

Heroes and Villains in the Historiography of Missions: A Korean Sketch

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Many of civilization's epic narratives, stories, legends and myths have a hero and a villain. Behind all of these stories, however, the gospel story reveals the true hero and villain. The Biblical narrative is a grand epic of journey, battle, and final vindication. The Christian faith is essentially wrought in this narrative. Mission history is no exception. Indeed, the story of the beginning of Christianity in Korea demonstrates this indelible aspect.

Defining the terms "hero" and "villain" in mission history is not a simple matter. The perception and portrayals of heroes and villains are quite complex, differing in vantage points and contexts. Thus, one who is perceived as a hero by one group may be a villain to another. The history of missions in Korea illustrates such complexity. Weighing these archetypal figures in the balance is not easy. Indeed, it is often elusive. Not every missionary is a hero; nor are they all villains. Such a simplistic dichotomy does not correspond with reality. We may find both heroism and villainy within a particular person. Mission historiography may delineate certain figures as missionary heroes, native heroes, missionary villains, or native villains. However, these judgments are not set in stone. They depend on criteria we choose to use to evaluate.

In this study, attention is given to the mission historiography of Korea. The number of mission historiographies of Korea is not small. For this paper, I have selected several relevant cases that fell under the content of this discussion. Due to limited access to primary sources, some stories were based on secondary materials. This is a limitation of this study. The structure of the present discussion follows two phases—Catholic and Protestant. The two phases of Christian missions correspond to the different time periods and different contexts. In some sense, the Catholic and Protestant beginnings in Korea took place in opposite situations, and consequently, produced different heroes and villains. This study provides some sketches of those stories from Catholic and Prot-

estant beginnings. Some vignettes and episodes of encounters between missionaries and native Koreans are presented here.

The first part shows that the Catholic side brought about enormous turmoil and martyrdom. One example is found in the Silk Letter Incident in 1801, named after the *baekseo* ["silk letter"] that appealed to a foreign Catholic authority to aid persecuted Catholics in Korea. Next, the discussion focuses on the Protestant side, which consists of stories of remarkable vindication. The martyrdom of the first Protestant missionary, Robert J. Thomas (1840-1866), and the conversion of his executioner afterward is just such an illuminating story. Finally, it considers the historiographical implications in mission historiography in Korea with its trends and transitions. Indeed, Korean historiography runs the gamut from missionary martyrs to Christian assassins and reveals the unique characteristics of the journey of the gospel in Korea.

Two Phases of Mission History in Korea

Prior to 1876, the year of the diplomatic opening in Korea, most missionaries who came to Korea were French Catholic priests from la Société des Missions-Etrangères de Paris [The Society of Foreign Missions of Paris]. Starting with Pierre-Philibert Maubant (1803-1839), who began to work in Korea from 1835 until his martyrdom, Catholic mission activities took place during a period when Korea was most restrictive in closing itself off to foreigners. French missionaries lived challenging and dangerous lives in Korea. They were mostly young and from rural areas in their home country and did not have much experience in parish ministry.¹ They also did not have much exposure to a polished modern urban lifestyle. These conditions in many ways proved to be favorable to prepare them for the living conditions in Korea. During the middle of 19th century (1836-1866), twelve missionaries out of twenty were beheaded, not counting those five who died of sickness and three who escaped.

Antoine Daveluy (1818-1866), who served in Korea for twenty-two years, left a significant amount of writing during this dark period; his work was later incorporated into the account of French mission historian Charles Dallet's *Histoire de L'Église de Corée* (1874).² Mission his-

1. Jo Hyeon-Beom, *Munmyeong kwa yaman: Taja cui siseon euro bon 19 segi Joseon* 문명과 야만: 타자의 시선으로 본 19세기 조선 [Civilization and savagery: The nineteenth century Joseon (Korea) seen from the perspective of the other] (Seoul: Chaeksesang, 2002), 54.

2. Ch. Dallet, *Histoire de L'Église de Corée* (Paris: Librairie Victor Palmé, Éditeur, 1874). The book was translated into a three-volume work in Korean in 1980.

toriographies written during this period often depict the heroic deaths of those martyred with an almost hagiographic tone. Dallet's *Histoire* devotes more than two-thirds of the volume to the martyrdom of missionaries and native believers. During this period, Korean Catholics also had to defend their faith from ideological attack in addition to being physically persecuted.³ Thus, this period was a productive time that created numerous writings that expressed the early Korean Catholic faith.⁴

After the opening of the nation, the situation changed. Now, the term "modernity" was not merely a slogan the Westerners spoke of in order to modernize Korea, but also it became the Korean nation's motto. Such an example can be seen in the work of a reformist, Yu Kil-Chun (1856–1914);⁵ he wrote a travelogue, *Seoyu Gyeonmun* 西遊見聞 [Observations on Travel in the West] in which he writes about his foreign experience. This situation provided a more favorable environment for the spread of Christianity, especially for future Protestant missionaries. Most of these later missionaries worked with relative freedom, often closely with the royal families.

During this period, major mission literature included missionary sketches of Korea that discussed fresh attempts to reveal this hidden nation to the world.⁶ Among them, William E. Griffis's *Corea the Hermit Nation* (1882) was one of the most well-known and influential.⁷ However, Korean scholars in general criticize his view on Korea as being inaccurate, negative, one-sided, Western, colonial, and (perhaps worst of all) pro-Japanese.⁸ Griffis had never visited Korea, did not speak the

3. See An Jeong-Bok, *Cheonhakgo* 天學考 [Concerning Catholicism, 1785], in *Sunam chongseo, sang*, 順庵叢書, 上 (Seoul: Seongkyunkwan University Daedong munhwa yeonguwon, 1970), 372-89; idem, *Cheonhak Mundap* 天學問答 [Questions and Answers on Catholicism, 1785] in Choi Dong-Hee, *Seohak ae daehan Hanguk silhak eui baneung* 西學에 대한 韓國實學의 反應, 民族文化研究叢書 12 (Seoul: Korea University Minjok munhwa yeonguso, 1988), 269-79.

4. See Yi Pyok, *Seongkyo Yoji* 聖教要旨 [Essentials of the Holy Teaching, 1779], in Kim Ok-Hee, *Hanguk cheonjukyo sasangsa I: Kwangam Yi Pyok eui seohak sasang yeongu* 韓國天主教思想史 I: 曠菴 李檠의 西學思想研究 (Seoul: Doseochulpan Sungyo eui maek, 1990), 317-84. Jeong Yak-Jong, *Jukyo Yoji* 主教要旨 [Essentials of the Lord's teaching, 1795], in Hector Diaz, *A Korean Theology: Chu-Gyo Yo-Ji: Essentials of the Lord's Teaching by Chong Yak-jong Augustine* (1760-1801) (Immense, Switzerland: Neue Zeitschrift für Missions- wissenschaft, 1986), 274-435.

5. Korean names in this article are given in the order of the last name and given name.

6. E.g., John Ross, *History of Corea: Ancient and modern with description of manners and customs, language and geography* (London: Elliot Stock, 1891).

