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BIBLE WOMEN: EVANGELISM AND CULTURAL
TRANSFORMATION IN THE EARLY
KOREAN CHURCH

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Yeong Woo Liptak
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BIBLE WOMEN: EVANGELISM AND CULTURAL
TRANSFORMATION IN THE EARLY
KOREAN CHURCH

Yeong Woo Liptak

Read and Approved by:

James D. Chancellor (Chair)

George H. Martin

David M. Sills

Date _____

To my husband, Steven G. Liptak, who has provided unwavering support and encouragement through my many years of education, and who has anticipated this achievement at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary with me.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARKWC	The Annual Report of the Korean Women Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church
ARMEC	The Annual Report of Methodist Episcopal Church, South
BFBS	British and Foreign Bible Society
KF	The Korea Field
KM	The Korea Methodist
KMF	The Korean Mission Field
KR	The Korea Review
KRP	The Korean Repository
MRW	The Missionary Review of the World
SBTS	The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
WWFW	Woman's Work for Woman of the Woman's Presbyterian Board of Mission

PREFACE

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19).

I am thankful to Jesus, my Lord and Savior, for leading me on a spiritual journey that includes this academic endeavor. To Him be the glory.

I enrolled in SBTS’ M.Div. program in 2002. At that time I had just become a woman *Chōndosa* and the ministry and spiritual maturity grew together while attending SBTS. Classes included Church History I, Church History II and a class on Cults that were all taught by Dr. James D. Chancellor. He travelled from Louisville to Maryland each Monday to teach. Dr. Chancellor’s support and encouragement as my supervisor made it possible for me to continue into my doctoral studies in the Billy Graham School. I am truly thankful for his helpful advice and patience and for providing important feedback at every stage of the process, without which I would not have been able to complete this dissertation. Likewise, I wish to acknowledge my appreciation to both Dr. George H. Martin and Dr. David M. Sills. Their guidance and comments were instrumental in the completion of this body of work.

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Lastly, I wish to mention my parents. They dedicated their time and treasure throughout my childhood always emphasizing the importance of education. Their reinforcement of its importance established a firm foundation in my heart with the Word of God for a lifetime of learning.

Yeong Woo Liptak

Bethesda, Maryland

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Under the late nineteenth century *Chosŏn* dynasty, which had just begun opening its doors to the West, Protestant missionaries possessed only limited freedom to engage in direct mission activities. Under these circumstances, missionaries resorted to indirect initiatives, such as education and health projects, as a means to establish contact with the Korean people, among whom their influence rapidly spread.¹ Kenneth M. Wells describes the decade from 1895 to 1905 as a time of growth and Protestant mission for the church in Korea.² He likens it to the time as being ‘like a chapter from the Acts of the

¹On December 4, 1884, Young Ik Min, a cousin of the Empress Min in the *Chosŏn* Dynasty, was seriously injured in the *Gapsin* Coup. Min’s life was in danger after significant blood loss, but he was saved by a Protestant medical missionary, Horace N. Allen, who began work in Korea in 1884. Min’s healing was indebted to Allen’s skillful surgery and careful nursing for three months. With this service, Allen earned credence with the emperor, empress, and governors of the *Chosŏn* Dynasty. In return, Emperor Gojong offered to help missionaries. Allen responded to Gojong by asking permission to build a modernized hospital and provide his services without pay. Gojong accepted his proposal and donated the house of late governor Hong, who had been removed from office and executed for his involvement in a coup. On April 10, 1885, Allen opened *Gwanghyewon*, the first modernized hospital in Korea. The name of the hospital means “a place that widely spreads grace.” After several weeks, *Gwanghyewon* was renamed *Jejoongwon*, which means “a place that saves many common people.” *Jejoongwon* came to serve as a center for missionaries arriving in Korea. Upon arriving at Incheon port, Horace G. Underwood stayed in *Jejoongwon* and learned the Korean language and Henry G. Appenzeller proceeded to Korea in 1885. William B. Scranton, a Methodist missionary, worked at *Jejoongwon* during his missional service. In addition John William Heron of Northern Presbyterian Missions (1885) and Annie J. Ellars, the first woman medical missionary, used *Jejoongwon* as their point of contact for Korean missions (1886). Mu Yeol Choe, “Korea as Holistic Mission Model: The Initial Mission,” *Mission and Theology* 2, no. 11 (2011): 137; Allen D. Clark, *History of the Korean Church* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1971), 60-62, 96; Lak Geon Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832-1910* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1971), 97-107.

²Kenneth M. Wells, *New God, New Nation: Protestant and Self-Reconstruction Nationalism in Korea, 1896-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 29.

Apostles,³ since baptized believers increased from 528 to 12,500 during these years.⁴ One of the key evangelistic forces responsible for this nearly unprecedented success was an unassuming group of apprenticed, largely nameless Korean women, known by the term “*Chōndo Puin*” (Bible Women).⁵ The Bible Women evolved as part of the first Korean Christian generation when Protestant missionaries first entered the nation in the mid-1880s.⁶

³Lak Geoon Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions*, 263.

⁴C. C. Vinton, “Statistics of the Protestant Churches in Korea,” *The Korean Repository* 2, no. 10 (1895): 383; Roy E. Shearer, *Wildfire: Church Growth in Korea* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1966), 166.

⁵Martha Huntley, *Caring, Growing, Changing: A History of the Protestant Mission in Korea* (New York: Friendship, 1984), 126-27; Mi Kang Yang, “The Early Bible Women’s Faith and Activities,” *The History of Korean Christian Women 2* (1992): 91-92.

⁶Lee describes the history of Christianity in Korea along with the three generations of early Christians: “One-hundred-thirty years of Korean Protestant mission history can be divided into three periods in relation to Korean national history. The first period spans from the late-*Chosōn* Dynasty in the late nineteenth century to the end of Korean Empire (1880-1910). This period saw the introduction of the gospel into Korea in which the traditional social structure began to yield its place to a more contemporary social system. The second period refers to the time when Korea suffered suppression under the colonial rule of Japan (1910-1945). During this period, the church underwent a national ordeal caused by the Japanese usurping control over the politics, culture, and society of Korea. The Korean church responded to the national challenge by participating in organized resistance against the oppressive rule of Japan. The third period started in 1945 and leads up to the present time. The political history of this period is marked by national liberation from Japanese rule and is followed by the Korean War, leading to the division of the nation into South Korea and North Korea (1950-1953). Despite the ideological conflict that caused national division, South Korea experienced economic growth and the introduction of democracy. The history of the Korean church in this period is marked by remarkable growth and revival as well. Divided into three distinctive periods, the history of Korean Christianity is a dynamic development comprised of three different generations that typify each period. The first generation Korean Christians were born at the end of the *Chosōn* Dynasty between 1850 and 1880. Growing up in the atmosphere of a traditional hierarchical society, these Koreans received the Christian gospel through foreign missionaries while in their thirties or forties; they represent the church leadership during early Japanese occupation (1910-1930). Second generation Korean Christians were born between 1890 and 1910, during a period of transition when the collapse of hierarchical society was underway. Typically, they were introduced to the gospel while young, attending classes at Christian-based schools. They became leaders of the Korean church and society during the core of Japanese occupation through the post-Liberation period (1930-1960). Their major role was to enlighten people and lead the patriotic movement in a critical time of national history. The third-generation of Korean Christians were born between 1910 and 1940. Many of them were born to Christian families, brought up with Christian educations, and became leaders in the post-Liberation period (1950-1980). This generation was responsible for the explosive growth of the Korean church and massive revivals in the 1960s through the 1980s.” Duk Joo Lee, “Freedom, Liberation, and Practice: Understanding Early Christian Women in Korea (1887-1920),” in *Korean Church and Women*, ed. The Korean Church Research

During the Chosŏn period, Confucianism heavily influenced Korean culture; this philosophy required the separation of unrelated men and women in social settings, which denied the predominantly male missionaries the opportunity to contact Korean women.⁷ In particular, non-elite women, who were almost all confined to the *anbang* (female quarter of the house), were largely inaccessible to male missionaries. The missionaries devised the system of Bible Women to overcome this social obstacle.⁸

The early Bible Women engaged in various tasks related to evangelism. Some traveled around the nation to share the gospel and distribute the Bible and Christian literature. The Bible Women taught other women, most of whom were illiterate, to read, thus giving them direct access to gospel tracts and the Bible.⁹ These efforts by the Bible Women increased female literacy and had a profound effect on the social transformation of Korean women.

As the gospel and Protestantism spread, women remained a deprived group in traditional Korean society, where they lacked freedom and basic human rights.¹⁰ As they

Center (Seoul: IVP, 2013), 11; idem, *Stories of Early Christian Women in Korea* (Seoul: Hong Seong Sa, 2007), 6-8.

⁷Samuel H. Moffett, *The Christians of Korea* (New York: Friendship, 1962), 16-17; S. E. Solberg, *The Land and People of Korea: Portraits of the Nations* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1966), 94-96.

⁸Katherine H. Lee Ahn, *Awakening the Hermit Kingdom: Pioneer American Women Missionaries in Korea* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 11.

⁹Harry A. Rhodes, ed., *History of the Korea Mission Presbyterian Church U.S.A., 1884-1934* (Seoul: Presbyterian Church of Korea Department of Education, 1934), 261.

¹⁰Lee provides a description of women's restrictive environment: "At the time of the introduction of the Christian gospel into Korea, Korean women were inferior to men in social standing. The monarchist society, based on the ethics of loyalty to the king and of filial piety to parents, along with its hierarchical institutionalized ethics of Confucianism put women into strait jackets with an ideal image of women as obeying parents in girlhood, husband in marriage and sons in old age, under the taboo of remarriage for widows. The area of women's activities was confined to the four walls of the house and within a small circle around close blood relatives of direct lineage." Hyo Jae Lee, "Christian Mission and the Liberation of Korean Women," *International Review of Mission* 74, no. 293 (1985): 93.

encountered Christ, they found release from bondage, which produced several effects. Primarily, the gospel meant deliverance from the power of sin. At the same time, the gospel's message emancipated them from the restrictive gender roles of a patriarchal society. For these women, Christianity was neither a shamanistic religion that solved life's problems nor a Buddhist escape from reality. They found in Christianity a religion of grace that enabled them to live more independently.

In the first ten years of missionary activity, the social norms of traditional Korean society that prohibited socialization with the opposite sex slowed the pace of evangelism.¹¹ Once the women received the gospel, however, they actively assimilated its message. With the rapid expansion of female believers, missionaries could no longer offer them adequate support. The missionaries sought to resolve this problem by turning to local women. Their strategy was to encourage these women to evangelize their peers with the promise of salvation and a better future.¹² They trained many previously uneducated, underprivileged, and isolated women to read the Bible and mediate on its message. These Bible Women spread the Christian message to women who would have been otherwise inaccessible.

¹¹“*Naeŏe KuByoul* (regulations of the inner-outer)” stems from codes of ethics to be observed between man and woman as prescribed by Confucian ethics. In its original sense, *Naeŏe* refers to the gender etiquette and moral demarcation of gender roles and space. Originating in terms like *Naeŏe*, it was legislated and enforced as a law called *Naeŏe* law when adopted by the *Chosŏn* Dynasty. The law was intended to prevent incest and adultery, but it was applied only to women in spite of men committing violations as well. The society of the *Chosŏn* Dynasty held the idea that women were responsible for sexual violations and needed to be regulated. Thus, the gender etiquette requirement of avoiding contact between men and women became a legal restriction regulating women's behavior. According to this law, women were forbidden to freely roam outdoors or even go out in the daytime. Women belonging to *Yangban* (the upper class of Confucian social hierarchy) were not permitted to walk on foot when going out; they were forced to rely on a palanquin and wear a hood so that their faces were not exposed to passersby. This is my own interpretation of the code as presented in several sources. See Seong Hui Jeong, *Women and Sexuality in the Korean Society* (Seoul: Garam Planning, 1998); Bae Yong Lee, *Women in Korean History* (Seoul: Ewha Womans University Press, 2008), 29; Hyaewol Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways* (Berkeley: University of California, 2010), 39-41.

¹²Duk Joo Lee, *History of the Methodist Women's Mission in Korea: 1897-1990* (Seoul: National Association for Christian Methodist Women's Mission, 1991), 328-29.

In those times, most female believers remained uneducated and marginalized in society. However, women such as Mary Scranton,¹³ who arrived in Korea in 1885 and who was one of earliest and most influential female missionaries, trained the Bible Women. The Bible Women learned to read the Bible and the principal doctrines of Christianity.¹⁴ Additionally, they played various roles in the church, such as spreading the Bible message, mentoring female believers, and visiting the homes of women to encourage their faith.¹⁵ As the role of the Bible Women became more prominent, the churches organized female mission societies and evangelical associations as part of their evangelistic efforts. In this way, the once insignificant group of women became leaders of faith and social reform.¹⁶ Thus, the activities of the Bible Women were quite significant to the Protestant mission and the early growth of the Korean church.

Despite the acknowledgement by historians of the Bible Women's extensive

¹³The Women's Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS) of the Methodist Episcopal Church dispatched Mary Scranton to Korea in 1885. Donald N. Clark, ed., *The Seoul Foreigner's Cemetery at Yanghwajin: An Informal History* (Seoul: Seoul Union Church, 1998), 116.

¹⁴The missionaries' teaching of the early Christian women in Korea centered on the words and deeds of Christ recorded in the four Gospels found in the New Testament. As Korean women learned the Old Testament, they began to identify with the history of Israel because Israelites lost their country just like Korea did. Korean women recognized that Israel lost freedom, rights, and land as they forsook faith in God. They also believed that when they repented of their infidelity and returned to God, God restored their rights and freedom. Hyo Jae Lee, *Women's Movement in Korea: Yesterday and Today* (Seoul: Jung Woo Sa, 1989), 38.

¹⁵Lee presents the roles of the Bible Women: "Women Missionaries seem to have started employing Bible Women in the 1890s. They also visited the sick, offering prayers to expel evil spirits. The role of Bible Women expanded to include touring the countryside, distributing the gospel and books on evangelism. In the 1900s, they also propagated books of information on daily life such as child care, schooling, home sanitation, and social etiquette in church attendance. In tandem with the growing number of churches and revival meetings, the role of Bible Women for the church also greatly increased. Particularly in opening up a pioneer church or in taking care of a small church, they were the only available church officers. In the formation of the Korean church, Bible Women acted as assistants to women missionaries and as church officers as well, greatly influencing the pattern of faith prevalent among women believers in the understanding of the Bible." Lee, "Christian Mission and the Liberation of Korean Women," 96.

¹⁶Rhodes, *History of the Korea Mission*, 262-63.

activity and efficacy, the historical records concerning them remain sparse. Most of the historical accounts that exist are brief, lack detail, and mention only events. With the exception of a few recognized leaders, the lives and activities of Bible Women remain obscure. However, the extant reports of missionaries contain evidence of the leading Bible Women.

Several factors account for this inadequacy of written records. According to Woo Jung Lee, the male dominated social structure of traditional Korean society explains the obscurity of the Bible Women.¹⁷ The patriarchal social system did not permit recognition of their contributions. Man Yeol Lee also points out that Korean church history has largely failed to study Christian women in general.¹⁸ Another factor contributing to the lack of historical records is that few Christian women penned their own experiences.¹⁹ For a more complete history of the church in Korea, it is essential to rediscover the significant contribution of women. In particular, the Bible Women deserve proper recognition for their strong commitment and valuable role in evangelism during the early history of Christianity in Korea. They are the forgotten contributors to the development of the contemporary Korean church.

Recently, a number of missiologists have begun to reflect on the issue of discrimination against women in the church. Howard Snyder is a renowned evangelical

¹⁷Woo Jung Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women over 100 Years* (Seoul: Minjungsa, 1985), 107.

¹⁸Man Yeol Lee, *The Collected Materials of the Bible Women of the Korean Church* (Seoul: The Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea, 1995), 4.

¹⁹Lee explains the relationship between women's education and Hangul: "In the male dominated situation of *Chosŏn*, the women were not able to be educated equally to men. On the other hand, they not only learned but also contributed to preserve Korean script, *unmun* [Hangul] which was treated contemptuously (although some scholars by the special order of the king Sejong firstly created it in order to possess the national language for the Korean people). In addition, there were prominent *unmun* literatures of some female authors." Hyun Hee Lee, *The History of Women Enlightenment in the Modern Period of Korea* (Seoul: Ewoo Monhwasa, 1982), 12.

missiologist, who has written significant articles on church renewal. In his monograph *Liberating the Church*,²⁰ Snyder writes that the tendency to limit ministry opportunities to men is a satanic scheme to undermine the pietistic witness to the kingdom of God. “Liberating the Church” means removing all the obstacles to the redemptive ministry of women for the church and the world.²¹ Therefore, Snyder argues, the church should repent for its teaching that women are not equal to men in service to the kingdom of God. In *Mission of God*,²² Christopher Wright claims that among the main tasks of the church is the restoration of the image of God. His work illuminates the missiological importance of the divine conception of Genesis 1, where the complementary relationship of man and woman reflects the image of a relational God. God created human beings for relationships and cooperation. Relational cooperation is not merely biological; rather, it assures mutual assistance in the dominion over the world on behalf of God.²³ Therefore, the purpose of missions is not only to encourage righteous individual relationships with God but also to foster healthy relationships among individuals and nations. The complementary relationship between men and women in the church is thus an important subject of God’s mission.

Thesis

As indicated, despite the contributions of the Bible Women to the growth and spiritual life of the Korean church in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they have received little scholarly attention. Therefore, this study examines their

²⁰Howard A. Snyder, *Liberating the Church: The Ecology of Church and Kingdom* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1983), 224-34.

²¹Ibid., 225.

²²Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 421-33.

²³Ibid., 427.

significance in three dimensions. The first dimension considers the lives and faith of these women, exploring how their life experiences prepared them for their roles as Bible Women. The second dimension examines their unique relationship to and role in the missionaries' evangelistic effort, analyzing the elements that successfully facilitated their successes. The final dimension investigates their influential role of reshaping the identity and social status of women in modern Korean society.

The purpose of the study is to illuminate the decisive role of the Bible Women in the development of the early Korean church through their active involvement in evangelism and discipleship training. In addition, this study seeks to redefine their contributions to the life of Korean women from a missiological perspective and examines them as models for contemporary missions in cultural settings where women remain isolated and out of reach of traditional evangelistic methods. Under this model, female missionaries evangelize indigenous women, recruiting and training them to become Bible Women. The study addresses the following questions to substantiate the validity of its thesis and to provide a framework for its proposed Bible Women model.

1. Who were the Korean Bible Women, and what did they accomplish?
2. What characteristic of a culture and/or a religion make it a good candidate for employing the Bible Woman model in an evangelistic context?
3. What training and preparation of the female missionaries are required for the Bible Woman model?
4. How does one identify and recruit candidates as indigenous Bible Women?
5. What is required to equip effective indigenous Bible Women?
6. How does the Bible Women model fit into the context of the overall mission strategy?

Background

I first learned of the varying statuses of women in religious contexts in the "Major Living World Religions" course taught by James Chancellor at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This experience inspired my scholarly interest in the roles

of women in the cultural and social transformation of Korea, which is religiously heterogeneous. The topic related to my own journey of faith as a female leader in Korean-American churches. Although I do not identify with the doctrines of Shamanism, Buddhism, or Confucianism, it is necessary to examine these religious traditions as important cultural and spiritual forces that influenced the social statuses and leadership roles of Korean women. Through more than ten years of ministry, I have wrestled with the identity issue of “female *chōndosa*,” the official title for un-ordained women ministers in many Korean churches. Understanding the distinctive position of women leaders drove me to examine five aspects of the origin and development of female *chōndosa*; specifically, I explored where, when, why, what, and how this position came into being.

While seeking answers to these questions, I learned of the Korean Bible Women from sources such as Lak Geon Paik’s *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea 1832-1910*; Martha Huntley’s *Caring, Growing, Changing: A History of the Protestant Mission in Korea*; Katherine H. Lee Ahn’s *Awakening the Hermit Kingdom: Pioneer American Women Missionaries in Korea*; Harry A. Rhodes, *History of the Korea Mission Presbyterian Church U.S.A., 1884-1934*; Roy E. Shearer’s *Wildfire: Church Growth in Korea*; and Man Yeol Lee’s *The History of the Christianity in Korea and the National Spirit*.²⁴

I gained insight into and perspective of the intercultural challenges between the American missionaries and Chosōn women through David M. Sills’ “Cultural Anthropology and Christian Witness” course. This academic experience enabled me to better objectively analyze the historical accounts and consider how they might be applied

²⁴Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions*, 347, 403; Huntley, *A History of Protestant Mission*, 126-27; Ahn, *Awakening the Hermit Kingdom*, 177, 255; Rhodes, *History of the Korea Mission*, 207, 210; Shearer, *Wildfire*, 170-71; Man Yeol Lee, *The Korean Christianity and Nationalism* (Seoul: Ji Sik Sa, 1991), 167-74. I originally gathered these sources for class reports: George Martin (86100--*The History of Christian Missions*, Fall 2010).

in present or future mission endeavors.

From the 1930s, when the Korean churches generally settled their institutional forms, the need for professional women ministers in the expanding church became evident. The office of women chōndosa arose in the 1930s from the earlier Korean Bible Women.²⁵ The institutionalization of women chōndosa marked the first step in the recognition of the professional ministry of women.

Literature Review

Until recently, few scholars have researched the Korean Bible Women. In 1985, the commemoration of Korean mission history led to the creation of an editorial committee that included most Korean denominations. One of its projects was to produce a study of women in Korean church history, which was a remarkable research step. Sun Ae Chu's *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea*²⁶ provided a helpful introduction on Bible Women. Woo Jung Lee's *Footprint of Korean Christian Women over 100 Years*²⁷ reveals the tremendous contribution Bible Women had in the growth of the Korean church by tracing the stories of little-known women. In particular, Lee reconstructs the history of women in the Korean church from the perspective of *Minjung* (common people) theology.²⁸ According to Lee, early Korean church histories identified

²⁵Mi Kang Yang, "Studies on Bible Women from the Viewpoint of Inclusion and Exclusion," *The History of Korean Christianity* 6 (1997): 142.

²⁶Sun Ae Chu, *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea* (Seoul: Dae Han Presbyterian Church Women's Association, 1978).

²⁷Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women*.

²⁸David Suh explains Korea's Minjung theology: "Minjung theology is a Korean theology. 'Minjung' is a term which grew out of the Christian experience in the political struggle for justice over the last ten or more years. Theology of minjung or minjung theology is an accumulation and articulation of theological reflections on the political experiences of Christian students, laborers, the press, professors, farmers, writers, and intellectuals as well as theologians in Korea in the 1970s. Suh observes, "Under Confucianism's strict imposition of laws and customs discriminating against women, the existence of women was han itself." It is the mind of feeling a woman has when she cannot produce a male child for the family and thus has to agree against her will, to her husband bringing in another woman for childbearing or when

the Bible Women as *Minjung* or unsung heroes, who sacrificed their lives for evangelism. Lee's approach to the Korean Bible Women from the *Minjung* perspective substantially affected Korean women's studies in the 1990s.

Mattie W. Noble compiled *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*²⁹ vignettes from the lives of early Bible Women in Korea. The stories, originally provided in the native language have been translated to reach a broader audience. The inspirational stories detail individual accounts of life changes under the difficult circumstances in Chosŏn. In *Early Christian Women in Korea: Life Stories of 28 Women Who Loved Christ and Their Nation*,³⁰ Duk Joo Lee attempts to rediscover the lives and faith of the Bible Women. Lee's introduction of the obscure stories of Bible Women sparked a new direction in Korean feminist theology. In another important work, "Freedom, Liberation, and Practice: Understanding Early Christian Women in Korea (1887-1920),"³¹ Lee portrays the liberating impact of the gospel on Korean women; it led to their active involvement in evangelism and the national independence movement. To date, Mi Kang

she has to obey her mother-in-law even though the order is absolutely unreasonable. It is an awareness of the structural injustice, which a Confucian society imposes on women. Han is a psychosocial term, which appears inevitably in the biography of Korean women and in their stories, novels, poems, and plays. . . . The minjung is present where there is sociocultural alienation, economic exploitation, and political suppression. Therefore, a woman is a minjung when she is dominated by man by the family, or by sociocultural structures and factors. An ethnic group is a minjung group when it is politically and economically discriminated against by another ethnic group. A race is minjung when it is dominated by another powerful ruling race as is the case in a colonial situation. When intellectuals are suppressed for using their creative and critical abilities against rulers on behalf of the oppressed, then the too belong to the minjung. Workers and farmers are minjung when they are exploited, their needs and demands are ignored, and they are crushed down by the ruling powers." Kwang-Sun David Suh, "A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation," in *MinJung Theology: Peoples as the Subjects of History*, ed. The Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia (New York: Orbis, 1981), 16-33.

²⁹Mattie W. Noble, comp., *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea* (Seoul: Kyujang, 1985).

³⁰Duk Joo Lee, *Early Christian Women in Korea: Life Stories of 28 Women Who Loved Christ and Their Nation* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1990).

³¹Lee, "Freedom, Liberation, and Practice," 1-102.

Yang has conducted the most in-depth research on the Korean Bible Women. Her 1992 article “The Early Bible Women’s Faith and Activities,”³² is one of the first to present an adequate account of the Bible Women’s social backgrounds, education, and roles in the early Korean church. Yang examines female leadership from the perspective of inclusion and exclusion in the institutionalization of the Korean church. In her article “Studies on Bible Women from the viewpoint of Inclusion and Exclusion,”³³ Yang discusses the financial remuneration and regulation of the Bible Women in the church. She encourages the active ecclesiastical participation of women in the effort to eradicate discrimination.

In 1995, after five years of work, the Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea published *The Collected Materials of the Bible Women of the Korean Church*.³⁴ Based on exhaustive research, the collection draws on sources from the coming of Christianity to Korea to the restoration of independence. These include magazines, minutes, denominational histories, and board of missions’ annual reports. It also comprises biographical data, arranged by name, activity, denomination, and type, on more than one thousand Korean Bible Women.

The first doctoral dissertation on the Bible Women, written by Sung Jin Chang at the University of Edinburgh, appeared in 2005.³⁵ In 2008, this dissertation appeared in print as *A Forgotten Story of Korean Churches: the Research of Korean Bible Women in the Early Protestant Mission and Church Growth of Korea, 1892-1945*.³⁶ Chang’s

³²Yang, “The Early Bible Women,” 91-109.

³³Yang, “Studies on Bible Women,” 139-79.

³⁴Lee, *The Collected Materials of the Bible Women*.

³⁵Sung Jin Chang, “Korean Bible Women: Their Vital Contribution to Korean Protestantism, 1894-1945” (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 2005).

³⁶Sung Jin Chang, *Forgotten story of Korean Churches: The Research of Korean Bible Women in the Early Protestant Mission and Church Growth of Korea, 1992~1945* (Seoul: KSI, 2008).

monograph publicized the hidden stories and reassessed the influence of the Bible Women. Her methodology differed from those of previous studies because it combined religious-cultural and historical approaches in a balanced manner. The 2011 doctoral dissertation of Lee-Ellen, R. R. Strawn, “Korean Bible Women 1888 to 1930: Effecting Change for Women from the Anbang to the Public Square,”³⁷ is the most recent scholarly effort to appear. To date, studies have focused on rediscovering the stories of Korean Bible Women and in presenting their place in the history of Korean women; however, they have largely ignored the powerful contribution of these women to Korea’s cultural transformation and the utility of the Bible Women as a model for missionary outreach in similar social settings.

Methodology

To properly grasp the contribution of the Bible Women and their missiological significance, this study employs various sources. First, it utilizes primary sources I gathered in fieldwork in South Korea. These include the annual reports of missionaries, correspondence, diaries, newspapers, tracts, and printed historical documents, all of which reflect the lives of the Bible Women. Second, the research extensively reviews secondary sources on the Bible Women in Korean Christianity, such as scholarly monographs, journal articles, and dissertations. Finally, it integrated the data gathered from interviews of selected people.

Archival Research

Research for this thesis included multiple trips to South Korea from September 2012 to April 2013 for fieldwork. I travelled to the cities of Seoul, Busan, and Daejeon, where I visited Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist women’s societies to obtain material

³⁷Lee-Ellen R. R. Strawn, “Korean Bible Women 1888 to 1930: Effecting Change for Women from the Anbang to the Public Square” (Ph.D. diss., Yonsei University, 2011).

and information on the Bible Women. I also visited churches established by Western missionaries in the nineteenth century in those cities. S. F. Moore, a missionary of the Northern Presbyterian Mission, founded one of these churches the Yeon Dong Church, in Seoul during 1894. The church's mission history building exhibits pictures of the work of missionaries in the early Korean church. The Jeong Dong Je-Il Church is a remarkable Methodist church with 127 years of history; H. G. Appenzeller began his missionary deeds there. Its historical archive contains materials on the early mission history of the Korean church. Unfortunately, it possesses only limited materials on the Bible Women—which is not unusual—as mentioned previously.

Collecting and Categorizing Sources

As also mentioned, written documents are the major sources of this study. Most of these documents are available in the Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea, including (1) Missionary reports: the Annual Report of the Korea Women's Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Annual Reports of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Annual Reports of the North Presbyterian Mission of the United States, and the Annual Reports of British and Foreign Bible Society; (2) Missionary files: correspondence, financial reports, diaries, and memos; and (3) Publications: *The Korea Mission Field*, *The Missionary Review of the World*, *The Korean Repository*, *The Korea Methodist*, *The Korea Review*, and *The Korean (Dae Han) Christian Times*.³⁸

³⁸Rhodes delineates the origin of *The Korea Mission Field* publication: "In 1901, the *Korea Field*, with C. C. Vinton, as editor, was started and published at irregular intervals. In 1905, this monthly periodical in English and *The Korea Methodist* were combined into one periodical called *The Korea Mission Field* with Vinton as one of editors. This periodical continues to be published under the auspices of the Federal Council of Missions. For a number of years, Mrs. H. G. Underwood was editor and was succeeded in November 1913, by the Rev. A. F. Decamp, affiliated member of the mission." Rhodes, *History of the Korea Mission*, 277. In 1901, Homer Hulbert founded *The Korea Review*, which was very similar in format and scope to *The Korea Repository*, however, the editorial policy of the Review was perhaps more strongly oriented by its editor's vision than the Repository had been. Royal Asiatic Society-

Interview-Based Data

This study also relies on interviews, all of which I conducted. The selected interviewees comprised theologians, scholars, women ministers involved in the study of the Bible Women, laywomen leaders, and the children of missionaries. Unfortunately, no Bible Women are currently living. I did, however, correspond with the grandson of a Bible Woman, Sadi Kim. These interviews provided valuable and detailed information about the Bible Women.

Using Sources

First, this study's primary literature is in either Korean or English; it interacts with what is common to and different in these sources. Because of the scarcity of Korean materials on the Bible Women, this study relies more heavily on English sources, most of which were written by Protestant missionaries of the early Korean church. Second, this study pays special attention to the writings of women missionaries. Third, the sources cast light on the statuses and activities of women in the early Korean church. Fourth, the study concludes with a new vision of women in the Korean church and a blueprint for their participation in missions in the twenty-first century.

Definitions

As is the case with any academic work, the clarification of terms is essential, since each may have various nuances of meaning. The following terms are key concepts of the study.

Chōndo Puin

Chōndo Puin is the common Korean term for the Bible Women. However, the English phrase "Bible Woman" also refers to *the Kwōnseo Puin* or women who worked

Korea Branch, "Homer Hulbert Biography" accessed August 23, 2014, <http://www.raskb.com/blog/2013/02/13/homer-hulbert-biography>.

as colporteurs for the Bible societies, such as the British and Foreign Bible Society.³⁹ The ambiguities in source materials often make it difficult to distinguish between these two categories. However, such distinctions may be unnecessary, since all types of Bible Women engaged in sharing the Bible, either orally or in print, and all were messengers to other women regarding new ways of being and thinking.

Evangelism

This dissertation employs the definition of evangelism found in Article 4 of the Lausanne Covenant:

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures and that, as the reigning Lord, he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, which is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with the view of persuading people to run to Him and so be reconciled with God. In issuing the gospel invitation, we must not conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify with His new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, participation in His Church, and responsible service in the world.⁴⁰

Revival Movement

“To revive” or “to renew” means to restore something to its original state, to replace with a fresh supply of energy, and to arrange for its continued vitality. J. Edwin Orr defines renewal as

an Evangelical Awakening is a movement of the Holy Spirit bringing about a revival of New Testament Christianity in the church of Christ and in its related community. Such an awakening may change in a significant way an individual only; or it may move a congregation, to the churches of a city or district, or the whole body of believers throughout a country or a continent; or indeed the larger body of believers throughout the world.⁴¹

³⁹Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women*, 55.

⁴⁰The Lausanne Movement, “The Lausanne Covenant,” accessed July 20, 2013, <http://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>.

⁴¹J. Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in Eastern Asia* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), vii.

Female *Chōndosa*

Male missionaries originally applied the term *chōndosa*, woman minister (evangelist), to female helpers and to Bible Women. By the 1930s, however, Korean churches began to apply the word to the office of professional ministers. Today, while a male *chōndosa* is in the process of ordination, a female *chōndosa* assists a male pastor, without the prospect of ordination. The term “female *chōndosa*” denotes the official position of an un-ordained woman minister.⁴²

A Limitation and a Delimitation

The studies of the Bible Women in this dissertation are limited in some ways. Few studies concentrate exclusively on women and their contribution in the history of Korean Christianity. Much of the material from primary and secondary sources only peripherally addresses the specific topic. Secondly, the sources of the literature researched are primarily from the Presbyterian and Methodist churches due to the scarcity of available material from other denominations. Therefore, this study was unable to capture the activities of the Bible Women that might have been found across other denominations.

The following delimitations apply to this dissertation’s study of the Bible Women. First, sources include only those records associated with Korean missions that actively utilized Bible Women during the period under investigation. Secondly, the research deals with the period 1885-1910, that is, from the birth of the Korean church to the Japanese annexation of Korea; it focuses on the Bible Women influence on the spread of the gospel and changes in the life experiences of Korean women.

Outline of Study

This chapter introduced the dissertation topic, purpose statement, research question, central argument, background, methodology, and significance.

⁴²Kwang Soon Lee, “Korean Women’s Understanding of Mission” (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1985), 119.

Chapter 2 sets the socio-historical stage, by indicating the situation of women under the late-Chosŏn dynasty, before the introduction of Christianity. This description is based on the extant historical records of foreign visitors and missionaries, which depict the depressing social condition of women before they accepted the gospel.

Chapter 3 discusses the context for the emergence of the Bible Women by examining the political situation when early Protestant missionaries began working in Korea, their specific mission strategies with Korean women, the non-spiritual results of their mission work, the emergence of the Bible Women as necessary partners to Western missionaries, and the impact of the work of these women. The chapter also explores the Bible Women's education, including some of the obstacles the missionaries encountered. Finally, I discuss the influence of mission work, the Bible Women, and female believers in general on the arrival of modernity and the decline of old Korean traditions.

Chapter 4 examines the organizations and activities of Christian women in the early Korean church, focusing on the Bible Women's relationship to and role in the missionaries' evangelistic efforts and the aspects of those that most contributed to their success. The chapter also explores the impact of the Bible Women on the evangelism and enlightenment of and change in the social statuses of women. I explore the participation of Christian women in social movements during the early period of the Korean church, as well as the discipleship of the Bible Women and female missionaries.

Chapter 5 examines the revival experience of Christian women in the early Korean church; it delves into the roles of women, their religious experiences, moral renewal, and the consequent growth of faith among Christian women leaders revealed in the early Korean revivals, from the Wonsan Revival of 1903 through the Pyeng Yang Revival of 1907. This chapter confirms the remarkable faith and leadership of the Bible Women, who transformed the meaning of the gospel from one of individual salvation to one of collective deliverance from social injustice and imperial suppression. The chapter also illuminates the influence of the Bible Women on the growth of social consciousness

among Christian women and their participation in the enlightened and nationalistic movements of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Chapter 6 discusses the phenomenon of the Korean Bible Women as a framework for contemporary missions in settings where, as a result of cultural or religious restrictions, women remain isolated and beyond the reach of traditional methods of evangelism. The chapter specifies the contextual elements that influence the success of the Bible Women model, the preparation of missionary teams to implement the model, the identification and recruitment of trainees, the equipping of indigenous Bible Women, and the accommodation of the Bible Women model to broader contexts in an overall mission strategy. Finally, the chapter proposes utilizing the framework to incorporate the Bible Women model in Indonesian missions.

The final chapter summarizes the research, presents conclusions, and offers insight on the implications of the study, which concludes with suggestions for further research on the Korean Bible Women and a consideration of the Bible Women model in applicable mission settings.

CHAPTER 2

THE LIVES OF KOREAN WOMEN BEFORE THE PROTESTANT MISSION

This chapter describes the lives of Korean women within the traditional society and religious traditions of the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392-1910), before the introduction of Protestant Christianity. Depicting the oppressive social conditions under which women lived and how they came about provides the background required to understand the attraction to Christianity that many felt in the late-1800s. Shamanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism together served a central role in Korea's cultural evolution beginning as early as the Ancient Kingdom of Korea, or Old Chosŏn, in the twenty-fourth century BC.¹ Protestant missionaries found all three religions still actively practiced when they arrived in 1884. Paul Hang-Sik Cho reported, "Syncretism had been a religious reality in Korea from time immemorial."² He cites Lak Geon Paik's observation to further illustrate,

Religious syncretism [in Korea] seems to reveal that the average Korean is largely guided by selfish interest and seeks in all three religions [Shamanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism] that which meets his want. Superstition may be another reason—more divinities bring more blessings. And above all, eclecticism, an idea that truth may be found by combining different beliefs, has played a large part in this phenomenon. However, this syncretism has a deeper significance: it is a sign of the demand for a universal religion which can offer all that other religions can offer—the highly ethical and moral standard of Confucianism, the religious inspiration of Buddhism, and the mysteries of life and death and the spiritual world of Shamanism. On the surface, the religious syncretism of the Korean people may

¹David Chung, *Syncretism: The Religious Context of Christian Beginning in Korea*, ed. Kang Nam Oh (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), 155.

²Paul Hong-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology: Experiences of the Korean Church* (Oxford: Regnum Book, 2010), 82.

seem an indication of a total indifference and undue tolerance towards religion, but examined more closely it shows a religious hunger.³

David Chung points out in *Syncretism* that,⁴ unlike contemporary western societies where an individual typically ascribes to a single set of religious principles, these religions were so intertwined that the missionaries' early reports reflect differing opinions regarding the state of Korea's organized religion at that time:

. . . from those who think that Koreans have no religion, to those who would say . . . that they are very religious. If you were to ask the average non-Christian Korean about his religion, he would say "no religion."⁵

He [a Korean] personally takes his own education from Confucius; he sends his wife to Buddha to pray for an offspring; and in the ills of life he willingly pays toll to Shamanist "Mudang" [sorceress].⁶

As a general thing, we may say that the all-round Korean will be a Confucianist when in society, a Buddhist when he philosophizes, and a spirit worshipper when he is in trouble.⁷

Korea's is a strange religion, a mixing of ancestor worship with Buddhism, Taoism, spirit cults, divination, magic, geomancy, astrology, and fetishism. Dragons play a part; devils of natural gods are abundant; "tokgabi" (elves, imps, goblins) are legion.⁸

Next, the traditional Korean religions: Shamanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism are examined. Discussions include both the religions' views and impact on women's lives, as well as how they influenced society and the construction of socio-cultural norms in Korea. These socio-cultural norms and the way in which women were

³Lak Geoon Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832-1910* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1971), 26-27.

⁴Chung, *Syncretism*, 91.

⁵Harry A. Rhodes, ed., *History of the Korea Mission, Presbyterian Church U.S.A., 1884-1934* (Seoul: The Presbyterian Church of Korea Department of Education, 1934), 47.

⁶George H. Jones, "The Spirit Worship of the Koreans," *Transactions, Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2, pt. 1 (1902): 39.

⁷Homer B. Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea* (New York: Kessinger, 1906), 403.

⁸James S. Gale, *Korea in Transition* (New York: Young People's Missionary Movement of the United States and Canada, 1909), 70.

treated and how they behaved very much influenced the receptivity of women to Christianity's message.

Traditional Religions and Korean Women

In *Theology of Culture*, Paul Tillich contended that religion is all the expressions of human spirits within a specific time and space.⁹ He also asserted that it is the special mixture of value, judgment, faith, purpose, hope, desire, and allegiance. Religion is therefore the most foundational and substantial element of culture.¹⁰ Culture contains the expression of the basic interests of religion. The religiosity of Korean women, therefore, was comprised of aspects of folk religion, shamanism, superstition, and spiritism. Under Shamanism's strong influence, Buddhism and Confucianism became distinctive forms of Shamanistic Buddhism and Shamanistic Confucianism.¹¹ One of the earliest Protestant missionaries, Horace Grant Underwood, offered an observation as a possible explanation as to why it appeared to early missionaries that the Korean people had no religion:

We find that even up to today she has been able to retain somewhat more of her ancient simplicity of belief. Shut in from the outside world as she has been during all these centuries, she has found satisfaction largely within herself, and has kept some of her primitive faith in the midst of invading polytheisms. Accepting Confucianism, she has adopted its ancestral worship and its code of ethics, and while acknowledging that "Tien Cha," "the son of Heaven,"... She accepted Buddhism, but simply as another religion, thus adding its deities to her pantheon. Nevertheless, through all their polytheistic tendencies they have held stoutly to their "Hananim". We find, then, that the three native religions, as developed in each individual land, are not answering all the needs of the people, and every one of them is showing a decided tendency to deteriorate, though at times there have been those who have protested and done their best to stop the downward trend.¹²

⁹Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 42.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Chung, *Syncretism*, 98.

¹²Horace G. Underwood, *The Religions of Eastern Asia* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 242-43.

In actuality, it is not that they did not have religion, but that traditional religion in Korea, especially Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shamanism, was inadequate. This resulted in Christianity's introduction to Korea at a time when the people felt a spiritual vacuum.

Korean Shamanism

Shamanism is the oldest form of Korean folk religion and predates the arrival of Confucianism and Buddhism, both of which were introduced to Korea in the fourth century BC.¹³ Shamanism had a pervading influence on the formation of the Korean religious mind from very early in the country's history to the present. The Buddhist monk Iryeon (1206-1289) recorded in the *Samguk yusa* that Tangun,¹⁴ the mythological founder of Korea was a shaman. The role of a shaman in early Korean history stands out as a very important figure, serving both as a political and religious leader in tribal Korea.¹⁵

At its core, Korean Shamanism seeks to resolve human problems through a meeting of humanity and the spirits. Shamanists believe that spirits of one's family

¹³Korean Shamanism has its roots in Siberia and shares attributes with similar expressions in Mongolia, Japan, and Manchuria. The term shaman is rooted in the Tungus language and means sorcerer, exorcist, doctor, or pharmacist. As a primitive religion without specific formal religious doctrines or systems, Shamanism takes on different shapes and characteristics varying by people group. Kil Sung Choi, *Understanding of Korean Shamanism* (Seoul: Yejeonsa, 1994), 21. Eliade asserts, "It is difficult to determine the 'origin' of Korean shamanism." Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), 462.

¹⁴Chung, *Syncretism*, 156. Clark relays the myth of Tangoon: "At early dawn, a tiger and bear met on the mountain-side and held a colloquy. 'Would that we might become men!' they said. Whanung overheard them, and a voice came out of the void to them saying, 'Here are twenty garlies, and a piece of Artemisia for each of you. Eat and retire from the light of the sun for thrice seven days, and you will become men.' They ate and retired to a cave, but the tiger, by reason of the fierceness of his nature, could not endure the restraint, and came forth before the allotted time. The bear, with greater faith and patience, waited the full twenty-one days and stepped forth a perfect woman. The first wish of the woman's heart was maternity, and she cried, 'Give me a son!' Whanung, the Spirit King, passing on the wind, beheld her sitting there beside the stream. He circled around her, breathed upon her, and her cry was answered. She cradled her babe in the moss beneath the paktal tree, and it was there that the wild people of the country in after years found him sitting, and they made him their king. This was Tangoon, whose name translated means the 'Lord of the Paktal Tree.'" Charles A. Clark, *Religions of Old Korea* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1961), 138-39.

¹⁵Joon Sik Choi, *The Development of "Three-Religions-Are-One" Principle from China to Korea: With an emphasis on Gang Jeungsan's Teachings* (Seoul: Jimoondang, 2009), 100.

ancestry and spirits of nature influence everything that happens in life. Negative aspects of daily life are believed to be the result of having displeased or not having paid sufficient attention to the spirits. All things positive in life are attributed to keeping the spirits satisfied by doing the right thing and paying appropriate homage to them. Shamans serve as invited mediators that interact seamlessly between the spirit world and the human world. Professor of Korean Studies Joon Sik Choi describes the Shaman's role and how it is performed:

The basic function of Korean Shamanism is to remove calamities or misfortunes, and to attain good fortune through a conciliatory reunion of gods and human beings. This becomes possible only by those who undertake divine rituals, involving singing and dancing. The Shamanistic ritual consists of three steps; 1) invocation of gods; 2) entertaining the gods and praying to them for human desires; and 3) granting a send-off to the gods.¹⁶

Shamanistic beliefs do not include moral values, since they only purport to gain blessings and remove disasters.¹⁷ Thus, Shamanistic beliefs oppress the moral character of humans, depreciate human personality, and inculcate a sensation of fear. Shamanistic beliefs make Koreans too reliant on others, ascribe their problems to spirits, and assume that all will go well if they perform a *Kut*¹⁸ through the shaman. Thus people, particularly badly treated Korean women, resign themselves to fate, leading to lethargy

¹⁶Ibid.,

¹⁷Joon Sik Choi, *Understanding Koreans and their Culture* (Seoul: Her One, 2007), 221.

¹⁸The Korean Shaman performs an exorcism to invoke god to give blessings to people, repel evil spirits, and send the spirit of the dead to the other world. The shaman directly communicates with spirits. The Shaman is the priest who can sense the spiritual world and exercise spiritual power, and accordingly, remove calamities and call in blessings. These interactions with the spirit world take several forms from individual counseling sessions at the Shaman's shrine (usually his or her home) to elaborate rituals called Kut. Different Kut serve different purposes, such as trying to conceive a son, ending a drought, paying homage to ancestors, blessing a new business, or healing the sick. Shaman are invited by both the patron and the spirits for the interaction. A Kut may last for several hours or more than a day and involve as many as eleven acts called kori with different costumes, offerings, songs, feats of balance, and spirit interaction in each. While its purpose may be serious, a Kut is meant to be both entertaining and engaging for both the patron and the spirits. In order to be effective the Shaman must know the patron's family ancestry. With very little formal institutionalization of Shamanism, each Shaman's Kut is unique and each is tailored to the specific situation and patron. Joon Sik Choi, *Shamanism: Fundamental Belief of Korean* (Seoul: Serving People, 2009), 43-75.

and a defeatist's mentality. Nonetheless, elements of Shamanism contributed to Korean people's acceptance of Christianity. Dong Sik Yu asserts,

The shallow realism of Shamanism has critically shaped the character of the Korean people. However, it also contributed to their acceptance of Christianity and its worldview, as they already believed in the God of heaven along with many other gods.¹⁹

As higher religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism made their way from China to Korea, Shamanism became less of a central religious practice, but still influenced these religions as they were adopted.

Shamanism's View on Women

As Kil Sung Choi discusses, there are many reasons why Shamanism is often referred to as the religion of women:

First, many feminine elements were found in important aspects of Shamanism, to the extent that Shamanism is evaluated as a gynocentric religion. Secondly, the majority of deep believers were female. Shamanistic actions concentrated mostly on private and household concerns such as children's health, a couple's marriage, or the home's prosperity. And finally, shaman was one of the few professional positions women in the Chosŏn Dynasty could occupy.²⁰

Mudangs (female shamans) outnumbered *Baksus* (male shamans) at an approximate ratio of seven to three.²¹ *Mudangs* were generally believed to be more effective than their male counterparts. In many cases, a *Baksu* would accompany a *Mudang* to a *Kut* and perform as her musician.²² *Mudangs* were quite visible in their profession often congregating together, either working or worshiping in larger numbers. These assemblies sometimes took place at auspicious places on commemorative days but other times in remote locations in the mountains. The system trained *Mudangs* in the

¹⁹Dong Sik Yu, *The History and Structure of Korean Mu Religion* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1997), 37.

²⁰Choi, *Understanding of Korean Shamanism*, 222-26.

²¹*Ibid.*, 222.

²²Dong Sik Yu, "The World of KUT and Korean Optimism," *Korea Journal* 8, no. 8 (1973):

ritualistic aspects of the religion learned through a long apprentice process.²³ These apprenticeships were individual woman-to-woman teaching relationships.

Korean Shamanism is considered a household religion in that it is performed within the boundary of the household with no temples or buildings as described by Charles A. Clark:

There are no great temples like those of the Buddhists, and nothing like the Haninkyō temples of Confucius. On the outskirts of every village, or on a nearby hilltop, there will be tiny shrines, varying from a two-foot cube to a building sometimes eight feet square. The “Koot” ceremonies are held outside shrines, not in them.²⁴

Shamanism has governed the religious consciousness of Korean people, particularly family-oriented Korean women. These women attend to Shamanistic beliefs and cultivate the spirits as guardians of the household.²⁵ They pray to the spirits for the prosperity of their family and share their faith with the family.

