

Mission possible! Toward a new perception of mission

Chung, Mee-Hyun¹

I. Introduction

“Mission” is a concept with a thick history and many meanings. In such circumstances, it is inappropriate to either negate or glorify the conflicts which have arisen among these meanings. While many Europeans now hesitate to use the terms “mission” or “Jesus Christ”, people in the so-called former mission countries do not necessarily share this preference, and live and work positively with such terms on a daily basis. While it is important to take seriously the negative impact of missions, and to reach an understanding of their “dark side” within our evaluation of the past, it is also important to underline, and not diminish, positive aspects.

The majority of the so-called mission fields have remained faithful to the heritage of former mission activities, in spite of the fact that the theology to the north and west of the world map has changed considerably during the 20th and 21st centuries. Hymns, prayers and liturgies that were carried into the world by the first protestant missionaries have become common in countries under missionary influence, yet in their countries of origin they have lost their meaning. Such “old fashioned” hymns and liturgies are currently frowned upon in western countries, evidence of a growing rift between theology and church practice.

What then is the task of Christian mission in the 21st century? Should we limit the intent of them to those theological interests currently acceptable in the west, including gender issues? Or is it sufficient to offer only material assistance? Or should we anticipate an inverse mission from the South and East to the North and West?

Below, I pursue new perceptions on these questions.

II. Deliverance and new bondage: Korea and de-politicizing mission

1. Historical Background

Korea is often called “the land of morning calm”. It rarely, however, enjoys quiet mornings, and is a fiercely contested country with deep social divisions. Japanese colonial rule (1910 – 1945) and the subsequent partition of the country (1945) have had fundamental and unsettling effects on its society.

After the Russian-Japanese war (1904-1905) the USA, Great Britain, Germany and France agreed on a secret treaty with Japan which legitimized Japanese colonial interests in Korea.

¹She is the Head of the Women and Gender Desk in Mission 21, Switzerland and a Minister of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and Vice President for Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians(EATWOT). She received Dr.theol. from Basel University in Switzerland. She has taught courses at both Undergraduate and Graduate level at the Ewha Womans University Seoul, Korea. E-mail : meehyun.chung@mission-21.org or gocmh@hanmail.net / www.credo.or.kr

Subsequently, in 1910, Japan formally annexed Korea, thus beginning the tragedy which has led to the present divided state of the country.

Although a Protestant Christian mission was initiated in 1884 in Solnae – presently in North Korea – by a Korean named S.Y. Suh, there followed a wave of missionary initiatives by Protestants from outside the country, paralleling somewhat the path of the foreign Catholic missions during the 18th century. First came the Presbyterians and the Methodists, soon followed by Baptists, Anglicans and other denominations. The first Presbyterian missionary in the country was Horace Grant Underwood, originally from Great Britain, but a resident of the United States prior to his arrival in Korea on April 5, 1885. He arrived with his Methodist friend and fellow missionary, Henry G. Appenzeller, originally from Switzerland.

There are many reasons why the Presbyterian Church grew more vigorously than the Methodist, or the church of any other denomination, but they fall outside the scope of this article. Generally speaking, however, Presbyterians, who now form the majority of Protestants in Korea, emphasized the growth of churches and church structures rather than the social work of hospitals or schools. As a result of these priorities – priorities established and guided from abroad, effectively “made in the USA” – a puritan and fundamentalist Presbyterianism spread throughout Korean society, carrying the imprint of Calvin’s theology, however changed or perverted, as it had made its way from Switzerland to Scotland, thence to the U.S.A., and from there to Korea.

Throughout Korean history, women have played a variety of roles in the hierarchies of society; but to summarize quickly, since the 13th century, when Confucianism was introduced as the ordering principle, the role of women has been restricted to family and private circles. During the Chosun dynasty, lasting roughly 500 years (1392 – 1910), Confucianism was both state philosophy and dominant social ideology. During this period women were systematically subordinated to men, losing all the public functions which they had practiced before the introduction of Confucianism.²

The arrival of Christianity in Korea led to fundamental changes within the Confucian order. On the positive side, women discovered that according to the Gospels they were equal with men before God. As well, Christianity contributed considerably to their education: schools for women were established and, by reading the Bible, they learned Korean script. Yet Christianity did not lead to the complete emancipation of women from male domination. Rather, elements of Confucian thought, which continues as a national philosophy and serves as a traditional religious ethic, have now been reinforced by a conservative Protestant fundamentalism, and this powerful dynamic is imbedded within the hierarchical, male dominated, practises and constitution of the Presbyterian Church in Korea.