7. William E. Griffis, *Corea the Hermit Nation* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1882).

8. Kim Soo-Tae, "William Griffis eui <Eundun eui nara, Hanguk> 윌리엄 그

language, and had no first-hand experience with the country. Griffis's overall thesis was that the demise of the Hermit Kingdom would bring promise for the nation following the example of Japan:

Corea cannot long remain a hermit nation. The near future will see her open to the world. Commerce and pure Christianity will enter to elevate her people, and the student of science, ethnology, and language will find a tempting field on which shall be solved many a yet obscure problem. The forbidden land of to-day is, in many striking points of comparison, the analogue of Old Japan. While the last of the hermit nations awaits some gallant Perry of the future, we may hope that the same brilliant path of progress on which the Sunrise Kingdom has entered, awaits the Land of Morning Calm.

We add a postscript. As our manuscript turns to print, we hear of the treaty successfully negotiated by Commodore Shufeldt.⁹

In contrast, Homer Hulbert (1863-1949), who came to Korea and earned a reputation as “a man who loves Korea even more than Koreans do,” left behind positive and sympathetic sketches of Korea in his two major works, *The History of Korea* (1905) and *The Passing of Korea* (1906). In the preface to the latter, Hulbert starts with this statement:

This book is a labor of love, undertaken in the days of Korea's distress, with the purpose of interesting the reading public in a country and a people that have been frequently maligned and seldom appreciated.¹⁰

The American public has been persistently told that the Korean people are a degenerate and contemptible nation, incapable of better things, intellectually inferior, and better off under Japanese rule than independent. The following pages may answer these charges, which have been put forth for a specific purpose,—a purpose that came to full fruition on the night of November 17, 1905, when at the point of the sword, Korea was forced to acquiesce “voluntarily” in the virtual destruction of her independence once for all. The reader will here find a narrative of the course of events which led up to this crisis, and the

리피스의 <은둔의 나라, 한국>” [William Griffis's Corea the Hermit Nation] (lecture delivered at Korean Cultural Institute of Princeton, Princeton, New Jersey, June 16, 2006), 3.

9. Griffis, *Corea*, 10.

10. Homer B. Hulbert, preface to *The Passing of Korea* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1909).

part that different powers, including the United States, played in the tragedy.¹¹

Hulbert argued that it would be highly improbable for Korea to follow the same path as Japan. This was due to the different temperaments between the two nations.¹² Unlike Griffis, Hulbert was highly affirmative of Korean culture. For example, having had a keen linguistic knowledge of Korean language, he commented, “the Korean surpasses English as a medium of public speaking.”¹³ Hulbert came to know King Gojong closely and was even deeply involved in Korean politics for the cause of Korean independence. Though expelled by Japan, he later returned to Korea and died there as “the friend of Korea” according to his last wishes. On his tombstone, we read, “I would rather be buried in Korea than in Westminster Abbey.”

Key Factors in Korean Mission Historiography

Considering the two phases of mission in Korea, mission historiography in Korea is necessarily divided into two different genres. One is martyrdom stories consisting mostly of Catholic accounts of the heroic deaths of both missionaries and native Koreans; the other is mostly Protestant missionary stories that account for their substantial contributions to Korea.

In dealing with the image of missionaries in literature and media, there tends to be two kinds of portrayals—one that is associated with the attitude and perspective of the missionary’s home country (emphasizing Western colonial views in most of cases) and the other are the stories that more compassionate toward native Koreans. The former creates the image of missionary as an informant or government agent, while the latter conveys the image of a friend. Usually, three factors are at play—missionary, native, and missionary’s home country. These become the criteria for different approaches.¹⁴ Their relationships can be sketched as the following diagrams (see Figures 1 and 2).

11. Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea*, 9.

12. Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea*, 8.

13. Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea*, 305.

14. Jo, *Munmyeong kwa yaman* 문명괴 야만 [Civilization and savagery], 103.

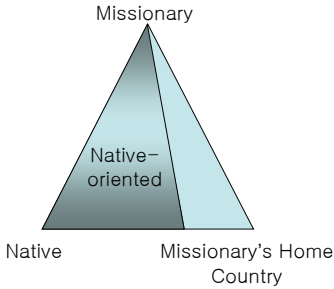


Figure 1

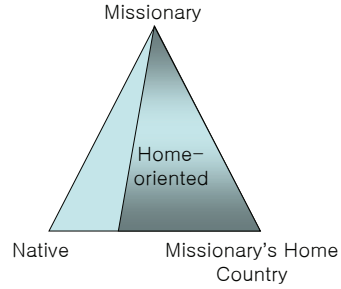


Figure 2

As seen in the case of Griffis and Hulbert, the unique situation of Korea during the time of Japanese control created a fourth factor, i.e., Japan. The missionary attitude toward Japanese colonialism created either friend or foe in relation to the missionary serving in Korea. Thus, Japan is another unique factor that characterizes both missionary and mission historiography (see Figures 3 and 4).

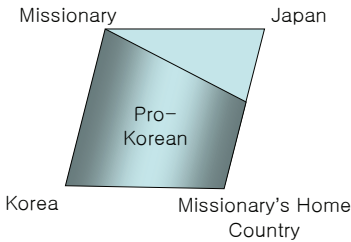


Figure 3

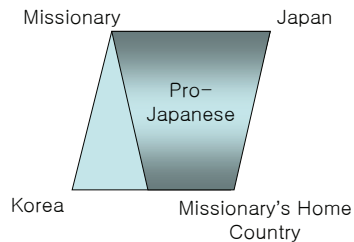


Figure 4

Now I turn more specifically to several vignettes and episodes in Korean mission historiography. Some important characters are a radical Catholic who almost betrayed his own country; an apologetic who publically defended Catholic faith; the first Protestant missionary martyr whose sacrifice became the seed that spread the gospel; several villains who became heroic martyrs; a Christian assassin who was loyal and controversial; and some medical doctors who played the roles of hero and villain.

The Catholic Phase

The Bloody Beginning

The first major step for the introduction of Christian faith to Korea came from Roman Catholicism in the late 18th century. It came basically through missionary writings from China rather than through missionaries themselves (Korean people revere books!). Naturally, the contact came to literati groups, composed of young Confucian elites. They eagerly engulfed themselves in writings such as Matteo Ricci's *Cheoju Sileui* 天主實義 [The true doctrine of the Lord of heaven, c. 1594]. They formed themselves into a study group that eventually grew into an autonomous worshipping community. The Catholic faith spread rapidly without an organized church and formal priests.

The two negative events set off both the beginning and the intensification of nationwide persecution. Persecution was ignited with the "Jinsan event" (珍山事件, 1791) when Yun Chi-Chung, a Catholic, burned an ancestral tablet. The death of King Jeongjo in 1800, who had favored the Southern faction, provided the opposing political faction with the impetus for persecution. Clearly, the persecution of Catholics was not purely religious, but also political in nature.

In 1801, another event called The Silk Letter Incident (帛書事件) occurred, which accelerated the persecution. The government intercepted a secret letter written on silk (*baekseo*) by Hwang Sa-Yong, a young Korean aristocrat and Catholic convert. The contents of this letter fueled the government's hostile attitude toward Catholics. In the letter, Hwang reported the persecution in detail to the French bishop in Beijing, petitioning the intervention of foreign forces:

I, the sinner Thomas, along with others, tearfully appeal to Your Excellency, our Bishop in Peking....

