



# The Historical and Cultural Value of Anseong Catholic Church, South Korea, in the Local Community

Myengsoo SEO, Young Jae KIM, and Jin Hong PARK

## Abstract

*This study is an attempt to rethink from a social and cultural point of view the historical and cultural importance of Anseong Catholic Church, South Korea, in the local community. Anseong Catholic Church was established in 1901 when Father Antoine Gombert (1875–1950) arrived in Anseong and officially began his missionary work. Anseong Catholic Church has played an important role in local society by working with the residents of Anseong during tumultuous periods, including the opening of ports, the Japanese occupation, and the modern periods. For more than a century, Anseong Catholic Church has served as the parish center of the Anseong and Pyeongtaek Catholic Churches while helping Catholicism become established in Anseong. This study reexamines the value and historical significance of Anseong Catholic Church, from four perspectives: religion, education, social work, and the March First Movement. Specifically, the study examines first, the value of Anseong Catholic Church in introducing Catholicism to southern Gyeonggi-do province; second, the historical value of Anseong Catholic Church in laying the foundation for modern education in Anseong; third, the value of Anseong Catholic Church as the center of social and charity work in Anseong; and fourth, the role of the Anseong Catholic Church in germinating democracy after the March First Movement during the Japanese occupation.*

**Keywords:** Anseong Catholic Church, religion, education, social work

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

### *Research Overview*

Although the Western powers' advance into Joseon Korea began in the 18th century, it was the 19th century that saw Western influence in Korea rush in at full force. Seohak 西學 (Catholicism) began to take root in Joseon after being introduced to the country via Qing China during the reigns of Joseon's King Jeongjo 正祖 (1752–1800, r. 1776–1800) and King Sunjo 純祖 (1790–1834, r. 1800–1834). In the Confucian society of Joseon, traditional forces endeavored to halt the spread of Catholicism through persecutions, such as the killing of Jeong Yakjong 丁若鍾 (1760–1801). Nonetheless, the Vatican established the Diocese of Joseon in 1831, and French missionaries first entered Korea during the reign of King Heonjong 憲宗 (1827–1849, r. 1834–1849). In response to these developments, a series of events occurred, including the Gihae gyonan 己亥教難 (the anti-Catholic persecution of 1839), and the martyrdom of Fr. Kim Daegeon 金大建 (1821–1846), the first Korean Catholic priest. However, despite such considerable persecution, Catholicism continued to spread in Joseon, beginning with the Myeongnyebang Community (Myeongnyebang gongdongche 明禮坊 共同體),<sup>2</sup> established in Myeongdong 明洞, a district of the Joseon capital, at the end of the 18th century (Lim 2011, 61). After the persecutions stopped early in the 20th century, several Catholic churches throughout the country were built as communities for the faithful.

In the modern era, the establishment of a Catholic church in a

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1. A portion of this article is adopted and modified from an earlier publication by Seo (2021a).

2. This was a community of faithful dating back to the early days of the Korean Catholic Church and which gathered regularly at the home of Kim “Thomas” Beomu 金範禹 (1751–1787) located in Myeongnyebang in the Nambu 南部 area of Hanseong 漢城 (present-day Seoul). In 1785, the Myeongnyebang Community was disbanded, and 113 years later, in 1898, Myeongdong Cathedral was built on the same spot where the community formerly met (‘Myeongnyebang gongdongche,’ *Hanguk minjok munhwa daebaekhwa sajeon* [Encyclopedia of Korean Culture], <http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Item/E0069925> [accessed October 30, 2023]).

community signaled not only the spread of Catholicism in the region but also the introduction there of Western culture and life. In other words, Catholicism affected many traditions that were deeply rooted in the Confucian culture of the conservative Joseon dynasty. Moreover, through the church much knowledge concerning modern Western culture spread to the local community, giving the cathedral a key role in the development of the area.

### *Research Aims and Methodology*

This study examines the value and historical significance of the Anseong Catholic Church, which played an important role not only as a religious space over the past century, but also for the local community of Anseong, Gyeonggi-do province, specifically in the four areas of religion, education, social work, and the March First Movement. First, focusing on the religious perspective, this study rethinks the historical value of Anseong Catholic Church as a place of strategic importance in the introduction of Catholicism to southern Gyeonggi-do. This examination includes a discussion of Father Antoine Gombert (Gong Anguk 孔安國, 1875–1950), who played a major role in the early years of Anseong Catholic Church. Second, this study examines the historical significance of Anseong Catholic Church in laying the foundation for modern education in Anseong. In particular, it offers a detailed assessment of the role of Anbeop School (currently, Anbeop High School) in the initiation of early-20th-century education and women's education in Korea. Third, this study analyzes the value of Anseong Catholic Church as the center of social work and relief programs in Anseong. For over a century, the Anseong Catholic Church has played a role in the social and economic growth of Anseong through various charity work in the local community, and this study sheds light on the value of the church in this respect. Fourth, this study examines the role of the Anseong Catholic Church during the Japanese colonial period as democratic initiatives unraveled in the wake of the March First Independence Movement. This study traces the historical processes in which the Anseong Catholic Church, with Father Gombert at its center, facilitated the formation of nationalism in

the region and in planting the seeds of the democracy that later developed from the 1960s. This study reassesses the role that a church building in the modern period played and the value it provided, noting how it went beyond being just a site for a community of faith.

In terms of methodologies, this study employs a literature review, field surveys, and interviews.<sup>3</sup> To trace historical developments, this study examines such primary sources as Father Gombert's letters (found in the Bishop Mutel papers), and the journals of Bishop Gustave-Charles-Marie Mutel,<sup>4</sup> who was head of the Vicariate Apostolic of Joseon (Joseon daemokgu) from 1890 to 1933. Accounts in period newspapers (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, *Dong-A Ilbo*) are also consulted. In addition, photographic materials and related documents from Anseong Catholic Church Centennial Anniversary Memorial Hall are reviewed.

### **The Significance of Anseong Catholic Church as a Place of Strategic Importance in the Introduction of Catholicism to Southern Gyeonggi-do Province**

Regarding Catholicism in Anseong, the Mirinae Parish<sup>5</sup> was established in 1896 following the Gabo Reform (Gabo gaehyeok 甲午改革, 1894), which allowed for a larger foreign presence in Korea, and Anseong Parish was established in 1901. The parishes of Mirinae and Anseong evolved while playing central roles in introducing Catholicism to Anseong and its surrounding areas (Yongin-gun to the north, Pyeongtaek-gun to the west, and Cheonan-gun in Chungcheongnam-do and Jincheon-gun in Chungcheongbuk-do to the south) (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). Anseong, Pyeongtaek, and Jincheon, which were initially part of the two parishes, were eventually

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3. In addition to General Chairman Jongkwon Park, a few Catholic faithful from Anseong Catholic Church were interviewed between January 2020 and August 2020.

