Kings Over an Empire of Hearts: Early Missionary Discourse in Korea

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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University of Toronto

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Master of Arts, 2009

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Abstract

In the last decades of the 19th century an interdenominational missions group emerged from within Anglo-American Protestantism: the SVM. This organization sought to broadcast the gospel to the entire world and through this message establish a version of modernity based on Christian belief. This work examines the presence of this evangelical movement in Korea and will consider the implications of its brand of Christianity on the exchange between missionaries and Korean nationalists. Towards this end, this paper will examine missionary discourses produced by leading evangelicals within the church apparatus and consider the writings of James Gale, one of the organization’s missionaries stationed in Korea. This paper will attempt to demonstrate that, although outsiders to the Japanese colonial regime, the evangelical’s exchange with Koreans was still shaped by Orientalist assumptions and broader compromises made between the interlocking ideologies of Capitalism, Social Darwinism and Christian doctrine.
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1. Introduction

In the summer of 1886, on a hill outside Hermon, Connecticut, one hundred young men committed their lives to the transmission of the Christian gospel overseas. Representing Protestant student groups from across North America, those present at the Mount Hermon meeting together laid the emblematic starting point for a new, student oriented, missions organization. In the decades that followed, this movement would become one of the leading bodies in late 19th century international evangelicalism; a group and a commission defined by the motto students chose to adopt as their own: “The evangelization of the world within this generation.”

The movement that grew out of the Mount Hermon meeting was an anomaly in the history of Anglo-American Protestantism. What came to be known as the Student Volunteer Movement for World Missions (SVM) was an ecumenical mix of denominations and theologies whose membership was overwhelmingly drawn from the rapidly growing institutions of higher education in late 19th century England and North America.¹ Connected with inter-varsity student groups like the YMCA and leading Protestant denominations, the SVM would work through church-affiliated academic institutions such as seminaries, student housing organizations, and social groups in order to recruit and fund foreign missionaries who would then filter out across the globe under the guidance and funding of denominational missions boards.

Expanding quickly inside the academies of England and North America, by 1906 the SVM had placed roughly 6,000 missionaries overseas and had recruited thousands

more as potential volunteers.\(^2\) In only a matter of years, the organization had grown into a dynamic network held together by its active publishing wing, a rotating system of traveling administrators and quadrennial conferences that brought together thousands of student delegates, missionaries and denominational representatives. One such convention, held at the University of Toronto in 1902, drew nearly 3,000 delegates from 465 different institutions of higher learning along with dozens of evangelist representing missions fields from around the world.

Among those present at the Toronto convention was a group of missionaries stationed in the Korean peninsula. There to speak about their work as well as to recruit new missionaries and raise funds, the delegation from Korea stressed the gains made over their years of work in the country. On the question of achieving the lofty SVM goal of total evangelization of the world in the span of one generation, one of the missionaries, Horace Underwood, responded with guarded confidence. “I have been an optimist, and we have the good Lord on our side. In this generation? Yes, it is possible; I know it is.”\(^3\)

Yet Underwood’s optimism was not shared by all in the movement. Fifteen years after the formation of the organization, John R. Mott, a leading member of what became known as the “Mount Hermon Hundred” and longtime chairman of the SVM, endeavored to clarify the seemingly apparent-eight word creed. Challenges had emerged that were forcing the leadership of the SVM to rethink their mission strategy. In a thirteen-page definition of, “The evangelization of the world within this generation” prefacing a book


under the same title, Mott attempted to reconcile the watchword with the new estimations of international evangelism that were gaining popularity in missions circles.⁴

Almost immediately, Mott’s broad explanation of the phrase neutralized one key part. The decision to use the word “generation” in the 1886 oath was reflective in part of the pre-millennialist theology that had helped shape the movement in its formative years. Gaining popularity through the charismatic forms of religious expression practiced during the Second Great Awakening, pre-millenarian theology initially oriented many in the SVM towards the belief that total evangelization of the world was a manageable objective to be pursued in order to expedite the physical return of Christ. Others, showing the influence of less radical eschatological views, held that the generational time frame was needed to encourage the SVM to capitalize on current global conditions. These members argued that the confluence of a favorable political environment together with the assets of modern transport and technology, constituted an opportunity for missions that could not be squandered.⁵

Mott’s writing in 1900 subtly de-emphasized both of these views by asserting that, rather than a time limit, the word “generation” in the original motto was meant to imply a sense of continuity. Consequently, each individual is subject to a different understanding of the unit. However, every Christian, according to Mott, regardless of condition, was called to pursue the evangelization of the world in his or her own generation.

This modification of the watchword can be explained in part by a growing desire among SVM leadership to seek reconciliation within the increasingly divisive theological environment of early 20th century Protestantism. The change can also be understood as a pragmatic move on the part of those in the missions movement who were becoming increasingly aware of the vast logistical challenges that stood between them and their original goal. However, an equally salient explanation of why the SVM chose to redefine their motto is located in new understandings of the faith emergent at this time, which challenged earlier assumptions about of the function of missions in the world. Mott’s meticulous explanation of the watchword’s implications was symptomatic of a growing shift in the techniques as well as goals evangelicals were developing in their work. The change in the motto signaled a move away from forms of missionary activity that solely emphasized individual conversion of non-believers in favor of a kind of evangelical work more closely linked to broadcasting material attributes of the Anglo-American social order.

This shift in the approach to missions occurred in concert with the emergence in Western Protestantism of a fresh conceptualization of the role of faith in society known as the Social Gospel. This liberal form of Christian belief had emerged in the late 19th century as a reaction to new scholastic trends such as Darwinian theory and Higher Criticism, which posed significant threats to many of the faith’s most basic assumptions. These intellectual challenges and subsequent attempts by church leaders to reconcile them with faith, resulted in the proponents of the Social Gospel, including many within the international missions movement, to recast the scope of Christianity’s role in society.
For the SVM, this meant that not only did the time frame of the organization’s motto need to be reconsidered, but also its overall objectives for evangelistic expansion.

In Korea, as with other SVM mission stations elsewhere in the world, this meant an explicit attempt by missionaries to posit an understanding of human social development as an outcome of Christian faith. The goal of this paper is to look at the implications this version of Christianity had for the work of missionaries. By examining the evangelicals’ writings on mission work and on Korea, the objective is to discern the ways these foreign Christians occupied a place within the colonial system with specific consideration for how they utilized forms of colonial logic and social theory to bolster their platform of reform.

Of equal concern is determining how the missionaries’ understanding of their commission influenced the position they occupied within Korean society and, in particular, in relation Korean programs of reform present in the peninsula prior to Japanese annexation in 1910. The aim is to unpack the nationalist-missionary dynamic by exploring points of commonality and departure concerning two issues which both groups attempted to address in their respective platforms of reform: the recasting of the Sino-Korean relationship and language reform.

Overarching the scope of this study is an understanding of the kinetic nature of this period in Korean history. The arrival of Protestant missionaries on the peninsula coincided with significant amount of political and social tumult; a period which witnesses the end of a centuries-old socio-political arrangement with China and the beginning of a decades-long phase of colonial occupation at the hands of Japan. This was a time of uprisings and war and also one of intense social activity that marked the regions further
integration into world markets. The missionary-nationalist relationship was played out in this environment and this paper will attempt to illustrate how, when social conditions began to change, foreign evangelicals attempted to alter the image of the church so that their program of reform could weather the realities of a rapidly changing peninsula.

In conducting this analysis, I will primarily depend the works authored by the Canadian Presbyterian, James S. Gale. Gale arrived in Korea in 1888 and would remain for forty years becoming one of the most senior members of the missionary community there. Noted for his impressive skills as a linguist, Gale’s most prolific contribution to the mission effort was a host of translations including the Bible, as well as several English-language publications on evangelism produced for the Anglo-American audience. Through these works, I hope to unpack the missionary’s presentation of Korean nationalists and explore the implications of the Christian civilizing mission that defined the global expansion of Anglo-American Protestantism at the time.

Through Gale my study will strive not go beyond the limitations of an insular examination of Protestantism’s arrival in Korea, to consider the larger evangelical apparatus that helped shape the version the faith broadcasted around the world at this time. To date the majority of studies on missionaries in Korea fail to sufficiently consider this larger evangelical movement and the discourses that helped shape it and favor instead a history of the church that is collapsed into that of the nation. The late 19th and early 20th centuries was also a tumultuous time for Anglo-American Protestantism as the institution started to directly confront new ideas that would challenge and eventually recast the institution. These changes had very real implications for the evangelical work in Korea as with elsewhere in the missions movement. Indeed, interconnectedness of this
sort should be expected from a movement that was in very real terms a global effort and thus produces a global history. In this capacity SVM will enable us to see how Korea developed as a singular part of a much larger effort to confront what came to be understood to be a divine mandate to civilize and save universally.

In commenting on the expansion of a Christianity meant to civilize and save, Gale evaluates Korea in relation to other national members within the global system considering the changes on the peninsula in correlation with the nations surrounding it. Serving as an antithesis to the challenges that both Japan and China posed to the goal of Christian hegemony, Korea in missionary literature was depicted as both under the siege from the corrupting influences of its neighbors, and also as the prospective solution to the challenges posed by these threats. A nation chosen to be humbled to both heaven and civilization so that it may go forward to lead the rest of East Asia to Christ.

2. Evangelization of the World in this Generation

As the opening decade of the 20th century came to a close, the first Protestant missionaries sent to Korea related satisfying accounts of their work on the peninsula back to the West. The reports of the 1910s spoke of how, in less than thirty years, this collection foreign clergymen, doctors and teachers had translated a vernacular edition of the New Testament, opened hundreds of churches, hospitals and schools all over the country, published tens of thousands of leaflets and religious tracts and ultimately influenced the conversion of thousands of Koreans. Yet, in the eyes of the missionaries,
the scope of their perceived success went well beyond the headcount rates of converted non-believers. Equally apparent in the descriptions of their work is the stress the missionaries placed on what they deemed to be the social transformation engendered by the growing acceptance of the Christian faith among the population. For the foreign evangelical, there was no great disconnect between what was considered the West’s ideological foundation and material expressions of modernity believed to have emerged from this spiritual base. Civilization and enlightenment in Korea was strictly a manifestation of faith to these Christians, an association they insisted could not be rejected.

The Protestant missionaries who championed this understanding of modernity were not an anomaly in the international landscape of the day. Like the thousands of missionaries who spread out across the globe in the last decades of the 19th century, the first Protestants to go to Korea were part of an interdenominational surge in global missions. Many different church organizations contributed to this trend; however, at the turn of the century it was the SVM that had emerged as the leading entity within this new campaign to spread the Christian faith abroad.6 By the time the movement reached its peak in the early 1920s, the SVM had helped recruited almost half of all missionaries sent overseas during the preceding three decades establishing an influential presence within

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Anglo-American Protestantism through the organization’s fundraising programs, publications as well as the sheer profile of its leadership.\(^7\)

As part of the organization’s effort to expand overseas missions, the SVM publishing wing had from early on in the organization’s history focused on producing a wide array of missionary accounts and educational material. These works were generally composed by evangelicals stationed overseas or by high-level leaders within Protestant denominations and the missionary establishment. Operating at first in conjunction with leading Christian publishing houses and later independently, SVM publishing functioned to produce synergy within the organization and, at the same time, solicit support for the missionary cause from inside the church. Some of the first evangelicals to be sent to Korea had, like Gale, entered mission work through SVM recruitment efforts; and even those who were not directly tied to the movement would have been exposed to the exchange brought about by SVM publications, conventions and evaluation tours.\(^8\)

Following his entry into the missionary community, Gale himself engaged in this broader discourse by means of the books and translations he produced in the field as well as through his participation in missionary conferences. As a member of the missionary delegation from Korea present at the 1898 SVM convention in Cleveland, Gale gave a talk in the Japan-Korea session that is indicative of the sort of descriptions produced at this time by evangelicals on the peninsula. In his presentation, Gale outlined the challenges posed by the Confucian tradition and Korean language, appealing for an

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expansion of Western forms of education that, he argued, arrived hand in hand with belief in Christ. His speech eventually ended with an appeal for further effort in the nurturing reform in Korea. “America has duties beyond her own borders. Korea sorely needs her help. Shall we not send it the only hope for a lost nation - the gospel of Christ?”

One of the ways SVM attempted to solicit this support for these so-called “non-Christian nations of the world” was through an enormous number of publications produced in the form of missionary journals, denominational reports, conference notes and regional reviews. All of these sources came together to produce a mountain of literature on missions, however, often the most succinct accounts of any individual mission field was organized in the form of a missionary account. Usually written by evangelicals serving overseas, the form of the missionary account would draw its reader in through the narrative’s use of a mix of moral challenge, adventure and descriptions of the exotic. The publication of the works would usually be directed by either a specific denomination or a central missions organization like the SVM and were intended not only to inform the reader, but also to encourage further recruitment and funding for missionary activities internationally. As a result, books would often be edited to include somewhat self-referential sourcing, advertisements for further reading on a missionary movement written and supplementary sections added to provide the works with discussion and reflection questions in an educational setting.

By examining the questions posed in these readers, one can see the ways in which the forms of knowledge produced through the missionary apparatus was trapped in the

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colonial logic of the period. Echoing Gale’s Hegelian dedication to the 1909 work, *Korea in Transition*, “To the Young Hearts of America In Behalf of the Old World of the East,” the reading questions in this book expose the missionary’s reference to temporal hierarchy that is derived through the trope of the static east now opened to the transformative influence of the Christian world. A sample of this material demonstrates that these study aids could, at times, push the reader to approach their heathen brethren with a greater level of empathy, as questions like, “How would you feel if your country were garrisoned with foreign troops?” or “What is the difference between initiating reforms for yourself and having them dictated from without?” clearly point the reader to do. However, questions like this proved to be an exception from the general tone; one that may be better captured by the question, “If Korea were made over to you as a gift, what measures would you take to improve your property?”  

The predominant attitude expressed in this question also finds expression in the narrative structure of that made up missionary accounts. All of Gale’s three works in this genera, *Korea Sketches* (1898), *The Vanguard* (1904) and *Korea in Transition* (1908) utilize this form to varying degree but it is in Gale’s third work of this pedigree, *Korea in Transition*, one can chart most clearly the way the mission field is constructed as a type of property to be managed. Introductory descriptions of the peninsula focus on its location, comparative population, climate and geographic formations. From there Gale goes on to give general accounts of natural resources, agricultural produce, manufacturing transportation was well as domestic life and culture. The explicit purpose of these descriptions was to introduce the reader to an unfamiliar subject, but the form

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Gale uses in his writing also helps to formulate the mission field within specific parameters of a new global system. Through this approach, Korea takes on the form of a nation, one delineated and distinguished by a catalogue of traits: borders, cultures, languages, traditions, attributes which work to make up the conceptual property in which the missionaries work. Subsequent sections then progress from within these initial confines. The national subject is populated and delimitated by social class while further sections divide the social realm into either the spiritual or material culture, thus furnishing the subject with Cartesian dualism of the Christian worldview. With the composite function of these parts the nation is then represented with material, culture and spiritual traditions that later are described in relation to the changes brought on by the contending attributes of protestant civilization.

Gale’s presence at the 1898 SVM conference in Cleveland came at a time when missionaries in Korea were expressing a growing sense of confidence about the future of Christianity in the field. Contemporary accounts were full of sanguine appraisals of the country’s potential, which were carried forward by the increase in conversion that followed the Sino-Japanese War. Missionary optimism as to the future of the church in Korea only grew with the passing of the 1910s, when there was an even greater sense of euphoria that accompanied the wellspring of religious expression and conversion that came with church revivals held in northern Korea in 1907 and 1908. Yet, in spite of the favorable appraisals of their work, missionaries in both Korea and internationally were beginning to express concern over the emergence of contending forms of thought which were seen as a threat to their platform of spiritual and social reform. Chief among these was nationalism, a rapidly expanding ideology which was particularly distressing to the
missionaries because of what they saw as its tendency to place the strength of an ethnic unit ahead of the universal spiritual transformation the evangelicals considered a prerequisite to legitimate social reform.

3. Nearly a Godsend: Social Darwinism and Missions

The approach initially advocated by the SVM to achieve the lofty goal described in its motto was essentially one of systemic reproduction and viral-like expansion. Already by the start of the 1890s, SVM leadership realized that rates of recruitment and financial donations were far from sufficient given the scale of their goal. To overcome this challenge, leaders like Mott advocated a form of cell-based evangelism first suggested by another prominent member of the “Mount Hermon Hundred,” Luther Wishard. During his time as chairman of the YMCA, Wishard started laying the foundation for an international Christian student union to be based in campuses worldwide. The union, argued Wishard, would serve as a focal point for local student converts within a mission field. From inside the university, these young people could reproduce Christian organizations that were geared towards the evangelization of the general population. The goal was to turn universities the world over into, as he put it, “strong-holds and distributing centers of Christianity,” converting institutions of higher

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learning into, “academies of the Church militant to train leaders for the present crusade of evangelism.”\textsuperscript{12}

This macro approach to missions was advanced by Mott in his 1897 work *Strategic Points in the World’s Conquest*. Written after his return from a world tour of university campuses following the successful establishment of the World’s Christian Student Federation (WCSF), Mott’s book provides an introduction and review of the various Christian student organizations across the world and includes his prescriptions for their advancement. The book is direct in informing the reader of the specific needs of each field as well as in calling for more volunteers to meet the almost universal need for Christian educators. According to Mott, the role of evangelists continued to be essential in establishing the ideological primacy of Christianity on international campuses as well as in managing the growth and operation of regional chapters of the WCSF and SVM.\textsuperscript{13}

While both Mott and Wishard maintained a confident tone when writing on the status of global missions and its potential, their strategic outline contained a lingering sense of anxiety over the intellectual environment found in many of their proposed centers for evangelical expansion. The universities of the mission field were not just locations where the SVM model could be replicated, they were also home to what was considered one of the great threats to the Christian faith, secular education. Mott’s concern, as he explained it, was that the loss of traditional faith by international students, while in itself a favorable development, would only lead to further difficulties if previous beliefs were not supplanted by the Christian faith. Wishard and Mott alike were confident

\textsuperscript{12} Wisehard, 1895: 16.
\textsuperscript{13} John Mott, *Strategic Points in the World’s Conquest: The Universities and Colleges as Related to the Progress of Christianity* (New York: F.H. Revell Co., 1897).
that graduates from modern institutions of higher learning would hold positions of power in the missions fields of the future, and both were also certain that it was this class of natives missionaries should seek to influence. However, the SVM leaders viewed the question of converting this class with a heightened feeling of apprehension, as Mott rhetorically asserts, “the burning question is, shall this leadership be heathen, agnostic, or Christian.”

