

aether

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Missionary

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“MISSIONARY” IS A 24-PAGE COMICS PRODUCED in 24 consecutive hours. Scott McCloud of *Understanding Comics* and *Reinventing Comics* fame created the 24-hour challenge in 1990, and the first 24 Hour Comics Day was held in 2004. The concept is simple. All participants are required to start without any preliminary writings or drawings, and finish all writing, drawing, inking, and lettering within 24 hours. The clock does not pause for sleep or food, both of which are optional during the event.

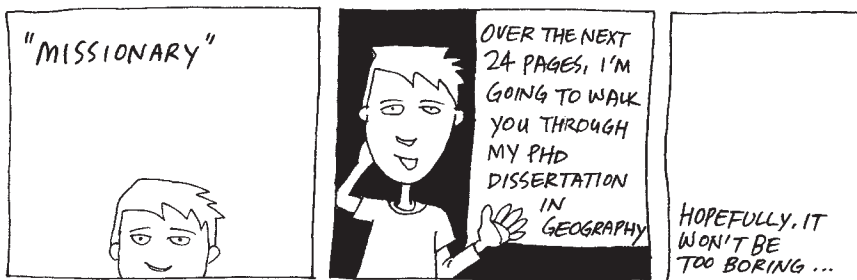
I participated in the 24 Hour Comics Day in 2006 at a comic book store in Vancouver, Canada, joining over 1,200 others in 89 locations in 17 countries. I have been a lifelong fan of comics and since I wanted to experiment with new forms of academic presentation, comics naturally appealed to me as an accessible media for readers inside and outside the academia. Of course, visual representations like illustrations, maps, charts, and diagrams are already important aspects of academic publications. But I did not want to use drawings simply to illustrate the writing—I wanted to play with successive images and their productive co-existence with words. In a way, my interest in comics had less to do with drawing as it did with visual storytelling. Like maps, comics simplify a complex three-dimensional reality into a more manageable version. Especially in the first-person, anecdotal narrative structure used by artists like Joe Sacco and Marjane Satrapi, comics can produce a provocative blend of intimate self-reflexivity and incisive social criticism. Some of the most compelling and poignant stories I encountered as a child growing up in South Korea were comics. My dissertation project on evangelical missions, especially the ethnographical research, certainly has elements both unsettling and heartbreaking—sentiments that I struggle to capture in academic writing.

The 24-hour challenge is designed to encourage spontaneity and productivity. I went in with a few reference photos and research notes, and spent the first 30 minutes outlining the story in broad strokes and allocating pages for each section. After that, it was all free-style writing and drawing, making decisions panel by panel, page by page. If

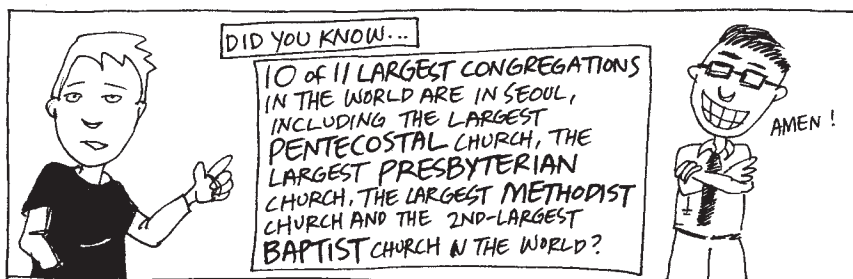
I had more than 24 hours, I would have drawn fewer talking heads and more dialogues and landscapes. Then again, had it not been for the intense time constraint, I would have also spent several months planning and writing, drawing and re-drawing, not to mention procrastinating and hesitating about the project. In the end, I have gained more clarity about the overall project—no doubt facilitated by the adrenaline rush of time pressure and sleep deprivation.

NOTE

I have made small revisions in Photoshop after the 24-hour event, including minor typographic corrections and background coloring.