4. Bishop Mutel maintained a journal every day from the time he was appointed as head of the Joseon Archdiocese until his death in 1933.

5. Mirinae Parish was established in Misan-ri, Yangseong-myeon, Anseong-si in 1896, distinct from Gatdeungi Parish.



**Figure 1.** Location of Anseong Catholic Church

Source: Work of Youngji Kim (Hankyong National University).

transferred to Suwon, Cheongju, and Daejeon Dioceses, respectively (Anseong Catholic Church 2000, 140).

The 19th century saw seven decades of anti-Catholic persecution in Korea. In Anseong, the Gospel began to spread before and after the Byeongin Persecution (Byeongin bakhae 丙寅迫害), a large-scale suppression of Catholics by the Heungseon Daewongun 興宣大院君 (1821–1898, regent 1864–1873) in 1866. At the time, Catholic villages had formed in Anseong, Juksan, and Mirinae in southern Gyeonggi-do province, and many believers were martyred (S Architects and Associates 2016, 9).





**Figure 2.** Current Anseong Catholic Church, 2022

*Source:* Authors' photograph.

Nevertheless, Catholics continued to form Catholic villages, and the Paul Secondary Station in Miyang-myeon, Anseong, the Galjeonni Secondary Station, and the Seonbawi Secondary Station were established after 1870 based on Catholic villages. In the 1890s, Catholicism expanded further, and around 1900, 20 secondary stations were established under the management of Gongseri Parish in Asan, Chungcheongnam-do province, from which Anseong Catholic Church was eventually separated. In Gyeonggi-do province, Anseong Catholic Church was the fourth parish church to be established, following Gatdeungi Parish (1888), Jemulpo Parish (1889), and Mirinae Parish (1896).

Until the 1890s, there was no church or even a single known Catholic within twenty kilometers of Anseong-eup. Then, in 1895, Father Emile Pierre Devise (1871–1933), who was appointed to the Gongseri Parish,



**Figure 3.** Father Antoine Gombert, founder of Anseong Catholic Church

*Source:* Anseong Catholic Church Centennial Anniversary Memorial Hall, Anseong.

raised US\$500 with Catholics in Anseong to prepare a site for a church and rectory in Anseong-eup (Anseong munhwawon 2011). On September 10, 1900, Father Devise asked the bishop to send a priest to Anseong, and through his efforts, Father Antoine Gombert (1875–1950), the first chief priest in Anseong, arrived in October 1900 (Fig. 3).

Father Antoine Gombert was born on April 27, 1875, in Camboulazet, France (Paik 2009, 40). On August 1, 1900, Father Gombert departed Paris, France, as a missionary of the Paris Foreign Missions Society (Missions étrangères de Paris), arriving in Seoul on October 9. At that time, Bishop Mutel of the Paris Foreign Missions Society, then serving as head of the Vicariate Apostolic of Joseon, was on a pastoral visit to a Catholic church in Gando. Father Villemot (U Ilmo 禹一模), whom Gombert met at the bishop's residence, sent Father Gombert to Anseong-eup (Anseong Catholic Church 2000, 225–226). After being sent to Anseong-eup on October 19, 1900, Father Gombert immediately undertook to learn Korean and local customs to better fulfill his role as missionary. At first, he could not officiate a confession for Korean believers since he did not understand the language.

The following are some general characteristics of the Korean Catholic Church in the early 20th century. In 1784, Lee Seung-hun 李承薰 (1756–1801) was baptized with the name of Peter by a French Catholic priest at South Church (Nantang 南堂) in Beijing. This marked the beginning of Korean Catholic Church history, in which foreign priests played a vital role. The Korean Catholic Church was managed by the Paris Foreign Missions Society until it became an independent church as decided by the Vatican. The fathers of the Paris Foreign Missions Society had a difficult time in conducting missionary work in Korea. The early years of the Catholic Church in Korea saw the Byeongin bakhae, or persecution of 1866, which was the most severe trial in the history of the Catholic Church in Korea. Prior to the tragedy of 1866, the Korean Catholic Church had enjoyed a peaceful period of nearly twenty years with no significant persecution. With the ascension of King Gojong 高宗 (1852–1919, r. 1864–1907) and the regency of his father, Heungseon Daewongun, during the king's minority, history took a new turn. At first, the regent Heungseon Daewongun attempted to use the power of the Catholic Church to hold back Russia. As time passed, however, he decided that the Catholic Church posed a threat to his political life. In 1866, he proclaimed a decree of persecution against the Catholics, and for the following six years proceeded with the largest and most severe religious persecution in the history of the Catholic Church in Korea. The Ganghwa-do Japan-Korea Treaty of 1875, and the subsequent US-Korea Treaty of 1882, proved a turning point in the introduction of Western religions to Korea. The freedom of Westerners to preach freely throughout the Joseon kingdom was confirmed by the Jobul suho tongsang joyak 朝佛修好通商條約 (France-Korea Treaty of 1886). In the early 20th century, the Christian value system influenced not only the religious life of Joseon society but also the general aspect of people's social and cultural activities (Myeongdong Catholic Cathedral 1984, 19–22). Such activities included educational initiatives, publishing, media, cultural activities, and social welfare projects. This historical background was closely related to the foundation of the Anseong Catholic Church and affected the entire Catholic Church on the Korean Peninsula (Choi 1980, 235; Noh 1988, 189–195).

The thirty-two years Father Gombert spent as a priest at Anseong



Catholic Church (1900–1932) were turbulent ones. During this period, Joseon Korea fell victim to Japanese imperialism, Korean Righteous Armies (Uibyeong) rose up to fight the Japanese colonizers, and the March First Independent Movement took place. During this same time, Gombert helped develop the local community in Anseong by working with its residents as an agricultural engineer and social worker. A foreigner in Korea, he spent his life in that country conducting various activities as a missionary and educator for Koreans.

At the time Father Gombert arrived at Anseong, there were few believers, and for six years he lived with one catechist and two servers or acolytes (*sikboks* 食服事) (Anseong Catholic Church 2000, 332). The following table gives the number of Catholic faithful in the Anseong Catholic Church between 1901 and 1910:

**Table 1.** Anseong Catholic Church, Number of Catholic Believers (1901–1910)

Year	1901–1902	1902–1903	1903–1904	1905–1909	1909–1910
Anseong-eup No. of believers	17	25	28	N/A	71

Source: Research Society of Suwon Catholic History (2019); as cited in Lee (2021, 37).

