Uncovering the Pearl

The Hidden Story of Christianity in Asia

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Western Colonialism and Christian Mission

William Yoo

In 1929, Daniel J. Fleming, a professor of missions at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, penned an article entitled "If Buddhists Came to Our Town" in *The Christian Century*. Fleming asked his readers to imagine how they would feel if a group of Japanese Buddhist missionaries possessing greater material resources entered their neighborhoods to establish new hospitals, schools, and temples there. Prior to his faculty appointment, Fleming was a missionary in India for several years and therefore readily acknowledged the cultural biases, racial prejudices, and religious arrogance of some Western missionaries in Asia. Fleming observed in 1925 that many missionaries encouraged the advance of Western imperialism "on the ground that the control of non-Christian lands by so-called Christian governments would facilitate the introduction of the West's supposedly superior moral and spiritual standards."[1] He also confessed that more than a few missionaries held contemptuous attitudes toward the existing religious traditions in Asia, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Hinduism, and derisively spoke of them as "systems of unredeemed darkness and error."[2] For these reasons, Fleming maintained that many persons in Asia linked Christianity together with Western colonialism. Thus, he advocated for a new approach to world mission that renounced any notions about Western superiority and presented the Christian message "without the immense handicap of association with Western civilization."[3]

Four years later, in his short but provocative essay, Fleming limned a hypothetical scenario of Buddhist missionaries from Japan in the United States to illumine the disruptive and sometimes harmful consequences

1. Fleming, *Whither Bound in Missions*, 58.
2. Fleming, *Whither Bound in Missions*, 79.
3. Fleming, *Whither Bound in Missions*, 59.

of the Western missionary presence in Asia. If the Japanese missionaries operated the best schools and hospitals in a US town, the locals there would surely resent it if access to these educational and medical services was contingent upon compulsory attendance to Buddhist instruction and worship. And if the missionaries insisted that their schools and hospitals proved that their religion was superior to Christianity, Fleming surmised that many Americans would seek the immediate expulsion of the foreign missionaries. Furthermore, Fleming explained that his "imaginary situation" was meant to serve as a "mirror in which we can re-examine our own missionary attitudes" and consider afresh the history and presence of the Western missionary enterprise in Asia.[4]

This essay examines the multifarious history of the relationship between Western colonialism and Christian mission in Asia through an introduction and interrogation of a myriad of arguments from historians, missiologists, postcolonial scholars, and theologians. It identifies the problems with interpretations that either entirely subsume Christian mission as a component of Western colonialism or emphatically insist that Christian mission was distinct from Western colonialism. Interpretations conflating Christian mission with Western colonialism do not sufficiently account for the diversity of missionaries from various Christian traditions and the ways in which their motivations sometimes differed from merchants' and colonial administrators'. Interpretations separating Christian mission from Western colonialism minimize the obvious ways in which the missionaries relied upon the unjust treaties and oppressive systems of colonial rule for their residence in Asia and inaccurately present the work of a few exceptional missionaries, such as Ann Hasseltine Judson and Roberto de Nobili, as characteristic of the Western missionary enterprise in sum.

Introducing and Interrogating the Relationship between Western Colonialism and Christian Mission

Colonialism is simultaneously a straightforward and complex concept. Colonialism involved foreign intrusion, domination, and exploitation, but it entailed multiple processes and inhabited different forms from the fifteenth century through the twentieth century. Edward W. Said connects colonialism with imperialism, defining imperialism as "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory" and colonialism as "a consequence of imperialism" through the "implanting

4. Fleming, "If Buddhists Came," 294.

of settlements on distant territory."[5] D. K. Fieldhouse understands colonialism as the domination and exploitation of a subject people "by the foreign society and its agents who occupied the dependency to serve their own interests, not that of the subject people."[6]

