

### C. John Corfe, "The Bishop's Letter" in August 1893.

The Church of England Mission in Korea was founded in 1889 by Bishop John Charles Corfe, D. D., who had served in China for several years. He arrived in Seoul on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1890 with Dr. Eli B. Landis (from USA). Dr. Julius Wiles arrived a little earlier. Rev. Richard Small and Mr. Peake (from Canada), and Rev. Leonard O. Warner arrived in November and December of 1890; Mr. Joshep H. Pownall, and Mr. Maurice W. Davis (from Canada) and Rev. M. N. Trollope arrive in the spring of 1891. These single male missionaries lived together as "brotherhood" of Korea mission.

Although the English Mission in Korea consisted of the English with Canadians and an American, the dominant spirit was communion and unity. Another characteristic of the missionaries was their intellectual power—Corfe graduated from All Souls' College, Oxford University; Trollope from New College, Oxford University, Small from Cambridge; and H. H. Kelly from Queen's College, Oxford, and others from good universities in England. They belonged to the Higher Church tradition.

Soon the mission began the medical, educational, and literary work. In 1892 Dr. Lois Cooke and the first regular nurse, G. Heathcote, started St. Peter's Women's Hospital in Seoul, which was maintained by the sisters of the Community of St. Peter of Kilburn, England. In a decade they opened three stations—Seoul, Chemulpo, and Kanghwa. Bishop Corfe oversaw Manchuria as well as Korea. He opposed to congregationalism and emphasized the unity among the stations and congregations. He also stressed the learning of the native culture.

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Hospital Naval Fund, and the "Association of Prayer and Work for Korea" supported the mission with funds and intercessional prayers. Bishop Corfe began to publish the monthly "Morning Calm" in London from 1890 as a newsletter to the supporters.

(by Sung-Deuk Oak)

"The Bishop's Letter," Morning Clam 4-42 (Dec., 1893): 173-6.

Chemulpo: August, 1893.

Dear Friends,

On my return from Niu Chwang I took up my quarters in the Corean house we have bought here for our one orphan, joining Mr. Smart in the school-house at meals. Early in the month my teacher arrived from Seoul, and I am happy to say I have had an almost uninterrupted use of him for the whole of the month. As the time draws near for us to add to our heavy task of learning the far heavier task of teaching, the hours we spend with our teachers become more precious. I have sent to England a copy of a Tract or treatise which we are now engaged in translating, and hope that in some form or other it may appear in the *Morning Calm*. The importance of this Tract to us cannot be exaggerated.

For nearly three years now we have been engaged in learning Corean and Chinese, with a view to preparing some authorised book which will commend both ourselves and our message to all classes of Coreans. When preaching and teaching, we shall for many years be guilty of faults in style and grammar. I have felt, therefore, that when our missionaries begin their work they should have something in their hands—something which they may put into the hands of others—which will not be marked with the blemishes and inaccuracies of our halting and our often unconsciously misleading speech. If they can say, "Perhaps I have expressed myself badly, but in this book you will find what I intended to say expressed accurately in language which you will understand and respect," I think we shall have gained a great deal. We shall show that our verbal blunders when speaking are due, not to any flaw in the message we bring, but to the difficulties incidental to all beginners. Then, whenever we have given a false impression by anything that we have said, the book will come to our aid and to the aid of our hearers and correct that false impression, whilst not the least advantage of having such a book will be that of showing the people how we desire to respect their language and their literature. We do not say to them, "We are in <173/4> such a hurry to 'teach you that any tract will do to found our half-understood spoken words upon." On the contrary, we say to them, "For three years we have lived amongst you and kept silence, preferring to spend that time in efforts to prepare, in

language you will understand and respect, a book treating of the fundamental truths of the religion which we believe and which we have come here, in order that, by our preaching, you may believe also.”