In the Chosŏn Dynasty, the shaman was one of the few professional positions women could occupy. Although the person occupying the position was considered a spiritual leader, her social status was the very lowest *chŏnmin* (lowborn people), considered to be on the same level as *gisaeng* (female entertainers), *euinyeo* (medical women), actors, blacksmiths, *nobi* (slaves), and jailers.²⁶ These were considered ‘dirty

²³Choi, *Understanding of Korean Shamanism*, 206.

²⁴Clark, *Religions of Old Korea*, 179.

²⁵Choi provides a high level summary of Shamanism’s role: “Korean women believe that the gods work with them and act with them against unreasonable and unjust occurrences. They look to the gods for support as they try to overcome their miserable reality and hope for a better future. Korean Shamanists calls female shamans to learn how to communicate with the earth, the gods, and the universe, and to lift up their voices through these practices. However, not only female shamans, but also most Korean women perform shamanistic rituals in their everyday lives. Shamanistic rituals and storytelling provide women with a cathartic release from their oppressive reality and empower them to share their pain. Shamanism, which existed from the beginning of Korean history, has been practiced continuously by many generations of women from ancient times to modern times, even though since the seventeenth century strong Confucian and Christian influences have encouraged people to disdain shamanistic rituals and practices.” Hee An Choi, *Korean Women and God: Experiencing God in a Multi-Religious Colonial Context* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005), 15-22.

²⁶Hulbert describes the Mudang’s position in society: “Women of the lower class comprising dancing-girls, slaves, courtesans, sorceresses [Mudang], and nuns are subject to none of the laws of

people' filling undesirable occupations.

Korean Buddhism

A Chinese missionary monk named Sundo introduced Buddhism to Korea in AD 372.²⁷ Korea readily adopted the religion and Buddhism flourished for more than 1,500 years being formally recognized as the national religion in AD 527.²⁸ Prior to the introduction of Buddhism kings worshipped "Heaven and Earth" at religiously significant places to solicit supernatural protection for the nation. Buddhism assumed this role replacing the indigenous faith. Thus, Buddhism succeeded in becoming the *hoguk pulgyo* (Buddhism that keeps the nation safe).²⁹ It served as a powerful influence on both technological and social change. Buddhist missionaries brought many advances to Korea including the Chinese Alphabet. Through the centuries Buddhism grew into a well organized institution with networks of monasteries becoming quite powerful as Choi points out in *The Development of "Three-Religions-Are-One" Principle from China to Korea*:

The Goryeo Dynasty which succeeded the Silla was the culmination of Korean Buddhism, with monks having high official ranks and the monasteries possessing huge tracts of land. The fact that the royal family (and the populace, as well) was favorable toward Buddhism throughout the dynasty can easily be confirmed by looking into the first article of the ten which the Tae Jo, the First King of the dynasty, bequeathed to his successors.³⁰

King Tae Jo created the ten articles toward the end of his reign in AD 943 to provide guidelines by which people should live in hope of preserving the order and prosperity that

seclusion that apply to so-called reputable women." Homer B. Hulbert, "The Status of Woman in Korea," *The Korea Review* 1 (December 1901): 532.

²⁷According to *Samguk Sagi*, Buddhism was introduced into Goguryeo in 372, in Baekje in 384, and in Silla, in 528. Choi, *The Development of "Three-Religions-Are-One*, 91.

²⁸Chung, *Syncretism*, 127.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Choi, *The Development of "Three-Religions-Are-One" Principle*, 94.

he instilled. The first article reads,

All the national affairs (hereafter) shall be managed and prosecuted under the protection, with the (spiritual) resources provided by Buddha. Therefore, the temples and monasteries of Seon (Zen in Japanese) and Kyo sects should be established and maintained.³¹

Buddhism's elementary teachings of karma³² and the pursuit of nirvana³³ blend well with Shamanism's foundational beliefs that all living things, all inanimate objects, and all natural forces embody spirits.³⁴ This blending of Buddhism with Shamanism's spirit worship resulted in Korea's unique version of Buddhism, which teaches that performing good deeds and living a good life yields blessing in both the earthly existence as well as the spirit world. Like the Kut, in which Mudangs assist a spirit to transition from the world of the living to the spirit world, Korean Buddhists believe that monks can assist in making the transition to paradise for a wandering spirit.³⁵

In 1392, Seong Gye Yi staged a rebellion, proclaiming himself King. He tried

³¹History of Goryeo, *Goryeo Sa: Se-ga (noble family history) II*, vol. 2 (Seoul: Kyungin, 2008), 55.

³²Cleary explains the concept of Karma: "Buddhist ethical teachings were grounded in the idea that in the natural course of cause and effect, wrong conduct would bring punishment and good conduct would accrue merit. *Karma* means 'deeds' or 'actions.' Actions bring inevitable results: Karmic reward or punishment." J. C. Cleary, *A Buddha from Korea: The Zen Teachings of T'AEGO* (Boston: Shambhala, 1988), 5.

³³Cleary explains Nirvana: "Peaceful extinction, the end of the cycle of birth and death, release from suffering. For bodhisattvas, nirvana is not experienced apart from the world of birth and death; in Great Vehicle Buddhism, clinging to nirvana is seen as the mark of the lesser vehicles." *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁴Nelson provides a summary of Buddhism's doctrine: "Buddhism's basic doctrine embraces the philosophy that life itself is a journey of suffering or discontentment. The Four Noble Truths, the foundation of the Dhamma, the Law, states that suffering begins at birth and progresses throughout one's growth, into illness, and eventually death. Buddhists attribute the cause of constant suffering to one's personal ambitions and desires, being driven by the wants of this earthly life. Liberation from this constant anguish is only achievable through focus and discipline following the Noble Eightfold Path that prescribes a combination of ethical conduct, right mindfulness, and learning. This is the goal of practicing Buddhism, to reach this state of nirvana, freeing oneself from the state of suffering." Walter Henry Nelson, *Buddha: His Life and His Teaching* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 1996), 146; Robert E. Buswell, Jr., *The Zen Monastic Experience: Buddhist Practice in Contemporary Korea* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 57.

³⁵Underwood, *The Religions of Eastern Asia*, 218.

to eliminate all Buddhist influence from the government and adopted Confucianism as the guiding principles for state management and moral decorum.³⁶ Throughout the five-century reign of Chosŏn, Confucian scholars strongly suppressed any effort to revive Buddhism. The number of monasteries dropped from 700 at its peak to 242 during the reign of T'aejong (1401-1418), and new construction was forbidden in the cities and villages of Korea.³⁷ Additionally, Buddhist monks were prohibited from entering the capital city. This remained the law until the second year of King Kojong's reign (1895). Underwood explains the volatile history:

The Japanese invaded the country with Buddhistic banners and emblems, not a few prominent Korean Buddhists were said to have joined them. The Japanese, with shaven heads and dressed as Korean Buddhist priests, entered the capital, and it is claimed, after being entertained by Buddhist monks in the city, returned with full details concerning the strength and fortifications of the capital. As a result of this, more stringent laws were enacted and the one or two Buddhist temples in the city were destroyed, so that up to time of the Japan-China war, not only was there no Buddhist temple in the city, but no Buddhist priest was allowed to enter its gates. Despite the fact that the late Queen was a very staunch Buddhist and a patron of many temples and monasteries, this law was not repealed until after the Japan-China war when the pro-Japanese party came into power. Even though it was then repealed, the law was again enacted and no shaven-headed monk dared enter the city until the second return of their champions, the Japanese.³⁸

Paik Lak Geon recognized Buddhism's deep influence despite that volatility saying, "Buddhism was one of the primary bases of the Korean culture. However, it lost its vitality in the nineteenth century."³⁹

The Buddhist View on Women

Buddhism does not explicitly consider women to be inferior to men.⁴⁰ It

³⁶Buswell, *The Zen Monastic Experience*, 23.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Horace G. Underwood, *The Call of Korea* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1908), 83.

³⁹Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions*, 22.

⁴⁰Nancy Schuster Barnes provides background on the view of women's religious capacities in Buddhism: "Originally no Buddhist doctrines asserted any difference between women's and men's religious capacities, aspirations, and accomplishments. But after the death of the Buddha, his followers began to speculate about the implications of his teachings. Then, about 300 B.C.E and before 200 C.E., a

considers men and women to be equally useful to society serving in different roles. Nor does it restrict or discourage women's educational opportunities. In terms of their religious participation, Buddhism accepts that similar to men, women are capable of realizing nirvana,⁴¹ although some followers believe that a woman cannot reach nirvana without first having been reincarnated as a man. Buddha did, however, provide strong caution regarding full ordination of women, saying that allowing them into the *sangha* (nunnery) would cause his teachings to survive only half as long, 500 years instead of 1,000 years.⁴²

Once women proved they were capable of managing affairs in the Order, Buddhism recognized their abilities and talents and gave them responsible positions as *bhikkhuni* (nuns). The *bhikkhuni* were required to learn and abide by 348 dictums while their male, *bhikkhu* counterpart (monks), had only 250. An additional Eight Rules specifically governed the relationship between the *bhikkhuni* and *bhikkhu*, which further illustrates their relative position to the male religious leaders counterpart.⁴³

The end of female acceptance in Korean Buddhism came during the Confucius regime's repression of Buddhism from 1400 to 1900.⁴⁴ During that period, the influence

doctrinal crisis erupted wherein the spiritual capacities of women were challenged and a real effort was made to prove theologically that women were inferior to men. It was during this period that Mahayana Buddhism arose, and it was some early Mahayanists who became champions of equality against the adherents of some of the older Buddhist schools." Nancy Schuster Barnes, "Buddhism," in *Women in World Religions*, ed. Arvind Sharma (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), 105, 114.

⁴¹Ibid., 106.

⁴²Ibid., 107.

⁴³Ja Woon, *SaBoon Bhikkuni Gyoe-Bon* (Seoul: Bhikkuni Associate, 1980).

⁴⁴Despite the additional rules and regulations for the Korean *bhikkhuni*, among Buddhist cultures, Korean Buddhism provides relatively favorable equality toward nuns. Unlike most Buddhist cultures, full ordination is available to nuns in Korea. They also have their own *sangha*, preceptresses, abbesses, and teachers, and they were financially independent from the *bhikkhu*. Korean *bhikkhuni* are thought to have benefited from Korea having had female shaman, or *Mudang* for centuries. This predominantly female Shamanistic spiritual medium likely provided some precedence paving the way for the Buddhist nuns. Joon Sik Choi, *Korean Religions as Reflected in Their Culture* Vol. 1 (Seoul: Sakyejul,

monasteries once had was largely dismantled. The following passage from Sukjong Sillok,⁴⁵ which relates to Saganwon's (the censorial official) argument to destroy Buddhist nunneries, illustrates how bhikkhuni were perceived at the time:

The reason why monks and nuns were banned from entering the city walls was to protect the people against lechery and cunningness, so as to correct the ways of the people. This is why the previous king destroyed all the nunneries. Yet, these days Buddhism has once again become popular, and nuns in groups of tens or hundreds live together within the ten li from the eastern suburbs and build big houses; these houses sparkle in gold, and six out of ten are built so close to each other that one could look into another house from one house. These houses have become the gathering places of wives who betrayed their husbands, maids who betrayed their masters, and unchaste widows. I cannot numerate the evil and lecherous deeds of these women. I ask your majesty to order these houses to be destroyed and the women to be sent to their proper places; please correct this wrong, and transform these women into proper people. (Sukjong Sillok 30/28/10)⁴⁶

The Confucian state's perspective was that nuns were adulterous and cunning beings, and even late-Chosŏn dynasty women did not stop favoring Buddhism. The record also implies there were large numbers of women serving as bhikkhuni, so numerous as to build houses in groups of tens and hundreds. Fearing that the bhikkhuni would disrupt Confucian order, the state forbade them from entering the city walls. In the first year of Yeongjo's⁴⁷ reign, the ban was expanded to include monks:

Seungji Yi Jeongju pleaded, "Because there are so many Buddhist temples close to the cities, many good daughters from proper families are lured into shaving their heads and becoming nuns. Your majesty must ban this practice." The king said, "Currently, the Confucian way is prosperous in the state; how could a petty number

2007), 419-25.

⁴⁵Sukjong (1661-1720), the nineteenth ruler of Chosŏn. Choi explained the historical significance of the Sillok: "The Sillok recorded all the events that occurred regarding the kings of the dynasty during the 472 years of *Chosŏn* (1392-1910), from those of the first king Yi Sung-gae to the 25th King, Cheoljong. The volume is quite extensive, with 53 million characters inscribed in the records." Choi, *Understanding Koreans*, 63.

⁴⁶Ji Young Jung, "Buddhist Nuns in Confucian Chosŏn Society," *The Review of Korean Studies* 11, no. 4 (2008): 150.

⁴⁷Yeongjo was the twenty-first king of the Korean *Chosŏn* Dynasty. The Sillok (Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty), which are registered as a 'Memory of the World' by UNESCO. This collection is the world's greatest historical record of a single dynasty in terms of volume. Choi, *Understanding Koreans*, 63-65.

of heretics harm the Confucian way? Only ban the nuns from entering the city walls.” (Yeongjo Sillok 1/3/5)⁴⁸

Bhikkhuni were considered dangerous, capable of contaminating proper women if unchecked. Although there were different kinds of nuns (unmarried, widowed, those who had committed adultery), the commonality between them was that they were not constricted by the Confucian family order. According to Ji Young Chung,

Even though the Chosŏn Wangjo Sillok records put the nuns in such a negative light, we can also read from the record how Buddhism was prosperous at the time. Also, we learn that despite Saganwon’s continual requests to have the nunneries destroyed the king never allowed it. The king knew that Buddhism, as a woman’s religion and culture, could not be destroyed merely by destroying a number of temples.⁴⁹

Korean Confucianism

Confucianism has existed in Korea since at least the third century⁵⁰ and the Yi Dynasty (1392-1910) adopted Confucianism as its state ideology for more than five hundred years.⁵¹ Choi described its cultural impact saying, “It exerted a great influence on the Korean way of life, even to the present, by regulating human relationships

⁴⁸Jung, “Buddhist Nuns,” 151.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Choi describes the origin of Confucian education in Korea: “Historical documents assert that in 372, Koreans already established a national college called Tae-hak in which various Confucian Classics were taught. This educational institution was founded in Goguryeo (37 B.C.E.-668), the most advanced country among the three old kingdoms of Korea. It is generally believed, therefore, that the same kind of institution was established in the two other countries, Baekje (18 B.C.E.-660) and Silla (57 B.C.E.-936) some time after 372. In 788, the first system of state examinations was established, called Dok-seo Sam-pum-gwa, in which examinees were obliged to study Confucian Classics. From that time to the last Yi dynasty, the system has continued to exist as the only way to become a government official.” Choi, *The Development of “Three-Religions-Are-One” Principle*, 84.

⁵¹Choi provides the background on the adoption of Confucianism in Korea: “Beginning with the Yi dynasty in 1392, Confucianism became the dominant ideology for all classes from the king to the common people, while Buddhism and Daoism were relentlessly suppressed. The Yi dynasty is generally considered to have been the most authentic and rigid example of Neo-Confucianism principles in action. However, unlike China, Neo-Confucianism in Korea was recognized as orthodox by the Yi dynasty Confucianists, but was confined to the Cheng-Zhu School. This school was introduced in 1290 by An Yu, the first Korean Neo-Confucianist, ninety years after the death of Zhu Xi. The followers of the Wang Yang-Ming school, as well as Confucianists whose interpretations of Neo-Confucianism varied even slightly from those of Zhu Xi, were sentenced to exile, sometimes even to death.” Ibid., 84-85.

according to its cardinal virtues as contained in the ‘Three Leading Rules and the Five Constant Relations.’”⁵² Concerning Korean Confucianism, Underwood noted, “Nominally today, this is a faith that holds a stronger place in Korea than all the other religions; and yet it does not answer the desire of the human heart, for it is a man-made faith and meets none of the requirements of the natural religious instinct.”⁵³ Many scholars regard Confucianism as a philosophy, not as a religion, because it does not have any view of the afterlife, nor does it have any belief in the divine. However, it is viewed as a religion, because it positively provided the meaning and direction of life to Korean people in the Chosŏn Dynasty.⁵⁴

An important distinctive with Confucianism is that it always begins with the family and prioritizes filial piety above everything else. Choi observes the following characteristics in that regard,

First, it is realistic and has a worldly orientation. It prescribes a set of ethics, which intend to put the human world in order. Therefore, it does not entertain questions,

⁵²Deuchler explains how the *Three Leading Rules (Samgang)* extend beyond their explicit application: “Social organization was tied together by a threefold mechanism: the domestic sphere, represented by the wife, was subordinated to the public sphere, represented by the father and son; they in turn were the sovereign’s subjects. *Sangang* objectified the hierarchical order of human society and at the same time stressed the interdependence between domestic and public spheres. Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 111. The following quotation comes from “The Youth’s Primer”: “Confucianism’s prescribed *Five constant relations (Oryun)* required for harmony remain consistent in Korean and Chinese Confucianism: between father and son, king and citizen, husband and wife, elder and younger, and between friends. As listed these relationships define a hierarchy in which to apply loyalty, obedience, and deference. Korean Confucianists augmented the relationships with three bonds or mandates referred to as the *Three leading rules*: sons must respect their fathers, citizens must respect their king, and wives must respect their husbands. The application of the three leading rules was done to provide a framework for governance and control.” “The Youth’s Primer,” *The Korean Repository* 2, no. 3, (1895): 96-102.

⁵³Underwood, *The Call of Korea*, 81.

⁵⁴Choi describes the foundational role played by Confucianism: “Confucianism, accurately speaking Zhuxi’s philosophy (School or Principle), was regarded as an orthodox teaching and as the ‘Ultimate Teaching under the Heaven’ by Chosŏn intellectuals. To them there was no truth beyond Zhu’s philosophy. The government and office-scholars of the Chosŏn eventually campaigned successfully to implement Confucianism as the most pervasive code of social ethics and rules of conduct. Consequently, in about three hundred years after the establishment of the Chosŏn Dynasty, Confucianism had permeated deep into every sector and class of society, exerting profound influence on the Korean people’s way of life.” Choi, *Understanding Koreans*, 14-15; idem, *Korean Religions*, 233.

such as the existence of God, eternity, or the afterlife. Everything is determined by the relative human relationships in the present. There is no space for a vertical relationship between the divine and humans, but instead the answer to everything is based on human relationship. These values and attitudes are demonstrated in the Confucian scholars' endless pursuit for position and power, since they only focused on present problems and issues. They ambitiously sought to be successful in this world. Second, Confucianism is a familiar religion. The relationships of father and son, husband and wife, and elders-youngers detailed in 'Three Leading Rules and the Five Constant Relations in Confucianism' regulate the order of the family. The relationship between king and subject is an extension of the father and son relationship. The order of communal society is scarcely considered, only family relationships based on blood ties matter. The interests of the family are the most important, and they determine everything. Public and national interests are lacking in this ethics. Third, individual rights are non-existent; Society is founded on the basis of family-centered ethics, and the nation is the extension of the family. Thus, individuals are considered only as an element of the family. The individual's destiny is constrained by family relationships. The position and behavior of an individual is determined by the family and the power of the family paves the way for the individual. The success of an individual is directly connected to the honor of the family. Face and honor are more important than individual personhood. Fourth, Confucianism is conservative and authoritarian. It is the authority of the family and tradition that maintains individuals who lack independence.⁵⁵

The concept of filial duty in Confucianism is not limited to parents, but influences other relationships in society as well. It is misinterpreted and manipulated as to provide other ethical virtues, which enable the privileged class continued existence. It requires absolute and unquestioning obedience to elders, and, by extension, the ruling class. Considerable resentment had built up over this manipulation and repressiveness.

Devout Korean Christian and political activist Chi Ho Yun provided a scathing indictment of Confucianism in an article he authored for *The Korean Repository Magazine*.⁵⁶ Charles Allen Clark assessed Yun's article highlighting seven points he believes to be largely true,

(1) Confucianism enfeebles and gradually destroys the faculty of faith. It is an agnostic system. (2) It nourishes pride, tells men that they are naturally good, overlooks the distinction between moral and mental. (3) Knowing no ideal higher than a man, it is unable to produce a godly or god-like person. Its followers may be moral, but never spiritual. (4) It encourages selfishness. It never says go and teach. It always says, come and learn. (5) It exalts filial piety to the position of highest virtue, but saps the foundations of morality by classifying women with menials and

⁵⁵Choi, *Korean Religions*, 194-202.

⁵⁶Chi Ho Yun, "Confucianism in Korea," *The Korean Repository* 2, no. 11 (1895): 401-4.

slaves. (6) It aims to make people good through legislation. (7) It makes me hunger for office that they may be in a position to squeeze and hurt others.⁵⁷

The Confucian View on Women

As previously mentioned, Confucianism holds women in very low regard. Its code of conduct during the Chosŏn Dynasty impacted their rights and roles in every aspect of their lives.⁵⁸ Implementing this code of conduct resulted in an extreme patriarchal society and systematically interfered with many women's individual human rights. Choi further elucidates,

One such Confucian influence was the institutionalization of a patriarchal system in Chosŏn society. In this respect, the entire history of Chosŏn can be interpreted as the process of the exclusion of women. Women's rights became increasingly weakened as Chosŏn history evolved. For example, up to the early Chosŏn period, a daughter could inherit her father's estate or other properties and keep them for life. She was also able to choose an heir in her will. Such privileges for women, however, had disappeared by the mid-seventeenth century when Confucian patriarchal system was institutionalized.⁵⁹

Confucian ethics of gender classification brought about fixed gender discrimination for generations that rippled through most core elements of a woman's life. Hee An Choi describes this bias,

Under such social conditions and Confucian teachings, women learned their designated roles and duties. It was believed that sex differences and sexual discrimination were an essential part of the Confucian cosmic order, necessary in order to maintain universal harmony. For example, during the Yi Dynasty, Confucianism had two major principles governing the interactions between the sexes: *namnyo-yubyol* (sex difference) and *namjon-yobi* (honored men, abased women).⁶⁰

Women's lives were confined to the sphere of the household. Governed by the three central principles of chastity,⁶¹ loyalty, and familial piety, a woman's

⁵⁷Clark, *Religions of Old Korea*, 123-24.

⁵⁸Choi, *Understanding Koreans*, 15.

⁵⁹Ibid., 14-15.

⁶⁰Choi, *Korean Women and God*, 37.

⁶¹Lee describes the importance placed on *chastity* in the Chosŏn dynasty: "Another deeply ingrained ethical principle was chastity. Many women killed themselves to keep their chastity from enemy troops. Many a widow committed suicide to follow their husband in death. This practice increased in the

responsibilities under Confucianism were limited to courtesy to the husband's family, providing a son to continue the family lineage, raising the children and providing their basic educational needs, and managing the affairs of the household. In these circumstances, a woman's life was completely shuttered from the public sphere. Educational opportunities, as well as social and political participation, were solely available to men.

Traditional Korean Society

Prior to Confucianism's influence, genders interacted freely. Hyun Hee Lee describes the pre-Confucianism social interaction,

In *Wiji Dongijeon* (Korean writing) of *Samgukji*,⁶² an ancient Chinese source, said, ancient Korea initially had a Non-Patrilineal family structure. Koreans mixed gender relationships were so natural that groups of men and women enjoyed couples dances and singing together.⁶³

However, the introduction of Confucianism at the end of the Koyro Dynasty profoundly impacted women, severely degrading their role and position in society. Woo Jung Lee explains the parallel between man and woman, and royalty and subject,

For the purpose of strengthening royal authority, Confucian royalty was emphasized in the relations of sovereign and subject: "A royal subject does not serve two kings." In order to support the philosophy of royalty, the image of the virtuous woman was also emphasized: "A woman does not serve two husbands." It implied that the man served under the absolute authority of the king as the retainer. It further implied that the woman served under the absolute authority of the husband. Consequently, this strict patriarchal structure severely constrained the scope of women's activity.⁶⁴

latter part of *Chosŏn* because the principle of chastity so widespread and deep-rooted that women could only draw attention through such an extreme act." Bae Yong Lee, *Women in Korean History* (Seoul: Ewha Womans University Press, 2008), 16.

⁶²Chinese historian Chen Shou describes Korean folk life in this book written in A.D. 279. It is believed that this is the oldest document about the lives of Korean people. Bo Kyung Park, "The Contributions of Korean Christian Women to the Church and Its Mission: Implication for an Evangelical Missiology" (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999), 18.

⁶³Hyun Hee Lee, *The History of Women Enlightenment in the Modern Period of Korea* (Seoul: Ewoo Monhwasa, 1982), 8.

⁶⁴Woo Jung Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women over 100 years* (Seoul: Minjungsa, 1985), 11.

Institutionalizing Confucianism and its patriarchal hierarchy during the Chosŏn Dynasty profoundly changed the Korean woman's role. Women's educational opportunities were extremely limited and, accordingly, women had little means or motivation to improve their lives. While some female shamans enjoyed a considerable religious position, they also were under the control of Confucian values and worldviews. Women held a low rank in families, and more generally in Korean society. For a woman, life was endless drudgery, with constant subjugation to their husbands. They were unable to make any decisions and were usually confined to their homes. As such, they were relegated to raising children and doing housework.

Social Status of Women in Chosŏn

The women in Chosŏn were thoroughly isolated from society under the control of the ideology of chastity and *Naeŏe* law ("law separating the outside and inside").⁶⁵ The position of women was well reflected in the traditional saying, "If the voice of a woman is heard outside of the house, three generations of the family will fall, if women and China are handed around outside, they will be ruined."⁶⁶

⁶⁵Lee explains both the concept and the origin of *naeŏebeop*: "The Confucian-oriented rulers of Chosŏn imposed rigid moral doctrine upon women. They considered family as the basic unit of society and the conduit to social stability under well-managed patriarchal order. Therefore, the rulers of Chosŏn made strenuous efforts to incorporate Confucian ethical norms, stressing distinction between classes and sexes and elaborate family rituals, into the daily life of the people. They believed women needed to be regulated to maintain order in individual households and the family-based social structure. As a result, boys and girls as young as seven years of age were taught not to mingle with another. Women had to hide their faces when they went out of the house. Unlike under Goryeo, they were no longer allowed to visit Buddhist temples or ride horses. The strict rule of sex segregation was defined as *naeŏebeop*, literally the 'law separating the outside and inside.' Men and women, and even husband and wife, were strictly distinguished and had to adhere to a code of etiquette with each other. More specifically, *naeŏebeop* required males and females to not contact one another and keep distance. The idea derived from the Chinese classic, Book of Rites (*Liji* or *Yegi* in Korean), which provided in its chapter on 'Pattern of Family' that 'men and women should neither sit nor eat together when they have become seven years old.' Accordingly, upper-class homes segregated men and women into walled sections connected with gates. They passed through the gates to other quarters only when necessary. Women of the noble class were not supposed to speak directly to men other than their family members. When it was inevitable, they could only speak indirectly in the form of addressing to a third person even if there was nobody else around." Lee, *Women in Korean History*, 29-30.

⁶⁶Woo Jung Lee, "Korean Proverbs and Depersonalization of Korean Women," in *Modern*

Here the woman is recognized as an incapable, dependent, and subordinate being, who must be confined within the house. *Samjongjido*⁶⁷ made women totally dependent on men, and degraded their function to being nothing more than a means of child birth and rearing. Most women were silent, since they did not have any power to affect the strong patriarchal structure. A woman did not even have her own name and was referred to as the subjective object of a relation to a male.

The situation of women at the end of the Chosŏn Dynasty period is well described in *Corea, The Hermit Nation*, which was widely read by early Protestant missionaries for the purpose of understanding Korea. Referring to the records of the French Catholic missionaries who worked in Korea earlier, W. E. Griffis recounts the position and role of Korean women in those times:

According to the opinions of the French missionaries, who were familiar with the social life of the people, a Korean woman has no moral existence. She has no name. In childhood she receives indeed a surname by which she is known in the family, and by near friends, but at the age of puberty, none but her father and mother employs this appellative. To all others she is “the sister” of such a one, or “the daughter” of so-and-so. After her marriage her name is buried. She is absolutely nameless. Her own parents allude to her by employing the name of district or ward in which she has married. Her parents-in-law speak of her by the name of the place in which she lived before marriage, as women rarely marry in the same village with their husband. When she bears children, she is “the mother” of so-and-so.⁶⁸

In the eyes of French missionaries, Korean women were no better than domestic slaves. Griffis found the slavish situation of women in their namelessness. While a Korean man in the Chosŏn Dynasty era had several names in addition to his own name, including a pen name, a woman was called ‘somebody’s daughter,’ ‘somebody’s wife,’

Korean Women, ed. Woo Jung Lee, Hu Chung Yoon, Hyo Jae Lee, In Ryong Shin, In Ho Lee, and Tae Young Lee (Seoul: Sam Min Sa, 1986), 59.

⁶⁷An excerpt from “The Youth’s Primer,” describes the important concept of the Three Following Ways: “Three Following Ways: In Korea custom decrees that, a female should in childhood *follow*, that is submit to her father: in wifehood she should *follow* her husband; and in widowhood she should *follow* her eldest son. This obligation which covers a woman’s lifetime is known as the Three Following Ways.” “The Youth’s Primer,” 102.

⁶⁸William E. Griffis, *Corea: The Hermit Nation* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1884), 244.

‘somebody’s mother,’ ‘somebody’s grandmother,’ etc. It was honorable only when the ‘somebody’ was a man.⁶⁹ In the feudal society, Korean women existed only in the subjective relation to men. Such subjective relationships were also present in their married life. Isabella Bird Bishop, an English writer who visited Korea three times between 1894 and 1898, describes the life of Korean housewives:

The wife has recognized duties to her husband, but he has few, if any, to her. It is correct for a man to treat his wife with external marks of respect, but he would be an object for scorn and ridicule if he showed her affection or treated her as a companion. Among the upper classes a bridegroom, after passing three or four days with his wife, leaves her for a considerable time to show his indifference. To act otherwise would be “bad form.” My impression is that the community of interests and occupations which poverty gives, and the embargo which it lays on other connections, in Korea as in some other Oriental countries, produces happier marriages among the lower orders than among the higher. Korean women have always borne the yoke. They accept inferiority as their natural lot; they do not look for affection in marriage, and probable the idea of breaking custom never occurs to them. Usually they submit quietly to the rule of the *belle-mere*, and those who are insubordinate and provoke scenes of anger and scandal are reduced to order by a severe beating, when they are women of the people. But in the noble class custom forbids a husband to strike his wife, and as his only remedy is a divorce and remarriage is difficult, he usually resigns himself to his fate. But if, in addition to tormenting him and destroying the peace of his house, the wife is unfaithful, he can take her to a mandarin, who, after giving her a severe beating, may bestow her on a satellite.⁷⁰

Some missionaries found the patriarchal social order disadvantageous to women in Sung Confucianism. American Methodist missionary G. H. Jones, who came in 1887, working in Seoul and Incheon, is one of those representatives. Jones details the philosophical background of Korean women’s inferiority complex in terms of yin and yang:

A Korean’s views of womankind are based on a dualistic philosophy which dominates his mind. All nature appears to consist of pairs of opposites, he does not with the Zoroastrian that these opposites are also antagonists. These categories run as follows; - heaven and earth, light and darkness, strength and weakness, superiority and inferiority, virtue and iniquity, male and female and so on. The first

⁶⁹Duk Joo Lee, “Freedom, Liberation, and Practice: Understanding Early Christian Women in Korea (1887-1920),” in *Korean Church and Women*, ed. The Korean Church Research Center (Seoul: IVP, 2013), 15.

⁷⁰Isabella B. Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors: A Narrative of Travel with an Account of the Recent Vicissitude and Present Condition of the Country* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1898), 118-19.

member of each couple is always the superior, the second the inferior; as scientific categories they appear to be based in the very constitution of nature and are thus necessarily correct.⁷¹

Homer B. Herbert, another American Methodist missionary, taught at Royal English School and *Baejaehakdang* (boy's school) and reported "The Status of Woman in Korea," which focused on the isolation in which Korean women had to live. He was especially interested in the culture of isolation that was imposed upon Korean women:

In discussing the condition of woman in Korea it will be necessary to classify them, for the degree of seclusion depends upon the position which the woman holds in society. In a general way women may be divided into three classes, the higher or yang-ban class, the middle or common class and the low or despised class. As might be expected the seclusion of women here corresponds to the term exclusive in western lands. The higher her position the greater her seclusion. And just as women pride themselves on their exclusiveness in the enlightened West so women in Korea pride themselves on their seclusion. But let us inquire to what extent the Korean woman of upper class, the lady is secluded.⁷²

Adhering to *Naeŏe*, women took refuge in the home's modest *anbang* (woman's living room).⁷³ This inner-house safe haven where most of her daily work took place also became the center of her social circle with other women, isolated from the rest of the house. An entire *anbang* culture resulted, which valued women's concealment. Women were also required to wear a shroud skirt when they left the home. This skirt served as a symbol of a woman's life of isolation. It also is derived from yin and yang dualism in Confucianism. In the feudal order, which is characterized by discrimination and distance, there similarly arose the unique culture of seclusion. In these circumstances, women became passive in everything. Though women had creativity and talents, they suppressed them, rather than developing or showcasing their abilities. This was the background in which women lived as forgotten and nameless beings. It was the task of woman to overcome these problems.

⁷¹George H. Jones, "The Status of Woman in Korea," *The Korean Repository* 3, no. 6 (1896): 223-24.

⁷²Hulbert, "The Status of Woman in Korea," 530.

⁷³Lee-Ellen R. R. Strawn, "Korean Bible Women 1888 to 1930: Effecting Change for Women from the *Anbang* to the Public Square" (Ph.D. diss., Yonsei University, 2011), vi.

Household and Marriage

Marriage was anything but a liberating experience for traditional Korean women. A bride normally moved into her husband's house where he resided with his parents. This implies that a woman did not marry to live with her husband, but to live with her husband's family. Because of this, a father whose daughter approached marriageable age thoroughly educated her regarding *samjongjido* (Three Following Ways) and *chilgeojiak* (Seven Reasons for Divorce).⁷⁴ Violating any of the *chilgeojiak* served as grounds for the husband to terminate the marriage and cast the wife out.⁷⁵ Her natural duty in that situation was to take her own life.

A woman's remarriage was strictly forbidden. In the death of her husband she was expected to live the rest of her days as a widow. As unsatisfying as married life might be, a young widow lived a more miserable life within the walls of her deceased husband's family. *Yeollyeos* (widows who remained faithful to their dead husband) were recognized by the home's front door being painted red, known as a *Hongsalmun*.⁷⁶ Hee An Choi explains the expectation,

A woman's reputation was determined not only by her chastity, but also by her capacity to look after her husband and his family. Filial piety to his family was upheld as the essential value in Confucianism, at least in Koreanized Confucianism. Women had to maintain this fidelity their whole lives and even after death. Once

⁷⁴The "The Youth's Primer" provides the consequences for not adhering to *Samjongjido* and *Chilgeojiak*: "The husband must manifest dignity and the wife docility ere the house will be well governed. Should the husband be incompetent to govern alone, not able to follow his way (of propriety), and the wife encourage him in his incompetence, departing from righteousness by not sewing –the 'Three Following Ways' (proprieties governing woman's submission) will be obscured, and the there be 'Seven Reasons for Divorce' through which a husband may find relief, his house will be annihilated by his incompetence. A man honors himself by governing his wife, and a woman honors herself by subordinating herself to her husband." "The Youth's Primer," 98.

⁷⁵An excerpt from "The Youth's Primer" enumerates the Seven Reasons for Divorce: "(1) incompatibility with her husband's parents; (2) adultery; (3) jealousy; (4) barrenness; (5) incurable disease; (6) quarrelsome; (7) theft." *Ibid.*, 102.

⁷⁶Joo Park, *Women in Confucianism* (Seoul: Kuk Hak Archives, 2008), 17. Park writes, "Park Young-Hyo, who failed in Gapsin Revolution and fled to Japan, insisted, in his 'Flowering for by Appeal,' on achieving gender equality by allowing remarriage of a widow and prohibiting concubinage. Finally, in the Gabo Reform in 1894, the bill for remarriage of widows was adopted." Young Ok Park, *The History of Women's Modernization Movement in Korea* (Seoul: Ji Sik Sa, 2001), 226-27.

they were married, they had to serve their husbands' families and children, whether their husbands were alive or not. These ideologies have been enormously influential in Korean society and have been practiced and enhanced throughout generations.⁷⁷

Catholicism and Donghak Influences in the late Chosŏn Era

In the late Chosŏn period, long before Protestant missions arrived, two significant events forecasted the potential for the Korean women's enlightenment: the Catholic women's movement and the Donghak religious movement. Drawn by elements of ideology that considered women on more equal terms, Chosŏn women participated in religious and social movements such as Catholicism and the homegrown Eastern Learning (*Donghak*), which threatened the Confucian social order.

Catholic Women's Enlightenment

Despite the determined seclusion policy of the Chosŏn Dynasty, Korean envoys who regularly visited China for political purposes frequently met Western missionaries in Beijing.⁷⁸ Catholicism was introduced to the peninsula after Korean Seung Hoon Lee was baptized as Peter in Beijing and established a church in 1784. Lee converted a few other Koreans and appointed them as evangelists, who put much more effort into evangelism. As a result, over a thousand men and women were baptized and formed a church in Chosŏn.⁷⁹

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the conflict between Catholicism and Confucianism grew more heated. The two viewpoints could not find a middle ground on the *chesa* (ancestor worship), which Catholicism rejected as idolatry. Unsurprisingly the Chosŏn Dynasty began to oppress Catholicism, believing that it opposed the fundamental ethical teachings of Confucianism. Catholics faced cruel persecutions because their

⁷⁷Choi, *Korean Women and God*, 38.

⁷⁸Kyung Bae Min, *A History of Christian Churches in Korea* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2005), 34.

⁷⁹Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions*, 32.

religion rejected traditional Confucianism by promoting gender equality, sharing wealth, abolished strict rules on women, and abolished the *chesa*:

Persecution against Catholics continued throughout the early nineteenth century, but the final and greatest outbreak of persecution occurred in 1866 under the fearful rule of the Regent Tai Won Kun. No one knows exactly how many Korean Catholics died, but it is estimated that more than two thousand perished during that year. There were still about 17,500 Catholics in Korea in the late nineteenth century, but they were so scattered and driven underground that the earliest Protestant missionaries could find little trace of them at first.⁸⁰

The doctrine that treats women as equal to men conveyed a different image of women living in a traditional patriarchal society and provided an opportunity for those bound by old customs to examine their own lives:

Kang Won Suk, in particular, was a Catholic woman leader who taught other believers the Catholic doctrines. She was born into a ruling class family in the Naepo region and became the second wife of Hong Ji Yeong. Her husband was narrow-minded and she spent years in distress, wishing to become a Buddhist nun. When Catholicism was introduced to Chungcheong province, she interpreted the Korean translation of Catholicism, Cheonju-gyo, as “teaching by the master of heaven and earth” and obtained a book to study the doctrine, believing that the doctrines taught by this religion would be correct because its name sounded correct. As a result, she became a devoted believer and evangelized her family and relatives as well as other villagers. She made every effort to convert her husband, but when she realized that she could not, she took her mother-in-law and her stepson to the Catholic Church in Seoul. She helped the church regardless of the size of the task. Her devotion inspired other women believers who kept their faith without wavering during the countless persecutions of Catholicism.⁸¹

In other words, women believers, once they overcame the constraints of tradition, risked their lives to preserve the new world that they had tasted. As such, women played a crucial role in maintaining the faith during persecutions and leaving the legacy of faith to the following generations.

Despite severe government persecution, Catholicism helped Korean women become much more self-aware, radically changing their lives. Female converts came out of their home to propagate their faith, defying norms of gender separation, and Bible

⁸⁰Katherine H. Lee Ahn, *Awakening the Hermit Kingdom: Pioneer American Women Missionaries in Korea* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 11.

⁸¹Ok Hee Kim, *The History of Catholic Women's Movement in Korea* (Seoul: Korean Liberal Arts and Sciences, 1983), 83-84.

studies offered them access to a missionary association founded by Wen-Mo Zhou, *Myeongdohoe*.⁸² In 1801, Won Suk Kang, Father Zhou, and 300 other believers were martyred.⁸³ From 1866 to 1873 more than 8,000 Catholics were slaughtered in an effort to squelch its adoption.⁸⁴ Although the brutality of persecutions extinguished Catholicism's propagation, its radical teachings planted the seeds of the women's enlightenment movement in the coming decades.

Donghak Movement

In 1860, the year of Eastern Learning's foundation, apprehension about and vigilance against the Western Powers were escalating due to the intrusion of Catholicism and the Anglo-French occupation of Beijing:

The first patriarch, Je-u Ch'oe (1824–1884), founded Eastern Learning in April 1860. His father was a renowned Confucian scholar who died when Je-u Ch'oe was sixteen years old. After his father's death, he wandered around the country without a home, meditating, for two decades. Eventually, he mastered the doctrine of Eastern Learning and established the movement. Eastern Learning was deeply rooted in the awareness that the existing religions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism were not capable of dealing with the crisis created by the intrusion of Catholicism.⁸⁵

Je-u Ch'oe understood people's emotions and began to spread the doctrine of Eastern Learning with a motivation to promote the national interest and provide for the welfare of the people:

In the early 19th century, the social class system, which consisted of *Yangban* (ruling class), *Jungin* (middle class), *Sangmin* (common class), and *Cheonmin* (lowest class), started to collapse and so did the concept of willingly tolerating subservient jobs. Financial pressures began to cause increased diversification among the social classes. In this social turmoil, the Yangban class strived to maintain their predominant position, to no avail, and anti-feudal sentiments among peasants continued to grow. Such social transition was reflected in the doctrine of Eastern Learning; for example, the core doctrine of Eastern Learning is "Man is Heaven",

⁸²*A History of the Christianity in Korea* Vol. 1, ed. The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 2011), 1:67.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 69.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 85.

⁸⁵Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women*, 17.

which means human nature is of the heavens and people need to recover their celestial nature by washing wickedness from their hearts. “Man is Heaven” is put into practice as “Treat People as Heaven,” which means everybody should be treated equally.⁸⁶

He boldly opposed the Confucian concept of the predominance of men over women and tried to accomplish equality by enlightening women:

He warmly encouraged women not to worry and be at peace because women were born by the will of Haneulnim (Master of Heaven). Eastern Learning deserves special recognition since it started from an internal motivation of the Korean people, not as a result of an external impact or the introduction of foreign ideology. Ch’oe Je-u himself set an example as a pioneer of women’s liberation by freeing two maidservants and welcoming them into his family as an adopted daughter and a daughter-in-law. In November 1889, he wrote “Guidelines for Women”, encouraging women to love their daughters-in-law, to treat servants as their own children, not to abuse children, to practice prenatal care, and to love domestic animals; as such, the book strongly advocated the equality of men and women, respect for women, and humanism.⁸⁷

Unfortunately, Je-u Ch’oe was beheaded in Daegu five years after he founded the doctrine.

Among the twelve provisions he wrote, he included a provision with regard to banning young widows’ remarriage. It said their remarriage should be permitted since the ban was a byproduct of Neo-Confucianism, which had been employed in order to strengthen royal power. This doctrine of Eastern Learning, as well as the modernization movement, had a great influence on the establishment of written law permitting young widows’ remarriage during the 1894 Reformation.⁸⁸ As such, Eastern Learning began to enlighten women; it is not an exaggeration to view Eastern Learning as a quickening stage of women’s awareness. A twenty-two year old woman named So-Sa Lee, became a leader of the Donghak revolutionary militia.⁸⁹ Through the Donghak movement, a new

⁸⁶Ibid., 18.

⁸⁷Young Ok Park, *The History of Women’s Modernization Movement in Korea* (Seoul: Ji Sik Sa, 2001), 26.

⁸⁸Sun Ae Chu, *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea* (Seoul: Dae Han Presbyterian Church Women’s Association Press, 1978), 37.

⁸⁹Park, *The History of Women’s Modernization Movement in Korea*, 43.

view of women's rights set precedents for the modern enlightenment of Korean women.

Women in the Chosŏn Dynasty Era and the Confucian Culture

Even though Roman Catholicism and the Donghak movement contributed to the promotion of women's rights before the arrival of Protestant missionaries, the vast majority of Korean women suffered from discrimination under the continuing strong Confucian values and rigid patriarchal social structure. In the eyes of western missionaries who visited or worked in Korea at the end of the nineteenth century, the life and culture of Korean women was oppressive, characterized by isolation, discrimination, and subordination. However, that same oppressive environment, and the associated hopelessness of Korean women, served as a key element that influenced the direction of the early Korean mission for women. That is to say, liberation of women from patriarchal inequality and the oppressive social structure became a central goal.

In order to achieve this goal, there was a desperate need for a new mindset and religion, which could replace Confucianism and provide a new definition of human beings, especially women, in terms of freedom and equality. The time was right for the arrival of Protestant Christianity.

CHAPTER 3

THE EMERGENCE OF BIBLE WOMEN

The confluence of a number of events, circumstances, and the strategic decisions of Protestant missionaries resulted in the emergence of the Korean Bible Women in the late 1880s. In less than three decades, a small team of missionaries partnered with growing numbers of Bible Women, evangelized thousands of Korean women, and established schools and hospitals that are still operational today. Bible Women triggered the social reform of the Confucian system that had subjugated women for centuries. This chapter examines those events and circumstances, the commencement of Protestant missionary work in Korea, and the resulting establishment of Bible Women as a professional position in which women supported that missionary work. First, the context for the emergence of the Bible Women is discussed by examining the political situation when early protestant missionaries began working in Korea, the specific mission strategies employed for engaging with women, the nature of their missionary work, the emergence of Bible Women as a necessary partner to Western missionaries, and the impact of the work of these women. Second, the education of Bible Women is explored, including some of the obstacles the missionaries encountered. Finally, the effect of missionary work, the Bible Women's contributions, and women believers in general on the old traditions of Korean society is discussed.

Political Backdrop for Protestant Missions

Around the time that US missionaries entered, the Chosŏn Dynasty was on the verge of collapse through a series of national disturbances.¹ Chosŏn was subject to political

¹Dae Young Ryu, *Early American Missionaries in Korea 1884-1910: Understanding*

interests pursued by surrounding powers including Japan, China, and Russia that waged war against one another to hold sway over the nation. Unlike neighboring countries that reformed their societies and cultures through modernization, Chosŏn retained the Seclusion Policy, leading to it being commonly referred to as the Hermit Kingdom.²

Missionaries from Their Middle-Class Background (Seoul: The Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea, 2001), 28; Allen D. Clark, *History of the Korean Church* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1961), 96-97. Park chronicles the historical political events surrounding the arrival of the missionaries: “It was in the critical moment that the foreign missionaries came to the Chosŏn Dynasty: I-mo Coup in 1882, Gapsin Coup in 1884, the Political Reform in 1894, the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Assassination of Queen Min, Korea Royal Refuge at the Russian Legation in 1896, and Russo-Japanese War in 1904. Chosŏn’s refusal to open its door ended up, however, failing to adjust itself to the changing political circumstances of Asia around the end of 19th century, and Japan was gaining more and more control over the nation. In the end, Chosŏn was annexed by Japan in 1910, as foreshadowed by the series of political disturbances at the turn of 20th centuries. ’Now, the political circumstance of Chosŏn alerted the nation to the critical situation it faced, and Korean people were gaining resolve to take action to hold their country. It was urgent that Emperor, Empress, and the government officials take measures against the foreign encroachment of Japan. However, the effort of Chosŏn’s court to resist the foreign powers ended up failing with Empress Min assassinated by the Japanese. Around the end of the Dynasty, Korean women were living in immense national turmoil. Even before the Japanese annexation, Korean women began to shape a new perspective regarding their roles through the influence of missionaries. To some extent, the women’s change resulted from desperate circumstances that demanded breakthrough. Their shaping of the new perspective gained momentum with the arrival of women missionaries from the United States. They instilled expectations for the new civilization and yearnings for the enlightenment in the local women. Unlike their expectations, however, the lives of Korean women were conditioned by the severe restraints that traditional society had been imposing on them.” Young Ok Park, “Christianity and Women’s Modernization,” in *Women! Wake up, Rise and Sing: The 100-Years History of Korean Christian Women*, prep. Women’s Anniversary Committee for 100 Years of Korean Church History (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1985), 73-110.

²Ahn describes important political changes resulting in broader access to Korea by missionaries: “While the work and pleas of the missionaries and Korean Christians started to catch the attention of American mission boards, political changes helped to open Korea to western influence and to allow Protestant missionaries to enter. Korean government’s attitude and policy toward Western nations began to change mostly because of the abdication of the powerful Regent Tai Won Kun. Although he ruled Korea with an iron fist for nearly ten years on behalf of the young King *Kojong*, his own hand-picked daughter-in-law, Queen Min, eventually pushed him out of the court. Unlike the conservative Tai Won Kun the progressive queen felt the need to open the country to foreign relations with Western powers. Soon after the fall of the Tai Won Kun in 1874, Korea concluded treaties with foreign powers.” Katherine H. Lee Ahn, *Awakening the Hermit Kingdom: Pioneer American Women Missionaries in Korea* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 13. Bishop detailed international treaties affecting access to Korea: “Up to 1876 Korea successfully preserved her isolation, and repelled with violence any attempt encroach upon it. In that year Japan forced a treaty upon her, and in 1882 China followed with ‘Trade and Frontier Regulations.’ The United States negotiated a treaty in 1882, Great Britain and Germany in 1884, Russia and Italy in 1886, and Austria in 1892, in all which, though and under Chinese suzerainty, Korea was treated with as an independent state.” Isabella B. Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors: A Narrative of Travel with an Account of the Recent Vicissitude and Present Condition of the Country* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1898), 11-19; Samuel H. Moffett, *The Christians of Korea* (New York: Friendship, 1962), 37.

