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Gabriele Kim April 10, 2023

Attempting Great Things for God: Southern White, Chinese, and Korean Women in the MECS Missionary Enterprise (1878-1925)

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Abstract

Attempting Great Things for God: Southern White, Chinese, and Korean Women in the MECS Missionary Enterprise (1878-1925)

By Gabriele Ka Young Kim

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Southern Methodist elite and middle-class white women went to China and Korea on foreign missions. Using a transpacific framework, this study tracks the motivations of missionaries who according to their Premillennialist and social gospel theology felt obliged to help the "heathen" both domestically and abroad. Not only were they interested in saving souls because they were convinced that Christ would not return until all the nations heard the gospel, but they also sought to assist people in this life by meeting various social "needs." They did this with Ji Yung, a Chinese convert, who they felt could benefit from teaching her their Victorian ideals of mothering through Christian education. In addition, Melissa Kim is a central figure in the study who traveled from Korea to China and then to America to receive a formal education so that she could become an educator for other Korean women. By expanding upon existing literature on the missionary enterprise which has primarily discussed the perspectives of the white Southern elite Methodist missionaries, I hope that incorporating the narratives of native converts into this transpacific history can lead to a more holistic understanding of these missional encounters.

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Introduction

In 1878, Lochie Rankin was sent to China by the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS) by the General Conference at First Church in Atlanta.[1] Rankin hoped to bring the gospel to women and children in China. She became the first representative of the MECS' organized womanhood.[2] While Rankin is often recognized as the first woman representative of the MECS in foreign missions, this title given to her in *The Atlanta Constitution* can be misleading. Women in the MECS were active participants in the foreign missionary enterprise since its inception, yet they were often not recognized because they were viewed as mere wives of missionary men and not missionaries themselves. Rankin can be recognized as the first *single* missionary woman to be sent by the Woman's Missionary Society of the MECS. She is one of the many women who were beginning to be recognized, encouraged, and trained to become foreign missionaries both as single and married women. Rankin, often praised and remembered as a missionary pioneer, laid the foundation for what would become an expansive network of home and foreign missionary enterprises at the turn of the twentieth century.

In this study, I focus on the Southern Methodist elite and middle-class white women who went to China and Korea on foreign missions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is a study of women, as I unpack the ways that the white missionary women believed in a "global sisterhood." Harnessing their alleged special capacity to care for the home as women, they sought to inculcate Victorian ideas of mothering onto their missional subjects whom they thought required assistance in becoming more "refined" according to their understanding of what

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[1] "Methodist Women Accept Challenge of Enlarged Program." *The Atlanta Constitution* (1881-1945), May 31, 1931. https://login.proxy.library.emory.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/methodist-women-accept-challenge-enlarged-program/docview/501343217/se-2.

[2] "Methodist Women Accept Challenge of Enlarged Program."

constitutes a modern and proper lady. It is also a transpacific study, as I track the motivations of missionaries who according to their Premillennialist and social gospel theology felt obliged to help the "heathen" both domestically and abroad. Not only were they interested in saving souls because they were convinced that Christ would not return until all the nations heard the gospel, but they also sought to meet various social "needs" of people in this life. They did this with Ji Yung, a Chinese convert, as they provided her and others with Christian education and taught her their Victorian understanding of womanhood. I also study a missionary convert named Melissa Kim, who traveled from Korea to China and then to America to receive a formal education so that she could evangelize and become an educator for other Korean women when she returned to her home country. Finally, it is a religious study as I focus on the way that Christianity was the driving force for the interactions between the Southern white elite missionaries who likely otherwise would not have interacted with people in China and Korea.

It is critical to define agency when studying women. Historian Catherine Brekus has noted that "the field of women's history grew in tandem with the feminist movement; and, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, women's historians hoped to recover the stories of crusading female leaders who had challenged male authority."[3] It can be tempting to only write these narratives, but doing this would create an incomplete understanding of women's history. Brekus encourages historians to expand their understanding of women's agency: "Because historians have implicitly defined agency against structure … scholars in search of a 'usable past' have rarely been interested in studying women who seem to have accepted subordination."[4] When women were not overturning their patriarchal culture, historians have often viewed these women as people without agency. However, women are not passive partakers in oppression or helpless

[3] Catherins A. Brekus, "Mormon Women and the Problem of Historical Agency," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, No. 2 (Spring 2011): 71.
[4] Brekus, "Mormon Women and the Problem of Historical Agency," 72.

beings; instead, they were active participants in their society. By examining nonradical women, I argue that women can exercise their agency amidst patriarchal structures, even when they are not directly overturning them. In this study, I focus on how women use their religious convictions to reform society with their social gospel theology. I hope that this study of agency, as a quest for finding meaning amidst religious, gendered, and cultural structures, can provide a more nuanced study of women.

It is important to note, then, that this story of women is not one of the heroic leaders or passive and oppressed women. Historian Anne Braude complicates the issue of studying women's religious history as she writes about how women participated in institutions that subordinated them: "They have embraced the churches and the belief systems they teach, finding special meaning there for their lives as women and defending them against a variety of threats from without."[5] From this, one can understand that white elite Southern women were passionate about their understanding of womanhood that they learned in the church and sought to defend its teachings. Even though the missionary women were teaching women who were not like them how to be caretaking Victorian women according to their heteronormative family ideal, not uprooting or questioning this societal expectation. In this way, instead of condemning their idea of a Christian family, I seek to understand why they might believe that this kind of structure in the home could not only help themselves inside but also reform society outside of the home.

In this project on missionary encounters, I hope to build on the existing work on the social gospel in the South. Writing extensively about the social gospel as it affected American religious history at the turn of the twentieth century, the editors of *Gender and the Social Gospel* (2003) situate the book in the post-Reconstruction and industrializing American landscape that

[5] Ann Braude, "Women's History *Is* American Religious History," in *Retelling U.S. Religious History,* ed. Thomas A. Tweed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 90.

was plagued with what missionaries called "social ills." The editors write about how the "unprecedented levels of urbanization and industrialization during the Gilded Age had given rise to city slums and inhumane working conditions that shocked the sensibilities of middle-class Protestants."[6] In order to address the widespread issues like intemperance and poverty, social gospelers like Frances Willard, Josiah Strong, and Walter Rauschenbusch criticized conventional Protestantism with their progressive theology and commitment to social ethics and moral imperatives. Applying the teachings of Jesus, they opined that these social issues caused by the Civil War and industrialization were proof of societal sin. Convinced that God wanted to alleviate them from these physical issues in this life in addition to the one in the next, these social gospelers hoped to transform American society and culture through the teachings of Christianity.

The editors also pointed out the ways that women in the social gospel movement should be studied from the perspective of their gender. They astutely differentiated that while white men were often involved in issues of industrial, political, and theological affairs, white women hardly ever meddled in these concerns unless they directly affected women, children, or the family. In addition, Historian John Patrick McDowell's *The Social Gospel in the South* (1982) made an important contribution to the field by centering the perspective of the South, even though work on the social gospel has largely been studied from the perspective of the North. Focusing on home missions from the period of 1886-1939 in the South, he provides a thorough examination of how women engaged in issues that started in the home and then sought to reform society through means such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union or educating the poor and immigrant who were often not Protestant Christians.

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[6] Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, "Introduction," in *Gender and the Social Gospel*, ed. Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte Gifford (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 3.

In order to understand the missionaries' interest in foreign missions, I draw from Jane Hunter's seminal book on the China mission titled *The Gospel of Gentility* (1984). In it, she unpacks the encounters between American missionary women who went to China with a focus on the schools they created. Hunter studies how missionary women wished to teach the "heathen" ideas of Christian domesticity according to Western and Victorian ideas of womanhood. In addition, Hyaewol Choi's *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Way*s (2009) similarly observes how in the Chosŏn dynasty, Korean women were often separated from men within the home in accordance with the Confucian inside-outside rule which restricted women to the inner quarter of the home. American missionaries saw the physical separation and wanted to provide them with more "modern" ways of living by bringing the Korean women outside the inner chambers of the home through education and most importantly teaching them the gospel. While these two books focus on the transpacific social exchanges of white women from America to China and Korea, they do not focus on the lives of the Chinese or Korean women with whom the missionaries interacted. I hope to expand upon their work by not only discussing elite white Southern Methodist missionaries but also incorporating the narratives of missionary converts into this transpacific history as well.

While this study does wish to analyze people involved in the missionary enterprise in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it is important to note that this is not intended to be a comprehensive study of elite Southern Christian women, nor representative of all experiences of converts in China and Korea. It does seek to understand how well-meaning elite Southern Methodist social gospelers sought to reform society because they believed it was their duty to do so. Throughout the study, I wonder how ideas of racial superiority intermixed with their missional goals when they sought to evangelize to the "heathen" through social means like

education or by leading the anti-footbinding movement. Oftentimes the way they viewed themselves clouded their ability to recognize the way their actions actualized in problematic outcomes. Furthermore, I hope to better understand the ways that Chinese and Korean missionary subjects may have received their new religion and reimagined it for their local contexts through the case study of two converts– Ji Yung and Melissa Kim.

Through analyzing the encounters between elite Southern Methodist women and their relationship with their missionary subjects in China and Korea, I hope to better understand the ways that Christianity was a driving force for women to "attempt great things for God."[7] In chapter one, I examine the causes of the increased social participation of elite and middle-class Southern Methodist women's application of their faith through their work at home and abroad. I argue the missionary enterprise provided a way for them to form women's networks, achieve leadership roles outside of the home, and sustain the work pioneer missionary women like Rankin started through the creation of the Scarritt Bible and Training School. In the second chapter, I analyze the ways that their views of racial superiority complicated their evangelical strategy of spreading the gospel through American ideals of what they considered to be a "proper lady." In the final chapter, I unpack the ways that white missionaries sought to inculcate a domestic and "modern" woman into their Korean missional subjects. Melissa Kim, a Korean convert, rejected certain aspects of the religion they sought to impose on her while simultaneously embracing and looking up to the spiritual mothers she discovered through the missionary enterprise who ultimately helped her shape what she considered to be a model Korean Christian woman.

[7] William Carrey.

Chapter 1: At Home– "Woman's Work for Women"

I. Introduction

In 1896, Laura Askew Haygood (1845-1900) stood before the congregation of Trinity Church in Atlanta saying, Not my will but Thine be done."[8] She returned to the South from China to ask for financial support from local churches in addition to encouragement. Before she left, the congregation asked how long she would stay in China. She responded, "Just as long as my health is good and I am able to win the hearts and souls of the heathen. It is, of course, hard to leave friends and loved ones, but my heart is in the work and I am anxious to get back where I have such opportunities to aid in the cause of foreign missions.[9] Haygood was a model teacher as she was the principal and a home missionary at the Trinity Atlanta Mission School which was the first Atlanta public school for young women. The school taught industrial education to the poor and needy in the city.[10] Young John Allen (1836-1907), one of the first missionaries in China had a vision for a women's school to raise Christian mothers to coincide with his school for men. Though initially hesitant about going abroad, Haygood was eventually convinced by God to leave her familiar Georgia landscape in order to participate in the work that God was doing in Shanghai. Dedicated to doing good through the missionary cause in order to fulfill God's will to save people from their "heathenness," she went to China in 1884.[11]

Laura Haygood is an example of an elite Christian Southern woman who felt a call to go abroad to educate those who were not like them on foreign missions. This chapter seeks to

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[8] Linda Madson Papageorge, "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle Rules the World': Laura Askew Haygood and Methodist Education in China, 1884-1899." *Proceedings and Papers of the Georgia Association of Historians*, (Kennesaw College: 1982) 125.

[9] "To Leave for China: Miss Laura Haygood Begins her Journey to the Orient Saturday. Her Work Among Heathens in Her Address Yesterday Afternoon at Trinity Church She Begged for an Increase in Missionaries." (*Atlanta Constitution*, Feb. 3, 1896), 7.

