

## Is Dirt Sin? Or Is Sin Dirt? The Germ Theory of Disease and the Early Formation of Concept of Sin in Korea

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### Abstract

The germ theory of disease that had been developed in Europe was not only a theory for clinical treatment including antiseptic surgery but also an etiology for public health including vaccination and public hygiene. Furthermore, it was not confined to a medical setting, and expanded to cultural realms in many ways for the benefit of both. In particular, it began to collaborate with Christian concepts in America to promote a new idea for public health. As a result, it has influenced some religious concepts such as filth, sin, and repentance. This paper illustrates the way in which the collaboration between medical and religious concepts in America impacted the Protestant mission field in 19th century Korea. I will argue that in the process of introducing new Christian ideas to Korean people, the ontological aspect of sin was emphasized and simultaneously the sin became to be conceptualized as a material being that could be washed away by some rituals.

**Keywords:** *Germ Theory of Disease, sin, repentance, mission medicine, hymnal*

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Received : April 14, 2020,    Revised : May 08, 2020,    Accepted : May 25, 2020

# 더러움은 죄인가? 혹은 죄는 더러운가?

:세균병인론과 한국에서의 기독교적 죄 개념의 성립

김신권

## 국문 요약

유럽에서 발전한 세균설은 무균수술과 같은 임상적 치료를 위한 이론이었을 뿐 아니라 백신과 일반 위생과 같은 공중 보건의 영역을 위한 병인론이었다. 더욱이, 세균병인론은 의학적인 영역에만 머무르지 않고 문화적인 영역으로 확대되어 세균설과 문화 모두에게 이로운 방식으로 발전하였다. 특히, 이 이론은 미국에서 공중보건의 새로운 장을 열기 위해서 기독교적인 개념들과 협력하게 되었는데, 그 결과로 더러움, 죄, 회개와 같은 종교적인 개념에 영향을 주기도 하였다. 이 논문은 19세기 미국에서 만들어진 이러한 협력의 결과가 한국의 개신교 선교에 어떤 영향을 미쳤는지 논의할 것인데, 한국인들에게 개신교의 개념들을 소개하는 과정에서 죄에 대한 존재론적 이해가 강조되어, 죄란 것이 어떠한 의례들을 통해서 씻을 수 있는 것이라는 개념으로 정착되었다는 점을 주장하게 될 것이다.

**키워드:** 세균병인론, 죄, 회개, 선교의학, 찬송가

## I. Introduction

When I was a child, I experienced the weekly event of going to the public bath with my mother or father almost every Saturday. There were some unique rituals related to that event. That is, my mother tightly seized my limbs and severely scrubbed my dirt or "stains" which is "Tae" in Korean language and can be hardly translated into English as a same meaning. "Tae" is the slight and delicate surface of the skin; most Western people do not peel away this layer, only Koreans. After my weekly scrubbing, all of my body used to become red. I had to endure this very painful process because I thought it was a kind of purifying process from the secular dirt for it happened every Saturday in preparation for the Lord's Day. I thought that I had to stand the pain because I considered scrubbing "Tae" was not a different thing from washing away my sins. It is an impressive memory not only for me but also for most Korean people who went to the public bath with their parents and scrubbed away their "Tae." According to a Korean scholar, it was a process of carving modernization onto their body. (Ko 2001, 130-1)

Every Sunday, most of Korean preachers deliver their sermon to urge people to repent with that expression, "wash away" your sin. In Korean language, sin and "Tae" have exact same usage, so you can replace two words each other. These words, sin and "Tae" represents marks of modernization: religion and hygiene. With the expression, "wash" or "clean," these two traditions meet and permeate each other.

For Martin Luther, sin is not an existence which we are able to wash away or clean. I supposed that the ontological understanding about sin started with the sanitary movement of the Western countries in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was propelled by the germ theory in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It crossed the Pacific Ocean and arrived in Korea in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through the American Missionaries. Most American Missionaries were educated during the revolutionary movement of hygiene and some of them were actually medical doctors. They felt the urgent task of mission in forming new Christianity in Korea: Christianization and civilization. During the process of transmission, two concepts crossed each other and were somewhat confused, and the ritual of hygiene and penitence were settled. In this study through the analysis of hymns and articles of the early missionaries to Korea, I will try to illustrate this point.

## II. Sanitary Movement and Germ Theory

Through the 18<sup>th</sup> century and well into the 19<sup>th</sup>, American standard, practices, and ideals about cleanliness were, in a word, pre-modern. From that on, the notion of hygiene was developed in two ways: pathologically and culturally ways. The former was to prevent contagious disease and the latter was to cultivate a life style for the upper class (Hoy 1995, 5).

