

**MISSIONARY JOHN VAN NESTE TALMAGE: RESPONSE
TO THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION IN KOREA (1910-1945)**

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Abstract: *It is the conventional wisdom of the academic community to conclude that the US missionaries' stance toward Japanese imperialism during the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945) did not stand on either side of Korea or Japan, but exposed their non-political inclinations by maintaining neutrality. This conventional wisdom is not wrong, but it is not entirely true. Almost all US missionaries maintained apolitical attitude that did not intervene into Korea's political situation. The purpose of this study is to find out the nature of Japanese imperialism by studying an American missionary who resisted Japanese imperialism in his own political way and to enrich the discussions on non-political stance of missionaries.*

Keywords: independence movement, Korea's history, Japanese expansion, Presbyterian Mission Station, Talmage's view.

From the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, the world powers implemented the imperialist policy much more intensely than in the past. The UK led to the Opium War (1839-42), forcing China to sign an unequal treaty, exporting opium and other goods to China at a high price, and taking Hong Kong as a concession. The US also joined this imperialist policy and sent the Commodore Matthew Peery to Japan in 1853 to demand the opening of Japan's doors by threatening the artillery of his fleet, before signing the unequal US-Japan Treaty of Kanagawa in 1854. In 1882, the US formed a relatively moderate "Chosen (Korea)-US Amity Treaty". Article one was the most important part of the treaty: There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the President of United States and the King of Chosen (Korea) and the citizens and subjects of their respective Governments. If other powers deal unjustly or oppressively with either Government, the other will exert their good office on being informed of the case to bring about an amicable arrangement, thus showing their friendly feelings¹.

In the treaty, the US affirmed to recognize, respect, and protect Korea as an independent nation. The US signed such a safeguard treaty with Korea, because it tried to use Korea, albeit a small country, as a forward base for trade expansion in Asia, to prevent Russia from making

¹ J. Elliot, Theodore Roosevelt gives Korea to Japan, 2019. Available at: <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Olympus/2460/korea.htm>.

huge economic gains and further expanding its force. However, the US did not keep the treaty and the root reason was Japan. Japan, which first opened its doors in the Far East with the threat of the United States, was the first country to succeed in modernization in the Far East by applying the Western powers' imperialist policy to its own country. Japan quickly gained the "throne" of the Far East with all its efforts to westernize European and American economic policies, education and culture, especially the military. Japan ousted Chinese power from Korea at once through The Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). It also expelled Russian forces from Korea and blocked Russia from advancing southward through the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). At that point, the United States realized the necessity to have a good relationship with Japan for its own good. In 1905, Japan's Prime Minister Katsura and Secretary of War Taft of USA prepared "The Taft-Katsura Memorandum" in Tokyo and secretly decided on the following three matters. First, Japan, Britain, and the United States should build peace in East Asia. Second, Japan was not interested in the Philippines and was in favor of the US governing it. Third, the US believed that Japan's protection over Korea would greatly promote its stability in East Asia.

The secret pact, in effect, was to recognize Japan's imperialistic expansion by breaking diplomatic ties of mutual trust and protection that the US promised to Korea. The US wanted to "immediately withdraw the US legation in Korea to win Japan's favor" when Korea and Japan signed the Eulsa Treaty on November 17, 1905². The Eulsa Treaty was signed under the Japanese coercion that stripped Korea of its independent diplomatic rights so that it could not make an international treaty or promise on its own without Japan's approval. Under the treaty, all Korean diplomatic institutions abroad were abolished. All foreign legations stationed in Korea returned to their countries. In February 1906, Ito Hirobumi took office as the first Governor-General in Korea and became the de facto ruler of the nation by interfering in Korea's diplomacy and domestic affairs. In 1910, Japan eventually annexed Korea, ruthlessly abusing the pride and identity of Koreans.

In this context, American missionaries began their missionary work in Korea. The US government ordered its missionaries in Korea not to engage in any political activities in protest against Japan's control of Korea. Christian denominations in the US also handed down strict missionary policies-namely, separation of church and state, and noninterference in the

² S. Kim, *A study on missionaries during the Japanese occupation*, Center for History of Korea Christianity Studies, Seoul, 2006.

internal affairs of Korea. The US missionaries in Korea were not in the position to violate orders from their home government and mission headquarters. Furthermore, most missionaries in Korea took a theological understanding that missionary work was focused on conveying the love and peace of Christ across races and nations, and not on engaging in the political situation of Korea. Therefore, it may be not right to negatively evaluate the American missionaries who took non-political, neutral attitude towards Korean political situation at that time. This study seeks to analyze and evaluate the political thoughts and behavior of an American missionary who revealed Japan's imperialistic aspect and showed resistance to its imperialism in his own political way, without considerable violations of the US government's foreign policy or the strong instructions of the home denomination in this context.

American missionaries' stance on Japanese imperialism in Korea

To better understand Talmage's view of Japan and his resistance, it may be helpful to analyze some of the patterns of American missionaries' views on Japanese imperialism.

A 'formal yes' position

Some missionaries were reluctantly in favor of the Japanese occupation of Korea, rather than genuinely in favor of it. Charles Allen Clark (1878-1961) and Wade Edwin Koon (1880-1947) could be said to be in this category. Clark and Koon were US Northern Presbyterian missionaries who opposed the Korean Christians' attempt to campaign for independence: Clark condemned militant action and prevented his church members from joining (such) movement. In 1908, Clark wrote: "Our position has been that the church is a spiritual organization and as such is not concerned with politics either for or against the present or any other government. ... We set ourselves rigidly against it (i.e. joining the Righteous Army)"³.

In favor of Clark's argument, Koon also said: "(The Korean Christians' duty was) to obey the Japanese and to do so with a "sweet mind" and not to work for independence. ... I have spent hours explaining to the church officers and teaching men advantages of Japanese rule"⁴.

³ K.Yu, "American missionaries and the Korean independence movement in the early 20th century", in *International Journal of Korean Studies*, 2011, vol. 15, no. 2, p. 171-78.

⁴ *Ibidem*, 2011.

Their support for Japan's colonial rule of Korea was by no means derived from the belief that Japan improved the quality of life for Koreans; without a doubt, they knew the purpose of Japan's invasion, and its process was unjustified. The reason for the approval, however, was that the influence of their conservative theology had fundamentally worked, and the church should never collectively participate in politics or, in particular, in resistance using force.