Established in 1901, Anseong Catholic Church had jurisdiction over Anseong, Pyeongtaek, Paengseong-eup, Jincheon, and Cheonan in Chungcheong-do province. At first, Anseong Catholic Church faced difficulties since it was established without any local faithful (Compilation Committee of Fifty Years of Suwon Catholic Church 2017, 273). In 1900, a Catholic church was established in Anseong-eup for preaching in the city, though most believers were associating with local churches in Anseong and Pyeongtaek on the border of Cheonan and Jincheon, including Geumgwang-myeon, Miyang-myeon, Seoun-myeon, and Paengseong-eup (Compilation Committee of Fifty Years of Suwon Catholic Church 2017, 277). According to the 1909–1910 statistics of the Catholic Church, of the 11

churches of Anseong and Pyeongtaek, the only one in the northern part of Anseong-eup was that in Gaena-ri (Jincheon-ri, Samjuk-myeon), founded in 1909. The total number of believers in Anseong-eup and Gaena-ri Church in 1909 was as small as 145, only 21 percent of the 684 Catholic faithful in Anseong and Pyeongtaek (Compilation Committee of Fifty Years of Suwon Catholic Church 2017, 277). According to the 1936–1937 statistics of the Catholic Church, Daedeok-myeon, Bogae-myeon, Samjuk-myeon, and Yangseong-myeon in the northern part of Anseong-eup each had one church (Compilation Committee of Fifty Years of Suwon Catholic Church 2017, 277). In the southern part of Anseong-eup, churches were located in Geumgwang-myeon (two churches) and Miyang-myeon (three churches). The number of Catholics in the northern part of Anseong was 539, and in the southern part, including Geumgwang-myeon and Miyang-myeon, was 578, which shows the growth of Catholic influence in Anseong-eup and northern Anseong (Compilation Committee of Fifty Years of Suwon Catholic Church 2017, 278). Established in the center of the city where there were very few believers, Anseong Catholic Church grew during the Japanese occupation period owing to the efforts of Father Gombert, who practiced pastoral ministry for more than 30 years.

When Father Gombert arrived in Anseong, its community of faithful was not in a healthy condition. Following his arrival, Father Gombert purchased the house and land of the Baek family, whose head had served as governor of Tongjin 通津, and used this house as a church (Paik 2009, 40). Father Gombert purchased the current church site in 1900, converted 21 tiled houses on the site into an eight-room church, held a celebration of its completion, and obtained a permit to establish the parish (S Architects and Associates 2016, 9). A photograph of the early Anseong Catholic Church taken on October 4, 1922, shows that the appearance of the church was quite different at that time (Fig. 4). The present Anseong Catholic Church is located in Gupo-ri, Anseong-gun. It was originally named Anseong Catholic Church, but its name was changed to Gupodong Catholic Church in 1970 to avoid confusion with other churches in Anseong. It regained its original name of Anseong Catholic Church on January 1, 2000, and has served as the parish center for Catholic churches in Anseong and Pyeongtaek for over a



**Figure 4.** A photo of what is presumed to be Anseong Catholic Church, October 4, 1922

*Source:* Anseong Catholic Church (2000, 121).

hundred years.

With the establishment of the Catholic Church in Anseong in the early 20th century under Father Gombert's leadership, the foundation had been laid for Catholics to carry out missionary activities in full force in the southern part of Gyeonggi-do province, and even in Chungcheong-do province. And through this work, Western culture was spread throughout the conservative Anseong area, which provided Anseong residents with new opportunities to embrace the social, cultural, and economic modernity of the West. At the same time, the closed social culture of pre-modern Korean society began to open up. All this to indicate that in Anseong at the beginning of the 20th century the seeds of change from a pre-modern to a modern society were germinating.

## Anseong Catholic Church as the Cornerstone of Modern Education

The activities of Western Christian forces in Joseon in the early years of the 20th century can be classified into three main categories: religious, medical, and educational. In terms of religion, missionary activities and their associated educational work were primary. Christian missionaries built and worked in various educational institutions in Joseon from the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th centuries. For example, the American Protestant missionaries Horace Grant Underwood (1859–1916) and Henry Gerhard Appenzeller (1858–1902) arrived in Korea in 1885, one day apart (Seo 2019, 23–28). Missionaries at that time built Western-style churches and schools while conducting educational projects as part of their missionary work (Lim 2011, 62). In other words, they likely had the secondary goal of modernizing Joseon along Western lines by introducing and implementing modern education based on the Christian spirit. Catholic missionaries as well were as active in educational activities as in missionary work, education work that had social and cultural dimensions.

Many *seohakseo* 西學書 (books on Western learning) in Literary Sinitic translation (*hanyeok* 漢譯) had been introduced to Joseon Korea via China and played an important part in the acceptance and spread of Catholicism during its early years in Joseon. However, until the late Joseon dynasty, most secondary stations had no clergy, and more importantly, *seohakseo* written in Chinese were the only medium for propagating Christianity. However, the commoners of Joseon were too uneducated to fully grasp Catholic doctrine and beliefs. For this reason, during the introduction of Catholicism and the founding of churches in Joseon, it was perhaps inevitable that Catholicism would find most understanding and acceptance among the nobility, who could read Chinese characters. This suggests that, in the early 20th century, overcoming Joseon's deeply rooted class barriers posed a serious challenge to the missionaries (Anseong Catholic Church 2000, 151). In the early 20th century, it was through pioneering missionaries such as Father Gombert that Catholics gained inroads among the common people. At that time, missionaries to Joseon made continuous efforts to approach closer to the common people through educational activities and social work.

The 1932 report of the Vicariate Apostolic of Seoul includes the following statement regarding Anseong Catholic Church:

Anseong Catholic Church continues to prosper. Some years ago, nonbelievers began to show positive responses, to the point of active conversion. Many people, including the young, are learning doctrines, indicating great potential. (Research Foundation of Korean Church History 1987, 271–272)

Another challenge facing Catholic missionary work was that, having faced continual persecution during the early years of Catholicism in Joseon, local Korean Catholics avoided direct, face-to-face contact with clergy or other Catholics as much as possible. In such an environment, it was only through *education* work that missionaries to Joseon in the early 20th century were



**Figure 5.** Mathematics class at Anbeop School in the 1950s

Source: Anbeop Centennial History Compilation Committee (2009, 45).

able to legally encounter believers (Fig. 5).

Modern education in Anseong began in 1902 when the Anseong Private Elementary School (predecessor to Anseong Elementary School and what is today Anbeop High School) was established (Fig. 6). In 1907, the private Haesung School was established by Father Kang Doyoung (1863–1929) in Misari, Yangseong-myeon (Seo 2021b). It taught practical subjects such as Korean, history, arithmetic, and agriculture, as well as Catholic doctrine; however, in 1936, the school was closed because of economic problems and the Japanese suppression of education (Anseong Catholic Church 2000, 152). These modern educational facilities contributed greatly to eradicating illiteracy among Anseong citizens in the early modern era, but the number of educational facilities was still too few. Moreover, after the failure of the uprising by Righteous Armies (Uibyeong) in the wake of Japanese colonization in 1910, interest in school education increased with the spread of the notion of *patriotic enlightenment*, especially among intellectuals. Father Gombert also recognized the need for formal education and planned to spread the Catholic faith in schools.<sup>6</sup> Based on the needs of Anseong residents and support from Vicariate Apostolic, in January 1909, Anbeop Elementary School (Anbeop hakgyo 安法學校), predecessor to the current Anbeop High School) was opened to male students, laying a new foundation for modern education in Anseong (Anseong Catholic Church 2000, 125). The school taught modern disciplines to the general public and represented an opportunity for teaching Catholic doctrine to non-Catholics. From the letters exchanged between Father Gombert and Bishop Mutel in 1909, it is apparent that Bishop Mutel provided financial support for establishing the school. In addition, through these letters one discerns the great effort Father Gombert expended in opening the school by personally coordinating various items in its early days.