The presentation of these early strategic plans provided the SVM with a plausible outline for how the organization intended to reach its objectives in spite of the logistical challenges. Though time was limited, the goal of the SVM at this point was still as transparent as the motto suggested. When describing the watchword in an SVM information pamphlet from 1892, Mott emphasized that it, “does not mean the conversion, or the Christianization, or the civilization of the world – no matter how much the volunteers may believe in each of these. It does mean that Christians of this generation are to give every person of this age an opportunity to accept Jesus Christ.”

Nevertheless, effective rallying cries and intricate planning aside, the SVM remained only an umbrella organization for the mission community. While it was largely effective in advertising the evangelical effort and in fostering cooperation between different mission organizations, the vast majority of actual funding and authority remained diffused among the numerous denominational boards and field-based councils. It was this scattered collection of organizations that ultimately was responsible for determining the applied form of missions work and it was in the way these activities

14 Mott, 1897: 111.
merged with new understandings of the role of faith in society that would ultimately led to the shift reflected in Mott’s reinterpretation of the SVM motto.

The conceptualization of faith traditions as the central attribute of a social collective existed long before the Protestant missionary movements of the 19th century. Benedict Anderson has written on the use of faith and the role of what he calls “sacred text” in the composition of collective identities that preceded the modern nation. Part of his work describes how a union of the religious community and dynastic realm operated in transcribing individuals with a sense of collectivity expressed most explicitly during instances of inter-collective exchange. Anderson’s account of how such religious collectives began to unravel with the emergence of print capitalism is a compelling assertion. This transformation, however, did not remove the concept of faith as an attribute of a conceptualized collective or civilization.

By the conclusion of the 19th century, the marriage between faith and the social collective in Anglo-America went through yet another transformation, one necessitated by the ontological challenge posed to the faith by Darwinism and its intellectual offspring. Attempts at reconciling faith with Darwin’s new theory appeared alongside the popularization of *On the Origin of Species*. Asa Gray, an American botanist at Harvard and personal friend of Darwin, who negotiated *On the Origin of Species*’ U.S. publication, was among of the first to propose a theory of theistic evolution in his 1876 book *Darwiniana*. Arguments similar to Gray’s were made throughout the 1880s and 1890s, among the most famous by the English theologian Henry Drummond. However,  

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it was not until the 1897 publication of *Christian Missions and Social Progress* that we find by far the most extensive attempt at integrating missions and Darwinian theory.

Written by James S. Dennis, a Presbyterian missionary serving as an instructor at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, *Christian Missions and Social Progress* offered a detailed study of missions-sponsored social programs and the ways in which these initiatives responded to the perceived spiritual and material needs of the non-believer. 17 Dennis’ work called for a reorientation towards what he called a “sociological study of foreign missions.” 18 This form of missions, much in tune with the Social Gospel, refers to a collection of techniques and practices that sought to use missions to identified and specifically address the social and material needs of the non-believer. The Social Gospel’s emphasis on direct social activism distinguishes it from more conservative forms of evangelism that remained focusing solely on conversion. 19 Missions, according to this approach, would thereby render the faith in what Dennis thought to be its truest form, as an aid in the evolutionary development of a social group.

Dennis’ book met with a favorable response in the international missions community and was heralded as proof of the value of Christianity in the broadening of civilization the world over. In the February, 1898 edition of the Seoul-based missionary journal, *The Korea Repository*, the book received a glowing review for its suggested approach. Taking the work as a powerful justification for the missionaries’ efforts, the

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18 Dennis, 1897: iii.
reviewer’s article, following a summary of the text, centered on the union Dennis describes between ethical traditions and social development, favorably commenting on the author’s use of the Irish sociologist, Benjamin Kidd.

His method of union is the old one of widening the accepted definition and this is along the lines made familiar to us by Benjamin Kidd. “Benjamin Kidd is correct in this contention that the religious forces of history, emphasizing as he does those distinctively Christian, are necessary factors in a full and rounded social evolution.” This method of enlargement is not in itself objectionable.20

The writer for the Korea Repository correctly places Dennis within the genealogy of a collection of theologians and early sociologist who endeavored to rehabilitate faith in relation to Social Darwinian Theory. By the close of the 19th century, Kidd was the most notable representative of this school of thought. Kidd’s 1894 publication of Social Evolution had propelled him into the forefront of a protracted debate between secular Social Darwinists in the tradition of Spencer and Huxley and liberal theologians like Drummond, as well as a larger contingent of conservative Christian leaders.

In the argument presented by Kidd, Spencer’s core theory of Social Darwinism is largely accepted. What sets him apart from other apologists like Drummond is the way he bases his argument on the idea of the utility of the irrational or “ultra-rational,” rather than on various theological hybrids and biblical reinterpretations. In Social Evolution, Kidd put forward the notion of there being an ideal equilibrium between reason and the “ultra-rational,” which he associated with systems of ethical belief. Religious tradition, according to Kidd, act as a social force that enables the collective betterment of a species. This rendering of belief by Kidd placed faith in sharp contrast with the egotism he argued was at the center rational thought. In his assessment of the secular Social Darwinists,

Kidd criticized what he saw as their excessive emphasis on the role of the thinking
individual. An actor, which Kidd determined would, in excess, subvert the well being of
a species better served by altruistic traits cultivated through religion.\textsuperscript{21}

The hierarchy Kidd saw in the world between often nationalized ethnic and racial
groups was to be explained primarily by the discrepancy between the function of various
ethical traditions. The primacy of the West was consequently seen as resulting from
faith. Kidd thought the social and political enfranchisement of the European masses as
an outcome of the “ultra-rational” role played by Christianity in overcoming the restraints
of the Greco-Roman world. However, it is the rise of Protestantism that Kidd designates
as the greatest synthesis of individual rational expression and an ethical commitment to
the collective.\textsuperscript{22} Such an explanation also succeeded in managing the difference existing
between the states of Europe itself.

In \textit{Christian Missions and Social Progress}, Dennis echoed Kidd’s argument and
projected it implications for missions. Evangelism is not merely a method by which to
save souls for the heavenly kingdom to come, it was a form of socio-biological pedagogy
that would materially raise up a group while yet on earth. “Christian missions,” Dennis
wrote, “have evidently entered upon a crusade not alone for the spiritual redemption of
individual souls, but also for the larger purpose to redeem the life that now is.”\textsuperscript{23} This
effort at social renewal was not limited to the operation of orphanages and soup kitchens,
but embraced almost all spheres of the social realm. It was an effort justified by a belief

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{21}] D.P. Cook, \textit{Benjamin Kidd: Portrait of a Social Darwinist} (Cambridge: Cambridge
\item[\textsuperscript{22}] Cook, 1984: 60.
\item[\textsuperscript{23}] James Dennis, \textit{Christian Missions and Social Progress: A Sociological Study of
Foreign Missions}, vol. i (New York: F.H. Revell, 1897), 47.
\end{itemize}
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that all activity ultimately influenced the biological success of a species and fortified by faith in the providential sovereignty of the divine. As Dennis explained, “The facilities of education, literature, medical science, diplomacy, colonization, commerce, modern inventions and even the dreaded realities of war, are all made subservient on the providence of God to the advancement of his kingdom.”

Dennis is careful not to completely dismiss the crucial role played by the individual in this new conceptualization of Christian missions. The conversion of the non-believer still remained the most fundamental part of evangelism and social restoration. However, the distinction from previous forms of evangelism is located in the fact that the individual’s value is now derived as much from his relation to the social whole as it is accrued from its intrinsic worth to the divine. Dennis depicts conversion as an act of re-scribing, where the foundational unit of the group is transformed into yet another agent of renewal in society. “The individual is in the first instance the receptacle of the leaven of Christianity,” he writes, “from thence it leavens the lump.”

The attributes of this converted unit are diverse, but in general are reflected in the image of the clean, kind, hardworking Christian. Such a character, for Dennis, was not only imbued with the virtue necessary to improve the moral tone of a society, but also with the character to enrich it, asserting that “the economic regeneration of an idle, shiftless, demoralized, unproductive, and especially of a destructive character, is equivalent to the addition of so much live capital to the working force of the community.”

“Every mission field,” Dennis assures the reader, “will be found to furnish examples of these

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24 Dennis, 1897: 29.
25 Dennis, 1897: 46.
transformed characters, fashioned after a pattern quite unknown before Christian teaching and morality were introduced.”

By maintaining the centrality of individual conversion in his writing, Dennis was able to posit a sense of continuity with a more micro approach to evangelism. Radically altered was the time frame in which missionaries now operated. Following the incorporation of Dennis and Kidd’s arguments, the generational limit established by the founders of the SVM together with Mott’s earlier assertion that civilizing the non-believer was not part of the SVM mission, were no longer tenable. As the missions movement positioned itself within the discourse of Social Darwinism, it was compelled to submit to the biological epochs of a species.

Still, for a large portion of Anglo-American Protestantism, what was gained through Kidd’s theory was more than worth the loss of the SVM’s pithy motto. For decades the church had been struggling against two powerful intellectual challenges which were eroding the epistemological foundations of the faith. Alongside Darwinist theory, the end of the 19th century saw the growing popularity of Higher Criticism, a school of biblical scholarship that utilized various methods of literary and historical analysis to historicize and de-mythologize the biblical scriptures. For conservative Christians who astutely recognized that the church was under attack both from without and within, the amalgamation of faith and science facilitated by Kidd was an ideal solution that could defend the faith from scholarly detractions while still enabling Christianity to access the authority of academic discourse.

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27 Dennis, 1899: 14.
When confronted with Higher Criticism, Kidd’s argument again was effective in defending the scriptural dogmatism of conservatives in the church. Based on the sociologist’s assertion as to the biological utility of the “ultra-rational,” the agency of faith in social evolution also offered the basis to oppose the more liberal versions of biblical critique. “A large and growing intellectual party in our midst hold, in fact, the belief that the religion of the future must be one from which the super-rational element has been removed,” wrote Kidd in *Social Evolution*. However, according the assumptions surrounding the “ultra-rational,” this was not biologically sustainable. “A rational religion is a scientific impossibility, representing from the nature of the case an inherent contradiction of terms.”

For missionaries like Dennis and the anonymous writer for *The Korea Repository*, Kidd enabled the formation of an even stronger union between their faith and civilization, one that was enabled by the powerful logic of Social Darwinism and that could stand up to forms of Christian thought that removed the divine from the faith’s very heart. It is also on account of this new paradigm that missionaries became more threatened by competing programs of reform that sought to alter non-Christian societies without depending on the spiritual and ideological conversion that the missionaries prescribed. If secular reform movements could disprove the purported link between faith and material civilization, the missionaries’ ability to find legitimacy in the discourse of Social Darwinism would be threatened. This tension helps explain why the domestic nationalist and the Japanese model of reform were reckoned by the central missionary apparatus to

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be among two of the most menacing threats to their work at establishing a Christian foundation for modernity.

4. Constructing Autonomy: The Church and the Nation

How does one confront the polarities of faith and doubt, let alone describe the heavily occupied territories in between? By what measure can we explain why individuals embrace, modify and reject explanations that will ultimately delineate their understanding of existence? Even more challenging is the question of how the historian is to use the extraordinarily varied and personal calibration that is faith in the composition of accounts on the collective.

To committed Calvinists like Gale, agency for spiritual change on both the personal and universal levels are ultimately to be placed in the anthropomorphic hands of God. Yet, even within this narrow theological school, we find extraordinary heterogeneity. Did John Calvin’s theology of election, which places the power of redemption exclusively with the divine, imply that those condemned to hell were created for that purpose? Does man retain a degree of agency outside of God’s decisive tampering with only the Jonahs of history having their freewill curtailed? Even Gale would have difficulty responding with certainty when confronted with such questions.

As unsatisfactory as Calvinism may be in answering the mystery of belief, the methodological approaches and scholarly trends developed by the secular academy to deal with the questions of conversion and belief contain their own epistemological
obstacles. Only a generation after the establishment of the mission in Korea, English language scholarship on faith in the kingdom had already begun to distance itself from the blunt accolades that placed the power of God at the center of explanations for spiritual transformation. By the 1920s, native converts as well newer members to the Korean missionary community were producing a growing body of academic research on the field, much of it written in the pursuit of advanced degrees within the Anglo-American academy. The work of these Christian Koreanists occupies a central place in the genealogy of present day English language Korea studies and their contribution as well as value as scholars should not simply be discounted on account of their belief. Still, scrutiny of the academic and religious trends that shaped this research is more than called for considering the importance of these works in shaping the history of Korean Christianity today.

Some of the first purposeful scholarship on the church in Korea was produced in the midst of a systemic shift in the academic approach to missions. The same type of compromise between faith and Social Darwinism brokered by Kidd and applied by Dennis in justifying the missions movement was impacting the role of faith in society across the Protestant world. The Social Gospel, with its commitment to the ideal of a domestic church active in addressing the social woes found fraternity with the ideologies and methodological approaches driving the Progressive Movement. Both movements, like Dennis’ “sociological approach to missions,” called for a more systemic and technical orientation to renewal that professionally and systematically addressed the material ills of the day.

29 For examples of such works see L.G. Paik (1929), C.A. Clark (1930), H.H. Underwood (1926), J.E. Fisher (1928).
This new commitment to the well-trained church manifests itself in the realm of Protestant missions through a more academic approach to evangelicalism that sought to identify the presumed science behind conversion. These were the days that saw the birth of missiology departments in the universities and seminaries of the Anglo-American academy. Through these programs, students were instructed in techniques of evangelism and social engineering, a pedagogical approach that increasingly turned the conversion of the individual into an outcome of inspired policy. This approach to conversion has left its mark on English language Korean history, even to this day by students in seminaries and missiology programs across the globe produced works that seek to isolate and reproduce the evangelical model that is thought to be key to success of Christian missions on the peninsula. The result is a systemization of evangelism in order to achieve a transformation that is anything but standardized.

Depictions of the Korean mission as a success were beginning to appear after only two decades after Protestants began publicly working there. Already in 1904, Gale was writing on the “great harvest” at hand in the country, while a similar tone of optimism was voiced by Underwood around the same time at the SVM conference in 1902. Considering the young age and small size of mission at this time, one can understand why Underwood and Gale took such pride in what had been accomplished. However, when writing on the Christian community in Korea at this time it is important to prevent the missionaries’ enthusiastic accounts from inflating the actual proportions of the church in late Choson society. When Underwood gave his hopeful prediction regarding the chances of achieving the SVM objective in Korea, average attendance for the

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Presbyterian church services in the country was just over 15,000 and of these only 5,500 people took communion. In a country that, according to missionary accounts form that time, supported a population of 13 to 15 million, this made the largest Protestant denomination in Korea little more than a social oddity. Even after the growth that follow Japanese colonization, the number of Christians in Korea, Catholics included, numbered only 200,000 by 1910, which accounted for less than 2 percent of the Korean population at the time.

Still, in light of the robust form of Protestantism found in South Korea today, there are few who would dispute the claim that the first missionaries to Korea were uniquely effective in spreading their faith. Presently about one-third of the population in the south is either Protestant or Roman Catholic and the country is widely believe to be the second largest recruiter of international missionaries after the United States. The impression of exceptionality is further encouraged through comparisons of the Korean church to the significantly smaller Christian communities found in Japan and China, a discrepancy elicits a number of explanations.

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31 Consistent statistics from the early twentieth century literature on the church in Korea are sparse. Multiple denominations, Protestant-Catholic factionalism and the frequent production of synoptic reports from central missions bodies has resulted in a varied empirical account. For Denominationally specific information this work refers to the accounts provided by Harry Rhodes, *History of the Korea Mission: Presbyterian Church U.S.A. 1884-1934* (Seoul: Chosen Mission Presbyterian Church U.S.A., 1934). For comprehensive statistic refer to Donald Baker, “Sibling Rivalry in Twentieth Century Korea” in *Christianity in Korea*, ed. Robert Buswell and Timothy Lee (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006).


While most current explanations for conversion on the peninsula reject simplistic referrals to God’s will in favor of more comprehensive narratives, the non-mystical can also be problematic for an entirely different set of reasons. Often, treatment of Korean church history favors depictions of faith that lock changes in the religiosity of society within the channels of political history and the teleological progression of the nation. One of the most overplayed modes of this narrative is the marriage brokered between the Korean reformers and the church. In this scheme, the Christian community is projected as either the wellspring of modern Korean nationalism or, alternatively, as a vehicle through which Korean patriots could resist Japan from the comparative safety of the institution of the church. In both accounts, Christianity ultimately joins the nation in victory over external oppression due to the fact that Koreans, enabled by the church to resist and-or develop ideologically, become receptive to the idea of conversion.

