

**Seeking Mutual Respect:
Rhetoric versus Reality in the Missiology of the United
Church of Canada Korea Mission, 1960s**

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Westerners do not easily accept the one-world idea; their heritage is one of domination, and new forms of Western domination continue to appear through the exercise of economic power and through foreign investments in lands where colonial power has been supplanted by ineffectual forms of self-government. Real power remaining in outside hands represents a divisive factor, for participants who do not share in the decision-making process in relation to determinative power find little meaning in merely constitutional independence. This has been a subject of debate in many of the “situation conferences” convened to discuss missionary policy. The one-world concept of secular society and the “Mission to Six Continents” concept of the churches are both related to a central question in the world today: How can mutual respect be achieved?¹ (from the Report of the United Church of Canada *Commission on World Mission*, 1966)

The above quote from the United Church of Canada (hereafter UCC) *Commission on World Mission* demonstrates an awareness of the fundamental issues of power and colonial history being raised on its mission fields overseas and a self-awareness concerning the patterns of domination that held their own members in Canada back from the personal and institutional changes required to address them. During the 1960s, as indigenous churches on the mission fields were pushing back against

Historical Papers: Canadian Society of Church History (2018)

decades of Canadian missionary paternalism, the language of the UCC was trying to get out ahead of the changes. But lingering colonial attitudes and practices were holding back real action. A study of missionary correspondence from Korea during this period, especially that of Wilna Thomas, an important woman pioneer in the UCC and secretary for mission boards overseeing missionary work in East Asia, provides insight into the tensions that existed within the UCC as it tried to come to terms with the new global post-colonial context and its own history of paternalism. This essay argues that pushback by the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea against Thomas' agenda for change uncovers some of the lingering colonial patterns that remained hidden beneath a progressive missiological rhetoric of change.

"Dear Mrs. Taylor," wrote Saskatchewan-born UCC missionary Romona Underwood to Ruth Taylor, the chair of the UCC Woman Missionary Society, in 1960, "I apologize to you if I have caused you additional concern and work by not writing to you about the political events of the past few weeks."² The letter was more than a few weeks late. The political events she referred to in June had occurred in mid-April. Later known simply by the numbers marking the date of 19 April on which it occurred, "4.19" was a student-led movement that toppled the government of Rhee Syng Man.

Rhee, the first president of the Republic of Korea, had been all but directly installed by the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) that had taken control of the Korean peninsula south of the 38th parallel following the capitulation of Japan at the end of the Second World War. There had been a delay of some months between the surrender of Japan and the moment when American forces had begun to arrive. In the brief interlude, local Korean councils effectively managed their own business. While not communist, these councils often had socialist leanings, something that made the new American military government uncomfortable. Though promising democracy, Lieutenant General John R. Hodge, the military governor of South Korea, a man who had curried the favour of Christian missionaries and their western educated Christian followers, called the election that Rhee won despite an apparent absence of popular support.³

From the start, Rhee's methods were authoritarian – a strategy calculated to make up for his government's lack of grassroots support. Sadly, Protestant and Catholic churches lined up to support him.⁴ A year after he was elected, public opinion in South Korea remained overwhelm-

ingly in favour of socialism. A group of right-wing paramilitary youth under Rhee's influence, referred to as the "Blue shirts," terrorized neighbourhoods where there were known to be socialists and communist sympathizers. The Korean military, aided and abetted by American advisors, carried out massacres and atrocities before and following elections. As Rhee's government lost any semblance of virtue and abandoned all pretence of democracy, the population grew unhappy. Larger and larger student-led rallies against government violence, corruption, and election meddling culminated with the police responding on 19 April with live fire on the streets of Seoul. Nearly two hundred people lost their lives and Rhee, by this time an embarrassment to the United States, was finally forced to step down.