[10] "Haygood, Laura Askew (1845-1900): Pioneering MECS Home Missioner and Educational Missionary to China" Methodistmission200, https://methodistmission200.org/haygood-laura-askew-1845-1900/

[11] "Haygood, Laura Askew (1845-1900)."

analyze the reason for the increased participation of women in society fueling their interest in the home and foreign missionary enterprises. Beginning with the late nineteenth century, I describe their theological conviction in what they called "social evangelization" or the missionary tactic of converting young girls to the Christian faith as a gateway into the homes, siblings, and mothers of the children whom they might teach the gospel. Finally, I unpack the ways that missionary women put their theology into practice by not only going on missions but also training other younger women to sustain and expand the missionary work they did in China. By analyzing the participation of elite and middle-class white Southern Methodist women's application of their faith through the missionary enterprise, I hope to elucidate the ways that Christianity provided these women an avenue to exercise new leadership roles, form women's networks, and sustain the work they were doing through creating the Scarritt Bible and Training School at the turn of the 20th century.

II. Why Missions? The Increased Social Participation of Women

The Civil War, Reconstruction, and the industrializing nation led to many poor working conditions that South Methodist elite women identified as "social ills." Progressive Protestants like Walter Rauschenbusch began to construct a humanistic understanding of the Bible where the teachings of Jesus were social and ethical issues rather than solely spiritual matters.[12] This meant that there was a new proximity between humans and God, where social justice could be a worldly reality in addition to a heavenly one. While traditional Protestant evangelicals were continuing their revivals, tent meetings, and evangelistic crusades with a focus on individual sin, social gospelers like Rauschenbusch labeled various social issues as sins that the collective

[12] Cornelius L. Bynum."'An Equal Chance in the Race for Life': Reverdy C. Ransom, Socialism, and the Social Gospel Movement, 1890-1920." *The Journal of African American History* 93, no. 1 (2008): 9. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20064253.

needed to address, instead of pointing to the shortcomings of an individual.[13] This theological development led people to expand their understanding of sin as something that is not only personal but also societal. Social gospelers understood that Christ wanted not only to care for their lives in this world but also that He wished to produce a "Heaven on Earth."

In addition to their commitment to alleviating social sins through ethical conduct, social gospelers were inspired by their Methodist theology. Their call to action was inspired by the teachings of John Wesley who emphasized the idea that God was concerned for and loved all people; they reinterpreted these truths for their own social context.[14] The white Southern and wealthy women felt convicted to do the salvific work of converting lost souls due to their Premillennialist theology which asserted that Christ would not return until all heard the gospel. The social gospelers likely longed for heaven in the midst of the social ills they faced such as intemperance, dysfunctional families, and wealth inequalities. Understanding the social context of America being in need of reform, they also believed that there were people in other lands that were "unreached"; this propelled the missionary women to bring their gospel to them as well.

Premillennialism is inspired by the Great Commission that Jesus states at the end of the gospel of Matthew. When missionary women went to China, they desired to fulfill the will of God to spread the gospel to those who did not know about their religion. As Christians, it is not a suggestion to spread the gospel, but a command from Jesus; this was one of the last great speeches Jesus said to his disciples. Still, when women missionaries were excited to partake in the spreading of the gospel, they at times would comment on their positionality in the church, like this one woman from Lynchburg, Virginia: "'Before Christ's ascension we hear the

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[13] Kyle M. Wiggins, "A Rethinking of the Social Gospel and its Implications for the Church in Modern America," Honors Thesis, (Ouachita Baptist University, 1994), 15.
[14] John Patrick McDowell. *The Social Gospel in the South: The Women's Home Mission Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1886-1939*. (Louisiana State University Press, 1982),145-146.

command: 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.' Happily for our sex, this command was not given to us.'"[15] Southern women were often excluded from the dialogue regarding missions, as the work was often left in the hands of men. Still, they were not idle and decided for themselves that they would make a great impact on the future of the world by going on missions.

In addition to their conviction that God wanted to help people, the elite Southern missionary women also wanted to assist other women because of their belief in the universal "woman." Historian Dana Roberts notes that "'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."[16] These Southern elite white women missionaries thought they were obliged to help other women both domestically and abroad because their religion transcended race– at least, idealistically. Under the assumption that they could empathize with other women regardless of ethnic identity because of their shared gender identity as women, the missionaries sought to alleviate women who they viewed to be "degraded" because of their lack of sanitation, education, and faith. They wanted to bring the Protestant God of the missionaries to their contexts hoping that they were helping other women as women themselves.

With their Premillennialist and social gospel theology in mind, these white elite women turned to the realm of social service to put their ideals into practice. While women were often confined to the home, one of the few public arenas in which they were allowed to participate was the church. Women were excited to partake in the work of the Kingdom. While traditionally

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[15] Noreen Dunn Tatum. *A Crown of Service: A Story of Woman's Work in the Methodist Church, South*, From 1878-1940 (Nashville, TN: The Parthenon Press, 1960), 37.
[16] Dana Roberts, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 133.

viewed as secondary in their ability to contribute to the mission field and often viewed as mere supporters of their missionary husbands in the early nineteenth century, women were beginning to be praised for their special ability to care for moral concerns. At the same time, "The Southern Methodist women did not view themselves as identical to males; in fact, they emphasized women's special sensitivity and social and moral concern."[17] Women who were traditionally supposed to be mothers were finding meaning outside of the home through leading in missionary activities because of their so-called womanly ability to empathize and relate to people due to their moral concern for society that came with their gender. Women who were working outside of the home through the missionary enterprise had a maternalistic bent on their social service occupations. Men were also interested in social gospel theology but often worked on issues like politics, theology, and industrial matters instead of domestic or familial affairs.[18]

With the gendered differences between the white male and female social gospelers in mind, it is important to note the ways that these elite Southern women were moved to action. They believed that morality and social reform started in the home. These Southern women harnessed their special ability to exercise moral concern because it directly affected them within the home. They reasoned that the widespread alcoholism and other sinful social ills were caused by a weakened family structure that could negatively affect children.[19] They felt that reform must happen in the home in order to produce a more sanitary and righteous living space. This concern for the home propelled women to engage in the missional cause. The people that the missionaries believed needed to reform were the poor, immigrant, and foreigners.

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[17] McDowell. *The Social Gospel in the South*, 125.
[18] Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, "Introduction," in *Gender and the Social Gospel*, ed. Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte Gifford (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 5.
[19] McDowell. *The Social Gospel in the South*, 58.

Social Evangelistic Work

The moral concern of women and their increased participation in society led to the development of the concept called "social evangelism." The term was rather expansive and included things like the literal sharing of the gospel with individuals or helping the poor in rural areas. Reflecting back on the elite Southern Methodist Protestant missionary enterprise, Sarah Estelle Haskin, former Editor of Literature of the Woman's Missionary Council, was chosen to recount the story of female missionary workers. When she suddenly passed, Noreen Dunn Tatum, an assistant in the department, continued the work Haskin started. Tatum wrote that the majority of this work was done within educational centers for two reasons:

> First, by training and inclination they were prepared to teach little children who were comparatively easy to reach and to win, and who was usually sorely lacking in opportunities for schooling. Second, through meeting this need of children the missionaries gained access to the homes and to older girls and women who would otherwise have been out of reach.[20]

To the missionaries, education was seen as a great means to evangelize to the people in society, as the elite Christian white women believed they needed to reform the home and also hear the gospel. By reaching young people who were seen as easier to convert, the women would then have access to the home because the children could convert their mothers and other members of the family.

This spiritual strategy of reforming the home through education was applied to those who the missionaries thought were most in need of hearing the gospel– the poor, unchurched, and uneducated– because they were often not Protestant Christians.[21] In a way, part of the work of missionary women was to teach people how to assimilate or conform to the dominant American culture that was white, Christian, and educated. In order to be viewed as more respectable,

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[20] Noreen Dunn Tatum. *A Crown of Service: A Story of Woman's Work in the Methodist Church, South*, From 1878-1940 (Nashville, TN: The Parthenon Press, 1960), 94.
[21] McDowell. *The Social Gospel in the South*, 67.

people needed to be literate to educate themselves in the scriptures which would transform their lives through the gospel they were taught in schools and at church. The result would be the transformation of the populations they hoped to reform. To the missionaries, Christianity and modernity were inextricably linked; they believed Christianity was the reason for their ability to be respectable and functioning homemakers. The missionaries wanted to teach their missional subjects how to follow their social models to behave like them. Perhaps the missionaries were not aware that their Christianity was informed by the political and American culture in which they lived, though religion is almost always informed by the society in which a person lives. The gospel was not only for those at home; the missionaries wanted to also go on foreign missions.

III. Educational Pioneers

Home and Foreign missions worked together in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The first denominational missionary work among women began on the Lebanon Circuit in Bethlehem, Tennessee, where Mrs. M. L. Kelley spearheaded the first missionary society in the 1830s while her husband pastored churches.[22] These missionary societies gave women an opportunity to gather and participate in the work God was doing, but most women involved in missionary enterprise were the wives of male missionaries. The next missionary activity recorded was that of Mr. J. W. Lambuth and his wife Mary Isabella Mcclellan Lambuth who in the 1850s went to Shanghai, China. During the Civil War, while missionary work continued, the activity witnessed a decline as Southern women directed their attention to their homes due to the Civil War while their husbands were away from home. The missionary enterprise experienced a resurgence after Reconstruction.

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[22] McDowell. *The Social Gospel in the South*, 9.

In 1878, Lochie Rankin (1851-1929), a teacher from Milan, TN, was the first unmarried woman missionary who was sent by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Southern Methodist Church to Shanghai to assist the Lambuths at the Clopton Boarding School.[23] This school was built with the money from the sale of the diamonds on Willie Harding McGavock's wedding veil, allowing women to put their ideas of social evangelism through education into practice. McGavock could participate in missionary work from home by playing the integral role of assisting to fund their work. By financially supporting women, the missionary enterprise proved to be a powerful source of women's connection both domestically and transpacifically abroad as women like McGavock could financially support her peer's religious convictions to socially evangelize the "heathen" in other countries.[24] In addition, the fact that she sold the diamonds on her wedding veil points to her commitment and emotional attachment to the cause. Weddings, a sacred Christian practice, are the legitimating way for heteronormative couples to live together and for women to become virtuous Christian mothers. By giving up her veil, she hoped that other women could also enjoy what she considered to be the benefits of marriage through her donation, as she thought the missionaries were doing good for "heathens" when they taught their subjects about the good that comes from marriage with a Christian man.

[23] Tatum. *A Crown of Service*, 80.
[24] Sara Estelle Haskin. *Women and Missions in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1920), 16.

MRS. WILLIE HARDING (D.H.) McGAVOCK

This picture was photographed from a beautiful oil painting presented to the Woman's Missionary Council by her grandson, Mr. Spence McGavock, October, 1920

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Rankin and her work at the Clopton School was not the only instance of a missionary school. Like the Lambuths, Young John Allen served as a missionary in China during the Civil War. Educated at Emory University, he asked his classmate Bishop Atticus G. Haygood's (1839-1896) sister to create a school for wealthy girls in Shanghai. Laura Haygood was often praised for her exemplary educational work as a teacher in the Trinity Home of Atlanta which primarily served black women, combining social and religious elements.[26] She was seen as a perfect candidate for the work Allen was envisioning for China. He wanted to create a school for young Chinese women in Shanghai so that the men he taught could be married to faithful wives and could then create Christian heteronormative families.

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[25] Photo from Haskin. *Women and Missions*.
[26] McDowell. *The Social Gospel in the South*, 10.

Laura Haygood and her predecessor, Lochie Rankin, were two women who were called to be some of the first single women missionaries in China. They were able to serve the Kingdom as single women instead of being viewed as mere assistants to their husbands. The work of these women opened the possibilities for other single women to be taken seriously as capable leaders in the missionary enterprise. Women were given the ability to exercise leadership in new ways by serving in the foreign missionary enterprise for they were not seen as subservient to men but strong and spiritually guided people who were capable of training and educating foreign women to become Christians. By taking the bold step of endeavoring in the world of foreign missions, the women were able to create a new pathway for other women to serve abroad.

IV. Scarritt Bible and Training School

Women like Laura Haygood were perfect candidates for foreign missions because they had experience as teachers. At the same time, the missionary societies quickly realized they were in need of a missionary training school to continue the work the two started. Belle Benett (1852-1922) was convicted to start a school for this purpose. When Bennett attended the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions meeting in 1889 in Little Rock, she presented her idea there.[27] The Board was fully supportive, and various people offered personal pledges for the school amounting to almost five hundred dollars; the first pledge of over fifty dollars was made by Martha Matilda Chick.[28] Later, Chick's husband, Dr. Nathan Scarritt, promised Bennett to assist with anything necessary in the formation of the school, including the land and $25,000 for the erection of the school.[29] The school was to be named the Scarritt Bible and Training School

[27] Tatum. *A Crown of Service*, 303.
[28] Tatum. *A Crown of Service*, 304.
[29] Tatum. *A Crown of Service,* 305.

and opened in 1892. Located in Kansas City, Missouri, it was created by a woman for other women.

