

Home Lessons, Foreign Tests: The Background and First Missionary Term of Florence Murray, Maritime Doctor in Korea

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Résumé de l'article

Florence Murray (1894-1975) a été missionnaire médicale en Corée. Paradoxalement, sa longue carrière réussie dans la colonie japonaise s'est amorcée par un séjour troublé, entre 1921 et 1927. La fermeté de son engagement envers les nouvelles normes occidentales de la profession médicale lui a causé des difficultés dans un contexte où la médecine missionnaire dominante privilégiait encore le travail d'évangélisation et réservait un rôle distinct aux femmes du métier. L'attitude de Florence Murray paraît résulter davantage d'un amalgame des valeurs typiquement presbytériennes de son éducation et des valeurs professionnelles de sa formation que d'un phénomène direct de laïcisation. Cette façon de voir aide aussi à comprendre l'orientalisme de cette femme et les transformations de son propre discours sur ce propos.

Home Lessons, Foreign Tests: The Background and First Missionary Term of Florence Murray, Maritime Doctor in Korea

RUTH COMPTON BROUWER

Résumé

Florence Murray (1894-1975) had a long and successful career as a medical missionary in Korea. Yet her first term in the Japanese colony (1921-1927) was a troubled one. Her difficulties arose in large part from her strong commitment to new western standards of medical professionalism in a setting where evangelization and, in the case of women doctors, a separate spheres approach, had previously been given priority in missionary medicine. This commitment is best understood as an outcome of the fusing of values derived from her stereotypically "Presbyterian" upbringing and her professional training rather than as a straightforward instance of secularization. It also provides the most useful context for understanding her changing orientalist discourse.

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Florence Murray (1894-1975) a été missionnaire médicale en Corée. Paradoxalement, sa longue carrière réussie dans la colonie japonaise s'est amorcée par un séjour troublé, entre 1921 et 1927. La fermeté de son engagement envers les nouvelles normes occidentales de la profession médicale lui a causé des difficultés dans un contexte où la médecine missionnaire dominante privilégiait encore le travail d'évangélisation et réservait un rôle distinct aux femmes du métier. L'attitude de Florence Murray paraît résulter davantage d'un amalgame des valeurs typiquement presbytériennes de son éducation et des valeurs professionnelles de sa formation que d'un phénomène direct de laïcisation. Cette façon de voir aide aussi à comprendre l'orientalisme de cette femme et les transformations de son propre discours sur ce propos.

In recent years, scholars of overseas missions have moved a considerable interpretive distance from the admiring biographies and tales of soul-seeking adventurism written by the movement's apologists. Yet, in some respects, the modern researcher's foreign missionary remains fixed in the same physical and narrative space as the subjects of the earlier literature: a western imperialist presence continues to hover over an enervating Asian or African landscape (albeit, in the newer accounts, a much less benign

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presence). Within this landscape, the principal challenges for the missionary arise from matters moral and spiritual, and these challenges are increased by her/his lack of a more than "Orientalist" advance knowledge of non-Christian cultures. Orientalism itself, ironically, often remains a dominating factor as scholars, seeking to deconstruct the phenomenon, perforce keep it in the foreground in order to demonstrate the western missionary's penchant for exaggerating and denouncing "otherness." Finally, gender identities remain vitally important in the modern scholarship on foreign missions, as they were for the missionaries themselves, though what is new is the extent to which tensions related to those identities have been brought out of the missionary closet.¹

For many contexts, the insights produced by scholarly reinterpretations of the exotic worlds and experiences first introduced to Canadian readers a century ago by missionaries and their biographers have been apt and revealing. There are, however, other contexts for which these new insights are not wholly adequate or appropriate. This is particularly true for the period after the First World War, when overseas missionaries' careers were affected in diverse ways by secularization in western societies and by modernizing and nationalistic tendencies among indigeneous elites in their fields of work. Moreover, when one turns to a setting where the colonial power was non-western, new issues inevitably emerge. The present paper offers a distinctive perspective by focussing on the first missionary term (1921-27) of a Maritime doctor in an important but seldom-studied mission setting: the Japanese colony of Korea.

A Presbyterian minister's daughter, Florence Jessie Murray (1894-1975) served as a medical missionary in Korea from 1921 to 1969, save for career interruptions resulting from the Second World War and the Korean War. By the time she died, just prior to the publication of the first volume of her memoirs, Dr. Murray had been honoured for her medical and refugee work by churches, governments and universities. Following her official retirement from the United Church of Canada's mission staff in 1961, she had returned to Korea for further service, first as a physician with a mission to lepers and then, for a final five years, as chief of medical records at Severance Hospital in Seoul. In retirement, she began a second volume of memoirs, volunteered for Oxfam and other causes, and, as opportunities presented themselves, spoke on behalf of Korean interests.² This remarkable career began, however, with a first term so troubled that it threatened to overwhelm Murray physically and emotionally.

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1. Recent monographs on Canadian involvement in foreign missions include Alwyn J. Austin, *Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1888-1959* (Toronto, 1986), Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto, 1990), and Rosemary R. Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist Women Missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1925* (Montreal, 1992). The Canadian study that most explicitly attempted to use Edward Said's concept of "Orientalism" (*Orientalism* [New York, 1978]) to deconstruct missionary behaviour, and with most ironic consequences, was "Into the Heart of Africa," an exhibition presented in 1989-90 by the Royal Ontario Museum.
 2. For these biographical data see United Church/Victoria University Archives (UCA), biographical file on Florence Murray; Public Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS), Maritime

The problems Murray experienced during her first missionary term were not primarily a function of her parochial background and her lack of knowledge of non-western cultures, significant as these factors were. Nor did she confront the challenges of a trying climate, hostility to Christianity and power struggles with male colleagues, which women missionaries in some fields had encountered. Rather, her difficulties developed in large part because of her strong commitment to new western standards of medical professionalism in the uncongenial soil of northern Korea. That commitment is best understood as a product of the fusing of her stereotypically Presbyterian upbringing and her professional medical preparation, rather than as a straightforward instance of secularization.³ A recognition of Murray's "Presbyterian" commitment to the principles and practices of modern western medicine, in turn, provides a useful context for understanding her critical comments from the field both about the Korean "other" and about her own missionary colleagues. Given her characteristically outspoken style of discourse, some of these comments were sharp indeed.

The paper begins with biographical data in order to establish Florence Murray's credentials as a representative, if somewhat, extreme product of a rural Maritime Presbyterian environment. It then provides a brief sketch of the Presbyterian Church's Maritime-based Korea Mission and the complex political circumstances in which it functioned before turning to the details of Murray's "foreign tests."

I

The eldest child of Robert and Isobel Murray, Florence Murray was born in Pictou Landing, Nova Scotia, in 1894 and raised in the rural communities of Lawrencetown and Earl-town. She spent a brief but formative period in Prince Edward Island, beginning in 1910 when her father took a charge in O'Leary. Like many other products of eastern Nova Scotia's Scots Presbyterian culture, Robert and Isobel Murray placed a high value on education, practising close economies in order to provide university training for all six of their children.⁴ Though Murray gives credit in her memoir to both parents for encouragement and self-sacrifice on her behalf, it was clearly their father who was the dominant influ-

Missionaries to Korea Collection, MG1, vol. 2276, file 1 (hereafter MMKC, with volume and file number); and Florence J. Murray, *At the Foot of Dragon Hill* (New York, 1975), Preface and jacket copy. The published memoir takes Murray's career up to 1942 when she was returned to Canada by the Japanese government following a period of internment.

3. Cf. Karen Minden, *Bamboo Stone: The Evolution of a Chinese Medical Elite* (Toronto, 1994), esp. chs. 3 and 4. Minden presents secularization in the professional identities of twentieth-century Canadian medical missionaries as an unproblematically linear phenomenon.
4. On the Scots Presbyterian educational tradition in Nova Scotia see Judith Fingard, "College, Career, and Community: Dalhousie Coeds, 1881-1921," in Paul Axelrod and John G. Reid, eds., *Youth, University and Canadian Society: Essays in the Social History of Higher Education* (Montreal, 1989), espec. 34-35, and B. Anne Wood, "The Significance of Evangelical Presbyterian Politics in the Construction of State Schooling: A Case Study of the Pictou District, 1817-1866," *Acadiensis*, XX (Spring 1991): 62-85.