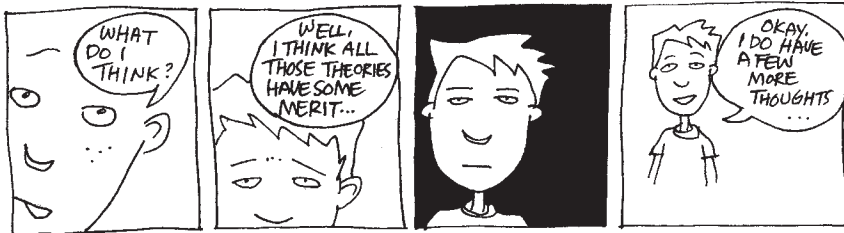
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IN JUNE 2004, SUN-IL KIM, A 33-YEAR-OLD SOUTH KOREAN, WHO DESCRIBED HIS PURPOSE IN IRAQ AS 50% BUSINESS AND 50% MISSIONARY, WAS HELD HOSTAGE BY IRAQI INSURGENTS FOR ALMOST 3 WEEKS. KIM'S VIDEOTAPED PLEAS WERE BROADCAST ON TV WORLDWIDE.



WHEN THE SOUTH KOREAN GOVERNMENT REFUSED TO CANCEL ITS PLANS TO SEND TROOPS, SUN-IL KIM WAS KILLED. THE VIDEO FOOTAGE OF HIS BEHEADING WAS BANNED IN KOREA.

KIM WORKED FOR A KOREAN CONTRACTOR CALLED CANA (SHORT FOR CANAAN), AN ENTIRELY EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN SUBCONTRACTOR TO THE U.S. MILITARY STATIONED IN IRAQ.



SO I'M THINKING...

JUST LIKE A CHURCH ISN'T A "NATURAL" OUTGROWTH OF FAITH ALONE...

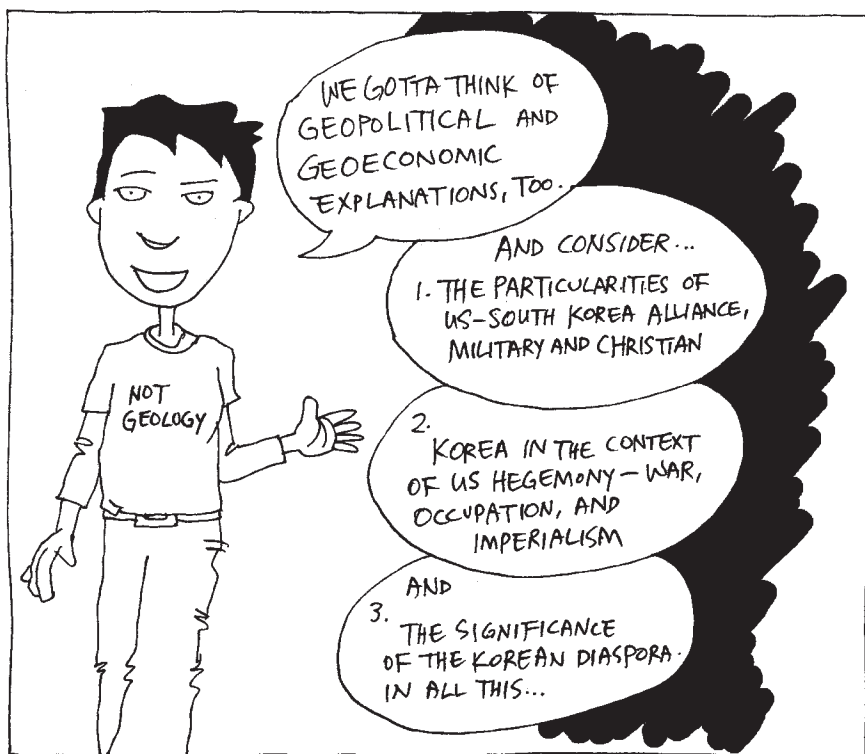
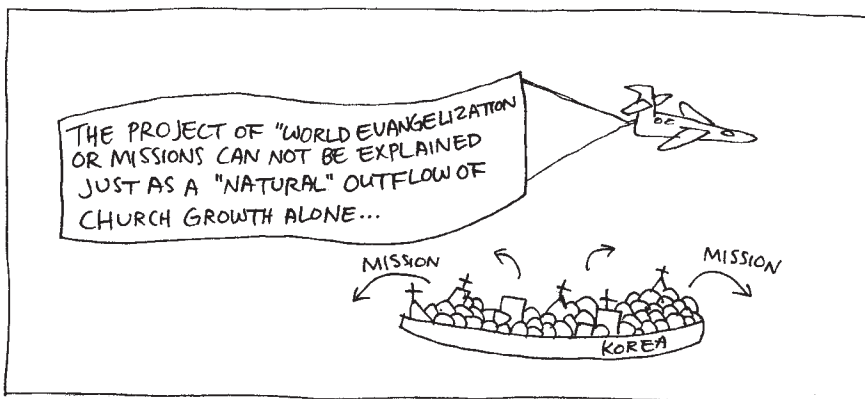