During the period from the 1820s to the 1860s, in accordance with the expansion of the cities, the risks of contagion and the needs of prevention against disease increased more and more. On the other hand, Americans were beginning to grasp and accept the notion that to be clean meant to be respectable, publicly responsible, and healthy. By the 1850s they were also coming to see that cleanliness would be maintained in the family through the agency of the "true woman" and maintained in the community through public boards staffed by men who were leading citizens in a virtuous republic (Hoy 1995, 5).

Up to the 1880s, many contagious diseases had broken out in America including tuberculosis, typhoid, smallpox, summer diarrhea, and cholera. By the mid-1880s, many common diseases that we now know to be communicable were thought to be constitutional in

origin, that is, the result of poor heredity complicated by unhealthy living habits. For example, the disease we now recognize as tuberculosis was endemic during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century (Tomes 1998, 4). People knew that some diseases could be "catching" but they did not know the scientific reasons associated with that, and not did they know how certain diseases could be contagious. Before the mid-1880s, the fact that germs were the main reasons related to contagiousness was unknown. Instead of the germ theory, there was a general hypothesis about contagiousness, miasma theory. The fact that many diseases spread without any known contact with the ill led many physicians to suspect a more generalized, atmospheric source of infection. This suspicion was often referred to as the "miasma" theory (Tomes 1998, 3). Because of the "miasma theory" around the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the sanitarian movement was born. Dr. Jacob Bigelow of Boston said that the sanitary crusade was "one of the greatest reforms that this country has ever entered upon installing a national obsession with contamination and, alternatively, with sanitation" (Prothero 2001, 46).

It was germ theory that reinforced the sanitary movement of America in the 1880s. That is, by the 1870s miasma theory was beginning to be challenged by a new hypothesis, which posited that infectious disease were carried not by miasma but by microorganisms, or "germs"(Tomes 1998, 49). The idea that living organisms had a role in causing disease had a long and venerable history dating back to classical times, but as of the mid-1880s, what was sometimes referred to as the "animacular hypothesis" was distinctly unpopular among medical men (Tomes 1998, 5).

The germ theory was organized by the laboratorial experiment of the German physician, Robert Koch and the French chemist, Louis Pasteur. By the early 1880s, Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch had proven that specific germs caused specific diseases. In Paris, Pasteur found the *anthrax bacillus*, devised a rabies antitoxin, and began to convince the world of the principle of contagion by germs. In Berlin, in 1882, Koch isolated the tuberculosis bacillus and found *V. Cholerae* in victims, in drinking water, and in food while studying the cholera epidemic in Cairo. This opened a new era in medicine and public health (Karlen 1995, 138-39). The experimental results related to these diseases were not accepted easily among their contemporaries. Thus, from 1865 to 1895 Western medicine underwent a virtual civil war over the truth of the germ theory. After a significant controversy, advocates of the germ theory triumphed: by the 1890s, medical students were being educated to reserve the germ theory as scientific orthodoxy and to regard Pasteur and Koch as heroes (Tomes 1998, 28).

People who wanted to pursue the modern way of life were encouraged by the reasonable and scientific theory of germs. They promoted public movements to change the culture, society and daily life of America on the foundation of the new theory. They tried to modify individuals and collective behavior. As a result of the movement, during the 1880s and 1890s, avoiding germs had been primarily the obsession of prosperous urban families. In the early 1900s, however, reformers sought to bring hygienic enlightenment to all Americans, in order to emancipate the whole society from the fear of infectious disease (Tomes 1998, 9.) Germ theory thus widely influenced many public hygiene movements including municipal and state health departments, life insurance companies, women's clubs, settlement houses, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, YMCAs and YWCAs, labor unions, and agricultural extension programs, especially the anti-tuberculosis movement and the domestic science movement.

### III. “Whited Sepulcher” (Matt 23:27)

Amid this burgeoning awareness, the advocates of germ theory became deeply connected with religion. They were called as “apostles of germ” and borrowed religious metaphors from the Bible to convince ordinary Americans that they coexisted with an invisible world of microorganisms. Because germs could not be seen, smelled, or touched, they were couched in religious as well as scientific terms. Equating God's law with natural law, hygiene reformers called on all citizens to embrace a sanitary gospel of redemptive cleanliness (Tomes 1998, 52). The pioneer home economist, Ellen Richards, described even humble chores such as dish washing and sweeping as “a fine action, a sort of religion, a step in the conquering of evil, for dirt is sin” (Tomes 1998, 181). Some physicians had used the “seed and soil” metaphor, drawn from the New Testament parable of the sower, to describe how the interplay between one's individual constitution and an external disease agent determined one's susceptibility to disease (Tomes 1998, 42). These religious metaphors played very important roles in spreading the gospel of germs.

