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Which Christianity?

The Gospel, Culture, and the Problem of Cultural Transformation in Korea

Chai-sik Chung

The rapid expansion of Christianity in Korea in the last half of the twentieth century has been a remarkable phenomenon in the recent history of Christianity. This expansion is especially notable because, with its shamanistic, Taoist, Buddhist, and Confucian legacies, Korea was for many years a country culturally quite remote from the West. Until the 1880s, the fact that Korea was the last remaining Confucian society more orthodox than China was the pride of the country. Because it was tucked away from oceanic trade routes, Korea was more belatedly exposed to Christianity than China and Japan, but since the initial contact, Christianity has had a far greater impact in Korea than in China or Japan. What can we make of this remarkable phenomenon looking at it from a long-range, holistic perspective? In delineating the broad outlines of the expansion of Christianity in Korean society, the central question I ask is whether Korean Christianity has manifested the authentic principle of Christian transcendence, and whether all is well on the much touted front of thriving expansion. This is to ask whether, beneath outward impressions of phenomenal growth, Korean Christianity is infected with some problems that adversely impact the quality of witness to the authentic truth of Christianity.

The Faith of the Pioneer Christian Leaders

The Pioneer Protestant missionaries – American Methodists and Presbyterians – first arrived in Korea in 1884, whereas Catholicism (called *Chŏnjuhak* or Teaching of the Heavenly Lord) was introduced in 1784 when Yi Sŭng-hun (1756-1801) brought the new faith to his country after being baptized in Peking. When Catholicism arrived in Korea (then known as the "Hermit Kingdom" because of its age-old seclusion policy), the alien religion immediately became embroiled in a collision course with the Confucian state and was condemned as a "barbarous" and "heterodox" religion allied with a foreign force that threatened the state and the family. Unlike the inauspicious timing of the arrival of Catholicism, Protestantism (called *Yesugyo*, Teaching of Jesus) came to Korea when the country had been increasingly exposed to foreign demands for diplomatic and trade relations and a handful of progressive leaders and high government officials had begun to transform the hackneyed Korean tradition by accommodating Western civilization. By this time the Korean people were just beginning to learn that the Protestant missionaries were the "American teacher [s]" who represented the "American religion" (American Protestantism), which was different from Catholicism.[1]

To avoid the sad experience of Catholicism's arrival involving the factional politics of the country, iconoclastic defiance of Confucian ancestor worship, and other alleged acts of subversive activities, the Protestant missionaries went out of their way to market their public image as those who came to aid the Korean people. In a way, Catholicism had "in many respects done a preliminary work" for the Protestant missionaries by showing the Protestants the difficulties involved in moving into Korea.[2] Through services such as medicine, nursing, and education rather than "distinctly religious teaching," the missionaries managed to convince the Koreans of their "philanthropic

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[1] S. F. Moore, Seoul, to F. F. Ellinwood, no. 21 (3 May 1894), Archives of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, New York, N.Y. (hereafter cited as "P.USA").
[2] D.L. Gifford, Seoul, to Ellinwood, no. 60 (November 2, 1892), P.USA.

motive."[3] To avoid giving the impression that they were forerunners of Western imperialism, as was the case in so many other places in the world, they refrained from resorting to diplomatic force and treaty enforcement as much as possible. Thanks to such cordial attitudes, a law-abiding spirit, and an unobtrusive way, the missionaries managed by 1888 to impress the Koreans that they were "the only friends" Koreans had in their own land.[4]

