

## RECENT RISE OF THE KOREAN MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

### Sociological Assessment with Religious, Economic, and Developmental Dimensions

Sangkeun Kim\*

#### 1. Introduction

Bishop Stephen Neill, an eminent historian of Christian mission, finishes his entry on "Christian Mission" in Mircea Eliade's epoch-making *The Encyclopaedia of Religion* with the following remark:

In the past, the gospel travelled across continents and oceans almost exclusively in one direction. Has not the time come to establish two way traffic, to have the gospel travel across continents and oceans in many directions? If this is true, the word *mission* may be in need of new and contemporary definition.<sup>1</sup>

Neill's entry was published in 1987. Some twenty years following the savant's predictive remark, the time has come to redefine the term *mission*. It is true that the gospel travels across continents and oceans in many directions today. Traditional missionary-receiving countries are now becoming missionary-sending countries and *vice versa*. Among these two-way transactions, the trans-national missionary movement of Korean Christianity serves as an outstanding case for a new and contemporary definition of *mission*.

Sociological accounts of why the Korean missionary movement is expanding today might directly refer to the modern history of Korean Christianity itself, since the two developments are not separable in nature. Several hypotheses have been offered to explain the sudden rise of the Korean missionary movement after the 1990s, largely from historical perspectives. Among these explanations, the revivalism factor has been the most convincing one. According to this approach, the revivals that caused

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\*Dr. Sangkeun Kim holds a PhD from Princeton Theological Seminary and is the Associate Dean of United Graduate School of Theology and Associate Professor of Mission Studies and History of Religions at Yonsei University. Dr. Kim, currently the editor of *Theological Forum*, has authored many monographs and research articles, including *Mission Studies: The Scope and Boundary* (2006).

<sup>1</sup>Stephen Neill, "Christian Mission," in *Encyclopedia of Religions*, vol. 9, Mircea Eliade, ed., New York: MacMillan, 1987, 578.

the explosive growth of the Christian population during the 1970s and 1980s in Korea propelled subsequent missionary expansions from the late 1980s, especially after the successful hosting of the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympic Games. As Andrew Walls points out, there is a close relationship between revival and mission, and the spiritual renewal through the great revival of the 1970s and 1980s triggered Korean missionaries' impulse to go to the world.<sup>2</sup> To supplement this historical analysis, a sociological investigation of the Korean missionary movement is greatly needed. A sociological analysis of the phenomenal growth of the Korean church was previously attempted by some scholars,<sup>3</sup> but no significant academic research on the recent Korean missionary movement has been offered from the perspective of the sociology of mission.<sup>4</sup> I will investigate the sociology of the recent Korean missionary movement here based on the scheme described below.

First, the various aspects of religious diffusion through the Korean missionary movement today will be discussed with updated statistics regarding the number of incumbent Korean missionaries, key mission players, hosting regions by continents and countries, gender and marital divisions of missionaries, ordained and lay divisions of missionaries, and main ministerial roles. Second, the present Korean missionary movement will be investigated from the sending side, receiving side, and the relationship between the two. The recent rise of the Korean missionary movement began immediately after the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympic Games, with the initial involvements of campus ministry groups, such as CCC (Campus Crusade for Christ) and UBF (University Bible Fellowship) at Korean universities. The sending sides of the recent Korean missionary movement should be approached from the point of view of younger Korean generations' "frontier spirit," which had been strengthened by a positive worldview in relation to self-image during the second half of the 1980s. The economic factor, which reshaped the self-image of Koreans who thought that they had "something to give" to the world, has promoted a "frontier spirit" for foreign mission among these youngsters for foreign

<sup>2</sup>Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996, 79.

<sup>3</sup>For example, Byong-suh Kim, "The Explosive Growth of the Korean Church Today: A Sociological Analysis," *International Review of Mission* 74 (January 1985), 59-72.