Among these, the most dramatic term from the Bible was “whited sepulcher,” which conjured the image of a whitewashed tomb that disguised the decaying bodies inside, appeared righteous, but actually were propelled as being riddled with sin. This slogan invoked very deep cultural meanings that resonated with the dire warnings about house disease, especially to the body-conscious and house-proud generation of Americans. That was a very strong slogan for public health experts and lay hygiene reformers to emphasize domestic-disease prevention from germs in the late 1800s. Over the course of the nineteenth century, a meticulous attention to personal and domestic cleanliness had become an important marker of high-class standing.

The parable of the “whited sepulcher” caused serious obsessions and anxiety in Americans. Because it meant that even neat and tidy appearance of house could not guarantee the health of family members, especially housewives had to bear the heavy burden of cleaning their houses by themselves. “On this head, fastidiousness cannot be carried too far. Cleanliness is the outward sign of inward purity” (Tomes 1998, 62). In order to prove their purity they could not relieve themselves of the tension of cleaning. On the contrary, they suffered two kinds of problems; by dint of great effort and a horde of servants, individuals and households sought the appearance of cleanliness. Further, the antiseptic cleanliness was a goal which could never be achieved because the human body was a potent source of pollution including their bodies. To sum up, two factors had bothered housewives in sanitary practices. One was the deceptiveness of appearance and the other was the ubiquity of filth. Thus, for Victorian women, the new theory of germs brought both a new sense of power and a heavy burden of guilt.

### IV “Washing Away” Our Sin

According to Sigmund Freud, it is easy to see where the resemblances lie between neurotic ceremonials and the sacred acts of religious ritual: This is, they exist in the qualms of conscience brought on by their neglect, in their complete isolation from all other actions (shown in the prohibition against interruption) and in the conscientiousness with which they are carried out in every detail (Freud 1981, 119). Neurotic obsession and religious ritual evolved from unconscious guilt as well as anxiety. Generally speaking, if someone knows that neglecting something can cause severe punishment, he/she likely is to become extremely

anxious. To prevent himself/herself from that calamity and sense of guilt he/she is most apt to develop a kind of ritual.

The guilt of obsessional neurotics finds its counterpart in the protestations of pious people who know, in their hearts that they are miserable sinners; and the pious observances (such as prayers, invocations, etc.,) with which such people preface every daily act, and especially every unusual undertaking, seem to have the value of defensive or protective measures (Freud 1981, 124). At the bottom of this sense of guilt, lies the repression of instinct, which can create special consciousness which is directed against the instinct's aim. In doing so, the process of repression can generate *anxiety*, which can gain control over one's future in forms of *expectant anxiety*.

Following the 19<sup>th</sup> century sanitary movement of many Western countries, the concept of sin and the notion about "germs" or "stains" were mingled. Because of this germ theory, people developed obsessive anxiety toward disease caused by germs and microbes. The message which was beneath the surface was that "If you eradicate all germs, you can be healthy, but, if not, you are to suffer serious disease and perhaps to die." It had made people become anxious about their health and to become obsessive about removing all germs.

Apostles of germ theory used religious analogies to convince society of the existence of invisible germs and draw the biblical term, "dirt is sin" to stimulate the sense of guilt among Americans so as to promote successful propaganda related to the movement. Moreover, the entrepreneurs of the germs advertised extensively through mass media to cause anxiety among the public for the purpose of gathering profits. We can find the agitative phrases in the advertisement of the "Germicide Company" in 1893. Doctor Doremus, one of the health experts of that era, commented "As I know and feel most keenly in the recent loss of a beloved member of my family (a reference to his young son's recent death from typhoid fever) to stop vile gases and disease-breeding germs from entering the home, I heartily recommend the rental of a Germicide" (Tomes 1998, 81). The entrepreneurs cleverly connected trivial carelessness with disaster. The commercial utilization of germ theory increased anxiety among the public.