² The only public practice left to women was shamanism. Although shamans lacked social recognition and were among the lowest social class, they could, at least, execute their duties in public. Yet this does not mean that they were emancipated. The shamans lived with the people, solving everyday problems and giving comfort in their own way. They played an important role, mainly among women, but their effects were not all positive. Shamanism, as it is actually practiced, is closely connected to family centrism and material blessing, lacking a developed social ethics, although this was, at its beginning, one of its aims.

The first female missionary, Mary F. Scranton (1832-1909), a North-American Methodist, also came to Korea in the year 1885. While accompanying her son, who worked as a missionary doctor in Korea, she saw the suffering majority of women and decided to dedicate herself to them. Having a special interest in educating women, she opened a girls' school in 1886 which evolved into Ewha Womans University.³ She founded it with the help of the last Korean Empress, Queen Min (1851-1895, brutally assassinated by the Japanese Mob.⁴) Female missionaries were mainly active in educating women and providing medical services. The efforts of female missionaries to raise the standard of living of all Koreans, both male and female, should not be forgotten or minimized. Many of them dedicated their lives to such work, and certain among them, with their children, suffered personally due to difficult living conditions, lack of suitable education etc..⁵ These women sacrificed themselves and the quality of their family life to free Korean women from the restrictions of traditional ways of thinking and acting.

However, there were other missionaries, of both genders, who lived in luxury and cared primarily for their own interests. They behaved like foreign diplomats and ruling officials, claiming the absolute correctness of Christianity and its expression in western culture. They never intended a gospel indigenous to Korea. As a result, Korean Christians under their influence attached little value to their own culture, and quickly oriented "westerly". The majority of poor Koreans at this time shared a deep longing for western-style affluence and style (e.g. clothes, hairstyle, household goods, etc.). Due to the spreading influence and material attractions of western culture, early Christian Koreans turned into representatives of the western bourgeoisie.⁶ By and by, the Korean national identity of these women weakened, as they discovered they were no longer marginalized within traditional Korean society.

The socialist ideal, which had brought Korean Christian women together to work for social equality and Korean independence, struggled and failed during the nineteen thirties against the ruthless repression of a determined Japanese occupation.

While Korean women have played a decisive role in constructing the Church, after its establishment they lost their public functions within it, as also happened within early Christianity. The commitment of these so-called 'Bible women' was more important to the spread of Christianity than the success of the so-called "Nevius method".⁷ Due to the cultural

³ Ewha Womans University is one of the world's most successful mission stories. Compared to other mission schools and universities, it is a well developed and mature institution which daily educates 20,000 female students in a broad range of faculties.

<http://www.ewha.ac.kr/english>

⁴ Queen Min wanted to open Korea to western culture and modernisation, and communicated to that end with the foreign missionaries and diplomats of her time. She named the school Ewha, referring to the flower of the pear, as many blossomed in the area of the first building.

⁵ A building and cemetery were established during the centennial of the Korean Protestant Church to honour the lives and work of foreign missionaries. Cf. <http://www.yanghwajin.net>

⁶ See Soonkyung Park, "The Korean Nation and the Problem of Mission", therein: *Re-unification and Christianity*, (Seoul: Hangil) 1986, 159

⁷ See *ibid.*, 99. This method, called after the American Presbyterian missionary John Livingston Nevius (1829-1893), aimed, from the very beginning, at the active participation of native Christians in evangelizing their compatriots. New proselytes were normally admitted to baptism only if they brought at least their wife but, wherever possible, even more candidates. "He emphasised especially the importance of self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting churches. Bible study, strict discipline of believers, cooperation with other

convention of separating women and men in public, it was impossible for male missionaries to visit Korean women and distribute Bibles, or to tell them the Good News. Thus, it was the efforts of the many nameless women evangelists, reaching out to other women, that proved effective. Or, to grasp the historical dynamic more accurately, it was the women evangelists who built the foundation upon which the Nevius method could succeed.

Yet as soon as the Korean churches became better established, women were again marginalized. As has happened so often in Church history, women did the diaconal work while men took over the leading functions. Women found themselves expelled from leading positions and only men retained executive power. The movement was no longer a liberation for women but, to put it critically, a new version of confinement and bondage. Thus the Korean Church became, and remains, male dominated.