The Murray children, Florence, Alex, Foster, Edward, Anna and Charlie, were all graduates of Dalhousie University. Like Florence, Foster, Edward and Anna became medical doctors. Alex trained in theology and later obtained a Ph.D. before returning to the United

ence on the professional lives of the Murray children.⁵ As a young girl, Florence paid the ultimate tribute to his example when she aspired to be a minister. Learning from his gentle warning and from a visit with him to the church's regional headquarters that ordination was not then an option for Presbyterian women, she would instead seek medical training as a prelude to fulfilling his unachieved goal of becoming a foreign missionary.⁶

As was common in other rural Maritime homes, and especially, perhaps, Presbyterian ones, the Murray household assigned each child a daily regimen of chores.⁷ Within the manse at O'Leary, the emphasis on work and duty, and on educational attainments and proper moral and social behaviour, probably exceeded even the Maritime Presbyterian norm, for as one historian of Prince Edward Island Presbyterianism has observed, during the early twentieth century "high social and moral status was [still] ascribed to the rural clergy."⁸ The offspring of the minister were, therefore, expected to set an example. Furthermore, within the Murray family, there was a certain sense of superiority and separateness from the surrounding community in terms of self-imposed standards of behaviour and high achievement.⁹

The Murray children were, on the one hand, sheltered from a knowledge of such matters as sexuality and, on the other, given a very clear understanding about other, mentionable, behaviours that were to be avoided.¹⁰ As the two eldest, Florence and Alex took these moral lessons more seriously than their younger siblings. Indeed, they appear to have been more judgmental than their father in regard to such matters as smoking,

Church ministry. Charlie became active as a Maritime socialist and union organizer. See United Church of Canada, *Record of Proceedings. Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the Maritime Conference*, June 5-10, 1956, 43, obituary of Robert Murray; and Robert Murray Personal Notebooks (hereafter RMPN), vol. 8, "Family Records." My thanks to Heather Murray for making her grandfather's notebooks available and for sharing information on Charlie Murray.

5. This impression is based on correspondence by Florence and Alex in Dalhousie University Archives (DUA), Robert Murray Family Papers, MS2/535 (hereafter MFP), and on information provided by Heather Murray in a personal interview, Montreal, 9 June 1992. Isobel Sproull Murray, a former schoolteacher, emerges from family records as a supportive but non-assertive figure.
6. Murray, *Dragon Hill*, dedication and *viii*. Robert Murray's family responsibilities had precluded his being chosen as part of the group of Maritime Presbyterian missionaries who established their church's Korea Mission in 1898.
7. See, for example, PANS, MMKC, vol. 2276, file 8, Florence to Foster, 6 March 1925. See also James Donald Cameron, "The Garden Distressed: Church Union and Dissent on Prince Edward Island, 1904-1947," Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, 1989, 32, for one Island visitor's observation that "the Calvinist tradition, found among Island Presbyterians, uniquely encouraged thrift, industry and hence prosperity."
8. *Ibid.*, 31.
9. The attitudes described in this paragraph are evident in Florence Murray's letters from Charlottetown and Korea and are recalled as part of the family's self-image by Heather Murray.
10. DUA, MFP, file H-24, Alex to Florence, 24 July and 9 August 1919. Writing as a shell-shocked veteran of the First World War re-enrolled in theological education, Alex regretted the former aspect of their strict upbringing, but not the latter.

drinking, dancing and card-playing.¹¹ Their strong disapproval of such behaviours may have been an uneasy attempt to reaffirm values that had stood them in good stead socially, as well as morally, in their rural Maritime environment but that were increasingly being abandoned and even ridiculed in the more worldly circles they began to encounter as young adults, where such practices as social drinking were increasingly being taken as marks of sophisticated behaviour.¹²

After matriculating from Prince of Wales College in Charlottetown in 1914, Florence moved on to Halifax and the Dalhousie University Faculty of Medicine. Alex would join her a year later as a student at Pine Hill Divinity Hall. Before leaving Prince of Wales, both had gone on record with the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) as intending foreign missionaries.¹³ This shared commitment would both strengthen the youthful bond between them and serve as a future cause of disappointed hopes.

A total of twenty-two women had graduated from the Dalhousie Medical School by the time that Florence began her studies there in the fall of 1914. Far from being greeted with the hostility from faculty and students that she had been warned to expect, she experienced her years in the medical school as a period of easy comradeship.¹⁴ If this sense of camaraderie made her Halifax years pleasant ones, they were also extremely important for her future medical professionalism, for her years as a medical student coincided with a new emphasis on improved standards in the medical school and with unique opportunities for female medical students created by the First World War.

In 1910, the Halifax Medical College had been one of several Canadian institutions indicted for its shortcomings in Abraham Flexner's influential report on medical

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11. See, for example, PANS, MMKC, vol. 2276, file 2, Florence to "Dear Sister," 8 May 1922; UCA, Foreign Missions Committee, Western Section, Applications for Mission Work, box 6, file 37, letter of reference for Alex from Clarence Mackinnon to A. E. Armstrong, received April 1923 (hereafter UCA Applications, and AEA). See also RMPN, "Family Records," 28, 18 January 1919.
 12. See, for example, PANS, MMKC, vol. 2276, file 6, Florence to Alex from Peking, 17 February 1924, for her continuing discomfort with "high society" people who engaged in such behaviours.
 13. *Dragon Hill*, viii-ix. Florence's SVM pledge may have reflected some sense of obligation to fulfil her father's unachieved missionary goal, rather than a total rejection of other possibilities. In a letter to her father en route to Korea, she would write: "Fear lest I be tempted to turn aside from my course was one of the reasons, tho only one, that I wanted to place myself on record *publically* as a student volunteer. It was an attempt to burn the boats behind me." (PANS, MMKC, vol 2276, file 1, 13 August 1921) The "boats" to which Florence referred were probably other career opportunities, rather than marriage prospects, for, despite her physical attractiveness and her obvious pleasure in fraternal friendships, courtship and romance seem not to have been a significant part of her student life.
 14. Enid Johnson MacLeod, *Petticoat Doctors: The First Forty Years of Women in Medicine at Dalhousie University* (Lawrencetown Beach, 1990), Table of Women Graduates, 1894-1933; *Dragon Hill*, ix. On women at Dalhousie generally during this period, see Fingard, "Dalhousie Coeds," 26-50.

education in the United States and Canada. Prepared for the Carnegie Foundation, the report had subsequently served as the Foundation's blueprint in its continent-wide campaign for medical school reform. As well as insisting on a model of medical training linked to laboratory-based research, the Foundation required that assisted medical schools amalgamate with a university.¹⁵ Though instructors at the Halifax Medical College had resented Flexner's report, Dalhousie had acted promptly on its recommendations. Improved physical facilities and more endowed chairs had to wait until 1920 when Foundation funding was provided, but within a year of the report's publication the Halifax Medical College had formally become a Faculty of Medicine at Dalhousie with upgraded entrance requirements and teaching standards.¹⁶ Florence Murray entered the Faculty in the wake of these important changes.

With the outbreak of the war, a wave of fervour for the imperial cause swept over Dalhousie. Alex and Foster were among the many male students who enlisted. Florence herself was seized with a burst of militaristic zeal that temporarily threatened to divert her from both medicine and missions. "I think I'd rather go [to the front] behind a gun than peaceably in a hospital," she told her father in 1916.¹⁷ But since there was no call by Canadian recruiters for women doctors,¹⁸ much less for women in combat roles, Florence instead took advantage of the many opportunities created by the war for female medical students to increase the quantity and diversity of their practical experience. When Dr. Grace Rice offered to take her out into the community on medical cases if she would agree to "pass off as a nurse," rather than reveal her identity as a medical student and make patients fear that they were being experimented upon, Florence promptly took a short course in basic nursing in order to obtain the legitimating certificate.¹⁹ In the aftermath of the Halifax explosion of 1917, she was pressed into service as the official anesthetist at the YMCA emergency hospital, despite the fact that she had then had only one day's experience in giving anesthetic.²⁰ The following year, she was sent to the south-shore community of Lockeport, where twenty-five people had died of Spanish influenza, when the local doctor himself came down with the disease. Reservations among Lockeport residents about the abilities of women doctors and a shortage of standard medical supplies gave her a foretaste of frustrations awaiting her in northern Korea.²¹

15. Abraham Flexner, *Medical Education in the United States and Canada. A Report to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching* (New York, 1910), 320-21, 325; Charles Vevier, ed., *Flexner: 75 Years Later* (Lanham, 1987), 3-4.

16. T. J. Murray, "The Visit of Abraham Flexner to Halifax Medical College," *Nova Scotia Medical Bulletin*, 64, 2 (June 1985): 34-41; Sheila M. Penny, "'Marked for Slaughter': The Halifax Medical College and the Wrong Kind of Reform," *Acadiensis*, XIX (Fall 1989): 27-51; B. Waite, *The Lives of Dalhousie University: Vol. One, 1818-1925, Lord Dalhousie's College* (Montreal, 1994), 202-3, 245-48.

17. DUA, MFP, A-10, letter of 3 March 1916.

18. Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto, 1993), 183.

19. DUA, MFP, A-10, Florence to "Dear Papa," 3 March 1916.

20. *Dragon Hill*, x; see also RMPN, "Family Records," 26.

21. *Dragon Hill*, x-xi; DUA, MFP, A-12, Florence to Father, 27 October 1918.