The letter from Underwood to Taylor frames these events as momentous and ones that heralded changes for both Korea and the UCC mission. The events of 4.19 resonated with the missionaries in Korea, and perhaps even more so among supporters at home in Canada, reviving memories of the Chinese uprisings a generation earlier that had had serious consequences for many UCC missionaries working there.⁵ "One or two of our missionaries packed bags in case of evacuation, I suspect the majority of us did so mentally," wrote Underwood.⁶ Although they had, in fact, never been in danger in Korea, the concerns expressed serve to show that missionary memories of colonial times were still very much alive among Canadian missionaries and in the church in Canada.⁷

It is notable as well that Underwood felt it important to mention the fact that the missionaries had been brave and continued to model good behaviour. "Some of the missionaries gave blood at Severance Hospital," she wrote, "and actually set the example which was followed by some of the Koreans."⁸ This commendable act of citizenship performed by missionaries on the grounds of a hospital with connections to the UCC mission was a well-used trope in the missionary movement: "Missionaries teach others how to be modern nationals." This trope was important for missionaries seeking to justify their presence in foreign lands – to themselves as well as to their home constituencies. Although on the cusp of significant changes that would affect the church at home, as well as missionary self-understanding, UCC missionaries nevertheless continued to uncritically repeat this message to themselves in the 1960s.

But even as Underwood reflected on the safety and the exemplary behaviours modeled by UCC missionaries, she demonstrated her awareness of the political importance of the event she and other missionaries had

witnessed. She was clearly empathetic with the students and stood in solidarity with their accomplishments. “At first, in spite of my concern and sympathy for the students who lost their lives and their families,” wrote Underwood to Taylor, “my personal reaction was one of resurgence of hope for the welfare of this country. I must admit I have been very discouraged during the past year and particularly at the time of the March 15th election. The students have been the great heroes of the crusade against corruption[.]”⁹

Students of the 4.19 uprising gave voice to a general desire among Koreans, north and south of the 38th parallel, for greater agency in the decisions of a sovereign nation. Their demands stressed the need not only for democracy in the south but also reunification with the north. Ironically, it was student action to organize a meeting with North Korean counterparts at Panmunjom, a village straddling the border between the North and South, that provided Korean General Park Chung Hee with the pretext he needed for a military overthrow of the democratically-elected government that had been the crowning achievement of their 4.19 uprising.¹⁰ Dismissing the barely-one-year-old government as weak, Park led a coup on 16 May 1961 (5.16). In following years, he imposed a disciplined, militaristic, ideologically anti-communist and gendered program of modernization that made a deep imprint on South Korean society for decades to come.¹¹

As the 46th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) gathered in 1961, just days after the 5.19 coup, political developments were no doubt on the minds of its members. Kim Chai Choon, a founding leader of fledgling PROK, was swift in his condemnation of the military action. Others like him were genuinely distraught by the blow to Korean democracy. But however urgent and dramatic developments affecting national politics were at the moment, missionary relationships remained the number one issue. Indeed, emotions were very close to the surface and when the issue came up for discussion the General Assembly erupted. At issue was the lack of trust and respect missionaries were showing to their Korean partners. The missionaries, it was charged, hovered over their Korean colleagues, accused them of misusing funds, and routinely wielded the charge of “sin” against them.¹² Taking exception to this treatment, Koreans passed an angry motion to reject furthering funding from the UCC.¹³

This was the first such open conflict between Korean Christians and the UCC Korea Mission since the 1920s when students had set fire to a mission-run school to protest the missionaries’ funding priorities.¹⁴ And

yet, the conflict might nevertheless be understood as the resumption of a contentious debate that had simply been interrupted by the Pacific and Korean wars. The motion to reject UCC funding was of such significance that it was simply referred to as “the decision” for many years. It marked a significant turning point in the relationship between the Korean Church and its Canadian missionary partners. The elimination of overseas funding had huge consequences for the PROK – a relatively young denomination that had just six years earlier separated from the larger Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK). The church was financially fragile, and “the decision” provoked earnest reconciliation efforts on both sides. Over the course of a lively debate that ensued, a new missiology began to be articulated.

The 4.19 uprising, the 5.16 coup, and “the decision” of the PROK were all part of a postcolonial moment for the Korean nation and church. And yet it is possible that Canadians belonging to the UCC Korea Mission were only partially aware of the significance of these events that were occurring all around them.¹⁵ In Toronto, the UCC metropole, there is no doubt that the church bureaucracy was starting to come to grips with a sea change in their foreign missions around the world. In 1962, the WMS and its Board of Overseas Missions (BOM) were amalgamated into the Board of World Mission (BWM). The omission of the “s” in “Mission” indicated a more global understanding of Christian work.¹⁶ In the same year, a Commission on World Mission was struck by the UCC General Council to undertake a comprehensive review of the history and direction of missionary activity and church missions. Fundamental to these moves was a new awareness that, whereas the UCC had once considered others to be exclusively in need of the gospel, they were now seeing that they might need some evangelization as well. On the surface this was an act of humility that acknowledged the leadership and vital contribution of non-western Christians. Korean theology student, Lee Young Min, who was studying in Canada on a UCC scholarship at the time, remembered the discussions that were taking place in UCC circles around him concerning “a new day’s mission policy along with a new role for missionaries.” For Lee Young Min, the moment felt “truly opportune” and he was left with a profound sense that the UCC was about to make “a big switch in the right direction.”¹⁷