One of the first tasks in building the school was to find a principal. After Bennett declined to become the principal, they wanted to hire Laura Haygood with all of her experience in the Trinity Atlanta Mission School and her work in China, but she politely refused in order to continue the work she was doing.[30] Instead, they chose Maria Layng Gibson (1845-1927) who was a principal of a school in Covington, Kentucky at the time. Gibson later became president of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions. In 1903, Mabel Howell (1874-1957) was added as the chair of sociology at the school.[31] She helped establish teaching that would produce practical skills for the students.

Foreign mission preparation was seen as second yet equal importance to the call to ministry. Women like Bennett and Gibson believed in a college education for the preparation of missionary leaders. Gibson addressing the Berlin World Missionary Conference in 1910 said, "The church feels the need of workers at home and abroad with high qualifications and the most advanced preparation of trained specialists for all fields."[32] While women like Haygood and Rankin were trained through experience, it was seen as important to properly train missionary women for their foreign missionary careers through training schools. Gibson described that the students could generally complete their training in two years and would enter through officials of the missionary society for which they applied for acceptance.[33] Notably, they generally accepted people who were from ages eighteen to twenty-two; each person was required to complete the

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[30] Haskin. *Women and Mission*, 241.
[31] Haskin. *Women and Mission*, 246.
[32] Maria Layng Gibson, "The Place of the Missionary Training School in the Preparation of Missionaries: Concerning Present Methods of Education and Training in Missionary Training Schools open to women in the United States and Canada," 1910, 2017.009, Box 5, Folder 2, Maria Layng Gibson Collection, Scarritt Bennett Center, Nashville, TN.
[33] Gibson, "The Place of the Missionary Training School."

equivalent of a High School education.[34] These missionary women were highly educated and were supposed to be prepared for the work they were going to do after they graduated.

Beyond the leaders who led the school's founding and the purpose of the schools, what can help illustrate the impact of the school is an analysis of the letter series alumni sent in response to the question, "What Miss Bennett and Scarritt Mean to Us." In 1925, reflecting back thirteen years prior to when she was a student at Scarritt, Martha Allis, a secretary at the Y.M.C.A. in Little Rock, Arkansas,[35] wrote about her positive experience at the school. She wrote, "The greatest thing that came into my life while at Scarritt was the privilege of touching the lives of women like Miss Belle H. Bennett, Miss Maria L. Gibson, Miss Mabel K. Howell, and Miss Elizabeth Billingsley. The friendship of women such as these absolutely opened to me a new way of life and revealed to me the true spirit of service."[36] Allis wrote that the most encouraging aspect of the school was being able to learn from her teachers. She looked up to the way that they interacted with one another, teaching her and others the ways that students should act in a respectful and Christian manner. She continues: "I have never known such lives as these– their utter self-effacement, their absolute unselfishness, their beautiful fellowship and relationship, one with the other, such preferring the other and desiring that not her own, but the other's ability should be recognized, has something that is so beautiful that it will live in memory throughout eternity."[37] The impact of the teachers on Allis was the value of friendship she learned as they morally and spiritually encouraged one another through the work they were preparing to do.

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[34] Gibson, "The Place of the Missionary Training School."
[35] *Scarritt Bible and Training School Catalogue (1895-1924)*, 2019.024, Box 1, Scarritt College Course Catalogues Collection, Scarritt Bennet Center, Nashville, TN.
[36] Martha Allis, "What Miss Bennett and Scarritt Mean to Us," 2017.009, Box 8, Maria Layng Gibson Collection, Scarritt Bennet Center, Nashville, TN.
[37] Allis, "What Miss Bennett and Scarritt Mean to Us."

Others also wrote their responses on what the Scarritt Bible and Training School meant to them. For Elizabeth McMillion, class of 1907 and home missionary in Murphysville, Illinois,[38] Scarritt was a place where she learned how to become a better Christian worker. She began her reflection by describing how the school prepared her physically for missions through their daily outdoor recreation, healthy food, and comfortable rooms.[39] She also highlighted how she was mentally prepared at the school: "The mental equipment which I received at the school was marvelous… Manifestation of the abiding, living Christ, in the hearts and lives of teachers and pupils, an intensified longing, 'that in all things He might have the preeminence' (our class motto) might be my experience."[40] She was able to see the embodiment of Christ through her teachers and peers who helped her mentally prepare and transform herself for her work. She continues by saying, "The most prominent and most worthwhile characteristic– the exaltation of Jesus Christ at all times and under all conditions."[41] The most rewarding aspect of Scarritt was the kinship she felt amongst her peers and the exaltation of Christ.

The Scarritt Bible and Training School envisioned and made into a reality by women, helped women learn from other women, and proved to be a positive place from which students could exercise leadership, encourage one another through their faith, and form meaningful connections with one another. Through Belle Bennett and other generous funders like McGavock, the dream of the school to train women missionaries became a reality. And, the selection of educational leaders such as Maria Layng Gibson and Mabel Howell was not merely viewed as great by the writers of the histories of Scarritt, but also affirmed by the alumni of the school who fondly remembered their experience. Of course, it is possible that only the records

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[38] *Alumna*, 2018.018, 1907, Box 6, Scarritt Bible and Training Collection, Scarritt Bennet Center, Nashville, TN.
[39] Elizabeth McMillion, "What Miss Bennett and Scarritt Mean to Us," 2017.009, Box 8, Maria Layng Gibson Collection, Scarritt Bennet Center, Nashville, TN.
[40] Elizabeth McMillion, "What Miss Bennett and Scarritt Mean to Us."
[41] Elizabeth McMillion, "What Miss Bennett and Scarritt Mean to Us."

that affirmed the positive influence of Scarritt were saved. Nevertheless, the school that helped prepare students for home and foreign missions proved to be an important step and avenue for women to gather, support, and encourage one another in preparation for the mission they hoped to do both within America and abroad.

While Allis and McMillion were home missionaries, the same sense of woman connection, mentorship, and women's networks to which they attested at Scarritt is apparent in the biography of Jennie Hughes Nicholson (1870-1907). Known by most as "June," she felt called to be a foreign missionary from a young age. Her missionary friend and fellow worker in China, Mary Culler White, in the biography *The Days of June* (1909) described Nicholson's time at Scarritt. She wrote about how even though Nicholson often felt homesick in the early days of her time at Scarritt, "Faithfully she worked, even while she was homesick, and application and determination effected a cure. Long before her junior year was over she was a happy member of the Training School family, loving and beloved."[42] It was at the Scarritt Bible and Training School that Nicholson was able to prepare herself for the missionary work she was called to do later as eventual Principal of the McTyeire School in Shanghai. Despite the tense socio-political climate in China she faced in the post-Boxer Rebellion era, she felt motivated to go to Shanghai. Clearly, at Scarritt, women were prepared for missions and could form women's networks with whom they could share their struggles and support one another by believing in the same missional cause. Through the mentorship they received at Scarritt, they could feel equipped to continue the legacy of women like Haygood who pioneered the McTyeire School in China.

[42] Mary Culler White, *The Days of June: The Story of June Nicholson* (New York: Fleming H. Revel Company, 1909), 23.

V. Conclusion

Southern white elite Methodist women at the turn of the twentieth century enjoyed increased participation in society because they were convinced that it was their Christian ethical duty to alleviate the social ills they thought were plaguing their society. Their social gospel and Premillennialist theology led to their desire to "uplift" the conditions of their society and also do the same in other foreign contexts. Building upon the work of the first-wave missionaries like Lambuth, a missionary wife who was often unrecognized, women like Rankin and Haygood were able to help both single and married women participate in foreign missions which reached its height at the turn of the century. Using their alleged special capacity for empathy, the women used this characteristic to help convert other women who they thought were in need of a Savior. Using the principle of social evangelization, they sought to convert young girls who could then teach their mothers, siblings, and family the gospel in order to fix social problems such as alcoholism, abuse, and other issues within the home. Central to their evangelistic ideology was that Christianity and modernity were inexplicably linked; to "modernize" and "fix" society, the missionaries wanted to Christianize them. With the legacy that Rankin and Haygood started, Belle Bennett decided to create the Scarritt Bible and Training School to assist them in nurturing new leaders to sustain and expand the work that Haygood and Rankin started.

As a result of the work of these women, one can see the ways that the missionary enterprise and the changing shape of women's roles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century allowed these white, educated, and elite Southern women to achieve new liberties. They were able to become leaders, form women's networks, support one another, and encourage one another that their work was doing good for the world. They strengthened one another by creating histories and lineages of women leaders. By participating in these new roles in society, they

could find a sense of meaning in their lives through their occupations, challenging their previously assumed roles as Victorian housewives and fate as caretaking mothers. Instead, women like Haygood, Rankin, Howell, and Gibson became spiritual mothers for the women they supported and raised through the missionary networks they paved.

Chapter 2: Making Mothers– Southern MECS Missionary Women in China

I. Introduction

Maria Layng Gibson, the President of the Scarritt Bible and Training School, encouraged, prepared, and propelled American white Methodist women to go on foreign missions according to her Premillennialist theology and social gospel convictions. In order to fulfill the word of God, she understood that women needed to spread the gospel. She encouraged her students at the training school that their work was meaningful through the different writings and speeches she would deliver. In a 1900 missionary document, she wrote, "One billion four hundred million immortal souls compose the world for which Christ died!... How shall they hear? The answer comes clear and plain. Through missionary effort!"[43] In this statement, Gibson appeals to the emotions of her audience as she urges them to pursue the burning conviction to preach the gospel to those who had not yet heard it. She understood that Christ would not return until all heard the good news as this was a commandment. By calling them immortal souls she raises the stakes of missionary effort, asserting the eternal damnation of those who do not profess their faith in Jesus as Lord and the eternal salvation of those who do accept Christ.

In addition to urging her students to go on missions, she understood her cultural position as an American who was encouraging her students to go to the East. Gibson expressed her disappointment in the US and China trade, where Westerners traded opium for worldly things like fine dinnerware and other goods. She stated that the "'open port' of China gave entrance to the emissaries of Satan as well as the ministries of God."[44] Though trade brought negative things like opium to China, she believed that the Southern missionary women could turn the exchanges between the West and the East into something positive by bringing the gospel to China. To put

[43] Maria Layng Gibson, "Our Duty Toward Missionary Report," 1900, 2017.009, Box 5, Folder 2, Maria Layng Gibson Collection, Scarritt Bennett Center, Nashville, TN.
[44] Gibson, "Our Duty Toward Missionary Report."

the situation in context for her readers she said, “Statistics show that the Chinese spend more money annually for opium than they receive for their silk and rice and that curse was imported by traders sailing under the flag of a Christian nation!”[45] While she did not provide the source of her statistics, she nevertheless encouraged her students and other readers to prioritize missions. She hoped that she could address the “evil” societal sin of smoking by bringing the gospel to China.

Women who were taught under the leadership of Gibson were encouraged to act upon their Premillennialist theology by going from America to China and in the process educating Chinese women on how to be proper Christians. After being trained at a school like Scarritt, the Protestant Christian workers could be prepared to achieve this end. With their theological aspiration in mind, this did not mean that their work was wholly virtuous, as the line between evangelization and what Dana Roberts calls “cultural imperialism” of Victorian mothering became blurred through their missionary practice. This chapter seeks to analyze the ways Southern Methodist elite missionary women’s views of race and “modernity” that the missionaries carried with them from America to China affected their missionary practice, and ultimately limited their ability to imagine a Christian Chinese woman as something more than domestic women according to the Victorian ideal of mothering that the missionaries were ironically rejecting through becoming missionaries, educators, and leaders. Caught up in their strategy of evangelizing through education, it becomes unclear whether their goal of converting Chinese women became a reality in practice, as in practice it sometimes focused more on physical and cultural change than spiritual.

[45] Gibson, “Our Duty Toward Missionary Report.”