Much of the English language scholarship on the Korean church tends towards one of these two depictions to varying degrees. Such narratives rest on a combination of the structuralist approach of missiology and nationalist historical narratives of the post-1945 South Korean state. Placed together, these accounts produce a picture of Christian faith on the peninsula that place disproportionate emphasis on the decades around the turn of the nineteenth century and correspondingly divert attention away from demographically more active periods of conversion, which occurred between the 1950s and 1970s.34

This model for church history, which emphasizes the early 20th century and links church growth to the story of the nation often makes specific use of three separate

moments in early Korean church. Chronologically last, but perhaps the most important in establishing Christianity’s credentials as the faith of nationalists, are the accounts of the church’s role in the national resistance during the March 1st movement of 1919. Preceding this is in the narrative is the so-called “Korean Pentecost” more commonly known to as the Great Revival of 1907-1908 and its purported relationship to the establishment of the Japanese protectorate. Finally, serving as the causal force for these later events are descriptions of missionary tactics which, in the case of the Korean church, is almost universally accepted to be those established by the American missionary to China, John Nevius.

Nevius was a Presbyterian missionaries stationed on the Shandong peninsula in China during the last decades of the 19th century. In the late 1880s, he published a series of articles on spreading the gospel for the missionary journal The Chinese Recorder, which were later compiled into two books on evangelical strategy. In 1890, after accepting an invitation from Horace Underwood, Nevius visited Seoul for two weeks to consult with the more junior Presbyterian missionaries stationed there and to instruct them on his proposed method for spreading the gospel. Underwood recounted that at the conclusion of their conference with Nevius the Presbyterians in Seoul agreed to adopt his method as a guide in their work in Korea.

Almost forty years after Nevius’ visit, Charles A. Clark, another SVM recruit who had served in Korea with the Presbyterians since 1902, published a book on the technique proposed by Nevius. Based on a thesis written for his Doctorate of Philosophy at the University of Chicago, Clark’s The Korean Church and the Nevius Method summarized Nevius’ evangelical approach and argued that church growth in Korea was largely due to
the successful application of this plan. However, for Clark’s argument to be plausible, he first needed to provide an overview of the technique, which was more challenging than would be thought. Nevius’ method, along with his writings, had been developed over the course of several years, and while instructive, where not intended to be comprehensive. Even Clark complained of this in his introduction when he described the disjointed series of articles and books authored by Nevius as, “a rambling series of studies, more or less connected, but not organized in any logical way.”

Clark’s dissertation proposed to organize Nevius’ method so as to clarify its implications and facilitate its reapplication elsewhere. Thanks to Clark’s filter, the Nevius technique was ultimately formatted into a method based on the idea of an indigenous church that was self-reliant. According to Clark’s explanation, what this meant was that the community of believers had to be constructed as a self-sustaining, self-propagating and self-governing whole. Elsewhere in his book, Clark elaborates on additional aspects to this approach citing such tools as the use of medical services, education, literature and specific programs for women; but the distilled version of Nevius throughout the work and in accounts since remained the principle of self-support.

Following Clark’s publication, the Nevius Method entered the lore of Korean Church history. One of the first scholars to echo Clark’s emphasis on the strategy was L. G. Paik in his seminal work *The History of the Protestant Mission in Korea*. Also a version of a doctoral dissertation, this time from Yale, Paik maintains Clark’s supposition that it was these unique evangelical tactics that held decisive sway over the conversion of

36 Clark, 1930: 242.
non-believers in Korea, explaining that, “the remarkable results that have been reported are the consequence of the early inauguration of the principle.”

With Clark and Paik’s endorsements, the role of the Nevius method has continued to inflate in Korean church history. In this way, a rough collection of articles from the 1880s on how to expand belief among the Chinese has become the hub where the history of the nation and the narrative of Korea Christianity’s exceptionalism intercept. The great flaw in this development is in the way such accounts take the diversity of evangelical approaches employed multiple denominations and individual missionaries and either homogenize them into expression of Nevius’ unique wisdom.

In this conflated capacity, Nevius’ strategy becomes not only a causation of faith, but also a mode of national enlightenment. A standard example of this version can be seen in work of denominational historians In Soo Kim and Ung Kyu Pak published in Peter Lang book series, *Asian Thought and Culture*. In both of their manuscripts, In and Ung highlight Nevius’ centrality through reference to Paik’s assertion that, “through the Nevius Principles, the Korean Christians learned self-confidence and gained a new sense of self-respect and independence of spirit which were so vital to the survival under the humiliation of foreign domination.”

Similar historiographic usage of Nevis can be seen in Wi Jo Kang’s work, *Christ and Caesar in Modern Korea*, where, he writes that, “the method appealed tremendously to the Korean mind. The emphasis on self-support and self-government aroused the

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Korean spirit of independence long suppressed under Confucian thought.”\textsuperscript{39} Jacqueline Pak, taking this view even further in her submission to Robert Buswell’s \textit{Christianity in Korea}, where she asserts that the Nevius method was in part the genesis of Ahn Changho’s drafting of the Korean Constitution. According to Pak, the reformer was, “initially exposed to the idea of democracy and politics by the unique practice of the Nevius Method in the formative phase of Korean Protestant Christianity.”\textsuperscript{40}

These explanations for church growth and their implications for the conceived genealogy of modern Korean nationalism are troubling in a number of ways. Perhaps most bothersome is the anachronistic assertion that the Nevius policy was broadly applied in a sustained way unique to Korea. Nevius’ suggestions do seem to have helped inform the early Presbyterians in Korea and his book \textit{The Planting and Development of Missionary Churches} was assigned reading for newly arrived missionaries in the denomination. However, it is far from clear how influential Nevius was on the applied evangelical work the evangelicals conducted on a daily basis. This is largely because none of them regularly discussed Nevius in their writings. Gale never mentions the method in any of his three books published between 1898 and 1908, and it is only on account of the editor of \textit{Korea in Transition} that an explanation of the technique written by Underwood was included as a forward to a chapter.\textsuperscript{41} Even this description, taken from Underwood’s 1905 work \textit{The Call of Korea}, is limited. After summarizing the method in eighteen lines, Underwood hedges by writing that, “in the execution of any

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Gale, 1909: 160.
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plan, difficulties existed, but circumstances were largely our guide in overcoming these.\textsuperscript{42} Sadly, a dissertation on the importance of being able to improvise will not earn a doctoral student his bonnet, hood and gown. Charles Clark’s work on the Nevius method presents an evangelical strategy in an expansive and systematic way that coincides with the highly technical approach towards missions in vogue during his day. However, his influential scholarship may have work to impose a version of missions back onto history that did not exist.

The presentation of the Nevius’ method as an explanation for the anomaly of church growth in Korea is equally distortive. Such an explanation for conversion in Korea overlooks the complicating fact that the method was far from universally applied by evangelicals in Korea. Only the Presbyterians participated in the 1890 conference with Nevius and, as we may infer from Underwood’s tone, even this denomination seems to have taken a relaxed stance towards the technique. The lack of any resounding endorsement of the method in the literature is only one indicator. The more explicit examples of the missionaries’ lax application of Nevius’ method can be seen almost immediately in the two jewels of the Presbyterian mission in Korea. Neither Severance Hospital nor Yonsei University were funded by native converts, but instead established thanks to the thousands of dollars donated by foreign supporters of missions.\textsuperscript{43} While it is true that many Korean churches supported themselves financially, they still only made up one part of a considerable missionary structure in the country that was still reliant on denominationally funded budgets under the control of foreign evangelicals.

\textsuperscript{42} Horace Underwood, \textit{The Call of Korea: Political, Social, Religious} (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1905), 109-110.

\textsuperscript{43} Rhodes, 1934: 490.
Since the mid-19th century, an extraordinary amount of literature has been produced on missions in the English-speaking world. Included within this mass of text is a substantial amount of works on evangelical strategy. Yet, in the majority of accounts on the Korean church only Nevius is singled out as being the instrumental factor leading to later high rates of conversion. Overlooking this larger body of works which informed the way missionaries operated in their day has prevented some from identifying how little of Nevius’ technique was in fact unique. While missionaries in Japan and China may not have adopted the specific method proposed by Nevius, this by no means implies that comparable strategies were not considered. The overarching ideals of a self-sustaining, self-propagating and self-governed church are rather plebeian elements of any mission strategy and can be found seen even the afore mentioned strategies proposed by Mott and Wisehard.

While credit to Nevius’ method may be misapplied, its function in presenting a uniquely Korean church that is allied with the goals of the nationalists is apparent. With the establishment of the Nevius Method as the source of Korean nationalist sentiment, church historians have been able to present the Christian community as a leader in resistance against Japanese colonialism. This view is then confirmed through descriptions of passive and direct opposition perpetrated by Christians at the time. Such a mixture of a nationalized, politicized church history frequently progresses in conjunction with the official narratives of the South Korean state. In this version of the past, it is insufficient to merely assert that the new faith inspired new politics. The nationalized version of Christianity must also be shown to be participatory, a depiction
that can be achieved through images of the colonial church as a political bastion against
Japanese oppression and nerve center for national resistance.

The presentation of the church resistant is often achieved through accounts of the
1907 revival as well as of the role played by Christians in the March 1st movement of the
1919. Kenneth Wells’ description of the revival asserts that the event was an expression
of the Korean Christian’s claim over the newfound faith and an outpouring of their
frustration following colonization.

It had a particular Korean flavor about it and, as their own unique experience,
impressed upon the Korean the fact that the faith belong to their race and nation.
No longer could Christianity be described as a western religion. The Presbyterian
mission in particular has encouraged this indigenization through implementing
what was called the ‘Nevius Method’ of self-support and self-propagation and
self-government of the Korean church.44

It is unclear precisely what attribute of Korean Christians meeting in Korea to conduct a
religious ceremony in Korean denotes the particularly peninsular flavor that Wells
detects. However, the scholar’s assertion that through the Nevius Method and the 1907
revival native converts were able to take control of the faith has clear implications for
establishing the church as a national entity. A similar view is expressed in recent
scholarship by Chung-Shin Park. In his book, Protestantism and Politics in Korea, Park
suggests that following the establishment of the protectorate in 1905, the Christian church
became a location for Korean nationalists to rally in order avoid Japanese suppression
and to advance their nationalist agenda. This was done outside the consent of the
missionaries who, according to Park, “chose reality over morality” in facing the

44 Kenneth Wells, New God New Nation: Protestant and Self-Reconstruction Nationalism
The use of the church as a shelter for nationalist activism explains the church growth that came in the wake of 1905. Proving this claim by pointing to reformist organizations like Sinminhoe, which associated itself with the church, historians of Christianity in Korea can argue for the faith’s central position in the historical narrative of the early colonial period extending all the way to the protests of 1919.

In his introduction to *Protestantism and Politics in Korea*, Park describes the unique role he sees the church as having played in the early 20th century history of Korea. The excerpt provided below is an abbreviated listing of some of the more pronounced flaws frequently found in the scholarship on the Korean church history.

Unlike its evangelical activity in other Asian countries, the Protestant church movement in Korea was closely allied with the progressive reform movement in late Confucian Korea and with nationalist activism in the colonial era. Not only did the Western religion introduce to Korea new values such as freedom, rights, equality, and democracy, but in late Confucian Korea it also fostered progressive social and political movements, such as the Independence Club Movement, that were affiliated with churches and missions schools. During the Japanese colonial period, almost all nationalist activities occurred in and around the Protestant religious community.

Much could be said about this paragraph, but of particular note remains the explicit connection made between the church and nationalist movements. In this version of history, enlightened values are dispensed by the missionaries, received by Koreans and translated into a form of nationalist ideology that is characterized by their political activism. Through this process the church, it is argued, passed through a process of

enculturation were the missionaries’ authority subverted by Korea congregates who direct the institution towards pursuing independence for the nation.

Based on such an account, the reader is presented an exclusive definition of what constitutes a nationalist, an image that effectively mirrors the parameters established in early South Korean state history. The activism of groups of disbanded soldiers, rural volunteers and local gentry who formed ad-hoc armies of resistance against the Japanese is explicitly left out in this account. Locked within the historic confines of South Korea’s early state history, accounts of this brand tend to summarily acknowledge only the efforts of the intellectual reformers of the Patriotic Enlightenment Movement as a normative form of political resistance. Likewise, the implication that these reformers were either Christian, or at least guided by church leadership, ignores those elements of the reform movement who opposed the new faith in the same way that it ignores the role played by the anti-colonial fighters.

It is not my intention to argue that the form of Christianity espoused by the Protestant Missionaries in Korea was disinterested in propagating the nation form. Nor am I inclined to argue that the means by which they spread their faith failed to influence the formulation of nationalist ideologies in Korea. Ross King has written several fascinating articles on missionary linguists and their place in the history of language reform, and orthography codification in modern Korea that make a strong case for the importance of missionaries in founding the linguistic building blocks for the nation.\textsuperscript{48}

Early missionary newspapers had perhaps some of the highest circulation rates of any other form of media at the time and most certainly contributed to the generation of collective consciousness that Anderson credits as the germ of the modern nation. Efforts in the collection and codification of what could be considered early national histories and literatures were also projects frequently engaged in by evangelical workers including, in the case of Korea, Gale.

However, the form of nationalism referred to in the mainstream histories of the Korean church is presented as merely a political ideology that engenders sacrifice and resistance for one’s homeland. From this perspective, if Christianity is said to awaken nationalist sentiment, then it is to be taken for granted that it also stands in opposition to colonization. This negates the possibility that the missionaries, in their capacity as part of the colonial system, sought to construct Korea as a national subject, but not as a politically autonomous one. As Korean reformers in the 1910s would discover, the church could espouse policies that further solidified Korea as a national subject while at the same time politically committing themselves to the Japanese. This was done not as a concession meant to establish the church as a sanctuary for colonial resistance, instead the missionaries’ repositioning was a pragmatic move to sustain their program of reform; a move made at the expense of domestic reformers.

A history of the church that is centered on the shared political fortunes of the religious community and the nation leads to a distorted approach in understanding presence of faith and the appearance of conversion in the past. The linking of Christianity with the nationalist movements of the early 20th century has succeeded in

forcing the story of the church into the story of the nation. The result is a church history that tends to exaggerate the faith’s importance during the colonial period, thereby downplaying the period of real numeric growth during the 1950s to 1970s.\(^\text{49}\)

5. Missi\(\text{onaries and the Colonial System}\)

On the night before the 25-year-old James Gale was to give his response to an offer from the University of College YMCA to serve as a missionary to the Kingdom of Korea, he climbed into the tower of the University of Toronto varsity building and prayed. No one knows what the young student said to God in that tower or what he believed to have heard in response, but we do have some idea what he saw. Only blocks to the south of the, campus clustered around the intersection of Spadina and Dundas, was the Jewish slum where Gale had spent his weekends for the past two years volunteering to work with the local poor through the Elizabeth Street Mission. To the north, his gaze would have reached out over the extreme limits of the young city to the fields and empty lots that rested between the campus and escarpment of the Iroquois Shoreline. Beyond this bluff and to the west were the fields and forests of southern Ontario where Gale had grown up and where his family still lived and farmed. Finally, to the extreme south was

\(^{49}\) Just as at the beginning of the century, this phase of new church growth cannot be equated to a homogenous causation. Instead, one is better severed through the consideration of an array of individual factors that relate to the torn social fabric of a post-war, urbanizing, industrializing Korea and diaspora community.
the blue expanse of Lake Ontario, stretching out well beyond his ken, mimicking the
great ocean that stood between his own world and the one he was about to enter.\textsuperscript{50}

The work of a missionary, in the minds of the Victorian world, was one fraught
with danger and adventure, sacrifice and ultimate reward.\textsuperscript{51} Goodbyes were often treated
as final and the commitment, life-long. In many cases, both assumptions proved to be
ture. For women and men alike, becoming a missionary could result in a palpable
increase in social cachet that allowed individuals locked in often strictly stratified
societies the opportunity to enter directly into a higher class. Even in the case of Gale,
this tendency is seen through his rapid rise from Alma, Ontario into posts of collector for
the Library of Congress and occasional advisor to President Roosevelt. Of course, for the
25-year-old sitting in a tower overlooking a provincial city in Upper Canada, these
possibilities may not have been so readily apparent. Gale had been inspired by the
commitment of SVM missionaries like Wilder, Forman and Mott and the local YMCA
promised him 500 dollars a year and passage to Korea in support. With that, Gale
decided to join in the SVM mission and consequently, opened yet another channel
through which the forces of international colonialism could flow.

From their initial appearance in the treaty ports and foreign concession of East
Asia, Protestant missionaries have been imbedded within the framework of imperialist
system in the region. Although the notion of a theologically and politically neutral
church was the ideal maintained by the SVM at this time, practice fell short of ideals.
The way that Protestantism first entered and expanded in Korea directly challenged the
image of non-political men of the cloth. While the missionaries in Korea would later

\textsuperscript{50} Rutt, 1972: 1-10.
very openly assert otherwise, the first evangelicals actively exploited the many forms of power available to them, including political, to advance their program of reform.

The boats, which brought the first Protestant missionaries to shores of Korea, exemplify the ties that bound colonial power to the spread of the gospel. In 1832, the East India Company sent one of its ships, the *Lord Amherst*, to explore the northern ports of China. Its mission was to investigate the geography available to the crown company for expansion. While in Macao, the ship took on board a German missionary, Charles Gutzlaff, who had been serving in the Portuguese colony with the famed British Protestant Robert Morrison. Gutzlaff accompanied the crew on their mission north serving as translator and distributing Christian literature. In July of 1832, the ship left Shandong and sailed across to the coast of Korea where the crew attempted to open trade relations with the Kingdom. While there, Gutzlaff communicated in writing with local leaders, distributed tracts as well as two copies of the Bible and planted a patch of potatoes. Eventually all petitions to the court and gifts were returned and the ship, in the words of the captain, “left the place highly dissatisfied with the unnecessary delay incurred.”52

Strictly in terms of evangelical impact and historic audacity, the next Protestant missionary to go to Korea was considerably more successful. Robert J. Thomas, a British Unitarian stationed in China, initially entered Korea surreptitiously along with two native Catholics in the fall of 1865, remaining for two months preaching and distributing religious literature. Following his brief stay, Thomas returned to Beijing, and while there, was enlisted by the French representative in Beijing, Admiral Roze, to serve as

52 Paik, 1929: 45.
translator and guide on a punitive mission planned against Korean for the killing there of French priests. However, when the French expedition stalled in Shanghai, Thomas decided to board another vessel headed to Korea, the American-registered General Sherman. The self-appointed task of this ship was to single-handedly open Korea to trade by sailing into the very heart of the kingdom and stating the crews’ demands. In joining the men of the General Sherman in their Conradesc mission up the Taedong River, Thomas ultimately shared their fate. Instead of forcing Korea open to trade, treaty and the gospel, the crew of the vessel was killed after their grounded ship was set on fire by local Korean militia.