The UCC bureaucracy was also getting a new face to go with its new mission policy. In 1960, Wilna Thomas became the executive secretary of Overseas Missions and, in 1962, associate secretary of the new Board of

World Mission with responsibilities for East Asia. Wilna Gratia Thomas was born on 6 March 1917 in Ogema, Saskatchewan.¹⁸ The only student in her class at the rural school to advance to university, she graduated with great distinction earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematics and economics from the University of Saskatchewan. Soon after she enrolled at the UCC Training Centre to begin a career in church work.¹⁹ After graduating from this program in 1941, she was recommended for work as military chaplain after the UCC received a request for a woman to provide spiritual support to the Canadian Women's Army Corps.²⁰ Beginning with the rank of lieutenant at the Advanced Training Centre in Ste. Anne de Bellevue, she became one of only two women padres serving in the Canadian army.²¹

After being decommissioned in 1946, Wilna applied for a position with the WMS serving in Japan and was sent overseas in 1947. As a single woman missionary, Thomas joined a long and important missionary tradition that had offered women unique opportunities for personal and professional development. Single female missionaries, though not usually from elite backgrounds, often managed to achieve a kind of elite status in Canadian society and abroad²² and offered unmarried women attractive careers in places others could only dream of going.²³ From its beginnings in the mid-1800s, single women missionaries had made significant contributions on the Canadian mission field. Combined with that of missionary wives, the numbers of female missionaries easily exceeded those of their male colleagues. In 1960, the UCC Korea Mission, for example, employed thirteen male missionaries and twenty-one female – nine of them single.²⁴ In some places, however, the number of single women exceeded those of all male colleagues on their own.²⁵ But by choosing to return to Canada to take an executive position in the church hierarchy, Thomas broke through a glass ceiling that had kept those same women from directing the missions to which they contributed so much labour. This was another first for Canadian women in the Protestant church: Thomas became the first woman to serve in an executive position in the UCC with responsibility for not only female but also male missionaries. Sadly, Thomas has not been remembered in the UCC for these pioneering roles – fallen forgotten between the the landmark events of Lydia Gruchy's ordination as the first female UCC minister in 1936 and Lois Wilson's ordination as the first married woman minister in the UCC in 1965. Wilson went on to become the UCC's first female moderator in 1980. Thomas' achievement in 1960, however, was another important first

for women and a sign of the times for religion in Canada.

One wonders what impression this sign of the times made on others with whom she came in contact as she visited UCC mission fields around the world. It is particularly worth asking how churches in places like Korea, churches that had been steeped in the patriarchal tradition of male church leadership modeled by earlier missionaries, responded to a woman at the top of the church hierarchy. When Canadian missions scholar Ruth Compton Brouwer asked a Korean male medical student about his first-hand experience of working under a female missionary doctor, she realized the question was in some ways absurd. Though the situation certainly “called for an all around wariness” on a number of levels, Brouwer surmises, nothing precluded the ability of these workers to collaborate on a project that was clearly important.²⁶ The fact that Thomas had received the position with the support of her male colleagues, moreover, would also have carried weight with the Koreans whom she encountered.²⁷