The Lord sent me 515 francs, the funds raised, and I [Father Gombert] started looking for teachers as soon as I came down from Seoul in January

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6. Antoine Gombert to Bishop Mutel, papers of Bishop Mutel, Document no. 1907-116, Research Society of Suwon Catholic History (unpublished).



last month, believing that the Lord has made His will clear to me. On the second day since my return from Seoul to Anseong, a young man came to me and applied for a teacher's position. His surname is Tjeong, and he is the son of a prominent scholar living in the town...So, I sent my notice to about 10 church members who promised to send their children upon receiving my notice, and we opened the school around the 20th of December in the lunar calendar (January 11, 1909, in the solar calendar) [emphasis added].<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 6.** The first graduation ceremony of Anseong Elementary School (Anseong Park, April 10, 1923)

Source: Anseong Centennial History Compilation Committee (2009, 240).

7. Antoine Gombert to Bishop Mutel, February 2, 1909, papers of Bishop Mutel, Document no. 1909-50, Research Society of Suwon Catholic History (unpublished).

At first, Father Gombert, who founded Anbeop School, was not deeply interested in education. Though some intellectuals in Anseong believed there was a strong need for education to promote national independence in the chaotic and challenging environment under Japanese colonial rule, Father Gombert was initially not particularly conscious of this issue. However, he did recognize the need for education when he witnessed the humiliation Joseon was subjected to under the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1905 (known as the Eulsa joyak 乙巳條約). More importantly, he witnessed the extensive educational activities of Protestant leaders, which were increasing in other regions, and recognized the possibility and impact of the spread of the Gospel based on these efforts. As a result, he began to contemplate the establishment of a school in 1906 (S Architects and Associates 2016, 9).

Father Gombert stayed in Anseong after 1900 and witnessed the rise and fall of the Korean Righteous Armies and the limitations of armed uprising. He seems to have come to sympathize with Anseong's intellectuals regarding the necessity of education. Intellectuals in Anseong visited Father Gombert and asked him to establish a school and curriculum and provide children with moral education. Recounting the March 1, 1919 Korean independence uprising in a *Dong-A Ilbo* article of 1946, Gombert said:

As thousands of local people shouted “Long live independence!” waving the national flag, others on the western mountain followed them after a while. Leaders of the locality, including the head of the township administrative office, approached me and asked how to resist. In response, I [Gombert] advised them to remain peaceful and to come out that night and hold an orderly demonstration holding oil lamps. I also gave them about 300 oil lamps that I had, wishing them success. That night, they held a magnificent and gentle demonstration, which led to another early the next day. Of course, I was aware of the nature of the Joseon people, but I could not but admire this demonstration. This demonstration was a cry for good reason. The world could not deny a nationality that was more patriotic and earnest than any other [emphasis added].<sup>8</sup>

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8. “Oegugin-i bon samil undong” (March First Movement as Seen by Foreigners), *Dong-A Ilbo*, February 28, 1946, 2.

As can be seen, Father Gombert was deeply touched by the passion of Anseong citizens after coming to Korea in 1900 and made efforts towards the education and future prosperity of Koreans, a dedication that continued even after national liberation.

Father Gombert finally obtained a school permit on January 15, 1909, and opened Anbeop School, which taught the Korean language and history to 25 male students. The school's name, Anbeop 安法, was a portmanteau, a combination of Anseong 安城 and Beopguk 法國 (France). At that time, France was called Beopguk, and Germany was called Deokguk 德國. Therefore, the name Anbeop combined references to Anseong and Father Gombert himself, a citizen of Beopguk (Compilation Committee of Anseong Catholic Church History 1979, 7–9). The school laid the foundation upon which education in Anseong, and the resultant possibility of evangelization, expanded. The school was maintained as Anbeop National School under Japanese colonial rule but was renamed Anbeop Middle School following national liberation in 1945. It continued in operation until February 1985, when it became Anbeop High School. The 36th and final class had 6,577 graduates. Anbeop High School remains open to this day (Anbeop Centennial History Compilation Committee 2009, 138).

Although Father Gombert was initially indifferent to the educational needs of Anseong, around the time Anbeop School was established, he gradually became aware of the need for education in the region as a result of the various challenges faced by its citizens. The correspondence between Father Gombert and Bishop Mutel includes several passages that mention the need for education in Anseong.<sup>9</sup>

Through their education, Anbeop School students actively participated in social movements in the early 20th century. They reportedly joined in the March First Movement for national independence and led a night lantern procession. The *Dong-A Ilbo*, reported that the school played a major role in shaping the national values of Koreans during the period of Japanese rule, as can be seen in the article, “Transcending Religion: Teaching in the Pure

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9. This correspondence between Bishop Mutel and Father Gombert was reconstructed here based on the contents of documents received from Anbeop High School.

Joseon Style.”<sup>10</sup>

Anbeop School continued to develop and eventually became a model in the Anseong community and for the entire Catholic Church in Korea. In 1921, when the Japanese Empire enacted the New Education Ordinance and amended regulations on the establishment and maintenance of schools, an increasing number of Korean schools closed. Nevertheless, church members and intellectuals in Anseong raised funds to keep Anbeop School open. Through these efforts, on April 14, 1922, Anbeop School was finally reorganized as Gonggyo Anbeop School, with five classes and a four-year system (Fig. 7).



**Figure 7.** Anbeop Middle and High School building and its Zelkova tree in the 1950s

Source: Anbeop Centennial History Compilation Committee (2009, 120).

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10. “Jonggyo chowol: Sun joseonsik-euro gareucheo” (Transcending Religion: Teaching in the Pure Joseon Style), *Dong-A Ilbo*, June 19, 1927, 3.

