

Gale, about to leave Korea, writes thoughtfully about the challenges of missionary work in Korea, treating Buddhism and the early Catholic martyrs with respect and veneration.

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The Beginnings of Missionary Work in Korea

An Address by Dr. J. S. Gale, reported by Gordon Bowles

In studying about the beginnings of Christianity in the Orient our first question is, From whence has it come?" In the Orient it is significant that there is only one religion which has an influence equal to that of Christianity and that is Buddhism. Confucianism is essentially an Old Testament cult and prepares for a New Testament conception such as is found in Buddhism. It is for this reason, therefore, that it is mainly Confucianists and not Buddhists who have become Christians.

It is said that at an early date St. Thomas visited India. There is no exact proof of this, but it seems likely that it might have been so. Whatever may have been the cause there was something which influenced Buddhism about this time for Buddhism had already been in India five hundred years.

About 150 A. D. a new book known as "The Awakening of Faith" appeared, and with it came a new conception of Buddhism, called Mahayana or the Great Vehicle. Later this book was translated by Mr. T. Richards and was found to present a totally new idea. Why was it that there was such an emphasis on faith?

Shortly after this, new ceremonies began to appear; the idea of a trinity was developed and a symbolic cross, the swastika, was evolved as well as a symbol of Buddhism somewhat like the Christian symbol of an "I," two arrows and a bow. Bells, rosaries, prayers and chants were added. Many people believe, therefore, that because of these numerous outward manifestations of similarity Buddhism is only one form of Christianity and they are consequently misled and are eager to propagate it. I do not think that Buddhism today has anything in it. It is true that there is much of the Orient in it, and in so far as one learns the Oriental mind by studying it, it is worth while.

I once came across a book on the life of the Buddha. I went through the eight chapters and then translated them with my friend, Mr. Kim, working steadily from five to seven every morning. I did it purposing to find in it traces of the gospels and to discover what the writer thought of the life of the Buddha. Some say Buddhism has no Heaven or Hell. In this book I discovered a beautiful Heaven to be sought after and a series of terrible Hells. In one chapter there was a story of the brother of the Buddha, a very wicked man, whom the disciples of the Buddha sought to bring to rights. He was first taken to a wonderful house in Heaven which was denied him, then he was shown all the terrors of the Hells until at last in humility he begged for mercy and afterwards became a just and up-right man. It is this idea of vengeance which holds the people and which inspired a Korean Christian once to say, "When I go to see pictures of Buddhist Hells I don't want to sin."

As to the influence of Buddhism on the people of Korea, one has only to glance over the land dotted with stone monuments to see what a hold it has over them. These stone monuments tell stories of good priests, of great men, of peace-makers and of angel-like men who helped the people. Surely "In every kind he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him," it matters not what his religion or his training was if his service is sincere. Buddhism is filled with the doctrine of self-renunciation. Absolute silence and devotion to a cause without argument governs the Buddhist heart and mind. In our modern age we seem to have lost the law of silence. We have forgotten the wonderful power that it can have. Our aim is organization but what really counts most is the "silent heart at one with God."

There is a real message in the repetition of Buddhist prayers, such as, "I trust in thee Amida Buddha" and I sometimes wonder if there would not be some difference in our lives if we Christians would say "I trust in Thee, Lord Jesus" constantly and really mean what we say.

When I speak of the rapidly developing tendencies in Buddhism I only do so to emphasize the greatness and the coming of the full gospel of Christ, for there can be no doubt that when His full revelation is realized people will see the utter inability of Buddhism to meet the needs of the hungry, human heart. The modern gospel was first heard in Peking where in 781 A. D. a stone was erected in the days of Tang. This Nestorian stone tells of three things, the creation of the world, the Incarnation

of Jesus and certain baptismal ceremonies. In 845 the stone disappeared and it was not rediscovered until 1625, and a few years ago duplicates were made by Mrs. Gordon of Japan. One stone was put up in Japan while another was erected in Korea. The original stone was set up again just outside one of the most noted cities of China and stands today a monument to the heroic sacrifices of the early Christian fathers who found their way into the heart of China.

All of these phases of Buddhism are only suggestions to be followed out by the younger missionaries. It is for us to discover what there is in Buddhism and to discover the Korean background. It is not what the Korean eats but his mind that needs to be understood. Don't think that the Korean mind is suited to Presbyterianism, for it is the result of centuries of influence and what is needed most is pure church work and Christian fellowship. The argument of a certain Buddhist priest "We do nothing and many believe while you have many meetings and many books while few believe" is quite justly put. What is needed most is silence, self-renunciation and devotion.