While it is hard to know to what extent Koreans may have held preconceived notions about women in positions of authority, it is clear that Thomas had already formed her own ideas about Koreans. In 1957, while still a missionary in Japan, Wilna had been asked to be part of an ecumenical mission to visit Korea and meet with students on the theme of “Revolution and Reconciliation.” Memories of Japanese colonialism were still fresh and it was impossible at this time for a Japanese citizen to get a visa to visit Korea. As a result Thomas was asked to represent Japan on the visit.²⁸ They met 3,000 students in fifteen different universities and discussed various intra-Korean controversies in the church – including the split in the Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK) that resulted in the creation of the PROK. This was a particularly important issue for Thomas as a UCC missionary since the UCC and its missionaries in Korea had decided to support the PROK when it was formed from a small group of leaders and churches expelled from the PCK over issues of biblical criticism and missionary control of theological education. The UCC’s was the first and only mission to stand with the PROK at the time. Curiously, Thomas came away from her time in Korea with the impression that the split was the result of nothing more than an internal Korean power struggle. “One group is definitely fundamentalist; the other group is called liberal, but is so conservative I could scarcely tell the difference. Perhaps a greater reason for the split has been the clash of personalities, and the desire for power on the part of certain leaders.”²⁹ UCC missionary colleagues working in Korea at that time would have almost certainly

found this assessment surprising. For William Scott, a UCC missionary in Korea since 1914, the issue was one based clearly on theological principles and had little to do with the clash of personalities. It was, for him, far more about maintaining indigenous Korean Christian integrity in the face American missionary meddling.³⁰ “It is difficult to avoid the conclusion,” he wrote, that those responsible for the split had one thing in mind: the elimination of the anti-fundamentalist and an independent Korean voice in the life of the Presbyterian Church in Korea.³¹

The issue that interested Thomas more was Korean-Japanese relations. “I think we can understand why the Korean people think and feel as they do,” she reported with reference to the distrust and resentment Korean Christians seemed to harbour for Japanese people. “For thirty-six years they were under Japanese rule. They couldn’t use their own language. They had to change their names. No Korean could advance to a position of leadership.” The legacy of bitterness and dysfunction for Thomas, however, rested on the shoulders of the Koreans rather than the Japanese: “Children were taught that to lie and to deceive the Japanese authorities was good. Now those children are the leaders. They have no training for it. Deceit and distrust are evident in every area of life. Even Church leaders deal in the black market.”³²

These views seem to have carried over into Thomas’ visits as executive secretary in the 1960s. Her notes from the 1961 visit reveal an interest in reconciliation between Japanese and Koreans, but nevertheless put the onus for change on the Koreans. She felt it was incumbent upon Korean Christian students, as Christians, to forgive the Japanese for the colonial oppression they had endured.³³ Their failure to do so disturbed her. She felt that it was an example of human “sinfulness” – a theological category that carried particular weight.³⁴ In subsequent visits to Korea, Thomas again affirmed her view that the Korean church was riddled with corruption – a perspective that was not shared by all Korean missionaries and that was never borne out by any other missionary documents.³⁵ These views were likely conditioned by the colonial perspectives still common in Japan where she had served for seven years, as well as by her own colonial assumptions as a Canadian of British descent. Indeed, Hamish Ion has noted that Canadian missionaries serving in Japan readily adopted Japanese colonial attitudes about Koreans and Taiwanese.³⁶ It is thus not surprising that Thomas’ reflections in 1957 reflected dominant Japanese stereotypes about Koreans.³⁷ And yet the notes from Thomas’ visits to Korea and other mission fields in the early 1960s were not completely

coloured by this bias. Indeed, they also reflected an evolution towards a more positive assessment of Koreans. She concluded her 1964 visit, for example, by remarking that, although the Korean Church was “fraught by all the sins of institutionalism that are part of the weakness of the Church everywhere,” she nevertheless believed that she “left Korea more conscious of the opportunities confronting the Church than in its weaknesses in meeting them.”³⁸

In many ways, Thomas’ notes paint a complex and multidimensional picture of a mission in transition. Her attentiveness and openness to the voices of those she encountered in Korea certainly distinguished her notes from the records kept by her male predecessors.³⁹ And yet her notes also reflect the Canadian church’s ongoing tradition of paternalism in the context of visits undertaken not only to listen, but also to disperse funds and teach Koreans what for her were more enlightened approaches. Her notebooks from her 1961 and 1964 trips to Korea outline the main points she sought to make as she met with each local presbytery. In her talks at PROK presbyteries around the peninsula, Thomas introduced the UCC’s new philosophy of mission – one that had been developed indirectly with indigenous churches through ecumenical institutions such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) but not directly with the local Korean churches or with other indigenous or Canadian church members. She stressed the importance of shifting away from making converts and towards erecting new social services. This was a position upon which the UCC was at the time putting a very strong emphasis. Indeed, some might have said that Thomas functioned as a kind of a harbinger of the wave of secularization then sweeping the Canadian church and society.⁴⁰ The leadership in Canada preferred to think of it as winning souls through “service for Christ’s sake,” but there is no doubt the emphasis had changed.⁴¹ “Doing justice” had become a more important aspect of Canadian missions than making converts.⁴²