Furthermore, it is clear that they had been affected by the ban on their own country's denomination from participating in politics. On top of this, they were believed to have agreed in a good-natured way to prevent Korean Christians from dying or suffering in the face of Japan's armed retaliation. Ironically, Ahn Chang-ho and Seo Byeong-ho, former students of Gyeongshin School (presently known as Yonsei University), where Koon was the principal, took the initiative in the "1919 March First Independence Movement" and participated in peaceful political protests. In 1941, Koon was deported to the US after being held in prison as an American spy. Considering these circumstances, their view of Japan was seen as a way to take care of Koreans.

Position of active opposition

Homer Bezaleel Hulbert (1863-1949) and Henry Gerhard Appenzeller (1858-1902) from the Methodist Church of the United States were representative missionaries of this type. Hulbert studied theology at Union Theological Seminary in the US and entered Korea as a missionary in September 1893. He was very positive about Japan's entry into Korea by 1904. It was believed that Japan would help its neighbor Korea in a good way and contribute to Korea's modernization. However, when he saw the Eulsa Treaty, he no longer believed that Japan could play as a constructive and healthy instrument of reform. The Japan-Korea Treaty of 1905 became the object of national humiliation. While seeing such political humiliation, many Korean patriots such as Min Yeong-hwan took their lives to claim the treaty's unfairness. In this dismal political situation, Hulbert lambasted the US for breaking the US-Korea treaty of 1882. America signed with Korea and yet secretly joined with Japan. In Hulbert's eyes, this was a diplomatic betrayal of America, so he tried to publicize the injustice of Japan's invasion of Korea to the world⁵.

Hulbert also visited the US in 1905 to deliver a secret letter of King Gojong to the US president stating that the Korea-Japan Treaty of

⁵ H.B. Hulbert, *The passing of Korea*, Doubleday, New York, 1906.

Protection was invalid, because it was signed by Japan's aggressive military force. However, he failed to accomplish this mission due to the refusal of American government to meet him. In 1907, he helped the Korean emissary to secretly attend The Hague Peace Conference in the Netherlands to proclaim the injustice of Japan's annexation of Korea. The envoys, however, were unable to enter the conference room due to Japan's interference. Under this pretext, Japan abolished King Gojong, who only had an Emperor's name, and expelled Hulbert from Korea. Back in the US, Hulbert joined hands with independence activists from the US, including Seo Jae-pil and Rhee Seung-man, and traveled to major American cities for Korea's independence, explaining the Japanese empire's aggression and appealing for Korea's independence. Hulbert's dedication for Korean independence stemmed from his discovery of Koreans' cultural excellence on many aspects. He argued that Hangul, the Korean alphabet, should be used in Korea instead of difficult Chinese characters, claiming that Hangul is the best existing writing system. He also acknowledged the originality of Koreans, which produced the Korean metal type, war turtle ship, and so forth. For him, Koreans were genuinely creative and, therefore, they did not need protection by Japan or any other nation. Korea must be independent. Therefore, Hulbert called for Korean independence as soon as possible, because such a great nation had suffered from Japan.

Appenzeller graduated from Drew University's Theology Department and joined Korea as a Methodist missionary in 1885. As Hulbert's close friend, he did not follow the non-political lines of most American missionaries for Korea's independence. Like Hulbert, he also emphasized the need for political action for Korea's independence: "(Appenzeller) cultivated an ethos of militaristic preparation, political activism, and intellectual engagement. ... (He) introduced formal military training and exercise among his Korean students. He also enlisted the assistance of a Sergeant from the US Marines who came over every afternoon to Paichai (Academy) to train them"⁶.

A moderate, non-political stance

This was the case with most American missionaries stationed in Korea. John Welch (1893-1959), a Methodist Bishop, declared that it was unfortunate for Christians to engage in independence movements or read

⁶ K. Yu, "American missionaries and the Korean independence movement in the early 20th century", in *International Journal of Korean Studies*, 2011, vol. 15, no. 2, p. 171-78.

the Declaration of Korean Independence in the church. When representatives of Presbyterian and Methodist churches gathered in March 1919, he, as spokesman, argued that missionaries should remain completely neutral in Korea's independence movement. Since missionaries could not prevent the movement by themselves, and if they did, they would incur resentment from the Korean Church, thereby reducing their influence, and if they supported it, they would violate the US government's order to intervene in politics. The Presbyterian missionaries in Korea were either thinking that Japan's colonial rule was advantageous to Korea, or trying to prevent futile sacrifices⁷. Most of them tended to work together to appease Christians and to prevent rebellion and riots.

Missionary Talmage's overview of Korean mission

Talmage entered Korea on August 26, 1910, during an extremely tense political period that took place between Korea and Japan⁸. The Korea-Japan annexation took place on August 29, 1910. Thus, Talmage entered the country three days before this event and became a true witness of Korea's woeful history. Talmage's ancestors were Jewish Americans, and his grandfather had long served as a missionary dispatched to China by an American Dutch Reformed Church. His father was a successful businessman who sold and distributed rice. Talmage was born on December 30, 1884 in Newark New Jersey⁹. More influenced by his grandfather's spirituality than by his father, he received theological education at the Princeton Theological Seminary and was appointed a missionary at the American Southern Presbyterian Denomination. He was assigned to the Gwangju Presbyterian Mission Station and was first given consideration to study languages and learn the Korean culture. He studied hard, because he felt the need to learn not only Korean, but also Chinese and Japanese while watching Japan's domination of Korea. Over time, he improved his language skills to the point that he had no difficulty communicating with ordinary Koreans, as well as the intellectuals who were good at Chinese classics, and Japanese. He had a specific ability of learning new languages. Soon he joined the works of his senior missionaries in Gwangju, who divided their ministry into three fields—namely, church planting, education, and hospital works. In his early service

⁷ L.H. Underwood, *Mrs. Underwood's Korean life*, Deep-Rooted Tree Press, Seoul, 1984.

