of the United States in areas like overall goals, methodology and nationalism. In addition, the idea of Korean Protestants as new leaders in world mission and of advantages that they believe themselves to hold over other past and present missionaries will be explored.

The fifth chapter revolves around the most common difficulties that Korean missionaries experience on the field, as reported by Koreans themselves and by Western and non-Western observers. These include misuse of money, lack of cooperation, isolation and competition. Many of these problems have clear precedents in the past, though some are more limited to the Korean situation. This chapter also acknowledges the prejudice and lack of understanding that Korean missionaries can experience on the field and from other missionaries.

The third and final section revolves around how recent Korean missionaries are attempting to become more culturally aware and fulfil the intercultural ambitions of the Korean mission movement. While much remains to be done, I hope to demonstrate that some positive changes have occurred even within the short history of large-scale Korean mission. The sixth chapter gives examples of some of the ways in which intercultural notions are being acted upon in Korean mission. In training and education, schools and training institutions are helping their students become more comfortable with other cultures and languages through bringing these issues into the curriculum and inviting students and teachers from other cultures. And more and more missionaries in training are going overseas to enhance their education. The Korean churches are attempting to interact more with new cultures through diverse language services and migrant ministries. This chapter also looks at how Koreans are forming relationships on the mission field and at some of the changes that have been made in response to former cultural difficulties in three of the countries where Korean missionaries are most active: China, Japan and Mongolia.

The last chapter ponders the ultimate question of Korean mission identity and how it can be made stronger. Seven difficult areas are examined, such as the lessons

of the past, bringing about social change while discouraging dependence, fostering a respectful attitude and avoiding superficial relationships. Based upon my sources and building upon the previous chapters, I will consider how these issues can be dealt with in ways that can keep enthusiasm for mission strong while avoiding past errors.

It is my desire that this work will contribute to a greater understanding of today's Korean missionaries both to those within and outside of the mission field. I hope that my position as an outsider will enable me to present new insights into this fascinating subject and put the movement within a larger global context. Though a great deal remains to be done before Korean missionaries live up to their high ambitions, I am ultimately optimistic that a group that has accomplished so much within a short amount of time can become "Intercultural Victorians" in the most positive sense of both terms.



# Chapter One:

## Historic Growth and Stagnation within the Korean Protestant Church

### *Introduction*

Throughout Korean Protestant writings, particularly those relating to global ministry, keen interest in Christian history has been displayed. Korean authors find inspiration and parallels to current situations from a wide variety of disparate periods in Christian history. For example, one scholar compared the modern Korean issue of Protestant stagnation to that of the decline of the Nestorian Church.<sup>15</sup> Another work uses Julian the Apostate as a model to Koreans for how non-Christians can be turned off from the faith by a lack of Christian hospitality.<sup>16</sup>

Such historical interest within the Korean Protestant Church naturally includes a close consideration of its own past. Such examination often comes in two forms. First, many Korean writers reflect on history to help the contemporary Church deal with its problems by learning from the mistakes and successes of the past. For instance, in his article “Global Theology for the Common Good: Lessons from Two Centuries of Korean Christianity,” Chai-Sik Chung asks, “How can we use Korean Christian history to shape theology for a global age?”<sup>17</sup> He uses past examples of the Korean Church adapting to the needs of the nation to find inspiration for modern reform efforts. And Kook Il Han believes that the Korean Church could learn from the history of Western mission in dealing with issues of secularisation and how to integrate financial prosperity. By looking into history, Korean churches hope to find a more comprehensive understanding of modern problems and hopefully avoid some of the difficulties the West faced in its past.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Jin Choi, “Mission and the Twenty-First Century Ministry of the Korean Church”, Jin Choi, (D.Min. diss., Claremont Seminary, 1992), 119.

<sup>16</sup> Byoung Sam Kim, “Toward 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mission in Korea: Making Strategy from a Non-Christian Perspective,” (D. Miss. diss., United Theological Seminary, 1998), 49.

<sup>17</sup> Chai-Sik Chung, “Global Theology for the Common Good: Lessons from Two Centuries of Korean Christianity,” *International Review of Mission*, 85, no. 339, (1996): 523.

<sup>18</sup> Kook Il Han, “120 Years of Korean Mission and the Future of Korean Mission,” *Sonkyohwa Sinhak* (Mission and Theology), 14, (Fall 2004): 275.



Another form of historical analysis comes in discerning how specific practices of the Korean Church and the Western missionaries who helped build it affected the present. Such writings usually lean more towards the problems caused by historic influences, but most acknowledge both the positive and negative qualities of past Western and Korean Christians. One such work is Kang Keun Whan's commentary on Presbyterian mission polity, "[It] certainly contributed to the historical miracle of the initial rapid growth of the Korean Church, but those were also responsible for some troubles of the Korean Church that emerged later after the end of World War II."<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, the one period in Korean Church history that receives the most current criticism from evangelicals and liberals alike is not the period when Western missionaries dominated but rather the Korean-led Church Growth movement of the post-war years that ended in the 1990s. However, with hindsight in coming years, the Church Growth period may be seen in a more positive light as well.

This chapter looks at the growth of the Korean Protestant Church from the initial arrival of Western missionaries in 1884 to the troubles of the Japanese occupation period and the Korean War. The extraordinary growth of the 1960s, 70s and 80s will then be detailed. The chapter ends with an examination of the 1990s, a decade which marked the end of high levels of church growth and inspired a large-scale reconsideration of previous ideals which continues to this day.

A major consideration in this chapter will be the complex historic relationship between Korea and the world during these years. Of particular interest, given that this thesis includes a partial comparison between the American missionaries of the Victorian period and the Korean missionaries of today, is the evolving relationship between the Korean Protestant Church and the United States. The United States was by far the greatest force behind the Western Protestant attempt to reach Korea and American churches and schools have continued to lend various kinds of support to Korean Protestantism over the years. Donald Clark notes that Christianity in Korea is "inextricably linked to American-Korean relations."<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Kang Keun Whan, "A Critical Study on the Early Mission Policies of the Council of Missions in Korea in the Light of the Nevius Plan," *Ching Feng*, Vol. 1, no. 2, (Fall 2000): 202.

<sup>20</sup> Donald Clark, *Christianity in Modern Korea*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986), xiii.

The closeness between Korean Christians and Westerners (especially Americans) has led some to question how much Christianity has truly been integrated into Korean life. Chung-Se Park observes that, “Many intellectuals interested in traditional Korean culture regard Christianity with deep suspicion, seeing it as a foreign and, therefore, inevitably destructive force within traditional Korean society.”<sup>21</sup> But the Korean Protestant borrowing of ideas from the West is very much in line with Korean history. Michael Breen writes that Koreans, “have borrowed foreign systems - for example: Confucianism, Christianity, communism, capitalism - and in each case developed the most extreme and successful version of that system, often outdoing their mentors.”<sup>22</sup> Korean Protestants used Western ideas successfully because they adapted them to the particular Korean situation. At each stage in their history, Korean churches have made deliberate adjustments to stay relevant and meet the perceived needs of the people.

The current period of international missionary activity is one more step in this continual process. As Korean Protestant churches have increased in confidence and resources, they have begun to promote their ideas overseas, influencing and changing Christian practices in the West. Even in the early stages of its history, the Korean Protestant Church showed interest in the giving to and taking ideas from other nations.

Along with such global concerns, the evolution of South Korea’s local churches will be highlighted. International ministry is intimately connected with local ministry in South Korea, mission having flowed out of the needs and ambitions of Korean congregations. Positive and negative aspects of Korean mission generally stem from similar traits within local churches. This intimate relationship becomes all the more clear in the history of the Korean Protestant Church. As Jang Yun Cho writes, the modern Korean mission movement cannot be accurately understood apart

---

<sup>21</sup> Chung-Se Park, “A Model of Cross-Cultural Mission in Korea- A Comparative Study of Bible Stories and Korean Legends,” (D. Min. diss., APS San Francisco Theological Seminary, 1990), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Breen, *The Koreans*, (London: Orion, 1998), 160.

from its relationship to the Church Growth movement and the revival movement of the past.<sup>23</sup>

## I. *The Arrival of the Protestant Missionaries*

### A. *The Foundation of Mission in Korea*

While later chapters will provide a broader comparison between Western missionaries of the late nineteenth century and today's Korean missionaries, this chapter details the activities of one particular set of American missionaries and other Westerners who laid the foundation for the Korean Protestant Church. Nonetheless, even in this more limited area of comparison, there are some striking similarities with modern Korean mission that will be pointed out. While some other nations participated in mission to Korea, such as Australia and Canada, the major impetus came from the United States.<sup>24</sup> It is hard to find a major mission field of the nineteenth century where European and British missionaries played such a small role.

The U.S. effort came in the second half of the nineteenth century when the country was beginning to take an active role as a mission leader. Coming after a long period of decline in mission caused by the Civil War and economic difficulties, the 1880s marked the beginning of a fifty year-long heyday of American foreign missions when tens of thousands of missionaries and millions of churchgoers were actively promoting overseas mission.<sup>25</sup> Echoing the frontier spirit that would later be seen in Korean mission, Americans were especially interested in initiating new mission endeavours in the Far East with the 1880s marking the first decade when missionaries sent to the Far East exceeded those in the Middle East.<sup>26</sup> Missionaries sought to go beyond the more familiar coastal areas of China and enter unexplored areas. Sending missionaries to Korea was a natural extension of these ongoing Eastern efforts.

---

<sup>23</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors", 6.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew E. Kim, "History of Christianity in Korea: From Its Troubled Beginnings to its Contemporary Success," *Korea Journal* 35, no. 2 (Summer 1995); accessed October 2006; available from <http://www.kimsoft.com/1997/xhist.htm>; Internet, .

<sup>25</sup> William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 1.

<sup>26</sup> John K. Fairbank, "Introduction: The Many Faces of Protestant Missions in China and the United States" in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, ed. John Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 7.

The first U.S. Presbyterian and Methodist missionaries arrived in 1884. These denominations came to dominate and set the pace for mission and Protestantism in Korea.<sup>27</sup> It was significant that these groups came at a time when the mainline denominations were still known for their evangelical zeal in America before the split between non-denominational “faith mission” groups and the increasingly liberal mainline denominations became apparent in the early twentieth century. Even as late as 1910, all but 8 of the 240 missionaries to Korea originated from the major denominational mission boards.<sup>28</sup>

The system of elders and the tight organisation within the Presbyterian Church found an especially eager audience among the group-oriented and hierarchical Korean people. In spite of competition, the various forms of Presbyterianism in South Korea remain dominant among Protestants while Methodism maintains a strong minority presence. The legacy of these denominations includes a strong ecclesiastical mindset in church and mission life that the Koreans have kept alive to a greater extent than many of their contemporary Western and non-Western counterparts.

The newly-arrived missionaries could hardly have picked a more opportune time to set up operations. The two previously dominant organised religions of Korea were both at low points for different reasons. Confucianism had political power as the endorsed religion of the Choson Dynasty (1392-1910), but it never really established itself as a popular religion. It went into rapid decline with the end of the monarchy and never truly recovered, though some of its ideas regarding family roles and hierarchy linger on in Korean society and religion (including Christianity) today.

Buddhism was established in Korea in the fourth century and it enjoyed a rich history and considerable popular appeal. Korean Buddhist history demonstrated that the country was not always the “hermit nation” that it became under the Choson

---

<sup>27</sup> L. George Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832-1910*, (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1929), 91.

<sup>28</sup> Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 128.

dynasty, as Korean Buddhist monks went abroad to China and India to study. They also acted as Korea's first global missionaries by spreading Buddhism into Japan in the last centuries of the first millennium A.D.<sup>29</sup> But centuries of foreign invasions by the Mongols and Japanese, in addition to continual persecution by the Confucianist Choson rulers left Korean Buddhism weak and disorganised, though popular support, particularly among women, kept the faith alive.

Roman Catholicism experienced a successful launch in Korea that reached fruition in the late eighteenth century with thousands of converts. Unfortunately, as in Japan, its arrival was seen by the Choson rulers as connected to possible Western invasion, even though it was largely a Korean-driven effort with few Western Catholic missionaries involved. These fears led to a wave of major oppression after one unwise Korean convert wrote an 1801 intercepted letter asking for Western military help. One anti-Catholic campaign from 1866 to 1871 killed 8,000 Catholics. Such strikes left the Korean Catholic Church operating under a "ghetto mentality" that hid from mainstream involvement.<sup>30</sup> It would take competition from and imitation of Korean Protestantism, along with a more stable and open environment, to revitalise both Catholicism and Buddhism in Korea.

Like Catholicism, Protestantism was also seen as being connected to the West. However, a changed atmosphere turned this into an advantage for Protestant mission. Korea had forged a strong relationship with China for many centuries in culture, politics and religion, even being seen as a "small China."<sup>31</sup> But China was in serious decline from its subjugation to various Western powers and its own stagnation. Korea saw that it was vulnerable to invasion from Japan and realised that it needed an ally. Incorrectly believing that the United States would protect it from Japanese invasion, Korea and the U.S. signed the Korean Treaty (with China's approval) in 1882 that officially opened the country to the West.

---

<sup>29</sup> James Huntley Grayson, *Korea- A Religious History*, (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002 ed.), 26-7.

<sup>30</sup> Grayson, "Cultural Encounter: Korean Protestantism and Other Religious Traditions," *International Bureau of Missionary Research*, vol. 25, no. 2, (April 2001), 67.

<sup>31</sup> Chung Chai-Sik, *Gospel and Cultures Pamphlet 16: Korea- The Encounter Between the Gospel and Neo-Confucian Culture*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), viii.

Certain Korean intellectuals perceived through the West and Protestant Christianity the opportunity to bring new strength to their long-weakened country. This was not the first time such a connection between religion and nation interest had been made in Korea. Nor was it the first time that Koreans interested in global affairs and modernisation had spurred religious growth. Buddhism grew to some degree because of its association with China.<sup>32</sup> And reform-minded Korean scholars studying in China and Japan were also among the first to show interest in first Catholicism and then Protestantism.<sup>33</sup>

A group of nineteenth and early twentieth century Korean progressives, disillusioned with the state of Korean and Chinese civilisation, sought *kaehwa*, enlightenment by Western means. Many among this elite group would become the first generation of Korean Protestant leaders. They did not separate the Christian religion from the Western education, science and knowledge that they desired to help their nation. Like many of these intellectuals, Park Young-hyo felt that the Protestant religion was the foundation of moral transformation in America and Europe and that Buddhism and Confucianism could not provide the needed catalyst for change. Another Korean scholar, Yun Chi-ho, was repulsed by the seeming lack of “public spirit” in Confucianism and preferred Christianity’s “can-do” spirit.<sup>34</sup>

The aims of the first Western missionaries, however, were very different as they felt discomfort with their new converts embracing English lessons and Western learning. As Chung Chai Sik observed, “There was a vast different between what the Korean leaders bent on modernization thought of Christianity and what the missionaries thought of it.”<sup>35</sup> To understand the wariness of the missionaries, one must consider their particular historic situation. In a manner that strikingly parallels the Korean missionary situation of today, these American missionaries were of a generation that was acquiring some maturity and experience after a somewhat shaky start in the early nineteenth century. The missionaries to Korea were all too aware of

---

<sup>32</sup> Grayson, *Korea: A Religious History*, 26.

<sup>33</sup> Breen, *The Koreans*, 95.

<sup>34</sup> Chung Chai Sik, “Global Theology for the Common Good: Lessons from Two Centuries of Korean Christianity,” *International Review of Mission*, 85, no. 339, (1996), 527-9.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 526.



the difficulties in Chinese Christianity caused by Westerners who insisted that their converts adopt Western cultural traits. They also would have known of attempts by groups like the China Inland Mission to separate culture from Christianity in their ministry. Also on their minds was the controversy over “rice Christians” whom some felt sought out the Christian religion due to non-spiritual ambitions.

The Korean mission had the opportunity to start anew and avoid these past difficulties. There were two main attributes of the Western missionaries to Korea besides their strong evangelistic drive. First, they were notably conservative, even by the standards of their day. Missionary executive A.J. Brown described the typical Korean missionary as, “a man of the Puritan type...In most of the evangelical churches of America and Great Britain, conservatives and liberals have learned to live and work together in peace; but in Korea the few men who hold the ‘modern view’ have a rough road to travel, particularly in the Presbyterian group of missions.”<sup>36</sup> While this Puritan style undoubtedly found its way into the modern Korean Protestant Church, it also tied into and reinforced the centuries-old tradition of authoritarian conservatism promoted by Confucianism and ancient Korean religions.<sup>37</sup>

However, while conservative, they also displayed determination to build a truly Korean form of Protestant Christianity, albeit one built through a Western system, which seems fairly enlightened to modern eyes. This largely came out of a pragmatic desire to avoid the mistakes of their mission predecessors in places like China. This attitude is clear in an 1896 article by W.D. Reynolds in which he asserts, “A Korean ministry for a Korean Church should be our motto: No namby-pamby, half-foreignized, mercenary ministry for an invertebrae mass of jelly-fish Christians, but a self-sacrificing, self-reliant, self-respecting Korean Church.”<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea*, 424-5.

<sup>37</sup> Clark, *Christianity in Modern Korea*, 22.

<sup>38</sup> Kang Keun Whan, “A Critical Study on the Early Mission Policies of the Council of Missions in Korea in the light of the Nevius Plan,” *Ching Feng*, 1, no. 2, (Fall 2000): 206.

### *B. The Advantages and Problems of the Nevius Plan*

One of the biggest and most controversial influences on the course of the Korean Protestant Church was fuelled by these principles of national independence and self-sufficiency: the Nevius Plan. John Nevius was a missionary to China who campaigned for mission reform. He briefly visited Korea in 1890 where the mission board of the Presbyterian Church decided to make his theories the basis of their mission policy for Korea. This visit has been called the: “determining factor in the direction of the history of Mission in Korea.”<sup>39</sup>

Nevius’ ideas, based strongly on the Three-Self principles expressed in Indian mission by Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn in the mid-nineteenth century, promoted self-support, self-propagation and self-government. His thinking appealed to important mission leaders like Horace Underwood who were looking for a unifying plan to work around the problems that had formed in the young mission, including low funding, a small number of missionaries and poor knowledge of the country. Korea turned out to be the nation where Nevius’ ideas were most widely utilised, as they would not be implemented on a large scale on the massive and divided Chinese mission field.<sup>40</sup> Korea, being a nation with a much newer Christian mission presence, was more readily able to adapt Nevius’ ideas.

At first glance, the Nevius Plan sounds like a farsighted and wise policy for its time. It was among the first modern efforts to systematically deal with problems of contextualisation on the mission field.<sup>41</sup> But its legacy for the Korean Protestant Church and its subsequent missionary activities is a complicated one with both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, Nevius’ goal of giving the Korean people responsibility for mission to their own people helped the mission to overcome its always meagre personnel and financial resources and experience the most tremendous proportionate Protestant growth found in any Asian nation in the

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>40</sup> Carol Ann Vaughn, “Missionary Returns and Cultural Conversions in Alabama and Shandong: The Latter Years of Madam Gao (Martha Foster Crawford),” in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory and Policy*. Ed. Wilbert Shenk, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 251.

<sup>41</sup> Sung-tae Kim, “Historical Evaluation of Theological Models of Contextualization,” *Chongshin Theological Journal*, 7, no. 1, (February 2002), 78.



nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed, the Nevius Plan has been deemed: “the most frequently cited factor in the outstanding growth of the Korean Church.”<sup>42</sup>

While the proportion of the population professing to be Christians remained low until the post-Korean War period, each year of the early mission to Korea saw significant growth. In 1900 alone, there was a 30% growth in membership.<sup>43</sup>

The Nevius Plan also helped contribute to the development of local leadership and a fairly quick build-up of a largely self-sustaining series of churches. Eun-soo Chae acknowledges that the Nevius methods built a strong, consolidated and institutional Korean Church.<sup>44</sup> The need for churches to support themselves also demanded that the people give generously and the new Korean Christians rose to the challenge, building an ethos of often sacrificial giving. As early as 1897, one Presbyterian congregation in Pyongyang was collecting enough donations to pay their expenses, help other churches and give to the poor.<sup>45</sup> Such high levels of giving laid the foundation for Korean-led foreign mission.

The missionaries’ efforts to establish a self-governing Korean Church would also bear fruit. Early Korean converts actually resisted the idea of independence in the early years of the mission, believing that the continued growth of the churches depended upon the guidance of the missionaries.<sup>46</sup> However, the growing strength of the Korean leadership that emerged in the early twentieth century encouraged the development of largely independent denominations. In 1907, less than twenty years after the arrival of the first Presbyterian missionary, the four major Presbyterian mission groups in Korea (from the Northern and Southern U.S., Canada and Australia) united their varying churches to form the Presbyterian Church of Korea. The Methodists followed suit in 1930.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Jang Yun Cho, “Factors,” 3.

<sup>43</sup> David Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia Volume 1*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 683.

<sup>44</sup> Eun-soo Chae, “Missiological Reflections on Nevius Methods,” *Chongshin Theological Journal*, 6, no. 1, (Feb. 2001): 161.

<sup>45</sup> Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea*, 227.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 421-2.

<sup>47</sup> Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 683.

But the self-sufficiency supported by the Nevius Plan created a series of problems in that its very strengths could become weaknesses when carried to extremes. Because the Korean churches grew largely through their individual efforts, there was little need to work together to achieve goals, which ultimately fed the growth of competitive individualism among the churches.<sup>48</sup> Lee Oosterom cites the Nevius Plan as a main reason for the extremism and lack of cooperation that can be found in South Korea today.<sup>49</sup>

Another problem related to the policy of limiting financial support emerged in the area of education, particularly for higher education and pastoral training. As codified in the rules of the Presbyterian Mission Board, the policy was specifically aimed at working, not upper classes, and focused on building elementary schools and providing education to females. The decision came about largely because of the belief, derived from concrete experiences in China, that members who received too much education would lose interest in everyday matters and fall out of touch with their own people. Today's Korean missionaries have dealt with a similar situation when they have financed theological training for Cambodian and Filipino converts only to find that their students did not want to return to their homes for service.

The educational policy proved effective in popular outreach, especially for Korean females who received little formal education prior to the formation of mission schools. But the policy resulted in inadequate training and education for Korean Protestant leaders that has only recently been alleviated.<sup>50</sup> The negative aspects were recognised quickly, particularly in the area of pastoral education. Writing in 1929, George Paik acknowledged the good intentions, but saw the policy as a short-sighted one that minimised the intellectual standard of the Korean minister and placed a "wide chasm" in education between Korean and Western Christian leaders.<sup>51</sup> In 1917, Yi Kwang-su lamented that a "bad fruit" of the Korean Church

---

<sup>48</sup> Kim Myung Hyuk, "Cooperation and Partnership in Missions," in *World Missions : The Asian Challenge*, (Compendium of the Asia Missions Congress, 1990), 103.

<sup>49</sup> Lee Oosterom, *Contemporary Missionary Thought in the Republic of Korea*, (Utrecht-Leiden: IIMO, 1990), 31.

<sup>50</sup> Kang, "A Critical Study on the Early Mission Policies," 207.

<sup>51</sup> Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea*, 216.

lay in its contempt for learning that largely came about through the poor education given by church schools. Displaying rigid conservative traits, the mission schools failed to teach subjects needed for a modern society like natural science and geography out of fear that they would be a bad influence upon their pupils.<sup>52</sup>

In spite of their failings, the missionary schools played a huge role in bringing education to the whole population of Korea. And some of the missionary schools did evolve into distinguished educational institutes with time. Two of South Korea's finest universities, Yonsei University and Ewha Women's University, started out respectively as a medical training centre and a small school for girls and gradually developed into respected institutions of higher education.

An additional problem with the Nevius Plan was that, for all of its hopes of building a truly Korean rather than foreign Church, it can still be seen as a projection of British and American values at the time.<sup>53</sup> Nevius' method held that there was a specific formula of Christian self-initiative that could be applied to any situation. While his ideas were genuine attempts to be open to new cultures, one formula could not handle all of the complexities found in a social context. It is little wonder that the Korean Protestant Church would take a different, though not necessarily less problematic, approach in its own mission activities. It is interesting to relate, however, that the early and much-lauded Korean mission efforts of the early twentieth century that will be examined in Chapter Three were based on the Nevius Method and are seen as role models for today's Korean missionaries.

The debates over the Nevius Plan bring to light the issue of partnership among the early Western missionaries. This has some current significance as Korean Church scholars search for possible origins for the infamous lack of cooperation and divisiveness among Korean missionaries, some preferring to see the origin for these problems in the Western missionaries and their lingering influence. For instance, Timothy Kiho Park laments the absence of the cooperation that was once a "beautiful characteristic" of traditional Korea and which largely vanished once Western

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>53</sup> Sung-tae Kim, "Historic Evaluation of Theological Models of Contextualization," 80.

individualism was introduced.<sup>54</sup> He is likely thinking of or imagining the village life of Korea, though, as the royal and intellectual circles of Korea were definitely not renowned for their cooperative traits. Hojin Chung writes in a similar vein that the denominational stubbornness and dissent of the American missionaries in Korea 100 years ago left the Korean Church with much conflict and division.<sup>55</sup>

### *C. Issues of Cooperation and Adaptation in the Early Korean Church*

While the Western missionaries left an impression of disunity upon some modern Koreans, their initial intentions were to act as models of harmony. Weary of the missionary infighting that went on in their day, there were deliberate efforts made towards cooperative ministry. An old story cited as a model of mission partnership for the Korean Church has perhaps the most famous Presbyterian missionary, Horace Underwood, and the most renowned Methodist missionary, Henry Appenzeller, arriving in Korea at the same time. Apparently, each of the respectful missionaries insisted that the other go ashore first.<sup>56</sup>

A less fanciful but more solid example of missionary cooperation was the policy of comity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the Korean mission field where the denominations agreed to limit themselves to particular areas to avoid unnecessary competition. Working out an effective division of territory between various Methodist and Presbyterian groups, as well as other denominations (such as the Baptists and Anglicans) that arrived later, took some time and there were occasions when different mission groups would occupy the same space. But there were genuine efforts to fairly divide territory, especially among the Presbyterians and Methodists. The four divided Presbyterian mission groups, which included Canadian, Australian and Northern and Southern U.S. denominations, were able to set up a central mission committee to form a single independent Presbyterian Church. The Northern and Southern branches of U.S. Methodism likewise came together on the Korean mission field decades before their unification in the United States.

---

<sup>54</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, "A Two-Thirds World Mission on the Move: The Missionary Movement of the Presbyterian Church in Korea", (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Seminary, April 1991), 229.

<sup>55</sup> Hojin Chung, "Korean Churches in Edinburgh and the Churches of Scotland" Unpublished paper for the Tartan and Hanbok Conference, May 28, 2004, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Kim Myung Hyuk, "Cooperation and Partnership in Missions," 101.

In 1905, encouraged by the ongoing growth and feeling that more could be done with a unified mission, the six major missions in Korea formed the General Council of Evangelical Mission in Korea. The continued growth of the different denominations and the increasing awareness among Korean Christians of sectarian differences ultimately doomed the temporary spirit of unity and any chance of a National Church, with the General Council becoming a Federal Council in 1912. But the formal division of territory that came out of the General Council was seen as a great aid in Korean evangelisation.<sup>57</sup> Korean mission scholar Samuel Kim wishes that today's Korean denominations could possess such a concept of comity when they themselves enter new regions in mission.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to the challenge of comity, the Western missionaries had to learn to work with the increasingly independent Korean Christians. For all their attempts at cultural understanding, the Western missionaries were creatures of their time period and many saw themselves as superior to the Koreans. Some Koreans, particularly more educated ones, disliked this attitude. For example, Yun Chi Ho, one of the Korean progressive scholars mentioned earlier, came to resent the patronising attitude of Western Christians and protested that Koreans should be given more say in mission work in their country.<sup>59</sup> But less well-educated Korean Protestants viewed the missionaries as above them in wisdom and spirituality.<sup>60</sup>

A positive change in the Western/Korean relationship came with the Korean revival of 1907. The missionaries saw a new and more spiritually mature side of the Korean converts and the converts gained a fuller sense of the humanity of the missionaries. As one anonymous missionary wrote,

I had said the Korean would never have a religious experience such as the West has. These revivals have taught me two things: First...the Korean is at heart... at one with his brother of the West. In the second place these revivals have

---

<sup>57</sup> Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea*, 381-4.

<sup>58</sup> Interview Subject No. 34

<sup>59</sup> Based on the unpublished work of my Edinburgh colleague Shin Ahn on the diaries of Yun Chi Ho.

<sup>60</sup> Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea*, 375.

taught me, that in the matter of making all life religious, in prayer, and in a simple, childlike trust, the East not only has many things, but profound things to teach the West.<sup>61</sup>

While there were still problems of inequality (observe the still somewhat patronising attitude of the above writer), Western missionaries started to act more like real partners in their interactions with the Korean Protestants after the revival.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to working out issues of partnership, Western missionaries had to deal with cultural adaptation. In spite of the hope of the missionaries to build a truly Korean church, many cultural elements were and remain Western in style. For example, one cardinal point of the Nevius Plan was, “to let the natives provide their own church buildings, which were to be native in architecture, and of such style as the local church could afford to put up.”<sup>63</sup> Any look at the Protestant church buildings of today’s South Korea makes clear that, on the whole, the dream of native church architecture (or church music and worship material, for that matter) has not been realised. Architecture, music and worship styles still display clear American derivation. Whether this lingering influence is due to the insufficient efforts of the missionaries or the genuine and continuing preference of Korean Protestants for the American style is difficult to determine.

A more successful example of cultural adaptation came from the adoption of ancient Korean ideas into Korean Protestantism. While the first wave of Western missionaries generally saw Korean traditional religion in a wholly negative light, the notion of Christianity as a fulfilment of Korean religion started to gain ground. By 1900, most North American missionaries had already begun to use the ancient Korean word for God, *Hananim*, with the logic that, “They have always worshipped *Hananim*. It is our job to teach them that *Hananim* is the only one and the only God, to tell all His nature.”<sup>64</sup> The early decades of the twentieth century, especially after the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, led to a more relaxed view of non-Western religions,

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 375-6.

<sup>62</sup> Kim Myung Hyuk, “Cooperation and Partnership in Missions,” 102.

<sup>63</sup> Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea*, 160.

<sup>64</sup> Sung-Deuk Oak, “Shamanistic Tan’gun and Christian Hananim: Protestant Missionaries’ Interpretation of the Korean Founding Myth, 1805-1934,” *Studies in World Christianity* 7, no. 1 (2001): 47.



the missionaries coming to see that *Hananim* in traditional usage had been a monotheistic god. They even perceived an analogy for the Christian Trinity in the shamanistic Tangun Trinity myth. These similarities to Christianity were valuable points of contact in mission. Sung-Deuk Oak credits the identification of *Hananim* with the Christian God as a major factor in the success of Protestantism in Korea and views the Western missionaries as pioneers of indigenous Korean theology.<sup>65</sup>

There was one area in which it is almost universally thought that the missionaries made a tremendous contribution to the cultural and national identity of Korea. This lay in their promotion and development of the Korean script, *hangul*. This script was actually invented in the fifteenth century under Korea's great King Sejong. But it remained underutilised for centuries, as Korean scholars disdained its simplicity compared to the more complex Chinese system. The Western missionaries, however, embraced *hangul* as a tool for educating and evangelising the general public through schools and written material. The work of translation proved lengthy, with a full translation of the Bible (begun by Scottish missionaries in China before the Korean mission was even established) only available in 1910.<sup>66</sup> *Hangul* spread quickly and its popular adoption in the twentieth century has been credited as the impetus for the nationwide spread of literacy and schools and the growth of the Korean mass media.<sup>67</sup> In the case of *hangul*, the goals of modernisation and evangelisation came together harmoniously.

The legacy of the Western missionaries in Korea will likely be a source of debate and controversy for a long time to come. Some commentators feel that Western mission spread harmful and imperialistic ideas that Korean missionaries adopted.<sup>68</sup> Even evangelical leaders, such as Paul (now David) Yonggi Cho who founded the world's largest church, Yoido Full Gospel, criticise past Western missionaries for their domineering attitude in spreading their culture along with the

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 42 and 56.

<sup>66</sup> Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea*, 412.

<sup>67</sup> Jay Kwon Kim, "The Impact of Mass Communication" in *Korean Church Growth Explosion*, Eds. Bong Rin Ro and Marlin Nelson, (Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1995), 134-6.

<sup>68</sup> Interview Subject No. 52

Gospel.<sup>69</sup> Still, many modern Korean Christians are quick to express their appreciation for the missionaries who gave up so much to establish Protestantism in Korea. The bulk of commentators point out both positive and negative elements in the effects of this period. However, as the next two sections will demonstrate, there are other important historical influences that shaped today's Korean Church and its mission.

## II. *The Suffering Korean Church*

### A. *Political Advocacy During the Japanese Occupation*

The early twentieth century was a bright time in Korea for evangelism with improved organisation and cooperation producing impressive results. In 1909, the ambitious young churches even adopted their own "watchword" in imitation of the famous 1886 John R. Mott expression, "The evangelization of the world in this generation". A Korean version was, "A million souls for Christ."<sup>70</sup> But for the nation as a whole, the first half of the twentieth century would prove a deeply troubled time with the long-feared Japanese occupation becoming a reality in 1910 and culminating in the brutal war which divided Korea in two. Yet this period also made Christianity, especially Protestantism, a real religion of the people and greatly enhanced its national prominence. The experiences of suffering and resilience against external forces, added onto the overall history of oppression in Korea, made an indelible mark on the character of the Korean Protestant Church.

Wi Jo Kang observed that, "an important reason behind Christianity's success in Korea has been its frequent identification with the political movements of Korean nationalism, the independence movements, democracy and Korean reunification."<sup>71</sup> Of these causes, the one that perhaps burns the brightest in Korean Church history was the Christian involvement in the struggle for liberation from Japan. The independence movement was the work of the Korean Protestants, not that of the Western missionaries. In light of the past political missteps of the Roman Catholics

---

<sup>69</sup> Paul Yonggi Cho, *More Than Numbers*, (Waco: Word Inc., 1984), 9.

<sup>70</sup> Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea*, 385.

<sup>71</sup> Wi Jo Kang, *Christ and Caesar in Modern Korea*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), vii.



in Korea, and wary of the unstable situation, most Western missionaries had stayed out of any overt political involvement and encouraged the Koreans to do the same, particularly in the early years of the twentieth century.

While many Korean Protestants maintained neutrality, a small number of Korean Christians ignored the missionaries' advice and engaged in protest activities. Carried on in spite of Japanese reprisals, the activism of such Korean Protestant leaders showed the nation that they were acting as national leaders out of proportion to their still-small numbers. In the landmark March 1919 Independence March in Seoul, sixteen of the twenty-three signers of the Korean Declaration of Independence were Protestants, including the first ordained Korean Presbyterian, Kil Son Ju.<sup>72</sup> The situation grew increasingly worse as all Presbyterian schools were shut down by 1938 and most Western missionaries had fled by the onset of the Pacific War.

The most remembered case of Japanese intrusion into Christian life was their attempt to promote Shinto shrine worship. Under considerable pressure, the Methodist and Presbyterian churches agreed that Shinto veneration was permissible and not necessarily a form of idol worship, but many Korean Christians disagreed and strongly opposed the enforced practice. The issue proved so contentious that one of the major Presbyterian splinter groups, the Koshin denomination, broke off because they could not abide the Church's acceptance of those who had given into Shinto shrine worship at a time when some of their number had suffered imprisonment and torture over the issue.

The number of Korean Protestants involved in political activities, then and now, was limited to a minority.<sup>73</sup> But Korean Protestantism still benefited from the actions of the few who were prepared to sacrifice themselves. Such involvement helped the faith to avoid the association with foreign occupation forces that had almost destroyed Roman Catholicism in Korea and tainted Christianity in so much of Asia. In fact, Christianity actually came out of this period with a patriotic reputation

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>73</sup> Chung Chai-Sik, *The Encounter Between the Gospel and Neo-Confucian Culture*, 31.

that much older religions in Korea like Buddhism (which the Japanese promoted to slow Christian growth) lacked.<sup>74</sup>

### *B. The Korean War and Its Aftermath*

With Korea winning its independence at the end of the Pacific War, the 1940s saw the Korean Protestants beginning to assert their leadership over the missionaries. As Korea remained a poor nation and mission money was still needed for the running of schools, hospitals and (to a lesser extent due to the Nevius Plan) churches, issues of finances proved a problem during this period.<sup>75</sup> However, the onset of the Korean War in 1950 and the devastation it brought soon overshadowed all other issues.

Prior to the Korean War, the centre of the Church was located in North Korea with Pyongyang seen as the “Jerusalem of the East”. But with the Soviet takeover after the end of World War II, over one-third of the population fled and the once-thriving North Korean Church was gradually destroyed.<sup>76</sup> Many fleeing North Korean Christian leaders settled in Seoul which became the new capital of Korean Christianity. From this point on, any reference to the “Korean Church” will refer to South Korea alone. The mass exodus and the suffering engendered by the War and its aftermath would mark the lives of the Christians who lived through the experience.

While reading about the lives and thoughts of the major Christian leaders during the major growth years of the 1970s and 80s, it is clear how their war experiences impacted their lives, regardless of their eventual ideologies. A number of these leaders were born in North Korea and were numbered among the exiles. Among the most notable were Kyung-Chik Han, the founder of Youngnak Presbyterian Church, for many years the largest Presbyterian church in the world, and Rev. Kim Sun Do, the founder of Kwang Lim Methodist, the world’s most sizable Methodist congregation. Minjung theologian Daniel Kwang-sun Suh’s father

---

<sup>74</sup> Grayson, “Cultural Encounter”, 68.

<sup>75</sup> Clark, *Christianity in Modern Korea*, 17.

<sup>76</sup> John N. Vaughan, *The World’s 20 Largest Churches*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 25.

was killed by Communists and prominent evangelical Bong Rin Ro's father died of malnutrition, asking his son to found a church in North Korea as his dying wish.<sup>77</sup>

The cumulative impact of the Japanese occupation and the civil war caused the Korean Christians to see their religious history as that of the underside.<sup>78</sup> Some theologians would explain this sense of identity in terms of *han*. This ancient Korean word is claimed to correspond to no precise English translation, but it can be defined as "a feeling of unresolved resentment against unjustifiable suffering."<sup>79</sup> *Han* may refer both to persecution from outside forces and to internal and class-based oppression. This self-identification as a suffering church became a significant part of the *minjung* theology that developed in the 1970s, but it has been embraced to some extent by all elements of the Korean Protestant Church.

Another, equally important, aspect of the Korean Church that came out during this period was the resolve to overcome adversity and engage in Christian ministry even with very few resources. The experiences of Korean Protestants during the difficult wartime and post-war years would also influence Korean mission by helping them attain a reputation among international mission agencies for being willing to undergo hardships particularly well. This ability to go into remote areas with little support is partially born out of necessity due to a still-developing system of organisation.<sup>80</sup> But the hardiness of Korean missionaries also comes out of the self-image of many Korean Christians as being a group that has endured much suffering in the past and can survive through any obstacle. This spirit comes through in this statement from a mission trainee who lived through post-war poverty,

I was hungry when I was young, so I can eat everything.  
When we [Koreans] go to other countries, we are easy to feed  
and it is easier to become friends. When I was young, we  
were very poor, so we can wear any clothes. They [Korean  
missionaries] are well-adapted to difficult situations.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> Daniel Kwang-sun Suh, *The Korean Minjung in Christ*, Hong Kong: The Christian Conference of Asia, 1991, p. 13 and Bong Rin Ro, "South Korea: Bankrupting the Prosperity Gospel," *Christianity Today*, 42, no. 13 (November 16, 1998): 61.

<sup>78</sup> Chung Chai Sik, "Global Theology for the Common Good", 530.

<sup>79</sup> David Kwang-sun Suh, *The Korean Minjung in Christ*, 50.

<sup>80</sup> David Tai Woong Lee, "Asian Mission Boards and Societies" in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, Ed. A. Scott Moreau, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 85.

<sup>81</sup> Interview Subject No. 29

While Korean megachurches may have seen their period of greatest growth in the 1970s and 80s, a number of the most successful ones had their origin in the Korean War period and the decade of hardship that followed. Youngnak, the earliest megachurch, started out as a tent church ministry to escaping refugees in 1949. Yoido Full Gospel, which began in 1958 with 27 refugee members, also set out to assist and evangelise new immigrants to Seoul.<sup>82</sup> Such stories of immense success from humble origins have become part of the mythology of the Korean Protestant Church. While the number of Christians during this period as a percentage of the population remained fairly small, with only 3% of South Korea being Christian by the end of the 1950s, the foundations for the amazing growth to come were already being built.<sup>83</sup>

In these difficult years, South Korea received considerable aid from Western mission and charitable organisations, with the bulk coming from the U.S. The help they gained from the West contributed to forming the majority of Korean Protestant leaders of the first post-War generation into a solidly pro-West, pro-America and anti-Communist group. Observing the need for strong institutions to help restore the nation, the mission boards cast aside Nevius principles to strengthen existing schools and hospitals and build new ones.<sup>84</sup> The Korean churches often acted as agents of distribution for donations, though the churches also invested what resources they possessed into the effort. A Korean remembered the help received as follows,

After the war, we were very hungry and had no homes. But foreign Christians supported Korea. They donated everything, so a lot of people went to church. I still remember I received some milk powder and clothes. America, France... they collected a lot of material.<sup>85</sup>

It is interesting to speculate whether this period influenced the opinions of some Korean Protestants on using food, money and other incentives to bring people to their churches while in the mission field. This is a major complaint raised against the methodology of modern Korean missionaries which will be discussed in later

---

<sup>82</sup> Vaughan, *The World's 20 Largest Churches*, 25.

<sup>83</sup> Grayson, *Korea- A Religious History*, 164.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>85</sup> Interview Subject No. 11

chapters, and offers an intriguing modern twist on the nineteenth century controversy over “rice Christians.”

While the Korean denominations had become independent, they remained influenced by events and debates in the Western churches. In the contentious mid-twentieth century debates between evangelicals and liberals, South Korean churches became polarised. One group of churches supported the ecumenical and political goals of the World Council of Churches with many forming the Korean National Christian Council. A greater number rejected the ideals of the WCC, out of a belief that ecumenism would dilute the Gospel message or out of suspicion of the liberal political agenda. Instead, these churches looked largely to American conservative evangelicalism for inspiration.<sup>86</sup> This division was perhaps best epitomised by the largest of the Korean Presbyterian schisms; the 1959 split of the Tonghap and Hapdong denominations was brought about partly over the debate over whether to join the WCC, with the Tonghap branch approving of the group and the Hapdong Presbyterians in disagreement.

In spite of the turmoil caused by years of war and occupation, these years proved invaluable in building today’s Korean Protestantism. There are authors who argue that the economic difficulties and political chaos operated as advantages in Korean church growth by making the Church a source of refuge and an avenue for protest. Some even feel a certain regret at the current state of prosperity.<sup>87</sup> While the great economic advances of the 1970s and 80s brought undeniable numerical success to Korean Protestant churches and pushed Christianity into the mainstream, the results of that period have resulted in much recent re-assessment.

### *III. The Megachurches and the Boom Period*

#### *A. Urbanisation and Church Growth*

While hardly devoid of turmoil, the 1970s and 80s brought about many

---

<sup>86</sup> Sang-Heung Lee, “Preaching for the Upbuilding of the Church in Transition,” (D.Phil. diss., University of Pretoria, 2004), 196; accessed 5 August 2006, 196.

<sup>87</sup> Kook Il Han, “120 Years of Korean Mission,” 275.

positive changes to South Korea. The formerly ruined country started to grow rapidly in such vital areas as the economy, education and urbanisation. The growth of Protestantism in these years was just as remarkable and attracted worldwide attention. While other religions, perhaps most notably Buddhism, also gained in numbers during these decades, Protestant Christianity showed the most substantial gains and became the most dynamic religious force in the country. This potent combination of religious and economic growth, and the confident feelings that resulted, would ultimately be the main force behind the emergence of the Korean missionary movement.

David Barrett (see Table 3) estimates the proportion of Christians in the population had already grown to 18.3% by 1970 and this percentage increased to 39.9% of the population by mid-1990. Christians defined as “Protestant” (as opposed to Barrett’s other groupings of Independents, Roman Catholics, Marginal Christians and Anglicans) make up the largest religious group with an increase of 6.9% in 1970 to 18.5% by 1990. Other Christian groups would also see increases, as in the growth of Roman Catholicism from 2.6% in 1970 to 7.6% in 1990. The only group that saw a substantial decrease in the twentieth century would be the Ethnoreligionists (another name for those who follow Shamanistic practices), who fell in official statistics from having the allegiance of 81.3% of Koreans to 16.3% by 1990.<sup>88</sup> However, while there is “universal” prejudice against Shamanism in “respectable” Korean circles, much consultation of fortune tellers and healers continues to go on in secret, so the percentage may be misleading.<sup>89</sup>

There is also evidence that the strength of religious devotion focused upon a particular faith has increased in the twentieth century. In 1964, only 3.5 million South Koreans noted a specific religious affiliation on government census forms out of a population of 28.2 million. By 1983, that number was close to 40% reporting a particular faith and an even larger 54% in 1997.<sup>90</sup> While government surveys can be

---

<sup>88</sup> Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 682.

<sup>89</sup> Chongho Kim, *Korean Shamanism: The Cultural Paradox*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), xiii.

<sup>90</sup> Don Baker, “Looking for God in the Streets of Seoul: The Resurgence of Religion in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Seoul,” (*Harvard Asia Quarterly*, August 2001); accessed September 2005; available from [www.fas.harvard.edu/~asiactr/haq/200101/0104a002.htm](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~asiactr/haq/200101/0104a002.htm); Internet, 2



unreliable, a more indisputable sign of increased faith lies in the fact that the number of religious buildings rose from 10,366 in 1962 to 58,896 in 1993. The number of Protestant churches increased over six-fold in that period, from 6,785 to 42,598.<sup>91</sup>

This rise in religious adherence in the midst of rapid urbanisation and modernisation stands against previous conventional wisdom that religion would decline in the face of modernisation. The Korean Christian case is so remarkable in this respect that it has been cited in many recent works as an important example of the fallacy of that idea. Such writers include Grace Davie's *Europe: The Exceptional Case* and Alister McGrath's *The Future of Christianity*. For instance, Davie notes that South Korea proves that there need be no incompatibility between modernisation and vibrant religion, as internationalisation and globalisation have both been eagerly embraced by Korean churches.<sup>92</sup>

A major reason for the compatibility between modernity and the Protestant religion lies in the overall history of the Korean Protestant Church. It has consistently made gains by meeting the spiritual needs of the people through addressing the secular problems of the time. The Western missionaries in Korea had helped to fill the religious vacuum of the time and to build up the struggling country. And during the occupation and war years, many of the churches encouraged both active and spiritual forms of resistance and gave aid to the impoverished. Sebastian Kim observes that this trend continued during the post-war years as the Korean Church divided into two strands: *kibok sinang* (or the prosperity gospel often espoused through the Church Growth movement) and *minjung* theology. While *minjung* theology is sometimes praised more for directly tackling social issues, Kim believes that both were contextualising expressions of Korean Christianity in response to the poverty and injustice of the time.<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 3

<sup>92</sup> Grace Davie, *Europe: The Exceptional Case*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2002), 134-5

<sup>93</sup> Sebastian Kim, "The Identity and Mission of the Church in the Asian Contexts of Communal Conflict, Poverty and Injustice," [article online] accessed May 2006; available from <http://www.martynmission.cam.ac.uk/CSebKim.wim.htm>; Internet.

While the people of South Korea enjoyed a better lifestyle than before in some ways, psychologically many had considerable needs due largely to the difficulties caused by an urbanisation process that was unusually fast even in the light of the general modern move in non-Western nations towards cities. Table 4 documents the fast growth of urbanisation in South Korea. In 1960, slightly more than 25% of South Koreans lived in cities of over 50,000 people. By 1980, that figure reached 57.3% with 78.5% in 1995.<sup>94</sup> The population of Seoul increased from 13% of the South Korean population in the mid-1960s to 25% in 1995, with that number growing to over 45% if the surrounding Kyeonggi province area is included.<sup>95</sup>

With such large numbers moving to cities, overwhelmingly for financial reasons, there are bound to be problems of transition. People must leave their friends and family behind and find a new community. The transition from rural to urban life also led to the abandonment of many former traditions and values in the absence of the communities which had sustained them. In addition to these challenges, South Koreans in the 1960s, 70s and 80s had to build a democratic society for the first time which involved almost thirty years of autocracy, notably under Presidents Park Jung-Hee (1962-1979) and Chun Doo-Whan (1980-1988), before South Korea settled into the relatively smooth form of government that it enjoys today. All of these social challenges presented opportunities for the Korean Protestant Church.

Harvey Cox has a theory that a vital element in the success of any religion is its ability to “equip people to live in rapidly changing societies where personal responsibility and inventiveness, skills associated with a democratic polity and an entrepreneurial economy are indispensable.”<sup>96</sup> While this theory is questionable in terms of its cultural bias (is every society looking for democracy and entrepreneurial success?), it certainly holds up in the case of South Korea. He believes that Korean Christianity achieved this feat during the crucial years of societal growth, even holding it out as an example of what could happen in other Asian nations undergoing similar changes. The major churches of the time, such as Yoido Full Gospel, Young-

---

<sup>94</sup> Baker, “Looking for God in the Streets of Seoul,” 4.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>96</sup> Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven*, (London: Cassell, 1996), 219.



nak and Kwang Lim, thrived by providing their adherents with the spiritual resources needed to adapt to the new environment.

Korean Protestantism has shown special strength within cities, especially Seoul. Ten out of the eleven largest congregations in the world, all Protestant, are located within Seoul.<sup>97</sup> The rural areas are so much weaker in numbers and resources that a number of urban churches, Sarang and Onnuri being two examples, count outreach to those areas as lying within their mission programmes. The Protestant focus upon cities dates back to the original Western missionaries who, like many missionaries including today's Korean ones, preferred to set up headquarters in urban areas for comfort and convenience. They also concentrated upon the northern part of Korea, and the southern part of South Korea to this day has fewer Christians. Southern-situated Pusan, South Korea's second-largest city, was so neglected that Buddhism, not Christianity, became the dominant religion in that area with 35% Buddhist affiliation compared to less than 12% Protestant.<sup>98</sup>

#### *B. Key Factors in Korean Church Growth*

##### *1. The Role of the Cell Group in South Korea and Overseas*

In reaching the urban population, Korean churches reached new heights of ingenuity and resourcefulness, drawing the attention of the world in the process. Perhaps most important ingredient in the post-war growth of South Korean Protestant churches lay in their keen targeting abilities and encouragement of lay leadership and evangelisation. This may be best seen through one of the most internationally significant and influential developments within the Korean Protestant churches: the rise of the home groups. Such groups have contributed to Korean church growth from the first megachurch, Younknak, to more recent large churches like Myungsung, Sarang and Onnuri. Probably the best known Korean adherent of the home group and one of the most prominent worldwide promoters of the concept is David Yonggi Cho of Yoido Full Gospel Church, who led his church to a membership of hundreds of thousands of people largely through shrew utilisation of the home groups.

---

<sup>97</sup> *Operation World*, Editors: Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryck, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), 388.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

The theory behind home groups, which evolved into the globally popular cell group model, is fairly simple and ideal for young churches lacking a prior dominant structure of organisation. For example, a church member who was a banker could try to set up a group of financial people or a woman in an apartment building might invite friends over to tea and prayer. Through the home groups, every member could play a direct role in building up the membership of their church. A wide variety of specialised home groups have been set up in South Korea over the years including ones for entertainers and athletes with the groups for soldiers being an area of special success. Cho encouraged would-be group leaders to first show love and concern to the potential members and then engage in evangelism when the would-be members were open.<sup>99</sup> Once a group has grown too large, it would be divided into new groups with trained leaders. The system is designed to be almost self-perpetuating once it gets going.

The home group idea made the age of the megachurches possible, as massive churches were not feasible under a model where the pastor was responsible for every individual member's pastoral care. While megachurches have always been the exception in their sheer size, their practices and programmes would inspire and be replicated in many smaller Korean churches.<sup>100</sup> The most prominent megachurches remain trendsetters for Korean congregations in almost all areas of church life, including mission.

The concept proved well suited for South Korean urban life. Boyung Lee theorised that the class meeting system was popular because many Koreans found it similar to the traditional, close-knit Korean family units.<sup>101</sup> Those who abandoned rural towns for impersonal big cities rediscovered the familial fellowship and support that they had left behind in the small group meetings. Moreover, small groups provided a way to turn the Korean Protestant Church tendency towards

---

<sup>99</sup> Paul Yonggi Cho, "How the World's Largest Church Got That Way", *Christianity Today*, 28, no. 8, (May 18, 1984): 53.

<sup>100</sup> Young-gi Hong, "Encounter with Modernity: The 'McDonaldization' and 'Charismatization' of Korean Megachurches," *International Review of Mission*, 92, no. 365, (April 2003): 244.

<sup>101</sup> Boyung Lee, "Rethinking the Dynamics of Christianity and Culture from a Post-Colonial Feminist Perspective," *Journal of Theologies and Culture in Asia*, 3, (2000): 12-13.

fragmentation into an advantage, allowing for greater options and flexibility as the small groups could promote diversity while still remaining within the larger church body.<sup>102</sup>

During the 1970s and 80s, the Korean Protestant Church began to grow as an intercultural power which could give to and learn from other churches around the world. The remarkable membership figures attained by the megachurches were a source of curiosity around the world as people from other cultures sought to learn from the Korean example. In fact, this period is cited as a prime illustration of the “multidirectional flow of cultural changes in the contemporary world.”<sup>103</sup>

The movement that some compare to a “second Reformation” in its overall impact on global church life grew in large part through the ideas and promotion of Korean Christians in their development of the home groups. This is particularly true as the cell growth model formulated by Ralph Neighbour Jr. and used by many churches is commonly seen as an adaptation of Cho’s ideas.<sup>104</sup> Cho was convinced that his cell group theory could work anywhere in the world and formed the Church Growth International group which spreads its message through conferences, TV shows and various forms of media around the world. Furthermore, the example of Korean megachurches like Youngnak and Yoido helped to inspire some of the concepts within the church growth movement in the West, led largely by scholars like Donald McGavran and Peter Wagner from Fuller Seminary, which became (and remains) a major haven for Korean theological students studying abroad.

Examples of the global applicability of Korean church ideas can be found in a number of places. Nigerian preacher Daniel Olukoya modelled much of his Mountain of Fire and Miracles ministry on Cho’s theories. Olukoya now has the largest congregation in Africa and a thriving worldwide ministry. He even borrowed

---

<sup>102</sup> Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford, Susan D. Rose, “South Korea: Modernization with a Vengeance, Evangelization with the Modern Edge” in *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 430

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 423

<sup>104</sup> Peter Koh, “The Cell Group Church Structure: An Evaluation,” *Church and Society*, 6, no. 1, (2003): 40.

the ancient Korean idea of the prayer mountain, an idea from traditional religion adopted by Korean Christians.<sup>105</sup> Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson affirm that one of Cho's church growth conferences inspired the expansion that occurred in their Pennsylvania-based Presbyterian church.<sup>106</sup> And Peter Koh writes of how a number of Singaporean and Malaysian churches have made use of the cell group model in the organisation of their church life.<sup>107</sup>

It was not just the organisational elements of the Korean churches that appeals to Christians around the world. The deep spirituality and intense prayer life of Korean Protestantism has impressed many foreigners. Korean Protestants in large numbers routinely attend early morning prayer meetings and go in retreat to the prayer mountains. Patrick Johnstone connects the spiritual influence of Korean churches and the exportation of their prayer mountain fasting and general prayer intensity to the "massive mushrooming" of the global prayer movement.<sup>108</sup>

However, for all of its positive points, the Korean problems of insufficient cultural adaptation that would plague its foreign mission programme also hindered its promotion of its church growth ideas. While praising the conference he attended, Russ Robinson admits that a lot of what he learned seemed to be specific to the Korean context and was not particularly helpful for the needs of his church in America.<sup>109</sup> Peter Koh writes of how churches in Singapore and Malaysia have had issues with the Korean cell growth model in terms of the focus on quick numerical results and the fact that too much time is demanded in the groups for "time-poor" Singaporeans, though the implicit assumption he makes that South Koreans have more time on their hands than Singaporeans is highly questionable. He wonders whether the Confucian aspects of conformity and authority that he perceives in the

---

<sup>105</sup> This information comes from a 2003 abstract proposal for the Yale/Edinburgh Conference from Gbeena Ibiola. However, the paper was not presented.

<sup>106</sup> Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 148

<sup>107</sup> Koh, "The Cell Group Structure," 40.

<sup>108</sup> Patrick Johnstone, *The Church is Bigger Than You Think*, (Fearn: Christian Focus, 1998), 131.

<sup>109</sup> Donahue and Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups*, 148.

Korean churches may be inappropriate for Singapore, a strange statement in light of Singapore's almost entirely Chinese Christian community.<sup>110</sup>

The fact that Koh sees such differences between South Korea and Singapore is striking, given that the two societies are not so dissimilar with both being modern Asian economic powerhouses influenced by Chinese culture. Koh's account challenges the assumption, of which several examples will be given throughout this dissertation, that Korean missionaries are better able to spread their ideas in Asia because of cultural similarities. Nonetheless, with proper adjustments made, Korean Protestant concepts for spiritual and church growth have proven inspirational for a number of different societies.

## 2. *Evangelism and Spirituality in the Church Growth Era*

Another prominent element of the 1970s and 80s for South Korean Protestant churches were massive evangelistic events. Among the more notable of these mass events was Billy Graham's visit in 1973 and Explo '74, which was organised by the Korean Campus Crusade for Christ and drew 2.7 million people.<sup>111</sup> Harvey Cox cites such events as prime examples of the great organisational skills of the South Korean churches, noting that one campaign in 1979 involved 2,050 churches working together and another in 1981 included 4,700 churches. He believes such events helped build the quantitative and marketing skills that led Koreans from rural and traditional backgrounds to succeed in a capitalist urban environment.<sup>112</sup> The ability of so many churches to work together also demonstrates that in spite of the Korean Protestant reputation for disharmony, which is admittedly often accurate, the churches can at least temporarily together on certain projects widely perceived as important.

Sung-Ho Kim offers a less positive analysis of the mass rallies phenomenon. He sees them as an escape from the economic and political instability of the time and

---

<sup>110</sup> Koh, "The Cell Group Structure," 47-8.

<sup>111</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 6.

<sup>112</sup> Cox, *Fire From Heaven*, 232-3.

as an affirmation of the churches' affluence and Western connections.<sup>113</sup> In a way, these large events were the Korean Protestant equivalent of the 1988 Seoul Olympics as a way to show their power and strength to the world. Since the less growth-oriented 1990s, these events have largely lost their power, though the smaller-scale mission conferences of today possess some of their spirit in their appeal to youth and their ability to bring churches together.

Another controversial element of the churches of the 1970s and 80s was the emphasis on attaining worldly blessings through faith. This emphasis, often called "prosperity theology," has been a common feature among Western and non-Western Christian churches alike in recent years. This theology has been aptly described by Chang-Dae Gwak and Jurgens Hendricks as "mystical, but materialistic."<sup>114</sup> To some extent, the linking of Christianity to financial success dates back to when Korean scholars hoped that Protestantism would give Korea similar success to the West. Bong Rin Ro sums up the conventional thinking on this issue with his writing that many Korean churches were guilty of teaching a "prosperity theology", saying that if you give more money, then God will bless you more. Like many scholars (along with a large number of my interview subjects), Ro felt that this element was an undesirable holdover from shamanistic beliefs in the appeasement of spirits in exchange for personal gain.<sup>115</sup> But in light of the widespread global popularity of the prosperity doctrine, its appeal for Korean churches seems to go beyond ties to shamanism to a more universal yearning for blessings and success.

The perceived adherence to a spiritual, blessing-oriented form of Christianity ties into another frequent complaint: that the churches became detached from the problems of the world in their focus on religious matters and personal piety. Most church leaders of the 1970s and 80s deliberately stayed away from political activism even in the midst of such grave national crises as President Chun Doo-Whan taking

---

<sup>113</sup> Sung-Ho Kim, "Rapid Modernisation and the Future of Korean Christianity" *Religion*, 32, no. 1 (Jan. 2002), 33

<sup>114</sup> Chang-Dae Gwak and Jurgens Hendricks, "An Interpretation of the Recent Membership Decline in the Korean Protestant Church," *Missionalia*, 29, no. 1, (April 2001): 60.

<sup>115</sup> Bong Rin Ro, "South Korea: Bankrupting the Prosperity Gospel," *Christianity Today*, 42, no. 13, (Nov. 16, 1998): 59.



over control of the government through the power of the military. Some church leaders were politically conservative, while others felt, as did Cho, that their primary job lay in preaching the gospel and affecting society indirectly.<sup>116</sup>

The *minjung* theologians who emerged in the 1970s reacted against the lack of interest in political and social affairs of the typical megachurch leaders, whom some felt were acting as the “guardian and missionary of the pro-capital and authoritarian culture.”<sup>117</sup> *Minjung* thought was also recognised internationally, gaining the renown among liberal theologians that megachurch leaders had among worldwide evangelicals. Reading global theological overviews might give one the impression that *minjung* theology is the only type of Korean theological thinking, as it is frequently the sole example of Korean theology given in books like *The Modern Theologians*.<sup>118</sup>

*Minjung* leaders had several goals. They wanted the Church to take an active role in solving problems that they saw as arising out of modernisation. They pushed for the nation to rid itself of autocratic leaders. Furthermore, they wished to build a fairer economy and supported the fledgling Korean labour movement. They hoped to bring new ideas to the religious education system, which even conservative leaders admitted was weak, and to explore some of the theologies coming in from other parts of the world, notably liberation theology. *Minjung* theology can be seen as a uniquely Korean look at liberation theology, though with less Marxist ideology included than in the works of their Latin American counterparts.<sup>119</sup> *Minjung* theologians also tried to utilise traditional Korean ideas more freely than Korean evangelicals. The term *minjung* was itself a combination of the ancient Chinese characters, *min*, meaning “people” and *jung*, meaning “mass.”<sup>120</sup>

---

<sup>116</sup> Cho, *More Than Numbers*, 70.

<sup>117</sup> Jin-Ho Kim and Sookjin Lee, “A Retrospect and Prospect on the Korean Modernity and Minjung,” *Journal of Theology and Cultures in Asia*, 1, no. 1, (Feb. 2002): 166.

<sup>118</sup> George Gispert-Sauch, “Asian Theology.” In *The Modern Theologians*, ed. David Ford, (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997), 467-8.

<sup>119</sup> Grayson, *Korea- A Religious History*, 166.

<sup>120</sup> David Kwang-sun Suh, *The Korean Minjung in Christ*, 23.



#### *IV. The Stagnation of the 1990s and Today*

##### *A. A Statistical Analysis of the Decline*

After years of continual success, the 1990s proved sobering for South Korea and its Protestant churches. The worldwide economic recession in the early 1990s exerted a profound impact upon South Korea as the country had to face a \$150 billion foreign debt and the humiliating intrusion of the World Bank into their financial affairs. The corrupt practices of powerful corporations, such as Hyundai, were exposed by the more open press. Even positive changes, like the long-awaited move towards full democracy and a melting of the icy relations with North Korea led to confusion and a re-appraisal of long-held prejudices. The nation wondered if the steps taken by the government and corporations to bring security and modernisation in the post-war years had been worthwhile. If the standards and ideas of the past were no longer effective, what was to be done for the future?

The Korean Protestant Church found itself in the thick of this debate. After all, it benefited as much as any group from the boom years as it found a way to feed the spiritual needs of the country in the midst of many changes. But now the churches no longer seemed to be as much in step with the needs of society as it had been and Koreans lost some of their previous interest in Korean Protestantism. After several decades of spectacular increases, the rate of church growth started to decline. The perception of failure and fear of further losses has led to a score of critical works by scholars starting in the 1990s and continuing up to today.

The extent of the perceived decline is difficult to assess as various statistics can contradict each other. For instance, David Barrett (see Table 3) estimates that the annual growth rate for Korean Protestantism from 1990 to 2000 was 1.1%, slightly behind the overall growth rate of 1.12% for all Christian groups. The proportion of Protestants as part of the population went up from 18.5% in 1990 to 18.9% in 2000, while the total percentage of Christians moved from 39.9% to 40.8%. According to Barrett, the Christian rate of growth is healthier than for other major Korean non-Christian religions, as Buddhism grew by .69%, Confucianism by .66% and Ethnoreligionists by .46%. The Non-Religious category had the greatest rise of all

the religions listed with a growth of 3.9%, an overall increase from 1.3% of the population in 1990 to 1.5% in 2000.

*Operation World's* figures (Table 5), also from 2001, present somewhat different statistics. They show the percentage of Christians within the population at 31.67% with an annual growth rate of 1.9%. However, Protestants enjoyed a much healthier annual growth rate than the other Christian groups with a 4.5% increase. But *Operation World* has a much different take on the Non-Religious segment of the population, listing that group at 35.02% of the population, though with an annual growth rate of only .4%. Christianity has the highest growth rate of all the religions listed, except for Baha'i and Islam, both very small groups which benefited from a recent influx of foreign migrants.

More confusion emerges from the figures provided in Table 6 entitled, "An Interpretation of the Recent Membership Decline in the Korean Protestant Church." The statistics come from the 1995 *Yearbook of Religions* in Korea and show the number of Protestants growing substantially from 3,205,309 in 1970 to 12,532,110 in 1990. The growth then slows with only 13,909,284 in 1995. The work notes that a 1995 report of the Korean Protestant Church indicated that while there had been a 9% increase in 1989 and a 5.8% one in 1990, the rate of growth slowed to 0.6% in 1992 and actually went down by 4% in 1993.<sup>121</sup>

Furthermore, Gwak and Hendricks show figures for non-Christian Korean religions, especially Buddhism, that are much larger than those given by *Operation World* and Barrett. In fact, Gwak and Hendrick's figure for the number of South Korean Buddhists in 2000 is three times higher than Barrett's estimates. The figure for the total number of religious people in South Korea is also 1/3 higher than the total population. However, this disparity, like many puzzling South Korean religious statistics, comes about because some claim allegiances to more than one religion, a common phenomenon among East Asians.

---

<sup>121</sup> Gwak and Hendricks, "An Interpretation of the Recent Membership Decline," 58.

Even discerning the current percentage of Christians within the population is difficult. Alister McGrath pointed out a 2000 C.I.A. study that reported 49% of South Korea to be Christian, which seems too high in comparison to other reports.<sup>122</sup> But a recent 19.66% figure given from the National Statistical Office appears rather low.<sup>123</sup> In my interviews with South Koreans, the most common percentage mentioned was 25%, but any sort of numerical precision is hard to establish. A 2003 government census giving a figure of 27.3% of the population as Christian may be the most accurate.<sup>124</sup>

In spite of the frustrations inherent in analysing Korean religious statistics, there is a sufficient statistical evidence overall to support a pessimistic view of the future of South Korean Protestantism, such as a 1994 government study indicating a 4% decline in overall church attendance.<sup>125</sup> Still, many commentators maintain hope for the future. *Operation World* remains optimistic, forecasting that South Korea could become the first majority Protestant country in Asia.<sup>126</sup> Barrett also feels that if the current gradual rate of growth continues that 60-80% of the population may eventually be a part of some form of Christianity.<sup>127</sup>

One hopeful sign comes from the fact that there are still many young people in the churches. James Huntley Grayson cited a 1995 Census that had 72.5% of South Korean Protestant Christians being between the ages of 15 and 44 compared to 69.2% of Catholics and 60.2% of Buddhists. And over one fourth of all Protestants fell into the 15-24 age group.<sup>128</sup> In a similar vein, Kwang- Soon Lee notes that, while some older Korean churches are showing signs of aging congregations akin to many of their Western counterparts, Sunday schools and various kinds of young

---

<sup>122</sup> Alister McGrath, *The Future of Christianity*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 30.

<sup>123</sup> Kwang-Soon Lee, "Growth and Undergrowth of the Korean Church," *Korean Presbyterian Journal of Theology*, 1, no. 1, (May, 2001): 268.