Here is how you can take advantage of this situation. Dispatch a fleet of several hundred ships, filled with fifty or sixty thousand of the best troops, along with lots of cannons and other deadly weaponry. At the same time, drop off three or four shrewd and persuasive Chinese scholars along the coast so that they can deliver a letter to the king of Korea. That letter should say ... if you refuse to permit this messenger of the Lord of Heaven to come ashore, then we will have to inflict the punishment of the Lord on you.¹⁵

15. Donald Baker, "Hwang Sayong: An Appeal for Aid," in *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization* Vol. II *From the Seventeenth Century to the Modern Period*, ed. Peter H. Lee et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 147-50.

This letter, a significant event in Korea's Catholic church history, conveys the Ultramontanist of the Catholic faith.

Cheong Ha-Sang composed an apologetic letter, titled *Sangjae Sangseo* 上宰相書 [A letter to the prime minister, 1839] against the persecutions and misconceptions on Christianity. Cheong, a staunch Catholic, refuted Buddha, Bodhisattva, and other sundry evil spirits altogether. Though he did attack many notions of Confucianism as well, Cheong tried to defend the Christian faith by emphasizing that the true Catholic teaching is not incompatible with Confucian virtues.

Do Catholics really distort Confucian moral principles? Do Catholics really delude the masses? Of course not. Good Catholics behave the way all of us, from the sovereign above to the people below, should behave in our daily lives. You cannot say that Catholics are a threat to Confucian moral principles or that they sow confusion.... Catholicism is the most holy and sagely, the most fair and impartial, the most correct and orthodox, the most genuine and true, the most perfect and complete, and the most singular and unique of all teachings....¹⁶

Cheong's letter reminds us of Justin Martyr who thought that Christianity was the perfect philosophy. Cheong's letter also shows a more indigenized effort than Hwang's. Unlike Hwang, we see that Cheong's writing is more accommodating and less confrontational. Eventually, strenuous efforts to bring a priest by appealing to the pope resulted in the first foreign (Chinese) priest named Chou Wen-Mu (1752-1801) in the Joseon Dynasty.

In Catholic historiography, Catholic leaders such as Cheong Ha-Sang and Chou Wen-Mu were heroes who were martyred. Yun Chi-Chung and Hwang Sa-Yong were simultaneously depicted as heroes (to Catholics) and as villains (to Korean nationalists). Two prominent Confucian scholars, An Jeong-Bok and Shin Hu-Dam, who launched intellectual and ideological attacks upon Christianity, certainly portrayed these Catholics as villains. This was much more the case with the Daewongun (1820-1898; the father and regent of King Gojong [r. 1863-1907]), who shut the doors of the nation to foreign countries and persecuted the Catholics. Ironically, such attacks actually made Catholic leaders become even more engaged in publically spreading the gospel, to the point of using *Hangeul*, the native Korean script, for theological writings.

16. Donald Baker, "Chong Hasang: A Confucian Defense of Catholicism," in *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization* Vol. II *From the Seventeenth Century to the Modern Period*, ed. Peter H. Lee et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 154.

Christian Assassin, a Hero or Villain?

After the opening of the nation, the martyrdom of Catholic missionaries, especially French priests, ceased. However, with the ascending Japanese empire, the Catholic attitude toward the Korean nation was slightly altered. This section introduces one figure, An Jung-Geun (1879-1910), who assassinated the Japanese governor-general at the dawn of the annexation of Korea (1910). In Korean historiography, An was certainly a national hero. However, he was a villain to the Japanese, to the occupied Korean officials, and to certain missionaries and the Catholic Church.

An was born to an influential father who became a Catholic and a reformist. An's father was baptized into Catholic faith along with his household, and thus, his son. An received Thomas as his baptismal name at age 19. Though his faith was not based on a dramatic personal conversion, An's faith began to steadily grow sincere and faithful until the time of his death.¹⁷ An's faith was influenced by doctrinal writings such as *Sangjae Sangseo* 上宰相書 [A letter to the prime minister, 1839] and *Jukyo Yoji* 主教要旨 [Essentials of the Lord's Teaching, 1795].¹⁸ He accompanied his priest on an evangelistic tour, often involving himself in teaching the catechism, too.

Brethren, please listen to me, if one has delicious meal but not share with his family, if he has a great skill but not teach for others, can we say that he is a fellow brother... I earnestly desire that you repent your sin and become a believer, that you as a Christian make this world just and peaceful, and that you go to heaven for reward, the blessed life forever . . .¹⁹

The above memoir of his speech from his autobiography shows An's societal concern for peace and justice as well as his evangelistic efforts.

17. Just before his execution, An witnessed his faith even to his Japanese attorney. It is said that later that the attorney, impressed by An, began to attend the church. See Suh Jeong-Min, *Ilbon kidokkyo eui Hanguk ihae* 일본기독교의 한국 이해 [Japanese Christianity's understanding of Korea] (Seoul: Hanul Akademi, 2000), 158, n. 22.

18. Cha Ki-Jin, "An Jung-Geun eui cheonjukyo sinang kwa geu yeonghyang 안중근의 천주교 신앙과 그 영향" [An Jung-Geun's Catholic faith and its influence], *Kyohoesayeongu* 16 (June 2001): 32.

19. An Jung-Geun, *An Eung-Chil Yeoksa* 安應七歷史 [An's autobiography, 1910], in *An Jung-Geun Jeongi Jeonjip* 안중근전기전집, ed. Yun Byeong-Seok (Seoul: Gukka bohuncheo, 1999), 139, 141, quoted in Cha, "An Jung-Geun eui cheonjukyo sinang kwa geu yeonghyang 안중근의 천주교 신앙과 그 영향" [An Jung-Geun's Catholic faith and its influence], 26.

An was initially involved in the enlightenment movement to awaken the Korean people, especially through education. At one point, he had the conviction to build a Catholic university, and strongly suggested his idea to a French priest, Gustave Mutel (1854-1933), then the archbishop of the Joseon Diocese. To his dismay, Mutel rejected An's idea, saying that education would not be beneficial for the faith of the people. Deeply disappointed by this response, An decided to stop learning languages (French), and gave up following a Western education.²⁰ This incident led him to distrust foreign leadership and church policies that only sought their own security, and not the welfare of the nation.

An also had a personal conflict with Joseph Wilhelm (1860-1938), the French priest who had baptized him, particularly taking offense at this Wilhelm's domineering attitude toward his own parishioners. An discussed this matter with other parishioners and even planned to make a plea to the Pope. When he learned of the plan, Wilhelm severely rebuked An for his attitude and physically humiliated him. Nevertheless, An endured without rebellion. An later forgave the abusive behavior of the priest.²¹ For the cause of Korean independence, he finally joined an armed nationalist resistance group.

An assassinated Ito Hirobumi (伊藤博文, 1841-1909), a highly important figure who had served as prime minister of Japan for four non-consecutive terms, and who was then the resident-general of Korea, in Harbin, Manchuria in October 26, 1909. It is said that An made the sign of the cross right after the assassination. An justified his action as not contradicting Biblical teaching because Ito was an enemy to peace throughout all of Asia.