From the 1880s, the first decade of the Protestant movement, to the eventful period that culminated in Japan's conquest of Korea in 1910, the *yangban* elite were divided between the various progressive reformers and the rigid traditionalists on the question of how they should cope with the rapidly changing world. First, the recalcitrant conservative voice that defended the social order at any cost was muffled by the progressives' battle cry for power and wealth. Much like the Chinese "Self-Strengtheners" and the Japanese "Civilization and Enlightenment" advocates, these reformers advocated the accepting of merely workable functional means such as science and technology from the West (*sŏgi*) that were compatible with Confucian values and institutions (*tongdo*). But in time, enlightenment or *kaehwa* advocates came to discover that the West's superiority really lay in its education, science, and technology, which, in turn, rested upon the cultural foundation of Western culture, namely, Christianity. Among others, such men as Kim Ok-kyun (1851-1893), Pak Yŏng-hyo 1861-1939), Sŏ Kwang-bŏm (1859-?), and Sŏ Chae-p'il (Philip Jaisohn in English, 1864-1951) were most famous among those who were inclined to accommodate Christianity because it offered a convenient means for modernization.[5] The missionaries' primary goal, however, was to proclaim

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[3] Allen, Legation to Korea, Washington, D.C., to Ellinwood, no. 30 (11 June 1888), P.USA).
[4] Ibid.; Allen, Yokohama, Japan, to Ellinwood, no. 58 (20 December 1889), P. USA; H.N. Allen, Seoul, to Ellinwood, no. 58 (October 24, 1892). P.USA..
[5] Chai-sik Chung, "Tradition and Ideology: Korea's Initial Response to Christianity from a Religious and Sociological Perspective," *Asia munhwa* 4, 1988, pp. 134-140. See also "Nonsŏl," *Taehan maeil sinbo*, 1 December 1905; Allen to Ellinwood, Seoul no. 33 (4 July 1885), P. USA..

"the Gospel of Jesus Christ."[6] They were eager for the conversion of heathens.[7] The missionaries opened schools, orphanages, and hospitals, and other useful undertakings in Korea, all of which were geared to help achieve the "evangelization of the natives."[8]

The missionaries were uncomfortable with the Korean enlightenment leaders' pragmatic perception of and motive to accommodate Christianity, which was incompatible with the consecrated principles and motives of the missionaries. Despite their willingness to appear interested in philanthropy, the fundamental policy of American foreign missions in the 19th century was focused upon the gospel alone, regarding social development merely as a by-product of evangelization. This was evident in the stances taken by Rufus Anderson (1796-1880) and his followers such as Robert E. Speer and John L. Nevius, who were critical of the paternalist, cultural imperialist attitude of identifying the spread of Christian civilization with world evangelization. They emphasized evangelism and the policy of encouraging local autonomy. While this was a laudable policy, unwittingly it was liable to neglect the dimension of social justice and social concerns that is integral to the gospel.[9] Also, despite the declaration of the Methodist missionaries that "we preach not medical skills, nor English, nor Western learning, but Christ Jesus and Him crucified,"[10] the missionaries were the unwitting bearers of American culture, social institutions, and political ideas. Thanks to the general trend of thought characteristic of their time, they themselves proudly associated Western civilization and progress with Christian beliefs. Because of its cultural

[6] *Minutes of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Korean Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church, held at Seoul, August 31, September 8, 1893*, ed. George Heber Jones (Seoul: Trilingual Press, 1893), p. 36.
[7] F. Ohlinger, Seoul, to A.B. Leonard, 1889, *Archives of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, ed., George Heber Jones, p. 36.
[8] W. W. Rockhill to Bayard, no. 58 (5 February 1887), IV, Korea Despatches, The United States Department of State National Archives.
[9] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), pp. 298-302; Ok Sŏng-dŭk [Oak Sung Deuk], "Han'guk changno kyohoeui ch'ogi sŏn'gyo Chŏngch'aek (1884-1903) [The early missionary policy of the Korean Presbyterian Church], *Han'guk kidokkyo wa yŏksa* [Korean Christianity and history] (The Institute of Korean Church History Publication Series vol. 9) (Seoul: Han'guk kidokkyo yŏksa yŏn'guso, 1998), pp. 117-123.

identification with the West, the early Christian movement in Korea changed its course as national feelings toward things Western either rose or fell.[11] An especially important variable was the fluctuation of the direct influence or presence of the West (particularly the United States vis-à-vis Japanese, Russian and Chinese influences) in the country. For example, church growth during the period between 1945 and 1961 was facilitated by the presence of the American military force and the military government, which was associated by Koreans as a power friendly to Christianity. It was also during the period of rule by the Methodist President Syngman Rhee since 1948 and the subsequent brief tenure of the Roman Catholic premier John Chang Myun, who was ousted by the military *coup d'état* of 1961, that Christianity found a climate quite favorable to growth. The story of the decline and fall of the Christian church in North Korea under Soviet Russian influence and North Korean communist rule is too self-evident to reiterate here.