A dog that cannot even total two and two can die for its master and a child that cares nothing for forms in ordination knows how to love. The intellect counts very little where real values lie in the heart.

Let us be happy and give much time to prayer and talking with God, for God is the only person who always loves to be talked to, and when we tell Him, we love Him He rejoices and gives us His blessing.

My earliest recollections are of Dr. Underwood and Mr. Appenzeller, both of whom were pioneers and deserved the many compliments they received. My last remembrance of Mr. Appenzeller was when he and I accepted an invitation from Dr. Reynolds to do some translation work and the date of sailing was set for June second. That was the last I saw of Dr. Appenzeller, for he was delayed a day and his boat met with an accident at sea and he was among the missing.

After my first year I went to Fusan to see Mr. Davis who was suffering from small-pox. I had only been with him a short time when he died and others shortly followed him. The doctors have done much toward lengthening life but they could not save these early workers.

When I first landed in Seoul everything seemed like a different world. Here was the east with its silks and colors and slow moving crowds, where only the swallows reminded me of home. One day I went with Mr. Jones to see the King in procession. He knew Korea for he had been here six months while I had only just arrived. But it was not long till I saw the first bicycle, then rickshas and auto-mobiles. Things seemed stirring around me, but I was disturbed because in Seoul I couldn't get the language. My teacher came every morning but I didn't learn anything. Finally I asked Dr. Underwood if I could go to the country. It was only after some length of time that he finally consented and I left for the interior. I started out early one morning with nothing but a can of milk, some coffee and a *kisu* (horseboy). We got to Koya in an unsavoury place about noon, but I had to pass up my meal to the boy and began to discover some of the hardships I would have to undergo, wondering all the while if millet was all there was to be had and thinking how I could live.

That evening we reached Paju and I was immediately ushered into the chief magistrate's office. I was given a room with a hibachi and served with an excellent meal of chicken, soup and white rice. I followed the usual custom of eating with chopsticks for it was my idea to take it as the natives take it.

After a time I went to Sorai Beach for three months. People came every day and although I was treated fine I began to feel like a barbarian, and was especially self-conscious in front of the governor of the province. My host, Mr. An, always gave me good food but I never saw Mrs. An, although she would take advantage of me by looking in through the holes in the paper door and watched me while I feasted. On the return it took six nights to get from Sorai Beach to Chemulpo, the boat making no headway part of the time against the strong north winds.

From Seoul Dr. Moffett and I started north with two pack-horses loaded with money to see Dr. Ross who had just translated the Bible. On the way we stopped at Pyengyang where we received nothing but contempt when we inquired about Christians in the vicinity. At Wiju, however, where we stopped for two weeks, there were lots of people who had obtained the Bible from Mukden and who knew it. We finally reached Mukden and saw Dr. Ross and on our return came by way of Wonsan. We first hired two men with cows but they soon threw their loads and left us. We next had a man from Hamheung who declared his cow could carry more than two ordinary cows. He got us part way but the strain on the cow was too great so we paid him off and got another conveyance to Ham-heung.

On all of our journeys we saw no women and it was not until I saw Mrs. Sen, in Seoul, that I got my first glimpse of a Korean woman. The women are gradually finding their place, but they have yet many steps to take till they approach the proper position they should assume. I recall a story of the birth-day of a princess when all the women in the neighbourhood were invited. Finally an old woman came, carried in a two-man chair, and wearing a coarse linen dress. The princess, much to the surprise of the gathered guests, hastened to meet her and led her to the highest place in the room and placed the first food before her. She was the wife of Yi Chung Li a sage and scholar of Korea, who had, like Carlyle, got homespun greatness.

The Koreans have courtesy and fine manners and these are certainly a mark of superior civilization, but they lack education. I go through Korea making rubbings of stones, and I know there is such a thing as a scholar of characters, but these are few and growing less. I am still on the outside after forty years of experience. Following the old Confucian system, boys started their education at five and studied for years, or for a lifetime, from morning to night. I know nothing is the West to equal the scholarly attainments of the Oriental countries, although now there are only a scattered few real scholars remaining in China and Japan.

There were once two young men who appeared for their scholar's examinations. After successfully passing them one left for the Mountains and for a long time no one knew where he was. Finally, the king on learning of his whereabouts, arranged a meeting with him but was unable to persuade him from his life of seclusion for, said the young scholar, "If we join forces here we meet beyond." That is what the Koreans are trying to find—the ultimate, the beyond.