<sup>4</sup>For a definition of "the sociology of mission," see Robert Montgomery, *Introduction to the Sociology of Missions*, Westport: Praeger, 1996.

mission. I would like to suggest here that the new enhanced self-image of young Koreans, based on Korea's economic development, was responsible for the greatest missionary impulse of the last two decades. In terms of the receiving sides, it seems Korean missionaries are being accepted since they are delivering a tangible development model not only for economic success, but also for spiritual growth to the people of the underdeveloped mission-hosting countries. The positive image of the Korean economy's remarkable success coincides temporally with Korean missionaries' theology of prosperity at the same time. Finally, I will discuss the relationship between the sending and receiving factors from the broader aspect of globalization. Certainly, the globalization aspects of Christian mission are not limited to the Korean case. If we accept Malcolm Waters' definition of "globalization" as "a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangement recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding,"<sup>5</sup> the worldwide presence of Korean missionaries should be discussed in the context of the following question: what is the global role of Korean missionaries for "the intensification of worldwide social relationships"?<sup>6</sup> The sending determination of Korean Christianity and the receiving necessity of Korean missionaries in the hosting countries are not separable in the era of globalization since there are designated roles of Korean missionaries for the intensification of worldwide social relationships with their characteristic "evangelical" components. Moreover, Korean missionaries are an "aggressive international sales force" for exporting American Gospel, the theology of prosperity, to the world.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Korean Missionary Movement Today

The current Korean missionary movement has been introduced as "the second largest missionary-sending" by mission scholars and this introduction is correct, if we consider the mere number of incumbent Korean missionaries worldwide.<sup>8</sup> If we also accept Philip Jenkins's

<sup>5</sup>Malcolm Waters, *Globalization*, London: Routledge, 1995, 3.

<sup>6</sup>It is Anthony Giddens who defines "globalization" as "the intensification of worldwide social relations." See, Donald Lewis, "Globalization, Religion and Evangelicalism," *Crux* 38, 2 (June 2002), 35.

<sup>7</sup>Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford, and Susan Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism*, New York: Routledge, 1996, 11.

<sup>8</sup>Steve Moon, "The Recent Korean Missionary Movement," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 27, 1 (January 2003), 11-16.

diagnosis of Christianity as “the global religion,”<sup>9</sup> Korean missionaries are becoming key-players in the diffusion of global religion.

A statistical analysis of the Korean missionary movement was first attempted by Marlin L. Nelson who conducted actual counting from 1979 to 1989. The Korean Research Institute for Mission (KRIM) succeeded Nelson and has done biennial statistical research since 1990. Steve Moon, director of KRIM, has gracefully provided me the most up-to-date statistical data. I will use it to briefly introduce the rapidly changing composition of the Korean missionary movement, evident in the following chart.

Year	Number of Missionaries	Number of Mission Agencies	Number of Host Countries
1979	93	21	26
1982	323	47	37
1986	511	65	47
1989	1,170	66	72
1990	1,645	74	87
1992	2,576	90	105
1994	3,272	113	119
1996	4,402	113	138
1998	5,948	127	145
2000	8,103	136	162
2002	10,422	163	164
2004	12,874	165	160

#### **The Statistical Composition of the Korean Missionary Movement (1979-2004)**

As the chart above shows, Korean churches are now sending at least 12,874 Korean missionaries worldwide as of 2004.<sup>10</sup> Since this number does not include independent Korean missionaries sent abroad by local churches in Korea and other Korean missionaries sent by Korean *diaspora* churches, especially from the United States, it is an estimated minimum. It is true that the Korean church is becoming a key player in world

<sup>9</sup>Philip Jenkins, *Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

<sup>10</sup>Also see, Steve Sang-Cheol Moon, “The Spiritual Influence of Korea: The Movement and Task of Korean Mission,” *KIATS Theological Journal* 2, 1 (2006), 177.

evangelization today in terms of total numbers. As Moon points out, however, the average growth rate, which, during the explosive period 1990 to 2000 exceeded a 35% biennial increase, is now subsiding to a level less than 25% increase. It seems that the Korean missionary movement is losing some of its initial enthusiasm, but the morale of sending "more" missionary personnel to the world is not fading at all. At a recent mission conference, held in May 2006, the conservative and evangelical Christian Council of Korea and the Korean World Mission Association announced that the two organizations would campaign to send 100,000 Korean missionaries throughout the world by the year 2030.<sup>11</sup>