In addition to imperialism and colonialism, two other systems of domination are settler colonialism and neocolonialism. Settler colonialism is the product of long-range migration in which settlers from the colonizing nation displace and marginalize indigenous populations, often with violent force, to construct facsimiles of their home societies on colonized territory, which occurred throughout the Americas and in Australasia and South Africa. Walter L. Hixson observes that "what distinguishes settler colonialism from colonialism proper is that the settlers came not to exploit the indigenous population for economic gain, but rather to remove them from the colonial space."[7] In 1965, the Ghanaian scholar, activist, and political leader Kwame Nkrumah wrote in his book *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* that neocolonialism represented a continuation of Western rule through the ongoing economic coercion from Western nations upon formerly colonized nations to extract their raw materials and leverage their capitalist power to perpetuate unjust international systems in which the bulk of foreign investments are utilized to exploit, rather than to develop, local economies, making them dependent on foreign resources instead of self-sustaining and competitive in the global marketplace.[8]

The relationship between Western colonialism and Christian mission in Asia was also simultaneously straightforward and complex. The missionary enterprise was engaged in the colonial process throughout its various stages. James Belich delineates three stages of modern European expansion:

1. *Networks*—the creation and maintenance of systems for commercial trade
2. *Empire*—the subjugation of native inhabitants in the Americas, Africa, and Asia
3. *Settlement*—the reproduction of European societies in colonized lands[9]

5. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 9.
6. Fieldhouse, *Colonialism*, 7.
7. Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism*, 4.
8. Young, *Postcolonialism*, 46–47.
9. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 21.

In Asia, the beginnings of both modern European colonialism and Christian mission are found in the arrival of the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama in Calicut, India, in 1498. A missionary accompanied the sailors aboard da Gama's ship. Upon docking in the port city, one of da Gama's sailors was asked why they traveled to India. The sailor replied, "We have come to seek Christians and spices."[10]

These two aims of religious evangelism and commercial trade were distinct but interrelated. In 1453, after the Ottoman Empire overtook Constantinople, the capital city of the Byzantine Empire, many Christians in Europe feared the westward expansion of Muslims into their nations with the loss of a city that stood as a bulwark protecting their religious and political interests. Additionally, one adverse result for European traders was the loss of access to important overland routes that they had relied upon for transporting goods from the East to the West. Europeans therefore developed their maritime capacities to seek new networks for pepper, which had become an essential and expensive commodity for European cookery in preparing and preserving meat. The Indian politician, diplomat, and scholar Kavalam Madhava Panikkar traces the significance of pepper, alongside Christian mission, as a motivating impetus for early European imperialism in Asia. Because pepper, unlike elements such as gold and cobalt, is no longer a prized commodity but ubiquitous and relatively affordable in the contemporary marketplace, Panikkar explains that it is difficult for us to imagine that pepper once held commensurate value to the most precious minerals and was one of the main reasons propelling European exploration, exploitation, greed, and violence in Asia. Panikkar does not conflate the motivations of Christian mission and the spice trade as one and the same, but Panikkar links the two and identifies them as separate but conjoining forces in the history of Western colonialism.[11]

The first wave of European missionaries in Asia during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was directly connected to commercial interests and wholly dependent on colonial powers. The expansion of Portuguese colonialism endorsed commerce, conquest, and Christianity in a system of *padroado* (patronage) that aligned the evangelistic activities of the Roman Catholic Church with the imperial designs of the nation. In 1493, the papal bulls *Inter caetera* and *Eximiae devotionis* divided territory to Portugal and Spain for colonization and evangelization.[12] The pope granted to Portugal the land east of the Atlantic Ocean, which included Asia, and instructed both

10. Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 4.
11. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance*, 22–29.
12. Irvin and Sunquist, *World Christian Movement*, 43.

nations to introduce Christianity to the native inhabitants of the lands they had infiltrated and begun to plunder. Stephen Charles Neill, an Anglican missionary in India and professor of missions at the University of Hamburg, argued in 1966 that the missionaries were sincere in their motivations to convert the indigenous persons they encountered but "too deeply conditioned" in a context in which "the ideas of conquest and of conversion lay side by side" to question the immorality of the colonial enterprise.[13]

Although the missionaries by and large did not challenge the unjust consequences of European colonialism, they were also not oblivious to the accompanying economic injustices and human rights violations. Belich underscores the rise of modern European expansion through his description of the burgeoning sugar economy in which "a borrowed Asian crop was grown on expropriated Native American land by coerced African labour for the benefit of Europe."[14] The missionaries understood that the dominant aim of Europeans in Asia was commerce, with profits that also helped to fund and enable their religious efforts, but some sought to distinguish their work and establish a presence disentangled from associations with colonial avarice and aggression.