Although the point-blank tactics of the Lord Amherst and General Sherman failed, later attempts by colonial powers to access Korea did succeed in generating the space in society needed for Protestant missionaries to gain entry. The series of treaties signed by Korea with foreign powers in the late 1870s and 1880s provided the opening Thomas had hoped for and, almost twenty years after his death, the medical missionary Horace Allen was able to begin clandestine work in Korea while serving with the American legation recently established in Seoul.

The conditions for Protestant missionaries in Korea improved in concert with Allen’s increased profile in the capital. The evangelist was first propelled into the good graces of the royal family following his treatment of wounds suffered by Prince Min during the Kapsin coup attempt in 1884. Through his connections with the court, Allen was supported in his efforts to establish what was ostensibly a mission hospital and medical school and, more importantly, in gaining permission to employ other foreigners.

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to work in these facilities. The doctor’s position in the political circles of Seoul continued to rise following his 1890 appointment to serve as secretary to the American legation to Korea, a position the former missionary would hold until he was recalled in 1905.\(^{54}\)

It was the space opened up by Allen’s political connections in the capital that allowed for the entry of the man, who in later years, would stand out as one of the most activist of missionaries: Horace Underwood. Underwood arrived in Korea in 1885 under the auspices of teaching at the medical school started by Allen and, over time, was able to assume a powerful role in capital’s political landscape. This was achieved due to a mixture of factors. Underwood’s citizenship, of course, was key, as was his wife’s position as the personal physician to Queen Min. However, it was likely the missionary’s status as an outsider in the highly factional Choson court that allowed him to garner the trust and affection he did from the king.

The extent of Underwoods political engagement was most famously demonstrated in the days following 1895 assassination of Queen Min. During what amounted to King Kojong’s extended house arrest followed the killing of the queen, Underwood served as an observer and even bodyguard for the King, supplying the monarch with meals prepared by his wife and delivered in a sealed box to protect the monarch from poisoning. When a group of loyalists devised a plan to rescue the king from the palace, it was at Underwood’s house the conspirators met, and then later, after the plot was discovered, it

\(^{54}\) Paik, 1929: 97-107, 270-271.
was again Underwood who rushed through the palace armed with Allen’s diplomatic credentials and a revolver to stand watch over the king for fear of his safety.\textsuperscript{55}

This degree of political engagement began to become a point of issue for diplomats in Korea and Washington at the time. Leaders in the American State Department felt that the missionaries’ relations with the King were undermining their authority and increasing pressure from their Japanese and Russian counterparts compelled diplomats in Washington to act. In the May 15, 1897 edition of the Seoul based newspaper \textit{The Independent}, a letter by the American Resident in Korea John B. Sill expressed the State Department’s concerns, delineating the need for missionaries to remain uninvolved in political events in the country.\textsuperscript{56} This memorandum from Sill would become in less than a decade perhaps one of most frequently asserted elements of the missionaries’ self-characterizations as the entry of the Japanese compelled them to actively project the image of the depoliticized church.

At the same time as Underwood’s exploits in the capital, Gale was exploring the flexibility afforded him by another political formation more common for missionaries at this time to exploit: extraterritoriality. After his arrival to Korea in 1888, Gale spent more than a decade traveling around the country. Working in Pusan and Wonsan for the most sustained periods, in between these intervals Gale traveled extensively throughout the country distributing tracts and looking for locations that could serve for future mission stations. During the period of this work during the 1890s, many of these


activities were in violation of Korea law, but to Gale this posed no great obstacle since his status as a British subject residing in Korea rendered such legislation defunct.

6. Leaven of the Earth

While the missionaries in Korea enjoyed the advantages derived from their status within the framework of colonialism, as time passed, they came to discover that their programs of ideological reform and political activism did not preclude other forces from affectuating change on the peninsula. Missionary literature on Korea was full of uneasy descriptions of social, political and economic forces that were changing the non-believer in ways that ran counter to their projected image of the civilized Christian native. As the SVM moved through the first decade of the 20th century, the literature produced by its central body began to devote ever more attention to these agents of social change found to be at work in the mission field often referred to in the literature as “leaven.”

As the forces of capital that helped carried missionaries overseas transformed the various fields in which they served, it became necessary to explain the changes that fell outside of the evangelical’s utopic vision. One work that attempted to address this spillage was the 1910 publication of *The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions*. Authored by John R. Mott, the work was intended in part to provide a general summary of the World Mission’s Conference held in Edinburgh that year. This conference was said to be the largest ecumenical event devoted to missions in the history of the church. At

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57 John Mott, *The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions* (Toronto: The Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1910), 44.
Edinburgh, missionaries and overseas church leaders came together to discuss a wide range of issues relating to evangelism, including a panel chaired by Mott on the social conditions of the mission field and its implications for social change.\textsuperscript{58} Mott’s review of this sub-field’s final report pays only passing attention to some of the more common subjects of critique regarding the seemingly backwards practices found in the mission field. What is of interest is the amount of attention devoted not to the failings of the field, but to forces thought to be emanating from the West, stimuli referred to by Mott as “evil occidental leaven.”

In \textit{The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions}, Mott presents the various types of bad “leaven” in detail. Drawing from the earlier work of Dennis and Kidd, Mott provides examples broad in scale and perceived severity, describing the negative influence of everything from oppressive colonial policy, exploitative business practices and the liquor trade to secular education, exchange students and “indecent French literature.”\textsuperscript{59} The assumption underpinning these critiques remained rooted in the idea of the West enacting unidirectional change on the static East, which Mott establishes as passive subject in the books first chapter, “The Non-Christian Nations Plastic and Changing.” Subsequently, the urgency expressed by Mott in this work is indicative of growing concern within the missionary movement that influences pegged as non-Christian would mold the non-West at a greater speed than the missionaries could save. The end result of this scenario, it was


\textsuperscript{59} Mott, 1910: 45-46.
feared, was a fully secularized version of the West free of the Christian foundation that the mission’s movement trenchantly held to be a requisite for true civilization.

Throughout these discussions on the threat posed to the non-West by the secular forces of the Occident, two topics frequently emerged as examples of these non-Christian forces made manifest: indigenous nationalist movements and the Japanese model of political and social reform. The success of the island nation at rapid modernization and integration into the global-system was viewed with enormous interest in Anglo-American world at the time, a spotlight that would only grow in intensity with Japan’s victory over Russia in 1905. Impressed by the nation’s ability to adapt to the patterns and forms of capitalist modernity, Japan increasingly began to be identified as the new leader of East Asia. As Mott explained, “The Eastern nations are following Japan and Japan is following the West, and what Japan has succeeded in doing today the others will do tomorrow.”

Still, the lack of any large-scale reception of Christian ideology among the Japanese population was a point of considerable ambivalence to the missionary. A common explanation for this detour from the pattern of anticipated development was the corrupting influence of secular education. A sense of the conflict that emerged between the missionaries and secular educators who lectured on Darwin and Spencer in Japanese universities can be garnered from Joseph Henning’s work on American-Japanese relations during the Meiji period, Outpost of Civilization. In this book, Henning describes the antagonism between these two groups by looking at the running debate over

\[\textit{Mott, 1910: 6.}\]
what in effect became the missionaries’ legitimacy to establish an association between the Christian faith and the concept of civilization as an outcome on teleological time.\textsuperscript{61}

Still, for the vast majority of Anglo-Americans, the link between faith and civilization remained unquestionable. Consequently Japan’s failure to convert became an avenue through which to critique the nation’s reforms. Traces of this tone can be found in the opposition to Japanese expansion voiced by missionaries on the peninsula during the annexation of 1910. Andre Schmid has examined this view in his writing on Homer Hulbert and the missionary’s 1906 work, \textit{The Passing of Korea}. Through this book, Hulbert offered a famous attack on the Japanese presence on the peninsula, but, as Schmid explains, the missionary’s opposition was not based on an ideological aversion to colonialism as much as it was opposed to the expansion on the non-Christian form of civilization as represented by Japan.\textsuperscript{62}

Following Japan’s victory of the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, the threat posed by the example of a secularized Japan imbued with what the missionaries saw as a “hollow” form of civilization and yet one still capable of delivering a decisive military defeat to a European nation was directly alluded to in the missionary discourse. In \textit{The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions}, Mott describes the emergence of Japan as an international event that would stimulate the aspirations of the world.

The ascendancy of the West, so bitter to the Asiatic, has emphasized the value of a new and bitter conception of nationality. The progress, victory, and power of the Empire of the Rising Sun have become known and have been discussed in the marts of China, the bazaars of India, the khans of Persia and Turkey, and even in


the caravansaries of Arabia and Africa, and have powerfully stimulated national hopes and ambitions and led to great changes in national outlook and practice.\textsuperscript{63}

However, Mott is reluctant to permit too much credence to the idea that a modern indigenous nationalist movement could arising independently from the influence of the West. Mott managed the challenge of nationalism in the same way that he responded to any other form of social force that was thought to have come from the West. Nationalism in Mott’s estimation, emerged from a Christian ideological base and thus could be made acceptable, if forms of patriotic loyalty are supplemented by faith.

But a far more potent cause (for the emergence of the new patriotism) has been the sense of the value of the individual and the desire for genuine liberty and progress which have been awakened and developed in men through the knowledge of the Christian scriptures, through the proclamation of the mission of Christ to man, and through the Christ-leavened institutions, ideals and practices of the West.\textsuperscript{64}

Regardless of its relationship to Christian ethics, nationalism and Anglo-American uncertainties over the rise of the ideology among the non-West mixed freely with race war anxieties that emerged in latter part of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century as capture in part by popular writings on the “yellow peril.” Progressively shaped by notions of a global ethno-racial competition rooted in the Social Darwinist understanding of race and nation, these fears were evident in missionary descriptions of foreign reform movements and worked to instill a sense of urgency in the evangelical mission at the time. This new incentive to evangelize the world before it was “too late,” in a limited sense, worked to take the place of the previous eschatological urgency implied in the SVM’s, by this time obsolete, motto.

\textsuperscript{63} Mott, 1910: 32.
\textsuperscript{64} Mott, 1910: 33.
Who can measure what it will mean for man-kind when not only Japan but also China with her un-limited resources and India with her 300,000,000 people take their place among the great civilized powers? The influence which they will exert upon the life and thought of the world must be enormous whatever the nature; whether it will be Christian or not depends largely on the direction given to it today.65

Korea assumed something of a unique position within the evangelical community’s discussion of forms of civilization divorced of Christian theology.

Compared to its surrounding mission fields, the Korean church had enjoyed rapid growth in a very short period, while at that same time material conditions on the peninsula had also undergone a significant transformation due to the increased economic integration of the region with global markets. A number of the leading reformers in Korean society were also members of the church and subscribed to a platform of reform similar to that of the missionaries. However, as the likelihood of a Japanese occupation increased, the church’s ties to the nationalist movement became a growing liability.

7. Making the Mission Field into a National Market

Court anxiety over the changing dimensions of the Sino-Korea relationship was a pronounced characteristic of late Choson politics. Intensifying forms of Chinese power in Korea coupled with the Qing’s new approach to the international system had been cause for considerable disquiet among Choson reformers and conservatives alike. Concerns over the peninsula’s relationship with its longtime patron took on an even greater sense of urgency in 1895 when Korean sovereignty was explicitly established in

65 Mott, 1910: 35-36.
the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War. In the eyes of international law, the treaty of Shimonoseki left little doubt as to the nature of Choson’s relationship with the Qing Empire. It was now up to the many discordant voices within the kingdom of Korea to determine what these changes meant for their society.

In examining the various views that found expression during this period of social reterritorialization, striking similarities can be found in the platforms of reform espoused by the nationalists of the Patriotic Enlightenment Movement and by Protestant evangelicals working in Korea. This likeness is rooted in the shared desire of the two groups to dislodge Korea from its historic relationship with China in favor of a national unit embedded in the system of global exchange. However, commonalities aside, a deeper examination will show that a point of divergence is reached when the nationalist and missionaries’ shared interest in constructing a national subject merges with the evangelical’s alternative goals of global evangelism and faith-based social renewal.

In the years between the Sino-Japanese War and the annexation of the peninsula in 1910, reformers of the Patriotic Enlightenment Movement frantically attempted to construct a new national subject in the space created by Korea’s post-1895 political reorientation. These nationalists, through forms of print media and education reform, attempted to further dislocate Korea from the Sino-centric world and recast it as a national subject within the global system of capitalist modernity. This transformation demanded an expression of commitment to the ontological notions underpinning the civilization and enlightenment discourse that the nationalists were accessing. Their reception of a Eurocentric understanding of unilinear modernity led Korean nationalists to attempt a reformulation of Korea’s characteristics, orienting the national subject away
from its previous relation to the social-political order of the Middle Kingdom and creating in its stead an autonomous national subject that could assume its place within the community of nations that structured the global market.\textsuperscript{66}

The missionaries also engaged in this effort to construct Korea anew as a national subject within the international system. Consequently, the deepening of Korea’s economic ties with world markets, facilitated through the structure of the nation, was a development the missionaries largely endorsed. The form of Social Darwinism employed by many missionaries in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century resulted in an unusual synthesis that could allow their explanation of the faith to incorporate manifestations of the market without needing to account for the exploitative aspects of the system. In more conventional forms of Social Darwinian theory, the market is rendered as an expansion of the biological domain. In this view, the notion of survival of the fittest in life is extended to encompass the fortunes of competing parties within an economy. However, this was by no means the only school of thought in circulation. Here again, the influence of Benjamin Kidd appears to have helped at least some in the international evangelical movement reconcile their religious views with the capitalist system and its role in the mission field.

Kidd’s 1898 book, \textit{Control of the Tropics}, broaches the question of the colonial state within world markets through the model of Social Darwinism introduced in his first work. In the book, Kidd maintains his earlier critique of the Spenserian view of social of development and its tendency to locate the engine of human progress with the rationalism

of the individual. Kidd had incorporated elements of the Marxist critique into his version of a human telos achieved through the collective influence of “ultra-rational” ethical systems, consequently, the rational self-interest of an individual competitor within a market is presented as an almost anti-social compulsion. Accordingly, the laissez-faire economy, in Kidd’s view, could only damage the social collective and hinder the evolutionary development of a species.

In keeping with general assumptions about the size of the temporal gap between the colonies and the west, Kidd maintained that the dominance of European races within the world would continue into the immediate future. This was not seen as the outcome of any Mendelian advantage enjoyed by Europeans, but as the result of a very wide lead in the social development of the West. With this in mind, Kidd’s work attempted to offer a policy model that would best mitigate the West’s demographic development which called for continued extraction of resources from the periphery with what Kidd saw as an evolutionary necessity to meet these demands in an effective and ethical manner.

*Control of the Tropics* commences with Kidd’s provision of a general overview and critique of the already existing models of colonial administration. In this section, the author expresses his doubts as to the potential of the economic liberalism and policies of political disengagement that at the time characterized the colonial approach of countries like a Spain and England. The unrestricted opening of markets and the formation of European-styled political structures were changes that Kidd considered too elaborate for the social maturity of people of the tropics.

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68 Crook, 1984: 56-65.
Because these regions have taken to themselves the outward forms of civilized states, and in particular those of Republican governments the deeper truth that Democracy is not simply a form of government but a stage in human evolution, seems with regard to them to have been lost sight of.69

Accordingly, attempts to rush political de-colonization and economic liberalization degraded social conditions in many parts of the world, facilitating the sort of exploitation that ultimately results in general instability and poor productivity. Kidd identified this as a trend across Latin American where the guiding hand of the colonial administrator had been replaced by the less effective rule of either the corporate trust or the warlord in a liberal’s robes.

Accompanying his critique of the liberal approach to colonial reform, Kidd also questions the effectiveness of expansionist policies that encouraged population transfers from Europe to the periphery. Such an approach, Kidd argued, was ineffective due to the climatic extremes of the tropics which, he predicted, would cause Continental programs that sought to mimic the Anglo model in North America to falter in the intolerable heat. Finally, Kidd roundly denounced the plantation-style colonization that characterized early phases of European expansion and that could still be found in places like the Belgian Congo. Finding greatest fault in the model’s treatment of native workers, Kidd argued that to simplistically approach a colonial possession as property to exploit for its resources and strictly protected markets would only damage the long term prosperity of both the metropole and the periphery.

In contrast to these three forms of colonial expansion, Control of the Tropics called for what was essentially a program of trusteeship. The people of the world’s equatorial regions, Kidd explained, lacked the faculties necessary to develop their

69 Kidd, 1898: 44.
resources independently, so it fell to European nations to nurture their social development in order to quicken the advancement of the colonies while at the same time maintain the metropole’s growth. For Kidd, such program called for a cadre of colonial managers who could administer a system of social reform and also paternalistically protect its development.

The first principle of success in undertaking such a duty seems to the writer to be a clear recognition of the cardinal fact that in the tropics the white man lives and works only as a diver lives and works underwater…The people among whom he lives and works are often separated from him by thousands of years of development; he cannot, therefore, be allowed to administer from any local or lower standard he may develop. If he has any right there at all, he is there in the name of civilization; if our civilization has any right there at all, it is because it represents higher ideals of humanity, a higher social order.  