II. Reforming China

Beyond these sentimental appeals of emotion to promote the missional cause, documents such as the *Missionary Centenary 1819-1919: World Survey* (1919) detailed "The Task Before Us." Written in celebration of the mission work the Methodist Episcopal Church did over 100 years since they started going on missions in 1819, they wrote their future plans regarding what they wished to do in each country the MECS sent people. Specifically for China, the Missionary Centenary Commission of the MECS wrote statements such as, "The old education system has proven insufficient. A new one is in the process of formation, promising intellectual freedom to women as well as to men" or "old faiths, traditions, and superstitions show signs of a mighty collapse."[46] From this, it can be discerned that the missionaries had an explicit agenda to overtake the educational forms and systems of the Chinese in pursuit of Western education. Still, the line between cultural imperialism and evangelization through spiritual means quickly became blurred through lines such as these in the missionary centenary.

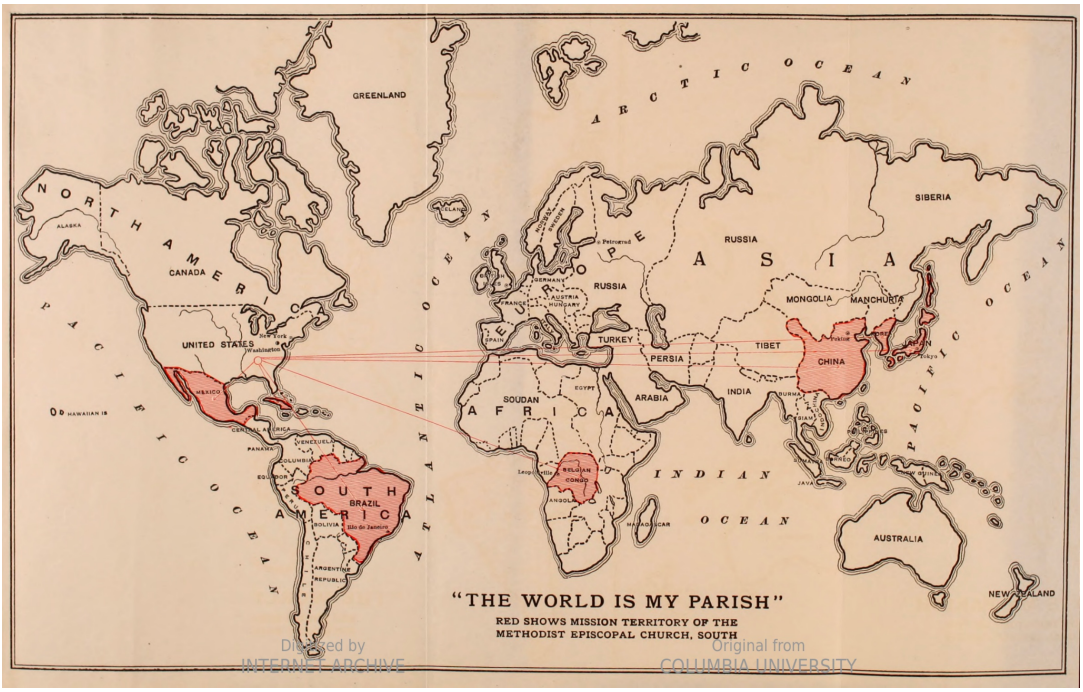
Part of the issue with the missionary enterprise was the ambiguous relationship between well-meaning women who sought to do "Woman's Work for Woman" according to their beliefs in a "global sisterhood" and in contrast to the way the missionaries lived out their goals in practice. Because women were often advancing their mission to spread the gospel through Western means, it can be difficult to distinguish when the spiritual mission to evangelize turned into what Historian Dana Roberts calls "cultural imperialism." Roberts writes, "The emphasis on social change toward Western norms, couched in the language of helping to bring about God's kingdom on earth, made 'Woman's Work for Woman' a partner with the myths of Western

[46] Board of Missions, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, "Missionary Centenary 1819-1919: World Survey," Hathitrust. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nnc2.ark:/13960/t44r2d515

superiority so prominent during the late nineteenth century."[47] In other words, the white Southern missionaries would often try to convert people in foreign contexts through American cultural norms. Part of the issue with their spiritual strategy of evangelizing through something like education is that the Protestant and American missionaries could not dissociate Christianity from "modernity," where it was hard to imagine a Christian society without things like sanitary living conditions, strong moral homes, and an education.

In the case of the missionary centenary, the missionary writers of the document assumed that not only was their religious ideology superior to those of the "heathen" Chinese but also that their educational systems were better, leading to the need for Chinese systems to be reformed in order that people could read the scriptures. When the missionaries looked down on what they labeled as "old faiths, traditions, and superstitions," their missional motivations can be problematized because their religion was one that was supposed to be for all people. If all were loved by God and equal in His eyes, then attempting to appeal to their missionary subjects through cultural means like education is a central question explored throughout this chapter.

[47] Dana Roberts, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 136.



Map highlighting each of the countries that the MECS conducted missions. Source from "Missionary Centenary 1819-1919: World Survey," Hathitrust. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nnc2.ark:/13960/t44r2d515

Educating China

One way that the missionaries sought to "reform" the old faith and superstitions of the Chinese was by educating them about their Christian theology. When Dr. Young John Allen, a pioneering missionary in China, was superintendent of the China Mission, he saw that the General Work and Women's work could complement one another through the creation of mutually dependent yet independent schools for both men and women. He wanted to raise good Christian men and women in these interdependent schools. Similar to how Southern home missionaries like Laura Haygood wanted to "uplift" African American young women through education, Allen hoped Haygood could do the same in China by "uplifting" the "heathen" Chinese young women she would teach at the school they would create together.

In 1884, Allen gathered together nine women and five men to discuss the China Mission, and Laura Haygood was chosen as one of the women to participate in the conversation. Haygood was selected to lead the future creation of the McTyeire school in Shanghai because of her outstanding achievement as a high-school teacher in Atlanta and a home missionary who had great potential to start a similar kind of school in China. Though initially hesitant, Haygood was eventually convinced. Sarah Estelle Haskin, a home missionary who dedicated her life to advancing the missional cause, described in her history of the foreign missionary enterprise that Haygood "soon came to share Dr. Allen's conviction that a definite effort should be made to reach the sons and daughters of China's upper class in order that strong and influential leader among the Chinese themselves might be developed."[48] The McTyeire school, though initially meant for the elite class, ended up accepting students from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Their plan was to convert the elite in society in hopes that if the most wealthy and powerful in society were saved, then the rest of the country would eventually follow their example. When the school initially opened, it had 7 students, but later expanded to hundreds.[49]

Because of the success of the McTyeire School with its strong leadership, missionaries wanted to create a school of equal caliber in Suzhou. Mrs. A. P. Parker was commissioned to spearhead a small boarding school for young girls called the East Side Boarding School whose name was later changed to the Mary Lambuth School.[50] In 1887, Lou Phillips came after Allen's call to take over the Mary Lambuth School. Later, Mrs. J. P. Campbell took over until 1895 when Martha Pyle became supervisor.[51] Eventually, through the work of many other missionary

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[48] Noreen Dunn Tatum. *A Crown of Service: A Story of Woman's Work in the Methodist Church, South*, From 1878-1940 (Nashville, TN: The Parthenon Press, 1960), 83.
[49] Sara Estelle Haskin. *Women and Missions in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1920), 48.
[50] Tatum, *A Crown of Service*, 84.
[51] Tatum, *A Crown of Service*, 84.

women, three educational institutions emerged in Suzhou– the Laura Haygood Normal School, Davidson Girls School, and Atkinson Academy.[52]

Martha Pyle, the supervisor of the Mary Lambuth School, wanted the Laura Haygood School to raise virtuous women so that Christian men who graduated from Suzhou University might be able to marry a Christian wife.[53] With this goal in mind, the Board moved the Mary Lambuth Primary School to Shanghai and combined it with the Clopton School, making it a feeder school to McTyeire School.[54] Pyle was then commissioned to make a new and larger school in East Suzhou in honor of the starter of the McTyeire School and called this new school the Laura Haygood Normal School.

Through schools such as the McTyeire School or Laura Haygood Normal School, the missionaries thought they could teach Chinese girls how to become Christians through their various educational programs. Missionary women were not trying to make Asian women into Western women necessarily, but oftentimes this is what they ended up doing because the missionaries could not imagine what Christian womanhood would entail without the embodiment of Western cultural mores. At the McTyeire School in Shanghai, the furniture was all Chinese, proving that the missionaries sought to immerse themselves into the culture in which they were living. And, though the school offered courses in Chinese language and literature, English language and literature, and music, the only requirement was religious education courses. On one level, the course offerings prove a way a proper Chinese woman could be cultivated in the eyes of the missionaries was to become a Christian. And, the commitment of the teachers to learn Chinese proves they earnestly desired for their students to become Christians and were dedicated to the cause. Because the Southern elite white missionaries were adapting to

[52] Tatum, *A Crown of Service*, 84.
[53] Tatum, *A Crown of Service*, 84.
[54] Tatum, *A Crown of Service*, 84.

certain aspects of Chinese culture, they likely did not view themselves to be culturally imposing their American and Victorian understandings of womanhood onto their missional subjects, though in practice this is what they were doing. Embedded into their spiritual strategy of evangelizing through schools, they were implicitly signaling their belief that their educational models were superior.

When missionaries were creating the ideal Chinese woman, it was more complicated than simply making Chinese women into Western people. Being a proper Christian lady in their eyes affirmed Chinese culture, so long as it allowed women to truly convert and understand the gospel. Though it is not excusable, the missionaries likely did not view themselves as being racist; they likely thought they were doing good for society by providing those without a formalized education in foreign lands a Christian one. So by teaching the Bible in Chinese, the missionary women were willing to learn a new language and create familiar environments for the students by choosing the furniture that they assumed would make the best learning space. While the end goal was to raise Christian women through their educational program, the missionaries saw that it was not necessarily a negative thing for the converts to be drawn to the faith initially for the education they could receive at the schools if it later led to their conversion. Still, it cannot be ignored that the Southern white women who were primarily from wealthier families and well-educated themselves assumed that their Western culture was superior to the Chinese. Otherwise, they would not have taught things like Western music-making or English to their missionary students in the schools.

Anti-Footbinding Work

More specifically within the schools, the anti-footbinding work of the missionaries was another way the missionaries sought to “reform” the “superstitions” and “old faith traditions” of

the Chinese elite young women they taught at their schools. When missionaries came to China, they were horrified at what they saw. To the Southern women who went to the foreign land; the missionary women reasoned, "Footbinding is anti-Christian because Nature – the Creator – endowed women with integral, natural bodies. The doctrine of Heavenly feet is thus predicated on the construction of a God-given natural body"[55] The Southern women were perplexed because in no other country were people binding their feet. They reasoned that God intended for people to naturally wear their feet and decided that footbinding was a sinful act on the basis of three categories: "as [a] cultural contrivance, as a violation of parental love, and as a sexual threat to the God-loving man."[56] The limited mobility and the potential for small feet to be sexually attractive to men were reasons enough to end the practice. From the missionary women's perspective, any bodily alteration was a signal to God that humans thought they knew better than God on how people should look. Before China's defeat in their war in Japan in 1895, it was primarily missionary women who were interested in educating women or ending footbinding.