One day I saw a little blind boy of twelve. I put my hands on his shoulder and said "I'm a foreigner, I'm sorry to see you blind." The little boy's cheerful response was, "I don't mind being blind, I know Jesus." That to my mind is the end of mission work, it is the perfection of the missionary's purpose. Then there is the example of Yung Dong, a cobbler, who returned a pair of stolen shoes and converted the man to whom he repaid the damage done, and many other examples which serve to show the joy that comes with service.

We foreigners are likely to misuse the language and to spoil our conversations with idioms from the English merely translated into Korean. Let us try to learn the true Korean language and become fully appreciative of the style the Bible is written in and learn to speak with ease and fluency.

Good will is certainly the greatest thing in life. When I left for the Korean mission field, what was of far more value than any blessing of the Pope could have been, was the message of goodwill of such men as D. L. Moody and John Currie.

Many years ago there was a lame English officer who walked through Korea. He was far more of a missionary than many workers on the field today and did an immense amount of good, as most lame people do. One day a Catholic priest, in haste, shot a man through the leg and arm. I could not help but protest to the authorities and received a sharp rebuke from my English friend for it. When he saw the logic of my complaint, however, he hastened to call me over to dinner and from that time forth we were the closest of friends.

The Roman Catholics have had their part in opening up the East. The Church has had its sinners as well as its saints, but many have suffered the supreme test and have died at the stake. And certainly there can be nothing very much worse about the catholic faith than the belief of some Protestants who consign all little children, heathen blacks, browns and yellows to the anger of Tartarus and then eat a hearty breakfast on top of it.

Brugier was the first missionary. He took with him a man Mobel. In order to disguise their passage through China they arranged to go separately and to meet above the great wall. They arrived there as planned and started for Korea. While within sight of Korea, however, Brugier was taken with dysentery and died, but Mobel continued the journey alone and met with the Koreans on the way who had been in contact with Korean and Jesuit fathers. Mobel was carried across the Yalu and fifteen days later arrived at Seoul, wearing a mourning hat to escape detection. Shastan came later and then came Imbert, a bishop. The three left records of thankfulness from their hearts and told of their experiences from 1836-1839, ninety years ago in a strange land where even the dogs detected them by their sniffing.

I had in my hand some years ago a letter which was written in 1800 by Alexander Whang, (?) with a request that missionaries be sent. It was delivered by a messenger, but both the messenger and Mr. Whang (?) were killed. It was just at the time when the Pope was imprisoned at Fontanbleau

and the Church in Korea was being suppressed and the Christians were suffering martyrdom. The Korean Government was not to be blamed, however, for the murders, for it was acting as it thought wisest and in this it followed the laws of Confucianism which formed the basis of the state religion. It looked with disfavour on all foreign religions in which no sacrifices were made to the ancestor. If King Sunjo had been living things might have been different. But priests were arrested and were tortured and brought to the river bank and were beheaded. It was wonderful devotion to go through to the block. They died like heroes and gave testimony to the last. Others followed them and after a long lull came Chung. He was arrested and beaten by the magistrate for being a Christian. After rejecting his faith he repented and confessing to the magistrate that his heart was not settled was later, on account of his persistency, beaten till he died.

In the war with China, Japan brought troops under Kato a Buddhist and Konishi a Christian, into Korea. When the Japanese were driven back they took some Koreans with them and many of them, Christians, were martyred in Nagasaki while nine of the martyrs were beatified.

During the time of Taiwan Kun more missionaries, seven priests and two bishops, came. Taiwan Kun heard of these new messengers and learned that they were making treaty relations with France against Russia. Bishop Deveroux was imprisoned, but the Princess Min, wife of Taiwan Kun, was greatly troubled for she had been influenced by this new religion. Nothing would stir the ruler from his purpose, however, and the missionaries were all put to the block at the same place on the river bank as their forbears had been.

Some years later an American vessel went up the Taitong River and grounded. At high tide it was refloated but soon grounded a second time and could not be moved. After numerous orders to have the boat removed, the Taiwan Kun finally took the advice of one of his counsellors and on a foggy morning sent a raft of burning sulphur down the river. The vessel, the General Sherman, was caught in the flames and destroyed and all hands on board who were not drowned were killed.

Such was the fate of these and many other early pioneers. They played a valiant part and bore the greatest share of suffering. God has His people among the Catholics as well as the Protestants. It is not a person's religious views which touches the chords of life but the spirit of good will, the spirit which governs the hearts and lives of mankind.