Koreans thought that diplomatic relationships with Western countries might prevent a Japanese surge. In 1882, the American and Korean governments signed the “Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce and Navigation,” also known as The Shufeldt Treaty.³ While this treaty encouraged commerce and gave American citizens the right to reside in Korea, it explicitly prohibited Christian evangelism. American missionaries were given passage for missions primarily in the areas of education and medical assistance. Prior to the opening of Korea to America, no Protestant missionary activity had taken place on the peninsula.⁴

Some Koreans residing beyond the country’s borders also labored to deliver the gospel to their country:

Outside Korea, however, some Korean converts existed and some Bibles had already been translated into the Korean language. For example, in 1876, two Scottish Presbyterian missionaries, John Ross and John McIntyre, baptized the first Korean in the Chinese-Korean border region where he resided. These missionaries converted many Koreans, and in 1882 translated the Gospel of Luke with assistance from Korean language teachers. By 1900, missionaries with Korean assistants had

³Harry A. Rhodes, ed., *History of the Korea Mission Presbyterian Church U.S.A., 1884-1934* (Seoul: The Presbyterian Church of Korea Department of Education, 1984), 6.

⁴Paik details the actions and fate of the first Protestant martyr in Korea: “Thomas left Chefoo in September 4, 1865, arriving at the Korean coast on the 13th. There he spent two months and a half. We have no record of the places he visited. During his sojourn, however, he acquired some knowledge of the Korean language, and distributed his stock of books which the Koreans received “at the risk of decapitation. He left the Korean shores in December and landed on the coast of Manchuria, whence he proceeded through New Chwang and Shan-Hai-Kwan overland to Peking early in January, 1866. While the furious persecution against the Catholics in Korea was carried on in 1866, three French priests escaped to China. One of these, Ridel, went to Peking and reported to the French Admiral Roze the recent event in Korea. The admiral at once began preparations for an expedition to Korea to obtain redress from the Korean government for the killing of priests. Roze wished to benefit by Thomas’ knowledge of the coast and language, and solicited his services. Thomas, having previously been “well received by the people, with whom he held most pleasant intercourse.. [and having] formed a high idea of the province as a sphere of missionary labor,” agreed to accompany the admiral and preceded to Chefoo for sailing. But the expedition was delayed. Meanwhile he embarked on an American vessel, the General Sherman. The vessel was loaded with goods likely to be saleable in Korea and was dispatched there for an experimental voyage in the hope of opening the country to commerce. The General Sherman entered the mouth of the Taetong River toward the end of August, 1866. The governor of the P’yong-an Province sent a messenger to inquire the cause of her coming, and the answer was they desired to open trade with Korea. The fear stricken governor informed the visitors that it was impossible. But the vessel pushed up the river until she reached a place not far from the city of P’yongyang. It was only the heavy rain in the interior and an exceptionally high tide that made it possible for her to get across the bar, and soon she was stuck in the mud. Then began a fight which result in the extermination of the whole crew and the burning of the ship. Thomas perished with the others. He was killed ‘about September 2nd 1886.’” Lak Geoon Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions*, 49-50.

completed a translation of the entire New Testament, which was to become the foundation of the growing church in Korea.⁵

Protestant Mission Begins

In September 1884, under the Shufeldt Treaty, an American Presbyterian medical missionary named Horace Newton Allen (1858-1932) arrived in Seoul.⁶ He was a medical officer who served the Korean Court and is highly recognized as one of the most significant early Protestant missionaries to Korea. The following year, Presbyterian ordained missionary Horace Grant Underwood and Methodist ordained missionary Henry G. Appenzeller arrived in Korea. Underwood immediately began to study the language and reported,

As soon as we had secured a little knowledge of the language we regularly went out into the lanes and byways, and, sitting down under some tree, near a frequent highway, or beside some medical spring, to which the people were in the habit of flocking, we would take out a book and start reading, and when several gathered round us to ask questions we would attempt to explain to them the book, its truth, and what it meant; but, of course, in all this, it was necessary to find some common ground on which we both stood, and lead them gradually, from what was, to them, the known, to the unknown. Later, this street work developed further, and gatherings were held on large streets, or in villages, and, in certain sections, street chapels were opened.⁷

Although evangelism remained the ultimate goal of their mission, the treaty's restrictions required missionaries to focus on providing medical care and education. This prohibition explains why the early missionaries officially worked as doctors or teachers. Robert S. Maclay, an episcopal Methodist missionary to Japan, China, and Korea, recorded a correspondence he had with the American Minister to Korea, General Foote in an 1884 report as the political situation began to settle more favorably toward the missionaries:

I have received renewed assurances from His Majesty that not only will no obstruction be thrown in your way, but that you will be tacitly encouraged in

⁵In Soo Kim, *History of the Christian Church of Korea* (Seoul: Presbyterian Theological University Press, 2012), 80.

⁶Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions*, 97.

⁷Horace G. Underwood, *The Call of Korea: Political-Social-Religious* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1908), 106-7.

founding a school and hospital at Seoul. I may not be here and see you firmly established, but I shall do all I can to prepare the way for you. Mr. Kim Ok Kuin and one or two others are doing what they can to aid me quietly.⁸

The report turned out to be an accurate assessment. In Soo Kim describes why the selected indirect mission areas served as excellent forums for evangelistic activity:

Korean society needed schools and hospitals, and teachers and doctors were welcomed. Those missionary pastors with theological education who entered Korea as part of the early mission effort maintained that evangelism was the supreme goal and priority of missions. They believed that running schools and hospitals was not an end in itself, but rather served as a stepping-stone toward the ultimate goal of the mission. Therefore, education and medical ministries served as a point of contact with the local people as a first step in mission planning. Subsequent steps included church plantings and baptisms.⁹

When Protestant missionaries began to enter Korea, the native people still feared them due to vivid memories of the government's persecution of Catholics and Catholicism. Since evangelistic activities remained unlawful, the missionaries themselves had a high degree of anxiety that the persecution of Christians might recur. Samuel A. Moffett recorded the threat saying, "There are at present no signs of opposition to our work, but our position here is not assured and the present King is not secure on his throne. A revolution might bring to power the man who 20 years ago had put 20,000 Christians to death."¹⁰

The Protestant Strategy for Women's Mission

The early missionaries to Korea sought a strategy to evangelize women without violating Naeŏe law and needed women who could lead this effort. In 1885,

⁸R. S. Maclay, "Commencement of the Korea Methodist Episcopal Mission," *The Gospel in All Lands* (November 1896): 500. Goucher wrote to Maclay on November 6th, 1883: "I wrote to the Missionary Committee that if they deem it expedient to extend their work to the Hermit nation, and establish a mission in Korea under the superintendence of the Japan mission. . . . I shall be pleased to send my check for, say, two thousand dollars toward securing that result. Could you find time to make a trip to Korea, prospect the land, and locate the mission?" R. S. Maclay, "Korea's Permit to Christianity," *The Missionary Review of the World* 9, no. 4 (1896): 287-89.

⁹Kim, *History of the Christian Church of Korea*, 89.

¹⁰Samuel A. Moffett, *The First Letters from Korea 1890-1891* (Seoul: Presbyterian Theological Seminary Institute of Missions, 1975), 25.

while preparing to go to Korea, H. G. Underwood requested the Foreign Mission of the North Presbyterian Church of the United States to send women missionaries to vitalize the Korean mission.¹¹ They answered his request and the following year sent female medical missionary A. J. Ellers. By 1889, ten more single female missionaries had entered Korea, seven of whom were Methodists, and three from Presbyterian churches.

In 1893, the “Council of Missions Holding the Presbyterian Form of Government” in Korea convened a conference to establish a set of mission policies.¹² Adoption of the Nevius Mission Method formed the core of those policies. The Nevius method refers to “Three-Self Principles” designed to ensure that planted churches become self-sustaining and not dependent on the mission organization for the long term. Specifically, the three principles refer to self-governance, self-support (i.e., financial independence from foreigners), and self-propagation of the gospel.¹³ The policy governed

¹¹Sun Ae Chu, *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea* (Seoul: Dae Han Presbyterian Church Women’s Association, 1978), 47.

¹²Vinton enumerates the ten Protestant mission principles: “The major principles of the Presbyterian Mission in Korea were (1) It is better to aim at the conversion of the working class than that of the higher classes. (2) The conversion of women and the training of Christian girls should be a special aim, since mothers exercise so important an influence over future generations. (3) Much could be affected in Christian education by maintaining elementary schools in country towns; therefore we should aim to qualify young men in our boys’ school and send them as teachers. (4) Our hope for an educated native ministry lies in the same quarter, and should be a constant focus. (5) The Word of God converts where men are without resources: therefore it is most important that we make every effort to place a clear translation of the Bible before the people as soon as possible. (6) In all literary work, a pure Korean, free from cynicisms, should be our aim. (7) An aggressive Church must be a self-supporting Church, and we must aim to diminish the proportion of dependent among our membership and increase that of self-supporting, and therefore contributing individuals. (8) The mass of the Koreans must be led to Christ by their own fellow countrymen: therefore we shall thoroughly educate a few evangelists rather than preach to a multitude ourselves. (9) The service of our physicians can be turned into best account when it is possible to keep the same patients long under the treatment either in a hospital ward or in the patient’s home, thus giving opportunity for instruction and example to sink deeply in mind. Dispensary work is of comparatively little profit. (10) Patients from the country who have undergone a season of treatment ought to be followed up by visitation in their native villages, since their experience of compassionate dealing is likely to open a wide door for the evangelist.” C. C. Vinton, “Presbyterian Mission Work in Korea,” *The Missionary Review of the World* 16, no. 9 (1893): 671.

¹³Clark records how the Nevius concept was brought to Korea: “Nevius worked out his ideas in the decade preceding 1890 and offered them first to the people of his own Mission. They were rejected there, and Dr. Mateer, one of his colleagues actually published a small book in which he tried to refute Nevius’ ideas and prove that they would not and had not worked in Shantung. Nevius published certain

the details of financial support missionaries and planted churches could expect from the organization. In addition to the Nevius method, the Council adopted principles focused on evangelizing the local women. They recognized the critical role women played educating the next generation and believed that evangelizing wives and young women would lead to conversion of the children, husbands, and relatives. In evangelizing women core principles were implanted:

It is better to aim at the conversion of the working class than that of the higher class; The conversion of the women and the training of Christian girls should be a special aim, since mothers exercised as important an influence over future generation; The Word of God converts where men is without resources: therefore it is most important that we make every effort to place a clear translation of the Bible before the people as soon as possible.¹⁴

The mission strategies worked well. By the 1920s, women made up sixty percent of the Christian population where they had previously been a significant minority. The women's mission strategy also accelerated the spread of the gospel among lower class women who were freer from the gender restrictions of traditional society that were imposed on upper class women. As a result, women formed the majority of working class believers:

The mission strategy employed Hangul as a means of attracting women from the lower classes to the mission. Since the Bible was translated into Hangul, missionaries taught women to read and write while they evangelized. Learning to

articles upon his plan in the Chinese Recorder in Shanghai in 1895. Those articles caught the eye of some of the young missionaries who were just getting started in Korea across the bay from Shantung. They sent and asked Dr. Nevius to visit them, and, in 1890, he came and spent two weeks with them studying their situation and making suggestions as to meeting it." Charles Allen Clark, *Nevius Plan for Mission Work: Illustrated in Korea* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1937), 17. Moffett chronicled how Nevius tailored his principles to be applied in Korea, "John L. Nevius took the three familiar principles of self-propagation, and self-government, and self-support and fashioned them into a uniquely disciplined pattern of mission strategy which, as practiced rather widely in Korea, emphasized five major principles: 1) Bible study 2) Self-propagation 3) Self-government 4) Self-support 5) Missionary itineration." Moffett, *The Christians of Korea*, 59-60.

¹⁴Kyoung Bae Min recounts the application of Nevius ideals to Presbyterian missions: "The Missionaries disseminated the Gospel among the lower, women and working class. Then awakened in them a human dignity both by illuminating the Bible and by modern education." Kyoung Bae Min, *A History of the Christian Churches in Korea* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2005), 158.

read provided a strong incentive for lower class women to join the classes, thereby exposing them to Christianity.¹⁵

Finally, personal evangelism contributed significantly to the success of the women's mission. Since middle or upper class women were forbidden from congregating in public, the mission societies approached them on an individual basis. The women missionaries formed relationships with the women they evangelized, providing mentorship as well as teaching them the gospel.

Ministries of Women Missionaries in Chosŏn

The first woman to enter Korea as a missionary was Mary F. Scranton. After being appointed by the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of Episcopal Churches in the United States, Scranton went to Japan to study the Korean language and arrived in Korea on June 20, 1885.¹⁶ Following her arrival, more female missionaries went to Korea; some of them were missionaries' wives, but others were professional missionaries:

Though deeply rooted in conservative puritan faith, these women tended to identify the gospel with their own civilization, and perceived the poverty-stricken situation of Korea from their own cultural perspective. Just as they considered themselves as Christian evangelists, they also felt themselves responsible to provide opportunities for women to grow with independent character in the way that they themselves had been raised. For women missionaries, the land of Korea seemed to have been in darkness, completely excluded from the light of civilization. The local women were perceived as benighted, uncivilized people in the grip of Shamanism with lives

¹⁵Woo Jung Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women over 100 years* (Seoul: Minjungsa, 1985), 35.

¹⁶Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions*, 111. Strawn summarizes Scranton's mission service: "She was born in 1832 in Belchertown, Massachusetts to Erasmus Benton, Methodist minister in the New England Conference. She had been active in women's missionary societies, and, as a widow, she accepted the call to be a missionary to Korea through the Methodist Women's Foreign Missionary Society in 1884. Her son, William, also was appointed to Korea as a Methodist missionary, and together with William's wife, they began their journey to Korea in 1885. Scranton worked in Korea, mostly in Seoul, for twenty-four years before she died of apoplexy in Korea on October 8, 1909. She was admired and honored by many as a *Tae Puiin* (Great Lady). In memoriam, a publication from the Board of Foreign Missions on the date of Mary Scranton's death claims, 'to her zeal and energy much of the growth of the Methodist work among women in Korea may be attributed.'" Lee-Ellen R. R. Strawn, "Korean Bible Women 1888 to 1930: Effecting Change for Women from the Anbang to the Public Square" (Ph.D. diss., Seoul: Yonsei University, 2011), 88-89.

destined to endless despair and suffering with no hope of escape. Regardless of social class, all women suffered from the bondage of enslaving social practices.¹⁷

Under the influence of Confucian tradition, society enforced Naeŏe law to regulate women's behavior, which practically deprived females of every opportunity to receive education and enter public life. Most women remained illiterate. While Chinese characters were taught to men, Hangul was disdained as "the women's alphabet," as mostly women learned it. Hangul served as a reminder of the social reality that excluded women from public education.¹⁸ Women missionaries believed that Christianity would bring all of these sufferings to an end and that their missionary work would improve women's social status.

On one hand, the dismal condition of Korea made female missionaries struggle in adapting to their new surroundings. On the other hand, inheriting the legacy of Great Awakenings and Civil War, these women had accumulated strength and courage.¹⁹ They embarked on their missionary enterprises in Korea with great hopes to enlighten women through education. The missionaries' zeal for women's education was favorable to the government, which was open to Western civilization. At the same time, it aligned with the mission policy of American churches to "preach the gospel to the ends of the earth." G. W. Gilmore, who set the direction of mission in terms of women's education, noted, "to develop them in such ways as to make them model housewives under the conditions in which they must pass their lives and to make them missionaries of the Cross among their relatives and associates."²⁰

Scranton describes both the progress made in the course of ten years as well as the still challenging conditions within which the missionaries operated in her writing on

¹⁷Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women*, 32-33.

¹⁸Man Yeol Lee, *The Korean Christianity and Nationalism* (Seoul: Ji Sik Sa, 1991), 63.

¹⁹Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions*, 70-73.

²⁰George W. Gilmore, *Korea from Its Capital* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath School Work, 1892), 300.

woman's work in Korea:

You who have come more recently can, I think, scarcely realize the difference between the Korea of today and the country to which we came more than ten years ago. Today there are gleams of brightness and promise all along the horizon. Then it was only as we looked upward and beyond the stars that we could see a ray of light or hope. The presence of the foreigner was not desired. We were counseled by our United States representatives to use the utmost caution in manner and speech. We were not expected to make manifest in any way the design we had in coming to the country. Nothing remained, . . . therefore, for us to do but to win hearts, if such a thing lay within the range of possibilities, and acquire the language. Both of these under the circumstances proved difficult. Our presence on the street in too close proximity to the women's apartments was oftentimes the signal for the rapid closing of doors and speedy retreat behind screens, while children ran screaming with as much lung power as they could bring to bear on the occasion. Then, too, how could one expect quickly to acquire the language when there were not books, no teachers worthy of the name, and no interpreters whose knowledge went further than the simplest forms of speech? It was no great feat to get a vocabulary of nouns but when it came to verbs and we were obliged to 'act' them, it sometimes became puzzling, not to say ludicrous. We had no fine houses in those days. My drawing-room and study was eight by twelve. On all sides but one (that leading to my sleeping apartment) there were only paper partitions between me and the outside world. This, during the summer, was not a serious defect, but when winter came it had its objections. There was no window glass anywhere to let in brightness and sunshine until one day Mr. Foulk, our Charge d'Affairs made me a present to three photograph plates. These I thankfully, if not proudly, inserted in the window near my desk, and once more rejoiced in being able to see, at least with one eye at a time, the light of heaven again. I suppose missionaries ought to be so far above the earth as never to think of the 'what shall we eat'" but in this respect I am quite confident the first representatives to Korea, during their first summer signally failed. The meal in the barrel if it did not 'waste,' turned sour, which was nearly as bad, and Japan and China were far away. Beef was forbidden, on account of disease among the cattle. Of potatoes and other vegetables, there were none. But there were chickens and eggs. While we were forced to acknowledge that in outward appearance these resembled those we call by that name in the home land, the taste we thought as different as the two countries themselves. But we ate them, 'not one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days. But even a whole month,' two months, 'until they came out at our nostrils.'²¹

The primary ministries of the women missionaries consisted of evangelism and education. The two elements were related as they attempted to win souls by means of educating, and they educated those who converted to Christianity. The motto of the foreign mission was "evangelism for unbelievers and education for believers."²² Hyo Jae

²¹Mary F. Scranton, "Woman's Work in Korea," *The Korean Repository* 3, no. 1 (1896): 2-3.

²²Shearer opines the narrow focus of the Presbyterian educational mission approach: "The educational policy of the Northern Presbyterian Mission was simply 'to win the lost and educate the saved,' a policy at variance with that of the home mission board. The Board of Foreign Missions in New York City was in favor of a broader educational policy which did not concentrate on education for Christians but was

Lee describes the difficulty in carrying out the ministries:

For the first decade, both education and evangelism proved unsuccessful. There were few converts, and most of them were girls and wives who had been deserted by their families. Women missionaries bore the costs associated with the students' living and education expenses while they carried out their ministries. Some women missionaries were paid to perform their roles as educators or administrators, but were generally very poorly. Some were also supporting their own family that had remained in their home country. Despite the hardships, the missionaries were determined to provide care for these deserted women.²³

Women missionaries did not target particular groups of people for evangelism; rather, they attempted to approach as many women as possible with an educational purpose. They taught Hangul to women, enabling them to read Scripture; consequently, many women became fluent in reading and writing. The middle aged wives who became literate brought remarkable changes to their family lives. They began to assert their own rights against their husbands' abusive treatment. More women expressed the ambition to send their daughters to school. By 1905, this demand for women's education filled Christian schools with girls.

In order to meet the increasing demand of education, missionaries cooperated with one another beyond their own professional areas, while making requests for additional female missionaries for Korea. The thriving missions desperately needed Bible Women to support missionaries.²⁴ The precise manner in which missionaries selected Bible Women candidates is not known. They likely selected them from among the local volunteers who assisted the missionaries. Both missionaries and Bible Women labored to convert people and form churches when they won sufficient numbers.

rather aimed at whole Korean population. They made it plain that they thought the Korea Mission was narrow minded in its policy of directing its education toward Christians and their children only. The Korea Mission did not exclude non-Christian children, but it did not aim its program at the non-Christians either." Roy E. Shearer, *Wildfire: Church Growth in Korea* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1966), 201.

²³Hyo Jae Lee, "One Hundred Years of History of Korean Christian Woman: An Overview," in *Women, Wake up, Rise, and Sing! The 100-Year History of Korean Christian Women*, prep. Women's Anniversary Committee for 100 Years of Korean Church History (Seoul, Korea: The Christian Literature Society, 1985), 21.

²⁴Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women*, 37.

Education: Establish Schools for Girl

Scranton established the Ewha Girl's School (*Ewha Hakdang*)²⁵ in 1886 as the first Christian school for girls. She explained that the educational goal of this school was “making Koreans better Koreans”:

They, the girls, are not being made over again after our foreign way of living, dress, and surroundings, because it occasionally appears from home and even in the field that we thought to make a change in all ways. We take pleasure in making Koreans better Koreans way only. We want Korea to be proud of Korean things, and more, that it is a perfect Korea through Christ and his teachings.²⁶

However, finding students for the new school proved to be extremely difficult because no one wanted to send their children to be educated by what they perceived as strange people. An ambitious government official enrolled his concubine as the first official student in the hopes that she might become an interpreter for the queen. She only stayed in the school for about three months. Scranton reflects on the early students of Ewha Hakdang:

School work was commenced in the house of Dr. Scranton six months previous to the removal to the new Home. It began with one scholar. She was the concubine of an official who was desirous his wife should learn English, with the hope that she might sometime become interpreter for the Queen. She remained with us only about three months. The first permanent pupil came in June, 1886, one month later than

²⁵Scranton explains the origin of the name of the Ewha school: “The Korean call women (when they wish to be especially sweet and poetic) pear-flowers; so our school is the ‘Pear Flower School.’ I am told that first they gave it a name which would have suited me exactly namely, ‘Entire Trust School.’” Mary Scranton, “Korea,” *Eighteenth Annual Report of Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Year 1887* (Boston: C. M. Barrows & Co., 1887), 50.

²⁶Mary. F. Scranton, “Notes from Korea,” *The Gospel in All Lands* (August 1888): 373. Gilford reports, “The teaching force consists of Miss Paine, who has been in charge since 1893, and associated with her, Miss Frey. The Korean assistants are on woman and three pupil teachers. Certain days in the week also Mrs. Bunker teaches them fine sewing and embroidery, and Mrs. Hulbert trains them in vocal music. The pupils number forty-seven boarders and three day-scholars. The average age is twelve years, with ages ranging between eight and seventeen years. English and eunmum are the media through which knowledge is imparted. Elementary Western branches are taught in English; certain Western studies and religious literature are studied in eunmum. English is optional and is taught to perhaps one-third of the girls. The domestic economy of the school is interesting. In addition to the training in sewing and embroidery, native and foreign, mentioned above, the clothes of all are made and cared for by the older girls. Then the school is divided into eight groups according to their rooms, each under a leader and sub-leader, who, turn about, two weeks at a time, clean rooms and school-rooms and assist in the culinary department. The leader in each case is made responsible for all that goes on in the room. . . . The aim of the school is to give a thorough Christian education and to make them better Korean women.” D. L. Gilford, “Education in the Capital of Korea,” *The Korean Repository* 3, no. 8 (1896): 309-10.

Mrs. Kim. Poverty unquestionably brought the girl to us, but not many days had passed before the mother felt it better to brave poverty rather than trust her child to a foreigner. The neighbors accused her of being a bad woman and an unnatural mother, or she would never have trusted her to the No Pou In. They said it might be well for a little time; there would be plenty of food and of good clothes, but by and by she would be carried away to America, and what her fate would be there no one could tell. An assurance was given in writing that the child should never be carried out of the country, which partially satisfied the mother for a while though it was several months before she was really at ease. The second pupil was a little waif whose sick mother was picked up out of the city wall by Dr. Scranton and taken first to his hospital for treatment. Koreans watched these girls very closely. As they did not find them unhappy or ill-treated, other mothers gradually gained a little confidence, and at the time of removal to the Home on the hill, the school numbered four, and the following January we counted seven.²⁷

A Sunday school also began at Ewha Hakdang in 1888, which was initially attended by eight women, along with eighteen girls and missionaries. Women who were unable to enter the official schools participated in this Sunday school. Unlike the official school established by missionaries, the Sunday school experienced little difficulty recruiting students. In a single month in 1888, fifty-five women attended Sunday school. The missionaries founded many girls' schools after the success of Ewha Hakdang.²⁸

While the Methodist missionaries were interested in educational and medical mission work for women, Presbyterian missionaries emphasized evangelism from the very beginning.²⁹ The actual work was nevertheless conducted among the poor and

²⁷Mary. F. Scranton, "Woman's Work in Korea," 4-5.

²⁸Soon Lae Lee notes the schools opening on the heels of Ewha: "The girls schools established in this period were as follows: Ewha Girl's School in Seoul (1886), Jungshin Girl's School in Seoul (1887), Baewha Girl's School in Seoul (1898), Youngwha Girl's School in Inchun (1897), Myungshin Girl's School in Jerung (1898), Sunghunch Girl's School in Pyongyan (1896), Chungyee Girl's School in Pyongyang (1899), Syngyi Girl's School in Pyongyang (1903), Samil Girl's School in Suwhon (1902), Hosoodon Girl's School in Keasung (1904), Mirihum Girl's School in Keasung (1906), Youngmyong Girl's School in Kunsan (1905), Speer Girl's School in Kwangju (1907), Kichung Girl's School in Chunju (1907), Chungmyung Girl's School in Mokpo (1903), Jinshun Girl's School in Wonsan (1904), Myungshin Girl's School in Hamhung (1908), Bohyung Girl's School in Sunchun (1906)." Soon Lae Lee, *The Twenty Years History of the Women Ministers Association* (Seoul: Women Ministers Association of PCK, The Presbyterian Church of Korea, 1992), 64.

²⁹Rhodes captures observations of the inaugural woman's Bible class: "In the early years of the Station, the women members carried on other work for Korean women in addition to that which was done in the churches. The first three women to receive baptism in 1888 came from Mrs. Heron's Bible class. Mrs. Gifford also and others of the married women had week day Bible classes in their homes. For many years, Mrs. Underwood carried on a work for Korean women at Mo Wha Kwan. Miss Ellen Strong started a work for Korean women at In Sung Poochai in the southern section of the city. She was succeeded in this

oppressed, and among these lower classes, women were the key targets. As early as 1893, the Presbyterians declared ten points of official Korean mission policy. Among these, the conversion of women and training of Christian girls were special targets. In 1887, Annie J. Ellers established *Jungdong Hakdang*.³⁰ She began her school with a class consisting of four boarding orphans whom she taught: “Notwithstanding that she severed her connection with the mission, commenced the work of forming a girls’ school in connection with the orphanage.”³¹ In 1899 Mary E. Hayden assumed control of the school:

Miss Ellers, the first woman physician in Korea, arrived in 1886. She saw large numbers of patients at the Hospital and won high favor at the Palace. Within a year she became Mrs. Bunker and the writer [Mrs. Underwood] was sent to take her place. One year after her arrival, the first trip into the country made by a foreign woman was taken, going as far as We Ju Thousands of Korean women were seen, books and medicines were widely distributed. With a picture book and a small moiety of the language an effort was made to tell the women the story of a Saviour. This at Song Do, Whang Ju, Pyeng Yang, An Ju, Kang Gay, We Ju and many smaller places. Miss Hayden arrived in 1888 and took charge of the little girl whom Mrs. Bunker had been teaching as the first pupil in the girls’ school (she is now, by the way, a dear little Christian mother). On my return from We Ju another Bible class was started. From this nucleus a regular Sunday service was opened and the meetings were taken in charge later by Mrs. Gifford who has kept them up ever since.³²

Subsequently, L. S. Horton, Ellen Strong, V. C. Arburkle and other missionaries also participated in this educational mission. *Jungdong Hakdang* officially became the *Chungshin* Girl’s School in 1895 and still operates today. These institutions and other Christian girl’s schools became the pillars of the women’s work in churches.

work by Mrs. Welbon who resided in this district. In this way six centers were established in the city where work was carried on for Korean women both on Sunday and on week-days.” Rhodes, *History of the Korean Mission*, 103-4.

³⁰Hyo Jae Lee, *Women’s Movement in Korea: Yesterday and Today* (Seoul: Jung Woo Sa, 1989), 136.

³¹Gilmore, *Korea from Its Capital*, 299.

³²Lillias H. Underwood, “Woman’s Work in Korea,” *The Korean Repository* 3, no. 2 (1896): 63.

Medical Mission: Hospital for Women

When the Presbyterian Church in the United States dispatched Ellers on a medical mission to Korea in 1886, they instructed her to take charge of the women's ministry irrespective of the women's social status. Soon after her arrival Ellers was able to earn the Queen Myung-sung's trust and established close ties with the court.³³ Ellers created the first maternity ward in the government-operated hospital, *Widespread Relief House*. Lillias S. Horton was appointed the supervisor subsequently marrying Horace Underwood:

The Presbyterian medical women continued to be important contributors to the development of the medical mission in Seoul during the 1890s and 1900s. Lillias H. Underwood led most of the mission's medical work for women in Seoul in the 1890s. She continued to serve as the queen's physician until 1895 and also started dispensary work for lower-class women in the city. She opened a dispensary first in her own home and also visited patients who were too ill to come to the dispensary. In 1893 she purchased a Korean building in a part of the city called Mo Wha Kwan and made it a special dispensary for abandoned patients with infectious diseases. She named it "The Shelter" and there treated hundreds of people every year.³⁴

In contrast, the Methodist church and the church of Canada, which engaged in the medical mission in Korea's Hanmgyoung Province, targeted individuals living in the utmost poverty and misery. Naeŏe law precluded these women from being treated by male physicians, and thus from virtually all medical treatment. Female doctors were needed to provide women with medical care. Dr. Scranton requested that the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church establish women's and children's hospitals.³⁵ His request was granted and Meta Howard was dispatched to Korea in 1887. Korea's first women's hospital, the *Salvation for All Women Institution*,³⁶ was built the following year. Dr. Howard worked to exhaustion treating three thousand women and

³³Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions*, 118-20.

³⁴Ahn, *Awakening the Hermit Kingdom*, 249.

³⁵Ibid., 123.

³⁶William B. Scranton, "More Medical Workers Needed in Korea," *The Gospel in All Lands* (September 1890): 429.

children in the hospital within two years living by her slogan “by women for women.”³⁷ She returned to America in 1889 and Rosetta Sherwood, who became Rosetta Hall when she married pioneering Canadian medical missionary William James Hall, succeeded her. According to Dr. Rosetta Hall, most of the patients came from the lower class because those from the higher class were forbidden to go out in public during the daytime. Therefore, she wished to operate the hospital into the night to treat women urgently needing medical care. Hall writes in her recollection of the patients:

Quite often at my morning clinic, I have had women from the higher class who have come in closed chairs. They always inform me that it is a great exception for them to go, but their disease was difficult, and they had heard that I was a very wise doctor, and therefore they came.³⁸

The enormous demand for female medical attention called for additional female doctors and nurses as well as institutions in which to train them. In her report on women’s medical missions in Korea, Hall explained the various functions she had to fulfill at the early stage of her practice and cited the immediate need for trained nurses and more medical doctors:

As yet there were no trained Korean helpers to assist in the drug work or nursing, and it took a great deal of time to prepare all the needed mixtures, ointments, and powders, to take temperatures and pulses of inpatients, and see to the giving of their food and medicine regularly, to do all the dressings of ulcers and abscesses, and the many other things incident to dispensary and hospital work which do not necessarily need to be done by a doctor.³⁹

She looked for native assistants, and successfully recruited some Ewha schoolgirls. Finding unmarried young girls proved difficult because of Korea’s custom for girls to marry during their teenage years. Two young female assistants left just weeks after

³⁷Elizabeth Roberts, “Medical Work in Seoul,” in *Fifty Years of Light*, prep. Missionaries of the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society of the Episcopal Church in Commemoration of the Completion of Fifty Years of Work in Korea (Seoul: YMCA, 1938), 6.

³⁸Rosetta Sherwood Hall, “Medical Work for Women in Korea,” *The Missionary Review of the World* 5, no.1 (1892): 58.

³⁹Rosetta Sherwood Hall, “Woman’s Medical Mission Work in Seoul, Korea,” *Heathen Woman’s Friend* 25, no. 1 (1893): 14.

having started their jobs. Hall attempted to find a young widow to train for the dispensary. Her hope of establishing medical education for native women never faded. She knew the importance of the native women's roles in the future of medical work in Korea.

Despite the need, there were few applicants.⁴⁰ In this context, Esther Park became the first female medical doctor of Korea.⁴¹ Before regular medical schools were established, Korean women assisted medical ministries as aids. They worked in dispensaries, dining rooms, and laundries under the supervision of doctors. At the same time, women assistants were involved in ministry as they read the Bible to patients and told them about the gospel. When a medical school was established through the sponsorship of the Women's Foreign Mission Societies, several women applied, among them was a woman named Martha:

Martha, had come to the hospital some years before minus the finger and thumb of her right hand and a portion of her nose, the work of a jealous husband, who had secretly carried off her two dear children, whom she has tearfully, sought in vain. She was a hard faced, ignorant, and bitter woman when she first came to us, but the sweetening influence of the Gospel of Christ did its work and thus began a life that speaks for Him in this dark land. Another is Grace, who also made her acquaintance with the hospital as a patient. She was a deformed helpless cripple, saved from a life of slavery and cured of her many infirmities. Today this young woman is doing remarkably well as a ward manager, takes delight in planning and helping to make hospital clothing, has learned to use the sewing machine, stood first in her

⁴⁰It is acknowledged that Korea had a medical institution which involved women as medical assistants. The institution of medical women was founded in 1409 in the court of Chosŏn Dynasty. The role of medical women involved medical examination, diagnosis of diseases, and acupuncture mostly for women. Due to the social custom that prohibited physical contact between men and women, medical women consisted of low-born women that would be exempted from application of the social norm. Due to the lowly social status, medical women were invited along with *giesang* (female entertainer) to attend the courtly feasts in the reign of King Yeonsan in Chosŏn Dynasty. King Joong Jong issued a decree that abolished calling of medical women to entertain in the court banquet. However, the low recognition of medical women continued, regarding them in terms of 'entertainers' for high class males. In the wake of Gapsin Coup in 1884, serfdom was abolished in Chosŏn Dynasty, and the government established a royal hospital equipped with modern medicine. When the government recruited nurses, only few women applied, which was due to the particular social understanding of medical women as found in Chosŏn Dynasty. Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women*, 45.

⁴¹"The Story of the First Korean Woman Doctor," *The Gospel in All Lands* (June 1899): 272; Jae Eui Shin, Kwon Jung Kim, and Ei Jae Cho, *Korean Christianity and Early Medical Mission* (Seoul: The Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea, 2007), 221.

examinations, can mix ointments, put up powders, beautifully, weigh and measure ordinary medicine, while the weekly tub bath is as much a part of our hospital program as are our daily meals. . . . Owing to the custom of early marriages, it is difficult to secure competent young women who truly desire to remain in single blessedness for the long term of six years. Young widows prove the more satisfactory pupils. In few cases has the previous mental training of the Korean woman gone beyond the point of learning to read and write. Her method of counting time has been to note the sunrise and, sunset and her methods of work are those suited to Korean surroundings, while her ideas of cleanliness are oriental and her knowledge of obedience sadly lacking. On the other hand she is naturally sympathetic, large hearted, and hospitable to an extreme degree. She is also wonderfully skillful in the use of her fingers and handles a cambric needle or a bandage with an exactness, which is most pleasing; and has genius born of poverty, for utilizing small things.⁴²

This is how women's medical education began in Korea. Medical institutions served as a vehicle to spread the gospel. Diseased women were connected to hospitals through missionaries in their evangelistic effort, and numerous wives opened their hearts to accept the Lord while they received needed medical aid. In 1906, Rosetta Hall's report acknowledged the impact made by the *Women's Dispensary of Extended Grace*, "Many people were baptized and became loyal adherents to church in the past two years":

I was called to attend a very dangerously sick woman here last Dec. and with God's blessings was able to restore her to health after she had been given up to die. The whole family were very sincere in their gratitude, her husband and son have attended our church ever since, and she began coming as soon as warm weather came, and has been received as a probationer. She reads and is quite an intelligent woman, and was pleased to have me start a meeting for women and children in her house. I take Susan and Ada with me and we go Wednesday afternoon regularly. We have 10 or 20 women and 5-6 big girls in attendance; they seem interested, but it is not going to be easy work, as almost the whole neighborhood is Roman Catholic. One day as I was preparing to visit this place, Susan came in saying a woman had just come from there, with word that there was no use of our going as the lady of the house we held our meeting in had moved away, and was in hiding with her whole family. I replied, "I promised to be there this afternoon, and I will go anyhow." I was afterwards very glad I did go, for I found quite contrary to the story, that the lady had no thought of moving, and was expecting us.⁴³

Bible Women, in particular, played a vital role in evangelizing through medical missions. Assisting in the hospital, they shared the Word of God with patients and encouraged their

⁴²M. J. Edmunds, "Training Native Nurses," *The Korea Mission Field* 2, no. 8 (1906): 154.

⁴³Rosetta Sherwood Hall, "Women's Dispensary of Extended Grace, Pyeng Yang Circuit," *First Annual Meeting of the Women's Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Korea, May 13-19, 1899* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1899), 16.

faith even after they were discharged.

Evangelism: Woman to Woman

While governmental restrictions permitted only indirect evangelistic activities in education, medical aid, and social work, the woman missionaries' underlying purpose remained to propagate the gospel through direct evangelism:

The evangelistic work in those days was carried on by all the women missionaries, whether doctor, nurse, or teacher, married or single, in the churches to which they were appointed. In addition to their regular work, they visited in the homes, and had charge of all meetings for women. Among the first believers, some who showed special ability were trained by Mrs. Scranton and Miss Pierce and other missionaries, and they were called *Bible Women*.⁴⁴

In an 1886 missionary report, Mary Scranton records,

Our work among the women is growing. I asked a Bible woman a short time ago how many were reading the "Book" and how many she had talked with. She replied, "one hundred," and said there would be many more if she only had a house large enough. We have nothing translated for them except Mark and the catechism, although the Gospels are nearly ready. Our Sunday evening meetings are well attended. Two weeks ago thirty were present besides our girls. Some of them seemed much interested, and one said the words they had heard were very good words⁴⁵

Scranton began to propagate the gospel to women individually. Evangelism, however, called for language fluency, and most of the women missionaries were not fluent in Korean. Scranton hired a male teacher to preach the gospel to women to compensate for her limited Korean language skills. When wives who were conscious of Naeŏe law rejected the idea, she fashioned a curtain in the middle of the room to ensure that women's faces remained concealed from male preachers:

I have had some difficulty in getting a teacher for the women and have adopted a new plan. I asked one of the colporteurs if he would come and talk for me, provided he did not see them. So now I shut him up in a room by himself until they are seated and ready to listen. Then I arrange a screen between them and the place where he is to sit, and in this way the women's ideas of seclusion are held sacred, and the

⁴⁴Jessie B. Marker, "Evangelistic Work, Seoul District 1887 to 1938," in *Fifty Years of Light*, 9.

⁴⁵Mary F. Scranton, "Korea," *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the year 1888* (Boston: J. W. Hamilton, 1888), 47.

speaker's voice can be heard as distinctly as though he were visible. I think four or five women will be baptized in a week or two. Nobody in Korea feels discouraged these days.⁴⁶

In 1889 Scranton established a church in Dongdaemoon for women and girls:

On the evening of February 12th, the Presiding Elder Rev. H. G. Appenzeller met at the Home some of the women who had been under instruction for several months, and formed them into a class. On the following Sunday evening he administered the ordinance of baptism to nine persons. Three of these were members of our home, one a teacher, and the other were received, we believing them to be suitable persons to be placed on the list of probationers. On account of the rigid seclusion of a large part of the women of this land, it has seemed necessary to organize our little band into a separate church, and at our recent annual meeting a pastor was assigned as (Rev. F. Ohlinger), who is to be with us one evening in three. The work is by no means confined to Sunday evenings. There are two services in the week, one of which is conducted by the Koreans themselves.⁴⁷

In 1895 she established the Sangdong church around Namdaemoon and made it a center for evangelism. Scranton worked with Jung-Dong Methodist Episcopal Church and traveled to small towns with assistance from Bible Women. Though they had great enthusiasm for evangelizing women, the missionaries' evangelistic endeavors were hampered by communication difficulties and isolating social customs, which resulted in the missionaries' needing to enlist the ministry of Bible Women in order to accomplish their mission.

Harry Ross' *History of the Korea Mission Presbyterian Church U.S.A., 1884-1934*, North Presbyterian Church annual reports reflect the incredible progress they made in less than three decades. He notes the following account of the continued hard work and dedicated services of women missionaries:

Mrs. Baird was in charge of women's Bible school attended by two hundred students, led a prayer meeting for a group of 30 to 40 women, and trained Sunday school teachers on Saturday afternoon. Mrs. Lee was heading up a Sunday school in Marquis Chapel inside the mission station. Mrs. Wells visited Korean families for evangelism hundreds of times while regularly visiting hospitals. Mrs. Hunt stayed for 11 weeks in Hwanghae Province and held women's class in four different places. Mrs. Sharrocks, who had been a member of the mission station for a year, led language class in women's school and helped with the administration of singing class. Mrs. Webb was in charge of the morning class for girls. Dr. Fish, who later

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Mary F. Scranton, "Korea," *Twenty-First Annual Report of Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1889-1890* (Rochester: Democrat and Chronicle, 1890), 52-53.

became Mrs. Moffet, took charge of the morning class for catechism and visited three churches within 10 miles of Pyeng Yang. Mrs. Blair and Miss Snook, who arrived in 1901, took a trip to the countryside. Mrs. Swallen taught Sunday school at the Marquis Chapel, held classes for women, led Bible Study Conference on Wednesday afternoon, taught a teachers' class on Saturday, and trained rural women in the daytime autumn class while she was engaging in ministry for the Waesong Church. Miss Best taught the Bible in eight different places across the countryside in one year, and seven places in the next. She once traveled as far as 175 miles overland to teach.⁴⁸

Similar reports documenting women missionaries' hard work and dedication corroborate their tireless devotion to the mission. Every day the missionaries welcomed visitors, serving refreshments and ministering the gospel. As the ministries developed, new types of ministries began. For example, Bernheisel and Ruts started a kindergarten and Ruths and Soltau began a music ministry.⁴⁹ Chu details a number of other mission areas the women focused on:

Western women missionaries in Korea committed themselves to a wide range of ministries: women's Bible school, prayer meeting, Sunday school, young adults' class, home-visiting, women's class, singing class, language class, Bible Study Conference, teachers' training class, kindergarten, music class, special education, medical aid, and running orphanages. Many women's ministries escaped the annual reports.⁵⁰

Although the missionaries made great strides, in 1907 *The Korean Mission Field* publication reported missionary views regarding the needs for Korean women's evangelization and enlightenment. The woman missionaries highlighted a variety of still critical needs:

Mrs. Maraget B. Jones, Seoul: A school for the training of Bible women and schools for young married women and young widows appeal to me as the greatest need of Korean women., Mrs. Fannie Belle Fenwick, Wonson: The greatest need of Korean women is to know that "Jesus is the Christ." This knowledge gives the new birth and prevents doubt as to salvation., Mrs. D. A. Bunker, Seoul: The greatest need of Korea's women is to KNOW Christ as their Savior; then to know that which will make them mothers in the broad and deep sense of that term., Miss L. R. Frey, Seoul: Her supreme need, aside from a knowledge of Christ, is education. That the men, who are largely responsible for her present ignorance, are awakening to this fact, is a hopeful sign., MRs J R. Moose, Seoul: The greatest need of Korea's women is well trained and consecrated teachers of the Christian religion; women

⁴⁸Rhodes, *History of the Korea Mission*, 158.

⁴⁹Ibid., 159.

⁵⁰Chu, *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea*, 55-57.

who not only teach but live the gospel of Jesus Christ., Miss Ethel M Estey, Yeng Ben: The all comprehensive but indefinite word, EVERYTHING, might tell a Korean woman's need as well as many, for it seems to me as I go about among them that they need making over from "A to Z," as the saying is., Miss Eleanor Dye, Seoul: No need of Korea's women seems to me to be more evident than a higher ideal of life, a truer conception of the dignity of womanhood, and a proper valuation of the influence to be wielded by the home., Mrs. A. F. Robb, Wonsan: The greatest need of Korea's women is the gospel of Jesus, intelligently grasped, which will indeed make them free from the slavish fear of devils, from ignorance, vice, and dull helplessness, and will supply purpose and hope for this life and the next.⁵¹

These ministries contributed to the women's enlightenment, thereby helping them to find their place in society within the modernization movement. Above all, they paved the way for oppressed and marginalized women to discover their independent personhood and explore their new potential in the public realm. Thus, the mission activities offered by these women missionaries presented a new model of life to women.

The Korean Bible Women

The position of Bible Woman was a distinctive ministry offered by the Korean church that was born out of the Chosŏn Dynasty's application of Naeŏe law, which made foreign male missionaries inaccessible to Korean women. In the early Protestant missions, indigenous women accompanied woman missionaries in their evangelistic works to compensate for the latter's limited knowledge of local language and customs. Most of these women came from the lowest class. Ironically, their social position freed them from the regulation imposed on the women of higher classes or nobility. These marginalized women were given more opportunity to hear the gospel from the women missionaries and many of those who converted to Christianity matured in their faith and knowledge and emerged as Bible Women, an important force in women's ministry. They became language teachers for the missionaries or worked as their assistants for itinerant evangelism. Later, these women led Bible studies and became female Christian leaders and evangelists themselves.

⁵¹"A Symposium: The Greatest Needs of Korea's Women," *The Korean Mission Field* 3, no. 12 (1907): 177.

The exact origin of the Bible Women is unclear. Sung Jin Chang finds their origin in the Women Colporteurs (Bible Sellers) who appeared in 1898⁵²; however, Hyo Jae Lee traces their origin to a group of women who assisted M. F. Scranton with her itinerant evangelism around local provinces in 1892.⁵³ Scranton recollects that she was carrying out the ministry of evangelism with the help of eight Bible Women:

I have been greatly assisted by my Bible women. They have always been ready to follow out my plans and directions as far as they were able. Besides the three regularly employed by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, five additional ones have been granted me by the British and Foreign Bible Society. There has been no difficulty in finding work enough for all, in fact a much larger number could be profitably employed. Mrs. Drusila Ni has continued her work as before, namely, has taught in the compound such as come to us. Mrs. Sarah Kim and Mrs. Hannah Chung have been from house to house teaching the catechism and giving such other instruction as has seemed necessary. Sarah is in great demand for the visitation of the sick. She goes about the work firmly believing that the 'prayer of faith will save the sick' and cast out the devils. There is not a tune she can sing correctly, but this makes no difference to her, and apparently none to her hearers. She exercises all the gift she has in this particular with great enthusiasm and delight, and as there are oft repeated encores, I judge her efforts are properly appreciated by those who listen. The five women allowed me by the British and Foreign Bible Society give most of the time to work in the country.⁵⁴

Irrespective of their origin, linking foreign missionaries and Korean women in traditional society, Bible Women played a vital role in developing the Korean Protestant church in its early period. The early Bible Women received only basic biblical instructions and doctrinal education from Western missionaries, and worked toward evangelizing people in the mission frontier. Examining the content of the education Bible Women received is important, as it illuminates what constituted the faith of women who received the gospel in the early Protestant missions.

⁵²Sung Jin Chang, *A Forgotten Story of Korean Churches: The Research of Korean Bible Women in the Early Protestant Mission and Church Growth of Korea, 1992~1945* (Seoul: KSI, 2008), 160.

⁵³Hyo Jae Lee, *History of the Modernization and Christianity in Korea* (Seoul: SoongShil University Press, 1985), 233.

⁵⁴Mary F. Scranton, "Missionary Work among Women," *The Korean Repository* 5, no. 9 (1898): 316.