Korea was not colonized by European or American forces, but rather by the non-Christian country of Japan. Therefore, one doesn't find the same resentment against Christian colonial power as one does elsewhere. Trust in the Christian God was not initially related to submissiveness to a great worldly power. Yet, as a result of the widespread success of the American mission, Christian submission to God has become linked with submission to the dominant Christian power, and the fear of and trust in God has become associated with the fear of and trust in the USA. Fundamentalist and conservative Christians in both Korea and America support this tendency, although it is destructive of Korean self-determination and impedes Korean political independence.

Most missionaries during Japanese colonial rule, reflecting fundamentalist leanings, opposed Korean national political awareness and those movements which aimed at the political independence of Korea. They stressed political abstinence and subordination to governmental authorities, in effect encouraging the acceptance of Japanese colonial rule. In this way, the strength of Korean native opposition to occupation was directly weakened through the spread of the Protestant missions.

Politics is certainly not the primary task of church and mission. Yet in emulation of the prophetic tradition, and in a sense of advocacy, mission can – for the sake of worldwide peace – contribute to a deepening awareness of the nature of socio-political questions, and proclaim statements that support social justice.

2. Emancipation and Empowerment: A shadow side of Women in Mission⁸

A serious public debate broke out in Korea in 1999, when Ewha University controversially, and unsuccessfully, attempted to endow a prize named after Helen K. Kim. During the twentieth century Kim (1899-1970) was the most prominent Korean woman both within her own country and on the international stage. She was a true pioneer of the women's

Christian groups and 'general helpfulness where possible in the economic life of the people' ... His principles so shaped the Protestant Church in Korea, that much missionary work as well as local church leadership and organization follow his original design to this day." (From an article about Nevius in: G. Anderson (Ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Mission*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 1998, 490. It should be noted though that while independence was encouraged in matters of spreading the Gospel and financial support, it was suppressed in matters of Church leadership.

⁸ Cf. Meehyun Chung, Mission Impossible!? Zwischen Evangelisation und Emanzipation in Süd Korea, in: *Zeitschrift für Mission*, Jg. 1-2, 2006, 147-153.

movement⁹, the first to earn a doctorate and the first Korean president of what was then Ewha College, now the world's largest women's university. She garnered international attention through her many activities and works, one example being her participation at the International Mission Council in Jerusalem in 1928. According to the report of a German participant, she was immediately recognized for her engagement and demeanour.¹⁰ Due to an early education with American missionaries and further studies in the U.S.A., her English was excellent, allowing her to eloquently share her passion for women's issues. Among the few representatives from Asia she quickly won attention for her commitment to the women's emancipation. In the plenary, speaking as a representative of Korean women, she said:

“The secular system of life in Korea, influenced largely by the teachings of Confucius, fully recognizes the instrumental value of women in the maintenance of home and society. But only when the life and message of Christ were brought to Korea did the women find themselves to have intrinsic values. Christ has shown clearly both in His life and in His teachings that to God one human personality, whether it be man's or woman's, bond or freeman's, is just as valuable as any other. Christian young women, and men as well, of Korea have learned this lesson and are diligently seeking to apply this teaching consistently to their lives....I think Christ would pity us women, if we still are timid and hesitate about bearing witness to Him in all the walks of life, not only in domestic life, but also in the industrial, commercial, political and international life of humanity. I think He would say to us: ‘Women, have I not freed you? Why are you still so timid? Go forth courageously with my message into all the phases of human life. They need you there, and there you have a distinct contribution to make at this stage of human society’.”¹¹

With perfect clarity she pleaded for the emancipation and deliverance of women:

“Christ showed clearly in his life as in his teachings that, before God any human personality is as valuable as any other, whether man or woman, whether servant or free... While Christ never forbid any woman to witness to him, nowadays women are not allowed in many of the churches to preach from the pulpit, not because they lack faith or fervour, but just because they are women.”¹²

Beyond that, she showed courage when she contradicted the Japanese bishop, who had denied racism in Japan:

“Then Miss Kim asked the bishop, whether he did not know that from the eight ministries in the Korean government only one was directed by a Korean subject, and even this but nominally. Whether he did not know, that among the 18,458 members of

⁹ Helen K. Kim was, literally, a pioneer in many ways, but especially in what concerned the new role of women. A nice photo of her, taken in Marseille 1928 on her way to Jerusalem, shows how quickly she adjusted to modernisation. She dressed the modern Korean way and wore short hair which, at the same time, reflected the Western style of the twenties. Other Korean women, and even pious European Christian women, had long hair bound in a chignon. In later years, however she changed her style, wore long hair and dressed in traditional Korean clothes, with the aim of strengthening Korean national identity.