Whether regular members of the UCC back in Canada were generally on board with the new understanding of mission is doubtful.⁴³ Certainly, Thomas’ notes show clearly that many in the Korean church resisted it. Many PROK Christians whom Thomas met asked the UCC to renew its commitment to evangelism. For some this situation had urgent political dimensions. “South Korea must become Christian quickly [in order to fend off the] communists next door,” one person told her.⁴⁴ As most Christians in South Korea were refugees from the North, moreover, their views of communism were more than ideological. Korean Christian-

ity had made most of its converts in the northeast area of the country in and around Pyongyang. Even before the division of the peninsula, there had arisen a serious tension between Christians and socialists over questions related to the Japanese occupation and modernization. In the shadow of both the Soviet occupation in the 1940s, followed by the rise to power of Kim Il-sung's communist regime in 1948, persecution of Christians had become severe. Those persecutions were made worse by the connections most Christians maintained to the West through their contact with the missions – including Moon Chai Rin, one of the first Korean Christians to study in Canada, and Kim Shin Mook, who worked with Canadian missionaries in Manchuria and later in South Korea. The communists regarded these connections with great suspicion.⁴⁵ Those who managed to escape the north, moreover, made up the majority of Christians in the south. These people had suffered greatly and had good reason to fear the further spread of communism.

For others, the priority of making converts was simply a religious desire to bring the Christian message to the many Koreans who had yet to encounter it. Some complained that even with many missionaries in the field, few unbelievers were being reached. Notes from the minutes of the United Work Committee (UWC), an organization in which PROK leaders and UCC missionaries shared responsibility for mission-related church programs, indicate that the priority for the Korean church was pioneer church building – that is, growing the number of Christians in Korea.⁴⁶ Koreans stressed to Thomas that they were very disturbed by the UCC mission policy, which they could not understand.⁴⁷ But Thomas remained intent on shifting the view that proselytization was central to the missionary enterprise. She informed her Korean audiences that the UCC now had a new understanding.

Mission, Thomas insisted, is the essence of the church. However, mission, as the UCC now understood it, was no longer about conversion but service. “The Church,” she proclaimed, “must involve itself in all the problems of people: political, economic, educational, family, health.”⁴⁸ What is more, mission was not to be understood as the special domain of missionaries. “I dislike very much the fact that there is an organization called the Korea Mission of the United Church of Canada,” Thomas declared, “This was true long ago – overseas churches as part of their mission to the world sent missionaries abroad and became related to these countries in the terms of these missions . . . Now we realize that there will be developed effective ways of partnership between the overseas church

and the church here for the mission of the whole church.”⁴⁹ For this to be true, she proclaimed, “your Assembly organization must be your own, supported by your own members so that it becomes your servant and is responsible to you. It seems to me that these days we are called to enter into a *partnership of equals* before God.”⁵⁰

The position that Thomas articulated was clearly a departure from the colonial era approach to missions. It was based on a reworking of mission policy taking place in UCC headquarters to address issues that had been raised by indigenous church leadership the world over. The UCC developed this position in consultation with other churches, including non-Western ones, at gatherings of such global ecumenical organizations as the World Council of Churches (WCC) that were themselves a legacy of the missionary enterprise. However, it is clear that there was distance between the message that Thomas was delivering and the views of the Christian membership on the ground in Korea. The way a privileged Westerner delivered this message to a non-Western audience, seemingly without opportunity to debate, belied its progressive rhetoric. Despite attempting to be more progressive, even egalitarian, the top-down delivery served only to highlight that it was coming from the powerful to the powerless. There was an element of self-interest concealed in the new policies as well: shifting the focus to social programs would also serve as a rationale to withdraw financial support from the Korean church proper. Accompanying this new theology was a policy to accelerate the transition to a self-funding, self-governing indigenous church. This acceleration was in part a knee-jerk reaction to growing accusations that the missionary movement was really just a form of cultural imperialism – accusations that were keenly felt by liberal churches in particular.⁵¹ But for all that, the UCC knew that overseas churches could not afford to maintain the institutions that missionaries had built up despite growing financial and ethical pressures to withdraw.⁵²

