

The Korean Church in China
by
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A MINORITY THAT IS ANOTHER COUNTRY
THE KOREAN CHURCH IN CHINA

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Introduction

The Korean Christian Church is one of the strongest minority Christian churches in China. Surprised? Most people do not even know that Koreans are living in China! And possibly they have forgotten that no country in Asia has a larger percentage of professing Protestant Christians than does Korea. From the fourth century of the Christian era, and maybe even earlier, that part of China known historically as Manchuria has been home for many Koreans. The Christian movement in Korea started among these migrants in China. After they helped the faith to take root in Korea, it was then taken back to China by many Korean refugees fleeing from poverty and Japanese brutality in their homeland.

Today most of China's Koreans live in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in Jilin Province. Established in 1952 as an autonomous province, Yanbian borders on the former Soviet Union and faces south across the Tumen and Yalu Rivers toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The total population of nearly three million people in this province consists of about 41% Korean Chinese and 59% Han Chinese. An additional one million Koreans are scattered in Heilongjiang and Liaoning Provinces, and in large Chinese cities. Although no accurate figures are given

for the size of the Protestant church among these Koreans, it has a vitality and strength not dissimilar ^{to} from that found among its brothers and sisters in South Korea.

How did the historic interaction among China, Korea, and Japan in this politically volatile area of China lead to the vital Protestant Korean Church found there today? Manchuria in the past was a vast wilderness, and people inhabited it at their own risk. During the 17th and 18th centuries, a small number of Koreans lived there. They were never welcomed by the native Manchu and Han peoples, who viewed them as unwelcome intruders into their sacred territory. Nor was the then ^{add Yi" in brackets} (Chosen) Dynasty in Korea happy that their people needed to go outside its jurisdiction to get the economic relief it should have provided. Particularly was this true following a devastating famine in northern Korea in 1869. By 1881 the Qing Dynasty in China was more amenable to outsiders, either Koreans from Korea or Han Chinese from Shandong Province, settling in Manchuria. It saw them as a counterweight to Russia, who had gained significant territory near the China-Korea border by its "unequal" treaty with China in 1860. Koreans in Manchuria were also a buffer to Japan, always interested in the natural resources--rice, wheat, timber, coal and iron-- that Manchuria could give her.

The first Protestant penetration into Korea was by ^{R.} (J.J. Thomas, a missionary with the London Missionary Society, who acted as an agent for the National Bible Society of Scotland in 1865 and distributed Chinese Scripture portions there for two

months. Later he was a passenger on the unfortunate American ship, General Sherman, when it unwisely tried to force its way up a Korean river in 1866. He and all the crew was lost when the ship was burned by Korean authorities. Subsequently, in 1867 another American ship was dispatched to Korea to learn more details of the loss of the Sherman. Hunter Corbett, a veteran American Presbyterian missionary was aboard the ^{Wachusett}~~Sherman~~ to serve as an interpreter. These early ill-fated attempts to force Korea, the "hermit nation," to open its sealed doors were dismal failures, and the land remained closed to outside influences, including the Christian faith.

But if it were closed to forced entry from outside nations, doors were opening from the China side to discreet Christian testimony. Alexander Williamson, the full-time agent of the National Bible Society of Scotland, came to the Manchurian border of Korea in 1865 and sold Christian books to Koreans there. Protestant missionaries first came to Manchuria in the late 1860s. One of these, John Ross, a missionary in Newchuang, with the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, came in 1873 to the village called "Korean Gate." This long, straggling village, the most easterly village in Manchuria towards Korea, got its name because it was the only place where Korean and Chinese merchants could come for exchange of the merchandise of their two countries.

Ross' first visit was not that fruitful. Polite Korean visitors to the inn where he was staying probed for much

information about his country, but offered little in exchange, concluding that he was a spy. The next year he was more successful. He secured a Korean teacher, a merchant whose livelihood had been destroyed when he lost all of his merchandise in a boat accident when crossing the Yalu river between Korea and the China side. With the assistance of this man, who did not want his activities known by any of his friends in Korea because of the government's prohibition on any relationships with foreigners, and the help of a missionary colleague, John MacIntyre, Ross translated the Gospel of Luke into Korean. Soon this Korean helper became a Christian, and also another Korean whom Ross hired to set the type for the completed Gospel.

When Luke was published, Ross, his missionary colleagues, and new Korean Christians took several visits to Korean villages in the eastern and northeastern valleys of Manchuria. They found a ready response to the Christian message, and by the early 1880s several hundred converts, largely farmers, had been baptized. What was good news to these new Korean Christians was bad news to the Chinese living in the valleys close to the Korean villages. They feared that these outsiders, with the help of the foreigners from Scotland, were working against their best interests and began to persecute them. Koreans in China, even with the new "welcome" policy that the Qing Dynasty enacted toward them in 1881, were discriminated against. They lived in separate, closely-meshed communities, had strange customs, did not assimilate well to Chinese culture, and spoke a different

language. They also were an economic threat because they worked harder than the Chinese. Added to all this, they now seemed to have a religious alliance with some distant barbarians! This latter perception ^{was} ^{not} natural. The missionaries, without giving too much thought to the matter, had worked exclusively with the Korean refugees and had had no contact with the Chinese landlords.