Another important social role of Anbeop School was its contribution to women's empowerment and women's education in the region. When Anbeop School was established on January 15, 1909, Father Gombert was determined to also provide women's education.<sup>11</sup> In a letter to Bishop Mutel, Father Gombert argued for the need for education for women and children.<sup>12</sup> In 1912, the fourth year of the school's existence, a women's department was established with the support of a patron, and Sisters Bae Veronica and Chung Youngsun Alfonso from Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres were brought in (Anseong Catholic Church 2000, 316). The two sisters became pioneers of women's education in Anseong. Thanks to these efforts, a women's class began with eight students in October 1912, and by December, the number of students had increased to 20 (7 believers and 13 non-believers). As Father Gombert related:

The girls' school, which was additionally established this year, is also growing admirably thanks to the dedication of two Korean nuns (members of the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres). The nuns started classes two months ago with eight students, and now they have 20 students. Only seven of them are believers and the rest are non-believer students...I started the girls' school after a patron mother promised to provide grants for the nuns for three years. During this time allotted to me, I have to make sure this school can survive [emphasis added].<sup>13</sup>

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11. "There are still no schools for girls. As there's nothing in the city, I am making preparations. I don't know when it will be completed. I wrote down my ideas in the present state." Antoine Gombert to Bishop Mutel, June 20, 1911, in "Anseong-eseo-ui bogo" (Report from Anseong), provided by Anbeop High School (unpublished).

12. "At this point, we actually launched a campaign with Father Bouillon to help young Christian women learn to read. There will be more and more excellent female Christians in each new generation. I am absolutely willing to accept young children and allow them to develop their skills. Since last fall, I have slightly reduced the number of young children who can receive First Communion. This was to give more attention to those children. I am planning to educate children this way." Antoine Gombert to Bishop Mutel, June 20, 1911, in "Anseong-eseo-ui bogo" (Report from Anseong), provided by Anbeop High School (unpublished).

13. Antoine Gombert to Bishop Mutel, December 19, 1912, papers of Bishop Mutel, Document no. 1912-165, Research Society of Suwon Catholic History (unpublished).

Anbeop School grew gradually. In March 1915, the number of students increased to 30 male students and 25 female students, and its ties with the local community strengthened. Father Gombert's letter to Bishop Mutel reveals that he emphasized the necessity of educating girls as well as boys and stressed the need for women's education, arguing that there was a lack of schools for girls. As there were no girls' schools in Anseong-eup at the time, the establishment of the women's division at Anbeop School was the beginning of modern women's education in Anseong (Anbeop Centennial History Compilation Committee 2009, 116).<sup>14</sup> At that time Father Gombert strongly believed in the importance of women's education, and conducted a campaign with Father Bouillon to help Christian women learn to read.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, in a letter of December 19, 1912, Father Gombert expressed his commitment to do his best for school education and noted that he was particularly interested in educational projects for female students. He also said that one of the nuns at the school had promised to donate her nun's pension for three years and that he would give it to the school for female students.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, in another letter to Bishop Mutel the following year, Father Gombert stated that he was pleased with the fact that Anbeop School had been growing steadily since the establishment of the women's division in 1912, and that the number of female students was increasing.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, education for women was related to the demands of the Anseong community, where the perception that boys and girls needed to be educated began to take root. In addition, Father Gombert's strong will to fill the need for women's schools to educate believers led to the foundation and continued development of the Anbeop Women's School. The progressive

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14. Since women's education was intended to train teachers and to teach Catholic doctrine, Father Bouillon of Gamgok Parish and Father Gombert opened their respective girls' schools in the same year.

15. Antoine Gombert to Bishop Mutel, June 20, 1911, in "Anseong-eseo-ui bogo" (Report from Anseong), provided by Anbeop High School (unpublished).

16. "I will do everything for the children in my school from January 1st to December 31st." Antoine Gombert to Bishop Mutel, December 19, 1912, papers of Bishop Mutel, Document no. 1912-165, Research Society of Suwon Catholic History (unpublished).

17. Antoine Gombert to Bishop Mutel, November 3, 1913, in "Anseong-eseo-ui bogo" (Report from Anseong), provided by Anbeop High School (unpublished).



attitude of Gombert, who emphasized out of a fundamentalist spirit the need for women's equality in education, was in sharp contrast to the discrimination that many Protestant women experienced (So 2019). Father Gombert was trying to change the prevalent oppression and discrimination of Korean society at the time.

It is possible that Father Gombert, who made such committed efforts for women's education, desired to bring about a new beginning in Joseon society. Under the influence of Confucian ideology, during the Joseon dynasty women's social status had gradually deteriorated, weakening their role in the male-dominated society. Arguably, Father Gombert's emphasis on the education of women in the social atmosphere during a time of strict gender segregation made Anbeop School a pioneer establishment in women's education.

Since its founding, Anbeop School has served as a place of higher education in Anseong. Anseong citizens recognized the school not as a Christian school established by Catholics so much as a school that took root in Anseong, and they strove to ensure the school's continued growth.<sup>18</sup> As a Catholic priest, Father Gombert's motivation for supporting Anbeop School was his interest in spreading Catholicism through education. His reasons for establishing not only the boys' school but also the girls' school were closely related to the spread of Catholicism and the education of believers.

### **Anseong Catholic Church as a Center for Social and Relief Work in Anseong**

During the Japanese occupation of Korea, and especially in the 1920s, rural communities and Catholics suffered from economic deprivation and confusion in values. Most Catholic believers were farmers, and in many

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18. "Gonggyo anbeop hakgyo-ui hoesyosing" (News from the Gonggyo Anbeop School), *Kyunghyang Magazine* 17.4 (April 1923): 185–186. The *Kyunghyang Magazine* article also noted that when Anbeop School was in crisis, it managed to survive through the efforts and donations of school staff, local residents, and parents.

cases, they made a living through slash-and-burn agriculture or the manufacture of pottery in the mountains. Japan's economic policies, especially its forest policy and tobacco monopoly policy, brought about the economic downfall of believers engaged in slash-and-burn agriculture and encouraged a growing trend among farmers to migrate to cities. This in turn led to a decline in Catholicism in Korea, and the Anseong Parish, which had many peasant believers, also faced a crisis. Under such conditions, Father Gombert tried to rescue impoverished peasants, including believers, through direct assistance. At the same time, he inspired believers' faith and displayed leadership to young people who were experiencing confusion in their values (Lee 2021, 54). This is clearly reflected in a letter from Father Gombert to Bishop Mutel in 1928:

It became impossible to begin this year-end report with a declaration of victory. All I can say is, I barely managed to maintain the status quo... Now the believers can no longer endure this wretchedness, this poverty. They want to escape it, they also want to live, and they want to accumulate wealth and enjoy riches and honors. Poor believers are leaving the mountain villages and moving to the towns...I believe that the only way to draw non-believers' interest in Catholicism is to rely on social work... In order to resist the current trend like a rising tide, I have tried to protect the faith of believers by strongly encouraging the Eucharist devotions, Holy Communion, and Eucharistic adorations. We have not been able to make big strides, but we tried not to be set back [emphasis added].<sup>19</sup>

Father Gombert, who witnessed the hardships of life in Anseong, tried to organize activities that actually benefited the local community, such as an innovative woodworking school. Although these efforts did not produce tangible results until the late 1920s, they managed to turn a small profit and received positive reviews from non-believers and applicable institutions as well as believers. To the people in the local community who had a critical

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19. Antoine Gombert, April 14, 1928, in "Anseong bondang-ui 1928nyeon yeonmal bogoseo 1" (1928 Year-End Report of Anseong Catholic Church 1), papers of Bishop Mutel, Anseong Catholic Church (unpublished).

view of early Catholicism, various relief activities provided an opportunity to form more positive evaluations.