<sup>124</sup> "Religion in South Korea," accessed 20 August 2006; available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion\\_in\\_South\\_Korea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_South_Korea); Internet. (Based upon an April 23, 2004 *Yonhap News* article)

<sup>125</sup> Bong Rin Ro, "South Korea: Bankrupting the Prosperity Gospel," 58.

<sup>126</sup> Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryck, *Operation World*, 388.

<sup>127</sup> Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 685.

<sup>128</sup> Grayson, *Korea- A Religious History*, 253.

people's groups maintain consistent growth.<sup>129</sup> These young people are at the forefront of the changes in direction and programming being made in the Korean Protestant Church, including the move towards foreign mission.

## *B. The Root Causes of the Decline*

### *I. Competition and Societal Change*

Some Korean scholars see parallels with Christian decline in the West to current Korean events. For example, Lee writes,

When reflecting on the Western Church of the latter half of the twentieth century, especially the ageing and collapse of the European Church, and the emptying out of the larger American urban churches, we can't help but to wonder if... the Korean Church is in danger of following in the same footsteps.<sup>130</sup>

However, Lee does not see the Church as doomed to decline. Once steps are taken to remedy the current problems, she believes that the Church can experience growth again, albeit on a more modest scale. While few predict a return to the frenzied growth of the past, optimism and confidence remain among the great majority of the numerous works that deal with this subject. Like Lee, most commentators on the Korean Church believe that the key lies in highlighting the problems and taking specific steps to remedy the situation.

One problem for the Protestant churches lies in the increased competition for people's attention in recent years. There is now greater vitality among other South Korean religions. For instance, Roman Catholicism has seen consistent growth during the 1990s.<sup>131</sup> Increased acceptance of Christian religions put an end to the "ghetto mentality" of the past and ushered in a more confident Korean Catholicism. Vatican II led to a less isolated Catholic Church which was more open to new ideas. While the Catholic Church once had an inflexible attitude towards Korean traditions, it developed a more accepting attitude towards indigenous culture than Protestant

---

<sup>129</sup> Kwang-Soon Lee, "Growth and Undergrowth of the Korean Church," 286.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 262

<sup>131</sup> Grayson's article, "Cultural Encounter: Korean Protestantism and Other Religions," saw Roman Catholicism growing somewhat faster than Protestantism, which the Hendricks and Gwak article confirms. However, Barrett and *Operation World* both see Protestantism with a somewhat faster rate of growth.

denominations. In the 1960s and 70s, this was a disadvantage since so many wanted to copy Western values.<sup>132</sup> Appreciation of this aspect of Korean Catholicism has grown in the last few decades as Koreans sought a greater balance between Western and traditional values. One non-religious Korean interview subject described the appeal of Korean Catholicism in this way,

[The Presbyterian Church says] 'Our Church is the real Church. Don't go to the temple or to the other Catholic Church.' The Catholic Church said it was all right to go to the temple. I think the Catholic Church and Buddhism are better.<sup>133</sup>

While still lagging behind Protestantism in total numbers, the Korean Catholic Church now stands as a strong alternative form of Christianity.

Buddhism also experienced new growth with the opening of religious freedom. The revival of traditional monasticism helped bring about renewed vitality, but James Huntley Grayson also gives credit to the borrowing of ideas from Korean Protestants. Buddhism was inspired by such elements as lay leadership, daily prayer, utilisation of the mass media and youth groups.<sup>134</sup> There are even Buddhist hymns with the music taken from Protestant tunes dating back to the Western missionary period.

Another reason for the stagnation may simply be that South Korean Protestants have largely completed their task of domestic evangelisation. According to some statistics, the number of people with no religion in the nation is as small as 2% of the population or less.<sup>135</sup> Considering that specific religious affiliation in South Korea increased substantially over the course of the twentieth century, it may be that most of the population with an inclination to join a particular religion have already done so.

Beyond other religions, there is competition from forces within the greater Korean society. Chung Chai-Sik theorises that South Korea is going through a

---

<sup>132</sup> Davie, *Europe: The Exceptional Case*, 128.

<sup>133</sup> Interview Subject No. 14

<sup>134</sup> Grayson, "Encounter," 68.

<sup>135</sup> Such low figures come from Kwang-Soon Lee, 283, Barrett, 682 and Table 3. Grayson also shares this theory with Lee in "Cultural Encounter", 71.

religious crisis that all advanced industrial societies face as an increasingly pluralistic and liberal society offers new spiritual and secular alternatives.<sup>136</sup> The Church is losing its previous monopoly as a force linking the individual to society as more options become available. This admission that South Korea is going through the same difficulties as other modernised nations serves as a counter-argument to the view that South Korea presents an exception to the theory that modernisation is incompatible with religious growth.

A more specific example of a way in which South Korea is echoing the problems of previous advanced societies lies in the effect of suburbanisation upon the urban churches. With cities like Seoul not enjoying the most family-friendly of reputations, middle and upper-class Koreans in recent years have moved to suburbs in increasingly large numbers. As in the West, urban churches have suffered some loss of membership as a result, though there is still willingness on the part of many churchgoers to travel far distances to attend services. Kwang-Soon Lee attributes stagnation in central city churches such as Youngnak, Sae Moon An and Youn Dong, to this phenomenon. However, newer suburban-area churches, like Myung Sung, have flourished and Korean churches may yet avoid the mistakes of some Western nations in neglecting the suburbs when planning new churches.<sup>137</sup>

## 2. *Discontentment with the Churches and Their Leaders*

While outside problems have contributed to the current difficulties, most of the blame in works on this subject falls upon the Korean Protestant churches themselves. The general reflective atmosphere of the 1990s contributed in some ways to looking anew at the activities of the churches. The financial aspects of the churches came under special scrutiny. After the free spending years of the 1970s and 80s, during which churches would buy whole mountains to build retreats, prayer centres and cemeteries, the 1990s saw more suspicion about the motives behind Church leadership and spending.<sup>138</sup> While there were few Christian scandals to match some of the corporate and political ones, there is still some cynicism regarding the

---

<sup>136</sup> Chung Chai-Sik, "Global Theology for the Common Good," 535.

<sup>137</sup> Kwang-Soon Lee, "Growth and Undergrowth of the Korean Church," 284-5.

<sup>138</sup> Bong Rin Ro, "South Korea: Bankrupting the Prosperity Gospel," 59.





financial practices of churches, particularly those of the head pastor. In my interview with a professor from Seoul University, he said,

There are so many corrupted churches in [terms of] how the ministers are treated like dictators. A minister with 300 members can get \$100,000 a year. Some churches even pay for the children to go overseas. All the money is spent on buying land, buildings and pastors' salaries.<sup>139</sup>

Previously, churches taught that gaining financial and worldly blessings was positive for both the individual and society. But revelations of corruption and scandals in the 1980s and 90s showed the darker side of material success. Moreover, a new generation questioned the sometimes extreme sacrifices made by post-war Koreans in the name of finding professional success. This conversation between M.T.I. students demonstrates some of the re-evaluation going on,

*Interview Subject No. 68:* That is our big problem. Christians see success as having a big house, getting into a good college.

*Interview Subject No. 73:* If he or she gives a tithe, they are a good member. Our faith and our life are separated.

*Interview Subject No. 66:* We have to evaluate the meaning of success. Sometimes the pastor is confused. Once I told a pastor that perhaps a member shouldn't receive a blessing [he asked for]. The pastor agreed, but said this was what the member wanted.

*Interview Subject No. 68:* We need to train young people for their professional lives. They may be lawyers, but they can lack integrity.

Pastors receive much criticism for the problems in their churches, especially the head pastors who are instrumental in forming the vision for their congregation. There was discomfort among many of my interview subjects about the large amount of power that the head pastor holds. One subject compared pastoral power in the U.S. to that in South Korea by saying that in the U.S., the minister serves the members, while in Korea, the members serve the pastors.<sup>140</sup>

However, the interview subjects acknowledged that pastors are under tremendous pressure to keep numbers high and are usually blamed if membership

---

<sup>139</sup> Interview Subject No. 50

<sup>140</sup> Interview Subject No. 51



falls. The fact that many members attend church in order to follow one particular minister increases the connection between a pastor's performance and overall membership figures. While my interview subjects may express dissatisfaction with pastoral power, there was still respect for pastors, particularly ones they knew personally.

The dependence of churches upon a charismatic leader presents another difficulty. Famous megachurches such as Yoido and Kwang Lim have had the same individual, frequently the same person who founded the church, in charge for decades. While the leader's life story and preaching skills become a beloved part of the church, the danger comes when the pastor dies or retires. Often a protégé or even a son will be groomed to succeed, but the successor may or may not draw the same loyalty. Younknak Church recently had a change in leadership from their founding pastor and has since lost its position as the world's largest Presbyterian Church to other newer megachurches (see Table 7).

A further problem for the pastoral system in South Korea is that an exciting and relevant vision that a pastor once set for the congregation may not be as fresh decades later. While many prominent post-war megachurches remain influential and important institutions in South Korean Christian life, it is difficult for a church to remain on the cutting edge with the same pastors holding power for decades. It is likely no coincidence that two emerging megachurches best-known for international ministries, Sarang (founded in 1975) and Onnuri (formed in 1985), are younger churches that first targeted a different generation of churchgoers than the post-war congregations. Seven of the fifteen largest megachurches shown in Table 7 were established after 1975, demonstrating that the newer generation of megachurches can attract just as many members as their more celebrated post-War counterparts.

### *3. A Call for Social Responsibility*

Another common complaint regarding the Protestant churches of South Korea is that they lack a proper sense of social responsibility. "Social responsibility" can take on several dimensions. First, there is the idea that churches should do more

charitable work to aid those in need. Granted, it can be accurately said that Christians have done much of the volunteer work in South Korea and that a large number of Korean charities were founded by Christians.<sup>141</sup> In my interviews, even those who were involved in such valuable church-sponsored charities as helping orphans, migrants and North Korean refugees felt that churches should do more to help. Secondly, there is the notion that churches need to tackle wider problems in society that create poverty and suffering through social and political activism.

But social and political activism by itself is not seen as the answer either. The *minjung* movement went through a decline concurrent with the misfortunes of the megachurches. It was always a small movement consisting largely of the highly educated who were much more liberal than the average Korean Protestant. To some extent the *minjung* movement was a victim of its own success. According to Hong Eyoul Hwang, once democracy was firmly established in the 1990s, the *minjung* community became more of a faith movement and gave up its revolutionary character.<sup>142</sup> With new freedoms emerging in Korean society, *minjung* theologians lacked a strong focus and seemed out of date.

Like the megachurches, the *minjung* movement has attracted its share of criticism in this period of re-evaluation. While changes were likely inevitable, as revolutions rarely maintain their original passion for long, the faith aspect of the *minjung* movement had never been as widely embraced as its social activism. It was common for people to attend *minjung* meetings to fulfil their political aims but still attend a more traditional church for their spiritual needs. Hwang laments that the *minjung* leaders did not find a proper balance between social and spiritual ministry.

Chung Chai-Sik goes further and says that the movement had promise, but that the theology was largely the perspective of a limited group of Korean intellectuals who, in spite of their hopes of developing an indigenous theology, relied heavily on

---

<sup>141</sup> Han Kyung-Chik, "The Present and Future of the Korean Church," in *Korean Church Growth Explosion*, 283.

<sup>142</sup> Hong Eyoul Hwang, "Searching for a New Paradigm of Church and Mission in a Secularized and Postmodern Context in Korea," *International Review of Mission*, 92, no. 364, (Jan. 2003): 86-7.

Western theology. They became too radical for the conservative mainstream and their political emphasis made them vulnerable to competition from secular forces.<sup>143</sup> But the *minjung* movement is far from a lost cause as it has also been in the process of redefining itself, in a similar manner to the megachurches, through increased engagement in global affairs.

Another aspect of social responsibility lies in whether Korean churches have lost their ability to criticise abuses within society. Harvey Cox questions whether the churches went too far in their attempts to blend into the mainstream. Did they succeed so well that they lost the distinctive power of ethical critique that they once possessed in previous decades as a religious minority, notably during the Japanese occupation period?<sup>144</sup> Did Protestantism in South Korea become just one more institution to rebel against?

An even more fundamental problem is that, as Suh Kyung-Suk puts it, South Korean Christians no longer believe that if the number of Christians increases, Korean society will automatically become better.<sup>145</sup> If anything, people feel that the moral situation became worse as the number of Christians rose. The idea that growth may have come too quickly to the Korean churches at the cost of building a true sense of discipleship is not new. In fact, Christians like Yun Chi Ho criticised the focus upon rapid conversion in the Korean mission field as early as 1910.<sup>146</sup> Western missionaries on the whole emphasised evangelism as the first priority with education coming afterwards in their work in Korea.<sup>147</sup> But there are more people than ever before in the Korean Protestant churches who question placing so much emphasis on seeking conversions as an end in itself.

---

<sup>143</sup> Chung Chai-Sik, "Global Theology for the Common Good," 533-4.

<sup>144</sup> Cox, *Fire From Heaven*, 237.

<sup>145</sup> Sang-won Lee, "The South Korean Church's Response to the Modern Economic Reality," *Chongshin Theological Journal*, 6, no. 2, (Aug. 2001): 145.

<sup>146</sup> Shin Ahn, "Yun Chi-Ho's International Religious Network- Mission or Dialogue?," 6.

Unpublished Sept. 2005 paper for the Lund British/Scandinavian Conference.

<sup>147</sup> Yong-Soo Koh, "Some Factors Which Hamper Social Implications of the Christian Gospel in Korean Church Education," *Korea Presbyterian Journal of Theology*, 1, No. 1, (May 2001): 328

In previous decades, the Church stressed personal ethical decisions instead of wider social critique, but that is no longer seen as sufficient to solve social problems. Furthermore, pastors and church elders are perceived by many, especially younger Christians who wish for a more open faith, as focusing too much upon moral issues like smoking and drinking instead of forming a more comprehensive Christian worldview. The once standard evangelical message of, “Come to church; believe in Jesus; and go to heaven” is no longer as satisfying for many Koreans who want more answers that fit the ever-growing complexity of their society.<sup>148</sup>

Such feelings that the Church has lost its way in the present are at times accompanied by a sense that things were different in the past when there was only a small, committed number of Protestants. One conversation between two MTI students illustrates this kind of nostalgia,

*Interview Subject No. 66:* Forty or fifty years ago, everyone thought a Christian was a good, sincere man. At that time there were one to two million Christians. Now it is different.

*Interview Subject No. 73:* Now a Christian is just a person who attends worship. In the past, it was a person who followed God. Many Christians don't want to be seen differently from non-Christians.

Many previous ideals and methods of operation that brought so much prosperity to the Korean Protestant Church may now stand in its way. The numerical success that was so sought after by many Korean Christians is now seen as a weakness by some in the sense that it diluted the integrity of the Church. In a similar vein, C.J. Ro thinks that the Church suffers today from the close connection it established to three ideologies that were so important to the boom period: capitalism, pro-Americanism and anti-communism.<sup>149</sup> While these three ideas are hardly universally scorned today, Koreans do turn a more critical eye towards all three areas.

The challenge for the churches today comes in finding new ways to attract the attention of the younger generations while maintaining the strengths of the past, especially of the early years of the Church that remain appealing. Sung-Ho Kim

---

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>149</sup> Gwak and Hendricks, “An Interpretation of the Recent Membership Decline,” 63-4.

predicts that new, less traditional forms of conservative Protestantism will appear in the future which will provide a better fit for today's Korean culture.<sup>150</sup> Some ideas that have been suggested both for appealing to the youth and revitalising the churches tie into the rise of overseas mission in South Korea. This theme will be further explored in the next two chapters.

---

<sup>150</sup> Sung-Ho Kim, "Rapid Modernisation and the Future of Korean Christianity," 32, no. 1 *Religion*, (Jan. 2002): 35

# Chapter Two:

## Global and Cultural Attitudes in the Korean Protestant Church and Its Mission

### *Introduction*

While a diverse number of solutions have been proposed for combating the current malaise within South Korean Protestant churches, a significant amount suggest a more flexible and active engagement with the outside world and an openness to the new ideas that this would entail. This chapter suggests that global mission has played a major part in working to fulfil these hopes. While the reality does not always live up to the potential, international mission can combine youth appeal, social outreach and a greater understanding of the outside world for a South Korea that longs for full participation in the globalised international community.

However, world mission has brought the Korean Church and its missionaries into contact with ideas that they are not always entirely comfortable with. The experiences of Korean missionaries in communicating with those from other cultures have made clear the need for further skills in adaptation and building relationships across boundaries and in their various ways, Korean missionaries and scholars struggle with the current cultural theories in Christian mission. Some feel that the Gospel message will be diluted with too much stress on culture, believing that the Gospel lies outside of culture. Others are willing to adopt some cultural theories, but view culture as a strategy for conversion and not as something that lies at the heart of the communication of the Christian message.

But early interaction with other cultures has also led to excitement over how South Korean missionaries can use the distinctive status of their country as lying between Western and non-Western cultural patterns to enhance their outreach. While still largely a goal for the future, Korean missionaries hope to embody an intercultural model of ministry in which they can move between cultures and act as a

role model of combining modernisation with traditional values in difficult areas like the Middle East.

This chapter will explore all of these ideas. It first considers how international engagement and mission are perceived as a chief avenue towards Korean Church reform. Secondly, the attitude of the Church towards globalisation, which can combine enthusiasm with hesitation and ambivalence, will be detailed. Some of the interpretations of chief Christian cultural theories by Korean mission leaders will then be covered. Finally, the chapter looks at the ambitions of Korean missionaries for intermediary mission work.

## I. *A Global Solution to Domestic Church Stagnation*

### A. *Suggestions for Church Reform*

In offering suggestions on how to help the Korean Protestant Church through its perceived decline, two key ideas emerge. First, is the need to find balance among differing elements of the past that have been taken to extremes. Il Nam Jung's statement that the Korean churches need to find an, "incarnational approach that incorporates soul-winning, social salvation and a global perspective without losing the balance," exemplifies this way of thinking.<sup>1</sup>

The second key idea is that the Church needs to open itself to new ideas and perspectives. One example of this trend towards broadness can be seen in the new openness by Korean Protestants, most notably evangelicals, to ideas that had previously been seen as too radical or inappropriate. This embracing of new ideas reflects a larger recent change in the worldwide Church in which a substantial group of evangelicals have taken on cultural ideas that were once considered the sole province of liberal Christians.<sup>2</sup> Korean evangelicals have shown this tendency through their changed attitudes towards social action and ecumenism.

---

<sup>1</sup> Il Nam Jung, "Incarnational Mission and Community Development: Three Korean Case Studies", (D Miss. Diss., United Theological Seminary, 2002), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 177.



As noted before, there is both regret for their previous neglect of social justice in Korean Christian circles and determination to improve in the future. However, always sensitive to any threat to the centrality of the Biblical message, Korean evangelicals want to increase their sense of social responsibility in a way that remains profoundly Christian. They want to achieve that sense of balance that has often been missing in Korean evangelical history. Authors like Jang Yun Cho and Sung-Tae Kim both express the hope of building a model of social justice that still provides a paramount role for the Bible.<sup>3</sup> Actual details of specific issues the churches should take on are usually lacking and one might question how megachurches could tackle controversial issues and still maintain mass appeal. Still, this is an area of the Korean Protestant Church that will bear further exploration as it develops.

Another unexpected recent development in line with worldwide Christian trends comes from a more positive attitude towards ecumenism. The concept of ecumenism being promoted today in the Korean churches is not necessarily the earlier model associated with the National Council of Churches and various efforts among denominations to unite separated denominations. The new Korean ecumenism is more in line with Alister McGrath's description of how Christians around the world desire greater understanding and cooperation between their denominations, while keeping distinctive denominational identities.<sup>4</sup>

Cooperation is not something for which Korean churches have acquired a reputation. Fervent competition and "sheep snatching" (the practice of one church tempting a member away from another) are more commonly perceived traits. While some, including Donald McGavran, have argued that the Korean Church has actually grown through its divisions, others see the lack of cooperation as mostly negative.<sup>5</sup> Han Kyung-Chik, the late founder of Younknak, lamented the damage done by divisions, which included great difficulty in organising any sort of

---

<sup>3</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 126 and Sung Tae Kim, "Historical Evaluation of Theological Models of Contextualization," *Chongshin Theological Journal*, 7, no. 1, (Feb. 2002): 86.

<sup>4</sup> McGrath, *The Future of Christianity*, 86.

<sup>5</sup> Kwang-Soon Lee, "Growth and Undergrowth of the Korean Church," 274.

interdenominational activities and the formation of too many theological seminaries. He believed that all Korean churches should join the National Council of Churches and join together to correct the errors that evangelicals had seen in the organisation.<sup>6</sup>

While Korean Protestants have not gone as far as Han suggested in terms of the NCC, the crisis of the 1990s led to some relaxing of tensions between progressive and conservative factions.<sup>7</sup> Some newer churches have a more relaxed attitude towards denominational differences. While Onnuri is technically a Presbyterian Tonghap denomination, in its international activities and services it is largely nondenominational in worship style and in the wide variety of Christian backgrounds among its attendees. Onnuri even employs an Assembly of God pastor for one of its English services, a move which one of their members called “pretty radical” in a country where denominations still rarely mix.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, Onnuri gets accused of sheep stealing by other churches, though its members deny deliberately trying to do this. Forming harmonious relationships between denominations and congregations remains a difficult thing in Korean churches, as later discussion of attempts at foreign mission cooperation will further demonstrate.

### *B. Mission and Youth Appeal*

Many suggestions for reforming the Korean Protestant Church focus on sparking the interest of the nation’s youth. As seen previously, the statistics on youth participation in the Protestant churches are not necessarily dire and are better than for other religions. Still, there are fears that youth are drifting away from the churches, turned off by the lack of needed cultural reform.<sup>9</sup> The question then becomes what do today’s South Korean youth want and how can the Church keep them interested?

An article by *Travel and Leisure* magazine summed up what many sources say about what young Koreans desire, “The World Cup, sexual freedom, globalization—these are the things people care about now, not social discipline, national unification,

---

<sup>6</sup> Han Kyung-Chik, “The Present and Future of the Korean Church,” *Korean Church Growth Explosion*, 287, 297.

<sup>7</sup> Sung-Ho Kim, “Rapid Modernisation and the Future of Korean Christianity,” 33.

<sup>8</sup> Interview Subject No. 37

<sup>9</sup> Sung-Ho Kim, “Rapid Modernisation and the Future of the Korean Church,” 34.

or revolution.”<sup>10</sup> Koreans are more conscious of the wider world around them than ever before and are excited by the possibilities and freedoms that international culture represents. In spite of the fact that less than one percent of the population of South Korea is non-Korean, its cities (particularly Seoul) are filled with the sights, sounds and cuisine of other countries. Perhaps the fact that there are so few non-Koreans makes the possibility of contact with other cultures all the more enticing. In any case, the South Korean drive to become a truly global nation has been accelerating for years, but was especially cemented by the 1988 Summer Olympics and the 2002 World Cup which highlighted South Korea’s power and prosperity.

Korean churches are exploring ways of tapping into this global hunger. For example, in accommodating the current generation that has made South Korea the fifth largest nation in the world for Internet usage, some 83,000 Christian cyber communities have been formed.<sup>11</sup> But a more important way of connecting with Korean youth comes through promoting international mission and ministry. The interest in mission by Korean youth has been noted by various authors. Andrew Boyung-Yoon Kim writes that he expects the numbers of missionaries will only continue to increase in South Korea due to the high level of awareness of cross-cultural mission among the younger generation.<sup>12</sup> Youth have been known to take the initiative in pursuing mission, even when the rest of the congregation was not interested. As one MTI student put it, “Some of the leaders in church do not have knowledge of mission, but many members, especially young people in youth groups, have a vision of mission, so they apply to be trained by mission organisations.”<sup>13</sup>

A great deal of the youth interest in mission has been fuelled by campus Christian groups. Student organisations such as the Korean branches of Campus Crusade for Christ, Youth with a Mission, InterVarsity and Navigators have flourished in South Korea since the mid twentieth century and they are acknowledged factors both in promoting overseas mission efforts and in encouraging

---

<sup>10</sup> Ian Buruma, “Korea,” *Travel and Leisure*, (Oct. 2003): 230.

<sup>11</sup> Hong Eyoul Hwang, “Searching for a New Paradigm of Church and Mission,” 93.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew Boyung-Yoon Kim, “Rethinking of Korean Missions,” *Journal of Asian Missions*, (Jan. 1, 1999): 102

<sup>13</sup> Interview Subject No. 74

the churches to be more socially responsible.<sup>14</sup> The Western origin of these groups and their status as global institutions make them natural promoters of international ministry, but the University Bible Fellowship, which originated in South Korea, has also been influential. In fact, the controversial UBF, which has sometimes been accused of taking the authoritarian style common throughout Korean ministry to cult-like levels, stood as the second-largest sender of Korean missionaries in 2000 and the only campus ministry or interdenominational group among the top ten agencies.<sup>15</sup>

In a nation with as short a Christian history as South Korea, there are still many Korean Christians who are the first in their family to accept the faith. For instance, out of 35 missionary applicants I spoke to, 17 of them were raised in a non-Christian home. Most of them came to the church through the influence of friends during their university or high school years. Some have experienced difficulties in making the transition from campus group membership to church membership (or the shift from a sodality structure to a modality), but their interest in mission born during their years in the campus group serves as an aid in finding a point of entry into church. The South Korean situation provides an interesting answer to Ralph Winter's question of how long it would take for the younger churches of the non-Western world to realise their need for flexible sodality structures to reach out in mission more effectively.<sup>16</sup> While Winter's assumption that the non-Western churches will follow the same course as their Western counterparts could be challenged, the Korean Church has actually followed the West in building strong sodalities. The Korean churches have been balancing these two models in mission for years now, though not without some problems, as later chapters will reveal.

Youth, particularly through student groups, have been an important part of the current mission surge. Young people were actively involved in organising the mass rallies of the 1970s and early 80s. For example, Explo '74, which attracted 2.7 million people, was put together by the Korean Campus Crusade for Christ. In the

---

<sup>14</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 128.

<sup>15</sup> Steve S.C. Moon, "The Recent Korean Missionary Movement," 12.

<sup>16</sup> Ralph Winter, *The Two Structures of God's Effective Ministry*, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1995), 13.

1980s, “a wave of student power rose to take control [of] the Korean modern mission movement.”<sup>17</sup> In 1988, a number of the major student groups set up a series of biannual conferences called Mission Korea, which acted to unite Korean mission organisations and promote cross-cultural mission activities. The conferences attract thousands of students, many of whom commit themselves to mission activities, be it through acting as a missionary or supporting mission as a church member.

### C. *The Potential of Renewal Through Global Mission*

The attraction of international ministry to Korean youth is not difficult to understand. It combines various enticing elements like idealism, charity (many Korean mission trips provide emergency relief, medical care and education) and adventure. Of course, international mission appeals to more than just youth. In fact, involvement in mission activities has been cited by a number of sources as an effective way to appeal to the people of South Korea as a whole. For example, Bong Rin Ro specifically refers to mission as the way to remedy the downward trend, though he adds that mission is important not only for the Korean people but for billions of people around the world who need to hear the Gospel.<sup>18</sup>

An example of how an expanded international awareness can provide revival to the Korean Church is found in the case of the *minjung* movement. While the more liberal *minjung* theologians may seem far apart from the evangelicals who dominate the South Korean mission scene, they both share a concept of building a stronger future through forging a global perspective. Hong Eyoul Hwang sees hope for a renewed and expanded *minjung* vision that emphasises ecumenism and working in partnership with churches around the world, both notable areas of weakness for more conservative Korean churches. He points to successful cases, such as a Korean church that trained Korean Americans to work as missionaries among African American and Hispanic groups in the U.S. and *minjung* pastors sent to Cambodia and

---

<sup>17</sup> Jang Yun Cho, “Factors,” 65.

<sup>18</sup> Bong Rin Ro, “The Korean Church: God’s Chosen People for Evangelism,” *Korean Church Growth Explosion*, 41.

Rwanda.<sup>19</sup> Liberal churches in South Korea have also found renewed attention and vitality through activism on such international issues as the war in Iraq.

International mission has proven so successful in South Korean Protestant churches since the 1990s largely because it embodies most of the suggestions for improvement that critics have made regarding the current crisis in membership. On one hand, well-conceived mission offers the chance to broaden the perspective of Korean Christians. At times Korean mission has reinforced a narrow cultural viewpoint, particularly in its early manifestations. But the more recent forms of international mission that will be examined in this thesis present a natural opportunity for the Korean Protestant Church to develop a wider global perspective that could otherwise be difficult given its monocultural setting.

On the other hand, mission in South Korea is as much local as it is global. As the next chapter details, interest in international mission (though not the means to support it) has been evident in the Korean Church almost from its beginning. Many Korean Christians that I spoke to took pride in their nation's status as the second largest sender of missionaries to foreign countries. And numerous interview subjects also mentioned the mission achievements of their individual congregation, whether large or small.

Mission also has the potential to bring together Koreans from a wide variety of backgrounds. While Mission activities are admittedly dominated by the young, older Korean Protestants are active in organising, promoting and praying for mission activities. International mission attracts an ever-growing range of professions. While field missionaries used to be primarily ministers, it is becoming more and more common for the laity to become long-term missionaries. My term at MTI saw a number of ministers and students with degrees from prestigious schools like Chongshin Theological School and the Asian Center for Theological Studies and Mission, but there were also teachers, housewives, hairdressers, businessmen and a mechanic among the student body.

---

<sup>19</sup> Hong Eyoul Hwang, "Searching for a New Paradigm of Church and Mission," 93-4.



Involvement in mission could also balance the calls for a greater sense of social awareness and responsibility, while also retaining an emphasis on the value of faith and belief. While cultural misunderstandings still run high, more experienced and sensitive missionaries can be highly knowledgeable regarding the issues and needs (spiritual and secular) of their areas and they are eager to share their insights. Outright political activism remains rare in the mission field, not least because it can be dangerous for all concerned. Mission can expand the scope of charitable activities offered by the Korean Protestant Church. A large number of Korean mission activities are devoted at least in part to humanitarian endeavours, such as establishing schools, medical care and providing relief for disaster-stricken areas.

There are also some service-oriented mission organisations that may have Christian origins and personnel, but which mainly perform charitable functions. One case came during my time in Cambodia as part of a short-term mission team, when the church we were staying in was visited by the Korean branch of the Mercy Ships organisation, which mainly distributes medical products. Those belonging to such groups frequently saw their work with the poor as falling under the category of Christian mission even if their work was technically nonsectarian. One interview subject with experience in Kenya related that, “I was a social worker, but I didn’t see any distinction [between that and traditional mission work], even though I didn’t build churches.”<sup>20</sup> Such an awareness of the faith element within charitable mission activities makes it unlikely for the near future that they will suffer the same disparity between faith and social action that damaged both the *minjung* and church growth movements.

## II. *Globalisation and the South Korean Protestant Church*

### A. *The South Korean Reaction to Aspects of Globalisation*

A significant reason why mission is seen as a way of increasing the contemporary relevance of the Korean Protestant Church ties into the increasing importance of globalisation within South Korean society. Globalisation has been called: “the cliché of our times,” but the word has the power to ignite both fierce

---

<sup>20</sup> Interview Subject No. 12



opposition and optimistic dreams of a better future like few other concepts can.<sup>21</sup> Globalisation has also exerted a profound impact upon Christian mission, opening it up beyond the Western control that had dominated for centuries. The influence of globalisation has been so wide-reaching that some even feel that it defines our time period. For instance, Robert Schreiter gives three major phases of Christian mission activity. The first is the Period of Expansion (dated from 1492 to 1945), the second is the Period of Solidarity (1945-1989) and the current phase is the Period of Globalization (1989-today). He dates this last period as beginning in 1989, the fall of Communism, a common starting point given for globalisation.<sup>22</sup>

Globalisation can be a poorly defined word with all sorts of meanings and issues connected to the term. Many works on globalisation are concerned with its effects upon two related sets of subjects: economic/political and cultural/communication. Much of the negative reaction to globalisation comes from those concerned with the political and, particularly, economic ramifications. Aylward Shorter sums up the views of many critics when he describes globalisation as a totalitarian world process fuelled by Euro-American technological culture that has resulted in such questionable developments as the global monetary system and the ever-increasing poverty of the Third World.<sup>23</sup>

The reaction of South Korean society to this aspect of globalisation varies. There is a desire to be a prospering part of the global economy and to take advantage of the opportunities for growth. One such case can be found in a 2005 article in *The Korea Times* entitled, "Chey Spurs SK's Globalization Drive", with SK being one of the nation's prominent corporations and Chey the current leader. The article proclaims that the SK group is, "accelerating its globalization drive to become a true world-class multinational business group." The article notes that Chey ordered SK to, "boldly discard their decades-old, insular ways of doing business."<sup>24</sup> In this example,

---

<sup>21</sup> Simon Shui-man Kwan, "Editorial," *Journal of Theologies and Cultures in Asia*, 2, (2003): 1.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 125-7.

<sup>23</sup> Aylward Shorter, *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization: Faith and Culture*, Eds., James Scherer, Stephen Bevans, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999), 58. Also: Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994), 53.

<sup>24</sup> Kim Sung-jin, "Chey Spurs SK's Globalization Drive," *The Korea Times*, (March 8, 2005), 18.

globalization is seen as a kind of goal that inspires the corporation to put aside outdated traditions and become “world class.”

However, the nation has also seen the darker side of global economics and politics. South Korea’s highly unpopular participation in the Iraq War came about largely due to its leaders’ desire to maintain international relations, especially with the U.S. And the near-collapse of the Korean economy in the 1990s and its forced bailout by the International Monetary Fund remains a sore point for many Koreans. In fact, Sang-keun Kim, a professor of mission at Yonsei University dates the onset of the current difficulties in the Korean Church to the 1997 IMF crisis, further indicating the connection between national confidence and church growth.<sup>25</sup>

There is distrust towards the economic and political effects of globalisation on the part of some Korean church leaders. *Minjung* theologian Kim Yong-Bok states that, “Globalisation is not a neutral process. The beginning of it is political in the form of colonialism. Now it becomes a global market.”<sup>26</sup> This negative view towards the economic and political of globalisation is also shared by some evangelical Korean Christians. Steve S.C. Moon, a prominent mission expert, shared his hesitations when he said, “I think globalisation may have a negative impact, especially economically. It means the expansion of the WTO [World Trade Organisation] and world currency.”<sup>27</sup>

The economic side of globalisation impacts mission in a number of subtle ways. Consider the following two important elements that will be dealt with in further depth in future chapters. First, the demands of the global market have put demands upon Korean employees in the cutthroat job market for cultural and language skills (chiefly English, but increasingly Chinese as well). Secondly, the need for job applicants to have global communication skills has resulted in Korean universities competing to have the most global resources in areas like faculty and

---

<sup>25</sup> Interview Subject No. 40

<sup>26</sup> From a brief conversation with Kim Yong-Bok after he spoke at the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World on February 3, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Interview Subject No. 34

curriculum. During my interviews with two professors, one from the highly-respected Yonsei University and the other from its rival, Seoul National University, both claimed that their respective schools were the best in the country for developing international awareness and skills.<sup>28</sup> It is no coincidence that, as seen earlier in this chapter, universities are also top sources for future missionaries to discover their calling.

The cultural and communicative aspects of globalisation are somewhat less controversial than the economic and political ones. Granted, there are some who fear that cultural diversity will be lost as vastly improved modes of communication spread a homogenised culture around the world. The 1995 Aram I document from the WCC Geneva conference declares that, “The emergence of this new global mono-culture seriously threatens humanity and all of creation.”<sup>29</sup>

However, there are many who are excited about the cultural and communicative possibilities of globalisation or at least offer conditional support. Certain authors even choose to define globalisation partly or largely through these aspects. Arjun Appadurai sees globalisation as a, “process...which embodies a transformation in the spatial organizations of social relations and transactions generating transcontinental and interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercises of power.”<sup>30</sup> And David Held calls globalisation a, “widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life.”<sup>31</sup>

The fear that globalisation will lead to a loss of local cultural identity has been eased to some extent in recent years. Some even believe that globalisation can enhance the local culture. This view is perhaps best expressed by Roland Robertson’s term, “glocalization.” The term refers to the heightened sense of the

---

<sup>28</sup> Interview Subjects No. 40 (Yonsei) and No. 50 (Seoul National University)

<sup>29</sup> Aram I writers, “The Incarnation of the Gospels in Cultures: A Missionary Event,” *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization*, 30.

<sup>30</sup> Rudolf Heredia, “Globalization, Culture, and Religion,” in *Church in the Service of Asia’s Peoples*, Eds., Jacob Kavunkal, Errol D’Lima, Mathew Jayanth, (Bandra: Jnana-Deepe Vidyapeeth Publications, 2003), 200.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

particular created by globalisation, in which the globalised world must be limited by what Robertson calls the “materiality” (space-time contingencies) and the “culturality” that has always governed the world.<sup>32</sup>

Such a concept of globalisation has recently found support within Korean Protestant mission. As an example of how popular the term has become, *The Korean Christian Times* published an article spotlighting a conference attended by Wycliffe Bible translators and missionaries from America, Canada and South Korea. The conference dealt with the “GLocal” (the Korean-language newspaper lacked a Korean equivalent for the term) paradigm and how missionaries from the three nations could work to make the concept a reality in their work.<sup>33</sup>

It is not unusual to find writers who approve of certain parts of globalisation, but not others. For instance, Steve S.C. Moon observed that while there were dangerous aspects to the political and economic sides of globalisation, the socio-cultural elements were more positive.<sup>34</sup> And Kim Yong Bok may have had problems with a global economy, but he was excited about the “theological convergence” between groups around the world protesting against the abuses of globalisation.

This dichotomy between the positive and negative aspects of globalisation has also received its own terminology in Ulrich Beck’s conception of “globalism” versus “globality.” Beck views globalism as a mono-causal and economically-oriented system, whereas globality represents unprecedented opportunity for reflection and dialogue.<sup>35</sup> In a way, globalisation as a multi-dimensional process creates its own counter-understandings and resistance networks.<sup>36</sup> Naturally, the idea of globality, which revolves around the more positive theme of communication instead of economic exploitation, would have greater appeal to many Christian scholars. The question remains, however, whether one element can exist without the other.

---

<sup>32</sup> Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, (London: Sage, 1992), 173.

<sup>33</sup> “Conference for the GLocal Paradigm,” (translation of Korean language title) *Kidokkyo Times (The Korean Christian Times)*, 22 February 2005, Section A, 4.

<sup>34</sup> Interview Subject No. 34

<sup>35</sup> David Smith, *Mission After Christendom*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003), 101.

<sup>36</sup> Heredia, “Globalization, Culture, and Religion,” 199.

## B. Globalisation and South Korean Protestant Mission

The freedom and opportunities created by the newly-globalised society have created cause for both excitement and reflection for South Koreans in international mission. In many ways, the freedoms of a globalised society have made Korean mission possible, as South Korean missionaries have taken advantage of the greatly enhanced ease of travel to and from their nation. Globalisation suggests the possibility for what Korean mission can achieve while also making barriers and limitations all the more clear.

South Korea's many Christian universities and seminaries, a major source for missionary recruits, have been quick to embrace the secular and spiritual appeal of globalisation in their curriculum. For example, Jung Woon Suh, a former missionary and President of Presbyterian College, calls a section in his book, *Spirituality and Theology in Mission*, dealing with his school, "Together with Globalization."<sup>37</sup> Ro Yun Shik notes how the advent of globalisation and the increasing ubiquity of the Internet within Korean society has convinced him of the need for the different areas of Christian study to cooperate in future works.<sup>38</sup> His recent book, *Mission in the Bible*, is an attempt to bring Biblical and mission studies together.

The positive potential of globalisation has also been embraced by many South Korean churches who wish to engage in international mission. "Globalizing the Onnuri Spirit" is a striking example of one church's concept of globalisation. The brief 2002 article was intended to mark the expansion of Onnuri's large and influential international ministry. In the piece, Pastor John Hong Hah explains,

The Globalization of Onnuri...is a two-part process: importing and exporting. First, we would like to be a channel to learn and benefit from influential spiritual leaders and churches abroad. We want to provide a platform on which world-class spiritual leaders can stretch and challenge our faith. We also want to strengthen and catalyze our network with other dynamic international churches. Simultaneously, we would like to export [or 'introduce'] the fervent worship

---

<sup>37</sup> Jung Woon Suh, *Spirituality and Theology in Mission: An Asian Perspective*, (Seoul: Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary Press, 2000), 13.

<sup>38</sup> Ro Yun Shik, *Sonkyong Sonkyoka Issnunka (Mission in the Bible)*, (Seoul, 2005), 6.

and diverse ministry contents of Onnuri to the global village.<sup>39</sup>

Though his mission statement does use economic terms in its language (“importing” and “exporting”), it also encompasses the ideas expressed in the concept of globality, with the common themes of sharing ideas.

The exchange of ideas does seem to be limited, based on the language of the statement, to “dynamic” and “world-class” leaders and churches. Indeed, as will be seen later, there is something of a two-tier approach in the international ministries of some South Korean churches in differentiating between the wealthier and more influential foreign visitors and the poorer migrant community. However, the statement still expresses a commitment to use globalisation in a positive way and illustrates the determination of some South Korean Protestant churches to exert international influence. The statement also stands as evidence of how international and domestic mission interests are increasingly united within South Korean churches to the benefit of both spheres.

However, the new freedoms of globalisation have made the cultural difficulties faced by South Koreans all the more evident. Samuel Kim observes this trend within his country,

Now we are opening our gate to other cultures. We are dealing with cultural differences. They're [South Koreans] experiencing what America had 100 years ago with the rise of immigrants.<sup>40</sup>

These issues of cultural adjustment are all the more obvious to Koreans engaged in international ministry both within and outside of their home country. Sensitive to the limited experience of Koreans in dealing with those from other cultures and the problems that can result from Korean missionaries holding on too tightly to the ideas and practices of their homeland, scholars like Jang Yun Cho advocate a movement from a local to a global vision of mission.<sup>41</sup> Chung Chai-Sik likewise affirms that

---

<sup>39</sup> John Hong Hah, “Globalizing the Onnuri Spirit,” accessed 2004; [http://www.onnuriman.com/news/414/20021201\\_english\\_c19.html](http://www.onnuriman.com/news/414/20021201_english_c19.html); Internet.

<sup>40</sup> Interview Subject No. 40

<sup>41</sup> Jang Yun Cho, “Factors,” 153.



the Korean Church is in need of a “revolutionary expansion of our horizons to perceive the common needs of the entire planet.”<sup>42</sup>

To a certain extent, Korean missionaries are open to this “revolutionary expansion” and eager to communicate with the world for Christ. However, global engagement also requires exposure to new cultures, religions and ideas that Korean missionaries can interpret as uncomfortable or dangerous. The next section will examine some of the ways in which Korean scholars and missionaries are seeking to reconcile these two conflicting elements while attempting to develop their own cultural theories for mission.

### *III. The Reaction of South Korean Protestantism to Cultural Theories in Mission*

#### *A. Korean Protestant Attitudes Towards Other Religions*

##### *1. The Historic Influence*

With the notable exception of the persecutions under some Confucianist rulers, Korea has enjoyed a largely peaceful co-existence among its religious groups, though not without a certain amount of heated rivalry. Mongolia even views South Korea as a role model of religious harmony in a multi-religious society.<sup>43</sup> Under such a situation, it is understandable that many South Korean churches have not seen the urgent need for guidelines on dealing with religious pluralism found in places like Nigeria or India where inter-religious violence is far more common.

But some changes have emerged since the 1990s. As Guen Seok Yang writes, “For the development of [a] democratic society and for the reunion of a divided country, Korean society demands a more tolerant and dialogical attitude of all segments of society.”<sup>44</sup> For Korean Protestantism, and especially for its mission movement which thrives on a need to save potentially damned souls, opening themselves up to relationships with those from other faiths within and outside of their own country can be a daunting task.

---

<sup>42</sup> Chung Chai-Sik, “Global Theology for the Common Good,” 536.

<sup>43</sup> Kyo Seong Ahn, “Christian Mission and Mongolian Identity,” 115.

<sup>44</sup> Guen Seok Yang, “Inter Faith Dialogue and Christian Mission in Korea,” Network for Interfaith Concerns website; accessed July 27, 2006; available at <http://www.anglicannifcon.org/Korea.htm>; Internet, 1-2.



Korean Christians tend to be ambivalent about how Christian beliefs in their own country have been contextualised through the influence of traditional Korean culture and religion. Granted, some minjung and liberal theologians have actively sought to incorporate past religious ideas into Korean Christianity. But even among these works there is acknowledgment of the problematical aspects of the past. For instance, Choi Hee An's recent work of feminist theology, *Korean Women and God*, looks at the Buddhist and Shamanistic contexts, as well as the history of present situation of Korean Christianity, finding both positive and questionable elements in all of them.<sup>45</sup>

Evangelical Koreans are more likely to see the influence of Shamanism or Confucianism in Christianity as a bad thing. Son Bong-Ho criticises Yoido Full Gospel Church for its excessive emphasis on earthly blessings, which he sees (and he is far from the only one to make this case) as a result of the Shamanising of Korean Christianity.<sup>46</sup> Harvey Cox asserts that there is a "massive importation" of Shamanistic practice in Yoido and other Korean churches, but that most ministers firmly deny any connection to shamanism.<sup>47</sup> Awareness of such influence was common among the Korean Christians that I interviewed. Most lamented the influence of traditional religions, with one student saying, "The West is oriented towards Christianity, but in South Korea, we are influenced by Confucianism and Shamanism."<sup>48</sup>

The idea that the fact that Korean Christianity reflects the older cultures and religions of Korea is rarely seen among evangelicals as a potentially positive thing or as an example of how the Christian faith can be contextualised within a culture in a relatively short time, though there are exceptions. For instance, Sebastian Kim's previously mentioned work states that, "Pastor Cho [of Yoido Full Gospel] and others certainly have succeeded in exploring the Korean traditional religiosity of seeking blessings and expanded the meaning of blessing in the context of poverty,"

---

<sup>45</sup> Choi Hee An, *Korean Women and God*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005), 6-7.

<sup>46</sup> Son Bong-Ho, "Some Dangers of Rapid Church Growth," *Korean Church Growth Explosion*, 262.

<sup>47</sup> Cox, 224-6.

<sup>48</sup> Interview Subject No. 74

though he does add that such an approach can be problematic. Another defence for the role of traditional religion in Korean Christianity and mission could lie in the successful, though much debated in its time, efforts of Western missionaries to assimilate ancient religious terms like *Hananim* into Korean Protestantism.

The distancing of Korean Protestants from Korean traditional religion may be due to several factors. First, Shamanism has quickly declined in official adherence (see Table 3) and is seen as somewhat embarrassing by modern Koreans in spite of its continuing influence in Korean cultural and religious practice. In addition, there is not as much insecurity over whether Christianity is truly a national religion as in other Asian countries like India, thus reducing the perceived need to include older cultural ideas. Heung Soo Kim wrote an article that considered whether Christianity was a Korean faith, concluding that it cannot be denied that Christianity is a true national religion, largely because of its role in the struggle against Japan.<sup>49</sup>

Memories of the Japanese government's attempt to impose its religion upon Korea and the fact that first and second generation Christians are still quite common in the Korean Church contribute to sensitivity about any compromise in faith, especially in terms of making any perceived concessions to other religions. One case that I witnessed that suggested how some Korean Christians felt about this issue took place during a training session for short-term mission teams at Onnuri. My team was comprised of Korean Americans, Caucasian Americans and Koreans who had spent a substantial amount of time overseas. We were asked what we would do in a hypothetical situation involving a Japanese Christian who had to decide whether to donate money at a neighbourhood party to a building project at a local temple. My group decided quickly that donating money would not threaten the faith of the Japanese Christian and that it could be seen as preserving a historical building. But a corresponding team that was totally Korean had evidently spent two hours debating the question. As recent converts or members of families or neighbourhoods where non-Christian religions were strong, they felt that there would be real spiritual danger in giving support to another religion.

---

<sup>49</sup> Heung Soo Kim, "Is Christianity a Korean Religion?," *Asia-Pacific Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, Feb. 2004, 113-115.

## 2. *Modern Attitudes*

In light of the difficulties in cultural adaptation that will be described in the second section of this thesis, many Korean missionaries have accepted the need to be deliberate about the role of culture and to gain a thorough knowledge of the societies in which they work. Nonetheless, most Korean evangelicals and missionaries do not want to acknowledge that there may be truth in non-Christian religions. Most Korean Protestants, “consider that Christians cannot devote themselves to mission without conviction about the absoluteness of Christian truth.”<sup>50</sup>

Sentiments against other religions can be found even within those churches and groups which want to promote harmony and cooperation among Korean churches and religions. For instance, a 2006 conference devoted to peace and reconciliation among the two Koreas invited some scholars from non-Christian religions to attend. But a DVD presentation by Youngnak, the megachurch sponsoring the conference referred to non-Christian religions as demonic and in need of the missionary presence, while a speaker from the church called shamanism, “low-level superstition.”

But just because the great majority of South Korean missionaries are conservatives, with many being fundamentalist in their beliefs, they are often not totally closed towards gaining knowledge of other religions. A common viewpoint among Korean missionaries regarding their interactions with and perceptions of other religions, can perhaps be best described by Douglas Pratt’s categorisation of different viewpoints towards pluralism. Pratt notes that there can be three different kinds of exclusivist paradigms, with exclusivism defined as, “the material identification of a particular religion with the essence and substance of true universal religion.”<sup>51</sup> The most common Korean mission standpoint is probably that of “open exclusivism,” which is differentiated from a “closed exclusivism” which attempts total separation from those who hold divergent beliefs. Pratt describes the open exclusivism model

---

<sup>50</sup> Guen Seok Yang, “Interfaith Dialogue and Christian Mission,” 4.

<sup>51</sup> Douglas Pratt, “Paradigms of Pluralism: A Hermeneutic of Religious Plurality,” Unpublished February 21, 2006 lecture at the University of Edinburgh’s Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, 2.

in the following passage,

An open exclusivism, while maintaining cognitive and salvific superiority, may at least be amenable disposed toward the other, if only to allow for- even encourage- the capitulation [by way of conversion, for example] of the other. Open exclusivism implies openness to some form of relationship with another without expectation of, or openness to, consequential or reciprocal change of self-identity with respect to that relationship.<sup>52</sup>

This selective method is similar to the attitude of the larger world evangelical community towards recent cultural and anthropological ideas. The bulk of evangelicals preferred to take the ideas that they found practical and in line with their Biblical interpretation from the new cultural attitudes of the mid and late twentieth century while rejecting what they viewed as “relativistic thinking.”<sup>53</sup> The increasing dominance in the West of evangelicalism within global mission compared to the declining interest of liberal Christians in spreading their faith has led many Korean Protestants to the conclusion that too much consideration of other religions or cultures damages the cause of mission.

Korean missionaries may display genuine interest in and knowledge of other religions and cultures, often far surpassing the understanding of the average Korean. But it is often a limited openness that considers the strategic value of culture information. One thesis project, Byoung Sam Kim’s work, “Toward 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mission in Korea: Making Strategy from a Non-Christian Perspective” would be a good example. Citing Catholic theologian Robert Schreiter’s triangular structure of Church, Gospel and Culture, the Protestant Kim advocates sensitivity to cultural context in the construction of local theologies. His hope is to create theology for Koreans from a non-Christian, not Church-focused, mind for more effective mission.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>53</sup> Kraft, “Anthropology, Missiological Anthropology,” *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 67.

<sup>54</sup> Byoung Sam Kim, “Toward 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mission in Korea: Making Strategy from a Non-Christian Perspective”, 12

An additional example can be found in an article by Ho Jin Jun on the response of Asian evangelicals to ideas of religious pluralism. He writes that pluralism, using John Hick and Paul Knitter as examples in spite of their very different theological views on the subject, deviates from the Bible and elevates the status of non-Christian religions to the level of Christianity. He concludes that, "Most Asian evangelicals are greatly disappointed in the Western pluralism which is promulgated in the non-Western world."<sup>55</sup> However, he does add that ideas of religious pluralism were common in Asia long before the West and that a number of countries, including Korea, have been religiously diverse for centuries. Jun also recognises the need to maintain good social relationships with those of differing religions, a view in line with the Korean emphasis on building practical inter-faith relationships.<sup>56</sup>

In light of the public pressure to move away from divisiveness, there have been some attempts by Korean Protestants since the 1990s at promoting closer ties with other faiths within South Korea, though Catholics remain better-known for leadership in this area. As with ecumenical efforts within Korean Protestantism, the most intentional and substantial efforts towards inter-faith cooperation have come through action-oriented projects, often related to social issues and public service. One well-known endeavour was a sixty-five day "three steps and one bow" protest journey in 2003 against the government building over environmentally sensitive land led by Buddhist and Christian leaders.<sup>57</sup>

Moving beyond such shared projects into dialogue dealing with more issues of belief remains highly controversial. Still remembered is the case of Pyun San Whan, an advocate of religious pluralism and Christian/Buddhist dialogue, who was expelled from the Korean Methodist Church for heresy in 1993.<sup>58</sup> Even a thoroughly liberal theologian like Jung Sun Noh stated that it was better that Korean Christians stick to work on a specified practical task in their inter-faith relationships within

---

<sup>55</sup> Ho Jin Jun, "Evangelical Challenges to Religious Pluralism in Asian Contexts," *Torch Trinity Journal*, 1 (1998): 30; accessed July 2005; available from <http://www.tgst.ac.kr/sub.asp?gubun=09010101>; Internet.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>58</sup> Heung Soo Kim, "Is Christianity a Korean Religion?," 112.

South Korea, as discussions of belief could become too heated and only make matters worse.<sup>59</sup>

## B. *South Korean Protestant Responses to Christian Cultural Theories*

### 1. *Christian Cultural Interpretation in the Korean Protestant Academic Realm*

If South Korean Protestant churches and missionaries are hesitant over their feelings regarding other religions, questions over the role of culture in religious life and mission are just as problematic. Until fairly recently, it could be said that the most serious thinking in South Korean Christianity regarding cultural matters was largely among the *minjung* theologians. Reflecting the worldwide evangelical trends chronicled in the previous section and amid growing awareness of culturally related missiological problems, a wider group of Korean Protestants have been tackling the role of culture in faith and mission. But there are still common objections among many Koreans about some aspects of cultural studies. These protestations often closely resemble those mentioned in the debate over the proper approach to other religions in the concern over losing the central truth of Christianity.

The academic world often absorbs changes in attitude and official policy long before it becomes obvious in the outside world. It is no surprise, then, that the current cultural shifts in Korean Protestant mission may be most clearly observed among the ever-growing crop of mission scholars and students. Certainly the current training for Korean missionaries tends to demand at least a few months' training in cultural issues. As Steve S.C. Moon puts it, "in almost every missionary training programme, they stress intercultural competency."<sup>60</sup>

But while Korean universities, seminaries and training institutes have embraced certain theologians and ideas from around the world, they can be decidedly selective in which elements they incorporate. This is especially the case with any concept seen as liberal, a word that, as in much of the West, has become so vilified that some Koreans are now using the term "progressive" instead. The following statement

---

<sup>59</sup> The statement comes from a 16 August 2006 York St. John International Conference on Peace and Reconciliation presentation.

<sup>60</sup> Interview Subject No. 34



from the Asian Center for Theological Studies and Mission (ACTS) sums up both a popular suspicion of Western liberal theology (along with the concurrent belief that such ideas contribute to church decline) and the feeling that Korean churches offer a more faithful alternative,

The Western church has declined in her faith because of liberal theology and post-modernism which are against the central truth of Christianity. In contrast to this, Korean churches have made a great effort toward the worldwide mission task. The reason [is] largely due to the fact that the Korea church has been remarkably revived on the foundation of evangelical theology. For this reason, we believe that our mission is to confirm the central truth of Christianity by the united cooperation of theologians both in Korea and abroad.<sup>61</sup>

While the ACTS proclamation does declare the desire of the school to take in ideas from theologians around the world, the process of incorporation would clearly be along the ideological lines it has set up.

While Chapter Six will offer a further look at the training and education of Korean missionaries and some of the prominent educational institutes, the particular authors and sources used in three schools known to train missionaries will now be considered. The Global Missionary Training Centre is run in conjunction with the Korean Research Institute for Mission. During their six-month training session, the Centre prefers to use the works of evangelical scholars from Fuller and Trinity, including Charles Kraft, Paul Hiebert, Peter Wagner and Harold Netland, along with other authors like Philip Jenkins and Andrew Walls.<sup>62</sup> MTI's schedule includes a class on missiological issues in which the instructor features readings from Baptist missiologist Alan Neely's book, *Christian Mission: A Case Study Approach*, which seeks to highlight specific contextual issues found on the mission field.

Torch Trinity Graduate School offers a more general course of theological and ministerial studies, but they do feature classes on mission and cross-cultural ministry. Professor of Mission Studies, Eiko Takamizawa, said that she featured the work of

---

<sup>61</sup> "Research Institutes," accessed 2 August 2006; available at [http://english.acts.ac.kr/academic/academic\\_2.html](http://english.acts.ac.kr/academic/academic_2.html); Internet.

<sup>62</sup> Interview Subject No. 34



Kraft and Hiebert in her classes. However, she considers their book a bit “thick” for her students, as her classes are in English and most of the students come from non-English-speaking backgrounds. She therefore starts off with books like Sherwood Lingenfelter’s *Ministering Cross-Culturally*, not on any theological grounds, but simply because it is an easier book for students to read.<sup>63</sup>

## 2. *Some Korean Protestant Interpretations of Culture and the Christian Message*

At the moments, there are no Korean scholars writing on mission and culture whose level of respect and popularity rivals those of the major Western scholars on the subject. However, much work is going on within the Korean Protestant community as they examine some of their current cultural models and consider which ones work for their situation. One comprehensive survey of Christian cultural theories by a Korean author comes from a 2002 *Chongshin Theological Journal* article (Chongshin being perhaps the top Hapdong Presbyterian seminary) entitled: “Historical Evaluation of Theological Models of Contextualization.” Sung-tae Kim examines a series of prominent Christian cultural models, though he is not fully satisfied with any of them.

With the model of liberation that was so prominent in the 1960s and 70s, Kim dislikes the liberal theology and lack of accounting for human sin within such theories. He does acknowledge that Korean evangelicals need to promote social justice and that their failure to do so in the past spurred on *minjung* theology.<sup>64</sup> He also finds fault with Kraft’s more conservative “dynamic equivalence translation” model, which seeks to,

bring about an equivalence between the response of the contemporary hearers/readers of the translation and that of the original hearers/recorders of the communication recorded in the document being translated.<sup>65</sup>

While he gives it credit for being groundbreaking and more culturally sensitive than previous theories, Kim shares Hiebert’s reservations that the Christian form cannot be separated from its meaning and that some have assumed that if the form is

---

<sup>63</sup> Interview Subject No. 45

<sup>64</sup> Sung-tae Kim, “Historical Evaluation of Theological Models of Contextualization,” 85.

<sup>65</sup> Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, Revised 2005 ed.), 204.

translated, people would feel that they understood the meaning when they have really only scratched the surface.

Like Lingenfelter and a number of evangelical critics, Kim is also troubled by what he calls the “limited universalism” found among writers like Kraft and Norman Anderson who see culture as neutral. While he appreciates Kraft’s increased sensitivity to cultural issues compared to some earlier theologians, Kim thinks that a neutral view of culture could potentially lead to moral and spiritual relativism.<sup>66</sup> Kim also disapproves of what he sees as universalistic tendencies in Schreiter’s semiotic model, so-called because it comes out of, “listening to culture for basic patterns and structures, analyzing culture...to discover its basic system of symbols”.<sup>67</sup> He appreciates that Schreiter gives more room for the role of symbolism than the translation model, but he fears that the essence of the Gospel could be overlooked in the focus upon the interrelated meanings conveyed by symbols.<sup>68</sup>

The author’s views seem close to the transcultural model seen in the work of scholars like Hiebert, Lingenfelter and Harvie Conn, in which Christian and Biblical revelation stands in judgment of all cultures. A transcultural theology seeks to transcend cultural differences and explore biases through finding universal truths within the Bible.<sup>69</sup> But Kim admits that these authors can worry too much about the dangers of syncretism and that trust must be given to God to protect the process of contextualisation.<sup>70</sup>

Ultimately, Kim concludes that contextualisation must be based on the Word of God, with the stipulation that revelation cannot be separated completely from its human contexts. The contextual process cannot be defined by any particular national Church, but by the Universal Church, which must be built up to prevent self-centredness. Kim also notes the relevance of these issues beyond the missionary

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>67</sup> Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, revised 2002 ed.), 92.

<sup>68</sup> Sung-tae Kim, “Historic Evaluation of Theological Models of Contextualization,” 89-90.

<sup>69</sup> Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 217.

<sup>70</sup> Sung-tae Kim, “Historical Evaluation of Theological Models of Contextualizations,” 93.

dimension, writing that this: “biblically sound, spiritually deep and culturally relevant contextualization produces growth in the local Church.”<sup>71</sup>

Like many Christian writings on culture, Kim’s work displays some weakness in its lack of any specific guidelines. For example, what is the core of the Bible that should form the foundation of cultural communication, given the human influences that have shaped the understanding of the Bible? How exactly would the “Universal Church” be organised to determine the guidelines behind contextualisation? Without such information, the assumption might be that the author feels that the essentials of Christianity are already clear whereas the development of so many authors looking into cultural forms of Christian faith suggest otherwise. While Kim wants to take culture more seriously, he still hopes to put distance between culture and the Gospel but cannot quite define what the relationship should be. Still, he does give a good overview of some of the common thoughts found in Korean analysis of cultural theory with his mixture of affirming the need for change, while not wanting to give up what are thought to be essential Christian truths in the process.

Bong Rin Ro, perhaps the best-known Korean theologian who has written on this subject, comes to a similar conclusion to Kim in his categorisation of Asian theology. He lists four theories, with the first three being: Syncretistic (an example being Raymond Panikkar), Accommodation (Kosuke Koyama) and Situational (Kim Yong Bok who presumably stands for minjung theology in general). The fourth category was Biblically-oriented, in which Ro would place himself and other Korean theologians.<sup>72</sup>

Kim and Ro’s concern that the Bible will be overlooked amidst the emphasis on culture is echoed in the work of other Korean authors. For instance, Seung Oh Ahn writes that the Gospel should be implanted in people’s culture, but also believes that the Gospel should not lose its identity, acknowledging the problematic tension that

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>72</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models*, (Leicester: Apollos, 1989), 72.

these two ideas create.<sup>73</sup> His work reflects the combined interest in and fear of the cultural process that comes out of a concern that certain cultures would taint the Gospel in adapting its ideas or that accepting cultural concepts from others would threaten one's own faith.

Ahn's theories bring in another important element of the Korean Protestant perspective on culture, namely its focus upon moderate action and ecclesiology. Ahn laments the tendency of scholars to seek radical, instead of gradual change. He dislikes the focus on context and regrets the popularity of "local theology" over "universal theology" and the traditions of the Church.<sup>74</sup> He writes of the need for a "holistic" model of contextualization that can plant healthy local churches instead of striving for social transformation. These churches would then serve as the foundation for social change. The weaknesses of this approach are similar to those within Kim's work in its assumptions of an unspecific "universal" heart of Christianity.

The desire for practicality in mission is also seen in the writing of a writer more open to the need for a greater global consciousness than Ahn. Seok-Won Sohn states that theories are not enough in building mission. He writes that, "True missional education will be conducted when mission theories are taught through re-illumination of theories in the various fields of mission."<sup>75</sup> These academic statements have translated into hiring policies, as Moon noted that while many Koreans are getting Ph.D.s in Mission Studies, schools prefer to hire teachers who combine theoretical knowledge with solid mission experience.

Another factor found in these Korean commentaries upon cultural theories is the hope that a balance can be found between traditional evangelical work (the proclamation of the Gospel) with social transformation. Kyo Seong Ahn notes that the two previous periods of Christian mission could be characterised as the Era of

---

<sup>73</sup> Seung Oh Ahn, "The Origin and Direction of Contextualization," *Sonkyowa SinHak (Mission and Theology)*, 14, (Fall 2004): 288.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>75</sup> Seok-Won Sohn, "History and Perspective for Korean Missions," 154.

Innocence known for Christian and Western expansion and the Era of Experience in which the non-Western churches challenged and debunked previous assumptions of mission. Ahn writes that the Era of Innocence acted under the principle of orthodoxy or translation (though he neglects writers like Kraft and Lamin Sanneh who update this term for contemporary usage) and the Era of Experience operated under a principle of orthopraxis or transformation. Ahn sees the current era as one of Experienced Innocence, which should be guided by orthopathy or right feeling, an indication of the emphasis in much of the Korean Church upon emotion. Under such a model of mission, proclamation and transformation would both play a part, but the ultimate focus would be on building relationships and community within the guiding concept of interculturalism.<sup>76</sup>

While Korean scholars may have reservations about the most acclaimed scholars of culture and Christianity, there is credit given for the ways in which these authors have affected the Korean Church in positive ways. One such article by Young-Won Park discusses the legacy of David Bosch to the Korean Church and its mission. Park credits Bosch for having, “enabled the Korean Church and its traditional mission to overcome the limitations that were coming from the polarizing effects of two extreme positions.”<sup>77</sup> In other words, Bosch’s moderate theories helped the differing camps of the Korean Church, the evangelicals and the ecumenical supporters, to understand their faults and realise their need to work together in mission. Bosch also provided guidelines for how culturally aware Asian and Korean mission should be conducted.

Park’s article may overstate Bosch’s influence upon the Korean Church, since a number of historic and cultural factors analysed in this thesis were also responsible for the changes Park describes. Nonetheless, the piece illustrates the genuine respect that Bosch inspired among many in the Korean churches. Evidence for Bosch’s influence can be found in the way that his conception of mission as *Missio Dei*, with

---

<sup>76</sup> Kyo Seong Ahn, “Spring Lecture on the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh 1910-2010 Project,” 26 April 2003 conference presentation; accessed April 2006; available at [www.towards2010.org.uk/downloads/t2010paper02kyoseongahn.pdf](http://www.towards2010.org.uk/downloads/t2010paper02kyoseongahn.pdf); Internet, 16.

<sup>77</sup> Young-Won Park, “David J. Bosch, the Korean Church, and World Mission,” *Mission Focus: Annual Review* 3 (2002): 23.

Christian mission being part of God's larger work in the world, has been embraced by a number of Korean Protestant sources with the Tonghap denomination proclaiming that its Department for Social Service and Witness has been structured around the *Missio Dei* idea.<sup>78</sup>

#### IV. *The Intermediary Role of the Korean Protestant Church*

Beyond the feelings of Korean Protestants about the cultural theories formed by the global Church, there is the concept of the Korean Church's own special cultural role within Christianity. Some within the Korean Protestant Church have set up their mission work as intercultural in nature, even if the exact term is not always used. This intercultural view of mission comes largely out of the awareness of the distinctiveness in South Korea's position compared to other non-Western and Asian countries.

A.G. Honig writes that Christian churches in Asian countries followed a pattern during the years after World War II of reacting to the after-effects that Western invasions exerted upon the previous patterns of life. He focused on the role of Asian Christians involved in nationalistic movements as they reflected upon issues of religious and cultural heritage.<sup>79</sup> However, in a demonstration of the perils of attempting any blanket statements concerning an area as large as Asia, South Korea did not really follow that pattern. In the post-war years, South Korea drew even closer to the West in an effort to evade its threatening neighbours. It has been said that, "For Korea, the West is not an object of hate, but one of desire and imitation."<sup>80</sup>

But for all their links to the West, Korean Protestants still see themselves as being an Asian, non-Western nation and belonging to the larger non-Western mission movement. For instance, Timothy Kiho Park gave his Fuller Ph.D. thesis the title, *A Two-Thirds World Mission on the Move*. Hwal-Young Kim entitled his thesis, *From*

---

<sup>78</sup>"Department for Social Service and Welfare," accessed March 2006; available at [http://www.pck.or.kr/EngPage/eng\\_history04.html](http://www.pck.or.kr/EngPage/eng_history04.html); Internet.

<sup>79</sup>A.G. Honig, "Asia: The Search for Identity as a Source of Renewal," *Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction*, 306.