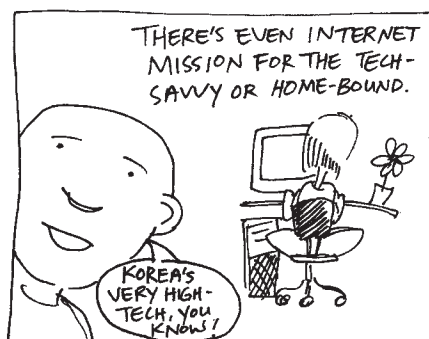
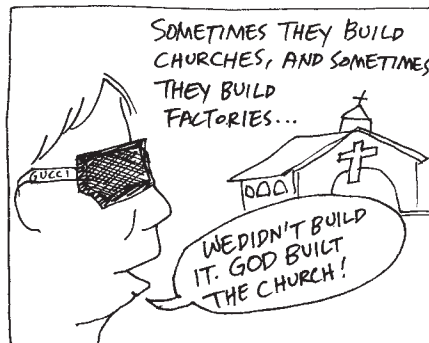
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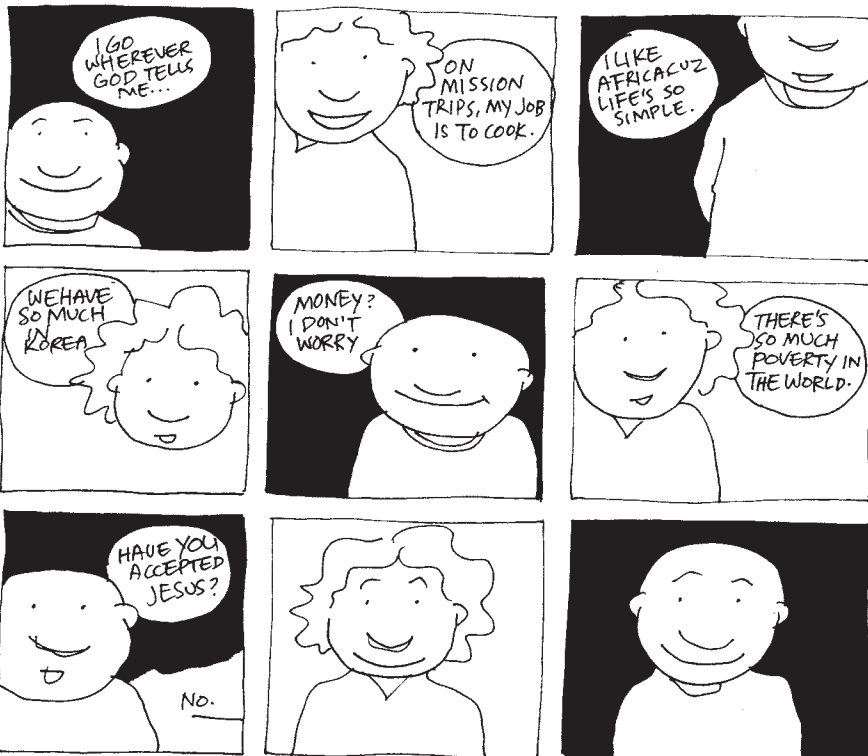
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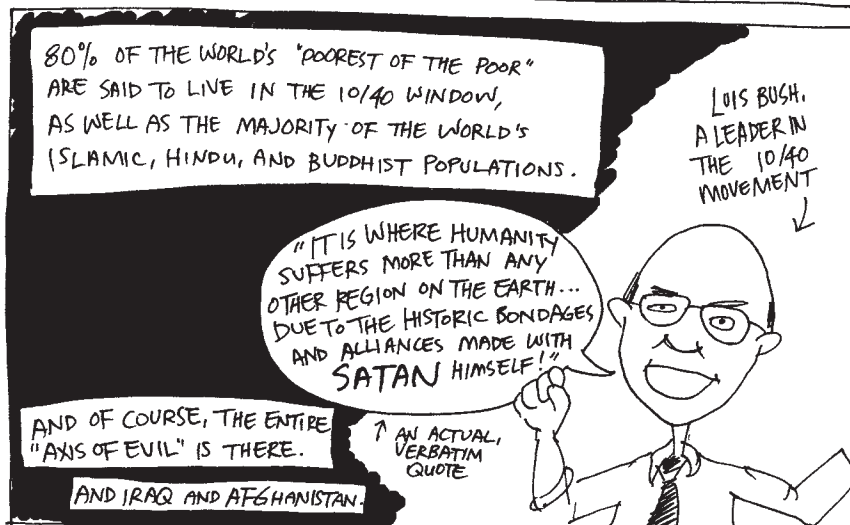
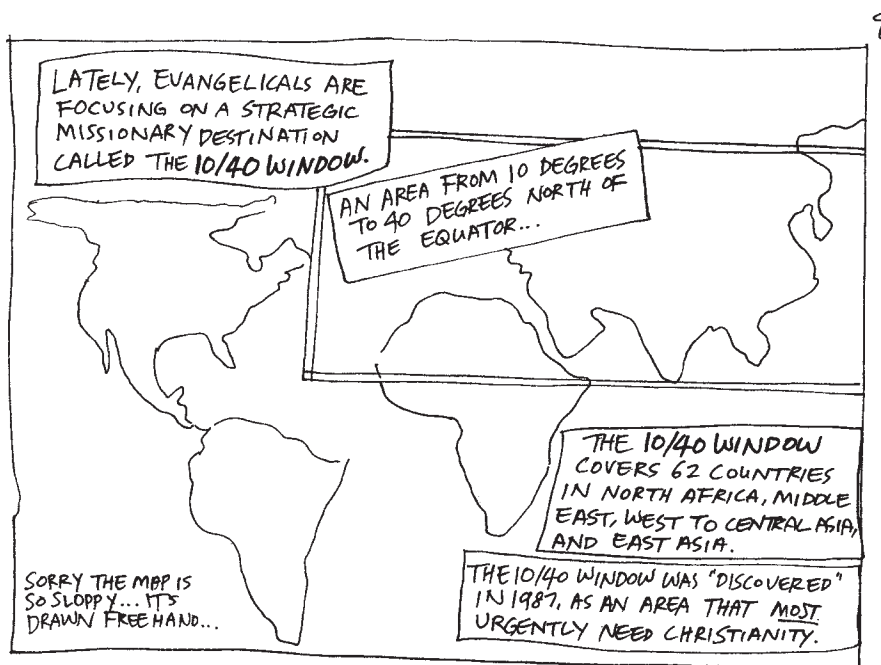