The work which Ross and his partners had commenced in China, bore fruit in Korea. Even before the Gospel of Luke had been published, a copy of the translation showed up in the Korean capital, was revised by Koreans whose names are unknown, and distributed to those interested. One of the Korean refugees who had been converted in Mukden returned to Korea; and in a short time made his faith known so effectively that a small congregation of believers began to meet together. They requested that Ross come to Seoul and baptize them, but it seemed unwise to him for a European to enter a closed land and risk the gains that God had brought by these very quiet, low-profile methods. The number of believers seeking baptism rose quickly to nearly one hundred. By 1884 and 1885, missionaries, primarily American Presbyterians, were entering the country as a result of Korea opening ^{two? said Korea - let her son} four of its ports to relationships with foreign countries. They were able to reap the harvest that Ross and his Scottish colleagues had helped to produce over these ten years since he had first gone to the "Korean Gate" in 1873.¹

This early enthusiastic response to the Gospel by Koreans in

difficult straits led Ross to observe prophetically that "nor is it possible here to give our reasons for believing that Korea will be one of the first eastern nations to become a Christian nation."² Korean Christians in Manchuria had helped in the initial evangelization of Korea. Now it was time for the new and growing Korean church in Korea to develop a missionary vision that would take the Gospel to its refugee compatriots in Manchuria.

Missionary Outreach of The Korean Churches to Koreans in China

Protestant mission work began in Korea in 1884 when Dr. H.N. Allen gave medical treatment to Prince Min who had been wounded in a ^{plot} riot in the capital city of Seoul. Within a short time a number of mission agencies entered the country: American Presbyterians and Methodist Episcopal from the north and south, Australian and Canadian Presbyterians, and the Society for Propagating the Gospel. Stimulated by the extensive use of weekly and annual Bible classes and conferences, churches in Korea developed quickly into indigenous congregations. Unlike the situation in China, they and their founding mission agencies were able to cooperate and plan united strategies.

This success was due in some measure to the fact that the church in Korea from the beginning had a better image among its own people than did the church in China. In China, Christians were viewed as "foreign," representatives of Western powers who had imposed "unequal treaties" on their country. Chinese saw the West, at least its religion, as the "enemy," even as they were

glad to turn to other Western imports--democracy, evolution, socialism--as alternatives. These alternatives were never options in Korea, for they were advocated by Japan, the enemy who represented the imperialist threat. Therefore, the country resisted any effort by Japan to impose "modern" Western civilization and found that the Christian faith was the best ideology to oppose the Japanese threat. In fact, the Christian church was the catalyst to create an ardent anti-Japanese nationalism.³

* The first Protestant ^{missionaries} missionaries came to Korea in 1884, ^{two in 1885} By 1891 Samuel Moffett and J.S. Gale of the Presbyterian church made a trip of 700 miles on foot, 400 miles in a cart, and 300 by horseback that took them from Seoul to Mukden, along the border between Manchuria and Korea, and back to Seoul. Although the scenery was equally beautiful in both countries, Gale saw a marked contrast in the social situation and mental attitudes. To go from Korea to China was to "exchange half-famished Korea for great, porky, greasy, oily China!" A more-telling difference was that Korea was "idle or asleep; China, strange to say, awake and busy." Local Chinese were not so enthusiastic, confessing that this part of their country was "the foul quarter of the empire," with its oft violent windstorms and bitterly cold winters.⁴

* This was not an isolated trip by Moffett and ^{Gale} Gates. They and other missionaries in Korea continued contact with the ^{Scottish} Scotch Presbyterian mission and made ad-hoc arrangements to nurture Korean Christians in Manchuria. In 1902 the Korea mission of the

American Presbyterian church in North Pyongan, just across the Yalu from Manchuria, was given care of the Christians nearest to them. This responsibility was passed around between the Kangkai station, further to the north, and the Syenchyun station in the south of the province. Korean pastors, missionaries, and colporteurs travelled into Manchuria to carry out this ministry of follow-up to Christians and outreach to the unconverted.

Evangelism in Manchuria was not easy. The Koreans were scattered widely--not merely along the more reachable border areas, but 150-200 miles into the interior, even up to China's border with Russia and to the Lake Baykal area in Siberia. The scenario was constantly changing.