If Thomas was promoting a new vision of mission as partnership, and chiding the Korean church to get with it, the Rt. Rev. Lee Nam Kyoo, former moderator of the PROK, had his own chiding to do about the attitude and approach of Thomas and the Canadian missionaries. At a meeting of the Study Committee tasked with looking into PROK-missionary relations, he argued that these missionaries held contrarian attitudes about Korean leadership that showed little acquaintance with the Korean Church situation. What is more, he said, they were misusing their spiritual authority, accusing the PROK leadership of “*sin*” simply because

they disagreed with or could not understand their priorities.⁵³ Tensions between missionaries and the PROK leadership in Korea were becoming dangerously high – “strained to the point of breaking” as one UCC source noted.⁵⁴ In September 1964, the General Assembly of the PROK met and, among other business, received a report by the Study Committee looking into missionary relations. In line with many of Lee Nam Kyoo’s observations, the Study Committee identified that the problems contributing to tensions between missionaries and the PROK leadership were connected primarily to the role missionaries played within the governing structure of the PROK. Specifically, they wielded too much power and were out of touch with the needs of the Korean church. Even then there were some in the Korean church who felt the report did not go far enough, and some who simply wished to send the missionaries home.⁵⁵ Even those who were more reticent desired to see a radical shift in the relationship. In a letter to the editor in the *Presbyterian News*, a denominational organ of the PROK, Rev. Chung Yong Chul argued that missionaries and their money should be entirely subject to the will of the General Assembly of the PROK.⁵⁶ The sovereignty and unity of the Korean church body was of the utmost importance for Chung. There should be no hierarchy or parallel structure for missionaries, he explained, and no special parameters placed on the spending of overseas funds besides those set by the Church in Korea. But beyond matters of policy and structure, Chung also touched on the question of attitude. “It is necessary for us to receive help from *friends*,” he said, but “we do not want money given as if it was to charity. If we are dependent and humiliated it is not good.”⁵⁷ Lee Nam Kyoo said something similar: “Missionaries must not continually travel about prying into our mistakes since this is very upsetting to us. They must try very hard to have an attitude of sympathy and understanding and so develop a *true friendship* between us.”⁵⁸

The question of friendship is an interesting one. To what degree were relationships founded on mutual affection, understanding, and trust actually possible on the uneven social terrain of the mission field? It is hard to say. But we do know that Chung and Lee were not alone among indigenous Christians in lamenting the absence of friendship in their relations with foreign missionaries.⁵⁹ Wilna Thomas had heard as much in other places.⁶⁰ In moments of honesty, Canadian missionaries would also admit that they had failed to act as friends. In 1975, missionary William Scott concluded his extensive reflections on the Canadian Korea mission with the following:

Our missionary mode of life tended to isolate us from close contact with Korean people. We lived, for the most part, in Canadian-style homes, wore Canadian-style clothes, ate North American foods (imported or home grown), and formed a neighbourhood of our own – a community apart. It is true that in our work, in church, school, or hospital, in the city or the country village, we rubbed shoulders with Korean of all classes, but in our off-duty hours, in our homes and social contacts, we tended to keep to our own missionary group. In recreation, where familiarity is encouraged, we seldom missed. Few missionaries learned the Korean form of tennis, with soft-ball and lighter racket. Fewer still could play their favourite games of ping-pong or soccer.⁶¹

Scott may not have given himself enough credit. Some in Korea vividly remembered the heart-felt farewell Scott delivered at his retirement in 1956, in which he recited from heart classical Korean poetry and stirred in the students feelings of courage and awareness of their inheritance and duty as Koreans.⁶² Nevertheless, there was truth to the confession as well. The UCC missionary residence at Seodaemun (the Great West Gate) is a case in point: a grand, redbrick structure of Edwardian vintage that dwarfed the humble thatched-roof dwellings in its shadow. The UCC missionaries lived in this house. They were served by Korean cooks and chauffeured by Korean drivers through to the 1970s.⁶³ Language also remained an important barrier. UCC missionaries themselves acknowledged that they had failed to achieve a proficiency that would allow them to work with their Korean colleagues in their own linguistic territory.⁶⁴ For Lee Nam Kyoo and Chung Yong Chul, friendship would only become possible if the missionaries gave up their position of power and privilege within the PROK body. To some degree, this was the vision that Thomas, despite her paternalism, was also articulating. But to what degree could she or others from the UCC truly overcome paternalistic attitudes and neo-colonial structures?