In essence, some missionaries were seeking to occupy what postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha delineates as a "Third Space" in between the colonizer and the colonized. Bhabha emphasizes the creative possibilities of the Third Space as a site of hybridity, translation, and negotiation that reinterprets the cultures of both the imperial rulers and indigenous persons to ultimately advance the liberatory cause of anti-colonial struggle.[15] However, Albert Memmi contended in 1957 that Europeans in colonized lands were unable to extricate themselves from the privileges and powers belonging to the colonizers. Memmi differentiated between the colonialist, colonizer, and the colonial. The colonialist was a European who actively worked to legitimize the racist dehumanization of colonized persons as objects of economic exploitation whereas the colonizer was a European who maintained a superior economic, psychological, and social positionality in comparison to the local population. The colonial, according to Memmi, existed only in theory but not in reality, because it entailed "a European living in a colony but having no privileges, whose living conditions are not higher than those of a colonized person of equivalent economic and social status."[16] Within Memmi's rubric, a Western missionary in Asia therefore could not identify as a colonial,

13. Neill, *Colonialism and Christian Missions*, 39–48.
14. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 21–22.
15. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 53–56.
16. Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 10.

despite one's best effort and fervent insistence, because missionaries were in fact colonizers who possessed the same extraterritorial privileges as foreign merchants and often held significantly greater material resources than the local persons they encountered daily.

Yet Memmi also recognized the relationship between colonialism and Christianity was "more complex than is heard among thinkers of the left." Memmi acknowledged, "To be sure, the church has greatly assisted the colonialist; backing his ventures, helping his conscience, contributing to the acceptance of colonization—even by the colonized."[17] But Memmi noted how some missionaries were critical of the pernicious abuses of colonialism. Memmi also observed that colonialists and missionaries often engaged in transactional relationships with one another. Each used the other to achieve their own purposes. In the nineteenth century, French diplomats supported their missionaries in China and negotiated to increase their access to own land and freely travel throughout the country for religious and political reasons. Between 1858 and 1860, the French coerced China into signing a treaty with a clause that permitted their missionaries to purchase land and erect churches wherever they wished beyond the five ports (Fuzhou, Guangzhou, Ningbo, Shanghai, and Xiamen) that were previously agreed upon in 1844.[18] In addition to bolstering Catholic evangelization, the French endeavored to assert their dominance through securing more extraterritorial rights for their missionaries. Missionaries throughout Asia accepted this kind of colonial support, but their primary motivation was for the sake of their religious work, not in service to imperial ambitions.

Several scholars maintain that missionaries were full participants in Western colonialism. In Said's construction of Orientalism "as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority" over Asia, Said includes missionaries alongside scientists, scholars, soldiers, and traders within the umbrella of Western hegemony because all these parties held and wielded positional superiority in their engagement with Asian persons, cultures, and ideas.[19] Frantz Fanon severely criticizes Christian mission in Western colonies because he identifies missionaries as agents of cultural destruction. Fanon compares colonialism to a "Manichean world" because of the "totalitarian character of colonial exploitation" as Westerners sought to dominate the colonized with physical violence, psychological torment, and cultural debasement. Missionary depictions of indigenous religious traditions as barbaric, satanic, and sinful offered rationalizations

17. Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized*, 72.
18. Latourette, *History of the Expansion*, 257–59.
19. Said, *Orientalism*, 3–7.