Those on the border are even moving again. Church letters of these people come to us from the extreme (?) south and east and west of Chosen. Little churches are springing up every where. Last year where there were no known settlements today there are communities and little churches. Some of these have grown to the size of two hundred members. A few places where churches were last year have disappeared. From one place where twenty-two died of some infection ten families moved away. . . . the people's ideas, desires and habits are beginning to differ. They are starting their own schools, their own societies and developing independent thought and activities.⁵

By 1907 the Presbyterian vision produced a Korean Board of Foreign Missions, specifically organized to do missionary work in China, partially among Chinese near Presbyterian missionaries working in the province of Shantung, but more specifically among Koreans in China. This was a natural arrangement--the Koreans knew many ideographs of the Chinese written language, they were physically close to China, and a strong historic relationship existed between the two countries. They also had a high sense of

missionary obligation, even though the Chinese and Koreans did not always get along well. A missionary heard one Korean pray about this in a church service:

O Lord, we are a despised people, the weakest nation on the earth. But thou art a God who chooseth the despised things. Wilt thou use this nation to show forth thy glory in Asia!⁶

While the American Presbyterians were beginning this thrust into the western area of Manchuria about Mukden, the Canadian Presbyterians established a foothold in east Kando beyond the Tuman River. Called Jiandao by the Chinese, this area was the Mecca of the Korean emigrant. Covered more with low-lying foothills, in contrast with the more rugged mountains of Korea, this was now the home of hundreds of thousands of Koreans. The mission as early as 1898 had supported the work of a Korean pastor, also an ardent nationalist leader, who had worked both in Kando and with Korean settlers in Vladivostok. By 1914 the Canadian Presbyterians had opened a station in Yong Jung (Lung Tsing in Chinese), which was to be an important center for their work. This city was already an outstation for the Irish Presbyterian mission, 300 miles away to the north, and eventually it transferred its work there to the Canadian Presbyterians.

American Methodists eventually established their work in Hsinking, which was to be the capital of Manchukuo, the puppet state established by Japan in the 1930s. In addition to this work, where Koreans outnumbered the Chinese, the Methodists worked in two other districts in close cooperation with the Presbyterians. These several foreign mission boards sent some of

their missionary personnel to serve in Korea, but the burden of this fast-growing work was with the Koreans. Although some of the ministries overlapped with each other, the mission agencies developed a fine sense of cooperation which minimized any competitive spirit.

The situation for Korean immigrants in China became more critical in 1910 when Japan annexed Korea. This accelerated greatly the rate of migration, sparked by the economic distress that came when Japan colonized regions of Korea with its own citizens. In Manchuria there were many uncultivated, highly-productive farming areas, and poverty-stricken Korean farmers hurried there to try to put their lives back in order. Severe drought in Korea in the winters of 1916, 1917, and 1918 only added to the flood of immigrants.

The political problem was even more serious than the economic one. Who were the Koreans in China--Japanese citizens, Chinese citizens, illegal aliens? The answer depended on when the question was asked! Since 1905 when Japan had defeated Russia, Japan had had a protectorate over Korea. This began a policy of "more Japanese into Korea and more Koreans into Manchuria." The Chinese did not mind, as long as they did not have a need to send their own citizens into Manchuria to escape local floods or famine. They did not like it when the Koreans continued to live as Koreans, refusing to assimilate to Chinese culture. They far preferred them to become loyal Chinese citizens, learn the Chinese language, dress as Chinese, and send their children to

Chinese schools.

When Japan annexed Korea in 1910, it proclaimed that all Koreans living in China were now Japanese subjects. This gave them the pretext to intervene in any "independent Korea" activities carried on by Koreans in China. China countered this growing Japanese influence in Manchuria by encouraging all the Koreans in its country to become naturalized Chinese citizens. Many did this, seeing it as their best protection against the Japanese. Others resisted, not wishing to give up so easily their Korean cultural and political identity. The situation was particularly critical for Koreans who were descendents from the population living there before Japan annexed Korea. They were Chinese by birth, but they had no papers to prove that they were Chinese or Japanese.

The situation worsened with Japan's Twenty-One Demands on China in 1915. In the subsequent "Treaty Respecting South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia," signed in 1915 with China, Japan insisted that this treaty apply to Koreans in Manchuria. Specifically, they wished for Japanese subjects to "have liberty to enter, travel and reside in South Manchuria and to carry on business of various kinds--commercial, industrial and otherwise."

The political crisis reached its climax March 1, 1919 with the beginning of the Korean Independence Movement which agitated to recover the country's independence from Japan. As many as 15% of Korea's Christians were leaders in this movement which brought

them and the churches into direct confrontation with the Japanese government. Earlier, in 1912, some Christians were also implicated in the Korean Conspiracy Case, in which there was an alleged plot to assassinate Count Terauchi, the Japanese Governor-General of Korea.