¹⁰ Cf. Martin Schlunk (Ed.), *Von den Höhen des Ölberges*, (Basel: Ev. Missionsverlag), 1929, 62.

¹¹ Reports of the Meeting of the International Missionary Council at Jerusalem, Easter 1928, Bd.I., 372, quoted by Karl-Fritz Daiber, “Begegnung mit einer Unbekannten. Helen Kim auf der Tagung des Internationalen Missionsrates 1928 in Jerusalem, Reports 1” in: *Zeitschrift für Mission*, Jg. 1-2, 2006, 144.

¹² Schlunk, *ibid.*, 78f. (translated into English by Ernst Schmid)

*the police force in Korea only 7,337 were Korean and all of them in low ranks only, and that the situation was similar in the railways. Whether he did not know that, when Korea suffered an earthquake, Japan did not even utter one word of compassion. Wilson's fourteen points were not abided by. To the day there was no justice for suppressed peoples. This speech took a few minutes only but it caused us so much to think about! How deep was the insight into the plight of a nation yearning for freedom and independence, of a Christendom fighting for the highest values!"*¹³

While Helen K. Kim opposed Japanese politics in Jerusalem, her reputation today is tarnished due to public statements she made in Korea during the nineteen thirties and forties; statements allegedly made before young men and women which have been interpreted as wilfully supporting Japanese imperial ambitions and recruiting young soldiers and so called “comfort women” for the cause.¹⁴ During the Asian-Pacific war (1937-1945), Japan repeatedly violated international laws while initiating brutal violence against both men and women. Among these egregious violations was sex slavery: approximately 200,000 Asian women from the Philippines, Taiwan, China, Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia, but mostly from Korea, baited with false promises of work, were transported to military centres where they “served” the Japanese soldiers. This enforced prostitution was systematically organized as a conscious policy by the Japanese government.¹⁵

¹³ Schlunk, *ibid*, 81ff. (translated into English by Ernst Schmid)

¹⁴ She followed the Japanese colonial policy of the time and renamed herself Yamagi Kasran. Some of her articles display a very strong pro-Japanese attitude, supporting participation in the Japanese holy war and imperialism; cf. Yamagi Kasran, We Provide so that Others Might Work, in: Chokwang, Dec., 1943, 56; Yamagi Kasran, Conscripted and the Determination of Korean women, in: Shinsidae, Dec., 1942, 28-29 etc.

¹⁵ At first this subject was never publicly mentioned in Korea, as the loss of virginity among unmarried young women was considered shameful and unmentionable. There is even a very coarse swear word, used against the women, which had originally been coined about women returning from the Mongolian Empire in the 12th century, and then used again against women returning from 17th century China, who, it was considered, had offended the honour of their families and the nation. Although innocent of any guilt, the abused women were forced into silence, unable to express their suffering or to bring the historical truth to public attention. It was only during the nineteen-eighties that women, mainly Christian women, began to openly address this subject. In 1992, the Korean Council for Women Recruited by Japan for Military Sex Slavery – a non-denominational, interreligious and ecumenical initiative – was established. It now unites 37 women’s groups (www.womenandwar.net). During the following year, at the Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the problem of Japan’s military sex slavery was brought to world attention for the first time. And every Wednesday since 1992 there has been a peaceful demonstration in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul, South Korea’s capital, expressing the Council’s demands that the Japanese government admit and apologize for its crime of military sex slavery; that the full dimension of military sex slavery be made public; that the victims be recognized through commemorative plaques; that the victims and their families be paid indemnity; that the historical reality of military sex-slavery be included in school books to inform the younger generations; and that the criminals responsible be held to account and punished. In 2005, in connection with the 60th anniversary of the end of the war, a major campaign was initiated in Korea appealing to the Japanese government to address this historical wrong. The United Nations and the International Labour Organization were urged to summon the Japanese government and ask that it officially apologize and offer compensation to the victims. The UN and ILO were asked not to accept Japan as a member of the UN Security Council as long as it refused to confront its past. To