Florence completed her medical studies in 1919. In her profile of Florence Murray in *Petticoat Doctors*, Dr. Enid Johnson MacLeod observed that “few medical students have graduated as rich in experience.”²² Nevertheless, Murray was anxious for a further two years of practice, both as a way to earn money to repay her parents for the costs of her education and in order to get the kind of experience advised by American missionary boards, two of which had already offered her postings.²³ Unable to obtain an internship at the Victoria General Hospital in Halifax, whose superintendent refused to accept female interns, Florence was initially grateful for the opportunity of an internship at a hospital near Boston, especially since the arrangement provided for a salary and room and board as well as the opportunity to attend lectures by well-known Harvard medical specialists.²⁴ But her dismay at the low level of medical care and personal attention given to the hospital’s largely indigent patients prompted her to return to Halifax, where she was able to serve as an assistant to a local surgeon. During this period she was also able to treat private patients in her spare time and to work as demonstrator in anatomy at the medical college.²⁵

The zeal with which Murray worked to equip herself as a modern and thoroughly experienced young medical professional was not matched by a parallel concern with the kinds of theological questions that were preoccupying some well-educated Protestants of her generation. Nor did she demonstrate much knowledge of, or curiosity about, ways of life and systems of belief different from her own. Her relative lack of interest in such matters is probably best understood as a reflection of her social environment and her gender, as well as her pragmatic approach to her calling.

If Murray had led a less parochial life than many Canadians of her age by the time she was ready to leave for Korea in 1921, it was nevertheless the case that her experiences and surroundings in Nova Scotia and “the Island” continued to provide the standard of what was normal and good, even relative to the rest of Canada.²⁶ Even her exposure to higher education in these provinces had not brought significant contacts with a culture different from her own. Though officially public institutions, both Prince of Wales College and Dalhousie University were still English-Protestant strongholds. Indeed, the two institutions retained strong remnants of their Scottish Presbyterian heritage in their earnest approach to scholarly and extra-curricular activities and in the make-up of their student population.²⁷ Both on and off campus, Murray’s social contacts

22. *Petticoat Doctors*, 62.

23. UCA, Applications, box 5, file 34b, Murray to AEA, 18 December 1919. Especially for the first generation of medical missionaries, it had been far more common than otherwise to go overseas without postgraduate experience; Minden, *Bamboo Stone*, 93.

24. DUA, MFP, A-13, Murray to Father, 23 July 1919.

25. *Dragon Hill*, xi-xii.

26. See, for example, PANS, MMKC, vol. 2276, file 1, Murray to “Dear Brother,” 7 August 1921, written during her train journey across Canada en route to Korea.

27. On Prince of Wales College in Murray’s era and its rigid Calvinist principal, S. N. Robertson, see Lester B. Sellick, *Some Island Men I Remember* (Hantsport, 1980), 50. On Dalhousie, see Waite, *Lives*, espec. 94, 213, 220, 266-67 292. More than 90 percent of Dalhousie students

reflected and reinforced her religious and scholarly interests, providing few opportunities for new ways of seeing the world.²⁸

During these years, she had, of course, become aware of intellectual challenges to Christian orthodoxy and of debates among believers about how to integrate the implications of Darwinian thinking and the higher criticism into a satisfactory new Christian theology. With a bookish minister father, and an intellectually curious brother preparing for the ministry, it could scarcely be otherwise. From time to time, therefore, brief references to such questions occurred in her correspondence with them.²⁹ And, to the extent that she spent time thinking or writing about such matters, she leaned, like Alex, in the direction of theological liberalism rather than conservatism.³⁰ Generally, however, reflectiveness about her personal faith and her inherited Presbyterianism does not appear to have been a significant element in her life.

This was scarcely surprising. Women, even educated women, typically did not have exposure to the kinds of books, lectures and mentorships that sparked theological debates, and sometimes doubts, among male undergraduates and ministerial candidates in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canada.³¹ The infrequency of references to religious controversies in Murray's correspondence can be read as a reflection of her pragmatic temperament as well her gender. Convinced of the essential truths of Christianity, she had little interest in speculative matters that were not amenable to a clear resolution, and discussion of which could produce no ready, tangible, gains. Church union was a step that she favoured because of its promise of effi-

came from the Maritimes during Murray's time. The number of women students with minister fathers still stood at 18 percent, and even in the 1920s, 50 percent of the student population were Presbyterian.

28. While a student at Dalhousie, Murray taught a Bible study class, joined the YWCA, headed the SVM and participated in debates. An early encounter with high Anglicanism had horrified her, but she did sample other Protestant churches. Skating and sledding-but not dancing-provided recreation; DUA, MFP, Murray to Father, A-6, 25 September 1912; A-9, Murray to Mother, 23 October 1915; A-10, Murray to Father, 3 March 1916. See also UCA, Applications, Murray to AEA, 18 December 1919. By comparison, Ontario universities seem to have offered a somewhat more diverse social and intellectual life; A. B. McKillop, *Matters of Mind: The University in Ontario, 1791-1951* (Toronto, 1994), espec. 249-92.
29. For example, DUA, MFP, A-10, Murray to "Dear Papa," 3 March 1916.
30. For Alex Murray's theological views, see UCA, Applications, box 6, file 37, statement by Alex Murray, 28 March 1923; and DUA, MFP, A-15, Alex to Father, 14 February 1925. For Florence's more ambiguous position, see PANS, MMKC, vol. 2276, file 6, to Alex, 6 April, 1924, and file 9, to Alex, 30 May 1926.
31. It is worth remarking, in passing, that in analyzing the nature, causes and timing of secularization in English Canada in this period, historians have not generally been attentive to gender as a variable in patterns of belief. Relevant works include Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto, 1985); Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal, 1991); David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief* (Toronto, 1992).

ciency and action, especially in regard to missions.³² But debates between “liberals” and “conservatives” that were not of immediate, practical significance held little attraction for her.³³

If Murray was largely unengaged by contemporary theological issues within Canadian Protestantism during the years of her preparation for missionary service, she was even less attentive to new ways of thinking about the non-Christian world. Admittedly, even in Maritime Canada’s largest city, it would have been a challenge to get beyond the stereotypes about “heathen lands” provided by an earlier generation of missionaries. References to the non-Christian world in university arts courses would have occurred within the context of a Eurocentric curriculum, and Murray, in any event, was not an Arts student. Halifax’s dismal library facilities would certainly have provided no alternative.³⁴ Information about Korea would have been particularly hard to come by, for histories of the country in English were scarce and relatively recent, and no specialized mission study book was available until 1931.³⁵ Murray’s knowledge of Korea prior to her arrival, then, was probably confined principally to what she had learned from missionaries’ reports and furlough addresses.

Still, the number of clichés about “heathenism” that Murray employed in the addresses she gave as a student volunteer in the three years prior to her departure,³⁶ and the conviction with which she presented this “knowledge,” is initially somewhat surprising. As William Hutchison’s *Errand to the World* makes clear, foreign missionaries’ portrayals of non-Christian religions, and their perceptions of their own role, were in a state of flux in mainline Protestant denominations in North America in the early twentieth century. Indeed, the very question of the missionary’s *mission* was an important issue in modernist-fundamentalist controversies in the 1920s.³⁷ Yet there is little evidence that the new, more accommodating attitude towards non-Christian faiths that many in the movement now held had penetrated into the circles in which Murray moved in the years of her preparation. Similarly, the greater awareness of the variety, integrity and viability of non-Christian cultures that would come through the Student Christian Movement (SCM) had not yet begun to develop on Canadian campuses when Murray

32. PANS, MMKC, vol. 2276, file 4, Murray to Father, 4 June 1923.

33. In Korea, Murray’s main concern about the issues that were dividing some (male) missionaries into liberal and fundamentalist camps was that they not become so public and disruptive as to harm the mission cause; see letters to Alex in PANS, MMKC, vol. 2276, file 6, 6 April 1924, and file 9, 30 May 1926.

34. Charles R. Acland and William J. Buxton, “Continentalism and Philanthropy: A Rockefeller Officer’s Impressions of the Humanities in the Maritimes, 1942,” *Acadiensis*, XXIII (Spring 1994): 79.

35. Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea*, trans. Edward W. Wagner (Cambridge, 1984), v, and 397; James Dale VanBuskirk, *Korea: Land of the Dawn* (New York, 1931).

36. DUA, MFP, File J, Florence Murray Addresses, 1918-21.

37. William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago, 1987), espec. Chs. 5 and 6.

was a student volunteer.³⁸ Though she had prepared herself for missionary service as a medical doctor rather than an evangelist, it was the non-Christian world's need for spiritual salvation that she emphasized as she spoke to Maritime audiences about the missionary cause in the three years prior to her departure. And she dismissed the idea that an organization such as the League of Nations could function effectively, much less serve as a substitute for missions, so long as it included member nations that had not yet been Christianized.³⁹

It is likely that Murray used traditional missionary rhetoric at least partly for strategic reasons: to appeal to audiences whose willingness to finance missions still depended on the invocation of stark contrasts between progressive, Christian, societies and backward, non-Christian, ones.⁴⁰ Certainly, Murray's style of missionary address met with strong approval.⁴¹ By contrast, when Korea missionary Frank W. Schofield, on furlough in Canada and evidently still full of his political concerns about the Korea Independence Movement of 1919, spoke at Zion Church, Charlottetown, he was denounced by the Rev. George Taylor, the minister who would proudly designate Florence Murray as Zion's own missionary "instrument" later in 1921.⁴²

The view that pragmatic considerations helped inspire the negative orientalist imagery in Murray's pre-service addresses is also supported by the fact that in corresponding with the Toronto-based Board of Foreign Missions (BFM) to arrange details of her posting she entirely eschewed such language, concentrating instead on matter-of-fact requests for information about the medical supplies and infrastructure in the station to which she would be posted and the kinds of specialties she should seek to acquire in the time remaining to her in Canada.⁴³ Yet, however different these two forms of discourse and the audiences to which they were addressed, Murray's zeal to be equipped as well as possible for her chosen profession was not at odds with her public statements about Asia's need of Christianity. Though preaching the gospel would not be her

38. McKillop, *Matters*, 445. For the SCM's importance in one liberal missionary's undergraduate years, see Mary Rose Donnelly and Heather Dau, *Katharine: Katharine Boehner Hockin, a biography* (Toronto, 1992), Ch. Four.