The definite turn of the tide for Christianity was the decline of the Chinese influence on Korea in the wake of the Sino-Japanese war and the aborted attempts of the Tonghak (Eastern Learning) movement to challenge the old order, both of which had paved the way for the so-called *Kabo* Reform Movement (1894-1896). The missionaries did not operate in isolation but happened to be involved with the pro-American progressive leaders, reformist high government officials, and American diplomats; such mutually expedient relations helped the marvelous success of the initial Protestant missions in Korea.[12] But the price they paid was the danger of politicization and an image they displayed that "the Christians are partisans of the West and of Western civilization, and are not true Koreans any more."[13] Since the end of the nineteenth century, has persisted the image that Christian communities are segmented ghettoes of imported Western cultures standing in sharp

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[10] *Minutes of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Korean Mission*, p. 36.
[11] H.N. Allen to Ellinwood, no. 108 (December 17, 1900), P.USA.
[12] Young Ick Lew, *Kabo kyŏngjang yŏn'gu* [Studies of the Kabo Reform Movement] (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1990), Chap. I, 2, 4, 5; Allen to Ellinwood, Seoul, no. 35 (19 July 1885), P.USA.

contrast to hackneyed but mainline ways of life associated with shamanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.

Anti-Christian critics reviled Christianity as a barbarian religion and Christian converts as dependents of a foreign power who lost their independence. In reality, however, many of them converted to Christianity because they believed Christian faith could help them find a dynamic and refreshing alternative to their moribund religious tradition and a true way to a new strong Korea. They were nationalists who were eager to emulate but not subject themselves to the West. The evidence of the political character of conversion of early nationalistic Korean Protestant leaders and their followers is plentiful. Among the best-known Protestant worthies were Sŏ Chae-p'il, Yun Ch'i-ho (1865-1945), and Yi Sŭng-man (Syngman Rhee, 1875-1965), who were all educated in America and played leading roles in the Independence Club. Despite their early education in Confucian classics, all these men attacked Chu Hsi Confucian orthodoxy and the old Confucian society as passé and turned to Protestantism, apparently in an attempt to find an alternative means to revitalize and modernize their beloved country.[14]

First, let us look at Sŏ Chae-p'il, the founder of the Independence Club (Tongnip hyŏphoe, 1896-1898), a modern movement which promoted the ideas of independence, self-strengthening, and democracy. In becoming a Christian Sŏ believed that "the Protestant form of Christianity" would be "best suited for the development of the moral and spiritual initiatives of the Korean people" and for inculcating a new civic morality and love of freedom, justice, and rights among his people. This came from Sŏ's conviction that Christianity had played a crucial role in the historical evolution of Western civilization. Accordingly, exposing the Korean folly of pursuing merely the branches (i.e., Western functional means) by forsaking the roots, that is, Christianity, which was the

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[13] Robert E. Speer, "Report on the Mission in Korea of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions" (New York: The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1897), pp. 33, 34-35.

foundation of Western civilization, Sŏ made a plea to his compatriots to strive to accept Christianity as the new ideological foundation of the nation.[15]

For Yun Ch'i-ho, the prominent Christian lay leader, educator, and modernizer, and the first baptized Korean Methodist (in 1887), America represented the height of Protestantism and forces associated with modernity such as capitalism, science, technology, education, and civil society. Perhaps he was the foremost of the reformers in consciously following a Western model. Establishing easy continuities between Protestantism and modernization, Yun could not distinguish the authentic Christian message, or the "kernel," from the "husk" of Western cultural accretions. The question of de-Westernization -- extracting the kernel of the Christian message from the husk of Western culture by translating the essential message into his inherited language, culture, and society -- was not a problem for him. His ultimate concern was to introduce "peaceful self-reformation" and "internal revolution" in corrupt government and decrepit social institutions by dialectically confronting his inherited tradition, particularly fossilized Confucianism,[16] which he condemned as "powerless and therefore useless."[17] "Only Protestantism," not the corrupt government, he declared, was fit to assume the task of "restoring the moral fibre of the people." [18] Yun found in particular the Confucian teaching of "the inferiority of women, of the absolute