Kim's reputation is in dispute because her stand against the Japanese colonial power was not clear. In fact, her stand was clearly ambivalent. Some charge her with collaboration, the main evidence being her support for Japanese military policy. It can be assumed, however, that she was under immense pressure from the Japanese government and that her actions had, as their main aim, the protection of Ewha College. Perhaps Kim believed that her influence in getting women into positions of power within Korean society justified her political position regarding Japanese occupation. Modernisation and enlightenment were more important to her than nationalism, and her priority was the education of elite women. The question whether she sufficiently considered the importance of class differences in her feminist work is germane. In her position as a leading member of various bodies she pleaded for the integration of Korean society within Japanese society, and showed a clear pro-Japan tendency in many of her statements.¹⁶ After being elected president of Ewha College in 1939, a time of increasing brutality as the Japanese military attempted to recruit soldiers, labourers, and sex slaves to further war ends, her mindset became yet more fixed.¹⁷

After the national deliverance from Japanese occupation in 1945, Helen K. Kim became strongly anti-communist, this time in order to win the support of the American provisional government to help her change Ewha College into Ewha University. Kim's relations with America, however, at least as represented by its churches, had always been excellent. This was especially true of the Methodist Church, which had been of direct personal assistance to her since its early years of mission, and which had founded Ewha – an institution central to Kim's life which did, indeed, become a centre of feminism.

The privileged and influential Korean elite under anti-communist American rule, post 1945, was the same, more or less, as the privileged elite under Japanese rule¹⁸. This partially reflected educational opportunities abroad, mainly in the U.S.. This social elite, under both regimes, did not oppose dictatorial rule, but rather benefitted from it. Only at the end of a long process of democratization was the reality of this social history publicly acknowledged in South Korea. Only since the achievement of a truly civil, non military, government during the late 1980s has such a critique been allowed to publicly flourish.

this day the Japanese government has not officially apologized, nor has it recompensed the victims. Hush-money has been offered to the "Asian Women's Fund", but the majority of the victims of forced military prostitution did not agree to such an inappropriate solution and rejected it.

¹⁶ In her autobiography she recognized her pro-Japanese actions during this period, even though they may have been forced upon her. Suffering from sore eyes, she seems to have viewed this as punishment. Cf. Helen K. Kim, *The Small Life in the Light*, (Seoul: Ewha University Press), 1999, 163f.;174f.

¹⁷ Her name is included in *The Dictionary of Collaborators*, compiled by a group of scholars (Research on Collaborationist Activists), released in November 2009. Cf. *The Dictionary of Collaborators*, (Seoul: Institute for Research in Collaborationist Activists), 2009.

¹⁸ This phenomena happened in many other countries, including Germany and South Africa. Those who participated in oppositional movements, and frequently their children, missed out on better educational opportunities. The activities were an impediment to advancing within society. Promotion between social classes is difficult in any society, and although Truth Committees have been established in many countries to move towards greater openness and justice, it is extremely difficult to offset the lasting effect of an established hegemonic elite, who seek to benefit from the new situation. Cf. Karl Rössel, "Die Fahne hoch...!" Die faschistische "Internationale" von Buenos Aires bis Shanghai, in; *Iz3w*, Mai/Juni 2009, 21.

This parallels, more or less, the evolution of feminist discourse, as the average woman in the early feminist movement in Korea was located in the upper middle class. The aims of these women were freedom from the limitations of traditional thought and the modernisation of society. The problems of the common people, which can only be addressed through genuine grassroots justice in a community oriented society, were neglected. To advance an elite minority, the powerless majority suffered. This was the result of one dimensional thinking and a top-down approach towards social change.

To sum up, it must be stressed that Western missionary activities did indeed help with the emancipation of Korean women and the modernization of the country in a Western direction, yet this was an incomplete initiative, without the full recognition and empowerment of women and other marginalized groups.

III. Perceiving Mission differently¹⁹

1. Gender and Mission

Traditional mission work is an example of gender discrimination and segregation. While ‘inner’ mission – diaconal works and nursing – were considered mainly female responsibilities during the 19th and 20th centuries, ‘outer’ mission and *oikumene* were considered male responsibilities. Everything related to ‘inner’ was considered passive, female and mundane, in stark contrast to everything related to “outer”, considered active, male, and something special. As a matter of fact, in established Christian tradition, mission was a task for men while lesser yet important tasks were declared women’s duties. Women’s work was not considered, in itself, independent. A quote from inspector J.F. Josenhans of Basler Mission in the 19th century confirms this, “Women are but an impediment to mission.”²⁰

It was considered self-evident that mission was a male responsibility, while necessary and related “minor” labours were women’s responsibilities.²¹ Women were not treated as self-reliant personalities, nor officially involved in decision-making, although at the same time it was taken for granted that they would assume great responsibility and perform demanding jobs, for example, running girls’ schools and orphanages.