Introduction of Korean Bible Women

The first generation of female Christians who grew into Bible Women had an initial association with missionaries. Some were their cooks or housemaids. They became Christians because they responded to the message of the gospel and were influenced by the personal sacrifice and service that the missionaries demonstrated:

Missionaries in the early Korean church endeavored to live a diligent and serving life, considering the influence of their daily lifestyle upon the people. As a consequence, people came to believe that Christians were kind to others, honest, and avoided evil things. Most Chosŏn Dynasty women suffered from miserable life conditions with little hope for improvement. It was often this hardship that drove them to believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. After graduating from Bible training schools or Bible institutes, the Bible Women preached the gospel to women who suffered in similar situations, and led them to the church. They effectively delivered the gospel message, combining the simple truths learned from missionaries with their own personal conversion experiences.⁵⁵

Most of the people who converted to Christianity were those “under middle class” commoners, who were very discontented with the feudal society and less restricted by cultural norms than the upper class aristocrats. Scripture, such as the Gospel of Luke, struck a chord with this segment of the population: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free” (Luke 4:18). The Christian gospel was much more attractive to the poor public than to the privileged class.⁵⁶ Aristocrats steeped in Confucianism were far more restricted in their ability to go beyond their life routine, and therefore had fewer opportunities to be exposed to the gospel. It was a near impossibility for them to turn their back on five centuries of Confucian heritage.

However, some of the wives of those aristocrats felt discontented and even rebellious against the social structure. They believed it enabled their husbands to take advantage of them and led to a hard married life under the demands of their in-laws. Many of these women also turned to Christianity to break from this lifestyle and served

⁵⁵Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women*, 37.

⁵⁶Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions*, 116.

as Bible Women. As Lee indicated, Sam Deok Jeon, the first woman baptized in the northern region, serves as a typical example of this motivation:

Before being baptized, she had nothing else to do but take care of her parents-in-law because her husband had shut himself off from the world and lived with a concubine. She blamed her fate and all the unfairness on her being born a woman. Then she heard about a new religion, which was not only open to men but also to women. She wanted to know more about the Christian belief and travelled more than eighteen miles to visit the Pyeng Yang Nam-San-Hyun Church where she met W. J. Hall. Despite being severely persecuted by her husband and in-laws, two years later, in 1895, she was baptized by W. B. Scranton and became a Bible Woman. She continually evangelized those persecuting in-laws through their own conversions, planted nine churches in places such as Kang-Seo, Sam-Hwa, and Ham-Jong, and became actively involved in education by establishing Christian schools.⁵⁷

Samuel H. Moffett captures Jeon's own description of her baptism:

Dr. Scranton asked me if I did not wish to be baptized. I replied that I should like to . . . but that since the customs of our country did not allow a man to see a woman face to face, I didn't see how such a ceremony could be performed. . . . He replied, 'That being the case, let us do it this way. Put up a curtain in the middle of a room, make a hole in the curtain large enough for you to put your head partly through and we will have the Baptism service right there.' I arranged the room as he requested and then received baptism, with all due reverence, through the aperture.⁵⁸

Jeon summarized her life changed by the gospel: "I have been living like a blind, a deaf and a mute though I have eyes to see, ears to hear, and a mouth to speak. However, I have become an independent person since I have known Jesus."⁵⁹

Though opinions between the Presbyterian and the Methodist church differ as to who among the early Bible Women was first to be baptized, Mrs. Han, the wife of evangelist Hong Jun Baek, and Mrs. Kim, the wife of evangelist Ha Sung Lee, were baptized by Underwood during the fall of 1887. In April of that same year, Appenzeller baptized Sung Kyoon Choi, his assistant's wife: "The first public Korean religious service in was held at the Bethel Chapel, in the Southern Part of the city on Easter

⁵⁷Duk Joo Lee, "Freedom, Liberation, and Practice: Understanding Early Christian Women in Korea (1887-1920)," in *Korean Church and Women*, ed. The Korean Church Research Center (Seoul: IVP, 2013), 31.

⁵⁸Samuel H. Moffett, *The Christians of Korea* (New York: Friendship, 1962), 41.

⁵⁹Sam Deok Jeon, "Mrs. Samtok Chun," in *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*, comp. Noble Mattie Wilcox (Seoul: Kyujang, 1985), 34-38.

Sunday, April 8, When A. [Appenzeller] baptized his first convert, a woman, and the Lord's Supper was celebrated.”⁶⁰

When the missionaries asked the women being baptized what their names were, most of them answered that they had no name. Unlike male Koreans, who were named at birth and maintained their names through baptism, women were given “new names” as they were baptized in 1896. Missionary Noble baptized Bible Woman, Sadie Kim, and gave her a name meaning “have found one of the rights of women.” Kim proclaimed at the baptism, “The liberation of Korean women was inaugurated by our Christianity”⁶¹

Bible Woman Dorcas Kim, who was baptized in Pyeng Yang in 1899, made a similar testimony saying, “Women have lived nameless under the oppression of men for thousands of years.”⁶² She also called the day of her baptism the happiest day of her life declaring that women's liberation had begun when the light of Christ began to shine on the Korean Peninsula:

The day of my baptism was the happiest day of my life. Of course I rejoiced most that I was acknowledging the Lord as my Savior. I also rejoiced that freedom had come to me, a woman. The day that Jesus Christ was preached in Korea began the emancipation of women from the bondage of thousands of years. Since my childhood name was, according to custom, discontinued when I was about eight years old, I had never had a name. Think of it – for nearly fifty years without a name. On my baptismal day I received a name, all my own – “Dorcas!” Yes, it was the happiest day of my life.⁶³

These testimonies illustrate the significance of their receiving names with their baptism. Having a name was much more than just a title to them. It marked the restoration of their dignity and human rights after many years of oppression and

⁶⁰William Elliot Griffis, *A Modern Pioneer in Korea: The Life Story of Henry G. Appenzeller* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1912), 209.

⁶¹Sadie Kim, “The Story of My Life,” in *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*, 103.

⁶²Dorcas Kim Kang, “Mrs. Dorcas Kim Kang: A Recipient of Abounding Grace,” in *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*, 82.

⁶³Ibid.

mistreatment, and also the day of being recognized as valuable human beings. Baptism became an expression of “freedom and liberation.”⁶⁴ However, they received Western names when they were baptized. The missionaries either gave them a female name from Scripture, or an American female name including their own names. Those who received Western names transliterated them into Korean. For example, Sadie became Sae Ji, Mary became Mae-Rae, and Doris became Dorcas. These women were the movers and activists within the church, society, and education during the latter era of the Chosŏn Dynasty and through Japanese colonization.

Missionaries had to go through birth pangs to win each female convert. The Catechism and baptism, and even medical checkups, had to be administered through a hole in a curtain to maintain separation between male pastors and female converts. Nevertheless, the Christian gospel spread among women. The ceremony of female baptism also encouraged other women to convert and the number of baptisms began to multiply.

Persecution and Suffering

The Bible Women’s conversion to Christianity caused little trouble if the family patriarch was also a believer when she converted. Patriarchs who became Christians learned how to treat their wives and children with kindness and respect. This transformation was viewed as a miracle. However, when a woman in a non-Christian family converted, persecution followed with few exceptions. Bible Woman Sadie Kim recounted the persecution she suffered at the hand of her unfaithful husband:

The day I decided to believe, I attended a church service. My husband saw me on my return, and said, “Now, our home is ruined.” He stuck me a fierce blow. After that, I watched for opportunities to attend church when my husband was away. Many times, he saw me and beat me.⁶⁵

However, the persecuted women patiently endured ill treatment for their faith, partly

⁶⁴Lee, “Freedom, Liberation, and Practice,” 27.

⁶⁵Kim, “The Story of My Life,” 101.

because they had been accustomed to constant trials and oppression. One Bible Woman describes her husband's difficult conversion:

To make me come to senses, he burned my Bible and my hymn book in our kitchen fireplace. An American missionary, who came through the town at that time, salvaged the partly burned Bible. He took it to America to use in speeches when working for Korea. . . . For a few more years my husband continued fighting against my faith. He became very ill. As it was evident that he couldn't live long, I prayed more fervently for him to accept Jesus as his Saviour. As his breath came slower he said he was sorry he had so ill-treated me. He grieved God. With tears of sorrow and longing he prayed to God for forgiveness. While praying, he passed away.⁶⁶

Young Bok Lee, who served as a Bible Woman in the Presbyterian church, was expelled from her own house by her family for her Christianity.⁶⁷ Soo Kyung Kim recounts the account of Gikyu Sim,

Prior to becoming a Bible Woman, Sim was a highly recognized woman among her community for her great devotion to family. Her devotion was such that she cut off a finger as an expression of grief when her husband passed away. However, once she converted to Christianity, she devoted herself to the church and attended every

⁶⁶Tuksun Kim, "Through Faith a Conqueror," in *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*, 126-27.

⁶⁷Song detailed the life story of Bible Woman Young Bok Lee: "Young Bok Lee was born in Waeseong in Pyoungyang on January 15, 1843. When she was 17 years old, she was married to Deok Yong Hwang, a nephew of high ranked government official. The seed of faith in Jesus Christ was sown in Lee's heart in 1866 when the English missionary Robert J. Thomas came to Waeseong and distributed the Bible in 1866. Though she did not receive the Bible from Thomas himself, she could learn the truth of the Gospel from the people who read Scripture given by Thomas. Widowed at the age of 34, Lee had her two daughters get married; the first daughter settled in Chowangri over Dae-Dong River, and the second daughter lived in Joong Wha Seo Cheon. Since Korean-American Treaty was signed in 1882, many missionaries were sent to Korea to spread the Gospel, and some of them reached out to Waeseong where Lee was living. The seed of faith had been already planted in Lee's heart by evangelistic effort of Thomas in 1866, which were waiting to sprout. Therefore, when she was asked to believe Jesus, she accepted him as her savior. However, before coming to the services at church, she had to deal with huge obstacles. Married into a conservative noble family inimical to Christianity, Lee was faced with the strong oppositions of her parents in law who did not allow her to go to church. However, Lee was determined to attend the worship services and received the baptism on the 15th of July in the following year. The persecution of Lee's family was ever growing since she had started coming to church. At last, Lee's in laws threw her out of house, depriving her of all belongings but a few articles of clothes and foods. However, Lee bore the hardship, considering it as the cost for following the Christ. Finding nowhere to go, she stayed in the room of women's evangelism at church. Now, at her age of 55, Lee began to learn Korean letter in order to read and study the Bible. After three years of Bible study, Lee decided to start evangelistic work. She was not dispatched or sponsored by any organization; rather, she evangelized on her own in the district she chose for herself. Once having dispelled her, Lee's family gradually changed their attitudes towards her, moved by her sincere heart and constant love for the Christ. They even allowed her some of their property to get along." Jong In Song, "The Study of 'the Early Presbyterian Bible Women in Korean Church'" (M.Div. thesis, Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary, 2003), 72-73.

worship service. Her focus on the church offended her parents-in-law as they believed she placed a higher value on the church than on her family duty. One night, when Sim came back home after worship, her parents-in-law forced her to spend the night in the snow without entering the house. On another occasion she was seriously beaten on her head, and subsequently spent more than three months in hospital.⁶⁸

Bible Women were often subject to indifference, social discrimination, expulsion from their families, and physical abuses for their beliefs. Still, many persevered through these hardships, deriving strength from the liberation and freedom provided by the gospel.

Though some of those persecuted wives led their husbands to faith through prayer and dedication, this was uncommon. Persecution from the family typically lasted a long time for them. As men predominantly held power in the family, women struggled to maintain their own faith, let alone lead other family members to Christianity. Because of this, occasionally women who began to believe before marriage deserted their faith.

Though not all of the suffering women succeeded in defending their faith, those who did often reached their neighbors:

The early Bible Women at the initial period of Protestant missions were mostly those who suffered under the harmful effects of patriarchal culture. Many turned to Christianity because of harsh treatment from their in-laws, their husband's unfaithfulness (or concubinage), and social alienation. Destitute widows, who were excluded from all social protection, also ended up with Christian churches as their last resort. These early women who had suffered through poverty and lived with abusive treatment from their husbands and in-laws found a new way of life as they experienced a loving and accepting church community. This new environment also provided them with better role models through their interactions with the female missionaries.⁶⁹

In spite of persecution, these early female Christians persevered in their new way of life, emboldened by their Christian education, and gradually realized their true worth. They turned away from blind submission to harsh authoritarianism, and became bold in their nonviolent protest against injustice. They became language teachers for the missionaries or worked as their assistants for itinerant evangelism as Bible Women to eventually serve as evangelists themselves.

⁶⁸Soo Kyung Kim, "A Study of Bible Women's Impact in the Early Korean Church" (M.A. thesis., Hanshin Graduate School of Theology, 2004), 15-16.

⁶⁹Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women*, 52-53.

Contributions of Bible Women in Mission

The women missionaries who worked with them predominantly recorded the activities of the Bible Women. According to Methodist missionary Nelia P. Miller, the Bible Woman with whom she worked was living a lonely life when they met, having been deserted by her husband. She accepted Christ through missionary Moose's Bible class and volunteered to be a Bible Woman:

I noted with much pleasure this year the presence of six women, (a seventh coming when her work permitted) in my class, who were unpaid: who simply came to study because of their earnest desire to know more of the Word. Some who read this may wonder why this fact should give special pleasure. The reason may be found in the keynote that has been struck so high and clear and been echoed so many times in this Annual Meeting, - the clarion note of "Self-support." In my class as it was organized before my return to America there was not an unemployed Bible woman in attendance, - not one who was not receiving a salary either from our own, or from the British Foreign Bible Society.⁷⁰

Mrs. A. F. Robb chronicles the story of another Bible Woman who sold liquor for a living before she came to Christ:

Dorcas has now been for almost four years a Bible-woman in connection with our Song Chin field. One of the earliest to believe in Puk Chong country, she may be looked upon as the mother of the church here. She first heard something of the Gospel from some chance travelers who had gone to sight-see in the little Hognwon church. Though they did not believe in the new doctrine themselves, the report they gave of it induced Dorcas to believe and for about a month before meeting a Christian she tried to do according to the doctrine, and to keep one day in seven as a Lord's Day, as best she knew how. She then fell in with the solitary Christian living in Ankok, from whom she got a New Testament and learned more of its meaning. She was a woman of force and brains, and had learned to read in order to help herself in business. She had made her living as a liquor-seller, but it did not take her long to decide that a Christian should not have anything to do with liquor, so she promptly stopped and began trading and peddling, preaching the new Jesus doctrine wherever she went.⁷¹

After conversion, she relinquished her liquor business for the ministry of evangelism.

Irrespective of their backgrounds, Bible Women made impressive contributions to the mission:

⁷⁰Nellie P. Miller, "Report of Bible Women's Training School, Seoul," *Report of Seventh Annual Session of the Korea Women's Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church held in Seoul, June 23 to 27, 1905* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1905), 53-54.

⁷¹Bessie A. Robb, "Our Bible Woman, Dorcas," *The Korean Mission Field* 3, no.1 (1907): 6.

A woman named Sam Deok Jeon came to Pyeng Yang when she heard about the Revival Movement of Protestant churches. She had been living a lonely life after her husband deserted her to live with his concubine. Despite severe persecution by her family members, she converted and became a Bible Woman, bringing more than 200 souls to the faith in Christ. Circus Kim travelled extensively across the provinces of Pyeng-an-nam-do, Pyeng-an-book-do, and Hwang-hae-do to evangelize. Remarkably, she walked more than seven hundred miles performing her service. An anonymous Bible Woman preached the gospel to over 6,730 people a year, selling 4,491 volumes of the Bible.⁷²

These women turned the joy of their new life into passion for evangelism. The early church owes much of its foundation and growth to the dedicated service and sacrifice of these Bible Women. They made their new life goal to share the gospel with other women who were living in isolation and loneliness.

Many Bible Women visited other women and read them the Scripture, taught them to read and write, prayed for the sick, and became their true neighbors by sharing their joys and sorrows. Because of their dedication, Christianity awakened the sleeping women and took root as a life-restoring religion of liberation, and the daughters of Korea arose as the heroines of Christian communities and of the nation. Moore describes the patience one of her Bible Women exhibited while working with a struggling student,

Yusil would patiently correct over and over again the same mistake, while the pupil's face would be bathed in perspiration, and the veins standing out on her forehead with the strain of bending over the paper on which the characters were written. Then she lifted her long body and said: "To the day of my death I shall not be able to learn." "Oh, yes, you will," Yusil replied. "Try again. Why, if So-and-so can learn, and she is so old, of course you can."⁷³

Previously, Bible Women had no sense of self-worth and could not find a purpose for their lives. However, through Christianity they found their value as human beings from Scripture, their baptism, and the new names they received. They also discovered their giftedness and potential when they participated in the ministry of missions. Mary Scranton acknowledged that the Bible Women she worked with were enthused, commanded respect from people, and had the remarkable power of prayer and

⁷²Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women*, 52.

⁷³Miss Moore, "Korea," *The Hundred and First Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society 1905* (London: The Bible House, 1905), 356.

deliverance from evil spirits. Alan Tippett, professor at the Institute of Church Growth, noted that “‘Korean Bible Women’ were most effective in confronting Shamanism. Some Christian women were themselves converted *mudangs*, *shamans* who manipulated demons and knew well what it meant to wrestle against principalities and powers.”⁷⁴ Scranton also reported that some had greater abilities in ministry than the women missionaries who brought the gospel to them. The lives of Bible Women were far from comfortable and opulent. They lived in the worst period of society, where Christianity was considered an unknown foreign religion originating from the West.

Scranton documented the mission contribution of three Bible Women whom she appointed: Drusila Ni, Sarah Kim, and Hannah Chung.⁷⁵ In the early Korean mission, the missionaries’ houses were places of great envy and attraction for local wives. When a group of wives visited a missionary’s house and complimented her on its beauty, Ni told them, “Are we, Korean people, living in such a beautiful house? No! The missionary is the one who serves God. We should acknowledge that God provided her such a beautiful house to live in.”⁷⁶ The Bible Women, who evangelized the visitors of missionaries’ houses, presented the well-to-do missionary families in terms of divine blessings offered to the believers of the Protestant church. Therefore, Protestant churches were recognized as the fountainhead of enlightenment and civilization both for Koreans and the Bible Women themselves. Chung and Kim also visited women’s homes to evangelize. Kim was well known for her ministry of deliverance and healing. It is reported that she was welcomed for her cheerful character and people even loved her when she sang hymns despite her extreme tone-deafness.⁷⁷

⁷⁴Alan R. Tippett, “Interviewed July 13, 1963,” cited in Shearer, *Wildfire*, 170.

⁷⁵Scranton, “Missionary Work among Women,” 316.

⁷⁶Mattie W. Noble, *The Journals of Mattie Wilcox Noble 1892-1934* (Seoul: The Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea, 1993), 112.

⁷⁷Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women*, 51.

Mrs. Scranton wrote a testimony of the Bible Women's works for the British Foreign Bible Society (BFBS):

Our seven Biblewomen have done faithful service. These women are highly respected, and are believed to have the ability to offer up prevailing prayer. If any one is in trouble of any sort, in mind, body, or estate, the Biblewoman is sent for to pray and sing psalms. When any one gets tired of trying propitiate the evil spirit, it is the Biblewoman who must come and take down the fetishes and burn them. They are called upon to cast out devils, as well as to offer the fervent effectual prayer for the healing of the sick. Their faith is often greater than that of their teachers, and the all-loving and compassionate Father rewards them accordingly.⁷⁸

Bible Women's ministries of healing and casting out demons were frequently attested in the missionary reports. In households that had been under the strong influence of Shamanism, wives were often relegated to the role of diviner and prayed for the blessing of their households. Protestant missionaries regarded ancestral worship as idolatry and considered abolishing these customs necessary to the process of enlightenment. Indeed, many people converted to Christianity, overcoming the influence of Shamanism.

Scranton noted, "Whenever there were demon-possessed people, they pleaded to Bible Women for help."⁷⁹ Therefore, it was common for Bible Women to receive invitations to cast out demons and it was believed that they often delivered people from evil spirits through their prayers. The ministry of deliverance was an important activity of the Bible Women's ministries and missions.

The following excerpt from a 1935 missionary report acknowledges the important contributions and the diverse roles of the early Bible Women:

Bible Women changed the lives of a great number of Korean women; many Korean women were in despair of their poverty-stricken lives. These women were restored through renewed courage and hope for life. . . . They offered a new way of life for the lower class women, particularly for those who were living as men's mistresses. . . . They saved the women who had been deserted by their husbands. . . . They delivered the girls who had been abandoned by their parents and helped them become students.⁸⁰

⁷⁸Mary F. Scranton, "Korea," *The Hundred and Third Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society 1907* (London: The Bible House, 1907), 394.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 422.

⁸⁰Louis B. Hayes, "The Korean Bible Woman and Her Work," *The Korean Mission Field* 31,

The report also indicated that the Bible Women taught and managed Sunday school, visited absentees from the worship service, attended the congregations' marriages and funerals, cared for the sick, administered women's Bible classes, and led early morning worship services. Well-trained Bible Women were often invited to lead Bible Conferences and provided help for women missionaries. Essentially, Bible Women were spiritual leaders in the church ministry.

Training Bible Women

In order for Bible Women to participate in missions, missionaries required that they be equipped with viable faith and adequate knowledge of the doctrine. However, the missionaries' language limitations made it difficult to properly educate Bible Women. They were not sure whether the Bible Women would be able to effectively communicate the messages for evangelism. A record of women missionaries reflects their concerns about the inadequate training of Bible Women. One reflects her concerns regarding the need for more training in *The Korean Mission Field*:

The question of "Bible Institutes" and Bible women is a very imminent and pressing one just now, in most of our stations, the demand being far greater than the supply, and rapidly growing. Many women are coming into the church in the relation of adherents or catechumens or even full members, who have never been taught anything but the merest rudiments of Christian doctrine, not to mention anything about the proper care of their own homes and children. The few lady evangelists cannot possibly do even a small fraction of the very elementary and simple teaching which is so greatly needed, so that more and more we are all simultaneously coming to realize that we must widen our influence and multiply ourselves, by training Koreans to do much of this work.⁸¹

The concerns about Bible Women's education resulted in the establishment of a Bible Institute:

In 1897 the Presbyterian denomination opened a short-term Bible Institute designed to train ministry leaders for six months. In 1907, the denomination established a leadership training center for women and 106 leaders in women's ministry attended. In 1910, the women's leadership training center was upgraded to a women's Bible school, which opened opportunities for women ministry leaders to receive advanced

no. 7 (1935): 151.

⁸¹W. L. Swallen, "Native Bible Women," *The Korean Mission Field* 6, no. 5 (1910): 119.

theological education. The Methodist church also provided training opportunities for Bible Women. In Pyeng Yang in 1908, the Southern and Northern Methodist Episcopal Church jointly opened a short-term Bible training school to train the women's ministry leaders. This school operated from October 1908 through May 1909. During the week the attendants studied the Bible for four days and applied what they learned in local churches on the weekends. Eighty-two women attended the school.⁸²

Yearly classes in Pyeng Yang also served as a key component of Bible Women's education:

Beginning with 1908, the regular yearly classes in Pyengyang city for women were four, viz., a general class each for the women of the country and the city; a special "workers' class of two weeks in the early fall, open only to a limited number of Bible women and others selected by the missionaries, and who are instructed in the schedule of studies to be taught by them in the country classes during the year;" and a special class open only to women especially invited by missionaries and their helpers, and by Korean pastors, with a view to their better instruction and training to act as Bible women, pastors' assistants, and Sabbath School Teachers.⁸³

The May 1905 issue of *Korea Mission Field* reports the development of the Bible education system:

In talking the Class over beforehand, we thought that if twenty names were enrolled we should be very grateful indeed. Our little faith has been rebuked and our hearts made very glad by having a class of thirty three earnest students, fourteen of whom came in from the country, leaving their homes to travel from seventy to two hundred and sixty li, spending from two to five days on the road each way and ten days here in study.⁸⁴

For the first time, a Bible Training School existed that ran courses distinctively for Bible Women, prospective Bible Women, and proactive Christian workers. In June 1910, another Bible school opened to meet the increasing educational needs of Bible Women.⁸⁵ The Bible class provided introductory teachings about the Gospel of Mark and the Book of Acts, adding courses for catechism and Hanguk.⁸⁶

⁸²Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women*, 57.

⁸³Rhodes, *History of the Korea Missions*, 159.

⁸⁴Louise Ogilvy Morris, "The Yeng Byen Bible Institute," *The Korean Mission Field* 2, no. 6 (1905): 117.

⁸⁵Mi Kang Yang, "The Early Bible Women's Faith and Activities," *The History of Korean Christianity* 2 (1992): 99.

⁸⁶Margaret Best, "Course of Study and Rules of Admission of the Pyeng Yang Presbyterian

Scranton established the first women's Methodist Bible school. She began a Bible Training School to train Korean women evangelists and subsequently expanded it to become the Seoul Methodist Women's School in 1905.⁸⁷ The school had boarding houses for students, "We have twenty-three girls who are boarders."⁸⁸ And four women became the first graduates in 1907. The Seoul Methodist Women's School was later renamed the Seoul Women's Bible School, which had two departments: regular and preparatory. The preparatory department provided education for those who had not graduated from elementary school. The regular department offered courses in the Bible, church history, ethics, music, gymnastics, and home education.⁸⁹ Missionary reports provide information about Bible classes in the early Korean mission:

Most of the Bible Women and active workers in local provinces are being trained in Mission Bible Institute. Not all of our most faithful and successful workers are receiving a diverse and quality education. However, they know Him whom they believe in, and are full of passion to make Him known to people.⁹⁰

The seeds planted by and for the early Bible Women continued to flourish through the subsequent decades. In Wonsan, in 1906, the Bohae Women's Bible School (Alice Cobb Woman's Bible School) was established with an endowment provided by Mary Knowles to educate women's ministry leaders.⁹¹ In the 1920s, those who could afford the time and money for education attended the Bible Academy or Bible School:

This group included Bible school teachers, Bible Women, and seminary students. Missionaries expected that the graduates of the Bible Schools would return to their hometowns and serve as church leaders. In particular, the missionaries hoped to

Church Women's Bible Institute," *The Korean Mission Field* 6, no. 6 (1910): 152.

⁸⁷Sung Sam Lee, *Methodist and Sinhak Dahaksa* (Seoul: The Institute of Book Publishers, 1975), 136-38.

⁸⁸E.C. Wagner, "The Girls' Boarding School, Song Do," *The Korean Mission Field* 3, no. 9 (1907): 132.

⁸⁹Best, "Course of Study and Rules," 153.

⁹⁰Hayes, "The Korean Bible Woman," 152-53.

⁹¹Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women*, 57; Ahn, *Awakening the Hermit Kingdom*, 204.

raise qualified women ministry leaders through the Bible Schools, since these leaders would have a higher level of education than the Bible Women.⁹²

In 1923, a school for higher biblical education, the Women's Biblical Seminary, was established in Pyeng Yang.⁹³ In 1920, recognizing the urgent need for training women workers, the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Southern Methodist Women's Missionary Council jointly established the Hyup Sung Theological Seminary for Women.⁹⁴ Until 1910, however, the education of Bible Women was mostly provided through the church, the Bible Institute, and Bible Training School facilitated by women missionaries.

The Education Content

The Bible Women's ministries were based on the knowledge of the gospel they acquired from women missionaries. Whether or not Bible Women could achieve an adequate understanding of the gospel depended on whether the missionaries were able to convey their messages to them. Success required them to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers. According to missionaries' reports, the teachings received by Bible Women dealt with topics such as overcoming life hardships, sins, worship attitude, and loving neighbors.⁹⁵ In other words, the faith of women missionaries was successfully handed down to the Bible Women.

Women missionaries used simple explanation, catechism, and verse memorization to communicate truths about sin, repentance, heaven, hell, Satan, and Jesus' life. According to the missionaries' reports, the regular course of the Bible academy in Busan was organized into two months of training each year, over five years: "The

⁹²Ibid., 58.

⁹³Rhodes, *History of the Korea Missions*, 161.

⁹⁴V. Chaffin, "Union Methodist Woman's Bible Training School, Seoul," *The Korean Mission Field* 17, no. 3 (1921): 62.

⁹⁵Best, "Course of study and Rules," 154.

syllabus includes certain books of the Old Testament, the Gospels, and some of the Epistles.”⁹⁶ Notably, they facilitated teaching practicums so that students might have as many opportunities as possible to practice teaching in front of their colleagues. It was difficult for some students to take time-consuming courses. However, the courses had great advantages, allowing the students to gain broader perspectives on the Bible as well as more self-confidence.

Since Bible Women received only a basic level of theological and doctrinal education, they were unable to offer proper answers to the questions people asked. A missionary’s report provides information about the training a widow Bible Woman received in Euijoo in 1890: “Do not worship idols, spirits, and ancestors but God the Almighty. Be godly, truthful, and kind. Observe the Sabbath by choosing one day of a week, and worship God with the hymnal, ‘Nothing but the Blood of Jesus.’”⁹⁷ A Bible Woman named Chu Lulu instructed people with the following message:

For those in persecution, exhort them with the stories of your own persecution. For those in suffering, encourage them with the stories of your own suffering, and for those in mental illness, comfort them with the fact that you used to suffer mental illness. For anyone in trials, tell them that by faith Jesus Christ was saved from all the trials of the world.⁹⁸

The messages of Bible Women were simple and effective, combining the truths learned from missionaries with their own personal experiences.

Since ordinary housewives could not afford the time commitment required for

⁹⁶N. R. Scholes, “Developing Women Leaders,” *The Korean Mission Field* 12, no. 7 (1916): 188.

⁹⁷Underwood, *Fifteen Years among the Top-Knots*, 79.

⁹⁸Lulu Chu Kim, “A Bible Woman on the Hai Ju District,” in *Victorious Lives of Early Christian in Korea*, 51. Bible Woman Chu Lulu was born in 1879 into a poor underprivileged family in Kyeng ggi Providence and given the name Chu Po Ki. She did not have an easy childhood and was married off to a poor farmer at an early age. Due to her difficult married life, Chu Lulu considered becoming a shaman as a way to escape her abusive married life, even though shamans were in the lowest of social classes. Chu Lulu had a unique conversion experience and was baptized in Dec of 1905 by Rev. Critchett. At the request of Methodist missionary Miss Hillman, Chu Lulu became a Hanguk teacher at the Haeju School for Girl’s started by the Haeju Church, and in 1907 became a Bible Woman. Duk Joo Lee, *Stories of Early Christian Women in Korea* (Seoul: Hong Seong Sa, 2007), 80.

the education or the ministry, Bible Women initially came from the lower class, as they were freer to use their time in evangelism. Subsequently, Bible Women came from those with a higher level of education who completed Bible class or mission school, diversifying the composition of Bible Women:

The enthusiasm and loyal service of Bible Women led to the establishment of many new churches. They travelled to churches with no pastor and delivered sermons on Sundays. They played various roles in the early period of Korean mission, since the churches lacked human resources. In this context, the service of Bible Women was indispensable; they served as the teachers in charge of Sunday school, leaders of Bible conferences, and educators of the illiterate.⁹⁹

Bible Women Educational Obstacles

Although the responsibilities of Bible Women gradually increased, their theological education remained on a basic level due to the limitation of Christian books and the limited support of foreign mission societies to educate ministry leaders.¹⁰⁰ Lee describes the resulting challenge the Bible Women faced and how they addressed it:

Missionaries and theologians were understandably concerned as to whether or not the Bible Women's training prepared them to communicate the Christian gospel strongly enough to break through Shamanism's long-standing influence on women. The Bible Women themselves felt anxious when encountering difficult questions they were not equipped to answer. Therefore, Bible Women's preaching of the gospel relied heavily on emotional connections as they focused on their own experiences. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that Bible Women failed to free themselves from the overwhelming influence of Shamanism or succumbed to syncretism.¹⁰¹

In the beginning of Protestant missions in Korea, the missionaries were deeply aware of the problem Shamanism posed, since it did not offer answers for the problems and suffering of women.¹⁰² The education, evangelistic activities, and economic opportunities offered by Protestant churches invited women into a new life. Therefore, Bible Women attempted to thoroughly eliminate sorcery and superstitious elements of

⁹⁹Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women*, 70.

¹⁰⁰Ahn, *Awakening the Hermit Kingdom*, 211.

¹⁰¹Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women*, 80.

¹⁰²Shearer, *Wildfire*, 171.

Shamanism from Christian beliefs that they communicated. In addition, the pietism of missionaries in the early mission had a significant effect on Bible Women, so they were sensitive to issues of alcoholism, smoking, and concubinage. Coming from society's lowest class, Bible Women were fully aware of the nature of Shamanic vices. They could also share their own experience of being delivered from the power of Shamanism, which constituted an important part of their messages of evangelism. This enabled them to establish a connection with the people that they evangelized through their common experiences.

Another significant issue of the Bible Women's ministry is the idea of prosperity that they communicated. With the exception of the strong testimonies of their own conversions, their messages tended to focus on benefits of Western civilization that might follow as the result of conversion. In this respect, their messages communicated false ideas about the essence of the gospel by encouraging people to focus on earthly rewards rather than spiritual transformation.¹⁰³ Conversely, women missionaries' messages tended to focus on the blessed life in heaven opposed to eternal torment in hell. While the connection proved effective in winning converts, Lee points out that it also led to some focusing their faith on the wrong objectives:

Human equality and dignity did not receive full treatment in their mission and education. While they often preached on liberation from the power of evil spirits, they did not focus their teaching on how to live once they converted. Therefore, the messages preached by missionaries and Bible Women in their early Korean mission tended to lead believers to focus their faith on the improvement of life conditions, which often might have been confused with receiving the benefit of Western civilization. They lost sight of the social dimensions of the gospel, such as pursuing the communal good and calling for social reform.¹⁰⁴

To this end it was the power of prayer and not theological education that inspired many conversions of women. The strong spiritual power demonstrated by spiritual healing and deliverance encouraged many women to cross over to Christianity.

¹⁰³Henry Munro Bruen, *40 Years in Korea* (Seoul: The Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea, 1998), 112-13; Ahn, *Awakening the Hermit Kingdom*, 206.

¹⁰⁴Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women*, 65.

Many were frustrated by their lack of theological training and inability to respond adequately to deeper questions. Additionally, the lack of biblical and theological integration prevented them from developing healthy faith for the people they ministered to and for themselves. Despite their educational limitations, the message of the gospel preached by Bible Women produced numerous women converts.

Cultural Transformation: Professional Positions for Women

Most of the Bible Women in the early Korean mission were from the lower classes, had been socially cast out, and intellectually impoverished. Some Bible Women were able to engage in ministry without pay, but most of them were living in poor conditions whilst supporting their families. For poor widows or housewives, working as Bible Women offered a means to make a living.

In order to become Bible Women, they were required to complete assigned courses. The post-conversion education opened an opportunity for those women to earn an income. Bible Women and Women Colporteurs (Bible sellers) received compensation.¹⁰⁵ Mrs. Swallen of Pyeng Yang made the following statements in response to questions from one of the evangelists of another station,

We have four Bible women paid with foreign money. One who receives one half of her salary from foreign funds, and one half from the British and Foreign Bible Society, who supply this on condition of the recipient spending a corresponding share of her time in selling Bibles and portions of Scripture. We have two paid entirely by the British and Foreign Bible Society, as Scripture colporteurs, four paid entirely by the native churches, two paid one fourth by the B. and F. B. S. and the remainder by the churches.¹⁰⁶

Even though the pay was minimal, they were able to support their families with a regular salary. Few opportunities to earn an income existed for women in the Chosŏn Dynasty prior to the Bible Women profession with available options limited to socially despised

¹⁰⁵Mi Kang Yang, "Studies on Bible Women from the Viewpoint of Inclusion and Exclusion," *The History of Korean Christianity* 6 (1997): 141.

¹⁰⁶Swallen, "Native Bible Women," 119.

positions such as prostitution and sorcery. Unlike *Mudang* or *Giseang*, Bible Women and Women Colporteurs were socially acceptable jobs for women. Bible Women were recognized as pioneers working on the cultural frontier who introduced modern civilization to Korean people.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, the Bible Women profession opened a door for many women into public life.

Women Becoming Members of Society

Many women walked long distances to study the Bible at Bible classes, which were designed to educate Bible Women in the church. Bible Class was held for ten days, and the students benefited from intensive study. Another merit of Bible Class was that it endowed a name for each woman participant. Women lived anonymously. They were given an unofficial childhood name before marriage. At marriage, their names were replaced with the husbands' family name. From that point forward women were called according to their husbands' last names followed by *sil* or *daek*, meaning "property of." Lower class women lived without names their entire lives, regardless of marital status. Women missionaries recalled the situation:

The best work I have been able to do since I came to Korea has been by cooperating with and working through a most excellent Bible woman, and it is about her that wish to write. Korean girls are not given a real name, but are called, it may be, "Golden Rat," "Sorrowful" or some such thing, and following this custom my Bible woman to be was called Little Treasure; this was unusual, as girls are usually unwelcome and are considered a burden rather than a treasure. Little Treasure was born about thirteen years before Christianity really touched Korea; so she with millions of others grew up knowing nothing but the rites and laws of heathenism.¹⁰⁸

Women Missionaries endowed the previously nameless women with biblical names. Pronounced in English, the names from Scripture sounded strange for them, but the women were greatly impressed with the fact that they now had their own names.

The women endowed with names were recognized as full members of society with individuality and personhood. Missionaries would give names on the occasion of

¹⁰⁷Chu, *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea*, 55.

¹⁰⁸Mary M. Moose, "A Good Bible Woman," *The Korea Methodist* 1, no. 3 (1905): 21-22.

baptism. Since baptism required women to study and read the Bible, baptism also marked the achievement of literacy, which brought important changes into their lives. The power of reading enabled them to extend the horizon of their understanding and empowered them to survive challenges in a patriarchal society. This great change in women's lives served as an important factor for the Protestant mission to thrive in Korea.

Early Women's Societies

In the early Korean church, the education of the Protestant mission aimed to train Bible Women as well as women believers in general. Education created a new social context in which women were able to come together. Female Christians fervently energized and expanded the church, and systematically molded a nationwide network of local women's fellowships. The purpose of establishing the women's organization of those days was to

support the general assembly and the movement of evangelism to preach the Gospel of Christ (Alliance of Women's Fellowship of Presbyterian Church of Cho-Sun) or Let us shine forth Jesus at any price and increase our membership to 10,000 by the end of this year (National Federation of Methodist Women's Fellowship).¹⁰⁹

This purpose illustrates their passion regarding evangelism and gaining converts through their revival meetings and faith movements. In terms of form, the women's organization in Korea was comparable to women's clubs that were emerging in North America and Europe. The formation of women's organizations offered new opportunities for women to foster a community beyond their family relationships, thereby promoting a social environment more conducive to fully realizing their potential.

¹⁰⁹Sun Ae Chu, "Christian Women's Movement After the Emancipation of Korea." In *Women, Wake Up, Rise, and Sing! The 100-Year History of Korean Christian Women*, prep. Women's Anniversary Committee for 100 Years of Korean Church History (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1985), 224.

CHAPTER 4
THE BIBLE WOMEN'S INFLUENCE
ON THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

This chapter examines the remarkable faith and leadership of the Bible Women, who elevated the meaning of the gospel from an individual experience of salvation to a collective experience of deliverance from social injustice and imperial subjugation. While maintaining close relationships with their missionary mentors, these emerging leaders organized and executed impactful ministries focusing on evangelism and Christian education. They established and operated local Christian women's organizations providing opportunities for women to engage in relationships beyond the confines of their immediate families. In so doing, they served as role models and agents for change, significantly contributing to social and cultural progress on women's issues.

This chapter, first, discusses the activities and accomplishments of the seasoned Bible Women and their continuing relationship with missionaries. Secondly, it examines their ministries and the role they played in establishing women's Christian organizations, and their influence on the growth of social consciousness among Christian women. Thirdly, it illuminates the influence of the Bible Women on the growth of social consciousness among Christian women and their participation in the Enlightenment movement in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. Finally, the chapter addresses the discipleships established between female Missionaries and their Bible Women.

Bible Women in the Church

In the early Korean church era, Bible Women served primarily as assistants,

helping female missionaries navigate both the countryside and the culture. Methodist missionary Mary Harris Follwell illustrates how she and her Bible Woman Helen worked together to evangelize local women in their homes:

As for the women probationers, I have kept Helen, my Bible woman, on the lookout for the homes of all of them, and asked her to note which were regular and which were irregular in attendance upon our weekday and Sunday services. As soon as she learns the home of any of them she reports to me and together we call upon them, urging them to study the Bible and catechism, I tell them that Helen will teach it to them orally, but also urging them to learn to read. Since January 1st I have entered 32 homes, having made in all 41 visits, of which 30 were to the homes of probationers, and 11 visits were to the homes of unbelievers, some of whom are now on the list of probationers. During these visits I have met in their homes 28 probationers.¹

Bible Women and women missionaries maintained reciprocal relationships learning each other's language and culture while delivering God's Word to the local women. Lee-Ellen Strawn wrote, "As assistants who could communicate with and understand missionaries, and thus worked closely with them, Bible Women also functioned as cultural advisors."² They worked closely with missionaries assisting them as right-hand persons as documented in excerpts of numerous missionary reports:

Since last Annual meeting, I have visited most of the homes of our church members, being accompanied by a Bible woman. At every home the Scriptures were read and explained, a song or two sung, and prayers offered. I have felt my hands somewhat tied because of my inability to speak the language.³

On these trips when not teaching and traveling she is reading the Bible with us, explaining unknown words and phrases or eagerly inquiring the meaning of some obscure passage.⁴

¹Mary Harris Follwell, "Evangelistic Work in Pyeng Yang Circuit," *First Annual Meeting of the Woman's Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Korea, Seoul, May 13 to 19, 1899* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1899), 12.

²Lee-Ellen R. R. Strawn, "Korean Bible Women 1888 to 1930: Effecting Change for Women from the Anbang to the Public Square" (Ph.D. diss., Yonsei University, 2011), 114-15.

³Alice Hammond, "Report V.—Evangelistic Work—Mead Memorial Church and South Korea District," *Fourth Annual Report of the Korea Woman's Missionary Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church Held at Pyeng Yang, May 16 to 21, 1902* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1902), 14.

⁴Mary R. Hillman, "Evangelistic Work and Day Schools, Chemulpo and West Korea District," *Fifth Annual Report of the Korea Woman's Missionary Conference of the Methodist Episcopal*

The Bible woman reported to me every morning and I directed her always as best I could. I have received many Korean guests through or with her.⁵

Most of the work has been done by our five Bible women, whom I might call the five fingers of my right hand, so useful have they all been to me.⁶

While they continued to fill various roles as needed, their primary emphases in the church were evangelism and education. In these capacities, missionaries credited the Bible Women with enormous Bible sales, teaching thousands of women to read, and achieving countless conversions. They served as colporteurs, itinerant evangelists, and Sunday school teachers. They held Bible classes, conducted Bible conferences, and organized adult continuing education programs. They achieved these accomplishments and attained personal growth through continued close discipleship with their missionary supervisors:

Whether the Korean Bible Woman is the highly trained, efficient, versatile church worker, or the humble, tireless country evangelists, the spirit is the same and God uses both types equally well. We as missionaries owe them our greatest respect and affection, and recognition of the wonderful work they are doing. We like to tell how marvelously the church is growing in Korea, how many hundreds of new believers are admitted each year, how many new churches established; but do we give full credit to the nameless, tireless, faithful Korean evangelist, man or woman? And are we doing all we can to make the Church realize the value of these trained workers, and that the worker is worthy of his hire?⁷

Ministry of Evangelism

Bible Women served as powerful evangelists in the early church through the missionaries' strategy to "extend the gospel to Korean women through Korean women."⁸

Church Held at Seoul, May 1903 (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1903), 32.

⁵Mrs. O. R. Avison, "A Bible Woman's Work," *The Korean Mission Field* 2, no. 11 (1906): 212.

⁶Lulu E. Frey, "Report II-Evangelistic Work of First Church, Seoul," *Fourth Annual Report of the Korea Woman's Missionary Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church Held at Pyeng Yang, May 16 to 21, 1902* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1902), 4.

⁷Louis B. Hayes, "The Korean Bible Woman and Her Work," *The Korean Mission Field* 31, no. 7 (1935): 153.

⁸Duk Joo Lee, *History of the Methodist Women's Mission in Korea: 1897-1990* (Seoul:

Many women became acquainted with Christianity through this strategy. Bible Women traveled to churches in assigned mission regions under the missionaries' supervision. A single Bible Woman visited as many as forty churches, selling Bibles and evangelizing door-to-door along the way. The women's spiritual drive led them over treacherous terrain through extreme weather to proclaim the gospel. They built a human network through their travels, delivering news to remote locations and providing mission headquarters with awareness of secluded villages in mountains and valleys.

The annual report of British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) includes examples of the women's activities:

The Biblewoman visited this village and went from house to house. The Gospel story was so new and strange that she had many listeners. When Wednesday evening came she spoke to some of the men who had believing minds, and asked them if they could not have a prayer-meeting. "Yes, the men could; but the women could never sit in the same room where there was a gathering of men." "Let us put up a curtain in the middle of the room," suggested the Biblewoman, to which they consented. The curtain was hung, and all preparations for a prayer-meeting made. The women gathered in the kitchen, but refused at first to go into the other room, although the curtain was hung across it. After much persuasion they began to enter: the prayer-meeting was held and the women listened attentively. At the close twelve women decided to believe, asked for books, and wanted the Biblewoman to stay and teach them.⁹

Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) missionary Mary Nora describes the feats and accomplishments of her Bible Women, Sarah:

She walks to 12 villages within a radius of ten miles from the town, and teaches an average of 40 women in each, some separately, some assembled in each other's houses, or in a little chapel which the people in most of the villages have built for themselves. She began a little school for girls, and this is now merged into a larger one where one of Sarah's pupils does her much credit as a pupil teacher. Sarah has not only taught her women, but inspired and helped some of them to teach others also, so that her work is carried on in the villages she can only visit once or twice a month. Some of the women walk in ten miles to the service at St. Stephen's Church.¹⁰

National Association for Christian Methodist Women's Mission, 1991), 328-29.

⁹"A Village Prayer-Meeting," *Hundred and Sixth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1910* (London: The Bible House, 1910), 354.

¹⁰Mary Nora, "Bible Women," *Hundred and Fifth Report of the British and Foreign Bible*

As new churches were planted, the Bible Women utilized their ability to reach women in their inner sanctums, where they pursued their indigenous mission to deliver the gospel to this otherwise inaccessible segment of the population. They carried God's Word physically as well as spiritually to the corners of the country providing women with the keys to salvation:

During the year just closed her report shows she visited 6,730 women and talked to them on the subject of personal salvation; she also sold 4,491 New Testaments and Scripture portions besides more than 1,500 Calendars and Tracts, all containing Christian teaching. Every morning she takes a supply of books for the day and ties them in a cloth which she binds about her waist and with her Bible and Hymn Book she goes from home to home selling books, telling the simple Gospel story, teaching the ignorant to read, and reading and singing to those who may wish to hear.¹¹

Bible Women took great pride in new converts and new church foundations. Their territory expanded as the number of churches grew. When a particular church was not able to support a Bible Woman, a guest Bible Woman would visit the church. The newly formed Pyeng Yang Sa-Dong Church was very fragile in its beginnings, with fewer than forty members. With no permanent Bible Woman, "Oh Chan-Il visited the church one week each month to cultivate relationships with the women of the area."¹² Membership quickly grew to more than one hundred, enabling it to sustain both a full-time pastor and a dedicated Bible Woman. While they continued to support God's work where they were needed, Bible Women served two primary roles in the church, namely those of colporteurs and itinerant evangelists.

As colporteurs. As colporteurs, Bible Women traveled vast distances, selling Bibles and other Christian literature. Unlike male colporteurs, the Bible Women had access to kitchens or sewing rooms where many women gathered. They shared the gospel

Society 1909 (London: The Bible House, 1909), 360.

¹¹Mary M. Moose, "A Good Bible Woman," *The Korea Methodist* 1, no. 3 (1905), 22.

¹²W. L. Swallen, "Native Bible Women," *The Korean Mission Field* 6, no. 5 (1910): 119.

as they helped women iron clothes and prepare food. An annual report of the BFBS acknowledged the scope of their work as colporteurs: “Bible women have opened the doors to meet women, even into their kitchens.”¹³ They primarily read them the Bibles and explained the content as they sold them. As most women were illiterate, the colporteurs made time to teach them how to read the Bible themselves. Their scope expanded as they were called to perform pastoral ministries such as visiting the sick, helping women work through family problems, and praying over those who were considered possessed.

The colporteurs traveled over mountains and across valleys, often where no evangelists had ever been. They spread their experience of the gospel, and sold Christian material on the street, in fields, and anywhere they encountered people. The BFBS recognized their contribution:

During the year an opening has been made in some villages, hither to entirely heathen, and souls have been won for Christ. In one such village, Abigail, the Biblewoman, was going from house to house telling the Gospel message, when she was asked to visit a home in deep trouble. She found that the eldest son, a young man of twenty-two, had become insane. His parents did not know where to look for help. She comforted them by telling of the great Healer of all diseases. Before she left the village, she made arrangements that the son should go with her some distance to the home of one of our colporteurs. There he was prayed for, taught to read, and kindly treated until his reason returned. God blessed this ministry of love to the good of the afflicted home, so that the father is now a faithful Christian and others in the village are professing believers.¹⁴

This has been an unusually busy year for the Biblewomen. The cause has been partly that there were few other workers among the women, and partly that there has been an awakening among the people, Biblewoman Abigail says that often as she is ready to start out for the Thursday evening Bible-class for women, some new believer will ask her to go and “cleanse her house from evil spirits,” or some one will come from a sick house and ask her to go and pray, or sit up with a child or whoever is sick.¹⁵

¹³Mrs. C. F. Berheisel, “Bible Women,” *Hundred and Eighth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1912* (London: The Bible House, 1912), 351.