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[14] See the Enlightenment (*Kaehwa*) Party's view of Protestantism in Yi Kwang-nin (Lee Kwang-rin) in *Han'guk kaehwa sasang yŏn'gu* [Studies on Korean enlightenment thought] (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1979), pp. 199-238.
[15] Philip Jaisohn, *My Days in Korea and Other Essays*, ed. Sun-pyo Hong (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1999), p. 207; see also pp. 180, 184, 269-270; idem, "What Korea needs most," *The Korea Repository* 3, March 1896; "Nonsŏl," *Tongnip sinmun*, 12 September 1899.
[16] Chai-sik Chung, "Confucian-Protestant Encounter in Korea: Two Cases of Westernization and De-Westernization," in *Confucian-Chrsitian Encounters in Historical and Contemporary* Perspective (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press,1992), pp. 399-433 and *Ching Feng* XXXXIV, no. 1 (January 1991): 62-67.
[17] 12 December 1893 in vol. 3 of *Yun Ch'i-ho ilgi* [Yun Ch'i-ho's diary] (Han'guk saryo ch'ongsŏ, no. 25), 7 vols. (Seoul: Kuksa P'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe, 1973-86).
[18] 30 March 1889 in vol. 1 Ibid. See also, 24 September 1893 in vol. 3, Ibid.

submission to kings, of its everlasting 'go-backism"' and the oppressive moral obligations based on the hierarchical traditional status society distasteful and outmoded.[19]

Yun lashed out at the lack of interest in "public spirit" (*res publica*) and "altruism" in Confucianism where such spirit is confined to the "supreme" duties of the Five Relations "within the four walls of one's house."[20] Yun also condemned Confucian morality for admittedly no "*vox populi*" [the voice of the people] and because "the Korean [Confucian] officials barter away the dearest interest of their country just to enrich their dirty selves."[21] When he thus criticized Confucianism and the Korean religious tradition for their prevalent tendency to privatize religion by submerging social consciousness, he was in effect introducing a new awareness of sin in its Western historical context, alternative worldviews and values, and a new concept of political theology. In the soul of this pioneer leader we find not only the conflict between the inherited past and the learned new values, but also the problem of balancing the virtue of cultural continuity and the virtue of liberating the people from oppression and injustice. These twin questions would challenge the creativity of modern theological thinking in the years to come and continue so to do.

Syngman Rhee, the first President of the Republic of Korea and a committed lifelong nationalist leader, was baptized in 1905 just before his matriculation into George Washington University in America. At about this time young Rhee made his pledge that he would devote himself to spreading Christian education "to raise the moral standard of the Korean people." [22] He believed

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[19] 12 December 1893 in vol. 3, 14 February 1890 in vol. 2; 11 March 1894 in vol. 3; 27 May 1904 in vol. 6, Ibid.

[20] 18 and 27 September 1894 in vol. 3, Ibid. It is interesting that as late as 1909 in its editorial The *Hwangsŏng sinmun* [The Capital Gazette, 23 March 1909] extolled Christian universalism and the spirit of self-sacrificing love manifested in Jesus. Highly praising the spirit of public service, universal philanthropy, and mutual help which some American Protestant missionaries had exemplified in their lives, it criticized that East Asian Confucians merely paid lip service to the Confucian morality of humanity and righteousness without actually putting them into practice.

[21] 6 April 1902 in vol. 5; 11 March 1894 and 27 September 1894 in vol. 3, Ibid.