In terms of economic policy this model of trusteeship called for a highly calibrated nation-based system of exchange. The colony should be integrated into world markets, thought Kidd, but also required sufficient supervision by foreign administrators who could protect society from the harmful excesses of the capitalist system.

It is difficult to conclusively determine the influence of Control of the Tropics on the Anglo-American missions movement. However, from the perspective of the work’s publishers, its release was almost perfectly timed. In England, the book contributed to an already intensifying controversy over tariff reform that would climax with an attempt by Prime minister Chamberlain to establish a system of inter imperial protectionist tariffs. Meanwhile, the book’s American release coupled with Kidd’s accompanying promotional tour came in the midst of a heated national debate on the country’s foreign policy. Kidd arrived in American during the immediate aftermath of its victory over Spain and acquisition of the Philippines and Cuba. The controversy that emerged around

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70 Kidd, 1898: 54-55.
America’s entry into an occupational form of colonialism coloured Kidd’s two-month stay and, according to his biographer, equated to a much more intense social applause and critique of his work.\(^{71}\)

Kidd’s critique of the colonial state and capitalist system also found its way into missionary discourse from this period. In the overview of the variables of the worlds’ missions fields at the 1910 conference at Edinburgh, missionary delegates adopted appraisals of colonial and market exploitation that were very much similar to those by Kidd. This was particularly true in terms of the evangelical movement’s denunciation of conditions in the Belgium Congo.\(^{72}\) Elsewhere, in an address to business leaders in at a fundraiser in 1909, Robert Speer, another leading member of the SVM and director of the Presbyterian Church’s board of missions, encouraged his audience missions sponsors from the Canadian business community to refer to *Control of the Tropics* when considering the negative influence of the market in the mission field.\(^{73}\) Dennis also makes use of Kidd’s writings in his adaptation of the image of the missionary as a form of the colonial agent-educator. Citing Kidd’s model of the administrator described in *Control of the Tropics*, Dennis argued that, “the projected potency which works for the future building up of nations is embodied in missionary activities.”\(^{74}\)

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\(^{71}\) Crook, 1984: 122-141.


Still, for the international missions movement, the greatest utility of Kidd’s work was in the way it enabled Christians to incorporate Social Darwinism into their understanding of the role of faith in this world. This alliance allowed the missionaries to link a critique of the capitalist system in a form similar to that of Kidd’s with the notion of ideological correctness. By emphasizing the importance of the altruistic compulsions elicited by “ultra-rational” belief, missionaries could ultimately refer back to the centrality of Christianity when confronted by the ethical problems posed by the market exploitation. From this perspective, the global economic system was redeemable as long those who engaged in it had a sufficient commitment to the faith and, in the invariable cases of excess, responsibility could be placed at the feet of the unbeliever.

An example of this sleight of hand is evident in Dennis’ attempt to underscore the liberating function of missions in his account of the church and the inter-continental slavery trade. The purchasing of slaves from parts of eastern and central Africa for export to the agricultural industries in the New World had been a prosperous trade that enjoyed the explicit and passive support of sizable sections of the Protestant church in America. During the American Civil War, all major denominations in the country split over the issue of slavery and it was only in the Northeast, were slavery had little direct value to the region’s economy, that theologies opposed to the institution were capable of garnering large scale public support.

Yet, rather than deal with this troubling part of the church’s past, Dennis simple places agency in his narrative with the abolitionist. By singling out critiques of the trade such as those voiced by famed missionaries like David Livingston, Dennis attempts to place the international evangelical movement in the anti-slavery camp. Meanwhile
Dennis deals with Christians engaged in the reprehensible trade by accusing them of being followers of the faith in name only who had, through their greed, sullied the name of the church. This treatment of slavery enabled Dennis to maintain his larger theme of the missionary as an agent of social progression. This pattern of argument was widely available to the evangelicals enabling them to avoid implication for the church’s role in abusive economic and governmental structures.\(^\text{75}\)

Gale employs a similar technique when confronted with the material wonders and exploitation of the international economic system. In his earlier works, we can see the missionary’s ambivalence over the upheaval brought to domestic markets by Korea’s increased entry into the global economy.\(^\text{76}\) Still, by and large, these observations do not appear to have upset Gale’s faith in the marriage of Christianity and the market. Not unlike many in his day, Gale was in awe of the material development that accompanied capitalist modernity and easily managed to incorporate the more appealing aspects of the economic system into his assumptions about Christianity and its decisive relationship with time, race and civilization. Gale lightly traces this belief in *The Vanguard* when he prefaces the future martyrdom of one of the story’s leading evangelists with a short soliloquy on the missionary endeavor.

Foster rejoiced at the evidence of the white man’s energy, for he believed that fully that in the wake of the Gospel would come all the triumphs of civilization. The trader, the merchant, the engineer, the miner were messengers of good, provided they recognize God and the rights of their fellow-man.\(^\text{77}\)

The provisional statement at the end of Gale’s quote shows how a technique is put into play that, similar to Dennis’ account of slavery, allows the church to avoid any explicit

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\(^{75}\) Dennis, 1899: 283-337.

\(^{76}\) James Gale, *Korea Sketches* (New York: F. H. Revell, 1898), 210-211.

\(^{77}\) James Gale, *The Vanguard* (New York: F. H. Revell, 1904), 189.
accountability for the excesses of the economic system it advocates. By asserting the importance of ideological correctness, Gale relegates the worst aspects of the capitalist system to the greed of the non-believer while maintaining the belief that material wealth of the Occident still had its foundation in the work of the non-deviant Christian businessman.

Gale’s 1904 book, *The Vanguard*, reproduces this trope in the contrast produced between the novel’s two foreign businessmen, the characters Puffsnauber and Shoreland. In the book Puffsnauber, a German customs agent, fills the role of the unbelieving businessmen. Characterized by his girth, cruelty, greed and the sexual exploitation of a Japanese servant, the element Gale identifies as most detestable about the character is the negative example the German provides to the “morally frail peoples of the East.” To stand in opposition to Puffsnauber, is the redeemable businessman Shoreland. This citizen of the Empire befriends the protagonist at the beginning of the book as they depart from Japan. In the story, Shoreland eventually leaves the Orient and settles into a profitable life among the upper class of Chicago. However, the character continues to reappear throughout the narrative, thanks to his correspondence with the protagonist, and in the end returns to Korea to survey the great deeds achieved by his old friend.

Shoreland is not written without his faults, which Gale appears to have added in order to respond to domestic critiques of the evangelical effort. However, the character is not castigated with the vilifying traits that give Puffsnauber his utility. Instead, Shoreland stands out as a foil for the missionary, with both presented as members of the same educated elite. The material wealth Shoreland enjoys, as recounted in his letters to

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78 Gale, 1904: 64.
the protagonist, Willis, provides a source of temptation for the kind of life the isolated and poor missionary gave up. However, Gale is deliberate in concluding the book with Shoreland and his wife admitting the superiority of the missionary’s chosen path. “I’d rather choose Mr. Willis’ place in life than be head of the Standard Oil Company.” The central dynamic in this relationship is most explicitly related to the challenge the private sector brought to missionary recruitment. Still, the way in which Gale constructs the protagonist and Shoreland as Anglo-Saxon peers in opposition Puffsnauber also exposes the author’s feelings about class and the place of missionaries in Anglo-American society. There is certainly not much of an indictment of the capitalist system present in likening missionaries to potential businessmen.

8. Missionaries and the Middle Kingdom

While the Anglo-American missionaries of the SVM and the Korean nationalists of the Patriotic Enlightenment Movement each attempted to affect the formation of a nationalized Korea, the similarities in the goals of both groups began to fragment as the evangelicals began to consider Korea in the context of the overall objectives of the international missions movement. In the SVM’s program to proselytize the world, China stood as a crucial objective. Contrary to the equally populous India, China, by the early 20th century, continued to maintain a significant level of political autonomy and the entry of missionaries throughout the country had only recently been initiated. Furthermore,

79 Gale, 1904: 320.
conservative shifts in the Imperial government in Beijing and internal rebellions such as
Boxer Uprising had created an image within the missionary movement of the country as a
vast and isolated ocean of stagnated virtues and lost souls, illustrations that appealed to
the Victorian esthetic of the intrepid young missionary carrying civilization to the
world.\textsuperscript{80}

From the vantage point of the missionary effort’s global vision, China emerged as
a convoluted subject for evangelicals like Gale to address in their work. On the one hand,
the Middle Kingdom was regarded as the genesis of Korea’s cultural and social
backwardness, an unwanted appendage in need of removal if the kingdom was to
graduate into modernity. Conversely, China was also depicted as the crucial objective for
the missionary in Korea, one made accessible through the cultural and racial sameness
that was perceived to exist between the people of both nations.

Gale’s representation of the static East is central to both his critique of the
Chinese tradition in Korean life and to his description of racial sameness as an attribute
facilitating the conversion of the Middle Kingdom. Initial characterizations of China’s
presence on the peninsula asserted that centuries of Korean captivation with the
Confucian tradition had resulted in national obsession with the past and universal
intolerance of change. For this reason, in order to be effectively introduced to the
modern world, the evangelicals asserted, the native would have to reject Confucianism
with its obsolete conception of time and turn to the alternative model of Christian
enlightenment and civilization.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{80} Parker, 1998: 14-42.
\textsuperscript{81} Gale, 1909: 99-101.
This appraisal of the Confucian tradition in Korean found its voice most potently through critiques of the education system. Depicted as the source of their failed worldview, the Confucianism in many missionary accounts became a basket in which to place all the identified failings of the Sino-centric tradition. The lack of progressive thought, economic stagnation, technological inferiority, any shortcoming could be explained by the cognitive restraint that was Confucianism. One of Gale’s descriptions of Confucian learning makes this point and contrast apparent by asserting that, “with us education is an exercise of the facilities, in order that the mind may grow; in Korea it is like a foot bandage or plaster jacket for the mind: once fairly put on, and all growth and development is at an end.” This overt reference to the Chinese practice of binding women’s feet leads the reader to associate Confucian education with what was seen as the epitome of the exotic and barbaric, yet another example of the tendency to link social practice to a conflated tradition.

Cognizant of the political shifts that were straining the social fabric of the peninsula, it was through the failed Tonghak movement and the defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese War that Gale located the most dramatic example of Korea’s movement away from China and the Confucian worldview. Yet, to Gale, the defeat went beyond the political reorientation that came with the treaty of Shimonoseki. The horrors of war accompanying the Donghak uprising and the battle of Pyongyang were seen as a form of pedagogy for the people of Korea, a lesson that would persuade them to turn away from the Middle Kingdom and reorient themselves to the teachings of the Christian West. This attitude towards Sino-Korean relationship was indicative of Gale’s works in the years

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82 Gale, 1898: 177.
between the Sino-Japanese War and the creation of the protectorate. In *The Vanguard*, he describes the aftermath of the Chinese defeat at Pyongyang as the prelude to the “great harvest” of converts.

In the first place, Korea’s worship of China ends here in this battlefield; in the second place, your proud, wicked city has been taught a lesson and humbled under the paddle, and nothing better at times, for Oriental character, than its broad telling sweep. We are to see great things on this ground from now on. I am convinced that the days of preparation are over.\(^8^3\)

Gale’s critique of the Sino-centric regional order notwithstanding, we can see elsewhere how his understanding of similitude between the Koreans and Chinese was introduced in his works as a social attribute meant to enable Koreans to take the lead in the conversion of China that the missionary movement so desperately sought after. The timing of this new conceptualization of Korea appears to be a salient factor. Gale’s two earlier publications from 1898 and 1904 make little mention of this predestined link of race and culture. The motif only appears in *Korea in Transition*, the work Gale produced in the years following the church growth that followed the 1907-1908 revivals and the establishment of the Japanese protectorate in 1905. In *Korea in Transition*, we can recognize the shifting characterization of the Middle Kingdom in relation to Korea. Through the book’s inversion of the former hierarchical relationship, China is now depicted as lagging behind Korea on the pathway of social development. In line with this juxtaposition, Gale forecasts a deepening inversion of the historic Sino-Korean relationship with Korea now playing the role of instructor, its suitability for the task established by a mix of racial sameness and the will of heaven.

A house of prayer for all Eastern people is what God apparently means to make of this little peninsula. By small degrees already we see that across its border are

\(^8^3\) Gale, 1904: 101.
going messages and influences that are to help great China to awake from her opium sleep of ages to see and to hear God calling, and when China awakes the world is won.\textsuperscript{84}

For Gale, the Korean Christian’s shared place in the ethno-collective of the Oriental equips them to transmit the gospel to the Chinese with greater effect. In order to buttress this argument as well as to justify his expanded work with Korean literature, Gale refers to the very characteristics he had previously cited as examples of the retarding influence of the Chinese civilization. As such, by the late 1910s, these cultural flaws were recast as assets, central among them the Korean use of Chinese script and their cultural background in Confucian tradition. Still, it is not just Gale’s belief in the racial and cultural affinity between Korea and China that gives rise to his new-found emphasis on the importance of the sameness between the two. Korea’s geopolitical position at the end of the 1910s helped give Gale cause to believe that Christianity was on the cusp of spreading outwards to the rest of the East. The colonization of Korea was shown by Gale to be an opportunistic change that opened the door to another high profile missions field: Japan.

Reactions among the missionaries to the intensification of Japanese power on the peninsula varied widely at the time. While some like Allen, Hulbert and Underwood exhibiting varying levels of antagonism against the Japanese expansion, often insisting on the need for other colonial powers to intervene in Korea under the standard of good-office or otherwise, few seem to have departed from the underlying assumptions that informed the colonial effort they were a part of.\textsuperscript{85} For many evangelicals in Korea at the

\textsuperscript{84} Gale, 1909: 145.
\textsuperscript{85} Don Clark, \textit{Living Dangerously in Korea: The Western Experience, 1900-1950} (Norwalk, CT: East Bridge, 2003), 32; Underwood, 1905: 39.
time, annexation appears to have been a welcomed change based on the belief that the new colonizers were more capable of effectively managing the peninsula. With Gale, we find a tempered receptiveness to the expansion of Japanese power; a reaction not uncommon within the Korean missionary community and one that was certainly based in part on the author’s faith in the teleological progression of a Christ-centered civilization in East Asia. As with its projected link to China, Korean Christians, in Gale’s understanding this providentially driven progression of history, were considered potential proselytizers of Japan, a role now enabled by the newly-forged political bonds of colonialism.

Korea’s heart beats one with China. The cords struck across the Yalu find response here. She is under Japan tighter than lock and key can make her. Has God a purpose for the Far East with his hand upon her, and she between these two mighty questions of the world, China and Japan?87

Situated between two of the most important mission fields in the global evangelical movement, it was through annexation that Gale’s vision of Korea as the sanctifier of the Orient took shape. According to the underlying assumptions of the missionary effort, Korea could serve as a force meant to straddle the two “mighty questions” Gale writes of. Specifically: could China be roused to enter the global system of Christian-based enlightenment, and would civilization and the version of modernity that would take root in Japan be molded into a form based on the indefinite and changing standard of Christian values? Or would it remain as the missionary movement asserted, a hollow form of civilization, founded on secular materialism, challenging the necessity of Christianity to the teleological path to modernity?

86 Clark, 2003: 37.
87 Gale, 1909: 24.
The creation of this new vision of Korea as the future native shepherd of China and Japan is an example of the author’s attempt to make sense of the political and social transformations that allowed for an introduction of the faith, but that also helped bring Korea into the Japanese Empire. At the time of Gale’s writing, the Korean church was undergoing the most rapid phase of growth in its short history and there were few signs indicating this expansion would abate. The atypical rate of growth in the Korean church became a point of celebration and perplexity within the international missions movement. However, aside from attributing this to the hand of God, Gale points to two other causes: one rooted again in essentialized traditions that the missionaries were striving to displace, while the other was founded on the author’s understanding on the Korean’s temporal positioning in relation to the West.

While Confucianism remained a popular target of missionary critiques, the tradition did receive a level of acknowledgement in evangelical discourse for its social utility as one of the so-called “high faiths.” These more codified and institutionalized traditions received recognition for their utility in propelling its followers further along the path towards civilization than the basket of practices that took the term of Shamanism. Missionaries praised the Confucian tradition for establishing an ethical foundation for the nation, one capable of supplanting local folk beliefs and orienting the population towards a more enlightened faith. In the 1907 publication of *Korea: the Land, People and Customs*, George H. Jones sums up this view when he designates Confucianism as a form of preparation for the reception of the true ethical system of the Christian tradition.

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The Korean is a man of one book. He memorized it, and his ability to repeat long passages from it is surprising. Taught by Confucianism to regard the Classics as the chief text-book of all education, the daily companion in all walks of life, he transfers this attitude to the Bible, and never questions the need and paramount importance of an early intimate acquaintance with it.89

From this understanding, we see the form of Orientalist logic that offers superficial praise of reified Korean social practice. Even while Jones acclaims the traits developed through what he terms the Confucian tradition, its value can only be located by virtue of its relation to the dominant West. The value of an object, in this case the very tradition rendered elsewhere as the source of the mission field’s social stagnation, can later be favorably recast and evaluated for its utility in preparing the way for the superior forms of the Occident.

Accompanying his assumptions about the utility of previous traditions in carrying the gospel is another factor Gale credits for rapid growth in the Korean church: an anachronistic understanding of time and history. The first generation of missionaries to Korea viewed the nation through a world-view decisively shaped by their time in the Anglo-American Academy. This intellectual background often equipped the evangelical with high degree of biblical study and training in the Greco-Roman classics. This, together with the increasingly influential Hegelian view of history, often led foreign evangelicals to describe their arrival as akin to stepping into the ancient past. Once there, they observed a level of receptivity to the gospel that met their expectations of a people locked in history.