<sup>80</sup>Jin-Ho Kim, Sookjin Lee, "A Retrospect and Prospect on the Korean Modernity and Minjung Theology," *Journal of Theology and Cultures in Asia*, 1, no. 1, (February 2002): 158.



*Asia to Asia: A History of the Cross-Cultural Work of the Presbyterian Church in Korea.* Western mission experts also view South Korea as a non-Western country, as when a 2006 *Christianity Today* article cited South Korea as a prime example of a country with a “majority world” approach to mission.<sup>81</sup>

Sometimes such identification with non-Western nations can seem awkward and contradictory. For one thing, there is the oddness of South Korea being considered part of the “Third World.” As Philip Jenkins wrote, a South Korean might have much more in common with a German or American, fellow members of economically advanced societies, than with a Peruvian or Kenyan.<sup>82</sup>

Then there are articles like Lee Hong-Jung’s “Beyond Partnership, Towards Networking.” The work deals with the transformation of mission from bilateral to multilateral relationships, but it assumes that the main difficulty is caused by the Western Church and its problems in shifting its traditional role in working with its “former daughter churches.”<sup>83</sup> No admission is made that the Korean Church has caused plenty of problems of its own in establishing effective partnerships.

Signs of discomfort among some Koreans as to their position in the non-Western world can be found. Ju Hui Han analysed the following quote by John Mbiti, “the centers of the Church’s universality [are] no longer in Geneva, Rome, Athens, Paris, London, New York, but Kinshasa, Buenos Aires, Addis Ababa and Manila.” Han thought that it was significant that Seoul was missing, given that it featured the world’s largest churches.<sup>84</sup> While she may well be overreacting, given that Manila does have a larger percentage of Christians than South Korea, her concern does indicate the feeling that South Korea might not fully belong in the non-Western realm or that it might have been forgotten or even deliberately overlooked.

---

<sup>81</sup> Moll, “Missions Incredible,” 30.

<sup>82</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 72.

<sup>83</sup> Lee Hong Jung, “Beyond Partnership, Towards Networking: A Korean Reflection on Partnership in the Web of God’s Mission,” *International Review of Mission*, 91, no. 363, (October 2002): 580.

<sup>84</sup> Han, “Missionary Destinations,” 5.

Sebastian Kim admitted during a conference presentation that the Korean Church is in an ambiguous position in terms of embodying characteristics of the Western and non-Western models. It has economic strength and enhanced mission experience that echoes the North and a mission history and relationship with the Western Church that is more in line with the South.<sup>85</sup> These works illustrate how difficult it is to move beyond the dualistic framework that has defined the world of mission for so long.

There are those who see the in-between status of South Korea as an advantage in mission. This can be glimpsed in this commentary by Paul Choi,

The West and the non-West will long suffer from the conflict between Isaac and Ishmael, and the Korean Church, since we are pro-West, yet Asian, will play an important role as the peace maker.<sup>86</sup>

“Isaac” and “Ishmael” refer to the conflict in the Middle East between Muslims (Ishmael) and Jewish Israel and the Western and Christian powers that support Israel (Isaac). As seen previously, Choi is far from the only Korean who sees that South Korea could play a special role in the Middle East. Choi believes that Koreans have an advantage in the Middle East to promote peace (and presumably Christian mission as well) through its openness to Western-style ideals and resources combined with its separateness from the West as an Asian country. But with Middle Eastern mission still such an unproven prospect for Korean missionaries, it still remains to be seen if Koreans truly can go “reaching where Westerners have long been unable to tread” in this most difficult of mission fields.<sup>87</sup>

Intriguingly, Choi’s view of the Korean Church’s ability to act as an intermediary matches the attitude of the Korean government as it is both torn between and excited about its position between the West and non-Western nations. An April 2005 *Korea Times* article called, “U.S. Accepts Seoul’s Role of ‘Balancer’” detailed how South Korea’s President Roh wants to act as a balancing influence

---

<sup>85</sup> Sebastian Kim, “Church and Mission in Unity: Toward Mutual Interdependence in Global Christian Relations,” Oral Presentation at Korean Churches in Scotland Conference, 29 May 2004.

<sup>86</sup> Han, “Missionary Destinations,” 4.

<sup>87</sup> Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, 45.

between the U.S. and nearby nations like China and North Korea. While critics fear that Roh intends to move closer to China, the text does mention that Roh wants to use common values that South Korea shares with the U.S., like democracy and a market economy, to enhance their ties. The article also quotes an American diplomat who makes the incorrect claim that South Korea is the only Asian nation that has never invaded its neighbours, thus giving it moral superiority.<sup>88</sup> This is another case of modern South Koreans, religious and otherwise, taking their nation's history of relative passivity and innocence and using it in an active and assertive manner.

There are specific churches and mission organisations which have taken on a deliberate policy of giving and taking between different cultures. Serving in Mission Korea has set as its goal the building of "two way highways from everywhere to everywhere."<sup>89</sup> And Onnuri's mission statement aiming for the "importing and exporting" of ideas across nations has already been examined. However, there can be disparities in this Korean "give and take" between cultures. For instance, as this dissertation will later relate in greater detail, there tends to be more willingness to import ideas from the West than from non-Western countries.

These are admirable goals and there is evidence that South Korean mission has benefited from its intermediary status to engage in intercultural mission. Chapter Seven will profile Korean efforts in Mongolia and China, two places where South Korea has filtered ideas from the West, including Christianity, in a form acceptable to these non-Western cultures. But in light of the cultural problems previously examined in this thesis, it is clear that much remains to be done before these high aspirations can be fully achieved. All too often, rather than acting as a bridge between Western and non-Western cultures, South Korean missionaries have succeeded only in alienating both groups. There is also the danger that Korean missionaries can take on the worst perceived Western and non-Western attributes, as

---

<sup>88</sup> Ryu Jin, "U.S. Accepts Seoul's Role of 'Balancer,'" *The Korea Times*, 19 April 2005; accessed April 2005; available at <http://times.hankooki.com/lpage/nation/200504/kt2005041817222311990.htm>; Internet.

<sup>89</sup> Interview Subject No. 86

when Kim Myung Hyuk sees both Western imperialism and exclusive Third World nationalism as being part of the obstacles impeding Korean mission.<sup>90</sup>

It is evident that there is a desire to promote knowledge and openness within Korean mission through the examination of current cultural ideas, but the need remains for sharper thinking on the part of Korean missionaries and scholars regarding issues of cultural theory within mission in areas such as dealing with other religions and the intermediary potential of Korean Christians. Furthermore, Korean missionaries have the potential to benefit the Korean Protestant Church by helping to bridge the divide between theologians and ministers. Guen Seok Yang observed that Korean ministers have accused theologians of judging the Church from an outsider's position without any concern for the life and development of the churches.<sup>91</sup> Korean mission scholars, as noted earlier, generally worked as missionaries before beginning their academic careers. Their knowledge of the mission field combined with their formal theological training could help them to find an answer to the dilemma of bringing cultural awareness and the fundamentals of the Christian faith into a harmonious balance. The next chapter will look at the fruits of the expanded global and cultural horizons within Korean Protestantism by chronicling the evolution of overseas mission in Korea from its birth in the early twentieth century to its status today.

---

<sup>90</sup> Kim Myung Hyuk, "Cooperation and Partnership in Mission," 108.

<sup>91</sup> Guen Seok Yang, "Inter Faith Dialogue and Christian Mission in Korea," 4.

# Chapter Three:

## Korean Overseas Mission: Its History, Growth and Present State

### *Introduction*

In light of the rapid rise to prominence of Korean mission, acclaimed mission scholar Andrew Walls made this statement about the present and future of the Korean missionary phenomenon,

The great missionary nation is now Korea; in every continent there are Korean missionaries by the hundreds, and in coming years we can expect hundreds more, preaching from Tashkent to Timbuktu, and reaching where Westerners have long been unable to tread.<sup>1</sup>

How did South Korea emerge in a relatively short time period from a country that was the subject of missionary activity to today's "great missionary nation"? This chapter will detail the history and evolution of South Korean international mission, which can be divided into three particular areas. First, there were initial limited efforts before the Second World War, especially the respected cross-cultural mission to Shantung (also known as Shandong), China. The second period covered the post-Korean War years when the churches began anew with tentative mission programmes. These missionaries began to consider issues of how to reach out to the world and how to overcome cultural barriers. The third phase began in the 1990s as South Korea turned into one of the world's top sending nations, displaying double-digit rates of growth in missionary numbers with each successive year.

This chapter will demonstrate that, while the notable boom period for mission was largely born out of the current concerns of young Koreans and their awareness of globalisation, there has been a sustained interest in overseas mission in the Korean Church almost from its beginnings. In addition to covering the historic highlights, this chapter will survey some of the reasons for this long-term interest in mission and some of the ways mission has been defined, bearing in mind that Korean mission has

---

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002), 45.

displayed frequent change in such aspects as training, the type of work considered mission, the areas where Korean missionaries serve and the kind of people who become missionaries.

This chapter also provides a look at the current state of South Korean mission. The various statistics for Korean mission will be delved into, examining such issues as how South Korea stands in comparison to other missionary-sending nations, where Korean missionaries go and which churches and agencies are sending them. Finally, the chapter will consider the important role played by the local churches in such areas as the missionary candidacy process. This will include a profile of some prominent churches that support mission, along with a few interesting smaller ones.

### *I. The History of the South Korean Missionary Movement*

#### *A. The Early Years (1907-1945)*

When looking at the early period of South Korean international mission, some authors stress the continuity of the initial missionary efforts with the current mission boom. For instance, Seong-Won Park notes the “long history” of Korean engagement in overseas mission.<sup>2</sup> And Timothy Kiho Park writes that, “From the beginning, the Korean Church has been a missionary church.”<sup>3</sup> There has indeed been a longstanding interest in worldwide mission on the part of the Korean Protestant Church. This interest remained through many obstacles, most notably the considerable financial limitations that only really eased during the 1980s and the years of war that put an end to almost all of the earliest efforts.

Then as now, the Presbyterians led the way to a great extent. Korean Presbyterians showed their commitment to mission when the Presbyterian Church of Korea gained its independence in 1907. One of the first seven ordained Korean pastors, Ki-Poong Yi, was sent to Cheju Island, now part of South Korea but at the time considered a foreign territory. In 1909, a PCK minister went over to Japan.

---

<sup>2</sup> Seong-Won Park, “A Survey On Mission Work in the Korean Churches,” *International Review of Mission*, 86, No. 342, (July 1997): 329

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, “Korean Mission Boards and Societies,” *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission*, Ed., A. Scott Moreau, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 546.



The most sustained and celebrated PCK mission effort in the pre-war years, however, was their lengthy mission in Shantung, China, which began in 1913 and lasted in one form or another until 1957. Other Korean denominations, including the Methodists, followed suit with their own foreign missionaries. In all, some 120 missionaries were sent out in pre-Korean War years to such far-flung locales as Siberia, America, Mexico, Mongolia and Manchuria.<sup>4</sup>

These efforts did not go unnoticed by some Western missionaries of the time. As early as 1910, Methodist missionary W.A. Noble wrote that he foresaw Korea as a major mission force.<sup>5</sup> And in 1929, Charles Clark, an early chronicler of the Korean Church, observed that all four major churches in the country sent missionaries. He contrasted the Korean commitment to mission with the fact that the great churches of Japan and China had sent no missionaries of their own.<sup>6</sup> This would not be the last time that a commentator would point out the extraordinary qualities of Korean Christianity, particularly in comparison to its two prominent East Asian neighbours.

It may seem curious that the Korean Church was willing to engage in international mission at a time when the task of domestic evangelisation remained so unfulfilled and when the nation was burdened with the Japanese occupation. Much of the rationale for mission can be observed in this 1910 statement by Rev. Gil Sun-joo, the coordinator of the Shantung mission,

It is very difficult, in many respects, for the Korean Church to send missionaries to China. Even though we lost our nation, it is not only the most meaningful thing for us that as a missionary church sending missionaries abroad, we can be a member of the sending nations, but also it is the duty of the Korean Church to carry out the evangelistic movement that would like to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth. It

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 546.

<sup>5</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, "A Two-Thirds World Mission on the Move: The Missionary Movement of the Presbyterian Church in Korea," (Ph. D. diss., Fuller Seminary, April 1991), 120.

<sup>6</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 40.

is the praxis of the faith obeying the word that you give freely  
as you received freely.<sup>7</sup>

While he was referring to the specific context of his time, many of Gil's arguments for mission are still used by today's Korean missionaries. There is the prestige connected with being a "member of the sending nations," along with the idea that Korean Christians should repay the good that was done for them by foreign missionaries. Finally, the crucial idea of the Christian duty of all nations to send missionaries is represented.

One important difference between the missionaries of the pre-war era and those of today is that the majority of the pre-war missionaries focused upon the Korean diaspora communities. In light of the political and economic instability of the nation in the early twentieth century, millions of Koreans fled to diverse parts of the world with most seeking jobs as unskilled labourers. There were probably 2 million Koreans in Manchuria and at least 300,000 in Siberia when the missionaries arrived.<sup>8</sup>

The diaspora mission proved highly successful with some areas experiencing Christian growth that exceeded that within Korea. The greatest success story was in the United States. In 1902, the first group of Koreans arrived in Hawaii and the Korean missionaries who followed shortly afterwards helped the Korean population of Hawaii to become overwhelmingly Christian, by making the Korean Church in America a place where newcomers could feel comfortable socially and culturally.<sup>9</sup> This remains the case today with the Korean American Christian community, which includes about 75% of the 750,000-1 million strong Korean American population, 65% of whom attend church regularly.<sup>10</sup>

While the growth of the Christian Korean community in America was the most dramatic case, other areas formed their own cluster of churches. These diaspora

---

<sup>7</sup> Choi Young-Woong, "The Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Korea in Shandong, North China, 1913-1957," *Transcontinental Links in the History of Non-Western Christianity*, Ed., Klaus Koschorke, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2002), 119.

<sup>8</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 41, 43.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>10</sup> Timothy Gall, *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Culture & Daily Life: Vol. 2- Americas*, (Cleveland: Eastwood Publications, 1998), 279.

communities are highly useful for today's Korean mission efforts in ways that will be explored later on, as the global circle of Korean churches remain strongly connected to each other. Korean immigrants have developed a reputation for bringing their church structure with them wherever they go. One saying that explores this idea (and continues on the theme of Korean differences compared to China and Japan) goes that when Koreans arrive in a new place, they establish a church, while the Chinese set up a restaurant and the Japanese, a factory.<sup>11</sup>

The work among the diaspora communities inevitably included a cross-cultural dimension. Koreans had been living in Manchuria since ancient times and the community there was much more heterogeneous than the typical Korean settlement. It was said that the Manchurian Koreans felt, "one-half Russian, one-half Chinese, and the rest Korean" and the Korean missionaries needed to engage in special cooperative work with Western missionaries to reach the group.<sup>12</sup>

By 1912, the Presbyterian Church of Korea decided to change its concept of a missionary to one who works among foreign cultures. While diaspora ministry continued, the true missionaries were believed to be those involved in cross-cultural international work. The Shantung mission represented the most sustained and thorough effort in this direction. It began in 1913 with three pastors. The mission grew gradually and planted 40 local churches and three presbyteries, a result that was described as "marvellous."<sup>13</sup> While the mission was one of the few Korean efforts to survive the war years, further growth was impeded by the Chinese Revolution, which eventually forced the demise of the enterprise in the 1950s. Pang Ji Il may well have been the last missionary to leave China after the Communists took over in 1957.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Norimitsu Onish, "Korean Missionaries Take on the Hard Cases," *New York Times*, 2 November 2002, Section A, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, "A Two-Thirds World Mission", 57.

<sup>13</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, "A Survey of the Korean Mission Movement", 115.

<sup>14</sup> Hwal-Young Kim, "From Asia to Asia: A History of Cross-Cultural Mission Work of the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Hapdong), 1959-1992," (Ph.D. diss., Reformed Theological Seminary, 1993), 57.

China was chosen as a location for Christian mission partly out of gratitude for the Chinese transmission of “common grace” through their bequeathing of the cultural and philosophical heritage of Confucius and Mencius before the arrival of the “special grace” of the Gospels.<sup>15</sup> Rev. Bang Ji-Il, a missionary to China from 1937-57, declared, “we [Koreans] have received the Confucian culture from China in the past. And now we can pay it back by the Gospel of life.”<sup>16</sup> These comments came at a time when the Confucian legacy was viewed in a more positive light within Korean secular and religious society.

The previous (and current) operating principle for Korean missionaries utilised techniques that had worked in the establishment of Korean Protestant churches. As with most early Korean mission efforts, the Shantung mission was based upon the Nevius method that produced results in Korea. The missionaries decided to work only with existing Chinese churches in the Chinese language. They also attempted to keep alive the spirit of cooperation that the Korean churches of the time were trying to forge. The Korean missionaries even went a step beyond the Nevius-inspired American Presbyterian Mission, which ultimately gave in on the issue of paying native workers, while the Koreans held on to the ideal of self-sufficiency.<sup>17</sup>

The fledgling Korean missionaries faced many obstacles in setting up their mission. They suffered from a lack of resources and a gruelling lifestyle. In addition, many of the Chinese people despised Korea as a small country and there was widespread anti-Christian sentiment.<sup>18</sup> The missionaries overcame many of these difficulties through a combination of factors. They worked hard to gain favour by visiting local officials. And they impressed the people with their knowledge of Chinese writing skills, an ability that many Western missionaries lacked.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps the Koreans’ biggest advantage, though, lay in their attitude towards mission. Reflecting the practices of the more progressive Western missionaries, such as those within the China Inland Mission, they adapted an incarnational mission theology.

---

<sup>15</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, “A Two-Thirds World Mission,” 71.

<sup>16</sup> Young-Woong Choi, “The Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Korea in Shandong,” 119.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>19</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, “A Two-Thirds World Mission,” 79.

This was exemplified by missionary Bang Hyo-won's declaration, "You should be a Chinese, if you want to win a Chinese."<sup>20</sup> They truly tried to live the same lifestyle as that of the people they served and strove to build a self-governing Chinese church. As a result, the Korean missionaries won the respect of the people with even those in the anti-Christian movement saying that they were "genuine Christian evangelists."<sup>21</sup>

There is the occasional criticism, such as Timothy Kiho Park's observation that even the Shantung missionaries were guilty of pushing their culture onto those that they served.<sup>22</sup> But on the whole, the Shantung mission and the other missionary activities of the time are viewed quite positively, particularly when compared to the perceived failings of modern Korean missionaries. For instance, Park goes on to write that the quality of today's Korean mission movement seems to be, "far less than that of the Church during the Japanese colonial period."<sup>23</sup> And Young Dong Kim lauds the "exemplary" work of the Shantung mission as a model of non-Western Christian mission, citing its respect for local churches, social service activities and lack of conflict and duplication of mission activities. While he warns against an overly romanticised view of the period, he asserts that the, "above-mentioned elements are important traditions that we should regain."<sup>24</sup>

## II. *Mission and Post-War Rebuilding and Mission*

### 1. *Korean Mission in the 1950s and 60s*

As much as Korean Protestants wanted to be active in world mission, the chaos caused by the end of the World War II and especially the onset and aftermath of the Korean War put international mission plans on hold for years. The global mission movement that slowly emerged in the period from the late 1950s to the late 1980s would be of a different sort than the tentative pre-war mission efforts, struggling in almost every way: in finances, training, culture and methodology. Yet these awkward years laid the foundation for the confident and well-supported missionary

---

<sup>20</sup> Young-Woong Choi, "The Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Korea in Shandong," 123.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>22</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, "A Two-Thirds World Mission," 228.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>24</sup> Young Dong Kim, "Korean Church's Mission: From the Early Mission Period to the Korean War." *Sonkyowa Sinhak (Mission and Theology)* 14 (Fall, 2004): 269.

boom of the 1990s. The post-war period also saw a change in guiding principles as the ideas of the Church Growth movement took over from those of the Nevius Method. Many difficulties now associated with Korean mission began to come out in these years, sometimes in a more extreme form than the present, as efforts were made to alleviate early problems.

It was more than just a lack of finances that slowed the Korean Protestant churches down in the 1950s and 60s. The incessant schisms during these years have been seen by some as a hindrance to foreign mission, though others feel that it was simply a period of transition before the denominations began their later mission efforts.<sup>25</sup> Another barrier came from a Korean government that did not encourage foreign travel among its citizens. In fact, a 1956 mission to Thailand found it difficult to get passports as the government did not know which department issued them.<sup>26</sup>

This aforementioned mission was the first real cross-cultural mission effort undergone after World War II. It was begun by the Presbyterian Church of Korea, just prior to its 1957 split, and dedicated itself to the memory of the Shantung mission.<sup>27</sup> Like the missionaries in Shantung, the Koreans were despised by the Thais because of their country's poverty and a national image tarnished by the Korean War. The Thais also had the idea that missionaries should only come from "culturally superior countries."<sup>28</sup>

But once again, the Korean missionaries found a way to win over the people, though Thailand was and remains a difficult area for mission. Learning the language helped the missionaries to gain more respect. One Korean, Samuel Kim, was even elected moderator of the Thai Presbyterian Church. This excerpt from Thai Presbyterian records explains some of the reasons why Kim was embraced,

---

<sup>25</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 52 and 55.

<sup>26</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, "A Two-Thirds World Mission," 105.

<sup>27</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 55. Actually, the Shantung mission was still going on at the time, albeit in greatly diminished form.

<sup>28</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, "A Two-Thirds World Mission," 105.



Brethren! This new missionary, Rev. Kim, has the skin color and looks like the Thai people. Probably his heart and mind are the same...He visited all the churches of our presbytery for the last five months. It must be our glory to have this kind of man as our moderator.<sup>29</sup>

This statement reveals some interesting similarities between this past missionary and those Koreans working today. As with the Shantung missionaries and many modern ones, the sheer hard work and perseverance of those in the mission impressed the people they were serving. Like past and present missionaries, the missionaries to Thailand utilised whatever cultural, linguistic and even racial connections they had to their mission subjects. The Thai author clearly believed that these links were positive points in Rev. Kim's ministry.

There are those in Korean mission today, such as Timothy Kiho Park, who believe that South Korea's status as a non-Western nation gives it innate advantages that Western missionaries lack. Park wrote that the Thai example shows how "Two-Thirds world" missionaries work more effectively with other non-Westerners.<sup>30</sup> Such a comment appears several times in this thesis and is sometimes accurate, though at other times simply hopeful rhetoric. Somewhat similar cultures can actually clash more on the mission field without deliberate efforts to promote harmony, as the later examination of Korean missionaries in Japan will reveal.

However, the excerpt also demonstrates how much things have changed in Korean mission. While it is not unheard of for modern Korean missionaries to complain of discrimination in places like Japan, very few countries would look down on modern Koreans on the basis of national poverty. It is more likely that the opposite would occur today, with those from poorer nations (which would include Thailand) looking up to South Korean missionaries.

The Thai mission was an anomaly for the 1950s and 60s as a denominational mission project. During these decades, the few international mission projects were

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 106.

more likely to be the result of interdenominational agencies and campus ministry groups. The cause of world mission was kept alive largely by a group of prominent leaders who focused on education. In campus mission, John Kim was an inspiration as the founder of the Korean Campus Crusade for Christ. Helen Kim of Ewha Women's University encouraged her students to consider foreign mission careers and eventually went to Pakistan herself. And David Cho began his efforts to promote mission, being one of the first Koreans to argue that with the Western Church pulling back from some mission activities, non-Western Christians needed to take on more leadership. His efforts culminated in his founding Korea International Mission in 1973, one of the first institutions for the formal training of Korean missionaries.

## 2. *Korean Mission in the 1970s and 80s*

In his excellent 2002 dissertation on the history of the Korean mission movement, Jang Yun Cho identifies the years from 1965 to 1988 as the true beginning of the modern mission era.<sup>31</sup> Steady financial growth and booming churches meant far more resources, financially and in potential missionaries, were available. The major denominations began to feel confident in sending out their own missionaries. Moreover, as previously noted, the popular mass rallies served to raise awareness of all kinds of evangelism, foreign and domestic.

While the number of missionaries and agencies would remain relatively small throughout this period compared to the enormous growth in the 1990s, there was still expansion from the late 1970s to the end of the 1980s. The first results of Marlin Nelson, the American who helped to pioneer research about Korean missionaries, found 93 missionaries in 1979. By 1989 that number had grown to 1,178.<sup>32</sup>

Three texts which sum up the achievements and shortcomings of this period, as well as the evolving Korean view of mission, will now be explored. Eun Moo Lee was one of South Korea's first missionaries to Indonesia. He wrote about his generally successful mission career in his 1983 article, "West and East must get

---

<sup>31</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 58.

<sup>32</sup> Steve S.C. Moon, "The Acts of Koreans: A Research Report on Korean Missionary Movement," accessed 2004; available at [http://www.krim.org/files/The\\_Acts\\_of\\_Koreans.doc](http://www.krim.org/files/The_Acts_of_Koreans.doc); Internet.

along.” His work is particularly interesting for its details regarding the Western (chiefly American) influences at work during the development of Korean mission. While in seminary, Lee was challenged by the work of David Cho and by two U.S. professors at his seminary. Lee notes that: “they helped me to recognize that the Great Commission is not directed toward a particular people [Westerners], but it was given to the Koreans as well.”<sup>33</sup>

While Lee was enthusiastic about the Korean prospects for mission, he saw that would-be missionaries lacked proper guidance, as the seminaries were geared towards the needs of regular pastors. He did manage to receive some training under the leadership of Cho that was supplemented by his attendance of conferences in such American evangelical centres as Fuller and Wheaton. After his training, Lee joined the Indonesian Missionary Fellowship through the financial support of various churches and individuals. He served in Indonesia with other missionaries from different countries, training lay people and opening seven churches.

Lee offers a number of criticisms of the global mission activities of the Korean Church, points which are still brought up today. While Lee admitted that he himself did not have much trouble with cultural adjustment in Indonesia, he recommended that the Korean churches need to seriously consider cross-cultural and missiological issues. He stresses that missionaries should act differently from local pastors acting in their own culture.<sup>34</sup> Lee also observes that most missionaries from South Korea by this time were being sent through their denomination instead of working through Western agencies, which he felt brought up many problems and prevented effective cooperation with missionaries of other nationalities.

Though he acknowledges the help that he received from Westerners in his mission career, Lee is not without criticism of his interactions with them. He writes that a “crucial obstacle” to the cooperative ministry that Lee clearly advocates would

---

<sup>33</sup> Eun Moo Lee, “West and East must get along- a Korean missionary speaks out,” *Evangelical Mission Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (July, 1983): 190.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

be the Western misconception that mission is a one-way affair from West to East.<sup>35</sup> He advocates bridging efforts, suggesting that while money is not really needed in Korean mission, Western agencies could use funds to train Asians for mission.

This last point regarding the need of Korean missionaries for assistance in training from the West is echoed in a 1981 *Christianity Today* article by prominent evangelical and mission proponent, Bong Rin Ro. The work is entitled, "Asian Pastors for Asian Churches," and involves Ro's belief that the best way to reach non-Christian Asia is to mobilise Asian Christians to reach their own people.<sup>36</sup> Ro's desire to speak on behalf of Asian Christians is emblematic of the strong and confident South Korean Church that was starting to play a leadership role for the Asian and non-Western world. This trend was exemplified by figures like Paul Yonggi Cho and the establishment of schools such as the Asian Center for Theological Studies and Mission (ACTS), which was set up in 1974 to further the evangelisation of Asia.

But this confident spirit is tempered by Ro's acknowledgment of the continued shortcomings in training among Asian pastors, including Korean ones. While he affirms that the work of evangelism should be left to Asians, he also suggests that the top priority of Western missionaries must be to train pastors and lay leaders. This same combination of strength and weakness can still be found in many of today's writings from Korean mission experts. It can be seen in the ending of Ro's article, with his hope that Western Christians will keep to the "Three 'T's': train us, trust us, thrust us into the fields to labor."<sup>37</sup>

While Lee and Ro's articles maintain a certain critical optimism regarding Korean mission, Timothy Kiho Park offers a harsher viewpoint of one particular mission project. A former missionary to the Philippines, Park wrote a thesis focusing upon the mission activities of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (the Hapdong

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>36</sup> Bong Rin Ro, "Asian Pastors for Asian Churches," *Christianity Today* 25, no. 17 (2 October 1981): 41.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 41.

denomination). He also offers an in-depth look at the Philippine mission, one of the PCK's earliest and most extensive mission activities in the country that until recently was the top location for Korean missionaries and still held the number two overall position in the year 2000 (see Table 10).

The missionary operation of the PCK, under the name of the Global Missionary Society, is the largest sending agency in South Korea today with 1,206 missionaries. Park was writing largely about the 1980s, a time when the GMS grew from 45 missionaries in 1980 to 125 in 1990.<sup>38</sup> In the 1980s, the PCK had high hopes for their Filipino mission. They set goals, a common thing within achievement-oriented Korean mission circles, of establishing 100 local churches and 100 native pastors with 7,000 baptised. The reality by the end of the decade fell short with 24 congregations, 20 pastors (only 7 of whom were ordained) and 711 members. Park observes that other groups met with more success, so he is inclined to blame the mission itself.<sup>39</sup>

Park comes up with a detailed list of the shortcomings of the Filipino mission including: inadequate mission theology, a monocultural perspective, a lack of mission strategy, improper selection and training and a lack of cooperation between the sending, receiving and supporting bodies. Contemplation of all these faults seems to depress Park regarding the future of Korean mission, as he wonders whether the Korean Church is ready to assume a leadership position in Two-Thirds World mission.<sup>40</sup> His relative pessimism compared to Ro and Lee's more optimistic views of the future of Korean mission highlights some of the increasingly visible problems that had crept into the Korean Protestant Church's international efforts, even in the midst of continued growth.

Some of Park's points deserve a more thorough analysis. One major change in mission operations came into effect in the post-war years, influencing the Filipino

---

<sup>38</sup> Global Missionary Society website, accessed December 2005; available from <http://www.gms.or.kr/ENG/a5.html>; Internet.

<sup>39</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, "A Two-Thirds World Mission," 17.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

mission and numerous others. American missionaries encouraged a denominational form of mission, with the Shantung mission a prominent example. But the schisms and general chaos of the 1950s encouraged local churches to take over the bulk of organising mission projects after realising that they could do as much work on their own as they could connected to their denomination. The sense of pride connected with the local churches being able to send members into the mission field boosted the numbers of missionaries. Even when the churches worked through a denominational mission board, they frequently maintained control of the selection and training process. All 15 initial PCK missionaries to the Philippines were chosen from local churches with the General Assembly simply giving their approval.<sup>41</sup>

One unfortunate consequence of this local church dominance has been a tendency towards divisions among the missionaries with differing agendas. As Park wrote, “Almost no mission field where more than two Korean missionaries were sent has been without trouble.”<sup>42</sup> With churches in the post-war years achieving so much individually, little benefit was seen in cooperation and mission efforts could turn into an extension of the achievements of an individual congregation. It is only with the awareness of the difficulties experienced by missionaries on their own and the current despair over Korean Protestant disunity that cooperation has once again become an ideal to be pursued.

Sometimes problems in mission arose in spite of efforts to do what was perceived as progressive. The Filipino project had a stated goal of finding and training native workers and pastors. But while they did make an effort to employ and train national workers, all but one left.<sup>43</sup> Part of the problem in recruiting local workers may have been that the Koreans kept applying the practices of the Korean Church to the Filipino scene, even when it made little sense. One vivid example lay in the Korean missionaries’ insistence upon the piano being used in services, an instrument that few Filipinos can play, preferring the guitar.<sup>44</sup> To Koreans, the piano

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 310.



was associated with sacred music, while the guitar had ties to secular music, thus making it inappropriate for church services.

These problems would not go unnoticed by the denominations. The PCK admitted to their weaknesses in training, especially in the areas of cross-cultural learning and partnership in ministry. As mentioned before, the Missionary Training Institute was established in 1983 to provide better cultural training and more schools were set up for this purpose in later years. Another major turning point came in 1992 when almost 200 major U.S. and Korean Presbyterian representatives in Manila came together to agree on a joint office and mission training centre, along with the amicable division of mission fields, though some did not cooperate in the effort.<sup>45</sup>

Other churches have followed suit in demanding stronger training and this does represent one area where some real improvement has taken place with the expansion of world mission. Dr. Kim Myung-Hyuk wrote an article in 1983 lamenting the lack of leaders in mission with strong training and partnership in ministry. He admits in a 1995 updating that the situation has improved with more training institutions and efforts at cooperative ministry, such as the 1998 formation of the Korean World Missions Association.<sup>46</sup>

The number of Korean missionaries working abroad continued to grow throughout the 1980s. Some of these factors that contributed to the rise were specific to the decade, such as the aforementioned global prominence provided by the 1988 Olympics. In addition, there emerged an overabundance of Koreans with seminary and theological training. Park, writing at the beginning of the 1990s boom, observed that the number of Korean seminarians was “much more” than the total number of seminarians in all other Asian, African and South American countries combined.<sup>47</sup> This problem endures today. When discussing an unpromising missionary candidate, the M.T.I. staff commented that Korean Church culture encourages those with strong

---

<sup>45</sup> Hwal-Young Kim, “From Asia to Asia,” 230-1.

<sup>46</sup> Kim Myung-Hyuk, “Korean Missions in the World Today and Its Problems,” in *Korean Church Growth Explosion*, 220-1.

<sup>47</sup> Park, “A Two-Thirds World Mission,” 10.

faith to take on career positions in ministry, regardless of their leadership skills or intellectual aptitude.

This element has impacted mission because with such a large surfeit of trained Christians, there simply are not enough of the desirable urban congregations that would-be Korean pastors prefer.<sup>48</sup> To some young pastors, a temporary position as a missionary can be a means of gaining recognition necessary to find a better permanent job within South Korea. Mission may also appeal to laypeople who lack the finances or are too old for seminary training, but still desire a long-term professional religious commitment.

Economic and political factors also played a role in mission growth. In the 1980s, the government established a more lenient policy towards Korean money being sent abroad, which turned overseas travel into a viable option for the public. This gave churches much more freedom in their overseas operations, feeding into the increasingly autonomous Korean churches' "passion for independence" from centralised forces that might interfere with their plans.<sup>49</sup> Foreign mission efforts may well have blossomed at an earlier date without these prior restrictions.

## *II. The State of Korean Mission Today*

### *A. The Overseas Mission Boom of the 1990s and Today*

While the growth in the 1980s was rapid, it could not compare to the explosion in numbers during the 1990s. The statistics offer a picture of continued growth that is still ongoing today. This section will examine those statistics to present a picture of this extraordinary foreign missionary boom in terms of overall numbers, places of service, percentage of cross-cultural mission and other factors.

Not surprisingly given the confusion that often surrounds Korean religious statistics, there are some discrepancies in figures among the major sources on such vital elements as the total number of foreign missionaries. *Operation World* (Table

---

<sup>48</sup> Johnstone and Mandryck, *Operation World*, 388.

<sup>49</sup> Oosterom, *Contemporary Missionary Thought*, 68.

2) reports that there are 10,646 missionaries for the year 2000, while the Korean Research Institute for Missions (Table 1) recorded 8,103 missionaries for that year. And the 2001 edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* provides a much lower figure of 5,500 sent missionaries from South Korea (Table 8).

It is difficult to determine accurate mission statistics, given that mission candidates often seek support from multiple churches and that numbers can be exaggerated by churches and agencies. The most reliable source of statistics appears to be the KRIM. It is the source most frequently cited by authors writing on Korean mission and the KRIM offers a thorough range of statistics on many aspects of the missionary experience.<sup>50</sup> The organisation was established in 1990 to accumulate reliable data on Korean missionaries, though it has expanded its aims in recent years to include training and providing methodology on cultural issues.<sup>51</sup>

Table 1, showing the results of the KRIM's bi-annual survey of Korean mission agencies, illustrates how much the Korean mission movement grew during the 1990s. The number of overseas missionaries rose from 1,645 in 1990 to 4,402 in 1996 to 10,745 in 2002. Every two years showed double-digit rates of growth and there is no sign of slowing down yet. As of the end of 2004, there were over 12,000 overseas missionaries.<sup>52</sup>

One obstacle to global mission during the 1990s was the stagnant South Korean economy and the devaluation of the currency. At first glance, this problem did not impact the Korean mission movement, as its growth never slowed throughout the decade. However, it would be wrong to think that the financial crisis had no effect. There was a 1997 meeting of the South Korean World Missions Association to deal with the problems caused by the 100% devaluation in the currency. Some of the recommendations include cutting living expenses by 50-60% while trimming administrative costs, encouraging local churches to raise 40-50% more money and

---

<sup>50</sup> These sources include Seong-Won Park, "A Survey on Mission Work," 112 and Onish, "Korean Missionaries Take on the Hard Cases," Section A, 1.

<sup>51</sup> Interview Subject No. 34

<sup>52</sup> Onish, Section A, I. (Based on the unpublished 2004 survey results)

having missionaries send their children to local schools instead of foreign ones.<sup>53</sup> These sacrifices were not inconsiderable given that administrative costs are small at 10% of the average agency budget and that monthly allotments for missionaries are, in the words of KRIM Executive Director Steve S.C. Moon, “extremely modest.”<sup>54</sup> It is interesting to speculate how large the Korean mission movement might be today without these financial hindrances. But it could also be said that the fiscal crisis made people more aware of their spiritual obligations since donations by church members to mission rose by 50% in 1997.<sup>55</sup>

The current large number of missionaries from South Korea has given them a position of prominence among the overall rankings of mission-sending nations. By the standards of the KRIM and *Operation World*, South Korea is the second-largest sender of missionaries to foreign nations, lagging only behind the United States.<sup>56</sup> This position is a source of pride for Korean Christians, who like many of their fellow countrymen receive satisfaction from international recognition for their achievements. If I had not already known of its second place position, it would have quickly become obvious during my interview process, as it was mentioned frequently, even by those who were not actively involved in Christian mission.

Furthermore, the numerical strength of Korean missionaries has given them a more prominent position among other missionaries. One M.T.I. student who had experience on the Gambian mission field remarked that some Western missionaries and Gambians she met initially did not consider the Koreans to be real missionaries because they were Asian. But as a testimony to the power of numbers, she added, “But now they see we are hardworking and *we are everywhere*.”<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Bong Rin Ro, “South Korea: Bankrupting the Prosperity Gospel,” 60.

<sup>54</sup> Moon, “The Recent Korean Missionary Movement,” 14.

<sup>55</sup> David Neff, “Honoring Pioneers [article online],” *Christianity Today* 50, no. 3 (March 2006): 2, accessed March 2006; available from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/003/18.10html>; Internet.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 and Johnstone and Mandryck, 388. However, South Korea would fall far down on the overall list according to the *World Christian Encyclopedia*'s standards (Table 8).

<sup>57</sup> Interview Subject No. 84

However, my interview subjects never mentioned that South Korea is only second in terms of missionaries to other nations. If the criterion changes to overall numbers of missionaries, referred to by *Operation World* as “total national missionaries” (see Table 2), India actually sends far more with 41,064 compared to South Korea’s 12,279. The difference lies in the fact that South Korea has far more missionaries going to other countries, while India naturally prefers to focus evangelistic efforts within its own boundaries.

South Korea’s overall status as a sender of missionaries also suggests how far it has progressed in sheer numbers from other non-Western nations. In recent years, Asian, Latin American and African countries have made forays into the world of global mission, but none are currently close to South Korea’s numerical or financial strength. This very success, especially in the sometimes superior attitude that can result, has created some problems for Koreans in mission. It will be seen in the next section that while Korean missionaries’ relations with Western mission workers are sometimes strained, their interactions with other non-Western missionaries can be even worse.

In terms of which agencies send Korean missionaries, the denominations have expanded their operations to the point where they dominate over the Western or Korean-originated interdenominational agencies. Denominational agencies grew from 55% of the total in 1994 to 58% in 1996 and their influence continues to grow.<sup>58</sup> In fact, as Table 9 illustrates, the University Bible Fellowship is the sole campus ministry and the Global Missionary Fellowship stands as the only interdenominational agency, a far cry from the past when both models guided the course of Korean mission. Of the denominational agencies, the Presbyterians rule supreme with four out of the eight remaining positions including the overall leader, the GMS. All of the denominational agencies have displayed rapid growth, with the presence of the Baptists on the list notable, as they only set up their Mission Board in 1987.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> Steve S.C. Moon, “Missionary Attrition in Korea: Opinions of Mission Executives,” 13-14, available at <http://www.krim.org/english3.htm>; Internet.

<sup>59</sup> Jang Yun Cho, “Factors,” 76.

Still, interdenominational and campus ministries are not fading away. They are also growing, but not at the same rate as the denominational agencies.<sup>60</sup> Indigenous interdenominational and campus groups like Intercorp, University Bible Fellowship, and Global Partners have seen success in the last few years. In recent years, some international interdenominational agencies like Serving in Mission and World Evangelization for Christ have been growing at very fast levels. WEC Korea, which formed its Korean base in 1997 already has 170 candidates on the field and about that many going through the candidacy process.<sup>61</sup>

It will be interesting to see how long this increasing momentum for mission growth can continue. Samuel Kang of the Korean World Mission Association is working on an ambitious plan to send 100,000 full-time missionaries and one million tentmakers by the year 2030. Moon (and some KWMA board members) feels this is unrealistic and that the current infrastructure is overwhelmed and can only fully support 5,000 missionaries. This would mean that the current system is already stretched too far.<sup>62</sup> Large numbers of missionaries and high goals for the future keep interest in Korean mission high both within South Korea and internationally, but future expansion needs to be accompanied by a consideration of support and training services. Yet for the moment, Korean mission shows no signs of slowing down and will likely continue to thrive and evolve for some time to come.

### *B. The Host Nations for Korean Missionaries*

The type of nation in which Korean missionaries work has evolved through the years. While the largest percentage of Korean missionaries (45.3%) still choose Asian countries for their place of service, candidates are becoming more adventurous in their selection of a nation.<sup>63</sup> The Philippines was the top choice for missionaries for years largely because of its convenient location. It has slipped to the second position now and is rapidly losing ground in the current climate to more exotic and genuinely non-Christian countries. China (see Table 10) is now the number one

---

<sup>60</sup> This assessment is based upon an e-mail answer to a question that I sent Moon in July, 2005.

<sup>61</sup> Interview Subject No. 90

<sup>62</sup> Rob Moll, "Missions Incredible," *Christianity Today* 50, no. 2 (March 2006): 34.

<sup>63</sup> Steve S.C. Moon, "The Recent Korean Missionary Movement," 12.



nation for Korean missionaries but interest in Islamic ministry, particularly in Central Asia and the Middle East, also runs high at the moment.

Islamic countries were the choice for one-third of M.T.I.'s 39 students during the term in which I taught. Seven students hoped to enter the Middle East, including two who hoped to go to Iraq, and six desired to serve in Central Asia. Of the remaining number, eight chose an African country and three aimed for China. Five selected nations like Japan and Sri Lanka, while the remaining ten were undecided. Some of these decisions were determined by the agency or church, as in the case of one couple who were told to go to Turkmenistan instead of their first choice. But most selected a country out of motivations such as kinship with the people or culture and a belief that their help would be most needed in that place.

To show how things have changed within the mission field, just a few years ago Jang Yun Cho wrote an appeal for the Korean Church to become more involved in mission to the 10/40 Window.<sup>64</sup> This term came into vogue during the 1990s largely through the work of mission scholar Luis Bush. He hoped for more attention to be paid to the evangelisation of unreached people groups concentrated in a geographic area from 10 to 40 degrees north of the equator encompassing the Middle East, North Africa and much of Asia (see Picture 1). South Korea actually falls within the 10/40 Window itself, though some evangelicals consider it to be a honorary non-member because of its Christian population.<sup>65</sup> Cho would not need to include that appeal today because the 10/40 Window is now widely recognised and highly desirable within the realm of Korean mission. As an example of its prominence, the GMS website makes sure to note in the section dealing with the regional disposition of its missionaries that 66% of 1,206 missionaries (it has grown since Moon's survey in Table 9) are working in the 10/40 Window.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 143.

<sup>65</sup> "10/40 Window," Wikipedia, accessed 20 July 2006; available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/10/40\\_Window](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/10/40_Window); Internet.

<sup>66</sup> Global Missionary Society website, accessed December 2005; available from <http://www.gms.or.kr/ENG/a5.html>; Internet.

One clear obstacle to evangelical work in countries such as China and many nations within the 10/40 Window is that entering those places as a Christian missionary is forbidden. Such countries are known in some mission circles as “creative access nations.” These countries are desirable locations for Korean missionaries for a variety of reasons: a hope of reaching the last unreached areas, the possibility of doing a better job than past Western missionaries have in 10/40 countries and perhaps a love of adventure and danger. These latter two motivations will be further examined in the next chapter. Missionaries in forbidden countries usually enter through their position in a non-governmental organisation or by serving as a student, teacher or businessperson. There is undeniably some secrecy involved in these operations, such as the use of code names and words. I even visited one Seoul congregation where a missionary’s position was so secret that his name and location were kept secret from his own congregation. At times it can remind one of this sarcastic commentary on “secret” missionaries, “Some seem to have been inspired by the book of James, verse 007.”<sup>67</sup>

But Korean mission does not always have to be done in secret, even in difficult nations. The economic and educational benefits offered by Koreans to the countries they visit can provide them relative freedom in their operations. David Aikman writes of a Korean-formed Christian seminary in Beijing with Korean-American teachers with general acceptance from Chinese authorities.<sup>68</sup> One M.T.I. student, “C,” taught at a science and technology college in China set up by Korean Christians. As she put it,

Usually when a university has over two percent of any religion, it [the religion] is not allowed. But [the university] has 25% Christians. The government looks the other way because the university is useful.<sup>69</sup>

The group that set up the university is even looking into establishing a similar university in North Korea with that government’s blessing.

---

<sup>67</sup> David Van Biema, “Missionaries Under Cover,” *Time*, 30 June 2003, 41.

<sup>68</sup> David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, (Washington: Regnery, 2003), 129.

<sup>69</sup> Interview Subject No. 65. There will be more information on this university in Chapter Seven.

Moreover, not all churches and agencies are comfortable with operating outside of the law. Youngnak Church is one major congregation that sees to it that all of its missionaries and their work are approved of beforehand by the nations that they enter, even in places like Central Asia and China.<sup>70</sup> Admittedly, Youngnak's mission programme, which supports a few dozen missionaries, is much smaller than a church like Onnuri, which provides for hundreds.

While Korean mission work is generally safe, forbidden countries can present some dangers. The Middle East and China are two special areas of trouble. The brutal 2004 slaying of evangelical Korean Christian Kim Sun Il in Iraq was a vivid warning. While not an official missionary, he did have links to a business and church sponsored by Onnuri. He reportedly refused to leave the Iraqi church he had helped to establish when tensions increased, even though the missionaries did. One Onnuri missionary to Iraq later died of a cancer that his family attributes to toxic chemical exposure.<sup>71</sup> The two M.T.I. students who hoped to go to Iraq even admitted the country was too dangerous at the moment and were heading to Jordan to learn Arabic and wait for renewed safety. China has also had issues with Korean missionaries who assist North Korean refugees in China to gain entry into South Korea.

The South Korean government has been attempting to keep Korean missionaries away from further trouble, as seen in such headlines as a July, 2005 *Chosun Ilbo* article entitled, "Korean Christians Urged to Avoid Holy Land"<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the public has displayed some annoyance towards reckless Korean missionaries, as in a Korean language cartoon (see Picture 2) that depicts three crazed-looking Koreans marching around Iraq. One is shouting, "Hallelujah" and another, carrying a Korean flag, screams, "The Republic of Korea!" with all three bearing target signs on their shirts. An Iraqi with a gun waits in ambush and exclaims: "Suicide terror!"

---

<sup>70</sup> Interview Subject No. 42

<sup>71</sup> Interview Subject No. 47

<sup>72</sup> "Korean Christians Urged to Avoid Holy Land," *Chosun Ilbo*, 7 July 2005, accessed December 2005; available from <http://english.chosun.com/w21data/html/news/200507/200507070031.html>; Internet.

Some countries preferred by Korean missionaries present another sort of problem. They have become altogether too popular. While countries such as China and India can easily absorb large numbers of Korean missionaries, it becomes more difficult in places like Mongolia, Cambodia and Thailand that some feel are now too full of Koreans. This is particularly so in the large urban areas of Phnom Penh and Ulaan Bataar chosen by many as their place for initial entry into mission. A March, 2003 article of the Korean Christian newspaper, *Kidokkyobo*, asked that missionaries not go in such high numbers to places like Kazakhstan, China and Mongolia, but instead consider less popular areas like Europe, Africa and South America.<sup>73</sup> One WEC Korea missionary that I interviewed spoke of how he had been trained in the Thai language, but ultimately decided to devote himself to India because he realised that countries like the Philippines and Thailand do not need more missionaries.<sup>74</sup>

### C. *The Redefinition of Missionary Work*

With the increasing diversity of cultures and nations reached by South Korean missionaries, acceptable tasks for would-be missionaries have also expanded. This suggests a broadening of the “classic view” of Korean mission, which is that mission involves going abroad for the purpose of Gospel proclamation and church planting.<sup>75</sup> Table 11 gives a picture of the missionary tasks undertaken by the missionaries of the GMS. It is scarcely surprising that the classic missionary duty of church-planting is by far the most common type of work with the somewhat nebulous category of “Unreached People” lower on the list likely also pertaining to evangelical work. But education also stands out as a prominent area, especially the second most popular job of teaching in a Bible college or seminary, which suggests that the GMS puts a priority on training local Christians. Categories like “Social Welfare”, “Local Leader Training” and “Medical Clinic” all give evidence of the fair variety of options available for those interested in full-time mission in South Korea.

---

<sup>73</sup> “Inki Sonkyoji Jajedwaenya Handa, (Popular Mission Fields Should Be Reduced),” *Kidokkyobo*, 19 March 2005, 12.

<sup>74</sup> Interview Subject No. 49

<sup>75</sup> Oosterom, *Contemporary Mission Thought*, 49.

Recent years have seen increasing interest in medical mission, social welfare-oriented ministry and short-term mission trips. All three options are attractive to lay people from a professional background. This is a far cry from past years when Korean missionaries were almost always pastors. Those involved in non-pastoral mission are also beginning to think about ways to integrate their work into the larger task of mission, both practically and theologically. Dr. Shinjung Cha, an advocate of long and short-term medical mission, writes, "The combination of good health care, discipleship training and church planting can be done in partnership with long-term missionaries and mission organizations."<sup>76</sup>

While the bulk of missionary work ultimately has an evangelistic aim, including much of the medical and social welfare work, there are projects with different goals. One interesting example is the Canaan Farmer's School, which began as a ministry for the rural poor of Korea but has since taken in 1,133 foreign students as of 1999 and set up branches in Bangladesh, the Philippines and Thailand.<sup>77</sup> The school insists that churches have lost the true sense of mission because they have turned away from the needs of society. Their 1999 vision, another example of the sometimes unrealistic goals within Korean Protestantism, was to: "eradicate poverty in all Asia by the year 2000 by sharing the Christian spirit, technology and agricultural techniques originated from the Canaan concept."<sup>78</sup>

While Korean mission may be broadening in many ways, not every Korean mission group or coordinator is open to the idea of expanding mission beyond its former boundaries. One female MTI pupil spent years in Turkey setting up small Christian communities. She has lately begun to think that there might be ways to shorten the time building up the communities through discipleship and Bible teaching. She now feels called to work in those areas, but her agency's director is not happy with her new direction, as he wants the group to remain limited to evangelism aimed at finding new converts.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> Shinjung Cha, *The Development Strategy for Future Overseas Missions*, (Seoul: Abide in Christ, 1999), 14.

<sup>77</sup> Il Nam Jung, "Incarnational Mission," 45.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>79</sup> Interview Subject No. 79

For now, a pastor-focused model of missionary still dominates. The personnel statistics for the GMS show that 1,048 of their missionaries are under the category of “Pastor and Wife,” compared to only 70 laymen and 88 evangelists. However, while pastors still form the majority, the site makes sure to add that the lay missionary force has been “increasing rapidly since 2000.”<sup>80</sup> An additional example of how the traditional categories are being challenged comes from the inclusion of the term “evangelist,” which once referred to a special class of professional ministry in the Korean Protestant churches dedicated to domestic evangelical efforts. The definition of evangelist used to be distinct from the Korean word for missionary, with the latter being utilised only for ministry outside of South Korea.<sup>81</sup> But as the GMS statistics prove, there are cases of evangelists going overseas, blurring the distinction.

The “Pastor and Wife” category demonstrates some intriguing things about Korean mission. First, single pastors rarely go to the mission field and their wives are considered by some agencies, including GMS, to be missionaries in their own right. It is also notable that all of the GMS pastors appear to be male. In general, married missionaries outnumber single missionaries considerably with 87% married compared to less than 13% single. In addition, the overall number of single Korean missionaries has been decreasing for years going from 20.2% in 1994 to 12.7 in 2000. The decrease is positive from a certain perspective as single missionaries are more likely to leave the field compared to their married counterparts, thus saving agencies the great cost it requires to train and deploy a missionary.<sup>82</sup>

This aspect of missionary attrition and the increase in married missionaries presents a real problem for single female Korean missionaries. In 1996, single missionaries made up 46% of the cases of missionary attrition when they were only 20% of the total. Single women made up 63% of the total number of single missionaries and the attrition rate for the single females was 73% compared to 27% for the men.<sup>83</sup> Large denomination and interdenominational agencies deliberately

---

<sup>80</sup> Global Missionary Society website, accessed December 2006; available from <http://www.gms.or.kr/ENG/a5/html>; Internet.

<sup>81</sup> Oosterom, *Contemporary Mission Thought*, 50.

<sup>82</sup> Moon, “The Acts of Koreans,” 2.

<sup>83</sup> Moon, “Missionary Attrition,” 21-24.



seek out married candidates over single ones, feeling that the presence of a spouse will provide for a more comfortable adjustment that will result in a more sensible investment. During the 2005 spring term at MTI, 27 out of 39 students were female and over two-thirds were unmarried. Mihyang Choi, the Executive Director of MTI observed that single female students often had trouble finding places in conventional agencies, with some turning to newer ones in South Korea like WEC and SIM, which may explain part of those groups' current rise in numbers.

But the situation for Korean female missionaries is far from bleak. As Moon mentions, there are "many areas" where single missionaries are better-suited for mission than a couple or family.<sup>84</sup> Single missionaries can also enjoy cheaper living expenses without concerns over caring for and educating children. Furthermore, many problems of attrition could be avoided with a better support system from missionary agencies and peer missionaries. While Korean women missionaries may not be able to act as independently as many of their male colleagues, they still can act in a wide variety of roles, such as leading small groups, teaching or engaging in person-to-person evangelism.

Finally, while elements of mission are in the process of redefinition, the scope of mission itself is being reconsidered. For decades, mission has been seen as something primarily done outside of Korean borders. But now some involved in mission are questioning whether domestic ministry could also be considered mission work. Samuel Kim remarked,

After 1997, there is argument over what is mission. What about rural Korea? They don't have that kind of resources [that larger churches possess]. Before 1997, we didn't care.<sup>85</sup>

In the changing climate for mission, large churches like Sarang and Youngnak put both domestic (largely benefiting rural and coastal churches) and foreign mission under the same programme and churches such as Onnuri include mission trips within South Korea as part of their short-term mission schedule. There is also the case of acting in mission towards foreign groups within South Korea to the benefit of global

---

<sup>84</sup>Moon, "The Acts of Koreans," 2.

<sup>85</sup>Interview Subject No. 40

mission, which will be examined later in the thesis, or of mission projects like the Canaan Farmer's School with both domestic and foreign elements.

#### *D. The Role of the Local South Korean Church in Mission*

This section will provide a more in-depth look at the vital role played by the local church in the process of mission. A Korean missionary candidate who does not rely upon the local church for support of some kind is a rare bird indeed. The process of becoming a missionary almost always starts at the congregational level. The candidates usually turn to their local churches as they begin raising money and gaining mission experience. In denominations like Hapdong, the General Assembly only trains candidates and does some administrative work for them.<sup>86</sup>

This local church dominance remains even if they go through an interdenominational agency, which candidates usually select on the basis of the experience and expertise they offer. Few such agencies provide direct financial support to their candidates, though they can supply them with a list of churches to go to for money. Some interdenominational agencies, such as WEC Korea, do not even pay their staff.

While some missionaries do receive full support from one congregation, the majority rely upon a network of local churches, along with individual sponsors. Sometimes support can also come from churches in the United States or Singapore.<sup>87</sup> The need for such a network often creates headaches for the missionary candidate who must gather support from different churches. They then must stay in touch with these churches, as congregations expect to receive progress reports from their missionaries. But there are definite advantages for a candidate with the support of several churches, notably in the freedom that comes from not being dependent on the wishes of any one congregation and in the larger number of visitors and resources the missionary could enjoy.

---

<sup>86</sup> Seong Won Park, "A Survey on Mission Work," 333

<sup>87</sup> As in the case of Interview Subject No. 19, for instance.

The support of a local church is also important in giving a candidate legitimacy. MTI, which trains more students for interdenominational agencies than denominational ones, emphasised this factor to its students. Executive Director Mihyang Choi addressed the students in this manner,

The church needs to recognise a missionary. You need to get recognised by a church, if you don't have one. Without one, you're not ready to go.

As important as the local church is, being sent only through the local church without any larger agency backing tends to be frowned on, especially so among those concerned with improving cultural skills among Korean missionaries. They lament the chaos and competitiveness that can result, not to mention the possibility of untrained local leaders exerting too much influence over field strategy.<sup>88</sup> I recall one conversation during MTI where a romantic young student expressed his dream of going off to China alone under a single church's sponsorship. His idea was firmly (though politely) refuted by other students who exclaimed that he needed the support and guidance of an agency.

Local churches aid missionaries in ways that go beyond financial giving. The churches often show their support through prayer, communication (e-mail, letters), packages and short-term mission trips. Few Korean missionaries are isolated from their church communities with most receiving several visits a year from the various supportive churches. An American missionary in Tibet being funded through Onnuri and its English ministry expressed his feelings over the support he received,

I wanted a close connection with whatever church I worked with. I have a home church [in the U.S.] that supports me financially, but they don't write much. It's easier here. I don't speak Korean fluently but other factors make up for it. People can come three, four, five times a year.<sup>89</sup>

The process of becoming a missionary can differ from person to person in such areas as length of preparation time, type of language training and the extent of the involvement of a local church. Korean missionaries tend to need a personal vision

---

<sup>88</sup> Moon, "The Recent Korean Missionary Movement," 14 and Jung Woon Suh, *Spirituality and Theology in Mission*, 30.

<sup>89</sup> Interview Subject No. 2

for mission. “Vision” involves a sense of where the person wants to go and how they wish to serve, as well as a spiritual sense of being chosen by God. A vision for mission can be formed early on in the candidacy process or quite late. There were a number of students at MTI who prayed regularly to receive their vision. Churches are on the lookout for candidates with a strong vision. For example, Youngnak Church sponsors “vision trips” with “vision teams” designed specifically to help church members increase their vision for mission. The mission staff that I interviewed also confirmed that they look for members with a vision for mission when selecting candidates to support for long-term training. As they explained,

To be a successful missionary, you need to have focus...  
We’re not looking for someone to do mission well. We need someone to act out the vision. We expect the man to do the work of 100. He is there as a leader like airplanes that go into a pattern.<sup>90</sup>

Mission agencies and churches are frequently content to work with the vision of a particular candidate. However, there are times when a candidate’s vision conflicts with that of the sending body. One such case was of a missionary couple at Onnuri consisting of a Chinese woman and an American man. The couple wanted to go to China and even trained for such work in a Korean Christian university. Onnuri decided that they wanted to set up a mission in Sri Lanka and told the couple of their hope that they would go. With consideration, the pair determined that God had put a burden on their hearts for Sri Lanka and are now working there.

### *III. Korean Missionary and Church Profiles*

#### *A. Missionary Profiles*

Three case studies of Korean missionaries will be presented to provide a sense of the process a missionary goes through and how it can differ from person to person. The first missionary has been interested in mission since the late 1980s, but only recently entered the field full-time. In his forties and married with four daughters, “Jeremiah” currently serves in Sri Lanka with an international agency that he requested not be named. His interest in mission dates to his time in seminary when a fellow church member suggested he should train as a missionary. After military

---

<sup>90</sup> Interview Subjects Nos. 41 and 42

service, he was preparing a lecture for church teachers when he felt called to read Lamentations 2:19. The verse, which reads in part: “Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street,” inspired him to work for his current agency, which specialises in mission to children. He appreciated the experience the agency brought from its work in over 150 countries.<sup>91</sup>

Jeremiah worked as a director of Christian education for years, but determined in 2003 that God wanted him to go out to evangelise children more directly. Again, a Bible verse (Mark 16:18) helped to inspire him to action. His citing a specific Bible passage and his initial time working in an agency in an administrative capacity are both traits sometimes found among Korean missionaries. Displaying the pioneering spirit often found in Korean missionaries, he researched countries where his agency had not yet set up operations. Sri Lanka was one such nation, though he had to overcome his personal reluctance to work in a strongly Buddhist country. Hearing a co-worker telling 1,000 children about the Gospel during a short-term mission trip to Sri Lanka convinced him to work there.

Jeremiah stayed in Sri Lanka for two years as a trainer of Christian teachers and evangelists, except for the occasional conference or class (I met him during his brief stay at MTI). He feels that the teens and children he meets are eager to accept Jesus as their Saviour. Like many Korean missionaries, he possesses a strong love of prayer and belief in miracles. He had prayed to God that if God wanted him to work in Sri Lanka, a local prayer team should be provided. Early in his stay, his guide suddenly said to him that he wanted to establish a Sri Lankan prayer team, which Jeremiah took as a direct answer to prayer. Right now, his main vision is to establish nine branches of his agency in Sri Lanka with 30 full-time Sri Lankan workers.

The second missionary is fairly typical of the process today’s Korean missionary goes through, though not in the country she selected. “E.” is single, in her early thirties and came from a Christian family, though she had doubts about her

---

<sup>91</sup> Interview Subject No. 67

faith during her youth. While a student, she experienced the presence of God and felt a growing sense of a call to be a missionary. This sense was confirmed by some mission conferences she attended that encouraged committing one's life to God and a 15 day short-term mission trip to Turkey.

In 2002, she decided to quit her job and joined the Onnuri World Mission Center outside Seoul for six months of training. With 17 other students, she learned about "spirituality, cultural differences, contextualization, Bible study, and how to get along with people." But she still had not found her vision for mission. After several months of prayer, she saw the words "Poland" in a vision. Although she wanted to go to China, India or Japan, she determined this was God's will. Tyrannus International Ministry, the agency for Onnuri's missionaries, would have preferred to send her to an Asian country, but they accepted her situation.

E. emphasised the importance of the three-fold structure needed for mission. She said that the local church gives prayer and support. Onnuri is her main church, though she relies on other forms of financial backing. Then, there is the role of the training centre. Finally, the agency does much of the needed paperwork. Eventually, E. graduated from her training and went to Poland for one year of language training in 2003. She is now connected to a Polish evangelical church, engaging in small group ministry and offering English lessons.<sup>92</sup>

The third missionary, "S," is admittedly not yet a full-time mission worker in his chosen field. But he is a young man in his twenties with a remarkably clear vision of his future ministry. In his desire for international training and greater cultural skills, he may represent part of the future of Korean mission. I first heard of this person when I was asked to pray for him during his solo short-term visit to Sierra Leone. While I harboured some doubts regarding the soundness of this trip, his later description of his plan for mission was fairly sound.

---

<sup>92</sup> Interview Subject No. 8



S. is a member of Sarang Church and he has begun a group at Sarang to support his project in various ways which now has some 200 people involved. S. also set up a website to promote his project. His work is not limited to South Korea and Sierra Leone, as he wants to ultimately set up a base in London. He has visited six times already and hopes to study one of the six languages used in Sierra Leone, as well as hook up with a non-governmental organisation.

His hope is to ultimately set up a school and get involved in development work in two cities in Sierra Leone. He anticipates no problem with violence, as he stays away from the parts where fighting takes place. S. is now planning a longer stay in Sierra Leone and hopes to bring short-term groups over in the future. His ultimate dream is to expand his mission to help all of West Africa, but the extended process through which he has planned his ministry indicates that he knows what a challenge lies ahead of him.<sup>93</sup>

Thus far, this work may have given the impression that all churches in South Korea are keenly interested in mission. While awareness of mission is so high that most churches maintain some sort of mission involvement, the depth of interest varies from congregation to congregation. The average church contains a number of different factions that are all competing for a limited budget. The enthusiasm of the head pastor can make a big difference in orienting the church towards mission, along with the support of dedicated laypeople.

Some mission supporters wish that more was being done within their own congregations and in Korean churches generally. One MTI student spoke for many in the school when he lamented that his church did not do nearly enough to help in mission efforts. Although his 1,000 member church backed 21 missionaries and 30 poor churches within South Korea, he believed that at least 20% of the overall budget should go to the cause.<sup>94</sup> He felt that the Korean Church needed to do more to help the global Church and spend less money on internal efforts. Those involved in North Korean ministry that I spoke to also complained of the lack of support they received

---

<sup>93</sup> Interview Subject No. 93

<sup>94</sup> Interview Subject No. 66

from Korean churches and lack of interest in international matters on the part of many members, even though backing for many of their projects came from churches.

### *B. Church Profiles*

The remainder of this chapter will highlight some individual Korean churches that play a role in forming today's vision of mission. The megachurches of South Korea act as role models and initiate new trends in church life. In Korean mission, one megachurch that is leading the way is Onnuri Church. Onnuri was formed in 1985 by Yong Jo Hah and now has a membership of 18,000 along with a number of satellite churches in South Korea.<sup>95</sup> Jang Yun Cho relates how Onnuri has been influential in a variety of areas, including helping to spread contemporary worship and praise music and boosting the evangelical movement in South Korea through opening its own publishing ministry.<sup>96</sup>

Onnuri's mission programme stands out largely because of its ambition and the prominent goals. Interestingly, although affiliated with the Tonghap denomination, Onnuri has its own mission agency, the aforementioned Tyrannus. This agency was established in the same year as Onnuri, as sign of Rev. Hah's longstanding commitment to mission, and calls itself nondenominational. In 1994, Onnuri and Tyrannus announced their Vision 2,000/10,000 plan, which hopes to have established 10,000 international cell church leaders and 2,000 missionaries by 2010. The church also plans to build 30 "vision churches" in South Korea and around the world.

The idea is to train and form the churches and leaders utilising Onnuri's "software", a combination of curriculum, training and infrastructure that proved successful for Onnuri itself.<sup>97</sup> The desire to set up so many cell church leaders around the world also indicates the continued interest in the cell church models and its global promotion by the Korean Protestant Church. Recalling the previous Mission Statement of Onnuri's that highlighted its hopes to spread its ministry and worship worldwide, it may seem like Onnuri is imposing its particular culture on its

---

<sup>95</sup> Accessed December 2005; available at [http://www.mylivinglife.com/about\\_tyranus.asp](http://www.mylivinglife.com/about_tyranus.asp); Internet.

<sup>96</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 96.

<sup>97</sup> Interview Subject Number 47

mission targets. This is not without foundation, as some of Onnuri's missionaries will be included in the chapter on missionary cultural errors. But Onnuri, as seen in E's training, does teach about issues of culture to some extent. It also has built an extensive network of ministry to foreigners in South Korea and makes efforts to broaden the cultural horizons of Korean Protestants through education. For instance, Rev. Hah recently took over leadership of Torch Trinity (to be profiled in Chapter Six), a school that brings foreign students into contact with Koreans.

The 2,000 missionaries of Vision 2,000/10,000 can include certain short-term, student missionaries and cooperative (those sent out by another mission board) missionaries, which certainly makes the ultimate attainment of the goal easier.<sup>98</sup> The fact that Onnuri generally gives limited instead of full stipends for their missionaries also helps build up the number.