Though the precise date for the origin of footbinding is unknown, it is commonly accepted that the practice began at least during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Based on folk stories and understandings of the practice, it is also commonly accepted that foot binding started with the imperial court and eventually trickled down to the lower social classes, with the aim to encourage women to be idle and dependent on men.[57] Still, footbinding was not practiced by all Chinese women; it originated from the Han Chinese tradition. A proper lady to the missionary women was one who could unbind her feet from the male oppressors, but missionaries did not always try to understand what free womanhood was beyond mobility. They likely did not have

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[55] Dorothy Ko. *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 15.
[56] Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*, 17.
[57] Alison R. Drucker. "The Influence of Western Women on the Anti-Footbinding Movement 1840-1911." *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 8, no. 3 (1981), 179.

the cultural competencies to conceptualize a "proper Christian lady" in the context of China because of their Western bias and preconceptions of what a virtuous woman was. Missionary women sought the best tactic to eradicate footbinding was to discourage young girls from beginning the practice altogether, as older women's bodies would likely resist the undoing of years of restricted feet.[58]

Besides discouraging the practice, missionary women reasoned that policy needed to be enforced in order to secure the end of what they viewed as an evil social practice. Deng Changyao, the head of the Office of Civil Affairs (Minzhengting chang) in Shaanxi, a province west of Shanxi, made a three-step process in 1928, mimicking Sun Yat Sen's tutelage program in creating a parliamentary democracy, which included three steps: admonition, or enforcing boys to wear banners that read 'I refuse to marry a boundfoot person;' enforcement, or sending inspectors to each household forcing the unbinding of feet; and penalty, which included detaining those who would refuse to unbind their feet.[59] Though the anti-footbinding movement can be seen as a marker of the success that the missionary enterprise achieved, at times, the means by which the practice was eradicated revealed the attitude of those leading the movement. Historian Dorothy Ko remarks,

> Whereas the leading male thinkers called them parasites and femmes fatales harmful to the nation, the campaigns either infantilized or humiliated them by exposing their bodies to ridicule or inspection in public… The tactic of the campaign is inherently paradoxical: the spectacle of female suffering, which provoked people to change their thinking and behavior, accentuated the association of femaleness with passivity and victimhood.[60]

Natural feet and being able-bodied was one aspect of the proper woman they wanted to craft. Still, moving past the ideal women the missionaries were trying to cultivate by unbinding their

[58] Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*, 63.
[59] Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*, 64.
[60] Ko, *Cinderella Sisters*, 68.

feet, they were also dehumanizing women by humiliating their cultural practice and treating it as a spectacle.

Still, they did have some standards regarding what "proper" femininity entailed, as they wanted women to at least perform what they considered to be normal by encouraging women to unbind their feet. They used bound feet as a marker of the success of their work: "The number of bound feet in the school grows beautifully less. There are now left only five young ladies whose feet are really bound. There are no children with bound feet."[61] In this reflection by Haygood in a letter to one of her friends, she wished to prove to herself and her friends back in the States that their works were not without meaning and that they were liberating women from the social sin of footbinding. Though the definition of an ideal Chinese woman is not entirely clear, it is certain that liberation from male oppression was one important aspect of cultivating freedom, but at the same time, this message did not promote the liberation of women to make all of their decisions and be independent of men either. At the least, an ideal Chinese woman was one who was a devout Christian and able-bodied.

III. From Education to Marriage: the Making of Domestic Christian Ladies

While the missionaries were able to unbind the feet of their missionary subjects and also create schools to educate women, at times the execution of these goals proved to be questionable. On one hand, missionary Laura Haygood was praised for her ability to create the McTyeire school for girls. She was excited when she saw that the number of girls binding their feet was "beautifully less" and praised the girls who were beginning to attend her school. Yet, in 1894, ten years after when she first went to China, she returned to the United States to visit and stay with her brother. During this time, she reported her experience to the *Atlanta Constitution*: "The

[61] Oswald Eugene Brown and Anna Muse Brown. "Chapter XIII: McTyeire Home and School" in *Life and Letters of Laura Askew Haygood*. (Nashville, TN; Dallas TX: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1904), 289.

marriages are conducted in a peculiar way. Neither the bride nor the groom is consulted in the matter, and the whole thing is arranged by a class of marriage brokers. Often the parties have never before seen each other."[62] She viewed the love relationships of Chinese people to be strange and restrictive. Haygood depicts these arranged affairs that are often conducted by parents to be "radically different" than that of the American way of marriage. She goes further to claim that, "of course, marriages thus arranged result in sadness and disappointment, and there is nothing of the sacredness that belongs to Christian homes."[63] Haygood believed these marriages to be detrimental to the well-being of Chinese women, and instead judged that Christian and Western ways of arranging marriages made both parties in the relationship happier.

The Western style of marriage she discussed is called "companionate marriages." These unions were based on attraction between a male and female as opposed to traditional kinds of marriage wherein parents would arrange two partners.[64] Yet, instead of encouraging marriage matchmaking to be done through the Chinese students finding love amongst themselves, the missionaries instead used the schools as places for women to develop into holy women who could then enjoy the sacredness of marriage that is supposed to be found in Christian homes. They were convinced that through the work of God, developing Christian Chinese homemakers could solve part of the issues that were found in the "sad" and "disappointing" homes that were being discovered among the Chinese. The missionaries hoped that by raising faithful Christian mothers, the gospel could be proclaimed and last for generations.

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[62] "Talks about China: Miss Laura Haygood Describes The Country Interestingly. Peculiar customs of the People. How the Marriages Arranged and Conducted– Interesting Facts about It's Social and Moral Condition." *The Atlanta Constitution* (1881-1945), May 6, 1894. https://login.proxy.library.emory.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/talks-about-china/docview/193297734/se-2.

[63] "Talks about China: Miss Laura Haygood," May 6, 1894.

[64] Peggy Pascoe. "Gender Systems in Conflict: The Marriages of Mission-Educated Chinese American Women, 1874-1939." *Journal of Social History*, 22, no.4 (Summer 1989): 634.

Missionary women felt that female Chinese students needed to be married. Though Haygood said that the Chinese parents arranging marriages made for unhappy relationships, ironically missionary women became their students' spiritual mothers and took on the role of match-making converting women with equally pious men in order to allow women to apply what they learned regarding what it means to be a Christian mother. In order to prove that the system of educating and converting Chinese women and then match-making them with good husbands was working, missionary women at times would explain to their friends in America how successful the missionary work was working. Perhaps, they even shared stories to make themselves feel a sense of accomplishment and that their work was meaningful. One such story is the one that unfolds in the life of an ideal Christian student named Ji Yung.

Ji Yung, "A Beautiful Gem"

Miss Janie H. Watkins, a Methodist missionary and faculty of the Laura Haygood Memorial School, published a book recounting the story of her exemplary student Ji Yung in 1911. Watkins, part of the missionary women generation after Haygood, wanted to continue Haygood's legacy of raising Christian mothers through her work at the school named in her honor. One of the goals of the Laura Haygood Memorial School was to provide pious wives for the neighboring men's Soochow University makes this kind of story unsurprising. In the introduction of the story, Maria Layng Gibson, the Principal of the Scarritt Bible and Training School, explained the relationship between the missionary teacher Miss Watkins and her student: "[Ji Yung] entered the Laura Haygood Memorial at thirteen, and then the polishing of the gem began. She remained a heathen several years, and her teacher wrote: 'To the daily study of the Bible Ji Yung brought a heart steeped in prejudice.' But God laid this young girl on the hearts of

her teachers, and the transformation of her life– a miracle of grace— was their reward."[65] Gibson described to the readers how the missionaries were able to transform a gem they found through polishing and training it to shine. Ji Young, initially described as a "heathen," was able to grow into what the missionaries considered to be a respectable Christian woman because she was able to adopt the mannerisms and teachings of her mentors after she converted to Christianity.

In the letters between the teacher and student, Ji Yung was able to mature into the noble Christian woman they wanted her to be. In the first letter in the collection, written at the end of the sixth year she was at the school, she wrote:

> I love not the honors and pleasures of this world; so although this man is the son of Chang Chih Ton's sister, and his father is one of the higher officers of the province Hunan, I don't please at all. I wish rather to be a teacher, that I can always help others and do work. Truly a very unfortunate girl I am, and it seems no one can help me; yet I decide to go forward bravely and do what is right. I hope very much that I can always find comfort and help in the Bible.[66]

One of the first things that Ji Yung says in the letter series is that she wanted to be a teacher. She respected the person she was arranged to marry but preferred to help society by educating other Chinese women like the Southern white missionaries who were her teachers. Ji Yung was not trying to overturn or question the educational model the missionaries presented her, but she wanted to be a teacher like the women she admired, not a Christian mother.

Missionary women who went to bring Christianity to China were pleased with students like Ji Yung who embodied the traits that would make a proper woman. Ji Yung admitted in another letter: "How sorry I am for the sins and ignorance of my country! Now I will ask you to pray to God that he will change the hearts of my father, mother, and all my family."[67] She perfectly articulated what the missionaries wanted to happen in China; when women converted,

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[65] Janie H. Watkins. *Ji Yung, A Beautiful Girl: Letters from a Chinese School Girl* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1911), 8.
[66] Watkins, *Ji Young,* 17.
[67] Watkins, *Ji Young,* 20.

the missionaries hoped they could convert their families and continue to raise Christians for generations. Because Ji Yung said exactly what the missionary women wanted people from home to read, she was able to become a symbol of the success of educating women in China, even though at the time Chinese society often viewed education as unnecessary for women. Her submission to their cause made her a model student.

Another part of the goal of training women like Ji Yung in the schools was so that the homemakers in the family could teach their children the message of Christianity. Though tragic, it was seen as a good thing for Ji Yung to sacrifice the personal liberty and freedom she found in her education in order to do the "proper" womanly thing of converting her family. She admitted, "Now my heart is full of sorrow over myself and all the sisters of my own country, who always suffer worse than I. How poor is it to be a Chinese woman! She is but a toy or slave to man. She cannot do what she pleases, and even has no chance to decide in her own life."[68] Even though she was educated and could have become a single teacher to help other Chinese women the way that the celibate and unmarried missionaries did, she was still considered heroic and a "beautiful gem" for agreeing to an arranged marriage if it meant that she could become a Christian mother. It was more beneficial for her to become a wife than to be a single but pious teacher in the eyes of the missionaries. She articulated her distaste for arranged marriages in agreement with Haygood, who originally criticized the practice.

What the missionaries were trying to accomplish can be questioned based on the narrative the missionaries provided. Though Ji Yung is described as a "gem" because of her devotion to God, at the same time the irony is that the evangelizing through families model that the missionaries were trying to produce was not going to happen because gems are not self-reproducing, difficult to find, and require a polisher. In this case, Ji Yung is described as an

[68] Watkins, *Ji Young,* 22.

exemplary student, meaning not every student was this perfect; careful devotion to an individual like the polishing of a gem is how a beautiful item, in the end, is produced. Simultaneously, if the goal is to produce quality items, then the comparison of a person to a jewel can also imply a capitalistic and goods-producing agenda for the missionary women who were experiencing the industrial revolution at home. If the goal was to make gem-producing machines, it is not entirely clear what the missionaries wanted to do when it was difficult to find more gems. In addition, if there were a lot of gems, the value of each one would be lost, because the reason why gems are so expensive is that they are so rare. Perhaps the missionary women were not thinking far enough ahead in time, or about the deeper implications of crafting "gems," which cannot simply be reproduced in a factory, for example, for the continuous polishing would require that women had a lot of individual time with their mentors.

Another irony of sharing stories like the one about Ji Yung is considering how white missionary women in society were considered superior to married missionary wives in China. Though it was unfortunate that Ji Yung was unable to live freely as a teacher like her white teachers, the Southern white women missionaries did not intervene or encourage her to seek freedom in singleness the way they themselves were living. First-wave missionary wives like Mary Lambuth were often not funded to pursue their own projects because they were seen as supporters of their husbands and not much more than this. As a result, these first-wave and pre-Civil War missionary wives occupied a secondary status in the missionary society in comparison to the men who were leading the enterprise. The next generation of women missionaries like Laura Haygood and onward were viewed as respectable missionary women because of their self-denial, where "the truly feminine was validated by its sacrifices rather than by its rewards."[69] While single white women missionaries like Laura Haygood were viewed as

[69] Hunter, *Gospel of Gentility*, 100.

respectable for denying marriage and having kids in pursuit of serving God, Chinese women like Ji Yung were encouraged to get married in order to Christianize her family and those in a similar social status as her.

In a sense, she was to make a similar familial unit to that of the American one, but it was not to be looked at as the same level or equally as that of a white American one. Though Ji Yung was an exemplary student who lived and said nearly exactly what missionaries wanted them to say during the period of segregation, racial tensions, and social Darwinism in the South, she was still seen as inferior. The missionaries could not imagine her becoming more than a Christian mother, even though Christianity was supposed to liberate her from "heathenness." An underlying question can be left through analyzing Ji Yung; what was the purpose of the missionary enterprise if there is still inequality? Though she was praised for learning how to think like a Western person, believing in their religion, and even cultivating heteronormative families just like her white mentors, she embodied the characteristics of what it meant to be a Christian woman by becoming educated in missionary schools and getting married still proved to be insufficient. The missionary enterprise was more than sharing the gospel with the "heathen," then. Convinced that their education was superior, the Southern Methodist women sought to teach the "heathen" the gospel through a formalized Christian education that emphasized teaching women how to be moral and great mothers. They were likely attempting to modernize the "Orient" while maintaining white superiority that they at times did not realize they were imposing. Their ideas of Western superiority were inherent in their work because their spiritual strategy of evangelizing was through social means. The missionaries probably could not imagine Christianity without "modernity." Ultimately, the arranged marriage of Ji Yung did not make her happy. She wanted to become a teacher and was appreciative of the education she received.