Outwardly, by habit, custom and ceremonial form, they are equipped to understand the Bible; the air they breathe seems impregnated with the flavor of the days of Christ; the movings of their world are along the lines of ancient

89 George Jones, Korea: the Land, People and Customs (Cincinnati, OH: Jennings, 1907), 98-99.
Palestine; their inner thoughts are recorded in the Scriptures; their superstitions just as they were in the days of Israel’s decline; their understanding of spiritual forces just what the nations round Judea understood them to be; their conclusions concerning life what the worldly of the Bible concluded life to be. To meet these conditions, is this wonderful language, Un-mun. Like the shot that hit the target it strikes squarely into the opportunity of to-day, and prepares the land for what God is asking of it. Nationally last, least and less than nothing, how beautifully is Korea suited to God’s hand! Just this time, too, missionary boards are awake and new forces are pressing in. Yesterday Korea sat weeping over her disbanded soldiers, to-day she welcomes the army of salvation to take the vacated and desolated place.\(^90\)

Clearly, the army of salvation Gale refers to in this excerpt is not composed of Japanese gendarmerie. Rather, what the missionary presents here is a vision of history in which the forces of providence have perfectly aligned with Korea’s religious traditions, teleological periodization, the political collapse of the nation and the presence of a vernacular written language. Accordingly, it is the arrival of the missionaries that serves as the active agent meant to organize these elements and occupy the central place in the reformulation of the nation and of the region. As Gale writes above, one of the key components needed for the forecasted transformation of the peninsula was the presence of a vernacular script, the tool through which missionaries’ teachings could reach out to the souls of the people and activate the citizens of the nation.

For the missionaries stationed in Korea, vernacular tracts and eventually full translations of the New Testament played a central role in their evangelical work. The evangelicals considered vernacular publications, along with educational programs stressing literacy, as one of the most important tools not only for spiritual reform, but also cultural activation and reorientation away from the Sino-centered worldview needed to more fully integrate Korea into the global system. The missionaries’ pleasure at their

\(^90\) Gale, 1909: 154-155.
discovery of Un-mun came partially from the script’s favorable contrast to classical Chinese. In the vein of his previous critique of China’s influence on the peninsula, Gale identifies the Korean usage of characters as one of the causes for the stagnation of the country. “Poor China flounders about hopelessly trying to find some vehicle that will convey thought from the page to the mind of the simple. She tried the character and labors hard to learn it.”\(^91\) Following a description of several amorphous mnemonic devices used to learn Chinese, Gale expands the scope of the problems caused by the Sino writing system to all of East Asia. “This represents the struggle of China, Korea and Japan after thought through the medium of the character. How labored and shadowy, but how simple when run out in native script.”\(^92\)

Gale’s initial distaste for Chinese as a medium for conveying the scriptures is apparent. While this view changed later in life, it is clear that up until at least the first decade of the twentieth century Gale retained a predilection for Un-mun as a vehicle for the gospel that was just short of reverential.

Korea’s native script is surely the simplest language in the world. Invented in 1445 A.D., it has come quietly down the dusty ages, waiting form who knew what? Never used, it was looked on with contempt as being so easy. Why yes, even women could learn it in a month or little more; of what use could such a cheap script be? By one mysterious providences it was made ready and kept waiting for the New Testament and other Christian literature. Up to this day these have had almost exclusive use of this wonderful simple language.\(^93\)

Indeed, in Gale’s view, the presence of a marginalized vernacular written language was merely another factor that contributed to the rapid conversion of the Korean people with Un-mun serving as further indication of the nation’s providential uniqueness. However,

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\(^{91}\) Gale, 1909: 136.

\(^{92}\) Gale, 1909: 137.

\(^{93}\) Gale, 1909: 137.
this predestined role could only be fulfilled through the activation and direction of the missionary. The language, “in waiting” as Gale described it, was in need of effective employment.

9. Vernacular Language and Missions

The use of vernacular literature in the Anglo-American Protestantism of the 19th century stood out as a central attribute of the faith. The same was true of the missions movement this school of Christianity produced. Global evangelization and material salvation alike called for a level of mass communication that took full advantage of industrialized publishing and literacy campaigns. These were the tools that were widely applied by the missionaries of the SVM world over at this time. However, the role envisioned for literature production in missions work also underwent a shift reflective of the larger changes that marked the emergence of the Social Gospel. Previous literature production by the missionaries generally came in the form of the religious tract, a medium considered as one of the most effective means of frequently understaffed mission fields to actuate conversion. Although this application of print media continued even as the Social Gospel grew in popularity, the emergence of the new views towards missions heralded in Dennis’ book expanded the task of evangelical publications to not only the spreading of the gospel, but also the facilitation of social renewal.

In the second volume of Christian Missions and Social Progress, Dennis offers a deeper analysis of the role of missions in the social development. Among the forces the
missionary saw as casting a positive influence on the mission field was Christian literature which, he argued, was one of the greatest social contributions to the non-believing nations of the world to be offered by the evangelical cause. Missions literature, Dennis contended, paved the way for knowledge of civilization through the provision of moral instruction.  

The sheer scale of the missionary enterprise fortified Dennis’ certitude about the transformative potential of evangelical literature. His section on missionary presses exudes this confidence through his presentation of the vast quantities of empirical evidence collected for his work. The existence of 34 tract societies, 120 new written forms of vernacular, 148 missionary presses, 6,000,000 annual publications, and 250,000,000 pages of mission-related material, it was in the missionaries’ production of knowledge on a scale as huge as this that Dennis based his confidence in the transformative power of evangelism.  

The morning drum-beat of the British Army is said to accompany the sunrise; but even in more literal harmony with fact, may it not be said that the throb of mission presses—signal of a transcendent dawn—pulsates round the world with the music of their unceasing activity?  

The martial imagery employed by Dennis in this passage is reflective of a broader attitude within the SVM. The missionaries considered themselves as on the march to renew the nations of the world. Encompassed within this program was what was thought to be a new literary epoch, a transformation nurtured under their direction for the social development and salvation of the non-believer. Affirming this view, Dennis wrote, “it is

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95 Dennis, 1899: 36.
96 Dennis, 1899: 37.
safe to say that an era of national literature has in many instances been inaugurated by missions.”

As Dennis saw it, missionary linguists and translators played a central role in the initiation of this new literary age. In an attempt to prove the evangelical’s centrality to the social reform sparked by a missionary literature, Dennis goes into even greater detail with the final installment of Christian Missions and Social Progress. As part of this third volume, meant to provide the comprehensive empirical support for Dennis’ sociological study, he provides an almost encyclopedic overview of the many hundreds of missionary-directed literary projects conducted throughout the world. Nestled within Dennis’ long lists and extensive overviews is an explanation of the work done by James S. Gale. In this section lauding missions’ literary contribution, Gale is commended together with hundreds of other missionaries for their efforts in introducing a social and spiritual salvation brought about by Christian literature.

Gale shared Dennis’ view on the importance of literature in the missionaries’ program of social renewal and he considered his work as a translator a key component in the endeavor to civilize and nationalize the Korean people. “Literature,” wrote Gale, “is a special mark that definitely fixes a nation’s standing – good literature means an enlightened people, while the absence of literature spells savagery.” Korea, in Gale’s approximation, fared poorly in amassing this reservoir of civilization. In one article written in 1905, he described Korea as a devoid of any current day literary exchange. “Korea is a land without novels or newspapers” he comments, “let anyone who suffers

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97 Dennis, 1899: 37.
from a nervous prostration, brought on by a vain effort to keep pace with the literature of
the day, come here to rest.” Accordingly, Gale considered it part of his divine calling to
nurture a national literature for Korea, which in turn he hoped would stimulate the
people’s historic consciousness and prepare the intellectual foundation for the Anglo-
American model of modernity.

At first, Gale proposed that the best way to achieve the goals of civilizing,
Christianizing and nationalizing the Korea people was through the exclusive use of
han’gul and then later through a form of mixed Sino-Korean script. The tempering of
Gale’s view towards Chinese found in this shift can partially be accounted for by his
development as a linguist. Yet, it is also reflective of the new kinds of sources Gale was
using in his attempt to compile a national literary canon. A nation must have a past and
the fact that the history of the peninsula was recorded only in Literary Chinese led Gale
to rehabilitate the usage of the language. “(A collective) that ponders carefully over the
records of its past and attempts to take counsel there from, in order to build something
better for the future, may be accounted civilized.” It was with this in mind that Gale,
by the 1920s, expanded the scope of his translations to include Buddhist texts and parts of
the Confucian canon in an attempt to integrate these works into the national literature of
the modern period. Gale defended his approach by asserting the teleological utility of the
tradition, “Korea’s Confucian teaching like John the Baptist’s voice, was a straightener of

99 James Gale, “Korean Literature,” (MC 245, Box 8, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto).
100 James Gale, “A Goodly Company,” in “Press Clippings of J. Gale” (MC 245, Box 1, p. 1, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto).
the path before Him. Purer it was in Korea than in China itself, for China had been mixed with many pagan races.”

Gale’s unusual treatment of the Confucian tradition, still seen by many of his peers as a competing ethical tradition, rests on the same unilinear conceptualization as that of the Reverend Jones. Confucianism was preferable, even laudable, on account of its usefulness in introducing the gospel. Gale’s treatment of Confucianism in the previous quote also speaks to the Social Darwinian subjectification of that nation. In this way, the missionary can attempt to reterritorialize Confucianism as a Korean tradition, a claim established on the assumptions of ideological if not ethno-national purity and relationship with historic authenticity.

While Gale’s later attitude regarding the utility of literary Chinese signifies a marked departure from his previous antagonism towards the language, it did not indicate a demotion of vernacular’s importance in the missionaries reform program for Korea. To Gale, the accessibility of the written word still remained central to the success of a society. Literacy, he predicted, coupled with the ethical instruction provided by the vernacular bible would elevate the Korean people and bring them into the modern age. Such a view was based in part on Gale’s reading of his own ethno-national past. In his essay “The Bible for Koreans,” Gale charts the rise of the Anglo-Saxon race thanks to the power of the word. In the paper, he follows the group from its oppression under Papal rule of the Middle Ages to its social assent made possible by the work of the Reformers and their vernacular bible. Gale’s essay assumes a direct correlation between the appearance of the vernacular bible, which he calls, “the germ of modern civilization” and

101 James Gale, “A Goodly Company,” in “Press Clippings of J. Gale” (MC 245, Box 1, p. 15, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto).
the social advance of an ethnic group. “The book made them the ruling race on earth and from them a heart and courage new to mankind.”

Present throughout the lyrical account of the rise of the Anglo-Saxon race in “The Bible for Koreans” was the implied assurance that this trajectory could be emulated by Korea if it would only embrace the faith. Similar to the form of Social Darwinism advocated by Kidd, the path of progress Gale is suggesting de-emphasizes the importance of the racial or ethnic make-up of a society; the plight of the non-West had less to do with racial difference, but rather was the result of a corrupt social environment. It was this socially fallen condition missionaries hoped to rectify through their work. If the Korean people were to be saved both individually and corporately, both materially and metaphysically, they would need the Bible. It was in order to meet this projected need that Gale devoted years of work translating the text. However, by the time his version of the Bible was ready internal conflict within Anglo-American Protestantism was rattling the foundations on which the faith stood.

10. Translation, Rationalism and Faith

The use of vernacular languages in the work of Protestant missionaries was more than simply a utilitarian approach to spreading the gospel even reforming the mission field. The combination of evangelism and translation was an expression their orthodoxy

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102 James Gale, “The Bible for Koreans,” 1904 (MC 245, Box 6, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto).
to the Christian tradition, a practice linked to trenchant understandings of the union between translation and the spread of the faith. Within missionary organizations like the SVM, high-minded assertions were often made about the relationship between vernacular language and Protestantism. These narratives sought to merge the practices of translation and missions, portraying the two actions together as an expression of fidelity to the spirit of the Apostolic Christianity of the early church. In his keynote address on Bible translation presented at the Ecumenical Missionary Conference held in New York in 1900, Canon Edmonds, a translator with the British Foreign Bible Society, spoke at length about the union between translation and missions within the ancient church. According to Edmonds, the form of Christianity being espoused within the Protestant missionary movement mirrored the faith practiced by members of the early church, who were said to have translated the scriptures as it carried their teachings around the Mediterranean. The work of Luther and the Reformers was simply a continuation of this tradition interrupted by the Catholic Church’s insistence on the sacred language of the Vulgate.

Thus, Protestantism, a school of faith that, like most others in the Christian tradition, insisted on its superior devotion to the historic church, evangelism and translation became symbolic expressions of their commitment to the faith. Yet, the comparative flexibility shown by the Protestants towards the use of the scriptures did not dislodge the church’s desire to control the act of translation, a point Edmonds makes early on in his lecture.

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We want Christian Converts to have the help of Bibles. We want them to look into the achromatic mirror in which, without refraction or distortion, they may see Jesus. We don’t want them to have the distraction of rival Bibles, nor the disadvantage of eccentric Bibles, nor the darkness of unlearned bibles.\textsuperscript{105}

Discerning what was “refracted or distorted” in Biblical translation was a responsibility that fell largely upon missionary translation committees in the field. These ecumenical bodies produced the bulk of literature used in missions work, thus enabling central publishing organizations like the London Bible Society and Foreign Bible Society to broadcast Biblical literature well outside the linguistic reach of their own translators. However, by the 1920s, we find in Korea that the efficiency of the translation process was becoming complicated by manifestations of the same sort of theological debates that were being waged in the theological centers of major Protestant denominations. In Anglo-America Protestantism this conflict was most deeply felt by the Presbyterian denominations in Canada and the United States, while in Korea the reverberations of the debate established Gale and his work as a focal point. When matters had somewhat settled at the end of the decade Gale would see his lifelong work deeply marred, first by closeted critiques and later outright assertions calling into question his theological orthodoxy.

The conflict that became known as the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy emerged in North America as a contemporary crosscurrent to the theologically moderate, ecumenical spirit that the SVM thrived on. In the decades that followed, the debate would help enormously in fostering the polarized religious environment that would in time contribute to the missionary movement’s downfall. The conflict would eventually fragment the Presbyterian Church in both America and Canada and cause deep fissures

\textsuperscript{105} Edmonds, 1900: 7.
within Protestant denominations throughout Anglo-America, planting the seeds of discord that would result in a form of conservative Protestantism that would in following decades redefine the face of the faith. While the denomination’s already fractious past initially caused the debate to be refined through the prism of previous disagreements over church governmental form and function, by the 1890s the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy had essentially been refined to a basic disagreement over the role of Higher Criticism and how the church should acclimate itself to the modern age.\(^\text{106}\)

Higher Criticism is a scholarly approach to the Bible that seeks to contextualize the text by means of historical, literary and linguistic analysis. It can be found in wildly varying degrees throughout historic and present day Christianity. The most current expression of this approach, as subjectified by the term, can be traced to post-enlightenment forms of biblical scholarship that originally emerged at Tübingen University in Germany. By the 1880s, the first generation of American biblical scholars trained in the school of German Higher Criticism began to take teaching positions at seminaries in the United States. The most notable of these was Charles A. Briggs who, in 1891, caused an uproar within the Presbyterian Church following an address he gave at his appointment to Professor of Biblical Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Briggs’ speech presented a form of radical biblical scholarship that championed rationalism as an alternative font of divine knowledge and salvation. The Bible, Briggs explained, far from being inerrant, was riddled with scribal missteps and texts reflective of multiple-authorship. Taking special aim at the Old Testament, Briggs

charged that the collection of books held no divine inspiration and that its only function was as a historic marker by which man could measure the degree of moral development achieved by man over the passage of time.\footnote{Charles A. Briggs, \textit{The Authority of Holy Scripture-Inaugural Address and Defense} (New York: Arno Press, 1972).}

For a speech on theology, the Briggs address elicited an unprecedented level of public attention prompting the Presbytery of New York to charge the theologian with heresy in 1891. At the next meeting of the church’s General Assembly, denominational leaders sought further punitive measures against the scholar by reversing his appointment at the church seminary. When the dust settled, Briggs had been ejected from the Presbyterian Church and the denomination suffered the loss of one of its premier institutions when Union Theological Seminary voted to leave the church in order to protect its academic autonomy.

In the years that followed, the conflict over Higher Criticism continued to simmer beneath the surface of the robust Protestantism that helped carry the SVM forward. Across the country, theologians continued to be disciplined by their denominations for views that were considered to be too liberal. Often precariously situated in the middle of this turmoil were divinity students who needed to navigate the church’s diverse theological climate during the decentralized oral examinations conducted by local judicatories as a prerequisite for ordination. It was at one of these examinations in 1909 that the debate over Higher Criticism again came to the fore when three divinity students interviewed by the New York Presbytery refused to affirm the virgin birth of Jesus. When regional church leaders decided to ordain the three students anyway, conservative
Presbyterians brought the issue to the floor of the next General Assembly in 1910. At this convention, the church leadership, stepping outside the scope of its authority, decided to uphold the ordinations, but also released an outline directing the conduct of future examinations. Named the *Doctrinal Deliverance*, or *Five Fundamentals*, the document identified what were to be foundational tenants of faith, essentially affirming the inerrancy of the scripture and the historical reality of Christ as described in the New Testament.