Thomas and the UCC Korea Mission continued to struggle with these issues throughout the 1960s. By 1969, UCC missionary Morley Hammond insisted that the PROK already had much more control over UCC mission funds and institutions than other Korean churches had in relation to overseas missionary churches. Yet clearly this was not enough. As Hammond admitted in his year-end report, few concrete solutions had been found for ending the acrimonious debate that began nine years earlier. Rather he described progress in the “mood,” and a deepening sense

of mutual understanding that might serve as a springboard for concrete steps in the decade to come. There was, he said,

an atmosphere of mutual expectation for the future, accompanied by conviction and confidence that the shackles of old patterns must and can be broken for mission in the seventies. There remained, then, the business of transforming this mood into practical decision and action.⁶⁵

The following decade did indeed see meaningful action to resolve the uneven relations between UCC missionaries and PROK Christians in Korea – but not without a crescendo in the debate and increased tensions between PROK leaders and UCC missionaries. The end result was the dissolution of the UCC Korea Mission. Those missionaries who remained, as Chung Yong Chul had suggested, worked directly for the Korean church. In addition, all UCC mission property was transferred to the PROK, including the big house in Seoul. There were other meaningful changes as well, including, perhaps, a change in attitude on the part of some Canadian missionaries. But this was something for which the Koreans in the relationship had to continue to fight.

The 1960s represent an important decade in the history of Canadian missionary activity, a time when political movements, theological developments, economic realities, and postcolonial consciousness combined to create a new context in which the missionary enterprise – a mainstay of Canadian religious life for generation – was being fundamentally challenged. Between the 4.19 student uprising and the end of the decade, lingering Korean unhappiness with UCC missionaries' policies, practices, and attitudes were aired and conversations were initiated. These conversations forced UCC missionaries and their supervising bodies to face ongoing patterns of colonialism that lingered behind new policies wrapped in progressive theological language. The interactions of Wilna Thomas, a pioneer for women leaders in the church, offer us a valuable glimpse of the complex and contradictory dynamics of the mission field during this period. This history is of value today in an age when colonial attitudes in church and Canadian society continue to impact relationships with non-Anglo, non-white individuals and communities despite the fact that they are often disguised by progressive discourse.

Endnotes

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20. Smith, *Tree Planted by the Water*, 5.
21. Smith, *Tree Planted by the Water*, 14; Wilna Thomas fonds, Accession #94 .053C, UCC Archives, Toronto.
22. Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 57.
23. Brouwer, *New Women for God*, 70.
24. Report of the Commission on World Mission, Appendix B, Year Book 1966, UCC GC, 1966, 439.
25. Brouwer, *New Women for God*, 5.
26. Ruth Compton Brouwer, *Modern Women Modernizing Men: The Changing Missions of Three Professional Women in Asia and Africa, 1902-69* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), x.
27. Brouwer, *Modern Women Modernizing Men*, 84.
28. Smith, *Tree Planted by the Water*, 35.
29. Smith, *Tree Planted by the Water*, 35.
30. William Scott, *A History of the Canadian Mission to Korea, 1898-1970s*, rev. J. Greig McMullin (Belleville, ON: Guardian Books, 2009), 785-9. Scott's claims are well documented although they contradict views held by American missionary and mission historian Samuel J. Moffett.
31. Scott, *History of the Canadian Mission to Korea*, 788.