Ironically, Laura Haygood, the woman that the school Ji Yung attended was named, even explicitly said that arranged marriages can lead to unhappy relationships, and unfortunately, this became a reality for one of the students at the school.

IV. Conclusion

Missionaries sought to preach the gospel to the "heathen" or those who had not yet heard the gospel. According to their Premillennialist convictions, Christ would not return until all had heard the gospel. Women in high positions like Gibson, the principal of the Scarritt Bible and Training School would encourage their missionary students in training through various speeches and writings by describing how "immortal souls" were in need of being saved. Missionary documents wrote about the need to reform Chinese education because they viewed it to be inferior to the Western education they knew and cherished.

Ironically, while the Chinese were excluded from the U.S. starting in 1882, two years after this, Laura Haygood and many others for decades sought to reform China according to their American idea of mothering, yet the Chinese women they tried to shape into Victorian mothers were not allowed to come back to America. While China was seen as a valuable place to buy and trade arguably superficial items like tea, porcelain, and silks in addition to Chinese workers who were paid low wages for undesirable jobs in America, the Chinese were later excluded from America. While Chinese people were excluded from coming to America, Southern women were encouraged to preach the gospel to the "heathen" and were seen as particularly pious for going to the East, the original place of the people Americans wished to exclude in America. Women training at schools like Scarritt started missionary schools in China. They were lauded for unbinding the feet of Chinese women and for teaching them literary skills so they could read the Bible and embody the Victorian ideas of domesticity. Yet, through analyzing the story of Ji Yung,

an ideal convert, it can be seen that sometimes the missionaries did not always do what was in the best favor of their missionary students, as the arranged marriage did not produce a happy ending that they tried to create for their student.

In the Western eyes, the "heathen" Chinese were unfit to be in the United States, but white missionary women could come to their land to "reform" them in their distant land. The line between "cultural imperialism" and evangelization through social means could be problematized through missionary practice because it was not always clear when the lines were crossed. While the missionaries wanted to provide a happy life for their students through Christian marriage, at times they did not know when to step back and allow their students to create meaning for their own lives like Ji Yung who wanted to become a teacher. Instead, they restricted her to what they viewed as a fruitful heteronormative family.

The well-meaning intentions of the missionaries can be problematized in light of the ways they practiced their convictions through the schools, which differed from what they idealized. Wrapped up in their spiritual strategy of evangelizing through social means, it at times appeared that they lost sight of their primary missional goal of evangelizing, not Westernizing. Missionaries who were preaching the gospel because of their sincerely held belief that it was their duty to do so likely could not see the ways that they were advancing ideas of Western cultural superiority instead of reimagining their faith and expanding the possibility for non-White people to be followers of Jesus, instead of encouraging their missional subjects to change themselves to act like the heteronormative and Western ideal of a Christian lady. As Historian Hyaewol Choi remarks, "For most missionaries, the gospel could not be separated from civilization.[70] Perhaps American women thought it was their spiritual and moral duty to make

[70] Hyaeweol Choi, "Women's Work for 'Heathen Sisters': American Women Missionaries and their Educational Work in Korea," Acta Koreana 2, (1999): 6.

non-Western countries resemble Western ones to be technologically, spiritually, and intellectually similar to America without wishing for foreigners to come back to America, pointing to the power inequalities present in the missionary enterprise.

Chapter 3: New Religion, New Woman– Christianity in the Life of a Korean Convert, Melissa Kim

I. Introduction

Melissa Kim[71] (1879-1955) converted to Christianity through her aunt, a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. She journeyed from Korea to China and then to the United States to obtain an education so she could prepare herself to become an educator for other Korean Women. And, based on her own experiences of family dysfunction she experienced because of her father as a child, she likely found meaning in her new religion because she found women role models that helped her reclaim purpose in life and conceptualize her ideal of a Korean Christian woman.

This chapter seeks to analyze the ways that Korean converts like Melissa Kim were constructing their own kind of Christianity within their native context. While American missionary women sought to inculcate their idea of Christian womanhood into their missional subjects, the Koreans were not passive recipients of the things they were taught. Instead, they both accepted the new religion in which they found hope but also resisted certain aspects of the faith in order to create a distinct version of Korean Christianity. For Melissa Kim, Christianity was an avenue for her to find women role models; she agreed with her missionary instructors that reform started in the home but also expanded her idea of an ideal Christian woman to encompass not only a faithful mother but also encouraged her students to venture and explore topics outside of the domestic sphere like her missionary teachers.

[71] Also known as Cha Mirisa

II. Missionary Work in Korea

Shortly after Melissa Kim's conversion, she taught Korean at a missionary school called Ewha Hakdang. This school was created by a white woman missionary named Mary Scranton. Ewha is one example of the ways that the missionaries achieved their agenda of educating and converting the "heathen" Koreans. During the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392-1910), there was no formal education for women in Korea.[72] In traditional Chosŏn Korea, women were either unmarried girls (*kyeojip*) or married women (*punye*).[73] According to Confucian influence in Korean society, women were confined to the inner chambers of the home with the laws of *naeoe* (inside and outside).[74] When missionaries saw the way that Confucian restricted women's mobility, they wanted to free them from their isolation and ignorance through education.[75] Yet, the primary goal of missionaries was not to simply educate Koreans; they wanted to teach them about Christianity. They believed that "spreading the gospel meant liberation from ignorance and seclusion for Korean women."[76] They hoped that Christian education could be a means by which "heathen" women could come out of their "backward" ways by liberating them from the perceived ignorance and seclusion of Korean women.

Missionaries viewed Korea as a *tabula rasa* or a blank slate. They saw that there was no national religion like Buddhism in China and saw this as an opportunity to "reform" Korea through the spreading of the gospel. Historian William Yoo writes how the missionaries believed "Korea's weak geopolitical position and recent opening to foreigners was a unique opportunity for them to introduce their religion to a vulnerable indigenous population looking for new

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[72] Hyaeweol Choi, "Women's Work for 'Heathen Sisters': American Women Missionaries and their Educational Work in Korea," Acta Koreana 2, (1999): 3.
[73] Heejeong Sohn, "Gendering Modernity: Korean Women Seen through the Early Missionary Gaze (1880s-1910s)," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 16, no. 16 (2015): 200.
[74] Sohn, "Gendering Modernity," 200.
[75] Choi, "Women's Work for 'Heathen Sisters,'" 3.
[76] Choi, "Women's Work for 'Heathern Sisters,'" 3.

systems of meaning. Unlike other Asians, Koreans did not adhere to one or two dominant non-Christian religious traditions."[77] Missionaries wanted to bring the "true" religion to Korea– a land they saw was not religious like other East Asian countries and therefore fertile soil to grow Christians.

Missionaries were compelled to go to Korea because of their Premillennialist theology that encouraged them to spread the gospel to all the nations. In addition, they wanted to alleviate what they considered to be social issues according to their social gospel convictions. Missionaries put their Premillennialist and social gospel theology into practice when they created missionary schools in Korea. They believed that similar to the way they sought to improve America by starting schools, they could also reform Korean society by providing an education to those who traditionally did not receive a formal one. Their most important goal was to increase literacy so that women could read the Bible. The missionaries hoped women could learn Christian morals at these schools that they could then teach to their families.[78]

Mary F. Scranton (1832-1909) became the first American woman missionary in Korea sent by the Woman's Foreign Methodist Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.[79] As a widowed woman in her older years, she moved to Korea with her doctor son, William B. Scranton, who came to serve Koreans through his medical practices in 1884.[80] Part of the reason she was able to do missions was because of her single status in American society. Though widowed women were some of the most vulnerable people due to their lack of male companionship in the patriarchal landscape, by being single, Scranton was able to exercise her leadership and become mobile because she was not tied to the domestic sphere. Before coming to

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[77] William Yoo. *American Missionaries, Korean Protestants, and the Changing Shape of World Christianity, 1884-1965* (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), 20.
[78] John Patrick McDowell. *The Social Gospel in the South: The Women's Home Mission Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1886-1939*. (Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 122.
[79] Choi, "Women's Work for 'Heathen Sisters,'" 4.
[80] Choi, "Women's Work for 'Heathen Sisters,'" 4.

Korea, Scranton stopped in Japan as she waited for Korea to stabilize after a coup d'état (*Kapsin Chongbyon*) in December 1884 when progressives hoped to expedite modernization in Korea; here, Scranton met Pak Youngho, one of the exiled members of the coup who encouraged her to start educational institutions for women and girls which could lead to Korea's modernization.[81] Scranton went on to create Ewha University in 1886 to educate girls which remains an influential institution in Korea today.[82]

In addition, Korea was being increasingly incorporated into the global capitalist system due to the force of Japan who opened its doors; new ideas, customs, products, and institutions infiltrated Korean society.[83] With the heightened influence of Japan in Korea, Koreans negatively perceived their foreign presence, leading them to not consider the U.S. as imperialistic. At the same time, the U.S. was aware of the Korean attitude toward them. In 1905, America acknowledged Japan's imperial interest in Korea, and Japan supported the interest of America in the Philippines in the Taft-Katsura Agreement; Historian Hyaeweol Choi notes that "Under these circumstances, missionaries were implicated in a tripartite power split in which Japan was a colonizer, Korea the colonized, and the United States (and the West more broadly) a competing imperial power."[84]

Despite the complicated geopolitical motivations between Japan, Korea, and America, this history of missionary schools like Ewha are often portrayed positively. As one missionary scholar and former professor of Ewha writes, "Ewha opened a new way of thinking and a new horizon for Korean women to be awakened as women, created in the image of God. Ewha was a

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[81] Choi, "Women's Work for 'Heathen Sisters,'" 4-5.
[82] "Scranton, Mary (1832-1902): Educator of Girls in Korea," Boston University, February 21, 2020. https://www.bu.edu/missiology/2020/02/21/scranton-mary-1832-1902/
[83] Choi, *Gender and MIssion Encounter: New Women, Old Ways* (University of California Press, 2009), 10.
[84] Choi, *Gender and MIssion Encounter*, 10.

symbol of 'new personhood of woman.'"[85] Both women in America and Korea were socially expected to stay at home and dedicate their lives primarily to domestic affairs. The primary difference between the two cultures was that the American missionaries believed education was a necessary part of reforming Korean society in hopes that it could liberate women. Because missionary schools gave women the ability to leave the confines of the home when women went to school, the stories of schools like Ewha are generally positive. Notably, because both cultures valued women's domestic life, by teaching women how to be better homemakers, this kind of education was likely palatable because it was not fundamentally uprooting the Korean societal expectation for women to be in the home, even if the missionaries wanted them to expand their mobility outside of the home. Christian education often taught women how to be respectable women and caretakers, which did not radically distrupt their traditional Korean Confucian role in the home.

The missionaries' strategy to "modernize" the "heathen" was problematic when they viewed their culture to be superior. Being a "heathen" was more complex than a simple delineation of believers and non-believers. Western missionaries displayed their ideas of their racial hierarchy over Asian people because they thought that Japan was relatively modern as an imperial power, but assumed "that true modernity needed to be centered on spiritual values, and moral superiority was the quality that missions could provide."[86] For these Protestant white missionary women, the technological advancement of Japan was insufficient; they thought Christianity was the missing element in creating a truly modern nation. In a way, they established a racial hierarchy, where Westerners were superior to the Japanese who were technologically

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[85] Chun Chae-ok, "Rediscovering Ewha Mission and its Contribution to Education" in *Christian Mission and Education in Modern China, Japan, and Korea: Historical Studies*, ed. Jan A. B. Jongeneel, et.al, (Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang, 2009), 115.

[86] Hyaeweol Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounter: New Women, Old Ways* (University of California Press: 2009), 11.

advanced, but lacked the moral righteousness and superiority as the missionaries who were Christians and white.[87] Of course, in their train of thought, they hoped that Korea, their *tabula rasa*, would be their chance to create an Asian nation that was spiritually reformed and modern.