This incident provoked reactions from many nations. China and Russia, threatened by Japan, praised An's heroic act. Overseas, the responses (including those of Koreans in America) were generally laudatory toward An's act. However, missionaries in Korea, especially French Catholic priests and Korean officials, denounced his act as murder and were reluctant to accept him as a Catholic.²² Against An's request in

20. An Jung-Geun, *An Jung-Geun euisa jaseojeon* 안중근의사자서전 [An's autobiography, 1910], trans. Lee Eun-Sang (Seoul: An Jung-Geun euisa sungmohoe, 1979), 55-57, quoted in Choi Seok-Woo, "An Jung-Geun eui euigeo wa kyohoe eui baneung 안중근의 의거와 교회의 반응" [An's protest and the response of the church], *Kyohoesayongu* 9 (October 1994): 101-102.

21. An, *An Jung-Geun euisa jaseojeon* 안중근의사자서전 [An's autobiography], 94-95, quoted in Choi, "An Jung-Geun eui euigeo wa kyohoe eui baneung 안중근의 의거와 교회의 반응" [An's protest and the response of the church], 102.

22. We can see an example in Mutel's behavior and attitude based on his diary in October 26-29, 1909. He expressed his condolence to the late Ito Hirobumi while he was very reluctant to publicly reveal An as a Catholic. See

prison, Mutel even forbade a priest from offering An the Last Sacraments. In spite of this order, the priest Wilhelm disobeyed and offered An the last rites, for which he was suspended from duty for two months.²³ Wilhelm protested against this punishment from his superior, and later left Korea.

For the Catholic Church, An has been a controversial figure from the moment of his assassination of Ito Hirobumi to as recently as the 1990s. The assassination brought about mixed responses and led to ethical and theological questions. Most of the Catholic missionaries of that time and the thousands of Korean Catholics who followed them seemed to hold a similarly negative view of An, not as a hero, but as a villain to the nation's security and to God's divine will. Historians today still attempt to determine whether his patriotic behavior really contradicted Christian love. In this story, we see the different perceptions and attitudes of missionaries. They were no longer sympathetic toward this kind of patriotic act, but in a sense, assented to the Japanese idea of colonialism.

An's Christian ideal was not in the killing of an enemy, but in the pursuit of peace. An developed a "Theory of Oriental Peace," based on a Principle of Solidarity among three Asian nations, i.e., Korea, China, and Japan, through coalition.²⁴ His was a "win-win" theory. This statement shows An's nascent ideas and intentions:

We now live in the time when the stronger preys upon the weaker. The whole world has been divided into the West and the East. The West is extending its territory to the East. The East should unite against the Western expansion . . . The competition and invasion is not of the Oriental virtue, not originated from the East, but of the nature of the West, from the Western characteristics . . . The reason why Korea and China supported Japan against Russia was the Japanese declaration for peace in the East and for independence of

Yun Sun-Ja, "An Jung-Geun euigeo ae daehan cheonju kyohoe eui insik 안중근 의 거에 대한 천주교회의 인식" [Understanding of the heroic action of An Jung-Geun by the Catholic Church], *Hanguk Geunhyundaisayeongu* 33 (June 2005): 53. Now the 8-volume complete translation of the Archbishop Mutel's diaries during his office in Korea (r. 1890-1933) is available: Gustave-Charles-Marie Mutel, *Mutel Jukyo Ilgi* 뫼땡주교일기 [Archbishop Mutel's Diary], 8 volumes, trans. Choi Seok-Woo (Seoul: Hanguk kyohoesa yeonguso, 1986-2009).

23. Mutel, *Mutel Jukyo Ilgi* 뫼땡주교일기 [Archbishop Mutel's Diary], March 15, 1910.

24. An Jung-Geun wrote out a thesis of his theory, along with his autobiography, while in prison, though he failed to complete the former.

Korea. Unfortunately, however, after the victory of the war, Japan has forsaken its promise . . .²⁵

Scholars see that, in a deep sense, An was more of a sincere Catholic than a patriot.²⁶ An was not just a nationalist, but a Catholic who had a cosmopolitan perspective. He wanted to become a peacemaker.²⁷ His vision was pan-Asianism. His political philosophy was not limited to East Asia, but ultimately to Asia and Europe. It was not a parochial one; rather, it was catholic in the sense that it was universal in its intent.²⁸

Now Korean Catholic officials have since affirmed his action as legitimate with an official mass to commemorate him, and restored him to the Catholic Church in the 1990s.²⁹ We now see a more positive evaluation of An in Korean church historiography. Can we compare An Jung-Geun with Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)? Though An preceded Bonhoeffer by one generation, his theology and thought are still understudied.

An's story is just one example of other similar cases. Yi Man-Yeol, a notable historian of Korean nationalism and Christianity, observes a number of Christian assassins during this time period on the Protestant side as well.³⁰ It is a peculiar picture of Korean Christianity that, during the process of Japan's annexation of Korea, most of the acts of assas-

25. Hong Sun-Ho, "An Jung-Geun eui 'dongyang pyeonghwa ron' 안중근의 '동양평화론'" [An Jung-Geun's theory of oriental peace], *Kyohoesayeongu* 9 (October 1994): 53-54.

26. Byun Ki-Chan, "An Jung-Geun eui sinang kwa hyeonyang ae daehan bigyosa jeok geomto 안중근의 신앙과 현양에 대한 비교사적 검토" [An Jung-Geun's faith and its manifestation: A study from comparative history], *Kyohoesayeongu* 16 (June 2001): 143.

27. Jeon Dal-Soo, "An Jung-Geun Thoma eui sinang kwa deokhaeng 안중근 토마스의 신앙과 덕행" [An Jung-Geun's faith and virtuous act], *Kyohoesayeongu* 16 (June 2001): 81.

28. Hyun Kwang-Ho, "An Jung-Geun eui dongyang pyeonghwa ron kwa geu seongkyeok 안중근의 동양평화론과 그 성격" [An Jung-Geun's theory of oriental peace and its characteristics], *Asiayeongu* 46, no. 3 (October 2003): 261.

29. *Chosun Ilbo* 조선일보 [Chosun daily news], August 22, 1993, quoted in Yun, "An Jung-Geun euigeo ae daehan cheonju kyohoe eui insik 안중근 의거에 대한 천주교회의 인식" [Understanding of the heroic action of An Jung-Geun by the Catholic Church], 72.

30. For example, Jang In-Hwan, along with another young Korean (Jeon Myeong-Un), assassinated D. W. Stevens, an American diplomat who worked for the Japanese occupation of Korea, in San Francisco in 1908. In 1909, Lee Jae-Myung also attempted, but failed, to kill Lee Wan-Yong, the Korean prime minister who was considered to be a traitor to his own country.

sination were carried out by Christians who were deeply imbued with patriotic fervor.

The Protestant Phase

The Protestant beginnings in Korea came after the Catholic phase. With the political decline of the Daewongun and the (forced) opening of the Hermit Kingdom to the Japanese in 1876, foreign powers began to compete for the Korean Peninsula. Protestant missionaries came on this tide for the next phase of missions. However, the first seed was already sown prior to their arrival.