⁸ M.T. Provost, *I gave you to the lord*, Munhwa Highschool Press, Geongju, 2014.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

period (1910-1925), he toured Damyang, Yeonggwang, and other cities in South Jeolla Province, but mostly helped Eugene Bell (1868-1925), the general manager of the Gwangju Mission Station, assisting him to take care of the Gwangju church community. Talmage also served both as the principal of Sungil Boy's School and as the chaplain of the leper hospital located Bongseon county in Gwangju city. From 1926 to 1942, Talmage was particularly devoted to planting and shepherding the local churches in Damyang and Sunchang. During this period, he purchased a shabby traditional Korean house in Damyang and expanded it for use as a seminary. An elementary school was founded by Talmage in Damyang during this period, too. He was deported from Japan in 1942 and stayed in the United States. He died in 1964 in Atlanta, Georgia¹⁰.

Talmage's understanding of Japanese imperialism

Japanese imperialism from the point of view of his faith

Talmage could not accept Japanese imperialism because of his faith. It was Japan's insistence on Japanese Emperor worship that most violently tormented him. In 1880, after the Meiji Restoration, Japan created the Japanese Imperial Constitution. The constitution, a mixture of Japanese Emperor ideology and Western democracy, was established with the aim of achieving Japan's political modernization^{11,12}. In Japanese history and culture, the Emperor was a symbol of politics, not just religion. In theory, the Emperor was the only authority in spiritual and secular matters. Japan fabricated records that the Emperor's genealogy has never been cut off since the foundation of Japan.

The Emperor lived in the realm of God, while daily social and political matters were left to the Japanese people, who were supposed to serve the nation democratically through the established law. This was the essence of the modern Japanese constitution¹³. The Emperor served as an ideological symbol that united the Japanese people by worshipping him throughout Shinto shrines. In other words, the Japanese visited the appointed shrine and vowed to the memorial tablets in meditating and worshipping manner, thus having a spiritual experience of oneness with

¹⁰ S. Son, *Missionary Talmage and the churches of Damyang*, Christian Historical Society, Damyang, 2013.

¹¹ J.K. Chung, *Missiologial criticism on culture*, Saehan Planning Press, Seoul, 1994.

¹² J.K. Chung, *Evangelical movement*, Kwangshin University Press, Gwangju, 1998.

¹³ J.K. Chung, *Missiologial criticism on culture*, Saehan Planning Press, Seoul, 1994.

the unbroken line of Japanese ancestors. The Shinto religion had established itself as an ideology of Japanese nationalism; during the colonial period, most (if not all) Japanese people faithfully participated in this religion which they say as a patriotic act towards becoming genuinely Japanese.

After annexation, Japan demanded all Koreans to adopt the Shinto religion, forcing Koreans to visit the certain shrine to worship the living Japanese Emperor as God. After the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Japan called for all-around Shinto practice as a way to make Koreans more loyal to Japan. The Japanese colonial government in Korea said that Koreans and Japanese should unite and wage war against all forms of Western infiltration in Southeast Asia, including China. To this end, the national Shinto religion was the most powerful weapon to manipulate all people who were conquered by the Japanese military force. As a Christian, Talmage could not accept the Japanese Emperor worship. He believed that the first half of the Old Testament's Ten Commandments strictly prohibited idolatry. He had theological reflections to prove that the Japanese Emperor worship was idolatry. He analyzed in detail the Japanese Shinto booklet named "The Divine Mission of Japan". The book described their Emperor worship and mythological history as revised and readjusted to fit their prospective role as conquerors of the world. The Japanese planned to force this concocted history and improvised religion on all subjugated peoples through its use in all schools and public... by officials and other employees, whether deceit and indirect coercion... (The) teachings were directly contrary to Biblical truth¹⁴. Talmage concluded that the Emperor worship was the Japanese propaganda and religious deception. It functioned as a powerful tool to fool the Korean people.

Japanese imperialism from the perspective of Korean history

Talmage argued that Korea had been a nation that had lived independently for a long time. The reason why Korea was able to live with dignity as an independent nation was that it had an outstanding authentic culture, and that this culture was the driving force behind the invasion of foreign powers. He said: "From ancient times the Koreans have been an independent race. The Japanese, by their suppression of free speech, have tried to make the world believe that the Koreans appreciate very much

¹⁴ J.V.N. Talmage, *A prisoner of Christ Jesus in Korea*, Presbyterian Historical Foundation, Montreat, 1947.

their privilege of becoming subjects to the Japanese Emperor, and that they are rapidly responding to the Japanese efforts to amalgamate the two countries. The Korean people have a distinct culture, which manifests itself in distinct architecture, clothing, customs, and language. They have for three millennia resisted Chinese culture infiltration”¹⁵.

The outstanding culture of Korea, as presented by Talmage, included the areas of architecture, clothing, custom, and language. The art, habits, and language that only Koreans had been so unique that they could never assimilate into Japan. The older Koreans said that their country had maintained its independence by resisting foreign aggression for thousands of years. They resisted Chinese cultural penetration for 3,000 years, not for one or two days, and Talmage noted this historical evidence. Talmage’s understanding of Korean cultural achievements and resistance spirit are very similar to that of Hulbert. Their common logic is that if Koreans have their own language and distinctive lifestyle, they will never be conquered. In more concrete terms, both Talmage and Hulbert agreed that there were two fundamental resources of Korean people against foreign aggression: their mental spirit and military force.

First of all, Korea had mentally resisted Chinese culture by developing its own language called Hangul. Hangul is a thoroughly phonetic writing, combined with consonants and vowels. Said differently, there is only one pronunciation per letter, and it is the perfect character for marking all sounds in their own letters. Hangul is easy to learn, so anyone can read and write within a day. However, it takes time to understand the meaning, because it is a sound letter. Since the fifteenth century, Hangul has allowed all Koreans to communicate more freely. As long as it exists, Koreans have the power to speak, write, reason, and critically evaluate the reality. Intellectual criticism is the mental or spiritual power of resistance.

The second power to resist against foreign domination over Korea was physical strength, that is, the military force. During the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392), Koreans constantly fought against Tungusic nations in Manchuria such as the Kitan and Jurchen. They boldly resisted even the Mongolian army, one of the strongest military forces in world’s history. In the two wars initiated by Japan in the sixteenth century, master generals like Admiral Yi Sun-shin and voluntary civilian soldiers drove Japanese troops out from the Korean soil. Sometimes there were temporary losses to Chinese or Japanese armies, but Korea eventually won in those wars. A

¹⁵ J.V.N. Talmage, *A prisoner of Christ Jesus in Korea*, Presbyterian Historical Foundation, Montreat, 1947.

small country on the peninsula would have many times collapsed under foreign aggression, but it regained its vitality like a phoenix. This was the real-life resistance of Korean history.