In the field of religion, the anxiety emerged as the pious recognition that disease was a scourge of Heaven and a result of germs simultaneously. To avoid the scourge of God, people had to do something concerning sanitary practices in each of the fields of body and soul in pursuing sterilization. The standard of aseptic cleanness was developed in the surgical room in the late 1880s. In fact, Koch's insight gave birth to *Asepsis*. Instead of the neutralization of germs, already in the operating room, surgeons sought to exclude them through careful rituals of cleansing and sterilization. Among medical groups, the "surgical cleanliness" came to be a kind of ritual as the standard of cleanness. And the search for asepsis fostered a powerful awareness of how the touch conveyed infections not only between people, but also between people and things. Those ideas writ large came to dominate the practice of what was often called "surgical cleanliness" in everyday life. (Tomes 1998, 104)

But significant difficulties also existed. The public wanted to reach the level of sterilization. However, on the contrary, as I mentioned, "surgical cleanliness" and "Asepsis" could not be realized continuously in the daily life of ordinary people. Instead of *Asepsis*, they produced many kinds of sanitary rituals such as cleaning, bath, face washing, and teeth brushing. Eventually, the fear of germs and contagious disease had caused sanitary rituals

which could prevent anxiety. They were results of obsession for cleanliness to prevent disaster with applying medical standards to daily life. For that reason, the formation of bath and washing started to be settled.

According to Ricoeur, the ablution is never a simple washing; ablution is already a partial and fictive act. It is because the ablution is already a symbolic washing that the suppression it signifies can be effected by a diversity of equivalent acts which mutually symbolize one another, while at the same time, together, they symbolize the same, essentially unitary action (Ricoeur 1967, 35). The daily bath thus became a kind of ritual to wash away "stains" and to fulfill psychological deficiency for surgical sterilization which could not be achieved in everyday life.

Defilement is to stain or spot what lustration is to washing. Defilement is not a stain, but like a stain; it is a symbolic stain. Hence, defilement, insofar as it is the "object" of this ritual suppression, is itself a symbol of evil. Thus, it is the symbolism of the rites of suppression that reveals in practice the implicit symbolism contained in the representation of infection (Ricoeur 1967, 35-6). Therefore, we can wash away our defilement or our sin by washing away our stains with the ritual of the daily bath.

<p>Germs - Impossible Sterilization - Anxiety about Contagious Disease - Alternative: Daily Bath or Cleaning (continuously and repeatedly)</p> <p>Sin - Impossible Perfect Guiltlessness - Anxiety about scourge - Alternative: Daily or Weekly Penance (continuously and repeatedly)</p>
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### **Figure 1. The Germ-Sin Connection**

As Figure 1 shows, there are structural similarities between the anxiety about germs and those focusing on sin, between the contagious disease and scourge, and between the ritual of the daily bath and that of penance.

Another common characteristic between repentance and cleaning is that of the continuously repeating ritual. According to Freud, the process of repression which leads to obsessional neurosis must be considered as one which is only partly successful and which increasingly threatens to fail. It may thus be compared to an unending conflict; fresh psychical efforts are continually required to counterbalance the forward pressure of the instinct (Freud 1981, 124).

In a sense, "religious sin" is also the paradoxical existence which cannot be washed away at once, concurrently, cannot be totally indelible, because it can continuously bring about tension and anxiety. Moreover, the term, "germ" or "stain" in a sanitary movement can precisely correspond to this concept. The repression of instinct is the inevitable process in the religious practice. As a consequence, it gives rise to a new form of religious activity, namely acts of penance, which have their counterpart in obsessional neurosis. One of the typical religious rituals is the believers' repeating penance continuously in thinking that they are unforgivable sinners. Ordinary pious individuals perform a ceremonial ritual repeatedly, without recognizing themselves with the accompanying significance as in a sanitary ritual.

## V. Transplanting Hygiene to Korea

The first impressions of the American missionaries on the sanitary environment of Korean in the late 1880s were described as filthy, unclean, dirty, and poor without exception. They might have regarded the higher standard of hygiene of the Western countries as proof of the superiority of the Far-Eastern country, Korea, because they thought the sanitary standard was a clear yardstick of modernity.

As to the sanitary arrangements of the Korean house, the less said the better. These people have not learned the first rudiments of hygiene, and so long as there is a ditch that will carry off the water that falls from the sky, all requirements seem to be met. The scavenger comes around at any time of day to take away the night soil, and you are more than likely to pass him and his load as you enter the gentleman's compound. To the Westerner this insensibility of the Korean, and of all the dwellers of the Far East without exception, is entirely unaccountable. You will find the most horribly offensive condition as readily among the residences of the wealthy and powerful as among the poor (Hulbert 1909, 247).