to justify the imperial project. In some colonial contexts, the deleterious results of Christian mission took the form of the colonized increasingly rejecting their own cultures and religious traditions as inferior and defective. Fanon argues, "The Church in the colonies is the white people's Church, the foreigner's Church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor."[20] Jean and John Comaroff find the "missionary imperialist" thesis, in which Christian mission is interpreted as the handmaiden of the colonial project by eroding indigenous resistance and preparing local populations for Western intrusion, as overly simplistic and historically imprecise, but the Comaroffs also insist this thesis is not entirely wrong. In their examination of European power and presence in southern Africa, the Comaroffs present British missionaries as active participants in the colonization of Tswana consciousness and emphasize how Christian mission exerted their own kind of hegemonic force in constructing "an empire of inequality" and enacting "a colonialism of coercion and dispossession."[21]

Neither Virtuous Bible Translators nor Vicious Cultural Imperialists

Scholars have countered the notion of missionaries as agents of Western colonialism by highlighting the fervent interest among missionaries to learn local languages. Colonial administrators and merchants chiefly resided in port cities or in relative isolation on compounds they fashioned with infrastructure that resembled their own cultures, but some missionaries itinerated throughout the countries they inhabited, engaged with local communities, increased their knowledge of indigenous cultures, and acquired the ability to communicate their religious teachings in native languages and idioms. One historian, Samuel Hugh Moffett, emphasizes the translating work of missionaries, especially in producing Bible translations in various Asian languages, as evidence to differentiate Christian mission from Western colonialism. Moffett highlights the translating work of Philip Baldaeus, a missionary with the Dutch Reformed Church in Sri Lanka for roughly ten years in the 1650s and 1660s, as an example. Baldaeus produced a catechism in Tamil and instructed other missionaries to study the language, writing, "The best and surest way to spread the religion is not to make the people learn Dutch—a long and tedious

20. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 41–42.

21. Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 7–8, 12.

process likely to be very expensive. It is much more convenient for one man to learn the language of the whole people."[22]

Lamin O. Sanneh asserts that one distinguishing characteristic of Christianity is the impetus on translation from Hebrew and Aramaic to the vernacular of every cultural context. Sanneh contrasts the impulse of colonial authorities in their suppression of "non-Western cultures even when they happened to embrace Christianity" with the collaborative and cross-cultural work of local Christians and foreign missionaries in Bible translation, which illustrates how "the gospel supersedes claims of progress and backwardness" from the colonial perspective.[23] Approximately fifty years after Baldaeus, the German Lutheran missionary Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg translated the New Testament into Tamil in 1711 and was responsible for facilitating the mass production of literature by setting the type to produce the first Tamil text with a modern printing press in India. Ziegenbalg also translated a systematic theology from German into Tamil in 1717 to provide more advanced theological resources to local church leaders.[24]

However, the missionary work of Bible translation in Asia was also marked by cultural bias and sometimes contributed to the larger colonial project endeavoring to purport Western superiority and Eastern inferiority. In their analysis of Christian mission, the Comaroffs agree that the missionaries prioritized Bible translation and labored to learn the local languages more quickly and thoroughly than the colonial administrators. But the Comaroffs also argue that some missionaries, despite their desire to distinguish themselves from Western colonialism, engaged in "the politics of language" through their translating work. They charge Robert Moffat, a missionary with the London Missionary Society (LMS) who produced the first New Testament in the Tswana language in 1840, with committing an act of violence against both the gospel message and Tswana culture in his use of *badimo*, a word the Tswana used for "ancestors," to denote "demons" in the book of Matthew.[25]

Archie C. C. Lee investigates the scriptural translations and hermeneutics of missionaries in Asia and also finds instances of intentional mistranslation to demean indigenous cultures and religions. Lee interrogates the translating work of Robert Morrison, a missionary with the LMS who published a Chinese Bible in 1823, and highlights Morrison's use of the Chinese character for *long* for the word "dragon" in thirty-three verses. Lee

22. Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 223–24.
23. Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 11.
24. Irvin and Sunquist, *World Christian Movement*, 411–12.
25. Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 213, 216–18.