39. DUA, MFP, Addresses, File J-2, untitled address, with some variations for different occasions. Cf. Robert Wright, *A World Mission: Canadian Protestantism and the Quest for a New International Order, 1918-1939* (Montreal, 1992).

40. As William Hutchison has observed, some critics of modernist missionaries took comfort in the belief that their appeals for financial support were doomed to failure: *Errand*, 143.

41. See PANS, MMKC, vol. 2276, file 1, Murray to Father, 12 August 1921 from Vancouver, where the Rev. R. G. MacBeth had praised her speaking ability: "[He] said he thought the church... should keep me in Canada for about six months to wake up the folk at home."

42. UCA, Korea Mission Correspondence (KMC), box 6, file 83, George Taylor to AEA, 4 February 1921. For Schofield, see Dorothea E. Mortimore, "Dr. Frank Schofield and the Korean National Consciousness," *Korea Journal*, 17 (March 1977): 37-47. For Zion's pride in Murray, see Zion Presbyterian Church, Charlottetown, Zion Church Annual Report, 1921, 8-9.

43. UCA, Applications, box 5, file 34b, Murray to AEA, 5 July 1920; see also KMC, box 6, file 87, Murray to AEA, 2 June 1921.

particular job in the field, she evidently believed that conversion to Christianity was not only essential for Asia's spiritual well-being, but a concomitant to its modernization. Hence, her amazement when, some years later, at a medical conference in Japan, she met Japanese doctors who were, simultaneously, "highly educated scientific men" *and* devout Buddhists or Shintoists.⁴⁴ Given the assumptions with which she had been raised, such a pattern was bound to appear paradoxical.

Murray's years of preparation and her designation in Charlottetown in July 1921 were followed by her departure from Vancouver and her arrival in Korea, by way of Japan, on August 31. Her father's reference to her departure in his private notebook was belated and matter of fact, but comments elsewhere in the notebook revealed the closeness of the family bond and perhaps a special pride in Florence.⁴⁵ If many of her "home lessons" would face considerable testing during her first term in Korea, there were other aspects of her background that would stand her in good stead. Raised to believe that her gender need not stand as an obstacle to public roles and high achievement,⁴⁶ she set off for Korea with a sense of confidence and a string of successes behind her. Back in Canada, her devoted family would respond with promptness, and usually forbearance, to the many letters that served as her safety valve in the years ahead.

II

The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Korea mission had been established officially by the Maritime (Eastern) Division Foreign Missions Committee (FMC) in 1898,⁴⁷ only fourteen years after an American Presbyterian had become the first resident Protestant missionary to work in Korea. From that late start, Protestant Christianity would go on to prosper in Korea, with Presbyterians remaining the largest denomination.⁴⁸ Guided

44. PANS, MMKC, vol. 2276, file 8, Murray to Mother, 21 October 1925.

45. RMPN, "Family Records," 19, 3 September 1912; 30-31, 15 December 1921; 37, 22 September 1924.

46. Personal interview with the late Dr. Anna Murray Dike Musgrave, Clarksburg, Ontario, 25 June 25 1990. The Murray family, for instance, supported Florence, a suffragist, when she challenged Principal S.N. Robertson's effort to prevent a suffrage debate at Prince of Wales College.

47. The impetus for founding the mission had come with the death in 1895 of Cape Bretoner William J. McKenzie, who had gone to Korea on his own missionary initiative in 1893. *The Helen F. MacRae Collection: A Bibliography of Korean Relations with Canadians and Other Western Peoples, 1898-1975* describes extensive holdings at PANS related to the mission and the political context. See also MacRae's *A Tiger on Dragon Mountain: The Life of Rev. Duncan M. MacRae, D.D.* (Charlottetown, 1993). William Scott, "Canadians in Korea: A Brief Historical Sketch of Canadian Mission Work in Korea," unpublished typescript, 1975, UCA, is a useful account by a contemporary of Murray. Scholarly works that deal briefly with the founding of the mission are Jung-Gun Kim, "'To God's Country': Canadian Missionaries in Korea and the Beginnings of Korean Migration to Canada," Ed.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1983, and A. Hamish Ion, *The Cross and the Rising Sun: The Canadian Protestant Missionary Movement in the Japanese Empire, 1872-1931* (Waterloo, 1990).

48. Allen D. Clark, *A History of the Church in Korea*, rev. ed. (Seoul, 1971), 76; Donald N. Clark, *Christianity in Modern Korea* (Lanham, 1986), 2.

by the advice of their American colleagues, the Canadian church's first official missionaries, Nova Scotians Rufus Foote, Duncan MacRae and Dr. Robert Grierson, had established work in the northern part of the Korean peninsula. In 1920, the year prior to Murray's arrival, the mission had five stations of its own and participated in interdenominational college and medical work in Seoul. With a Canadian staff of fifty-two (including missionary wives), it was the third largest of the church's overseas missions, after Central India and North Honan, China.⁴⁹

Like other Protestant missions in early twentieth-century Korea, the Canadian Presbyterian mission was successful in attracting large numbers of converts.⁵⁰ Indeed, opportunities for effective evangelism soon outstripped the financial and personnel resources of the Maritime founders. Following the Maritimers' appeals for assistance, the Toronto-based Western Division FMC sent its first missionary to Korea in 1910. Four years later, the two regional committees merged and henceforth as the Board of Foreign Missions (BFM) supported a joint missionary effort in Korea.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the mission continued to reflect and celebrate its Maritime origins and its links with Dalhousie and Pine Hill. Maritimers remained the single largest group overall and by far the largest in Murray's first station, Hamhung.⁵² Reflecting the traditional theological outlook of its three founding fathers, the mission tended to be "on the conservative and fundamentalist wing of missionary activity."⁵³ The same tendencies were evident in the Korean-run churches established under its tutelage, though by the 1920s both mission and church were receiving liberalizing influences from newer missionaries and, occasionally, from young, educated Koreans who had studied in the West.⁵⁴ Following its transfer to the United Church of Canada in 1925, the mission continued to be affiliated with Presbyterian mission councils and churches in Korea.

The success of missionary Christianity in Korea owed a good deal to the political context. In contrast to the situations that prevailed in South Asia and Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Protestant missions in Korea were not handicapped in their proselytizing efforts by being associated in the eyes of the indigenous population with the imperial power. As one group of scholars has observed, "Koreans saw Christianity as 'modern,' but not 'imperialist'."⁵⁵ Japan, the dominant external presence in Korea from the late nineteenth century, officially annexed the country in 1910.

49. *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (hereafter *APP*), 1921, Appendices, 147-48, and 154-56.

50. Christianity ultimately became Korea's second largest religion, after Buddhism; see Donald N. Clark, *Christianity*, xi, and Stewart Lone and Gavan McCormack, *Korea since 1850* (New York, 1993), 55.

51. *APP*, 1914, Appendices, 101; Scott, "Canadians in Korea," Ch. 8.

52. For Korea missionaries in 1921, see *APP*, 1921, Appendices, 147-48, and UCA biographical files for their backgrounds. See also PANS, MMKC, vol. 2300, file 2, photograph taken to celebrate the mission's twenty-fifth anniversary.

53. Kim, "'To God's Country,'" 5.

54. *Ibid.*, 41ff, 137; Scott, "Canadians in Korea," ii.

55. Donald N. Clark, *Christianity*, xiii, "Executive Summary."

Undertaking only such reforms in industry and education as were congruent with its desire to use the peninsula as a source of raw materials and a route to Manchuria, Japan created few modernizing opportunities for Koreans such as could have provided some compensation for the loss of independence and the presence of a militarist, assimilationist regime.⁵⁶

In this context, Christianity came to be perceived as a vehicle for modernization and for the expression and furtherance of Korean nationalism.⁵⁷ The association with nationalism was especially evident in 1919, when a non-violent mass movement for independence developed in which Korean Christians played a leading role. In the wake of the defeat of the Independence Movement, the missionary community publicized the persecution of Korean nationalists and sought international condemnation for Japan's heavy-handed response to the peaceful uprising. This attention, and the uprising itself, led Japan to alter some of its more unpopular administrative policies. Nevertheless, economic and social conditions remained bleak for the mass of Koreans, and the West showed no lasting interest in the cause of Korean independence.⁵⁸ Faced with this situation, thousands of Koreans fled to Manchuria, Siberia and other destinations. Many young nationalists turned to communism.⁵⁹

Within the Christian community, some young Koreans responded to the frustrations of colonialism by seeking a greater voice in the shaping of missionary services. Koreans having long since demonstrated their ability to finance and manage their own churches, these young men were anxious for an increased role in other mission-launched institutions, particularly the educational facilities to which they looked for the means for personal and national advancement.⁶⁰ More self-confident and more widely respected among non-Christians as a result of its leadership role in the Independence Movement, the Korean church overall was not as inclined as in the pioneer days to show patience and docility in its relations with western missionaries.