¹⁴W. R. Foote, “A Village Prayer-Meeting,” *Hundred and Sixth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1910* (London: The Bible House, 1910), 355.

¹⁵W. R. Foote, “Biblewomen,” *Hundred and Seventh Report of the British and Foreign Bible*

Bible Women dauntlessly preached the gospel and propagated Christianity, bringing ineffable joy to local women. Their message brought freedom and happiness to those who lived poor and isolated lives filled with despair. They shone the light for the women who were living in darkness.

In 1902, Seventeen Bible Women supported women missionaries belonging to the North Methodist and Southern Methodist churches, the American Presbyterian churches, the Presbyterian church in Canada, the Australian Presbyterian church, and the church of England.¹⁶ In 1910, the BFBS hired thirty one Bible Women. They read the Bible to 77,000 women, and taught 170 of them to read the Bible on their own. In addition, they sold 8,680 copies of the Bible.¹⁷ Alexander Kenmure, the BFBS' first agent, recounts,

The more I hear about Bible women's activities, the more pleased I become. A decline in the number of colporteurs is not a problem. As they have more experience and better qualification, they can work more effectively. Bible women have been doing amazing things in their ministries. I thoroughly investigated the operation and asked their supervising missionaries to closely examine the ministry. In our judgment, the ministry is very healthy. Their sales volume averages more than those of two male colporteurs. They are doing a great ministry.¹⁸

I never wrote a report with so much satisfaction as this - *in every way* it is satisfactory. In other departments of work there is very much to discourage, much to cause doubt and skepticism; but here there can be no question that the Society is accomplishing a good and solid work.¹⁹

Society, 1911 (London: The Bible House, 1911), 339.

¹⁶Mi Kang Yang, "The Early Bible Women's Faith and Activities," *The History of Korean Christianity* 2 (1992): 103; Yeon Sook Huh, "Work and Role of Bible Women in Early Methodist Church, 1885-1935" (M.A. thesis, Sook Myeong Women's University, 2005), 27.

¹⁷Foote, "Biblewomen," 338.

¹⁸Alexander Kenmure, "Document of the History of Korean Bible Society," in *The History of the Korean Bible Society II: Translation, Distribution and the Work of Colporteurs*, ed. Man Yeol Lee, Sung Duk Oak, and Dae Young Ryu (Seoul: Korean Bible Society, 1994), 56.

¹⁹Alexander Kenmure, "Bible Women In the East-Korea," *The Ninety-Seventh Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society 1901* (London: The Bible House, 1901), 298.

Kenmure's remarks publicly recognized the Bible Women's diligence and faithfulness and documented the success of their ministry. Kenmure's accolades echoed verbal praise from the missionaries to the Bible Women.

Mrs. A. F. Robb reports the accomplishments of a Bible Woman named Dorcas who performed exceptionally in Songjin and Puk Chong:

During the year she sold 369 Gospels, one New Testament, and a number of tracts, catechisms, and hymn-books. Two thousand five hundred and forty women heard the Gospel from her, and we pray that many of these may be stars in her crown. In her home in Puk Chong she does important work in teaching the Christian women and children, visiting and looking after people who are favorably disposed to the Gospel, and in every way in her power working for the coming of Christ's kingdom.²⁰

Methodist missionary Mattie Wilcox Noble reports on Sadie Kim, who worked under her supervision:

Sadie-filled with the Spirit of God, leading her heathen sisters to Jesus, and teaching the Christian women, has made one thousand four hundred eighty-one visits during the year and sold two hundred thirty-nine books. She has brought to the altar thirty-one new believers; led on backslider to return; distributed tracts and invitations to church to hundreds of homes at the time of the revival meetings, and studied in the fall and spring Institutes.²¹

In addition to selling books, colporteurs read Bible stories to non-Christian women and taught the illiterate to read. Their ministry contributed to the reduction of illiteracy. F. S. Miller, who worked in a Presbyterian church in the Chungju province, records the testimony of an elderly woman named Shin:

I could not read God's Word and I cannot tell you how *tap-tap-how* (oppressed) my heart was. I bought a Testament, took it to one of the Christian women and said: "Teach me how to read this." She said: "Grandmother, you are seventy now and too old to learn to read, all you can hope to do is to go to heaven just by believing." Still I would open the Books, put on my glasses, pray to God, and strain my eyes trying to read it, and my mind grew more and more **tap-tap-how*. I went from one to another and they only discouraged me: I was too old. Finally I asked a little child to

²⁰Bessie A. Robb, "Our Bible Woman Dorcas," *The Korean Mission Field* 3, no. 1 (1907): 6.

²¹Mattie. W. Noble, "Bible Woman Sadie Kim," *The Korean Mission Field* 3, no. 6 (1907): 88.

teach me the alphabet and kept studying word by word, till now I can read the Father's Letter and now my heart is so *she-won-how* (refreshed).²²

These women persevered in the face of opposition and persecution. As a result, everywhere the Bible Women went new believers arose. Lulu Frey stated,

She [Korean women] welcomes the Bible woman; her visit affords a little diversion. The Bible woman sees her opportunity and tactfully makes the most of it. The Bible stories are interestingly told and she has no trouble in getting an invitation to come again.²³

As itinerant evangelists. Bible Women's role as itinerant evangelists evolved naturally as one of the primary early functions they performed was assisting missionaries in this ministry. Their role as assistants served as an apprenticeship enabling them to operate with increasing independence as their supervising missionary deemed appropriate. The itinerant evangelist role also grew out of the expanding needs filled by colporteurs as their Bible sales led them to read and teach the Bible, and to pray and minister to the local women. Harry A. Rhodes acknowledges the scope of their work as colporteurs:

Kim Si, the wife of the colporteur in Tyung Ju, accompanied her husband on the difficult trip to Kangkei last fall (1902), teaching the women there and in groups along the way, spending about two months on the trip, and doing her best to fill the lack of a foreign woman's teaching.²⁴

Sun Ae Chu also recognizes the important functions performed by the Bible Women:

²²F. S. Miller writes, "Grandmother Shin is one of the oldest members of the Chongju Sabbath School. She felt called of God to start a church in her native village ten miles away, and for several years has made frequent visits on foot. Often she walked ten miles out on Saturday, holding her aching back with one hand and swinging her long staff with the others. All day Sabbath she went from house to house or held meetings for the women, on Monday trudged ten miles back with heavy feet but light heart. Now there are sixteen catechumens in that village preparing for baptism, and they are going to build a little church this spring. The sun was setting when Grandmother Shin was called into the vineyard but her basket is nearly full already, and her wages waiting. There are others whose hearts are *tap-tap-how* because they cannot read God's Word and that is why we need Bible women so much." F. S. Miller, "Grand Mother Shin Learns to Read," *The Korean Mission Field* 7, no. 4 (1911): 108.

²³Lulu E. Frey, "The Bible Women," *The Korean Mission Field* 3, no. 3 (1907): 42.

²⁴Harry A. Rhodes, ed., *History of the Korea Mission Presbyterian Church U.S.A. 1884-1934* (Seoul: The Presbyterian Church of Korea Department of Education, 1934), 334.

Itinerant evangelists traveled from church to church, participating in Sunday services, visiting absentees during the week, attending weddings or funerals as required, caring for the sick and less fortunate, and encouraging people who had left the church to return. When a Bible Woman was invited to preach in a village, the word spread quickly that “a Bible Woman came.” The news generally resulted in nearly all the village people gathering. Park Wonshin maintained a circuit of forty-eight churches across five townships. Han Kyungsik remembered the excitement of hearing that a Bible Woman was coming to preach when he was just twelve years old. In recalling the evening service he said, “Her preaching was engraved deep in my heart, even though I was young.”²⁵

Itinerant evangelists walked hundreds of miles to complete a single circuit. Usually, they did not travel alone, but went with a woman missionary or another Bible Woman. Bible women and women missionaries worked together. Most of the time they went in groups of at least two to teach the Bible, visit door to door, and to witness person to person. In *The Korea Mission Field*, Margaret Best writes, “In April at the close of our Pyeng Yang class for country women, Park Si, my Bible Woman, and I started for Koksan. We traveled 213 miles by chair and horse and were absent from Pyeng Yang twenty-two days.”²⁶ Missionaries were well acquainted with the role’s physical demands, particularly the heavy winds and bitter cold of northern Korea’s winters. Even fierce winds and snowstorms could not deter them:

Last winter in an issue of the “Korea Filed” we had a most interesting article concerning the exposure and hardship endured by the women missionaries in country travels. I had just had prayer together with our women here and seen them set forth on their long journeys, facing the bitter wind and snow of a Northern Korean January, and heard their reports upon returning home, when this article came to my attention. It made me rejoice, and I know those other women are happy to be able to suffer some inconveniences and hardships for women who in their return will go out and face the storms and cold, to give the gospel of hope and salvation to their own country women. One old Bible woman, fifty years of age, came back after walking over five hundred *li*, altogether, with her face exceedingly sore from the cold and winds, but with her heart overflowing with joy that the Lord had let them lead thirty-eight souls into the kingdom, in one place.²⁷

²⁵Sun Ae Chu, *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea* (Seoul: Dae Han Presbyterian Church Women’s Association, 1978), 92-93.

²⁶Margaret Best, “In the High Valleys,” *The Korean Mission Field* 2, no. 11 (1906): 209.

²⁷Olga P. Shaffer, “Yeong Byen Women’s Bible Class,” *The Korean Mission Field* 9, no.11 (1913): 286.

The traveling evangelists generally wore shoes made of straw; as a result, their feet were calloused and blistered. The sight of their feet brought tears to the missionaries' eyes but the spirit drove them beyond the limits of their flesh. They took inspiration from various Bible figures:

Two of the Bible Women took a trip to Tuk Chun, which lasted until late December. One of them in relating the experienced they had passed through on this hard journey said that as she was climbing high mountain passes, so weary that she didn't know whether she would be able to take another step, she thought, "Why should I have all this toil? Others can be Christians and live a life of ease, why should not I?" Then she thought of Paul and most of all one other, and pressed to reach it, it seemed that heaven would surely be in sight. "Miryun han saing Kak" she called her thought (foolish thought), but it is the "Miryun han saing Kak" to which most flesh is prone, especially when weary and exhausted.²⁸

The incredible hardships endured by the itinerant evangelists not only enabled the Word of God to be received by the local population, but the women also served as inspirations and exemplified the power of their message. Nellie Pierce describes the feats of itinerant Bible Women in Korea:

The distances they travel are tremendous and always, though worn, weary and tired by a long day's journey they gather the women around them for the evening service. Josepha traveled over seven hundred and twenty five *li* and taught aside from the women of the church about five hundred and ninety women.²⁹

Ethel M. Estey enjoyed great success as a Southern Methodist missionary by training women and sending them to remote locations to evangelize:

Kilsi, the woman who gives two-thirds of her time to the Lord, has travelled several thousand *li* this past year and there is no group and hardly any little, lonely, out-of-the-way place where believers dwell, but has seen her happy face and heard her earnest exhortations once or several times during the year. "When I think of God's grace to me I can not rest, but I feel I must go and make it known to others." has been her answer as, again and again, after long trips in the mountains she has returned for fresh traveling orders.³⁰

²⁸Margaret Best, "A Woman's Work," *The Korean Mission Field* 8, no. 2 (1912): 63-64.

²⁹Nellie Pierce, "Report IV—Bible Woman's Training School, Evangelistic Work, Mead Memorial Church and South District," *Fourth Annual Report of the Korea Woman's Missionary Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church Held at Pyeng Yang, May 16-21, 1902* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1902), 10-11.

³⁰Ethel M. Estey, "Bible Woman," *The Korean Mission Field* 7, no. 11 (1911): 326.

Ministry of Education

None could appreciate the liberating effect that learning provided more than previously illiterate Bible Women. It comes as no surprise then that empowering other women and leading their journey of Christian education became one of their essential roles. As educators, Bible Women taught Sunday school, led Bible classes, and hosted Bible Conferences (Sakyenghoe), inspiring hundreds of women to follow their example and ignore the cultural taboos that restricted their education. The multiplier effect of students sharing their newfound skills and encouraging other women to follow suit resulted in thousands of women reading the Bible, and eventually to the establishment of institutions dedicated to educating women.

Bible classes. Women's Bible classes began to congregate between 1897 and 1898 and Bible Women played a significant role in this ministry. Few of them had regular theological training. Most served in their positions as they themselves studied in classes offered in the spring and fall. After completing the classes, they started teaching women in their own districts, both as assistants to missionaries and independently. Some pursued additional learning in the Bible Institute or the Bible Training School. Those were then sent to provinces to organize and run local Bible classes. For instance,

Mrs. Kang, a widow, is spoken of as a very good Bible woman. The third annual women's Bible class in Milyang at the end of the 1904 had an attendance of one hundred and twenty five.³¹

My Bible woman O-si-Sin-do reports as follows: -That she has held nine classes in which 1,327 women were under instruction; she also attended the spring and fall classes at Pyeng Yang and Miss Estey's Normal Bible class.³²

According to a Pyeng Yang report in 1907, Bible Women led seventy-five Bible classes

³¹Rhodes, *History of the Korea Mission*, 132.

³²Maude S. Rufus, "Evangelistic Work Pyeng Yang," *Korea Woman's Conference 1910: Twelfth Annual Report of the Korea Woman's Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Seoul May 11-19, 1910* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1910), 72.

out of the year's total eighty-nine.³³ Notes from Missionary Avison support the growing importance of the teaching contributions of the Bible Women:

The need of Bible women becoming more and more urgent and immediate, volunteers who would be willing at some time during the ensuing year to go the country and hold at least one local class, were called for. In order to prepare somewhat for this it was arranged to hold a training class, once a week for six weeks. Outline studies in Mark and Acts were prepared, the women trained in these by two of the missionary women of station and then sent out with copies of these lessons to hold classes in them and in the Catechism and reading.³⁴

Margaret Best also confirms their key role,

The 93 women who studied in October in the Workers Normal Training Class of Bible Institute, have been going out to all sections of the territory since November to teach Bible classes, using the course of study provided by the Training Class Committee and taught in the Workers Class. One woman, who in October pledged herself to teach in on country class, during the year, told me several weeks ago that she had already been out to four and was soon going to another. She is a voluntary worker as are most of the 93 women.³⁵

The Presbyterian church's annual report of the BFBS indicates that Bible Women taught nearly six thousand women in one year: "In 1912, Korean Women leaders alone taught five thousand seven hundred women in one hundred sixty-six country classes."³⁶ This report demonstrates that as time progressed, the primary responsibility for conducting Bible classes moved from the missionaries to the Bible Women and that the women's Bible class ministry was rapidly growing.

Sunday school. Planting the seeds of faith and providing a foundation of Christian education in children increases evangelistic momentum and shapes the future. Mattie Wilcox Noble began the first Sunday school in Pyeng Yang in 1903 with 175

³³"Men's Bible Training Classes: Women's Bible Training Classes," *The Korean Mission Field* 4, no. 10 (1908): 148.

³⁴O. R. Avison, "Notes From Station," *The Korean Mission Field* 6, no. 6 (1910): 135.

³⁵Margaret Best, "Country Bible Classes For Women," *The Korean Mission Field* 9, no. 4 (1913): 103.

³⁶Rhodes, *History of the Korea Mission*, 159.

students.³⁷ Within ten years, the number of students attending Sunday school grew to over 90,000 across the nation.³⁸ Bible Women played a leading role in this extensive growth. Missionaries knew the importance of Sunday school in both the spiritual growth of individuals and growing numbers of the church; therefore, they commissioned their most accomplished Bible Institute students to carry out their teaching in Sunday school. The Busanjin Bible Institute taught their Sunday school teachers the lesson for Sunday each week in the school. The students would then each visit three rural churches or hospitals one after another on Sunday mornings to teach the same lesson. Missionaries participated in Busanjin's Sunday school lessons and advised the instructors as to how to improve their teaching. This method proved very effective.³⁹

Nearly every Korean church operated a Sunday school, but the missionaries assessed many of them as insufficient and poorly managed. The schools organized and operated by Bible Women were among the more successful:

We have seen a marked improvement in the teaching ability of our Sunday school teachers and Biblewomen since this branch of practical training has been introduced. Then too, in large centers, the weekly preparation class for Sunday school teachers is very helpful, in fact almost necessary, for even amongst Sunday School teachers one finds not only peculiar theology being taught but also faulty history.⁴⁰

Edith Helena, of the Anglican Mission at Seoul, reported, "Yi Angela, who did very good work for the two months assisting in Seoul. Her teaching was chiefly among children who could read well, and she interested them so much in Bible lessons that many

³⁷Mattie W. Noble, *The Journals of Mattie Wilcox Noble 1892-1934* (Seoul: The Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea, 1993), 111.

³⁸"Korean General Assembly," *Woman's Work for Women* 28 (February 1913): 34.

³⁹Sung Jin Chang, *A Forgotten Story of Korean Churches: The Research of Korean Bible Women in the Early Protestant Mission and Church Growth of Korea, 1992-1945* (Seoul: KSI, 2008), 263.

⁴⁰N. R. Scholes, "Developing Women Leaders," *The Korean Mission Field* 12, no. 7 (1916): 188.

of them bought Bibles for themselves.”⁴¹ Starting with one Sunday school, five teachers, and one hundred pupils in 1922, ten years later there were over eight hundred schools, four thousand teachers, and nearly seventy thousand pupils.⁴²

Bible conferences (*Sakyenghoe*). Churches hosted periodic Bible Conferences as Chu describes in *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea*:

A *Sakyenghoe* involved multiple days of robust programs focused on celebrating and growing in Christian faith. Each day from before sunrise to well after sunset, large numbers of participants engaged in prayer, round-table meetings, Bible study, worship, and related events and generally stayed at or near the church for the duration of the conference. Bible Women served varying roles in the *Sakyenghoe* from leading a Bible study or prayer meeting to organizing the entire program. Well-known Bible Women were frequently invited to *Sakyenghoe* held in other churches. They also belonged to various committees, and helped women’s mission departments. In this way, they participated in nearly every aspect of ministries related to women.⁴³

Noble reports on Pyeng Yang’s success supporting *Sakyenghoe*:

We sent young women, who for several years had studied in the Pyeng Yang classes, out into the country to hold Bible classes at eight different towns, teaching about a week at each place, the number in attendance varying from ten to thirty-two. At Sin Chang they had been passing through bitter persecutions, and they were overjoyed that in the midst of their troubles a teacher from so far away should come to them and lead their minds away from the persecutions and teach them the beautiful things of the Bible. At Pong Nong Dong through Helen’s influence five families turned to the Lord, making an addition to that church of thirty new believers.⁴⁴

Similar to the colporteurs and itinerant missionaries, Bible Women took their educational mission to the nation’s women, regardless of location. Sometimes churches asked missionaries to send a famous teacher in advance, but most churches were satisfied with any Bible Woman, and treated them very well. Occasionally, a church provided

⁴¹Edith Helena, “Patient Continuance,” *Hundred and Eighth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1912* (London: The Bible House, 1912), 351.

⁴²Rhodes, *History of the Korean Mission*, 447.

⁴³Chu, *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea*, 179-80.

⁴⁴Mattie W. Noble, “Taught by Helen,” *The Korean Mission Field* 3, no. 5 (1907): 74.

transportation expenses, but most of the women walked the long distances from church to church. Missionaries frequently requested that church leaders send an aide who could guide the Bible Women and assist in carrying clothes and materials that would be distributed to class participants:

Sakyenghoe participants gathered for early morning prayers each day. A thirty-minute devotion service in the chapel followed breakfast, after which they had their morning class. After lunch, they attended the afternoon class, which also included singing hymns. Late in the afternoon, they dispersed for personal worship. The teachers used diverse approaches to teach the Bible, topically, chapter-by-chapter, or the most common method, verse-by-verse exegesis. The exegetical method, which involves critically examining each verse, resembled the teaching method used in the village school (*Seodang*). In this way, study began with memorization. Believers recited biblical texts after the lecturer and repeated important verses until they memorized them. Bible class was a prominent element of the *Sakyenghoe*, and served as a foundation for the church's growth.⁴⁵

It was a very special event for the entire church and extremely exciting for women believers. Some brought their children and stayed with nearby relatives or friends while others actually slept on the church floor, but all participated with joy. The local women found being taught by their fellow countrywomen, rather than by foreign missionaries, inspirational.

Ministry of Medicine

Some Bible Women also worked in dispensaries and hospitals. They started their day with a morning worship service while wearing their white gown. After the service, they sold Bibles and preached the gospel to patients as they listened to their stories and counseled them:

Kwaksi has been very faithful, both in and out of the hospital. Her work consisted in first attending morning worship at the hospital and then teaching in-patients at any and all times convenient to the patient, according as she was well enough to listen and understand; then in meeting all the women who came to the clinic every day, teaching them and finding out where they live, accepting invitations to visit them at their homes. She visited patients who had gone out from the hospital, even in villages many miles from here, where sometimes she had to remain over night and

⁴⁵Chu, *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea*, 181.

come back next day, always inviting all she met to come to our Sunday morning services or any of our church services where most convenient. She reported to me every morning and I directed her always as best I could. I have received many Korean guests through or with her, sometimes patients who had gone out and often friends of patients who are in or have been in the hospital.⁴⁶

In 1899, Hall reports the work of her dispensary Bible Woman:

Susan No is my right hand helper in all the work; she conducts a service with the patients in the waiting room before dispensing, sells the books, and later help me with compounding the drugs, cleansing and dressing surgical cases, and accompanies me when needed in my out-calls. She also teaches Korean composition in the girl's school, and has helped some in the Woman's Training Class. Neither Susan nor I have personally been able to follow up the medical work in the homes of our patients as it should be done, having made but eighteen visits, when not called professionally.⁴⁷

Bible Women's medical ministries expanded to include serving as nurses and medical assistants. Their hospital ministries had very favorable results. Hospitals provided easy access to patients as well as their visiting friends and relatives, and patients more naturally received the gospel in hospitals.

One Missionary of the Australian Presbyterian Mission in Pyeng Yang confirms in a BFBS report,

Mrs. Pak works with gratifying results in the hospital, which has had during the year 13,000 patients. Many cases of direct conversion can be traced to her labours, and many women, who met in a class of 15 to 25 every week, were taught to read.⁴⁸

Mrs. Pak: 'At last year, her duties have been mostly at Carline A. Ladd Hospital, where she spends the forenoons talking with the dispensary and in-patients. There have been a number of converts during the year, largely due to her instrumentality in presenting the Gospel to so many country-women who have never heard of Christ before.'⁴⁹

⁴⁶Avison, "A Bible Women's Work," 212.

⁴⁷Rosetta Sherwood Hall, "Kwang Hya Nyo Won or 'Woman's dispensary of Extended Grace,' Pyeng Yang Circuit," *First Annual Report of the Korea Woman's Missionary Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Korea*, May 13-19, 1899 (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1899), 15.

⁴⁸Mrs. Hunter Wells, "Glimpses of the Work and Workers," *Ninety Eighth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1902* (London: The Bible House, 1902), 361.

⁴⁹Mrs. Hunter Wells, "A Sorceress," *Hundred Third Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1907* (London: The Bible House, 1907), 395.

Esther Park worked in the hospital as a Bible Woman. In 1900, she graduated from Baltimore's Women's Medical School, becoming the first Korean female medical doctor.⁵⁰ Park later became a professor in a Bible institute in order to train other Bible

Women:

All of our patients coming to our dispensary have an opportunity to hear about Jesus. Our faithful Bible-woman, Theresa, in her simple way proclaims the love of God, and indeed some of the women have shown their earnest desire to learn more about Him. Tracts and books are loaned to them and we have sold a great many religious calendars. Theresa and I have visited some of the homes to carry the good tidings to them, some of these homes being among the upper classes, whose women are so secluded that they cannot go out even to consult the doctor. Much ignorance prevails among them in regard to health and hygiene.⁵¹

Social Outreach Work

Bible Women expanded their influence to include contemporary social issues:

Bible Women opened evening classes and schools to teach reading and writing, arithmetic, grammar, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostle's Creed. The contents of their lectures also included social topics such as women's hygiene, wedding customs, abstinence from alcohol, the cessation of smoking, the abolition of early marriage, and self-reliance.⁵²

These open discussions created a community spirit among women that laid the foundation for later patriotic movements, which thrived during the Japanese occupation. The women missionaries introduced western culture to the Bible Women both explicitly and by example. The disciples, in turn, passed this on to the general public to awaken women's movements. Women's organizations in Korea paralleled the women's clubs that were rising in the United States.⁵³ They offered new opportunities for individual women

⁵⁰Sherwood Hall, *With Stethoscope in Asia: Korea* (McLean, VA: MCL Associates, 2010), 196.

⁵¹Esther K. Park, "Report III.-Chong Dong Dispensary, Seoul," *Fourth Annual Report of the Korea Woman's Missionary Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church Held at Pyeng Yang, May 16 to 21, 1902* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1902), 6.

⁵²Mi Kang Yang, "Studies on Bible Women from the Viewpoint of Inclusion and Exclusion," *The History of Korean Christianity* 6 (1997): 156.

⁵³Jung Ran Yoon, *History of the Korean Christian Women's Movement 1910-1945* (Seoul: The

to foster a community beyond their familial relationships, thereby providing the social environment in which they could realize their potential.

Bible Women in Society

Although the Bible Women focused on doing God's work under the missionaries' supervision, their sphere of influence grew as their network of Christian women expanded, and they sought additional opportunities to gather, interact, spread the gospel, and shape their own destiny. Their work expanded to meet this growing need and they contributed to the formation of several key women's organizations. In characteristic manner the women rose to the additional calling. The activities of Bible Women not only contributed to the early Korean mission, but also became a beacon for female enlightenment and social involvement.

Establishment of Christian Women's Organization

Christian women endeavored to grow the church and systematically molded and expanded their nationwide network through local women's fellowships:

The motto of the Alliance of Women's Fellowship of the Presbyterian Church of Chosŏn was "We support the general assembly and the movement of evangelism to preach the Gospel of Christ" and the National Federation of Methodist Women's Fellowship's was "Let us shine forth Jesus at any price and increase our membership to ten thousand by the end of this year." These mottos illustrate the evangelistic passion that drove these Christian organizations and their recruiting efforts.⁵⁴

Women Evangelists Association (WEA). Another indispensable ministry of the Bible Women was the formation of local women's fellowships across the country. Sixty-three members attended the historical first gathering of the women's fellowship

Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea, 2003), 44.

⁵⁴Chu, *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea*, 165.

held at Null-Da-Ree-Gol Presbyterian Church on February 20th, 1898.⁵⁵ The event's sponsors included Shin Heng Lee, Ban Suk Shin, Seung Shin Kim and Kwan Sun Park, all of whom had previously been baptized by S. A. Moffett.⁵⁶ The 'Null-Da-Ree-Gol Church Lady's Mission fellowship was a hard working organization in which members collected money every Sunday to send one of the members to the nearby Soon-Ahn region as a missionary. As their membership grew, so did their collections. They raised as much as 307 dollars to fund evangelists and construct several sizeable buildings such as the Jang Dae Hyun church.⁵⁷

The organization's primary goals were to evangelize, teach the Bible, and send missionaries to remote places. In a sense, the WEA had a broader goal than that of the Home Missionary Society in 1897. Though the curtain of separation was still around them and they were still sharpening their leadership skills, these women paved the way for future female activities and movements. The organization helped women increasingly see themselves as equally valuable in a religious context. Korean women, who used to be under the yoke of "three cardinal mandates of women" and restricted to their homes, were now able to freely attend church as active participants. This organization offered them the opportunity to listen to sermons, hear about the world abroad, and become involved in social services as full members of society:

The WEA in the Changyoung area sent two Bible Women to remote areas. The WEA in Yiju Church sent Jang Sin Hyo to Jasung in 1900. In 1908, the WEA in the Null-Da-Ree-Gol Church sent Lee Sun-Kwang to Jeju Island. Many other women's fellowships followed the organizational example of the Null-Da-Ree-Gol Church's and developed into regional networks of women fellowships. Through these networks, they combined their resources to plant new churches and preach the

⁵⁵Yeon Ok Lee, *Presbyterian Church of Korea Yeojeondo Times 100 Years* (Seoul: Presbyterian Church of Korea, 1998), 53.

⁵⁶Chu, *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea*, 82-83.

⁵⁷Ibid., 84.

gospel to other women. The Bible Women who were sent on missions established new women's fellowships in each destination.⁵⁸

During a revival Conference in 1910, they agreed to devote themselves to evangelism and formed a women's fellowship with seventeen members. Bible Women Do Mi Park and Shin Hwan Kim exercised great influence as leaders and made enormous contributions to the women's fellowships.⁵⁹ The titles of the fellowships varied depending on their location and type. Most of the fellowships in the northern and central part of Korea used the title "Lady's Mission," while "Supporting Committee" was used in the southeastern (Ho-Nam) region and "Women's Fellowship" in Ham-Kyung province. In January 1908, Fifteen Presbyterian women and two women missionaries consolidated the fellowships into the Korean Woman's Missionary Society (*YeoJeonDo hoe*).⁶⁰

Margaret Best's report describes the society's operation as it concluded its first year as an organization:

The Korean Woman's Missionary Society of the five Presbyterian Churches of Pyeng Yang is entering upon the second year of its history. Organized at the Koreans New Year Season in 1908 by the official action of the Union Session of the five Churches, the Society has been doing its work very quietly in a systematic and business like way with results that give fair promise of permanent success. The women of the five congregations make up the membership of the Society. The work of the society is under the direction of a central committee appointed yearly by the Session Consisting of 15 Korean women and 2 foreign missionaries, a business meeting it held quarterly at which reports are received from the Evangelistic and Finance committees and all other matters that should come before the Society are brought up and discussed. The Evangelistic Committee plans the itinerary of the women who are employed by the society, and sent out on preaching tours every month, to the unevangelized villages of Pyeng Yang territory. The Finance Committee with the treasurer collect the contributions of the women of the 5 churches and pay all bills. The collections are not made publicly but a member on the Finance Committee from each church makes it her business to see privately every quarter the women of her own church and gather their collection-if only a sen a week-and to *give it regularly*.⁶¹

⁵⁸Chu, *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea*, 133.

⁵⁹Ibid., 89.

⁶⁰Hee Hyun Joo, "A Study on Activities of Korea Protestant Women: 1885-1945 years" (M.A. thesis, Ewha Women's University, 2003), 75.

⁶¹Margaret Best, "The Korean Woman's Missionary Society of Pyeng Yang," *The Korean*

Women Missionaries Association (WMA). Sixty-three Methodist women from the First Jung-Dong Church founded the Ladies' Aid Society in 1900 as a charitable institution. The Society was supported by all ages "of Korean women to Korean women" for the purpose of evangelizing and providing assistance to the poor.⁶² As mentioned previously, Hwang, who was an early graduate of Ewha Hakdang, was its founder and facilitator. The organization's members raised funds to help impoverished church members and encourage people into fellowship in order to keep the church membership vibrant. The very existence of this organization shows both the need and the spirit of giving that existed in the church in those days. The group's staffs were generally Ewha alumni, and were able to accomplish the activities systematically. The Ladies' Aid Society was composed of female Christian elites and was considered a modern institution with the mission of researching Christian doctrine, evangelism, and social improvement. Founded in 1900, it continued until 1919. In 1920, the Ladies' Aid Society united with elements from four provinces and adopted the name of the Women's Missions Organization (*YeoSeonKyo hoe*).⁶³

The Research Society of Christian Women was founded in 1910. This group worked quite successfully on issues such as women's rights, enlightenment movement, support for literacy, supplying Bibles, and the anti-concubine movement.⁶⁴ Once the Japanese residency-general was established in Korea, the major public newspapers, all group movements of intellectuals were oppressed or dissolved, and it became difficult for

Mission Field 5, no. 11 (1909): 187.

⁶²Duk Joo Lee, "Freedom, Liberation, and Practice: Understanding Early Christian Women in Korea (1887-1920)," in *Korean Church and Women*, ed. The Korean Church Research Center (Seoul: IVP, 2013), 50.

⁶³Chun Byeng Yun, *A History of Methodist Church Growth in Korea* (Seoul: Methodist Press, 1997), 75.

⁶⁴Yoon, *History of the Korean Christian Women's Movement*, 57.

the women's groups to operate openly. Therefore, they began to work within religious organizations, and gradually became more patriotic, nourishing a strong sense of protest.⁶⁵ The fact that most independence activists were from religious groups during the colonial era demonstrates this connection. Thus during the enlightenment period Christianity, the women's movement and independence movements were closely intertwined. The Ladies' Aid Society developed as a religious movement as well as a women's movement. Similarly, the independence movement was both a nationalistic and a religious campaign.

Christian Women's Enlightenment Movements

Christians proactively supported many movements for the advancement of women during the late Chosŏn period. They were congruent activities as the church endeavored to reduce social evils in order to foster an identity of the nation based on Christianity. These movements cultivated a very dynamic social revolution, which began to form a new set of morals among the people. The *Independent Newspaper* from The Korean Independent Association, the *Korean Christian Newsletter*, and the *Christianity Bulletin* played important roles in energizing national consciousness:

These papers also debated women's issues. With this opening in public discourse, many began to assert more explicitly that widows' remarriage should be sanctioned, that married life should be based on mutual love and support, and that female education would help families prosper and benefit the country. They also raised objections to the custom of parents forcing spouses on their daughters, and argued in favor of a minimum marital age.⁶⁶

Most enlightenment ideologies around 1900 focused on re-humanizing women by endorsing the Christian point of view. As more people converted to this viewpoint

⁶⁵Lee, "Freedom, Liberation, and Practice," 53-54.

⁶⁶Man Yeol Lee, *The History of the Christian Movement in Korea* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1987), 122.

they eliminated their superstitious *Samsin Kag* from their house.⁶⁷ Even shamans, fortunetellers, and palm-readers began to evangelize and helped their children obtain education once they became Christians. Some Christians were very focused on eliminating the practice. In 1903 July, *The Dae Han Christian Times* reports,

They proclaimed, “Repent for the Kingdom of God is near!” and the shamans became panicked and speechless and began to beg to have their lives spared. Then fellow Christians pulled down demonic pictures from the shaman’s walls and burned them. They then turned to the patrons and told them not to waste their money on this meaningless practice while the crowd looked on favorably.⁶⁸

Korean Christians created a new expectation of a reasonable way of life in the midst of various established societal conventions in terms of marriage, funerals, and gender-based discrimination. Christianity delivered women into an environment that provided the same social status and equal rights as well as duties. Women working collectively through the Women’s Christian Clubs accelerated progress in these social movements.

Women’s Christian clubs (Yeowo hoe). Women’s Christian Clubs were another type of organization formed in the church in 1899. These groups taught Hangul and supplied Bibles to mature and well-established women.⁶⁹ They also protested against the feudalistic tradition of concubinage and taught women to expand their consciousness. An example of their progressive activity is an organized appeal they staged at the palace

⁶⁷Clark provides an explanation of Samsin Kag: “The ‘Samsin’ or Three Spirits. This is the Trinity formerly worshipped by women who longed for children. The Koreans say that these gods “look over the shoulders of little children” until they are ten years of age, i.e., they are a sort of guardian spirits or angels. Usually they live in a paper bag or gourd containing rice and some strips of paper with writing on, placed there by the Mootangs. They are hung in the warmest, most honourable part of the living-rooms, and periodically women spread out food before them and worship them. Who these Three Spirits may be, no one seems to know. Underwood suggests that they are the Trinity of Chinese Taoism. There are many Buddhist Trinities, and one man suggested that they might be the Vairochana Trinity, the Puppohwasin. My Buddhist college friend said that they were probably Whanin, Whanung and Tangoon.” Charles A. Clark, *Religions of Old Korea* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1961), 206.

⁶⁸“Korean Women’s Voices,” *The Korean (Dae Han) Christian Times* 1, no. 7 (1903): 48.

⁶⁹Chu, *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea*, 74.

gate in April 1899. Club members led by the club leader, who was in her thirties, assembled in front of the Po-Duk gate of the Duk-Soo palace protesting from 6am to 6pm against concubinage. Their demonstration lasted one week, until they received an answer from the palace. They appealed to the Emperor Ko Jong:

Your majesty, please issue an imperial order to ban all types of concubinage that has been practiced by men from high officers to ordinary commoners, by your setting initial example of abstaining from concubinage. Irrespective of the past please order this practice to cease.⁷⁰

These campaigns helped to further women's social liberation. They awakened society's consciousness to social vices as the club members actively protested with a common goal. Though the first open protest did not achieve the desired results, it was still a meaningful event as it was the first official demonstration against female oppression. The female Christian movements that began before the 1900s included evangelism, education, and cultural reform. They laid the foundation for these social transformations by empowering women to realize their sense of identity. In this manner, female Christians regarded the messages of the Scripture as supportive of liberation.

Discipleship to Bible Women

What began as a woman-to-woman evangelistic mission evolved into a Christian and social transformation that could not have been envisaged. The relationship between missionary-mentors and Bible Women mentees served as the core ingredient of this discipleship. Women missionaries in the early Korean church earned deep respect from the souls they won. Out of love and honor, the recipients of the gospel partnered with the missionaries in furthering their mission. The ministry of mission in the early church was marked by such a partnership. God sent missionaries to Korea and empowered them to produce many disciples. Once the women became disciples, they embraced the

⁷⁰Woo Jung Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women over 100 years* (Seoul: Minjungsa, 1985), 86.

missionaries' ministries and, in turn, produced more disciples. The missionaries' hearts filled with joy as they watched their disciples multiply.

Several factors enabled the missionaries to establish themselves as role models for Korean women. They were deeply committed to the work of evangelism, they moved around interacting freely with their male counterparts as though they were nearly equal, and most of all, they exhibited a Christian character marked with great empathy and love which strongly appealed to the women. The missionaries recognized potential in their volunteer assistants and committed to their education through a deep and long-term relationship. The missionaries and the women who received the gospel through them bonded across ethnicity, culture, and language differences. The dynamic interaction between the two groups created the driving force of change in Chosŏn society.

Mattie Wilcox Noble and Sadie Kim: Fifth Day Meeting

Mattie Wilcox Noble served in Korea for forty-two years. Noble is described as “veteran” insofar as she was quite experienced in missionary work and played key roles in a variety of ministries for women.⁷¹ Noble’s ministries complemented those of her husband, who was also a missionary in Korea. Nevertheless, Noble’s work was independent of her husband’s, and her small groups and classes for Bible study inspired a large number of women to start new lives. In *Victorious Life*, Kim recalls that Noble was the Bible teacher that led her to faith in Christ.⁷² Sadie Kim’s life was transformed through Noble’s Fifth Day Meetings (*O il Hoe*).

Noble arrived in Pyeng Yang in 1896. She soon organized Fifth Day Meetings, which were dedicated to educating Christian women. She taught Hangul to Christian

⁷¹Yun, *A History of Methodist Church Growth in Korea*, 140.

⁷²Sadie Kim, “The Story of My Life,” in *Victorious Lives of Early Christians in Korea*, comp. Noble Mattie Wilcox (Seoul: Kyujang, 1985), 99.

women in order that they could read the Bible and catechism by themselves. Considering the importance of literacy to the progress of modernization, Fifth Day Meetings played an important role in accelerating the modernization of Chosŏn society. In her diary, Noble records a vivid account of the settings for one of the classes:

An afternoon meeting for the women, room just crowded, no standing room and many at the doors, nearly a hundred. A very interested audience. Our organ came the 18th, & so it is a great marvel to these women who have never heard one before. Poor old women are trying to learn their alphabet, so that they can better study doctrine.⁷³

The small rooms were filled with women who shared the goal of learning the Scripture.

They also yearned to learn Hangul as a means to study the Bible:

Once they mastered Hangul, they were taught catechism, which was the Bible education method used to teach women in Fifth Day Meetings. The method is designed to teach Christianity's fundamentals through the process of questions and answers. The students were required to answer various questions relating to foundational doctrines. In the process of seeking answers, they had the opportunity to internalize Christian values. This learning process also contributed to the character formation of Korean women by strengthening their individuality and independence. Those who mastered catechism were endorsed to teach other women. Finally, women who were well-equipped with biblical knowledge had the opportunity to become leaders. These women became actively involved in the ministry of "women's work for women" and were recognized as leaders and teachers of other women.⁷⁴

Sadie Kim was born on October 17, 1865, in Pyengnam, a province in the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula. She was widowed at an early age, and thus destined to a life without familial security. As she was illiterate, she referred to herself as an ignorant woman. Sadie's experience illustrates the three-stage development process through the Fifth Day Meetings:

I was an ignorant woman, and did not know how to read our simple Korean syllabary. Thank God I became able to study my beloved Bible through the printed page. I can never forget the one who came to me and became my dearest teacher and friend, Mrs. W. Arthur Noble. She came as a missionary to Korea in 1892, and arrived in Pyeng Yang in 1896. Mr. Suk Kyung Oh led me to know of our Lord, but

⁷³Noble, *The Journals of Mattie Wilcox Noble*, 65.

⁷⁴Young Sook Kim, *A Study of Korean Women during Josun Dynasty* (Seoul: Sook Myung Women's University Press, 1979), 71.

Mrs. Noble led me to the cross where I was born again, taught me to read and to study the Scriptures. She led me in learning the plan of salvation, line upon line. She is truly my mother in the faith. Their consecration was to me a great inspiration. I attended the weekly women's prayer meeting that Mrs. Noble held in her home. There I learned to read and write. Then we learned the catechisms, the Temple Keeper, outlines of the New Testament, and lessons from our four Gospels. The women were divided into classes; the more advanced helped with the teaching. It was not easy to find time for these studies. My interest was upheld by my teacher's great interest in me. I sewed, studied, and later learned writing and many other subjects, including the Chinese classics. In October, 1896, I was baptized by my missionary pastor, Dr. W. A. Noble. I was given the name Sadie. For years, I, like other Korean women's release from the bondage of centuries began when the Christian religion, the Jesus doctrine, entered Korea. In 1897, in November, Mrs. Nobel began the first women's Bible Institute held in the Methodist church in Korea. From then on they were held nearly every spring and fall. I began studying in the institute continuing as a pupil until I graduated in March, 1908. Afterward I served as a teacher, though before I received my diploma. I also taught for many years. In 1899 I began work as a Bible woman. I served for twenty-six long years, which, in my busy work for my master, passed as a day.⁷⁵

Among Sadie Kim's Bible Women were Tabetha Kim, Isabelle Lee, Circus Kim, and Dorcas Kang, all of whom received their names in the baptism ceremony.⁷⁶ The ministry activities Sadie Kim performed are nearly comparable to the ministries of her mentor, Noble. Like her teacher, Kim strived to awake the consciousness of Chosŏn women and help them claim their rights. In addition to her evangelistic accomplishments, Kim's recognition included the leadership influence she had on society by establishing the Ladies' Aid Society to continue developing women's abilities and assisting the poor, especially widows.

As a Bible Woman and the president of Ladies' Aid Society and Widows Relief Association, Sadie Kim was recognized as a woman leader among the churches of Pyeng Yang and within the broader society. On November 11, 1897, the Christian women of Pyeng Yang's Presbyterian and Methodist churches jointly organized a Patriotic Women's Association, with the goal of funding the independence movement in

⁷⁵Kim, "The Story of My Life," 102-4.

⁷⁶Ibid., 103.

Shanghai and Manchuria.⁷⁷ This once illiterate widow was appointed the deputy of finance, and thereby virtually responsible for the entire organization's operation.

The study of Sadie Kim's life with respect to her conversion, life changes, and leadership development exemplifies women's missions in Korea that were based on relationships between women mentor missionaries and Korean women disciples. Her remarkable achievements are ascribed to Noble's mentoring. She offered Kim a role model that demonstrated how to live life as a Christian woman in her renewed identity, enabling Kim to reach her full potential.

Mary Scranton and Lee Kyung Suk: Ewha Hakdang

Kyung Suk Lee was born into a poor family in Hong Ju in 1851. Like Sadie Kim, Lee's life included much hardship. Shortly after their wedding ceremony, her husband left for Seoul and she never saw him again. After three years, her hope of reunion was extinguished as she learned of his death and knew she was condemned, at the age of eighteen, to spend the rest of her life as a mourning widow. Lee met Scranton at the age of thirty-seven, and Scranton's kindness and gentle manner immediately made her more receptive to Christian education.⁷⁸

Looking back, Lee confessed "Jesus, my Lord, has been my Comforter for many years. Before I began to believe in Jesus, it was the time of joylessness and bitterness"⁷⁹ Without encountering Scranton, she would never have been able to make such a confession about Jesus.

Lee was baptized in the Chungdong Church on September 18, 1890, and given

⁷⁷Ibid., 106-8.

⁷⁸Kyung Suk Lee, "Biography of Mrs. Drusilla Kyeng Sook Yi: As Told by her to Mrs. W. A. Noble," in *Victorious Lives*, 21.

⁷⁹Ibid.

the name Drusilla. Scranton adopted Drusilla as her own daughter. She was becoming a Hangul teacher in Ewha Hakdang.⁸⁰ At that time Scranton and R. C. Rothweiler were the only teachers in the school. Lee and Scranton established a very close bond. Although not an official title, Lee served as assistant at Ewha Hakdang. She worked with Scranton in nearly every aspect of the school's operations including its recruiting program:

In April, 1890, when I first came to Ewha, a number of girls had dropped out, and there were only six girls in the school. I had known Unmoon (the Korean reading and writing), from childhood. Mrs. Scranton engaged me to teach Unmoon to the girls and to seek more girls for the school. The children we were able to gather together were mostly orphans or children of poor widows. There were over 90 girls at the end of the year. At first the Koreans were afraid of the Westerners. They wouldn't send their children. After the people came sightseeing time and again and found them to be kind loving friends, and that, at first, tuition and books were free, they began to send their girls. Six years passed. Time came for Mrs. M. F. Scranton to return to her own country for furlough. She was then in poor health. Miss Rothweiler took her place in the school.⁸¹

Lee worked under Scranton's mentorship at Ewha Hakdang for seven years. In 1897, Scranton retired from her responsibility at the school to refocus her efforts on evangelism with Drusilla. Lee observed that Scranton continued to pursue the women that she met until they converted. Scranton's tenacity impressed Lee and influenced her own evangelistic style. From her teacher, she learned that being a Bible Woman required a healthy balance of patience and persistence.⁸²

Lee recalled itinerating with Scranton on one of their early evangelistic trips.

Lee reports visiting a woman's house,

On a first itineration trip to a place, the food and the rooms were so unclean that we taught a great deal about hygiene. On a second visit to a place, it showed signs of improvement. On a third visit, at some places, a number had been converted and we

⁸⁰Duk Joo Lee, *Stories of the Early Christian Women in Korea* (Seoul: Hong Sung Sa, 2007), 92.

⁸¹Lee, "Biography of Mrs. Drusilla Kyeong Sook Yi," 22.

⁸²Lee, *Stories of the Early Christian Women in Korea*, 90.

could organize a mission group. At a fourth visit, the new believers' homes were much cleaner. Never again were they like at the first visit.⁸³

It surprised her to see that the hygienic condition visibly improved on her subsequent visits. It struck her that the “women’s work for women” she took part in was having a practical impact on the lives of women. Those to whom the Bible Women ministered responded with the intent to change their lives, even with regard to hygiene.

Lee realized that women’s pessimism resulted from the fact that they had adjusted to and accepted their social conventions without the opportunity to reflect on alternatives. The woman Lee met in town was not aware of the importance of hygiene. In a society where the lack of hygienic was conventional, she was simply accustomed to the condition. The one-on-one meetings with Bible Women provided the opportunity to become conscious of a condition that they could themselves transform.

Lee recalls another encounter where her personal behavior impacted a woman:

One winter, I visited a certain town and met a poor woman who wore a summer waist or jacket. She was too poor to have it padded with cotton to keep her warm. She was also barefooted. In pity, I took off my outside cotton padded jacket and an extra skirt, and gave them to her. After a year, we returned and with pleasure met the same woman. When she had received the clothing I had given her, she immediately decided to believe in my God. She told her husband the story of Jesus as I had told it to her. He also became a Christian. His business prospered, and they were very happy. Mrs. Scranton asked the woman how often she prayed, and she answered, “Without ceasing.” A woman who stood by said, “How can you say you pray all the time when you do your own work? I am so busy that I cannot find time to pray so I find it difficult to be a Christian.” She answered, “Why, I pray while I work. When I do the washing, I pray, ‘Please wash the sins all out of my sinful heart while I try to make the clothes clean!’ When I build the fire, I pray ‘Oh! Lord! Please make my faith to rise in my heart as the flames rise from the fire.’ When I work in the field I pray as I pull the weeds from the garden or the fields, ‘Please take out the weeds of sin from my heart!’ If one really wants to pray, one need not seek for a time for prayer.”⁸⁴

Kyung Suk Lee put into practice the very love of God exemplified in Matthew 25:35:

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.” She felt sorry to see that the

⁸³Lee, “Biography of Mrs. Drusilla Kyeong Sook Yi,” 25.

⁸⁴Ibid., 25-26.

woman had no shoes in the cold winter, and gave up her own warm coat and skirt. That gift of love touched the woman's heart and she accepted the gospel and started a new life. The woman discovered a new light in the darkness, and spent the rest of her life in prayer.