The actual number of missionaries increases by more than 1,400 annually. The largest missionary-sending agency is University Bible Fellowship (UBF) with 1,320 missionaries. The next largest missionary-sending agencies are mostly denominational boards of mission: Global Missionary Society of the General Assembly of Presbyterian Church in Korea with 1,287 missionaries, The Presbyterian Church of Korea (Tonghap) with 849, The Methodist Mission Board with 702, and The Assemblies of God with 555. The forerunners of the Korean missionary movement during the early 1990s were mainly recruited and managed by campus ministry groups, such as UBF, CCC, and IVF (InterVarsity Christian Fellowship), but now the proportion of denominational missionaries is increasing. More recruitment from denominational mission boards directly indicates that more ordained pastors are getting involved in missionary enterprises.

According to KRIM's missionary statistics, however, only 28.2% of Korean missionaries are ordained. However, since these statistics count a missionary's spouse as a "lay" missionary, the actual "ordained" missionary couples constitute at least 56% of the Korean missionary community. The increasing number of ordained missionaries is closely related to home mission. The Korean seminaries' over-surplus of seminary-educated ministry candidates, which far exceeds the hiring capacity of local churches, has had direct influence upon the recent increase of "ordained" missionaries.

In terms of hosting continents and countries, Asia (49.6%) and China (1,482 missionaries) rank the highest. Beyond Asia, Korean missionaries

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<sup>11</sup>"The Second Missionary Revivals: 100,000 Korean Missionaries by the Year 2030," *Kuk-Min Daily*, May 31, 2006.

are scattered throughout the world: North America (11.2%), Eurasia (9.6%), Africa (7.8%), Central and Latin America (5.5%), Western Europe (3.4%), the Middle East (3.4%), Russia (3.2%), and the South Pacific Ocean (2.6%).<sup>12</sup> Beyond China, with respect to hosting countries, the favoured destinations of Korean missionaries' are either North American countries or Asian countries: the United States (994), Japan (691), the Philippines (666), Russia (407), Germany (346), Thailand (327), Indonesia (322), India (300), and Canada (221).<sup>13</sup> As Steve Moon indicates, Korean missionaries in developed countries such as the United States, Germany, and Canada are focusing on the various types of campus ministries. In other words, Korean missionaries who are working in developed countries have been sent by campus ministry groups, such as UBF and CCC. Consequently, they are mostly "lay" and "tent-maker" missionaries.

In KRIM's statistics, no more than 5.8% of the total Korean missionaries are working among the Korean *diaspora* communities in their mission destinations. Thus, it is obvious that the majority of Korean missionaries are "cross-cultural" in nature. In terms of the types of Korean missionaries, the characteristic "cross-cultural" components are revealing, with the major focuses being discipleship training (39%) and church planting (35.3%). Other areas of ministry include educational ministry (7.2%), theological education (4.4%), preaching tours (4.4%), Bible translation (2.5%), and medical mission (2.5%).

With respect to the gender and marital status breakdown, there are more female (52.2%) than male (47.8%) missionaries and only 16.2% of all missionaries are single, while the majority (83.8%) are married. In terms of age, interestingly, 78.2% of missionaries are in their 30s or 40s.<sup>14</sup> The majority of Korean missionaries attended college during the 1980s and early 1990s. Some Korean sociologists call people in their 30s and 40s "the 386 Generation," meaning "the people of generation in their 30s and 40s, who were born in 1960s and were attending their college in the 1980s." It is also plausible that "the 386 Generation" is, indeed, the major force behind the Korea missionary movement today.

<sup>12</sup>Moon, "The Spiritual Influence of Korea," 180.

<sup>13</sup>Moon, "The Spiritual Influence of Korea," 181.

<sup>14</sup>8% of Korean missionaries are in their 20s, 36.4% in their 30s, 41.8% in their 40s, 11.3% in their 50s, and 2.6% in their 60s. See, Moon, "The Spiritual Influence of Korea," 182.

