

Challenged Identities: North American Missionaries in Korea, 1884–1934.

By Elizabeth Underwood. Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch, 2004. Pp. 328. \$33.

This book, written by a descendant of one of the great missionary dynasties of Korea, is a fresh attempt to look at the first two generations of mission history in Korea.

The book enters into the postcolonial debate, and more broadly the negatively critical view of missions, by examining the issue of the personal and cultural identities of the missionaries who served in Korea between 1884 and 1934.

Eschewing both an overly critical and an overly hagiographic view of the first missionaries, Underwood shows in a balanced manner how the missionaries' self-understanding not only influenced how they dealt with the Korean people whom they encountered but also how they themselves changed in the course of an extensive encounter with the Korean people and culture.

The book is full of good insights, especially the initial comment that what distinguishes missions in Korea is the fact that imperialism in Korea was not Western but Japanese.

Although providing an excellent discussion of its defined topic, the book has one major flaw—the almost exclusive focus on Presbyterian missions and missionaries to the exclusion of the Methodists and other church bodies. The history of the Methodist Church in Korea, despite its considerable size within Korean Christianity as well as within global Methodism, is little discussed. The book would have benefited from an examination of the differences and similarities between the two major mission groups and their missionaries. A table of the plates that appear in the book and a better index also would have improved this contribution to mission studies.

—James Huntley Grayson

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