Korea resisted foreign aggression by all means. It is important to keep in mind that the resistance mentioned by Talmage is a positive resistance, allowing military force. Hulbert's frequent use of diplomatic resistance, as well as the use of force as claimed by Appenzeller, is the true meaning of the resistance as discussed by Talmage. Japan annexed Korea, invaded China, and further expanded the war to the Southeast Asian region. In 1941, America also entered the Pacific War. Koreans fought against Japanese troops in China and Russia, because they lost their country. In addition, Japan, which lacked military manpower, conscripted Koreans into the Japanese army and sent them to war. "An army is being trained" was a testament to this¹⁶. Koreans would make enormous sacrifices in the process, but this was also a new opportunity for Koreans: "It will eventually leave the country (Korea) prepared against (Japanese) aggression"¹⁷. Here, Talmage used the vocabulary, that is, "army", indicating that Koreans could engage in military protest against Japan in order to attain independence. In sum, from the perspective of Korean history and culture, it was Talmage's belief that Korea would one day overcome Japanese imperialism and regain its independence.

Japanese imperialism in general sense

On August 26, 1910, Talmage was informed that: "The Korean King, realizing his own inability to govern his country well, had asked the Japanese Emperor to undertake the task for him. Emperor Mushihito of Japan very graciously complied and formally annexed the country. The Japanese had sugarcoated their treacherous act. ... (The Koreans were) forced to celebrate annually the "glorious privilege" of annexation by Japan"¹⁸. For him, the story was a sudden treacherous act. It was not a difficult theological issue, but the general expression of surprise that ordinary people articulated. Why was he so surprised by the news of Japan's annexation of Korea that he openly said it was Japan's atrocities? Talmage could not accept it, because it was a violation of the natural law.

The self-evident right of Korean humanity had been invaded by Japan, he reasoned. Talmage could not agree with the Japanese

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

imperialism, especially when he heard the fictional account that the Korean King gave his country to the Japanese Emperor by begging him to graciously accept it. Japan's annexation and domination of Korea was a clear act of violation against the general norms of the modern civil society. It was Japanese barbarism, Talmage argued. Modern civil society opened the path of diplomacy under mutually equal qualifications. A nation-state should live with other nation-states, having the attitudes of mutual respect and consideration based on reciprocity. For Talmage, it was impossible to ignore this procedure and mobilize the Japanese military to force Korea to subjugate to Japan. The Japanese invasion of Korea was not easy to understand using his American common sense. He was born in the United States where everyone pursued happiness, insisting on freedom and equality. His country, in general, gave everyone equal opportunities to live a happier life. In particular, any society could pursue social well-being with self-effort, hard work, and moderation. It was impossible for any person to dominate and enslave another person. Yet Japan invaded and annexed Korea in defiance of the proper order of the civil society. It was a violation that the modern civil society could not accept.

Talmage's actual response to Japanese imperialism

As we have seen, Talmage was assigned to serve in the Gwangju Mission Station from the time of the Japanese annexation to Korea until his deportation to the United States. During his early career years as a missionary, he served as an assistant to Eugene Bell, the father of the southwestern Presbyterian local churches. Right after he acquired Korean and Japanese along with Chinese characters, he started to help several churches in the Gwangju area. Since 1920, he served almost thirty local churches in Damyang, Sundam Bible School, and Gwangdeok Elementary School, while responding to Japanese imperialism in its own way. He protested against Japan's invasion of Korea and its policies in his political thought.

However, his political thought did not actualize as a single intensive and physical resistance. His ideas had limitations that could not be seen as a physical resistance movement to change real politics at once. This was due to his position to serve as a team member with various missionary workers from Gwangju. At least outwardly, all Presbyterian missionaries in Gwangju de-emphasized direct political participation, such as armed demonstrations in Korean politics. Talmage did not openly object their political stance. However, he tried to do what a missionary like himself

could actually do. Talmage reasoned that the best thing he could do for Korea's independence was to wait for the right time and prepare for it thoroughly. The preparations were meant to raise Korean leaders who could train ordinary citizens to build a new country. He believed that leaders were not born, but were made. He was convinced that only thorough and systematic education and training could make a true leader or citizen. He put his belief into practice as he engaged in church planting, as well as in educational and hospital works.

Response through local churches and Sundam Bible school

First, as to the response of the local churches, Talmage strongly protested against Japanese imperialism, especially Japanese Emperor worship, through the local churches and Sundam Bible School. He applied the Nevius mission policy, which was accepted by Presbyterian missionaries in the early days of their missionary work, to the local churches he was in charge of. The policy was based on the three self-ways: self-support, self-government, and self-propagation¹⁹. The self-support means economic independence; self-government indicates administrative autonomy; the self-propagation entails disseminating the message of the gospel among Korean Christians. Talmage called for Damyang local churches to build their own church buildings, unless there was any special reason to not do so. When the churches grew to a certain degree, he helped them to administer their internal matters on their own, i.e. without interference. Even if church growth was slow, he decided not to use any artificial methods. These three self-ways took place one by one, and the effect was palpable.

Most of all, ordinary Korean Christians started regaining their identity through churches. Learning the core Christian teaching: "Love God and love neighbor", they realized that, under God, all mankind is equal. There is no distinction between Koreans and Americans, men or women, rich and poor, literati and ignorant. The missionaries, who came from an advanced country, were elite groups of the United States in terms of theology, medicine, and education. However, they did not discriminate between themselves and Koreans. The Nevius three-way policy actively helped Koreans to stand on their own feet and proceed with their work. Korean Christians in the Jeolla province began learning and practicing democratic culture while communicating with these American missionaries. The communication was not a vertical command and

¹⁹ C.A. Clark, *The Nevius plan for mission work*, Christian Literature Society, Seoul, 1994.

obedience made under the influence of traditional Korean Confucian society, but rather a horizontal fruitful exchange full of mutual understanding and discussion. As a result of Nevius practice, Korean Christians gained economic independence from missionaries. This economic independence instilled pride, working like Americans. Their sense of accomplishment expanded to self-respect and created a healthy sense of self-esteem, which no longer allowed Japan to dominate Korea.