### 3. The Push Factors for the Missionary Impulse: The Sense of Calling with Increased National Pride as a "New Nation"

During the 1980s, the Korean economy skyrocketed with an average 10.1% annual growth rate throughout the decade of economic boom. Especially from 1980 to 1988, the Korean economy boasted the highest increase of annual growth rate in the world. The so-called "export-driven" economic policy worked efficiently with the Korean companies' entrepreneurial spirit and the Korean government's rigid protective trade policies. The business tycoons of Korea, such as the owners of Samsung, LG, Hyundai Motors, Daewoo Electronics, and SK, enthusiastically expanded their market boundaries in the world. The economic prosperity of the nation during the 1980s was unprecedented in the history of Korea, which has existed for about 5,000 years. In the early 1960s, Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world, following the brutal Japanese colonialism and the bloody Korean War. At that time, Korea's GDP was only \$79, nearly the same as that of Sudan in Africa. Less than 30 years later, however, Korea had become an industrialized country. Many economists referred to Korea's rapid economic growth as "the Miracle of Han River."

The symbolic climax of those affluent decades occurred at the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympic Games. After the successful hosting of the Olympic Games, Koreans identified themselves as people of a new nation. The shameful history of the Japanese Colonial Occupation (1910-1945), national division into South and North Korea after the destructive Korean War (1950-1953), the image of a war-ruined poor country, and the memory of the long-lasting military dictatorship were finally fading away. The self-identity of Korea as a new nation has been reproduced and promoted by the patriotic rhetoric of political leaders ever since. In 2005, Korea was ranked as the tenth largest economic power in the world. With the fierce competition from other emerging countries, so-called BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), the Korean economy is thriving more than ever. Korea is now one of the economic superpowers in Asia, along with Japan, China, and India.

Since the end of the 1980s, Korea has become a country with "something to give" to the world for the first time. The Korean soap operas, pop music, and cinema provide many neighbouring Asian countries with Korea's cultural influence. For example, a Korean TV drama, *Winter Sonata*, was a sensational hit in Japan during the early

2000s, and the main characters of the drama became cultural icons not only in Japan, but also in many south-eastern Asian countries. The Chinese National TV station airs a Korean language program everyday. Korean actors and pop singers have been cheered by the young Chinese generation. In Hong Kong, a Korean TV drama, titled *Tae-jang-kum*, gathered about 47% of the population in front of their TV screens, which is a record in the history of Hong Kong's entertainment industry. It was recently announced that *Tae-jang-kum* will be aired in Arabic countries soon. Many Arabic countries, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Arab Emirate, Kuwait, Syria, and Jordan, have signed a contract with the Korean Broadcasting System, the national TV station of Korea that produced *Tae-jang-kum*.

The 2002 World Cup Game, co-hosted by Korea and Japan, was another event that Koreans found to represent their renewed self-image as a new nation. When the Korean soccer team made the semi-finals at the World Cup, Koreans saw themselves as they did after the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. As BBC News reported, the young Koreans' cheering for the national soccer team looks "more like a religious revival than a pep rally for a sporting event."<sup>15</sup> Korean nationalism has fused with soccer, especially amongst younger generations. As their economy expands, so does their sense of national pride as a new nation. The players who defeated the national football (soccer) teams of Italy and Portugal are the young Korean generation's new *alter ego*.

As mentioned, the early players of the Korean missionary movement throughout the late 1980s and the early 1990s were mainly young college-graduates who had experienced a state of religious excitement at the missionary-recruiting revivals sponsored by several para-church movements and campus ministry groups, such as Mission Korea, UBF, CCC, and IVF. Young Korean college students had a similar sense of calling and of the obligation to volunteer for foreign mission as did young American college students who had volunteered in the years from 1890 to 1917. The slogan adopted by the Student Volunteers Movement was repeated by the Korean college students about a century later in Korea: "The Evangelization of the World in This Generation!"