Within the Canadian mission, the reaction to the more aggressive mood created by the Independence Movement was mixed. Some missionaries, such as educators William Scott and Rufus Foote, proved not only willing but eager to turn the administration of mission institutions over to appropriately trained Koreans. Others, such as Edith MacRae,

56. Lone and McCormack, *Korea since 1850*, Chs. 1 and 2; Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea*, English ed., trans. Edward W. Wagner (Cambridge, 1984), Ch. 14.

57. This perception developed despite the fact that some leading missionary spokesmen had initially supported Japanese intervention in Korea as a means of ending what one of them had called "the old regime of conservatism"; Lone and McCormack, *Korea since 1850*, 41.

58. For the March First Independence Movement see Chong-Sik Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism* (Berkeley, 1963), Part III. For the Canadian mission's criticisms of Japan at this time see Scott, "Canadians in Korea," Ch. 9, and for the prominent role of one missionary, Mortimore, "Schofield," 37-47.

59. Lone and McCormack, *Korea since 1850*, 77-84.

60. Young male Koreans' anxiousness for leadership roles in missionary institutions is an ongoing theme in missionary letters. See also VanBuskirk, *Dawn*, 56-57.

the wife of one of the founding fathers, were more ambivalent, variously taking pride in their friendships with Koreans and complaining that they were "going to the dogs."⁶¹ It was under these volatile circumstances that Murray served her first term in Korea.

III

At first, like many newly arrived missionaries in the honeymoon phase of their career, Murray wrote enthusiastically about her new life, her warm welcome to her station and her regard for the local Christians.⁶² There were, in fact, a number of congenial elements in her new world in the autumn of 1921. Hamhung, a city about the size of Halifax, was on the way to becoming one of the most important Christian centres on the east coast.⁶³ It contained the largest of the mission's stations and, as noted, the mission's western staff were chiefly Maritimers. Northern Korea's temperate climate seemed a more pleasant version of the one Murray had left behind, a fact she would emphasize in later years when she wrote home as an avid gardener. The mud-walled WMS residence was without electricity, and the city streets unpaved and unlit,⁶⁴ but to someone brought up in rural Maritime communities most of these were familiar hardships. As in Prince Edward Island and her native Pictou County, the majority of people engaged in subsistence agriculture. The extent of malnutrition and illiteracy was certainly far beyond anything she had observed in Maritime Canada, for Japanese rule had increased the rate of rural tenancy and seasonal impoverishment, and even after the reforms of the 1920s Japanese schools served only a tiny proportion of Korean children.⁶⁵ On the other hand, there were not the shocks to western sensibilities that existed in some of the more "exotic" mission lands in regard to moral and social practices and that would have been especially trying to someone from as sheltered a background as Murray's. Writing in 1922, fellow Maritimer Rufus Foote observed: "The [Korean] people are thrifty, have good morals, and many noble qualities. When one speaks of their character as Christians, many of them are not surpassed by people of other lands."⁶⁶ The condition of women, though unenviable, particularly for the many poor widows and deserted wives whom Murray would come to know as patients or hospital workers, was largely free of the dramatic physical manifestations of subordination that were highlighted in missionary literature on women in India and China.⁶⁷

61. "Canadians in Korea," 89-90; PANS, MMKC, vol. 2272, file 31, letters of Rufus Foote, 3 January and 14 August 1926; vol. 2252, file 26, Edith MacRae to Mother, 4 June 1924; see also Helen MacRae, *Tiger*, 169-70.

62. DUA, MFP, B-1, Murray to "Dear Mother," 29 September 1921.

63. *Dragon Hill*, 9; Harry A. Rhodes, *History of the Korean Mission, Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., 1884-1934* (Seoul, 1934), 140.

64. *Dragon Hill*, 9.

65. Lone and McCormack, *Korea since 1850*, 59-69.

66. PANS, MMKC, vol. 2272, file 26, Foote to Mother, 10 March, 1922.

67. *Women of Korea: A History from Ancient Times to 1945*, ed. and trans. by Yung-Chung Kim (Seoul, 1976); Joyce Gelb and Marian Lief Palley, eds., *Women of Japan and Korea: Continuity & Change* (Philadelphia, 1994), Part II.

One thing that did shock Murray from the very beginning, though, was the mission's general hospital at Hamhung. Within a month of her arrival she had expressed her dismay to her brother Foster, then a medical intern in Halifax. It was not simply that the hospital was without modern conveniences and professionally trained nurses and its sanitary practices and patient management far below what she had been taught to value during her days as a medical student. It was the easy tolerance of such conditions evident in the attitude of Dr. Kate McMillan, the resident medical missionary, and her Korean colleague, Dr. Pak. "The way they do things horrifies me," she told Foster:

I feel like I did in Boston when I saw the patients experimented on and was helpless to prevent it or do anything better for them.... I am very glad I am to go to Yong Jung [sic] for awhile. I do not see how I could work here under the circumstances. If I could speak enough to do anything independently it would be different, but to assist with work like that!!⁶⁸

This early outburst signalled the fact that Murray would give priority to the medical side of her vocation, even as the hospital reflected an era when the mission's first doctors, pioneer Robert Grierson and Kate McMillan (appointed 1901), had made evangelization rather than western standards of medical practice *their* priority.⁶⁹ Significantly, later that autumn Murray asked her mother to forward copies of the *Canadian Medical Journal* "to help keep me from going to seed."⁷⁰

The condition of the hospital and the routine demands of mission life in Hamhung would undoubtedly have brought an abrupt end to the honeymoon stage of Murray's first term in Korea. But her departure from Hamhung, first for six weeks at the central language school in Seoul and then for Yongjong, Manchuria, as a temporary replacement for colleague Stanley Martin (appointed 1916), delayed the day of reckoning.⁷¹ In Yongjong, where the mission had work among a large community of expatriate Koreans, Murray was able, for a time, to combine language study with medical work in a comparatively well-run hospital. And she had a mutually respectful professional relationship with Dr. Martin, who stayed on in Yongjong for several months prior to leaving for medical furlough. She was impressed by the young Newfoundlander's initiative and drive. In six years he had built up a hospital in a remote setting and, at the time of her arrival, was attempting to set up a dynamo to produce electricity. Murray also appreciated the opportunity to practice medicine, including surgery, under his able tutelage.⁷²

68. PANS, MMKC, vol. 2276, file 1, 21 September 1921.

69. Scott, "Canadians in Korea," 66. See also PANS, MMKC, vol. 2270, file 3, Robert Grierson, "Episodes on a Long, Long Trail," unpublished ms., n.d. Grierson, an ordained missionary as well as a doctor, had evidently practised medicine only sporadically.

70. PANS, MMKC, Vol. 2276, file 1, 3 November 1921.

71. *Ibid.*, Murray to "Dear Brothers," 13 October 1921; to Foster, 25 October 1921; and to "Dear Brothers," 18 December 1921.

72. *Ibid.*, file 2, letter of 6 January 1922 to Charlie and 9 January 1922 to Murray [a friend]; see also Stan Martin to "Dear Alec," 4 April 1922, praising Florence Murray's professional skills and her good fit with the social life of the station.

During the early months of her stay, Yongjong even offered a lively social life, for in addition to other young missionaries, there was a cosmopolitan population outside the mission as a result of the political chaos in southern Manchuria.⁷³

With the departure of the Martins and several other furlough missionaries, however, Murray faced both loneliness⁷⁴ and heavier responsibilities. With the only Canadian nurse in the station among those on leave, she assumed responsibility for hospital administration as well as medical work and hence was unable to give adequate time to the latter or to language study. Her difficulties were exacerbated by a pattern that was to become familiar during the next few years: the departure of several Korean male medical workers under her administrative regime.⁷⁵ Given these problems, the fear of falling behind in her beloved profession returned to haunt her:

There is nothing like medicine for interest when you can dig right in... and investigate your cases from both the clinical and laboratory side. One of the hard things out here is one is too busy to go into cases properly and has no one who can do lab work for one and so one gets careless. I feel that after a year or two out here I shall be no good for anything else. It is impossible to spend enough time at the language to learn it properly and do a couple of operations every day and see thirty or forty out cases besides and attend the cases in the wards and superintend the dressings done by careless and ignorant dressers and still have enough time to do any of it as well as it ought to be done. And then you are disgusted with yourself for not doing things properly and you long for a blood count or a lab report or an x-ray plate and there is no one to do it and you haven't time yourself if you had the apparatus.⁷⁶

Allotting more hospital responsibilities to Korean medical personnel in order to gain more time for her own work was not a practical option in Murray's view, and in a letter to her family, she explained why:

They... are very competent to do many things but... it will be some time before they are in a position to run a hospital in any sort of respectable way. A few of them will have to go to the west first and really see a decent hospital before they can be expected even to know what such an institution is like. If they pattern their hospitals on the mission hospitals or the Japanese ones they will fall a long way short of good scientific work.⁷⁷

Later, writing to Alex about what she regarded as Koreans' premature demand for control over mission schools, she was much more negative about their abilities: "[T]hey feel quite capable of doing things for themselves with results that are often

73. *Ibid.*, letters from Murray of 10 and 22 February 1922 (no salutation). See *APP*, A 1921, 124, for the political situation in Manchuria as it affected the mission; and, for a brief overview, Gavan McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911-1928* (Stanford, 1977), Introduction.