While not all of the members are interested in mission, Onnuri encourages high involvement among the laity through prayer groups specialising in mission, mission conferences and the Onnuri School of Mission for lay people. Onnuri's high goals also require money, so Pastor Hah began a fund-raising/awareness-building campaign called Acts 29. Acts only contains 28 chapters, so the idea is that Onnuri is helping to write the next chapter in Christian history. Rev. Hah explained the Acts 29 endeavour in this way,

Onnuri Church began with the desire of becoming like 'that very church' in the Book of Acts. This vision of starting 30 vision churches before 2010, it fits with our philosophy of ministry, program and outreach goals. In order to fulfil these goals, we need to raise 25 million dollars.<sup>99</sup>

Cho praises the work of Onnuri and Tyrannus in exerting a great impact on world mission in the local church and numerous interview subjects mentioned the church's notoriety. In its innovations and in the mistakes that it has made along the way in their rush to enter new areas, Onnuri will be featured throughout this work.

---

<sup>98</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 96.

<sup>99</sup> "Acts 29- Book of Acts Continues at Onnuri," Accessed December 2005, available at <http://www.onnuriyangjae.org/acts29/org>; Internet.

Sarang (which means “love” in Korean) Church also stands as a prominent megachurch with a keen interest in mission. With roughly the same membership as Onnuri, Sarang was formed in 1978 by Han-Heum Ok and built its reputation by promoting the value of continued discipleship in a period when people were tiring of focusing simply on conversions and quantitative value. Its initial vision was that of a three-fold ministry focus consisting of: training laity, youth evangelism and evangelism in Communist countries. With the subsequent fall of Communism, the church expanded the mission vision to fit the whole world, though like many in Korean mission, they do hope for eventual freedom to evangelise in North Korea.

Sarang’s mission programme consists of three sections: the Planning Team, Overseas Team and the Domestic Team. The Planning Team takes care of mission policy, works on the internet site and networks with foreign and domestic mission agencies. Like Onnuri, Sarang does not appear to be closely tied to its denomination in mission, although it is a Hapdong congregation. Instead, it seeks to: “strengthen networking ties and seeks efficient results through mutual cooperation with over twenty mission organizations.”<sup>100</sup> These groups include SIM, WEC, Global Bible Translations and New Tribe Mission.

In early 2005, the Sarang Overseas Team backed 31 missionaries with full support, 65 with partial, 20 through international organisations and 7 “Professionals” (skilled laymen). The Sarang missionaries operate in over 30 countries, though the majority work in Asian nations, especially China and Central Asia. Their promotional CD- Rom emphasised that 65% of their missionaries operate within the 10/40 Window.

Sarang is a church that attempts to place equal emphasis on foreign and domestic mission. Sarang’s Domestic Team supports 90 Korean churches in small farming and fishing villages and is involved in migrant ministry efforts. Sarang has its own domestic variation of Onnuri’s 2,000/10,000 plan called the “20/20 Movement,” which hopes to evangelise 75% of South Korea by 2020.

---

<sup>100</sup> Sarang Mission CD-Rom “Go or Send!”

Sarang makes a special effort to recruit the laity for mission, particularly lay professions, declaring that the: “twenty-first century is the age of lay professional mission.”<sup>101</sup> Like Onnuri, it has its own school for training laity in mission. Sarang excels in involving its members in prayer with over 1,450 small groups interceding for missionaries with requests sent in by the Mission Department. There are four “Barnabas” prayer teams meeting for two hours on Sunday to pray for a mission area, such as the Middle East or Northeast Asia. Sarang also arranges for numerous small group trips with 1,104 people going in 2003 with half of the destinations being domestic and half foreign.<sup>102</sup>

One of South Korea’s oldest and most distinguished Protestant megachurches, Younknak’s mission department is smaller than Sarang’s and Onnuri’s, but it has its own unique view of mission. Younknak has ten missionaries with full support (\$1,800 a month), eight missionaries in conjunction with other groups (\$1-2,000 a month), five to eight networking missionaries and an unspecified number of local workers (\$500-800 a month). Younknak’s generosity extends to supporting a missionary for the first two years in their location with cultural and language training, after which they return to South Korea to announce their vision for their third and fourth years.

Younknak aims for specificity in their mission work. The mission staff admitted that they cannot focus on the whole world, so they limit their scope to China, Russia and Central Asia. Younknak also has a pastor devoted to North Korean mission, a long-standing interest of the church in light of its founding pastor’s North Korean origins. The staff noted the “special heart” that Younknak has for North Korean mission and held that they were better at it than other churches. Younknak also found remarkable success in building churches overseas (intended both for Korean and non-Korean members) with over 500 in the Americas, Asia, Africa and Europe, including the 5,000 member Younknak Presbyterian of Los Angeles.<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> “Go or Send!” CD-Rom

<sup>102</sup> Interview Subject No. 46

<sup>103</sup> “Previous Prize Winners,” accessed 20 July 2006; available at [http://www.templetonprize.org/bios\\_recent.html](http://www.templetonprize.org/bios_recent.html); Internet.

Youngnak defines mission in a broad way that encompasses some older ministries of the church brought into being by the much-revered late founding pastor, the range of which probably help to explain the relatively small size of their foreign mission programme compared to those of Onnuri and Sarang. During my interview with the mission staff, they mentioned the military mission and social welfare work which their church pioneered within South Korea. The church also devotes much energy to university ministry and has recently begun sending out short-term mission teams from that wing. Their official mission programme even includes a pastor who specialises in “cultural missions,” including music, drama and movies.<sup>104</sup>

Megachurches attract much attention in Korean mission for their substantial resources and numerical strength. But the small and medium-sized churches have also been important in the development and current prominence of Korean mission. Smaller churches can offer a more intimate experience of mission than the more impersonal megachurches. One interview subject who had done mission through Onnuri said that smaller churches were preferable to large ones as mission sponsors because they had less red tape. On the negative side, smaller churches may micromanage their candidates. Some of the worst candidate/sending body disputes that will be described later on come from such churches.

The sometimes heroic scale of the more modest churches in their mission giving have acted as an inspiration to some. A notable influence in the early 1970s was the small Dongshin Church, whose minister campaigned for mission and gave one-third of the church budget over to such efforts.<sup>105</sup> Mihyang Choi of MTI spoke fondly of her home church in Hwacheon. A small resort town congregation with less than 200 members, Hwacheon nonetheless made it a priority to support multiple missionaries over the years. Choi received funds for her education, including time spent in Australia and Canada, through Hwacheon Church.

Smaller churches can create some significant mission ventures of their own when they band together. One such example is Dong San Church. Located in an

---

<sup>104</sup> Interview Subjects Nos. 41 and 42

<sup>105</sup> Hwal Young Kim, “From Asia to Asia,” 73-4.



industrial area near Seoul with some 2,000 companies and factories, Dong San is a Koshin congregation keenly aware of its commitments to its area and the wider world. With only 400 members (small by Korean standards), the church supports 20 overseas missionaries. Dong San, with the backing of other churches, has set up a centre called “Friends of All Nations” that reaches out to the migrant community that work in the factories.<sup>106</sup> The work of this centre, designed to benefit both domestic and foreign mission, will be profiled in the third section, but it is a notable example of a ministry made possible by small churches pooling their resources.

This section focused largely on the element of growth within the Korean Protestant Church and its mission as it grew from a target of mission to a major Christian leader and sender of missionaries. All of this growth has not been without concerns that quality was sacrificed for the sake of quantity, as the backlash against the church growth movement and the nostalgia for the financially-strapped but culturally sensitive mission to Shantung shows. Such expansion is now being seen in the realm of South Korean overseas mission, but as the next part will establish, this phenomenon has also attracted criticism and controversy in regards to mission.

A key element of the growth within the Korean Church has been its ambition and determination to exert an ever greater influence whether expanding from a small sect to a substantial national religion to attempting to evangelise the entire world. But the attempts of Korean missionaries to be international mission leaders has produced some conflict over how to deal with issues of globalisation and culture while still holding onto what is perceived to be the core of the Christian faith. The next section will further explore the vision and difficulties faced by the mission of the Korean Protestant Church as a global leader, largely by comparison to a prominent earlier mission authority, the American mission movement of the late nineteenth century.

---

<sup>106</sup> Interview Subject No. 80

# **Introduction to Part II:**

## **Korean Mission and the Victorian Connection**

There was once a certain country. After years of domination by a domineering, occupying nation, it won its freedom after a hard struggle. Internal struggles led to a long and painful civil war. Beyond the suffering the civil war brought about, it also delayed the nation's attempts to become a sender of overseas missionaries. Tentative efforts had been made before the war, with some success, but only in the post-war period of rebuilding and financial growth did the missionary movement really begin and blossom. Great growth within the nation's churches and economy, along with a large student movement, all contributed to the development of an overseas mission programme.

Problems emerged quickly for this country's missionary work. The missionaries were seriously lacking in experience and sophistication compared to those from other nations. And there were serious cultural problems as the missionaries had to learn to adapt to very different new environments. But they were determined to work through these problems, largely through improved training and methodology, persevering in their mission. They believed that their overseas mission work would contribute to revival within their home churches as well as fulfilling their obligation to fulfil the Great Commission. Some even hoped that they could help to bring about the Second Coming in some way by reaching new nations for Christ.

While they were aware that other nations enjoyed certain advantages over them in mission, this country firmly believed that God held a special destiny in store for them. Had God not given them marvellous blessings since they won their freedom and prosperity in a way that gained worldwide attention? They had much to share with other countries, although they had to fight a certain isolationist streak that existed along with the desire to embrace the world. And unlike some of the countries whose missionaries had previously been dominant in the mission field, this

country lacked difficult baggage in the form of colonial or political entanglements. In a way, they held themselves to be a chosen people, with some making specific connections between themselves and the Israelites as they were taking up the historic banner as the people doing God's will on earth. While they believed they were acting through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in achieving their goals, some critics accused them of being motivated instead by nationalistic pride.

This description fits today's Korean Church well. But it equally applies to the United States and their mission hopes during the nineteenth century, especially in the years from 1880 to 1900, the height of what Kenneth Scott LaTourette referred to as "The Great Century" of mission.<sup>1</sup> Some of these similarities are clearly a product of Korea being an object of American missionaries during the late nineteenth century, such as the strong role of the student movement. The origins of other connections, however, are more difficult to pin down. Past American missionaries made attempts to help the Koreans to avoid mistakes made by Western missionaries of the time by building a relatively harmonious and financially self-sufficient mission. But Korean mission still became known for its lack of cooperation and financial extravagance. Ultimately, nineteenth century American missionaries and today's Korean missionaries are alike at least as much through their similar ambitions and in the scope of their mission hopes as through their specific historical links.

It should be stressed that the Victorian American/modern Korean analogy is far from perfect. There are many ways in which Korean missionaries differ from their earlier American counterparts, some of these differences coming about precisely through the awareness of the often highly educated Korean missionaries of past mission efforts. And today's Korean missionaries can express themselves in a way that is superficially close to the behaviour of the Victorian Americans, yet profoundly different due to the changed modern atmosphere and the uniqueness of the Korean Church. These differences will also be examined throughout this section. Some of the hopes and problems found in Korean mission are common to those of many other groups of modern non-Western missionaries or to missionaries in general.

---

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Great Century, A.D. 1800-A.D. 1914*, 1.

But the similarities between Victorian-era Americans and modern Koreans are so striking and reveal so much about the Korean mindset and methodology that a further examination is called for, especially as there are many Korean missionaries who specifically see themselves as successors to the legacy of nineteenth century missionaries in unashamedly seeking to spread the Gospel into new corners of the world.

In this second section of the thesis, two areas of comparison between Korean and late nineteenth century American missionaries will be detailed. The first part looks at the parallels between the two groups in their mission mindset. Areas such as their mission aims and motivations will be delved into, as well as a special reflection upon the mutual feeling the two groups had of being chosen by God both as a nation and in their mission activities. The first part will conclude with a consideration of how many Koreans believe the West to no longer be the mission leader and why they feel themselves to be better suited to act as evangelists.

The second part will examine mistakes made by Korean missionaries, especially in the area of culture. Many of these, such as inexperience, lack of methodology, accusations of bribing would-be converts (“rice Christians”) and building enclosed compounds for new believers, were also difficult areas for the Victorian missionaries. Again, some of these mistakes come out of Western influence or general mission shortcomings, while others emerge from South Korea’s long monocultural and authoritarian history. The lingering influence of these problems, in spite of widespread knowledge of these issues and their dangers, demonstrates how hard it truly is to do culturally sensitive mission. The deliberate and often costly (in time, effort and expense) efforts to overcome these mistakes that the third section of the thesis will examine in depth are a direct result of the growing awareness of these mission faults among Korean Protestants.

# Chapter Four:

## Vision and Confidence in Nineteenth Century American and Korean Mission

### *Introduction*

Some of the most interesting and relevant parallels between the late nineteenth century American and modern Korean missionaries revolve around the bold vision shared by the two groups. In both cases, they believed in their ability to change the world, even if they were unclear at times on exactly how to go about doing this.<sup>2</sup> The confidence of the American and the Korean missionaries stemmed to some extent from their being part of a larger movement that defined the Christian religion of their times (the nineteenth century Western missionary boom and the current non-Western Christian explosion, respectively), but the two groups also stood out for their high level of activity and confidence.

Such confidence has been expressed in different ways. The Victorian American missionaries were renowned for their optimism, zeal and activism, sometimes to the point of lacking respect for tradition and institutional structures<sup>3</sup>. Today's Koreans are, if anything, even more assertive. They have been called "aggressive" in their operations.<sup>4</sup> This can be seen in a positive light, as when Patrick Johnstone praises the, "dogged determination of the Koreans in Church planting," as well as in the negative sense of acting in a difficult situation recklessly and without proper planning.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter will look at the similar, yet distinctive, visions of these two sets of missionaries in four areas. The first part gives an overview of the missiology of late nineteenth century American missionaries in such areas as motivations, nationalism

---

<sup>2</sup> Interview Subject No. 32

<sup>3</sup> William Hutchison, "A Moral Equivalent for Imperialism: Americans and the Promotion of 'Christian Civilization'," *Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era: 1880-1920*, Eds. Turben Christensen, William Hutchison, (Denmark: Christensens Bogtrykkeri, 1982), 167.

<sup>4</sup> Onish ("Korean Missionaries Take on the Hard Cases," Section A, 1) provides one example, along with some of my interviews, such as Subject No. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Johnstone, *The Church Is Bigger Than You Think*, (Fearn: Christian Focus, 1998), 139.

and methodology. The second part features the ideas of modern Korean missionaries in these same fields and considers the ways in which the Koreans are close to and different from their predecessors.

The third part will demonstrate how the Korean Church of today specifically looks upon itself as the successor of the mission legacy of the West, of which the late Victorian period was such a classic example. Like much of the non-Western Christian world, Korean Protestants are well aware of the decline of the previously dominant Western churches. The Korean Church is quite willing to take over as an important leader of the new Christian order with some even seeing it as the foremost Christian power. Furthermore, many Western Christians affirm this “changing of the guard” as the wave of the future and the hope of Christianity.

## I. *An Overview of Late Nineteenth Century American Mission*

### A. *Motivations for Mission*

Motivations for missionary services have long been myriad and complex. First of all, there were certain secular developments that promoted the cause of foreign mission among Americans in the last decades of the nineteenth century. After the disruption of the Civil War, the United States was making strides towards increasing its global prominence and overcoming internal divisions and its physical distance from Europe. Americans were also becoming more interested in exploring and developing the frontier. The frontier was both a physical reality within their own borders and beyond, as well as a more intangible spiritual concept. The stimulus provided by the increasing knowledge of geography made possible through exploration helped to spark interest in missionary possibilities.<sup>6</sup>

The combination of freedom, relatively safety and paid expenses for entry into some of the world’s most exotic places offered by overseas mission led to opportunities and problems for American Protestants. James A. Field, Jr. observed that the motivations for mission service among American missionaries in the Near and Far Eastern regions was indeed partially driven by the hope of romance and

---

<sup>6</sup> Fairbank, “The Many Faces of Protestant Mission in China,” 29.



adventure, though he does conclude that the desire to fulfil the Great Commission was a more important incentive.<sup>7</sup>

However, the freedom found within mission and the desire to actively engage in the world was balanced by a sense of hesitation in a country where growing isolationist tendencies existed alongside the hope for global engagement. The tension between traditional American nationalism and the desire of its churches for involvement in international mission in the 1800s has been noted by authors such as Samuel Hugh Moffett.<sup>8</sup> The American churches would serve as a force that encouraged global activity, even in secular areas, as the following section on mission and national identity will further reveal.

The Protestant churches of the late nineteenth century were filled with confidence in their abilities and potential, largely because of the decades of revivalist movements and growth they had enjoyed. In spite of America's current reputation as a country that has held onto its Christian faith more strongly than other Western nations, only 17% of the population was affiliated with a church in 1776. By 1850, fuelled by the religious revival that swept through the West in the late eighteenth century and perhaps by the sense of unease caused by rapid societal change, that figure had increased to 34%.<sup>9</sup> As in the case of Korean mission, the desire for overseas mission involvement in America came as a gradual and natural extension of home mission within a culture that was preoccupied with the ideal of expansion.<sup>10</sup> And like later Korean missionaries, Americans begun with tentative efforts within their own borders in Hawaii and among Native Americans

Those in the American mission movement widely held the belief that building up overseas mission would also benefit the cause of Christianity at home. William Hutchison points out that the concept of overseas mission as a way to the general

---

<sup>7</sup> James A. Field, Jr. "Near East Notes and Far East Queries," *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, Ed. John K. Fairbank, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 28.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia, Volume II*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005), 639.

<sup>9</sup> Wilbert Schenk, "Introduction," *North American Foreign Missions*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Walls, "The American Dimension in the History of the Missionary Movement," *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*, Eds.: Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Schenk, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 9.

fulfilment of American churches and even society as a whole, was one of the most common arguments in favour of mission.<sup>11</sup> Such an attitude is exemplified in such quotes as this 1814 statement of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission: “the readiest and most efficacious method of promoting religion at home is for Christians to exert themselves to send it abroad.”<sup>12</sup>

But American missionaries wanted to go beyond national change towards global spiritual and societal transformation. In the West, the nineteenth century saw an ever-growing interest in reform and relief efforts at home that spurred interest in helping suffering people overseas. In America, humanitarian concerns, as expressed through educational, medical and other types of work, were among the most common motivations for mission.<sup>13</sup>

While humanitarian concerns were becoming more of a stimulus for mission, a more spiritual vision of transformation also gained adherents. During the mid and late-nineteenth century, pre-millennialism became popular and began to develop its modern form as it vied with the previously dominant theology, post-millennialism. The first Anglo-Saxon missionaries of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, not to mention most Puritans and German Pietists, were overwhelmingly post-millennialist in their thinking, including such important figures as William Carey, Jonathan Edwards and Alexander Duff. Post-millennialism traditionally held that the Kingdom of God is already coming into fruition and that eventually the whole world will come to the Christian faith. Christ will return at the end of the millennium but the new world will not differ significantly from the old one.<sup>14</sup>

Pre-millennialism came to the forefront in the mid-nineteenth century out of a general trend towards interpreting the Bible in a more literal sense, although there had been somewhat similar interpretations through church history. Pre-millennialists believe that: “Jesus will return to earth in glory, ushering in a thousand-year reign of

---

<sup>11</sup> Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 7-8

<sup>12</sup> Charles L. Chaney, *The Birth of Missions in America*, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1976), 203.

<sup>13</sup> Field, “Near East Notes,” 28.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Schiermacher, “Postmillennialism,” *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 772.

peace, after which a new heaven and earth will replace the old ones, as foretold in the Book of Revelation.”<sup>15</sup> Although Christians are commanded to spread the Gospel around the world, there is no guarantee that these attempts will have any success. The return of Christ is also said to involve a much more radical difference between the old and new worlds than postmillennialists thought. The Kingdom is most definitely not here on earth yet and moral and spiritual conditions will not truly improve until Christ’s return.

Pre-millennial ideas fuelled the work of a number of prominent American evangelical supporters of mission in the late nineteenth century, such as A.T. Pierson, Dwight L. Moody and A.J. Gordon. They felt there was a “crisis of missions”, as Christ opened the world in preparation for the Second Coming.<sup>16</sup> While on one hand, pre-millennialists were opposed to the idea that human effort could build the Kingdom of God on earth, on the other hand, there was a definite –if paradoxical– feeling that evangelism could hasten the coming of Christ. Prominent pre-millennial evangelical A.B. Simpson thought that, while the numbers of converted would remain small, all on earth should hear the Gospel. Indeed, Christ’s return depended upon human action, as Simpson wrote: “Our missionary work is to bring Christ Himself back again.”<sup>17</sup>

The late nineteenth century saw the advancement of pre-millennialists, who became associated with conservative and evangelical mission. It was also a popular guiding principle among the faith missions movement which placed proclamation ahead of “civilising” activities such as medical and educational services, which came to be more associated with postmillennialist missionaries. Post-millennialism became linked with Christian liberalism, especially when advocates became increasingly open to communication with non-Christian religions and their possibility of offering salvation.<sup>18</sup> The theology remained strong until World War I when, perhaps due to the general decline of a belief in human progress, it lost ground

---

<sup>15</sup> Dana Robert, “Premillennialism,” *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 783.

<sup>16</sup> Dana Robert, “The Crisis of Missions: Premillennial Mission Theory and the Origins of Independent Evangelical Missions,” *Earthen Vessels*, 32.

<sup>17</sup> Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 118

<sup>18</sup> Hutchison, *Missionary Ideologies*, 169-70

to pre-millennialism, which benefited from links to the thriving evangelical movement. The pre-millennial interpretation became part of official evangelical theology when the Lausanne Conference mentioned it in its final article. While the details of interpretation can vary greatly, pre-millennialism is still very popular today and a strong motivating force in modern mission.

### *B. Mission and National Identity*

In modern times, the strong connections between nationalism and Christian mission of Western missionaries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has provoked much criticism. This was especially so during the height of anti-colonial sentiment during the 1960s when Western missionaries were viewed as government tools and a common opinion held that missionaries were followed by traders and gunboats.<sup>19</sup> While more recent critics are somewhat less harsh towards this period, the nationalist tendencies in mission are often undeniable, even in the United States which for most of the nineteenth century sought to avoid international entanglements of the kind they saw among European nations.

From its beginnings with the Puritans, American Protestants had a profound sense of their being divinely chosen by God for work whose ramifications would last long beyond their lifetimes. The Puritans saw themselves as a people on a mission who were participating in God's "grand plot for the ages."<sup>20</sup> Nineteenth century Americans exceeded the zeal of the early Puritans in the belief that they lived in a society where the possibilities of the Christian Church in the past were being realised in the present.<sup>21</sup> With their blessings came responsibility, as they were obliged to help others in the world lacking their spiritual and material abundance. One writer holding such beliefs was Rev. Herman Humphrey, who noted in 1819 that Israel had lost the courage to possess the land that God had promised. After thirteen centuries of apathy, the Christian Church now had the potential to accomplish great work once more.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Stephen Neill, *Colonialism and Christian Missions*, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1966), 13.

<sup>20</sup> Chaney, *The Birth of Missions*, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 9.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

This belief in being chosen by God to carry out great work was hardly limited to the American case during Victorian times, as the Americans were just one example of a general feeling of confidence felt by Westerners during the late nineteenth century. British Christians of this time period were equally renowned for their conviction regarding God's plan and its connection to their nation's development. For instance, the Methodist John Watson declared, "Have we not been surrounded by the seas and our national character formed for purposes that we can recognise?"<sup>23</sup> Particularly after the 1880s, the British sense of chosenness came to be increasingly associated with empire-building.

In contrast to the involvement of Britain and other Western countries in colonial activities, America attempted to avoid such entanglements during the late nineteenth century, with few considering the American Indian situation or such exertions of global power as the Monroe Doctrine to constitute examples of colonialism. Many American missionaries were pleased at this and appreciated their distinctiveness compared to other Western mission workers. They felt "gloriously free" compared to the more compromised missionaries of "old Europe."<sup>24</sup> American missionaries particularly contrasted their neutrality to their British counterparts. As G.E. Post observed,

The English hold the hands - the physical forces; and God has given to the other branch of the Anglo-Saxon race, untrammelled by your political complications, a control of the brains and the heart.<sup>25</sup>

However, such neutrality did not last beyond the dawn of the twentieth century as America became increasingly involved in global affairs, due partly to a growing sense of responsibility to improve the state of the world in a more direct way, until their missionaries became as associated with the policies of their country as British ones.

Though American missionaries often credited the success of their home nation to God, they went through the same sort of mixed feelings common to most

---

<sup>23</sup> Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, 184.

<sup>24</sup> Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 93.

<sup>25</sup> Walls, *Earthen Vessels*, 23.

missionaries in not always approving of their country's actions or inaction. They needed to work hard to devise an identity for themselves which balances their national identity with their religious beliefs.<sup>26</sup> For instance, while conservative American missionaries were known for their confidence in their nation, the rise of pre-millennialism within nineteenth century American mission also suggests discomfort with the widely held optimism in the continuing progress of Western society.

The inclusion of nationalist sentiments in American mission has brought some negative reaction from critics who saw it as contributing in some way to the more heavy-handed American foreign policy of the twentieth century. Dana Robert points out that the "imperial age" of U.S. foreign policy coincided with, "a burst of Protestant enthusiasm for 'saving' and 'civilizing' the world's heathen."<sup>27</sup> While many American missionaries in the late nineteenth century were content for the U.S. to remain neutral in their dealings with the world, some began to advocate a more active and interventionist approach.

Paul Johnson goes into more detail on one particular area affected by such missionary influence when he writes of how the U.S. had its own form of "Christian imperialism" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that was sometimes connected to the use of force, especially against Spain. Certain missionary efforts and promotions contributed to this more active form of foreign policy. The Protestant missionary influence can be seen in the following statement by President McKinley as he wrote of his decision to take the Philippines from Spain, "There was nothing left for us to do but to take them all and to educate the Filipinos and uplift and civilize and Christianize them."<sup>28</sup>

The results in places like the Philippines were mixed, though the intention of many American missionaries of the period was to provide a different sort of international involvement. While America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

---

<sup>26</sup> Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Robert, "Earthen Vessels," 29.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1976), 456.



centuries may have been active in certain imperialistic activities, these, “not only reinforced American pretensions to a purer international altruism; it helped give substance to these pretensions.” American overseas mission thus served to give a “moral equivalent” for imperialism that utilised some of its ideas, but still sought to maintain a certain moral distance.<sup>29</sup>

### C. *Mission Methodology*

Which methods were most appropriate for mission proved to be one of the most contentious issues among Western missionaries of the nineteenth century. The long debate over whether missionaries should focus upon evangelisation or civilising activities, which was a major part of the arguments between those with pre- or post-millennial ideas, proved highly influential in determining the course of modern mission. There were many nineteenth and twentieth century missionaries who stressed mission as a civilising tool, one notable example being the Filipino mission in the early twentieth century which strove to “produce character.”<sup>30</sup>

But William Hutchison argues that the bulk of Americans, especially those within the growing evangelical camp, chose to emphasise Christianisation over civilisation. Two early American mission activities which convinced some American Christians of the wisdom of this course were the relative failure of civilising work among American Indians as opposed to the far more successful direct proclamation used in mission to Hawaiians.<sup>31</sup> Samuel Hugh Moffett writes that the ruling theology of nineteenth century Protestantism in America among many missionaries was that refined by the great evangelist Dwight L. Moody in the late 1800s. Drawing on the authority of the Bible and acknowledgment of Jesus as the only Saviour, there were three basic stages to mission work: proclaim, persuade, and organise a church.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Hutchison, *Missionary Ideologies*, 174.

<sup>30</sup> Arthur Judson Brown, *The New Era in the Philippines*, (Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Church, 1903), 162.

<sup>31</sup> Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, 639.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 637-8.

The distinction that came from the choice was in some ways manifested more through goals and emphasis as opposed to actual activities. Nineteenth century American missionaries of all spectrums of belief worked to improve education and medical care within their countries of residence. But the ever-increasing numbers who stressed Christianisation often did such activities with the ultimate goal of telling others about Jesus, though this does not mean that they lacked genuine compassion for those they served. For them, the most important factor was not earthly results, but fulfilling Jesus' command to proclaim and to make disciples.<sup>33</sup>

The no-frills approach exemplified by the Nevius Method in Korea was in some ways a product of the general nineteenth century trend towards a focus on the basics of evangelism in mission. Korean missionaries have retained the emphasis on proclamation throughout their relatively short mission history. However, they have followed a path that is in some ways the opposite of that experienced by American missionaries. American missionaries started out with a stress on civilisation, followed by a long debate between the "civilising" and "Christianising" camps, and ended up with a majority of missionaries giving top priority to proclamation.

American missionaries also became known for their efficient and action-oriented approach to work. Hutchison describes American religion from the period 1880 to 1910 as, "activistic- busy, practical and optimistic."<sup>34</sup> Walls shares a similar opinion of the American missionary style during this period, citing the pragmatic and activity-driven style that runs through the work of mission pioneers like John R. Mott and A.T. Pierson.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, past American mission displayed a willingness to utilise whatever elements they could in the cause of evangelisation. Walls noted that a vital feature of American Christianity and mission was making the fullest use of contemporary technology, organisation and business methods, though still maintaining a separation

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 640.

<sup>34</sup> Hutchison, *Missionary Ideologies*, 167.

<sup>35</sup> Walls, *Earthen Vessels*, 5.

of the spiritual and political realms.<sup>36</sup> They were known for their sense of innovation. For instance, they became more overt about soliciting donations and bringing the business world into mission at a time when the British were hesitant about such activities out of fear of appearing too worldly.<sup>37</sup> The Americans also proved innovators in bringing the cause of mission into universities through student groups, which South Korean Protestants followed to great success.

## II. *Modern Korean Mission in Comparison to Late Nineteenth Century American Mission*

### A. *South Korean Mission Motivations*

#### 1. *The Frontier Element and the Role of Compassion*

Like earlier American missionaries, the motivations behind engaging in mission can be complex for today's Korean Protestants. Earlier chapters showed that the expansion of Korean mission went along with a general rise in global prominence. The perceived aggression of Korean missionaries is very much matched by the feeling that Koreans display assertiveness in more secular areas such as politics and business. As Michael Breen observed, Koreans are, "a passionate nation that is barging into a crowded world with its elbows out, demanding membership in the once-exclusive whites-only club of major powers."<sup>38</sup>

The ideal of the frontier also plays some importance as an impetus for mission. For Koreans living in a country and an age where geographical expansion is no longer feasible, the idea of the frontier comes through pushing former limits of culture and tradition. Mission, however, does offer a sort of geographic frontier for Koreans to explore as they enter into areas which few Koreans have ever laid eyes upon. Some missionaries see their work as going to the last frontiers available in the role of spiritual pioneers, as in a map used by InterCo-Op entitled: "Back to Jerusalem: To the Last Frontiers (Picture 3)."<sup>39</sup> As with the Americans of the

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>38</sup> Breen, x.

<sup>39</sup> Ju Hui Judy Han, "Missionary Destinations and Diasporic Destiny: Spatiality of Korean/American Evangelism and the Cell Church," *Institute for the Study of Social Change. ISCC Fellows Working Papers, Paper ISSC\_WP\_01*, April 2005, 11.

nineteenth century, foreign mission work gives Koreans a relatively safe outlet with which to explore the new frontiers of their time, one with a sense of continuity with old traditions but free of the hindrances of previous institutions.<sup>40</sup>

In spite of the greater convenience and opportunities in travel for today's South Koreans, adventure still spurs on some would-be missionaries, though the churches try not to promote this element. After all, the money that pours into Korean mission does make overseas travel available to some for whom lack of finances would otherwise limit. One M.TI teacher related how a student confessed to being interested in mission largely out of a desire for excitement, though the student claimed the MTI course convinced her of the true spiritual purpose of mission.<sup>41</sup> Rev. Leo Rhee of Onnuri Yangjae mentioned in a sermon revolving around the value of small trip experiences that some were sceptical of such trips, wondering, "Why they should pay for someone else's vacation?"<sup>42</sup> However, it is difficult to determine the extent of this motivation, as few Korean missionaries would openly admit to only being interested in mission for such a non-spiritual purpose.

As with nineteenth century American missionaries, Koreans must deal with the tension between the desire for global and cultural exploration with a tendency towards insularity. The interest in mission among South Korean Protestants is all the more striking given its long-held reputation as a "hermit nation." While there are a number of divisions and distinctions in areas such as culture, regional adherence and religion within the population, the wider world still tends to regard Koreans as a remarkably uniform and closed-off people. In his book designed to give Westerners a better sense of Korean identity, Michael Breen wrote, "Koreans are a closed shop. There is probably no more homogeneous country on earth."<sup>43</sup> Some specific problems that may be caused when Korean missionaries are uncomfortable with, or even inept at relating to, other cultures will be examined in the next chapter.

---

<sup>40</sup> Andrew Walls, *Earthen Vessels*, 10. Walls' statement was intended to apply only to the American example, but I feel that it also fits the Korean one.

<sup>41</sup> Interview Subject No. 58

<sup>42</sup> Interview Subject No. 46, though this was from a May 2005 sermon, not the interview.

<sup>43</sup> Breen, p. x.

Like the past American situation, mission in South Korea grew out of a period of church growth. The belief that foreign mission enhances the local churches is embraced by the Korean Protestant churches, which as seen in the past section sees mission as a vital part of maintaining their relevance among the Korean people. In fact, a number of Korean Christians feel that mission work is absolutely necessary for the survival of the Korean Church. Young Dong Kim writes in this vein, saying that, "If the Church neglects its missionary obligations, it directly threatens the foundations of the Church."<sup>44</sup>

Modern Korean missionaries, mindful of their own country's impoverished past, are also motivated by the hope of helping the needy. Korean missionaries have acted as leaders in raising awareness of poor nations and spearheading relief programmes within their nation, which lacks the long tradition of charitable giving found in the West. The Korean branch of Food for the Hungry, one of the previously-mentioned agencies that blends mission and service, was the first non-governmental organisation in South Korea to send aid to foreign countries upon its formation in 1989 and now work in over 45 countries.<sup>45</sup> More recently, the Korean churches participated in the global relief efforts for the victims of the Southeast Asian tsunami by sending money, supplies and short-term teams. Onnuri, for example, sent four teams as of late February 2005 (with follow-up trips being planned) offering medical and child care in Sri Lanka.

Furthermore, Korean mission agencies actively use compassion for the poor as a tool in attracting would-be missionaries. Besides illustrating the high technological standards of many Korean mission agencies, the images posted on the agencies' web sites and on their glossy brochures are often designed to appeal to the heart. A brochure for a small group called (in the English translation) "Good People World Family" features on its cover the sad picture of a poor Afghani girl carrying a large canister on her head with other ragamuffin images within (Picture 4). A Korean Food for the Hungry brochure (Picture 5) depicts one of their Korean workers sitting

---

<sup>44</sup> Young dong Kim, *Sonkyowa Sinhak*, p. 266

<sup>45</sup> "Korean Food for the Hungry International," accessed January 2006; available at <http://www.kfhi.or.kr/english/Intro.asp>; Internet.

in the midst of a group of Southeast Asian children, one of whom is clutching a Garfield backpack presumably donated by the group. Inside are more photos of smiling Koreans happy to be helping out needy African, Asian and Europeans with dental care, food and education. Finally, a brochure (Picture 6) highlighting the needs of Mongolians in China has this quote from Acts 16:9, “Come over and help us,” a Scriptural passage that has long inspired missionary efforts.

All of these types of pictures, along with the Acts quote, have been utilised by past and present missionary groups to support their work. The similarities between Western and Korean mission propaganda materials can be uncanny, particularly in the modern-day context. There are virtually no differences in the types of pictures found on the Food for the Hungry’s English language web site and its Korean branch, except that the latter has well-groomed Korean workers in place of European ones surrounded by the poor children and adults. It is difficult to tell whether this comes about because of Koreans deliberately copying the Western style or if certain promotional patterns are universal within mission groups.

## 2. *The Spiritual Element and Pre-Millennialism*

However, while charitable work is held to be important, the truly visionary and far-reaching hopes tend to be reserved for the spiritual aspect of mission. At the heart of the spiritual motivation behind mission is the profound respect of most Korean missionaries for the Bible and what they see as the Biblical command to go out into the world. Not surprisingly, the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 plays a significant role in providing this justification. But Korean missionaries find insights throughout the Bible for their work and an individual’s selection of an inspirational verse is often very personal. Chapter Three pointed out Jeremiah’s selection of Lamentations 2:19 and Mark 16:18 as verses that guided his career in mission. Steve S.C. Moon also spoke of how Mark 13:10, “And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations,” led him to mission, as he interpreted it to mean that global evangelisation was a condition for Christ’s coming again.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Interview Subject No. 34



Certain Bible verses and stories also guide Korean missionaries throughout their work and in the crafting of their message. Acts serves as a common source of guidance. During the required presentation the MTI students had to give imagining a possible Gospel message in another cultural setting, verses from Acts were frequently chosen. For instance, one student selected Paul's message to the Athenians at the Areopagus in Acts 17:22-31 as summarising the universal relevance of Christ.

As Moon's choice of a passage suggests, a significant motivation for Korean mission lies in one special area of Biblical interpretation: pre-millennialism, which has been adopted by many non-Western Christians. Not surprisingly given their evangelical tendencies and the fact that almost 95% of Korean Protestants have been categorised as conservative, Korean missionaries are overwhelmingly pre-millennialists.<sup>47</sup> But while pre- and post-millennial missionaries were both found in large numbers in Victorian mission, pre-millennialism has little competition among today's Korean missionaries. The ideology has taken on a new dimension, though, because many Korean missionaries see themselves as playing a key role in the final fulfilment of the Great Commission in a way that goes beyond and completes what the Western missionaries did. It is a sense that, "History has repeated itself; it has come full circle."<sup>48</sup>

If one movement within South Korean mission epitomises the pre-millennial motivations of Korean missionaries, it would be the Back to Jerusalem Movement. Usually associated in the West with China, where it originated, the Back to Jerusalem Movement has captured the imagination of many Korean missionaries. Its ideas are an important part of mission policy in such agencies as Serving in Mission and InterCo-Op and of megachurches like Sarang.

The Back to Jerusalem Movement began in 1920s China and spread throughout the 1930s and 40s. The movement revived in China with the growth of the house churches. The movement's message has spread through the increasing global

---

<sup>47</sup> Brouwer, Gifford and Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel*, 426.

<sup>48</sup> Chris Marantika, "God's Plan for His World," in *World Missions: the Asian Challenge*, 23.

visibility of Chinese evangelistic leaders and the publication of such works as *The Heavenly Man*, the account of Brother Yun (or Liu Zhenying) that was a special favourite of M.T.I. students during my term. The key idea behind the movement is that there has been a geographical advance of the Gospel throughout history, beginning in Jerusalem and spreading westward, with China representing the farthest advance. China now wants to fulfil the Great Commission by sending out one million missionaries and encircling the world back to the beginning in Jerusalem. The movement is not necessarily focused on the Middle East and actually involves around 51 nations in Asia, most of which are also part of the 10/40 Movement.<sup>49</sup>

Korean missionaries have put their own distinctive spin on the Back to Jerusalem Movement, as they consider their part in achieving its goals. As mentioned previously, China is the number one country for Korean missionaries and Korean missionaries want to act as mentors and partners to Chinese Christians. While Koreans are struggling to refine their own methodology and training, the chance to influence the even less experienced Chinese missionaries is too great an opportunity to pass up. The number of those missionaries working on projects related to the Back to Jerusalem Movement is uncertain, but I did hear of various training efforts and schools for Chinese leaders. For example, a representative from Serving in Mission related that they were planning to open a school in Mongolia to teach Chinese missionaries. He said that the group wants to, “open their eyes and prepare them.”<sup>50</sup>

Korean missionaries also want to expand the geographic boundaries of the Back to Jerusalem Movement to include their own country and North Korea. As the slogan for the Korean mission agency, Cornerstone Ministries, states, they want to go, “from Pyongyang to Jerusalem.”<sup>51</sup> The mission department at Sarang is especially excited about the plans for a railroad connecting North and South Korea, noting that

---

<sup>49</sup> Tim Stafford, “A Captivating Vision,” *Christianity Today* 48, No. 4 (April 2004): 84.

<sup>50</sup> Interview Subject No. 46

<sup>51</sup> Cornerstone website, accessed March 2006; Available at <http://www.cornerstone.or.kr> (Korean language); Internet.

the rail bridge would join South Korea with such far-flung areas as Central Asia and Siberia, truly putting them onto the new “Silk Road” of mission.<sup>52</sup>

The ultimate goal of the Back to Jerusalem Movement is the hastening of Christ’s return. As one Onnuri member put it, when the process of mission that went from the Middle East to Europe to America and to Korea and China moves back to the Middle East, “That’s the end of the Bible.”<sup>53</sup> Or to put it in more detail, in the words of a Korean-American elder, “Ultimately, when Jerusalem returns to Jesus, when Jews finally accept the Gospel, then we will know that the time has come for the Second Coming of Christ our Savior.”<sup>54</sup> With such high hopes for the ultimate end result of Korean mission, it is little wonder that global mission has captured the hearts of so many Korean Christians.

### *B. South Korean Mission and National Identity*

In more recent years, Christianity in the West has tried to disassociate itself from such fervent nationalism, though one could make a case for its connection with certain forms of Christianity in the United States. Lacking many of the special historic circumstances that led to the decline of Christian nationalism in the West, such is not the case in South Korean Protestantism. In his article, “The Korean Church: God’s Chosen People for Evangelism,” a title which says much in itself, Bong Rin Ro wrote that nationalism is largely linked with secularism in the West. He finds this to be “shameful,” especially as the Western missionaries had done much to teach Koreans to have feelings of patriotism towards their own country.<sup>55</sup>

There are multiple dimensions to Korean Christian nationalism, many of which contain clear missionary connotations. First, there is the widely held idea that God raised up the Korean people from their formerly lowly status. Like the Victorians, modern Koreans see a significant sacred dimension in their material blessings. Timothy Kiho Park goes into detail on some of the ways in which God prepared the

---

<sup>52</sup> Sarang CD Rom “Go or Send!”

<sup>53</sup> Interview Subject No. 16

<sup>54</sup> Judy Han, “Missionary Destinations,” 11.

<sup>55</sup> Bong Rin Ro, “The Korean Church: God’s Chosen People for Evangelism,” in *Korean Church Growth Explosion*, 85.

Koreans for their mission. Along with the great growth in churches, these methods of preparation include secular factors like the emigration of many thousands of Koreans from the late nineteenth century onward, which has provided Korean mission with a wide global network of support and the rise in the nation's economy.<sup>56</sup>

Like the Victorians, Korean Christians see their financial growth as a sign of God's providence, along with the acknowledgment that their riches are meant to be used in God's work. While "God's work" certainly includes domestic projects, the expense of foreign mission and the movement's rapid rise in conjunction with the growth of the Korean economy has led to a connection of the two phenomena. One typical example of the Korean Christian view of South Korea's financial rise comes from this MTI student,

Our country became richer by God's grace. Our senior believers prayed to be a rich country for mission. As a result, God blessed our country. [It] became able to send many missionaries to this world.<sup>57</sup>

Another similarity between the Victorian and Korean missionaries comes in their desire to continue and advance the Biblical mission. As noted previously, Korean Protestants view their work as a continuation of the Acts churches. Korean Christians also regard themselves as a "new Israel," being one of the foremost peoples in the world currently acting out God's will.<sup>58</sup> There is even a joke in Korean Protestant circles that they are the "choson people," a pun using the name of the last Korean dynasty to suggest both their link with the ancient Israelites and their distinctiveness as a new kind of missionary.<sup>59</sup>

Unlike Victorian missionaries, who generally saw their work as focused upon all non-Western nations, many Koreans conceive of a more restricted global ministry that God has intended for Korean Christians. While there certainly are Korean

---

<sup>56</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, "A Two-Thirds World Mission", 5-11.

<sup>57</sup> Interview Subject No. 81

<sup>58</sup> Mark Mullins, "The Empire Strikes Back: Korean Pentecostal Mission to Japan," *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*, Ed. Karla Poewe, (Columbia: University of Columbia Press, 1994), 88.

<sup>59</sup> Judy Han, "Missionary Destinations," 2.

missionaries working all over the world, some Koreans, such as Han Chul-Ha, the president of ACTS, believe that, “God has raised up the Korean nation as His people for Asian evangelism.”<sup>60</sup> This special mission to evangelise Asia involves working amongst their former colonisers, the Japanese,<sup>61</sup> and can encompass the whole of the continent up to less familiar places like the Middle East

It should be remembered that in both the American and Korean examples, missionaries could be harshly critical towards what they saw as negative features within their culture as well as affirming and patriotic towards their country. In a similar manner, Korean missionaries may find strength in their country’s considerable advancement, but they can be uncomfortable with the materialism and individualism that modernisation has brought to South Korea. Nonetheless, some critics focus more upon how Korean missionaries support their societies’ policies than in the more ambivalent sentiments expressed by the missionaries.

The presence of nationalism sentiments in contemporary Korean mission has caused concern among some scholars. This is one area where the connection between the U.S. past and the South Korean present is especially emphasised. For instance, some writers have seen a link between the doctrine of manifest destiny, devised in the nineteenth century to express the American sense of a divinely inspired mission to expand their territory, while also theoretically spreading democracy and freedom. Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford and Susan Rose speculate that Korean Christian groups which focus on the role of South Korea as an example and leader among the nations have a touch of manifest destiny and U.S. inspiration. Sectarian groups like the Unification Church were prominent promoters of nationalist Christian ideology, such as the National Evangelization Movement, which claimed that, “We are the priesthood nation to all the world.” Such ideas were accepted by much of the mainstream in the initial post-war decades and even

---

<sup>60</sup> Han Chul-Ha, “Involvement of the Korean Church in the Evangelism of Asia,” in *Korean Church Growth Explosion*, 76.

<sup>61</sup> Mullins, “The Empire Strikes Back,” 88.

encouraged by President Park in the 1960s and 70s to increase feelings of patriotism.<sup>62</sup>

Judy Han adds to these comments by writing that mission leaders like InterCP head Paul Choi and Timothy Kiho Park, “articulate a distinct sense of national destiny for Korean mission projects, similar to the doctrine of manifest destiny behind American expansionism.”<sup>63</sup> Such a critique does not tell the whole story, however. Park certainly believes in the special ability of the Korean people to reach Asians and, like many other Korean mission scholars, displays excitement over their progress and future as a national Church in mission. But Park’s work is also strongly critical of the shortcomings of the Korean Church as a global mission power and aware of how much work remains to be done. A similar mixture of optimism and criticism can be found in the writings of other Korean writers on mission such as Steve S.C. Moon and Bong Rin Ro.

A question to ponder is where the nationalistic sentiments will lead the Korean people as a whole and in the area of mission. There is little doubt that South Korea as a nation possesses many of the factors seen in past Western missionary-sending countries with one vital difference. David Neff wrote that one Korean pastor who studied nineteenth century British mission concluded that South Korea held all the main characteristics (strong local churches, highly educated constituency, economic prosperity and a sense of eschatological urgency) except for an inability to match Great Britain’s global and imperial influence.<sup>64</sup> In a post-colonial world, global dominance is measured by different means. Michael Breen argues that the self-assurance of the Koreans that may have led to expansion by force and imperialism in past periods has now been transformed by the reality of global interdependence into a “confident internationalism.”<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Brouwer, Gifford and Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel*, 428-9.

<sup>63</sup> Judy Han, “Missionary Destinations,” 9.

<sup>64</sup> David Neff, “Honoring Pioneers,” 2.

<sup>65</sup> Breen, *The Koreans*, 6.



Whether or not such internationalism represents a positive progression from the imperialist age remains a subject of much debate, as the section on globalisation previously demonstrated. There are some writers who view global economic operations as a new form of colonial exploitation. A Korean ecumenical theologian, Soo-II Chai, perceived Korean mission as being similar to market expansion, stating that, “Conservative evangelical interests appear to be closely aligned with the interests of transnational capital and empire.”<sup>66</sup> Chung Chai-Sik points out how Korean mission is strongly connected to the acquisitive society of today’s South Korea, which equates its exportation of overseas products with the overall health and measure of the nation.<sup>67</sup> Such economic links to mission are generally not overt, though. While there are some Korean missionaries involved in business activities on the field, there is no Korean mission equivalent of David Livingstone’s quote that: “Those two pioneers of civilisation - Christianity and commerce - should ever be inseparable.”<sup>68</sup>

While there may be danger of Korean mission being influenced by or giving a boost to questionable nationalist and economic trends within the larger South Korean society, there also exists a determination within the world of Korean mission to avoid exploitative practices and use their considerable resources responsibly. This comes partly out of the awareness of the mistakes of the past made by Western missionaries. The missionary, E, profiled in the last chapter, had this to say about the responsibilities of today’s Christians and the actions of previous generations of Western missionaries,

Christians have to rule the world. We have to be better. We have to be the best, to be a light.... Western missionaries have a long history of missions. They were pioneers. They found they were not prepared. They wanted to rule in a different meaning from what I said. They went to a weak country. The politicians and soldiers used the sword. The missionaries did not respect the people. They had to see people as human beings.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Judy Han, “Missionary Destinations,” 14-16.

<sup>67</sup> Chung Chai-Sik, *Korea: The Encounter Between the Gospel and Neo-Confucian Culture*, 36.

<sup>68</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, (London: Penguin, 2003), 155.

<sup>69</sup> Interview Subject No. 8

The desire to improve over the missionaries of the past is certainly present within this statement. However, while she gives some credit to the early missionaries for their achievements, she does not understand that most Victorian missionaries also wanted very much to “rule” in the best possible way. While late nineteenth century missionaries did at times endorse direct intervention in the affairs of other nations, at other times they strongly opposed Western rule or simply saw it as an irresistible force outside of their Christian work that could be used for a good purpose through their work.<sup>70</sup> A Korean parallel may be found among some modern Korean missionaries who, like the great majority of their country, were uncomfortable with South Korea’s participation in the Iraq occupation, but still hoped that it would result in greater freedom for their mission activities.

In general, Korean mission distinguishes spiritual power from secular and makes clear that they wish to “rule” in a truly different way. For instance, Paul Choi proclaimed, “Do you want to dominate the world? Go to the center of the world. But if you want to transform the world, you must go to the remote frontiers.” The next section will go into further detail on how Korean missionaries seek to emphasise spiritual transformation in their methodology. Still, Korean missionaries would be wise to continue to learn from the American example how quickly the perception of missionaries from a particular country can change due to changes in national policy that they themselves have relatively little control over. One tragic reminder of this for Koreans would be the death of Kim Sun Il in Iraq, who was killed both on account of his fervent evangelical practices and his country’s decision to ally with the United States.

However, while there are dangers for missionaries being associated with controversial aspects of their home nation, modern Korean missionaries also undoubtedly benefit in a number of ways from their status as Koreans. With South Korea’s economic vigour and a current vogue for Korean culture throughout much of Asia, Korean missionaries have found a receptive audience for reasons that go beyond the spiritual. Their links to Western culture, while maintaining a distinct

---

<sup>70</sup> Neill, *Colonialism and Christian Mission*, 413.

Asian identity, have given them a special advantage in nations like China and Mongolia which are experimenting with accepting ideas previously seen as exclusively Western such as democracy and Christianity. This key aspect of Korean mission will be explored in the third section of this thesis.

### *C. South Korean Mission Methodology*

In spite of the years separating their work, modern Korean and Victorian American missionaries share many similarities in terms of how they operate on the field and their attitudes towards the way in which missionaries should act. The Korean model of mission is quite similar to the nineteenth century American version. The “fundamental character” of their work lies in the evangelisation of the local people. While Korean missionaries engage in service activities like medicine and education, the ultimate goal is to start congregations and train the locals to be able to sustain the churches after the missionaries leave. Seong-Won Park points out that this form of methodology is similar to that utilised by Western missionaries in the nineteenth century.<sup>71</sup>

In contrast to the American example in which service-oriented mission clashed with a more purely evangelical view, Korean mission emerged out of a Christian environment in which the Christianisation model was dominant early on. But there has been a recent re-examination within the wider Korean Church of the need for an enhanced service element to ministry, as seen previously in this thesis. This does not mean that there will be a repeat of the split between civilising and evangelising elements within the mission world. Instead, there is now greater consideration of the need for a balance between service and proclamation on the mission field. One such example of this trend would be the model of mission used by Korean Serving in Mission (SIM). Their model consists of a circle with four equal parts: Evangelism, Discipleship, Human Needs and Mission (How “mission” is defined as one of the four parts was not made clear). In the centre of the circle was placed a smaller circle

---

<sup>71</sup> Seong-Won Park, “A Survey on Mission Work,” 331.

representing the vital need for promoting the “Mature Church,” another indication of the overall church-focused aim of Korean mission.<sup>72</sup>

Beyond actions, there are close similarities between the attitudes that drive the work of the Korean and nineteenth century American missionaries. Korean missionaries are renowned for their emphasis on action and a sense of pragmatism within their churches as a whole and within their mission activities. Korean missionaries are some of the hardest working in the world in terms of putting in long hours towards achieving the goals to which they feel called by God. This has caused some conflict in their work with Western missionaries who do not share their work ethic. A Korean missionary might see the Westerner as lazy and the Westerner could view the Korean as too rigid and domineering.

One MTI student with years of experience working in China pointed out another area of conflict coming from the action-oriented and hierarchical habits of Koreans as opposed to those of today’s Western missionaries. She said,

Korean people [on the mission field] work in the Korean style. They don’t discuss. They just follow the leader. Western people share and discuss.<sup>73</sup>

A seeming contradiction of Korean mission is that it combines authoritarianism and strict organisation with considerable individual initiative and pioneering spirit that used to be associated with Western missionaries. Korean missionaries are becoming known in international agencies as strong church planters in some of the harshest spaces on earth, especially as many modern Western missionaries seem to be losing their desire to do such work. A Worldwide Evangelization for Christ director for East Asia spoke of this situation and of one extraordinary Korean example sent by an individual church, as WEC does not officially approve of the following methodology,

Many people want to do projects, but not church planting. They lack confidence, maybe. We want to recruit Koreans as church planters. I think Koreans are inborn church planters. I saw a Korean man [in

---

<sup>72</sup> Interview Subject No. 86

<sup>73</sup> Interview Subject No. 65

Mongolia who was] over forty and with no language. He found a person in a market to be a translator and in a few weeks, he had over 20 people and now there are over 150.<sup>74</sup>

Korean missionaries are also seeking to feature the most up-to-date technology and trends. One element of technology that they are working within is computers, not surprising for a country with one of the highest rates of computer usage in the world. In some ways, Korean missionaries were not as quick to exploit the potential of computers and the internet as they should have been. Moon, for example, criticised those in Korean mission for not taking full advantage of information technology in their work.<sup>75</sup> But there are signs that this is changing. There are specialised mission agencies within South Korea that concentrate solely on computers. Those in computer mission are involved in activities like showing underdeveloped nations how to improve their computer technology and building evangelistic web sites.

Korean innovation has also been evident in the rise of the term “businary.” This word, of mysterious origin and rarely seen in the West, refers to a “business missionary” or tentmaker. There are classes in how to acquire businary skills available to missionaries and even a few schools that specialise in businary training, such as All Nations’ Network’s Businary Training Camp (Picture 7) that offers a “Mission MBA.” While the spread of the Gospel remains the ultimate goal behind all that they do, Korean missionaries are aware that access and success among difficult and poor countries can be greatly enhanced by offering practical skills and services to the people they seek to reach. Such a strategy is similar to that utilised in the nineteenth century.

The diverse fields in which missionaries can operate within can be seen through many of the major Korean mission agencies’ websites. Along with more conventional mission activities like campus, children’s and medical ministry, InterCP’s website offers the following categories: Mission & Business, Mission &

---

<sup>74</sup> Interview Subject No .91

<sup>75</sup> Moon, “The Recent Korean Missionary Movement,” 16.

Sports, Mission & Computer (including a Media and Computer Impact Team) and Mission & Science and Engineering.<sup>76</sup> With all of those mission activities available to Korean Christians, the pool of potential missionaries can be greatly expanded.

### III. *Korean Missionaries as Successors to the West*

#### A. *South Korea as a Global Christian Leader*

One of the most important developments in recent Christian history has been the growing acknowledgement that the spiritual and statistical strength of global Christianity lies not in the long-dominant West, but in the vibrant and growing non-Western nations. Awareness of such a trend can be found as early as in Walbert Buhlmann's 1976 work, *The Coming of the Third Church*. But recent works such as Philip Jenkins' 2001 work, *The Next Christendom*, and articles like the 2004 piece, "World Christianity Under New Management?" have brought these issues to a mass audience in the West.

The rise of non-Western Christianity is well-known in Korean Christian circles as well. In addition, Korean missionaries are sensing that the mission movement in the West is fading and the non-Western countries must pick up the slack. As Timothy Kiho Park wrote, "Today we hear that Western missions are fading away and Two-Thirds World missions are emerging."<sup>77</sup>

Such knowledge is due partially to all-time high rates of Korean students of all ages studying in Western countries, giving them first-hand experience of the religious situation in the West and how it compares to that of their own country.<sup>78</sup> While the United States remains popular for Korean students, many now seek out schools in more secular Europe, Australia and Canada in light of greater U.S. restrictions in the light of heightened security after 2001 and tighter competition for placements. One MTI student talked about his observations that came about from studying theology in Canada in this manner:

---

<sup>76</sup> InterCP website, accessed March 2006; <http://www.intercp.net/#>; Internet.

<sup>77</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, "A Two-Thirds World Mission", 1.

<sup>78</sup> Chung Ah-Young, "Students Studying Abroad Hit Record High of 12,300," *The Korea Times*, 20 March 2005, 3. (Referring to elementary to high school numbers)



We may have problems, but Korean mission is envied by other countries. In Canada, missionaries are suffering. They have to raise their own support. The churches don't want to give.<sup>79</sup>

Some Western visitors to South Korea reinforce the idea that Korean churches have more vitality than many in the West. Even a short-term visitor to one of South Korea's large cities, particularly Seoul, tend to notice the visibility of its churches with their neon crosses and frequent urban presence. The impression goes beyond physicality, however. As one American teaching in Seoul said to me,

Being a Christian here is easy and accepted. Even if somebody isn't Christian, there is a level of respect you don't always get in the States. I know other people who will say it is easy to come to Korea and be Christian. It is very easy to talk about your faith.<sup>80</sup>

Such admiration can also extend to mission projects in the churches of Seoul, which are prominently promoted within popular expatriate churches like Onnuri and Sarang. MTI teacher Janny Van der Klis addressed the students by observing, "We in the West envy your vibrant churches and great missionary zeal."<sup>81</sup>

Whether the United States should be considered as part of the perceived Western Christian decline is an uncertain matter within both Korean and Western mission and academic circles. Certain works, such as Grace Davie's *Europe: The Exceptional Case*, do mention that Christianity in the United States is not in as dire straits as other Western countries. But frequently, the U.S. is implicitly included as part of a homogenous "West" as in this statement from Samuel H. Moffett in reference to a book about Korean mission offering, "a word from the wave of the future- the 'third- or 'non-Western' world in mission- to a 'Western Christendom' which is losing its mission vision."<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Interview Subject No. 82

<sup>80</sup> Interview Subject No. 33

<sup>81</sup> Interview Subject No. 63

<sup>82</sup> Jung Woon Suh, *Spirituality and Theology in Mission: An Asian Perspective*, (Seoul: Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary Press, 2000), ix.

However much the United States has been affected by the problems affecting Western Christianity, Korean missionaries have begun to offer some competition to their position as the top missionary nation in the world. Granted, the U.S. maintains significant advantages over Korean missionaries in terms of experience and numbers. But it has been observed that, “Koreans have become prominent in endeavors that twenty or thirty years ago would have been controlled by evangelical representatives of the United States.”<sup>83</sup>

Korean missionaries also work side by side with American and European missionaries on important mission projects, sometimes as the only non-Western workers involved. One such case would be the, “loose network of Americans, Europeans and Koreans who are doing what they can to assist China’s Christians in the Back to Jerusalem venture.”<sup>84</sup> Representatives from some international agencies acknowledge the Korean presence and its future potential, as when a WEC representative proclaimed, “WEC Korea has the most missionaries in Asia, though it is behind Australia, Britain and the U.S. [in overall numbers]. But I think it will overtake them all [as the country with the most WEC missionaries].”<sup>85</sup>

Korean missionaries are seen by many, including Koreans and non-Koreans alike, as a new world leader in mission among emerging non-Western nations and perhaps the most important of them all. South Korea is far from alone among non-Western countries in its zeal to spread the Gospel. But at the moment South Korea towers above other non-Western nations in mission combining numerical strength and enthusiasm with financial and educational resources to make a formidable mission force. Little wonder that George Sweeting said that South Korea spearheads the new northeast spread of the Gospel.<sup>86</sup> Likewise, Jung Woon Suh affirms that South Korea can play an important role in the “Third Church” conceived by Buhlmann.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Brouwer, Gifford and Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel*, 424.

<sup>84</sup> Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 204.

<sup>85</sup> Interview Subject No. 92

<sup>86</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, *A Two-Thirds World Mission*, 3.

<sup>87</sup> Suh, *Spirituality and Theology in Mission*, 4.

An even more confident declaration of South Korea's new role in global Christianity comes from Paul Choi who declares that,

The final curtain has closed on the age of world mission led by the Western Christian Church. In other words, the age of our white brothers managing the world in the name of Christ has come to an end. At this time, the non-Western Church, especially the Korean Church, is more important than ever...The 'Global Christian Leadership' has been passed on to the Korean Church.<sup>88</sup>

Despite statements like Choi's, the bulk of Korean Christians do not feel that the West no longer has any role to play in the world of mission. As one MTI teacher told me, most Korean Christians that he met felt general appreciation for what the West had done. They did not believe that the role of the West in mission was finished or that they should leave the Korean Church alone.<sup>89</sup> My interviews and experiences have led me to the same conclusion.

However, this does not mean that some Korean missionaries do not conceive of Western and non-Western missionaries filling different roles in mission. Writing of his observations gained from doing mission work in Mongolia, Kyo Seong Ahn notes that non-Western missionaries, including many Koreans, were effective in establishing churches in that area where Westerners failed due to their inability to build up truly Mongolian churches and leaders. Korean missionaries, however, have been accused of similar practices in their own interactions with Mongolians, as Chapter Seven will explore in further detail. He feels that Asian missionaries excel in tasks such as translation, evangelism and discipleship. Western missionaries can still play a role, but as advisers and in areas like hardship relief, broadcasting and community development.<sup>90</sup>

Ahn's conclusion does not differ much from what some Western mission experts have been saying about the future of the West in mission. One such expert, Patrick Johnstone, wrote that in the future, "Westerners will become the technicians

---

<sup>88</sup> Judy Han, "Missionary Destinations," 4.

<sup>89</sup> Interview Subject No. 59

<sup>90</sup> Kyo Seong Ahn, "Christian Mission and Mongolian Identity: The Religious, Cultural and Political Context," *Studies in World Christianity*, 9, no. 1, (2003): 119.

who support the rest” by focusing on mission training and programming.<sup>91</sup> For that matter, the idea of differing roles also pertains to the feelings of some within the Korean Church regarding its own future. Leo Rhee of Onnuri spoke of how Korean Protestant missionaries’ most important role may be providing China with the training that it needs so that it can be a great mission power, one that could do much more than South Korea because of China’s larger population and connections.<sup>92</sup>

One theme that came out through some of my interviews was that Korean missionaries believe that it is “their turn now” to spread the Gospel and carry on the legacy of the Western missionaries.<sup>93</sup> While Korean missionaries are proud to be part of the ongoing story of Christian mission, they do not hesitate to add their own new dimensions. One example that demonstrates both the continuity and distinction of Korean mission can be found with Paul Choi’s theory of mission. In his opinion, Koreans should be grateful to white missionaries, but Korean missionaries can do better by reclaiming the Silk Road instead of following the coastal lines used by many Victorian missionaries. He sees three stages of mission targets in the last few centuries. The nineteenth century utilised coastlands, the twentieth century worked within the interiors of continents and there is increasing focus today upon unreached people groups. The Silk Road project would combine the latter two areas of emphasis.<sup>94</sup>

## *B. Korean Advantages in Mission*

### *1. Perceived Strengths of Korean Mission*

Further evidence of how Korean missionaries view themselves as different can be observed through the particular advantages that they attribute to themselves as opposed to Western and other non-Western missionaries. These advantages tie into the popular Korean Christian belief that they are a better role model for fledgling non-Western churches than Europe or America.<sup>95</sup> Such feelings come about partly because of the cultural similarities that Koreans perceive that they share with non-

---

<sup>91</sup> Patrick Johnstone, *The Church Is Bigger Than You Think*, (Fearn: Christian Focus, 1998), 139.

<sup>92</sup> Interview Subject No. 47

<sup>93</sup> Interview Subjects No. 59 and 89

<sup>94</sup> Han, “Missionary Destinations,” 13.

<sup>95</sup> Clark, *Christianity in Modern Korea*, 33.

Western nations, especially Asian ones. Kyo Seong Ahn points out that when missionaries are culturally similar to the people that they serve, mission can be implemented more efficiently.<sup>96</sup> As this section will illustrate, some of these cultural links genuinely enhance Korean mission, though others seems more illusory or unproven. At other times, the distinctiveness of Korean missionaries furthers their work, an idea also explored in the intermediary theory described in Chapter Two.

One advantage that Korean missionaries see in themselves over Western missionaries lies in their and others' analysis of their character as Koreans. A common comment about Korean missionaries focuses upon their greater levels of enthusiasm and hard work. Former Onnuri employee, Connie Ridge, described Korean missionaries in this way: "They are extremely zealous and hard working. They are very evangelical and committed."<sup>97</sup> And, while he overlooks the very popular short-term mission trip within Korean churches, Steve S.C. Moon had this to say about Korean commitment compared to Westerners,

We Koreans are diligent; we work so hard. Sometimes I think they [Koreans] produce more since they work hard. There is their commitment- a lifetime commitment. In the West, there is a short-term trend. In Korea, our missionaries are different. We don't consider the short-termers [to be] missionaries. I think most are long-termers.<sup>98</sup>

Another factor lies deep within the history of Korea in the way that its experiences of suffering, embodied in the concept of *han*, have supposedly given Koreans enhanced understanding of the sufferings of people around the world. Jung Woon Suh, a former missionary turned professor of missiology and seminary president, details this aspect of Korean mission. He wrote that Korean spirituality as a whole had been refined through suffering and that many missionaries from wealthier environments could not empathise with the "deep despair" and "sorrow" of native people.<sup>99</sup> For him, such empathy is relatively easy for Koreans who can identify with the multitudes of the poor and suffering through shared experiences.

---

<sup>96</sup> Ahn, "Christian Mission and Mongolian Identity," 119.

<sup>97</sup> Interview Subject No. 1

<sup>98</sup> Interview Subject No. 34

<sup>99</sup> Jung Woon Suh, *Spirituality and Theology in Mission*, 6.

While Western mission has been criticised with combining expansion for mission, Koreans were historically dominated and conquered by others. In mission, this “weakness became its strength.”<sup>100</sup> An obvious objection to this viewpoint is that today’s South Koreans, particularly younger ones, are no longer especially poor or oppressed. Indeed, as the next chapter will show, heavy-handed displays of Korean wealth have caused some difficulties for Korean missionaries. Suh does consider this problem, admitting his concern that the memory of past national weakness will fade. But he hopes that the continued memory of past suffering can keep this element of Korean mission alive. His hopes may be fulfilled in some way, as Korean awareness of their past, especially its oppression by Japan, remains high among young Koreans, but it is unrealistic to expect the same level of empathy among those who grew up in a comfortable and stable environment with other indirect knowledge of national and individual suffering.

In spite of such drawbacks, it is possible to take the fact that South Korea has built an advanced industrialised society as an asset in mission. Like Suh, Paul Choi claims that Korean missionaries could relate better than American ones to poor Asians because of South Korea’s history. But he also finds potential in the fact that so many of the problems of the past have been overcome.<sup>101</sup> The idea of South Korea as a role model presents difficulties, however. For one thing, the rise of South Korea came about due to certain factors, particularly embracing industrial capitalism and taking on the U.S. as an ally, which some non-Western countries do not want to accept and which missionaries would be unwise to openly support. Moreover, a clear weakness with Suh and Choi’s ideas is that assuming wealthy missionaries cannot empathise with the poor puts South Korea in danger of falling into the same uncaring category.