Portrayal of the First Seed

Robert J. Thomas (1839-1866) was an iconic figure in Korean mission history. Thomas, a Welsh missionary from the London Missionary Society, first set out to China, but died in Korea, becoming the first Protestant missionary martyr on Korean soil.

After the loss of his beloved wife in China, he was relocated to Peking. But Korea became the new focus for his missionary zeal. Thomas's keen interest in Korea was kindled after meeting two Korean Catholics and learning that there were eleven Catholic missionaries and a few thousands believers in Korea. He discovered that Koreans were eager to read the Bible. In 1865, he came to Korea as an agent for the National Bible Society of Scotland and secretly distributed Bibles (written in Chinese). In the following year, he visited Korea again as an interpreter for the USS General Sherman, an armed American naval gunboat. Of course, Thomas's real intention was to distribute more Bibles.

Unfortunately, the ship became stuck in the mud of a river near Pyongyang and was attacked. All the crewmembers and the captain were captured and executed. Thomas, kneeling down, humbly asked the executioner to take his last Bible. The ill-fated missionary was beheaded at age 27 in 1866. (The year 1866 was also a severe blow to the Catholics.) The executioner, greatly troubled in his heart and deeply impressed with the apparent goodness of the man he had just executed, took the Bible with him to his home.

At that time, an official edict had been announced to ban the possession of any personal Bible. Many discarded the Bible, but others removed the pages to use as wallpaper. In some cases, the texts that were papered onto the walls were sometimes read with curiosity and eventually brought about conversions and revivals. One house that had been used pages of the Bible for wallpaper became the Neoldarigol Church—the first church in that province. In 1907, when the Great Revival in Pyongyang took place, many confessed their sins publicly. According

to one account, an old man came forward and confessed that he had been the one who executed Thomas almost forty years earlier. This man became a lay church leader. The old man's nephew became an assistant to a missionary and one of the translators of the Korean Bible. This is a remarkable story of vindication that is a highlight of early mission historiography.

Despite the heroic account above, however, Thomas remained an obscure figure, misunderstood by the historians of his time. Richard Lovett, in *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895*, writes: "In 1866 R. J. Thomas, B.A., was appointed, but never settled down to work in the capital, and is supposed to have been drowned while on a voyage to Corea."³¹ This record seems to be written in the context of vague information disseminated among Thomas's fellow missionaries. His death, however, was not in vain. It is said that almost five hundred people received Bibles through Thomas. Samuel A. Moffett, a pioneer Presbyterian missionary in Pyongyang, reported that in 1893 he discovered a catechumen who had received a Chinese New Testament from Thomas.³²

From Mobs to Martyrs

Likewise, on the Protestant side, we have similar stories of vindication—a tale of a missionary hero and a native villain, who in turn, later became a hero in his own right. The episode of Samuel Austin Moffett whose church became a hotbed during the Great Revival and Lee Ki-Pung (1865-1942), who was a famous gang leader in Pyongyang, is another vignette in Korean mission history.³³ The encounter between the tall missionary and the gang leader was a bloody one. Lee struck Moffett in the face with a stone, leaving a deep scar. Through a dramatic encounter with Jesus, Lee became a believer. He was one of the first seven graduates from the first theological seminary in Pyongyang and the first domestic missionary to Jeju Island. He led a staunch resistance to Japanese Shinto worship, enforced by the colonial authorities during the colonization of Korea. The Japanese police tortured him, which caused

31. Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895*, vol. 2 (London: Henry Frowde, 1899), 570.

32. Samuel Austin Moffett, "Early Days in Pyeng Yang," *The Korean Mission Field* 21 no. 3 (March 1825 [sic]): 54, quoted in L. George Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea 1832-1910* (Pyeng Yang: Union Christian College Press, 1929), 45, n. 163.

33. The popular image of Lee Ki-Poong as a gang leader, as shown in *Even unto Death* (private publication) by Neil and Peggy Verwey with Annalou Marais, was a misconception. According to his family, Lee was a police officer.

his death in 1942.³⁴ Lee's story is compared to the conversion story of the murderous Saul who later became the Apostle Paul. The encounter between W. L. Swanlen and Kim Ik-Du (1874-1950) was also such a story. Kim Ik-Du, a vagabond, received the power of the Holy Spirit and healed thousands with great revivals. He ultimately faced martyrdom by Communist forces during the Korean War (1950-1953).

Heroic Doctor or Haughty Diplomat?

The encounter between the first missionary doctor, Horace N. Allen (1858-1932), and Prince Min Young-Ik was another heroic episode. Allen, a missionary to China, came to Korea with mixed motives. When radical members from a reformist political group stabbed Prince Min in a failed coup attempt in 1884 (known as the Gapsin Coup), Allen was asked to care for the wounded prince. This auspicious opportunity demonstrated the power of Western medicine. The prince, whose arteries had been severed and was near death, recovered from his severe wounds. As a reward, the first Western clinic was established upon Allen's request and an influx of missionaries began to arrive in the country. Allen not only worked as a physician, but also as a diplomat (as a U.S. legation secretary).

There is also a dark side to the story that was not covered by earlier mission histories. Western interests in the Korean Peninsula (by countries such as Russia, Germany, England, France, and America) became manifest in the following events between 1896 and 1905: the conferral of foreign rights to build a railway system (1896); the American right to develop golden mines in Unsan (1896); foreign monopoly of electric and transportation systems (1898); foreign rights for lumbering, etc. Unfortunately, Allen was involved in these deals. Allen's initial role in acquiring the gold mining rights in Unsan brought significant profit for the United States, leading to the formation of the Oriental Consolidated Mining Company.³⁵ Almost forty years of American exploitation of Korean gold led to the coining of the term, *Nodaji* (a loose transliteration of the English words, "No touch!"), meaning a financial bonanza. Later, historians portrayed this incident as only one example of many cases where missionaries were engaged in "villainy." In this sense, the missionary Allen and the diplomat Allen represent the ambivalent, dual perception of the missionary as both hero and villain.

34. Lee Sa-Rye, *Lee Ki-Pung moksa cui salm kwa sinang* 이기풍 목사의 삶과 신앙 [The life and faith of the Rev. Lee Ki-Pung] (Seoul: Kidokkyomunsa, 1991).

35. Donald N. Clark, *Living Dangerously in Korea: The Western Experience 1900-1950* (Norwalk: EastBridge, 2003), 223.

Other Vignettes of Medical Missionaries

Donald N. Clark provides a negative account about a missionary and an apple thief. There was an American missionary doctor, C. A. Haysmeir, who worked on the Seventh Day Adventist Mission compound in the suburbs of Pyongyang. The orchard, a source of sustenance for both the missionaries and the hospital patients, had become a chief target for village children during harvest time. On one occasion, Haysmeir caught a boy who had stolen a ripe apple. To make the boy an example to other thieves, he traced the Korean word, *dojeok* (meaning “thief”), on the boy’s cheek with caustic soda, a chemical that burned into the boy’s skin. This incident caused a public outcry. Eventually, the word spread to newspapers and the local bar association. He was convicted and ordered to pay two months’ salary to the boy’s family with three months’ imprisonment.³⁶

In another episode, a missionary doctor, Wiley Forsythe, encountered a beggar woman in a terminal stage of leprosy in Gwangju (or Kwangju). He lifted her on his pony, and led the pony and woman away to a local clinic. The story continues:

This small group must have looked like a Christmas card as they approached . . . a tall spare figure leading a pony, with one hand steadying the drooping figure on its back. There was ‘room in the inn’—or rather the clinic—on the floor, with other patients. But after a couple of days, when they realized there was a leper amongst them, the patients protested . . . Nearby was a large kiln, not in use. Dr. Forsythe put the woman on his pony again and led her tenderly to the kiln. Mrs. Owen, now a widow, brought her husband’s country bedroll and spread it on the floor of the kiln. Other ladies of Kwangju brought soup and comfort. Manton tended the woman until she died two weeks later—but not before these friends told her of Jesus and his love for her. The leper woman said, “My own people would not do as much for me.”³⁷

This kiln soon became a place for more lepers. This was the beginning of the first leper clinic in Korea.