74. PANS, MMKC, Vol. 2276, file 2, Murray to "Dear People at Home," 6 June 1922.

75. *Ibid.*, file 3, 3 September 1922 to "Dear Folks."

76. *Ibid.*, 15 August 1922 to "Dear People."

77. *Ibid.*, 2 October 1922 to "Dear Folks."

disastrous [...] while they try to put the blame on the foreigner for they can't 'lose face' themselves."⁷⁸

As she struggled to cope effectively with the increases in her own professional responsibilities, Murray was clearly irritated by the assertiveness of young, upwardly mobile Korean men, whose ambitions, it seemed to her, often exceeded their professional competence. Yet she was even more impatient with her missionary colleagues. In a letter to her mother, written some fourteen months into her first term, she vented her feelings:

if you want to know actually what is the hardest thing out here, it is to have to live with, and see every day, and never get away from, and seldom see anyone else than some uncongenial saint of a missionary who always rubs your fur the wrong way. There is always one on every station, and that individual... becomes yearly more deeply set in his or her own opinion and more and more eccentric till the popular comic paper 'missionary type' is unmistakable.⁷⁹

Murray's "tirade" (the term was her own) had been triggered by the sense of frustration she felt as she struggled to meet her own high standards in language study and medical work while having to endure gratuitous advice from older missionaries, including advice on *her* hospital work. They had forgotten the trials of a novice missionary, she declared, and seemed blind to the particular difficulty of trying to cope simultaneously with language study and professional responsibilities: most new missionaries were able to concentrate exclusively on language study.⁸⁰

If Murray wanted to avoid becoming like the stereotypical "missionary type" whose abundant advice and small eccentricities she so resented at this stage of her career, she was even more horrified at the idea that she might eventually come to resemble a particular sub-category of the type: the older generation of female medical missionaries. Their gendered professional identity, it seemed to her, had become synonymous with inferior work: they had failed to keep up with modern western medical developments, took no interest in performing surgery, and complacently accepted low standards for themselves and the work in their hospitals.

The context for articulating this new concern was a trip that Murray made to Seoul in December 1922, as part of a committee to inspect medical facilities and place orders

78. *Ibid.*, file 4, 16 June 1923, 8. The context for this criticism was significant: Murray anticipated that Alex would soon be joining her in Korea. In her typically admonitory fashion she warned him to prepare thoroughly for a teaching career, given the demands that aggressive young Koreans were now making for improved standards in mission schools: "I don't want to discourage you but it seems to me that even high honours in theology may not be sufficient to solve all the problems of educational work in Korea."

79. *Ibid.*, file 3, Murray to Mother, 21 November 1922, 2; emphasis in original.

80. *Ibid.*, 5. Her tirade notwithstanding, Murray had managed to pass her first-year language examination; see *ibid.*, 28 July 1922 to "Dear Brother."

for supplies in preparation for rebuilding the Hamhung hospital, to which she was slated to return. The hospital had been closed some months earlier, following the sudden death of Dr. Kate McMillan, and would not be allowed to re-open until renovations brought it up to standards acceptable to the colonial government. The committee's itinerary in Seoul had included the East Gate Hospital for Women, where two veteran American medical missionaries were in charge. In a long letter to her father, Murray expressed her displeasure at what she had seen of their work: with plenty of funds at their disposal, trained western nurses and two young Korean women doctors, the two medical missionaries had only four patients in total. Yet because of their insistence on serving only female patients, they refused to affiliate with Severance Hospital and share their resources, despite that union institution's much greater burdens and needs. Their women-only policy would be justifiable, Murray wrote, if they did their work well and in worthwhile quantity, but that was far from being the case. Rather, they had made the term "woman doctor" a byword for inferior standards, a situation she was determined to alter:

After having seen these two and Dr. McMillan and their institutions I am not surprised that missionaries, medical and non-medical alike, ask me if I can do surgery.... These people have established the standard expected of women doctors. I understand now why Dr. Martin wasn't enthusiastic about turning his hospital over to me when he first heard I was coming to Korea.... my little job seems to be to transform Hamheung [*sic*] Hospital from what it was into one of the best and most flourishing mission institutions in Korea and incidentally demonstrate to the missionary community that women doctors are not necessarily cantankerous and inefficient.⁸¹

Given this ambitious goal, the setbacks that followed were particularly hard for Murray to accept. Back in Hamhung in March 1923, her plans for renovating and reopening the hospital were delayed by cutbacks in mission funding and by her own ill-health.⁸² Even more frustrating was the fact that her very success in impressing Dr. Martin with her skills as a doctor now appeared to be working work against her. From Canada, where he was still on furlough, Dr. Martin was arguing that Murray should again be posted with him to Yongjong, and the re-opening of medical work in Hamhung delayed until such time as they could both have first-rate facilities *and* a co-worker. "I agree with him to a certain extent," Murray told Alex:

viz. without certain essential things a hospital is a disgrace to the mission rather than a glory to God and I would rather see a hospital closed any day than run like that. Now we have no nurse here, very few beds, no mattresses, no pillows, no nurses' home (for

81. PANS, MMKC, vol. 2276, file 3, 27 December 1922 to "Dear Father." Criticisms of the priorities and professionalism of medical missionaries generally would be articulated in William Ernest Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry after One Hundred Years* (New York, 1932), espec. 199-208. See also Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill, 1994), 113.

82. PANS, MMKC, file 4, 13 February 1923 to "Dear People All," 18 March 1923 to "Dear Sister and All the Folks at Home," 7 April 1923 to "Dear Father," and 28 May [1923] to "Dear Mother."

Korean nurses), etc. etc. and so far I have no money to get them with.... But... I have not yet given up hope but that some aid will be forthcoming.

Nor would either she or Dr. Martin have to practice alone, she declared, for they could "make use to the fullest extent of the young Korean doctors who are now available." If this sounded somewhat hypocritical in view of Murray's earlier remarks about the continuing inadequacies of locally trained Korean doctors, she justified her stand by asserting that in the hospitals run by herself and Dr. Martin, the young Korean men would get such training as would equip them to serve competently as co-workers in the short term and, later, as independent medical practitioners.⁸³

Murray was relieved when at its annual meeting in July 1923, the mission council voted to go ahead with renovating the Hamhung hospital, funding problems and Dr. Martin's opposition notwithstanding.⁸⁴ Though the renovations were not yet complete and many supplies still scarce, the official re-opening took place in November. The occasion served the strategic goal of signalling Murray's determination to press on and provided the rationale for evicting the students and the missionary family who had been occupying various parts of the hospital compound.⁸⁵ But in other respects it was a hollow victory. There were initial difficulties in attracting staff and winning back former patients.⁸⁶ If the time and energy she had sacrificed from language study and medical work had resulted in the kind of model hospital she had envisioned as a testament to what a good woman doctor could do, she told Foster, and if it had attracted crowds of grateful Korean patients, it would have been some consolation. Instead, for the present, she was presiding over an embarrassingly inadequate institution. Moreover, it was "practically being boycotted" by the local Christian Korean community, as a result of the decision to become more rigorous about charging fees. Though that decision had been made by the mission collectively, rather than by Murray alone, it was regarded as one of several unattractive departures from the good old days when Dr. McMillan had run a much more casual institution. "I am not," Murray acknowledged, "a very much loved person just now."⁸⁷

As a result of increasing alienation from her missionary colleagues, Murray was also a very lonely person, living as well as working in the hospital to escape from overcrowded and tense conditions in the WMS residence.⁸⁸ In a Christmas letter she reassured her parents that, despite her work load and various discouragements, her physical health was good.⁸⁹ Less than a month later, however, her colleagues had

83. *Ibid.*, 26 June 1923 to "Dear Alexander."

84. *Ibid.*, file 5, 18 July 1923 to Father.

85. *Ibid.*, 16 September and 7 November 1923 to Mother, and 3 November 1923 to Alex.

86. *Ibid.*, 3 and 16 September and 7 November 1923 to Mother; and 3 and 18 November 1923 to Alex.

87. *Ibid.*, to Foster, 30 December 1923.

88. *Ibid.*, 16 September 1923 to Mother, and 30 December 1923 to Foster; and file 6, 15 February 1924 to Charlie.