Many Korean missionaries believe that they can communicate more effectively and with greater ease than Westerners in Asian countries. In terms of learning languages, numerous Korean missionaries believe that, as one MTI student said,

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>101</sup> Judy Han, “Missionary Destinations,” 14.



“Koreans can learn Asian languages easier than in the West.”<sup>102</sup> Past examples have supported the idea that superior linguistic abilities can give Korean missionaries an edge, as in the early mission projects to Thailand and Shantung, China. More recently, the fact that many Korean missionaries find learning the Mongolian language to be fairly simple and close in structure to Korean has probably assisted that mission effort.<sup>103</sup> However, this advantage pertains mainly to some Central and East Asian languages and not to Western or other languages, where Koreans can be at a decided disadvantage. It should be noted, though, that saying that Koreans have an advantage in Asian countries is not always true for all of Asia, as in the case of much of India where most Indian languages are not close to Korean.

But the advantages in communication go beyond language and into areas of similar appearance and understanding. Some of my Western interview subjects particularly stressed this feature. As one missionary in Tibet said, “They can blend better because they look Chinese. That translates into missions.”<sup>104</sup> Likewise, another subject commented that, “Because they’re Asian, they blend in physically and culturally. They understand some of the philosophy. It is easier to make Christian arguments because they understand what they’re arguing against.”<sup>105</sup>

The assumption of closely related backgrounds can strengthen the interaction of Korean missionaries with the people they serve and enhance their commitment, whatever their capacity may be. One Korean missionary, who operated a thriving mission that had started seven churches in Cambodia, told me that he felt a special kinship with the Cambodian people because of their dark history and Buddhist background, which he believed mirrored Korean experiences.<sup>106</sup>

## 2. *Accessibility and the Advantage of International Reputation*

Mirroring past American missionaries in their pride over their relative neutrality compared to Victorian Europeans, Korean missionaries, along with

---

<sup>102</sup> Interview Subject No. 81

<sup>103</sup> Interview Subject No. 39 commented on this, among others.

<sup>104</sup> Interview Subject No. 2

<sup>105</sup> Interview Subject No. 33

<sup>106</sup> Interview Subject No. 19

Westerners, are quick to point out the advantages inherent in lacking a negative international reputation. Judy Han observes that Koreans see themselves as the new “model missionary” nation largely because they can go places that Western missionaries, especially white American ones, are no longer able to easily access. She writes that for many American missionaries, their, “whiteness has become a liability... [their] mobility has been severely compromised by strains of imperialism and threats of terrorism throughout the world.”<sup>107</sup> Korean American missionaries and those of other races may not be as affected as their white counterparts, as Han’s work is concerned largely with Korean American mission links to South Korea’s overall work, but their nationality nonetheless remains an obstacle.

An American missionary who worked for years with Korean churches goes into further detail on the superior mobility of Korean missionaries and their advantages over white ones on the field,

I think one of their [Koreans’] chief contributions to the world missionary movement is their ability to serve in countries where Westerners cannot serve effectively. Koreans don’t elicit the same kind of prejudices that Caucasians do. They are freer to move about and live out their Christian witness than folks from the West. They are making inroads in countries closed to traditional missions.<sup>108</sup>

Nowhere is this advantage more apparent than in Middle Eastern mission. While the area is far from completely safe for Korean missionaries, they are still thought to be able to operate more freely and with more success. A British former Onnuri employee who now coordinates a Korean Islamic-focused mission organisation, said this about the subject, also bringing in the previous advantages of cultural and communication advantages,

There’s a political or cultural advantage. There would be more openness to receive them [Koreans] than in perceived enemies. Culturally, they’re closer to Arab society than Western. They’re both shame cultures with emphasis on relationships. The standard of living differences have been easier to adjust to [among Koreans] in the past.<sup>109</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> Han, “Missionary Destinations,” 34-5.

<sup>108</sup> Interview Subject No. 2

<sup>109</sup> Interview Subject No. 10

Korean missionaries are not the only ones who are aware of their superior access compared to American and other Western missionaries. Chinese house church leader, Zhang Rangliang, was quoted as saying, “Chinese people are more suitable than Americans to go to the Muslim world. Muslims prefer the Chinese to Americans.”<sup>110</sup> Likewise, I heard an American mission leader talking to Singaporean Christians about how they can operate so much more freely than Western missionaries. This assumption seems to be a common one in the Asian and non-Western Christian world.

But South Korean missionaries are relatively distinctive in the fact that their country still has a fairly pure record of international non-interference, with certain exceptions like their country’s limited involvement in the Vietnam and Iraq conflicts. Norimitsu Onish’s profile of Korean mission stressed that, compared to Western missionaries whose work dovetailed with colonialism (overlooking early American and other Western efforts that deliberately strove not to do so), South Koreans have little history of sending people abroad in any capacity.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, as one Korean missionary candidate put it, his country is the only one in Asia that has never invaded another country.<sup>112</sup> While the statement is not true, South Korea certainly lacks the historic record of aggression displayed by its neighbours, China and Japan.

In their ever-increasing presence within Christian mission, Korean Protestants have demonstrated many of their positive features to the world, whether by demonstrating continuity with Western traditions or stand out by going against them. The Korean Protestant enthusiastic and far-reaching vision for mission has served as an inspiration for the global Church and has embodied the powerful potential of non-Western missionaries as the new leaders of world mission.

But Korean missionaries have also been in danger of perpetuating the worst features of past Christian mission, often through the same characteristics that are offered up as advantages. The driving passion of those within the Korean mission

---

<sup>110</sup> Aikman, *Jesus in Beirut*, 196.

<sup>111</sup> Onish, “Korean Missionaries Take on the Hard Cases,” Section A, 1.

<sup>112</sup> Interview Subject No. 30

movement can easily turn into a significant obstacle. Korean confidence and enthusiasm in mission can turn into arrogance and inflexibility. A shared background can only make historic resentments and areas of difference more keenly felt. Freedom to operate could become recklessness and expose a lack of planning. The problematic features of Korean mission and their historic precedents will be explored in the following chapter.

# Chapter Five:

## Problematic Issues in South Korean Protestant Mission and the Repetition of Past Mistakes

### *Introduction*

Today's mission scholarship often stresses how different this era is for missionary activity compared past periods. David Bosch wrote that, "We live in a world fundamentally different from that of the nineteenth century, let alone earlier times." For Bosch, the qualities of the new era of mission include the loss of Western dominance in the world and in theology, the challenging of unjust structures and a profound ambiguity about technology.<sup>1</sup> In a similar fashion, Andrew Walls states that there have been six ages thus far in Christian development and we are living in the Sixth Age of Cross-Cultural Communication, one marked by numerous Christian cultural centres. This stage differs from the Fifth Age of Expanding Europe and Christian Recession, a period that involved the colonial domination of Europe, most notably during the nineteenth century, along with a decline in Western Christianity made evident by the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

However, Korean mission shows that it is possible for past patterns once associated primarily with the West to remain potent in the present day in a different context. Bosch used Kenneth Scott LaTourette's seven volume *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* as an example of what was to him a now-obsolete belief in the continuing progress of Christian faith with each wave of Christian mission bringing stronger results than the one preceding it.<sup>3</sup> But as seen in the previous chapter, such optimism and faith in Christian progress, climaxing in no less than the Second Coming of Christ, is alive and well in the Korean Church. This chapter will look at a decidedly less optimistic aspect to Korean mission: the widely acknowledged problems and the parallels to mission difficulties of the past;

---

<sup>1</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 189. However, Bosch adds that a missionary can embody elements of the past and the present age, which is a good description of what the Korean Church does..

<sup>2</sup> Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 21-23.

<sup>3</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 334.

Observing the danger of Korean missionaries to equal or to even exceed historic missionary errors is nothing new, as a number of Western and Korean mission scholars have made this connection. Among the many examples of such comments, Samuel Kim noted that he hoped that Korean missionaries did not make the same mistakes that Western missionaries made long ago and that Koreans are going through misunderstanding of the world similar to the ones that Americans made when they first opened up to the world.<sup>4</sup> David Smith asserts that cross-cultural missionaries today are repeating the same mistakes of Western missionaries in seeking a more shallow level of conversion. He cites Koreans as a special example of this, highlighting the fact that thousands of them are working on the mission field today, though strangely not giving any further reasons for why Koreans should be singled out except for their sheer numerical size.<sup>5</sup> And James H. Taylor III cautions Asian missionaries in general to avoid, “the danger of perpetuating weakness observed in the Western mission movement of the nineteenth century.”<sup>6</sup>

This chapter details precisely which past dangers these writers are referring to and analyse the most common problems faced by modern Korean missionaries. Some possible solutions to these problems will be looked at in the third part of the thesis. These difficulties fall into four interrelated categories. First, there is the lack of experience of Korean missionaries in the field compared to their Western counterparts, a shortcoming exposed through the poor organisation and planning sometimes seen within Korean mission. Secondly, the chapter will examine the problems caused by money. For many non-Western missionaries, lack of money presents a serious problem, but for Koreans, the exact opposite is the case. Then the issue of cooperation or, more accurately, the lack thereof, will be addressed, as manifested through the perceived isolation of Korean missionaries and their difficulties in working with other missionaries, locals and other Koreans. The last category deals with cultural problems from the substantial (assuming that overseas

---

<sup>4</sup> Interview Subject No. 40

<sup>5</sup> David Smith, *Mission After Christendom*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003), 128. When I asked Smith in person about this in 2004, he said that he had heard reports of Korean problems on the mission field that led him to spotlight them.

<sup>6</sup> James H. Taylor III, “Missions Strategy for World Evangelization,” in *World Missions: The Asian Challenge*, 67.



churches and people should act in the Korean manner) to the small (food and manners).

A final section will further illustrate Korean mission errors by looking at two specific countries: China and Japan. The two are so close to South Korea in location and culture, yet the serious miscalculations made by some Korean missionaries in those countries expose how far Korean Protestants still must go before they achieve the level of mission competence necessary to achieve their goals in these regions.

As with the previous chapter, it can be pondered how much of the similarities of Korean missionaries to their past Western counterparts are due to ancient elements within Korean culture or to Western influence on South Korea or simply to certain universal patterns in mission. Is there a distinction between the paternalism of past Western mission and the authoritarianism of modern Korean missionaries, as Andrew Boyung-Yoon Kim suggests?<sup>7</sup> Is Korean mission influenced more by Western imperialism or by Third World nationalism?<sup>8</sup> Or does Korean mission contain all of these elements? An ultimate answer to these questions is not possible, but there will be certain points where the probable root of a problem will be addressed.

### *I. The Problem of Korean Inexperience in Mission*

While many factors contribute to common problems in Korean mission, a major source must be the relative inexperience of Korean missionaries and organisations when contrasted with the centuries of work and knowledge amassed by some American and European mission agencies. This issue can be seen in a positive light, as when one MTI student noted that Korean progress in mission was all the more special because their history as a Church was shorter than other countries.<sup>9</sup> But inexperience is generally seen as a problem, as when Jang Yun Cho lamented that Korean mission seems more adolescent than mature.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Boyung-Yoon Kim, "Rethinking of Korean Mission," 113.

<sup>8</sup> Kim Myung Hyuk, "Cooperation and Partnership," 108.

<sup>9</sup> Interview Subject No. 70

<sup>10</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 138

This problem may be one of the most difficult issues to overcome, as experience can only come with time and effort. Korean missionaries can take heart in the fact that America was once in their position when it attempted to break into the European-dominated mission field in the nineteenth century. Like the Korean missionaries of today, the Americans had plenty of enthusiasm for their task and conviction of a special destiny in store for them, but were initially short on the know-how that comes from experience.<sup>11</sup>

While certain aspects of Korean mission such as training and the diversity of potential mission work and opportunities, have shown improvement since the modern Korean mission movement began in earnest in the 1970s and 80s. But rapid growth in recent years has exposed shortcomings as the mission infrastructure struggles to meet needs. One such example would be the fairly primitive state of member care for mission personnel in Korean agencies when contrasted with that available within international agencies. Moon cites a 2000 survey showing that there were only 47 care workers for 12 agencies that had 8,103 total missionaries. As a result, missionaries often felt “virtually alone” on the field in terms of agency support or guidance.<sup>12</sup> To add strength to this point, a 1992-4 survey on missionary dropouts revealed that 66% of the cases, which represented 18% of over 90,000 families sent out during that time period, were preventable. Some reasons cited for leaving the field, all of which could be ameliorated with improved member care, included health problems, interpersonal relationship issues, poor communication with the sending agencies and problems in adaptation. Poor on-field training has also been a neglected area that creates needless discouragement among new missionaries.<sup>13</sup>

Another problem lies within the area of evaluating missionary personnel and candidates.<sup>14</sup> While certain agencies and churches are very thorough in selecting the right candidates and following their progress, others will seemingly permit any

---

<sup>11</sup> Schenk, “Introduction,” 5.

<sup>12</sup> Moon, “The Recent Korean Missionary Movement,” 13.

<sup>13</sup> Jang Yun Cho, “Factors,” 160.

<sup>14</sup> Moon, “The Recent Korean Missionary Movement,” 12.

person who expresses a calling to become a full-time missionary. It was well-known among the staff at MTI that some of the candidates enrolled in the programme were not well-suited for overseas mission work in terms of temperament or attitude.

While MTI attempted to make their reservations known to the churches or agencies sponsoring the candidates through private consultation and the grading process, in some cases the sending body simply did not care. All they wanted was proof that the candidate had gone through some formal training process before sending them out. Such emphasis on increasing the numbers of missionaries sent out by a church or agency over selecting the best candidates brings up the question of whether the interest is really in spreading the Christian message or in building up the glory of the sending body.

The focus in so much of Korean mission on charisma and individual incentive has not helped in promoting a mature missionary movement. When so much of the weight falls upon one person, it is difficult for sustained growth to occur. Among others, Kook Il Han advises the Korean churches to avoid individualised and non-systematic mission for the future.<sup>15</sup> Such a turn will require a certain amount of effort, as the legend of the individual Korean missionary wandering alone and often unprepared into a strange foreign land and finding success is part of the overall lore of frontier-focused Korean mission. The previous chapter spotlighted one such example of a lone missionary to Mongolia. Another case would be that of “Rev. L,” a missionary to Cambodia who entered the then quite troubled country alone in 1997 with almost no linguistic or missionary training. He now has hundreds of members in the seven churches he has founded. Onnuri sponsored him for years, arguing that his success in a difficult area justified some of his more questionable practices.<sup>16</sup> The church recently cut off his support and, while the exact reason was not explicitly stated, some of the problems with his mission that will be detailed in this chapter may well have contributed to the decision.

Related to the problem of relying upon spontaneity and charisma in mission is the complaint that some Korean missionaries do not come to their chosen country

---

<sup>15</sup> Kook Il Han, “120 Years of Korean Mission,” 276.

<sup>16</sup> Interview Subject No. 9

with a particular plan or set of objectives for mission. One such comment was made by a Kenyan pastor studying in Seoul. He detailed the differences between Western and Korean missionaries in Kenya in this area,

When Westerners come, they have specific mission objectives: 'I will go here for this long.' Koreans just go. They just do a particular job and that is all. They don't know what to do.<sup>17</sup>

MTI teacher Janny Van der Klis responded to his words by relating her own story of a Korean group who came to the area of Chad in which she was working. They attached themselves to her group for lack of any plan, though they still wanted to "do their own thing."<sup>18</sup>

Another element of Korean mission that works against building a balanced and mature model of mission is the desire for quick results and an impressive number of new Christians and churches. The impressive success of missionaries like Rev. L and the great rate of growth seen in past Korean churches have led some church members and agency leaders to expect similar results every time, no matter how difficult the area is and how much time may be necessary for sustained mission work. A possible disadvantage to the close connections established by some sending churches with their missionaries is that the members of the church demand frequent updates and expect that their contributions will produce fruits. Some Korean missionaries in problematic areas like Japan have even been known to falsify the results of their ministry under the pressure, a practice also seen in nineteenth century mission.<sup>19</sup>

Van der Klis observed that the hardest task for Korean missionaries now and in the future will be their much talked about work in Islamic countries due to the level of preparation and patience that will probably be required for such a challenging mission.<sup>20</sup> She believes that this desire for fast results is the same among today's American missionaries. Patrick Johnstone also notes that the challenge of potentially

---

<sup>17</sup> Interview Subject No. 87

<sup>18</sup> Interview Subject No. 63

<sup>19</sup> Kim Myung Hyuk, "Cooperation and Partnership in Missions," 105.

<sup>20</sup> Interview Subject No. 63

fruitless mission in Islamic countries is not limited to the Korean context by this statement, “Missionaries coming from countries of fast growth like Korea and Indonesia find it hard to write home reports with so little evident signs of fruit... among a resistant Muslim people.”<sup>21</sup>

One unfortunate result of South Korea’s inexperience as a missionary nation is that certain missionaries and agencies lack an awareness of historic precedence that could help them to avoid costly mistakes. For instance, like almost all Korean missionaries, Rev. L hoped to train and nurture native leaders who could become the clergy and administrators of his churches after his eventual departure. Rev. L was excited about the prospects of a batch of young Cambodian ministerial prospects during my visit in the summer of 2003 and spoke of how he hoped to send the youngsters to Singapore and Seoul for formal training.<sup>22</sup> However, things had apparently worsened upon my return to Seoul in 2005. An Onnuri member who had been on one of Onnuri’s numerous short-term trips to Rev. L’s churches related what had happened,

He sent one [candidate] to Singapore. He [the candidate] returned and told Rev. L he had to visit his father. He went to America and became a pastor at a Cambodian-American church. Rev. L felt betrayed and sent them [other candidates] to the Bible Centre in Cambodia. They don’t have proper discipleship [in Rev. L’s churches].<sup>23</sup>

Rev. L might have done things differently if he had been trained well enough to recall that the problem of formally educated and urbanised native ministers leaving the mission field for more lucrative work has occurred before in mission history. For instance, nineteenth century American missionaries feared that formally trained Korean ministers would no longer want to relate to their peers with their new sophistication, a belief which came out of observation of the Chinese mission. Or Rev. L could have looked to his country’s recent mission history and the attempts of the early Korean mission to the Philippines to train native workers with expensive education that left the students with the desire to pursue other forms of work.

---

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Johnstone, “A Strategy for Asia’s Christians to Reach Unreached Peoples,” 335.

<sup>22</sup> Interview Subject No. 19

<sup>23</sup> Interview Subject No. 38

Korean mission inexperience is a relative matter. For all of their feelings that Westerners may be abandoning Christianity, they also feel that the West has many years of superior Christian knowledge and understanding that go beyond the realm of mission. As one MTI student put it, "The whole system of the West was oriented towards Christianity. But the Korean system is oriented towards Buddhism and custom."<sup>24</sup> At the same time, though, Korean missionaries and agencies do possess a longer history as Christians and in mission when compared to some non-Western nations. If Koreans did not believe they had something to offer, they would not be working in places like China to train new missionaries.

## II. *The Problem of Money in Korean Mission*

### A. *Issues with Korean Protestant Wealth in the Mission Field*

As the first part of the thesis detailed, a lack of money was a barrier in the early days of Korean mission when the nation was struggling financially. The economic expansion that has resulted in South Korea currently standing as the world's tenth or eleventh richest country changed the situation and helped fuel the overseas mission boom.<sup>25</sup> South Korean missionaries now find themselves in a historically unusual position as a non-Western mission country struggling to come to terms with how to spend their abundant wealth wisely.

The novelty of this situation can be seen through Jonathan Bonk's influential 1991 book, *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem*. The title alone suggests that the affluent missionaries are restricted to the West. Bonk's premise is that the wealth of Western missionaries has isolated them from sharing the Christian message with the poorer countries of the world. He writes that the real work of evangelism is being done by, "the missionaries of the poorer churches who demonstrate in their own lives the truth that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life for the poor, the destitute, and the hopeless - and not just for the rich."<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Interview Subject No. 66

<sup>25</sup> Accessed January 2006; Available from

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_GDP%nominal%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP%nominal%29); Internet. The 11<sup>th</sup> figure is based on World Bank statistics and the 10<sup>th</sup> figure from the IMF, with both coming from GDP.

<sup>26</sup> Jonathan Bonk, *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 14. I met the author at the 2004 Yale/Edinburgh Conference where I gave a paper on



Bonk adds that using wealth so prominently in mission has been the rule for Western missionaries for the past two centuries and that we are not so far off from our roots in the nineteenth century as we might like to think. He acknowledges that “material plenty” has played a special part in forming the consumerist-oriented character of the American people, including its missionaries.<sup>27</sup>

Many of Bonk’s points could apply equally to South Korea and his argument that mission affluence separates missionaries from the people that they are trying to serve and can even bring hostility is one that possesses some validity within the Korean context. Too much money has resulted in a variety of problems for Korean mission. First of all, some Korean missionaries use money as a lure for attracting visitors and converts to their churches and programmes. While such practices can bring impressive results, it can legitimately be asked how genuine such conversions would be.

During my two weeks observing Rev. L’s mission in Phnom Penh, I saw a number of different cases of how Korean abundance was utilised as a key part of the overall mission plan. For one thing, during our trips to the different churches, there were frequently gifts being made to the local people. On one occasion, Korean crayfish crisps and school notebooks were given out. Rev. L or his associates regularly give bread to one community, although to my eyes it was unclear whether the area actually suffered from hunger. A Korean Christian relief group also visited Rev. L and gave out a massive amount of boxes containing items such as balloons, coloured paper, clothes, hats, stuffed animals, balls, medicine, vitamins and candy.

In addition, when interviewing eight children at Rev. L’s main church, they admitted to me that they initially went to Rev. L’s church because of the services he offered. These were mainly English and other language lessons (Chinese and Korean) which offered opportunities for better jobs in the future, along with some

---

how his theories relate to the Korean missionary situation. He told me that he may look at addressing issues of wealth in the non-Western context in a future edition of this book, coming out this year.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

special inducements like candy.<sup>28</sup> The educational services came out of Rev. L's belief that Christian schools were vital in the evangelisation of Korea and his hope to give the poor children that he serves an advantage in an educational system that favours the rich and well-connected.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, it is little wonder that children made up the great majority of the people in Rev. L's churches.

It should not be concluded that the children were necessarily insincere in their professions of faith because their initial rationale for attendance came partially out of selfishness. The children spoke of the obstacles that they faced because of their faith, including Buddhist parents who disapproved and teachers who gave them lower marks because of their beliefs. Their reasons for becoming Christians included an awareness of their sin and need for salvation, a growing belief in the love of God and a feeling that God has answered their prayers. Still, providing educational and material incentives can bring up questions about the motivations behind conversions, as explained by one Korean-American who went on an Onnuri short-term trip to see Rev. L. She wondered (without prompting),

Why do they come? It is a mix of reasons. Maybe they go in the beginning for English lessons. But they were coming on Wednesday and Sunday when there was no English. I don't think that they come every day only for English.<sup>30</sup>

Korean mission extravagance can also make them look bad in the eyes of other missionaries. Paul Freston worked among Brazilian missionaries and spoke of how Korean missionaries had a poor reputation in their eyes as insensitive and inflexible. One incident that especially offended some Brazilians was in Africa where a Korean missionary offered a raffle for a gas refrigerator for those who attended every church service in one month.<sup>31</sup> A worker for the United Bible Societies in Peru also told me how the first generation of Korean missionaries thought that money could solve all of their problems, though he did say that the latest generation has done better. Korean

---

<sup>28</sup> Interview Subjects Nos. 21-28 (Group interview)

<sup>29</sup> Interview Subject No. 19

<sup>30</sup> Interview Subject No. 6

<sup>31</sup> Paul Freston related this anecdote as part of his 2004 Yale/Edinburgh presentation.

missionaries offered more money to local pastors to work for them, even if they were of another denomination, and became known as “sheep stealers.”<sup>32</sup>

In addition, too much money in mission has caused some of the people I interviewed, especially the more secular ones, to question the motivations behind the mission explosion. But even dedicated Korean Christians, not to mention some of the staff at MTI, admitted that there were serious problems with “freeloading” missionaries who see an opportunity for free room, board and travel. A lot of the problems in this area go back to the previous issue of inexperience, as there does not seem to be proper accountability in some mission churches and organisations. One interview subject had been a Korean social worker in a Christian group in Kenya before returning to Seoul to work as a business interpreter. She explained part of the reason why she left Kenya and her view of how money can corrupt mission,

Many [in mission] did not have money before and once they see how good the money is, they want more. If you have a generous church, you can do anything. They say: ‘I’m doing things for God.’ Things have to be as open as possible to protect you from temptation. Bank accounts are not open. My own group had problems with money. That’s why my husband and I left. A lot of Korean pastors are known to be corrupt.<sup>33</sup>

While previous chapters looked at how Korean Christianity and its mission had been forged under times of hardship and suffering, the question can be raised whether their nation’s current prosperity is making today’s Korean missionaries spoiled. Modern Korean missionaries tend to congregate in prominent urban areas, such as Nairobi in Kenya and Phnom Penh in Cambodia. There are some solid reasons for them to do so in the early years of their mission, as cities help to ease culture adjustment and offer better formal opportunities for studying languages. The problem comes when they are reluctant to leave these comfortable areas to pursue mission in less comfortable parts.

---

<sup>32</sup> Interview Subject No. 31

<sup>33</sup> Interview Subject No. 12

Finally, Korean missionary abundance impacts mission by diluting the overall Christian message they are attempting to share. Moon spoke of how money could get in the way of effective incarnational ministry, as the people Korean missionaries serve can become more interested in the money being offered than by the genuine message of the Gospel.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, Jang Yun Cho comments that the Korean Church is starting to realise that money is not the most important thing in successful mission. Instead, spiritual maturity should be the ruling principal.<sup>35</sup>

### *B. The Historic Foundation Behind Issues of Mission and Money*

While such behaviour may seem heavy-handed and foolish, it actually makes some sense against the background of Korean society. Using questionable means to achieve a desirable result is not generally frowned upon, as bribery remains common. Children are routinely given gifts of candy and money to do well in school and I heard of some cases of children receiving money for copying the Bible by hand. Korean society has been attempting to address the problems of bribery in recent years and this has brought about some realisation of the problems of incentives in Christian mission. One Onnuri member discussed the way that well-intentioned bribes have impacted Korean Christianity and missionaries in the past, along with the hope that they are progressing past such behaviour,

If you review the history of mission, there are a lot of mistakes in the beginning. In Korea, we will give you the opportunity to be Christian for money. They [Korean missionaries] have the memory of being offered candy of gifts [to attend church]. Even though they are grown missionaries, they have the memory. The first time for many visitors [to church] was Christmas when candy is offered. A lot has changed."<sup>36</sup>

These problems have come up time and time again in the course of Christian mission over the past two hundred years. One particularly notable country in which money was widely thought to be used as a prime incentive for conversion would be China, though this issue emerged in virtually every major Christian mission field. Such concerns contributed to the development of the Nevius Method in Korean

---

<sup>34</sup> Interview Subject No. 34

<sup>35</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 70

<sup>36</sup> Interview Subject No. 38

mission. The still-utilised term “rice Christians,” referring to those who were assumed to convert to Christianity in order to gain monetary or educational advantages from Western missionaries, became a popular term in anti-Christian sentiment as expressed through the Boxer Rebellion and the uprisings that led to the Communist takeover. As an Anti-Christian Society in China communicated through a tract,

We oppose the Church because...It tempts men by money and the promise of fame. The pastors and members are rice-Christians. Their deeds and words do not tally.<sup>37</sup>

Although not necessarily less dedicated to their sense of missionary calling, young Koreans come from a heavily urbanised world radically different in many ways than that of the missionaries of a previous generation. While the notoriously strict Korean system of education assures that few children are entirely unacquainted with discipline and sacrifice, they still can find it difficult to function in a place without broadband internet. Some of my MTI students admitted that they would feel uncomfortable living in a non-urban setting, though they didn't think that this would hinder their mission work. Van der Klis agreed that this was a problem, saying: “Koreans find it very difficult to get their head around that there are areas without electricity or water - that they can't use their cell phones.”<sup>38</sup>

However, an impression of Korean missionaries as a wealthy lot from a national Church that stands out from the bulk of non-Western Christians for their affluence is not a wholly accurate picture. For one thing, while admittedly better off than most, Korean churches are not the only ones in the non-Western world with financial resources. Some 91% of Asian missionary boards are autonomous and self-supporting.<sup>39</sup> Even excepting other Asian examples, such as Singapore, there are African and South American Protestant churches that have acquired their own fortunes and are starting to move into the mission field.

---

<sup>37</sup> Lewis Hodous, “The Anti-Christian Movement in China,” *Journal of Religion* 10, no. 4 (1930): 492.

<sup>38</sup> Interview Subject No. 63

<sup>39</sup> “Asian Mission Boards and Societies,” *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 84.

Moreover, for every Korean missionary who lives high off of mission funds, there are others who struggle with acute financial problems in making their mission dreams a reality. Mihyang Choi revealed that some 25% of MTI students have trouble paying their fees each school term, creating continual problems for the school's treasurer. Some of the stories related to me of the students' financial difficulties were truly sad. One especially poignant one came from a female student who tearfully spoke of how her non-Christian parents berated her for living with them during her training and being useless to the family because of her failure to bring in any money for the household.<sup>40</sup>

Once on the field, Korean missionaries sometimes continue to experience problems making ends meet. Moon calls the average allotments for Korean missionaries, which can range anywhere from \$390 to \$1,404 per month, "very small" compared to the average amount given to Western missionaries.<sup>41</sup> Rev. L had only \$500 when he began his work in Cambodia, including \$100 from his wife, and strained for years to gain a solid financial foundation for his work. The fact that overabundance and lack of resources can co-exist within Korean mission is just one of the many contradictions sometimes found within this complex phenomenon.

Ideas about the wise use of money still appear to be in the formation stages in Korean mission, with current literature and the interviews that I conducted being most concerned overall with pressing problems of cooperation and culture. Nonetheless, as Korean Protestants continue to work at building long-term philanthropic programmes overseas and seek to find the wisest ways in which to use their financial resources, these issues will likely become more prominent.

### *III. The Problem of Cooperation in Korean Mission*

#### *A. Issues in Relationships within the Local Community*

While South Korea has welcomed more and more foreigners into its boundaries in the past few decades, the former "hermit nation" still confounds many foreigners who enter its borders and attempt to understand its people. Even after a

---

<sup>40</sup> Interview Subject No. 84

<sup>41</sup> Moon, "The Recent Korean Missionary Movement," 14.



three to five year stay in South Korea, most foreign journalists that Michael Breen spoke to still admitted that they could not figure out the place. Breen wrote that Koreans could be forthright and obscure at the same time, telling you what they thought, what they wanted you to think and what they wanted to happen.<sup>42</sup> Satirist P.J. O'Rourke is even more blunt in his assessment of his time in South Korea during the 1980s: "They don't like anyone who isn't Korean and they don't like each other all that much either. They're hard-headed, hard-drinking, tough little bastards..."<sup>43</sup>

One might think that Korean international missionaries would be an exceptional group, as they are by the very definition of their profession attempting to relate to people from other cultural groups in a positive way. But many obstacles stand in the way of meaningful Christian cooperation in Korean mission. For one thing, a Korean missionary must often learn to communicate with those from multiple different cultures in the course of their work. Beyond the people from their particular target country, there are other churches that may exist in the area and the wider surrounding community. There are also other Christian missionaries, not only Western ones but also non-Western missionaries and Korean missionaries from other agencies and churches. And the missionary will likely be working in a group setting with other Koreans or on an international team, which presents its own challenges either way.

In all, a Korean missionary may need to find ways to relate to people from an array of cultures in a manner that can go beyond what many Western missionaries of earlier generations faced but which does exemplify the current multi-cultural nature of modern mission. Seeing as how Koreans come from a relatively homogeneous culture, it is little wonder that serious problems occur in the course of forming these various relationships. This section will examine some of the most common problems in forming working relationships among local people and missionaries of other nationalities, along with the acknowledgment that Korean missionaries have their own valid complaints about how they are treated by these same groups.

---

<sup>42</sup> Breen, *The Koreans*, 4.

<sup>43</sup> P.J. O'Rourke, "Seoul Brothers," *Holidays in Hell*, (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988), 47.

A major weakness among some Korean missionaries lies in the way that they set up their mission in the context of the larger community. Too many live in isolation from the people they came to serve and cause their converts to adopt a similar lifestyle. In this behaviour, the Koreans demonstrate similarities to the missionaries of the late nineteenth century. Hutchison cites many American missionaries of this period who advocated a “so-called hothouse system” that kept converts and potential future ones, especially children, within a school or other enclosed area to protect them from the evils and temptations of the outside world. He notes that while this system produced good results in the short-term, in the long-term, the consequences were, in the words of one practitioner: “less practical...than we had expected.”<sup>44</sup>

Similar examples of hothouse systems can be found among Korean missionaries and they experience analogous problems with maintaining belief under that system. A Korean missionary to Gambia described some of the difficulties with the enclosed philosophy of mission among her co-workers and Korean missionaries in general,

Korean missionaries have built compounds where children can study. But we have started to rethink that idea. Many children change their beliefs when they leave the compound.<sup>45</sup>

My time observing Rev. L’s operation in Cambodia gave me the opportunity to get a close look at a kind of Korean missionary compound. His main church building is located on the outskirts of Phnom Penh. It is a gated, two story church and school building that is notably more elaborate than the rest of the somewhat impoverished neighbourhood. Rev. L admitted that the building did not quite fit in with the surroundings, but remarked that he was competing with the ornate Buddhist temples of Cambodia for the people’s attention and that he wanted a sturdy building that would last for a long time. While many children from the area attend the lessons and services, about ten to eleven children live within the compound because they lack the money to attend school.

---

<sup>44</sup> Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 98.

<sup>45</sup> Interview Subject No. 84

Rev. L's mission was very self-contained. He has little to no contact with local churches, including those run by Koreans or most other mission groups in Cambodia, though he does receive many visits each year from short-term groups and individuals within the churches that support him and an occasional sympathetic agency. A major shortcoming of his system, which he confessed to being troubled by, is what happens once the children grow up and possibly leave the community. Without links to other churches throughout the country, there are few Christian options for those who move out of the area. And because many of the children convert while their parents remain Buddhist, the families pressure the youngsters to marry non-Christians. The overall instability was reflected in the fact that the main church once has 1,500 children and youth attending services and programmes, but now the figure is down to 1,000, due to what Rev. L calls "backsliding."

Another serious flaw among certain Korean missionaries that ties into the issue of isolation is their reluctance to work with local churches and denominations besides their own. This is not such a hindrance when they enter into areas with little Christian presence, but it can create a lot of discord in places where Christianity has long since been established. S.W. Park points out that it is the policy of the Hapdong denomination to cooperate with local churches only if their doctrines are in line with Hapdong ones.<sup>46</sup> If the churches are not, the Hapdong missionary are supposed to start their own church.

One clear case in which such a policy results in turmoil would be that of Korean missionaries in India. Indian students in Edinburgh and scholars like Andreas D'Souza and Juliet Thomas have affirmed that Korean missionaries are often seen as insensitive in their operations. A special point of contention is the Koreans' desire to ignore the sometimes ancient local churches. Hojin Chung spoke of this problem within India. While affirming the potential of Korean missionaries to make a difference within India, he writes that, "We need to accept and respect the Indian Church that has an abundant and richer history and tradition compared to the

---

<sup>46</sup> Seong-Won Park, "A Survey on Mission Work in the Korean Churches," 332.

Korean Church.”<sup>47</sup> He comments that many Indian churches are in serious need of pastors and workers for theological programmes and Bible colleges, all positions that Korean missionaries could potentially fill. Unfortunately, “what is seen is painfully stubborn insistence on denominations, independent of the existing churches.”<sup>48</sup>

At times, the disdain by Korean missionaries for local churches can showcase lingering prejudices within South Korea towards other cultures. My colleague, Shin Ahn, interviewed conservative Korean missionaries from the Koshin denomination working in South Africa in 2003. He discovered that their general goal was that: “we should plant an authentic church on the land of black Africa.” In what Ahn saw as a dispiriting repetition of traditional Western mistakes in mission, the missionaries saw indigenous forms of Christianity in the country, including the many independent churches, as “unchristian,” “satanic” or “heretical.”<sup>49</sup> The Koreans sought to convert people from both the mainline and independent churches to the Reformed faith commonly found in South Korea.

While many Korean missionaries work hard to get to know the people within their focus area and learn about the culture and language, others are not so diligent. One reason may be the group mentality of Koreans. Samuel Kim goes into detail about this aspect of Korean mission,

Korean missionaries have a special culture. We may say it's a clique. A special bond of Korea-ness. We feel good when we meet Koreans outside of Korea. We have a missionary gathering every four years. It blocks many things with other missionaries.<sup>50</sup>

On the mission field, it is common for Korean missionaries to live together. While this has beneficial aspects, in terms of easing the psychological adjustment and providing mutual support, the downside is the possible hindrance to forming other relationships. One MTI graduate working in Israel stays with other Koreans

---

<sup>47</sup> Hojin Chung, “The People Who Make the Dead Alive,” Presentation at the Tartan and Hanbok: Korean Churches in Edinburgh and the Churches in Scotland Conference, 29 May 2004, 4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>49</sup> Shin Ahn, “A Korean Model of Conversion: Beyond Dialogue and Conversion,” Unpublished presentation at the British and Irish Association for Mission Studies, June 2005, 1.

<sup>50</sup> Interview Subject No. 40

and, while she is glad to be with them, she adds that it is bad for her acquisition of the Hebrew language.<sup>51</sup>

Korean missionaries working and living together as a clique can make them look distant and unfriendly to people from other nationalities. The Kenyan student mentioned earlier in this chapter commented that all the Korean missionaries seemed to live together in a house in Nairobi. Van der Klis responded by saying: “Koreans have a reputation all over the world for staying with other Koreans. Africans don’t like that- they want to mix.”<sup>52</sup> Of course, the bond between Koreans can dissipate very quickly when they come from different denominations or organisations, as the next section will demonstrate.

#### *B. Issues in Relationships with Other Koreans and Foreign Missionaries*

The lack of respect and sense of competition among some Korean missionaries for the work of local churches can definitely extend to other missionaries. In this they differ from much of the mood of the late nineteenth century, where the value of unity and partnership among different mission groups in the work of world evangelisation was increasingly stressed, though rarely fully achieved. Certain mission fields attempted to build harmony among different denominations through formal and informal agreements, though these often involved agreeing to keep away from each other more than actually working together. For instance, the Comity of Missions Agreement in the Pacific during the 1840s, saw each Pacific Island country given over to a particular Protestant tradition.<sup>53</sup> And as previously documented, the mission to Korea was itself a model of relative civility and collaboration within the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The onset of the ecumenical movement and the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948 alienated the evangelical wing which came to dominate global mission and threatened the advancements in comity that had been achieved.

---

<sup>51</sup> Interview Subject No. 85

<sup>52</sup> Interview Subjects Nos. 63 and 87

<sup>53</sup> Aisake Casimira, “The Freedom of Religion and Conscience,” accessed January 2006; available at [http://ecrea.org./webpages/publications\\_files/Papers/16/doc.](http://ecrea.org./webpages/publications_files/Papers/16/doc.;); Internet, 1.

But the onset of an evangelical form of ecumenism from the 1960s onward, which included worldwide gatherings like the 1974 Lausanne Conference, put the goal of cooperation back in the minds of the international missionary community.<sup>54</sup> In light of these developments, the incessant competition found among so many Korean missionaries stands out all the more. The fact that the Western missionaries, in spite of some examples of disagreements, got along so well and established a working model of comity in Korea makes the situation all the more embarrassing.<sup>55</sup>

South Korean Protestants have made some solid moves to improve their sense of cooperation, both among different groups of Korean missionaries and international agencies. Chapter Three chronicled the eventual 1992 decision in Manila of major denominations, such as the Hapdong branch, to work together and divide the mission territory more effectively. Korean missionaries in some individual countries have followed suit by forming groups designed to promote alliances, such as the Korea Development Association for Bangladesh.<sup>56</sup> Even the most conservative groups like the Koshin denomination, which signed a comity agreement with agencies including InterServe, OMF and SIM in 1998, have made certain efforts towards partnership in mission.<sup>57</sup> Another hopeful sign is the decrease in the growth rate of new mission agencies, which suggests a preference for working with established organisation which are more likely to have already established some kind of comity in their territories.<sup>58</sup>

But the slowed-down creation of new mission agencies and the work of individual churches to send out their own missionaries can still threaten whatever progress is made in an area, and denominational agencies with some kind of comity policy in place can still be guilty of divisive activity among some of their missionaries, as the example of the Koshin missionaries in South Africa showed. Denominational and sometimes congregational loyalty comes before any other type

---

<sup>54</sup> Paul Pierson, "Ecumenical Movement," *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 301.

<sup>55</sup> This observation was made by Interview Subject No. 39 and by Kim Myung Hyuk, "Cooperation and Partnership in Missions," 102-3.

<sup>56</sup> Kim Myung Hyuk, "Cooperation and Partnership in Missions," 105.

<sup>57</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 74.

<sup>58</sup> Moon, "The Recent Korean Missionary Movement," 12.



among many Korean missionaries, even if this means wasteful duplication of ministries. One egregious example of Korean denominational competition is the case of three Bible colleges in Bangalore built by Korean missionaries, each accusing the other of luring away their students.<sup>59</sup>

Sometimes the need for separation is not due so much to any special individual grievance a missionary may have, but their need to please the congregation, denomination or agency that is paying their bills. For instance, Rev. L, whose one attempt at working with a nearby Korean missionary had ended badly, explained to me that he did not coordinate with other missionaries for this reason,

There are other missionaries, but I haven't contacted them. The differences may be slight. But when you are a missionary and you must do a certain thing for support, you cannot have your work threatened.<sup>60</sup>

In some ways, this problem goes right to the heart of the motivation for Korean mission and how it can be driven more by self-interest than by the work of God.

Kim Myung Hyuk writes that,

Competitive individualism has been the most critical factor in the Korean Church's involvement in missions. Each church is enthusiastic for its own mission projects, but not for others.<sup>61</sup>

In a later article, Kim blames the rise of Church Growth theory within South Korea for encouraging competition among Korean churches, with mission as an accessory to this tendency.<sup>62</sup> Yet the competition and disunity among Korean Christians has also been the spark behind some of the excitement and spirit within the Korean Church. Furthermore, it is an unfortunate fact, of which some Korean missionaries are no doubt aware, that the height of the age of ecumenism and mission comity also was accompanied by serious decline in mission enthusiasm among the mainstream Western denominations. In fact, the number of American missionaries in the mainline denominations, the ones that supported comity and ecumenism the most,

---

<sup>59</sup> Hojin Chung, "The People Who Make the Dead Alive," 3.

<sup>60</sup> Interview Subject No. 19

<sup>61</sup> Kim Myung Hyuk, "Cooperation and Partnership in Missions," 103.

<sup>62</sup> Kim Myung Hyuk, "Korean Missions in the World Today and Its Problems," 215.

went from 82% of the total number of missionaries in 1918 to 6% in 1966.<sup>63</sup> However, while Korean missionaries have blamed liberal religious ideas for this decline, there is not necessarily a direct correlation.

Multiple reasons may exist for the reluctance of many Korean missionaries to coordinate or even speak with other missionaries. For some, the explanation may be that they simply do not care or see the need for building such relationships. Moon spoke of an American friend in Turkey who was disappointed that the Korean missionaries in the area did not appear at a conference. Moon believed that the reluctance to attend was partially because of a lack of interest in networking, along with too much devotion to their individual work.<sup>64</sup>

The language barrier, especially given the difficulties in acquiring English fluency, does indeed hold some Korean missionaries back and can make them appear shy or distant. The Kenyan pastor remarked on how particular the Korean missionaries were about their pronunciation, even though the Kenyans understood what they were saying.<sup>65</sup> Korean missionaries might want to remember the lesson of the first Anglican missionaries in Korea. Arriving in 1890, the Anglicans were determined to master the Korean tongue, “lest they shame the Gospel by clothing it in broken grammar.” While they ultimately gained a small, educated following, the Presbyterians and Methodists used the extra time won by the Anglican delay to talk with the people, even with their bad grammar, and won far more hearts.<sup>66</sup>

Even when Korean missionaries join international agencies or receive short-term teams that may include international members, there are still many problems that limit effective partnership. A lot of these are cultural in nature and revolve around the different ways in which Koreans view their work. One common complaint among Westerners who participate in Korean ministries and secular jobs alike, is the propensity of their supervisors to constantly be changing the guidelines

---

<sup>63</sup> Pierson, “Ecumenical Movement,” *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 303.

<sup>64</sup> Interview Subject No. 34

<sup>65</sup> Interview Subject No. 87

<sup>66</sup> Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, 543

of the job the Westerner is supposed to do. One such case would be that of a Korean American who worked with Rev. L. and clearly had some issues with the way the Cambodian mission was run. Despite the fact that the Korean American was an English teacher with no pastoral experience, Rev. L. went on an unannounced one-month vacation and left him in charge of all the churches in the mission.<sup>67</sup> Another example involved an American who was supposed to run a camp for children, but found that none of what had been promised on the brochure she was given (numbers of children involved, resources and activities) were in place once the camp arrived. She lamented that their attitude was, "The foreigners know everything. They'll put it together."<sup>68</sup> But few of the Westerners I spoke to with such complaints were permanently put off Korean mission and most remained enthusiastic about the Korean Church and its mission.

Another issue for some Koreans involved in international mission projects is their hesitancy to fully express their feelings, which can be damaging in light of Western missionaries' fondness for sharing and discussion. One facet of this dilemma came up in a heated series of debates among MTI students over whether and to what extent they should complain. Some thought that it was a good idea to stay silent, with one explaining, "I heard a pastor say that if you wait two months before saying something, you will learn enough to make the problem go away."<sup>69</sup> But others disagreed, with one saying, "Koreans are taught not to complain. But I think we should learn to speak up in a sensitive way."<sup>70</sup>

The reasons for poor cooperation among Koreans can vary from nation to nation. As seen, the Brazilian missionaries objected to the crass use of money among Korean missionaries, while many Indian Christians are offended by a lack of respect shown to their churches and traditions. Each country potentially presents its own problems and there seems to be little distinction between whether the partners are Western or non-Western in terms of how well they will get along.

---

<sup>67</sup> Interview Subject No. 36

<sup>68</sup> Interview Subject No. 32

<sup>69</sup> Interview Subject No. 69

<sup>70</sup> Interview Subject No. 68

Kai Michael Funkschmidt writes of how these relational problems among Asian missionaries as a whole defy dualistic categorisation, “It is no secret that relationships between Africans and Asians are by no means easier than between ‘the North’ and ‘the South.’” He relates the story of a 1996 meeting of the United Evangelical Mission agency in which the African missionaries stood against the election of an Asian to be the first moderator, as voting threatened to be along continental lines.<sup>71</sup> Yet while in certain cases there can be solidarity among Asians as a whole in international groups, Koreans can clash with other Asian missionaries just as much as with Western, African or South American ones.

### *C. Issues of Bias and Prejudice Against Korean Missionaries*

While many Korean missionaries certainly make grave errors that contribute to the poor relationships that can develop on the mission field, it would be unfair to say that these problems are entirely their fault. Missionaries and Christians from various nationalities may have their complaints about Korean missionaries, but Koreans make some valid points of their own about how they are treated on the field by agencies, other missionaries and the people they are trying to serve.

When a major new force in mission comes onto the field, there are bound to be problems on all sides. Historically, American missionaries of the nineteenth century ran into difficulties when they entered a field dominated by European missionaries. The Continental mission leaders were increasingly alarmed that Americans were doing so much more than before and seemingly refashioning overseas mission as a whole to fit their needs. William Hutchison wrote that the Americans possessed a louder voice and a fresher idealism than many of their more restrained European colleagues, which naturally created conflict.<sup>72</sup> The current situation with Korean missionaries entering the field involves some of the same clashes but reflecting the new state of missionary work where any country can participate.

---

<sup>71</sup> Kai Michael Funkschmidt, “Partnership Between Unequals- Mission Impossible?-Mission Structures Revisited,” *International Review of Mission* 91, no. 362 (July 2002): 408.

<sup>72</sup> Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 93-4.

A major issue is that Korean missionaries do not meet the traditional expectations of who a Christian missionary should be. While word of the growing influence and power of non-Western Christianity is quickly spreading, it is far from a universally known phenomenon. One of the first things that the *New York Times*' article on Korean mission emphasised was that it marked the first time that a large number of non-Western missionaries have been deployed. Koreans do take advantage of this factor, which the article took note of: "People expect missionaries to be from America or Europe, so Koreans can do their work quietly."<sup>73</sup>

But such perceptions also include a decidedly negative side. I heard several accounts of how Korean missionaries in Africa struggled with what Africans thought a missionary should look and act like. Van der Klis said that the residents of Chad didn't know what to think of the Korean missionaries who came. They were used to white missionaries and the fact that Asian, along with African missionaries, started to come in was a significant change. Some people ridiculed the Koreans and thought they were Chinese, though as in previously cited countries like Thailand, the hard work of the Korean missionaries ultimately earned them a place in the community.<sup>74</sup>

The long shadow cast by the Western missionaries in Africa also influences the view of Koreans by comparison of their operating styles. The Kenyan pastor told me that, "Westerners made many mistakes but they risked their lives for the Gospel. Now, you can fly and drive in Kenya." In contrast to the adventurous, imperilled Westerners of the past, the frequently urban-dwelling Koreans seem more hesitant and spoiled. He does admit, however, that it is not the Koreans' fault that safety standards have increased since the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Korean missionaries may also represent, unintentionally, the confusion caused by the loss of spiritual and financial power of some parts of the West and the rise of new countries to the forefront. When asked about areas where Korean missionaries are not very effective, Moon mentioned Eastern Europe, parts of which are more

---

<sup>73</sup> Onish, "Korean Missionaries Take on the Hard Cases," Section A, 1.

<sup>74</sup> Interview Subject No. 63

monocultural than South Korea. He said, "They still don't understand any coloured missionary. They are embarrassed by Asian and Latin American missionaries."<sup>75</sup>

An even more insidious form of adversity for Korean missionaries comes from the prejudice, or perception thereof, from other missionaries. One MTI student who worked in Africa noted that at first, the Western missionaries she met did not consider her and her group to be "real missionaries because we were Asian," though their attitudes eventually improved.<sup>76</sup> Another student who worked with a prominent mission agency in Japan spoke of her difficulties with Western missionaries inside and outside of her group, "Usually Western missionaries think they are superior in all things. Our way of thinking and feeling is very different."<sup>77</sup>

While international agencies have found some notable success lately in signing up Korean missionaries, their initial attempts at recruitment were flawed. Kim Myung Hyuk tells of how Western agencies appealed to Koreans in the 1970s for their credibility, experience and organisation. But the agencies did not consult with Korean churches in areas like training, placement and recruiting or let Korean churches contribute to policy-making, a substantial mistake in a nation where churches are at the heart of Christian mission.<sup>78</sup> However, international agencies like SIM and WEC that have established themselves within the last ten years are avoiding those mistakes, as the branches are based run almost entirely by Koreans with connections from specific churches but with the advantages in experience and training of the wider global network. Any solid sense of partnership and cooperation in global mission will need to involve effort and understanding among all parties.

#### *IV. The Issue of Culture*

##### *A. Cultural Conversion in Korean Mission*

While the preceding three problematic areas were all important in their own way, the issue that looms the largest over Korean mission today may well be that of

---

<sup>75</sup> Interview Subject No. 34

<sup>76</sup> Interview Subject No. 84

<sup>77</sup> Interview Subject No. 64

<sup>78</sup> Kim Myung Hyuk, "Cooperation and Partnership in Missions," 104.



culture. A major and commonly acknowledged contributor to cultural problems in Korean mission is the presence of cultural conversion as a guiding idea behind much of its mission methodology. Cultural conversion holds that, “true Christianity could only be properly expressed in the cultural forms in which they received it.”<sup>79</sup> The concept has a long history within Christian mission, dating back to the New Testament debates over whether adopting Jewish culture was necessary for new converts. Cultural conversion returned to mission during the rise of the Western missionary movement with a significant portion of the mission force believing that at least some transference of the blessings of Western civilisation was desirable and necessary. Though some real benefits were brought to the native communities through this belief, it is strongly criticised today by liberal and evangelical Christians alike for being arrogant and needlessly damaging to non-Western cultures.

Many Korean missionaries continue this unfortunate legacy, both deliberately and unwittingly. They have received some sharp criticism for it. Among the authors who see Korean missionaries as a part of the cycle of domineering cultural mission would be Juliet Thomas. She writes,

From the West and more recently from Korea, a vast number of wealthy and powerful ministry leaders are sweeping into India. They cause more damage to Christian mission and testimony than you can ever imagine.<sup>80</sup>

A similar declaration is made by a Korean working for the Korean Methodist Church. Requesting anonymity by virtue of his strong criticism of Korean Methodist policy, he told me,

The Korean Methodist Church is a good example of mission history. This means they adopt all kinds of imperialistic ideas from Western missionaries and are implanting them in the Third World.<sup>81</sup>

While these two statements suggest a direct continuity between Western mission history and modern Korean mission practice, the Koreans have also placed

---

<sup>79</sup> Charles Kraft, “Cultural Conversion,” *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 251.

<sup>80</sup> Juliet Thomas, “Issues from the Indian Perspective,” in *Deliver Us From Evil*, Eds., A. Scott Moreau, Tokunboh Adeyemo, David Burnett, Bryant Myers, Hwa Yung, (Monrovia: MARC, 2000), 148.

<sup>81</sup> Interview Subject No. 52

their own unique spin upon the long-held concept of cultural conversion. After all, the history of Korean Protestantism supports the idea in some ways. While their beliefs were under attack from the Japanese during the occupation years, the Korean Christians whom history and public sentiment would generally vindicate were the ones who did not compromise on their values, in spite of Western missionaries urging them to do so. The uncompromising Korean Protestants held firm to the idea that elements of faith should never be altered, which many subsequent believers took to be a warning against the dangers of contextual Christianity, not recognising that their own beliefs were influenced by their culture and history.

Beyond that aspect, there are the rapid changes to Korean society that came about almost concurrent with the swift rise of Protestantism, with the growth of the Korean economy being perhaps the most impressive to foreign eyes. As seen previously, some Korean Christians saw an explicit and divinely-inspired connection between the two phenomena which together allowed Korean overseas mission to thrive. If God brought such obvious secular and spiritual blessings to South Korea, then why shouldn't Korean missionaries be able to bring such gifts to the world? And why not build up new churches and programmes overseas that are based on precisely the same model that worked so well in South Korea? Chung Chai-Sik noted that some Koreans and non-Koreans feel that the prime movers behind Christian mission movements are no longer mainline Christians in rich countries. Instead, "it is those who were themselves once poor and helpless, but now have overcome poverty."<sup>82</sup>

In practical terms, this results in Korean pastors and missionaries imposing, often unconsciously, their own cultural model upon the people they work among.<sup>83</sup> Veteran missionary Karen Ridge detailed this problem among Korean missionaries by saying,

The weakness that Korean missionaries must constantly guard against is their temptation to plant little Korean churches. Because their culture is monolithic, they find it quite hard to break out of their cultural patterns and be able to

---

<sup>82</sup> Chung Chai Sik, *The Encounter Between the Gospel and Neo-Confucian Culture*, 37.

<sup>83</sup> Interview Subject No. 4

discern between Korean church culture and Biblical imperatives.<sup>84</sup>

Attempts to replicate the “little Korean churches” result in many of the stories that I have heard regarding Korean missionaries alienate the locals or other Christian workers. Some examples include a Korean missionary who gives Korean-style haircuts to Latin American barrio children<sup>85</sup> and Korean pastors who continue to use Korean-language terms to describe key Christian words.<sup>86</sup>

One particular area in which Korean missionaries tend to duplicate their cultural forms is in worship. Chapter Three related the story of how Koreans in the Philippines during the 1980s pressured their flock to give up the guitars that the locals preferred in favour of the organ music listened to in Korean worship. Such practices still go on today. In Bolivia, it was reported that the Korean Presbyterians there were experiencing ongoing conflicts over their insistence on utilising only the organ in services. One Bolivian pastor in their employ even lost his job because he arranged for Christian songs to be played on traditional instruments.<sup>87</sup>

Beyond the poor reputation that such practices have brought Koreans among the international missionary community, insisting on Korean models brings some specific long-term disadvantages. For one thing, some Korean missionaries expect that other cultures will behave in the same way as they do and that Christianity will spread as quickly as in Korea.<sup>88</sup> With such ideas, it is little wonder that the impatience for expectation of fast results described earlier occurs, especially when the supporting Korean congregations clamour for results.

Another issue comes from the model of leadership that Korean missionaries provide for the people and its long-term effects. As Korean churches rely largely on the power of an individual charismatic pastor, their missionaries often bring that concept overseas. A Korean pastor or mission leader will frequently stay in one post

---

<sup>84</sup> Interview Subject No. 1

<sup>85</sup> Interview Subject No. 31

<sup>86</sup> Interview Subjects No. 5

<sup>87</sup> This information came from Karla Koll during the 2005 Yale/Edinburgh Conference.

<sup>88</sup> Onish, “Korean Missionaries Take on the Hard Cases,” Section A, 1.

for many years, imprinting his or her (but usually his) style of pastoral care upon any churches or programmes founded. The problem comes once the Korean missionary leaves, just as it does in South Korea when the head pastor dies or retires. The remaining churches frequently fail to reproduce or fall apart altogether because the charisma is gone, even when steps may have been taken to train local leaders or pastors.<sup>89</sup>

### *B. Monocultural Missionaries in a Multicultural World*

One element that recurs again and again in commentary on Korean mission is that they are “monocultural and monolingual” or “monolithic.”<sup>90</sup> Even among less scholarly Koreans interested in mission, comments such as the following are made: “Koreans only know one way of speaking.”<sup>91</sup> The culture shock that affects virtually every long-term missionary therefore can potentially impact Koreans all the more. Even worse is that Korean missionaries who enter the field without proper preparation (or even with, as training can only go so far) can cause great offence due to lack of cultural awareness.

Cultural misunderstandings are not difficult to find in the world of Korean mission where, in spite of ever-increasing and improving efforts, the quality of cultural education in seminaries and mission training programmes remains decidedly unpredictable. Some churches remain content to send their missionaries out with little to no cultural or linguistic training. For example, one MTI student struggled throughout the term with her church’s wish for her to leave MTI in favour of a quick regimen of prayer and Bible-reading. They told her she could simply hire an interpreter in her mission base to assist her, which the Korean and Western staff alike considered an unwise move reminiscent of the earlier, flawed generation of Korean missionaries.

Among the examples of cultural clashes, the staff at M.T.I. mentioned with some embarrassment one past student who engaged in street evangelism in Itaewon,

---

<sup>89</sup> Interview Subjects Nos. 4 and 52

<sup>90</sup> Interview Subjects Nos. 39 and 33

<sup>91</sup> Interview Subject No. 75

a section of Seoul known for its international population, as preparation for her overseas mission work. She went up to a black man walking down the street and shouted: "You are going to Hell unless you accept Jesus!" The student was puzzled by his hostile response. Her classmates attempted to convince her that she had been insensitive in her approach, but she didn't seem to get the point. The student now serves in a French-speaking African nation.

Another, more subtle case came up a few times during the MTI students' presentations of messages designed to potentially introduce Christian ideas to a person from another culture. Two of the students' messages featured the use of the colour black as a sign of sin and white as symbolising God's purifying love. Van der Klis and Mihyang Choi had to remind the students that some people, especially Africans, might not appreciate such an analogy.

The monocultural Korean society is not as limiting as one might think, however. In the course of their work and through the widening of Korean society as a whole, some unexpected links have emerged with certain countries in Asia. It is widely known within Korean mission that they operate well in Central Asia, to the extent that Western mission agencies are starting to specifically request working with Koreans in that area.<sup>92</sup> This Central Asian link extends all the way to Turkey, a nation that became increasingly prominent in Korean culture due to its participation in the 2003 World Cup and the remembrance of the Turkish role as part of the UN force in the Korean War. Some Koreans even viewed the Turks as, "long-lost blood relatives of Koreans" due partially to the common traits that they noticed.<sup>93</sup>

But for every Turkey or Mongolia, there is a country whose culture clashes with that of South Korea. An obvious example is India, an Asian country whose vast diversity conflicts sharply with Korean monoculturalism. As India possesses an ancient Christian heritage of its own and a large internal missionary operation, many Indian Christians naturally do not approve of Koreans who come in and want to take over while displaying an ignorance of India's history and culture. One of my Korean

---

<sup>92</sup> Interview Subject No. 4

<sup>93</sup> Ju Hui Han, "Missionary Destinations," 10.

interview subjects, a fellow student at the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, is devoting himself to the history of Indian mission and to gaining a fuller grasp of Indian culture. One of his main goals is to improve the knowledge of Korean missionaries regarding India due largely to the observation he has made of their mistakes from his trips to India. He told me,

They [Korean missionaries] have to know more about native culture and native language. They do not study or learn about local context very seriously. When I studied more Indian Christian theology, especially about British missionaries, I was very surprised. Some studied Indian theology and religious life more than Indian people and many other missionaries. But Korean missionaries do not study this very seriously.<sup>94</sup>

The cultural tasks faced by Korean missionaries can be comprehensive in nature, consisting of small challenges as well as large ones. One of the more esoteric aspects of MTI's teaching came in instructing the students in Western-style table manners and serving Western-style breakfasts, necessitated by the fact that so many intended to go into international agencies where chopsticks wouldn't be used and rice is not necessarily part of the menu. In fact, food was a surprisingly large source of complaint among the students as they contemplated life in their future mission base, though the great majority would never dream of ever voicing such thoughts in the field. To my surprise, many Koreans who had visited the areas spoke of how they found Thai and Indian food to be too spicy for their tastes. While Korean food can be exceedingly spicy, they considered Thai and Indian food to be spicy in a different and undesirable way from familiar favourites like *kimchi*, a common food brought along on their journeys by homesick Koreans.

## V. *Profiles in Korean Mission Problems: China and Japan*

### A. *China*

No two countries can compare with China and Japan for the depth of cultural, historical and religious ties shared with Korea. And in Korean Christian mission, few countries can compete with China and Japan in terms of the ambitions and frustrations generated by Korean missionary work in those nations. China and Japan

---

<sup>94</sup> Interview Subject No. 30



prove that even within countries that share remarkable links and similarities with South Korea, differences exist that threaten effective mission. The problems within Korean mission discussed in this chapter. In particular, these two countries represent the shift in religious power within South Korea, as two countries that once dominated Korea now find themselves in the shadow of a confident Korean Christianity that wants to play a prime leadership role in building up the churches in both nations.

China and Korea were once so closely connected to each other that Korea truly maintained only a nominal independence for centuries until China's gradual loss of power to Europe in the nineteenth century led to the erosion of many of their ties. Certainly in terms of overall Christian development, there could hardly be two more different countries. But in spite of China's role in supporting North Korea's government, South Korea still looks favourably upon China, especially with the potential for lucrative economic partnerships in light of China's quickly growing economy. In fact, an April 2004 poll showed that 63% of the ruling party legislators saw China as South Korea's most important partner with only 28% identifying the U.S. in that role. At the moment, South Korea is struggling between establishing closer ties with China or keeping its alignment with the United States and Japan, with strident advocates within the country upholding both positions.<sup>95</sup> Some young Koreans want to maintain ties with both countries, with many high school graduates wanting to study with both the English and Chinese departments during their university time, with some dreaming of establishing a bridge company in China.<sup>96</sup>

One aspect of Korean/Chinese relations that does not generate such debate is that the Korean churches are excited about the prospects for mission in China. Not only is it the top country for Korean missionaries, but the Korean imagination has been inspired by what China could accomplish for God if its Christian numbers continue to increase. As one MTI student said, "If China believed in God, they would change the world."<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Victor D. Cha, "South Korea in 2004: Peninsular Flux," *Asian Survey* 45, no. 1 (January/February 2005): 35.

<sup>96</sup> Interview Subject No. 37

<sup>97</sup> Interview Subject No. 76

This is hardly the first time that China has fuelled the dreams of a missionary-sending country. From the arrival of the first Western missionaries, China has been an exciting prospect for Western missionaries convinced they could convert its vast millions. Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries believed that they had a “special responsibility” for “saving” China in both the spiritual and secular sense. So strong were these dreams that certain missionary publications even blocked out discouraging news of setbacks and emerging anti-Christian and Western sentiment in China.<sup>98</sup> With the Communist takeover of China, the country became a symbol of the end of the optimistic nineteenth century vision of mission, with some assuming the country was lost for Christianity forever.

Recent years have proven that Western pessimism over China’s apparent rejection of Christianity was premature, as the Chinese churches rebuilt themselves, mostly without any missionary help. A key difference between Korean hopes for mission in China and those of the past is that there is more of a concrete Christian reality today in China. Koreans may be eager about the Back to Jerusalem concept, but it was apparently conceived and promoted worldwide largely by the Chinese Christians themselves.

Korean mission in China can encompass both the best and the worst characteristics of Korean missionaries. On the positive side, there exist ample opportunities for collaboration and sharing among Chinese and Korean Christians. One such example, a school at which one MTI student taught, will be profiled in the final chapter as an example of a well-run, intercultural Korean mission project. The mission to China even highlights a more humble and supportive side to the Korean Church. After all, part of the enthusiasm over China is in recognition of its possible future ability to overtake South Korea. This declaration by one of Onnuri’s ministers reflects this,

Pastor Ha realises Koreans can’t reach the 10/40 Window,  
but we can help China so they can reach it. Number-wise,  
first of all [China can do it]. They’re a lot closer  
geographically, they’ve been through all kinds of persecution.

---

<sup>98</sup> Margo S. Gewurtz, “United States Attitudes and Policies Toward China,” (book review) *Pacific Affairs*, 64, no. 4 (Winter 1991-2): 566.

They have more spiritual training...Koreans have a lot of limitations - language and culture-wise.<sup>99</sup>

The prospect of China overshadowing Korean mission can be expressed in somewhat more threatening terms. For instance, I was told that a Sarang pastor told his congregation that Chinese Christians were going to overtake Korean mission in numbers unless they increased their missionary enthusiasm.<sup>100</sup>

In spite of its recent church growth, China still has a number of relatively remote, unevangelised areas, particularly among its minority tribes. These places have attracted the attention of adventurous Korean missionaries, while also sometimes bringing out the domineering side that can thrive in remote and unsupervised situations. One MTI student with knowledge of China remarked, "Many Chinese Christians says that Korean missionaries want to be [like] kings. They don't want to work with Chinese church leaders."<sup>101</sup>

Korean missionaries are known for acting quickly and directly, but if such action is couple with recklessness, it can have disastrous consequences in China. In 2002, I went on a short-term mission trip at Onnuri to an unchurched rural area in southwest China. The trip was part of an overall mission project led by Korean and American missionaries. Due to government restrictions, using Chinese Christians from other parts was said to be unfeasible. In subsequent years, a Christian community did emerge in the area, though there were reports of periodic troubles with local authorities. Onnuri sponsored several mission trips to the area each year, considering the tribe there to be an "adopted people group."