Nevertheless, since the beginning of the 20th century, single western women have been sent out to the so-called mission fields with distinct autonomous responsibilities. They no longer only travelled as wedded companions (“mission brides”²²) and they attained positions they would not have achieved in western society at that time. However, traditional missionary work supported obedient and diligent women rather than a feminist movement. A quote from the director of Basler Mission, Karl Hartenstein, emphasized this aspect, “In any case the

¹⁹ Cf. Meehyun Chung, Vertrauen auf das Evangelium unter den Bedingungen des Neukolonialismus, in: Mission Erfüllt? Edinburgh 1910-100 Jahre Weltmission, (Hamburg: Missionshilfe Verlag), 2009, 103-110.

²⁰ Waltraud Ch. Haas, Erlitten und erstritten. Der Befreiungsweg von Frauen in der Basler Mission 1816 – 1966, (Basel: Basilea) 1994, 31.

²¹ Cf. Christine Keim, Mission und Menschenbild-eine weibliche Perspektive, in: Zeitschrift für Mission, Jg. 1-2, 2006, 51ff.

²² Cf. Dagmar Konrad, Missionsbräute. Pietistinnen des 19. Jahrhunderts in der Basler Mission, (Berlin: Waxmann), 2001.

woman mission work may not be connected with the emancipation movement of the woman. The independence and development of the gifts of the woman must be established in the welfare and social work, but not in the woman movement, which has an anti religious root.”²³

Western patriarchy travelled with the missions and was allowed to entwine with traditional Confucian patriarchy, wherein both were strengthened.²⁴ Thus, in the so-called mission areas, two patriarchal traditions exist, mutually self-reinforcing. While some western women, working within the mission field, gained an agency still denied them in their own countries, this was not the case for women of colour. The ethnocentricity of western Christian mission created an environment where white mission woman, as representatives of a superior Christian culture, were symbols of emancipation, while women of colour, along with their respective cultures, were devalued and demeaned.

Because emancipation through mission was most often effective within the middle class or the elite, the pressing problems of the common people were neglected. Thus, the small elitist groups of native women actively supported by women missionaries were usually incapable of practising solidarity with the yet more marginalized.²⁵

The discussion of gender in mission, however, should not be limited to a discussion of sexual justice; a broader, more formative discussion is required, correlating gender to all aspects of social, economic, cultural and political life. Conceptual categories such as ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, age, religion etc., along with gender, have inclusive as well as exclusive functions, and effective analysis of any of them can only be undertaken within a thorough and encompassing critique of power structures.

The desired approach to gender and feminism is context based and inclusive of colour, not simply a white ideology exported to the South and East. To strengthen such an awareness is to strengthen self-esteem, critical thinking and self-determination. In order to achieve it, we need to read and interpret the bible with new eyes and bodies.

2. Redressing the world: the economic system and mission

In about 1882 the USA, Germany, Russia and France urged Korea to open its borders to unlimited trade. During the period of this enforced opening, missionaries – both male and female - began entering the country. It was, in the early years, difficult for Koreans to differentiate between mission, cannon and warships. But in spite of popular reservations about the then constellation of world politics, Christianity spread quickly.

Many missionaries served with devotion in very humble circumstances, but it is necessary to recognize and critically evaluate the prestige and profit of the majority of missionaries who lived in luxurious circumstances, perhaps the most famous being H.G. Underwood, the so-called “missionary millionaire”.²⁶ Many among them possessed and managed mines, and the

²³ Christine Keim, *Frauenmission und Frauenemanzipation: eine Diskussion in der Basler Mission im Kontext der frühen ökumenischen Bewegung (1901-1928)*, (Münster: Lit), 2005, 97.

²⁴ Patriarchy doesn't merely mean biological male dominance, but includes, more generally, the ideology of rule and attitudes of dominance.

²⁵ One clear example being the case of Helen K. Kim, mentioned above.

²⁶ See Dukju Rhie, *Die Spuren der Frauen in der 100 jährigen koreanischen Kirchengeschichte*, (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society), 1985, 27.

God of Western Christianity was strongly associated with material blessings. For this reason it was difficult to recognize structural social sin; affluence was glorified and poverty cursed. The yearning for Western wealth, as represented by these missionaries, proved strong, and native cultural values waned.