High-ranking Japanese officials accused the missionaries of pushing their church members into this movement. Midori Komatsu, formerly Director of Foreign Affairs, charged that:

While engaged in Christian propaganda work, the American missionaries run schools, and diffuse foreign political and social ideas among the half-civilized people. The principle of liberty is recklessly advocated among them, this having an evil influence upon their undeveloped minds, which are consequently tainted with excessively radical ideas.⁸

While the missionaries denied this wild accusation, there was no denying that many church leaders and members were prepared to combine their Christian faith with strong political convictions.

For Christians to desire and agitate for political liberation was both good news and bad news for the Protestant churches of Korea. They were brought into sudden prominence as standing up for what was undoubtedly the heart-cry of all Koreans. In the political demonstrations following the call for independence, many people were injured, and individual Christians and mission hospitals were admired for the compassionate care they showed to both sides in the conflict. Prejudice to the Gospel was broken down, as people for the first time had a new understanding of the "beauty of the Gospel."

The bad news was a wave of severe persecution on Christians and churches in Korea. This reached even into Manchuria as 15,000

Japanese police and soldiers tried to ferret out the many church leaders, evangelists, and leaders who had fled there to continue their anti-government agitation. In some cases in north Korea, entire congregations made their pilgrimage into Manchuria. The devastation brought by Japanese forces would have discouraged a less hardy people:

During a period extending from a fortnight to a month, death by rifle, sword and club stalked through the land, the smoke of hundreds of grain stacks and buildings ascended to heaven and terror through frightfulness reigned supreme. Four church buildings, twice as many Christian Schools and many Christian houses were burned. About sixty Christians perished, among them being two evangelists and three church leaders. On account of the suspicions entertained toward the Church and the Christians, and the word that had just gone around that 'all the Christians will have to be killed before the Independence Movement stops,' in many places Church services have ceased.

We found one village that had lost its church and school buildings, meeting with good cheer in three different houses and reporting that already they had had their faith strengthened and had been brought nearer to God because of the tribulations through which they had passed.'

In the general confusion and chaos of this period, Chinese bandits escalated their usual pillages, burning villages, robbing stores and homes, killing, and taking hostages to be held for ransom. Many churches were forced to close, but in most instances this only meant that their members had moved farther into the interior. Very soon these zealous Christians had reconstituted their congregations and schools and were busily engaged once again in outreach to their non-Christian compatriots.

Missiological Principles of Korean Protestant Christianity in
China

Korean Protestant Christianity in China was similar in most ways to the Christian faith found in Korea. A notable feature of the development of Christian work in Manchuria was the relatively diminished role of the foreign missionary. Initial thrusts across the Tumen or Yalu Rivers were spearheaded by foreign missionaries. But, as soon as any foothold was gained, the widespread use of Bible classes quickly surfaced a corps of local lay leaders, often assisted by Bible society colporteurs and Korean missionaries sent from growing churches in Korea. They took over the hands-on direction of the work. Within ten years of beginning their Manchurian ministry, the Canadian Presbyterians could report that they had 62 churches and several thousand converts. These new Christians built their own church buildings and supported their own schools.

In relating how a new Presbytery had been started in Manchuria, the 1917 Annual Report of the U.S. Presbyterians noted that nearly all of the church groups were under the care of Korean pastors, that most of their people had never seen a foreign missionary, and that, at best, the foreign missionary visited them only once or twice a year. The Korean General Assembly was organized between 1915 and 1920, and by 1932 three Presbyteries had been developed to oversee Presbyterian work in Manchuria. The church was growing rapidly, sometimes doubling in a period of five years, and leadership training was a priority.

Most of the lay leaders were developed through the large number of Bible classes that were held each year. The translation

of the entire Korean Bible was completed by 1911, and it became the fuel for great growth. The American Presbyterians, for example, reported that from 1920-29, "there was an average of twenty four Bible classes each year with an average attendance of nine hundred and sixty men and six hundred and ten women." These ran usually for one month of intensive study. In addition, there was an Annual Men's Bible Class for the district of Sinpin, one of the major Presbyterian centers. In 1931, three hundred and forty men were in attendance.

In addition to this concentration on lay training, each mission group also had one or more Bible Institutes which trained both men and women more specifically for full-time, professional Christian ministry. While local churches were the hub of the Presbyterian work, neither the missionaries or Korean leaders wished to overcentralize their ministries. Their vision was much greater--the extensive diffusion and widespread preaching of the Gospel everywhere. This had been the nature of early missionary outreach, and their Korean disciples learned well. Such a focus might be appropriate for any situation, but it was even more necessary in Manchuria, where unsettled political and economic conditions made the Koreans, and the church population itself, a moving target.