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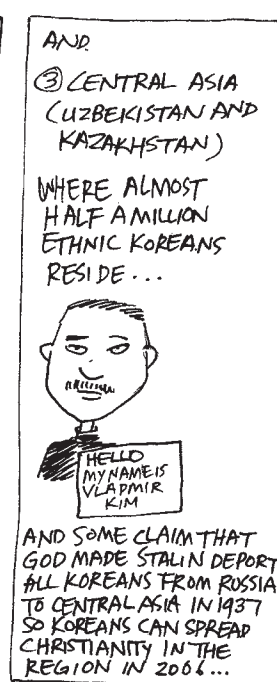






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FAMILY TIES AREN'T THE ONLY CONNECTIONS...

A DOCUMENTARY CALLED SEOUL TRAIN SINGS PRAISES FOR "THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD"—CLANDESTINE MISSIONARY NETWORKS THAT HARBOR AND TRANSPORT NORTH KOREANS THROUGHOUT NORTHEAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA, INCLUDING MONGOLIA, VIETNAM, LAOS, AND THAILAND...

BUT THE PEOPLE I TALKED TO IN SAFE HOUSES IN CHINA SAID...



THESE PEOPLE WHO BLAB ABOUT THE SECRET ROUTES TO MONGOLIA



WELL, IT'S NOT SUCH A SECRET ANYMORE, IS IT?

NOW WE HAVE TO FIND OTHER MORE DANGEROUS ROUTES...

SO MANY STORIES...

A 29-YEAR-OLD NORTH KOREAN WOMAN TOLD ME SHE JUST GOT TO THE SAFE HOUSE A WEEK BEFORE...