A Prisoner of Christ Jesus in Korea

John Van Neste Talmage and his wife Eliza Emerson Talmage arrived as missionaries of the Presbyterian Church US (Southern Presbyterian)

36. Clark, *Living Dangerously*, 94.

37. Mary Stuart Wilson Mason, *Bess and Manton: Stories about growing up in Korea with her parents and other missionaries, A lighter side of the introduction of Christ into the Land of the Morning Calm* (n.p: 1997-2004), 25.

to Korea in 1910, just three days before the annexation of Korea by Japan. They served there for more than forty years. The year 1941 was a time of severe oppression on the Korean people by Japan. Shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the Talmages were arrested and imprisoned as internees. The pressure was increased on the missionaries as investigations began by corrupt Japanese police agents, especially on the properties of the American missions compound. The couple learned that their facilities might be used for a Shinto shrine. The missionary couple resisted in signing the contract to lease the property—several hundreds buildings, land, and equipment exceeding \$1,000,000 in value. “One can see immediately why we all could not leave Korea. Someone had to care for the property...”³⁸ They risked their lives with this action.

A Duplex Structure of History

According to Korean church historian Min Kyong-Bae, history is comprised of good and evil. History has a duplex structure and a paradoxical nature. Even seemingly evil things may serve the higher purpose of God and turn into good results. Min argues that history, seen from God’s providence, completes God’s will. He calls this process a “sacramental principle.”³⁹ The two seemingly contradictory tensions are in actuality a creative power in light of God’s perspective through revelation and the grace of the cross. With this view of history, Min observes a certain historical phenomenon that may be of interest to historians as described below.

Situational Variables of History

Dealing with Catholic and Protestant faiths, Min tried to clarify how these two historic Christianities were processed in different situations and resulted in different consequences. The religious receptivity of both faiths functioned the same way, but generated two different reactions. Korea was under the threat of both Western pressure and Japanese annexation. These circumstances made the situation of Korea unique and complex. Catholic alliances with foreign powers against the

38. J. V. N. Talmage, *A Prisoner of Christ Jesus in Korea: A story of my imprisonment by the Japanese in Kwangju, Korea following the attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 until I was released in preparation for return to America in an exchange of nationals. Abridged and edited version* (Montreat: Presbyterian Historical Foundation, 1947), 89-92.

39. Min Kyong-Bae, “Je 2 segi eui Hanguk kyohoe sahak 제 2세기의 한국 교회사학” [The second century of Korean church historiography], *Kidokkyosasang* 330 (June 1986): 55-56.

nation's severe persecution of Catholics caused direct opposition from the government. In contrast, Protestant missions that opposed Japanese encroachment brought about a rather favorable synergistic effect from the native populace.⁴⁰ Thus, the relationship between Protestant Christianity and the nation developed a positive rapprochement under a particular historical situation, especially during Japanese colonization. Min sees this affinity between Christianity and the nation as being different from the historical church and state relationship of Western Christianity.⁴¹

The study of the relationship between the church and the nation is further developed by Min's pupil, Suh Jeong-Min.⁴² In Korea, the relationship between the church and the nation was not always mutually beneficial, but in many cases diagonally opposite. This means that loyalty to the nation brings about disloyalty to the church, and vice versa. Suh developed Min's theory from the same perspective and tried to categorize certain types of faith in the relationship between the church and the nation. He examined how these types of faith function differently in different situations. Suh classified basically two types of faiths in terms of Christian attitude toward one's own nation. Type A is an exclusive type as seen in the case of Hwang Sa-Yong and the *baekseo* (silk letter) incident. In this case, the believer's Christian viewpoint is confrontational toward national policy. Type B is an accommodative type as seen in the case of Cheong Ha-Sang with the *Sangjae Sangeo* (A letter to the prime minister) incident. In this case, the believer's Christian faith is compliant with national policy.

Each type can appear as either a patriot or a traitor to the nation's point of view. On the other hand, each type can be seen as either a saint or a scoundrel to the church's point of view. The factor that makes one a hero or a villain is not a constant, but a variable. It depends on the situation, i.e., whether the nation holds its security and sovereignty (X+side) or loses them (X-side). (See Figure 5. In this diagram, the X-axis represents the status of the nation while the Y-axis corresponds to affinity to the nation.)

40. Min Kyong-Bae, *Hanguk kidokkyo kyohoesa: Hanguk minjok kyohoe hyeongseong kwajajongsa* 한국기독교회사: 한국민족교회형성과정사 [The church history of Korea: Formation and development of a Korean national church], 3rd ed. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1993), 20.

41. Min, *Hanguk kidokkyo kyohoesa* 한국기독교회사 [The church history of Korea], 20.

42. Suh explained this phenomenon in history with the concept of magnetic field theory. See Suh, *Ilbon kidokkyo eui Hanguk ihae* 일본기독교의 한국이해 [Japanese Christianity's understanding of Korea], 314ff.

Hwang's type of faith was repellent to the spirit of nationalism espoused by the nation when the state's hold on security and sovereignty were strong (X+ Y- area); Cheong's type was not. Conversely, when the national security and sovereignty were in danger, Hwang's type of exclusive faith became more heroic (patriotic) (X- Y+ area) while Cheong's type of accommodative faith became less so. For example, in the case of the Catholic faith, the assassination of Ito Hirobumi by An Jung-Geun, a staunch Catholic nationalist, made him a hero to the nation when Korea was on the verge of losing her sovereignty. Nevertheless, he was not a hero to the church. In the case of Protestant faith, Christianity played a crucial role when Korea lost her security and sovereignty to Japan. In this situation, the exclusive type of faith appeared more patriotic and heroic while the accommodative type of faith appeared less patriotic and even compromising (X- Y- area). Such a case is observed in the Shinto worship decree issued under Japanese control. Joo Ki-Chul, who was martyred for his vehement resistance to Shinto worship, had a very exclusive type of faith that was less accommodative to national policy. His refusal of Shinto worship did not come from his nationalistic concerns or patriotism, but rather, from his "pure" motive to maintain true to his Christian faith. However, his death appeared heroic and patriotic to the nation. By contrast, most of the Korean churches that participated in Shinto worship treated the ritual as a national ceremony. For the majority of the church, Joo was not a hero, but a black sheep. (See Figure 5)

All these illustrations show that the different situations in historical circumstances created different heroes and villains in Korean historiography. Historians such as Min and Suh, bearing this phenomenon in their minds, try to understand a unique and complex situation in the writings of church and mission historiographies in Korea.