As a part of its outreach ministry, Canadian Presbyterians organized a Central Evangelistic Society, with a branch in each local congregation. Under the supervision of one of its missionaries, the society was directed by a Korean pastor who was

responsible to pinpoint specific evangelistic goals, to help mobilize workers to meet the need, and to develop the required strategy. One early effort, for example, was to send three evangelists 150-200 miles from the central station at Yong Jung to the Russian border, and even beyond the Trans-Siberian Railway, to visit 41 groups of Koreans. Some Koreans had even migrated far beyond Manchuria to the Lake Baykal area, northwest of Mongolia. Missionaries speculated that there were more Koreans in Russia than there were even in Manchuria.

In the northern part of Manchuria where the American Methodists worked, many of the Koreans were from Russia. They had fled from Russia after their property had been confiscated, but in their life in Manchuria they continued to be thoroughly Russianized in life style, religious ceremonies, language, and dress. Some of them had been converted through the ministry of Russian believers and religious leaders and had been baptized in Russian churches.¹⁰

God raised up some stalwart leaders to take charge of the work among Koreans in Manchuria. One of these, Do In Kwon, was ordained by the Methodists in the northern area. He became a Christian in Korea, and then, after taking part in the Independence Movement in 1919, he fled to Siberia and continued to assist the Korean independence movement. He joined the Methodists there, and, after a period of persecution, he became pastor to many of his displaced Korean compatriots and led them to the eastern part of Manchuria.

Kim Ik Tu was referred to as the Billy Sunday of Korea. He travelled about to many of the churches in Korea to hold ten-day evangelistic campaigns. Many of the congregations met in homes in isolated rural areas. The urban situation was different. The church building erected by the Canadian Presbyterians at Sinpin, held 1000 people, and many Koreans heard the Gospel for the first time in these large religious gatherings.

A further impetus to growth among the Korean churches in China was the willingness of the people to support their own work. From the beginning, the work in Manchuria was not "foreign." Christians had their own names for the villages where they settled: "Town of eternal life," "Dwelling of God's grace," and "Village of Providence," to name a few.¹¹ Outside money was used for some capital expenditures--missionary residences, clinics or hospital buildings, and occasionally for central churches. The main responsibility for finances was with the people, even though their livelihood was not very good. The Chinese usually got the best land, and the Korean immigrants took what was left. This was often just a piece of timber land, where they had to cut the trees down, clear out the underbrush, and farm in between the trunks. Then there were the bandit raids, and like the Chinese around them, it was wise to buy "bandit protection insurance." But at least they had land. In northern Manchuria they rented land at high rates as tenant farmers from the Chinese. The redeeming factor for these poor farmers was their better technique than the Chinese in rice cultivation, and

the good soil which made it possible for the land to produce five to twelve times more than in Korea.

Where the Christians were able to buy land, self-support was not too much of a problem. No building codes restricted the type of structure they might erect, and a building could be put up at very little cost. Where it was necessary to rent buildings, landlords raised the rent exorbitantly, and church leaders needed to appeal to home boards in American or Canada for one-time financial grants.

Even small churches in Korea were prepared to give sacrificially for "home mission" work in Manchuria. The Korean church was their church, and this extension outreach was their responsibility. Self-support, then, followed naturally after self-propagation and self-government. More important than the so-called "three selves" of the indigenous church were "self-identity" and rapid growth.

The emphasis on Bible classes, the self-identity of the churches, the development of mature leaders and evangelists, the passion for outreach, and the willingness of the people to support the work financially were the missiological ingredients which, with God's providential spark, produced revival. The spark was the Independence Movement of 1919. This "bloodless revolution," as some missionaries referred to it, led missionaries and Christians to form a Covenant of Prayer to seek revival throughout the church. "Before sunrise" prayer meetings were a mark of the Korean churches in Manchuria even at this

early period. The Korean General Assembly also organized a three-year Forward Movement Campaign to give feet to the increased prayer emphasis. Over the next few years revival-type growth marked Korean churches both in Korea and Manchuria. Revival fires also jumped to Chinese churches in Manchuria, as Jonathan Goforth talked about how God had showered his blessing on the Koreans, a people whom the Chinese often despised.¹²

Missionary wives and Korean Bible women developed important ministries for women among the Korean immigrants in Manchuria. For many years the policy of the American Presbyterians was not to send single women missionaries into Manchuria, fearing banditry and unsettled conditions. This, however, had never been the policy of the ^{Scottish} Scotch Presbyterian Mission in Manchuria, and gradually the Americans came around to this point of view. However, the single women and missionary wives worked with women in a particular station, such as Sinpin, and did not itinerate widely. Again, the Korean churches directly took responsibility for work among women, who made up 60-70% of the church membership.