I LEFT MY ABUSIVE DRUNKARD HUSBAND AND TWO YOUNG KIDS BACK IN NORTH KOREA

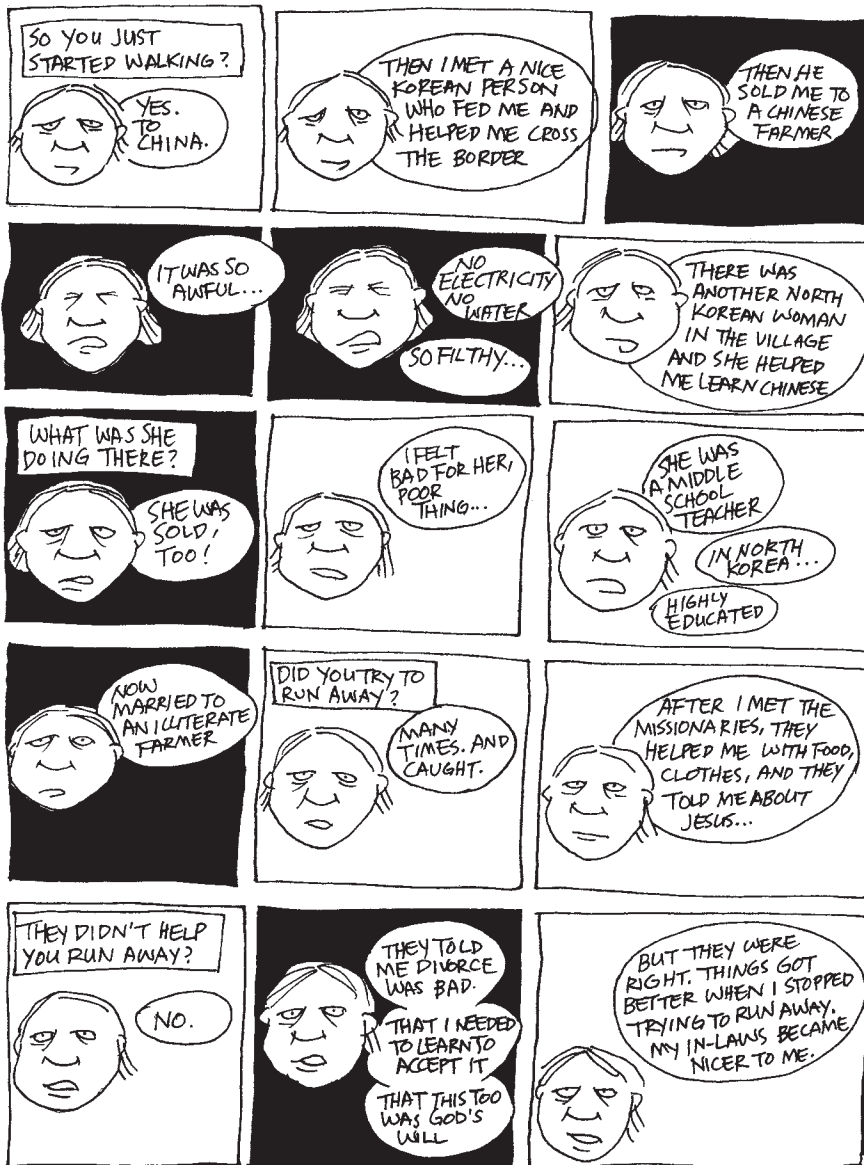


BECAUSE WE HAD NO FOOD FOR DAYS, AND I COULDN'T BARE TO WATCH THE KIDS STARVE TO DEATH



I MISS THEM...