An Onnuri short-term mission trip last year undertaken through the English Ministry may have jeopardised any progress made. The international team took a number of teaching packets in order to give them to a long-term missionary in the area to distribute. An unknown person took one of the packets, however, and gave it to a policeman. The group was taken into police custody, where the police attempted

---

<sup>99</sup> Interview Subject No. 47

<sup>100</sup> As related to me by Interview Subject No. 61

<sup>101</sup> Interview Subject No. 77

to gather information on the missionaries in the area. With future trips suspended for the time being, Onnuri's mission staff is evaluating the extent of the damage and what their future plans in the area should be.<sup>102</sup>

Besides these difficulties, Korean mission to China also contains a certain amount of unrealistic romanticism about the real situation there. The students who were involved in Chinese mission saw the buzz generated by the Back to Jerusalem movement as a generally positive thing. However, one did observe that many people just dream about China and don't really understand the present situation. One possible example of this came with the students at MTI sometimes comparing China to Korea to underscore the greater simplicity of the Chinese Church. For example, one student said,

In China, they don't have church buildings, but they plan to send 10,000 missionaries. We [Koreans] are eager to make big buildings. What church does God want? I think the live church is in China.<sup>103</sup>

Adapting to the culture of China also presented some difficulties. While the linguistic structure of Chinese may not be very different from Korean, the written language was another matter entirely. Some students who had gone to China on short or long-term trips found the greasiness of Chinese food unpleasant. There are also more fundamental distinctions in how the Chinese approach life. One such difference was reflected upon by a long-term Korean missionary to China,

I was told one way to understand the Chinese people is that popular words in Korean are, 'quickly, quickly' and popular words in Chinese are, 'slowly, slowly'. Some part of going quickly is bad and some is good. A part of my character was changed by China.<sup>104</sup>

## B. *Japan*

Japan is a nation that has puzzled and frustrated Westerners for centuries, especially in the area of Christian mission. From the time Japan opened up to Protestant missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century, over 200 mission societies

---

<sup>102</sup> Interview Subject No. 43

<sup>103</sup> Interview Subject No. 66

<sup>104</sup> Interview Subject No. 65

have poured into the country, a full third of them from the United States and Canada. Initially, Japan held promise as a mission success story. In the midst of a vogue for the West reminiscent of the *sohak* (Western knowledge) movement in nineteenth-century Korea, called *seiyosuhai* in Japan, the number of Japanese Protestants rose from 59 in 1873 to over 31,000 in 1891.<sup>105</sup> At that point, for a variety of historical and socio-political reasons, the growth rate slowed down considerably.

Today, the question of why Korean Christianity succeeded while the religion failed to gain a substantial foothold in Japan continues to linger. It is one which I myself have been asked on a number of occasions on explaining my work. The question comes up in Korean church circles as well, but they are no more able to conceive of a full explanation. Indeed, for two nations so close together in geography, the divide in understanding between South Korea and Japan continues to be wide.

In spite of the welcome religious freedom in Japan, the challenges involved in working in China pale in many ways compared to the complicated dynamics of Korean mission in Japan. While the Chinese have enjoyed a mostly favourable reputation within Korea, Japan has stood as Korea's most hated enemy for much of its history. Korean-Japanese tensions have relaxed considerably in recent decades, with Japanese popular culture enjoying a warm reception among many Korean youth and the shared World Cup of 2002 standing as a notable symbol of the ability of the two nations to work together in harmony. But it does not take much to bring tensions to the surface, largely due to South Korea's feelings that Japan has never properly acknowledged its historic misdeeds against Korea, especially during the colonial occupation. In 2005, for example, Koreans were furious over the Japanese laying claim (in words only) to a tiny rocky island named Tokto that the Koreans strongly believed was their rightful property.

Some Korean Christians are open about their struggles to deal with negative sentiments towards Japan. One MTI student spoke of how he prayed for God to

---

<sup>105</sup> Mark Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 13.

destroy Japan as a child.<sup>106</sup> Another student, “H,” who worked as a missionary in Japan, admitted that she liked individual Japanese, but had problems with their society as a whole and with their government.<sup>107</sup> Prominent Korean Christian leaders like David Yonggi Cho wrote openly about their spiritual turmoil over engaging in Japanese mission when they still harboured feelings of hatred towards the country.<sup>108</sup>

Any mission to Japan therefore bears the weight of the many years of accumulated enmity. Some Koreans find that this gives the mission added meaning and importance for the Korean Church as a whole. One could even argue that they feel some pride in being able to overlook former negativity in pursuing God’s call. Mark Mullins, in an article with the meaningful, if somewhat unoriginal heading, “The Empire Strikes Back,” pointed out that within the perceived calling that many Korean Christians feel to evangelise Asia, their work with their former coloniser bears special notice.<sup>109</sup> While mission interest in Japan has faded recently in South Korea, for reasons that will soon become obvious, it is still the fourth largest country for Korean missionaries (see Table 10).

Those who have spent years in both countries are open about the large cultural and religious differences between the two countries. H. made some observations this cultural divide,

Japan is so near Seoul, but we have no idea about Japan and Japan is not aware of the Korean situations...Koreans are quick to open their hearts. The Japanese are slow to trust newcomers...They [Japanese] need what we [Koreans] have already. They think all religions are the same. They have no concept of God.<sup>110</sup>

Dr. Eiko Takamizawa, a Japanese professor of Mission Studies at Torch Trinity Graduate School in Seoul, agrees that her home country is very different from South Korea. She noted that the Japanese see emotion as a weakness, while Koreans find strength in emotion and are very open, to the extent that Japan now seems cold to her.

---

<sup>106</sup> Interview Subject No. 77

<sup>107</sup> Interview Subject No. 64

<sup>108</sup> Paul (now David) Yonggi Cho, *More Than Numbers*, 103

<sup>109</sup> Mullins, “The Empire Strikes Back: Korean Pentecostal Mission to Japan,” 88.

<sup>110</sup> Interview Subject No. 64



Takamizawa also pointed out the divergent ways in which the churches in the two nations engaged in mission work. While Korean Protestants may be hierarchical, they also emphasise flexibility. The Japanese churches prefer lots of careful planning before acting. To the Koreans, the Japanese appear too cautious and inflexible, while Takamizawa reported that the Japanese she spoke to sometimes found Korean Christians to be irresponsible.<sup>111</sup>

Japan presents a definite case of mission being hampered by prejudices on both sides. On the part of the Japanese, as Mullins writes: “many...still regard Koreans as an inferior race and are unlikely to see solace in churches dominated by religious leaders from a former colony.”<sup>112</sup> H. found this assessment to be true in many ways. She told of one time when she was once called an “unkind” racial term by an older person she worked with on a short-term trip. In her opinion, the Japanese were humble to those from strong nations, but looked down on people from “weak” countries. However, she did feel that a good knowledge of the Japanese language helped in winning the friendship of the Japanese that she met.<sup>113</sup>

On the other hand, Korean missionaries have not made the situation any easier by their behaviour on the field, particularly the previous generation who worked in Japan. A significant problem was the familiar mistake of assuming that what worked in South Korea would also find success in another country. As H. put it, “Previous Korean missionaries thought that Japan and Korea were alike.” Takamizawa recounted how Korean missionaries who came to Japan twenty years ago rebuked the Japanese and tried to get the people to do things their own way. Only one Korean of that generation found long-term popularity, likely due to his stress on long-term discipleship over proclamation alone.

Some Korean missionaries have not helped matters by setting their sights too high. Cho made a rather rash claim in the 1980s that, “God has now given me a promise that ten million Japanese are going to be saved in the decade of the

---

<sup>111</sup> Interview Subject No. 44

<sup>112</sup> Mullins, “The Empire Strikes Back,” 99.

<sup>113</sup> Interview Subject No. 64

eighties.”<sup>114</sup> While Cho did establish one of the most prominent and expensive Korean mission efforts, including a variety of multi-media projects, only a fraction of that number became Christians during that decade. Cho has since scaled back his work in Japan, as have other Korean churches (including Youngnak) in light of the low rate of conversion achieved by Korean missionaries in Japan. Churches like Onnuri and Sarang continue to work in Japan, but other countries tend to produce far faster, more impressive and less expensive results for Korean missionaries.

But the Korean mission situation in Japan is not entirely hopeless. Takamizawa reported that the current batch of Korean missionaries are changing their attitudes and methods in Japan and finding some success. The reasons for this, including a profile of H’s fruitful model of ministry, will be profiled in some depth in the next section of this thesis. But part of the reason may be due to the admissions of differences seen earlier. While these may seem stereotypical in some ways, analysing another country’s deviations from one’s own goes against the notion that the same sort of ideas and attitudes will work in every setting.

Today’s Korean mission has benefited from its high sense of purpose and the skills of its missionaries in important areas like church planting. But it also faces a great variety of difficulties in effectively reaching out to and working with those from other cultures in the cause of sharing the Gospel. While Korean missionaries are striving to carry on the legacy of the Western missionary past, they want to avoid repeating the historic mistakes that hindered the progress of mission in many parts of the world. Providentially, there does exist an ever-growing awareness of what these problems are, due both to the changing attitudes of the Koreans themselves and to the realisation of how they are perceived overseas. Some key strategies for dealing with these issues will be found in the next section, detailing how Korean missionaries are working to be truly intercultural, along with defining just what that term means to them.

---

<sup>114</sup> Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan*, 180.

# Introduction to Part III:

## Korean Mission and the Intercultural Connection

As the previous chapter made clear, Korean mission faces a great challenge in improving its cultural competency. The difficulties involved come at least partly out of the monocultural climate of the Korean Church and of the Korean people as a whole. Many Korean Christians are ill-equipped to deal with those from environments different from their own or unwilling to abandon the idea that what works in South Korea will produce similar results in any context. Yet the South Korean Protestant churches want desperately to reach out to the world and play a prominent role in global evangelism. To achieve this goal, Korean missionaries are generally eager to sacrifice time, money and effort to attain cultural skills.

A key question is: how exactly do missionaries, on an individual and group basis, go from a monocultural ethos to one which emphasises harmoniously working in and out of various cultures? In other words, how does an individual, church or denomination change its mindset to become interculturally aware in mission? While these struggles are closely linked to the culture of South Korea and its churches, they are common in a number of other national mission movements and may be universal to the Christian mission experience. Particular issues and cultural theories have changed through the decades, yet the current process the Korean missionaries are going through resembles the same struggles British and American missionaries went through in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

C. Douglas McConnell, the dean of Fuller's School of Intercultural Studies notes that it took some two or three generations to learn to contextualise the Gospel and is impressed the Koreans have caught on so quickly.<sup>1</sup> While this is a debatable and somewhat patronising statement, it at least suggests that foreigners are taking notice of improvements that have been made. This perceived progress could be due

---

<sup>1</sup> Moll, "Missions Impossible," 33.

to the Korean awareness of these past issues in the West, a benefit the Americans and British largely lacked.

Furthermore, there is the question of the motivation behind the quest for intercultural skills. Does this desire for knowledge of other cultures on the part of Korean missionaries come out of a desire to use the knowledge as a tool for conversion or is it based upon the hope to establish deeper and more equitable relationships with those from other cultures? Or, as I would argue, is it frequently some combination of the two?

As I stated in the Introduction, interculturalism is not meant to be seen as a purely positive phenomenon or as a cure-all to the perceived shortcomings within Korean mission. Indeed, interculturalism creates certain problems of its own and the imprecision behind the definition of the term can create confusion. Still, there are Korean experts who view aspects of interculturalism as a means towards building a stronger model of mission. Likewise, some consider interculturalism to be part of their concept of the ultimate ideal vision of the role Korean mission can play in the world. While some of the Korean authors profiled in this chapter are uncomfortable with aspects of interculturalism and the cultural theories that produced the term, few can deny the importance of the issues associated with the word in modern mission.

Chapter Six deals with how Korean Protestantism is working to turn the ideas behind interculturalism into a reality in such areas as education and training, migrant ministry and short and long-term mission trips. The chapter will also consider the particular steps taken by Korean missionaries in establishing themselves on the field and building relationships within a new environment. While there have been successes in building ties with other cultures both inside and outside of South Korea, barriers still remain that fall short of the ideals of culture and communication explored in Chapter Two.

The final chapter in the thesis revolves around the future direction of Korean mission. Does it have an identity of its own compared to the perceived realities of

Western and non-Western mission? Can Korean missionaries be the “new Victorians,” maintaining the excitement and frontier spirit of past mission with the cultural insights of today? How could Korean missionaries use their resources to help poorer countries and Christians without promoting dependency or other problems resulting from imbalances in power? Ideas currently being discussed in Korea and beyond about the future of Korean mission will be featured, which would integrate the best features found in the Victorian and Intercultural sections of this thesis. The chapter will provide some case studies from Korean mission that exemplify what this new vision of mission could be.

A summary of what such a vision could look like comes from Kyo Seong Ahn’s previously cited theory that the current period of Christian history can be described as one of “Experienced Innocence,” in attempting to blend the enthusiasm and drive of nineteenth century mission with the more questioning and thoughtful attitudes that emerged in the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Ahn was referring to the whole of Christian mission when detailing this idea, but he could easily have been speaking of many Korean missionaries today, who are striving to absorb modern insights regarding culture without losing their passion and sense of core Christian values. To accomplish this goal, they are attempting the difficult task of trying to learn from the world and reach out to it in service, while remaining critical about which elements to keep and which to reject. In the process, Korean missionaries may discover that they can become more truly self-aware and Korean in their work through learning from other cultures and that the: “globalization of the Korean Church is in fact to be truly Korean.”<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Kyo Seong Ahn’s “Spring Lecture on the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh 1910-2010 Project,” 3.

<sup>3</sup> Young Whan Park, “David J. Bosch, the Korean Church and World Mission,” *Mission Focus: Annual Review*, 2003 Supplement, 3, (2003): 26.

# Chapter Six:

## Interculturation in Action within South Korean Mission

### *Introduction:*

A common observation regarding South Korean missionaries is that they are limited by the absence of cultural diversity within their own nation. For instance, Moon observed that Americans have access to crosscultural opportunities that South Koreans lack.<sup>4</sup> However, Korean missionaries have still found ways to gain experience interacting with those from other cultures. This can take the form of exploring the limited but growing diversity that does exist in South Korea, particularly in major cities like Seoul. Korean missionaries and the churches and agencies that support them also create chances for communication with those from other cultures through travel or through bringing in people from other cultures.

This chapter will examine the specific actions that are being taken to make the intercultural dreams of Korean missionaries become a reality. Three different aspects will be explored. First to be considered are the institutes of education for Korean missionaries, which encompasses universities, seminaries and various training centres. This section also highlights the import and export of global culture in South Korean mission education. A growing number of schools are bringing in teachers and students from around the world into South Korea. An even greater number of Korean students are travelling to other countries for both cultural and educational reasons with some missionaries feeling that overseas training is the key to understanding other cultures and learning languages. The role of languages in Korean mission and the challenge of acquiring linguistic skills will then be analysed.

The second part goes into further detail on the place of non-Koreans within South Korea and the attempts being made to integrate them into Korean mission. There will be a look at the two types of language ministries within South Korea. The first kind is the English service and ministry, which brings Westerners together with

---

<sup>4</sup> Moll, "Missions Incredible," 32.



Koreans who use the service to grow in their English skills and to meet international residents. The second type involves the numerous and diverse migrant ministries and non-English language services. Though the two ministries are viewed differently by the Korean Church, they both advance the cause of mission and are valuable in establishing international connections. The part played by the ultimate though sometimes conflicted intermediaries in Korean mission and ministry, the Korean diaspora, will then be contemplated.

The third part of this chapter focuses upon how intercultural communication is strengthened during the act of overseas mission itself. The section will delve into several aspects of overseas mission. The popular phenomenon of short-term mission trips will be profiled, along with the changing role of international mission agencies. Finally, there is the question of the varied ways in which Korean missionaries begin the difficult task of building relationships with the people that they hope to reach on the mission field.

One issue to be addressed concerns the distinction between how South Korean Protestants interact with Westerners and many Non-Westerners in mission that can fall short of the ideal of equal sharing espoused by many of the theologians in the previous chapter. The West, particularly English-speaking nations, is still seen largely as an object of imitation by Koreans and that extends to mission as well. For non-Western nations, Korean Protestants often seek to be role models for potential native missionaries. These differences may perhaps be observed most fully in the contrast between the English language services (aimed at helping both Westerners and Koreans) and the other language services which are designed to help the migrant community alone and recruit native missionaries. In a way, there can be an assumed model of Christian and missiological progress with the West at the most advanced end, South Korea in the middle and most non-Western countries at the least developed point.

However, such a statement can be countered. As pointed out before, South Koreans are hardly hesitant to criticise what they perceive as faults of the West. And

like many other non-Western Christians, Koreans are starting to see the need for mission within the West. Korean Christians are increasingly facing the West on its own terms, picking and choosing what they desire to learn without letting the West dominate them.<sup>5</sup>

South Korea also has more familiarity with Western culture and religion (along with those of certain other Asian countries like China and Japan) and is still caught up in discovering many places in the world previously unknown to them. It should be little wonder that the Korean churches are still trying to discern exactly how to build Christian relationships with those from unknown cultures and what role new converts from these places should play.

At their best, Korean missionaries can be full of curiosity and generosity in their active desire to learn from and share with other cultures in service and humility. At their worst, though, some readily exploit Westerners and non-Westerners alike to meet their mission goals, often unconsciously. It is not without reason that some foreigners feel used from their experiences working with South Koreans. As Michael Breen puts it, foreigners can be conditionally accepted but collectively rejected in their dealings with Koreans.<sup>6</sup> The distinction between compassionate sharing and exploitation often depends upon an individual's perspective.

## *I. Training and Education*

### *A. The Global Vision in Korean Mission Education*

In common with its neighbours China and Japan, Koreans have acquired a reputation as a group that strongly values education. P.J. O'Rourke expresses this stereotype with typical bluntness when he writes of South Korea that, "This is a whole nation of people who did their homework on Friday night."<sup>7</sup> Granted, many teachers with experience working with Korean children or adults, myself included, can confirm that there are students just as untalented and unmotivated as any in the West. Nonetheless, education is commonly thought to be the answer to many

---

<sup>5</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 168.

<sup>6</sup> Breen, *The Koreans*, 27.

<sup>7</sup> O'Rourke, *Holidays in Hell*, 52.

dilemmas in South Korea. Education is also perceived the key to building greater cultural awareness, both among missionaries and the general population.<sup>8</sup>

One can find such efforts among many universities and seminaries in South Korea where the need to at least be perceived as globally aware is growing in importance among Christian and non-Christian students alike. Whether this global awareness is deep or superficial depends largely upon the individual and the school. The following two schools are examples of the lengths Korean schools will go to create and promote cultural diversity, with specific connections being made with such education to the strengthening of Korean mission.

As a professor and then-president of Presbyterian College and Seminary, Jung Woon Suh proposes a sort of intercultural vision of education. He believes that the Korean Church should act as a greater “point of contact for joint research and advancing cooperation for the Church worldwide in the areas of theology, mission and education.”<sup>9</sup> Suh feels that theological education needs to be globalised with professors, students and resources shared in an atmosphere of mutual exchange. In terms of concrete efforts, Suh notes that Presbyterian College has begun a student missionary programme that put 180 Korean students into short-term mission work within 40 countries from 1994 to 1999. Suh’s ultimate hope is that the education at his school and others will develop ministers who are “World Christians who will lead and produce other World Christians.”<sup>10</sup>

Another example of a school with both a global vision and the adjustments being made in the name of global vision is Hansei University. Founded in 1953 and connected to Yoido Full Gospel Church, Hansei recently produced a glossy booklet entitled, “Specializing in Globalization 2010.” Designed for both would-be Korean and international students, the booklet boasted that,

Hansei University, above all, equips students to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by placing its emphasis on international and intercultural education. Globalization of the

---

<sup>8</sup> Interview Subject No. 39

<sup>9</sup> Jung Woon Suh, *Spirituality and Theology in Mission*, xiv.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

campus focuses on increasing our international student population and encourages international study and travel for both students and faculty. Cooperation relationships with overseas universities provides faculty and student exchanges.<sup>11</sup>

Hansei provides a variety of special programmes and classes designed for a student interested in a global religious career. The Division of Theology offers a major in World Missions and Evangelism that incorporates such elements as a, “holistic understanding of the contemporary challenges to Christian mission..., the missionary situation around the world and the involvement of local churches in world mission.”<sup>12</sup> There are mission trips during the summer and winter vacations to strengthen skills. More general global education can be had through a number of English language courses, including summer and winter classes in the United States, a “Let’s Speak English Room” and a comprehensive programme combining English, Chinese and computer training.

Korean missionaries tend to be highly educated, with many possessing undergraduate and graduate degrees.<sup>13</sup> But their education usually does not end at that level, as the great majority of agencies and denominations (along with some large churches which may have their own schools) require additional training courses. These tend to last anywhere from one month to six months and cultural training is very much integrated into the general curriculum. One prominent example would be the Hapdong denomination’s Global Missionary Training Center. During their three month course (with an additional two weeks of overseas training), candidates learn about issues in cross-cultural communication and adaptation, along with such areas as denominational history, Biblical and anthropological principles of mission and rudimentary language training (both English and field).<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Hansei University booklet, “Specializing in Globalization 2010,” 3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>13</sup> Moll, “Missions Incredibly,” 31.

<sup>14</sup> “Training,” (Korean language site) accessed April 2006; available at [www.gms.or.kr/GMTI/ab.html](http://www.gms.or.kr/GMTI/ab.html); Internet.

### *B. Importing Students and Teachers in Korean Mission Education*

Universities, seminaries and training centres are increasingly seeking ways for their students to interact directly with those from other cultures. This can be a major source of prestige for schools, as when Yonsei University proudly notes that it receives more than 4,000 foreign students and faculty each year.<sup>15</sup> Chongshin University incorporates its exchange programme into its overall goal to build mature Christians in this part of its Mission Statement, “Chongshin attempts to extend its horizon of mission to the whole world as a global village, exchanging professors and students with other authorized universities and seminaries worldwide.”<sup>16</sup>

Among the more specifically missiological reasons for importing international students is the desire to build up Christian leaders in other nations. Many schools have joined in the groundbreaking efforts of Asian Center for Theological Studies in this area since the 1970s. I met a number of such students during my time in South Korea, most of whom received full financial support from their Korean schools. Such students include the previously mentioned Kenyan pastor who was studying for a Th.M. degree and a Myanmar Th.D. student who were both at Chongshin University. Other examples were an African American woman working towards a M.Div. degree at Torch Trinity and a Korean American from Yonsei. The classes they took were mainly conducted in English, a necessity for attracting many foreign students, though they reported that some classes were in Korean.

Some of this support for overseas students comes out of a desire to invest in foreign Christian leaders who could use Korean knowledge to go further in ministry to their home country than a Korean missionary might. One of the more successful early examples would be the Immanuel Methodist Church, which sponsored a Tanzanian orphan to study theology in South Korea. Sent back to Tanzania in the 1980s, he has since set up 45 Methodist churches with 1,727 members in his native land.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> From an informational sign posted inside the Yonsei Global Lounge.

<sup>16</sup> “Purpose & Mission Statement,” accessed April 2006; available at <http://www.chongshin.ac.kr/eng/profile/purpose.html>; Internet.

<sup>17</sup> Sung-Tae Kim, “Historic Evaluation of Theological Models of Contextualization,” 81.

While the universities and seminaries help these foreign students, the benefits are as much designed for the Korean students. Dr. Takamizawa of Torch Trinity explained this principle,

If we invite students from the 10/40 Window to come and study, we can send them back for mission. We also need to train Korean missionaries with more international competencies: language, manners, cultural understanding. In an international atmosphere, we can prevent possible problems.<sup>18</sup>

Torch Trinity, a graduate school and seminary with strong ties to Onnuri, is one of the schools in South Korea that has gone the furthest in bringing different nationalities together. All of its degree programmes are offered in English, though some were also available in Korean. In the spring of 2005, 48 of its 240 students were international, including ones from Russia, Sudan, Ghana, China, Bangladesh and Austria, though the U.S., Myanmar, India and Nepal were the most commonly represented.<sup>19</sup> Torch Trinity also features permanent and visiting international faculty members from such countries as the Philippines, U.S. and Japan. The school aims to present: “a new model of cooperation for the challenges of theological education in the 21st century, bringing together the best of both worlds, East and West.”<sup>20</sup>

True interaction between Korean and foreign students can be difficult to develop, however. Dr. Takamizawa described the process for Korean students,

The first semester being in a foreign atmosphere excites them [the Korean students]. It's their first international experience. Their voice is loud and they're excited. After the second semester, they're more normal. They're adjusting. They are willing to extend their friendship, but if problems happen, they go to Korean people more easily.<sup>21</sup>

A MTI student who received a degree from Torch also admitted to me that, while generally pleased with the staff and students she met, she did not get to know the

---

<sup>18</sup> Interview Subject No. 45

<sup>19</sup> Information from the Torch Trinity main office.

<sup>20</sup> “History of Torch Trinity,” accessed April 2006; available at <http://www.ttgst.ac.kr/sub.asp?gubun=01010000>; Internet.

<sup>21</sup> Interview Subject No. 44



non-Korean students well, observing that most were going back to their homes upon completing school.<sup>22</sup>

It can also be questioned how committed some Korean schools are to making significant changes to suit international students, especially in the area of language. One of the odder examples came when a Russian woman visited MTI. A Korean church had funded her education in South Korea, but she first had to learn Korean. The MTI staff privately wondered why the church could not have found an English or Russian language seminary for her instead of training her in a language which she would have little use for in Russia. A similar case came when a WEC candidate told me how he had spent time in Thailand teaching the Korean language to locals who wanted to study in a Korean theological school, though he noted that they found the Korean language to be very difficult.<sup>23</sup>

### *C. Overseas Study and Missionary Training*

Studying abroad for both children and adults is more popular than ever in South Korea with record high numbers of travelling students reported in 2005.<sup>24</sup> The United States remains a desirable location for study, but countries like Canada and Australia are growing in popularity. For many careers in South Korea, including religious ones, studying overseas can be a significant boost to a worker's future job prospects in a highly competitive market. Such seems to be the case of the mission departments of major Korean seminaries and universities. A search through the nineteen missiological faculty profiles for Torch Trinity, Presbyterian College and Chongshin revealed that seventeen received Ph.D. or their highest degree from an overseas school. And one of the two who did not was Filipino. Of the seventeen, a full fifteen were degrees from American schools, with Fuller and Trinity especially prominent; the other two attended German universities.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Interview Subject No. 94

<sup>23</sup> Interview Subject No. 73

<sup>24</sup> Chung Ah-Young, "Students Studying Abroad Hit Record High of 12,300," *The Korea Times*, 30 March 2005, 3.

<sup>25</sup> "Faculty Profiles," accessed April 2006; available at <http://www.chongshin.ac.kr/eng/faculty/professor.htm>, <http://www.ttgst.ac.kr/sub.asp?gubun=01030000>, [http://www.pcts.ac.kr/pcts\\_eng/sub\\_8.html](http://www.pcts.ac.kr/pcts_eng/sub_8.html); Internet.

Similar interest in overseas study can be found among missionary trainees. In spite of the real improvements made in education for Korean missionaries within South Korea in the past two decades, studying abroad remains an important part for many mission candidates. They are often willing to pay a great deal of money and stand against keen competition for positions. One MTI student applied for one of ten year-long positions in Australia against hundreds of other Korean applicants. Such study is encouraged and facilitated by all types of missionary-sending bodies. Onnuri sends some of its missionaries and lay people to Hawaii for training. Hapdong's GMTI offers courses in the U.S., Canada and Singapore, while WEC sends its missionaries to New Zealand.

While the great majority of the cases I heard about involved going to Western schools, some within Korean mission are willing to go to non-Western institutions. This can be through an exchange programme offered through some universities or agencies. Korean missionaries have also been known to enrol as students as part of their cover identities within closed countries. One MTI graduate, for example, was praised for her covert work as a student missionary evangelising fellow students in a Malaysian university. This serves as another example of how deceptive and dangerous practices can be accepted or lauded within Korean mission if it serves the perceived higher end of furthering the spread of the Gospel.

The reasons for going overseas for missionary training are diverse. Some believe that by studying in a foreign country, they will enhance their skills in interacting with those from other cultures. Becoming more fluent in English is definitely a factor as well. A few deliberately analyse Western mission history and techniques to gain insight into Korean mission, as in the previously cited case of a Korean pastor who studied with Andrew Walls to learn about the factors that made Great Britain a prolific missionary-sending country.<sup>26</sup>

The benefits can be substantial. The teachers at MTI made note of instances where students improved considerably in confidence and linguistic ability after

---

<sup>26</sup> David Neff, "Honoring Pioneers," 2.

spending times abroad. On the other hand, it is possible to put too much faith in the overseas experience. The MTI staff also pointed out the case of a student hoping to work in Ethiopia where English was widely used in mission endeavours. The student felt that his upcoming trip to New Zealand would be a cure-all for his difficulties with language and culture, which resulted in a perceptible lack of motivation in his studies. Such a view comes both out of the idea that skills in English will pave the way to smooth communication in any culture and that fitting well into one foreign society (New Zealand) would be similar to entering another (Ethiopia). This ties into a tendency among some Korean missionaries to group cultures together (as with those who use the term “Asia” when they sometimes are only referring to certain Asian countries) regardless of how distinct they may actually be.

For Korean missionaries, foreign study presents as many perils as it does opportunities. A serious problem comes from the Korean expatriate community itself. With Korean immigrants and short-term residents found all over the world, a Korean traveller can find a familiar and often insular environment in some of the most distant places. While many Koreans studying abroad attempt to fit in with the new culture, to the extent of some Anglicising their names, cultural and linguistic limitations make retreating into the Korean community a tempting option.

Gil-Soo Han profiled Korean Christian communities in Australia and found them to remain strongly Korean in their organisation and lifestyle, a phenomenon common within many immigrant communities. One quote in his article regarding Koreans in Sydney said that, “one can live a more ‘Korean’ lifestyle than one could in Korea in terms of their eating habits, lifestyles and songs.”<sup>27</sup> There have been efforts to interact with non-Korean churches in Australia, including attempts to join with denominations like the Uniting Church of Australia. But sharing power and money, as well as concerns over such polity issues as terms of appointment, have hindered these attempts. While Han feels sympathy for the desire to maintain ethnic ties in the face of social and structural barriers, he believes the Korean Christians of Australia need to do a better job of balancing their ethnic identity within a global context.

---

<sup>27</sup> Gil-Soo Han, “Korean Christianity in Multicultural Australia: Is It Dialogical or Segregating Koreans,” *Studies in World Christianity* 10, Part 1 (2004), 121.

Among the examples of shallow integration was the case of a Korean pastor who had resided in England for twenty years. While he encouraged Koreans to come to the United Kingdom, his English was so poor due to his lack of interaction with non-Koreans that the students he met worried that the same thing would happen to them.<sup>28</sup> A professor at Seoul National University observed a similar shallowness in cultural awareness among Korean academics who studied overseas,

Roughly half of [Korean] professors receive their Ph.D.s overseas. Do you see universities being more open than other organisations? No. They return to being Koreans. It is so hard to change. When Koreans emigrate, they take their culture with them.<sup>29</sup>

However, there are also examples of Korean individuals who effectively strive to go outside of their culture when they live abroad. *Inside Out*, the magazine of the Council for World Mission, featured a Korean Christian on its issue on multicultural churches. Koreans were the largest ethnic minority at the multi-ethnic church that the cover subject belonged to, Kingston United Reformed Church of London. The Koreans in the congregation chose that church over the dozens of Korean language congregations in the area out of a desire to integrate into English society and share knowledge and culture with each other.<sup>30</sup> But such Koreans must make deliberate efforts to go against the usual pattern of the overseas Korean community.

Another threat is that a would-be Korean missionary can become too comfortable with the culture (both Western and the Korean migrant communities) in which they are supposed to be only temporarily staying and “go native.” One MTI teacher told me that some Koreans who go West for missionary training get caught up in Western culture and the desire for further travel, citing an MTI graduate who decided to stay in Sydney after becoming involved with a local church.<sup>31</sup> The missionary vision may also be lost through the realisation that the skills gained in mission training can be applied to careers far more profitable than that of missionary, such as teaching English. In spite of these dangers and some questioning of whether

---

<sup>28</sup> Interview Subject No. 63

<sup>29</sup> Interview Subject No. 50

<sup>30</sup> Kenwyn Pierce, “Welcoming Strangers,” *Inside Out*, Issue 36, (October/November 2003): 12.

<sup>31</sup> Interview Subject No. 58

such expensive training is worthwhile when a domestic option might be available, going abroad for mission training remains a popular choice.

#### *D. Language Learning and Cultural Connections*

Language acquisition in general is something of a national obsession in South Korea. No language ranks higher as a subject of study than English, even with some rising current competition from Chinese languages. The pursuit of English has brought some 7,800 legal and perhaps up to 20,000 illegal native English speakers to South Korea to improve the often poor Korean pronunciation of the language, constituting one of the most visible foreign presences in the country.<sup>32</sup> There are many reasons for this interest in English, but the main one for the majority of the population is financial. As one saying goes, “Money talks and it speaks English”.

Very few Koreans that I met enjoyed learning English, as they found virtually every other language (except Arabic in some instances) to be easier. Some downright object to the prominence of English in Korea and around the world, to the point of seeing it as a form of Western cultural imperialism. Such a view was held by minjung theologian Kim Yong-Bok who spoke English only as an “unavoidable necessity.” He told me, “If you speak the Roman language, you have their ideas. The U.S. is the most powerful country in the world and has everyone learn it [English].”<sup>33</sup> One MTI student agreed and lamented that other languages were disregarded because of the stress on English. While believing that all Korean missionaries should know English, he still asked, “There are many languages that surround us. Is only English of primary importance?”<sup>34</sup>

In spite of such qualms about the cultural risks of learning English, many do hold that it is a practical necessity for Korean missionaries. Mihyang Choi’s opening speech to the new MTI recruits detailed this pragmatic attitude towards English,

---

<sup>32</sup> Liz Ford, “Reports of Britons Arrested in South Korean Teaching Crackdown,” 26 October 2005 accessed April 2006; available at <http://guardian.co.uk/Korea/article/0,,1600955,00.html>; Internet.

<sup>33</sup> From a brief conversation after Kim’s 3 February 2004 lecture at the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World in Edinburgh.

<sup>34</sup> Interview Subject No. 76

If you went to China and had a Bible study and tried to explain in Korean, would they understand? We still love our language and our national identity. But at MTI, for the sake of the Gospel preached all over the world, we must think: I'm not trying to learn English for myself, but for the sake of the Gospel.

There was some debate among my interview subject as to whether English was a language required for all Korean missionaries. Some held that it was, while others thought that only those entering international agencies needed English fluency but that those in Korean agencies only had to know the local language. However, there are examples that could be cited of the usefulness of English on the mission field outside of international agencies. For one thing, some churches and Korean agencies require English skills. Sarang even demands that its missionaries attain a TOEFL score of over 450.<sup>35</sup> English may also be utilised as a common tongue in countries with diverse communities, such as Sri Lanka, or in order to learn other languages like Arabic. Furthermore, for Korean missionaries with a good knowledge of English (and even some without), offering English lessons can be used as a tool for evangelism in countries as disparate as Poland, Japan, Cambodia and Turkey.

However, the most important language for Korean missionaries to learn is that of the group in which they will serve. There are still some cases of generally individual churches sending out missionaries with no linguistic training, but the more respected agencies and churches allow some time for linguistic acquisition. This distinction between English and the local language was expressed to me by a Korean missionary working in Israel. She found both Hebrew and English useful in her ministry, but noted that when she speaks in English, they do, "not [seem] very interested." When she talks in Hebrew, she received more of a heartfelt reaction.<sup>36</sup>

Another Korean missionary spoke about how English and the native language could be combined for effective mission work,

For Korean missionaries, we need English and the local language. For example, missionaries to Japan need English.

---

<sup>35</sup> Interview Subject No. 46

<sup>36</sup> Interview Subject No. 85



The Japanese don't speak English well. If we speak English well, the Japanese respect Korean missionaries. But, at the same time, nobody respects Korean missionaries if they don't speak Japanese well.<sup>37</sup>

While the rate of language acquisition depends largely upon the individual's skill and the language itself, there was general agreement among many of my interview subjects that Koreans had an advantage with "Asian" languages over Western missionaries. As opposed to the frustrations common among Koreans attempting to master English, some Korean missionaries were pleased at the ease with which they gained Asian languages, though Indian and Middle Eastern tongues are acknowledged to be more difficult than Eastern and Central Asian ones. Recently, Koreans have acknowledged their special affinity for the languages of Central Asia, in a region ranging from Mongolia and Kazakhstan up into Turkey. A WEC Korea representative observed that the linguistic similarities of those languages to Korean are one reason why mission in Central Asia has been so successful for Koreans.<sup>38</sup> Such linguistic ties, whether real or imagined, have built a feeling of solidarity and cultural and even racial connections between Korean missionaries and Central Asians that one rarely hears of in relation to English.

Hesitation about language ability can hamper the efforts of some Korean missionaries both on the mission field and when studying overseas. The aforementioned Kenyan pastor related how some Kenyans became impatient with Korean missionaries who were overly particular about their grammar (partly due to the emphasis on English grammar over conversation that until recently was taught in Korean schools) when the Kenyans just wanted to talk.<sup>39</sup> I have met numerous Westerners who were under the misleading impression that Koreans in general are shy because the ones that they met, usually at school, proved so hesitant to speak.

The necessity of learning at least one local language (and sometimes more), along with English being required in certain cases, greatly adds to the overall length

---

<sup>37</sup> Interview Subject No. 30

<sup>38</sup> Interview Subject No. 90

<sup>39</sup> Interview Subject No. 87

of training for Korean missionaries. This is a common phenomenon in Christian mission in general and particularly for non-Western denizens who also may need to learn English. Patrick Johnstone wrote of the general need for Asian missionaries to learn both local languages and non-Asian bridge languages, citing one Hong Kong couple in Burkina Faso who had to study English, French, a trade language and the local language.<sup>40</sup>

While studying overseas and linguistic training have probably made the current generation of Korean missionaries more culturally adept and sophisticated than previous ones, the downside is that the overall period of training has become both longer and more expensive. Van der Klis remarked that her organisation, African Inland Mission, estimate that it took an average of five years for Korean missionaries to prepare (excluding university education), far longer than for their Western counterparts. She added that the Korean missionaries she met always wanted to study more to the point that they were no longer young when they entered the mission field.<sup>41</sup>

While many Korean missionaries may enjoy the studying and preparation that is now demanded, a SIM Korea missionary told me that the high standards for mission education scare some potential candidates, to the extent that SIM was now evaluating individual candidates to determine their educational requirements.<sup>42</sup> And it may ironically be that the years of training intended to improve cultural awareness and skill could hinder these traits. Moon wrote of his concern that the “unusually long” period of training, along with required military service for male missionaries, is disadvantageous for intercultural adjustment and creativity best gained in youth.<sup>43</sup> Hopefully a combination of more diverse domestic mission education and more experientially-focused overseas training can alleviate such dilemmas for future generations of Korean missionaries.

---

<sup>40</sup> Patrick Johnstone, “A Strategy for Asia’s Christians to Reach Unreached Peoples,” *World Missions: The Asian Challenge*, 335.

<sup>41</sup> Interview Subject No. 63

<sup>42</sup> Interview Subject 86

<sup>43</sup> Moon, “The Recent Korean Missionary Movement,” 11.

## *II. The Role of Foreign Residents in South Korean Mission*

### *A. English Language Services and Korean Mission*

While the perception remains that South Korea has a homogenous and closed population, the number of foreigners living in the country, particularly in the urban areas, has been growing in the past few decades. At the end of 2003, there were 438,000 registered foreigners working in South Korea, a number which does not include undocumented workers, of which an estimated 289,000 stayed in the country in 2002.<sup>44</sup> Granted, this figure is still only around 1% of the overall population, but it nonetheless represents a resource for Koreans interested in mission to tap into for enhancing intercultural exposure and learning through establishing ties with people of different ethnicities. One example of how the foreign population is utilised for mission comes from the growth of English church language services, a type of service that is distinct from the language services for migrants that will be examined in the next section.

English language church services in Seoul can be found in many of the prominent megachurches in the city, including Onnuri, Sarang, Youngnak and Somang, but also in a number of smaller churches. One of the most obvious aspects of these services is that they serve the Korean churchgoers far more in the great majority of cases than they do the English-speaking expatriate community. Even the Korean church with perhaps the largest native English speaker audience, Onnuri-Yangjae, which averages about 400 people at their services, still has at least a half Korean constituency at the English services. The pastor in charge of Onnuri-Yangjae's English ministry at the time of my visit, Leo Rhee, acknowledged that the audience at most of the English services he had visited was 90% or more Korean. He noted that a great number came to improve their English or to enjoy the looser style of ministry, as many Korean English services feature contemporary worship to which older attendees at the main services can display resistance.<sup>45</sup> The English services also attract members of the large non-Western migrant community seeking to

---

<sup>44</sup> Young-bum Park, "South Korea: Balancing Labor Demand with Strict Controls," accessed April 2006; available at <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=272>; Internet. However, recent newspaper reports indicate that a government crackdown is reducing the number of illegal workers.

<sup>45</sup> Interview Subject No. 47

enhance their own job prospects and acts as a social centre, both common features of expatriate churches in general.<sup>46</sup>

In spite of such mixed reasons for attendance, Korean English services do attract some Koreans interested in mission. This can certainly be seen in the short-term mission trips of churches like Onnuri and Sarang, which will be looked at later in the chapter. Some services overtly state their missionary motivation and their intention to improve cultural communication through the interaction of nationalities. One example would be the Shindo English Ministry, one of the smaller-scale English services in Seoul. Its mission statement reads that it,

seeks to deepen Christian fellowship in Christ in terms of singing together, sharing Christian experiences and blessings...and to advance our English proficiency to prepare ourselves for going to the world with the Gospel.<sup>47</sup>

It is not difficult to meet members at such churches, both Korean and Western, who are interested in mission. For instance, I knew student at MTI who led a small English service for children and was working to organise a mission trip with the children to expose them to people from other cultures.<sup>48</sup> Another case was a Korean deaconess at Yoido who attended the English services at Onnuri for the purpose of “learning culture” and improving her English so that she could minister to Americans and migrant workers in Seoul. This case is also illustrative of the occasional attitude found among Korean Christians that “culture” can be used as a tool and defined as the specific knowledge needed to effectively communicate the Gospel to those from other countries.<sup>49</sup> And while the numbers of Westerners working as missionaries for Korean churches is still very small, I did meet a few people from the U.S. and Australia who were inspired to work in places like Mongolia, Japan and Cambodia as a result of their experiences gained through the English ministries.

English services and Korean mission tend to draw upon a similar demographic among Korean Christians: youthful (a large majority of people in their 20s and 30s)

---

<sup>46</sup> Interview Subject No. 43

<sup>47</sup> From a 21 March 2005 brochure of the Shindo English Ministry

<sup>48</sup> Interview Subject No. 84

<sup>49</sup> Interview Subject No. 44

and daring to a certain extent in their willingness to explore new ideas in faith. In the few cases where Westerners and Koreans mix together, the Korean English service can even be an example of what Donald McGavran referred to as the “urban exception.” This idea holds that, while most Christians prefer homogeneity within their congregations, within true “melting pots” a small urban minority will be open to a church that draws people together through the unifying power of Christian faith. Such “supratribal” churches should include worship in the “standard language” as the rule.<sup>50</sup> One would hesitate to call even Seoul a “melting pot,” but it is not too much of a stretch to see English services and mission as signs of a small group within Korean society increasingly opening up to other cultures.

While the leaders of the English services are honest about the reality and shortcomings of their work, they still display excitement about the potential of what they are doing. One Korean American leader of a student English service at Yonsei said, “I feel like the churches are globalizing. The English churches have the ability to change the culture. It can break down barriers of age and gender.” She added that many Korean Christians who come to dislike the Korean churches either stop going or choose a global church.<sup>51</sup>

Rhee likewise declared that his church was on the “cutting edge,” pointing out that his service attracted Americans, Japanese, Singaporeans, Australians and other ethnic groups. He believed that the English language ministry was not like the other language ministries, but that beyond its importance as a vehicle of communication, the embrace of English symbolised a new and more culturally open mindset that could spread Onnuri’s message much further.<sup>52</sup>

However, they both remarked that the services they led were far from fully integrated into the larger church. There was not even much communication between

---

<sup>50</sup> Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 243-4.

<sup>51</sup> Interview Subject No. 36

<sup>52</sup> Interview Subject No. 47

the English service and the other language services (Korean and otherwise), though some of my interview subjects hoped that there would be in the future.<sup>53</sup> Rhee lamented that the budget for his ministry was the same as when it started a few years ago with only a handful of people. Some of the problems were due to cultural miscommunication. For example, in 2003, the Onnuri-Seobinggo English service moved into the main sanctuary in light of its high attendance. But, along with certain leadership issues, there was displeasure over practices like the sanctuary cameras taking pictures of random worshippers. While this is common practice in Korean churches, some Westerners were uncomfortable with it.<sup>54</sup> The English service lost some members and has since returned to its smaller previous worship hall at Seobinggo.

While the English services are cases of a deliberate and “top-down” approach to boosting cultural diversity within Korean churches, one can also find more spontaneous instances of Christian communication between Westerners and Koreans. One interview subject, an American English teacher who worshipped at Onnuri-Yangjae, ran what they called “Deep Bible Study” with a Korean friend. Sensitive to the fact that the use of English in religious activities attracts people with mix motivations, she stressed that it was not a case of free English lessons. Instead, the group of differing ethnicities and beliefs (along Protestant Christian lines) was designed to encourage more open communication on Biblical and theological issues than the participants could otherwise find. She added, “We learn from each other and respect each others’ beliefs.”<sup>55</sup> Another American subject was part of a multi-ethnic Onnuri-Seobinggo trip to Sri Lanka that went so well that they decided to meet weekly and engage in mission to rural Korean areas. She told me that members of other domestic mission teams were following them to learn from her techniques in teaching children.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Interview Subject Nos. 37 and 43

<sup>54</sup> Interview Subject No. 33

<sup>55</sup> Interview Subject No. 33

<sup>56</sup> Interview Subject No. 53



### *B. Migrant Ministries and Mission Connections*

Unlike the English service, the migrant services are much more likely to attract only the members of a particular language community. Economically, with the exception of the Chinese and especially the Japanese services, the migrant language services are focused upon a much poorer class. But these services also play an increasingly important role in Korean overseas mission, as migrants offer their own potential contributions. In their work among the migrants, the Korean churches display genuine compassion, along with what some might perceive as an exploitative attitude.

Few events better illustrate South Korea's rise in economic stature and its cultural struggles than the nation's rapid change from a major exporter to importer of unskilled labour. Since the 1980s, hundreds of thousands of workers from such countries as China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan and others come to South Korea to do the low-paying manual jobs that most Koreans now look down upon in fields like manufacturing, agriculture and construction. They are said to be pursuing the "Korean Dream" of economic prosperity, an interesting spin on an American phrase that I have seen in print and heard among the MTI students.<sup>57</sup>

Koreans have experienced some tension between their need for the workers and their deep reservations about embracing them even temporarily into mainstream society. This dilemma is one that has been seen in many Western countries, but in the Korean case the mixed feelings are only deepened by their "intense pride" in their cultural, ethnic and linguistic uniqueness reinforced by government and educational policy.<sup>58</sup> Averse to granting citizenship or long-term residency to these workers, South Korea has limited work permits to three years. However, an indeterminate but high percentage of migrant workers are outside the law and thus subject to low working and living conditions.

---

<sup>57</sup> Kyo Seong Ahn, "Christian Mission and Mongolian Identity," 116.

<sup>58</sup> Eungi A. Kim, "Low Cultural Receptivity Toward Foreigners in Korea: The Case of Transnational Migrant Workers," *Korean Observer* 36, No. 1 (Spring 2005): 2.

South Korean churches have taken some steps to meet the needs of the migrants. Along with the English language services, most megachurches have a variety of other language ministries such as Russian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Mongolian and Tagalog available for migrants. Some of these ministries can attract hundreds within a certain ethnicity, such as Saemoonan Presbyterian Church's Vietnamese service, which draws 200 Vietnamese every week. There are also service organisations like the Seoul Migrant Mission Center, which has over 20,000 workers registered. Churches offer food, medicine, lessons in English and Korean and job information, in addition to spiritual and social support. A reporter wrote that,

For them [the migrants], the Korean churches serve as a place of relief and comfort, away from the cold response of the Korean people and the danger of being expelled from Korea, which they consider a land of opportunity.<sup>59</sup>

As noted by Samuel Kim, the Korean churches and mission groups are the only major segment in Korean society that really seeks to help the foreign migrants.<sup>60</sup> This does not mean that Korean Christians do not have some qualms about the presence of the migrants, particularly the large number of illegal workers. But there is also concern for the abuses the workers face from employers. As one MTI student said, "I know some Koreans treat foreign workers just like slaves. We should treat them fairly." The mission drive generally wins out, as Sarang's mission statement declared when it noted of its foreign workers, "Although most of them are here illegally, we cannot neglect these foreign guests."<sup>61</sup>

Beyond the charitable benefits of helping the migrant workers, Korean mission has been enhanced through such ministry. For one thing, those interested in Korean mission can prepare for their overseas work while in Korea through service to migrants. I visited three migrant ministries during my most recent trip to South Korea and all of them included volunteers who hoped for future overseas mission careers. One of the volunteers, a young man who hoped to go to Indonesia, told me

---

<sup>59</sup> Steve Kim, "Foreign Workers Seek Comfort at Korean Churches," *Seoul Times*, accessed April 2006; available at [http://theseoultimes.com/ST/?url=/ST/life/religious\\_service/religious\\_service.html](http://theseoultimes.com/ST/?url=/ST/life/religious_service/religious_service.html); Internet.

<sup>60</sup> Interview Subject No. 40

<sup>61</sup> Sarang CD-Rom, *Go or Send!*

that his ministry with the migrants helped him to appreciate the value of contextual theology in mission work.<sup>62</sup>

An even more important feature of migrant services to mission comes from the opportunity to build up Christians in key nations both in terms of providing training for Christian leaders and recruiting new ones. Moon described this idea: "It's a good strategy to equip migrant workers with mission principles and skills when they go back. It's more effective and efficient, as they understand their home country well."<sup>63</sup> Overseas Christians studying religion in Korean schools also provide a source of leadership for the migrant language services. For instance, Torch Trinity has a number of their students presiding over services for Onnuri. Several of Onnuri's seven churches in Japan are being led by Japanese missionaries recruited through the Japanese services.<sup>64</sup>

Beyond furthering the progress of those who are already Christians, Korean churches hope to use their migrant ministries to convert new Christians who can return to their home nation as missionaries. This has indeed happened in the past, as several churches were planted in Mongolia as a follow-up programme for returned Mongolian illegal migrants converted and aided through Korean churches.<sup>65</sup> The idea of training and sponsoring national missionaries has been derided as sending the message, "Let the nationals do it, and let the West pay for it," although the West is often not involved at all in the South Korean scenario.<sup>66</sup> But in the right atmosphere of respect and cooperation, it can result in a mutually satisfying partnership for both parties.

A more detailed look at a migrant mission that is attempting to recruit national missionaries can be seen through one migrant church that I observed. Sponsored mainly by a 400-member church, the Friends of All Nations Church was located, like

---

<sup>62</sup> From a brief 20 March 2005 conversation at the Unpyong Church's English-language migrant worker service.

<sup>63</sup> Interview Subject No. 34

<sup>64</sup> Interview Subject No. 47

<sup>65</sup> Kyo Seong Ahn, "Christian Mission and Mongolian Identity," 115.

<sup>66</sup> Robertson McQuilkin, "Fads in Mission," *Evangelical Encyclopedia of World Mission*, 351.

many other such ministries, in an industrial area on the outskirts of Seoul. The service's 25 or so migrant visitors consisted mainly of Filipinos with a few Bangladeshi and one Iranian. Among the leaders were two MTI students, a husband and wife who hoped to go to Turkmenistan. The services offered by the ministry, which conducted services in both English and Tagalog included access to computers, dinner after the service, monthly doctor visits and haircuts. The husband explained to me that he hopes the workers with "true faith" would become missionaries in their own nation, saying that, "It's better that way." He especially hoped that his Iranian friend would become a missionary in Iran. He noted that this hope was the reason behind the ministry.<sup>67</sup>

The migrant ministries have received some criticism, even from those within the churches. One M.T.I. student noted that the churches have a limited capacity to help foreign workers practically and that they lack real knowledge about the lives of the migrants. He also believed that the churches were too passive in their ministry by just setting up the churches while not actually going out to the factories to work with the migrants.<sup>68</sup> However, the workers that I spoke to at the Friends of All Nations church did report that they came because the pastor came to visit them at their workplace.

A more fundamental critique is that the churches are exploiting the migrants to further their mission aims without really caring about the needs of the people themselves. This was the view held by the Methodist mission worker that I interviewed. He observed,

There are lots of legal, educational and medical services to migrant workers because the Church wants to use them as a tool for the evangelism of their people. It's another kind of imperialistic way. If you're from Nepal or the Philippines, they want to convert them from 'Roman Catholicism' to 'Christianity' or from the 'Protestant Church' to 'my congregation.' They have a very narrow viewpoint on Christians.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Interview Subject No. 80

<sup>68</sup> Interview Subject No. 82

<sup>69</sup> Interview Subject No. 52

A somewhat similar argument was featured in a 2005 *New York Times* article examining a special form of migrant ministry that targets North Korean refugees. South Korean churches have been active both in promoting abuses in North Korea and in assisting refugees in their assimilation into the country. Such work can include South Koreans training the North Koreans to return home as missionaries or to smuggle Bibles into their country. Some Korean missionaries see North Korea as part of the larger dream of spreading the Gospel through the Silk Road within the Back to Jerusalem model. But the ministry to the defectors has only met with limited success, partly because of issues of motivation and exploitation. The article mentioned that,

To the North Korean defectors, some South Korean missionaries seem more concerned about brokering deals to smuggle them out of China and using them in Seoul as publicity tools against North Korea. To South Korea missionaries, who have risked their lives to evangelize in China, some North Korean defectors appear ungrateful.<sup>70</sup>

The idea of missionaries as exploiters of the people that they are targeting is an old one in mission history and generally depends upon one's perspective. There can be extremes on both sides, with missionary critics sometimes failing to understand the genuine compassion and caring of the missionaries. On the other hand, the missionaries occasionally are blind to the dangers of conceiving of others as mere objects for the pursuit of mission and can attribute purely spiritual motives to those who participate in their ministries when more complicated ones may exist. This subject will be further examined in the final section on how missionaries establish themselves in the field.

The discord that can come between the interactions of two groups as close in ethnic and historical ties as the North and South Koreans demonstrates how difficult it can be to establish harmonious relationships in mission when unequal resources and power levels are involved. While attempts are being made to build up Christian

---

<sup>70</sup> Norimitsu Onishi, "Helping North Koreans Defect Is Easy Part, Missionaries Find," *New York Times*, December 19, 2005, accessed April 2006; available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/19/international/asia/19missionary.html?ex=1145419200&en=fdd309f6a1349f95&ei=5070>; Internet.

leadership in other countries and engage in international partnership, much of South Korean mission remains far from the intercultural ideal of equal sharing espoused by theologians like Schreier and Bosch. A more thorough consideration of these issues of power and partnership could make a great difference. Still, for a country that was as closed as South Korea was to the outside world for so long, the efforts described in this chapter at least represent a first step towards that ideal.

### C. *The Korean Diaspora as a Missionary Resource*

As the previous sections have shown, whether out of a sense of pragmatism or doubt in their abilities to reach a particularly difficult culture, Korean missionaries are not averse to using Christians from other countries as intermediaries in their work. Perhaps the most convenient intermediaries would be those from the great Korean diaspora of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that spread hundreds of thousands of Koreans around the world. The third chapter examined how these diaspora communities helped to justify the birth of Korean overseas mission. These over six million ethnic Koreans in 151 countries are still important today and are acknowledged as valuable “human resources” for global Korean mission.<sup>71</sup>

While this chapter will look largely at Korean Americans, diaspora Koreans from all over the world have contributed to Korean mission. Chapter Five pointed out that Japanese Koreans supported the churches set up in that country by Korean missionaries, though this was not always conducive to attracting native Japanese Christians. The four million Chinese Koreans have played a part in mission to both North Korea and China, due to their ability to interact culturally with both groups and the fact that many Chinese Koreans live along the North Korea/China border. Many Korean missionaries work along the border area and do mission among Chinese Koreans, other Chinese groups and North Koreans. One such agency is the Yerang Mission. Their top goals are to spread the Gospel into North Korea and China. They achieve this largely through educating and training Chinese Koreans to

---

<sup>71</sup> Daniel Shin Jong Baeq, “A Study on Trends and Future of Korean-American Short-Term Mission: with Special Reference to the Presbyterian Church in America,” (M.Th. diss., Fuller Seminary, 2005), 51.



be “ambassadors” to both countries, reporting that they have set up dozens of churches through this approach.<sup>72</sup>

Such a policy has come under some criticism for not fully understanding the different culture that has developed among the Chinese Korean community. Bao Jiayuan of the China Christian Council addressed the Conference on World Mission and the Role of Korean Mission. He commented on the role of some conservative South Korean missionaries who attempt to apply their principles of church growth to China through using Chinese Koreans in another case of the over-simplification of culture in Korean mission. He said,

However, they forget that those Korean Christians in China are Chinese Koreans whose identity is not entirely the same as that of those Koreans in Korea. Their differences in identity have been shaped and re shaped by different social, political, historical and cultural contexts.<sup>73</sup>

Ethnic Koreans from Western nations have a variety of employment options in South Korea within both secular and Christian fields. The mastery of both English in the preferred North American accent and the Korean language displayed by many, though by no means all, Korean Americans (and Canadians) makes them valuable. An American missionary in Seoul who was employed by Onnuri told me that many Western missionaries he knew wanted to work with Koreans because they were excited by their potential for mission. The Westerners felt that Korean Americans in particular have the capacity to be a bridge between the two groups and smooth over difficulties.<sup>74</sup>

This presumed ability to operate within two cultures explains the presence of Korean Westerners in other fields within the Korean churches. I interviewed eight ethnic Koreans who were American citizens, along with several others who had stayed in the U.S. for many years through study or marriage. The eight included

---

<sup>72</sup> “Purpose and Structure,” accessed April 2006 ;<http://www.gajo.org/about.html>; Internet.

<sup>73</sup> Bao Jiayuan, “China: World Mission Policy,” accessed April 2006; available at <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=129>; Internet.

<sup>74</sup> Interview Subject No. 4

leaders of English services (a ministry dominated by Korean Americans), workers in mission agencies, students, professors and English teachers.

While some were thankful for the opportunities that they received and enthusiastic about their work, this group tended to be the most harshly critical of Korean churches and the most dubious about their capacity for culturally aware mission. A professor at Seoul National University who had lived in the States since childhood spoke of the source of his frustration with Korean churches and closed cultural attitudes: "I have a lot of critical things to say because I keep comparing the two [the U.S. and South Korea]. Koreans are definitely racist. They discriminate less against Caucasians and more against those from other parts of Asia."<sup>75</sup> Another interview subject, a Methodist minister who led an English service, declared, "Korean Christians have become slaves to Shamanistic Christianity. It's one of the reasons I'm staying. I want to help."<sup>76</sup>

For Korean Westerners, living in South Korea can both heighten and ease the struggles with identity and culture that are common for first and second generation immigrants. The Yonsei service leader spoke about the plight of Korean Americans in this way,

I think everyone who comes here has an identity crisis. In America, they think I'm a foreigner. Here, they think I'm Korean. Understanding culture may be easier [for Korean-Americans], but unless you live in it, you can't really know it. It's really hard.<sup>77</sup>

However, she does acknowledge that she can fit in much easier than non-Koreans, admitting she didn't like to walk with non-Koreans because they were stared at.

It is certainly possible for a non-Korean Westerner to build a successful ministry in South Korea. Even African Americans, a group that is known to clash with Korean Americans, have been welcomed with open arms by some South Korean

---

<sup>75</sup> Interview Subject No. 50

<sup>76</sup> Interview Subject No. 7

<sup>77</sup> Interview Subject No. 36

churches.<sup>78</sup> However, the fact that Korean Westerners are both within and outside of Korean culture does give them certain unique advantages in mission and ministry. The Yonsei leader told me that because she was a foreigner, she could get away with more than a Korean girl would and that she hoped to use that advantage to break down barriers of culture and language. Elaine Kim, a Korean American married to a Korean missionary, held a temporary administrative position at WEC Korea that benefited from her knowledge of WEC in South Korea and America.<sup>79</sup> And Rhee said that he acted as a “major bridge” between the Korean and Western contingents of Onnuri, though he confessed that his “Western side” caused some conflict.<sup>80</sup>

The criticism of my subjects who left South Korea as young children and adults and then returned exposes another peril of increased cultural awareness. Namely, that prolonged time within another culture could lead to disenchantment with one’s native culture. Such differences can be small, as when Samuel Kim related how he was having problems eating spicy Korean food after his period of study in the U.S.<sup>81</sup> Or they can be some internal conflicts, as in the Methodist agency employee whose employment in both the U.S. and Korean Methodist wings has made him more aware of the faults, though also the strengths, of both institutions.<sup>82</sup>

### *III. Intercultural Communication Overseas*

#### *A. Short Term Mission and Cultural Sampling*

It was unusual among the cases that I encountered for a Korean missionary to go straight into full-time work in another country without ever having been abroad previously. Even missionaries of an older generation like Rev. L. of Cambodia gained awareness of other cultures in small doses through short-term mission trips ranging in length from a few days up to a year. Many missionary organisations require such experiences before they will sponsor a candidate for long-term service.

---

<sup>78</sup> I observed one Onnuri service presided over by an African American pastor who joked about the conflict between the two groups and the mostly Korean audience loved his jokes and his sermon.

<sup>79</sup> Interview Subject No. 39

<sup>80</sup> Interview Subject No. 47

<sup>81</sup> Interview Subject No. 40

<sup>82</sup> Interview Subject No. 52

For instance, the Methodist Church of South Korea mandates two short-term mission trips during the training period. The Korean short-term mission phenomenon is similar to the growing popularity of the concept in the United States, especially for young people. South Korea does have an advantage in terms of a greater array of unchurched contexts within relatively easy reach with countries like Japan, China, Cambodia and Mongolia serving as destinations with parts of Africa, South America and Europe being options for hardier travellers.

Daniel Shin Tong Baeq wrote of the history of short-term mission in South Korea from the efforts of those whom he sees as pioneers in short-term mission in Korea like Nevius (who was only in Korea for a very brief period) to the present day, though the concept of short-term mission was certainly different in the nineteenth century compared to today. He detailed how short-term mission grew rapidly in numbers along with Korean mission in general during the 1980s and 90s to the point where short-term missionaries are now believed to outnumber their long-term counterparts in South Korea.<sup>83</sup> Parachurch organisations, especially university ministries like YWAM, IVCF Korea and KCCC, helped to fuel this surge. Table 13 depicts the attendance at the youth-targeted conference, Mission Korea, and the large number of short-term missionaries who committed during the conference. While the percentage of commitments to short-term mission among attendees has declined, the 2000 meeting still attracted 3,446 participants in short-term mission (or STM) out of 6,066 people in 2000. Baeq also credits some of the rise in STM to the need for creative alternative structures in mission to reach the resistant areas of the world where career missionaries are heavily scrutinised.<sup>84</sup>

Short-term mission has also mirrored Korean mission in general in the realisation that they needed better training and cultural understanding. A number of training programmes for them have been set up in agencies and denominations around South Korea, with Baeq himself helping to run such a programme for local

---

<sup>83</sup> Daniel Baeq, "A Study of Trends and Future of Korean-American Short-term Mission," 51. While much of the work does deal with the specific Korean American short-term experience, Baeq also includes much information about South Korean mission.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

churches called the Laymen Missionary Training Center.<sup>85</sup> The current attitude towards short-term training can be seen in Dr. Shinjung Cha's short work on medical mission. Cha writes that short-term missionaries need the same preparation and training as long-termers do and that a medical short-termers needs to study the Bible, missiology, anthropology (citing Hiebert's *Cultural Anthropology* as a good work on the subject), cross-cultural assimilation, outreach and long-term case studies.<sup>86</sup>

Short-term trips are generally designed to enhance mission and general religious devotion among both the laity and potential long-term missionaries. The benefits of these trips for participants, Korean churches and the host missionary have been proven in at least one study. Doosik Kim wrote a 2001 doctoral dissertation entitled: "Intercultural short-term missions' influence on participants, local churches, career missionaries, and mission agencies in the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin)." Drawing upon interviews, Kim's work attempted to illustrate the connection between short and long-term missionary efforts in the Kosin (or Koshin) denomination. His study concluded that short-term mission trips had a positive effect upon home churches and led to a greater likelihood of a subsequent commitment to some kind of ministerial career in both a domestic and overseas capacity. He believed that short-term mission trips played an, "important role in the acquisition and development of intercultural competence for participants."<sup>87</sup>

Tellingly, Kim does not explore the impact of the short-term workers upon those they encounter in other countries, likely because the prime aim of these trips is not to create any long-lasting legacy, but rather to build interest in mission. This is not to say that these teams make no contribution to the mission field that they visit. While long-term missionaries on the field had both positive and negative impressions of the short-term teams they had hosted, they admitted that they needed the help the short-termers provided.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>86</sup> Shinjung Cha, *The Developmental Strategy for Future Overseas Missions*, 53-4.

<sup>87</sup> Doosik Kim, "Intercultural Short-Term Missions' Influence on Participants, Local Churches, Career Missionaries and Mission Agencies in the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin)," (D.Phil. diss., Reformed Theological Seminary, 2001), iv-v.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 161.

The nature of this help can vary according to the type of mission trip and the needs of the host area and personnel. Baeq includes a categorisation of five different types of short-term mission trips. For what he calls “non-repetitive STM,” or trips lasting less than twelve weeks, Baeq sees three kinds. First, there is the “Vision Trip,” in which a person is inquiring about God’s vision for themselves and the world. In “Outreach Mission” and “Short-term Service,” the participants engage in evangelism and teaching efforts, while the latter assists missionaries and local workers in specific projects. The last two categories are known as, “Repetitive STM,” as they last three months or longer. There are those in “Short-term ministry,” who initiate projects or act as helpers and the “Non-Residential Mission” type, where a Christian performs the full duties of a missionary<sup>89</sup>.

I was involved in two short-term trips with Onnuri Seobinggo that demonstrated some of the range of these STM experiences. The first was the scouting trip in China that I described in Chapter Five. The second, for which Onnuri provided an afternoon-long training session beforehand, involved two weeks spent with Rev. L in Cambodia teaching children and visiting his churches. The two trips included Korean and Western members and both made use of this diversity to gain attention. For the Chinese trip, the area was so remote that the people had never seen a Korean or American before. In Cambodia, Rev. L made a point of taking us to a small town where he hoped to establish a church where we gave a short presentation to the curious people. These two cases, along with the fact that those in migrant ministries are also involved in STM trips, illustrate another way in which the more multi-cultural churches of South Korea can utilise their relative diversity for global mission.

At times, such blatant displays of Korean Church power and resources can constitute another example of the exploitative tendencies of Korean mission. One troublesome instance was related to me by the Methodist agency worker. He told of how a Korean missionary started several congregations in Indonesia, Nepal and other developing countries. He would ask key members of Korean congregations to visit

---

<sup>89</sup> Baeq, p. 87



and support these congregations. The Methodist agency worker believed that the missionary wanted to show how he has power and influence in South Korea. The message was, "If you join my congregation, you can get power through me."<sup>90</sup>

At their best, STM trips can be a great benefit for those who have a particularly challenging vision of mission. One MTI student discovered a "heart" for an impoverished tribe in China during a short-term trip. Since her return, she has been learning about the culture and language of the people while using her job at a church dental clinic to formulate a plan to set up a dental ministry in the area. She hoped to return for another brief trip to continue meeting people and working on her long-term strategy.<sup>91</sup> The aspiring missionary to Sierra Leone profiled in Chapter Three has been to the country for short periods several times and is starting to lead Korean church members to the area to engage in STM. This is a good example of how the STM process can be a part of the process of gaining knowledge about an area while also getting others interested in your work.

Unfortunately, some STM trips encounter problems that can even endanger the work of the long-term missionaries. The difficulties brought about by a later Onnuri STM expedition to China detailed in Chapter Five are a good example of the dangers in bringing in STM teams to volatile areas. Sometimes the distinction between a successful and chaotic trip comes down to planning. One of Onnuri's Sri Lankan STM teams mentioned earlier in this chapter was undertaken with the assistance of a member of Onnuri's Sri Lankan migrant ministry and went so smoothly that it was called the "dream team."<sup>92</sup> But reports from another Onnuri trip to the same area lacked a translator and became overwhelmed by crowds of needy people. The group could not accomplish much of what they had hoped to do.