Women's Missionary Societies were developed in each presbytery, and they supported their own Bible women. The Women's Missionary Society belonging to two churches in Syen Chun supported an ordained missionary in the Moukden district and also gave generously toward the erection of a church building there and the salary of a pastor. Six Bible women worked under the direction of the Korean General Assembly, three supported by the

local churches and three paid by funds from Canada. Also, in each Methodist church there was a Christian Endeavor Society. The parallel in Canadian Presbyterian churches was a "Life Membership Society," which was a preaching society to support Bible women in evangelism.¹³ Many young women, often with no more than a primary school education, took charge of the primary Sunday schools run by most local churches.

Educational and medical work were important adjunct programs to the strong evangelistic emphasis of these Korean churches in China. Education among Koreans in China was almost out of control:

We are in the midst of an educational revolution. Schools spring up in a night, heathen and Christian. The Governor starts schools; the Magistrate starts schools; the Myun officials start schools; the town official starts schools, and the villages start schools. Schools to the right of them, schools to the left of them! Horns and commotion! Seven school boards lay hold of the flowing coat tails of one poor teacher.¹⁴

Little wonder then that every small church wanted its own school and its own honored teacher. The Canadian Presbyterians reported in 1918 that they had 27 boys' schools and 3 girls' schools that were formally organized, in addition to many informal schools.

All of the schools run by Korean churches were on the primary level and gave general education. Even though living in China, they were not required to follow the Chinese educational system, nor did they wish to adopt the system used by the Japanese in Korea. In their instruction they focused on Korean language and Korean history. The various mission societies gave no help to the

churches as they developed their system of primary schools. On several occasions, the churches related to the American Presbyterians in Manchuria appealed to the Annual Meeting of the mission to give support to establish secondary schools. This was a critical need, since Korean students were not able to access Chinese schools in large number, and they were far removed from schools in Korea which they might attend. For the mission agencies this was not as pressing a priority as the planting and nurture of local churches.¹⁵

The educational issue on the secondary level--Korean schools or Chinese schools--was critical in helping Koreans in Manchuria to adjust to Chinese culture. Previous to the coming of the People's Republic of China, Koreans in Manchuria, with some exceptions, lived in their own little enclaves and resisted assimilation to the majority culture. Therefore, a goal of acculturation has been a high priority for educational officials now in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture. Korean students are expected to learn well both Chinese and Korean languages in their primary and middle school education. When they take college entrance examinations, they may use either Chinese or Korean. They are encouraged to adjust fully to Chinese culture, without abandoning their Korean cultural heritage.¹⁶

When Koreans settled in areas clearly dominated by the Chinese, they assimilated better. The ^{Scottish} Scotch Presbyterians in Manchuria had no special work for Koreans, but they welcomed them into their churches, where many learned to speak Chinese

fluently. The Manchurian Christian College in Moukden enrolled a few Korean students, and their education was entirely in Chinese.

None of the mission societies working among Koreans in Manchuria emphasized a medical ministry. The ^{Scottish} ~~Scotch~~ Presbyterians sent a medical doctor to Sinpin in 1920 to open a hospital, and the American Presbyterians cooperated with them. This was not specifically for Koreans, but many of them took advantage of this service. The Canadian Presbyterians opened St. Andrew's hospital in 1916 in Yong Jung. They noted that a big difference between their medical work here and that in Korea was the wide number of nationalities to whom they gave services--Russian, Chinese, Japanese and Koreans.¹⁷

Korean churches in Manchuria, like their brothers and sisters in their home country, have continually resisted oppression. For them, Jesus was the liberator both spiritually and politically. This happened dramatically in 1910 and 1919, as the Korean people agitated for their independence from Japan. An early evangelist, Yee Donghui, asked his Korean audience to "believe in Jesus to save the nation," and claimed that when "one million Koreans became Christians, Korea will achieve independence." This emphasis was so pervasive that Marquis Ito, who visited Korea in the early 1900s, claimed that Korean Christianity did not have any spiritual depth, but was fueled by economic, social, and political factors.¹⁸

Anti-Japanese sentiment heightened as Japanese forces entered Jilin and Mukden in September 1931, preparatory to setting up

their puppet regime of Manchukuo in 1932. Thousands of Koreans fled to Mukden and other towns along the railway, where they were put up in large sheds and slept on straw mats through the long, cold winter. This meant that many congregations were moved, as Christian refugees fled the war zone. A Korean colporteur disguised himself as an agent of Standard Oil in order to carry on his activities.¹⁹ People were open to the Gospel, however, and believed in such large numbers that it was necessary to form a North Manchurian Presbytery. An American Presbyterian missionary, Lloyd Henderson was killed by assassins as he was trying to help his family escape from the turmoil.