In addition, from about 1920 the daily *Dong-A Ilbo* became interested in Father Gombert's poverty-relief projects and the operation of Anbeop School and introduced these topics to its readers. According to one article titled, "Good Deeds of Frenchman Father Gombert," Father Gombert was praised by the Anseong community for his public and philanthropic work, such as distributing grain to those in most need during the famines of 1919 and 1920 (Fig. 8):

Father Gombert also conducted various projects for the public good and charity, and people around Anseong highly praised him. Particularly this year, he sympathized with poor people who were struggling due to the bad harvest last year...Furthermore, he lent bountiful rice without interest to poor church farm tenants. People spared no praise for such a benign and charitable foreigner.<sup>20</sup>

The *Dong-A Ilbo* also reported on the 15th anniversary ceremony for Anbeop School held in 1924. And on June 19, 1927, an article titled,

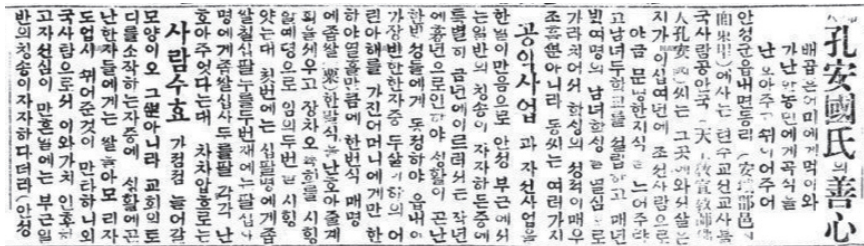


Figure 8. *Dong-A Ilbo* article, "Good Deeds of Frenchman Father Gombert"

Source: *Dong-A Ilbo*, June 26, 1920.

20. "Burin Gong Anguk ssi-ui seonsim" (Good deeds of the Frenchman Father Gombert), *Dong-A Ilbo*, June 26, 1920, 3.



**Figure 9.** *Dong-A Ilbo* article, “Transcending Religion: Teaching in the Pure Joseon Style”

Source: *Dong-A Ilbo*, June 19, 1927.

“Transcending Religion: Teaching in the Pure Joseon Style,” recognized Father Gombert’s achievements in education and gave him an award as part of the meritorious selection project conducted to commemorate the completion of the *Dong-A Ilbo* headquarters (Fig. 9). This publicized Father Gombert’s work and achievements throughout Korean society. Notably, the article relates how at Anbeop School Gombert did not teach Catholicism-related subjects and approached Koran society from more than merely a religious perspective:

Gombert (53, Gong Anguk) was born in Camboulazet, Aveyron, France. Twenty years ago, he came to Joseon to preach and established Anbeop School 19 years ago. Despite the financial challenges, we hear that he continued to bear the schooling expenses and taught no religious subjects but those common in Joseon, unlike other religious schools [emphasis added].<sup>21</sup>

21. “Jonggyo chowol: Sun joseonsik-euro gareucheo” (Transcending Religion: Teaching in the Pure Joseon Style), *Dong-A Ilbo*, June 19, 1927, 3.



**Figure 10.** Symbolic grapevines at Anseong Catholic Church in 2021

*Source:* Authors' photograph.

Furthermore, the vineyard at Anseong Catholic Church had a substantial impact on the local economy. The origin of Anseong grapes follows the history of Anseong Catholic Church, which still has grapevines with symbolic significance growing on its northeast side (Fig. 10).

Although the exact year is unknown, Father Gombert began planting grapevines in the early days of Anseong Parish (Anseong Catholic Church 2000, 234). It is believed that he started growing grapes to use them in church services as it was difficult to obtain wine for communion. Apparently, Father Gombert first brought Muscat, Hamburg, and Black Hamburg grapevines—German cultivars—from Seoul Seminary (currently the Seminary of the Catholic University of Korea, located in Hyehwa-dong, Seoul) and planted them on the premises of Anseong Catholic Church (Anseong Catholic Church 2000, 122–123). He found the growing conditions, such as the soil and climate, to be favorable for growing grapes and later brought 32 grape plants with him on his way back to Korea from travels in France. Eventually,

Father Gombert began distributing grape seeds and disseminating farming methods among Anseong's citizens. He gave some Muscat grapes to Park Sungbyeong 朴崇秉, the president of lay believers of Anseong Catholic Church, to plant. This was the site of Samdeok 三德 Vineyard in Sungindong behind the current Anseong Catholic Church, which initiated Anseong's grape cultivation, thereby laying the foundations for Anseong emergence as a region for high-quality grapes. For this reason, although Anseong grapes are from a cultivar that originated in Germany, the people of Anseong call them "French grapes" in recognition of the homeland of Father Gombert (Anseong Catholic Church 2000, 122–123).

Anseong Catholic Church, led by Father Gombert, was also looking for ways to contribute to the local community through various relief projects for residents. As can be seen in his correspondence with Bishop Mutelon on August 16, 1912, Father Gombert wanted to share all his knowledge and experiences with residents to revitalize the local economy rather than simply spreading the faith in Anseong:

First of all, from the very beginning, I used all financial support and money I received from France to support Christians' agriculture. I've found some income for future work, and I'm selling a little bit of extra harvests for them [people]. This helped them pay off the debt for the chapel [emphasis added].<sup>22</sup>

In addition, Father Gombert recommended that farmers suffering from severe drought in 1919 grow mulberry trees and raise silkworms. He also launched projects to offer free property leasing and to raise the impoverished orphans of farmers. Currently, grape farming is a major source of income for farmers in Anseong.<sup>23</sup> Thus, a small farming practice initiated by the wisdom of a foreigner from the West has continued to serve as a seed of love

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22. Antoine Gombert to Bishop Mutel, August 16, 1912, in "Anseong-eseo-ui bogo" (Report from Anseong), provided by Anbeop High School (unpublished).

23. The current scale of grape cultivation in Anseong is about 380 *ha* (3,800,000m<sup>2</sup>), with about 600 farms earning their income through grape farming (<https://www.anseong.go.kr/depart/contents.do?mId=0203040000>).



even a century later.