The poor woman's conversion initiated from the act of kindness Lee showed her. She did not need to experience a miracle or receive abundant blessings from God to change her life. While her remaining life was short, Lee's heartfelt kindness sparked her desire to accept the gospel, and the rest of her life was driven by the light in the gospel. This experience taught the Bible Woman that small things made big differences.

Rosetta Sherwood Hall and Esther Park: Medical Missions for Korean Women

Rosetta Sherwood Hall came to Korea as a medical missionary in October 1890. The medical mission that Hall undertook began with a medical course that she offered to four girls in the *Salvation for All Women Institution* with a slogan of "medical missions for women by women."⁸⁵ Hall expected the students to become her skilled assistants and possible future leaders of the medical mission for women. In her diary, she showed particular interest in two of the girls who were helpful in assisting her:

Kim Chyom Tong continued to be an especially apt pupil and become a very decided help in putting up drugs in the dispensary and in caring for the sick. Her initial aversion to helping at the surgical operations changed after she had watched Mrs. Hall do an operation for harelip. Chyom Tong declared that she would like to be able to perform such an operation herself, and from that time on never gave up her determination to become a doctor someday should God open the way.⁸⁶

⁸⁵Pauline Kim, *90 Years with the Lord* (Seoul: Voice Published, 1989), 37.

⁸⁶Sherwood Hall, *With Stethoscope in Asia: Korea* (McLean: MCL Associates, 2010), 111. Hall writes, "Chyom Tong was also developing the spiritual side of her life and when she was fifteen, ask to be baptized. [She received the name, Esther] In Korea, at that time, a woman lost her given name when she was married, usually around the age of fourteen. She then had no name of her own until she became a mother, at which time she was only known as such a one's mother. The missionaries, therefore, developed their own custom and gave women and girls 'Christian names' when they were baptized." Ibid.

Hall's hope was not in vain. Through her mentorship, Esther Park became the first female medical practitioner in Korea.

Park was born in Jeongdong, Seoul, on March 16, 1876. When she was ten years old, American missionaries began activities in Jeongdong. Her father served in the house of Henry Appenzeller, the first Methodist missionary sent to Korea. Though not a Christian himself, her father sent Park to attend Ewha Hakdang.⁸⁷ Later in her life, she recalls her youth:

When I was ten years old, my father took me to Mrs. Scranton. On that cold winter day Mrs. Scranton's room had a stove, which I had never seen before. When she called me to draw near to the stove, I was scared that she would put me in it. However, the gentle smile on her face made me believe that she would not do so. At that time, there were three students in the school other than myself. I had no idea about God, I could only think of eating the food.⁸⁸

Park received her Christian name when Franklin Ohlinger baptized her on January 25, 1891.⁸⁹ She studied with great interest in the new subjects that she was learning at Ewha Hakdang. The missionaries recognized her exceptional English skills, which allowed her additional opportunities to assist Hall. Duk Joo Lee describes how Esther's faith inspired her medical service in *Stories of the Early Christian Women in Korea*:

Park questioned her own suitability for the job of treating the sick. However, she took comfort in her faith and valued the job, reflecting on how Jesus treated the sick. She was willing to provide help for the sick and assist the missionaries however they wished. She demonstrated Christian character in overcoming her challenging circumstances. Merely a young girl, she exhibited a lifestyle committed to meeting the needs of other people before her own.⁹⁰

As a medical doctor, Sherwood served Park as a role model. When Sherwood married James Hall, she moved her mission station to Pyeng Yang and wanted Park to

⁸⁷“The Story of the First Korean Woman Doctor,” *The Gospel in All Lands* (June 1899): 268.

⁸⁸Lee, *Stories of the Early Christian Women in Korea*, 58.

⁸⁹“The Story of the First Korean Woman Doctor,” 269.

⁹⁰Lee, *Stories of the Early Christian Women in Korea*, 59.

accompany her. When Hall asked Park about her intentions, she replied that she would go wherever God led her:

I will go wherever Lord open the door for me; my body and my heart and my soul are all the Lord's things, and I give my life to teach my people about God, even if people kill me. I do not hope I get rich, or have many pretty things, but I want to work for Jesus most of all.⁹¹

Park's answer echoes the mission perspective of her mentor. From Hall's perspective, serving Jesus meant providing healthcare to women. Likewise, for Park, the medical mission for the sick was understood as the way to make God known. Medical care was identified with spreading the gospel and serving God. Park reflected, "I am not certain that medical service is the best way to serve mission. Nevertheless, I admit that medicine is a great mission tool for Korean people. I am not qualified to serve him, so I thank God for using my medical knowledge in his the service."⁹²

Hall believed that she was using her expertise as a means to serve God. Her view of the medical mission shaped Park's resulting view as well. Park recorded Hall's treatment of a sixteen year-old girl in her diary:

The girl had her three fingers melted together from burns so she would not have the opportunity to marry. Hall performed surgery to address the damage. Since the girl's fingers were deficient in flesh, Dr. Hall took some skin from her own body grafting it to the girl's fingers.⁹³

Park believed that God was using Dr. Hall's medical skills for the sake of missions for Korean women. Therefore, Esther committed herself to serving women with medicine as a manifestation of her faith. Mrs. Hall decided to return to America after Dr. Hall's death in 1894 and decided to help Park pursue her own dream of studying medicine.⁹⁴

⁹¹"The Story of the First Korean Woman Doctor," 270.

⁹²Lee, *Stories of the Early Christian Women in Korea*, 64.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 65.

⁹⁴"The Story of the First Korean Woman Doctor," 271.

Park followed in the footsteps of her teacher. On October 1, 1896, she was admitted to the Women's Medical College of Baltimore, which is known today as the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.⁹⁵ In 1900, Park graduated from the medical school with honors and became the first female doctor of the Chosŏn Dynasty. Although they offered her the opportunity to stay in the United States after graduating, Park insisted on returning to Korea to carry on the women's mission.

On her return to Korea, Esther became the director of the Salvation for All Women Institution in Seoul. Dr. Hall recorded her accomplishment,

She was a great help to my mother in her expanding medical work. In her first ten months of practice, Esther treated over 3,000 patients. We were all very proud of her for she was the first Korean to study Western medicine. Her husband, Yousan who had remained in the United States to help support Esther through medical school, became a victim of tuberculosis while working in a Baltimore restaurant. Esther nursed him through his illness until his death which occurred during her final year at the Women's Medical College of Baltimore.⁹⁶

As Hall imagined, a new era began when a Korean woman treated Korean women. In later years Park commuted long distances between Seoul and Pyeng Yang to treat patients in both locations. In addition to conducting medical outreach for women patients living in mountainous regions in Hwanghae and Pyungan Province, Park's service included establishing schools for the blind, centers for medical training, and raising Bible Women at the Bible Institute: "Dr. Park and myself have both taught in the Fall and Spring Institute for women, and have each had charge of a class-meeting for the women of our city church. Dr. Park is also one of our most faithful S. S. teachers."⁹⁷ Park tried to serve wherever she was called. Unfortunately, her health failed as a result of

⁹⁵Ibid., 272.

⁹⁶Hall, *With Stethoscope in Asia: Korea*, 196.

⁹⁷Rosetta Sherwood Hall, "Medical-Evangelistic Work for Women, Pyeng Yang," *Seventh Annual Report of the Korea Woman's Missionary Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Korea, June 23 to 27, 1905* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1905), 45.

exhaustion from excessive work, and she passed away April 13, 1910, at the early age of thirty-four.⁹⁸

Park became the first medical doctor in Korea irrespective of gender. She also accomplished much working with the foreign women missionaries. She owed her successful life and ministry as a Christian woman to Hall, her mentor. The professional and ministerial spirit that she adopted from Hall enabled her to lead her life independently as a Christian woman and to achieve God's purpose in her life despite having been widowed.

Bible Women, working with their missionary mentors, extensively influenced many aspects of the lives of women. They traveled throughout the country evangelizing and providing Christian literature. Their focus on education significantly reduced illiteracy and established foundational Christian knowledge upon which to build, and their ministries in medicine both improved the medical services available to women and opened the field for future female medical professionals. The energy resulting from these accomplishments combined with the nationwide network of churches and social organizations that followed, set the conditions for a decade of revivals and national movements that completely forged Christianity in Korea and forever transformed women's position in society.

⁹⁸Sarah B. Hallman, "Pyeng Yang Woman's Hospital," *Twelfth Annual Report of the Korea Woman's Missionary Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Korea, May 11 to 19, 1910* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1910), 54.

CHAPTER 5

BIBLE WOMEN IN THE REVIVAL MOVEMENT

By the early 1900s, the Bible Women had established themselves as leaders in their own right. This group of once illiterate, disenfranchised non-believers having been mentored by female missionaries was institutionalized. Their efforts and accomplishments significantly advanced women's literacy and began to change the perceived boundaries of women's roles in the church and society. The first decade of the twentieth century also saw considerable growth for Christianity and accelerated social change on the Korean peninsula fueled by an explosion of Revival Movements. In 1905, there were 791 churches with 39,136 members. By 1907, the number of Christians in Korea was above 120,000.¹ Naeŏe law's oppressive grip loosened, as men and women began worshipping in the same facility together for the first time.

This chapter explores the movements that energized these sweeping changes including the Revival Movement and several related socio-political movements. In addition to chronicling events, it examines the active roles Bible Women played in them, and illustrates how they laid a lasting foundation for women's participation. Lastly, it examines the social and cultural change that resulted as a byproduct of these events, and its impact on the everyday lives of women.

The Revival Movements of the Early Korean Church

In *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* defines "revivalism" as "a

¹Horace. G. Underwood, *The Call of Korea: Political-Social-Religious* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1908), 149-50.

type of religious worship and practice centering in evangelical revivals, or outbursts of mass religious fervor, and stimulated by intensive preaching and prayer meeting.”² From 1903 to 1907, the Revival Movements played a vital role in the Korean church’s growth, which shaped its character. While this was a period of continual local revivals, the Wonsan Revival in 1903 and the Pyeng Yang Revival in 1907 played the part of national events that energized the others. Women had a critical role in these movements.³ In “Freedom, Liberation, and Practice: Understanding Early Christian Women in Korea,” Duk Joo Lee highlighted the importance of the women’s perspective with regard to revivals: “It is important to research these movements from the women’s perspective since women’s role and participation were an indispensable part of the movements.”⁴ He recognized the change in women’s consciousness and their religious experiences through the revivals as “a significant topic in the study of historical and women’s theology.”⁵

Wonsan Revival Movement

The Wonsan Revival Movement in 1903 was initiated and catalyzed by two female missionaries, Mary C. White and Louise Hoard McCully.⁶ McCully served as a missionary to China until the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. She escaped China and came to Korea as a Canadian Presbyterian missionary. White was a Methodist Episcopal Church

²F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingston, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1394.

³Hyo Jae Lee, “Christian Mission and the Liberation of Korean Women,” *International Review of Mission* 74, no. 293 (1985): 56.

⁴Duk Joo Lee, “Freedom, Liberation, and Practice: Understanding Early Christian Women in Korea (1887-1920),” in *Korean Church and Women*, ed. The Korean Church Research Center (Seoul: IVP, 2013), 55.

⁵*Ibid.*, 63.

⁶Lak Geoon Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea: 1832-1910* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1971), 367.

missionary. The two were motivated to start a Bible study with a view toward deepening their own spiritual lives. They invited Robert A. Hardie, a medical doctor from Toronto University who came for missionary work in the area of Pusan and Wonsan in 1890, to lead the Bible study.⁷ Because he shared a Methodist background with White and Canadian nationality with McCully, they correctly believed he would look favorably upon the proposition. Prior to accepting the proposal Hardie had himself been in a state of “absolute spiritual depression” because of his fruitless ministry. Women’s church historian Martha Huntley describes the beginning of the Wonsan Revival:

In 1903 a member of the China mission of the Southern Methodist Church, Mary Culler White, visited Korea. During her stay in Wonsan she met with Canadian Presbyterian missionary Louise McCully each day to pray for a deepening in the spiritual lives of the missionaries. This led the Wonsan missionaries to set aside a week in August for Bible study and prayer. Dr. R.A. Hardie, who had joined the Southern Methodist mission in 1898, was asked to prepare three papers on the subject of prayer. The request came to Hardie just when he was in despair. Many of the churches under his care showed little numerical or spiritual growth, and he had had to expel several church members during the year. He felt his ministry was a total failure.⁸

The weeklong Bible study and prayer meeting consisted of five female and two male missionaries from August 24 to August 30 in Wonsan. Among the participants were Joseph Lumpkin Gerdine, Arrena Carroll, and M. Knowles, who were Southern Methodist missionaries like Hardie.⁹ White also brought Josephine Hounshell, a missionary from Seoul, to the meeting. During the meeting, the Holy Spirit revealed to Hardie the true reason for his failures in ministry:

⁷Paik writes, “It began in 1903, when a group of missionaries of the Methodist Mission met for a week of prayer and Bible study at Wonsan. Among these was a Canadian Missionary, R. A. Hardie. Hardie went to Korea as a medical missionary of Canadian College’s Mission, but in 1898, he had severed his former relationship and joined the Southern Methodist Mission and engaged in evangelistic work at Wonsan. Under the appointment of his mission, he had charge over a pioneer district in Kangwon providence.” Ibid.

⁸Martha Huntley, *Caring, Growing, Changing: A History of the Protestant Mission in Korea* (New York: Friendship, 1984), 131.

⁹Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions*, 368.

Although not conscious of any obstacle in myself that could account for the absence of results in my work, yet as I labored and chafed under it, there was forced upon me more and more the consciousness of a lack of spiritual power, which was in itself a sufficient cause for failure in a work which is as God has said, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit.”¹⁰

This realization struck Hardie during the Bible study and led him to experience a deep presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Other groups shared the experience, including the women missionaries. Hounshell recalls the event,

What a rich week we had during our Bible conference! The Holy Spirit came into our midst and took of the things of Christ and showed them unto me. I realized that during the past year my life had not been the life of power that it should have been, and by the help of the Father I committed myself unto Him anew for cleansing, keeping and use. He fulfilled His promise and in accordance with the thought expressed in our conference song.¹¹

Carroll’s report reflects similar enthusiasm:

Those of the Canadian Presbyterian Mission who could take part with us and we can truly say that the Spirit of the Lord was upon us, and, like Peter on the mount of transfiguration, we frequently said, the one to the other, “It is good for us to be here. May we not lose hold on the promises claimed then but carry them with us through the coming year that the spirit may come with convicting power upon those with whom we labor.”¹²

Her wish came true that week. In the first Sunday after the united prayer meeting, Hardie stood before the Wonsan Church congregation. According to Hardie,

The first duty the Holy Spirit required when He came upon me was an acknowledgement to those before whom the greater part of my missionary life had been spent, of my past failure, and of the cause of that failure. It was a painful and humiliating experience, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day to save much people alive.¹³

As relayed by Hardie, it was “painful and humiliating” that a missionary

¹⁰Robert A. Hardie, “R. A. Hardie’s Report,” *Minutes of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Korea Mission of the MEC, South, 1903* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1903), 26.

¹¹Josephine Hounshell, “Report of Miss Hounshell,” *Minutes of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Korea Mission of the MEC, South, 1903* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1903), 57.

¹²Arrena Carroll, “Report of the Boarding School and General Work in Wonsan,” *Minutes of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Korea Mission of the MEC, South, 1903* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1903), 53.

¹³Robert A. Hardie, “R. A. Hardie’s Report,” *Minutes of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Korea Mission of the MEC, South, 1904* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1904), 23.

should acknowledge his failure and accept his own mistakes in public. However, as soon as he obeyed the call of the Spirit to confess his own pride, obstinacy, and lack of faith before the people, he began to see some of the congregation repent that they had hated and cheated missionaries. The repentance of sins continued in the prayer meetings that Hardie led for the subsequent three weeks:

In January 1904, Hardie continued to lead a Bible study conference in Wonsan. The one-week conference was extended an additional week in response to the participants' demand. At the conclusion, all of the people in the conference experienced the "fullness of the Holy Spirit" and converted to Christianity. The Russo-Japanese War that broke out immediately after the conference threatened these people's burgeoning faith. Even Carroll and Knowles left Wonsan for Seoul for their own safety. However, the number of believers did not decline as Bible Women handled the situation in an admirable and faithful way. As missionaries noted, the religious experience of Bible Women through the spirit-filled prayer meetings resulted in the advancement of faith. Meanwhile, the Revival Movement ignited by Hardie continued spreading out from Wonsan. Hardie led a Bible conference in his own ministry district in Wonsan. He had despaired over the lack of results for the past three years. In the 1904 conference, however, nearly all those who had previously shown no sign of change experienced radical repentance.¹⁴

In a conference held in Kaesŏng in March 1904, almost every brother and sister came to cry over their sins with contrite heart when the Spirit opened their eyes to their hidden sins. Upon confessing their sins, they also received the fullness of the Spirit. Thus, the Revival Movement spread from Wonsan to Kaesŏng, and eventually to a Bible conference held in Seoul.

Hardie held his Bible study conference in Jagol, Seoul, where many women missionaries worked. In particular, Jagol was the home of the Women's Missionary Society of Southern Methodist Mission and Baehwa Women's High School, which the Society ran. The Jagol Church, whose congregation was mainly comprised of women, also resided within the Baewha Women's High School:

Early in November Mrs. Moose and her Bible woman went with me to a number of churches on the circuit and spent several days working amongst the women, which

¹⁴Duk Joo Lee, *The Study of an Indigenous Church History formed in Korea* (Seoul: The Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea, 2001), 93.

resulted in much good to the churches visited. In the city of Seoul we have built a new chapel, located on the same compound with the Carolina Institute, which is ably conducted by Mrs. H. P. Campbell. ... If there is anything in an institution being started with women, then this will surely prosper.¹⁵

The preliminary prayer meeting held two weeks prior to the conference provided a foretaste of the intense spirituality of the conference. Missionaries from across the region came to the prayer meeting regardless of denomination and experienced the grace of God in the meeting.¹⁶ Following the prayer meeting, Hardie's conference in Jagol had a tremendous spiritual impact on the congregation, teachers, and students in the Baewha Women's High School:

The atmosphere of the high school completely changed after the teachers and students experienced the spiritual outpouring that followed their confessions during the conference. As a result of the conference in Jagol, Hardie received an invitation to speak at a revival rally in the Jeongdong Church [The First Methodist Episcopal Church] in September 1904. As in the Jagol conference, the revival rally made a tremendous spiritual impact on the congregation. Indigenous evangelists, Bible Women, group leaders, and teachers who had been lacking in self-sacrifice turned into devoted Christians. The women students in Ewha Hakdang demonstrated genuine life changes after the revival rally.¹⁷

In October of the same year, Hardie led another revival rally in Namsanhyun Church in the ministry district of Methodist Episcopal Church in Pyeng Yang. The one-week revival rally in Pyeng Yang also manifested such spiritual energy that the believers confessed their sins one after another. The next revival rally was in Incheon.¹⁸ It greatly influenced Bible Women and other female believers. M. R. Hillman and L. A. Miller, who were in charge of the women's mission in Incheon, reported the rally's transforming effect:

¹⁵J. R. Moose, "Report of the Seoul Circuit Korea Mission Methodist Episcopal Church, South," *Minutes of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Korea Mission of the MEC, South, 1901* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1901), 18.

¹⁶Mary H. Knowles, "Miss Knowles' Report," *Minutes of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Korea Mission of the MEC, South, 1904* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1904), 7.

¹⁷Lee, *The Study of an Indigenous Church*, 94.

¹⁸E. M. Cable, "Another Wonderful Revival," *The Korea Methodist* 1, no. 2 (1904): 11.

What a wonderful week that was! Tho having attended many blessed revival services at home we had never before seen such intense conviction of sin, such marked manifestation of the Spirit's presence and power, and such direct answer to prayer. Our faithful Bible woman convulsed with emotion sobbed out her confession of jealousy and lack of love. Her anguish of conviction was soon transformed into the peace which passeth understanding, and her life has borne the fruits of the spirit since that time.¹⁹

While this report is about the repentance of a Bible Woman, the occurrence of repentance is reported to have been true of the entire congregation, not just Bible Women:

A poor widow, whom we verily thought a member of our Gideon's band. . . . During the services she arose and made what have been for her a most humiliating confession, and since that time her development into a most aggressive Christian worker has been truly marvelous.²⁰

The report also tells of a woman's transforming experience in the revival rally that brought her to evangelize in the region. As a result, Hillman, Miller, and Cable opened Bible conferences at four different places in the Hwanghae province with Bible Women for the five weeks beginning November 10, 1904:

After the New Year, classes were held at Poo Pyong, Nam Yang, and later two on Kang Wha, and one on the Island of Kyodong. . . . Beginning with the last week of June a ten day's class for the Bible women of our District was held in Chemulpo in the teaching of which Mrs. Cable kindly joined us. Examinations were held on the last day of the class. The Bible women have done increasingly faithful work at the different points on the District.²¹

In this way, the excitement of the revival spread throughout the nation from 1905 to 1906.

Pyeng Yang Revival Movement

The Pyeng Yang Revival Movement ignited in the Presbyterian churches.²² On January 6, 1907, a united Bible conference was held for five days for the churches of

¹⁹Mary. R. Hillman and Lulu. A. Miller, "Report of Chemulpo Church, Day Schools and West Korea District," *Report of Seventh Annual Session of the Korea Woman's Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, June 23 to 27, 1905* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1905), 26-27.

²⁰M. R. Hillman, "A Wonderful Week," *The Korean Mission Field* 2, no. 10 (1906): 183.

²¹Hillman and Miller, "Report of Chemulpo Church," 27.

²²Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea*, 370.

Pyeng Yang:

The women of the churches are to meet in the various churches, namely North Gate church, East Gate church, South Gate church, and in the men's sarang outside the West Gate, services to be conducted by the wives of missionaries in charge of these places. The lower school boys are meeting in the chapel of the college and academy building meeting led by one of the elders.²³

Radical repentance began among the male students at the Soongdeok School in January 7, 1907:

When Presbyterian Kim Chanseong read the story about the "prodigal son" in Luke 15, more than three hundred male students burst into tears at once and confessed their sins. The news about the students' repentance spread to the people who were participating in Bible Conferences in other places. . . . On the same day, Kil Sôn-ju lectured about the Holy Spirit; Jeongmin Chae burst into tears and began confessing his sins. The entire congregation was moved to repentance simultaneously, sobbing prayers. In the Bible Conference's evening session when G. Lee was leading worship, they experienced a sudden, strong wind followed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the congregation. . . . Sounds of the saints wailing and weeping with their hearts broken with the bitter confession of sins filled the building. Repentance occurred on an even larger scale in the meeting at the Jangdaehyun Church, where 1,500 people participating in the Bible Conference confessed to their sins in public.²⁴

The women's Revival Movement began in the Soongeui Girl's Middle School on the third day, January 9, 1907. It began with the young students' repentance:

Wednesday morning there was the same manifestation at the Advanced School for Girls and Women. Miss Snook went as usual, and the first classes were held, and then chapel began at ten o'clock, but there was no regulation chapel exercises that morning. After a few remarks and prayer the girls broke down and began to weep and confess their sins, and until after twelve o'clock the meeting went on with nothing but prayer, tears, and confession of sin. Thursday morning was a repetition of Wednesday, and chapel lasted until moon. On Friday all recitations were spent as the two previous days.²⁵

On Thursday, the same phenomenon occurred in the Soongdeok Girl's Elementary School:

²³G. S. McCune, "The Holy Spirit in Pyeng Yang," *The Korean Mission Field* 3, no.1 (1907): 1.

²⁴Lee, *The Study of an Indigenous Church*, 111-12; *A History of the Christianity in Korea* Vol. 1, ed. The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 2011), 230-32.

²⁵Graham Lee, "How the Spirit Came to Pyeng Yang," *The Korean Mission Field* 3, no. 3 (1907): 36.

On Thursday morning, the Spirit fell on the primary school for girls. As some of us were going by the school room we heard the sound of wailing and knew the same power was there. Miss Best went down immediately to look after them. Hearing of what was going on at this school, Mrs. Bernheisel went down to the girl's school in the city to see how matters were there. She said a few words to the girls, and immediately they began to weep and confess their sins.²⁶

Adult women were the last to encounter the revival, following the younger students:

All through the class the women of the church had been meeting separately, but there had been no special manifestation among them. We determined to hold meetings for them in the Central Church on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings. Thursday and Friday evenings there was no special manifestation, for the women were not ready; there were a few confessions and a few rambling talks by some self-righteous old women, but the Spirit was not there in power. Saturday night the power came, and then the women confessed and agonized just as the men had. We all rejoiced in the confession of one young girl, who has been a cause of grief and sorrow to us. We wished to help her, but could find no way to do. Saturday night she broke down, made a confession, and wept as if her heart would break.²⁷

For the two weeks following March 16, the Board of the Foreign Mission of the North Presbyterian Church of the United States hosted a special Bible study conference for the Bible Women belonging to the Pyeng Yang. Including the Bible Women, 550 women attended the conference, many of whom had walked 100 miles to attend. The conference turned into the place of repentance even from the start:

These women had come in with hearts already warmed with the desire for this spiritual blessing which their sisters in the city had previously experienced. Indeed some had already received a sprinkling of blessings in the churches from which they came, for this work of grace spread quickly for out into the country. Conviction and confessions began almost from the first and continued to increase each evening, both as to the numbers confessing, and as to the intensity of conviction.²⁸

After the conference, the Bible Women who experienced the works of the Holy Spirit returned to the places of their ministries and began to convene the same type of revival meetings. This helped the Revival Movement spread further into the local areas:

The Revival Movement for Methodist churches began a month after those of Presbyterian churches, which were mediated by the students of Soongsil High

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸W. L. Swallen, "God's Work of Grace in Pyeng Yang Classes," *The Korean Mission Field* 3, no. 5 (1907): 78.

School. At that time, the Presbyterian Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States jointly ran the Soongsil High School. After several Methodist students experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in revival meetings at school, they began special prayer meetings in the Namsanhyun Church, which were marked by radical repentances. Finally, the revival meeting occurred on February 11. Women came together at ten o'clock each morning and men congregated in the evening every day; both meetings featured radical repentance and confession of sins by participants. The revival meeting that had been scheduled for a week was extended for another week. In the extended meetings, they decided that male and female believers should congregate together in the evening services. Though they separated the two groups using curtains, this was the first time in the history of the Korean church that male and female believers came together in the same place for a religious meeting.²⁹

On February 20, approximately two thousand participants gathered in the Namsanhyun Church, more than half of which were female. Unfortunately chaos broke out in the revival meeting:

A cry of fire from a man outside who hadn't wanted his wife to attend, and thinking to get her out anyway, he called fire. Nothing could stop the women. At the door they began pressing so hard some were thrown down, and before the men or the leaders knew what was the trouble, a number were injured, and several fainted. Help from the men's side came, and the crowd was pushed and pulled back and away, and the injured rescued and brought into the Church and revived. There were no serious injuries, but for a while there were four children and five or six women who looked lifeless out on the floor of the Church. . . . Oh! It was all so pitiable. What an awful shock it all was to our people. The Christians mostly remained in their places, and later they went on with the rest of the service and thanked God so fervently for sparing the lives of those who had fallen.³⁰

Even though only a small number of people were injured in the accident it negatively affected the Revival Movement. Church leaders and missionaries distressed over the negative consequences with respect to their ministries. The result, however, was quite different:

With our Bible woman, Sadie, the next morning I visited a number of the homes of those who were injured. The little child I had held was playing about, and the others were recovering, and every place instead of abusing the Church, they thanked God for preserving them, and they and their families mostly said they must begin to believe and serve Jesus.³¹

²⁹Lee, "Freedom, Liberation, and Practice," 62.

³⁰Mattie W. Noble, *The Journal of Mattie Willcox Noble, 1892-1934* (Seoul: The Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea, 2003), 163.

³¹*Ibid.*, 164.

Surprisingly no one complained about his or her injuries. On the contrary, they expressed thanks to God for protecting them and vowed to believe in Jesus with their whole family. The misfortune turned into a blessing. The accident reinforced the Bible Women's faith. More women than men were injured in the accident. However, the way missionaries and male believers treated them deeply moved the injured women, encouraging many of them to convert to Christianity.

Several meetings followed the Methodist church's Revival Movement. First, a revival meeting convened for the students in the local seminary on February 20. From February 21, another student revival meeting was hosted in the Jeongeui Women's School:

At the *Spring Institute* from March 28th to April 8th there were in attendance 177 country women and girls and 110 city women and girls making a total of 287. All of our Pyeng Yang missionary ladies taught in the various classes each day as did also a few of the native women [Bible Women].³²

As in the Revival Movement of the Presbyterian churches, those Bible Women who claimed to have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit carried the Revival Movement to their local provinces. The zeal of the Revival Movement reached Seoul and exploded in Pyeng Yang, spreading throughout the entire nation and changing its churches and societies.

Religious Experience of Church Women

Missionaries had made great progress penetrating Korea's insulated female population prior to the Wonsan Revival. They had cultivated a cadre of Bible Women who had matured in their faith and evangelistic ability and together they spread the gospel's message. J. Z. Moore of the Southern Methodist Mission echoed these sentiments in his comments:

³²Mattie W. Noble, "Report of Evangelistic Work, Bible Institutes and Three Day Schools, Pyeong Yang," *Report of the Ninth Annual Session of the Korea Woman's Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church held at Seoul, June 19 to 27, 1907* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1907), 48.

Until this year [1907] I was more or less bound by that contemptible notion that the East is East and West, West, and that there can be no real affinity or common meeting ground between them. With others I had said the Korean would have a religious experience such as the West has. These revivals have taught me two things: First, that though there may be a thousand things, on the surface, that are the direct opposite of the West, the Korean is at heart, and in all fundamental things, at one with his brother of the West...In the second place these revivals have taught me, that in the matter of making all life religious, in prayer, and in a simple, childlike trust, the East not only has many things, but profound things, to teach the West, and until we learn these things we will not know the full-orbed Gospel of Christ.³³

Women arguably chose whether or not to adopt Christianity based on an intellectual assessment of the teachings as compared to those of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shamanism. However, the personal spiritual experience many of them encountered during the revival period fundamentally reshaped their lives. Even the Bible Women who had already committed their lives to Christ and made great sacrifices to this effect were re-energized through their personal experience at the revivals.

Repentance and Born-Again Experience

The 1903 to 1907 Revival Movements predominantly featured repentance and rebirth. Participants publicly confessed their sins and experienced forgiveness and spiritual cleansing. Missionaries witnessed the born-again experience transforming the new believers' lives: "The work of our mission (Southern Methodist) is a work of grace which has been mighty in transforming the character and life of many a professing Christian."³⁴ Most sought to be reconciled with whomever they had wronged and recompense them for losses where possible. Lee contends that the transformation occurred in three phases: repentance, rebirth, and sanctification: "This personal encounter introduced the believers to Christianity beyond religious theory and blind declarations of faith that they had experienced to this point."³⁵ McCully reports the baptism of the Holy

³³J. Z. Moore, "The Great Revival Year," *The Korean Mission Field* 3, no. 8 (1907): 118.

³⁴W. G. Cram, "A Genuine Change," *The Korean Mission Field* 3, no. 5 (1907): 68.

³⁵Lee, *The Study of an Indigenous Church*, 137.

Spirit experienced by Hannah, the Bible Woman with whom she closely worked:

During the first week in January she attended revival services in Ham Heung and there for the first time intelligently claimed the baptism of the Holy Spirit for service. At later services these experiences became deeper and she learned as never before wherein the true secret of power lies and made a very full surrender of herself to God. In the spring, as she accompanied me on intenerating trips to various out stations, it was easy to see the great change that had come over her and the earnest spirit with which she entered into her work was most inspiring. As she herself spoke of what she had experienced she said "I used to do my work according to the flesh, but now I see how little that accomplishes and that I must always have the power of the Holy Spirit."³⁶

Helen Baek, who had been working as a Bible Women for a long time in Incheon, had a similar experience. Baek was much respected among the churchwomen in the Incheon area, and was called "mother." Baek received the baptism of the Holy Spirit at a Bible conference in the spring of 1907:

We had a wonderful revival in our church this morning. Although we thought Helen a saint, she came through such deep waters that she was tried as if by fire. After she had told the meanest sin in her life, the one which she did not wish any of our women to know, and had seen other things that were standing in the way of her largest service, her face shone with the radiance of an angel, and she said that she had never known such peace and freedom as had become her everlasting possession. She was never going to lose this sweet peace.³⁷

According to Noble, the legendary Bible Woman Sadie Kim had a similar experience in Pyeng Yang:

She was convulsed in agony over her sins. She sobbed and beat the floor with her hands. She could not control herself until after the meeting to tell of the load on her mind. One was lack of love, and resentment when the people all thought she must lay out each dead body of a woman Church member, and going to perform those rites without love in her heart, and in one case refusing to go. Another sin was murmuring about her pastor. Then she could nearly control herself as she told of her pharisaical manner when others confessed horrid sins.³⁸

Bible Women asked for forgiveness for their sins and acknowledged their

³⁶L. H. McCully, "Fruits of the Revival," *The Korean Mission Field* 3, no. 6 (1907): 84.

³⁷Jessie Marker, "Report of the Day Schools and Evangelistic Work of the Chemulpo and Hai Ju Circuits," *Report of Ninth Annual Session of the Korea Woman's Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church held at Seoul, June 19 to 27, 1907* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1907), 32.

³⁸Noble, *The Journal of Mattie Willcox Noble*, 160.

shortcomings in the ministry that had lacked in spiritual power. Their open confession did not damage their reputation or leadership effectiveness. On the contrary, it reinforced their positions as trustworthy “Spiritual Leaders”: “All of the Bible Women were greatly blessed by the revival held in April and now do their work with a new love for souls. They had a number of houses to which they desired me to go and teach with them.”³⁹

The Bible Women who experienced repentance evangelized with renewed love and passion. Their repentance renewed the atmosphere of the entire women’s society. The most important outcome of the women’s personal religious experiences was their appreciation of the essence of Christianity featured by repentance, rebirth, and sanctification. The gospel had taken root in the Korean women’s soil.

Reconciliation and Unity

Revival participants confessed both spiritual and ethical sins. Lee describes the depth and breadth of these confessions,

They sought forgiveness for hatred, envy, jealousy, dislike, distrust, enmity, and anger. Likewise, they proclaimed their sorrow for robberies, embezzlement, fraud, gambling, and arson. Most of those spiritual and ethical issues were rooted in broken and damaged human relationships. However, repentance brought renewed relationships among the believers and between believers and non-believers. Those who repented for their sins also attempted to make peace with their neighbors who had been in conflict with them.⁴⁰

The revival meeting at the Naeri Church in Incheon vividly shows the reconciliation among the congregation as an aspect of the religious experiences during the great revivals:

Two women had had some domestic trouble and it had gone from bad to worse until they would not speak with each other. One of these women when asked to go and make it right with the other said “No, I would rather go to hell first,” but conviction became so deep and pungent that they both rose and confessed their sins and asked

³⁹A. Carroll, “Bible Woman’s Work in Seoul,” *Minutes of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Korea Mission of the MEC, South, 1904* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1904), 44-45.

⁴⁰Lee, *The Study of an Indigenous Church*, 134.

each other forgiveness and made things all right with each other before leaving the church. If nothing more than this had been accomplished by the meetings they would have been a success. We had almost given up hope of these two women ever making friends again.⁴¹

Reconciliation was followed by the restoration of peace of mind. A women's Bible conference in February 1907 shows that regaining peace for troubled minds was an aspect of the Spirit's ministry during the revival meeting:

When any one would become so overcome with grief as to be unable to cease, the whole congregation would break out together in audible prayer, after which a song might be sung. If still there were those who could not get comfort-and not unfrequently there were many such-then those sainted women who had previously gone through with such an experience themselves and had gotten peach would go through the congregation like angelic messengers, seeking out such and putting their arms about them in unmistakable love, and speak peace to their agonizing souls. This never failed to bring speedy relief.⁴²

This coming together in support and prayer for one another is typical of the way the revival congregation experienced reconciliation and forgiveness. The following is the story of Bible Woman, Susanna Oh:

Each day each meeting has witnessed confessions of sin with mourning and weeping in sorrow for having sinned. Many have swooned away in agony over sin. Susanna O in a women's meeting smote her breast and fell on the floor, received strength to arise, and went to Mrs. Follwell's and fell at her feet craving for forgiveness for her ill feelings toward her; then went and fell at Mr. Un Sung's feet prostrate. He attempted to raise her. I went to her assistance, but she stiffened out in a swoon in my arms. She came to quickly and prayed for pardon. She received a sense of pardoning peace and has been a most joyful Christian since, teaching the other women with great power.⁴³

Susanna went to each missionary and pastor that she worked with and asked for forgiveness, unifying the leadership. The powerful, common religious experience transcended cultural and linguistic barriers, strengthening the bond between missionaries and the indigenous women. The missionaries also changed their perspectives: "Our foreign community have all received new and rich blessings of the filling of the Spirit.

⁴¹Cable, "Another Wonderful Revival," 12.

⁴²Swallen, "God's Work of Grace," 78.

⁴³Noble, *The Journal of Mattie Wilcox Noble*, 161.

There is a sweet, tender love toward each other; and all drawn nearer our Koreans and understand them better and they understand us better than ever before.”⁴⁴ Thus, the Revival Movement also resulted in reconciliation and unity between church members, church members and non-believers, pastors and lay people, pastors and other pastors, and missionaries and Bible Women.

Indigenization of Christian Experience

The Revival Movement also gave birth to indigenized forms of religious practices such as ‘In the Early Morning Prayer’ and ‘Rice Offerings.’⁴⁵ During the early period of the Revival Movement, many male believers practiced an indigenized form of prayer where they made their individual prayers simultaneously in a loud voice. This type of prayer was called “united audible prayer.”⁴⁶ Women preferred gathering very early in the morning to pray. L. E. Fry, the principal of Ewha Hakdang, chronicled the lives of female students ‘In the Early Morning Prayer’ practice:

The last week of the meetings Miss Paine and I were listening till midnight every evening after services as the girls confessed their sins and unburdened their hearts to us. In the early mornings we would see the girls stealing one by one to the chapel to pray, and many of them, when asked when and where they had felt their sins forgiven, would say when alone on a certain morning in the chapel.⁴⁷

Some of the students had already been inspired by Hardie’s preaching at the Bible conference held in Jeongdong. Those students began ‘In the Early Morning Prayer’ sessions during the Bible conference held in Ewha Hakdang, and received the Holy Spirit and forgiveness of sins. The form of ‘In the Early Morning Prayer’ exercised by the

⁴⁴Ibid., 162.

⁴⁵Lee, *The Study of an Indigenous Church*, 150.

⁴⁶*A History of the Christianity in Korea*, 225.

⁴⁷Lulu E. Frey, “Ewha Haktang-School,” *Report of Seventh Annual Session of the Korea Woman’s Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church held at Seoul, June 23 to 27, 1905* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1905), 5.

Ewha Hakdang students had not yet developed into public worship:

‘In the Early Morning Prayers’ had been a common practice in Shamanism. Almost every woman began the day by praying to the gods of heaven and earth for the family’s well-being. The women in the early church adopted this religious custom and transformed it into a Christian tradition of prayer. ‘Rice offerings’, also called holy rice or Sung-Mi, are another example of indigenization.⁴⁸

Collier, the missionary working in Gaesong, reports,

It is very encouraging to contrast the earnestness of our people and their attendance at all services with that we often found to prevail in Methodist Churches in America and England. The Idea of every Christian being a soul-winner is the standard; that such is the daily object of the lives of many we have abundant evidence. Their self-denial makes them to happy that it is infectious. In many kitchens there is what is known as “The Lord’s Pot.” Every time they cook for the family a handful or so of grain is deposited in this pot. At the end of the month this grain is sold and its proceeds devoted to preacher’ salary.⁴⁹

Missionaries complimented the women for their sacrifice to offer rice. Women were committed to laying aside a handful of rice in “the Lord’s Pot” whenever cooking and offered it to church once a month. The custom was popularized alongside the “self-support” movement of the early church in which they made a rule that individual churches support their own pastors.⁵⁰ However, the practice of ‘Rice Offerings’⁵¹ in the church originated in religious practices preceding the introduction of Christianity. W. G. Cram, another missionary in Gaesong, reports,

⁴⁸Lee, *The Study of an Indigenous Church*, 158.

⁴⁹C. T. Collyer, “Report of Songdo South Circuit,” *Report of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Korea Mission of the MEC, South, 1905* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1905), 36.

⁵⁰P. Beyerhous and H. Lefever write, “The local Church must actively acknowledge its share of the responsibility for proclaiming the Gospel, not only within its own confines but throughout the whole world; it must not only join in prayer for others, but must, from the start, offer material gifts for this wider work. The Korean Churches, the system whereby the church-members themselves assess the amount of their own church-contribution, stimulated by confrontation with their tasks, seems one to be recommended.” Peter Beyerhus and Henry Lefever, *The Responsible Church and the Foreign Mission* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1964), 154.

⁵¹Clark explains the notion of Rice Offerings: “Every believer must daily set aside his spoonful of rice. This is the fund for the making firm of Heaven and Earth. It is the means of financing the organization and is a sacrifice to Heaven and to Earth.” Charles A. Clark, *Religions of Old Korea* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1961), 160.

The women of this church said that when they served the devil they did it with so much zeal that every time the family rice was cooked a handful of rice was taken out and at the end of a certain period this rice was offered to the devil in sacrifice, therefore, since they had become Christian they should serve the Lord with as much zeal at least and thereupon they would as before give a handful at each cooking and have it sent in for the support of their circuit preacher.⁵²

In *The Study of an Indigenous Church History formed in Korea*, Lee reports,

Traditional Korean households had a rice pot that was dedicated to ancestral worship. They believed that offering rice to ancestral spirits would grant protection and wellbeing to the living family members. The rice offered for household ancestors was later collected and used to make rice cakes to offer spirits on a traditional religious days. Christian women adopted this custom and developed it into Christian practice. The rice was no longer offered to ancestral spirits but to the Lord, and the pot was renamed the Lord's Pot.⁵³

Thus, 'In the Early Morning Prayer' and 'Rice Offerings' represent the indigenous and viable faith of Christian women of the early church. These unique Christian traditions reflect the church's efforts to indigenize Christianity by integrating it within their own cultural context.

Change in Consciousness of Church Women

The Bible Women also received wider recognition from their roles in the revivals and began to exercise spiritual leadership for male believers as well as women. Most importantly, the Revival Movement ignited women's passion for evangelism. They rapidly spread the gospel through the movement of "woman to woman." Hyo Jae Lee points out the liberating aspect involvement in these movements provided:

Korean Women thus experienced the community spirit of the church through the revival movement, which contributed in volume and quality to the formation of the church as community. Long chained to life in the husband's family and the hard toils of housekeeping in poverty, Korean women began to see a new horizon for their life, experiencing a community of love, forgiveness and tolerance.⁵⁴

Duk Joo Lee also highlights the impact participating in these activities had on the women:

⁵²W. G. Cram, "North Ward Circuit, Songdo," *Report of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Korea Mission of the MEC, South, 1905* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1905), 35.

⁵³Lee, *The Study of an Indigenous Church*, 158.

⁵⁴Lee, "Christian Mission and the Liberation of Korean Women," 95.

Women's Revival Movement experiences resulted in changes in the way women viewed themselves and their position in society. They came to understand the core of the Christian faith through the religious experience of repentance, rebirth, and sanctification. Their spiritual experiences combined with the Bible's teachings and the example set by the Bible Women provided them with a renewed assessment of their own self-worth. The revival experience also caused Christian men to reevaluate the way in which they viewed their wives and marital relationships. For the first time men and women worshipped in the same facility separated by only a curtain. These events fueled the women's confidence and gave them courage and conviction to challenge the circumstances of their family, and later their nation. The practice of concubinage, which had been accepted for centuries, was challenged through Scripture. They broke out of their position of silent acquiescence as the male-centered hierarchy between husband and wife shifted toward an egalitarian relationship. Women became active in social reform, and even joined alongside their male counterparts in patriotic movements during the Japanese occupation.⁵⁵

Women's Improvement of Leadership

During the Revival Movement, women were blessed with the same spiritual experience as men. In the movement's beginning, men and women worshipped in separate places as was customary. As the revivals progressed, however, they worshipped in the same physical structure, divided by only a curtain, as was documented in the 1904 Incheon Bible Conference and the 1907 Bible Conference at the Namsanhyun Church in Pyeng Yang.⁵⁶ E. M. Cable reports on the Incheon Bible Conference in 1904:

Services were held three times a day beginning at ten in the morning with only intermissions for lunch and dinner. The preaching of the Word was in great power and demonstration of the Spirit, revealing the awful sinfulness of sin and the power of Jesus to save from sin and the power of Jesus to save from sin. Conviction became so strong as the preaching went on that the Koreans would rise and interrupt Dr. Hardie in order to confess their sins. I never have seen the like before among any people. One after another arose and enumerated all the evil things he or she had done.⁵⁷

Strikingly, both men and women gathering in the same place shared identical spiritual experiences of repentance and public confession. Women were no more ashamed of confessing than their male counterparts. The desire for confession was so

⁵⁵Lee, "Freedom, Liberation, and Practice," 67.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Cable, "Another Wonderful Revival," 11-12.

strong that the participants interrupted the pastor's preaching. This is as true for the participating women as it was for the men. A similar scene occurred in the January 1906 Bible conference, held in the Jeongdong Church in Seoul:

The fifteen minute prayer meeting just before service was also very helpful, one thing held by the foreigners and one by the natives holding position as elders, deacons or Sunday School teachers. The presence of the Spirit of God was manifest in the hearty confessions of sin, the preacher being stopped one evening by a woman rising and saying that in listening to the Word she saw her sins as she had not before, and there were also many testimonies to a quickened spiritual life.⁵⁸

The scene repeated itself in a revival meeting in Syen Chun in 1907: "The Spirit of the Lord came in power, convicting of sin. Women stood up to confess here and there all over the room before the leader was through speaking. Three and four would start to speak at the same time. Such hours of agony!"⁵⁹ Lee pointed out that the spirit was so compelling long standing cultural norms were overcome:

That a woman would dare to interrupt a man speaking in public was unimaginable at that time. Behavior that would normally be viewed as mutinous was joyously accepted in the context of the spirit-filled revival meetings. These women's religious experiences challenged the male-oriented hierarchical social order. The liberating effect these experiences had was more explicitly shown in a revival meeting in the church, when a Korean wife pointed out that the transition of leadership in churches was underway as it began to recognize the importance of the woman's place its ministries.⁶⁰

McCully's account of the Bible Woman Hannah at the united Bible conference in Hamheung in 1907 illustrates the growing leadership of women:

When a series of meetings was going on she would gather the women together for prayer before the service and in her simple earnest way explain to them some of the truth that they found hard to grasp. In the general meetings her devout help and bright testimonies were a great help and even the Korean men showed respect for her. In one place she was asked by them to lead a prayer meeting in one of the homes where both men and women were gathered. It is, of course, necessary to

⁵⁸S. F. Moore, "The Revival in Seoul," *The Korean Mission Field* 2, no. 6 (1906): 116.

⁵⁹J. L. Gerdine, "The Colporters' Share," *The Korean Mission Field* 3, no. 5 (1907): 72.

⁶⁰Lee, "Freedom, Liberation, and Practice," 68.

understand the inferior place granted to women in this eastern land in order to understand what it means for a woman to thus win respect.⁶¹

This fascinating account bears witness to the changing picture of women's roles in the early church. Bible Women's ability and spiritual leadership in the church eroded the conventional view of the limits on women's roles. These Revival Movement experiences inspired women's renewed awareness that they were human beings equal to men. As demonstrated in the account of Hannah, Bible Women exercised effective spiritual leadership in revival meetings and church ministries beyond any previous conception of women's ability.

Evangelization of Family

The Revival Movement also altered Christians' conventional thinking about marital relationships. The change of consciousness over marriage began with Christian husbands first. At the outset of the Wonsan Revival, a Korean male from the *yangban* class made a confession in a public worship during Hardie's sermon:

His reference to his wife who had died when he was but nineteen years of age was most touching. He said she was ill for several months, but that during all that time he was drinking and living the life of a libertine. She died on New Year's Day and because this interfered with his celebrating the day with his associates he cursed her name and memory. "Oh," he said, "if while she was ill I had gone in but once and asked how she was satisfaction to me now. But I did not do even that." With tears he asked forgiveness of several whom he said he had hated and secretly abused.⁶²

In repentance, Seung Kun Yoon was struck by the guilt of never loving his wife. His confession reflected the beginning of a new awareness of Christian husbands. They began to find it their duty to love their wives. In Hardie's report, a Christian man demonstrated a Christian husband's love for his wife after his life was transformed through repentance:

⁶¹McCully, "Fruits of the Revival," 84.

⁶²Hardie, "R. A. Hardie's Report," 24.