Those involved in STM trips are not expected to build anywhere near the depth of relationships expected from career missionaries, as they lack serious language and cultural study. But barriers in communication can encourage creative thinking

---

<sup>90</sup> Interview Subject No. 52

<sup>91</sup> Interview Subject No. 70

<sup>92</sup> Interview Subject No. 53

among would-be missionaries. During my visit in early 2005, Youngnak's university student group was going on a STM trip to Malaysia. While the students lacked any local languages and many were not proficient in English, they had rehearsed an elaborate Christian dance routine. They saw their task as involving "cultural ministry" and the attraction of the "physical beauty" of their dancing.<sup>93</sup>

### *B. The Changing Role of International Agencies in Korean Mission*

As noted previously, while some international agencies like WEC and SIM are recruiting missionaries in South Korea at impressive rates, their growth rate still lags behind native Korean and denominational agencies.<sup>94</sup> Nonetheless, international agencies remain an important option for some Korean missionaries. Native Korean and denominational organisations have been influenced by international agencies, whether through borrowing their ideas or consciously going in a different direction.

Many of the Koreans that I spoke to who chose international agencies did so because they saw advantages within these groups that strictly Korean ones lacked. H., the MTI student who worked in Japan, chose her international agency because it was very trusted by Japanese churches and pastors due to its long history of working in the country.<sup>95</sup> Elaine Kim of WEC Korea noted that some who joined her organisation already had mission experience and specifically wanted a more international group, also pointing out the strong pastoral care and administrative support offered by her agency.<sup>96</sup>

Furthermore, international agencies are usually eager to recruit Korean missionaries for their zeal and superior resources. James H. Taylor III wrote that it was important for international mission agencies to be in partnership with local churches. He mentioned that the Korean churches already had such models and that Korean missionaries who joined international mission organisations were helping

---

<sup>93</sup> Interview Subject No. 40

<sup>94</sup> Moon, "The Recent Korean Missionary Movement," 12.

<sup>95</sup> Interview Subject No. 39

<sup>96</sup> Interview Subject No. 38

other non-Westerners who lacked English skills. Taylor thought that Korean missionaries could serve as an “anchor person” within multi-cultural agencies<sup>97</sup>.

As observed in the preceding section on short-term mission, multi-cultural teams look impressive. Beyond the issues of novelty and power, such teams can even potentially show Christianity in a more positive light. As one mission director put it,

There is a team working in northern India. There are a couple of Koreans, a Japanese, an Ethiopian, a couple Americans, and a couple Australians. [Thus] it is very difficult for Muslims in northern India to say that Christianity is a Western religion.<sup>98</sup>

Another advantage in international agencies is the guidance that can be received from members of different nationalities, especially regarding tricky issues of culture. Korean missionaries can benefit from the criticism of others regarding problems that they may not otherwise perceive. A WEC representative said that, “Today Koreans are immediately challenged by other WEC missionaries on these issues. In the past, Western missionaries were not challenged.”<sup>99</sup>

However, such criticism by missionaries of other cultures can easily be taken the wrong way or be seen as patronising. Chapter Five went into some of the difficulties that Koreans had with international agencies in this respect. An additional reason why some Koreans feel uncomfortable within global mission organisations is due to different ideas about how mission should be conducted. *Christianity Today* author Rob Moll attributes this to a larger “majority world” movement away from the Western model of a more expensive and complex administrative approach towards a flexible network closer to local culture. He cited how some Korean missionaries in Afghanistan complained that Western missionaries were too analytical and policy driven. Korean missionary Sung-Chan Kwon believes that, “The West wants to control people with regulations. The heart is more

---

<sup>97</sup> James H. Taylor III, “Missions Strategy for World Evangelization,” *World Missions: The Asian Challenge*, 68.

<sup>98</sup> Moll, “Missions Impossible,” 33.

<sup>99</sup> Interview Subject No. 91

important.”<sup>100</sup> While Kwon’s statement does touch upon the emotional and sentimental side of Korean mission, his comparison neglects the significant controlling tendencies of Korean missionaries.

One quote by Steve S.C. Moon speaks of the tension that exists between the awareness of the need to look to international agencies as role models and the desire to strike out as independent leaders for the non-Western world. Moll states of Moon,

Steve Moon writes... that while Korea will continue to work with Western mission agencies in the beginning of the twenty-first century, it may be time for Korea to look back East and learn how to help the majority-world countries develop their mission movements. [Moon said] ‘China and India will play crucial roles in evangelizing the existing unreached world... Korean missions are expected to develop both the philosophy and the skills to [build] smooth partnerships both with international mission agencies with a Western background and with indigenous mission agencies with a two-thirds-world background.’<sup>101</sup>

This statement can be taken as an acknowledgment that Korean mission is increasingly being called upon to play a role in two different global realms, Western and non-Western. Within these agencies, Korean missionaries would likely be perceived differently in terms of the resources and knowledge that they have to offer compared to those from other countries.

Some in Korean mission take the approach of serving for a short period within international agencies, the great majority with Western origins, and then using the insights that they gain to set up their own mission group or work within a Korean organisation. H. told me that she had heard of such cases at her agency and Elaine Kim confirmed that this had also happened at WEC, though she said that the group was not offended by it.<sup>102</sup>

While Koreans have much more history of working with Western-based international agencies, there are some signs that they are building ties to non-Western

---

<sup>100</sup> Moll, “Missions Impossible,” 33-4.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>102</sup> Interview Subjects No. 39 and No. 38

mission organisations. In 2005, the first meeting of the Global Network of Mission Structures was held. This conference was designed to allow leaders from smaller or newly formed “Global South” agencies to have equal status with larger Western-based agencies in discussing issues of world mission. Among the representatives, which included mission leaders from such countries as Nigeria, the U.S., Malaysia and India, was Sung-Sam (or Samuel) Kang, the influential head of the Korean World Mission Association.<sup>103</sup> Participation in such events, along with attempts to avoid the problems with non-Western missionaries described in Chapter Five, could help build more equitable relationships with from all kinds of international agencies.

### *C. Establishing Relationships on the Field*

#### *1. Different Approaches to Beginning Relationships in the Mission Field*

For all of the preparation that a Korean missionary goes through, gaining real skill in the field is something that can only be fully acquired through time and effort. Establishing effective relationships with the local inhabitants on the mission field can be the most challenging part of a Korean missionary’s task. How they go about building relationships is often a highly individual effort, though some trends can still be perceived.

There is certainly a type of Korean missionary who thrives in an isolated frontier setting and can single-handedly build up churches where none existed before. But many in Korean mission go about things differently and establish themselves more gradually. It is increasingly common for Korean missionaries to be granted a period lasting anywhere from a few months to two years for cultural and linguistic education within the host country. Throughout this period, they would experience the church life of the country and develop a long-term plan. Some missionaries, particularly young female ones, spend the early part of their careers working exclusively among the Korean mission community in such jobs as teaching missionary children. During this time, they may or may not undergo any cultural or linguistic challenges, though some may go on to seek such training, as did several M.T.I. students.

---

<sup>103</sup> David Packiam, “Introducing the Global Network of Mission Structures,” *Mission Frontiers*, (July-August 2005), 8-9.

One option for Korean missionaries seeking to establish themselves is to work within a pre-existing church in some capacity. That was the method chosen by E, one of the missionaries profiled in Chapter Three who now does small group work and English lessons for a Polish Protestant church. A missionary can also be sent to take over a pastoral or administrative at an overseas church established by their sponsoring church or agency.

A popular option is to provide some sort of service ministry, such as a school, medical clinic, business or non-governmental organisation to both justify a missionary's presence in closed countries and to easily establish contacts with locals. This kind of work proved successful for missionaries like Chapter Three's Jeremiah and Rev. L. But giving a service to the community does not always do much to remove cultural barriers. One MTI missionary spoke of how her mission team in Gambia worked to build a school for Muslim women and children. She lamented, "When we do something nice for them, they think we should thank them, as they are giving us a chance to service them."<sup>104</sup>

Two issues come to mind in examining the role of service ministry. While it can do a lot of good, such ministry can create problems if performed uncritically. One case would be the work of South Korean missionaries in the Mozdok region of Russia. The mission, directed towards ethnically Korean residents of the area, established programmes and activities designed at helping the Korean Russians rediscover their Korean identity. The South Korean missionaries believed that they were appealing solely to the spiritual longings of the people. But when interviewed, the Korean Russians said that their acceptance of the South Koreans' religious ideas had little to do with spirituality or relationships developed with the missionaries. Instead, the Korean Russians wanted the programmes offered or were simply being hospitable. Furthermore, when the cultural programme declined, the church that had been set up suffered a similar fate.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> Interview Subject No. 84

<sup>105</sup> Yumi Yi, "The Prodigals: A Religious and Ethnic Examination of Korean-Russians in Mozdok," 2003, 3-4, accessed May 2006; available at [http://www.uga.edu/juro/2003/2003\\_abstracts.html](http://www.uga.edu/juro/2003/2003_abstracts.html); Internet.



A second issue revolves around the role of money and power in service ministry. Preman Niles observed how any the most benevolent attempts at helping others through money and resources can backfire and create dependency. He wrote,

The relationship between donor and recipient assumes that where there is a concentration of power in the form of money, there too are the real resources of ideas or theology and personnel.<sup>106</sup>

However, this does not mean that service ministry cannot be done in a sensitive and effective manner, as the next chapter will consider.

Some Korean missionaries make use of their specialised talents and training to fit into a community. One case that also serves as an encouraging sign of Korean mission openness towards traditional music is Africa Inland Mission missionary Gwang Su Yi. Trained in both Western and traditional Korean musical styles, he was hired to work with choirs in Madagascar. Although hired to teach Christians about Western music, Yi has made efforts to promote local Christian music as well, calling it “heart music.” Yi declared,

I have a real and deep friendship with people; they are keen on learning music and want my help. I find it is a closer relationship than that of a preacher and his congregation. As a friend and singer like one of them, they really appreciate my help.<sup>107</sup>

While all of these forms of mission have their own difficulties, the Korean missionaries who face the most formidable challenges are likely those involved in frontier mission. Like all missionaries who work totally alone in places with no prior Christian presence, these workers must have strong personalities. They need to be very confident in their faith to overcome the months and even years of isolation that can ensue before establishing themselves with those in the community. Along with the offering of services, they often win the trust of locals through sheer toughness

---

<sup>106</sup> Preman D. Niles, “World Mission Today,” accessed April 2006; available at <http://www.religion-online.org/shorarticle.asp?title=127>; Internet.

<sup>107</sup> Jonathan Hildebrandt, “This Music Has Zafindrony,” *African Inland Mission International-Australia*, 2, no. 1, (February 2005): 5.

and perseverance, as seen in the previous accounts of Rev. L and the Shantung missionaries of the past.

Another example of a Korean frontier missionary is “Peter,” who has spent 13 years as a Hapdong missionary in northern China. He arrived in an area in which there were no churches and no Koreans. For one and a half years, Peter did not do any direct mission work, instead studying the local language and prayed for God’s guidance while evading suspicious policemen. Like many Korean missionaries, Peter had faith that God would miraculously send people open to the Gospel to him, finding inspiration in such stories as Philip’s meeting with the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40). He believed that the process of, “interculturalization [or interacting with other cultures through mission] is not natural. But if we obey, we can find God’s power.” One day, a young man with whom he had been teaching the Korean language came to his house with another man and asked to learn about the Bible. While he initially had difficulty conversing in the local language, Peter spoke in English with the men until his skills improved. A strong advocate of the value of long-term discipleship, Peter now leads some 140 Christians. He is no longer the only missionary in the area, as other Koreans and a few Americans have entered. Over time, he also established contacts within the Chinese house churches and has done training and preaching work for them.<sup>108</sup>

## 2. *From a Formulaic to a Friendship-based Approach to Evangelism*

Korean missionaries vary in their approaches to the task of evangelism. Like evangelicals around the world, Korean Christians can be guilty of a certain formulaic tendency in sharing the Gospel. One of MTI’s requirements was for the students to deliver a sermon in English designed to communicate with a person from a non-Christian country. While some of the sermons were very good, many of them had the same structure. God created the world, but then humanity came to suffer and die through sin. To solve this problem, God sent Jesus into the world so we could have eternal life. Sometimes this was accompanied by the metaphor of Jesus as a bridge to bring us to heaven. This structure was often accompanied with visual aides, such

---

<sup>108</sup> Interview Subject No. 56

as a picture cube or a PowerPoint presentation. One student brought in three balloons to show three states of humanity, “Good, Dying and Happy,” which corresponded to the above storyline and was apparently borrowed from an evangelical campaign during the 2002 World Cup.<sup>109</sup>

The MTI staff did include criticism of these presentations, including the observation that relying on visual aides or computers might not be practical in a non-urban setting. More importantly, they told the students that convincing people of the value of Christianity would likely require building relationships with people and that it took more time and effort than a recitation of a formula involves.

There is definitely a contingent within Korean Christianity that is so concerned with spreading the message that it overlooks the needs of the subject entirely. I have experienced this myself a few times when talking to missionaries who felt the need to convert me in spite of my assuring them that I was already Christian. It became apparent that they were not interested in getting to know me as much as giving me a long-rehearsed Bible-based message that my questions would not alter in the least.

Nowadays, though, as part of a larger trend in the Korean Protestant Church towards greater depth in its ministry, more and more people are turning to spending more time building friendships before bringing in Christian concepts. In addition, many are attempting to really enter the life of the area that they work in and find a way for the locals to see them as insiders and for converts to remain within their community. For example, Henry Lee, a mission leader who trains Koreans to live in Muslim areas, believes that Muslims (as well as Asians in general) mistrust outsiders. Lee sums up their attitude, which is also close to the Korean way of thinking, as, “If I don’t know you I can’t trust you.” He adds, “Unless you break into that community, you cannot get them for the kingdom of God.”<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>109</sup> Among my mementoes of my time in South Korea is a button from the World Cup with that message upon it, so this must be a popular formula.

<sup>110</sup> Moll, “Missions Impossible,” 31.

Emphasising the role of friendship in mission is sometimes known as “friendship evangelism.” Such quotes as this from the Ethnic Harvest ministry’s website demonstrate the concept’s popularity within domestic and foreign mission: “Friendship is at the heart of cross-cultural ministry.”<sup>111</sup> One could argue that it is manipulative or dishonest to build friendships with people for the purpose of changing their beliefs. However, it can also be said that friendship evangelism at least encourages listening and responding to the needs of others in mission and that genuine affection can be built within such relationships. The larger question is how willing are Korean missionaries to let go of the formulas and enter into truly meaningful relationships with those from different cultures? Moreover, can Korean missionaries open themselves up to learn from and be challenged in the process of cross-cultural ministry?

This chapter has depicted various ways in which South Korean Protestant missionaries are attempting to evaluate their actions and policies, trying to form new ideas while maintaining their enthusiasm for spreading the Gospel. In doing so, they have borrowed ideas from other contexts, especially from the West, while considering the worth of these influences and examining mission within their own culture. But barriers often remain in promoting effective Christian communication and relationships across different cultures.

The next chapter will ponder perhaps the ultimate question: considering the positive and negative sides of both the “Victorian” and “Intercultural” sides of its mission, what is the nature of Korean mission? Does it possess a distinct identity? What are some ways in which Korean missionaries can move forward in embracing current ideas while preserving the best aspects of its past?

---

<sup>111</sup> “Friendship Evangelism,” accessed April 2006; available at <http://www.ethnicarvest.org/ideas/friendship.htm>; Internet.

# Chapter Seven:

## Constructing a Future Identity for Korean Protestant Mission

### *Introduction*

Speaking to a 1995 Seoul conference entitled “World Mission and the Role of Korean Churches,” Preman Niles wrote that there were two prevalent attitudes towards mission at the time, both of which were inadequate. The first, one held by some Western churches, was to give up on world mission altogether. Proponents of such a view would say that the era of the overseas missionary was over and that the focus should be exclusively on the affairs of the local church. The second attitude, which Niles believed was held by the Korean churches, assumed that nothing was wrong or had changed with Christian mission and that overseas mission work should continue as it was during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While the former attitude ignores the mission of the Church to the whole world, the latter is unable to effectively relate in the long term to indigenous churches and non-Christian religions because it does not deal with the many changes that have taken place in the world since the “classic” era of mission.<sup>1</sup>

Since Niles gave that presentation, the Korean mission movement has grown greatly both in numbers and in its awareness of its strengths and weaknesses. Many Korean missionaries are still content to go with the “business as usual” model, but others are considering ways in which to better adapt to the needs of the contemporary world while maintaining a strong commitment to spreading the Gospel around the world. This chapter will examine the potential for mission through the South Korean Protestant churches based on this current re-assessment.

Crafting a Korean model of mission goes beyond issues of communication, though those are of vital importance. There is also the issue of the identity of South Korean mission. Korean Protestants in general had been content to follow Western, especially American, patterns of Christianity for years, albeit with their own

---

<sup>1</sup> Niles, “World Mission Today,” <http://www.religion-online.org/shortarticle.asp?title=127>.

modifications. But a growing realisation of South Korea's position as a leader among non-Western countries and awareness of the shortcomings of the West have led to a desire to search for new forms of inspiration. As Jang Yun Cho wrote, many think that it is time for Koreans to develop their own theology of mission.<sup>2</sup>

The question is what constitutes "Korean mission" and is it distinct from the qualities people see in Western and non-Western mission? Opinions differ on this subject. On one hand, there is the statement of a "well-respected Korean mission pastor," whose decision to be quoted anonymously suggests that his viewpoint is not the most popular, who said, "There is no such thing as Korean missions."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, there are those who do see a distinctively Korean identity to mission, perhaps not so much in method as in attitude and emotion. As one MTI student put it, "In the way of using things, it is Western, but in a mental way, the South Korean Church and its mission are non-Western."<sup>4</sup> Expanding upon the idea that the distinction lies more in the people and their personalities than in organisation and techniques, David Lee, the director of the Global Missionary Training Center, believes that,

In terms of theology and missiology, in terms of methods, we may not be unique. But it's uniquely Koreans doing this with Korean structures, with Korean church support, with Korean zeal...<sup>5</sup>

The first part of this chapter will deal with seven areas of vital importance for Korean mission. This section will look into possible solutions for some of the more common difficulties within Korean mission while considering the future direction of South Korean mission. It is true that some aspects of Korean mission are not going to change anytime soon. For instance, it is highly unlikely that Korean missionaries will (or should) suddenly decide that all religions are equal or that the majority will adopt *minjung* theology. But many people involved in Korean mission of varying theological viewpoints have identified common aspects that need improvement in order for Korean missionaries to truly reach the world with their message.

---

<sup>2</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 115.

<sup>3</sup> Moll, "Missions Impossible," 34.

<sup>4</sup> Interview Subject No. 77

<sup>5</sup> Moll, "Missions Impossible," 34.



The following seven signposts will cover ways in which the South Korean Protestant Church could act as a global mission leader in a manner that maintains continuity with the work of past missionaries and makes use of current insights into Christian cultural communication. These seven signposts are:

1. Maintain a strong, but pragmatic, vision for mission and frontier ministry
2. Be mindful of the lessons of the missionary past from both the Korean and world Church
3. Build a vision for world mission that combines global awareness with the specific strengths of Korean culture
4. Realise the potential for social change through mission, but be cognisant of issues of power and the danger of exploitation
5. Be aware of the distinction between superficial and lasting cross-cultural missionary identification and relationships
6. Foster a respectful and cooperative attitude towards others
7. Embrace the intermediary potential of Korean mission, but remember the need for substantial effort and patience

The second section of the chapter details how some current Korean missionaries are acting out elements of these seven signposts in three key countries. The first two nations to be profiled, China and Japan, were featured in Chapter Five as countries in which Korean missionaries have encountered difficulties. This chapter will consider how efforts are being made to prevent these problems. The third country to be included in this section, Mongolia, lacks the historical presence of Korean Christians found in Japan and China and is instead a case of a newer mission effort intended to do things differently from the beginning.

### *I. Seven Signposts for the Future of South Korean Protestant Mission*

#### *A. Keeping a Strong and Practical Vision for Mission*

One of the most appealing aspects of South Korean mission is the sheer excitement generated over foreign mission and the scale of its vision for mission. This can be a considerable asset, but also brings up the risk of unrealistic goals and overlooking the need for a strong structural foundation. The Korean mission

movement likes to “think big” from the number of missionaries to financial and educational resources. Some previously detailed examples of these are Onnuri 2000/10,000 plan and the Korean World Mission Association’s set of goals, which includes sending out 30,000 missionaries by the year 2030. The vision of Korean mission can encompass the local, national and global realms, and sometimes all in one, as with the Immanuel Methodist Church slogan, “Today Kangnam, Tomorrow Korea, the Day After Tomorrow the World.”<sup>6</sup>

Yet there are Korean mission experts who suggest more self-examination and reform, though they are not necessarily any less enthusiastic about the potential of Korean mission. Steve S.C. Moon, who (as related in Chapter Three) felt that Samuel Kang’s plans for KWMA were not feasible, believes that rapid growth within South Korean mission has resulted in “severe growing pains.” His work advocates the need for improved evaluation and training of candidates and better support for missionaries on the field.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Andrew Boyung-Yoon Kim suggests a “rethinking” of Korean mission in the areas and makes many of the same points as Moon.<sup>8</sup>

But just because a plan is ambitious and far-reaching does not automatically mean that it is unrealistic. At a report of the 2005 meeting of the International Society for Frontier Missiology, Kang’s ideas had clearly excited the group, but he also made them believe in the long-term viability of his project. Kang was described as a “saintly patriarch” who “stunned us with the Korean mission’s breathtaking vision and meticulously planned mobilization program for frontier missions.” The group felt that it was a feasible project in spite of its scale, writing that KWMA, “dreamed hugely, but are developing detailed policy, plans, and curriculum to achieve them.”<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Tae-Sung Kim, “Toward a Holistic Mission in the Twenty-First Century: A Case Study in Mission Theology and Strategy of the Korean Methodist Church,” (D. Min. diss., Claremont Seminary, 1996), 69.

<sup>7</sup> Moon, “The Recent Korean Missionary Movement,” 13.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Boyung-Yoon Kim, “Rethinking of Korean Missions,” 116-8.

<sup>9</sup> “Doing Church Where There Is No Church,” accessed May 2006; “ISFM 2005 Denver Conference: Doing Church Where There Is No Church,” available at [www.ijfm.org/PDFs\\_IJFM/22\\_4\\_PDFs/134%20ISFM.pdf](http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/22_4_PDFs/134%20ISFM.pdf); Internet.

While it could be a loss for Korean mission if it stopped setting higher goals for itself, it can be asked whether the South Korean mission movement is setting itself up for disillusionment if these campaigns fall short of their aims. Similar feelings were experienced in mid-twentieth century Western mission when hopes of global evangelisation seemed to fall short; they are already being felt by some within the Korean churches today in the face of decreasing levels of church growth. But the Korean Church and its mission have managed to achieve advances that went far beyond what experts of the time could have expected, due largely to the immense amount of work that Korean Christians have put into achieving their ambitions.

The key may lie in finding effective middle ground between idealism and practicality forming a realistic vision for the present and future of Korean mission. It is important for the Korean Church and its missionaries to make plans to move forward and build up the sense of enthusiasm that is one of the most appealing aspects of the Korean mission movement. However, such gains mean little if Korean missionaries are not cared for properly in the mission field or given the training needed for effective ministry within the most challenging areas of the world. And promises and goals within Korean mission to reach new areas of the world will not be taken seriously if they cannot be brought to some level of fruition.

### *B. Paying Attention to the Lessons of the Past*

Throughout this thesis, examples have been given of areas of current Korean mission which bear similarities to the wider mission history of the Christian Church. This thesis has provided many examples of links between Korean and Western mission at the peak of its confidence during the late nineteenth century. But connections can be found dating from other periods. Korean missionaries find inspiration in the early Church and its outreach as depicted in the New Testament. For instance, Andrew Boyung Kim cites Paul as a role model for Korean missionaries who seek to live among the people they serve.<sup>10</sup> In addition, Koreans have looked back to their own mission past from the early spread of Protestant

---

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Boyung Kim, "Rethinking of Korean Missions," 106.

Christianity to the first Korean overseas efforts, most notably the well-received ministry in Shantung.

There are few elements of Korean mission, both in terms of its difficulties and its overall vision of mission, which do not have parallels of some sort in the past. If South Korean Protestants truly are at the forefront of global Christian leadership, they could look at those who led in previous eras and learn from their successes and failures. Such historic interest can serve as a way of comparing current to previous behaviour or of seeking confirmation within the past for contemporary developments that may seem to have little precedent within the immediate context. In the Andrew Boyung Kim example, the incarnational ministry of Paul could serve as an encouragement and validation to a Korean who wants to perform mission in a manner that may differ from that of the missionaries around him.

Korean missionaries need little encouragement to learn about the Christian past, as their interest in history was clear in books and articles on Korean mission and in my interviews. But one potential danger in utilising missiological history would be putting too much separation between aspects of the past that are generally criticised today and current mission activities, viewing the present as more enlightened than the benighted past. This can especially be seen in attempts to distinguish the Western mission past from the non-Western mission exemplified by Korean missionaries. One such case would be this quote, previously included in Chapter Four, from the missionary, E.,

Christians have to rule the world. We have to be better. We have to be the best, to be a light...Western missionaries... wanted to rule in a different meaning from what I said...The missionaries did not respect the people. They had to see people as human beings.<sup>11</sup>

While there are distinctions between past Western mission and today's Korean missionaries, this thesis has attempted to demonstrate that in a number of ways they are not that far apart. Even if South Korea does not exert its military influence upon the world in the manner of Britain or the United States in the past, the heavy-handed

---

<sup>11</sup> Interview Subject No. 8

behaviour of some Korean missionaries can still bring to mind the worst elements of nineteenth and early twentieth century mission. Indeed, some see the great financial power of Korean mission as being as much of a threat as the imperialism of the past. As Niles noted, “The power of large financial resources has replaced military and colonial power. People immediately see mission in its old guise as an attempt to conquer others.”<sup>12</sup>

The best Korean works dealing with history in mission combine an even-handed analysis that acknowledges strengths and weaknesses with consideration of what the past events reveal about current mission efforts. One good example would be Eun-soo Chae’s 2001 article, “Missiological Reflections on Nevius Methods.” Chae gave credit to Nevius’ ideas for building a strong and consolidated church, but lamented that the resulting churches were also selfish. The Nevius Method was adequate for an agricultural Korean society, but the modern Korean Church needed a more complex strategy that includes more emphasis upon social reform and a wider, more Biblical concept of mission.<sup>13</sup> Such a critical yet understanding look at the past that acknowledges its power as both an inspiration and a hindrance can be applied to other areas of history, from Biblical times to relatively recent events, to the benefit of the current Korean churches and their mission.

### *C. Reconciling Korean Identity with a Global Vision in Mission*

A common suggestion for Korean mission is that it should adopt a broader and more global vision in its overseas ministry. Jang Yun Cho writes, with inspiration from Moon, that a paradigm shift needed in Korean mission is the movement from a local to a global ideology.<sup>14</sup> The rationale for building an international foundation for mission comes about partly because of the many criticisms of Korean missionaries performing their work in the style of Korean churches, no matter how much it may clash with local customs.

---

<sup>12</sup> Niles, “World Mission Today,” [www.religion-online.org/shorarticle.asp?title=127](http://www.religion-online.org/shorarticle.asp?title=127)

<sup>13</sup> Chae, “Missiological Reflections on Nevius Methods,” 161-2.

<sup>14</sup> Jang Yun Cho, “Factors,” 153.

Even those most dedicated to the cause of Korean mission can be greatly critical of specifically Korean characteristics that impede its global operations. Timothy Kiho Park went into considerable detail in his 1991 thesis on what he saw as negative features of the Korean churches that were damaging mission. These included: regionalism, local church-centeredness, extreme competitiveness, overall extremeness, the authority of the elder, male dominance, face-saving, excessive imitation and dependence.<sup>15</sup> These factors serve to hinder mission through impeding cooperation and the building of effective relationships with those within the mission field, be they local churches, other missionaries or non-Christians.

In the attempts to gain a broader perspective and wider identity, Korean Christians have been attempting to identify themselves with a larger mission force. As this dissertation related, Korean missionaries have viewed themselves as part of Asia, the larger non-Western world, and global mission as a whole. Such examination of South Korea's place in the world as a Christian leader has been valuable in many ways, even if South Korea does not always fit perfectly into common perceptions of what Asia and non-Western countries are. WEC missionary Yong Cheung Lee spoke of how he felt a conflict with his Korean culture in the early years of his mission but that his embracing work as a world missionary gave him a new identity as a global citizen rather than just a Korean one. He said, "The cultural experience touches your gut- your national pride. But you can feel born again as a missionary."<sup>16</sup>

Yet Korean missionaries have made use of their own culture and national characteristics in mission through a number of different avenues. Some missionaries utilise Korean economic and cultural resources to gain a foothold in difficult areas. Beyond bringing these secular aspects of the Korean identity into mission, Korean missionaries have embraced what they see as positive features within their work. These more beneficial elements of Korean mission have been examined throughout the thesis and include the creativity and fortitude of Korean missionaries in some of the world's most difficult areas for mission and a desire to begin new projects. The

---

<sup>15</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, "A Two-Thirds World Mission on the Move," 233-244.

<sup>16</sup> Interview Subject No. 90



emotion and passion of Korean Protestantism has also been affirmed within mission, as in this statement by David Lee that sees Korean Protestant mission as part of the overall “Korean spirituality, which is willing to suffer and willing to shout to God with perseverance.”<sup>17</sup> Even an advocate of intercultural mission like Steve S.C. Moon acknowledges that the Korean churches have learned much about church growth that they can share with other countries.<sup>18</sup>

All of these aspects of mission possess their own drawbacks. Connecting a spiritual message too closely to the economic and cultural power of a missionary’s home nation can bring short-term success, but risk eventual obsolescence. And the positive features identified as specifically Korean are hardly limited to the Korean sphere but can be found among many non-Western and Western missionaries.

Becoming a part of world mission does not mean missionaries must abandon their identities. In fact, national characteristics can be a great asset in mission. But when missionaries insist upon replicating all the features of their home country when forming new churches overseas, they are not engaging in the sharing and listening that is a chief part of mission. In maintaining some objectivity about their home culture and truly communicating with those from other cultures, Korean missionaries can maintain a balance between their identities as Koreans and as global citizens.

#### *D. The Potential and Danger of Social Change in Mission*

Korean Christians are increasingly being called upon to become more socially conscious and work to improve Korean and global society. This certainly comes through in current thinking about international mission with the Korean Church being called upon to combine “soul winning” with “social salvation.”<sup>19</sup> A term like “social salvation” can mean a number of different things from becoming more involved in world political and economic affairs to putting more emphasis upon service to the community when spreading the Christian message to setting up educational and charitable programmes to improve impoverished communities.

---

<sup>17</sup> Moll, “Missions Incredible,” 34.

<sup>18</sup> Interview Subject No. 34

<sup>19</sup> Jung, “Incarnational Mission and Community Development,” 2.

While South Korean mission can seek social change in other ways, the financial resources of the Korean churches and the varied professional skills of its members could make a real difference in the world. One area of possible change was suggested by Andrew Walls. In his writings of the role of Africa and the global Church, he pointed out that the Pacific Rim countries could alter the whole pattern of African trading.<sup>20</sup> A concrete case of how the Korean churches are encouraging financial relationships between South Korea and African countries came in an article detailing a series of Korean/African conferences under the umbrella title, the Korea-Africa Cultural Interchange Mission Conference. In preparing for these conferences, expected to draw 400,000 people in 40 African cities, the South Korean Minister of Agriculture and Forestry visited several African countries to meet with ministers and congressmen.<sup>21</sup> While this politician's involvement raises some questions about the separation of Church and State in South Korea, it does demonstrate how Korean missionaries could bring about economic benefits for Africa.

Africa, to say nothing of countries like Cambodia and Mongolia that are glad to receive South Korean patronage, may be only too happy to embrace Korean missionaries who offer the promise of earthly prosperity with their spiritual ministry. But bringing about social change, no matter how positive, in Christian mission through money and powerful connections creates a whole series of questions about motivation, power imbalances and dependence. Are Korean missionaries following in the footsteps of late nineteenth and early twentieth century missionaries who found success through links with economic and political power but later faced a backlash when countries demanded independence from the West? Furthermore, can there be any true partnership or cultural sharing in an environment where resources are so unequal?

I would argue that Korean missionaries can engage in responsible and socially transformative mission with certain precautions. First, there needs to be some

---

<sup>20</sup> Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, 112.

<sup>21</sup>Madison Y. Kim, "Korean Evangelical Mission Conference to Be Held in 40 Cities in Africa," *Christian Today*, September 6, 2005, accessed April 2006; available at <http://www.christiantoday.com/news/africa/korean.evangelical.mission.conference.to.be.held.in.40.cities.in.africa/319.htm>; Internet.

deliberate consideration of these issues and of the process of communication when differences in power exist. Some inspiration might be found from renowned anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who revealed recently how he has been giving new thought to the dynamics behind fieldwork in which two parties can have very different expectations of what the relationship should be. While not feeling that fieldwork should no longer be conducted, Geertz observes the “inherent moral asymmetry” of the fieldwork situations with a “complex of claims and concessions only dimly recognized.”<sup>22</sup> This has parallels in Korean mission where, as noted in the previous chapter, some missionaries ascribe the eager response to their efforts on the part of the objects of their mission to spiritual causes when the actual motivations are more mixed and secular.

Korean missionaries could also benefit from the insights of international agencies and experts who have examined the issue of partnership. Luis Bush writes of some guidelines for Christian partnership such as that participants should not negate the need for personal responsibility while upholding dignity and freedom. The model for partnership needs to be one of both giving and receiving.<sup>23</sup> Niles provides similar advice in his address to Korean Church leaders, stressing that they should consider all kinds of resources that can be shared within mission beyond money, like theology and personnel.<sup>24</sup>

Given the overabundance of ministers and missionaries within South Korea, finding a place for non-Western Christians can be a challenge. But Korean schools and churches have been experimenting with training missionaries from other countries for work in especially difficult regions, as the previous chapter touched upon. There are other areas in which poorer countries can contribute that could benefit the South Korean Protestant Church. One example of how this might happen comes from Chong H. Kim, who writes that the theologies of Southern Christians reflect important societal and religious issues, like the role of ancestors, caste, spirits

---

<sup>22</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Available Light*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 36.

<sup>23</sup> Luis Bush, *Funding Third World Missions: The Pursuit of True Christian Partnership*, (Singapore: World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission, 1990), 31.

<sup>24</sup> Niles, “World Mission Today,” accessed April 2006; available at [www.religion-online.org/shorarticle.asp?title=127](http://www.religion-online.org/shorarticle.asp?title=127); Internet.

and the meaning of suffering. Although he may be oversimplifying geographic distinctions, Kim feels that Northern Christians in mission presently have little to offer Southerners in these areas.<sup>25</sup> While Kim writes that the culture of South Korea has increasingly come to resemble that of Northern countries, many South Koreans have recently struggled with the issues he links to Southern Christianity, even if their society and churches sometimes ignore them. Interaction within a *mutual* spirit of ministry with the non-Western world can help South Korean Protestants to deal with issues like poverty and the role of other religions while enhancing their missionary outreach.

Finally, the field of theology may provide insight into some of these difficulties. A number of prominent theologians have given thought to the role of power in mission, concluding that earthly power should always be seen as below the ultimate divine power that drives the missionary encounter. For instance, Reinhold Niebuhr believed that all earthly political and economic power was less than the “law of love” which he sees “not only as the source of the norms of justice, but as an ultimate perspective by which their limitations are discovered.”<sup>26</sup>

Jung-Woon Suh believes that Korean mission should be led by the idea of *Missio Dei*, which, as seen in Chapter Two, has found some popularity among Korean missionaries. Suh feels that the *Missio Dei* concept can help avoid some of the most commonly perceived problems among Korean missionaries by affirming that mission is not the work of human beings. Suh states, “It is not by power, thought, or knowledge and reason of the human being that mission is accomplished. There is only the mission of God, *Missio Dei*.”<sup>27</sup> These affirmations should not be used to ignore issues of power and money, but to remember that the ultimate foundation and validation of mission lies in the Gospel message and the relationships formed through its declaration.

---

<sup>25</sup> Chong H. Kim, “Another Reformation on the Horizon,” 25.

<sup>26</sup> Charles C. West, *Power, Truth and Community in Modern Culture*, (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 120.

<sup>27</sup> Suh Jung-Woon, “Mission of the Korean Church,” accessed April 2006; available at <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=134>; Internet.

*E. Distinguishing Between Superficial and Genuine Missionary Identification*

Most modern Korean missionaries are willing to take certain steps in order to adjust to a different culture. Learning the native language and customs, as well as some review of current theories in Christian communication, are common parts of missionary training. But in light of the widely-held criticism of Korean mission imposing its own culture and methods upon its overseas ministries, how deep is the commitment to true intercultural communication? Are they just adopting enough surface-level cultural attributes which “merely imitates the local customs of a people hoping to gain access for a hearing of the Gospel?”<sup>28</sup>

Eugene Nida provides a useful overview of the difference between surface-level and genuine missionary identification. Deeper communication requires more than just imitation. As Nida writes, “Our task... is not to propagandize people into the kingdom of heaven, but so to identify ourselves with them that we may effectively communicate ‘the way.’” A missionary should not be “working for people, but with them” in a spirit of mutual adjustment.<sup>29</sup> The task of “inner identification” requires learning about the deepest elements of a society, such as their religious beliefs and their system of values. Missionaries do not have to adopt the ideals of the host culture, but they need to take them seriously in their communication efforts.

Some Korean missionaries can go far in establishing a presence in a community, to the extent of undergoing considerable personal sacrifices, yet still fall utterly short in connecting to the culture around them. Rev. L in Cambodia built his ministry due to his willingness to live and serve within a desperately poor and unstable community while suffering through serious illnesses and threats of violence. But he has been cited, even by members of Onnuri who once supported him, as building “basically a Korean church in Cambodia.”<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Robert King, “Extent of Missionary Identification,” *Evangelical Encyclopedia of World Missions*, 349.

<sup>29</sup> Eugene Nida, *Message and Mission: The Communication of the Christian Faith*, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1990 ed.), 212.

<sup>30</sup> Interview Subject No. 38

In other cases, Korean missionaries face the problem of moving beyond acting as patrons, even to willing recipients, and instead forming a relationship of equals. This might be seen in the training and recruitment of migrants to become missionaries and church leaders in their own countries. Such encouragement of national missionaries can contribute to more effective ministry in other cultures and build cooperation through building up leaders who can participate in and understand two cultures. But it can also present Korean missionaries buying their way out of the responsibility and risk of becoming personally involved in mission by assuming that their national substitutes can do all the hard work while the Korean Church simply pays the bills.<sup>31</sup>

Korean Christian scholars are working to build a theology of mission that promotes deeper levels of communication with other cultures. Andrew Boyung Kim believes that an incarnational attitude to mission gained largely through multicultural training is important for the future of Korean overseas ministry.<sup>32</sup> Il Nam Jung agrees that an incarnational approach is needed to overcome the frequent inadequacy of modern Korean churches in sufficiently identifying themselves with the communities around them, be they local or international.<sup>33</sup>

And there is willingness on the part of the South Korean sending churches and agencies to fortify ties between their missionaries and those from areas where Koreans have not always worked well in the past. The Korea-African Cultural Interchange Mission Conference serves as one example of such an attempt with its very title speaking of the hopes for enhanced cultural exchange. But while these efforts and the improved standards in educating would-be missionaries about other cultures are a good beginning, the intercultural process must go even deeper.

Ultimately, the task is to build reciprocal relationships between people that may challenge the beliefs and ideas of the missionary. The missionary must be willing to be changed while seeking transformation in others. As Anthony Gittins

---

<sup>31</sup> McGuilkin, "Fads in Mission," *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 351

<sup>32</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 168

<sup>33</sup> Jung, "Incarnational Mission and Community Development," 2.



writes, “evangelization must stimulate a creative, dynamic, poetic response from both evangelizers and evangelized” that touches the “deep structures” of the cultures involved in mission.<sup>34</sup> As seen in the second chapter, there is a popular feeling within Korean mission that going too far into the intercultural (or whatever name the act of communicating the Christian message with other cultures might go by) process can endanger the fundamentals of Christian faith. But if Korean missionaries are serious about interculturalism and establishing meaningful relationships, they must be willing to take risks in the knowledge that the most successful missionary experiences throughout history have resulted in positive changes to both Christianity and culture.

#### *F. Fostering Respect and Cooperation*

Building a strong foundation in mission goes beyond forging ties with any one targeted subsection of a region. A missionary needs to live in relative harmony with the community as a whole, especially in areas where missionary presence is frowned upon or downright forbidden. There is also the issue of how to approach the pre-existing churches and missionaries from other countries or from other denominations within one’s own nation.

As chronicled throughout this thesis, South Korean missionaries have displayed little skill in building such relationships. Their enthusiasm and strongly held ideals that do so much to fuel Korean mission, along with the powerful denominational consciousness, results in a tendency towards a “lone ranger” mentality that does not encourage teamwork.<sup>35</sup> Some Korean missionaries display a lack of respect for those with different beliefs, be they people from other religions or other Christians. As a result, Korean missionaries can gain a bad reputation or even inspire outright hostility, while impeding effective ministry.

One illustration, which comes from a BBC article profiling Korean mission in the Middle East, demonstrates how reckless and inconsiderate behaviour can

---

<sup>34</sup> Anthony Gittins, “Beyond Liturgical Inculturation: Transforming the Deep Structures of Faith,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (2004): 55.

<sup>35</sup> Moll, “Missions Incredible,” 31.

jeopardise ministry. It also provides another case in which Korean missionaries specifically target children, a questionable but popular technique. In the words of an anonymous Korean missionary:

I invited 150 Muslim children to my house on Christmas Day. I gave them gifts and preached the Gospel. But afterwards, some of their parents came and threatened to kill me. After that, I had to be more careful.<sup>36</sup>

There are signs that some Korean missionaries are seeking a more cooperative and respectful model of mission. Divisiveness within South Korean mission is criticised by virtually all of the authors and experts on the subject. And as noted previously, some denominations and agencies have forged agreements with other mission groups, Korean and otherwise, and are attempting to train their missionaries to approach overseas ministry in more culturally sensitive ways. And there are Korean missionaries in the Middle East who attempt outreach with a “low voice and with wisdom,” as one worker in Jordan described his own method.<sup>37</sup>

The heart of the matter touches upon the issue addressed in the previous section, namely a hesitation to go too far in the Christian cultural process for fear of losing cherished aspects of faith. Working with Christians from different denominations or being too open to other religions could therefore be viewed as dangerous for Korean missionaries and those whom they hope to influence. A vision of inter-religious relations that finds a place for strong Christian faith while displaying sensitivity towards other religions would be helpful. One Korean theologian who is attempting such a task is Kim Kyoung Jae, who has tried to move away from the negative connotations of the word “syncretism” by emphasising the positive aspects of “harmony” and “fusion” possible when religions meet.<sup>38</sup> Korean missionaries could also gain inspiration from the work of recent scholars, such as David Bosch and Robert Schreiter, who have attempted to bridge the divide between a strong Biblical faith and a sympathetic attitude towards other religions.

---

<sup>36</sup> Charles Scanlon, “South Korea’s Zealous Mid-East Missionaries,” 6 May 2003, *BBC News*, accessed May 2006; available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3690259.stm>; Internet.

<sup>37</sup> Norimitsu Onish, “Korean Missionaries Take on the Hard Cases,” A7.

<sup>38</sup> Kim Kyoung Jae, *Christianity and the Encounter of Asian Religions*, (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverji Boekencentrum, 1994) 61.

Another valuable suggestion came when South Indian theologian, Israel Selvanaygam, addressed Korean missionaries on the question of how to engage in mission oriented towards building converts. He felt that such a mission could be possible, even in difficult regions like his own, but thought that the qualifications and attitudes of the missionaries was of vital importance. Referring to a quote from Japanese theologian, Kosuke Koyama, he believed that missionaries should possess a “crucified mind” that does not presume to know all the answers, as opposed to a more aggressive “crusading mind.”<sup>39</sup>

For greater harmony, it would also be helpful for those from other countries, especially missionaries, to learn more about South Korea. Knowledge of Korean culture and Christian history can promote understanding of the actions and ideas of Korean missionaries. Mihyang Choi, acknowledging that MTI may not last much more than ten years in its present state due to advances being made in training among agencies, has even considered eventually reversing the focus of MTI to teaching overseas missionaries about South Korean culture.<sup>40</sup>

#### *G. Embracing the Intermediary Potential for Mission*

South Korea is currently seen as one of the great hopes of Christian mission among Koreans and non-Koreans alike for evangelising the remaining frontier areas and reaching places like the Middle East where Western missionaries have made little progress. Some feel that Korean missionaries can work more effectively because they combine elements typically associated with both Western and non-Western nations. As Rob Moll wrote, “Christians in South Korea see their missionaries as uniquely positioned to bridge the divide between the wealthy West and majority-world nations.”<sup>41</sup> But while a number of Koreans and Westerners believe this, it is still debatable whether the non-Westerners that Korean missionaries attempt to serve consider this to be true.

---

<sup>39</sup> From Israel Selvanaygam’s 17 August 2006 lecture at the International Conference on Peace and Reconciliation at York St. John University College

<sup>40</sup> Interview Subject No. 57

<sup>41</sup> Moll, “Missions Incredible,” 31.

But it will take time and substantial effort before South Korean missionaries live up to their full potential as intermediaries. One thing to keep in mind when it comes to change among Korean missionaries is that new attitudes and methods may take a long time to be adopted with any sort of uniformity on the field. It is true that the major agencies, denominational boards and educational institutions have embraced more rigorous guidelines in areas like cultural and linguistic acquisition, as well as a more intensive period of training. However, while the growth in the establishment of new agencies has slowed somewhat in recent years, there are still many smaller churches and organisations sending out missionaries who may hold to more traditional notions of culture and communication.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, even those who receive the most up to date education and want to make a difference may find themselves under the supervision of missionaries from the previous generation who may have been insufficiently trained, leading to potential disagreements. For instance, one MTI female graduate clashed so much with a male supervisor whom she saw as old-fashioned that she ended her missionary career. The younger generations may be more open to new ideas, but the hierarchical mindset that the older and more senior leaders should be obeyed without question still remains.

A major task of the South Korean Protestant Church in the years to come will be finding a way to incorporate all of the preceding principles of mission into training without making the process excessively arduous. Janny Van der Klis noted that her organisation, New Tribes Mission, estimated that Korean missionaries now spend an average of five years in training, excluding university education, which is more than their Western counterparts.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, the cultural and linguistic challenges a Korean missionary must face could well demand a long period of training. Once again, the challenge is to find the right balance.

And while a Korean missionary may be more practically and socially suited than Westerners to certain challenging mission fields of the world, establishing

---

<sup>42</sup> Moon, "The Recent Korean Missionary Movement," 12.

<sup>43</sup> Interview Subject No. 63

relationships and adjusting to unfamiliar societies will still take time and effort on the part of the whole Christian community of South Korea. While there may be a strong frontier spirit within the Korean mission movement, churches eager for swift and concrete results sometimes lack the patience to wait for their missionaries to build a foundation. Van der Klis spoke of a Korean couple working to establish a ministry in a remote part of Africa. While she admired their efforts, which included working with established church leaders from nearby areas, their sponsoring churches had some hesitation. As Van der Klis reported, "A leader member said, 'Why didn't they go to the city instead of to the difficult place?' But how will the difficult place hear the Gospel?"<sup>44</sup>

### *I. Changing Korean Missionary Attitudes in the Field*

#### *A. Japan: Signs of a New Approach*

While the other two examples in this section represent countries in which Korean missionaries have enjoyed relatively fruitful ministry, Japan is, as noted in Chapter Five, one of the more troubled nations for Korean mission. The difficulties were caused both by Japanese prejudices against Koreans and the South Korean missionaries' insistence on applying the same methods that worked in their country to Japan. As a result of such problems, interest in Japanese mission has slowed down. But there is also evidence of new opportunities within Japan, due largely to some of the principles examined in this chapter.

First of all, Japan is now more open to South Korea in general due to the *hallyu* phenomenon and new respect for the achievements of the Koreans. As my MTI missionary interview subject H. observed,

Now after World Cup soccer and because Korean soap operas are more popular, they [the Japanese] are really different. They want to know about Korea more and learn the Korean language.<sup>45</sup>

The fact that Korean missionaries are often skilled in the English language serves them well in Japan, a country with a similar hunger for English acquisition.

---

<sup>44</sup> Interview Subject No. 63

<sup>45</sup> Interview Subject No. 64

Some missionaries combine linguistic and cultural elements into their ministry in Japan. One missionary, Grace Suh, was helping to plant a church in one area through teaching English and Korean. Her work has also included cooking lessons and Christmas parties to tempt Japanese who want to sample different cultures.<sup>46</sup>

Eiko Takamizawa, who leads Torch Trinity students on short-term mission trips to her native land, believes that the current generation of Korean missionaries are doing “much better” in Japan. She feels that these new missionaries, generally aged 30-40, are more culturally understanding and sensitive, combining passion with humility.<sup>47</sup> H. agrees that Koreans in Japan, along with other Asian missionaries, are taking cultural issues more seriously. She said, “With an Asian organisation, they think we are similar, so they didn’t stress cultural adaptation. But now it’s changed.”<sup>48</sup> While there are still some who believe that simply being Asian is enough to blend into another Asian country, she felt that the Korean mission organisations now know not to make such assumptions as every country contains its own challenges in adaptation.

She shed some interesting light upon how Korean missionaries might operate in a way that encouraged partnership with other groups while playing to their respective strengths. While she still makes use of certain generalisations about different cultural groups within the process of partnership, her statement does suggest how Koreans can act as intermediaries on the mission field between Westerners and non-Westerners. She told me,

Usually Japanese want to know Westerners and be close friends with them and learn English. If there are Westerners, many Japanese go to church. But it’s superficial, not very deep. But when they decide to go to church, Korean people are good at discipleship and teaching. Westerners are satisfied to let Koreans take over, though some are jealous to ‘surrender’ their members. The Japanese are scared among

---

<sup>46</sup>“Grace’s Serving in Japan,” accessed May 2006; available at <http://www.ttaris.net/tt/index.php?setdate=200506&setday=28>; Internet. Websites like this one (which uses both Korean and English) for individual missionaries are becoming increasingly popular.

<sup>47</sup> Interview Subject No. 45

<sup>48</sup> Interview Subject No. 64



just Westerners, but with other Asians, they are more secure.<sup>49</sup>

There are attempts being made to achieve a more cooperative and culturally attuned Japanese mission among Korean missionaries. Indeed, the first mission principle listed by the Korean agency, the Japanese Evangelical Mission, is a “Cooperative Spirit” that works with Japanese Christians.<sup>50</sup> Such cooperation can involve multi-national teams like that utilised by H. She has worked with Japanese, American, Singaporean and various European missionaries and pastors. Her focus on discipleship work and training new members also indicates the current emphasis upon spiritual depth and following through on building up new converts.

### *B. China: Equipping the Future*

The intermediary role of South Korean mission in China is even more pronounced than in Japan and encompasses areas like religion, business and popular culture. Norimitsu Onishi looked at the Chinese hunger for all things South Korean, mentioning that Chinese young people are eager to embrace almost all Korean products, viewing them as the height of fashion and style. He notes that this hunger extends to Korean Christianity and its missionaries who convey its message to China in spite of government disapproval. The recently granted freedom of travel that South Korean missionaries enjoy stands as a symbol of the expanded liberties and openness of the country as a whole.

One might wonder at how desirable it is for Korean mission to be put in the same category as soap operas and rap music as products of South Korea and what could happen to mission efforts if South Korea falls out of style. But beyond mere trendiness, Onishi explores how much of the appeal of Korean culture lies in how it mediates between the forces of modernity and tradition. Onishi observes how South Korean culture presents a model of a thoroughly modern life with ideals not only of consumer consumption and individual happiness, but also of certain enduring

---

<sup>49</sup> Interview Subject No. 64

<sup>50</sup>“Japan Evangelical Mission,” accessed May 2006; available at [http://www.kjem.com/index.php?view=Ucon&id=1&menu=m1&sid\\_t=1148052968](http://www.kjem.com/index.php?view=Ucon&id=1&menu=m1&sid_t=1148052968) (Korean language site); Internet.

Confucian values like the centrality of family. The Chinese can establish warm relations with Koreans and the products they offer far more than with the Japanese and Americans, given their strained history with China. The article included this illuminating quote:

‘We feel that we can see a modern lifestyle in those shows,’ said Qu Yuan, 23, a student at Tsinghua University in Beijing. ‘We know that South Korea and America have similar political systems and economies. But it's easier to accept that lifestyle from South Koreans because they are culturally closer to us. We feel we can live like them in a few years.’<sup>51</sup>

The article serves as a reminder that some of South Korea's appeal as a missionary-sending nation lies in its combination of innocence and tradition with economic progress and modernity. This is true in Japan as well as in China where H. spoke of how the Japanese enjoyed Korean culture largely because it reminded them of their own country twenty years ago and the simpler values of that time.<sup>52</sup> An American quoted in an article on *hallyu* also commented on how the optimism of Korean culture contrasted to the more cynical popular culture of the United States.<sup>53</sup> While one might wonder whether Koreans can maintain this balance in an increasingly open society, it can be an asset for mission. Korean missionaries to the Middle East might be wise to use this strategy in offering Middle Easterners an alternative role model for modernisation that avoids some of the perceived hedonism of the West.

One example of the intermediary principle among South Korean missionaries in China is a certain university in southern China that was briefly mentioned in Chapters Three and Four. This school sees itself as a, “living embodiment of the term, ‘global village’” and stresses the incarnational approach to mission on the part of the missionaries who teach there.<sup>54</sup> This is because the university, which specialises in science and technology, is taught and funded chiefly by Western and South Korean churches. Of the 164 missionary teachers, about 60 are Western (some

---

<sup>51</sup> Norimitsu Onishi, “A Rising Korean Wave: If Seoul sells it, China craves it,” *The New York Times*, 10 January 2006, Section A, 7.

<sup>52</sup> Interview Subject No. 64

<sup>53</sup> K. Oanh Ha, “The New Cool,” 7.

<sup>54</sup> From the university's promotional CD-Rom, which includes both Korean and English

of whom are Canadian and American Koreans) and 100 are Koreans, along with one Chinese couple. After 15 years, the plan is to give the school over to the Chinese people. The Chinese government is aware of the mission foundation of the university, but lets the school operate in relative freedom because of the services offered. While the missionaries are not allowed to speak openly about religion, C, the MTI student who taught Korean at the university, engaged in one-on-one evangelism with the students and encountered no official resistance.<sup>55</sup>

Regarding the interaction between the Western and Korean missionaries, C. reported that there was still some separation between them. She attributed this largely to the differing communication styles with the Western teachers wanting to discuss situations and problems more than the more reticent Koreans, who preferred to follow orders and engage in direct action. While the two groups initially worshipped together, they now meet for individual Korean and English services except for monthly joint worship.

As for the language used in instruction, the Western teachers all teach in English. The Koreans, many of whom studied in the United States, feature English, Chinese and Korean in their work. C. herself is planning to go to the U.S. to improve her English due to the great desire of the students to learn English. The students also like to study Korean, largely out of a hope to work in South Korea in the future.

Like many South Korean missionaries in China, the aim of the Korean missionaries at the university is focused upon teaching and the goal of helping the Chinese enter into mission in their own country and the rest of Asia. The university's CD-Rom states that in addition to teaching about computers and the English language, the hope is to give the students a "mission mind."<sup>56</sup> C. adds that the missionaries are especially concerned about building up the Korean-Chinese (ethnic Koreans who migrated to China) students for mission. She said, "Many teachers thought that the Korean-Chinese can become missionaries to other areas in

---

<sup>55</sup> Interview Subject No. 65

<sup>56</sup> From the university's promotional CD Rom

China. The effective minister is Korean-Chinese because they know their country and can speak the Chinese language.”<sup>57</sup>

While the Western and South Korean-sponsored university is an example of how Korean missionaries can blend the spiritual and earthly needs of the people they serve, other missionaries have a different view of mission. One would be Peter, whose early years in China were profiled in the previous chapter. While not directly under Sarang Church, Peter is an enthusiastic advocate of its leader’s vision of discipleship-centred ministry. He said,

In Korea, the American missionaries built schools and hospitals, but after they left, the schools fell apart after 30 years. More important [than building hospitals or schools] is to teach them discipleship and to equip with God’s word. I want to make China a model case.<sup>58</sup>

Like C., Peter’s work requires cooperation and partnership with those from different countries. While he works with Americans and respects American society and its missionary heritage, Peter has mixed feelings about American missionaries, believing that they don’t truly understand Oriental culture in the same way that Korean missionaries can. But he did experience some trouble adjusting to Chinese culture himself and admits that other Korean missionaries experience difficulties, even with the similar Confucian background. But with time he became comfortable enough to develop an effective partnership with the Chinese Christians he works with and expressed great respect for their wisdom and insight.

Peter’s view of culture is close to the transcultural theory, telling me how American missionaries had written about interculturalism and the importance of “overcoming culture.” He didn’t understand this concept at first, but now felt that within the Chinese culture, “if they understand God’s word, they will change little by little.” Such an idea bears some resemblance to the idea that Christianity can alter the deep structures of a culture, though not the reciprocal notion that the culture can change the Christian faith as well.

---

<sup>57</sup> Interview Subject No. 65

<sup>58</sup> Interview Subject No. 56 His comment about missionary establishments in South Korea is not strictly correct, as missionary-founded universities like Yonsei and Ehwa are certainly still standing.

In addition, Peter's work is concerned largely with teaching the Christian community he helped to build and equipping them for mission. He sees himself as being like Paul who trained leaders like Timothy to take over the churches that he established. Peter also stresses the importance of the Chinese mission movement, noting that, "We [Korean missionaries] say, 'You must go to other countries.' One million [Chinese] will go. Then I think God will come back." This clear reference to the Back to Jerusalem movement and China's role in fulfilling the pre-millennial vision illustrates that China tends to bring out the most far-reaching optimism of Korean missionaries.

### *C. Mongolia: South Korea as a Role Model*

Unlike Japan and China, which were early targets of Korean missionaries, Mongolia has only been a major target of Korean mission since the 1990s when its Communist government fell. With interest very high in recent years, Mongolia has been a prime example of the second generation of South Korean missionaries who have benefited from the lessons of the earlier generation who began the Korean mission boom. Indeed, Mongolia was cited as an "experimental place" for Korean missionaries in mission conferences where new ideas can be explored, though that does not mean that the Korean ministry in Mongolia has been entirely free from familiar difficulties in Korean mission.<sup>59</sup>

Mongolia is an almost ideal fit for South Korean missionaries in a variety of ways. As mentioned previously, Korean missionaries perceive cultural and linguistic similarities in Mongolia. South Korea is close enough to Mongolia to allow for short-term mission trips and there is far more freedom of religion than in other Central Asian nations. And some 20,000 Mongolian workers are employed in South Korea, constituting the largest Mongolian expatriate community in the world and a valuable resource for Korean mission.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, the two nations have a common history in terms of having been shut off from the world for centuries and then experiencing an influx of interest from the outside world. Mongolia has even

---

<sup>59</sup> Kyo Seong Ahn, "Christian Mission and Mongolian Identity," 103.

<sup>60</sup> Robert Koehler, "The 'Ugly Korean' in Mongolia," 12 October 2005, accessed April 2006; available at <http://www.rjkoehler.com/?p=2062>; Internet.

been displaying a rate of Christian growth that might eventually come to match that of South Korea, prompting concerned Buddhists, the dominant religious presence in Mongolia along with shamanists, to ask the question, “Will Mongolia go the way of South Korea?”<sup>61</sup>

Moreover, the almost total absence of any established Christian churches in the area at the time of the arrival of missionaries in the 1990s, in spite of a long history of Christianity in the area, has created many opportunities for the frontier ministry that many Korean missionaries enjoy. For instance, WEC is planning a major operation to send 150 church planting teams to the countryside, feeling that the cities now have a sufficient Christian presence. The agency is particularly looking to recruit Korean missionaries for this task because of the confidence and skills they display as church planters.<sup>62</sup>

Few countries give South Korea as exalted a status as Mongolia, where the Korean culture has proven even more influential than in China. For their part, many South Koreans believe that they have a “special obligation” towards Mongolia, though Kyo Seong Ahn warns this can become a “Korean messianic complex” in its extreme form. With its economy suffering since the collapse of Communism, Mongolia is actively seeking to live the “Korean dream” with Ahn pointing out the case of a politician who wrote an article entitled, “Let’s Make Korea Our Brother Country.”<sup>63</sup>

A darker side to the close Korean/Mongolia relationship has emerged in recent years with the growing awareness in Mongolia of the “ugly Korean.” Instead of bringing prosperity and sharing their resources, some Korean residents of Mongolia have brought organised crime and sex tourism. Mongolians are also beginning to protest the poor treatment of Mongolian migrants working in South Korea.<sup>64</sup> Except for a few deviant cases, Korean missionaries would not be guilty of such acts and, as

---

<sup>61</sup> Elizabeth Dalziel, “Will Mongolia go the way of South Korea?,” September 25, 2005, accessed April 2006; available at <http://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=1,1752,0,0,1,0>; Internet.

<sup>62</sup> Interview Subject No. 90

<sup>63</sup> Kyo Seong Ahn, “Christian Mission and Mongolian Identity,” 115-6.

<sup>64</sup> Koehler, <http://www.rjkoehler.com/?p=2062>.



related in the last chapter, are actively working to help migrants in South Korea. However, South Korean missionaries are to blame for putting Mongolia in a difficult place diplomatically with North Korea and China by bringing North Korean refugees into the country with the hopes of settling them in South Korea.<sup>65</sup> While Mongolians have largely been willing to assist in this matter, one might view this as Koreans treating Mongolia as a subject country.

The result is a country whose inhabitants can feel both great love and great enmity towards Koreans. This was shown in a recent article that detailed the rapturous reception by “Korea groupies” that South Korea’s President Roh received at a Korean missionary-founded Mongolian college but also bluntly commented that, “Many Mongolians say they hate Koreans now.”<sup>66</sup> Ironically, this situation displays more than a little resemblance to the mixed feelings that South Koreans bear towards Americans. The article even reported that some of the Mongolians interviewed were now turning to America as their new hope for a benevolent patron. The backlash against Koreans in Mongolia illustrates how national identity in mission can become a burden as well as a blessing. It is little wonder that while Ahn sees potential for South Korean missionaries as part of their country acting as a role model for Mongolia, he gives a strong warning about the dangers of navigating between “the twin perils of the Scylla of opportunism and the Charybdis of anachronism.”<sup>67</sup>

In spite of its short history, the Korean missionary presence in Mongolia experienced some problems early on, in spite of their swift success in winning converts, in terms of imposing their own culture upon new Mongolian believers. In another parallel with Korean Christian history, the Mongolian church leaders have become independent early on, which has resulted in some strife with Korean missionaries who wanted to do things their way. In 1998, a *Missions Frontiers* article wrote of some of the difficulties caused by Korean missionaries,

---

<sup>65</sup> James Brooke, “South Korea Plans Transit Camp in Mongolia,” *The New York Times*, Monday, 29 September 2005, A5.

<sup>66</sup> Chun Su-Jin, “Roh in Mongolia: Love Blooms,” 22 May 2006, accessed May 2006; available at <http://joongangdaily.joins.com/200605/09/200605092158339479900090309031.html>; Internet.

<sup>67</sup> Kyo Seong Ahn, “Christian Mission and Mongolian Identity,” 116.

The Koreans are exceptionally dear brethren and have been greatly used by God in Mongolia, but their mono-cultural ways are beginning to frustrate the emerging Mongol leadership. Bringing white gloves, ecclesiastical robes, and a golden chalice from Korea to serve communion is not sitting well with Mongol leadership who would like to see the church become more Mongolian.<sup>68</sup>

Ahn's 2003 article, based upon his mission work in Mongolia, indicates that a new attitude among some Korean missionaries emerged after the late 1990s. He writes that by that time, there was an atmosphere of cooperation and partnership in Mongolia mission with the various Western and non-Western groups seeking to support the Mongolian leaders. Under this support, the new leaders, many of whom learned English from the missionaries, have largely received formal theological training and are taking part in ecumenical exercises.<sup>69</sup> He told me that, while mistakes had been made in the first years of the mission, the worship situation commented on in the previous paragraph has changed and that many Mongolian songs are now used, to the extent that the Mongolian youth are beginning to ask for more "modern" music in church services.<sup>70</sup> One MTI pupil who worked as a missionary in Mongolia echoed this assessment of the current unity in the mission to Mongolia, declaring how she learned many valuable communication skills from working with missionaries and Christians from other countries.<sup>71</sup> While it can be questioned how much things have fundamentally changed within a few short years, Mongolia nonetheless remains an encouraging area for Korean mission.

Ahn also stresses the need for some of the principles covered in this thesis to be applied to mission in Mongolia. He believes in the need for stronger and more genuine relationships among all the groups involved. And while Koreans will have to give up the major leadership roles to Mongolians, he cites the belief of Schreiter that outsiders can play a valuable role in mission by preventing too much insularity.

---

<sup>68</sup> Rick Leatherwood, "Mongolia: As a People Movement to Christ Emerges, What Lessons Can We Learn?" *Mission Frontiers*, July-August 1998, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/1998/0708/ja983.htm>

<sup>69</sup> Ahn, "Christian Mission and Mongolian Identity," 107 and 113.

<sup>70</sup> From a 2 July 2006 conversation with Kyo Seong Ahn at the Yale/Edinburgh Conference.

<sup>71</sup> Interview Subject No. 75

Ultimately, he looks back to Paul's model of a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic mission that trains new leaders from the beginning.<sup>72</sup>

These three nations demonstrate both the progress that has been made by Korean missionaries but also how far they still need to go to meet the hopes of the Korean Church for effective communication of the Christian message around the world. In these cases, some of the cultural and relationship problems of past Korean mission were examined and steps were taken to remedy the situation. The missionaries cited are working to forge deeper relationships with people from different countries and express a willingness to work with other nationalities and groups for the greater good of the Gospel message.

Yet their work still falls short of the ideals of interculturalism in terms of building relationships that bring about mutual transformation that crosses against barriers of culture and power. To build a solid missionary identity and serve as an effective intermediary in world mission will require continued self-examination and effort, as the seven areas covered in this chapter reflected. An overview of the current situation of South Korean Protestant mission and where it might be heading in the future will be given further consideration in the Conclusion.

---

<sup>72</sup> Ahn, "Christian Mission and Mongolian Identity," 114 and 118.

# Conclusion:

## A National Mission Movement on the Threshold

When analysing the current state of South Korean Protestant mission, Jang Yun Cho observed that the movement seems more adolescent than mature.<sup>73</sup> This is an apt description for a missionary-sending nation that stands on the edge of a new stage in its development. Aside from the efforts of the early twentieth century which came to an end with the Korean War and its aftermath, overseas mission in South Korea as it is now began in the 1970s and 80s with tentative steps that led to the explosive growth of the 1990s that continues today. The first generation of missionaries was filled with eagerness to reach out to the world, which in some ways mirrored the experience of the South Korean nation as its awareness of and engagement with the outside world rose to new heights. But in their enthusiasm for world mission, issues of methodology, training and culture were neglected.

With a new generation of missionaries coming in and the consequences of previous actions being examined, mission scholars and leaders have been able to give serious thought to the strengths and weaknesses of the movement. In addition, the scale of Korean mission and the presence of its missionaries in such sensitive areas as the Middle East and China is increasingly attracting the attention of the global Christian and secular media. With all of this reflection, what can be said about where Korean mission is now, where it wants to go in the future and what needs to be done to achieve these goals and become fully mature?

One of the main ideas in the construction of this thesis was that the modern Korean missionary movement can be viewed as containing elements of the both the past and the present. I still believe this to be true, but the connections are complex and defined largely by how South Korean missionaries perceive themselves in relation to their idea of what the Christian past and present is. In terms of the past, some Christians both within and outside of Korean mission see South Korea as being

---

<sup>73</sup> Jang Yun Cho, "Factors," 138.

the new carriers of the torch of “Global Christian Leadership.”<sup>74</sup> Within much of their methodology, ideology and the great scope of their ambitions, the resemblance of Korean missionaries to Victorian ones can be remarkable, even if Koreans manage to replicate these patterns in a distinctively Korean manner.