The struggle of Korean Church against Japanese imperialism was intensified since the late 1930s. The Japanese colonial government proclaimed a political ideology called “Japan and Korea are one” in order to force Koreans to become like Japanese. This ideology was further strengthened and manipulated through the practice of Japanese Emperor worship, change of names from Korean to Japanese, and the usage of Japanese as the official language in schools and public offices. How did Korean Church leaders cope with this Japanese pressure? In the 27th Presbyterian Assembly Meeting on September 9, 1938, the leaders resolved that the Emperor worship was a simple national ceremony and, therefore, corresponded to the doctrines of the Christian faith²⁰. However, most missionaries including Talmage immediately refused to accept this. Many students and co-workers of Talmage at Damyang’s local churches followed their spiritual mentor and received tremendous persecution. Some of them were martyred.

Second, with regard to Talmage’s seminary response, the purpose of the seminary called Sundam Bible School was not to produce armed resistance leaders who campaigned for political independence of Korea. Sundam Bible school was intended to raise spiritual soldiers who took care of Damyang in the Jeonnam territory and Sunchang in Jeonbuk areas. Soondam Bible School started in 1925 for three year-course works at Yangji Church in the Damyang county. In the early days of its establishment, the Yangji Church chapel was used as a learning place. From the fourth-year class, the students could study at Talmage’s new residence in Damyang. He bought a traditional Korean house and renovated it to be used as his residence, lecture hall, and students’ dormitory. The three-year course works consisted of introduction of the Bible, systematic theology, church history, preaching, English, and so forth. The faculty members volunteered unpaid services. Many young people from South and North Jeolla areas entered the seminary. While studying there, students were free from any costs of school studies,

²⁰ S. Kim, *A study on missionaries during the Japanese occupation*, Center for History of Korea Christianity Studies, Seoul, 2006.

because Talmage solved this problem wisely. He purchased a school farm near Yangji Church. The students were advised to plant crops; they sold the fruits of the crops to pay any necessary expenses related to school studies. Talmage trained them to study in the morning and to work in the afternoon. Although they worked and studied at the same time, they could exercise economic independence which, in turn, helped them to build a healthy self-hood with pride. Talmage was talented in playing baseball, football²¹, and other sports. Therefore, he not only lived with students, often playing the above games with them, but also mobilized them to engage in mission work²².

So now, in what sense did Sundam Bible School resist Japan? The Emperor worship was directly resisted. In fact, Talmage did not recommend physical resistance to Japanese colonial rule, except for idol worship. He helped his disciples prepare for the future. He allowed his students to gain economic independence first, and also reminded them of modern civilization through extensive new school education. He expanded the horizons of the world by teaching his students English, music, and physical education instead of just giving them the Bible lessons. In addition, Talmage and all his students shared their lives through living together under the same roof. He was a top-notch educated American, but he overcame the differences in American and Korean culture. Furthermore, Talmage divided his disciples into groups to serve in nearly thirty local churches in Damyang. Some groups taught the Bible, some taught basic English, and others played the piano, organ, and trumpet, demonstrating that the arrival of new age along with dreams and visions of future hope was at hand. His disciples played the important role of introducing modern democratic civil society to many Koreans. Said differently, Talmage tried to help his church congregation to be enlightened through education and training. This educational training would eventually transform the Korean society into a powerful independent nation-state, he believed.

²¹ E.M. Akhmetshin, A.F. Miftakhov, D.A. Murtazina, R.P. Sofronov, N.M. Solovieva, V.A. Blinov, “Effectiveness of using football basics in physical education and organizing arts and cultural events for promoting harmonious development of orphan children”, in *International Journal of Instruction*, 2019, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 539-554.

²² Y.R. An, *Cheulla Do is home town*, Kum-Ran, Seoul, 1998.

Response through school education

Talmage's school ministry took place at Sungil and Gwangdeok schools. Gwangdeok School, a five-year elementary school, was built to give educational opportunities to children near Damyang. Sungil Boy's School and Gwangju Girl's School were mission schools established in 1908 by the Presbyterian missionaries in Gwangju. A pious lady in the United States donated \$5,000 to the Girl's School in honor of her sister, Jenny Speer²³. At that time, \$5,000 was a huge sum, and the money was used to build a modern three-story building. The name of Gwangju Girl's School was changed into Jenny Speer Memorial School for Girls in honor of the sponsor. The two mission schools followed the founding spirit of "Sungil". "Sungil" literally means "Worship One". This "One" refers to God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth. Accordingly, this One affirms the story of the Old Testament based on the first chapter of the Genesis. In it God is described as the almighty Creator who speaks and feels with personality. All things in the universe are created by his spoken words. He also creates the human after his image and gives him authority to rule over all things except God. Here we see that the name of Sungil itself implies resistance to any destructive and impersonal forces. Since it is an order to serve only One God, it is absolutely not right to bow down and worship the Japanese Emperor. God makes every human being after his own image, so every human being including the Japanese has the image of God. It is clear that Koreans also have the sacred and personal image of God. Japanese aggression and exploitation on Korean people are life forms that directly challenge the will of God. Talmage understood the founding spirit of these mission schools and translated the name of Sungil into "The School of High One" by himself²⁴. He served the Sungil Boy's School for more than five years, giving students an indelible influence on Korean independence. This was achieved in the following two ways.

First, he promoted national consciousness through religious education. Sungil and Speer schools held worship services every morning. At the heart of the service was the aphorism, many of which had been declared the subject of the liberation of the Old Testament. In particular, the story of Exodus was the most favorite theme to be repeated in their

²³ J.K. Chung, "Christian heritage research in Yanglim area and its usefulness", in *The Second Study Symposium of Korean Christian Culture Studies*, Seoul, Center for Korean Christian Culture Studies, 2016, p. 45-47.

²⁴ J.V.N. Talmage, E. John, *Talmage and Ta John plant seeds on the field of Ojeong*, Hannam University Press, Daejeon, 2015.

worship services. The students recalled God's redemptive history that helped them to understand the way of liberation for the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt. The narrative of Exodus orders that, in order to be liberated from Egypt, Israelites have to repent of such sin as slave or beggar mentality. This mentality blinds them not to recognize the sovereign ruler of the universe. They depend on Egypt for day-to-day survival. Because of their inclination to the world, they lose the spiritual world, completely ignoring the existence of God.