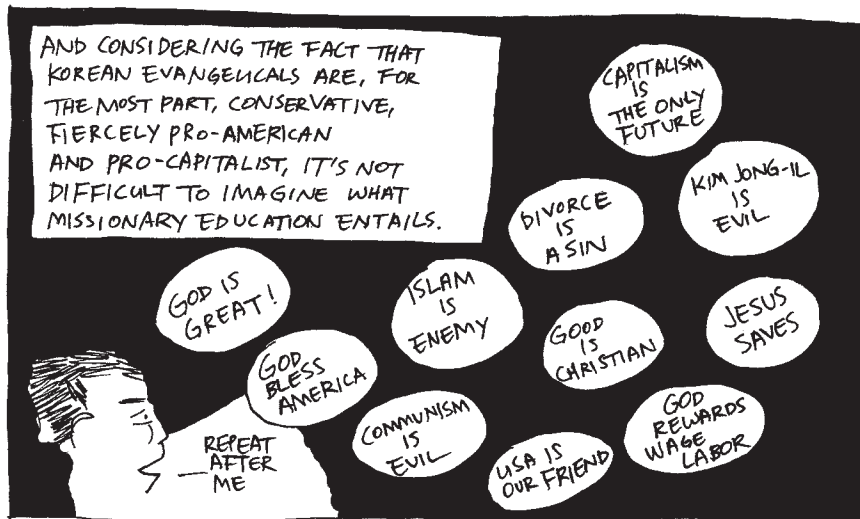
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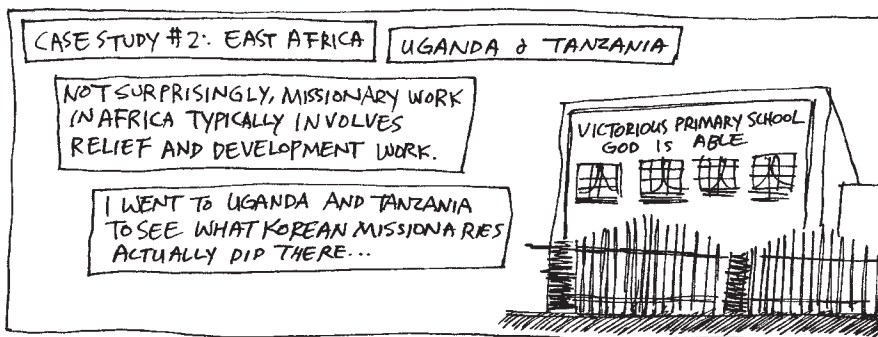
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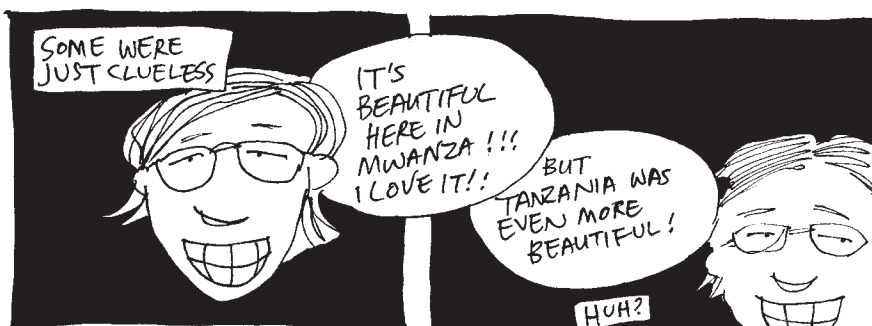