32. Smith, *Tree Planted by the Water*, 37.
33. Smith, *Tree Planted by the Water*, 37.
34. Notebook on Korea, circa 1961, Wilna Thomas fonds, Korea notes File #3, Box #2, Accession #94.053C, UCC Archives, Toronto.
35. Wilna Thomas to Mrs. Taylor, 27 March 1961, Wilna Thomas fonds, Africa/India Correspondence notes File #2-1, Accession #94.053C, UCC Archives, Toronto.
36. A. Hamish Ion, "Canadian Missionaries under the Japanese Empire," in *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad*, eds. Alwyn Austin and Jamie S. Scott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 180.
37. Ken C. Kawashima, *The Proletariat Gamble: Korean Workers in Interwar Japan* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 18.
38. Smith, *Tree Planted by the Water*, 81.
39. These records can be found in the Wilna Thomas fonds at the UCC Archives, Toronto.
40. Brouwer, "When Missions Became Development," 665.
41. Phyllis Airhart, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation: Making and Remaking the United Church of Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 243.
42. Airhart, *Church with the Soul of a Nation*, 253.
43. Brouwer, "When Missions Became Development," 683.
44. Hong Kong/Korea notes 1963, Wilna Thomas, Accession # 94.053C, UCC Archives, Toronto.
45. Moon Chai Rin and Kim Shin Mook, *Kiringapiwa Komannyeeui Goom: Moon Chai Rin Kim Shin Mook* (Seoul: Samin Books, 2006). This book gives a compelling account of conditions under communist rule in the north by someone who was not ideologically anti-communist or north Korean.
46. Hong Kong/Korea notes 1963, Wilna Thomas, Accession # 94.053C, UCC Archives, Toronto.
47. Hong Kong/Korea notes 1963, Wilna Thomas, Accession # 94.053C, UCC Archives, Toronto.

48. Hong Kong/Korea notes 1963, Wilna Thomas, Accession # 94.053C, UCC Archives, Toronto.
49. Hong Kong/Korea notes 1963, Wilna Thomas, Accession # 94.053C, UCC Archives, Toronto.
50. Hong Kong/Korea notes 1964, Wilna Thomas, Accession # 94.053C, UCC Archives, Toronto. Emphasis in original.
51. Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 247.
52. Ruth Compton Brouwer provides one example of this dynamic: Brouwer, "When Missions Became Development," 669.
53. Report submitted by the Very Rev. Lee, Nam Kyoo to the mission work policy study committee 20 February 1963, Box#14, Accession # 83.011C, UCC Archives, Toronto.
54. *Report of the Commission on World Mission*, UCC, Proceedings, GC22, 1966, 386.
55. Translation of the article on page 8 of the third issue of the *Presbyterian News* by Rev. Chung Yong Chul entitled "Having Read Mission Policy Report," Box # 14, Accession # 83.011C, UCC Archives, Toronto.
56. Translation of an article in the third issue of the *Presbyterian News* by Rev. Chung Yong Chul entitled "Having Read Mission Policy Report," Box # 14, Accession # 83.011C, UCC Archives, Toronto.
57. Translation of the article on page 8 of the third issue of the *Presbyterian News* by Rev. Chung Yong Chul entitled "Having Read Mission Policy Report," Box # 14, Accession # 83.011C, UCC Archives, Toronto. Emphasis added.
58. "Report submitted by the Very Rev. Lee, Nam Kyoo to the mission work policy study committee February 20, 1963. Emphasis added. From Box#14, Accession # 83.011C, UCC Archives, Toronto.
59. Andrew Walls provides this quote from a famous speech delivered fifty-three years earlier: "Through all the ages to come the Indian church will rise up in gratitude to attest the heroism and self-denying labours of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for love. Give us FRIENDS!" Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 70.

60. Notebook on Trinidad, 1960, Wilna Thomas fonds, Trinidad notes File #2-1, Accession #94.053C, UCC Archives, Toronto. Trinidadian church leader Roy Neehall “admitted that there was not a real sense of fellowship between Trinidadians and Canadians. They do not enjoy each other – share their difficulties with each other.”
61. Scott, *History of the Canadian Mission to Korea*, 838.
62. Lee Young Min, “A reflection on the history of mission and cooperation of the churches in Canada and Korea,” Mission consultation between the UCC and the PROK, 16-18 August 1995, Academy House, Seoul, author’s personal collection.
63. Mission report by Joyce Sasse, 13 January 1971, File # A-232, Box #10, Accession #83.011C, UCC Archives, Toronto.
64. From letter to WMS from UCC missionaries circa 1960s.
65. Accession# 83.011C, Box# 9, File# A-233 Presbyterian Church ROK – General Assembly, dated 1970. This is an annual report by Morley Hammond enclosed in a mailing to Frank Carey with a letter dated 13 January 1970.