89. *Ibid.*, file 5, 29 December 1923 to "Dear People."

closed Hamhung hospital once again and ordered Murray to Union Medical College in Peking for tests and rest following a trip to Seoul that had resulted in a diagnosis of tuberculosis and a weakened heart.⁹⁰ Reporting on this latest setback, she declared, "I have had things go more crooked since I came to the east than in all my previous life."⁹¹

Murray was pleased, if also frustrated, when medical specialists in Peking confirmed her own view that the doctors in Seoul had provided a "crazy diagnosis."⁹² She would have been even more frustrated had she seen other pronouncements on her physical and psychological state sent to Canada by colleagues. In a long letter to BFM secretary A. E. Armstrong, William Scott, who had known Murray in Yongjong, urged the Board to insist in future on more rigorous check-ups for missionary appointees. The burden of his letter was that people like Dr. Martin, and especially Murray, created physical and mental difficulties for themselves through what he called "that over-aggressive, impatient, restless spirit which is not satisfied with the common round, and the second best." What the mission needed, he continued, was workers with "phlegmatic natures," people content to "plod along doing the daily task," not driven by unrealistically high expectations.⁹³

Writing unofficially to Armstrong, missionary wife Edith MacRae purported to be full of sympathy for Murray ("It is a real tragedy to see that beautiful young girl with a promising career before her with her brilliant mind and talents going around with a droop").⁹⁴ Letters to her mother revealed, however, that Mrs. MacRae was resentful and jealous of the attractive young doctor, whose work with her husband on the hospital rebuilding committee had taken place during a period when she herself had been absent in Canada.⁹⁵

While Mrs. MacRae's jealousy appears to have been entirely unwarranted, and some of her comments mean-spirited, they nevertheless provide insight into the tensions created by Murray's strong personality and outspoken manner. While not denying her ability, Edith MacRae and some of the other missionaries appear to have resented Murray's confident assumption that she would function as an efficient new broom in Hamhung, especially since that assumption was frequently accompanied by outspoken criticisms of her Canadian and Korean co-workers. Inevitably, comparisons were drawn between Murray's regime and the earlier era when Dr. McMillan had been in charge.⁹⁶

90. KMC, box 8, file 118, William Scott to AEA, 19 January 1924, 1.

91. MMKC, vol 2276, file 6, 20 Jan. 1924 to Alex.

92. *Ibid.*, 27 February 1924 to Foster.

93. KMC, box 8, file 118, Scott to AEA, 19 January 1924.

94. *Ibid.*, Edith MacRae to AEA, 12 January 1924.

95. MMKC, vol. 2252, file 25, Edith MacRae to Mother, 15 September and 14 October 1923, and undated, incomplete letter [number 12, 1923]; and file 26, 5 and 16 January and 15 November 1924. See Helen MacRae, *Tiger*, Ch. 21, regarding Edith MacRae's stay in Canada and her return to Korea in 1923.

96. MMKC, vol 2252, file 25, Edith MacRae to Mother and Pearl, 15 September 1923, and file 26, Edith MacRae to Mother, 15 November 1924.

For a time, both the missionary and Korean Christian communities forced Murray to live in her predecessor's shadow.

If the end of 1923 and early 1924 marked a traumatic low point in Murray's testing by her new world, it was followed fairly quickly by signs of recovery of her old zest for work, education and new experiences. Having been declared free of any serious illness by the experts at the Peking Union Medical College, she promptly took advantage of her presence there to enroll in a postgraduate course in ophthalmology, following which she paid a visit to the church's mission in North Honan, China.⁹⁷

Back in Korea, in March 1924, Murray faced a further trial to her pride and her patience when the mission council insisted that she postpone the reopening of Hamhung hospital and, instead, go to Seoul for language study and further rest.⁹⁸ Though she had earlier complained bitterly about the inadequacy of her time for language training and was now to have the chance to study with the Canadian James Scarth Gale, reportedly "the best speaker of Korean among the foreigners in the country,"⁹⁹ Murray was unabashed about, perhaps even unconscious of, her inconsistency in criticizing the mission's new directive to her. In addition to her perennial worry about losing her medical and surgical skills and her characteristic need to be "useful," she was concerned about studying Korean in a classroom context, where any difficulties would be revealed before other western students who had not been as long in the country.¹⁰⁰ The concern not to "lose face," which she had earlier identified as an "Oriental" trait, was clearly not foreign to her own nature.

At the annual meeting of the Canadian mission in July 1924, Murray was officially permitted to recommence the medical work in Hamhung. She immediately threw herself into efforts to upgrade the hospital's physical plant and began recruiting staff. She was probably even more heartened than she acknowledged in a cheerful letter to her father, when the supply of applicants for jobs far exceeded the positions available, especially since they included "the whole of the former staff," and since, as she confessed in an unusually frank and insightful examination of her own personality, "I am a hard taskmester [*sic*] who often insist on things being done exactly as I say they are to be done."¹⁰¹ Her problems with hospital facilities, workers and patients were by no means behind her: water pipes burst, the electric generator failed to generate, there was still no Korean doctor, a nurse took money from patients and then maligned *her*, patients arrived with an entourage of relatives who insisted on staying in the hospital, etc., etc.¹⁰² Still, Murray was delighted to be in charge of her own

97. MMKC, vol. 2276, file 6, Murray to Mother, 9 February 1924, and to Foster, 27 February 1924.

98. *Ibid.*, 25 March 1924 to Mother.

99. *Ibid.*, Murray to Foster, 20 May 1924. On Gale, see Richard Rutt, ed., *James Scarth Gale and his History of the Korean People* (Seoul, 1972), Introduction.

100. MMKC, vol. 2276, file 6, Murray to Mother, 25 March 1924; to Edward, 28 March; to Foster, 9 April; and to Alex, 6 April.

101. *Ibid.*, file 7, 28 August 1924.

102. *Ibid.*, and Murray to Foster, 11 December 1924, and file 8, Murray to Father, 19 January 1925.

work once again. She was in good health, had the prospect of a Canadian nurse and was learning to make small compromises when local customs conflicted with her western notions of proper hospital administration. Meanwhile, even minor improvements in hospital facilities gave her pleasure. Citing some examples to Foster, she conceded that he would probably be amused by them: "I smile too but with pleasure, not amusement or disdain."¹⁰³

As her confidence began to return, Murray even learned to cope more serenely with veteran missionaries' criticisms of her own work. When the elderly McCully sisters, pioneer Canadian evangelistic workers in the church's station at Wonsan, and the American Methodist Dr. Hall, whom she had met at the East Gate Hospital in Seoul, took her to task for not confining her medical practice to "women's work for women," she was amused, rather than distressed: "They are scandalized at me for carrying on a general hospital here and find it hard to believe that any good can come of it. I listen respectfully to their opinions and tease them a bit now and again, in the mean time doing as I please myself."¹⁰⁴

Four years into her first term, then, Murray was gradually learning to cope with many of her "foreign tests." What had not eased significantly at this stage was the loneliness she felt as a single woman whose strong personality precluded closeness with any of her co-workers. Writing to Foster early in 1925 she contrasted "the good old days" in O'Leary with her current situation. She had not forgotten her heavy workload as the eldest daughter in a large family, but her dominant memory was of a happy home life:

It is quite a change living out here. I have my rooms in the hospital and get up and go over for my breakfast to the women's house.... Generally we [WMS missionary Ethel McEachern and Murray] have supper together and all the rest of the time we are each with the Koreans or in our studies in different buildings. Sometimes I think living in a jolly household was a poor preparation for this kind of live [*sic*] but I am glad I had it anyway.¹⁰⁵

From the time of her arrival in Korea, Murray had counted on being joined by her brother Alex as a solution to the loneliness of missionary life. So certain had she been of his appointment to Korea and so diligent in preparing the ground that she had not anticipated any other outcome. Yet, by the time she learned in 1926 that Alex would not be arriving, either as an appointee of their own church or of the Australian Presbyterians' Korea mission, to which she had commended him as part of her back-up plan, she had become remarkably resilient about dealing with plans gone awry. Her expression of personal disappointment, therefore, was comparatively muted.¹⁰⁶

103. *Ibid.*, file 8, to Father, 19 January and to Foster, 21 January 1925.

104. *Ibid.*, Murray to Father, 24 August 1925. The differences between Murray's feminist concerns and those of an earlier generation of women missionaries will be explored in a fuller study.

105. *Ibid.*, 6 March 1925.

106. MMKC, vol. 2276, file 3, to Alex, 23 July 1922; file 8, to Foster, 19 June 1925; file 9, to Alex, 18 May and 10 June 1926. For BFM deliberations see UCA, KMC, box 8 file 136,

What perhaps also lessened Murray's disappointment was the fact that Foster, who had by now completed his own medical studies, had come to assume an increasingly important place in the orbit of her fraternal relations. As she became ever more engrossed in the development of her medical work and the variety of cases she was called upon to treat, she increasingly valued long-distance discussions of their shared professional interests, even asking Foster's advice on occasion.¹⁰⁷ Writing in June 1925, she spoke of this new sense of closeness:

Alex and I ... always studied together and were so nearly of the same age that we were always the best chums till that winter you were at the citadel in Halifax and we got to know and appreciate one another better. Now that we are both in the same profession too I feel nearer together than ever and that we can understand and appreciate one another's aims and work better than any of the others.¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, as had been the case from the time of her arrival, Murray's comments about Koreans in the two years preceding her first furlough were reflective of the particular circumstances and the frustrations, or successes, of the moment. They were also influenced by the gender of her subjects. In the spring of 1926, as she awaited the arrival of a Korean doctor to replace another who had stayed with her only briefly, she attributed her problems in obtaining and retaining Korean medical men to their salary expectations ("[t]he yen is almighty")¹⁰⁹ and their style of medical practice,¹¹⁰ rather than to any personal difficulties arising from cross-race gender relationships and her own demanding administrative style. Yet her remarks about Koreans in circumstances such as these do appear to indicate that she had more difficulty in relationships with male than with female workers, especially when the former were, like herself, well-educated professionals. Thus, at a time when she was having trouble in obtaining a male doctor, she appeared to be succeeding in establishing effective working relationships with nurses and other female hospital staff, relationships that carried over into social get-togethers as her language skills developed.¹¹¹

A similar pattern prevailed outside the hospital setting. In 1926, she was full of praise for the effective way that young, educated Korean Christian women were conducting a newly established women's missionary society in Hamhung, especially given the considerable challenge of exercising leadership without alienating older, uneducated members with no understanding of the society's organizational procedures. Male student activists, by contrast, earned her wrath when they organized to demand that a local

AEA to Dr. T.D. Mansfield, 25 July 1925, and file 139, 24 October 1925 to D.A. Macdonald; also Applications, box 6 file 37, reference from Clarence Mackinnon to AEA, received April 1923. As well as financial problems, the BFM had concerns about Alex's temperamental fitness for mission work.