The Sungil students were taught that, just as Israelites suffered in Egypt, so too Koreans would suffer because they neither prayed to God, nor prepared for the Japanese invasion. More specifically, there had been no spiritual leader like Moses in the Exodus story to lead Koreans. Therefore, it was the very time to renew their spirit in God and to be used in God²⁵. The process of renewal needs a spiritual revolution within the heart of each individual, making a Moses-like decision: Moses gave up his position as Prince of Egypt and served his people by training them with the vision of the future hope. Since the Korean people under Japanese colonial rule had similar oppression as the Israelites groaned in their hooves, Talmage's logic was that, in order to solve this pain, proper Korean leadership should be established to guide the Korean people. He believed that among the graduates of Sungil School, even though it would take time, such outstanding leaders for the Korean people would emerge. He claimed that the actual independence of Korea depended on the behavior of Korean Christians: "The greatest factor of all, which makes me think Korea can continue independently, is that there are 500,000 people in the Korean Christian constituency. ... Democracy cannot exist to any extent without Christianity. But the independent Korean Christian Church has been a visible pattern for all Koreans to use in setting up their own national government"²⁶.

Second, Talmage introduced a modern curriculum. The missionaries in Gwangju including Talmage introduced modern educational courses to their students. In 1908, there was a discussion between representatives of the Japanese government and foreign missionaries in Korea about the operation of the Mission School. The high Japanese officials agreed with mission representatives that schools run by missionaries should be allowed to freely operate under the condition that

²⁵ Y.R. An, *Cheulla Do is home town*, Kum-Ran, Seoul, 1998.

²⁶ J.V.N. Talmage, *A prisoner of Christ Jesus in Korea*, Presbyterian Historical Foundation, Montreal, 1947.

they would not engage in or support Korea's independence movement²⁷. The Japanese government, however, gave another direction, declaring, in 1911, that all schools should keep the education ordinance which did not allow Christian teaching. Fortunately, Sungil and Speer were relatively free to operate their courses, since they were accredited schools in 1908. The two schools ran a wide range of courses, including Bible study, English, music, physical education, mathematics, social science and humanities.

In addition to these courses, Talmage gave students professional vocational training in the afternoon. From 3 p.m. to dark time, he insisted that students combined various vocational education and practice, including digging, carrying luggage, farming, carpentry, broiling, ironing, building clothes, and weaving. There were two reasons why Talmage gave his students vocational training. First, students with a Confucian-based education were reluctant to participate in labor works, thinking that this kind of jobs should be done by servants. Such students were basically shunning labor. Second, poor Korean students could not find a way to stand on their own feet if they came to mission school and were expected to be educated under the auspices of the missionaries. Therefore, it reminded them of the preciousness of labor and economic independence, and further helped the finance of the mission station to some extent. Talmage said that the effect of this curriculum had both direct and indirect effects on Korea's independence: "(A) factor in preparation for (Korea) independence has been the widespread advance in education. This has been really astonishing. There were no women who knew how to read when I went to Gwangju, but now education for girls is nearly as widespread as for boys. It has been not only literary education, but one in all branches of industry, agriculture, and science"²⁸.

In fact, through such education, Sungil and Speer staged a campaign for independence movement on March 10, 1919, and the school was temporarily closed. Some students at Sungil School stayed up all night making the national flag at the home of English teacher Nam Gung-hyuk, while others printed the Declaration of Independence in the school basement. Thousands of Korean flags and the Declaration of Independence were kept in straw bags before students gathered at 3 p.m. on March 10, 1919 at Sungil School Stadium and marched through downtown Gwangju with hails as they took out the Korean flags and the

²⁷ S. Kim, *A study on missionaries during the Japanese occupation*, Center for History of Korea Christianity Studies, Seoul, 2006.

²⁸ J.V.N. Talmage, *A prisoner of Christ Jesus in Korea*, Presbyterian Historical Foundation, Montreat, 1947.

Declaration of Independence and distributed them to all citizens who gathered there. Kim Yang-soon, a 17-year-old student at Speer School, bravely stood up to a Japanese military police officer who used a bayonet: “Shoot. . . Surprised police officer has been mesmerized for some time”²⁹. The police officers in Gwangju arrested the teachers and students of Sungil and Speer and took them to court. Teachers Choi Byung-jun and Kim Kang-eun served three years in prison, while students Song Kwang-jun and twenty-six others were put into prison. Song was transferred to a Daegu prison where he died after having been tortured. Sungil School was constantly monitored by the Japanese as an agitator of Korean independence movement. In 1931, Japan abolished the middle school courses of Sungil and only allowed the average elementary school curriculum.

We have not found any historical data that Talmage led the March 1919 Independence Movement. In addition, his fellow missionaries protested to the Japanese colonial government that the movement had taken place secretly and had no connection with them. Did Talmage have no idea of this independence movement? When he was the principal of Sungil School, he worked with teachers like Nam Gung-hyuk, Kim Kang and Choi Byung-jun. These teachers instilled in their student’s national consciousness. In particular, Choi Byung-jun, an avid patriot, argued that since Christ broke down the hierarchy and sacrificed himself for the freedom and happiness of all mankind, students should also overcome any obstacles to their country’s independence³⁰. Under these circumstances, Talmage must have known at least that teachers and students at Sungil School were constantly praying and striving for Korea’s independence. He did not participate in the independence protest under the guidelines of the US government and the Gwangju Mission Station, but, deep in his mind, he seemed to have supported the movement.

Another special area that Talmage contributed through education was the promotion of physical exercise. After Talmage took office as the principal of Sungil School, one surprising thing had spread out to schools in Gwangju. It was an event that transformed Gwangju into a cradle of sports. Talmage distributed football, baseball, tennis and basketball to Sungil School³¹. The school’s baseball team attracted both Japanese and Koreans in Gwangju, creating a baseball club in a Japanese-run school as well, causing a baseball boom. At that time, it was awkward at the

²⁹ Y.R. An, *Cheulla Do is home town*, Kum-Ran, Seoul, 1998.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 1998.

³¹ *Ibidem*, 1998.

playground of Sungil School, where students exchanged large leather gloves and hit the ball with a long bat, but since they were having fun, this was the beginning of the baseball movement in Gwangju. In particular, the Gwangju First High School baseball team was born in this atmosphere to represent the Korean baseball community. World-class baseball players such as Sun Dong-yol grew up in this atmosphere. Obviously, it was Talmage's heart-felt desire that healthy and physically fit Koreans would regain independence.