This unsettled period brought increased financial distress to many Koreans, including the Korean Christians. One missionary noted that some church members went into the opium business and engaged in other illegitimate activities, hoping that their privilege of ^{extraterritoriality} ~~extrality~~ would get them off without too much punishment.²⁰ Koreans did reap some benefits from the establishment of Manchukuo. Before the time of this Japanese puppet state, they were brow-beaten and abused both mentally and physically by the Chinese. Now, the tables were turned! Favored more by the Japanese who apparently felt closer to them than to the Chinese, the Koreans now had the upper hand and took it out on the Chinese.²¹

Korean guerrilla bands tried to undermine the Japanese-supported Manchukuo government and were suppressed ferociously for their efforts. These bands' most notable resistance-effort

was the "August 1 Insurrection" at Jidun in 1933. The PRC has applauded them for their struggle against Chiang Kai-shek which helped to "liberate" the area in the final throes of the Chinese civil war. Korean churches allied with the Three-Self Movement also supported the government's call to "Oppose-America, Support-Korea" in 1951. The Cultural Revolution in China from 1966-1976 diminished the government's lustre with some Korean churches. This led them, along with many Chinese house churches to carry on many independent religious activities. Despite loyalties that divide them between the China Christian Council and the independent house churches, the Korean Protestant church in China is a vital, witnessing church that wears well the mantle of the Christian faith received from Korea.²²

Roman Catholic Mission Work Among Koreans in China

If the Protestant effort for Korea and then for Koreans in Manchuria started at the Korea Gate along the Yalu River, the Roman Catholic ministry began in Beijing in 1783. Korea was a tribute state to China, and each year it sent an ambassador and other officials with tribute to the Chinese capital. There they met Catholic missionaries who gave them books on science or religion. Circulated among the scholarly class in Korea, these materials aroused great interest, particularly among a group of students who were seeking more meaning in life. They had never before been exposed to such appealing topics as the providence of God, the soul and its nature, and virtue and vice. One of these students had a close friend, Ri Syeng ^{Hun}Huni, whose father was the

(Huni would have been his familiar boyhood name.)

ambassador to China in 1783. He asked Ri when he next accompanied his father to Beijing to investigate Christian truth more thoroughly and report back to him.

Ri went his friend one step better. He interviewed the missionaries, embraced the Christian faith, and returned to Korea as a zealous convert. Several students followed him in his conversion, and together they formed the nucleus of a band that propagated the Catholic faith widely. By 1795 they were able to report that there was a Christian community of over 4000. As common with the pattern of Christian faith in Korea, all of this had been done without a single foreign missionary or without any initial direct effort at evangelization.

The Bishop of Beijing sent a Chinese priest to consolidate this work, and by 1801 the number of adherents had more than doubled. Such growth sparked several waves of persecution in 1801, 1839, and 1846. The most serious riot occurred in 1866, resulting in the martyrdom of several Korean and foreign priests and thousands of Christians. When friendly relations were established between Korea and the Western nations in the early and mid-1880s, the persecution died down, and the Catholic church began to reap the harvest prepared by such wide-scale sowing of the blood of the martyrs. Converts increased rapidly to 105,000 in 1927, more than ten times what it was when the persecution commenced.

As was the case with the Protestants, difficult times in Korea forced many Catholic refugees to flee across the border to

the Kando (Jiandao) area of China. They, along with Fathers Ridel, Calais, Blanc, Richard, and Martineau of the Paris Foreign Mission Society, lived in or about the small city of Chakou, to which they gave the name "Our Lady of the Snows." Here, after the severe persecution of 1866, they held the Second Synod of the Church of Korea, and laid unsuccessful plans to return secretly to Korea.

Father Bret of the PME came to Wonsan, Korea in 1894, and from this vantage point kept in contact with and encouraged the Catholic Christians in Kando. In 1896 a Korean from Kando was travelling toward Seoul and broke his journey at Wonsan. Here he came into contact with the church, learned the Christian doctrine, and was baptized. Upon his return to his native land, he preached his new faith with fervor and gathered a nucleus of 100 new catechumens. Encouraged by this development, Father Bret made an annual trip across the Yumen to baptize new adherents to the faith. By 1908 two foreign priests and one Korean priest, with the permission of the Vicar Apostolic of Manchuria who supervised this territory, had taken up residence at Kando.