In the Weberian sociological sense, Protestantism, the specific form of Calvinism, has a close connection with the rise of the Western

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<sup>15</sup>Charles Scanlon, "South Korea's Hard Act to Follow," *BBC News Internet Edition*, May 24, 2006.



capitalism as it produced "sober, serious, and disciplined people who worked hard and, anxious to demonstrate to themselves that they were among God's chosen people."<sup>16</sup> According to Donald Lewis' succinct summary of Weberian understanding regarding the connection between Protestantism and capitalism, the Protestants "came to equate the idea of 'calling' with 'career.'"<sup>17</sup> The Korean missionaries who left Korea during the late 1980s and the early 1990s were mostly young people who just graduated from college. It seems they equated the sense of God's calling with their missionary career under the broader influence of a Calvinistic framework. It is quite astonishing to see that the major sending force of the recent Korean missionary movement has been the conservative Calvinist circle. The Tong-hap, Hap-dong, and Ko-shin Presbyterians, all in the traditional Calvinistic framework, have been providing theological impetus to the young Korean missionaries of the world by fusing the idea of calling with career.

Their missionary impulse, however, has not been limited to the Calvinistic framework. The national pride as a new nation and missionary sense of calling as the people of a chosen country for world mission are closely connected with missionary impulse among young Korean missionaries. The connection has already been found in some speeches and remarks of mission pioneers. For example, Dae-sun Park, President of Yonsei University, asserted in 1980 that "God is calling Koreans to make them the second 'chosen people'" and that's why "God protected the Koreans from the communists' invasion from north during the Korean War." In his article, titled, "The Light of East," Park claimed that it was "God's watchful providence to make the Korean churches financially prosper."<sup>18</sup> Chong-sung Lee of the Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary in Seoul (the largest and "hardest-to-enter" seminary in Korea) even encouraged Korean Christians for foreign mission in 1981 by claiming God called Korea to be "the last witness" to the world.<sup>19</sup> He claimed that splendid church growth, financial capability for foreign mission, and a renewed national pride were providing the concrete platform for the Korean missionary movement to the world. The prime

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<sup>16</sup>Donald Lewis, "Globalization, Religion and Evangelicalism," *Crux* 38, 2 (June 2002), 41.

<sup>17</sup>Lewis, "Globalization, Religion and Evangelicalism," 41.

<sup>18</sup>Dae-sun Park, "The Light of East," *Han-kuk Bok-un-shin-moon*, March 23, 1980.

<sup>19</sup>Chong-sung Lee, "The World Is Calling Us," *Shin-hak Chum-chu* 33 (1981), 11.

players in the initial stage of the Korean missionary movement, interestingly, were not the leaders of local churches or denominational mission boards. They were young generations who belonged to campus ministry agencies. The question of missionary impulse, or the push factors, could not possibly provide adequate answers if we were to underestimate the newly formulated national image and the sense of calling as “a newly chosen country” for world mission among these young generations.

#### 4. The Pull Factors: Korea as a Model Country of Development, Economically and Spiritually

If there is a missionary-sending country with missionary impulse, there is a corresponding missionary-receiving country with an accommodating spirit, each having their differing motivations. The missionary-receiving countries are not the passive beneficiaries of religious diffusion. They have their own rights and powers, visible and invisible, to select the nationality, confessional identity, gender, and the ability to provide financial subsidy, of the incoming missionaries to their country. These pulling factors on the Korean missionaries should be examined by asking why the world, albeit mostly underdeveloped countries, needs Korean missionaries today.

The invaluable advantage that Korean missionaries have, coming from a new missionary-sending country, is that they can “proclaim the gospel to the world without the baggage of colonialism.”<sup>20</sup> In the history of modern Christian mission, it is known that three Cs went together to the non-Western world: Christianity, commerce, and civilization.<sup>21</sup> During the era of colonial expansion, European and North American missionaries were self-appointed with the so-called “white man’s burden” to be the guardians of coloured races for the entire world.<sup>22</sup> Colonial officers and Western missionaries altogether believed that the people of Africa, Latin America, and Asia needed the “civilized” Christian protection of the white race.<sup>23</sup> The history of the Korean missionary movement has nothing to do

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<sup>20</sup>Sangkeun Kim, “Sheer Numbers Do Not Tell the Entire Story: The Challenges of the Korean Missionary Movement from an Ecumenical Perspective,” *Ecumenical Review* 57, 4 (October 2005), 468.