[22] Yi Sŭngman, *Ch'ŏngnyŏn Yi Sŭng-man chasŏjŏn* [The autobiography of young man Syngman Rhee], trans. with notes by Yi Chŏng-sik (Lee Chong-sik), in *Sin Tong'a* (September 1965): 425-426. Quoted in Yu Yŏng-ik (Lew

that with its "dynamism for reform (*pyŏnyŏk hanŏn him*) Christianity would help his people to gain "a power to do new things out of their own accord" so that his country might regain independence.[23] Like his seniors Sŏ and Yun, Rhee found in the new dynamic reformist spirit inherent in Christianity symbolic resources which would help shape new values and attitudes needed for the reconstruction of the Korean nation. With a strong faith in the non-violent, evolutionary philosophy of progress, growth, and becoming, he believed in the power of education to reform the moral condition of his people. Rhee, as other pioneer Christian nationalist leaders, determined that building an independent and modern Korea and answering the question of individual self-reform through Christianity were tandem concerns that could not be thought of or resolved in isolation from one another.

These Protestant cultural reformers lived in times of tremendous change and unrest marked by uncertainties and anxieties, but they tried to keep their faith in the future of their country and in the formative power of religion and education to assist the gradual but steady progress of their society. They thought such an approach was more becoming to their Christian understanding of human beings and history than resorting to either violent military resistance or suffering a courageous martyrdom for faith. As Yi Kwang-su (1892-?), a prominent intellectual and writer in modern Korea, declared, "Christianity brought to Korea the dawning light of [Western or modern] civilization." For him, especially noteworthy were Christianity's promotion of civil morality and of democratic education, its uplifting of women's position, and its discovery of the usefulness of the vernacular *han'gŭl*.[24] The Protestant reformers were certainly the harbingers of the dawn of hope, and they committed themselves to forging a new path in the wilderness of their modern history. To

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Young-ick), *Yi Sŭng-man ŭi sam kwa kkum* [Syngman Rhee's life and dream] (Seoul: Chung'ang-ilbosa, 1996), p. 218.

[23] Yi Sŭng-man (Syngman Rhee), "Yesugyo ka taehan changnae ŭi kich'o" [Christianity is the foundation of Korea's future], *Sinhak wŏlbo* (August 1903). Quoted in Yu, *Yi Sŭng-man, p. 218.*

[24] Yi Kwang-su, "The benefits which Christianity has conferred on Korea," *The Korea Mission Field*, trans. Yun Ch'i-ho, 15 (February 1918): 35. See the Korean version, "Yasogyo ŭi Chosŏn e chun ŭnhye" in Chu Yo-han

these men who recognized that "the one hope of the country lies in the power of Christianity and Christian education," Christianity was "essentially an emancipating religion" that "leads inevitably to the desire for free government and pure and popular institutions."[25]

Which Christianity?: A Tale of Two Christian Ways

Has the promising Christian beginning in Korea had a happy ending? Has Korean Protestantism been able to reach the promised land after wandering in the wilderness for a century? Have Protestants realized their dreams of applying the "principle of reform" that they had discovered in Christianity? It appears at this time that a good ending is more difficult than a good beginning and that it is hard to find the convincing evidence of the fulfillment of the early dreams. So, what went wrong?

In delineating with a large brush the structural forces that have impacted the development of Christianity in Korea, we are sure to miss their subtle shades. Yet, it is helpful to look into the way in which the patterned cultural ways and social institutions influence present cultural and social patterns. First, let us look at the inherited cultural and social characteristics. Take the case of Neo-Confucianism, the state ideology of the Chosŏn dynasty with its sacrifices to the altar of land and grain (*sajik*) and the cultural values symbolized by paired symbols – "father" and "king." It extolled the twin virtues of filial piety and loyalty rooted in an inviolable nature that could not be challenged by human choice but which were only to be obeyed for social integration. As we have seen, deeply embedded in such "natural groups" as the family, village, schools, and the royal system of rule, Confucianism has predominantly supported the social status quo and encouraged harmonic adjustment to the world, rather than a prophetic challenge to change it. Buddhism, too, which had been bereft of its potential for universal transcendentalism under the Koryŏ state's patronage,