Historiographical Implications

Mission Historiography in Korea: Trends and Transitions

I have up to this point briefly presented sketches of heroism and villainy in a particular Korean historical setting of missions using several vignettes. In very simple, general terms, Christian historiography in the non-Western world often exhibits a certain trajectory of transition from an initial missionary period, followed by nationalist reactions, and finally, a more indigenized perspective. Accordingly, mission historiography and literature in Korea have demonstrated similar phases in portraying missionaries.

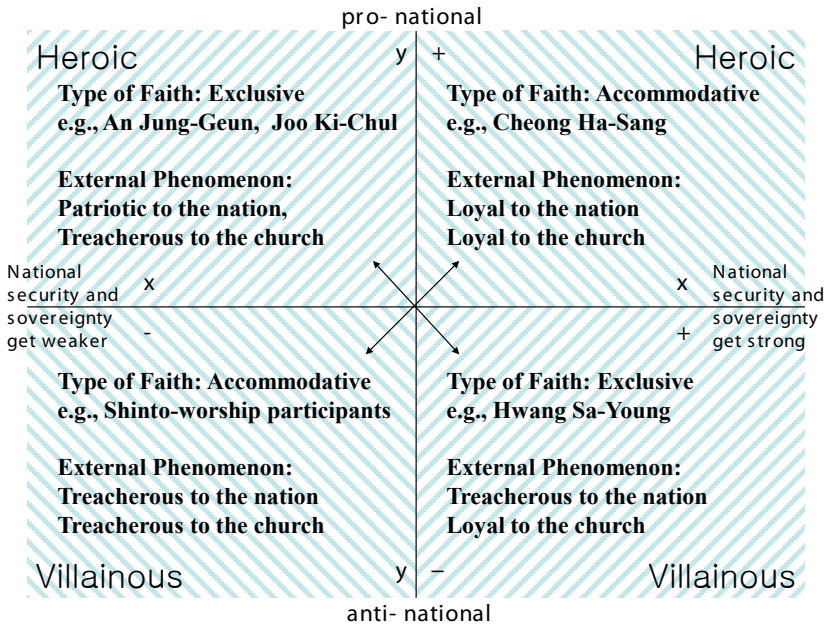


Figure 5⁴³

During the golden era of missions in Korea (1884-1930), missionaries themselves first produced most of the mission literature. There were also some writings produced by native Koreans with their own perception and portrayal of missionary activity. However, most missionary biographies at this early stage were commemorative hagiographies, including the heroic martyrdom of missionaries and often highlighting the redemptive story of the conversion of a “villain.”

For example, one of the early accounts of Robert J. Thomas appeared in 1928 as written by Oh Mun-Hwan, who deeply devoted to commemorate the first Protestant missionary martyr.⁴⁴ Mission historian L. George Paik comments on this book: “His viewpoint is highly eulogistical.”⁴⁵ More focus was given on the missionary’s commitment

43. Source: Adapted from Suh Jeong-Min, *Ilbon kidokkyo cui Hanguk ihae* 일본기독교의 한국이해 [Japanese Christianity’s understanding of Korea: A study in the relationship between the church and the nation] (Seoul: Hanul Akademi, 2000), 316.

44. Oh Mun-Hwan, *Thomas moksajeon* 토머스목사전 [The Life of the Rev. R. J. Thomas] (Pyongyang, 1928).

45. L. George Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea 1832-1910* (Pyeng Yang: Union Christian College Press, 1929), 42, n. 144.

and dedication for the cause of the gospel and God's providence to vindicate the negative circumstances of Thomas's death. Yet, the disputed accounts of the General Sherman incident from various historical sources (Korean, American, and Christian) caused historians to debate over the controversial nature of the incident and the unconfirmed account of Thomas's martyrdom.

A negative picture of the missionaries was written included in many historiographies, but often appeared in other literary forms. Kang Younghill, a pioneer Korean American writer in the early twentieth century, somewhat cynically describes the missionary career: "There are two types of missionaries I have known. One is really educated and sincere . . . The second one is the kind almost universally met with, the type that cannot get any job in the West so he comes to the East where he can live cheaply and have a cook and a waiter and a gardener and cherish a superiority-complex over 'heathen.'"⁴⁶

Recent Trends in Mission Historiography

During the last decade, historians in Korea (both Christian and non-Christian) have turned their attentions to the early missionaries and have published numerous source materials. These new materials are by and large categorized into source materials and studies materials. The source materials include primary documents such as missionary diaries, letters, reports, and various documents from various archives.⁴⁷ They provide rich insight into the detailed thoughts of the missionaries,

46. Kang Younghill, *The Grass Roof* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), 310-11.

47. E.g., Horace N. Allen, *Allen cui ilgi* 알렌의 일기 [H. N. Allen's diary], trans. Kim Won-Mo (Seoul: Dankook University Press, 1991); R. S. Hall, *Hanguk eseo choicho ro sunjik han seonkyosa: Doctor William James Hall* 한국에서 최초로 순직한 선교사: 닥터 윌리엄 제임스 홀 [The life of Rev. William J. Hall], trans. Hyun Chong-Seo (Seoul: Amen Publishing, 1994); Samuel Austin Moffett, *Mapo Samyeol moksa cui seonkyo pyeonji* 마포삼열 목사의 선교편지 [Samuel A. Moffett's missionary letters: 1890-1904], trans. Kim In-Su (Seoul: Changnohoe Sinhak Taehakkyo Chulpanbu, 2000); Horace Grant Underwood, *Underwood moksa cui seonkyo pyeonji* 언더우드 목사의 선교편지 1885-1916 [Rev. Underwood's missionary letters 1885-1916], trans. Kim In-Su (Seoul: Changnohoe Sinhak Taehakkyo Chulpanbu, 2002); Sherwood Hall, *Doctor Hall cui Joseon hoesang* 닥터 홀의 조선 회상 [With stethoscope in Asia: Korea], trans. Kim Dong-Ryul (Seoul: Good Seed Publishing Company, 2002); Charles F. Bernheisel, *Pyeon Ha-Seol moksa cui seonkyo ilgi* 편하설 목사의 선교일기 [The Rev. Charles F. Bernheisel's missionary diary], trans. Kim In-Su (Seoul: Kumnan Chulpansa, 2004); Pak Ung-Kyu, *Gajang Hanguk jeok in miguk seonkyosa: Han Bu-Seon pyeongjeon* 가장 한국적인 미국 선교사: 한부선 평전 [Bruce F. Hunt: Life & ministry] (Seoul: Grisim, 2004).

their attitudes, etc. The study materials are secondary sources published in the form of articles, essays, dissertations, monographs, and memoirs. These are in-depth studies based on various source materials with special subjects.⁴⁸

(1) *In Search of Missionary Thoughts, Attitudes, and Lifestyles*

Newly published primary sources give scholars access to the inner world of missionary minds, and even enable them to observe certain transitions in missionary thoughts and attitudes. A newer generation of historians has emerged with the production of these works.