<sup>21</sup>David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, New York: Orbis Books, 1995, 305.

<sup>22</sup>See William Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

<sup>23</sup>On the relationship between colonialism and mission in the early Spanish period, see Vincent L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian*

with these kinds of colonial or racial ramifications associated with past Western missionary movements. Rather, the modern Korean nation-building experience in the first half of the twentieth century was tightly related to the Japanese colonialism that ruled Korea with an iron fist from 1910 to 1945.

It seems the Korean missionaries have been labelled by their hosting countries as successful role models for both spiritual and economic development at the same time. They are being regarded as the religious symbols who could illustrate the best ways of achieving economical and spiritual wellbeing within Christian sentiment. According to Sung-il Hong's article, "How Does the Third World Evaluate Korean Economy," in *The Voice of Business*, the Third World sees Korea as a model country for economic development.<sup>24</sup> Hong cites the research reports of the Centre of Cultural Exchange in Korea, which shows the evaluation of Korea in 276 high school textbooks in 34 foreign countries. In the high-school textbooks for Egyptian students, for example, Korea's "Miracle of Han River" is introduced in detail as a superior model of economic development in the modern history of the world. Other countries, such as Uruguay, Poland, and Mongol, regard Korea as one of the industrialized and developed countries within the tenth size of economy in the world; Korea is not just the second-largest missionary-sending country. Korea is sending not only missionaries with Christian faith, but also a developing model with the amazing amount of missionary money.

As Korean missionaries emanate throughout the world, so does Korean money in the name of the missionary fund. If we accept KRIM's report on the number of Korean missionaries as 12,874 as of 2004 and it is estimated that at least \$110 million per year is sent to them only for their basic living compensation, receiving \$1,000 per month. No comprehensive study on the entire Korean mission finance has been produced to date, but if we add ministry expenses, such as the construction of church buildings, travel fees, insurance and pension, and education expense for the children of missionaries who usually go to English-speaking international schools, the total sum of missionary expenditure is beyond our imagination.

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*Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

<sup>24</sup>Sung-il Hong, "How Does the Third World Evaluate Korean Economy," *The Voice of Business* 86 (September 2006).

### 5. Korean Evangelical Mission and Globalization

The scope and methodology of trans-national mission is, directly and indirectly, under the influence of the massive power of globalization today. The first blueprint of world mission, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, which was presented by William Carey, claims that the success of the Western commercial expansion could be used as an example for the successful execution of a world mission.<sup>25</sup> During the "Great Century" of Christian expansion, the West's colonial enterprises had furnished the operative scope and methodology upon which the Western missionaries in the non-Western world could be dependent. Now, the ubiquitous presence of a globalization force in the world system plays a significant role in Christian missionary enterprises worldwide.

As Malcolm Waters argues, globalization has an ideological implication since "it appears to justify the spread of Western culture and capitalist society by suggesting that there are forces operating beyond human control that are transforming the world."<sup>26</sup> If that is so, the globalization force and Christian mission today have a similar ideological ramification: the Western capitalistic norm that allegedly achieved "the end of history"<sup>27</sup> and the Christian norm nurtured in Western intellectual traditions are the operating norms that transform the world system today. Historically speaking, the origin of the driving force behind globalization and Christian mission is Western. There are similarities between globalization and Christian mission with respect to trans-national mobility and moral justification.<sup>28</sup> There is, however, one exception; the emerging key players of Christian mission for the coming decades are not Westerners, although the key players of globalization forces for the immediate decades are still originating from the West. Both the globalization force and Christian mission today are Western in origin, but the agents for delivering the content differ.

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<sup>25</sup>William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, Leichestor, 1792; see Section IV, "The Practicability of Something Being Done," 67-76.

<sup>26</sup>Malcolm Waters, *Globalization*, London: Routledge, 1995, 3.

<sup>27</sup>Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: Avon Books, 1992.