Some writers have accused the Koreans of being prone to "wander lust." They treated their homes as camps, it was claimed, and were prepared at the drop of a hat to go elsewhere to seek their fortunes! This natural tendency was heightened by Japan's oppressive brutality in Korea, particularly after it annexed the country in 1910. The number of Catholic migrants increased sharply, because they knew that they already had Christian

friends in Kando and that they would find Catholic missionaries able to speak their language. By 1925, the number of Korean Catholic Christians in Kando had increased to 10,000, most clustered in southern Manchuria. In subsequent years, aided by its extensive network of churches and priests throughout all of Manchuria, the Catholic church in Manchuria among migrant Koreans grew at the same pace as the Protestant work.²³

Of the fifty-five minority nationalities in China, only the Koreans represent an entire political entity outside the country. If Korea had not early been subject to China as a tribute nation, and if its inhabitants in China had been militantly aggressive with nationalistic aspirations, the presence of such a large people group from a neighboring nation could have produced an explosive situation. This would have hindered or stopped entirely the greatest Christian growth in China among minority nationalities outside of that to be found in Southwest China among the Lisu, Lahu, Wa, Miao, and Yi peoples.²⁴

Notes

1. Most of this material on the work of Ross and his colleagues may be found in George Paik The History of Protestant Missions in Korea (Seoul:Yonsei University Press, 1927), 51-55 and John Ross, "The Christian Dawn in Korea," in The Missionary Review of the World, April 1890, 241-8.
2. Ross Ibid., 248.
3. Spencer J. Palmer Korea and Christianity The Problem of Identification With Tradition (Seoul: Hollym Corporation, 1967), 94-96.
4. Paik Ibid., 177-8 and James S. Gale Korean Sketches (New York:Fleming H. Revell Co.,1898), 92,95.
5. Report of Kang Kai Station of the Presbyterian U.S.A. Church, 1913, 104.
6. Arthur Judson Brown The Mastery of the Far East (New York:Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), 532.
7. This quotation and other material in these paragraphs come from Chae-Jin Lee China's Korean Minority The Politics of Ethnic Education (London:Westview Press,n.d.), 15-31.
8. Henry Chung The Case of Korea A Collection of Evidence on the Japanese Domination of Korea and on the Development of the Korean Independence Movement (New York:Fleming H. Revell Company, 1921) gives a good picture of the situation. This quotation is from The Korean "Independence" Agitation articles reprinted from the "Seoul Press" (Seoul: The "Seoul Press," 1919), 1.
9. Annual Report of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., 1921, 66. The New York Times for February 7, 1921 reported that, in general, 3,128 inhabitants were murdered and that 2404 homes, 31 schools, 10 churches, and 818,620 bushels of grain were burned. Chung, Ibid., 319.
10. C.S. Deming "The Methodists in Manchuria. 1. Koreans in Northern Manchuria," in The Korea Mission Field Vol. XXXI, No. 11 November 1935, 239.
11. Wi Jo Kang, "Korean Minority Church-State Relations in the People's Republic of China," in International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Vol. 14, No.2 April 1990. 77.

12. Mrs. Dugald Christie (ed) Thirty Years in the Manchu Capital in and Around Moukden in Peace and War:Being the Recollections of Dugald Christie (New York:McBride, Nast, and Company, 1914), 209.

13.Emma M. Palethorpe "Korean Women in Eastern Manchuria," in The Korea Mission Field Volume XXXI, No. 11 November 1935. 236.

14. Annual Reports of the Korea Mission of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. 1908. 81.

15.Harry A. Rhodes (ed) History of The Korea Mission Presbyterian Church USA 1884-1934 (Seoul:Chosen Mission Presbyterian Church, n.d.) 378-9.

16. Lu Yun, "The Korean Autonomous Prefecture," in Beijing Review, December 21-27, 1987. 31-33.

17. C.S. Deming, "A Hospital in Manchukuo," in The Korea Mission Field Vol. XXXI, No. 11 November 1935. 237.

18.Wi Jo Kang Ibid., 78.

19. Report of British and Foreign Bible Society 1926, 206.

20.William G. Davis, "Koreans in the Manchurian Field of the Canadian Presbyterian Mission," in The Korea Mission Field Vol. XXXI, Nol 11, November 1935. 229.

21.L.D.M. Wedderburn, "The Koreans in the Hailung District," in The Korea Mission Field Vol.XXXI, No. 11 November 1935. 228.

22. Many of the details on the characteristics of the Protestant Korean church in China have been taken from the annual reports of the various mission agencies which had work there. This final paragraph's analysis comes from Wi Jo Kang, Ibid, 80-81 and Ma Yin (ed.)China's Minority Nationalities (Beijing:Foreign Languages Press, 1989), 56.

23. The material on the Roman Catholic work in China has come from two principal sources: F.E.C. Williams and Gerald Bonwick (eds.) The Korea Missions Year Book (Seoul:The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1928)155-159, and The Catholic Church in Korea (Hongkong:Imprimerie de la Societe des Missions-Etrangeres, 1924), 55-72.

24.PRC officials are concerned that the Korean churches in China are patriotic to South Korea and discontent with the Chinese government. They trace this to religious broadcasts from South Korea to China, and to the travel among these Christians by South Korean evangelists. This is found in Xuanchuan Banyue Kan (Propaganda Biweekly) October 1990 and reported in China Insight:An OMF Publication April 1991, 2. Will this situation be changed now that the PRC and South Korea have established diplomatic relations (August 1992)?