explains, "Among Chinese communities, the word '*long*' is understood as a beneficial mythic creature, combining the most miraculous parts of many animals. Chinese people believe that the dragon brings blessing and prosperity to humanity."[26] Morrison departed from the translation of Matteo Ricci, an Italian Jesuit missionary in China from 1583 to 1610, who understood the meaning of *long* and therefore chose another Chinese character (*jiao*) for "dragon." Lee argues that "Protestant missionaries capitalized on the mistranslation and came up with an oppressive Christianity with the biblical God taking on a long fight against the evil and devilish Chinese culture and religion."[27]

Raj Nadella studies the Telugu Bible translations of Western missionaries in India and excavates how they utilized neologisms over "readily available" Telugu equivalents to "cleanse Indian languages, in this case, of native religious influence" and propagate the notion that Telugu was an inferior language lacking the capacity to express Christian concepts like grace. Missionaries introduced a new word, *krupa*, for grace instead of *prasadam*, an existing Telugu word that Nadella maintains could have "sufficiently conveyed the concept of grace."[28] Nadella, Lee, and the Comaroffs contend that some missionaries subverted local languages and cultural idioms to produce scriptural translations that were amalgams of Christian mission and Western colonialism combining theological and political motivations.

Some scholars place missionaries within the typology of imperialism rather than colonialism because the former emphasizes domination without the colonial forms of conquest and occupation. Johan Galtung constructs a structural theory of imperialism focusing on power structures. Galtung understands imperialism "as a sophisticated type of dominance relation which cuts across nations, basing itself on a bridgehead which the centre in the Centre nation establishes in the centre of the Periphery nation, for the joint benefit of both," but with economic inequities that favor the "Centre" through the exploitation of the "Periphery."[29] A diverse array of individuals across many nations performs functions within imperial structures. Galtung finds that missionaries function as agents of cultural imperialism: "If the Centre always provides the teachers and the definition of that worthy of being taught (from the gospels of Christianity to the Gospels of Technology), and the Periphery always provides the learners, then there is a pattern which

26. Lee, "Scriptural Translations and Hermeneutics," 128.
27. Lee, "Scriptural Translations and Hermeneutics," 129.
28. Nadella, "Postcolonialism, Translation, and Colonial Mimicry," 52–53.
29. Galtung, "Structural Theory of Imperialism," 81, 90.

smacks of imperialism."[30] In William R. Hutchison's history of Protestant missionaries from the United States, Hutchison avers that "the American missionary movement takes its place as an active contributor" of imperialism with a conceptual understanding that defines imperialism as "the attempt to impose one's ideas and culture on another, and the possible instruments of imposition are not limited to guns and power politics—if the tools of the trade include, for example, ordinary persuasiveness backed by vastly superior resources."[31] Carol C. Chin argues that female missionaries from the United States in China were engaged in a beneficent imperialism rife with contradictions. Chin notes how American missionaries drew comparisons between themselves and their European counterparts in China. They prided themselves on coming from a nation that did not participate in the selfish and coercive structures of "crass imperialism" and insisted that their motivations were solely to enact ministries of evangelization and compassion. Yet they also wanted to impose their cultural values upon the Chinese, seeking to remake Chinese women according to their evangelical and Western prescriptions, and rarely questioned their own structural advantages and positions of superiority due to "the implicit backing they enjoyed from the power of the U.S. government."[32]

Interpreting missionaries within the framework of cultural imperialism illumines some aspects of their social presence in Asia, but it also obscures their religious motivations. Just as the image of the missionary as a virtuous Bible translator renders an incomplete and misleading portrait, the classification of vicious cultural imperialist is not the most accurate category to summarize Christian mission. Missionaries often possessed superior material resources and appealed to colonial or diplomatic authorities for protection when traveling, but they seldom persuaded local persons to fully adopt Western economic, political, or social systems. Instead, missionaries such as Roberto de Nobili and Jerome Xavier endeavored to present Christianity with images, practices, and teachings that were amenable to regnant Eastern cultures and customs. In 1605, De Nobili, an Italian Jesuit missionary in India, departed from the existing focus on ministering to lower-caste persons and labored to propagate Christianity among higher-caste Hindus. De Nobili learned the Sanskrit language, absorbed Brahmin teachings, and self-identified as a Brahmin ascetic. He traded his clothing, the black cassock that the Jesuits traditionally wore, for the Indian dress of a *sannyasi* (renouncer), the highest level of Brahmin asceticism,

30. Galtung, "Structural Theory of Imperialism," 93.

31. Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 204.