Educating Korea served a threefold purpose: educating, modernizing, and evangelizing to the Koreans. Inspired by their Premillennialist ideology, they were compelled to go to lands that had not yet heard the gospel. When they went to Korea, their ideas of the social gospel compelled them to solve the social issue of the confinement of women by providing them an avenue into the realm of intellectual development during the Chosŏn era. This would help Korea become more "modern" in the eyes of the missionaries. And finally, they would spread the gospel through education, which was supposed to help Korean women read the Bible in preparation for their next life in heaven.

III. Reception of Christianity: A New Korean Woman

While at times the American women's missionary motivations can be problematized in light of their perceived intellectual, spiritual, and technological superiority in comparison to Korea's, analyzing the autobiography of Melissa Kim can help illustrate the ways that Koreans did not passively accept the religion. By first analyzing her childhood and interactions with her lack of role models within the home, one can see the ways that Christianity provided a means for Kim to imagine the possibilities for women to exercise leadership through faith in Jesus and education through an analysis of her "Autobiography" that she wrote during her time at the Scarritt Bible and Training School.

Growing up, Melissa Kim was unfavored by her father because he wished to have a son to continue his family name. He left her and her mother to live with a concubine who bore him a

[87] Hyaeweol Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounter*, 11.

son. Kim recounted the ways that she would fight with the concubine's son, Youngee, at school because her father would spoil him with candy but neglect her and her mother. This lack of family stability made her grow bitter, and her feelings worsened when Kim's mother grew sick on a cold and snowy day. In desperation, Kim ran to her father's house who was eating a hot dinner while she and her mother had been unable to eat properly because her father did not give them much money on which to live. She asked him to help her mother and he left to find a doctor. By the time she came home, her mother was unresponsive so she ran to her father's home again. She knocked on his door saying, "'O father, my mother is dying.' At last his concubine opened the door and said in an angry voice, 'Your father has already gone for the doctor. Don't you come to my house to make trouble anymore.'"[88] Rejected by the woman who in her childish eyes had taken away her father, she was upset. Eventually, her mother recovered, but she and her mother were still alone.

Kim's mother's prophecy that her father would return when he ran out of money eventually came true. Despite the wrong he committed towards them, she said that they welcomed him back when he came to their door a few years after the incident. Four years after his return, Kim's parents decided they were unable to raise their daughter properly so they said, "'We are getting very old now and we have the darling child *agie*.[89] We cannot keep the jewel in the box any longer. We must let its owner have it.'"[90] Like Ji Yung in China, Kim was subject to the fate of becoming a wife because of the cultural expectation for her to become a mother in her Confucian and patriarchal society. Unfortunately, her husband passed away when he was twenty and she was nineteen in 1886– just three years after they got married.

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[88] "Autobiography of Scarritt Student From Korea," by Melissa Kim, Unfiled, Scarritt Bennett Center, Nashville, TN, 8.
[89] Korean word for child
[90] Kim, "Autobiography," 12.

Not only was she let down by her father who took on a concubine to fulfill his dream to have a male heir, but also her husband also passed away. The men in her life who were supposed to be leaders in the household had failed her. She recounted,

> After seven days, the relatives made tablet for my husband, before which I worshiped and offered sacrifice thrice times a day for three years. Sometimes when my mother in law treated me badly and spoke harsh words I would go and weep before the tablet until I was weak. But that was all in vain for it only wasted my strength and time. My protector had left me alone in the world.[91]

In the midst of her sadness and even eventual suicidal thoughts that emerged during this difficult period of her life, it was her Christian aunt that provided her hope for a future that could be redeemed through faith in Jesus.

Her aunt, described as a faithful Christian and member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, would always carry her Bible and hymn book. She was a secret believer for fear of the backlash she might receive from her family members. Still, she faithfully came to Kim's side from Saturday until Monday for many weeks to teach Kim about her Savior and would sing songs from her hymn book. Before they ate, she prayed. In the morning and evening, she prayed outside. Kim's servants would even wonder if the aunt was crazy.

Kim too was initially hesitant to believe in Jesus, considering the religion to be a disgrace to Korea. But after a cruel experience with her mother-in-law, she had a dream. Kim recounted, "One day, almost three years after my husband's death, when my mother-in-law had treated me badly at the morning sacrifice before my husband's tablet, I cried and wept unusually long and bitterly."[92] That night, she dreamed of a man dressed in a perfect garment with green pine trees who pointed to "the West" [sic] saying, "'Go there and I will be there to show you.'"[93] Initially thinking it was her husband, her aunt told her that it was Jesus. Kim originally did not agree with

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[91] Kim, "Autobiography," 18.
[92] Kim, "Autobiography," 21.
[93] Kim, "Autobiography," 21.

the interpretation of her dream, but she agreed to attend a Christmas service with her aunt. At the service, Santa called the names of all the congregation members but did not recognize her. She realized she needed to become a Christian so that she could enter the Kingdom of Heaven because otherwise, God would not know her name the way the congregation did not prepare a present or know her name.

Christianity was a way for Melissa Kim to reinvent her identity from a state of despair into a Child of God. She was neglected by her father and mistreated by her father's concubine. Her father was not a great role model in her life and made her feel vulnerable in the dramatic story of her mother's illness. Her own husband could not save her either as he passed away at a young age. The one thing that gave her a restoration of her self-worth and motivation to live was the relationship she formed with her aunt who brought Christianity into Kim's life. Kim's aunt was a model Christian woman who took care of her when she was a young woman, widow, mother of a small child, and unsure of what to make of her future. In this way, Christianity was a means by which Kim could model what a good Korean woman could become.

Following the Dream: Kim's Educational Journey

Kim attended Ewha Hakdang shortly after her conversion. Mary Scranton, the founder of the school, helped her learn the catechisms to get baptized and also allowed Kim to teach Korean classes at the school. Though teaching was fulfilling, she could not let go of the dream she had to go Westward toward pursuing an education. She was convicted that God was leading her to foreign lands so she could prepare herself for her future as an educator for Korean women; this conviction was affirmed when God provided her with the financial means by which she could obtain an education. Though she could not afford the journey, one of her friend's cousins, Mr.

Chang,[94] encouraged Melissa Kim to go to America. Shortly after, she received financial support and letters of recommendation from her teachers at Ewha and the church. She then bid farewell to her mother and daughter to go to China with Ju Sam Ryang, a future bishop in the Methodist church.[95]

Kim upended both the Confucian and Victorian assumptions that women needed to be mothers who were tied to the home because she left her daughter and mother in order to pursue an education. While she initially hoped to go to the United States, she first went to China in 1901 with Ryang. The two of them met Dr. A. P. Parker, the President of the Anglo-Chinese School, the school that was started by Young John Allen.[96] Ryang was allowed to attend the school shortly after their arrival, but Kim, despite meeting Miss Richardson– the Principal of the McTyeire School, could only receive a scholarship if she knew English or Chinese.

Kim worked with Dr. Parker's wife who provided her language lessons over the course of that summer, as Kim did not know either English or Chinese. After she improved her skills, she became ready for school; Kim attended Huzhou University, a school for women. Shortly after she started attending the school, Mrs. Parker passed away, but Dr. Parker continued to support her throughout her education and even provided her with a small allowance. Despite her gratitude, she often felt different than her classmates who came from affluent families. She admitted, "Oh, I was so lonely and it was so hard to endure such treatment. But I was fulfilling God's plan for me and I must endure. I used very often to steal off into some quiet corner with tears in my eyes and pray until I felt strengthened."[97] Navigating the language and economic barriers she experienced while being an international student, she trusted that God was preparing

[94] His first name was not provided.
[95] "Ryang, Ju Sam (1879-1950?): Korean Evangelist, Teacher, and Bishop, Boston University, March 20, 2020. https://www.bu.edu/missiology/2020/03/20/ryang-ju-sam-1879-1950/
[96] Nathaniel Gist Gee, "The Educational Directory for China," (Soochow, China: Educational Association of China, 1905), 89.
[97] Kim, "Autobiography," 90.

her through these struggles so that His plan was to bring the gospel to Korea. And, Mrs. Parker proved to be another faithful Christian woman who was able to help her when she was in need. This mentorship she experienced with Mrs. Parker further confirmed to Kim that Christianity was able to allow women to not only connect with one another but also mentor and assist them. Notably, the Christian role model had a maternalistic bent, as she appreciated it when her spiritual mothers would offer her care in her times of despair.

Her time in China was not entirely miserable. Kim felt hopeful when she received the financial means to go to the United States. Ryang sent her a letter enclosing $200 that he obtained from a former ambassador of London. Kim reflecting on this moment recounted, "God had fulfilled his promise to me. O, it was wonderful! Man could not understand His workings, but if he trusts and submits to God's will, He will bring everything to pass that He promises. And so I went about secretly preparing my clothes for the journey, so happy all the while that I could hardly retain myself!"[98] Kim interpreted this instance as an act of divine favor extended to her by God. The difficulties she endured in China were tolerable because they prepared her language capabilities for the education she hoped to obtain in America.

Kim made it to America in 1905. Though she was physically where she believed God was calling her to be, she experienced another roadblock toward her education; she needed to work in order to afford her tuition. Originally landing in San Francisco, she left a few days later and went to Los Angeles. Here she reunited with Chang, the man who encouraged her to go to America earlier in her life. She worked closely with his wife in order to start a night school by renting out a small cottage. The school they created for Korean boys and girls started with 10 students, increased to 20, and continued to expand.[99] With the growing number of students, they

[98] Kim, "Autobiography," 107.
[99] Kim, "Autobiography," 127.

added a Sunday School and eventually made it independent of the church. They named the school the United Korean Educational Association. She likely viewed this opportunity to educate other Koreans in America as a way that God was preparing her to do this work in Korea. Christianity was a source of empowerment in her life when she was able to fundraise for the school, serve Korean students, and be an educator all outside of the home.

On August 2, 1910, Kim left California to attend the Scarritt Bible and Training School in Kansas City. Here, she was able to advance her education. Shortly after arriving, she grew sick and could not study. During the difficult moment, Principal Maria Layng Gibson came to visit her for the weeks that she was afflicted by an illness. She wrote that "I can never forget how kind Miss Gibson was to me. She was a very busy woman, but she always came in four or five times a day, and saw that I took my medicine."[100] Kim, who was often neglected by her father who barely tried to help her mother when she was sick, found herself again being taken care of by a Christian woman. In this case, the principal of the school she was attending helped her. Gibson caring for the sick in this instance can be an example of what Kim believed to be an ideal Christian woman. Like Kim's aunt and Dr. Parker's wife, she was able to be cared for by another woman in a moment of suffering. Central to Kim's idea of a model Christian woman was a woman who was a care-taking and empathetic woman.

The autobiography ambiguously concludes during her time at Scarritt. Yet, she was able to fulfill her dream of becoming an educator when she established Kŭnhwa hagwŏn in 1920 which is now known as Duksung University.[101] She likely understood her faithfulness to listen to the call of God in her dream allowed her to attain the remarkable achievement of starting a school.

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[100] Kim, "Autobiography," 157.
[101] "Founder Miss Cha Mirisa," Duksung, December 3, 2021, https://www.duksung.ac.kr/contents/contents.do?ciIdx=35&menuId=927

IV. Making a Distinct Korean Protestant Christian Woman through Education

While missionary women wanted to expand women's roles in Korean society by providing them a Christian education, Melissa Kim wanted more for women than to simply be studious, great wives, and Christians, though she did not entirely uproot or question this ideal. In an interview in the October 1920 edition of the missionary periodical *Korea Mission Field,* Kim is asked about her teaching strategy at the school she started the same year called *Kŭnhwa hagwŏn*. Here, she outlines some of her philosophy regarding education for the Korean women with whom she hoped to work. To begin, she said that she wanted to establish monthly lectures because she asserted that "Study alone is not enough. At present, women can only carry on a conversation concerning their households. We want them to know something of world conditions and of affairs outside of their own immediate circle, and so we are holding the monthly lectures."[102] She wanted her students to be more than mothers; she hoped they could hold intelligent conversations about things happening outside of the home, which could potentially be things like politics or philosophy. Likely inspired by her own teachers and missionaries with whom she interacted in Korea, China, and America, she wanted Korean women to act in roles outside of the home. After all, the single American missionary women with whom she interacted dedicated their lives to being educators instead of being full-time mothers.