But the Victorians and other past mission eras serve another function as they provide modern Koreans with something denied to most past missionaries: the advantage of hindsight and a sense of the consequences of mistakes. The historic baggage carried by Western, particularly American, missionaries today and the secularisation present in much of the West today acts as a reminder to Korean Christians of the consequences of cultural missteps and loss of enthusiasm for the missionary spirit. The fact that Korean missionaries have been accused by experts like Timothy Kiho Park of falling short of the limited indigenisation church-building principles, epitomised in Korea by the Nevius Principle, espoused by many Western missionaries in the past is a potent impetus towards positive change.<sup>75</sup> At the same time, Korean missionaries should keep in mind that while the imperialist invasions of the past may not exist in their past form, the domineering ideas of the past still remain, even amongst Koreans who were themselves victims of colonialism.

Korean missionaries are often keenly aware that the source of so many of their difficulties comes from culture and the awkwardness and misunderstandings that can result from interactions with Westerners and non-Westerners alike. It is little wonder then that so much effort is being put, especially in education, into getting in step with current cultural standards and theories, often known as contextualisation or interculturalisation. Genuine progress has been made in a number of important areas over the last decade in the form of improving training, stressing the values of relationships and in highlighting the value of culturally sensitive mission. There is hope that the days of Korean missionaries assuming that an overseas church should be run the exact same way as the churches of Seoul could come to an end.

---

<sup>74</sup> Ju Hui Judy Han, “Missionary Destinations,” 4.

<sup>75</sup> Timothy Kiho Park, “A Survey of the Korean Mission Movement,” 119.

But much remains to be done before Korean overseas ministry lives up to the standards of interculturalism described by scholars like Schreiter and Bosch. Too many Korean mission relationships remain at a shallow level, depending upon knowledge of the culture and providing various needs to the community over encouraging deep and mutual interaction. And while there is much desire for interculturalism, there also exists fear of its possibly dangerous effects. Schreiter writes that a real theology of culture focuses on the moment of change (for both parties involved), not stasis.<sup>76</sup> Maintaining a strong conviction in one's own values and beliefs can be an attractive feature of Korean missionaries, but more challenges need to be accepted in welcoming in new elements into their own faith.

It does not help matters that Christian cultural theory in general can be confusing and unclear. When Peter in the previous chapter equated interculturalism with "overcoming culture," he was only incorrect according to some authors. There really is no clear consensus on how mission should relate to culture, whether in the evangelical or more liberal circles other than that culture should be taken seriously. One advantage to this lack of clarity may be that it provides those in Korean mission with more room to devise their own theology in this area.

Engaging in mission with those from other cultures can be an uncomfortable experience for South Korean Protestants. I remember the comment of one MTI student who said, "Missionaries have to match with each other. But sometimes I wonder why we always have to match. I think there is nothing wrong with our (Korean identity)."<sup>77</sup> But while Korean cultural attitudes may at times act as a barrier to effective mission, international mission can also strengthen and draw upon the Korean identity. Koreans have much to offer with their experiences of suffering through and overcoming poverty, living with relative harmony in a multi-religious community and their familiarity with both Asian and Western values.

If Korean missionaries are called upon to go further towards culturally aware mission, it is because they want to do so much for the global Church. Their aims are

---

<sup>76</sup> Schreiter, *The New Catholicism*, 59.

<sup>77</sup> Interview Subject No. 71



no less than to reach the most difficult and resistant countries and even to bring about Christ's Second Coming. They wish to bridge the gap between the past and the present and between rich and poor. The potential to serve as intermediaries is real within a world where distinctions of North and South and First and Third World are becoming more and more meaningless.

While Korean missionaries may hold similarities to those of the past and can learn from their successes and triumphs, they do not have to repeat the patterns of history. As the most prominent non-Western missionary-sending country, the Korean mission movement could demonstrate to the world that the new wave of missionaries can do things differently. Among other things, working to build a better society in the countries that Korean missionaries visit does not have to lead to promoting dependence. And fostering a strong missionary drive should not always equate arrogance and hostile relationships with other religions and churches. But at the moment, only the first steps have been taken in what will no doubt be a long and fascinating journey in global mission for South Korean Protestantism.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahn, Kyo Seong. "Christian Mission and Mongolian Identity: The Religious, Cultural and Political Context." *Studies in World Christianity* 9, no. 1 (2003): 114-35.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Spring Lecture on the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh 1910-2010 Project." 26 April 2003 Conference Presentation; available at [www.towards2010.org.uk/downloads/t2010paper02kyoseongahn.pdf](http://www.towards2010.org.uk/downloads/t2010paper02kyoseongahn.pdf); Internet.
- Ahn, Seung Oh. "The Origin and Direction of Contextualization," *Sonkyowa Sinhak (Mission and Theology)* Vol. 14 (Fall 2004): 229-258.
- Aikman, David. *Jesus in Beijing*. Washington: Regnery, 2003.
- Amaladoss, Michael. "Contextual Theology and Integration." *East Asian Pastoral Review* 40, no. 3 (2003): 266-71.
- An, Choi Hee. *Korean Women and God*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005
- Anderson, Gerald, Coote, Robert, Horner, Norman, Phillips, James, eds. *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994.
- Aram I writers. "The Incarnation of the Gospels in Cultures: A Missionary Event." In *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization*. Eds. James Scherer and Stephen Bevans, 29-41, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999.
- Arnold, Matthew. *Culture and Anarchy*. New York: Macmillan and Company, 1882.
- Baeq, Daniel Shin Jong. "A Study on Trends and Future of Korean-American Short-Term Mission with Special Reference to the Presbyterian Church in America." Unpublished M.Th. diss., Fuller Seminary, 2005.
- Baker, Don. "Looking for God in the Streets of Seoul: The Resurgence of Religion in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Seoul." *Harvard Asia Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (Autumn 2001); available from <http://www.asiaquarterly.com/content/view/108/40/>; Internet
- Barrett, David, ed. *World Christian Encyclopedia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

- Bevans, Stephen. *Models of Contextual Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis, revised 2002 edition.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and Roger Schroeder. "Missiology After Bosch: Reverencing a Classic By Moving Beyond." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 29, no. 9, April 2005
- Beyer, Peter. *Religion and Globalization*. London: Sage, 1994.
- Bonk, Jonathan. *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991.
- Bosch, David. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993.
- Breen, Michael. *The Koreans*. London: Orion, 1998.
- Brooke, James. "South Korea Plans Transit Camp in Mongolia." *New York Times*. 29 September, 2005, Section A, p. 5.
- Brooks, David. "Kicking the Secularist Habit." *The Atlantic Monthly* 291, no. 2 (March 2003): 26-28.
- Brouwer, Steve, Paul Gifford and Susan D. Rose. *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Brown, Arthur Judson. *The New Era in the Philippines*. Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Church, 1903.
- Buruma, Ian. "Korea." *Travel and Leisure* (October 2003)
- Bush, Luis. *Funding Third World Missions: The Pursuit of True Christian Partnership*. Singapore: World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission, 1990.
- Cha, Shinjung. *The Developmental Strategy for Future Overseas Missions*. Seoul: Abide in Christ, 1999.
- Cha, Victor. "South Korea in 2004: Peninsular Flux." *Asian Survey* Vol. 45, no. 1 (January/February 2005): 33-40.
- Chae, Eun-soo. "Missiological Reflections on Nevius Methods." *Chongshin Theological Journal*. 7, no. 1 (Feb. 2002): 142-165.
- Chan, Kim-Kwong, Hunter, Alan. *Protestantism in Contemporary China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

- Chaney, Charles. *The Birth of Missions in America*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1976.
- Cho, Jang Yun. *Factors Contributing to the Development of the Modern Korean Missions Movement: A Historical Analysis*. Unpublished Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002.
- Cho, Paul (now David) Yonggi. 'How the World's Largest Church Got That Way.' *Christianity Today*. 28, no. 8 (May 18, 1984): 50-60.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *More Than Numbers*. Waco: Word Inc., 1984.
- Choi, Jin. *Mission and the Twenty-First Century Ministry of the Korean Church*. D. Min. diss., Claremont, 1992.
- Choi, Young-Woong. "The Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Korea in Shandong, North China, 1913-1957." In *Transcontinental Links in the History of Non-Western Christianity*, ed. Klaus Koschorke, 117-30. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2002.
- Chun, Su-Jin. "Roh in Mongolia: Love Blooms." *Joong Ang Daily*, 22 May 2006; accessed June 2006; available from <http://joongangdaily.joins.com/200605/09/200605092158339479900090309031.html>; Internet.
- Chung, Ah-Young, "Students Studying Abroad Hit Record High of 12,300." *The Korea Times*, 20 March 2005, p. 3.
- Chung, Chai-Sik. *Gospels and Cultures Pamphlet 16: Korea- The Encounter Between the Gospel and Neo-Confucian Culture*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Global Theology for the Common Good: Lessons from Two Centuries of Korean Christianity." *International Review of Mission* 85, no. 339: 523-538.
- Chung, Hojin. "Korean Churches in Edinburgh and the Churches of Scotland." Unpublished paper for the Tartan and Hanbok Conference, May 28, 2004.
- Chung, Hoon-Taik, "Cinderella's Glass Shoes (II): Studies of the Church's Essence and Growth as Reflected in the Korean Church." *Chongshin Theological Journal* 6, no. 1 (February 2001)

- Clark, Donald. *Christianity in Modern Korea*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1986.
- Cox, Harvey. *Fire From Heaven*. London: Cassell, 1996.
- Dalziel, Elizabeth. "Will Mongolia go the way of South Korea?" *Buddhist Channel TV*, 25 September, 2005; accessed June 2006; available from <http://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=1,1752,0,0,1,0>; Internet.
- Davie, Grace. *Europe: The Exceptional Case*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2002.
- Donahue, Bill and Russ Robinson. *Building a Church of Small Groups*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.
- Duggan, John. "Opening the Gospel in a Congregation of Many Cultures." *International Review of Mission* 85, no. 336: 53-62.
- Edwards, Wendy J. Deichmann. "Forging an Ideology for American Missions: Josiah Strong and Manifest Destiny." In *North American Foreign Missions: 1810-1914: Theology, Theory and Policy*, ed. Wilbert Schenk, 163-91. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Escobar, Samuel. *A Time for Mission: The Challenges of Global Christianity*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003.
- Fairbank, John K. "Introduction: The Many Faces of Protestant Mission in China and the United States." In *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, ed. John Fairbank, 1-22. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974.
- Ferguson, Niall. *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*. London: Penguin, 2003.
- Field, James A. "Near East Notes and Far East Queries." In *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*, ed. John Fairbank, 23-55. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974.
- Ford, Liz. "Reports of Britons Arrested in South Korean Teaching Crackdown." *The Guardian*, 26 October 2005; available from <http://guardian.co.uk/Korea/article/0,,1600955,00.html>; Internet.

- Funkschmidt, Kai Michael. "Partnership Between Unequals- Mission Impossible?- Mission Structures Revisited." *International Review of Mission* 91, no. 362 (July 2002): 395-413.
- Gall, Timothy. *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Culture & Daily Life: Vol. 2- Americas*. Cleveland: Eastwood Publications, 1998.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . *Available Light*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000
- Genet, Harry. "Big Trouble at the World's Largest Church." *Christianity Today* 26, no. 2 (Jan. 22, 1982): 30-39.
- Gewurtz, Margo. "United States Attitudes and Policies Toward China." *Pacific Affairs* 64, no. 4 (Winter 1991-2): 566.
- Gittins, Anthony. "Beyond Liturgical Inculturation: Transforming the Deep Structures of Faith." *Irish Theological Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (2004): 47-72.
- Gramsci, Antonio. "Cultural and Ideological Hegemony." In *Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates*, ed. Jeffrey Alexander, Steven Seidman, 47-55. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Gispert-Sauch, George. "Asian Theology." In *The Modern Theologians*, ed. David Ford, pp.455-476, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997.
- Gray, John. *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism*. London: Granta, 2002 ed.
- Grayson, James Huntley. *Korea- A Religious History*. London: Routledge Curzon, 2002 ed.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ . "Cultural Encounter: Korean Protestantism and Other Religious Traditions," *International Bureau of Missionary Research* 25, no. 2 (April, 2001): 66-71.
- Gwak, Change-Dae and Hendricks, Jurgens. "An Interpretation of the Recent Membership Decline in the Korean Protestant Church," *Missionalia* 29, no. 1 (April 2001): 55-68.
- Ha, K. Oanh. "The New Cool: South Korean Pop Culture." *The Tampa Tribune*, 14 October 2005, Baylife, p. 7.



- Han, Chul-Ha, "Involvement of the Korean Church in the Evangelism of Asia." In *Korean Church Growth Explosion*. eds. Bong Rin Ro and Marlin Nelson. Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1995.
- Han, Gil Soo. "Korean Christianity in Multicultural Australia: Is It Dialogical or Segregating Koreans?" *Studies in World Christianity* 10, no. 1 (2004): 114-135.
- Han, Ju Hui Judy. "Missionary Destinations and Diasporic Destiny: Spatiality of Korean/American Evangelism and the Cell Church" [article online]. Berkeley: University of California, 2005, accessed April 2006; available from [http://repositories.cdlib.org/issc/fwp/ISSC\\_WP\\_01/](http://repositories.cdlib.org/issc/fwp/ISSC_WP_01/); Internet.
- Han, Kook Il. "120 Years of Korean Mission and the Future of Korean Mission," *Sonkyohwa Sinhak (Mission and Theology)* 14 (Fall 2004): 109-42, 274-7.
- Han, Kyung-Chik, "The Present and Future of the Korean Church." In *Korean Church Growth Explosion*. eds. Bong Rin Ro and Marlin Nelson, pp. 276-300. Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1995.
- Heredia, Rudolf, "Globalization, Culture, and Religion." In *Church in the Service of Asia's Peoples*. eds. Jacob Kavunkal, Errol D'Lima, Matthew Jayanth, 97-220, Bandra: Vidyapeeth, 2003.
- Hesselgrave, David and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models*, Leicester: Apollos, 1989
- Hiebert, Paul. *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985.
- Hildebrandt, Jonathan. "This Music Has Zafindrony." *African Inland Mission International- Australia* 2, no. 1 (February 2005): 1 and 5.
- Hinton, Keith. *Growing Churches Singapore Style: Ministry in an Urban Context*. Singapore: Overseas Mission Fellowship, 1985.
- Hodous, Lewis. "The Anti-Christian Movement in China." *Journal of Religion* 10, no. 4 (1930): 487-94.
- Honig, A.G. "Asia: The Search for Identity as a Source of Renewal." In *Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction*. Eds. F.J. Verstraelen, A. Camps, L.A. Hoedemaker and M.R. Spindler. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

- Hong, Youngi-gi. "Encounter with Modernity: The 'McDonaldization' and 'Charismatization' of Korean Mega-Churches." *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 365 (April 2003): 239-255.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Charisma of Cho Yonggi and Its Routinization in the Yoido Full Gospel Church." *Journal of Asian Missions* 2, no. 1 (2000): 65-90
- Hutchison, William. *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Moral Equivalent for Imperialism: Americans and the Promotion of 'Christian Civilization'," In *Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era: 1880-1920*. eds. Turben Christensen and William Hutchison, 167-176. Denmark: Christensen Bogtrykkeri, 1982.
- Hwang, Hong-Eyoul. "Searching for a New Paradigm of Church and Mission in a Secularized and Postmodern Context in Korea." *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 364 (Jan. 2003): 84-97.
- Inge, John. *A Christian Theology of Place*. Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003.
- Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Jiayuan, Bao. "China: World Mission Policy." accessed April 2006; available from <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=129>; Internet.
- Jin, Ryu. "U.S. Accepts Seoul's Role of 'Balancer.'" *The Korea Times*, Tuesday, 19 April, 2005; accessed April 2005; available from <http://times.hankooki.com/lpage/nation/200504/kt2005041817222311990.htm>; Internet.
- Johnson, Paul. *A History of Christianity*. London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1976.
- Johnston, William. "Re-Imagining the Other: Inculturation as Cultural Triage." *Colloquium* 34, no. 2 (Nov. 2002): 121-31.
- Johnstone, Patrick and Jason Mandryck, eds. *Operation World*. Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001.
- Johnstone, Patrick. *The Church Is Bigger Than You Think*. Fearn: Christian Focus, 1998.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Strategy for Asia's Christians to Reach Unreached Peoples." In *World Missions: The Asian Challenge*, 331-35. A Compendium of the Asia Missions Congress, 1990.
- Jun, Ho Jin. "Evangelical Challenges to Religious Pluralism in Asian Contexts." *Torch Trinity Journal* 1 (1998): 29-61; accessed July 2005; available from <http://www.ttgst.ac.kr/sub.asp?gubun=09010101>; Internet.
- Jung, Il Nam. "Incarnational Mission and Community Development: Three Korean Case Studies." D. Miss. diss., United Theological Seminary, 2002.
- Kang, Keun-Whan. "A Critical Study on the Early Mission Policies of the Council of Missions in Korea in the Light of the Nevius Plan." *Ching Feng* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 201-20.
- Kang, Wi-Jo. 1997. *Christ and Caesar in Modern Korea*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Kim, Andrew Boyung-Yoon. "Rethinking of Korean Missions." *Journal of Asian Missions* 1, no. 1 (1999): 101-119.
- Kim, Andrew E. 1997. "History of Christianity in Korea: From Its Troubled Beginnings to its Contemporary Success" in *Korea Web Weekly*, available from <http://www.kimsoft.com/1997/xhist.html>; Internet.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Low Cultural Receptivity Toward Foreigners in Korea: The Case of Transnational Migrant Workers." *Korean Observer* 36, No. 1 (Spring 2005):1-20.
- Kim, Byoung Sam. "Toward 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mission in Korea: Making Strategy from a Non-Christian Perspective." D.Miss. dissertation, United Theological Seminary, 1998.
- Kim, Chong H. "Another Reformation on the Horizon." *International Journal of Frontier Mission* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 17-29.
- Kim, Chongho. *Korean Shamanism: The Cultural Paradox*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.
- Kim, Doosik. "Intercultural Short-Term Missions' Influence on Participants, Local Churches, Career Missionaries and Mission Agencies in the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin)." Ph.D. Diss., Reformed Theological Seminary, 2001.

- Kim, Eungi A. "Low Cultural Receptivity Toward Foreigners in Korea: The Case of Transnational Migrant Workers." *Korean Observer* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 1-20.
- Kim, Heung Soo. "Is Christianity a Korean Religion?: One Hundred Years of Protestant Churches in Korea." *Asia-Pacific Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* (Feb. 2004): 108-115.
- Kim, Hwal-Young. "From Asia to Asia: A History of Cross-Cultural Mission Work of the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Hapdong), 1959-1992". Ph.D. dissertation, Reformed Theological Seminary, 1993.
- Kim, Jay Kwon. "The Impact of Mass Communication." In *Korean Church Growth Explosion*. eds. Bong Rin Ro and Marlin Nelson, 132-151. Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1995.
- Kim, Jin-Ho and Lee, Sookjin. "A Retrospect and Prospect on the Korean Modernity and Minjung Theology." *The Journal of Theology and Cultures in Asia* 1: no. 1 (Feb. 2002): 157-75.
- Kim, Kyoung Jae. *Christianity and the Encounter of Asian Religions*. Zoetermeer: Uitgeverji Bockencentrum, 1994.
- Kim, Madison Y. "Korean Evangelical Mission Conference to be Held in 40 Cities in Africa." *Christian Today* (September 6, 2005), accessed May 2006; available from <http://christiantoday.com/news/africa/korean.evangelical.mission.conference.to.be.held.in.40.cities.in.africa/319.htm>; Internet.
- Kim, Myung Hyuk. "Cooperation and Partnership in Missions." In *World Missions: The Asian Challenge*, 100-108. The Compendium of the Asia Missions Conference, 1990.
- Kim, Sebastian. "Communal Conflict, Poverty and Injustice." [article online] accessed May 2006; available from <http://www.martyrmission.cam.ac.uk/CSebKim.wim.htm>; Internet.
- Kim, Steve. "Foreign Workers Seek Comfort at Korean Churches." *The Seoul Times*; available from <http://theseoultimes.com/ST/?url=/ST/db/read.php?idx=5>; Internet.

- Kim, Sung-Ho. "Rapid Modernisation and the Future of Korean Christianity." *Religion* 32, no. 1 (January 2002): 27-37.
- Kim, Sung-jin. "Chey Spurs SK's Globalization Drive." *The Korea Times* 8 March 2005, Section 1, p. 18.
- Kim, Sung-tae. "Historical Evaluation of Theological Models of Contextualization." *Chongshin Theological Journal* 7 no. 1 (Feb. 2002): 78-100.
- Kim, Tae-Sung. "Towards a Holistic Mission in the Twenty-First Century: A Case Study in Mission Theology and Strategy of the Korean Methodist Church." D. Min. diss., Claremont Seminary, 1996.
- Kim, Young Dong, "Korean Church' Mission: From the Early Mission Period to the Korean War." *Sonkyowa Sinhak (Mission and Theology)* Vol. 14 (Fall 2004): 266-70.
- King, Robert. "Extent of Missionary Identification." In *Evangelical Encyclopedia of World Missions*. ed. A. Scott Moreau, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000, 349.
- Koehler, Robert. "The 'Ugly Korean' in Mongolia." *The Marmot's Hole*. 12 October, 2005; accessed June 2006; available from <http://www.rjkoehler.com/2005/10/12/the-ugly-korean-in-mongolia/>; Internet.
- Koh, Peter. "The Cell Group Church Structure: An Evaluation." *Church and Society* Vol. 6, no. 1 (2003): 40-53.
- Koh, Yong-Soo. "Some Factors Which Hamper Social Implications of the Christian Gospel in Korean Church Education." *Korean Presbyterian Journal of Theology* 1, no. 1 (May 2001): 313-337.
- Kraft, Charles. *Anthropology for Christian Witness*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Christianity in Culture*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005 revised edition.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Anthropology, Missiological Anthropology," In *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. ed. A. Scott Moreau, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 66-7.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Cultural Conversion." In *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. ed. A. Scott Moreau, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000, 251.

- Kwak, Pius Seung-Ryong, "Witness to the Gospel and the Korean Church," In *Church in the Service of Asia's Peoples*, eds. Jacob Kavunkal, Errol D'Lima, Mathew Jayanth, 81-97, Bandra: Vidyapeeth Publications, 2003.
- Kwan, Simon Shui-man. "A Discursive History of the Asian Theological Movement- A Critique of Its Binarism." *Journal of Theology and Cultures in Asia* 1, no. 1 (Feb. 2002): 93-133.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Editorial." *Journal of Theologies and Cultures in Asia* 2 (2003): 1.
- Latourette, Kenneth Scott. *The Great Century, A.D. 1800-A.D. 1914, Europe and the United States of America*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1945.
- Leatherwood, Rick. "Mongolia: As a People Movement to Christ Emerges, What Lessons Can We Learn?" *Mission Frontiers* 20, no. 7/8 (July-August 1998): 10-17.
- Lee, Boyung. "Rethinking the Dynamics of Christianity and Culture from a Post-Colonial Feminist Perspective," *Journal of Theologies and Culture in Asia*, 3, (2004): 3-22.
- Lee, David Tai Woong, "Asian Mission Boards and Societies." In *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau, pp. 85-6, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000.
- Lee, Eun-Moo. "West and East Must Get Along- A Korean Missionary Speaks Out." *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (July 1983): 190-95.
- Lee, Hong-Jung. "Beyond Partnership, Towards Networking: A Korean Reflection on Partnership in the Web of God's Mission." *International Review of Mission* 91, no. 363 (October 2002): 577-82.
- Lee, Kwang-Soon. "Growth and Undergrowth of the Korean Church." *Korean Presbyterian Journal* Vol. 1, no. 1 (May 2001): 263-290.
- Lee, Sang-Heung. "Preaching for the Upbuilding of the Church in Transition." D.Phil. diss., University of Pretoria, 2004.
- Lee, Sang Hoon. 'After Church Growth, Then What?' *Asia Journal of Theology*, 1, no. 2 (1987): 498-502.



- Lee, Sang-won. "The South Korean Church's Response to the Modern Economic Reality." *Chongshin Theological Journal* 6, no. 2 (August 2001): 128-49.
- Lingenfelter, Sherwood, *Transforming Culture: A Challenge for Christian Mission*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998
- Marantika, Chris. "God's Plan for His World." In *World Missions: The Asian Challenge*, 23-30, A Compendium of the Asia Missions Congress, 1990.
- McGavran, Donald. *Understanding Church Growth*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980 ed.
- McGrath, Alister. *The Future of Christianity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.
- McQuilkin, Robertson. "Fads in Mission." In *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau, 351. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000.
- Moffett, Samuel Hugh. "The Church in Asia: Getting on the Charts." *Christianity Today* 25, no. 17 (Oct. 2, 1981): 38-40.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A History of Christianity in Asia, Volume II*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005.
- Moll, Rob. "Missions Incredible." *Christianity Today* 50, no. 3 (March 2006): 28-34.
- Moon, Steve S.C. "The Acts of Koreans: A Research Report on Korean Missionary Movement." Available from [www.krim-org/files/The\\_Acts\\_of\\_Koreans.doc](http://www.krim-org/files/The_Acts_of_Koreans.doc); Internet.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Missionary Attrition in Korea: Opinions of Mission Executives." Available from [www.krim.org/english3.html](http://www.krim.org/english3.html).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Recent Korean Missionary Movement: A Record of Growth, and More Growth Needed." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 27, no. 1 (Jan. 2003): 11-17.
- Moreau, A. Scott, ed. "World Council of Churches," *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000.
- Mullins, Mark. "The Empire Strikes Back: Korean Pentecostal Mission to Japan." In *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*, ed. Karla Poewe, 87-99. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Christianity Made in Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998.
- Naisbitt, John. *Megatrends Asia*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishers, 1997.
- Neely, Alan. *Christian Mission: A Case Study Approach*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997.

- Neff, David. "Honoring Pioneers [article online]." *Christianity Today* 50, no. 3 (March 2006), accessed March 2006; available from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/003/18.10.html>; Internet.
- Neill, Stephen. *Colonialism and Christian Mission*. London: Butterworth Press, 1966.
- Nida, Eugene. *Message and Mission: The Communication of the Christian Faith*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1990 ed.
- Niles, Preman D. "World Mission Today." Accessed May 2006; available from <http://www.religion-online.org/shortarticle.asp?title=127>; Internet.
- Oak, Sung-Deuk, "Shamanistic Tan'gun and Christian Hananim: Protestant Missionaries' Interpretation of the Korean Founding Myth, 1805-1934." *Studies in World Christianity* 7, no. 1 (2001): 42-57.
- Oberdorfer, Don. *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.
- Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko. "Introduction: The Historicization of Anthropology," in *Culture Through Time: Anthropological Approaches*, 1-25. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.
- Onish (also Onishi), Norimitsu, "Korean Missionaries Take on the Hard Cases." *New York Times*. 2 November 2002, Section A, p. 1.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Helping North Koreans Defect Is Easy Part, Missionaries Find." *New York Times*, 19 December 2005; accessed 20 December 2005; available from <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/19/international/asia/19missionary.html?ex=1152676800&en=0c31b4877b8477f5&ei=5070>; Internet.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "For China's Youth, Culture Made in South Korea." *New York Times*. 2 January, 2006. Section A, pp. 1 and 7.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Rising Korean Wave: If Seoul sells it, China craves it." *New York Times*. 10 January, 2006; accessed February 2006; available from <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/01/02/news/korea.php>; Internet.
- Oosterom, Lee. *Contemporary Missionary Thought in the Republic of Korea*. Utrecht-Leiden: IIMO, 1990.
- O'Rourke, P.J. *Holidays in Hell*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988.

- Packiam, David. "Introducing the Global Network of Mission Structures." *Mission Frontiers* no. 4 (July-August 2005): 8-10.
- Paik, L. George. *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832-1910*. Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1929.
- Park, Chung-a. "Is 'Hallyu' a One-Way Street?" *The Korea Times*, 21 April 2005, accessed 22 April 2005; available from <http://times.hankooki.com/lpage/200504/kt2005042117374410440.htm>; Internet.
- Park, Chung-Se. *A Model of Cross-Cultural Mission in Korea- A Comparative Study of Bible Stories and Korean Legends*. D. Min. diss., APS San Francisco Theological Seminary, 1990.
- Park, Seong-Won. "A Survey on Mission Work in the Korean Churches." *International Review of Mission* 86, no. 342 (July 1997): 329-333.
- Park, Timothy Kiho. *A Two-Thirds World Mission on the Move*. Ph.D. diss., Fuller Seminary, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Korean Mission Boards and Societies." In *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission*, ed. A. Scott Moreau, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000, 546-7.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Survey of the Korean Mission Movement." *Journal of Asian Mission* 4, no. 1 (2002): 111-119.
- Park, Young Whan. "David J. Bosch, the Korean Church, and World Mission." *Mission Focus: Annual Review* 3 (2003 Supplement): 22-26.
- Pate, Larry. *From Every People: A Handbook of Two-Thirds World Missions with Directory/ Histories/ Analysis*. Monrovia: MARC, 1989.
- Pierce, Kenwyn. "Welcoming Strangers." *Inside Out*. 36 (October/November 2003): 12-13.
- Pierson, Paul, "Ecumenical Movement." In *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. ed. A. Scott Moreau, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000, 300-303.
- Pilario, Daniel. "'Locus Theologicus' Place, Theology, and Globalization." *Bijdragen International Journal in Philosophy and Theology* 63, no. 1 (2002): 71-98.

- Rhee, Hyung-Ki. "The 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Christianity- The Restitution of Life-in-Fullness of North East Asia in the Context of Postmodernism and Globalization." *Korea Presbyterian Journal of Theology* 3 (May 2003): 66-84.
- Ro, Bong Rin. "Asian Pastors for Asian Churches," *Christianity Today* 25, no. 17 (October 2, 1981): 41.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1995. "The Korean Church: God's Chosen People for Evangelism." In *Korean Church Growth Explosion*. eds. Bong Rin Ro and Marlin Nelson, 12-42.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "South Korea: Bankrupting the Prosperity Gospel," *Christianity Today* 42, no. 13 (Nov. 16, 1998): 58-61.
- Ro, Yun Shik, *Sonkyonge Sonkyoka Issnunka (Mission in the Bible)*. Seoul: Handulchulpansa, 2005.
- Robert, Dana. "The Crisis of Missions: Premillennial Mission Theory and the Origins of Independent Evangelical Missions." In *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*. eds. Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Schenk, 29-46. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Premillennialism." In *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. ed. A. Scott Moreau, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000, 783-4.
- Robertson, Roland. *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. London: Sage, 1992.
- Sanneh, Lamin. *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991.
- Scanlon, Charles. "South Korea's Zealous Mid-East Missionaries." *BBC News*. 6 May, 2003; accessed May 2006; available from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3690259.stm>; Internet.
- Schenk, Wilbert R. "Introduction." In *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy*. ed. Wilbert R. Schenk, 1-9. Grand Rapids: Cambridge, 2004.
- Scherer, James, Bevans, Stephen, eds. *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization: Faith and Culture*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999.

- Schreiter, Robert. "Communication and Interpretation Across Cultures: Problems and Prospects." *International Review of Mission* 85, no. 337 (April, 1996): 227-39.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Constructing Local Theologies*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The New Catholicity: Theology Between the Global and the Local*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997.
- Seo, Bo-Myung. "Overcoming of Globalization and the Task of Theology in Asia." *Journal of Theology and Cultures in Asia* 2, no. 2 (2003): 217-32.
- Seok, Yong-Guen. "Globalization and the Implications for Decolonization Theology." *Journal of Theology and Cultures in Asia* 2, no. 2 (2003): 203-16.
- Shorter, Aylward. *Evangelization and Culture*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988.
- Smith, David. *Mission After Christendom*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003.
- Sohn, Seok Won. "History and Perspective for Korean Missions." *Mission Focus Annual Review* 11 (2003 Supplement): 140-157.
- Son, Bong-Ho. "Some Dangers of Rapid Church Growth." In *Korean Church Growth Explosion*. Ed. Bong Rin Ro, 256-300. Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1995.
- Stafford, Tim. "A Captivating Vision." *Christianity Today* 48, no. 4 (April 2004): 84-86.
- Suh, David Kwang-sun. *The Korean Minjung in Christ*. Kowloon: Christian Conference of Asia, 1991.
- Suh, Jung Woon. *Spirituality and Theology in Mission: An Asian Perspective*. Seoul: Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary Press, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mission of the Korean Church." accessed June 2006; available from <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=134>; Internet.
- Sung, Deuk. 'Shamanistic Tan'gun and Christian Hananim: Protestant Missionaries' Interpretation of the Korean Founding Myth, 1805-1934.' *Studies in World Christianity*, 7 (1): 42-57.
- Taylor III, James H. "Missions Strategy for World Evangelization." In *World Missions: The Asian Challenge*, A Compendium of the Asia Missions Congress, 1990.

- Thomas, Juliet, "Issues from the Indian Perspective," In *Deliver Us From Evil*, eds: A. Scott Moreau, Tokunboh Adeyemo, David Burnett, Bryant Myers, Hwa Yung, Monrovia: MARC, 2002.
- Thomas, Norman, ed. *Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity*. Orbis: Maryknoll, 1995.
- Vaughan, John N. 1984. *The World's 20 Largest Churches*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- Vaughn, Carol Ann. "Missionary Returns and Cultural Conversions in Alabama and Shandong: the Latter Years of Madam Gao (Martha Foster Crawford)." In *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory and Policy*, ed. Wilber Shenk, 251-9. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Van Biema, David. "Missionaries Under Cover." *Time* 161, no. 26 (30 June 2003): 36-44.
- Verstaelen, F.J., L.A. Hoedemaker, and M.R. Spindler, eds. "Introduction." In *Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Walls, Andrew. *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The American Dimension in the History of the Missionary Movement." In *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*. eds. Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Schenk, 1-25. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- West, Charles C. *Power, Truth and Community in Modern Culture*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999.
- Wilfred, Felix. "Religions Face to Face with Globalization: Some Reflections Against the Asian Background." *Journal of Theology and Cultures in Asia* 2 (2003): 31-53.
- Wilson, A.N. *The Victorians*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003.



- Winter, Ralph. *The Two Structures of God's Effective Ministry*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Editorial." *Mission Frontiers*. January-February 1997; accessed June 2006; <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/1997/0102/jf971.htm>; Internet.
- Yang, Guen Seok. "Inter Faith Dialogue and Christian Mission in Korea." Network for Inter Faith Concerns, Accessed 27 July 2006; available from <http://www.anglicannifcon.org/Korea.htm>; Internet.
- Yi, Yumi. "The Prodigals: A Religious and Ethnic Examination of Korean-Russians in Mozdok." *The University of Georgia's Journal for Undergraduate Research Opportunities*, Best of CURO 2003, Accessed April 2006; available from <http://www.uga.edu/juro/2003/yi.htm>; Internet.
- You, Bin. "Asian Theology and Global Ethic: A Reflection on Constructing Asian Theology in the Era of Globalization," *Journal of Theology and Cultures in Asia* 3 (2004): 193-205.

## Interview Information

In this section, I have compiled information about all of the interviews conducted during my two main research trips. The first one began in August of 2002 and ended in July, 2003. During that period, I worked as an English teacher in Seoul and, as I had not yet begun my Ph.D. programme, my interviews were much less specific in nature than they would be during my second time in Seoul when I had selected a thesis topic. Some of the interviews during this period come from two short-term mission trips I took; one to Northwest China (the exact location must remain secret due to the covert nature of the mission) and one to Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

My second trip involved four months (February to June of 2005) largely spent working as a teacher for the Missionary Training Institute (MTI) of Seoul, though I also conducted a number of interviews outside MTI. I have included separate sections at the end for the MTI interviews with students and staff. In certain cases, I will update in the "Information" section what has since happened to the people that I interviewed during my first visit when I caught up with them on the second trip. In between these two periods in Seoul, I interviewed a few relevant Korean scholars during my time at the University of Edinburgh.

Most of the interview subjects will not be identified by name with some exceptions where the person is an established source on Korean religion and mission. The information listed below includes the date and location of the interview, race and nationality, sex, age and additional information. All of the South Koreans interviewed are Korean in race, as are virtually all legal citizens of the country. Most of the ages listed are general estimates. Most of the interviews involve one particular period of questioning, but some (especially for the MTI students) came from questions over the three month spring term and will so be noted.

Number: 1	Date of Interview: 25/9/02
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: American
Sex/Age: Female, 40s	Information: Karen Ridge is an OMF missionary who worked for Onnuri English Ministry at the time. Now works in Singapore.

Number: 2	Date of Interview: 29/12/03
Location of Interview: Northwest China	Race/Nationality: American
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: Onnuri-sponsored missionary now working in Tibet. Was visiting missionaries in the area at time of interview.

Number: 3	Date of Interview: 1/1/03
Location of Interview: Northwest China	Race/Nationality: American
Sex/Age: Female, 24	Information: Was a fellow member of the short-term mission trip. Is now an Onnuri-sponsored M.Div. student at Torch Trinity in Seoul.

Number: 4	Date of Interview: 12/1/03
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: American
Sex/Age: Male, early 40s	Information: This subject is a missionary and pastor who recently worked in Korean churches.

Number: 5	Date of Interview: 12/1/03
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 30s	Information: This was a joint interview with number four, as the two are a married couple. She is also a trained missionary.

Number: 6	Date of Interview: 19/1/03
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean American
Sex/Age: Female, 20s	Information: This subject attended Onnuri's English services and was a short-term missionary in Cambodia. She now attends a U.S. seminary

Number: 7	Date of Interview: 15/2/03
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: South Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 50s	Information: This subject is a Methodist minister who worked in the U.S. for several decades before returning to Seoul.
Number: 8	Date of Interview: 20/2/03
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: South Korean
Sex/Age: Female, late 20s	Information: At the time of the interview, she was preparing to go to Poland as a missionary with Onnuri, where she is now.
Number: 9	Date of Interview: 23/2/03
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: New Zealander
Sex/Age: Male, 20s	Information: Was a short-term missionary on several trips to Cambodia and now works in Japan as an Onnuri missionary.
Number: 10	Date of Interview: 9/3/03
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: British
Sex/Age: Male, 30s	Information: He was Onnuri English Ministry's mission leader at the time, but now works for the Korean office of Frontiers, a Muslim outreach organisation.
Number: 11	Date of Interview: 9/3/03
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 30s	Information: Number 7 and 8 are husband and wife and were interviewed together. Like her husband, she has been active in mission to Muslims.
Number: 12	Date of Interview: 16/4/03
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, late 30s	Information: One of my English pupils, she is now a business interpreter but did social work in Kenya with a Christian agency.
Number: 13	Date of Interview: 18/4/03
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Singaporean Chinese
Sex/Age: Female, late 20s	Information: A Singaporean living in Seoul, I met her at an Onnuri prayer group for missionaries.

Number: 14	Date of Interview: 30/5/03
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 50s	Information: Towards the end of my teaching, I held a group interview with some of my classes. This subject, a Catholic businessman, and the next four ones were the participants.
Number: 15	Date of Interview: 30/5/03
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 62	Information: Part of the "round table" interview, this subject was a non-religious Korean male.
Number: 16	Date of Interview: 30/5/03
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 20s	Information: Part of the "round table" interview, she is a Protestant who attends Onnuri.
Number: 17	Date of Interview: 30/5/03
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, early 40s	Information: Part of the "round table" interview, she is an English tutor and is non-religious.
Number: 18	Date of Interview: 30/5/03
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 30s	Information: Part of the "round table" interview, this subject is a Christian and a housewife.
Number: 19	Date of Interview: From 22/6/03-29/6/03
Location of Interview: Phnom Penh, Cambodia	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: This Korean pastor, who was sponsored by Onnuri at the time and by a number of other churches, has set up seven churches in Cambodia. I visited his operation as part of an Onnuri short-term mission trip.

Number: 20	Date of Interview: 23/6/03
Location of Interview: Phnom Penh, Cambodia	Race/Nationality: Cambodian
Sex/Age: Female, 18	Information: A former student at Number 19's main church, she now teaches English to children at the church.
Number: 21	Date of Interview: 28/6/03-29/6/03
Location of Interview: Phnom Penh	Race/Nationality: Cambodian
Sex/Age: Male, 23	Information: One of a number of children at the Cambodian mission that I interviewed at Number 19's main church.
Number: 22	Date of Interview: 28/6/03-29/6/03
Location of Interview: Phnom Penh	Race/Nationality: Cambodian
Sex/Age: Female, 17	Information: See Number 21.
Number: 23	Date of Interview: 28/6/03-29/6/03
Location of Interview: Phnom Penh	Race/Nationality: Cambodian
Sex/Age: Female, 18	Information: See Number 21.
Number: 24	Date of Interview: 28/6/03-29/6/03
Location of Interview: Phnom Penh	Race/Nationality: Cambodian
Sex/Age: Male, 19	Information: See Number 21.
Number: 25	Date of Interview: 28/6/03-29/6/03
Location of Interview: Phnom Penh	Race/Nationality: Cambodian
Sex/Age: Female, 16	Information: See Number 21.
Number: 26	Date of Interview: 28/6/03-29/6/03
Location of Interview: Phnom Penh	Race/Nationality: Cambodian
Sex/Age: Female, 15	Information: See Number 21.
Number: 27	Date of Interview: 28/6/03-29/6/03
Location of Interview: Phnom Penh	Race/Nationality: Cambodian
Sex/Age: Female, 18	Information: See Number 21.
Number: 28	Date of Interview: 28/6/03-29/6/03
Location of Interview: Phnom Penh	Race/Nationality: Cambodian
Sex/Age: Female, 19	Information: See Number 21.



Number: 29	Date of Interview: April-August 2004
Location of Interview: Edinburgh	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: This subject is a Korean herbal doctor training to be a missionary, first in Edinburgh and now near London. I had a series of short interviews with him while we traded language instruction.

Number: 30	Date of Interview: 7/6/04
Location of Interview: Edinburgh	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: This subject is a fellow Ph.D. student at New College where he is working on cultural issues in mission in India. He was involved with the University Bible Fellowship, but now belongs to a less authoritative splinter group.

Number: 31	Date of Interview: 16/8/04
Location of Interview:	Race/Nationality: White American
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: He is a worker with United Bible Societies in Peru.

Number: 32	Date of Interview: 11/11/04
Location of Interview: Sheffield	Race/Nationality: White British
Sex/Age: Male, 50s	Information: This subject is Dr. James Huntley Grayson, a professor of Korean Studies at the University of Sheffield.

Number: 33	Date of Interview: 4/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: White American
Sex/Age: Female, 30s	Information: She is an Onnuri Yangjae member who teaches at a university and has been involved in short-term domestic and foreign mission projects.

Number: 34	Date of Interview: 7/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: Steve S.C. Moon is the head of Korean Research Institute for Mission, perhaps the foremost group that gathers statistics and analyzes Korean mission. He helps run the Global Missionary Training Centre, which trains Korean missionaries.

Number: 35	Date of Interview: 9/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Myanmese
Sex/Age: Female, 20s	Information: This subject is a Th.D. student at Chongshin University.

Number: 36	Date of Interview: 10/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean American
Sex/Age: Female, 20s	Information: She runs an English-language service at a Yonsei university, while also taking some classes.

Number: 37	Date of Interview: 11/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean American
Sex/Age: Male, 20s	Information: This subject is an English teacher who at the time was a mission leader at Onnuri Yangjae.

Number: 38	Date of Interview: 11/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 20s	Information: This interview was in conjunction with number 37. She is a business woman who has been involved in different short-term mission projects.

Number: 39	Date of Interview: 14/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean-American
Sex/Age: Female, 40s	Information: Elaine Kim was the temporary executive director of the Korean branch of Worldwide Evangelization for Christ (WEC) at the time. She and her husband (Number 90) had worked as missionaries to Mongolia.

Number: 40	Date of Interview: 14/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: Dr. Sang-keun Kim is a professor of missions at Yonsei University.

Number: 41	Date of Interview: 16/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: White American
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: Rev. Bill Majors leads the English service at Younknak Church. The interview was in conjunction with Number 41.

Number: 42	Date of Interview: 16/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 30s	Information: Rev. Kim In is part of the mission ministry team at Younknak.

Number: 43	Date of Interview: 20/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: American
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: He is a mission leader at Onnuri-Seobinggo and also teaches at a Christian school.

Number: 44	Date of Interview: 20/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, late 50s	Information: She is a member of Yoido and a part-time evangelist who attends Onnuri English services to improve her language skills and learn Western culture.

Number: 45	Date of Interview: 21/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Japanese
Sex/Age: Female, 40s	Information: Dr. Eiko Takamizawa is a professor of mission at Torch Trinity.

Number: 46	Date of Interview: 23/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 30s	Information: This subject works for the Sarang Mission Department.

Number: 47	Date of Interview: 24/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean-American
Sex/Age: Male, late 30s	Information: Rev. Leo Rhee is the pastor at Onnuri Yangjae's English service.

Number: 48	Date of Interview: 25/2/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, late 20s	Information: This subject is training with WEC and taught missionary children (MKs) in Mongolia for 2 years.

Number: 49	Date of Interview: 10/3/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 30s	Information: This subject is in the late stages of training with WEC Korea. He has done mission work in Thailand and now wishes to go to India.

Number: 50	Date of Interview: 13/3/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: This subject is a professor at Seoul National University who spent many years in the United States.

Number: 51	Date of Interview: 17/3/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 30s	Information: This pastor and martial arts instructor is a WEC candidate with short-term experience in Thailand. He wants to work in India.

Number: 52	Date of Interview: 25/4/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: The subject holds a position with the Methodist Church in Korea, but requested that I not give specific details. He has also worked with the United Methodist Church in the United States.

Number: 53	Date of Interview: 21/5/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: White American
Sex/Age: Female, 30s	Information: She attends Onnuri Seobinggo and works as an English teacher. On Sundays, she is part of an Onnuri rural mission team that formed after a short-term trip to Sri Lanka.

Number: 54	Date of Interview: 21/5/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 40s	Information: This subject is married to an American soldier and recently returned from a long stay in the U.S.

Number: 55	Date of Interview: 22/5/05
Location of Interview: Seoul	Race/Nationality: White American
Sex/Age: Male, 20s	Information: He is a member of Onnuri Yangjae who volunteers with North Korean migrants and operates short trips to and prayer meetings for North Korea.

Number: 56	Date of Interview: 17/2/06
Location of Interview: Edinburgh	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: "Peter" has worked as a Hapdong missionary in China for 13 years.

### MTI Student, Staff and Visitor Interviews

#### MTI Teachers and Staff:

Number: 57	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, late 30s	Information: Mihyang Choi is the acting director of MTI and a former student.

Number: 58	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: White Australian
Sex/Age: Female, 70s	Information: This retired widow, typical of the older volunteer teachers MTI relies upon, has taught several past terms.

Number: 59	Date of Interview: 13/4/05
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: White American
Sex/Age: Male, 50s	Information: An Orthodox Presbyterian minister who has taught on and off at MTI since 1996.

Number: 60	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: White Australian
Sex/Age: Female, 50s	Information: This subject was a first-time teacher at MTI.

Number: 61	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: White Canadian
Sex/Age: Male, 60s	Information: This teacher had taught at MTI a few times before.

Number: 62	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: White Welsh
Sex/Age: Male, 30s	Information: This former teacher and ordained minister still lived at MTI and helped out occasionally.

Number: 63	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: White Dutch
Sex/Age: Female, 60s	Information: A former missionary in Africa with Africa Inland Mission, Janny Van der Klis has taught at MTI on and off for the past several years.

### *MTI Students*

Number: 64	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 30s	Information: This student has worked as a missionary in Japan for several years before coming to MTI on her sabbatical.

Number: 65	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 30s	Information: She has taught in a Korean-sponsored university in China in her prior missionary career.

Number: 66	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality:
Sex/Age: Male, 60s	Information: He and his wife were MTI's oldest students. Having gained a fortune as a businessman, he helped to form WEC Korea and is contemplating entering the field as a missionary.



Number: 67	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: "Jeremiah" only studied in MTI for a few weeks. He works with children in Sri Lanka.

Number: 68	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 30s	Information: This student worked in a church previously and was searching for sponsorship.

Number: 69	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 30s	Information: This student was still forming her future plans, but intended to go to Mongolia for the summer.

Number: 70	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 20s	Information: She wanted to set up a ministry and a dental clinic with a tribe in China.

Number: 71	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 30s	Information: An example of how MTI sometimes lets in pastors who do not intend to become missionaries, he hoped to learn more English to communicate with international visitors in his Itaewon church.

Number: 72	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 30s	Information: This student has gone on various short-term mission trips, though the MTI staff doubted he could be a viable career missionary with his low communication and social skills.

Number: 73	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 30s	Information: He and his wife were affiliated with WEC, though both were interested in different mission fields.

Number: 74	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 40s	Information: This quiet student was seeking a long-term vision for mission. After leaving MTI, she decided to go to Australia to stay with No. 57.

Number: 75	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 30s	Information: This WEC affiliated student had previously worked in Mongolia.

Number: 76	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 20s	Information: This young student was shaping his vision and trying to determine whether to seek further education.

Number: 77	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 19	Information: MTI's youngest student, he was taking a break from ministerial studies, but is considering working as a missionary in China upon graduation.

Number: 78	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 50s	Information: An ordained minister in rural South Korea, this student went to visit relatives in the U.S. after graduation.

Number: 79	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 30s	Information: She had worked in Turkey with a frontier-oriented mission group. She hopes to focus on discipleship and may join a new group, though she wants to return to Turkey.

Number: 80	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 30s	Information: He and his wife (also in MTI) lead a migrant ministry, while hoping to go to Turkmenistan.

Number: 81	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 30s	Information: This student was seeking a mission organisation and exploring different mission options.

Number: 82	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 20s	Information: He is studying theology in Canada and wants to be a pastor who supports mission.

Number: 83	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 30s	Information: Affiliated with Onnuri and after extended work in youth ministry, this hairdresser hopes to go to Afghanistan.

Number: 84	Date of Interview: Ongoing
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 30s	Information: She was a missionary to Gambia who spent part of her sabbatical at MTI.

### *MTI. Visitors*

Number: 85	Date of Interview: 4/3/05
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 30s	Information: This MTI graduate is now working as a missionary in Israel.

Number: 86	Date of Interview: 6/3/05
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 40	Information: This visitor was a director at Serving in Mission Korea.

Number: 87	Date of Interview: 3/17/05
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Kenyan
Sex/Age: Male, 30s	Information: He was a pastor studying in Seoul through Korean sponsorship.

Number: 88	Date of Interview: 1/4/05
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: This businessman and MTI graduate hoped to set up a MTI-style school in Chicago.

Number: 89	Date of Interview: 19/4/05
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: He was visiting as a representative with New Tribes Mission Korea.

Number: 90	Date of Interview: 13/5/05
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, late 40s	Information: The husband of No. 39, Yong Cheung Lee was a temporary WEC Korea director who was planning to move to England as Deputy Director.

Number: 91	Date of Interview: 13/5/05
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Dutch
Sex/Age: Male, 40s	Information: He is a regional director with WEC in East Asia.

Number: 92	Date of Interview: 13/5/05
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: White American
Sex/Age: Female, 40s	Information: She works with her husband (No. 91) in WEC.

Number: 93	Date of Interview: 26/5/05
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Male, 20s	Information: He is a Sarang member who is working to set up a ministry in Sierra Leone.

Number: 94	Date of Interview: 26/5/05
Location of Interview: MTI	Race/Nationality: Korean
Sex/Age: Female, 30s	Information: A graduate of MTI, she is helping to run a migrant ministry in Seoul while waiting for her husband to finish his studies so they can go overseas.

# Tables

*Table #1:* Steve S.C. Moon, "The Recent Korean Missionary Movement: A Record of Growth, and More Growth Needed," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 27, no. 1 (January 2003): 11.

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Missionaries</b>	<b>Two-Year % of Growth</b>
1990	1,645	-----
1992	2,576	56.6
1994	3,272	27.0
1996	4,402	34.5
1998	5,948	35.1
2000	8,103	36.2
2002	10,745	32.6 (est.)

*Table #2:* *Operation World*, Eds.: Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryck, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001) The statistics are from 2000.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Agencies</b>	<b>Total Foreign Miss.</b>	<b>Total National Miss.</b>	<b>Cross- Cultural %</b>
South Korea	46,843,989	140	10,646	12,279	91.6
Singapore	3,566,614	39	407	773	55.5
India	1,013,661,777	233	352	41,064	51.7
U.S.A.	278,357,141	632	46,381	64,084	80.7
Great Britain	58,830,160	166	5,666	8,164	88.3



Table #3: David Barret, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001 ed.), 682.

	1900	1970	Mid-1990	Annual change, 1990-2000
Total Christians	0.5	18.3	39.9	1.12
Protestants	0.1	6.9	18.5	1.10
Roman Catholics	0.5	2.6	7.6	1.23
Independents	0.0	6.2	16.2	1.03
Ethnoreligionists	81.3	39.2	16.3	0.46
Buddhists	10.0	16.7	15.6	0.69
New Religionists	0.1	10.6	15.1	0.99
Confucianists	8.0	14.9	11.4	0.66
Nonreligious	0.0	0.3	1.3	2.02

	Mid-1995	Mid-2000	Mid-2025 (estimated)
Total Christians	40.2	40.8	43.2
Protestants	18.7	18.9	21.3
Roman Catholics	7.8	7.9	9.1
Independents	16.3	16.4	18.1
Ethnoreligionists	16.2	15.6	15.5
Buddhists	15.4	15.3	13.9
New Religionists	15.2	15.2	15.4
Confucianists	11.2	11.1	9.6
Nonreligious	1.5	1.5	1.8

Table #4: Don Baker, "Looking for God in the Streets of Seoul: The Resurgence of Religion in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Korea," *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, (Autumn 2001): 4. Available at [www.fas.harvard.edu/~asiactr/haq/200104/0104a002.htm](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~asiactr/haq/200104/0104a002.htm); Internet

**Percentage of Total South Korean Population Living in Cities of 50,000 People or More:**

Year	Percentage
1960	25%
1966	33%
1970	41.1%
1975	48.4%
1980	57.3%
1985	65.4%
1990	74.4%
1995	78.5%

Table #5: *Operation World*, Eds. Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryck, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001) 386. Statistics are from the year 2000.

	Population %	Adherents	Ann. Growth
Non-Religious	35.02	16,404,765	+0.4
Christian	31.67	14,835,500	+1.9
Buddhist	23.89	11,191,029	+1.0
Indigeneous	8.00	3,747,519	-1.5
Other	0.80	374,752	+1.1
Chinese	0.47	220,167	+0.8
Baha'i	0.08	37,475	+3.6
Muslim	0.07	32,791	+4.0

	Denominations	Affiliated %	Adherents	Ann. Growth
Protestant	151	36.19	16,954,000	+4.5
Independent	18	1.15	539,000	+3.8
Anglican	1	0.16	75,000	+4.6
Catholic	1	8.12	3,805,000	+2.1
Marginal	59	3.75	1,757,000	+1.0
Doubly Affiliated		-17.70	-8,291,000	n.a.

Table #6: Chang-Dae Gwak and Jurgens Hendricks, "An Interpretation of the Recent Membership Decline in the Korean Protestant Church," *Missionalia* 29, No. 1, (April 2001): 59. (Taken from *The Yearbook of Religions in Korea*)

	1965	1970	1975	1980
Protestants	2,236,000	3,205,309	4,019,313	7,180,627
Catholics	595,900	765,109	1,012,209	1,321,293
Buddhists	4,551,370	6,024,539	11,972,930	12,329,720
Confucianists	4,223,000	4,423,000	4,723,493	5,182,902
Other	2,311,720	2,412,242	3,548,208	4,477,813
Total	13,917,900	16,830,199	25,276,153	30,492,355
Total Population	28,578,000	30,720,000	33,949,000	37,440,100

	1985	1990	1995
Protestants	10,312,812	12,532,110	13,909,284
Catholics	2,423,181	2,739,200	3,580,113
Buddhists	19,897,366	22,769,020	22,400,050
Confucianists	10,290,167	10,204,720	10,185,001
Other	5,164,210	7,053,580	18,294,904
Total	48,087,737	55,298,630	68,369,352
Total Population	40,419,652	42,790,000	44,554,000

Table #7: Young-gi Hong, "Encounter with Modernity: The 'McDonaldization' and 'Charismatization' of Korean Mega-churches, *International Review of Mission*, 92, No. 365, (April 2003): 240.

**The Profile of 15 Korean Protestant Mega-churches in 2002**

Church	Est. Year	Founder or Current Pastor (installation year)	Denomination	Location	Est. Adult Worshipper
Youngnak	1945	Han, Kyong-jik (Yi, Chul-sin, 1997)	Presbyterian, Tong-Hap	Seoul	13,000
Myungsung	1980	Kim, Sam-hwan	Presbyterian, Tong-Hap	Seoul	24,000
Ju-an	1955	Na, Kyum-il (1978)	Presbyterian, Tong-Hap	Inchon	15,000
Somang	1977	Kwak, Sun-hee	Presbyterian, Tong-Hap	Seoul	22,000
Onnuri	1985	Ha, Yong-jo	Presbyterian, Tong-Hap	Seoul	17,000
Chunghyun	1953	Kim, Chang-in (Kim, Sung-kwan, 1997)	Presbyterian, Hap-Tong	Seoul	13,000
Sarang-eui	1978	Ok, Han-heum	Presbyterian, Hap-Tong	Seoul	18,000
Kwanglim	1953	Kim, Sun-do (1971)	Methodist	Seoul	25,000
Yoido Full Gospel	1958	Cho, Yong-gi	Assemblies of God	Seoul	230,000
Full Gospel Inchon	1983	Choi, Sung-kyu	Assemblies of God	Inchon	
Eunhye wa Chilli	1981	Cho, Yong-mok	Assemblies of God	Anyang	50,000
Sungnak	1969	Kim, Ki-dong	Southern Baptist	Seoul	23,000
Man Min Choon-ang	1982	Yi, Jae-rok	Unification Holiness	Seoul	12,000

Table #8: *World Christian Encyclopedia* Available at <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/>; Internet.

Country	Sent Missionaries (defined as “missionaries working abroad”)
South Korea	5,500
Singapore	500
India	7,000
U.S.A.	118,600
Great Britain	18,500

Table #9: Steve S.C. Moon, “The Recent Korean Missionary Movement,” 12.

**Largest Korean Mission Agencies in 2000**

Agency	Number of Members
1. Global Missionary Society	1,021
2. University Bible Fellowship	889
3. Tonghap Presbyterian Mission Board	616
4. Methodist Mission Board	592
5. Global Missionary Fellowship	310
6. Baptist Mission Board	277
7. Assembly of God Mission Board	269
8. Kaehyuk Presbyterian Mission Board	231
9. Koshin Presbyterian Mission Board	213
10. Holiness Church Mission Board	197

Table #10: Steve S.C. Moon, “The Recent Korean Missionary Movement,” 12.

**Top Ten Host Countries for Missionaries in 2000**

1.) China 781 missionaries	6.) Thailand 233 missionaries
2.) Philippines 527 missionaries	7.) Indonesia 216 missionaries
3.) Japan 463 missionaries	8.) United States 183 missionaries
4.) Russia 359 missionaries	9.) India 160 missionaries
5.) Germany 288 missionaries	10.) Uzbekistan 138 missionaries

Table #11: The Global Missionary Society site; Available at [www.gms.or.kr/ENG/a5.html](http://www.gms.or.kr/ENG/a5.html); Internet.

**Type of Work for GMS Missionaries**

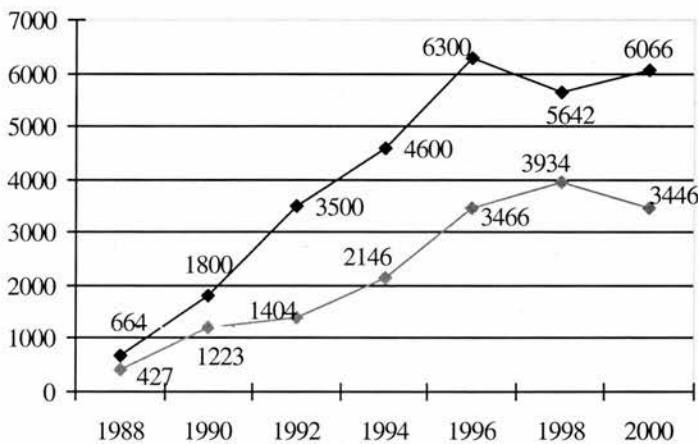
Type of Mission Work	Number
Church Planting	432
Bible College and Seminary	176
Christian School	129
Social Welfare	118
Local Leader Training	85
Unreached People	46
Medical Clinic	32
Campus Ministry	25

Table #12: Steve S.C. Moon, "The Acts of Koreans," Available at [http://krim.org/files/remap\\_presentation.ppt#299,18](http://krim.org/files/remap_presentation.ppt#299,18) Age Distribution(1994); Internet.

**Age Distribution (1994)**

Age	Percentage of Total Number of Missionaries
20s	18%
30s	52%
40s	22%
50s	6%
60s	2%

Table #13: Mission Korea Statistics for Short-Term Mission, Available at <http://www.missionkorea.org/page/home.htm>; Internet





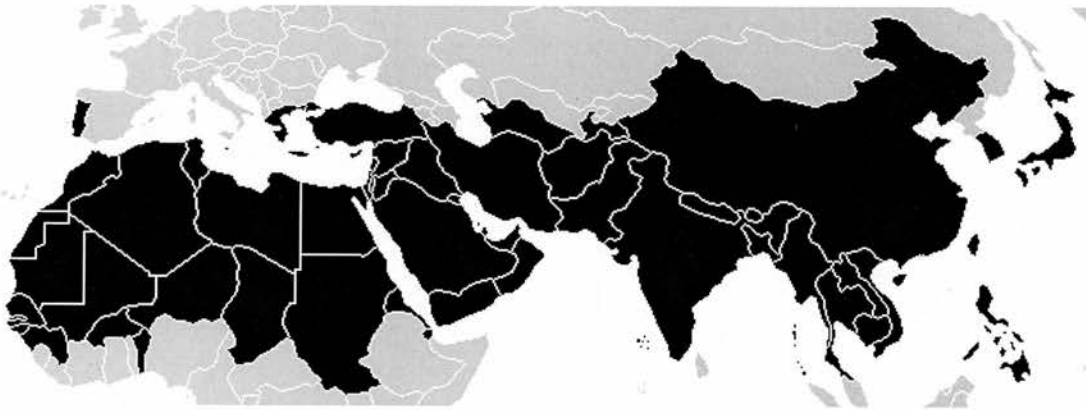
# Pictures

## Picture Number 1:

Map of the 10/20 Window

Accessed 20 September 2006; Available at

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/5/57/40\\_Window\\_world\\_map;](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/5/57/40_Window_world_map;)  
Internet.



**Picture Number 2:**

Accessed 29 October 2005; Available at <http://www.kimchihead.com/?p=36>; Internet

## Crazy Korean Missionaries



EDITORIAL CARTOON COPYRIGHT © THE KOREA TIMES

**Picture Number 3:**

Accessed 2 February 2006; available at <http://intercp.net/>; Internet.

::: interCP(전문인국제협력단) :::

Page 1 of 2

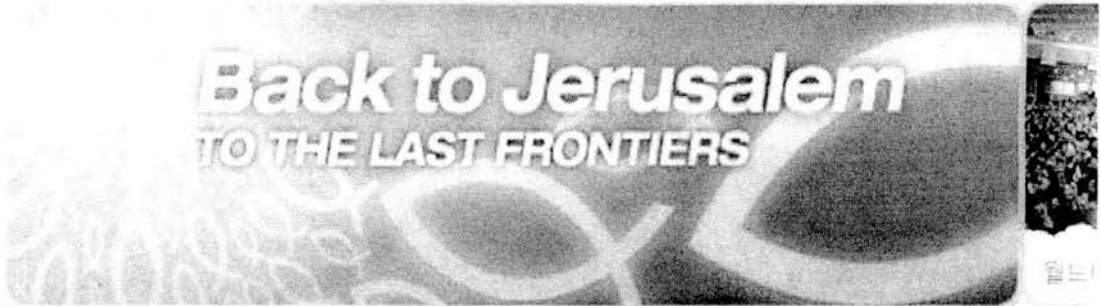


WWW.INTERCP.NET  
**인터콕 INTERCP**  
TO THE LAST FRONTIER

Home | Sitem

지역

InterCP소개 | 코리아미션컬리지 | 전문사역분야 | 해외프로젝트 | 증축별홈페이지 | 선교지연결프로그램 | >



코리아미션컬리지

비전스쿨

미션스쿨

여성비전스쿨

남성비전스쿨

What's New

more

- 아프가니스탄 평화축제 신청 받습니다.☞
- [2/10]미용기술을 전문적으로 배우기 원하는 선교사 후보생을 모집합니다.☞
- 미션칼리지도서관에서 미디어자료(DVD,CD등)와 도서를 기증받고 있습니다.
- 2006 북카프카스 Power & Mercy Ministry

-지부



**Picture Number 4:**

Promotional brochure for the “Good People World Family” mission and Christian relief agency found at the Mission Training Institute in the spring of 2005



**Picture Number 5:**

Promotional brochure for the Korean branch of Food for the Hungry found at the Missionary Training Institute in the spring of 2005

선교훈련 프로그램



21C 선교의 주인공은 바로 '당신'입니다.

전화 \_02)544-9544(내선 400~440)  
주소 \_서울시 강남구 청담 1동 111  
홈페이지 \_www.kfhi.or.kr  
팩스 \_02)514-7213

 국제개발원  
기아대책

**Picture Number 6:**

Promotional brochure for an Inner Mongolian mission agency found at the Missionary Training Institute in the spring of 2005

Come over  
and  
Help us



와서 우리를 구원하소서!

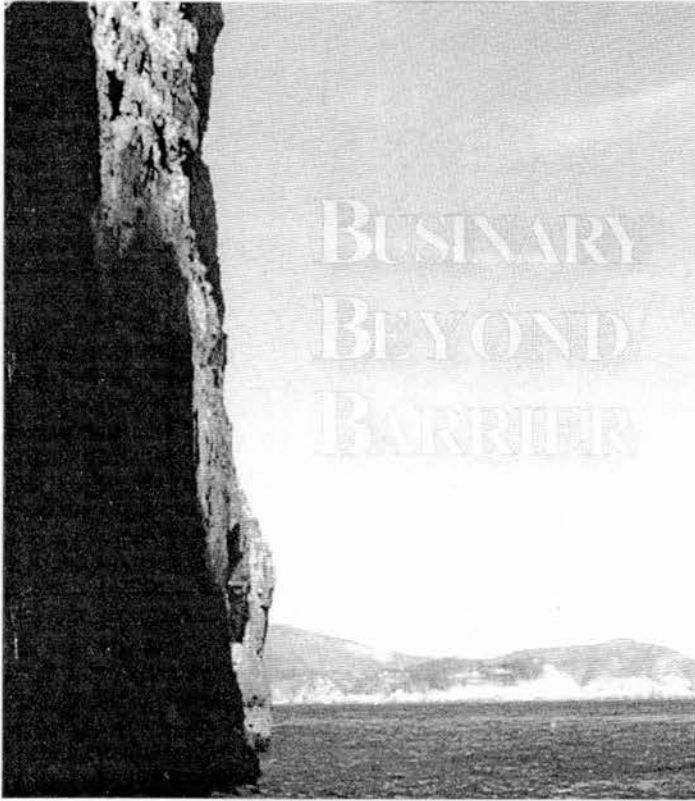


중국의 몽골 영혼들이 씨부리는 자를 기다리고 있습니다.



**Picture Number 7:**

Promotional brochure for the Businary Training Camp found at the Missionary Training Institute in the spring of 2005



**BTC**(Businary Training Camp)는  
열방네트웍의 훈련기관입니다

**Businary:**

사역과 삶을 구분하는 이원론을 극복하고 지상명령과 문화 명령을 온전하게 순종하도록 사역과 직업에 관한 통합적 훈련을 통해 개척사역자로 구비시킵니다.

**Training:**

지적 교육만이 아니라 아는 바를 행할 수 있는 실천적인 역량을 키웁니다.

**Camp:**

개인주의를 극복하고 공동체인 선교적 역량을 강화시킵니다.