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et al., eds., *Yi Kwang-su chŏnjip* [The complete works of Yi Kwang-su], 20 vols. (Seoul: Samjungdang, 1962-64), 17:16-19. See also entries of *19 January, 9 April, 19* December 1893 in vol. 3 of *Yun Ch'i-ho ilgi.*

25 Robert E. Speer, "Report on the Mission in Korea of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions",

further suffered a serious adulteration and ill-fated destiny during the Chosŏn era by accommodating superstitious and this-worldly folk beliefs. The Buddhist karmic concepts of reward and punishment also ended up producing Buddhists who dutifully supported the priesthood and obeyed the powers-that-be. Shamanism has been at the core of popular religion for centuries, but like the two historical religions in decline, it was in no shape to give spiritual nourishment and social directive to the people who were caught in a difficult and confusing age of transition. With its predominantly this-worldly secular mentality, it became a helplessly blessings-bound religiosity reminiscent of the Korean proverb, "Eat the pheasant and have its eggs too," for no one can serve God and worldly goods together.

The religious situation thus characterized led *Foreign Missions* to conclude in 1923 that the Korean "ancient religions are moribund and form but feeble barriers to the progress of the Gospel."[26] Yet the composite traditional religious culture made up of diverse elements of the inherited religions persisted and would eventually overshadow the nature and the pattern of Christian development in Korea.[27]

The Christian progressives were a relatively few intellectuals out of touch with popular opinion who were painfully conscious of their self-assigned role to salvage their country from its sad plight. To them, the Christian concept of the free and responsible individual, its transcendental message, and creative energy seemed to promise a convincing theory and effective methods for social reform and the modernization of Korea. But their reasoned voices were almost drowned out by a general clamor of the masses for the mundane and habitual.

[26] *Foreign Missions, Chosen 1923*, P.USA., p. 113. It is interesting that Yi Kwang-su's evaluation of the contemporary Korean religious situation coincided with the missionary's, see "Sin saenghwalnon" [On New Life] in *Yi Kwang-su chŏnjip*, 17: 546-549.
[27] See Chai-sik Chung, *Korea: The Encounter between the Gospel and Neo-Confucian Culture* (Gospel and Cultures Pamphlet 16) (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1997).

As time advanced, missionaries began to reach out to the non-literate peasant stock and women to increase members, who soon comprised the majority of the converts. One of the most important contributions missionaries made was the rejuvenation of the neglected vernacular *hangŭl* so that all believers could read the Bible and hymns more easily rather than through difficult Chinese characters. This came from the missionaries' conviction that "genuine education lies with the many rather than with the few."[28] Using the Bible as "the text book," the education of the whole Christian population was "undertaken systematically," and the whole population was "saturated with a knowledge of the Bible." Thus, Bible study and Bible training classes constituted "the most unique and most important factor in the development of the Korean Church."[29] Thanks to this effort for common education, the level of literacy among Christians was incomparably higher than that of the non-Christian population.

Nevertheless, the Korean converts were usually lower class and very much used to superstitious propitiation of ubiquitous spirits out of fear and the worship of ancestors. While the Japanese traditional elite *samurai* became Christians, giving Christians status and prestige, in Korea this was not the case. In Korea many Christian converts were of peasant origin and many native clergy were relatively undereducated and unqualified with only crash courses in the Bible.[30] The problem with Korean Protestantism and even Catholicism was that because of this particular social attribute the churches became a hotbed to perpetuate the religious cultural habits of the people -- firmly embedded in folk religious tradition, which was a curious blend of shamanistic, Confucian, and Buddhist elements -- in Christian disguise. To win the hearts of the commoners serving their needs and wants the church had begun to make Christianity more acceptable to them,

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[28] "The Educational Needs of Korea," *The Korea Review* 6 (1904): 450; Yi Kwang-su, "The benefits which Christianity has conferred on Korea," p. 35; George Heber Jones, *What Koreans Say about Our Use of Their Language* (Seoul: The Trilingual Press, 1894); S.A. Moffett, The Boys' School Report, 1892-93, p. 4, P.USA.
[29] *The Korea Mission*, 1910, p. 279, P.USA.