He [Seung Kun Yoon] loved the Church, and his whole desire was to see it prosper. He learned to love his wife, and was not afraid to say so any where which means much in this land where genuine love is almost unknown and in this instance at least is regarded as a sign of weakness. His experience in receiving the fullness of the Holy Ghost was rich and full so that his last days while he was being wasted by consumption were happy and joyful. Death had no terror for him.⁶³

Contrary to the binding social conventions of the time, Christian husbands did not reserve their expression of love for their wives. In this way, they challenged the established customs and conventional values of traditional society. The change was also occurring among Christian wives, as is described in the following missionary's account of a woman's confession in an Incheon revival meeting in 1904:

One woman whom we thought was a good woman arose and confessed that she had been sinning continually. She said that she had been living with a man for over a year who was not her husband. The man also confessed to living with this woman, so at the close of the meeting in order to straighten this affair the couple was married.⁶⁴

The resolution of the problem began with the woman who became conscious that according to Christian values, cohabitation was sin. The wedding ceremony after the revival meeting reflected the egalitarian idea held by Korean Christians. In the course of the Revival Movement, there came to be many Christian couples, which often led to the evangelization of entire extended families.

The previously accepted upper-class practice of concubinage received new consideration in the changing understanding of marriage. In the course of the Revival Movement, Christians experienced an increasing awareness that concubinage was not acceptable. Hounshell provides the following report as evidence:

Some months ago, a lovely little woman came to the church and said she wished to be a Christian. Very rarely does a convert, from the first, give so clear a testimony, or possess such aptitude for learning as did this little woman. Shortly afterwards, another very nice looking woman started to come. But she was a second wife, the Bible women said, and so could not receive baptism. Neither could she change her family relations, she said, as she had no place to go, should she leave her present home. Finally both women stopped coming and, on inquiry, it was found that they

⁶³Ibid., 29.

⁶⁴Cable, "Another Wonderful Revival," 11.

were both the wives of same man, who, finding that his family arrangements were being upset, had prohibited their going to church. A visit to the home revealed the fact that the man and also his brother, were in possession of the Bible, had read it, believed it and were in sympathy with its teaching but, practical application to the case in hand, it was “very difficult.” But what is impossible with man is possible with God, and we can believe that the desire and prayers of these two women will the end prevail.⁶⁵

In Wonsan, a woman who used to be a concubine terminated her illicit relationship when she converted:

One of the results under our observation was a woman who had been a second wife for twenty-one years. She was so convicted that she left her husband and comfortable home for the sake of the Gospel. She now spends most of her time telling her heathen friends what the Lord has done for her, how deliverance from sin and fear have come through Christ Jesus. She does a little sewing for her living. The Christian women have been very kind to her, helping her get work and giving her a place to stay.⁶⁶

A woman’s decision to leave concubinage was a proclamation of freedom from an oppressive social structure. The Christian women in Wonsan actively supported women who resisted concubinage to start an independent life. Concubinage was a problem that faced many women who began new lives as Christians. The issue was not merely an individual choice; rejecting concubinage represented rebellion against the conventional, male-dominated tradition for a new worldview informed by Christianity. Christians who had converted through the Revival Movement embraced Christian ethics.

Missional Mind and Women’s Education

Those whose lives were changed through the revival meetings wanted to share their experiences with their neighbors. In particular, the passion for mission was strong among women who felt liberated and freed through the gospel. Moore’s report conveys the women’s roles in spreading the gospel:

⁶⁵Josephine Hounshell, “How They Come into the Kingdom,” *The Korea Methodist* 1, no. 7 (1905): 91.

⁶⁶M. D. Myers, “The Spirit’s Quiet Work in Wonsan,” *The Korean Mission Field* 3, no. 4 (1907): 54.

At the time of the women's class in Pyeng Yang women who had received new experience of sins pardoned and fullness of peace and joy in the new birth, came to me with tears, pleading that I might go or send someone to their church, that all might have this new experience and live. In some cases these women themselves were the means of bringing the revival to their local church.⁶⁷

The gospel rapidly spread throughout local provinces with the help of Bible Women whose passion had escalated through revival meetings. The gospel spread considerably among women as it was experienced and understood from women's perspectives. This sharing occurred from "woman's work for woman," or as sometimes described, through a "woman to woman" mission.⁶⁸ In this context, the Women's Societies of Mission and the Women's Evangelism Association were organized throughout the local churches.

The revival meetings also sparked women's interest in learning. An important agent of change was teaching women the Scripture. Bible conferences offered unique learning opportunities to women who had previously been completely deprived of them. This excerpt of a missionary's report reflects the demand for additional classes:

If it is possible we hope to spend the entire winter months in holding classes in the various churches over the district. We are embarrassed by the riches of our opportunities and the urgent invitations received from the various places. The Spirit has been graciously manifest and our cup of joy has indeed been full to overflowing. Eunice [Bible Woman] accompanied us in all our class work, acted as interpreter for our doubtful Korean, held evangelistic services and assisted in class-work during a slight illness which we each successively experienced.⁶⁹

The interests of those women were not limited to learning about Scripture. Their true desire was to read the Bible themselves without aid from Bible Women or missionaries. This led missionaries to run Hangul classes independently from the Bible conference in order to equip them with this skill:

⁶⁷J. Z. Moore, "The Great Revival Year," 115.

⁶⁸Katherine H. Lee Ahn, *Awakening the Hermit Kingdom: Pioneer American Women Missionaries in Korea* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 33.

⁶⁹Hillman and Miller, "Report of Chemulpo Church," 29-30.

The class was held during the Korean New Year, and at the close we decided to seize the time when the women were less busy and make some special effort to teach them how to read. Eunice [Bible Woman] took her rice and moved down to the church, and she and several other women who could read did the teaching for ten days or two weeks. The plan proved successful. A large number of women brought their lunch every day, and studied diligently from early in the morning till late in the afternoon. The determination with which they started out and the earnestness with which they prayed to learn to was inspiring.⁷⁰

Thus equipped, the housewives escaped illiteracy. Women began to look for diverse learning opportunities, and churches began to establish women's schools. Moore noted that women's schools established by local churches were an important outcome of the Revival Movement: "Another hopeful sign of the time was the increased interest in girls' schools. Two years ago it was hard to start girls' schools with either love or money. Now almost every church wants one, and some have started them without help from the missionary."⁷¹

The Korean churches' zeal in establishing women's schools deeply moved Moore. At the same time, Moore was impressed by the women's great passion for learning:

One of the school girls at Ham Chong wanted to go to the Pyeng Yang Woman's Class, but did not have money enough to pay her way. After the others had left for Pyeng Yang she felt so badly she knew not how to stand it or what to do. The Magistrate at that place being a great friend of the school boys and girls, she concluded she would go in and talk it over with him. This took quite a bit of courage, but she remembered how kind he had been, and went. During their talk she suggested that perhaps he might loan her the money. He was so pleased to find a girl who was so eager to study, that he not only gave her enough money to pay her way during all the Class, but saw that she got safely to Pyeng Yang only a day later than the others.⁷²

The churchwomen developed a new self-understanding through the Revival Movement, and began to break down traditional social barriers. They increasingly sought to realize their potential, ability, and leadership by participating as contributors in education and evangelism. But for the Bible Women's pioneering efforts in achieving

⁷⁰Mary H. Knowles, "Miss Knowles' Report: Woman's Work," *Report of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Korea Mission of the MEC, South, 1905* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1905), 50.

⁷¹Moore, "The Great Revival Year," 119

⁷²*Ibid.*, 119-20.

explosive Christian growth, social change would have been extremely difficult.

Patriotism and National Prayer Movement

Paik describes the revival and the growth of the church from 1907 to 1910,

The time had now come when the movement was to extend throughout the peninsula. The four years from 1907 to 1910 are marked by many great events both in the political and the religious history of Korea. Politically, the Japanese protectorate which was established in 1905 resulted in the annexation, and the political independence of the country was terminated. Religiously, the period begins with a great awakening, which was followed by a nation-wide evangelistic campaign. The religious revival gave new impetus to the educational revolution.⁷³

In the wake of the Revival Movement, women formed regular meetings for prayer. L. E. Frey, responsible for women's ministry in the Jeongdong Church and Ewha Hakdang, writes of the group prayer as a remarkable phenomenon:

I have but one new feature in the work of the church to report and that is the cottage prayer meeting. While of course the rooms are small and perhaps the attendance would not average more than twenty, yet these meetings, held as they are in a different part of the city each week, reach a larger number of members in the year than if held in the church, and often the neighbors come in, and in this way the gospel finds its way into new hearts.⁷⁴

Prayer in small groups was known as 'Cottage Prayer,' since several groups of housewives prayed together in small cottages in the town. Cottage Prayer had a positive impact on the church members' faith and on evangelism. Female students who had experienced the revival meetings that Hardie had led in the Jeongdong Church also founded similar prayer groups in Ewha Hakdang.⁷⁵ When Korea signed the Eulsa Treaty annexing the country to Japan in 1905, the nature of small group prayers in Ewha Hakdang began to take on a patriotic tone. J. O. Paine reports the school's changing

⁷³Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions*, 359.

⁷⁴Lulu E. Frey, "First Church, Seoul," *Report of Sixth Annual Session of the Korea Woman's Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church Held at Chemulpo, April 30, 1904* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1904), 18.

⁷⁵Lee, *The Study of an Indigenous Church*, 164.

atmosphere upon returning from a Sabbatical year:

The first day I took my classes, soon after my return, the Eunmun teacher asked me to excuse my three o'clock class if they were a few minutes late as they had a matter about which they were praying. After few days I enquired of the girls what it was for which they prayed each day and they replied "We are praying for our country."⁷⁶

After the New Year's vacation when one of the girls was telling me of the victories she had in her heart life and home life during her stay in a practically heathen home she told me how they had allowed her to have prayer each day, and how at noon they had gathered together while she prayed for the country.⁷⁷

The "Save the Nation" Movement

In this time period, Japanese intentions to invade Korea became much more explicit:

Japan had won the Sino-Japanese war in 1895, and recorded a decisive victory in 1905 over the Russians in the Russo-Japanese war, which was fought over differing intents regarding Manchuria and Korea. In 1905, Japan forced a Protectorate Treaty or *Eul-Sa* onto Korea in preparation for full colonization. Koreans formed many organizations to protest against and resist Japanese annexation. Organizations such as the Independence Association, the Korea Security Committee, and the Constitutional Research Society deployed anti-Japanese campaigns but were forced to disband and dissolve. By 1910, Japan annexed Korea altogether.⁷⁸

Lak Geon Paik describes this period in relation to the period's growth in Christianity:

For Annexation in 1910 was only the culmination of the long processes of decay originating before the opening of the country. On the contrary, the intercourse with the West awakened the nation to a new life purpose. The infusion of Christian ideals gave to it a new birth. The nationalism humiliation and foreign oppression were only birth pangs. To the regenerated Christian community the future belongs. The persistently active minority have already made themselves felt among their non-Christian neighbors. The rebirth of a nation in the heart of the Orient, the rousing to new leadership of a people once spiritually leaders in the Far East, who through the fire of a new zeal are impelled to proclaim to others their new faith, it the story of Christian expansion in Korea.⁷⁹

A fierce resistance movement broke out across the peninsula, driven initially by peasants

⁷⁶Josephine O. Paine, "Ewha Haktang-Seoul," *Report of Eighth Annual Session of the Korea Woman's Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church Held at Seoul, June 8-14, 1906* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1906), 5.

⁷⁷Ibid., 4-5.

⁷⁸Lee, *The Study eof an Indigenous Church*, 166.

⁷⁹Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions*, 428.

and Confucian scholars, growing eventually into an all-out war when joined by the regular army. In the midst of these national trials, Christians were leading some powerful anti-imperialism movements that employed four main tactics:

First, they established a faith movement in which they prayed for the nation in order to shape a future perspective of Korea and raise the anti-Japanese spirit. Second, they formed an anti-tax movement to minimize economic exploitation. Third, they systematically organized and shaped political protests despite the threat of persecution. Finally, they remained willing to continue resistance even when faced with the use of armed force.⁸⁰

Even before the Japanese occupation, Christians hosted occasional public events to boost the spirit of independence and patriotism. Examples include local churches gathering for memorial services followed by afternoon loyalty events. One anti-Japanese event that took place in Seoul brought between 1,000 and 2,000 people together to recite the Lord's Prayer in unison.⁸¹ Because most people had very little experience organizing these types of demonstrative meetings, church networks became a useful channel to gather consensus, inform commoners, and unite political power. During these special events they hoisted the national flag together with the cross flag and sang the national anthem to stir patriotic sentiment. Female Christians employed a similar strategy. Their movements can be categorized as the Patriotic Enlightenment Movement and the National Debt Redemption Movement.

Patriotic Enlightenment Movement

A great number of female organizations came into being during this period, including the Grace Lady's Association, the Charity Women's Association, the Eastern Patriotic Lady's Society, the Female Education Board, and the Korean Women's Club.⁸²

⁸⁰Man Yeol Lee, *The History of the Christian Movement in Korea* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1987), 76.

⁸¹In Soo Kim, *History of the Christian Church of Korea* (Seoul: Presbyterian Theological University Press, 1998), 156.

⁸²Jung Ran Yoon, *History of the Korean Christian Women's Movement 1910-1945* (Seoul: The

Many members of these organizations were wives of pro-Japanese officers or sophisticated women whose social or political influence did not reach the general public. However, most Christian organizations and female Christian groups included average women in their memberships: “The organizations that formed during this period were established to build more schools and train female leaders. Many people believed that the only way to recover independence was to modernize and enlighten Koreans, and many organizations were established for this purpose.”⁸³ They also wanted to invoke their influence through movements such as a national capital campaign and national debt redemption movement. Koreans focused on providing education as a means toward independence. These educational and enlightening movements provided Koreans with knowledge and courage to challenge the country’s deep-rooted corruption and other non-Christian practices:

During this period, Christian women formed other campaigns such as superstition elimination, alcohol abolition, smoking cessation, supporting local business, and the encouragement of literacy. They tried to regain national rights by shifting from traditional to Christian ethics and values. They believed that these female campaigns aligned with the human rights movements for women.⁸⁴

National Debt Redemption Movement

Women came to realize that reading the Scripture and the gospel was changing every aspect of their private and social life. The Christian female movements aimed primarily to evangelize, but also to enlighten and support independence.⁸⁵ The only way to resist Japanese injustice was to educate Korean people and to help them prosper economically. More than anything else, Korean men and women had to urgently focus on

Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea, 2003), 21.

⁸³Ibid., 23.

⁸⁴Woo Jung Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women over 100 Years* (Seoul: Minjungsa, 1985), 146.

⁸⁵Lee, *The Study of an Indigenous Church*, 172-73.

getting modern education for the sake of independence, and these educational and enlightening movements provided Koreans with both wisdom and courage to deal with the corruption that was deeply rooted in the country.⁸⁶ At that time, Korea took a very large financial loan from Japan which threatened its national sovereignty:

Out of concern for the country, men started smoking cessation and drinking cessation movements and even the Emperor Go Jong stopped smoking. The women followed by initiating a national debt redemption movement. They collected their jewelry, rice, and cash and formed organizations such as Kam Sun Hoi and Tal Hwan Hoi. They strived to repay the loan and recover national sovereignty. By solving that kind of political issue, they also aimed to further gender equality and build more schools. They engaged with these social issues, the economic crisis, and personal education because they believed that all three problems needed attention. Women from every social class pursued the common goal of national independence, which gave them a sense of companionship with each other and contributed to the unity of all Koreans.⁸⁷

This would not have been possible less than a decade earlier and would not have been possible at all had it not been for the cultural transformation brought about by the Bible Women through the Revival Movement.

The tremendous success of the Revival Movements, social organizations, and nationalistic movements accelerated the adoption of Christianity and the associated transformation of women's rights. This achievement becomes even more impressive when one considers that the nation's wives and mothers remained virtually inaccessible to the predominantly male missionaries. The contribution of the Bible Women strategy deserves full recognition for the results of their commitment and sacrifices. It might also serve as an example to strive for similar outcomes through the same strategy in evangelistic endeavors in similar cultural contexts.

⁸⁶Young Ok Park, *The History of Women's Modernization Movement in Korea* (Seoul: Ji Sik Sa, 2011), 417.

⁸⁷Sun Ae Chu, *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea* (Seoul: Dae Han Presbyterian Church Women's Association, 1978), 76-77.

CHAPTER 6

BIBLE WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY MISSIONS

At its core the Bible Woman approach employs a woman-to-woman missionary method to produce indigenous female evangelists focused on delivering Christ's message to local women. Dana Robert explains the concept in her book on women missionaries in Korea:

“Woman’s Work for Woman” was based on a maternalistic, albeit idealistic, belief that non-Christian religions trapped and degraded women, yet all women in the world were sisters and should support each other. Late-nineteenth-century mission theory continued belief in the “rotteness of paganism” from early-nineteenth-century mission theory, but it analyzed women’s victimization under non-Christian religions more sharply and more consistently... “Woman’s Work for Woman” aimed to put into place instruments of education, medical work, and evangelization that would “raise” women to the status they presumably held in Christian countries.¹

Although effective in any setting, both the potency and the demand of the approach increased substantially in contexts where the culture and, in particular, local religion, restricts women’s direct access to evangelistic efforts. With more than 100 million non-Christian women living in a country with strong Muslim influence, Indonesia offers that context.

This chapter explores the application of the Bible Women approach to contemporary missions in Indonesia. It first analyzes the mission opportunity by providing the historical context in which both Christianity and Islam came to Indonesia, then provides an overview of its predominantly Islamic society, and introduces its Muslim women activism. Second, the chapter seeks to provide insight into the present

¹Dana Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 133.

state of Indonesian women through discussion of women's movements focused on increasing equality in the face of the government's use of Ibusim to subjugate them. Third, this chapter provides the framework for implementing the Bible Women method, including how to prepare a missionary team to implement the model, how to identify and recruit local candidates to be Bible Women, and what is required to equip them once selected. Finally, the chapter concludes with the success of the approach in Korea and the role of Bible Women in mission programs of other countries.

The Mission Opportunity for Indonesia

Indonesia is not officially an Islamic country, yet it has the largest population of Muslims in the world. Approximately 90 percent of its more than 240 million people are Muslims, 10 percent Christians including Catholics, and the remainder Hindus, Buddhists, and believers in traditional religions.² Religious affiliation is an element of social and legal identity in Indonesia. The government requires that all people choose from one of the aforementioned religions,³ and those who do not have their religion written on their national identification cards are not considered citizens. However, the country is also famous for its diversity in culture and resources, for example, more Christians reside in Indonesia today than in Korea. On the other hand, the standard of evangelization refers not to the number of Christians residing in a country, but instead, to whether or not there is an independent religious community or indigenous reproductive church among a certain group. Indonesia consists of over 300 unreached people groups with different cultures using 583 types of regional languages.⁴ The number of Christians

²Adrian Vickers, *A History of Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

³Susan Blackburn, *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 84-88.

⁴Ralph D. Winter, "On the Cutting Edge of Mission Strategy," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey

in Indonesia is limited to the areas in which primarily Christian groups live.

The Dutch and European countries that ruled Indonesia for over 350 years spread Christianity in Indonesia while primarily Arabian merchants spread Islam. Even today, Indonesians refer to Christianity as a “Western religion.” Indonesia banished all things perceived as related to Western Christianity when they claimed independence, in order to denounce the foreign power.⁵ They continue to equate their patriotism or Indonesianization with Islamization. While the existence of Christianity in Indonesia is in a relatively unfavorable position compared to Islam, considering the historical context, Christianity has been flourishing consistently since the gospel was first introduced.⁶ Politics and religion are inseparable in Indonesia, and thus religious problems have always been raised as political issues. Most people with vested rights in the government

Library, 1999), 578. Timothy Monsma credits Winter with establishing the notion of unreached people groups: “In 1974 Ralph Winter presented to the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization a new perspective on the missionary task. Using some key words recorded in the Great Commission of Acts 1:8-10, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth-as categories for classification, Winter spoke of E-1, E-2 and E-3 evangelism. E-1 evangelism addresses those of the same culture, E-2 those of a similar culture, while E-3 addresses those of a very different culture. Winter went on to point out that there are many ethnic and sociological groups in the world for whom E-2 and E-3 evangelism is necessary because there is no one within their culture to carry out E-1 evangelism.” Timothy Monsma, “Homogeneous Networks: A Label That Promotes Good Evangelistic Strategies in Cities,” accessed August 27, 2014, www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/03_1-4_PDFs/3_1Monsma.pdf.

⁵Young Dong Kim, “A Study on the Folk Islam and the Mission to the Indonesian Folk Muslim,” *Journal of Presbyterian Theology* 32 (2008): 45.

⁶Aristonang and Steenbrink describe Christianity’s growth in Indonesia: “Islam was broadly practiced in Indonesia well before Christianity was introduced to the nation. Hundreds of years passed between Indonesia’s first Muslims and the arrival of its first Christians. Seafaring trade and Muslim missionaries extended Islam’s adoption throughout the archipelago. By 1300 AD, large cities and the nation’s ruler had adopted Islam. Extraordinarily, Christianity was able to take root in this widespread Muslim society in the early 1600s when the Dutch colonized Indonesia and established the Dutch Reformed church. The church translated the Bible into Indonesian and served as the primary source of Christianity for nearly three hundred years. Despite evangelistic efforts, the conversion rate was insignificant with the local population. As part of Europe’s nineteenth-century revival, European churches established additional Indonesian missions resulting in the conversion of several people groups. More missionaries focused on Indonesia in the subsequent century and by the 1980s, Indonesia’s most rapidly growing religion was Christianity.” Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink, eds., *A History of Christianity in Indonesia: Studies in Christian Mission* 35 (Denver: Brill, 2008), vii, 104.

are Muslims. Thus, Christians are vulnerable in Indonesian society. Professor of Islamic Studies, Mujiburrahman explains the impact of a predominantly Muslim government population on Christianity's growth,

Moreover, the Muslims also demanded that the Government control and restrict Christian missions by (1) making strict requirements for obtaining permission to erect a new place of worship; (2) restricting religious propagation only to those outside the five recognized religions; and (3) controlling foreign aid for religious institution; (4) prohibiting inter-religious marriage; (5) requiring that religion classes given at schools should be taught by a teacher whose religious background was the same as that of students. The Muslim leaders also tried to intensify Islamic propagation (da'wha) programs to compete against the Christian mission.⁷

However, Islam in Indonesia is more open than traditional Islam in the Middle East, making it relatively possible to spread the gospel. Since Suharto's New Order government collapsed, Indonesia faces a general crisis nationwide, combined with financial crash, political chaos, racial discrimination, and religious conflicts. In this context, the Bible Women approach could provide a powerful evangelistic force as well as an opportunity for local women to influence cultural change.

Islamic Society in Indonesia

Indonesia stretches approximately 5,200 kilometers from east to west and 1,900 kilometers from south to north between the Pacific and Indian Oceans, centering on the equator. Since it consists of 17,508 islands, diversity itself may be considered the symbol of this nation.⁸ Accordingly, Indonesia adopted "Pancasila" instead of "Islam" as the national ideology, and has pursued "Unity in Diversity."⁹ The island of Java is at the

⁷Mujiburrahman, *Feeling Threatened: Muslim-Christian Relations in Indonesia's New Order* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 300.

⁸Vickers, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 1.

⁹Rinaldo explains the Five Principles of the Nation of Indonesia: "During the Revolution Sukarno and a number of advisers laid the basis for an explicit national ideology that could underpin the development of nationalism, which would make Indonesia a prosperous modern state (1945). The key to this ideology was the doctrine of the Five Principles of the nation, the 'Pancasila,' are as follows: Belief in One supreme God, or Monotheism; Just and civilized humanity; The unity of Indonesia; Democracy guided by inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberation amongst representatives; and social

center of the Indonesian archipelago, and has been intensively developed as a monocultural region for tropical crops such as sugar cane, tea, tobacco, and coffee by the policy of colonial economy. This policy was implemented by the Netherlands, which colonized and ruled Indonesia for over 350 years. Java occupies 7 percent of the nation's land area yet is home to 63 percent of the total population.¹⁰ The dense population of Java brings with it a coexistence of diverse religious cultures, including Hinduism and Buddhism, along with indigenous religions that developed in a complementary and eclectic form since before the arrival of Islam. Thus, the form of Islam that spread in Indonesia was generally Javanese Islam, also known as Kejawen,¹¹ with the exception of a few regions that continue to retain the characteristics of Islam in its original form. Therefore, even though it is the world's largest Muslim country by population, Indonesia is clearly a secular state, with Pancasila¹² as the national ideology. Indonesia officially

justice for all of the people of Indonesia.” Rachel Rinaldo, *Mobilizing Piety: Islam and Feminism in Indonesia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 213.

¹⁰Encyclopedia Britannica, “Java,” accessed August 27, 2014, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/301673/Java.

¹¹Mark Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam: Muslims in Global Societies Series* (Tempe, AZ: Springer, 2011), 169.

¹²Densmoor analyzes Indonesia's political ideology and how it was used: “Pancasila’, the political ideology of the nation state of Indonesia, is an inventive construct that gave form to the Republic of Indonesia. Upon their declaration of independence, Indonesia adopted Pancasila as the unifying narrative for their country. Yet Pancasila's simplistic statements needed to be given meaning. Social movement theory looks at how politics use frames as a means of creating their narrative. Over the past sixty years, three governing periods have framed the first principle (sila)—belief in One Supreme God—in ways that have furthered their political agendas. The first period was under Sukarno, a radical nationalist who viewed Pancasila as a means of ensuring territorial integrity by including Christians in the fabric of the newly founded nation. The second period was under Suharto, an uncompromising autocrat who saw Pancasila as a way of establishing a stable state through eliminating the armed Islamic rebellion of Darul Islam and violent Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia—PKI). Suharto utilized Pancasila as a means of rejecting both the Islamic and the Atheistic state. The final period is under fluid democratic rulers. Under this period, religion is being globalized and is no longer confined to territorial entities. As religions are freed from territory and culture, Pancasila has taken on the role of creating a national community between religions groups.” Michael Densmoor, “The Control and Management of Religion in Post-Independence, Pancasila Indonesia” (M.A. thesis, Georgetown University, 2013), 3.

supports six approved religions: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism, Christianity, and Confucianism. Even though Islam coexists with other religions, Indonesian Muslims remain as religious, enthusiastic, and devoted as any other Muslim nation.

Islamic society in Indonesia has a different sentiment from those in Malaysia or the Middle East. According to Professor of sociology Rachel Rinaldo,

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz famously divided Javanese Muslim practice into three categories: *priyayi* (the upper class influenced what they considered to be a more orthodox version of Islam), *santri* (the merchant class who practiced what they considered to be a more orthodox version of Islam), and *abangan* (nonstandard Islamic practitioners).¹³

The *abangan* class believes in an Islam that is quite different from the original form, grounded on animism or spiritism that had been rooted in Indonesia for a long time, combined with Hindu and Buddhist ideas that came later. The people are mostly farmers living in village areas of Java, and refer to themselves as Muslims. The *santri* class works in commerce or trade in coastal urban regions retaining stronger features of Islam than the *abangan*.¹⁴ Seung Yoon Yang, professor of Malay and Indonesia literature, describes the further subdivision of the Indonesian classes:

Indonesian Islam includes classifications beyond *santri* and *abangan*, for example, *santri* subdivides into reformers, traditionalists, and mystics. Further, Muslim society can be categorized by education methods into those who received a modern, general education, and those who received a religious education. Muslims who received a more secular, Western education tend to be outward-oriented, and to take the Western lifestyle. They are urban-oriented, have cosmopolitan characteristics, and are more “dynamic” compared to those who received predominantly religious education. Muslims can also be classified into an elite group and a general public group. Most Muslims in Indonesia are farmers living in rural areas. Urban Muslims were generally small-scale traders or simple laborers.¹⁵

The secular legal system takes priority over everything else in Indonesia.

¹³Rinaldo, *Mobilizing Piety*, 34.

¹⁴Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 5-6.

¹⁵Seung Yoon Yang, *Indonesia* (Seoul: HanKuk University of Foreign Studies Press, 2012), 108.

Islamic law (Sharia) is applied only within the range permitted by “customs” (adat).¹⁶ The religious board that mostly deals with Islamic issues resides within the government, and even though the Islamic court exists, its jurisdiction is quite limited. Muslim family law, which mostly consists of marriage and property issues, is officially applied only to Muslims, but its execution is partially secular.¹⁷ Jajat Burhanudin and Kees van Dijk describe the evolution of Indonesian government,

After Indonesia became independent on 17 August 1945, its history as a nation is usually divided into three parts: the old Order when Sukarno was President, the New Order when Suharto was in power, and the post 1998 period. The Sukarno years were colored by antagonism between adherents of a religiously neutral state—or the Pancasila state, named after the five principles formulated by Sukarno in 1945 as the ideological foundation of political life—and the proponents of an Islamic state. A number of these proponents took up arms, fighting for an Islamic State of Indonesia (also known as the Darul Islam rebellion); others tried to realize their ideals through constitutional means by striving for a majority in the representative bodies. In the Constituent Assembly, the political institution tasked with defining the nature of the Indonesian state, those in favor of giving the Indonesian state an Islamic base and those against were more or less in balance. The deadlock this caused induced Sukarno to re-introduce the Constitution promulgated in 1945, which mentions Pancasila in its preamble, on 5 July 1959. The large modernist socio-religious organization, Muhammadiyah, was allowed to continue to exist, as was its traditionalist counterpart, the Nahdlatul Ulama; but it became impossible for the leaders of either organization to publicly criticize government policy in any field. Suharto’s New Order brought some relief, but only partially so. The generals who came to power in 1965 were highly suspicious of political Islam and the Masjumi. The authorities introduced a new term—right extremism—for political Islam and for demands for a state based on syariah instead of Pancasila. Only those fundamentalist groups that kept clear of politics and did not question Pancasila as the basis of the state were tolerated. Speaking out against the national ideology meant imprisonment or life in exile, if not worse. President Suharto was forced to step down in May 1998, and the Reformasi (Reform) period began. Full freedom of speech and of association was stressed as being among the most important achievements of this new political era. Muslims persecuted for their religious ideas were released from prison or returned home from exile. The *asa tunggal* became irrelevant. People were allowed to campaign for the establishment of an Islamic

¹⁶Rinaldo expounds on *adat* from a legal perspective: “*Adat* means custom or tradition. This concept has legal status in Indonesia, as some *adat* laws are accepted by the government as legitimate. Such laws usually pertain to marriage, religious practice, artistic expression, and so forth. Each ethnic group is considered to have its own *adat*.” Rinaldo, *Mobilizing Piety*, 219; H. Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (London: The Edinburgh House Press, 1938), 56.

¹⁷John R. Bowen, *Islam, Law, and Equality in Indonesia: An Anthropology of Public Reasoning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5-6.

state. Some propagated Islamization “from above”—that is, the establishment of an Islamic state and enforcement of Islamic legislation. Others made reform of society, not of the state, their principal aim, concentrating on winning over the population to their ideals before implementing Islamic laws.¹⁸

However, the potential displayed by the Muslim power in the process of establishing the new Megawati government after Habibie’s temporary rule (1997-1998), the legislative election on June 7, 1999, and the Wahid government proved once again that they are the most important variables of Indonesian politics. Indonesia is a constitutional democracy.

Arrival of Islam in Indonesia

The arrival of Islam is one of the most important events in Indonesian history, but also one of the most ambiguous. It was introduced to the Indonesian archipelago not through holy war or armed rebel forces, but through a peaceful expansion of the economic region developed along the key trading routes of the East. The first evidence of its introduction is in northern Sumatra (the second largest Indonesian island) as Dung Sull Choi captures:

When the Venetian traveler Marco Polo (1254-1324) landed at Sumatra on his way home from China in 1292, he found that Perlak was a Muslim town, while two nearby palaces, Pasai and Samudra, were not. The gravestone of the first Muslim ruler of Samudra, Sultan Nalik as-Salih, has been found, dated 1297. This is the first clear evidence of the existence of a Muslim dynasty in the Indonesian-Malay area, and further gravestones confirm that from the late thirteenth century, this part of north Sumatra remained under Islamic rule. The Moroccan traveler Ibnu Batutah (1304-1378), known as the “Arab Marco Polo” and the most far-ranging explorer of the Middle Ages, passed through Samudra on his way to and from China in 1345 and 1346, and found that the ruler was a staunch adherent of the ’Shafi’I school of Islam. This confirms the presence, from an early date, of the school that was later to dominate Indonesia, although it is possible that the other three orthodox schools, Hanafi, Maliki, and Hanbali, were also present at an early time in the Indonesian archipelago.¹⁹

As Islam spread to the Indonesian archipelago through Aceh in northern Sumatra and the

¹⁸Jajat Burhanudin and Kees van Dijk, eds., *Islam in Indonesia: Contrasting Images and Interpretations* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 8-9.

¹⁹Dong Sull Choi, “The Process of Islamization and Its Impact on Indonesia,” *Comparative Civilizations Review* 34 (Spring 1996): 14.

Strait of Malacca, the northern coast of Java flourished as a minor trading kingdom. The possibility that the royal family or nobility of Java accepted Islam before the seashore kingdoms of Java was largely determined by the influence of trade merchants, who introduced Islam or Sufi Islamic mystics to the ruling elite.

The Sufis, grounded on a form of supernatural mysticism called Sufism, spread the religious traditions, asceticism, dance, and literature to Indonesia, as they passed on the elaborate culture of the Arab world. The sea route from northern Sumatra to Java through the Strait of Malacca was an important road for the spread of Islam.²⁰ Yang relates how Islam fit within the nation's political cultural environment,

Around the time Islam began to spread, the Majapahit Empire, grounded in Hinduism and Buddhism, had already positioned itself in Java. This kingdom had a particularly broad political scope and active commercial exchange, having frequent interactions with Muslim merchants in other countries. The teachings of Islam harmonized well politically and culturally with the Indonesian archipelago, previously dominated by the Devaraja, Brahman, and the mystics of Tibetan Buddhism. There, Islam argued for equality of all people before Allah and emphasized the idea of equality to a greater extent than Hinduism, which is based on a caste system that values social class.²¹

However, this transition was settled through a generally peaceful process without causing disorder to the social and political structure of the existing kingdom.

It is unclear when Islam settled in northern Java.²² In the early fifteenth century, the Sultanate of Malacca, a large trading nation of the Malay Peninsula, was established. Within a short period, Malacca became the most important trade center for the neighboring islands, including northern Sumatra and Java, centering on the Strait of Malacca. Accordingly, foreign Muslim merchants frequently visited the area, naturally introducing Islam in the process. Many tombstones that prove the introduction of Islam in

²⁰Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam*, 43.

²¹Yang, *Indonesia*, 93.

²²*Ibid.*, 94.

the Malay Peninsula have been found in Malacca and various other regions. It is also clear that Islam spread to the east along the Greater Sunda Islands from northern Sumatra.²³ A tomb discovered in Jolo, the most prosperous city of Sulu at the center of the Sulu archipelago in southern Philippines, confirms that the sovereign ruler was a Muslim. Furthermore, the legend of Mindanao and Sulu, Islamic regions of the Philippines, provides a story showing that the Arabs and Malays spread Islam in the west.

Process of Islamization in Indonesia

Islam secured its place in the Indonesian archipelago, and various Southeast Asian regions, in coexistence with Indian cultures based on Hinduism and Buddhism since the eleventh century. Accompanied by the expansion of economic activities by the exchange of trade merchants, Islam changed the former Hindu and Buddhist cultures in the Malay Peninsula and Indonesian archipelago.²⁴ The “idea of brotherhood,” emphasized both by Islamic beliefs and Muslims directly, gradually weakened support for aristocracy in these regions.

Islamic literature requires the inclusion of all members of the Ummah, the traditional Islamic society. All Muslims must be able to recite the Qur’an and understand the fundamental principles and ideologies of Islam by learning Sharia law.²⁵ The Arabic alphabet was introduced for this purpose, which was widely used in almost all regions from northern Sumatra on the west end of the Southeast Asian Islamic region to Mindanao in the southern Philippines:

Melayu, the Malay language, was commonly used as a trade language in the Malay Peninsula and the Strait of Malacca, such as Java of Sumatra, as well as areas near

²³Ibid., 95.

²⁴Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam*, 49.

²⁵Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971), 5.

the Java Sea, and thus it began to be written in the Arabic alphabet. The Tawi alphabet, discovered in Jawi and Java of the Malay Peninsula, indicates Melayu's use in the Arabic alphabet. In particular, Melayu was an important medium of Islam's religious education, and thus was selected as the regional language in various parts of the Indonesian archipelago. Melayu gradually began to play a significant role in the language integration of this area. Thus, many regions such as Pasay, Malacca, Aceh, and Pattani emerged as centers of Islamic studies that have attracted the interest of famous scholars.²⁶

The Islamic education system resulted as a byproduct of this process. In most cases, the masjid or Islamic mosque was institutionalized as the hub of academics. This was followed by establishment of independent educational spaces in various places, such as the pesantren boarding school of Java, the pondok boarding school of the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, and the madrasah of Sulawesi.²⁷ The hub of Islamic studies in these areas was in contact with international Islam. Pilgrimage (Haji) to Mecca became the object of envy for Muslims, as they could build emotional, spiritual, psychological and intellectual ties with the Muslims of the Middle East through the journey.²⁸ Migration of Arabs to the Malay Peninsula and Indonesian archipelago was also encouraged. The emphasis on Islamic learning that had been officially encouraged, along with the guidance of Arab Islamic scholars, began to produce *kiyai*, who are in charge of Islamic education in this area, and *ulama*, who are leaders of Ummah.²⁹ This change led by Islam was developed into a unique perspective on Muslims in this region within a short period. That is, they accepted the absolute belief in Allah as it is, while also broadly accepting the native elements of belief that dominated the natives' world of spirit:

In this Islamization process, the influence of strong Buddhist culture and the geographical factor of being countries of the Asian continent had a significant impact for Myanmar and Thailand. Thus, Islam could be integrated with a unique

²⁶Yang, *Indonesia*, 98.

²⁷Allen M. Sievers, *The Mystical World of Indonesia: Culture and Economic Development in Conflict* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 47.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

Islamic flavor in a minority of the regions. In comparison, the vast Indonesian archipelago had features of a rainforest, which caused Islam to adopt a different form than the Islam that coexisted with Hinduism and Buddhism. The archipelagic features of this area, formed by a volcanic eruption, delayed the development of overland traffic due to the thick forest and swamp, the short river that does not help much in communicating with the inland, and the ground that is not solid. Since this hindered smooth interaction, even between regions that were geographically close, it took a considerable amount of time for some islands to encounter a new culture, which also led to sustaining their unique and independent culture for an extended period.³⁰

Islam in the Indonesian archipelago was advanced in the “form of flowing water.” For example, Sumatra in the region from Aceh to Palembang along the Strait of Malacca could be Islamized at an early stage, but many regions of Sumatra along the West Coast remained non-Islamic until the late seventeenth century. Therefore, many scholars argue that Islamization in the Indonesian archipelago is still in progress today.³¹ The Malay Peninsula is one region that is quite distinguished from the Islamization process of Indonesia. Islamization here occurred in the form of Indonesia’s case mixed with Myanmar’s and Thailand’s case. The background in which Islamization was fulfilled in this region has two characteristics:

One characteristic is that the small states of the Malay Peninsula that were not continental states had been on the periphery of Hindu and Buddhist culture before the arrival of Islam, and thus could keep the unique feature of Islam from the start. The other characteristic is that the Malays, who were natives grounded on Islam, were later formed into becoming financially inferior by immigrants such as the Chinese people.³²

The Malays, who became inferior in the process in which the Malay Peninsula was transformed into a complicated multi-ethnic society, further strengthened the unique features of Islam as a means of comfort to maintain their identity.

Muslim Women’s Activism in Indonesia

Unlike in Iran or Pakistan, Islam was not designated as Indonesia’s state

³⁰Yang, *Indonesia*, 100.

³¹Ibid., 102.

³²Ibid., 103.

religion, and it has a moderate form in which no compulsory practice of Sharia is enforced by the state. The moderate, hybrid, and comprehensive features of Indonesian Islam result in the existence of traditional Islam (*Nahdlatul Ulama*) and modern Islam (*Muhammadiyah*) that have been in the mainstream for a long time. Sonja Van Wichelen illustrates the relative percentages of followers:

According to a survey published in the prominent weekly journal *Tempo*, 42 percent of Indonesia's Muslim population of over 200 million aligned themselves with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) traditions and twelve percent with Muhammadiyah traditions. (*Tempo* 29 December 2001, quoted in Fox 2004).³³

These organizations embrace both conservative and liberal sects within themselves while having a generally moderate character, thereby playing a crucial role in making Indonesian Islam known for its moderation and flexibility. For that reason, Indonesian Muslims are known to be compatible with democracy, gender equality, and pluralism.

Female activism under the framework of Indonesia's gender equality can be classified into two tides: the tide that utilizes secular frameworks, such as human rights, liberalism or socialism, and the tide that utilizes the framework of Islam.³⁴ Of these, Muslim women's activism is overwhelmingly popular. Fatayat, an NU woman's organization, contributes significantly to forming a balanced Islam based on an innovative interpretation of the Qur'an.³⁵ The method of practice for gender equality, which took root through an introverted organization, is an example that well displays the subjectivity and uniqueness of Muslim women's activism in Indonesia.

Fatayat's strategies of activism. Fatayat is an organization for NU's young

³³Sonja Van Wichelen, *Religion, Politics and Gender in Indonesia: Disputing the Muslim Body* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 3.

³⁴S. White and U. Anshor, "Islam and Gender in Contemporary Indonesia: Public Discourses on Duties, Rights, and Morality," in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Heng Mui Keng, Singapore: ISEAS, 2008), 45.

³⁵Wichelen, *Religion, Politics and Gender*, 86.

women between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five throughout Indonesia.³⁶ Rachel

Rinaldo explains the organization in *Mobilizing Piety*:

Fatayat's objectives are "to create and shape devoted young women to almighty Allah, to be moral, skillful, responsible, and beneficial to religion and nation; to create a society with gender equality; to create devotion toward the principles, beliefs, and objectives of N. U. in building Islamic *Shariah*." Fatayat's work is currently structured into seven major areas: organization and education; law, policy, and advocacy; health and environment; social, art, and culture; economy; *dakwah* (propagation of Islam) and building membership; and research and development.³⁷

The value and method of life explained based on religion is considered emotionally proper and persuasive as a divine order. Geertz elaborates on the two main forms of common culture:

Among the most important of these is the sense of a common culture. This takes two main forms: a denigration of the present in terms of the past, especially criticism of contemporary practices by traditional standards of judgment, a practice mainly, but not entirely, resorted to by older people; and the growing strength of nationalism which attempts to appeal to sentiments of national self-respect, solidarity, and hope for a more "modern" style-of-life in order to curb social disorganization, which is characteristic mainly, but again not entirely, of younger people.³⁸

Therefore, as sincere Muslims and female activists, they find the basis of their activism in Islam. The perception that Islam, which forms the basis of their lives as well as standard for their thoughts and behaviors, instructs believers not to discriminate against women and motivates these women to seek gender equality and empowerment. Fatayat women argue that their activism toward gender equality is grounded on the teachings of Islam. They intend to eliminate patriarchal gender discrimination by reinterpreting Islam and empowering women.³⁹

³⁶Rinaldo, *Mobilizing Piety*, 16-17.

³⁷Ibid., 57.

³⁸Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, 365.

³⁹Monica Arnez, "Empowering Women through Islam: Fatayat, NU between Tradition and Change," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 21, no. 1 (2009): 118.

The beginning of Islamic activities that aimed for gender equality in Fatayat was supported by the progress of democratization in Indonesia, as well as the fact that Wahid had faith in human rights, gender and justice, and overseas programs. The women's empowerment program was supported by the Asia Foundation in the year 2000, while programs against human trafficking were supported by the International Labor Organization (ILO).⁴⁰ There was also support from international organizations regarding migration in 2004. For Fatayat activists, pursuit of gender equality is fulfilling the order of the Qur'an and practicing the Islamic lifestyle.⁴¹ They consider the Fatayat organization a means to promote religious reformation and a part of the broader women's movement.⁴² In other words, the practice of religious conviction for Fatayat women is the practice of reforming Islam in resistance to the conservative Islam while also reforming Islamic lifestyle and seeking Islam in which both genders are equal.⁴³

Their primary approach to eliminating gender discrimination centers on reinterpreting gender-biased verses in the Qur'an and the Hadith. Soo In Lee, a researcher in Asian women's studies, provides additional details this method of reinterpreting Islamic scriptures,

According to the activists, most verses on gender must be understood in the historical context of the time in which they were revealed. Regional differences are indigenous to the spread of Islam, and such regional individuality forms the basis of the Creeds. Therefore it requires not literal interpretation but social-historical and contextual interpretation. In other words, they aim to restructure the value of Islam

⁴⁰Blackburn, *Women and the State*, 170.

⁴¹Bianca. J. Smith and Mark Woodward, eds., *Gender and Power in Indonesian Islam: Leaders, Feminists, Sufis and Pesantren Selves* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 15.

⁴²Rachel Rinaldo, "Envisioning the Nation: Women Activists, Religion and the Public Sphere in Indonesia," *Social Forces* 86, no. 4 (2008): 1781, accessed August 30, 2014, <http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/content/86/4/1781>.

⁴³Kathryn Smith, "Islamic Cosmopolites, Human Rights and Anti-Violence Strategies in Indonesia," in *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism: Feminist, Vernacular and Rooted Perspectives*, ed. P. Werbner (Oxford: Berg, 2008), 114.

by eliminating the patriarchal traditions of Islamic ideologies and practice that contradict the true value of Islam based on equalitarian spirit. The reinterpretations eliminate patriarchal traditions and arouse women's rights and gender equality thereby empowering women. For people who cannot separate their lives from religion, their thoughts or behaviors must fit their religious teachings and norms, because their religious worldview and community becomes the universe to which they belong as well as the foundation for life.⁴⁴

For Fatayat activists, resisting patriarchal discrimination and seeking women's rights is fulfilling the order of the Qur'an, thereby practicing the Islamic lifestyle.⁴⁵ The belief that women's rights coincide with religious creed and community lifestyles is the power that sustains their activism.⁴⁶ Therefore, wiping out the patriarchal idea and arousing the consciousness of women's rights through the reinterpretation of the Qur'an is a strategy to empower Fatayat women.

The equality strategy rejects the idea that men and women are born with different characters, and argues that men and women are complete equals in all territories of life. The equality strategy differs from the Islamic equity strategy which purports that men and women are born with different characteristics and thus perform different roles with equal value: women as mothers and wives, men as providers.⁴⁷

Conservative female Muslim activists use the equity strategy.⁴⁸ Finding the grounds for gender equality in Islam, they present Sura 49:13, 4:1, and 2:187 of the Qur'an as examples.⁴⁹ These verses clearly state that Allah does not distinguish women

⁴⁴Soo In Lee, "The Practical Strategy and Characteristic of Indonesian Muslim Women Activism: Focusing on Fatayat Activists," *Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies* 21, no. 1 (2014): 15.

⁴⁵Smith and Woodward, *Gender and Power in Indonesian Islam*, 15.

⁴⁶Rinaldo, *Mobilizing Piety*, 87-88.

⁴⁷Rebecca Foley, "Muslim Women's Challenges to Islamic Law: The Case of Malaysia," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 6, no. 1 (2004): 59, accessed August 30, 2014, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1461674032000165932>.

⁴⁸Arnez, "Empowering Women through Islam," 78.

⁴⁹Qur'an Sura 49:13: "O mankind! We have created you from a single (pair) of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know on another (not that you may hate each other)," 4:1: "O mankind! Fear and respect your Lord, Who created you, from a single person (Adam), and

from men and regards them as equal. Based on these verses, and contextual interpretation of gender equality, the Fatayat gender training program clarifies that gender is formed socially as opposed to theologically. One of the goals of this program is to give higher status to women, because women must be considered equal to men in order to be considered complete human beings with the same rights and obligations as men:

1) Participants understand and comprehend that the essence of the teaching of Islam is the oneness of God. The unity of God as a theology means the liberation of humanity from all kinds of oppression and from all forms of shackles so that humanity realizes that what is proper is to worship Allah. 2) The Participants understand that Islam is a religion which strongly respects the values of brotherhood, equality, justice, and freedom. 3) Participants understand that Islam gives women a high position. Women are viewed as the same as men, namely as full human beings, who have certain rights and obligations. 4) Participants realize that some of the teachings of Islam which deal with the relations between men and women have been wrongly interpreted so that they produce the belief that Islam legitimizes gender relations that are not equal. 5) Participants have a critical awareness about the necessity of interpretations that return to the sources of Islamic teachings about the relations between men and women. (P.P. Fatayat Nahdlatul Ulama 1999).⁵⁰

Having received this training, Fatayat women criticize polygamy from the perspective of gender equality, claim the need for women's social activities and political participation, and argue the need for a 30 percent quota system for female participation on the council, stating that a woman can also become the President.⁵¹ Lee points out the two predominant philosophies activists hold regarding the degree to which religion and politics should be intertwined,

Since the 1990s, there are two trends in the activism approaches of female Muslims in Indonesia connected to gender discourse. The first is typified by the Fatayat women's standpoint. They believe that the public sphere must be influenced by religious values like social justice, and agree that religion does have influence on the public sphere. But they are against the idea that religion and politics coincide

from him, Allah created his mate of similar nature, and from both spread countless men and women," 2:187: "They are your garments and you are their garments." *English Translation of The Message of "The Quran"* (Lombard, IL: Book of Signs Foundation, 2007).

⁵⁰Rinaldo, *Mobilizing Piety*, 93-94.