32. Chin, "Beneficent Imperialists," 328.

and adopted the ascetic lifestyle in his diet and separation from persons of lower castes. De Nobili also adapted Christian worship to the Indian caste system in advocating for segregation between higher-caste and lower-caste worshipers.[33] In *Mir'āt al-quds* (Mirror of holiness), Xavier, a Spanish Jesuit missionary in South Asia at the turn of the seventeenth century, referenced Roman Catholic documents, the New Testament, and his own interactions with Muslims in the Mughal Court specifically to counter Islamic notions about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Xavier resided for several years in the Mughal Court as a guest of Emperor Akbar and hoped the emperor would convert to Christianity.[34]

Both De Nobili and Xavier utilized the structures of imperialism, enjoying positions of superiority on account of their material wealth and Western identities, but they were not interested in supporting the economic and political aims of the colonial project. Instead, they leveraged their cultural influence to advance their religious ambitions. Some missionaries wanted access to persons with privilege and power in Asia to convert them to Christianity. They did not see themselves as the advance agents of colonialism and were not consciously plotting to facilitate the conditions for subjugation by introducing their Western ideologies to Asian persons and communities. Rather, these missionaries believed they were ambassadors of Jesus Christ fulfilling the divine commission to make disciples of all nations.

The primary focus of most missionaries was to introduce Christianity to Asian persons and communities with the goal of conversion. Some missionaries were aggressive in their evangelization and employed methods that ranged from deceptive to coercive. Their scriptural translations demeaned and demonized local cultures and religions. In some of their hospitals, they made attendance to religious worship compulsory for receiving medical attention. Edward Hicks Hume, an American medical missionary in China, reported in 1907 that he did not treat patients at his hospital within the Yale Mission in Changsha unless they first participated in a Christian prayer service. The hospital opened at 9:00 in the morning, but patients waited in a space devoted to prayer for one hour before they were ushered in to see Hume.[35] In the 1880s, Horace Newton Allen, an American physician responsible for establishing the first Western hospital in Korea, rebuffed other missionaries seeking to proselytize to his patients in their vulnerable

33. Irvin and Sunquist, *World Christian Movement*, 204–5.

34. Sugirtharajah, *Jesus in Asia*, 13–15.

35. Lian, *Conversion of Missionaries*, 32.

conditions and struggled against rumors that medical treatment at his hospital was contingent on conversion to Christianity.[36]

Many missionaries also adhered to a triumphalist theology with hostile attitudes toward local cultures and religions. They identified every societal ill in their new contexts, such as poverty or injustices against women, as evidence to support the superiority of their Christianity and the inferiority of other Asian religions. In the 1920s, Frank J. Rawlinson, a veteran American missionary in China, grew critical of the narrow-minded triumphalism of his colleagues and endeavored to alter their perceptions of Chinese culture and religion. But many of them vehemently disagreed with Rawlinson's lectures to new missionaries touting the moral virtues within the teachings of Confucius and tracing how Confucianism contributed to the development of Chinese civilization. One of these missionaries captured their antipathy toward Rawlinson in a letter that denounced his lectures as anti-Christian: "You showed how Confucius had given the ethical content of the Christian gospels centuries before Christ was born . . . a large number of us resented your attitude toward Christ and were so disappointed that a missionary of your prominence saw no more than you did of the true spiritual content of the Gospel."[37]