Now, I must remind you once more that we have neither Prayer-book nor Catechism, nor—what is of more importance than either—Bible. The New Testament has indeed been translated into Corean, but none of the missionaries who were here before us are satisfied with it. It has been revised once, and is shortly to be revised again. I could not therefore recommend it to my clergy, nor could I afford to wait. Remembering, therefore, that when the Apostles had to begin their work amongst the Gentiles without the Scriptures, they preached the Word as eye-witnesses of His Resurrection whose death was to be, for all men, the grave and gate of everlasting life, I determined that we should do, so far as we could do it, the same. This Tract, therefore, prepared in the very words of the eye-witnesses, covers the whole ground of our Blessed Lord's Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension—in a word, the ground covered by the second division of the Apostles' Creed. It consists, roughly, of 400 verses, and prefaced by St. Paul's sermon on Mars Hill (which is the text for every missionary to the Gentiles), proceeds from the Annunciation to the Ascension, with a concluding section on the descent of the Holy Ghost and the foundation of the Church to show people how the facts of our Lord's life were brought to bear on mankind.<sup>1</sup>

All this, I trust, will not only give the keynote of our teaching which is “Jesus Christ and Him Crucified”—but, in better words than we can ever hope to find, will provide Coreans with our credentials—a short answer to the question they will be asking, “By what authority do you preach these things? Who gave you this authority?” I feel that if all this can be done in the words of Holy Scripture, we shall be beginning our work on very secure ground. There will be no danger of our trumpet giving “an uncertain sound.”

But I have another ground for satisfaction in the compilation of this Tract. Most of you know by this time that, whilst the Coreans *speak* their own language, the educated classes amongst them *read* only Chinese. The spoken language has, indeed, been reduced to writing—by means of an alphabet, which is as <174/5> easy as our English alphabet—and this spoken language, when written, can be read by most Coreans. It is called En Moun. But the educated classes have, or affect to have, a contempt for this alphabetical writing, and use, Chinese characters in writing to one another and in official documents; whilst they read are the same as those which are read by the scholars of China. Hence, unless our written message as to be either limited to the educated (if written in Chinese), or exposed to the contempt of the educated classes (if written in En Moun), it must be in both Chinese and En Moun. There are one or two translations of the Bible into classical Chinese, which are much appreciated by Corean scholars. It only remained for me, therefore, to base the Chinese portion of the Tract on these Chinese versions, and procure, with the help of my clergy and native teachers, a translation from the Chinese into Corean, or En Moun. Thus the Tract, when finished, will be printed in the two languages, verse by verse, in parallel columns of Chinese and En Moun, just as Coreans print their editions of the Chinese classical books which are taught in their schools. It is this work on which I have been engaged during the past month. As I write, Mr. Trollope, Mr. Warner, and Mr. Davies are all engaged similarly; and if the Editor prints the Tract in the *Morning Calm*, you will see how we propose, out of our united efforts, to get a version of those portions of Holy Scripture, not free from faults, indeed, but as free as possible considering our imperfect knowledge of both languages. In the preparation of the Tract I have been helped—as I am helped in everything—by Mr. Trollope. To him, indeed, has fallen the chief share of this undertaking, whilst, the responsibility—heavy enough—which falls on me is greatly lightened by the confidence I have in his skill and judgment. According to our calculation, we ought to finish the translation before

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<sup>1</sup> This tract was entitled “*Cho manmin kwang* 照萬民光” (*Lumen as Revelationem Gentium*), which stood for “the Light that lightens all people.” It was published in 1894.

the winter fairly gets in, and if throughout the winter months we can supply Mr. Hodge with "copy," we ought to have the Tract printed and ready for use soon after the Korean New Year.

When, therefore, you are praying for us, please think of Mr. Trollope as doing his share of the translation in our river-side house at Mapo; Mr. Warner as doing his in a small Korean house rented on the island of Kan Hoa, between Seoul and Chemulpo, and Mr. Davies his in Nak Tong, where he combines with this work his own preparation for Priest's Orders and a good deal of useful help which he is able to give to Dr. Baldock in his native hospital in Seoul.

I have been too busy to go to Seoul since I last wrote, but, <175/6> from all I can hear, they have go very well through an unusually hot and trying summer.

We all are in good health; and I am glad to report that Sister Nora who, with an attendant sister to nurse her, has been staying for the benefit of her health in St. Michael's Parsonage, has just returned to St. Peter's Mission House, I dare not say quite well, but very much better than she was when I went to Niu Chwang. Praying God to bless you all.

I am, always yours affectionate,

C. J. Corfe