In particular, Lillias Underwood, the wife of the first Presbyterian missionary for Korea, was a medical doctor who referred to the sanitary situation of Korea in her book many times.

We saw narrow, filthy street, flanked by low mud houses, either thatched with straw, or tiled.... It is needless to say that everything in connection with these houses is fearfully unsanitary, and many of them are filthy and full of vermin. All sewage flows out into the unspeakable ditches on either side of the street. Of late year's efforts have been made to alter this state of things, better streets have been laid, and the open sewers, which have existed for many years, are sluiced out by the summer rains, which are the salvation of the city (L. Underwood 1904, 4-5).

She paid attention to two points: domestic hygiene and the public sewage system which were big issues of the American sanitary movement. She was astonished by the primitive level of sanitary consciousness, because she had grown up in the sanitary age of America and had become a doctor.

She further describes the actual sanitary condition of an inn which she visited in their missionary travels.

The mat which are placed over the oiled paper, or more likely directly on the earth floor, are full of dust and vermin of all descriptions, which run riot everywhere. It is best not to begin to think how many people have, in that room and lying on these identical mats, been ill, and died, of dysentery, smallpox, cholera or typhus fever, since the room was even swept or the mats once shaken. A "really truly" cleaning they are ignorant of. Fumigation and disinfection are as far beyond the flights of their wildest imagination as the private life of the man in the moon. The miracle over which we never cease to wonder and admire is that so many people of clean antecedents who travel through the interior are able to resist the microbes, bacteria, germs and all similar enemies under whatsoever name which, according to all modern science, ought to attack and destroy them in short order (L. Underwood 1904, 40-1).

In her report, she mentions "fumigation" and "disinfection" and seems proud of them. At the same time, she shows a sense of superiority toward people who do not know the scientific method of disinfection. The sanitary culture of which she speaks is a mark of her source of pride. We can find that she uses the terms like microbe, bacteria, and germ and their fatal function to attack people causing death. A convert to the gospel of germs, she clearly points to microbes as the source of contagious disease.

Similarly, her husband the Reverend Horace Underwood, who had studied medical science for a short time and worked for *Jejungwon*, the government hospital as an assistant, reported on Korean attitudes toward epidemic disease.

In addition to the regular list of disease as found in foreign lands many others such as Asiatic cholera at intervals and typhus fever almost annually carries off their thousand. When cholera arrives its victims reach the tens of thousands per month. A lack of knowledge of all sanitary laws adds to the mortality in other disease, and smallpox and tuberculosis carry off more than their share. It is true that the birth-rate is very high, but the mortality is equally so, especially among children... There is absolutely no attempt to isolate contagious disease (H. Underwood 1908, 19).

The Reverend Underwood definitely knew that germs were the source of epidemic and also was aware of the need of quarantines. In his book, he also discussed the significant role of the medical mission to improve the hygiene of Korea.

One of the remarkable contributions of the medical missionaries was the introduction of vaccination, which antedated but then converged with germ theory. Before the arrival of the missionaries, smallpox was the scourge of the country, and it was impossible to find anyone who had not suffered from the disease, or a family that had not lost several victims. According to the Reverend Underwood, "Today, vaccination has been introduced into nearly every village, and, a thing previously unknown, many have reached maturity without having suffered from this malignant disease" (H. Underwood 1908, 102).

Due to the introduction of germ theory and vaccination, they could prevent the spreading of most contagious disease. In the great epidemic of cholera, marvelous cures resulted. The untiring devotion of the missionaries and their native assistants, together with the prompt and timely aid rendered by the inspection corps stationed in specified districts which were a quick aid to the injured, and which often succeeded in stamping out its first beginnings, and very materially prevented its spread, were remarked upon throughout the whole land and claimed attention from high and low, rich and poor (H. Underwood 1908, 103).

The early medical missionaries in Korea thought that activities of preventing disease and preaching gospel could not be separated. Lillias Underwood left a remarkable report concerning the close relation between disease and scourge.

Eight years before, in 1887, the plague swept through the land (Korea), and thousands fell. Christians, both missionaries and natives, united in prayers that God would stay the scourge. Physicians pronounced it contrary to the laws of nature that it should stop before frost came to kill the bacilli, but, in wonderful justification of faith, the ravaged of the plague were abruptly checked in the midst of the terrible heat of the last days of August and the first of September (L. Underwood 1904, 134-5).

For her, there were indissoluble connection between the plague and the scourge as well as germ and sin.