Oak Sung-Deuk elucidated how the early Protestant missionaries in Korea paid special attention to the value of the national myth. They held a view that this myth offered the prototype of monotheistic faith (original monotheism), a form of proto-revelation, and a *praeparatio evangelica*. According to Oak, the early missionaries in Korea applied fulfillment theory⁴⁹ to their views; thus, they sought a point of contact between traditional myth and the gospel. These attempts are found in Homer Hulbert and James Gale. They found the triadic forms in the Tan'gun myth (the foundational myth of the Korean people) similar to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. In these efforts, they emphasized continuity rather than discontinuity.⁵⁰ They attempted to discover the "preexistence of God's revelation" in the Korean worldview. As a result, this understanding elevated national consciousness. Oak states, "Biblical evangelicalism and Tan'gun nationalism were combined to create

48. For example, several studies of early medical missions in Korea were published with a special focus on their social and cultural impact. Yi Man-Yol, *Hanguk kidokkyo euiryosa* 한국기독교의료사 [A history of Christian medical work in Korea] (Seoul: Acanet, 2003); Suh Jeong-Min, *Chejungwon kwa chogi Hanguk kidokkyo* 제중원과 초기 한국기독교 [Chejungwon and the early Christianity in Korea] (Seoul, Korea: Yonsei University Press, 2003).

49. This is a reflection of the decision made at the 1910 Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, which adopted fulfillment theory as an official position. See Oak Sung-Deuk, "Chogi Hanguk kyohoe eui Tan'gun sinhwa ihae 초기 한국교회의 단군신화 이해" [The early Korean church's understanding of the Tan'gun myth], in *Hanguk kidokkyo wa minjok tongil undong* 한국기독교와 민족통일운동 [Korean Christianity and the movement of national unification], ed. Yi Man-Yol (Seoul: The Institute for Korean Church History, 2001), 299, n. 2. Oak referred to Kenneth Cracknell, *Justice, Courtesy and Love: Theologians and Missionaries Encountering World Religions, 1846-1914* (London: Epworth Press, 1995), 181-260.

50. Oak, "Chogi Hanguk kyohoe eui Tan'gun sinhwa ihae 초기 한국교회의 단군신화 이해" [The early Korean church's understanding of the Tan'gun myth], 295-318.

a national identity against Japanese imperialism and its polytheistic Shintoism.”⁵¹

Ryu Dae-Young made a fresh attempt with a more social scientific approach to those missionaries who came to Korea from 1884 to 1910.⁵² In this work, Ryu observed that during their stay in Korea, missionaries maintained their American middle class lifestyle. In some sense, they not only planted the seed of the gospel, but also the American lifestyle itself to Korean soil. Representing mainstream American Christianity, these missionaries transferred conservatism, Puritanism, democracy, capitalism, separation of church and the state, and the American consciousness of manifest destiny.⁵³

Jo Hyeon-Beom examines missionary attitudes from the perspective of civilization versus savagery, observing that in the late 19th century, the task of civilization reached beyond moral obligation to the Biblical commandment of missionary attitudes. The “civilization” was the spirit of the time. Most of the missionary sketches of Korea bear this kind of thought and attitude in mind. However, Jo also observes that certain missionary attitudes were also transformed throughout missionary life in the country where they served. Such a case is found in Daveluy, a French Catholic missionary who came to Korea. Initially, Daveluy saw Korea in a very critical and negative way. The *yangban* (the Korean literati class), as a whole, were corrupt, exploiting both the king and people. People were locked in rigid social classes, uneducated, prone to lying, talkative, boisterous, noisy, vociferous, gluttonous, and even *demi-barbarie*. However, later writings of Darveluy show a more sympathetic attitude toward Korean family life, its mutual relationships, and Korean culture and entertainment.⁵⁴ As we have seen, missionaries’ own perceptions and portrayals of Koreans were capable of growing and changing.

(2) In Search of Self-Understanding

In newer mission historiography, a keen interest in these studies has not merely been to study missionaries, but to understand Koreans’

51. Oak, “Chogi Hanguk kyohoe eui Tan’gun sinhwa ihae 초기 한국교회의 단군신화 이해” [The early Korean church’s understanding of the Tan’gun myth], 295-318.

52. Ryu Dae-Young, *Chogi miguk seonkyosa yeongu 1884-1910 초기 미국선교사연구 1884-1910* [Early American missionaries in Korea 1884-1910: Understanding missionaries from their middle-class background] (Seoul: The Institute for Korean Church History, 2001).

53. Ryu, *Chogi miguk seonkyosa yeongu 1884-1910 초기 미국선교사연구 1884-1910* [Early American missionaries in Korea 1884-1910], 266.

54. Jo, *Munmyeong kwa yaman 문명과 야만* [Civilization and savagery], 87.

indigenous concepts of Christianity. These efforts are made ultimately for self-understanding. The latest generation of historians is trying to understand the roots of Korean Christianity by looking closely at missionary Christianity in Korea.

For example, Ryu Dae-Young, in his recent studies, traces the evangelical fervor of the Korean Church to the influence of evangelical-revivalist versions of American Protestantism at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁵⁵ The chief agents in this shaping are American Protestant missionaries, but they cannot be understood without taking into account the special circumstances of Korea during that time. Their religious-ethical rigor also characterized the conservative nature of Korean Christianity.

Pak Ung-Kyu studies the eschatological character of the Korean Protestant Church by examining the eschatology of American missionaries in Korea.⁵⁶ Pak examines how the missionary influence during the special circumstances under Japanese rule shaped the mind of Korean Christianity toward millennialism.

Jo Hyeon-Beom applies the implication of his studies of early missionaries in Korea to the current situation of Korean society. Today, Korea is no longer a homogenous society. The economic wealth of Korea attracts many other Asians for work, marriage and settlement. Foreign employees and interracial marriages have become a reality in contemporary Korea. Korea has responded to this situation with evangelical mission activity. Here, he argues that in this situation, Koreans make the same mistakes made by early Westerner missionaries.⁵⁷ Thus, this fresh pursuit for self-understanding by examining the portrayals of missionaries shows a new trend in mission historiography.

Conclusion

The story of the beginning of Christianity in Korea demonstrates a complex story of heroes, villains, battles, and vindications. Their assessment depends on the vantage points from which they are appraised (Christian or nationalistic), their roles (missionary or native Korean), and even on the specific time period during which they came and worked (eighteenth to the twentieth centuries). Perhaps the decision

55. Dae Young Ryu, "The Origin and Characteristics of Evangelical Protestantism in Korea at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *Church History* 77, no. 2 (June 2008): 371-98.

56. Ung Kyu Pak, *Millennialism in the Korean Protestant Church* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

57. Jo, *Munmyeong kwa yaman* 문명과 야만 [Civilization and savagery], 163-66.

to determine the “true” heroes and villains in Korean mission history does not belong to us, but to the omniscient God. Even so, we need to examine critically and honestly the positive and negative depictions of missionary activities that took place in Korea in efforts to discern God’s sovereign role in the history of missions.

In Korea, many second generation descendants of the first generation missionaries remained or returned to Korea to serve as missionaries. Many missionary wives (as well as husbands) became widows, but they chose to remain in Korea to fulfill their remaining tasks. Many wished to be buried in Korean soil as the literal “seeds” of the gospel. Fortunately, in the memory of the Korean people, there are more heroes than villains.