⁵¹Arnez, "Empowering Women through Islam," 82.

because they support freedom of choice in religion's practice in the private sphere. Women from the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) adhering to the conservative view on the role of women and emphasizes that religious practice must embrace all areas of life represent the other trend. They emphasize visible forms of practice, such as prayers, wearing conservative clothing, and faith, believing these religious practices must have highly public characters. They argue that religion must directly interfere with politics.⁵²

Fatayat oppose the idea of Islam being officially legalized by the government or becoming a public norm. More specifically, they are against legalization of Sharia in local governments, because Sharia makes it compulsory for all Muslim women to wear the jilbāb⁵³ and forbids them to go out at night alone. Fatayat is against the idea of enacting Sharia as a local ordinance because it strengthens the subordination of women, limits women's choice of clothing, controls women's mobility and behavioral rights, and restricts activities at night.⁵⁴ As such, Fatayat members support the idea of wearing jilbāb, but are against regulating it as a religious obligation as well as law. This is because, while they support individual piety and social justice, they oppose official coercion to pious practices.⁵⁵

⁵²Lee, "The Practical Strategy," 17.

⁵³Blackburn explains that Indonesian women began wearing the more conservative jilbab as a matter of demonstration: "By the late 1980s, a growing number of Indonesian women were adopting the Arabic-style headscarf, known as the jilbab. Headscarves had not been common in most of Indonesia, even among pious Muslims. The traditional form of veiling on Java did not fully cover the hair and was worn only for religious holidays in most parts of the archipelago. The new jilbab completely covered the hair, neck, and shoulders. It was considered by many to be a symbol of political Islam, and it was banned from public schools and government offices. Young women began to organize demonstrations against the prohibition, and in 1991, the government repealed it. It was one of the first instance of women's antistate mobilization during the New Order." Wichelen, *Religion, Politics and Gender*, 46; "Rights for women for which groups campaign may have more to do with group identity than with feminist ideas of emancipation. As an example, it might note the furor over the government preventing girl pupils in state schools from wearing the jilbab in the 1980s. It took a sustained campaign by Islamic organizations for women's right to wear the jilbab for the decree to be reversed. For women, the importance of gender rules within communities means that struggles for individual rights are frequently conducted within their own ethnic and religious groups if they are to be effective on the wider stage of the Indonesian polity." Blackburn, *Women and the State*, 86-87.

⁵⁴White and Anshor, "Islam and Gender," 152.

⁵⁵Rinaldo, *Mobilizing Piety*, 70.

By contrast, the PKS demands that national policy strictly apply Islam, holding conflicting views with Fatayat on gender, religious, and political issues.⁵⁶ This party, consisting of supporters of the conservative Islamic Renaissance Movement, first argued for the foundation of the nation, was based on Sharia when it was established. This argument has been withdrawn in order to acquire broader political appeal, but this shows the extent to which the group believes that Islam must interfere with state politics and systems. Their position is to support highly visible public piety while practicing the activism of equity strategy for women's rights. This approach is grounded on the pursuit of integrating politics and religion.

Women's Movement in Indonesia and Ibuism

The term *Ibuism* (Motherism) was created by combining the social values adhered to by the petite bourgeoisie in the Netherlands during the colonial period with the values of traditional Java middle class (*Priyai*).⁵⁷ Ibuism is a type of restriction on women as mothers, requiring them to take care of their family, organization, class, company, and state without asking for rewards in power or status. Hyun Mee Kim, researcher for Asian Women's Studies at Ewha University, describes the impact of Ibuism:

"Ibuism" first emerged in the late 19th and early 20th century from a confluence of Dutch bourgeois and traditional Javanese middle class (*priyai*) values which were linked to the "mothering" concept. During the colonial period, Indonesian middle class women became the recipients of a modern education instructing them on how to be a sensible wife always supportive of her husband, and on how to be a stimulating mother in order to foster the development of her children. However, not only did the Ibu need to fulfill her homely duties, but she was also expected to supplement the family income as a mother to ensure the maintenance of the *priyai* class status. The mother had no claim on power because the ideology of Ibuism stressed the image of a loving mother, who did not expect anything in return. This ideology relating to women's motherly role is not limited to the domestic sphere

⁵⁶Ibid., 111.

⁵⁷Julia I. Suryakusuma, "The State and Sexuality in New Order Indonesia," in *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, ed. Laurie Sears (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 9.

alone, but is also extended to include her unselfish devotion to the nation and community.⁵⁸

This ideology of Ibuism presents a new image of women who had to take care of their family, class, company, and state without asking for any status or power, ultimately strengthening the gender idea that “the father has power and status, while the mother takes action.”⁵⁹

Independent Movements in Indonesia and “Kaum Ibu”

Anti-colonial movements were vigorous from 1910, and Indonesian women also participated in the movements in various ways within the great social trend of anti-colonial and independence movements.⁶⁰ Indonesian women’s movements can be studied by categorizing them into different periods. Women’s movements from 1928 to 1942 are characterized by struggles for “one homeland, one state, one language.” *Perikatan Perempuan Indonesia* (PPI) was formed in 1928 by integrating nine separate women’s organizations.⁶¹ According to Kim, emphasis on the Ibu originated with the women’s movement but was, in turn, contorted and applied by the state:

Before 1945 all activism, including the concerns of the women’s movement, focused on attaining national independence. Women’s status as the Ibu was emphasized by the women’s movement during their participation in the national independence movement. The symbol of “Kaum Ibu” (Mothers) and the slogan “to raise the dignity of women as mothers” were frequently used by women’s movement groups in order to protest against the degradation and discrimination that Indonesian women faced including polygamy and forced marriage. This slogan,

⁵⁸Hyun Mee Kim, “Ibuism and the Women’s Movement in Indonesia,” *Journal of Women’s Studies* 16 (1999): 99.

⁵⁹Blackburn, *Women and the State*, 147.

⁶⁰Elizabeth Martyn, *The Women’s Movement in Postcolonial Indonesia: Gender and Nation in a New Democracy* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 30.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 40-41.

however, became an ideology and put women in a stereotyped position as the caretaker of the family and the nation.⁶²

After that, all organized movements were prohibited from 1942 to 1945 during the Japanese occupation, and instead, a women's association called Fujinkai was established by Japan.⁶³ Indonesia declared independence in 1945, but armed struggles began again, when the Netherlands tried to recapture the old colony.

Finally, Indonesia obtained complete political independence in December 1949. The guided democracy policy under Soekarno's seizure of power from 1959 to 1965 took the so-called native form and created a socialistic government in solidarity with the Communist Party: anti-Americanism, anti-foreign power and anti-imperialism. Gerwani was the first feminist movement organization that existed during this period, and it tried to narrow the gap between men's politics and women's social needs.⁶⁴ Gerwani struggled to demand equal labor rights and responsibilities between men and women, acting as an advance guard of women's movements in this process.

Emergence of the New Order State and State Ibuism

The New Order newly reconceptualized the state and strengthened the state's or the military's control over the society. The New Order State of the Suharto administration, established after 1966, indicated that the military played the double role as a guardian for national defense and safety, as well as social and political participant, legalizing its control over all national organizations by emphasizing unity of the military and citizens.⁶⁵ The concept included the multiracial and multilingual society with "unity in diversity" as the key national ideology:

⁶²Kim, "Ibuism and the Women's Movement," 99.

⁶³Martyn, *The Women's Movement*, 44-45.

⁶⁴Ibid., 9-10, 59-60.

⁶⁵Blackburn, *Women and the State*, 25-26.

Under Indonesian common law, women can inherit legacy just like their brothers, exercise their property rights after marriage, and have economic power, since they are mostly in charge of family finances through work in commercial transactions. However, these facts do not mean Indonesia was a “gender-equal” society. This is because women’s economic status in Indonesian society lacked spiritual potential, thereby taking an inferior position in their cultural system. State Ibuism defines women as subordinate to their husbands, mothers of their children, and workers of their state. Ibu specifies women as “mothers,” but this concept primarily emphasizes men’s private control and the state’s control over individual women, combining the most oppressive parts of the bourgeois “housewifization” and Java middleclass “Ibuism.” Women were required to provide labor for their family and the state without seeking any reward or power, and this concept defines women’s previous pursuit of economic status as “immoral.” The ideology of State Ibuism is actively distributed by the state and fulfilled by the subordination of women. State Ibuism, which emerged after the New Order, is newly spread and encouraged by the state, referring to the meaning of women in a “desirable” category with broad acceptance and flexibility added to the custom of women’s gender roles, thereby newly defining femininity.⁶⁶

The ideology of State Ibuism expanded to the cultural, political, and economic concept, turning into a concept devised for political purposes that reinforces the state’s control by extensively reorganizing the daily territory of Indonesian residents. The Indonesian government creates new femininity for national development by absorbing women into the national ruling mechanism. Inspired by the UN’s declaration of International Women’s Year in 1974, the Indonesian government began regulating “women’s participation in national development” as law in the year when the second five-year plan for economic development began.⁶⁷ Nina Nurmila, Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Radlands, points out that two government-created women’s organizations promoted state’s ideology:

PKK ((Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga: Family Welfare Movement) and Dharma Wanita. The latter is an organization of the wives of civil servants designed to facilitate women’s support of their husband’s careers in service of the nation and the state. The PKK is a rural-based organization led by the wife of the village head. Every village in Indonesia has a branch of this organization, and its program is displayed in front of village head office. Both of these organizations promote state ideology stated in *Panca Dharma Wanita* (Five responsibilities of Women): A wife

⁶⁶Kim, “Ibuism and the Women’s Movement,” 100.

⁶⁷Nina Nurmila, *Women, Islam and Everyday Life: Renegotiating Polygamy in Indonesian* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2009), 5.

is to (1) support her husband's career and duties; (2) provide offspring; (3) care for and rear the children; (4) be a good housekeeper; and (5) be a guardian of the community.⁶⁸

In Indonesia, the military organized a single functional organization that represented laborers, farmers, youth, and women to centralize power by establishing the authoritative ruling party Golkar and a government-patronized opposition party after the 1970s.⁶⁹ In other words, there is a process of dual formation of the military as a masculine absolute power and the society as a feminine and controlled group. The state, which claims modernization in this process, exaggerates the value of patriarchs and the state by applying the founding principles of Islam and Pancasila, thereby giving a highly feminine image to the society ruled by them.

Emergence of 'Ibu' in the Indonesian Financial Crisis

The severe financial crisis in Indonesia forced Suharto to step down in 1998, which led Indonesia to face the new political order. In one women's organization, the image of Ibu emerged as a new symbol of women's movements. *Suara Ibu Peduli* (SIP- Voice of Concerned Mothers), a national organization made up of ordinary housewives in Indonesia, spread rapidly by emphasizing the role of 'Ibu' that saves children from starving in the financial crisis.⁷⁰ This organization was formed voluntarily to provide milk and food for children and nutrition for pregnant women when the Indonesian government was standing by and just watching urban poverty:

It began by focusing on the rapidly rising prices of goods and services and organized funding to provide women with half-price milk powder, one of the items in short supply and sky-rocketing in price. In February 1998 the leading activities in SIP began gathering in a prominent spot in Jakarta to conduct a "prayer for milk" protest, which gained great media coverage because it was carried out by middle -

⁶⁸Ibid., 6.

⁶⁹Ibid., 9.

⁷⁰Blackburn, *Women and the State*, 162.

class educated women. The protesters repeatedly sang “Ibu Pertiwi,” the nationalist song about the suffering motherland, and held banners with slogans like “Mothers Struggle for the Children of the Nation.”⁷¹

Movements of ordinary housewives expanded to many regions within a year and a half, with membership reaching four thousand. New members were recruited using the time in which they came to attend worship services every week. Finally, the government felt threatened by this power, and mobilized male public officials to urge women to withdraw from the group. This massive organization intended to remain faithful to the role of a traditional mother or wife, concerned about the threat of financial crisis on her family’s welfare. The housewives’ movement serves as a good example of a voluntary women’s movement developing and expanding new programs without the government’s intervention and guidance.

Mission Strategies for Women in Indonesia

Similar to nineteenth-century Chosŏn, twenty-first-century Indonesia offers many challenges to and opportunities for mission work. In general, Indonesian women maintain a relatively higher status than women in the patriarchal societies of Northeast Asia. Their active participation in the workforce serves as an example of the significant difference. Studies on Indonesian society emphasize that men’s and women’s occupations are “complementary” and the economic and ceremonial discrimination due to gender difference are not severe. Anthropologist Hildred Geertz argued that differentiation by gender is extremely rare in studies of the Java society in Indonesia, and that both men and women participate in politics, rituals, economy, and kinship matters almost equally.⁷² However, the gender ideology of Ibumism in Indonesia formed a new femininity which diminishes women’s rights in society and threatens their future independence, which

⁷¹Ibid., 163.

⁷²Hildred Geertz, *The Javanese Family: A Study of Kinship and Socialization* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1989), 20.

presents an opportunity to employ the Bible Women model.

Mission work in Indonesia has many difficulties, the most significant being the people's strong resistance to Christianity. Professor of Missiology Young Dong Kim, a missionary experienced with Indonesia, highlights four major reasons for this resistance:

Indonesia claims to support the Pancasila policy that does not declare Islam as a national religion and that secures religious freedom, but the influence of Islam's reach is so strong that it is difficult for Christianity to conduct open mission work. Secondly, Islamic society cultivates solidarity. Muslims maintain religious solidarity and connect their entire social life to religious life patterns, which makes mission work difficult. Converting to Christianity is becoming an apostate to faith resulting in being ostracized as well as potential criminal charges for blasphemy. This unity makes it difficult for Muslims to consider converting to Christianity. Thirdly, there is a language barrier, and undeveloped means of transportation. Although the nation's official language is Bahasa, illiteracy remains extremely high as each tribe communicates with its own unique language. Fourth, the Dutch colonial settlement in Indonesia, begun in the early seventeenth century alongside the Church of England and Dutch Reformed Church, is considered to have promoted mission work for the purpose of expanding imperialistic power. The motivation for mission work became unclear with the help of colonial policies, as churches sent many missionaries through the nineteenth century, degenerating the church's mission into a political tool. Indonesians perceive Christianity as a Western religion distinguished from Eastern religion, indicating that Christianity is considered the religion of the west introduced under Dutch colonial rule. This contrasts with the natural introduction of Islam by merchants, instead of by armed forces. Considering this history, Indonesians believe in their conscience that Christianity was abused for pillaging, creating a formidable obstacle to mission work.⁷³

Beyond the resistance to Christianity by the general population, Indonesian government policies serve as an impediment. The Indonesian government restricts evangelism and offers no visa provisions for missionaries.

While serving in Indonesia, missionary Bong Hwan Kim observes social conditions similar to those found by the early Protestant missionaries in Chosŏn, which suggest an indirect mission approach could be effective in providing contact points to the local population:

Indonesia generally has a low-income level and insufficient quality of life, and thus requires help in many fields such as industrial technology, education, medical services, transportation, and social welfare. These needs present opportunities for missionaries to work with the local population. Additionally, since eighty-eight

⁷³Kim, "A Study on the Folk Islam," 65-66.

percent of its population practices Islam, distinctive missionary methods to convert Muslims must be employed. Unlike many Muslim countries, moderate believers make up a majority of Indonesia's Muslims and thus there are more people who have recently converted from Islam to Christianity. This has increased Islamic sensitivity to Christian missionary work. An effective countermeasure would be to educate and train local Christians to form their own community, addressing Muslims' interest in this community.⁷⁴

While not identical, many parallels exist between the oppressive social and cultural challenges imposed on twenty-first-century Indonesian women and those found by the early missionaries to Korea. One positive aspect is that Indonesian women tend to be more open to welcome the gospel than men, as Islam's traditional value system is less ingrained in women. The need to reach Indonesian women through women missionaries is inarguable. The early Protestant mission to Chosŏn struggled to reach women, as the restrictions imposed by Naeŏe law largely blocked interaction with women. Implementing the Nevius method, in conjunction with engaging in indirect missions that improved women and children's life conditions, proved to be a powerful combination within that cultural context. The strategy for the female missionaries to evangelize other women served as the key to that gateway. A tailored Bible Woman approach should be considered as a key element of missions in Indonesia.

Bible Women Mission Approach to Islamic Missions

Missionaries experienced significant success developing and utilizing Bible Women in Korea and China. While the core of the approach, employing the Nevius method with indigenous women, remained consistent, aspects such as the selection of the specific indirect mission and the training provided to the Bible Women required tailoring to fit specific situations. For example, teaching illiterate women to read Chinese proved a much larger obstacle than reading Hangul, so the Chinese Bible Women were required to evangelize verbally. Indonesia's diversity makes a one size fits all approach to Bible

⁷⁴Bong Whan Kim, "A Study of the Sunda region in West Java: Religion, Cultural Life and Christian Approaches" (Th.M. diss., Presbyterian Theological Institute of World Mission, 2006), 150.

Women impractical. However, the fundamental tenets of repressive male dominance and gender segregation invite an indigenous woman-to-woman evangelistic approach.

Women missionaries often live and work closely with local women. Laila Abu-Lughod describes the powerful bonds formed while working closely together:

Women's ministry never has been merely cerebral. It always has been holistic, involving body, mind and spirit. And as women have worked together, rested together, laughed together and cried together, de facto empathy has grown. Sisterhood has bonded women across cultures, whatever the missionaries' ideology.⁷⁵

What would a framework of Bible Women in an Islamic context look like?

What training and preparation would missionaries require in order to effectuate a Bible Women model? How can one identify and recruit the right candidates to step into the role as indigenous Bible Women? What equipping would the indigenous women require in order for them to be effective?

Missionary Training

Today's missionaries enjoy a broad array of training options to prepare them for international missions, including training that is available through the Southern Baptist Convention, the International Mission Board, the Woman's Missionary Union, and a host of colleges, universities, and private institutions. Augmenting that training with targeted language and culture classes as well as a specific curriculum designed to address the unique aspects of implementing and operating a Bible Women model would substantially improve the program's probability of success. Professor of mission and anthropology Paul Hiebert writes,

Culture as the more or less integrated system of beliefs, feelings, and values created and shared by a group of people that enable them to live together socially and that

⁷⁵Laila Abu-Lughod, *Writing Women's Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 20.

are communicated by means of their systems of symbols and rituals, patterns of behavior, and the material products they make.⁷⁶

In addition to standard cultural training, a focus on evangelizing in an Islamic cultural context should be undertaken. When considering the challenge of language in cultural issues, David Sills notes,

Every culture uses language for two reasons. One is to communicate information and the other is to maintain relationships. The culture of the United States uses language in this order of priority. Relational, face-to-face cultures of the group-oriented societies of the world operate in an opposite order. Our culture of direct communicators expects honest answers to questions; in fact, our society depends on it. However, indirect communication cultures answer with what you want to hear in order to appease and avoid the awkwardness that saying no to a request might cause. The resulting confusion makes the North American missionary seem rude and demanding at times, while he thinks that the people in the new culture are liars who are incapable of telling the truth.⁷⁷

Missionaries should learn how to teach the Bible with a heavy emphasis on parables, plays, proverbs, stories, and poems. Bible stories should be contrasted with indigenous stories so that the audience may understand the similarities and differences. Most Muslims and many Eastern people tend to communicate in imagery, poetically, and by suggestion.⁷⁸ Missionaries need to adjust the delivery of a message according to its intended recipients.⁷⁹ Another important element of the augmented curriculum should focus on establishing and managing disciples. The discipleship bond between the female missionaries and the indigenous Bible Women forms the nucleus of the program. Sills points out the need to return evangelistic focus to discipleship:

⁷⁶Paul G. Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 150.

⁷⁷David M. Sills, *The Missionary Call: Find Your Place in God's Plan for the World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 150.

⁷⁸Jung Soon Lee, *Islamic Culture and Women* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 2007), 241.

⁷⁹Tom A. Steffen, *Passing the Baton: Church Planting That Empowers* (La Habra, CA: Center for Organizational & Ministry Development, 1997), 124.

In recent years, mission agencies and missionaries have increasingly shifted away from teaching and discipleship toward an emphasis on evangelism and church planting—sometimes to the exclusion of any other field activity. While evangelism and church planting are essential components of a missions program, deep discipleship, pastoral preparation, and leadership training must be priorities as well.⁸⁰

He also reminds that making disciples is the single imperative of Christ's great commission: "Christ articulated the Great Commission with a single imperative to make disciples. He did not command us merely to share him; he commanded us to make disciples by teaching them all that he commanded us."⁸¹ Bible Women change the Christian conversion equation from a linear to an exponential function by creating and managing these disciples.

The final element of the recommended augmented training for missionaries provides them leadership with a thorough understanding of the principles of the Nevius Method and the mission policy adopted by the Council of Missions in 1893 that form the core of the approach. As discussed in chapter 3, the aim of the Nevius Method, and its philosophy of mission, was to build a healthy, indigenous church, led by locals, supported by locals, and not dependent on missionaries or foreign missions. The ten concrete mission policy statements adopted by the council form the core of much of the strategy and must be thoroughly understood:

- 1) It is better to focus the mission outreach on the working class than on the upper classes.
- 2) In evangelizing women, the missionary should focus attention on the education of Christian girls.
- 3) It is more effective to focus Christian education on the primary school level in the rural areas.
- 4) Ministers should receive their training in their own country.
- 5) Since it is the word of the Lord that leads people to repentance, it is imperative that the missionaries do their best to translate the Bible into the native language correctly and to publish it as quickly as possible.
- 6) Both in the documents and in the Minutes of the church's meetings/decisions, the native language should be used.
- 7) The developing church should strive to be self-supporting. To that end, the developing church must try to reduce the number of those who receive support from missionaries and increase the number of those who donate monies in support of the church.
- 8) It is important that indigenous people

⁸⁰David M. Sills, *Reaching And Teaching: A Call to Great Commission Obedience* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 11.

⁸¹David M. Sills, "The Balance of Search and Harvest," *Southern Seminary* 80, no. 1 (2012): 40.

lead their fellow countrymen to Christ. To that end, the missionaries should train the members of the local church to engage in the work of evangelism, rather than do the evangelizing work themselves. 9) To get better results, the medical missionaries should treat their patients in their homes and/or sick rooms; they must moreover, be a model for their patients so as to give them a lasting impression. Providing medicine alone is not sufficient medical care. 10) It is important that the evangelist visits with and cares for those who were discharged from the regional hospital.⁸²

Following these policies enabled the female missionaries in Korea to focus their efforts, and the Bible Women method awakened Korean women to realize their potential, fuel church growth, and help to reform its politics and culture while significantly improving the conditions of many Koreans. Institutionalizing these policies maximizes the likelihood of establishing a sustainable Bible Women program in Indonesia.

Selecting Bible Woman Candidates

Developing a single Bible Woman requires substantial investment of a missionary's time and energy beyond the evangelistic efforts required to win her conversion. Assessing candidates against a set of criteria observed in successful Bible Women serves to minimize false starts and attrition. While candidates can overcome shortcomings in any or all of these criteria, the probability of their success or the degree of their impact lowers with each criterion misfit. The elements sought in candidates parallel many of those recommended by Tom Steffen in evaluating church planting staff. One criterion Steffen emphasizes is ensuring their commitment to God's Call:

With such a commitment individuals know beyond a shadow of a doubt God has called them to reach the lost for Christ. They set their courses accordingly, allowing nothing to deter them from this goal. Their personal aspirations become secondary to what they believe God wants of them. These individuals gather information on the target people, associate with them, take appropriate studies, pray for the people and missionaries working among them. They also look for other committed Christians and try to learn from them. If candidates are married, their spouses share their conviction.⁸³

⁸²C. C. Vinton, "Presbyterian Mission Work in Korea," *The Missionary Review of the World* 16, no. 9 (1893): 671.

⁸³Steffen, *Passing the Baton*, 46. Steffen's qualities required in a potential church planter align with those required in a potential Bible Woman candidate: "Spiritual Maturity, Commitment to God's Call, Managed Household/Singleness, Psychological Maturity, Evangelistic Experience, Disciple Experience,

Most of the Korean Bible Women were unmarried when they were recruited and trained, either widowed or having yet to marry. These women spent countless hours studying Hangul, studying the Bible, working with their missionary mentors, and traveling around the country selling Bibles and evangelizing, tasks that would have placed an incredible burden on marital relationships with the added responsibilities of being wives and mothers. Because of this, married candidates should only be considered if their spouses share their conviction and commitment to God. Missionary Kate Cooper describes the characteristics required in order to become a successful Bible Woman:

Be without home responsibilities; widows are preferred. She must be able to give her whole time and service to the Lord's work; she must be a woman whose life has proven her to be a doer of the word and a follower of the Master, not for any earthly gain but because of her love for the salvation of souls. She must be a graduate of a Bible institute able to teach....⁸⁴

Bible Women must be able to change roles as they sometimes lead others and sometimes follow so that others might lead. Candidates must be driven and achievement-oriented but women with a competitive, win-at-all-cost type drive would be less suitable than those more focused on the needs of the team. Steffen elaborates on the church planter's adaptability requirements, which also apply to the potential Bible Woman:

The desirable candidates not only communicate or lead effectively within their own context, but they will also seek out opportunities to hone their skills within new contexts, with equal effectiveness. They show similar interest in knowing other languages and cultures. They recognize the value of learning, teaching, and leadership/followership styles within and outside their own culture, and make appropriate adjustments. Rather than being judgmental of differences they seek to learn from them: they also seek to become international models of Christ. Their lives motivate others to action regardless of the ethnic context because they moved beyond outward adaptation to inner empathy and identification. Lifestyle does not inhibit their ministries.⁸⁵

International Political Awareness, Empathetic Contextual Skills, Servant Leader/Follower, Flexibility and Adaptability, Physical Vitality, Basic Medical Skills and Support Maintenance and Expansion." *Ibid.*, 45-53.

⁸⁴Kate Cooper, "The Bible Woman," *The Korea Magazine* 1, no. 1 (1917): 8.

⁸⁵Steffen, *Passing the Baton*, 49.

They have acquired in-depth working knowledge of the Bible; they can sense the needs of individuals, find solutions, and resolve conflict. These individuals challenge others to stretch their own abilities by willingly delegating to them various responsibilities; they inspire vision. As team players they willingly change roles (become followers) so others can lead. They model a disciplined lifestyle and active faith; and meet the qualifications of I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. People follow them willingly.⁸⁶

Missionary Margaret Best's criteria for admission to the Pyeng Yang

Presbyterian Church Women's Bible Institute provide sound selection criteria:

Candidates for Admission: Sabbath School Teachers, Bible Women, Pastors, Assistants, Evangelists, who have been baptized at least one year. Recommendation from Pastor required. Qualifications: Proved Christian character. Evidence of love for and zeal in Christian work. "Of good report." Free from home duties. Able to read well. Good health. Age: Minimum 25 years. Requirements: All women except those who live with their families in the city shall be required to live in the Institute Dormitories.... Connected with the Institute there are special classes besides: (1) The Workers' Class of two weeks. (2) The S. S. Teachers' Class of two weeks. (3) General Class of all women of country churches 12 days. (4) Class for women of city churches one week. Each of the above classes has a prescribed plan and course of study.⁸⁷

Missionaries operate in an extremely dynamic environment. Politics, culture, interaction with other religions, financial challenges, and changing needs of the mission organization are only a few of the environmental parameters that change with little or no notice. Like the missionaries, Bible Women must adapt and be flexible, taking advantage of opportunities when they present themselves and adjusting as necessary when faced with obstacles. Candidates who thrive in a predictable, well-structured environment or require specific task directions may be less successful than those who exhibit resiliency when faced with constant change and are able to operate within a high degree of ambiguity.⁸⁸ In addition to the emotional and intellectual energy needed to prepare as a Bible Woman, candidates must have sufficient physical vitality to withstand the demands of the mission.

Through the course of researching the Korean Bible Women, one can see that

⁸⁶Ibid., 50.

⁸⁷Margaret Best, "Course of Study and Rules of Admission of the Pyeng Yang Presbyterian Church Women's Bible Institute," *The Korean Mission Field* 6, no. 6 (1910): 154.

⁸⁸Ibid., 51.

the common characteristic that each of them exhibited and the single most important criteria for candidates is an unyielding commitment to God's call. Without God reaching into their hearts, who could imagine the physical and emotional hardships that the Bible Women bore? Those who had family were often persecuted, physically abused, and shunned for taking up Christ's cause. They walked hundreds of miles across treacherous terrain in extreme weather to deliver Bibles, share the gospel, visit sick and needy people, and teach Bible classes. They grew from being society's outcasts to being leaders of social change and political reform. Rather than the missionaries choosing the Bible Women, God chose the Bible Women. Some originated from the missionaries' inner circles, having worked as their domestic help or personal assistants. Others were simply early converts that the missionaries encountered. A Bible Woman candidate will likely face persecution and the threat of corporal punishment in some Muslim countries. The missionary must ensure that the candidate is answering a genuine calling from God.

Equipping the Bible Women

Properly equipping a Bible Woman candidate to reach her potential as an effective evangelist and agent of change requires a dual commitment on behalf of the missionary and the candidate. The preparation process consists of three dimensions: structured Bible classes, leadership training, and most importantly, personal mentorship. These personal, one-on-one relationships enable the missionary to recognize and cultivate the individual gift that each Bible Woman brings, as Mattie Noble did with Sadie Kim's gifts of evangelism and teaching the Bible and Dr. Rosetta Hall with Esther Park's medical proclivity. The personal nature of the bond additionally motivates the women to maintain high performance levels in an effort to make their mentor proud.

The missionaries in Chosŏn understood the need to train their potential women evangelists as described by Ahn:

From the beginning of missions in Korea, the missionary women knew the importance of training Korean women for ministry among their own people.

However, such training had to begin with teaching the basics of the Christian faith first. In order to fulfill the dual purpose of evangelism and training, missionary women began holding Sunday school classes and small weekday meetings for women. . . . Missionaries felt the need of providing them with a more comprehensive and systematic Bible study courses. The missionaries thus began to hold large Bible study classes in mission stations and in country churches where Christians gathered to receive more extensive instruction. The Bible classes usually lasted four to ten days. . . . The Bible classes held in major mission stations were usually larger, longer, and more intense, as they were designed to develop leadership among the attendants, who came from every group of believers in the region.⁸⁹

At minimum, the desired outcome in order to declare the candidate successful is for her to effectively deliver coursework. As Indonesian Missionary Dal Man Kim notes regarding women's Bible study:

A concentrated Bible study forms the first leg of the structured class work. This course aims to teach the candidates how to be Christians. Stories of biblical women will resonate with them and also prepare them for their own evangelistic gospel sharing. Theology makes up the second leg of training in order to help them become effective evangelists. It should provide a solid foundation for the gospel, be comprehensive (Acts 20:27), focus on the material as well as the spiritual world, and address cultural themes, cults, and political ideologies relevant to the community. Finally, as the women learn, the missionary mentor introduces elements of leadership training with increasing degrees of responsibility. These include working in indirect missions, accompanying the missionary on itinerant missions, leading prayer groups, teaching portions of Bible studies, establishing informal networks, performing itinerant evangelism, and eventually assuming leadership positions in organizations and potentially in underground social movements.⁹⁰

Bible Women's Approach Based on Transforming Women's Worldview

Indonesia generally has a low income level and quality of life, and thus requires help in many areas including industrial technology, education, medical services, transportation, and social welfare. These issues present opportunities for indirect mission work with possible life changing results for the local people. Focused Bible Women ministries in technical training, education, medical service, and support to orphanages

⁸⁹Katherine H. Lee Ahn, *Awakening the Hermit Kingdom: Pioneer American Women Missionaries in Korea* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 202-03.

⁹⁰Dal Man Kim, "Strategy for Islamic Missions in Indonesia and Malaysia" (Th.M. thesis, Chongshin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 2009), 78.

and nursing homes would provide missionaries avenues to reach the hearts and souls of the local women with transformative potential.

Indonesia maintains oppressive social institutions such as wearing the veil, polygamy, and domestic violence, which tend to undermine the rights of women.⁹¹ In order for women to attain freedom and dignity, their own views on their identity and value must be transformed. Equipping them with a biblical perspective of women is an important step toward women's freedom in Indonesia's society as it was in Korea's transformation from a culture based on Confucianism to one based on Christianity. When Indonesian women realize who they really are, they can begin striving for the changes by themselves.

Paul Hiebert's discussion of transformation theology supports the Bible

Woman approach to cultural transformation:

In transformation, we need to involve people in evaluating their own cultures in the light of new truth. This draws on their strength. They know their old culture better than we do and are in a better position to critique it and live transformed lives within it, once they have biblical instruction. We can bring outside views that help them see their own cultural biases, but they are the ones who make decisions as they grow spiritually through learning discernment and applying scriptural teachings to their own lives.⁹²

Well-equipped Bible Women serve as the provocateur inspiring the local women to perform that evaluation. Rinaldo points out that Islam is much more than a practiced religion to ardent believers:

The issue of identity cannot be discounted as a crucial part of Islam for women activists. Most of the women I spoke to in all four groups mentioned it at some point. Many said that they wanted an identity in which they could take pride, and this is what Islam provided for them. Identity was a primary reason for many of the younger women to wear the headscarf.⁹³

⁹¹Nurmila, *Women, Islam and Everyday Life*, 39.

⁹²Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts*, 32.

⁹³Rachel Rinaldo, "Veiled Feminism: Islamic Religious Piety and the Women's Movement in Indonesia," ASA Paper (2006): 14, accessed August, 2014, allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/0/2/5/3/pages102538/p102538-14.php.

Louis Jefferies addresses the application of this information in the evangelism process,

Christians need to explore the place of women in the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as engage with the wider debates about women in Islam—from both conservative and feminist writers. Despite the common assertion that they have veiled because they have “become aware,” some Indonesian women may veil as a expedient means of gaining enhanced dignity and protection against harassment—without necessarily having a deep Islamic “awakening.” Christian witness to such women might seek to unsettle the presupposition that external measures such as veiling genuinely change individuals, or more importantly, society. Christianity enables individuals to find personal dignity and security because of God’s action in Christ, rather than external behaviors. This is a different, yet equally powerful, path to personal empowerment, which can lead to social action aimed at the transformation of unjust social behaviors and systems. The recognition that the gospel is a powerful force for social change also needs to be incorporated into dialogue with Indonesian women. Campaigns for the abolition of slavery for and women’s civil rights have had significant Christian foundations and protagonists. If the realization of a more equitable and just society is a goal of jilbabisasi, then Christian apologists can strongly point to Christianity’s track record in this field.⁹⁴

Jefferies cites an example provided by Miriam Adeney to illustrate success using the described approach:

Irin, an Indonesian Muslim educated in Islamic law with aspirations to change and serve society through some position of leadership, was challenged and inspired by a local Christian law student. . . . He not only argued apologetically, but also showed her how much Christians had done and were doing in the form of local outreach, and Irin saw how he served out of love rather than treating people as projects like many humanitarian lawyers. . . . Irin became a Christian, and now serves her society and works for a set of values that will revitalize her culture.⁹⁵

Bible Women can introduce Christianity as a means to accomplish these changes to the Indonesian women. Transformation through Christ is more powerful than that achieved through self-discipline driven by rigid religious ideology.

The Bible Women of China

In the nineteenth century, Chinese women were also isolated. Binding women’s

⁹⁴Louis Jefferies, “The Rise of the Jilbabisasi in Indonesia,” *Missiology: An International Review* 39, no. 2 (2011): 236.

⁹⁵Miriam Adeney, “*Daughters of Islam: Building Bridges with Muslim Women*,” cited in, Jefferies, “The Rise of the Jilbabisasi,” 236.

feet remained widely practiced throughout the country. Male interaction with unrelated females was not illegal but was very uncommon.⁹⁶ Missionaries to China also established schools for girls and visited women in their homes to teach them to read. Since their seclusion made receiving medical attention difficult, missionaries also visited their homes to provide medical services. While Chinese people were very suspicious of foreign males, female missionaries were able to evangelize local women nearly unnoticed.

Missionaries trained and employed local women as Bible Women as they did in Korea. Unlike the simplicity of Hangul, the complexity of the Chinese written language made it impractical to accomplish mass literacy rates with people capable of reading and comprehending the Bible. Chinese Bible Women were trained largely orally and, in turn, evangelized orally, but they were still very well received and extremely effective.⁹⁷

Baptism requirements were harder to satisfy in China, as even a minimal level of literacy was harder to achieve. Additionally, public confession conflicted with cultural norms of modesty, where respectable women never spoke in public. Despite these obstacles, women achieved many informal leadership positions. Pui-Lan Kwok notes,

They learned to be teachers, evangelists, leaders of religious ritual, and counselors in local congregations. . . . Other volunteers offered their help in teaching Sunday Schools, organizing prayer meetings, visiting the sick, and providing comfort for women in need. Women's religious groups, therefore, became training grounds for women to develop their own leadership.⁹⁸

Many gifted female leaders became evangelists and teachers but were never accepted into the formal ordination process and training, which was reserved only for men. This actually proved beneficial for women as the conferred status that was reserved for men made them an easy target for the government's efforts to persecute Christians while the

⁹⁶Rebecca Lewis, "Underground Church Movements: The Surprising Role of Women's Networks," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 21, no. 4 (2004): 148.

⁹⁷Ibid., 149.

⁹⁸Pui-Lan Kwok, *Chinese Women and Christianity, 1860-1927* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 66.

women remained unrecognized.

As in Korea, the Chinese Bible Women movement grew beyond evangelism, forming social organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and YWCA.⁹⁹ These and other social organizations made substantial progress in promoting women's economic independence, children's welfare and education, and undermining practices such as alcohol, drug, and tobacco use, foot binding, prostitution, and polygamy.

The Bible Women of Korea

Understanding why the early missionaries experienced such dramatic success in evangelizing women in Korea provides the necessary elements in order to determine the applicability of this approach to other scenarios. Beyond its promise of eternal salvation, a number of Christian doctrines spoke to women's social conditions that had been prescribed by local cultures and religions. In general, Christian women had a higher status and were treated significantly better than in other cultures at the time. Christians prohibited the infanticide of female newborn that, while not sanctioned by Confucian teaching, had become a byproduct of society's view of females as valueless. Christians also forbade adultery and divorce. Fidelity was only expected of Chosŏn females, while men routinely kept one or more concubines throughout their married life. Similarly, while Christians did not condone divorce, "*Three Following Ways*" or "*Seven Reasons for Divorce*" empowered a husband to divorce his wife for disobedience to his parents, the inability to bear a son, infidelity, lewdness, jealousy, poor health, or theft. A wife could only request divorce if her husband was missing for years or if he beat her severely and he agreed to the divorce. Christians also married at a more mature age, whereas Chosŏn brides were often in their early teenage years.

⁹⁹Lewis, "Underground Church Movements," 148.

The prospect of improving living conditions for women through the benefits of the indirect missions, focusing on providing education and medical services to women and children, was also appealing. In this case, Chosŏn government prohibiting direct evangelism actually increased missionaries' access to women as the women's need to and interest in improving the health and education of themselves and their children brought them to the missionaries. Naeŏe law, which prohibited women from receiving medical attention from male doctors, left few options to the women other than visiting female missionaries. Attaining the ability to read and write and the prospect of enhanced education opportunities for their children through the missionaries' ministries also offered hope to wives and mothers.

Armed with a hope-filled earthly message and promise of eternal salvation, and the attraction of the indirect mission, the missionaries unleashed the Bible Women using the Nevius mission method, using women to evangelize women. They served as force-multipliers, learning and working as disciples to a small cadre of missionaries. Not only did they increase the sheer number of evangelists, they were also able to indigenize the message and deliver it much more effectively. Unburdened by language and culture barriers, the Bible Women traveled more efficiently and personalized the teachings to their recipients. They also served as examples and role models, illustrating to other women how it was possible to escape society's shackles.

Chosŏn discrimination toward and isolation of women partly fueled the Bible Women's success. As disenfranchised members of society, women raised their interest in the missionaries, their missions, and their disciples when they saw the potential of improved living conditions and a better future for their children. Being isolated from the "important" social aspects of life also provided a level of anonymity to the Bible Women's activities, which were likely viewed as rather inconsequential.

The missionaries realized the importance of the maternal position even in the strict patriarchal society. They focused on them for their ability to shape the foundational

worldview and faith of their children. Over the ensuing century, the church experienced explosive growth. From comprising a tiny minority in 1900, the church has surged to include over 30 percent of the population today, of whom 70 percent are women.¹⁰⁰ Despite the fact that Korean culture shared many features with Indonesian culture, it still seems very difficult to reach Indonesian Muslims today. Although women evangelists are surely nothing new to Indonesian Christianity, a more intentioned and focused effort on the model of the Korean Bible Women merits consideration.

¹⁰⁰Hyo Jae Lee, "Christian Mission and the Liberation of Korean Women," *International Review of Mission* 74, no. 293 (1985): 93.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Christianity's rapid growth in Korea has been well documented in books, journals, and academic papers. Without question, credit for this growth and the accompanying social transformation belongs to Christ and his unleashing of the Holy Spirit on the nation's hearts and souls. Many works extensively document the accomplishments made and personal risks, sacrifices, and hardships endured by those early missionaries who answered His call.

This dissertation focused on another of His instruments, Korea's Bible Women. It examined their lives and ministries serving as assistants to female missionaries, evangelists, educators, and physicians. It followed the achievements of these women, who often remain largely unknown regardless of their valuable ministries and occasional martyrdom. It also confirmed that the primary indirect ministries of the woman missionaries who came to evangelize Chosŏn, education and medicine, were the seeds of liberating Christian education and women's education. Their activities led to the creation of modern schools and hospitals and laid the foundations for elevating women from being subjugated in society to their current status as near equals. In addition to documenting the Bible Women's role and contributions this work proposed utilizing the same model in similar mission contexts and suggested missions in Indonesia as an opportunity.

Impact on Female Evangelization

Baptist historian Leon McBeth poses the following questions in his book titled *Women in Baptist Life*, "Should women take leadership roles in the church? Are they to do God's work alongside men or subordinate to them? Does the Bible teach the everlasting subordination of women to men? What roles have women had in Baptist

history?”¹ Struggling with similar questions regarding women’s roles both today and in the early Korean church inspired this work. The early missionaries to Korea struggled to reach local women due to the restrictions imposed by Naeŏe Law. Implementing the Nevius method in conjunction with engaging in indirect missions that improved women and children’s immediate life conditions proved to be a powerful combination within the Chosŏn cultural context. The Bible Women enabled missionaries to overcome culture and language barriers as well as the segregating laws. As the missionaries approached these limits they trained and mentored select local women to become their assistants and eventually evangelists themselves. These Bible Women brought significant changes to the evangelization of Korean women and subsequently the role of women in society.

After learning Hangul and studying the Bible, the Bible Women taught Hangul to those who did not know it,² thereby opening a new chapter in the history of Korean women. The Bible Women were the first female teachers and workers; they also served as guidance counselors who spoke of their new lives, while selling Bibles and evangelizing. In addition to offering Bible classes, leading prayer groups, visiting the sick, and serving as itinerant ministers, they educated rural women and children and took part in many social movements. The women prayed when they met together, evangelized when they were apart, and collected offerings for missions to other countries. The spectacular growth in the missions continued through the founding of the Women’s Evangelistic Society in 1898, which also dispatched missionaries to Shandong area in China.

The Bible Women of the time recognized their place as individuals before God and devoted all of their energies to expanding His kingdom through the liberating salvation that they felt. Moreover, they led independence movements resisting foreign

¹Leon McBeth, *Women in Baptist Life* (Nashville: Broadman, 1979), 9.

²Sang Chang, “The Meaning of Women’s Ministry,” in *Women, Wake Up, Rise, and Sing! The 100-Year History of Korean Christian Women*, prep. Women’s Anniversary Committee for 100 Years of Korean Church History (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1986), 55.

intrusions, thus becoming spiritual and social leaders, who were respected and admired by women in the church and throughout society. Their early recognition of cross-cultural missions advanced the female regional evangelistic societies advocating missions in the 1910s. Female Korean missionaries continued to undertake missions in China's Shandong province and in North and South Manchuria and Japan through the 1930s.³

Effects on the Lives of Korean Women

The combined efforts of the missionaries and the Bible Women resulted in critical spiritual and social changes in the lives of women. Christianity laid the groundwork for the transformation of a culture that oppressed women into one that offered them greater opportunity. Their collective work reshaped societal norms on polygamy and concubinage and introduced women to different values, which greatly improved their lives. For example, the Christian value of monogamy created awareness that Confucian practices of polygamy and concubinage were sexually discriminative and oppressive. This realization served as the basis for more equal gender relationships within the family. The Christian missions' goal to restore dignity to individuals, all of whom are made in God's image, through evangelism alleviated female oppression.

Their evangelization also played an important role in introducing local women to Western culture, once based on Christian values. In travelling and spreading the gospel, both the Bible Women and the missionaries served as symbols and propagators of this new culture and faith. They formed an informal network through which Western culture was introduced. Their bags contained address books, pencils, and basic medical supplies as well as Bibles. Their activities enabled the introduction of Westernized child rearing and education methods and personal hygiene through literature and discourse. Without Christianity as the transmitter of Western culture, the naturalization and

³Sun Ae Chu, *The History of Presbyterian Women in Korea* (Seoul: Dae Han Presbyterian Church Women's Association, 1978), 187-89.

contextualization of these new cultural elements would not have occurred.

Second, their missions expanded the learning opportunities of Korean women, who with time brought greater productive resources to society. Allowing women to contribute freely in the *Public Arena* as well as the household was an important contribution.⁴ Ultimately, the Christian faith seeks the self-achievement of all people by reinforcing the role that God has assigned them. The Bible Women demonstrated that women can contribute to the family, the church, and in the wider society effectively.

Finally, their missions to propagate Hangul fluency provided an escape from ignorance that cannot be overstated. Although some aristocratic women received a Chinese education at home, only two of one thousand women could actually read.⁵ Men looked down on Hangul as something women learned; its rate of adoption had been low for more than four hundred years, even among lower class women. However, since teaching potential believers to read preceded the distribution of Bibles, the Bible Women taught other Korean women this critical skill. They thus contributed significantly to increasing literacy among Korean women. Translating the Bible into Korean and raising the literacy rate were means to an end, rather than a sudden appreciation of the value of Hangul but the positive side effect is undeniable.

Suggestions for Future Work

Future efforts related to this research should focus on realizing an implementation of the Bible Women model in Indonesia. Given the country's diversity, a more detailed analysis of cultural attitudes, constraints, and situations for candidate locations would result in a subset to explore for implementing a pilot program. After

⁴Bo Kyoung Park, "The Impact on the Impact of Christian Mission to the Life of Korean Women from the Later Part of 19th to Early Part of 20th Century," *Mission and Theology* 13, no. 5 (2011): 109.

⁵Woo Jung Lee, *Footprint of Korean Christian Women over 100 Years* (Seoul: Minjungsa, 1985), 30.

selecting the initial location, missionaries currently deployed there as well as veteran missionaries experienced in the local culture should be consulted. Their knowledge and experience can be applied to tailor the details of the program including the training program for both the missionaries and the indigenous Bible Women candidates with a goal of actually implementing a local program. Cooperation and team ministries among missionaries of both genders are vital in conducting this evangelization strategy. Although attitudes toward female missionaries have evolved, certain obstacles to gender equality remain. The dominant perspective is that the wives of missionaries contribute to ministry by taking care of household chores, often making the additional workload associated with evangelizing more than they can handle. Additionally, unmarried female missionaries face greater personal risk and loneliness; they must be encouraged to remain in the field. This gap between the ideal and reality raises questions regarding the future directions for female missionaries, who require appropriate training and who must establish their identities in both their passion for the gospel and their proper training and education.

Korea's Bible Women resisted Chosŏn's gender-based constraints because their faith stirred them to achieve their full potential as Christ's disciples. Their example inspired an entire generation of women to pursue self-reliance and contribute more to the home, to the church, and to society at large. Their message remains as relevant to women today as it was one hundred thirty years ago.

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ABSTRACT

BIBLE WOMEN: EVANGELISM AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE EARLY KOREAN CHURCH

Yeong Woo Liptak, Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014
Chair: Dr. James D. Chancellor

When Protestant missionaries first arrived on the Korean peninsula in the 1880s they encountered religious syncretism being practiced in a socio-cultural environment which prohibited all interaction between the predominantly male missionaries and the local females. To remedy this situation, the women missionaries converted and recruited a small number of indigenous women to augment evangelical outreach to other women. In addition to serving as the catalysts of an unprecedented Christian transformation, these “Bible Women” laid the foundation of a cultural transformation that enlightened Korean women from an oppressive social structure that totally marginalized them.

Through a detailed literature review, this dissertation examines the major religions actively being practiced during the Chosŏn Dynasty and how they affected women. It details the challenges faced by the early missionaries that led them to employ the Bible Women method. Several case studies detail the process of converting, recruiting, and training indigenous women to serve as female evangelists, including the persecution that they suffered for choosing to follow Christ and the enormous impact that they made both spreading the gospel and breaking down social barriers. Finally, a proposal is provided for how this same approach may be employed in evangelical outreach in similar cultural contexts.

VITA

Yeong Woo Liptak

EDUCATIONAL

B.A., Cabrini College, 1997

M.Div., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006

Th.M., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2009

Th.M., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011

MINISTERIAL

Chōndosa Intern, New Covenant Fellowship Church, 2002-2004

Chōndosa, Ichthus Mission Church, 2004-2009

Chōndosa, Light Global Mission Church, 2009-2011

Mission Pastor, Jesus Community Church, 2011-2012

Consultant, American Theological Institute (ATI Mission), 2013-