In 1924, and based on his experience with educational funding, Father Gombert established the Agricultural Fund to address the difficulties facing farmers. With funds increasing from a loan business collecting principal and interest, in 1927, Gombert arranged interest-free grain loans to impoverished farmers. With cooperation from local church presidents, the fund operation and relief project succeeded and were highly regarded by the local community, including non-Catholics.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, Anseong Catholic Church organized the Catholic Youth Society to help youths experiencing a confusion of values but having them engage in various volunteer works. The church also conducted practical vocational education programs, opened a woodworking school, prepared and made available to poor households four-wheeled vehicles for funerals, while using these opportunities to spread Catholicism.

The innovative woodworking school is still fledgling, taking slow steps. It seems that believers also like that school. Besides, there is much work to do. However, the school has a long way to go to show its sharp contours... The Agricultural Fund generates much revenue now, producing results so soon that believers, nonbelievers, and institutions regard it highly [emphasis added].<sup>25</sup>

Through this continuous social work, Father Gombert himself assessed that “the Catholic Church has escaped the dislike of Korean society.”<sup>26</sup> By the late

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24. Antoine Gombert, April 14, 1928, in “Anseong bondang-ui 1928nyeon yeonmal bogoseo 1” (1928 Year-End Report of Anseong Catholic Church 1), papers of Bishop Mutel, Anseong Catholic Church (unpublished); and Antoine Gombert, April 20, 1928, in “Anseong bondang-ui 1928nyeon yeonmal bogoseo 2” (1928 Year-End Report of Anseong Catholic Church 2), papers of Bishop Mutel, Anseong Catholic Church (unpublished).

25. Antoine Gombert, April 14, 1928, in “Anseong bondang-ui 1928nyeon yeonmal bogoseo 1” (1928 Year-End Report of Anseong Catholic Church 1), papers of Bishop Mutel, Anseong Catholic Church (unpublished).

26. Antoine Gombert, April 14, 1928, in “Anseong bondang-ui 1928nyeon yeonmal bogoseo 1” (1928 Year-End Report of Anseong Catholic Church 1), papers of Bishop Mutel, Anseong Catholic Church (unpublished).

1920s, the status of Anseong Catholic Church and Father Gombert was very high, among both Catholics and non-believers.

### **Anseong Catholic Church: A Seed of Democracy from the March First Movement**

There is some scholarly disagreement concerning the relatively low degree of oppression experienced by Christianity during the Japanese occupation of Korea. The fact that some Christians joined the pro-Japanese side and the relatively weak involvement of Christians in the anti-Japanese independence movement may have played a minor role in the relatively minimal oppression of Christianity during the Japanese colonial period. From the perspective of the Japanese imperialists, there was little reason to be hostile towards Christianity in Korea and therefore no reason to actively suppress their activities.

In terms of the role of Anseong Catholic Church in the local community, it is noteworthy that the church contributed to national independence during the Japanese occupation. First, the *jeongmi uibyeong* 丁未義兵 incident that took place between September and October of 1907 provided a groundbreaking opportunity for the early development of Anseong Parish. As Japanese imperialist aggression became explicit, resulting in the abdication of King Gojong in 1907 and the disbanding of the Joseon army, Korean Righteous Armies (Uibyeong) rose up in protest, and Anseong-eup was embroiled in the vortex of the “war of Righteous Armies.” Many lives were lost as the Righteous Armies and Japanese troops occupied Anseong-eup by turns and retaliated against each other. During this period, Father Gombert helped Anseong residents safely escape the Japanese troops while also trying to prevent the Japanese army from harming Anseong-eup’s residents. During fighting in the town, non-believers, including nobility, fled to Anseong Catholic Church, where the number of refugees reached into the hundreds. Eventually, after the unrest subsided, the sense of distance between Father Gombert and Anseong-eup’s residents disappeared, and the atmosphere shifted toward a friendlier one characterized by mutual help-

seeking. This led more people to convert to Catholicism, and the number of intellectuals desiring to read the catechism increased (Anseong Catholic Church 2000, 337–340).

Bishop Mutel and Father Gombert had different perceptions of the March First Movement of 1919. Bishop Mutel was not actively involved in the Movement. Though some Catholics participated on an individual basis, to avoid conflict with the Japanese, both missionary priests, including the head of Vicariate Apostolic, and Korean priests banned Catholics from participating in the movement for national independence (Research Foundation of Korean Church History 1987, 153). The Catholic Church's awareness of and response to the March First Movement is expressed clearly in the following words of Bishop Mutel:

I [Bishop Mutel] can say that we Catholics set a good example of loyalty to the government [the Japanese Government-General of Korea] by not participating in this (March First) Movement. The [Government-General] authorities paid more and more attention to this, as this case of the Catholics was singular and due to the discipline and doctrine of the Holy Church [Catholicism] [emphasis added]. (Research Foundation of Korean Church History 1987, 153)

As such, Father Gombert's position differed from that of Bishop Mutel in responding to the March First Independence Movement. Father Gombert disagreed with the Catholic Vicariate Apostolic of Gyeongseong (Gyeongseong daemokgu) led by the existing vicariate apostolic of the Paris Foreign Missions Society. However, Father Gombert actively sought ways to use his position to help the Korean people while reducing any damage to the Independence Movement. Father Gombert developed affection and respect for Koreans during his service in Anseong. He concentrated on agriculture, industry, and higher education to operate the church autonomously on the Korean Peninsula, consistent with the position of the European Catholic Church. In that respect, his approach differed from that of Bishop Mutel, which, due to financial constraints, relied on elementary education based solely on religious teaching (Kim 2005, 30–45).

On numerous occasions the leaders of Anseong asked Father Gombert for advice regarding the March First Movement. Father Gombert advised the leaders to join the Movement waving the Korean flag during the day and at night to shout slogans and organized lantern processions (Anseong Catholic Church 2000, 234). He also advised the Japanese not to inflict any harm upon the Korean people. Moreover, the March First Movement in Anseong culminated at Manse Hill in Yangseong-myeon, Anseong, and citizens of Anseong who were forced from that place by the colonial authorities fled to Anseong Catholic Church. Father Gombert then hoisted a French flag on the front door of the church and claimed the church property to be the extraterritorial jurisdiction of France (Anseong Catholic Church 1999, 14). Father Gombert, who was very aware of the nature of the Japanese occupiers, warned Anseong's citizens not to kill the Japanese or destroy any building, fearing that killing even a single Japanese person out of a mob mentality would result in disaster (Anseong Catholic Church 2000, 102).

As explained above, Father Gombert responded to Japan indirectly rather than through direct aggression, while actively providing relief to residents. He understood the political nature of the situation and tried to distance himself from Japan as much as possible even as he looked for ways to provide direct assistance to the Korean people. With this help, many Anseong citizens at that time were able to respond to the oppression of the Japanese imperialists and find opportunities to escape to some extent Japan's ruthless retaliation.