The core links between missionary work and hygiene can be summarized as follows:

1. Most of early missionaries for Korea were educated in the age of sanitary revolution and were consequently astonished by the poor sanitary situations of Korea.

2. They were influenced by germ theory, or at least had heard about it.

3. The standards of hygiene were considered as a criterion of modernization. Therefore, they tried to implant sanitary science to their new mission location.

4. They taught immunity to Koreans and achieved success in preventing contagious diseases.

5. However, they realized that extermination of disease could not be possible without broader and greater improvements of the sanitary situation.

6. In addition, some of them considered the plague as the scourge.

## **VI. Understanding the Concept of Sin through Korean Hymns**

Korean churches had used one hymnal from 1983 until 2006, *TongIl ChansongGa*, the Korean Standard Hymnal, which was constituted by Korean Hymnal Society without regional or denominational exception. There are twenty hymns at the section of redemption and ten hymns at the section of sanctification in this hymnal. In these hymns we can find several expressions related to "washing" and "cleanliness" (Tables 1 and 2).

In terms of terminology, it is no exaggeration to say that concept of sin in Korean Christianity was formed by the influence of 19th century American Christianity. Sin was embodied as an existence, which could be washed away and cleaned, from an ontological perspective by the lyricist of the hymns. The implicit message of these poems was that "you can wash away your sins and cleanse your soul if you come to Christ with his blood."

In the hymns we can note:

1. Sin is something washable.
2. Sin is able to be detached and removed from our body or soul.
3. We can be clean if sin is detached and removed from our being.
4. We have to die in so far as we carry our sin.
5. Therefore, we have to continuously remove our sins.

The most interesting point is that:

6. The references to sin correspond to those of germ or stain.

**Table 1. Redemption in the Korean Standard Hymnal**

Number	Year	Lyricist	Expressions	Original Title
No 182	1878		cleansing from sin keep me clean	
No 183	1884			
No 184	1876	R. Lowry	wash away my sin	Nothing but the blood of Jesus
No 185	1859			
No 186	1872		cleanse me	
No 187	1871			
No 188	1776 England	A. M. Toplady	wash me	Rock of Ages
No 189	1888			
No 190	1771 England	W. Cowper	guilty stains wash all my sins away	Cleansing fountain
No 191	1868			
No 192	1855		cleanse my heart	
No 193	1878		cleansing power	
No 194	1989			
No 195	1880s		cleanse my sin wash me	
No 196	unknown	Korean		Though I speak with the tongue
No 197	1865	E. M. Hall	crimson stain wash my garment He washed it	All to Christ I owe.
No 198	early 20C		wash away each stain	
No 199	mid 19C			
No 200	late 19C		cleansing wave	

			cleansing stream	
No 201	1874	P.P. Bliss		Hallelujah, 'tis Done!
No 202	1899		Come for a cleansing Sin stains	

**Table 2. Sanctification in the Korean Standard Hymnal**

Number	Year	Lyricist	Expressions	Original Title
No 210	early 20C			
No 211	1919			
No 212	1882			
No 213	early 20C		cleansing	
No 214	late 18C			
No 215	1872	J. Nicholson	wash me	Whiter than Snow
No 216	1849			
No 217	1902		wash me	
No 218	mid 20C			
No 219	1975			

## VII. An Analysis of the Preface of *ChanYangGa* (Hymnal, 1894)

H.G. Underwood, one of the first missionaries to Korea, translated many English hymns into Korean and published the first hymnal with the melody in 1878, which became a foundation of the Christian narrative in Korea. In the short preface, he uses "sin" or "sinner" almost ten times. This frequent use shows us that he selected the starting points of introducing Christianity as stimulating a sense of guilty.

There is no country without morality on the earth and no people who do not worship a god, too in Korea. However, there are no people who abide by the moral law perfectly and have no **sin**. If you worship god with your **sin**, you are to be scared and afraid of punishment. If a **sinner** who is coming to a King is terrified, how much more so should we, **sinner**s, be! (H. Underwood 1894, 1).

In order to invoke guilt among the Korean people, Underwood tried to explain moral law and conscience which they already had. He reminded them of their anxiety about their soul

following guilt. He manipulated an analogy of a sovereign and a miserable sinner to elucidate the concept of "*Coram Deo*," people who stand in front of God. He considered anxiety in relation to sin, that is, if anyone has sin, he/she could not help fearing, vice versa, if anyone dreads to stand in front of God, he/she must have sin.

Even though we come to the Lord with praise and song, we should not think light of our **sin**. We have to think of our **sin** as a serious problem as we can and have to recognize ourselves as grievous sinners, so we cannot come in front of Jehovah (H. Underwood 1894, 1).