<sup>28</sup>For a moral justification of globalization, see Jagdish Bhagwati, *In Defense of Globalization*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

The agents of Christian mission are coming from the southern hemisphere. The southward shift of the Christian centre from the northern hemisphere has been observed by numerous missiologists, including Andrew Walls, Lamin Sanneh, and Dana Robert.<sup>29</sup> The characteristics of "Southern Christianity," such as the independent, Pentecostal, and charismatic tendencies, have already been examined by many other scholars. It is Paul Preston, sociologist of religion, who attempts to connect the issue of globalization and the evangelical trans-national Christian mission from the southern hemisphere, with his particularly interesting Brazilian evangelicals' foreign mission.<sup>30</sup> According to his observation, current studies on globalization require much more interest in the grassroot religious diffusion through the migration of evangelicals from the Third World since there is an endless and simultaneous flow of capital and labour in the era of globalization.

Korea belongs to the northern hemisphere where the "old" form of Christianity is allegedly declining. It is argued that the last days of "old" Christianity in the countries of the northern hemisphere are not so far away, but Korean Christianity is one of the remarkable exceptions. In terms of doctrinal emphases and denominational loyalties, Korean Christianity is more akin to European and North American forms of "old" Christianity. However, Korean Christianity, although belongs to the northern hemisphere geographically, is still thriving and so does the Korean missionary movement. Korea's missionary enthusiasm is quite exceptional from the northern hemisphere's standpoint. It seems that Korean missionaries are delivering the familiar message of "old" Christianity in the form of American evangelicalism as the last enthusiastic mission from the northern hemisphere. Korean missionaries are the witness to the people of underdeveloped countries that shows the

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<sup>29</sup>See Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003; Dana Robert, "Shifting Southward: Global Christianity since 1945," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (April 2000).

<sup>30</sup>See Paul Preston, "The Transnationalisation of Brazilian Pentecostalism: The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God," in *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, A. Corten and R. Marshall-Fratani, eds., London: Hurst, 2001, 196-215; Paul Freston, "Globalization, Religion and Evangelical Christianity: A Sociological Meditation from the Third World," in *Interpreting Contemporary Christianity: Global Processes and Local Identities*, O. Kalu, ed. (forthcoming).

American mode of evangelicalism is still working elsewhere. Here I am echoing the persuasive arguments of Steve Brouwer and his co-writers in *Exporting the American Gospel*:

Although the new Christian fundamentalism possesses a theological doctrine and a religious practice that are American, it is in the process of becoming an international religious culture generated by enthusiastic, broad-based movements in dozens of countries. While U.S. missionaries and their resources are still very strong players, indigenous fundamentalist churches have become partners in propagating and deepening the faith.<sup>31</sup>

Korean missionaries belong to the people of the “indigenous fundamentalist church” that propagate and deepen the legacy of the American Gospel in the world of globalization. They are exporting prosperity theology made in the United States of America to the world. As Brouwer and others say, the Korean missionaries are an “aggressive international sales force” to distribute the gospel, stamped, “Made in the USA.”<sup>32</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

The enthusiastic members of missionary religions, such as Christianity and Buddhism, interpret their missionary obligation as a God-given mandate. Their missionary impulse has been instrumental in the life and expansion of their religion itself because it represents the transcendental vision of the religion. Max Stackhouse, thus, argues:

[M]issionizing religions are religions that, impelled by a unique revelation of a great discovery about the nature of being, or a momentous social transformation and revitalization of purpose sparked by spiritual impulses, have generated a salvific metaphysical-moral vision that they believe to be of universal import for humanity.<sup>33</sup>

The Korean missionaries in every corner of the world are carrying this salvific metaphysical-moral vision that they believe to be of universal importance for humanity. Or, are they simply transferring the global myth of spiritual and material success to the other side of the world? As Cobble Palm of the Philippines and Cephas Omenyo of Ghana ferociously accuse

<sup>31</sup>Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel*, 6.

<sup>32</sup>Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel*, 11.