The zeitgeist that dominated Anseong, Gyeonggi-do province, one of the country's top three sites of forcible protests during the March First Movement,<sup>27</sup> led to the April Revolution<sup>28</sup> in the 1960s and the defense of democracy. One noteworthy event in the history of Anbeop Middle and High School is that against the background of the April Revolution in 1960,

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27. Anseong was the site of an active national independence movement during the March First Movement in 1919. At that time, Anseong in Gyeonggi-do province, Uiju in Pyonganbuk-do province, and Suan in Hwanghae-do province (the latter two in present-day North Korea) were the top three sites of national protests against Japan.

28. The April Revolution was a demonstration against the fraudulent elections that the Rhee Syngman regime committed on March 15, 1960, to achieve long-term seizure of power.

its students rejected their classes and instead traveled to Seoul on foot. The April Revolution was a democratic movement in Korea that began as a protest against the election fraud committed by the Syngman Rhee (1875–1965) regime on March 15, 1960, a movement that soon spread nationwide. One newspaper article reported on the activities of these students under the headline, “Yet Another Revolt in Anseong” (Anseong-seo tto dasi gwolgi 安城서 또 다시 蹶起):

Many Anbeop High School students stood on the roof of Hwashin Pharmacy in the middle of the town market at around 4:30 p.m. on the 22nd and appealed to the citizens, “We will end this, whether we die or the Liberal Party dies.” These students were extremely outraged by the ruling of the National Election Commission that the cancellation of the candidacy of Mr. Oh Jae-yeong 吳在泳, who had resigned his candidacy following student accusations that he was an anti-revolutionary element, was invalid. The students decided to hold a rally at Anseong Park from 9:30 a.m. on the 23rd to condemn the Liberal Party, and they exclaimed, “Now, it’s the entire Liberal Party we must destroy rather than just Oh Jae-young!” [emphasis added].<sup>29</sup>

On July 22, Anbeop Middle and High School students condemned the Liberal Party in Anseong-eup and expressed strong opposition to the ruling of the National Election Commission, which recognized the candidacy of Oh Jaeyeong, then running for the National Assembly. Moreover, at 9:30 a.m. the following day, the students decided to hold a rally in Anseong Park to condemn the Liberal Party. Taking things a step further, about 800 Anbeop Middle and High School students led by Ji Seongchan, from the ninth class of Anbeop, decided that resistance in Anseong was insufficient and went to Seoul the next day (July 24). The students who arrived in Seoul even protested in front of the National Election Commission building.<sup>30</sup>

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29. “Anseong-seo tto dasi gwolgi” (Yet Another Revolt in Anseong), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, July 23, 1960, 3.

30. “Banhyeongmyeong seryeok gyutan sambaek-ri gil” (Walking 300-ri to Condemn the Counter-revolutionary Forces), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, July 24, 1960.

(*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, July 24, 1960, 3).

As shown by this series of events, at the time of the March First Movement, the Anseong Catholic Church, led by Father Gombert, functioned as a shield from the harsh oppression of the Japanese imperialists and contributed to a certain extent to the independence of Korea. One can argue that this spirit of resistance persisted, leading to the defense of democracy in the 1960s. In particular, Anbeop Middle and High School students were active in nationwide protests against election fraud in the 1960s and resisted the long-term seizure of power by the Rhee regime. Anbeop Middle and High School students actively showed their spirit of resistance to a political party that committed undemocratic practices in their hometown. These events demonstrate how Anbeop Middle and High School students participated in the development of democracy in Korea (Anbeop Centennial History Compilation Committee 2009, 125). Moreover, the sense of justice and firm determination of Anbeop Middle and High School students in the defense of democracy in the 1960s found their successor in the spirit animating the April Revolution.

## Conclusion

In the late 19th and early 20th century, Joseon Korea was plunged into chaos as Western powers and Japan made efforts to colonize the Korean Peninsula. Amidst the incursions by various Western powers, many pioneers, sensing the need for a national enlightenment in order to transition from the pre-modern to the modern era, created the New Culture Movement to help ensure the independence of Korea and promote an enhanced national consciousness. But from another perspective, in tandem with the Western cultural influences gushing into Joseon, foreign missionaries entered the country in large numbers to spread the Gospel and undertake missionary work. Anseong was no exception to this trend. After the Frenchman Father Gombert settled in Gupo-dong, Anseong, in the early 20th century, the Anseong Catholic Church began to bring changes to the local community through missionary activities, educational and relief projects, and rural area



enlightenment. In effect, the church served as the vehicle allowing a missionary from the West (France) to transfer the knowledge of modern Western culture to Anseong. In particular, modern education, which developed in the area primarily through the efforts of the Anseong Catholic Church and Father Gombert, created a turning point, allowing the region to move toward modernity. In this respect, Anseong Catholic Church had a number of positive effects on the local community.

First, Anseong Catholic Church had a significant role in shaping religious faith in Anseong and making it a strategic point for the introduction of Catholicism to southern Gyeonggi-do province. Until the 1890s, Anseong was a barren land for Catholicism. The appointment of Father Gombert to Anseong provided Catholics in the area with an opportunity to practice their faith and served as a catalyst for the broader spread of Catholicism in Gyeonggi-do.

Second, Western missionaries' experiences of modernity and Western knowledge and lifestyles were introduced to Anseong. As a result, the closed social culture of pre-modern Korean society opened up. In particular, the establishment of Anbeop School in Anseong laid the foundation for modern education in the region. Moreover, women's education at Anbeop School at the beginning of the 20th century represented a meaningful change in the social atmosphere of the time, which had until then been dominated by a male-centered culture and the strict gender divisions that characterized Joseon's pre-modern society. Most importantly, as a modern educational institution in Anseong, Anbeop School was the cornerstone of the Catholic Church's pioneering role in women's education.

Third, the spirit of the March First Movement, a popular protest against Japanese colonial rule in the early 20th century, found rebirth as a pro-democracy movement in the mid-20th century. Father Gombert of Anseong Catholic Church, who knew the challenges Joseon faced better than anyone, contributed to the independence of Korea, especially with the March First Movement in Anseong. Arguably, the zeitgeist of the Anseong region during the March First Movement in 1919 helped inspire pro-democratic sentiments in Korea later in the 20th century.

Fourth, in terms of economic impact, the grapevines planted in the rear

of Anseong Catholic Church were later expanded to Samdeok Vineyard, which became the birthplace of Anseong grapes. This had a major impact on the economy of farm households in Anseong. In addition, Anseong Catholic Church, led by Father Gombert, conducted several relief projects, thereby playing a major role in helping the residents of Anseong as they made the difficult transition from a pre-modern to a modern society.

As discussed above, Anseong Catholic Church is worth examining not only for its importance as a cathedral, but for its social, cultural, and historical significance to the local community. Having celebrated its 120th anniversary in 2022, the church today is even more strongly rooted in the local community and continues to serve as a spiritual pillar in Anseong.

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