Praise is not an answer to problem of sin, for it is terribly consequential. The sinner has no choice except mourning. He utilizes even hymns as tools for inciting guilt. Jehovah is described as a frightening being that is to judge and punish sinners.

The true God, Jehovah took pity on **sinner**s who worship gods in vein, are blind with avarice, are lascivious, commit murder, lie and always **sin** before God. God wanted to save **sinner**s from their **sin**, so God gave us God's only son. On behalf of **sinner**s, God made only son to be punished to die and to resurrect from the dead. Even a serious **sinner** can be an adopted son/daughter, if he/she believes God (H. Underwood 1894, 1).

Underwood delivers the implicit message "You are going to die a sinner, even if you didn't know that." That implies that the infusion of the Christian concept of sin is a most difficult matter, particularly for Korean Christians, who had previously lacked the Christian concept of sin. But we can find a kind of dilemma in there, for he indicates sins not as a distorted relationship with God, but sins generated by breaking the moral law. He speaks about "washing away sin" and "cleansing stains." It is very similar to the main strategy of the advertisement in the Anti-TB movement. In propagating the Anti-TB movement, the advocates frequently combined moralistic appeals with more direct, fear-based warnings about the consequences of carelessness (Tomes 1998, 119).

### VIII. **Blending Two Concepts: Religion and Hygiene**

For Rev. Underwood, the "washing away" of sin was a most important matter. He thought that if Koreans did not cleanse themselves of their sin, they would die as a natural consequence. He wanted to teach Koreans to recognize the seriousness of sin and to present a solution for their sins. It caused him to place a strong emphasis on guilt and sin which could create severe anxiety in the Koreans. However, it remained a momentous problem that sins were invisible and intangible. He taught that even if sin was not seen, it was washable. "So, you can scrub your soul and body with the blood of Jesus." Korean Christians were perplexed and anxious because they did not know how to clean their body and soul in the new way suggested by the missionaries. For preventing disaster, as a disease or a scourge, they had to learn new techniques of cleanliness and self-examination in the form of ritual.

On this point of significance was not the matter of whether the sin was truly washable or not but rather, it was significant that clergy demanded to have wash sins away. If the authority taught people to scrub something because it was extremely dangerous but that it was impossible to see or to remove, people had no choice but to make a symbolic ritual and repeat it. The more people repeated the cleaning ritual, the stronger they depended on the authority which taught them the ritual. According to Foucault, it is a most important technique for

pastoral power to make a relationship between the pastor and the sheep in which the sheep exhibit complete dependence and absolute obedience. Religious pastors use the tools of self-examination and guiding conscience to control their sheep and to perpetuate their power (Foucault 1981, 225-6). The first manifestations of pastoral power in Korean Christianity started in the same way.

For the early Korean Christians, Christianity was not merely a new religion but a representative of modernization. Christians had to be exposed to unfamiliar concepts such as a biblical God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, sin, redemption, salvation, and so on. The accommodation of new narratives was another stage in the manufacture and cultivation of Korean Christianity. During this process, some parts were mingled with the concept of modernization, especially in the field of hygiene.

From the early stages, Korean mission was achieved by two routes: one was that of direct mission, including the establishment of churches, the construction of church buildings, and gospel preaching; the other was that of indirect mission, including the establishment of hospitals and schools in the process of the modernization of Korea. For most of early missionaries for Korea were educated in the age of the sanitary movement and influenced by high standards of hygiene. Consequently, they regarded cleanliness as a criterion of modernity. They did not consider that religious purity and physical cleanliness were different things. They were shocked by the miserable hygiene environment of Korea and tried to improve the situation with their scientific knowledge of hygiene and with medical services. They provided the notion that cleanliness was an emblem of the modern, if you cleaned yourself, you could be one of the chosen people of modernity. They tried to classify modern and pre-modern people according to a standard of hygiene in order to encourage people to be clean and to be Christian. Connecting individual cleanliness with religion, served a double purpose. Unexpectedly, it happened that disparate two targets were mingled in the process of transmission. Under the proposition of modernization, the matter of hygiene and the matter of sin were not separated. And they were accepted by the newly Christianized Koreans in 19th century as that of the full meaning of civilization.

### **IX. Wash Away Your Sin as Like Your Stain!**

According to Foucault, a distinctive feature of 19th century was raising concern of power about life. In the 19th century, the right on life belonged to the only one, sovereignty.