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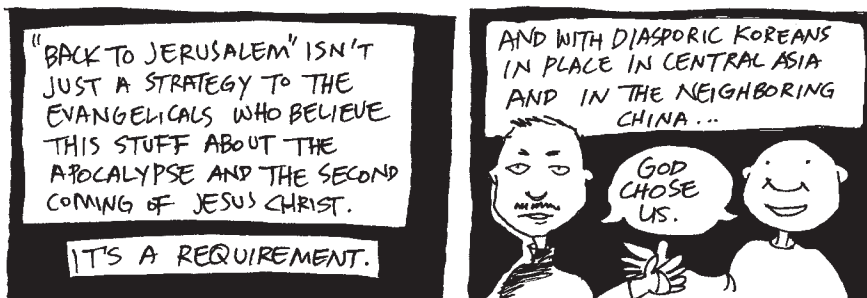






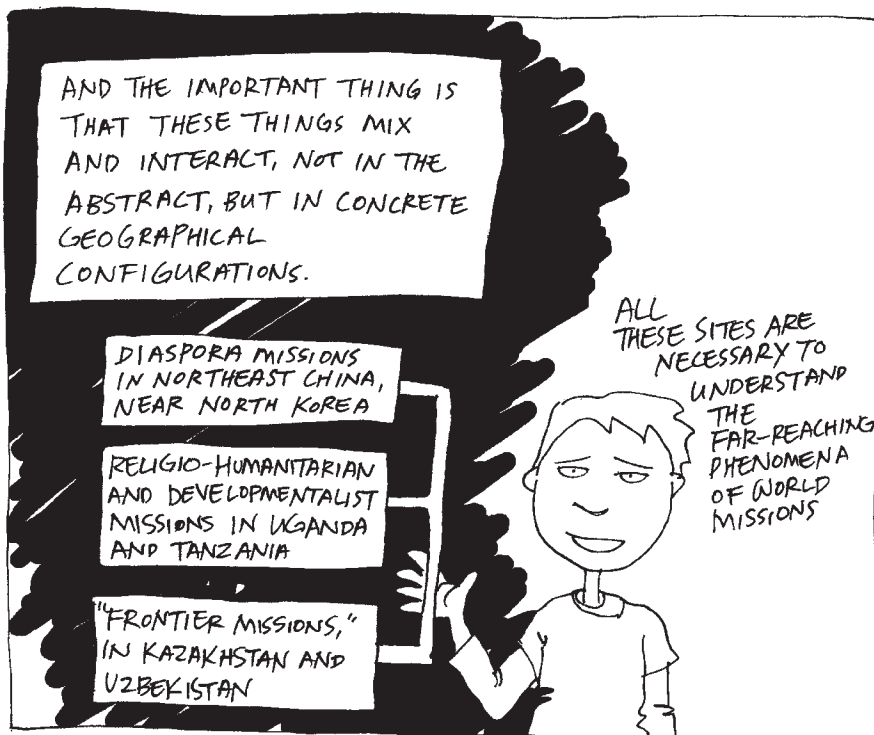


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OKAY,

HOW ABOUT THIS FOR NOW

The contemporary Korean missionary movement is an ambitious world-making project, claiming as theirs the entire stretch of the globe — but there are multiply rendered globalities that together constitute their world view.

THE END
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