<sup>33</sup>Max Stackhouse, “Missionary Activity,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 9, 563.

the Korean missionaries of misconduct and even ignorance in their mission fields in the Philippines and West Africa, are the Korean missionaries just delivering the old and negative memories of Western missionaries to the underdeveloped countries?<sup>34</sup> Or, do the Korean missionaries deliver the American neo-fundamental Gospel with “a spiritual enterprise culture” that requires “in the top echelon, a kind of international manager of the spirit”?<sup>35</sup>

The recent demographic shift of world Christian populations from the Western world to the non-Western world has been studied by many mission theorists, statisticians, and church historians. Their statistics show that the recent change began from the second half of the twentieth century and is presently still occurring in the twenty-first century, if not accelerating. This new trend is observed in the sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific Islands. What are the Korean missionaries doing in these regions? Are they exporting the old model of Christendom of the northern hemisphere to the southern hemisphere? Or, has “U.S. influence in South Korea helped foster notions of a messianic Korean nation allied with the U.S. global mission” so that the Korean missionaries are an “aggressive international sales force” to distribute the American Gospel?<sup>36</sup>

Korea, the country that had been called “a hermit nation” by the first band of Western missionaries, is now becoming one of the most enthusiastic missionary-sending countries of the twenty-first century. Korea was neglected by Western missionaries in East Asia as a mission field about a century ago, but now Korea is becoming a new axis of the Protestant missionary movement. The last shall be first? Or, the last is just repeating the same mistake as the first? Or, is the last a mere puppet salesperson for the export of the American Gospel?

As the missionary experience has been augmented, so has the critical self-reflection by the Korean missionary movement itself. As the former Western missionaries did, so do Korean missionaries need more critical

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<sup>34</sup>Cobbie Palm, “Toward a World Mission Tribunal,” *International Review of Mission* 86 (July 1997), 289-300; Cephas Omenyo and David Choi, “Korean Missionary Enterprise in West Africa, 1979-1999: A Preliminary Study,” *Exchange* 29, 3 (2000), 213-229.

<sup>35</sup>David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, 143.

<sup>36</sup>Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel*, 255.

self-assessments. Korean missionaries also need more cultural flexibility.<sup>37</sup> The messiah complex of Korean missionaries needs a holistic cure.<sup>38</sup> The *Pax Koreana* should not be pursued by Korean missionaries.<sup>39</sup> Lastly, ecumenical cooperation with local churches should be emphasized and pursued more frequently.<sup>40</sup> It seems, however, that the sociological assessments about pushing and pulling factors of Korean missionaries and their relationship with globalization aspects show a more profound reality of the Korean missionary movement today.

The Korean missionaries' sense of calling with increased national pride as a new nation coupled with the receiving countries' image of Korea as the country that has achieved simultaneous economic and spiritual success are colouring the Korean missionaries today as an aggressive international sales force of the American Gospel. It seems that Steve Brouwer and others are not just sceptical about the sociological implication of Korean Christianity with respect to its relationship with capitalistic behaviours in the age of globalization.

Protestant behaviour in the late twentieth century seems to turn Weber on his head: rather than religious asceticism allowing for the development of capitalist behaviours, we now have capitalist behaviours adopted in order to accelerate the efficacy of religious faith. There is no better place to see this phenomenon at work than in South Korea.<sup>41</sup>

As the remarkable growth rate of the Christian population is subsiding, if not declining, the recent rise of the Korean missionary movement shows the Korean Christians' ability to "sell Jesus" as an imported religious product, stamped "Made in the USA." With this connection, the recent Korean missionary movement is becoming a part of the globalization force. By making this connection, I do not want to suggest that the American Gospel the Korean missionaries are delivering is spiritually powerless or religiously superficial. Rather, I suggest that the Korean missionary movement is taking a wider part of the trans-national globalization with a powerful and profound reconfiguration of itself.

<sup>37</sup>Andrew Byung-yoon Kim, "Rethinking of Korean Missions," *Journal of Asian Mission* 1, 1 (1999), 101-118.

<sup>38</sup>Omenyo and Choi, "Korean Missionary Enterprise in West Africa 1979-1999."

<sup>39</sup>See Kim, "Sheer Numbers Do Not Tell the Entire Story."

<sup>40</sup>Palm, "Toward a World Mission Tribunal."

<sup>41</sup>Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel*, 116.