Nor is it the right to allow people to live or to leave them to die. It is the right to take life or to live. And this obviously introduces a startling asymmetry.

And I think that one of the greatest transformations political right underwent in the nineteenth century was precisely that, I wouldn't say exactly that sovereignty's old right-to take life or let live-was replaced, but it came to be complemented by a new right which does not erase the old right but which does penetrate it, permeate it. This is the right or rather precisely the opposite right. It is the power to "make" live and "let" die. The right of sovereignty was the right to take life or let live. And then this new right is established: the right to make live and to let die. (Foucault 2003, 144-5).

The method of hygiene to remove germs is exemplary way to “faire” anyone live, on the contrary, the dirt is a way to “laisser” anyone die. We can find the similar power in the field of religion and medicine in the 19th century. People in that era became known so-called ubiquity of germ and fatal contagious disease, which it could cause. With showing new scientific techniques of hygiene, medical power gained its priority over other narratives. The medical power was developed out of peoples' anxiety about disease causing death and maintained by the perpetual dependence of people on its methods of hygiene. The main content of propaganda regarding medical power was related to whether individuals wash themselves or not and maintain ongoing cleanliness. There was no completion to this process.

In religion, the "eternal inferno" following the "ubiquity of sin" has been one of the most effective ways of constituting the spiritual and political power of the church. In terms of Christianity, the medieval structures of power were changed by the religious reformations in the 16th century. The Pope could excommunicate anyone putting him/her to die in social and physical meaning, and that was the most effective skill to control his people. But, religious reformations in 16th century changed the power structure in place at that time. The newly-risen protestant pastoral power provided the faithful with salvation of their soul thorough “right” doctrine of the redemption. That was a new system to control lay people. The prerequisite for operating a new salvation program was peoples' anxiety which came from "ubiquity of sin" and "eternal Judgment." People had to depend on the ritual, repentance, which was learned by pastors in order to prevent anxiety. In so far as people are concerned about their afterlife, pastoral power could maintain its perpetual power.

For the early Korean Christians and Korean people, the hospital and the church were not considered as separate organizations. Those were footholds of modernization and sources of civilization. Most missionaries were medical doctors as well. The people who had hymns which emphasized "washing and cleansing sin", could not have room to think that "washing away sin" and "washing stains" were disparate concepts.

Foucault notes that, in the alleviation of physical misery, it would be close to the old spiritual vocation of the Church, of which it would be a sort of lay carbon copy. To the army of priests watching over the salvation of souls would correspond to that of the doctors who concerned themselves with the health of bodies. (Foucault 1973, 32-3)

Most of Koreans usually scrub their dirt at the public bath almost every week. Scrubbing has been a typical and somewhat obsessive ritual of cleanliness to carve modernity into the body of people in Korea. In the same way, most Koreans go to church every Sunday to “wash away their sins” with penitence. Christianity, which was introduced by the possessors of the sanitary movement and germ theory, came to be a Christianity of continuously "washing away sin."

## X. Conclusion

The sanitary movement and germ theory have changed the daily life and society of Americans since the 1880s to a large extent. Particularly, the "gospel of germs" was influenced by religion and vice versa. The apostles of germs draw metaphors from the Bible in order to spread their theory: in the parable of seed and soil, germs or dirt represent sin, and "white sepulcher" etc. The commercialization of the germ theory promoted widespread the public concern about contagious diseases, and anxiety about disease causing death let people create rituals of hygiene including washing, cleaning, teeth brushing, and bathing. Just as people

made sanitary rituals for preventing fatal disease, they applied the concept of "washing" to religious sin. Because there were structural similarities between washing dirt and washing sin, the two concepts intermingled and permeated each other.

Through the missionaries, that hybrid of religion and hygiene came to Korea. Most of the early missionaries were also doctors who were shocked by the poor hygienic conditions of Korea. Because they tried to achieve two goals, Christianization and Civilization at once, sometimes the two goals were intertwined with each other.

One of the first Presbyterian missionaries, the Reverend Underwood, stimulated the guilt of Koreans as a first step in making them Christians. In order to form Christian concept, he translated English hymns into the Korean language and preached the need for repentance. From the perspective of Koreans, Christianity and medicine, together, were considered as one topic or subject: modernization. Because the hospitals and churches were functioned as power organizations in that era, Korean people did not reject it but rather, accepted it without criticism. They were told to repeat the washing away of their sins and washing their dirt continuously. The ontological understanding about sin became a distinctive characteristic of Korean Christianity, and through this process, pastoral power took root in the Korean Church.

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