The *Five Fundamentals* served as a rallying point for conservatives in the denomination. One such individual was Lyman Stewart, co-founder of Union Oil and leading Presbyterian layman. Steward became so moved by the debate that between 1910 and 1915 he funded the publication of a pamphlet series called *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*. Appearing in a series of 90 essays released in four volumes the tracts were meant to favorably highlight a conservative version of Calvinism as well as forward explicit critiques of both Higher Criticism and secular Darwinism.\(^{108}\) Thanks in no small part to Steward’s personal fortune which financed the series, it enjoyed immense readership with free distribution financed for every pastor, missionary, theology student, YMCA and YWCA secretary, college professor, Sunday school superintendent and religious editor in the English speaking world.\(^{109}\) While these publications certainly succeeded in raising the profile of the debate, liberal theologians tended to defer criticism to the denominational structure encouraging critics to file heresy charges if they desired to press a case against them. In general, it appears that concurrent ecumenical

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\(^{109}\) Marsden, 2003: 118-123.
movements and the distraction of the First World War discouraged both sides from belaboring the issue.

This brief détente was not to last and conflict in the Presbyterian church between liberal theologians and those who became known as the Fundamentalists finally came to head in early 1922 when H. E. Fosdick, a prominent liberal preacher from New York delivered and later published a scathing critique of the conservatives entitled *Shall the Fundamentalist Win?* Fosdick accused the conservative wing of the church of being unwilling to make any attempt at reconciling faith and modern knowledge a view that gain even great recognition following his sermons publication in the widely read Christian periodical *Christian Century*. This move succeeded in further drawing attention to the debate, as did the fact that, John Foster Dulles, recently returned from negotiations at Versailles, came to Fosdick’s defense during his heresy hearing and that the church attended by John D. Rockefeller quickly hired the theologian after his resignation.

In the years that followed in a series of debates that came to characterize Protestantism in the 1920s, conservative and liberal wings of the Presbyterian church vied over matters ranging from Church Union, Darwinism, and denominational government, to the faculty make up of the seminaries, feminism, missions and even the legitimacy of the Westminster Confession. Yet, at the core of all these issues, there remained the fundamental disagreement over the extent to which the bible could be received as unadulterated truth, a disagreement that rested on the debate over Higher Criticism. For its proponents, it was a question of making amends between contemporary

\[110\] Ahlstrom, 1972: 911.
knowledge and traditional faith. To the conservatives, Higher Criticism represented a cancer at the very heart of the faith. In the middle was a shrinking collection of moderates who still called for accommodation.

By the time the conflict was resolved, the Presbyterian Church in North America had radically transformed itself. Church Union had succeeded in Canada, leaving the Presbyterian denomination there a diminished shell of conservative hardliners. In the United States, the ecumenical movement had failed, resulting in a significant loss of prestige for church liberals and ecumenical leaders like Mott.¹¹¹ At the same time and in no way unrelated, the conflict that continued to fester within the denomination eventually led fundamentalist scholars to leave the only remaining conservative seminary, at Princeton, to form the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1933. Compared to Canada, the Presbyterian Church in America had managed to avoid any great schism, but the many expressions of the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy brought to the surface the type of ideological dissent that ecumenical movements like the SVM desperately preferred had remained dormant. The conflict that resulted from explicit attempts by American Protestant denominations to determine the role of Higher Criticism in the church proved to be more than the SVM could handle. The ensuing debate wreaked havoc on small missionary communities, a point that became painfully clear to Gale when, in the early 1920s, he prepared to publish his latest translation of the Bible.

11. The Gale Bible

In the autumn of 1923, Gale composed a letter to his superiors in the Presbyterian church. In the report he describes a controversy that had emerged among the missionaries in Seoul over the latest translation of the Bible that the literature committee chaired by Gale was attempting to publish. The work was intended to replace the previous fragmented versions of the Bible with a newer more comprehensive text produced through inter-denominational effort and consensus. However, with perhaps the most advanced language skills of any in the Korean mission, Gale and his Korean pundits eventually translated the majority of the text.\footnote{James Gale, “Literary Report: Station Meeting, Bible Translation,” Nov. 13\textsuperscript{th} 1923 (MC 245-Box 10, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto).}

The 1923 letter relates Gale’s version of the bitter conflict that emerged around his version of the Bible when the committee began to take steps to get the completed draft approved for publication. Missionary policy dictated that a translated work first receive approval by a local translation committee at which point drafts could be sent on to the leading bible societies in New York and London for final authorization to print. In the case of more obscure languages like Korean, this permission was almost always given. This standard helps explain Gale’s surprise when his work’s publication was eventually brought to a standstill by a flurry of letters sent by his fellow missionaries in Korea to the central Bible societies.

While the new version of the text was approved by the four-man translation committee in Korea, letters of protest, some written by members of the same committee that had initially approved that text, criticized Gale for taking too great a license in
making alterations. The protests brought the publication to a halt and mission leadership insisted on the formation of an expanded committee to review the entire text and make the necessary modifications in order to insure a translation that was a literal as possible. Gale was vocally irate over this attempt at compromise. Not only did he see it as foolish to produce a text that was culturally de-contextualized, but he also complained that the expanded council was unwieldy and full of inexperienced members who were in, Gale’s opinion, excessively, even purposefully, theologically conservative in their work.

With so many members now on the text, the revision process became extremely slow. Frustrated, Gale eventually withdrew from the committee in 1923 taking his translation with him. In his report Gale, describes how he pleaded with the council to allow at least one edition of his Bible to be published. If they would make this accommodation, Gale wrote, he would then acquiesce to whatever changes the committee deemed necessary for his manuscript. Unfortunately for Gale, even initial approval for this compromise was thwarted by another round of private protests to the Bible societies of America and England who, as before, sided with the conservatives. In the end, the work of the expanded committee came to a complete standstill. With so many members, little progress could be made and Gale described a small measure of vindication when he told a committee representative who came requesting the use of Gales original draft for modification that they could have it, “only after a kindly mutual discussion at the point of a gun.”

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113 Rutt, 1972: 72.
114 James Gale, “Literary Report: Station Meeting, Bible Translation,” Nov. 13th 1923 (MC 245-Box 10, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto).
In rebuttal to the charges made against his translation, Gale argued that his work was within the scope of the Protestant tradition and that his Bible consisted of nothing more than, “good Korean, just as Martin Luther used good German.” Nonetheless, traces of the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy could be seen throughout the conflict. Opponents of the translation were taken aback by the work’s relatively short length and considered Gale’s treatment of the godhead even more scandalous. After finding references to the divine removed almost twenty times from the book of Genesis, some accused Gale of attempting to take God out of the Bible. Gale maintained that what changes made were only done in the name of good grammar and syntax.

Still, Fundamentalists in Korea had other reasons to be suspicious of Gale. Conservative missionaries who denied any version of Darwinian theory would have been critical of the form of Social Gospel Gale espoused. A number of the linguists’ translations would have given more cause for conservatives to be suspicious of Gale’s ideological standing. Not only would the his work with Confucian and Buddhist texts seem questionable, but Gale’s 1921 translation of Fosdick’s *Manhood of the Master* could have in the following years, been easily construed as an indication of the missionary’s theological preference. Gale’s temporary resignation in 1916 from his position as instruction of biblical literature at Union Christian Seminary in Pyongyang might have also raised suspicions, particularly for those who had seen his critique of institutions conservative teaching style voiced in his letter or resignation.

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Perhaps aware of his appearances Gale’s letter to the missions board in 1923 attempts to stake out his position on the church controversy. “I am a conservative of the Old School and polychrome bibles and Higher Criticism I do not like.” Whether or not this is true, although Gale’s writings tend to reflect a largely conservative theological outlook, what is significant is how by this time Gale is compelled to overtly establish his ideological correctness. This is a surprising admission from a man who earlier in his career maintained the type of a moderate, often self-deprecating stance towards theological disagreement that had made the ecumenical tone of the SVM possible.

12. Nationalists and Missionaries

Though the cresting tide of ecumenicalism in Anglo-American Protestantism was among the most salient of factors contributing to the climax and decline of the SVM, at the time of the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy, many of those in missions movement found more menacing threats elsewhere. As their campaign moved into the second decade of the 20th century, missions leaders could observe that the social transformation and individual conversion they had sought was not occurring on a scale or according to the pattern they expected. The cause for this upset of predictions was placed in several directions in Mott’s The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions. Included in the

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118 Rutt, 1972: 40.
119 In The Vangaurd, Gale pokes fun at the differences between Westlian and Calvinist theology by means of his alter ego McKechern, a Scottish Calvinist Translator, who combs through the translation of the New Testament in order to highlight references to the doctrine of election.
120 Showalter, 1998: 12.
collection of forces thought to be retarding the growth of the mission cause was threat
posed by foreign students studying in Europe and North America.

The capacity for international travel that helped make the scale of the SVM
possible was also a development that facilitated a growing amount of academic exchange
between the metropole and colonial educational centers. To criticize this trend was
difficult for Mott, particularly when given the pedagogical task the evangelicals had
adopted for themselves. Such an inconsistency can in part explain the hedge Mott
constructs immediately before his negative assessment of the exchange students.

The increasing number of travelers from non-Christian nations, especially the
wonderful migration of Oriental students to American and Europe, has, in many
cases, resulted in exposing these more enterprising representatives of the non-
Christian world to the materialistic, antichristian, and demoralizing side of the life
of Western nations. On their return, some of them, as teachers, editors, and
government officials, constitute a great barrier to the spread of the Gospel.\textsuperscript{121}

The anxiety seen in this excerpt speaks of a larger sense of concern over the danger of
mimicry and an uncontrolled exposure to material expressions of modernity.
Apprehension over what missionaries saw as native appropriation of evangelical tools
and techniques of social and spiritual ministry found frequent expression in SVM
publications from this period. This concern increasingly became acute as missionaries
came to believe that the programs cited as proof of their faith’s social utility were being
employed by non-believing or spiritually immature natives towards alternative ends.

Elsewhere in \textit{The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions}, John Mott attempted to
use this concern to implant a new sense of urgency in the international evangelical
movement. Calling on supporters of missions to redouble their efforts, Mott points to
Buddhist, Muslim, Confucian and Hindu communities that were developing their own

\textsuperscript{121} Mott, 1910: 44.
programs of social outreach that employed what had theretofore been considered Christian techniques. Mott warned that this trend would only increase and that permutations of mimicry could also be found elsewhere in the field. According to the missions leader, indigenous nationalists were also among those who employed both the tools of missionaries and a distilled version of Christian ideology in their efforts.

Mott observed the growth of nationalism from his place at the head of an international ecumenical movement that had clearly profited form the inequalities of the colonial system. As such, he felt threatened. “Since the war between Japan and Russia,” Mott explained in 1910, “in all parts of the non-Christian world, but especially in Asia, this national spirit has been growing, and, associated with it, a spirit of racial pride and antagonism.” Following this statement, Mott goes on to provide a global tour of the various nationalist and independence movements found in the SVM’s missions fields. Though his overview exposes a tone of empathy over colonial excesses and inequality within the church, his concluding remarks remain firm on the centrality of Christianity and the continued need for missions-led social renewal. Mott retains his suspicion of nationalist movements for their tendency to subordinate faith to a place below the notion of love for country. In the eyes of the missionaries sideline faith in such a way was a huge flaw as the only constructive form of nationalism, the one that could in fact solve the material and spiritual needs of the nation, was one based on Christ’s ethical model.

Colonial exploitation, activist students, accelerated transport, increased output of domestic print media and the inspirational example of Japan all had a place in Mott’s understanding of rise of nationalism, but still he insisted that at the root of all of the

122 Mott, 1910: 44-61.
123 Mott, 1910: 25.
versions of the this ideology, even if they failed to recognize it, was the ethical example of provided by the church. This is the point Mott chooses to close his overview of global nationalists movements. Writing in 1910, the mission field Mott ultimately chooses to illustrate Christianities centrality to social progress is one that has seen its domestic nationalists fair the worst. “Without a doubt,” Mott wrote, “as in Korea, so in many another land, Christianity has furnished the principle transforming influence and power.\textsuperscript{124}

The expression of views similar to Mott’s by missionaries in Korea can help to more clearly illustrate the tenor of the evangelical-reformer relationship that anteceded annexation. In Gale’s depictions of Korea’s political environment at the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the Nationalists of the Patriotic Enlightenment Movement, when even considered as a factor deserving attention, were rendered as a destabilizing force that offered only a refracted version of the missionaries’ own platform of reform. Gale’s critique of the nationalists became further entrenched following the onset of the Japanese occupation when the nationalist-missionary relationship became even more strained as the denominations began to vocally assert an image of the church as an apolitical institution.

A comprehensive illustration of this dynamic can be found in The Vanguard when Gale emphasizes the discord present between the nationalists and the missionaries. The book presents an image of a church that through the use of modern tools of evangelism had succeeded in bringing about individual conversion and social transformation. However, following his lionized description of the community of faith, Gale explains

\textsuperscript{124} Mott, 1910: 33.
how the community was troubled by converts who attempt to utilize the missionaries’ tools for their own purposes. In the book, the author presents the missionaries’ publishing techniques as one of Occidental objects appropriated by the Koreans. Earlier in the narrative, Gale describes the mission’s publishing and translation process as one of the greatest assets to their evangelical work.

With Gilber and Foster to translate, and Willis to organize a carrying combine, they were pushed to the farthest limits of the land. Away up on the Yalu they were to be found papering the walls, sometimes upside down and inside out, but, ‘never mind send on more’; on to the distant Russia, and away east into the little hamlets by the sea of Japan.\textsuperscript{125}

Like Dennis, Gale’s writing expresses a tone of amazement in the scope of communication made possible by the medium the foreign Christian’s controlled. Indeed, the quantity of print produced by the missionaries in Korea was impressive, especially when compared to that of pre-industrial facilities existing in Korea before the missionaries’ arrival. For example in a one-year span between 1893 and 1894 the missionary controlled Trilingual Press produced over three million pages of evangelical literature.\textsuperscript{126} It was this facet of the Korean mission that Gale credited as one of the leading causes for the number of conversions already achieved.

Thus, it is the apparent appropriation of these literary tools by the nationalists that trigger’s Gale concern. In \textit{The Vanguard}’s chapter on the Independence Club, “The Tok-Neeps,” Gale presents the group unfavorably as a type of radical indigenous Christian movement, well meaning in some of its aims, but which were ultimately untenable given their desire for rapid reform. The chapter begins with a description of the book’s

\textsuperscript{125} Gale, 1904: 87.
protagonist, Willis, reveling in recent successes achieved by the evangelicals in the city of Pyongyang.

Along the streets he made his triumphal entry. There were Christians at every corner, and also here and there dotting the midway, all out to greet him. He saw and felt that he was king, king over an empire of hearts, the best of all the kingdoms.127

However, this idyllic scene of the foreign evangelist being greeted by the loving throngs of Korea is then interrupted by events taking place in Seoul.

In the meantime in the old grey capital, that lies between the hills, there were forces at work that were shortly to be feared. Men of influence had gone to England and America. Some had graduated from colleges there and had come back with hair close-cropped and minds bristling with new and dangerous intentions.128

Gale remains diplomatic in his description of the leaders of the Independence Club. He expresses admiration for So Chaep’il and is even more generous with Yun Ch’iho. Yet, in this chapter of The Vanguard, we can see Gale’s sense of apprehension over insincere conversion, mimicry and the appropriation of evangelical techniques.

Keen and bright eyed these two gathered round them a few hopeful young men of Seoul, which included Hong the Christian and his friends. They had adopted the tract and leaflet plan that had proven so helpful to Willis, and their press turned out a weekly sheet, that went on its way to the city and the land. They were passed, through Hong’s influence, into the homes of Christians, and there was a great stirring among the powers temporal and spiritual.129

Here Gale most clearly levels his accusation against the, by the time of his writing, failed nationalists of the Independence Club. While it contained a welcomed reformist tone, Gale saw the movement as one based on the inertia of Western influence and thus inferior to the authentic transformation brought by the missionaries. Moreover,

128 Gale, 1904: 220.
129 Gale, 1904: 222.
the evangelist asserts that, because of their radicalism, the reformers threatened the overall stability of the church and acted as a hindrance to the more foundational reform proposed by the missionary effort. Thus, it was at the intersection of the forces of social reform emanating from the West with the semi-reformed natives of the Orient that Gale located the point of instability.

Citing *The Independent*, the newspaper Gale mentions in connection to the club, the power of vernacular language combined with the printing press is shown as a source of social volatility that endangers the church. Gale described the meetings of the Independence Club in a similar way, writing that the organization’s rallies became progressively more raucous as larger numbers of pragmatic natives entered its ranks. Back in Pyongyang, Gale’s subject complains of even greater challenges because of the club and new conflicts that finally came to head when members of his congregation, including the Willis’ head servant, were led in rebellion by reform-minded Christians who ignored the missionary’s warnings.

Gale does attempt to present a note of support in regards to the Independence Club. In the part of the book, when the protagonist arrives in Seoul himself, Gale uses a soliloquy to present a reconciliatory statement regarding the reformers’ efforts.

‘Nothing against them,’ said Willis, ‘independence is right, and there is any amount of room for political reform. Jay and Chee are honest men, as far as I know, but the Church of Christ is not a political organization and must not be; the moment it becomes so, its spiritual influence is gone.’

Of course, the problem with this statement is that the church in Korea was very clearly a political organization with established connections in the royal court and a well-articulated program of social and ideological reform. Gale’s post-mortem critique of the

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130 Gale, 1904: 226.
Independence Club exposes the suspicion that existed among the missionaries over the issue of church leadership and who would ultimately retain power over the forces of change which they sought to employ in Korea.

Mott and Gale’s posture towards indigenous reformers expresses a larger tone of skepticism towards nationalist ideologies within the missions movement. Leading SVM missionaries tended to regard “patriotism” or “national spirit” with antipathy considering nationalism as a retarding influence on the program of conversion and social development of the non-believer. One of the clearest condemnations is found in Dennis’ highly conditional appraisal of patriotism in *Christian Missions and Social Progress*.