accommodating various characteristics of popular religious beliefs and practices. The common folks found in exogenous Christianity an intriguing alternative to their inherited, old religions, but not at the expense of their traditions. Having been deeply immersed in traditional cultural ways, it was difficult for them to grasp the true meaning of Christianity with essentially different views of the world, human beings, and morality. Therefore, they basically continued to live according to the cultural codes of their society even when outwardly they learned to accept and follow in a perfunctory and Pharisaic manner the tenets and rules laid down by the missionaries such as abstaining from smoking, drinking, adultery, and Sabbath breaking.

This led Yi Kwang-su to regret as early as 1917 that Korean churches' over-subscription to the belief in heaven and hell, blessing oriented prayers, and the otherworldly belief in life after death were little different from the time-worn irrational and superstitious beliefs and practices of socially disinterested traditional religions.[31] Missionaries tried to convert Koreans in their own image, but they would eventually discover, with some disillusionment, that the products of their conversion were much different. If we were to fail to notice the nature and extent of this tenacious symbiotic relationship between the traditional popular religious culture and Korean Christianity, especially Protestantism, we would come short of grasping the essential characteristics of Korean Christianity.

One of the hallmarks of folk belief is its conspicuous eudemonistic character with its emphasis on right action to produce happiness or the satisfaction of human natural inclinations. Accordingly, virtue that obeys moral law becomes insignificant before nature. What folk belief seeks at all times and places is not such a thing as the universal salvation of the lone individual soul before the remote, single, high God with whom it seeks to be one -- the kind of union that leads them to be

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[30] Irwin Scheiner, *Christian Converts and Social Protest in Meiji Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 107, 100-126.

[31] Yi Kwang-su, "Kŭmil ChosŏnYaso kyohoe ŭi kyŏlchŏm" [The flaws of the contemporary Korean Christian churches] in *Yi Kwang-su chŏnjip*, 17:20-26;idem, "Sin saenghwalnon" in *Yi Kwang-su chŏnjip*,17:515-554, especailly see pp. 544-554.

ethically responsible and honest to God. Rather, what matters in folk religion are utilitarian ends such as happiness, health, prosperity, and security. Religion is good so long as it brings happiness, money, health, male children, and good harvests through such means as weather-magic, ancestral cults, and animistic magic. Popular religion is unabashedly "this-worldly" and utilitarian in orientation. Crude economic and calculating motives to manipulate spiritual powers to obtain practical ends are common to popular religion. In the world of popular religion "ethical rationalism" based upon the responsive action of the human person is a rarity.[32]

Deeply steeped in such tradition, the common folk were not as socially aware and politically conscious as the elitist progressives. Despite their warm acceptance of Christianity, the commoners as a whole found the reasoned ideals of the intellectual reformers who had mapped out a path for progress somewhat unfamiliar and implausible. Thus, under the overwhelming weight of the restrictive local cultural tradition, the transcendent call for creative cultural and social transformation in the fledgling church failed prematurely. As a result, the church has gradually learned to be content with supporting the status quo, simply to survive, primarily by catering to private needs of the people. This means that the church is itself now something of a this-worldly, folk-like institution. This set the stage for Korean Protestantism at large to become parochially self-absorbed and socially disinterested, as the Koryŏ Buddhist community had before it. The reformers had the will and capacity to commit themselves to the historical role of fundamentally reforming their society and their compatriots, but they were to remain through the ensuing decades only a small coterie of conscious minority set apart from the rapidly expanding rural and working class Christian population. The voice of the reformers was too weak against the clamor and scream of those who were guided by blind habits.