107. For example, MMKC, vol. 2276, file 7, 11 December 1924.

108. *Ibid.*, file 8, 19 June 1925.

109. *Ibid.*, file 9, Murray to Mother, 4 April 1926.

110. *Ibid.*, 24 March 1926.

111. See, e.g., *ibid.*, file 8, Murray to Father, 1 February 1925, and file 9, Murray to Mother, 14 June 1926.

mission school be upgraded to meet higher government standards at a time when a serious shortfall in mission funding made such a step impracticable.¹¹²

These patterns of conflict and co-operation, approval and disapproval, are hardly surprising, given, on the one hand, Murray's "hard taskmaster" approach and, on the other, Koreans' centuries-long conditioning in a Confucian social system which assumed the natural superiority of men over women.¹¹³ At a more mundane level, the more co-operative spirit demonstrated by the female staff in Murray's hospital also reflected the fact that such women were typically poor and vulnerable by virtue of their humble class origins or their status as widows or deserted wives, while male doctors who found her regime, or mission salaries, unacceptable, did have other options.¹¹⁴

Nevertheless, by the time she was ready to leave on furlough in the spring of 1927, Murray had managed to attract two Korean doctors with whom she was quite pleased, the first a product of government training and the second, a Severance Medical School graduate with the twin virtues of surgical skill *and* a strong interest in church work.¹¹⁵ Her fortunes had improved in other respects as well. She had established a congenial domestic arrangement with a sister missionary,¹¹⁶ while from her new church sponsor, Trinity United Church, Charlottetown, came gratifying financial and moral support after the lean years when Zion's adoption of an anti-unionist position had cost her its support.¹¹⁷ Most heartening of all, perhaps, was an event that took place just as she was about to board the Hamhung train to begin the long journey to Canada. Among those in the crowd to see her off was the gift-bearing husband of a patient on whom she had performed urgent surgery only an hour before. Murray carried the grateful man's gift home to her father as a trophy of her success.¹¹⁸ Though many things had gone "crooked" in her first Korea term, she had moved out of her predecessor's shadow and won acceptance for a new style of missionary medicine.

IV

If by 1927 Florence Murray had begun to acquire some of the qualities that William Scott thought requisite in a foreign missionary – "[p]atience, tact... the grace to wait

112. *Ibid.*, Murray to Alex. 16 October 1926 (for the WMS meeting), and to Mother, 14 June 1926 (for the student activists).

113. Elizabeth Choi, "Status of the Family and Motherhood for Korean Women," in Gelb and Palley, eds., *Women of Japan and Korea*, 191; in this volume see also Cho Kyung Won, "Overcoming Confucian Barriers: Changing Educational Opportunities for Women in Korea," 206-222. Murray was by no means unique in experiencing tensions with male medical assistants; see Martha Huntley, "Presbyterian Women's Work and Rights in the Korean Mission," *American Presbyterians*, 65 (Spring 1987), esp. 41.

114. PANS, MMKC, vol. 2276, file 9, Murray to Mother, 4 April 1926.

115. *Ibid.*, file 10, Murray to Alex, 13 February 1927; see also *Dragon Hill*, 141.

116. PANS, MMKC, vol. 2276, file 9, Murray to Mother, 13 November 1926.

117. *Ibid.*, file 10, Murray to Alex, 13 February 1927; Cameron, "Garden Distressed," 101.

118. *Dragon Hill*, 141-42.

for a more convenient season; the humility which recognizes that the West has not a monopoly on all wisdom” - she had not learned to accept his view that the most effective missionary was the one who had learned to “plod along” and settle for “second best.”¹¹⁹ In the years to come, her commitment to the principles and technologies of modern western medicine would remain unwavering, tempered only by what immediate circumstances made impossible.

The orthodox model of secularization assumes that modernization leads to the atrophy of a religious outlook.¹²⁰ Designed to explain broad social patterns and ideal circumstances, the model is a poor fit in many individual cases, and certainly a poor fit for Murray, whose Christianity co-existed comfortably with her faith in the “god” of western science. Though she did not make medical work the servant of evangelism as her predecessors had done, Murray was entirely comfortable with the practice of using a mission hospital as a site for Christian services, and, in later years when she had the language facility to do so, she herself spoke regularly at Korean church services.¹²¹ Her concern to practise the best possible western medicine in Korea, using the best possible equipment, should be seen as a logical outcome of the emphasis on high achievement and hard work in her Presbyterian childhood, as well as of Dalhousie’s post-Flexner medical training. In using a religious rationale to justify new medical technology as she did, for instance, in 1923 in asking the BFM for money for a new sterilizer, Murray was speaking pragmatically, but not insincerely.¹²²

If Murray’s commitment to western medical professionalism was partly a product of her Presbyterian background, rather than a departure from it, the commitment nonetheless emerges as the single most striking concern in her first-term letters from the field. As such, it is central to an understanding of her comments about Koreans, and, in particular, her negative comments.

It would be misleading to suggest that Murray made disparaging remarks about Koreans exclusively because of her professional concerns (she objected, as noted, to militant young students and was occasionally merely mean-spirited¹²³), or that such remarks were qualitatively indistinguishable from her criticisms of colleagues and siblings. In fact, almost invariably, the failings of individual Koreans were presented as national or “Oriental” characteristics, while the flaws of individual westerners were their own. Still, it is worth observing that, in the considerable body of correspondence examined for this paper, Murray’s critical tendencies were exercised as frequently (and

119. See above, 28

120. Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, “Secularization: The Orthodox Model,” in Steve Bruce, ed., *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis* (Oxford, 1992), 8-30.

121. Cf. Minden, *Bamboo Stone*, 97.

122. UCA, KMC, box 7, file 116, Murray to R. MacKay, 21 November 1923: “What gives the best service to His creatures is surely of the most glory to God, and I do not think we should rest satisfied till we have the very best we can get for His service and His glory.”

123. PANS, MMKC, vol. 2276, file 7, to Foster, 6 July 1924.

certainly as sharply) against unsatisfactory western colleagues and underachieving siblings as against Korean acquaintances, and that when the latter were the objects of her disapproval it was often in connection with putative shortcomings in work-related contexts.¹²⁴ The pattern of orientalist discourse in the correspondence is thus distinctive both from that employed in Murray's pre-service addresses, which had located the Orient's social ills in an undifferentiated "heathenism," and from that in her memoir, *At the Foot of Dragon Hill*. Written after she had lived more than half her life in Korea and dealing largely with her professional work during her first missionary term, the memoir presents pre-modern medical practices such as *chim* and *doom* and tradition-bound *types* such as elderly grandmothers as the chief barriers to the march of medical progress¹²⁵; while, Korean doctors appear in its pages as – like her missionary colleagues – allies in the struggle for scientific medicine.

As for Murray's self-image in *At the Foot of Dragon Hill*, it is essentially that of a young doctor who, upon realizing that she has much to learn about practising medicine in a new, non-western environment, takes her cue for introducing innovations from the example of veterans like Dr. McMillan and the readiness and consent of her Korean staff, and then works systematically for prioritized goals.¹²⁶ This memoir version reduces the frustration and conflict of the early years to anecdotes about exasperating or (retrospectively) amusing circumstances. As such, it offers no hint of the pain that Murray experienced, and undoubtedly caused, as she struggled during her first missionary term to practise the gospel of medical professionalism.

124. Some of the sharpest criticism in Murray's first-term correspondence was directed against her three youngest siblings, whose failures and indecisiveness in school and college work she regarded as a betrayal of family standards; see, for example, *ibid.*, file 6, Murray to Foster, 27 February 1924, and file 8, to Father, 24 August 1925. Such criticisms emerge as a kind of counterpoint to her remarks about her Canadian and Korean co-workers and reveal an analogous concern with standards of performance.

125. *Dragon Hill*, 43-45 (for *chim* and *doom*), and 133-34 (grandmothers). *Chim* referred to a variation of a treatment that the West would come to know as acupuncture. *Doom* involved blistering, or burning, the surface area of diseased tissue.

126. *Dragon Hill*, esp. 12 and 129.