In the 21st century, it is mission's responsibility to play a meaningful role in the development of an alternative globalization. Missions have, in the past, played an active part in creating the presently unjust worldwide economic system, and their reorientation is a necessary, if only partial, recompense for what was destroyed during colonial rule. The regeneration of the original wealth with which God blessed the global South is paramount. Poverty caused by the capitalist system must be reduced. In view of the global grip of neo-liberalism, where only a few profit while the majority suffer one crisis after another, mission could be part of the healing process. This doesn't just mean helping the materially poor, but also addressing the obsessive fear of a loss of hegemonic power among those who are better off, freeing them from the collective, structural sin in which they are involved, consciously or not. When we gather at the communion table to share bread and wine in memory of the death of Jesus, who suffered and died within an imperial system, we should remind ourselves of our ecumenical responsibility to work towards economic justice.²⁷

A healthy mission, then, would promote a world wide ecumenical Christian community as an instrument of advocacy for the voiceless, the marginalised and the dispossessed, and would commit to sustainable development, rather than act primarily as an agency of charity. Mission would offer a new framework in which to promote the "caring" economy, quite distinct from "Cowboy" capitalism.

3. Unity through a reconciliation of pluralities

The partitioning of the mission field, executed with blind enthusiasm and zeal, resulted in a splintered Korean Church rampant with competing denominations. Denominationalism, tribalism, family centrism and salvation egoism are all factors that separate people from one another. Thus, the Korean church has become a paradigmatic example of the fragmentation of Protestantism. One of the most important challenges faced by a holistic mission in Korea, as elsewhere in the world, is the spreading of Christian ethics and community within a vibrant ethos of the common good.

During the reign of Constantine, and increasingly after, Christianity became a powerful and dominant religion, losing the prophetic voice it had before it was institutionalized. As a ruling ideology, Christianity took on a triumphant aspect, achieving hegemonic status – as the term was coined by Antonio Gramsci – as it spread throughout the world. Christianity promoted and consolidated dualistic thinking, and maintained itself as the final measure of goodness. Mission, within this ideology, is understood as the tool that captures souls. From the beginning of its history in the 16th Century, institutionalised mission has been used to distract European society from recognizing and addressing major problems within its borders by diverting attention to the problems beyond.

²⁷ Cf. Andrea Bieler, Luise Schottroff, *Das Abendmahl, Essen um zu leben*, (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus), 2007, Peter Winzeler, *Zwinglis sozialökonomische Gerechtigkeitslehre-heute wiedergelesen*, in: *Reformiertes Erbe. Festschrift für Gottfried W. Locher zu seinem 80. Geburtstag*, Bd. 1, hrsg. von Heiko A. Oberman, Ernst Saxer, Alfred Schindler und Heinzpeter Stucki, (Zürich: TVZ), 1992, 430f.

Mission didn't only bring the message of liberation, but also the mechanics of fear. The blind claims for Christian 'absolute truth' have strengthened a dualistic mode of thinking, allowing unrestrained dualistic imaginings of either blessing and curse, friend or enemy. Whoever lives in fear of hell is not easily healed from feelings of guilt or fears of punishment. This religious intimidation, which hinders the integration of both individual and society, must be critically evaluated: it encourages blind acceptance of unjust social systems, and prepares its believers to make villains of others both within and outside the Church. Thus, it becomes extremely difficult to withstand the lies and misrepresentations of destructive and deadly powers. It has become more important than ever to overcome a culture of death and dissociation, and to promote a culture of reconciliation, on the side of life. Our historical memory of the negative aspects of mission should be investigated and confessed, in order to avoid idealizing one extreme within a dualistic pattern of thought, but similarly, we must investigate the transformative energy that is clear within the heritage of Christian mission.²⁸

By overcoming an obsession with proselytizing to capture souls, by seeking to create unity within an active pluralism, mission can discover a new integrity within a new vision. In saying this, I don't simply mean to suggest inter-religious cooperation, but inter-Christian cooperation as well. Justice, peace and a profound recognition of the wholeness of creation is the necessary goal, creating tolerance towards diverse beliefs among diverse peoples from different lands and cultures. While such tolerance can be misinterpreted as ignorance or indifference, it is neither, having nothing to do with passive sufferance: it is, rather, a positive and active step towards creating an enhanced awareness of, and empathy towards, others.

Jesus expressed his emotions by weeping, as it is written in John 11:35 and Lk 19:41. It is this fullness of compassion, captured in tears, which led Jesus to the cross, wherein we may locate the dwelling of God. When God's dwelling is complete among us, all the tears will be wiped away (see Rev. 21:4; 7:17, Is.25:8a) and our joy will be complete (Gaudium Plenum). This message allows us to listen to one another with compassion, creating larger spaces in which others may find the freedom to speak, so that we will no longer be repelled by difference, and fear of the other no longer delay peaceful coexistence.