A few missionaries were sympathetic to Rawlinson's attempts to counter the attitudes of religious aggression pervasive among missionaries in Asia. Fleming, like Rawlinson, thought it was ignorant and naive for Western missionaries to construe every evil they encountered as outsiders in Eastern societies with spiritual meaning and theological judgment. After all, the missionaries did not negatively assess Christianity as a devilish religion on account of the many vices and social sins rampant in their own Western nations. Fleming therefore advocated for a fourfold approach to Christian mission that first looked to "appreciate the admirable qualities that should endure in other peoples," such as "the Japanese Buddhist's genius for contemplation"; second, discerned the cultural and social conditions that were hindrances to their progress; third, identified what ideas, goods, and systems from the missionary's home context, such as Western science and medicine, would be helpful if transported to their host countries; fourth, maintained "an unrelenting effort to detect those elements in one's civilization," such as white supremacy and theological provincialism, that would harm the very persons the missionaries desired to help and serve.[38]

36. Yoo, *American Missionaries, Korean Protestants*, 26.

37. Lian, *Conversion of Missionaries*, 76.

38. Fleming, *Whither Bound in Missions*, 43–44.

The Exceptional Missionary as the Exception Rather Than the Rule

Another challenge in scholarly assessments of Christian mission in Asia is the tendency to overemphasize the work of a few exceptional missionaries and make general conclusions about the entire scope of Christian mission based on these rare individuals. Interpreters seeking to separate Christian mission from Western colonialism highlight the courageous witness of individuals like Ann Hasseltine Judson, the first American female missionary in Asia, and her steadfast work as an educator and Bible translator in Burma (Myanmar) amid supporting her spouse, Adoniram Judson, during his imprisonment, or the writings from missionaries excoriating the abuses and sins of Western colonialism. Andrew Porter stresses that some British missionaries in China were critical of their nation's exploitative use of opium in pernicious trade exchanges. British merchants and colonial administrators openly defied Chinese restrictions against opium because the British found no other import was as desirable in China. European demand for Chinese goods and materials, such as teas and silks, outpaced Chinese demand for manufactured goods from Europe, and therefore European merchants were forced to pay the Chinese in gold or silver until they began exchanging opium cultivated in India. In 1841, William Lockhart, the first British medical missionary in China, condemned his government as a "pretendedly Christian people" for their use of military force to defend and perpetuate the wicked opium trade: "[We] are also allowing this hateful traffic to go on, among our own Ships of War and in open day . . . the smugglers are protected by her Majesty the Defender of the Faith's ships, this is the very worst thing that we have done and fills me with disgust and what must the Chinese think of such conduct."[39]

One glaring problem with utilizing exceptional missionaries is that they are exceptions who do not accurately represent how Christian mission functioned alongside Western colonialism in Asia. Paul W. Harris contends that most American Protestant missionaries in China purposefully ignored the obvious immoralities of the opium trade because they understood that their ongoing residence was dependent on commercial and diplomatic support. Thus, these missionaries were linked to Western colonialism as conscious participants of "imperial culture" despite their insistences about self-identifying as religious preachers declaring the biblical message of Christian salvation.[40] Porter also acknowledges that British missionaries were divided

39. Porter, *Religion versus Empire?*, 203.

40. Harris, "Cultural Imperialism," 311, 320.

about the question of whether to advocate for the suppression of the opium trade. In 1889, Robert Needham Cust, an administrator with the Imperial Civil Service in India and member of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) Parent Committee, maintained that missionaries ought to refrain from commentary on political matters like the opium trade and strictly focus on their evangelizing work abroad.[41] Although most missionaries professed to be spiritual ambassadors armed only with "a philosophy of love" in Christianity, Rawlinson conceded that their religious teachings were often obfuscated by their reliance on coercive treaty arrangements and extraterritorial protections born of militarism and imperialism.[42]