Dreams and vision of reform through the lepers

Talmage served the local churches and a hospital of leprosy based in the Bongseon county, Gwangju, since 1915. The medical missionary who inspired the start of the leper treatment in Korea was Wiley H. Forsythe³². He was working as a medical missionary in Mokpo. When his fellow missionary was urgently reported to be dying, he was on his way to Gwangju to save him. When he came near Gwangju, he found a female leper screaming and crying. Forsythe allowed the patient to enter an unused brick kiln near the Jejung Hospital (JH) run by Gwangju Presbyterian medical missionary team. He provided care and treatment until she died peacefully. Robert M. Wilson (1880-1963), the director of the JH, also began treating patients with leprosy. As the number of lepers increased, Wilson built a special hospital for the lepers in the Bongseon county to accommodate approximately 200 men and 150 women. At the time, leprosy patients were abandoned by their parents, family, and even relatives as social outcasts. Talmage served these leprosy patients for more than a decade³³.

Dr. Wilson moved to Yecheon, South Korea's southernmost region, to build a new leper village and a hospital called Aeyangwon, as the leper hospital in Gwangju ran out of room to accommodate more patients³⁴. Talmage and Wilson were responsible for the construction of this village. They were under tremendous financial strain in the process. Support from the Gwangju Mission Station and donations arrived from all over the world, but the donations were insufficient. Therefore, the two trained the leper patients so that they could finance themselves: "Our

³² J.K. Chung, "Christian heritage research in Yanglim area and its usefulness", in *The Second Study Symposium of Korean Christian Culture Studies*, Seoul, Center for Korean Christian Culture Studies, 2016, p. 45-47.

³³ J.V.N. Talmage, *A prisoner for Christ*, Pietas Publishing House, Seoul, 2003.

³⁴ J. Cha, *Son Yang-won*, KIATS Press, Seoul, 2008.

mission had no funds for the leper colony but gladly furnished the workers. ... Dr. Wilson was always short of funds, for his big heart could not resist taking in more lepers. In order that management expenses might be reduced to the minimum, Dr. Wilson (and I) taught the lepers to do almost everything needed with the plant. The nurses, the farmers, the carpenters, the masons, the school teachers, the tailors, the porters were all lepers. All this was possible only because of the Christian leadership in the colony and because of the large measure of self-government within the colony”³⁵.

The above passage, written by Talmage, explains very well the operating system of the leper hospital. First, Aeyangwon had excellent leaders: Dr. Wilson and pastor Talmage. Wilson was a committed Christian before he became a doctor. He showed his patients mercy, not theory or theology: He gave his full attention to every single leper to be healed. Talmage too, treated lepers with kindness and compassion. The above passage illustrates how much Talmage respected Korean lepers. He truly loved them, demonstrating the spiritual nature of true and genuine humanity or a new being. Talmage expressed his admiration on seeing the Korean lepers: “This Christian colony achieved world-wide distinction for efficiency. In my dealings with the lepers in the colony, I have been amazed at the high standard of brotherhood, honesty, diligence, truthfulness, and decency. It was hard to believe they had been non-Christians!”³⁶.

Second, Talmage was very faithful, honest, and organized in managing the finances of the hospital. Nine-tenths of all expenses were spent on the welfare of lepers. The managers of the hospital used only a small tenth of the money to prevent fraudulent or private forms of money from misappropriation. Second, there was voluntary training of patients. Patients were able to choose their jobs and make the most of them according to their talents. In this way, each felt rewarded and proud of his/her work.

Third, it was the birth of a wonderful community. In order to become a nice and healthy community, each person in that community should not be self-assertive. Understanding and caring the other person’s situation sometimes took place, losing some valuable things such as money or time. Yet, any person in the community needed to pay more attention to the overall benefits of the community than to his or her own.

³⁵ J.V.N. Talmage, *A prisoner of Christ Jesus in Korea*, Presbyterian Historical Foundation, Montreat, 1947.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, 1947.

Only then it could co-exist with the coalition. Talmage saw this closely, so he could pride himself on leading this Christian colony towards acquiring world-wide distinction for efficiency.

To sum up, Talmage and Wilson trained leper patients, who, in human terms, had fallen horribly and had nothing but despair, made them realize their human dignity and value. They were able to lead happy lives every day with new dreams and visions. They received various vocational training to show that the leper village was financially self-sufficient. They showed the world how they lived independently without begging for help. In Talmage's eyes, even lepers could achieve independent life with admirable human dignity. Then a healthy Korean could bear more abundant fruits if they were adequately trained and worked hard. It is needless to say that Korea's independence from Japan would be enshrined among the fruits, Talmage reasoned.

Talmage's struggles against the Japanese colonial government

When both the Presbyterian General Assembly and each Presbytery in Korea succumbed to Japanese religious policies, the Presbyterian missionaries including Talmage left their Presbytery, saying that they had nothing to do with the Presbyterian Church in Korea. Japan began to closely monitor these missionaries and forced all students of mission schools to visit the designated shrines to accomplish their civilian duty. The Presbyterian missionaries decided to close their mission schools in order to keep their faith. Sungil and Speer voluntarily closed their schools. Talmage also closed Sundam Bible School and Kwangdeok Elementary School. Shortly afterwards, Japan issued a deportation order for all missionaries to leave Korea. The US government and home denominations also strongly instructed missionaries to withdraw from Korea. Talmage had been the head of the Missionary Foundation for the Southern Presbyterian Church in Korea since 1925 and did not leave Korea until it became clear that its property was protected. The Japanese colonial government had plans to confiscate the property of all the Southern Presbyterian Mission Stations. What was the size of the property managed by Talmage? And why did Japan harass Talmage? Tamazar explained it as follows: "All these (mission property) add up to the total of 373 buildings, but it must be remembered that. ... the total value of the buildings... came to Yen 2.165.568 or... \$649.670.40. As for the land, we owned sites for various buildings. ... It was worth... \$311.995.33. ... Thus

the grand total for land buildings and interior equipment exceeded \$1,000,000. One can see immediately why we all could not leave Korea³⁷.