While Kim's educational program included classes that extended beyond the domestic sphere, she did agree with her missionary teachers that the reform of society started in the home. Following the former question, the interviewer asked, "What kind of woman are you trying to develop? Do you want them to be like American women, or like Japanese women or like Chinese?"[103] Kim responded, "You ask me queer questions. We want a chance at Christian

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[102] "The Korean Women's Educational Association," *K'oria misyŏn, p'ldŭ*, October 1920. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.I0086838646 (accessed February 20, 2023), 207.
[103] "The Korea Women's Educatonal Association," 207.

education such as the American women have and we want to have their social equality. We should like to be as diligent as the Japanese women but we do not want to adopt their dress. From the Chinese women, we hope to learn lessons of loyalty and as Korean women we want above all things to preserve our modesty and chastity."[104] Kim makes clear that she does not want to teach her students to imitate American, Chinese, or Japanese women.

While she does admire aspects of each of the cultures to which Korean women were being compared, she at the same time expressed it would be "queer" to compare Korean women to cultures that were unlike their own. She was resisting the idea that Korean women were to be imitators of Western or even other East Asian countries; she wanted to teach her students to create a distinct Korean Christian woman ideal.

Kim noted that most important to her educational philosophy was that she wanted to "preserve our modesty and chastity." Throughout her childhood, she endured a dysfunctional family due to the complicated relationship between Kim's mother and father in addition to Kim's relationship with her father's concubine. Because of her father's infidelity to the family, she experienced a traumatic childhood. She reasoned that families could be reconciled and made whole through the gospel which would not only transform a person spiritually but physically and familially.

Despite the bitterness she expressed in the beginning part of her autobiography, it is notable that she believed that most all women had the ability to "reform." When asked if she receives anyone who had been in prison, she states that "There are only two classes whom we do not receive, concubines and dancing girls. We want to help any woman who needs help. Certainly, the weak and erring need help and we will gladly do all we can for them. The object of

[104] "The Korean Women's Educational Association," 207.

this organization is to serve."[105] Perhaps her hesitancy to accept those engaged in prostitution and concubinage had to do with her own personal negative experiences with her father's concubine, leading her to deny their admittance to the school. She may have feared they could not reform because of the emotional damage that she experienced in her childhood. Yet, she did think that women could be reformed through the gospel and transform the home for the good of the family. By "helping" women through her school and program, Melissa Kim discussed the ways that she hoped Christianity could restore families inside and outside the home. And, she did this through a service mindset, as she strived to emulate her Christian women mentors who were nurturing, caring, and empathetic in her times of need. Her ideal Korean Christian woman would embody the same characteristics of mothering that she experienced and appreciated with her missionary teachers.

V. Conclusion

While American white Christians sought to spiritually, intellectually, and technologically "reform" Korea from their "heathenness" Korean Protestants were not so quick to accept the messages they sought to inculcate. Melissa Kim rejected the idea of being solely a mother by leaving her daughter and mother in order to pursue her education abroad. This was acceptable for missionaries because they wanted to have Korean missionaries reach the country. Perhaps people would not have funded her education if she wanted to evangelize to people in America; they likely supported her in hopes that the gospel may be more compelling if taught by another Korean. They likely would not have funded her if she wanted to evangelize to white Americans, for example. In addition, throughout her educational journey in China and the United States, she used Christianity as a message of hope, as she clinged to the idea that God was the one

[105] "The Korean Women's Educational Association," 207.

orchestrating her life and allowing her to obtain the education she was called to pursue. Kim was not only able to spiritually connect with those who resembled a virtuous Christian woman but could also connect with other Korean women of faith through things like letters and prayers the way Kim received support from her aunt and mother. While Christianity may have disconnected Kim from other Korean women who were not Christian, her relationship with those who were a source of empowerment as she sought to better her Korean country by preaching what she believed to be a message of hope for other Korean women.

At the same time, Kim exemplifies the ways that Korean converts were not interested in passively accepting the lessons they learned from their teachers, though they enthusiastically and genuinely respected their mentorship and spirituality and embraced most of the teachings the missionaries presented them. Melissa Kim, a Korean convert, used Christianity to transform her life. Using her personal struggles with her dysfunctional family, Kim thought faith in Jesus did not only spiritually transform people but also could restore families and physical realities within the home. Throughout her autobiography, she recounted the ways that while her biological parents were not always great role models, she could find good examples in her spiritual mothers, like her aunt, Dr. Parker's wife, and Gibson. It was their actions of care that shaped her conviction that Koreans must also become Christian to reform the issue of women's limited mobility in traditional Confucian Chosŏn society by increasing women's ability to exercise leadership outside of the home.

Photo of Melissa Kim in the bottom center with other students at the Scarritt Bible and Training School. Dated February 22, 1913. Located at the Scarritt Bennett Center Archives in Nashville, TN

Conclusion

Missionaries in the late 19th and early 20th century were compelled by their social gospel and Premillennialist theology to spread the gospel to those who were not like them. In particular, they wanted to alleviate various "social ills" in the American South, China, and Korea. White Southern Methodist and elite women in society felt a particular compulsion to assist those who were poor, Black, and immigrant in home missions, hoping that teaching Protestant Christianity and ways of living could assist their missional subjects in restoring the home and then society. In China, smoking opium, footbinding, and arranged marriages were issues they wanted to reform. And in Korea, the confinement of women in the inner chambers was a social issue they thought they needed to change by bringing these people out of the home. In all three locations, missionaries sought to alleviate issues through Christian education, believing that if their students were to convert, society could be restored. These do-gooders were genuinely convinced that it was their duty to create a "Heaven on Earth" by teaching "heathens" the gospel.

Through the missionary enterprise, these Southern white and elite women were able to become leaders outside of the home as single women. In the process, they were able to encourage, prepare, and sustain their missionary effort through the creation of the Scarritt Bible and Training School. They were not overturning the heteronormative and domestic societal expectations of women because they felt that by restoring the ideal, Christian household as the central pillar of American society, social ills would decrease and Americans could experience a return to a Protestant nation. With the gospel, men would become temperate, businessmen would be less greedy and pay workers fairly, and the "heathen" immigrants and poor in society could find hope and meaning in God and not their alleged superstitions and religious practices they may have carried from their other-than-white-American cultures. In the countries to which the

missionaries went, the missionaries hoped their missional subjects could begin to experience the modernity and spirituality that the Southern white women wanted to carry over to their countries. In short, the social gospel could be a mechanism for society to return to homeostasis, where the "others" in society could behave more like the Christian nation the missionaries wanted to preserve.

These Southern white elite missionary women reformed society through education in the U.S. South, China, and Korea. Tied to their missional strategy of evangelizing through schools was an inherent belief that Western culture and knowledge were superior and "modern." The missionaries did not always claim this explicitly, yet their marker of spiritual change and progress was often measured by when their missional subjects began behaving like the "refined" Victorian women that the missionaries viewed themselves to be. This emphasis on social and behavioral change complicated their practice, as it at times became unclear when the missionaries were trying to genuinely convert people or just praised their students when they performed the missionaries' Western understanding of Christianity. Their preconceptions of a proper lady likely limited their capacity to imagine what a Christian woman could be in China and Korea in their own context.

Ji Yung and Melissa Kim are examples of missionary students whose teachers wanted them to embody the traits of a Victorian woman. Ji Yung was praised when she became a Christian, stated that she wanted to "save" other Chinese people, and submitted to becoming a wife even when she preferred to be a teacher. While Kim upended the Victorian and Confucian Korean expectations for her to be a mother when she left Korea to obtain an education, her idea of a proper Korean Christian woman was similar to the one the missionaries imposed on her. Kim wanted Korean women to be nurturing and empathetic, just like the teachers she

encountered and admired. At the same time, she reimagined Christianity as a source of empowerment because, alongside the caretaking qualities she sought to teach at the school she created for other Korean women, she wanted her students to be well-versed in things other than just the domestic; she wanted her students to discuss things like philosophy or politics.

Notably, Ji Yung and Melissa Kim embraced most aspects of their Christian faith. They both enjoyed learning about their new religion in their education. In addition, after converting, both women wanted to become educators in order to share the gospel with other women in their countries. Though Ji Yung did not become an official teacher at an educational institution, she likely went on to teach her family the domestic virtues she found in Christianity. And Kim may have taught her students the same Christian values Ji Yung taught her family, acting as a "spiritual mother" to the students at her school instead of being a mother of a family.[106] Because these women appreciated most aspects of the message the missionaries brought to them, it would be too simplistic to conclude that the missionaries were entirely "cultural imperialists." Their willingness to participate and embrace Christianity proves they were agents and accepting their new faith, not passively agreeing to the religion people imposed onto them.

Throughout the project, the issue of historical preservation can be raised, as most of the documents that were saved did not include things that were hard, problematic, or even contradictory to the missionary cause. The stories of Ji Yung and Melissa Kim for example were likely preserved to serve two agendas: showing off the work they were doing in the life of Ji Yung and keeping an account that praises their work in the autobiography of Kim. The letter collection between Ji Yung and her missionary teacher that was published points to how the missionaries likely wanted to display what they thought was a model student so they could

[106] At one point in Kim's autobiography while she is abroad seeking her education, she received a letter from her mother who said that she had Kim's daughter stay with a relative, but that they lost her daughter. So, when Kim returned to Korea to start her school, she probably did not have any children to whom she would teach the gospel.

testify to the ways God was working. Ironically, they could not overcome their engrained ideas of racial superiority that they learned in America and carried with them to China when reading the letters, as they did not see the ways that Ji Yung did not fully agree with their expectation to be a wife. Regarding the preservation of Melissa Kim's papers, perhaps Kim felt like writing an autobiography was a way for her to give thanks to God and to the missionary women who helped her achieve her goals of educating Korea. Even more cynically, Kim may have felt compelled to write an autobiography so that she could be funded and sponsored to start a school in Korea. Furthermore, because the autobiography was in English and positively portrayed Scarritt and the school's alumni, the missionaries may have felt it was necessary to preserve the information bound in the handwritten text. For these reasons, the documents cannot be entirely credible, but they cannot be dismissed entirely as dramatized and inaccurate depictions of the work the missionaries attempted to do for God. The narrative they crafted through the archives shows what the missionaries wanted people in the future to remember.

More work must be done in order to better understand the legacies of the missionary enterprise in the early twentieth century. I hope to continue recounting and centering the narratives of the native people the missionaries sought to convert like Ji Yung and Melissa Kim in order to provide a more nuanced understanding of the transpacific exchanges between women in the missionary enterprise. By continuing to explore the missionary enterprise in the early twentieth century, the legacies and histories of these women may not only be known but also can help people better understand the goals, missions, and aspirations these women sought to achieve in contrast to what the result of their actions caused. In addition, understanding this past can even help better understand some of the missionary work that is being done to this day.

The perspectives of the way missionaries viewed themselves and the way this informed their missionary practice can be a way to productively illuminate the ways that Christianity can be problematic, especially when the missionaries did not take the time to consider the ethical implications of culturally imposing their ideas of Western superiority onto people who did not ask for it. It is from studies of the past that people can consider ways to be more ethical in acts of voluntourism that are part of our society today. For example, many people volunteer for many reasons. Though the goal of volunteering is usually not proselytizing, oftentimes people can easily fall into the trap of believing that their resources, time, and kind heart for doing acts of service can make a volunteer feel superior to the person they are trying to help. Even if religion is taken out of acts of service, the practice can reproduce many of the harmful legacies of the missionary enterprise of the past if people are not careful to examine their motivations when trying to help others.

Creating a nuanced understanding of the missionary enterprise is difficult, for it can be tempting to simplify the narrative to that of "cultural imperialist" and "white savior" missionaries, or conversely kingdom workers who are saving "lost souls." These binary understandings of missions are incomplete and simplistic. By understanding the motivations of missionaries, in addition to the reception and resistance of the converts, the missionary enterprise can be understood more holistically. Certainly, the motivations for anyone's actions cannot be pure all the time. Yet, learning from the mistakes of the past can help people learn how to become more ethical in whichever field one chooses, so long as people seek to practice and acquire the skill of becoming better leaders. Hopefully learning from the past can lead people in the present to think more critically about the implications of one's actions in cross-cultural interactions that impact our society today.

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