Some missionaries certainly acted as generously, selflessly, and valiantly as Ann Hasseltine Judson. Many of them endured arduous physical conditions in foreign terrain and some died from infectious diseases. Missionaries also grieved when their colleagues and family members, including infants and young children, succumbed to various illnesses. Because some missionaries focused their efforts on ministering to the poor, the sick, and the marginalized in Asia, many of these local persons welcomed the missionaries and lauded their positive contributions in improving the physical and social conditions within some Asian societies. In Thailand, Dan Beach Bradley, a medical missionary with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, tirelessly labored for nearly four decades from 1835 to 1873 and was responsible for performing the first surgical operation, creating the first smallpox vaccinations, and publishing the first newspaper in the country.[43] One empirical study published in the *British Journal of Political Science* from 2013 finds that the mission schools established by CMS, LMS, and other British missionaries in India had positive outcomes for women's education. The 1931 Census of India indicates that Christian women had a literacy rate of 203 per 1,000 people compared to 21 and 15 for Hindu and Muslim women per 1,000 people, respectively.[44] When Annie Baird, an American missionary in Korea, died in 1916 after approximately twenty-five years of service in educational and evangelistic ministries, one of Baird's Korean students honored her with the following eulogy, "In life or in death the thought of her soul was ever directed toward this people, and ever will be. She lives for us. She dies for us. Oh, woe is me! In the land of eternal blessing she will peacefully rest."[45]

41. Porter, *Religion versus Empire?*, 204.
42. Rawlinson, "New Christian Struggle in China," 810.
43. Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 350–51.
44. Lankina and Getachew, "Competitive Religious Entrepreneurs," 112.
45. Yoo, *American Missionaries, Korean Protestants*, 10.

However, the actions and attitudes of other missionaries were reprehensible. Some abused their material advantages and looked upon Asian persons and communities with contempt. In Indonesia, Dutch missionaries were employed by the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Dutch East India Company, VOC) and their tasks included collecting taxes in local Malay communities and praying for Dutch soldiers before they engaged in military campaigns to seize more territory.[46] In some regions, Dutch missionaries were offered extra remuneration for every person they baptized with financial compensation categorized as *discipelgeld* (disciple-money) to bolster VOC efforts to subjugate areas with predominantly Muslim populations.[47] In the South Pacific, some missionaries leveraged their superior material resources to acquire political and commercial power. In Tonga, the British missionary Shirley Waldemar Baker pursued a close relationship with the king, George Tupou I, and achieved his goal when the king appointed him to a leading government post in 1881. Western colonial administrators and missionaries alike roundly criticized Baker for his divisive and selfish actions in Tonga.[48] Other missionaries in Asia were simply mediocre. In some instances, such as with several Dutch pastors in Asian regions under VOC control, the missionaries were there only because they were unable to secure ministerial employment at home due to their lackluster skills.

In 1945, W. E. B. Du Bois classified missionaries in a third category distinct from commercial entrepreneurs and colonial officials: "The missionaries form another class. They have been of all sorts of persons: unworldly visionaries, former pastors out of a job, social workers with and without social science, theologians, crackpots, and humanitarians."[49] Yet Du Bois also recognized that these three foreign parties functioned within the same imperial structures. It was not appropriate to conflate Christian mission with Western colonialism. But it was also false to separate the two as completely discrete phenomena. Missionaries in Asia held various attitudes toward Western colonialism and engaged in different kinds of relations with colonial authorities. Some relationships were cooperative whereas others were combative. A few missionaries publicly protested the wanton abuses of imperial aggression and many more privately detested the sinful avarice of Western expansion. The missionaries nevertheless understood that their presence in Asia was initiated alongside colonial endeavors and recognized

46. Irvin and Sunquist, *World Christian Movement*, 409.

47. Neill, *Colonialism and Christian Missions*, 176–77.

48. Forman, *Island Churches of the South Pacific*, 125–26; Neill, *Colonialism and Christian Missions*, 240–41.

49. Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 256.

that their ongoing residence was dependent upon the dominance of Western economic, military, and political systems. Their mouths proclaimed a religious message professing that Jesus Christ was no respecter of persons and did not differentiate between East and West when welcoming persons into the kingdom of God. But in many of their hearts, they knew that the world they inhabited was different from the eternal heaven in their preaching and teaching. Nearly every facet of their daily lives, ranging from quotidian practices to cross-cultural encounters, evinced a position of superiority that was made possible because of Western colonialism.

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