Japan demanded the transfer of property rights in the form of Talmage's voluntary donation without violating international law. Talmage refused, and Japanese police took him into custody as a US spy. One day, a powerful police chief accompanied his men and visited Talmage in a police cell and gave him two documents, demanding him to sign the contract:

- 1) All mission property in South Zenra Province should be leased for the duration of the war.
- 2) The lessee should be responsible for minor repairs, but major repairs to be made upon consultation.
- 3) Lessee should have power to make annual contracts with tenants.
- 4) In case of disagreement, lessee's opinion to be final.
- 5) Two copies of contract to be made, one for each party³⁸.

Here, the contract was a horse lease, but it was actually a free donation not different from an unequal contract, and the other document was an application to the Governor-General for allowing Talmage to sign the above contract. It was a shamelessly threatening document. Realizing that the Japanese planned to take over the mission property, Talmage replied that he could not sign the documents without the approval of the Missionary Society because the ministry's property belonged to it, not to him. Japanese officials said that the board members of the Mission Station had already returned to the United States and that persuading only one executive and full-fledged member of the Society would be sufficient for the contract to enter into force. However, they were perplexed by Talmage's refusal and asked how they could get approval from the Missionary Society.

Talmage said he would sign it if all of the currently male and female missionaries in Gwangju, who had not returned to the US, agreed. At the time, Miss. Florence E. Root (1893-1995), the principal of the Speer Girl's School, and Mary Lucy Dodson (1881-1972), the principal of the Neel Bible School, remained in Gwangju, just like the Talmage couple. The remaining female missionaries had never discussed the Gwangju ministry's assets in advance. However, Talmage believed the missionaries would behave wisely. The Japanese officials asked if the remaining missionaries in Gwangju were women and had such rights, and Talmage explained that

³⁷ J.V.N. Talmage, *A prisoner for Christ*, Pietas Publishing House, Seoul, 2003.

³⁸ J.V.N. Talmage, *A prisoner of Christ Jesus in Korea*, Presbyterian Historical Foundation, Montreal, 1947.

women had equal voting rights with men in the missionary enterprise, because Americans were democratic. Instantly orders were issued to bring in female missionaries, and Root, Dodson, and Talmage's wife came. Japanese officials explained the contents of the contract and asked for Root's opinion. She immediately answered that: "I could not release any property because the Japanese could fit Shinto shrine on it"³⁹. When Dodson and Talmage's wife also said the same, Japanese officials angrily tried to persuade them until midnight, but they did not succeed. Eventually, the Japanese plan was failed, and Talmage was forced back to jail by angry police.

Then how was Talmage's espionage charge made? The first reason was his gun possession. The pistol belonged to the Missionary Leroy Tate Newland, but as he entered the United States, he left it to Talmage for fear of its getting into the wrong hands. The Japanese government allowed missionaries to own reported guns for hunting, but Japanese police insisted that the problem was a serious criminal act, because the handgun found was not a pistol reported by Talmage, but a pistol from Newland. The second ground for charge of espionage was Talmage's listening to the radio. Talmage did not trust the news from Japan's regular broadcasts, so he often listened to the English-American broadcasts from China's Shanghai. Police said the possession of a radio receiver was a grave crime. The third reason for espionage was Talmage's possession of a map. Talmage measured and mapped the leprosy village in the Aeyangwon as historical data of missionary work. Around 1920, Talmage made a big map showing the locations of local churches in the Honam region as well as hospitals and schools run by the missionaries. These maps served as a reason to suspect that he was a spy. Talmage's charges were intended to be used as a way to confiscate the assets of the Presbyterian Mission Stations, but were thwarted by the cooperation of Talmage and his wise missionary colleagues. In 1942, the Governor-General of Korea deported Talmage to the US in exchange for prisoners; Root and Dawson were also forced to leave the country in the same year.

Talmage had a deeper and more accurate understanding of Japanese imperialism than any other missionary in Korea. He was as familiar with the Korean history and tradition as Hulbert, a Methodist missionary. Both looked into Korea's long history and excellence in cultural creativity and resistance to foreign aggression. Therefore, both strongly argued that these facts were clear reasons for Korea to rise as an independent nation.

³⁹ J.V.N. Talmage, *A prisoner of Christ Jesus in Korea*, Presbyterian Historical Foundation, Montreat, 1947.

Talmage, however, followed most of the mission guidance from the US government and the Presbyterian Mission Station. When Hulbert spoke and acted freely in accordance with his beliefs, Talmage always acted with the fellow workers in the community of the Gwangju Mission Station. It is difficult to find any evidence or records that Talmage took part in the militant protest campaign for Korean independence. With this in mind, one can say that he shared most of the missionaries' views on Japan at the time when they were taking non-political or neutral position, but this assessment can hardly be proven with certainty.

While helping various local churches where he served, Talmage gave them dreams and visions for the future of Korea. Instead of violent resistance for Korean independence, he called for growing strength in anticipation of the times. He and his Korean co-workers protested peacefully against Japan's forced Emperor worship. This led to the imprisonment of many of his students. The local church leaders he served did not fight directly against the Japanese colonial government, but struggled for Korea's independence by providing military funds to the independence fighters. Talmage approved of the use of force if necessary. However, this affirmation was not officially declared and reflected in real politics. He supported the orderly use of force like John Calvin, the father of Reformed Theology. This orderly protest required able generals or leaders to guide the opposition forces in their resistance to the evil government.

Talmage saw no such generals around him or well-trained soldiers. So he had to wait until the right time came. Until then, he wanted to prepare by raising future leaders through proper education and training. He thought that his mission as a missionary was to foster future leaders who would first reform society, not engage in an unplanned and impulsive independence movement. In other words, Korea would have an opportunity to become independent only when it nurtured people with abundant spirituality through local churches and professional schools. That was why he taught not only Bible lessons, but also general courses in English, music, and various other professional subjects. He trained his students to work and study at the same time, thereby developing the spirit of economic independence.

He encouraged young people to enhance their healthy minds and heart together with healthy bodies. In this way, he dreamed of Korea's regaining its independence in the future. He even trained the leper patients to maintain orderly life through vocational training. He had firm beliefs that trained Christians would necessarily do great things for future Korean

independence. If we evaluate his life and ministry as a whole, it is safe to conclude that Talmage was not one of those who maintained political neutrality or apathy at that time. Talmage had the same political ideas as Hulbert and emphasized in his desire for Korean independence. However, his way to achieve this goal was different from that of Hulbert.