Patriotism is not a competent or trustworthy guide in social relations. As regards morality, wisdom and practical insight, it may be utterly misleading spurious, and superficial. It has no moral guarantee and no proper standard of intelligence. It may be simply a reflection of the existing status, and represent only a blind and prejudice adherence to opinions and customs in themselves objectionable and injurious. It cannot alone be safely trusted to promote the welfare, happiness, and progress of society. It is true that enlightened, unselfish, and high-toned patriotism, under the culture of intelligence and Christianity, is a beautiful and commendable trait which has had and inspiring mission in the world…There is, however, a false and sinister patriotism which may work only disaster and prove a hindrance to true progress.¹³¹

In this excerpt resides a classic example of the culturally reductionist bind of colonialist ideology, that, when mixed with the temporal hierarchy of the Eurocentric worldview, can operate to negate the subaltern from accessing forms of power.

Nationalist ideologies in missionary discourse were in this way negated as reactionary to the true pattern of Christian civilization. Civil uprisings like those seen in the Tonghak movement or later, in the campaigns by the Righteous Armies, as well as political activists like those engaged in by intellectuals and supporters of the Patriotic

¹³¹ Dennis, 1898: 375-376.
Enlightenment movement, are all targeted in this critique, with the former presented as conservative reactionaries and the latter, being made out to be pragmatic usurpers.  

Only forms of nationalist thought established in conjunction with Christian belief were considered normative and constructive. This, however, was again problematic for the missionaries in Korea as many of the leading nationalists in the Patriotic Enlightenment movement were in fact Christian. As seen above, Gale deals with this inconsistency by simply asserting that the nationalist reformers where not Christian enough to enjoy success. In the author’s description of the character Hong, we see the ease with which Christians with dissident political views could be purged from the church. Due to their authority as leaders of the church as well as through their status as brokers of civilization and enlightenment, the missionaries asserted their authority to appraise Korea’s readiness for independence. As Lillis Underwood wrote in her short evaluation of the club, “the time was not ripe, the nation was not ready, Christianity had not yet sufficiently prepared them for liberty.”

Written in 1904, The Vanguard’s treatment of the Independence Club in was hardly prophetic. Yet, the work’s timing did endow it with a degree of frankness that would fade in later accounts. At the time the book was composed, the outcome the Russo-Japanese struggle for control over the peninsula had yet to be determined consequently, Gale’s writing was presumably less influenced by the later desire to acclimate missions work to the new conditions of colonial rule. The other works produced by Gale during this time also enjoy a similar vantage point resulting in a

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132 For Gale on Tonghak see Gale, 1904: 32.
133 Wells, 1990: 8.
134 L. Underwood, 1918: 186.
collection of writings on Korea that are less shaded by the influence by the missionary’s later political slant and hindsight.

In examining Gale’s writings from this time, one gets a distinct sense that the groups of Koreans who, in the later state histories, would become the patriot-reformers of a modern nation, may have not occupied such a prolific place in Korean society during the late 19th century. The majority of the political-minded articles produced by Gale for the *North China Daily* tended to overlook the efforts of the nationalist altogether. Judging from the subject matter of his reports, Gale at this time was more drawn to internal politics within the Choson court, or alternatively, regional events such as the Donghak and Boxer Uprisings. Whatever attention he does devote to the reformers, tends to be diluted by these larger subjects.

In one article, written during the high water mark of Independence Club activities, Gale’s focus gravitates towards the implications of the King’s show of support for the conservative Peddler’s Guild. This was done not out of any voiced anxiety for the reformer’s platform, which was soon to be suppressed in the streets of the capital, but instead was directed by concern by the implications the court’s move had for the missionaries’ work. In the article, Gale suggested that that the King’s show of support for the guild signaled a prelude to a Boxer-style up-rising; that the empowerment of the peddlers meant a bloody end for many of the reformers became of secondary interest in this account. In another article from this time, Gale’s expressed such concern about the threat of an anti-foreign rebellion in Korea that he called for direct foreign military intervention, asserting that a Japanese army would be a welcomed sight to foreigners on the peninsula. In conclusion to the piece, the missionary wrote that, “without being,
pessimistic, we may truly say, Korea is hopeless. Some of us have had hopes and aspirations and dreams with regard to the country, but the last two years have blotted them out.”

The trauma of the Boxer Uprising, especially for a mission with so many connections to the North China Christian community, can help explain Gale’s lack of concern for the reformers at this time. Still, even in the handful of articles where Gale does focus on the nationalists as a subject, little is made of their efforts. At the end of one pointedly critical piece, Gale takes cynical aim at the Independence Club by proposing to solve a supposed shortage of ceremonial gate names that had emerged in the city. With so many new entrances being built, Gale suggested that the next be engraved “Chulmang Mun.” A translation of Dante’s “Lasciate Speranza,” Gale’s “Abandon All Hope Gate” is a rather direct insult to one of the more material successes of the reformers.

Elsewhere, in what appear to be draft articles on reform and patriotic movements, Gale maintains his tone of disdain. In one piece which appears to have been composed in the first years of the 1900s Gale lists the various organizations that had been formed in what Gale called an “autumn of societies.” However, the missionary is dismissive in his treatment of the national spirit that inspired these groups.

Korea is no longer indifferent; she may best be described as bewildered. Some have taken to black stockings as a first step in national reform. Many are donning

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135 For clippings of articles written by Gale for the *North China Daily* see, “Press Clippings of J. Gale” (MC 245, Box 1, James Scarth Gale Papers, Robert Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto).
full foreign gear, with gold rim spectacles, in a desperate attempt to adjust the
times that are so badly out of joint. What to do the Korean knows not.¹³⁶

Gale assails the change proposed by the reformers as being as superficial as their fashion.
“The sound of scissors has been heard in the land and the top-knots are falling,” he
writes, but like the change in clothes, the Korean reformer’s attempts at renewal
remained on the outside and lacked the internal transformation the missionaries
subscribed. Gale’s view, similar to that of Lillis Underwood, was that, until reformers
submitted to the Christian faith, their programs would remain cosmetic.

In watching the conditions during the past year, one is more and more impre
ssed
with the fact that the heart of the Korean nation is wrong, and that until the heart
is in a measure rectified, there will be no hope nationally. All of her attempts at reform are on the surface.¹³⁷

Still, the critique found in these excerpts is only one facet of the missionaries’
frequently tumultuous relationship with Korean reformers of this period. In The
Vanguard, cynicism is elsewhere countered by restrained praise for select reformers like
Yun Ch’iho. Gale like a number of other missionaries in Seoul and Pyongyang at this
time established close ties with early nationalists, particularly those who had
converted.¹³⁸ The cooperation that existed between the two groups can be seen
particularly clearly in the case of the missionary journal, The Korean Repository. Edited
at the time by the Methodist missionary, Henry Appenzeller, the journal reflects the kind

¹³⁶ James Gale, “A World of Change” in “Excerpts from Manuscripts Type Script,” (MC 245, Box 6, James Scarth Gale Papers, Robert Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto).
¹³⁷ James Gale, “A World of Change” in “Excerpts from Manuscripts Type Script,” (MC 245, Box 6, James Scarth Gale Papers, Robert Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto).
¹³⁸ Conversion story is in L. Underwood, 1918: 248-249, also see James Gale, “The Death of Kwon Yung-chin” in “J.S. Gale Press Clippings,” (MC 247, Box 1, James Scarth Gale Papers, Robert Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto).
of close relationship that was built between missionaries and members of the reform movement. Prior to the group’s suppression, missionary support for the Independence Club was such that at several events, including the dedication of the Independence Arch, evangelicals openly participated in various club events. The articles and editorials published in *The Korean Repository* during this time provided further encouragement and support for the organization. Although the writers of the journal were cautious not to explicitly endorse the movement, they would republish declarations produced by the group, provide editorial space for profiles of the club’s leaders, share articles with the club’s publishing wing and, most importantly, allow for the reformers to use missionary-owned printing facilities to produced the club’s mouthpiece, *The Independent*.\(^\text{139}\)

Gale chose to not mention this relationship in later writings. By the mid-1910s, the fact that the press that had produced the Independence Club’s daily paper was the same that had printed the New Testament was an association missionaries no longer wished to make. Following the Japanese establishment of the protectorate, mission policy was explicitly articulated in opposition to the Korean nationalist with leading denominational missions boards adopting a policy of non-interference. The position the Presbyterian church officially took was an attitude of “loyal recognition” asserting that the church should operate outside of the political realm just as had done during the days of Rome.\(^\text{140}\) It is at this point that the notion of the church as a non-political agent takes on new importance for missionaries stationed in Korea. The evangelicals’ trenchant insistence on the myth that the church operated in a separate realm within society allowed

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\(^\text{140}\) Kang, 1997: 44.
them to present themselves as less threatening to the emergent colonial regime. This move enabled the missionaries to protect a key aspect of Anglo-American influence in Korea right at the time when Japanese power in the peninsula had succeeded in pushing other imperial powers out.

The ideal of a politically disengaged church continued to find expression in Gale’s writing throughout the first decade of the 20th century, concluding with an almost synoptic account of Korean nationalists given his 1909 book, *Korea in Transition*. In the work, the author assumes a sympathetic and yet resolutely detached posture in his discussion of the establishment of the protectorate and the response among the Korean people. Attempting to convey to the reader the sense of loss felt by the Koreans, Gale uses the analogy of a death in the family to describe the devastation felt by the allegorical household when their only son, the source of all of the family’s aspirations, drowns.141 Gale explicitly identifies the son as a projection of the nation and then goes on to describe two contrasting reactions to the tragedy.

One response to colonization that Gale discusses is that of the nationalists who, alert to the progressive weakening of their nation, enact a number for frantic reforms and petitions in the vain attempt to avert the coming tragedy. Describing the response of this group to Korea’s eventual demise, Gale goes on to write that:

A mad sort of spurious patriotism started into being, with suicide, chopping off of fingers, sworn oaths, guerilla warfare, flint-lock resistance. It still goes on to a considerable degree, while the poor people in the valleys, caught between the contending forces, have to pay the price for Korea’s past failures.142

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141 Gale, 1909: 31-33.
This “spurious patriotism” that Gale describes is similar to that referred to by Dennis. Lacking a sufficient foundation in the Christian faith, nationalist reactions to annexation fail to be worthy of any serious consideration, but are, as the quotation describes, emotional, destructive and ultimately ineffective.

Following this initial description of the nation’s fall, Gale goes on to idealize the alternative response to annexation, one that encompasses both the image of the non-political Christian and Gale’s theme of Korea’s providential mission. By returning to the analogy of a death in the family, Gale describes the kind of reaction found in a devoted Christian family to the loss of autonomy and by this implies the function the experience ought perform on the believer’s ideological disposition.

Evidently the purpose in this plan of God was to bring Korea to a place where she would say, “All is lost, I am undone.” Like Mrs. Shin and her house-hold, nothing remained for the people but to commit the whole burden of it to the Lord himself.143

This description of the devotee’s response to the establishment of the protectorate and the forced abdication of King Kojong presents a version of events that highlights the missionaries’ faith in the providential role of Korea in East Asia and their ambivalence towards the fortunes of the indigenous nationalist movements.

Gale again endorses this type of submissive faith in the Korean church by his likening the people of the peninsula to the New Testament apostle, Peter. Like the other followers of Jesus, Peter is presented in the gospels as having confused the form of salvation proposed by early Christianity with political liberation from the Roman Empire. Gale contends that the Koreans in their challenge of the prevailing political winds were

143 Gale, 1909: 39.
comparable; an analogy meant to project an image of nationalist Christians as oblivious to the forces of providence believed to be shaping the future of the peninsula.

In his tears over his fallen divinity, he fumbles at the sword, thinking to try it, but the sword is not his, as it was not Peter’s. What shall he do for something that will take the place of all that he has lost? When in tears, just at this time there comes to him the Bible.\textsuperscript{144}

The Apostle Peter’s use of violence the night of his teacher’s arrest is an act described in New Testament literature as driven by the disciple’s desire to protect the program of political reform and liberation that the Christian message was thought to offer. Jesus’ admonishment of Peter was a command for submission to the order of providential design. Gale’s use of the apostle in reference to the Korean nationalists’ responses to the establishment of the protectorate was meant to level upon the reformers the same sort condemnation. Korea, in Gale’s account, needed to submit to the forces of providence that led to fall of the nation and undergo the shame of colonization so that the peninsula would be impelled to adopt the missionaries’ ideological system. Upon doing this, Korea could once again play the role of regional evangelizer and fulfill the destiny that missionaries like Gale conceived for the peninsula.

13. Conclusion: “This is Korea”

When James Gale left Korea in 1928, the evangelical movement that had carried him there had already begun its slow decline. John Mott ended his decades-long tenure at the head of the SVM in 1922, citing his age and the need for fresh leadership; yet by then

\textsuperscript{144} Gale, 1909: 47.
the number of new SVM recruits was already in a steady decline.\textsuperscript{145} Students had tired of
the movement that had by then become an established figment of the university and the
church, a structure that increasingly began to seem out of touch with the challenges of the
day.\textsuperscript{146} Delegates at SVM conferences became vocally critical of the lackadaisical altar
calls and worn out reiterations of Jesus’ great commission. Mott and Gale’s generation
was clearly passing by and it was readily apparent that the movement’s formative goal
remained far from completion.

By the time of Gale’s retirement, a new generation of missionaries was entering
the mission field with objectives that were often much were less clear, than the previous
generation of evangelicals. The liberal wings of Protestant denominations continued to
press for even more comprehensive versions of the Social Gospel and while a minority
called on students to rally beneath the “blood soaked banner of the cross” in the pursuit of
Christian-Socialism.\textsuperscript{147} Meanwhile tensions within the church community were further
inflamed by the 1932 report \textit{Re-Thinking Missions}, an inter-denominational evaluation of
missions funded by John D. Rockefeller came to an alarmingly syncretic conclusion that
called for more inter-faith cooperation in addressing human suffering.

Conservatives in the church were not impressed and continued their standard
critique that the liberals were intent on distorting the faith. By the mid-1930s
fundamentalist churches had started to end their support for the SVM in favor of
establishing their own missions unions. This trend was even more troubling for the SVM
when joined with the drop in financial support that came with the economic upheavals of

\textsuperscript{145} Howard Hopkins, \textit{John R. Mott: A Biography} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans
\textsuperscript{146} Showalter, 1996: 101-118.
\textsuperscript{147} Showalter, 1996: 55.
the 1930s. All this, combined with the disruption of another world war, hobbled the movement permanently and following a long period of atrophy, the organization was formally dissolved in 1969.

Even so, for a brief period of time, the SVM embodied Protestant evangelism as church participated in one of its most aggressive phases of global expansion. The ideological unions the church brokered with Darwinism and the market coloured this process and while these accommodations may have been constructed in the metropole, it was in the mission field where they were often most bluntly applied. There the character of the Social Darwinian model of the faith could be determined through the missionaries interaction with the other.

It is not certain the thousands of young men and women who made up the first generation of SVM missionaries were ready to manage the development of this new version of the faith. A mixture of late 19th century spiritualism, romanticized Victorian images of the intrepid missionary and a pragmatic desire for social mobility came together to sweep these volunteers off their mushrooming campuses arming them with the mission to conquer. However, as these young people might have observed, what conquest meant also changed with their faith. Compromises that enabled the missionaries to advertise their faith as the key to theological progress of an ethnic group also obliged the SVM to supply a version of Christianity that could deliver material salvation in the present along with everlasting life in the future. Producing a plausible explanation for how to bring wealth called for a strengthening of ties between faith and the market. The version of the Prosperity Gospel put forward by the evangelicals kept the faith at the center of development, but it also insisted on the missionaries turning a
blind eye towards the exploitation which produced that wealth and that in turn propelled the colonial system in which then had embedded.

Still the missionaries occupy a curious place in the colonial system they helped populate. Poorly served by the compulsion to reduce colonialism to a political confrontation between opposing parties, evangelicals in Korea advocated reform that can easily be characterized as that of a nationalist platform. The foreign Christians sought to build the kingdom along the lines of the modern nation state: they pursued social enfranchisement, educational reform, linguistic standardization and economic development. Few missionaries sought formal political power and fewer still any sizable economic gain. Dozens of these foreign Christians died during the course of their stay in Korea; and yet, in several cases, the work started by parents was continued by surviving children who opted to stay.

Gale saw the heroics in the missionaries’ sacrifice and was fortified in the worth of their loss by his faith in the centrality of their commission, not only to bring spiritual salvation, but also to nurture the material development of the Social Darwinian unit. This latter goal called for the kind of nationalization of Korea that Gale advocates in his work. In his eyes, it fell upon the missionary reform to the Koreans even when it was the Koreans that Gale, considered the most counter-productive element in the achievement of this goal.

The writer wearied his soul for many years trying to urge on an indifferent group of Korean friends and acquaintances some pride in the great men of the peninsula. He laboured, too, through two decades and more to get their literature, which was never for sale, but was hidden away in all sorts of holes and corners. Little by little he possessed himself of valuable books which he tried to introduce
to his circle of friends, ‘this is Korea,’ said he, ‘let’s drop China and dwell on these great men. But it was in vain.\textsuperscript{148}

It is the sticking similarities between the objectives of the SVM missionaries and the Korean reformers that have led many historians to depict the evangelical as a nationalist of the Civilization and Enlightenment pedigree; indeed, in very real sense, it can be argued that they were. Still, a crucial aspect of the Nationalist-Missionary relationship that this study has attempted to bring to light is the way in which the evangelicals’ subscription to a hierarchy of belief and ethnicity provided them with a sense of authority to manage reform. Moreover, when the hope of an autonomous Korean nation had clearly faded, it was this faith that allowed the evangelicals to attach to the Koreans the blame for their colonized status. From this vantage point, subjugation was not the outcome of external greed, but the result of a lack of internal faith.

\textsuperscript{148} James Gale, “One Korean Patriotism” in “Excerpts From Manuscript Type Script” (MC 245, Box 6, James Scarth Gale Papers, Robert Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto).
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