IV. Conclusions

The call to mission should be understood according to the gospel of John (John 20: 10 – 18), where the risen Jesus sends Mary to proclaim the Good News. The Latin word mission means 'to be sent'. More than that, however, the call to mission involves "testifying to the Good News", and certainly not spreading mechanisms of fear and bondage. It means proclaiming the Good News through healing actions, which includes efforts to reduce the suffering and trauma of those poor in material goods, to free those constrained by hostile power structures, and to cure those obsessed with the fear of not being rich and strong at all costs.

This Easter message and the call to mission not only represent the turning point "from death to life", "from anxiety to boldness" and "from sadness to joy", they also represent the empowerment of the voices of the marginalized who, be it due to gender or any other reason, are ignored and shunned. Jesus' call to mission enabled a female, a woman named Mary with no special institutional power, to witness the Easter happening. Through this calling, she was

²⁸ To idealize is to hinder our discovery of historical truth, and the work to avoid the idealization of Christianity is, in itself, salutary and necessary.

liberated from silence and hidden oppression. We ourselves can be witnesses anywhere. We can proclaim the Good News and spread joy for life.

Mission can play a positive, integrating role in public life, helping people live together harmoniously during a period of cultural and religious pluralism. While, in the recent past, the quantitative growth of Christianity was primary, a more profound definition of mission, aware of a new role during this neo-colonialist period, can lead to a more mature Christianity. To me, personally, this maturity would reflect, and be rooted within, mutual learning aimed at the sharing of benevolence and goodness among the peoples of all continents. It is important to deeply grasp the relations of mutuality and interdependence. Mission must no longer mean expansion and conquest, rather its task must be Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. It is an empowerment among people and between creatures with the aim of preserving life together.

In our century, mission can serve to free us from a power-obsessed, rapacious ideology, and release the affluent from their fear of losing hegemonic supremacy, while strengthening the benefits of integrative thought and holistic action. In the case of the Korean peninsula, reunification and peace are the necessary priorities of an urgent mission.

To acknowledge former mistakes does not reflect a loss of trust in the Gospel. Rather, we need to discover, or invent, a variety of postcolonial approaches; new methods of thinking which multiply, and do not reduce, encounters between diverse subjects, each with agency. This implies that all cultural, philosophic and religious ideas must be weighed and interpreted from within its own cognitive perspective. To change our value system – to create new attitudes towards each other, and to the other creatures with whom we share the earth, and to the earth itself – is demanding. In applying post-colonial insight we can – in the East as in the West, in the South as in the North – develop a new Christendom. In this sense, mission is both possible and necessary!

“Awake, O north wind; and come thou south; blow up my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his precious fruits.” (Song of Songs 4,16)

<Abstract>

What is the task of Christian mission in the 21st century? Should we limit the intent of them to those theological interests currently acceptable in the west, including gender issues? Or is it sufficient to offer only material assistance? Or should we anticipate an inverse mission from the South and East to the North and West?

Mission can play a positive, integrating role in public life, helping people live together harmoniously during a period of cultural and religious pluralism. While, in the recent past, the quantitative growth of Christianity was primary, a more profound definition of mission, aware of a new role during this neo-colonialist period, can lead to a more mature Christianity. It is important to deeply grasp the relations of mutuality and interdependence. Mission must no longer mean expansion and conquest. Rather its task must be Justice, Peace and the Integrity

of Creation. It is an empowerment among people and between creatures with the aim of preserving life together.

In our century, mission can serve to free us from a power-obsessed, rapacious ideology, and release the affluent from their fear of losing hegemonic supremacy, while strengthening the benefits of integrative thought and holistic action. In the case of the Korean peninsula, reunification and peace are the necessary priorities of an urgent mission.

we need to discover, or invent, a variety of postcolonial approaches; new methods of thinking which multiply, and do not reduce, encounters between diverse subjects, each with agency. This implies that all cultural, philosophic and religious ideas must be weighed and interpreted from within its own cognitive perspective. To change our value system – to create new attitudes towards each other, and to the other creatures with whom we share the earth, and to the earth itself – is demanding. In applying post-colonial insight we can – in the East as in the West, in the South as in the North – develop a new Christendom. In this sense, mission is both possible and necessary.

Key Words

Mission, Korea mission, Helen K. Kim, feminist movement, Confucian patriarchy, ecumenical Christian community, pluralism, reunification and peace of Korean peninsula.