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[32] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. Guenther and Claus Wittich, 3 vols. (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 2:400, 424; Gustav Mensching, "Folk and Universal Religion," *Religion, Culture and Society,* ed. Louis

Christianity had already brought hope to those who had fallen victim to the chronic evils of early marriage, polygamy, the inequality of women, illiteracy, class segregation, and the trauma of the decline and fall of the nation. It also awakened Koreans to liberate themselves from drinking, smoking, superstitious practices, and other social ills. The dream of reforming Korea through Christianization, however, went through another phase of growth. This was the rise of a peculiarly Korean form of revivalist movement marked by millennialisitic faith, fervent dawn prayer meetings, and Bible study with a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, known as the Great Revival or "Save A Million Souls for Christ." This movement had begun in 1907 as a large Bible study conference in P'yŏngyang and lasted well over several years. Especially appealing to all of those who had been looking for a way out of their hopelessness on the eve of the loss of the nation, it spread through the country like wild fire. The Korean church, which by this time had become a self-supporting and self-governing community encouraged by what was called the "Nevius Method," came to develop its own indigenous form of revival movement. The leadership of native clergy (especially Kil Sŏn-ju) who by this time had been on "co-pastor relationship" with missionaries and were burning with an ardent patriotism geared to an eschatological hope, set the tone for the subsequent development of mainstream conservative Protestantism. Enamored by the explosive church growth, a Protestant missionary James S. Gale wrote: "The new Korea will be a Christian Korea and that within a comparatively short period of time. Churches are multiplying in all directions." [33]

In time, however, what had a start in the early years as the mission of national regeneration drumming up enthusiasm for saving the country by turning to Christian faith had become

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Schneider (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964), p. 254-261; idem, "The Masses, Folk Belief and Universal Religion," Ibid., pp. 269-273.

[33] Underwood, Seoul, to Ellinwood, No. 37, August 25, 1888. P.USA.; John L. Nevius, *Methods of Mission Work* (New York: Foreign Mission Library, 1895); D. L. Gifford to Ellinwood, No. 43; October 21, 1890, P.USA.; C. C. Vinton, Missionary Secretary to Korea Mission, *Minutes of the Annual Meeting*, No. 4, January 17, 1893, P. USA., 21-22; *Seventy-Fifth Annual Report of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., 1912*, pp. 44-46. See the

something other than what the leaders had originally intended. To borrow the words of Max Weber, it had become more and more a movement that was characterized by "an increased tendency toward flight into the irrationalities of apolitical emotionalism," self-absorption, and otherworldly withdrawal from a rational ethical concern for public affairs, dichotomizing the spiritual from the social-political.[34] This tendency to split the soul from the body in which it dwells comes from the primitive idea of spiritual beings. This in turn results from elementary religious reflections on such experiences as death, trances, visions, and dreams. The belief in the soul detachable from its "material home" develops into the beliefs in the gods or ghosts of remote ancestors, of superior persons becoming divinities, and the practice of offering foods and drink to them as sacrifices and libations to propitiate them. This kind of animism that is at the basis of ancestor-worship forms the roots of Korean religion. It has persisted for millennia and is still held dear by many Korean people even today. It is this primordial religious culture that accounts for the predominant Korean Christian tendency to separate the realm of faith and spirit neatly from the domain of everyday life fraught with ethical and social responsibilities.[35] In short, Christianity in Korea was privatized and de-politicized and lost its potential to act as a force for social change.

Interpreting the power relations in this world in a language of privatized personal devotion and millennial hope, initially the Korean Christian revivalists came to formulate the problem of salvation more in terms of either otherworldly redemption or a sudden chiliastic or millennialistic intervention of Christ in history to save them. Accordingly, most missionaries and conservative Korean church leaders interpreted the intent of Christ's injunction "to render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" as an encouragement of, if not indifference to, all the politico-social affairs of this world; thus they countenanced a passive apolitical endurance of Japanese colonial rule. As a

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firsthand narrative of the movement in James S. Gale, *Korea in Transition* (New York: Laymen's Missionary Movement, 1909), p. 229, and chap. 7, 8.

[34] Weber, *Economy and Society*, 2: 600-601.

result, the great imperative of being Christian by practicing the prophetic ministry of the church was displaced by privatized, ritualistic devotion and flight to an emotional, personal experience of one's relationship to God passively enduring the oppressive rule of the Japanese.

About this, the following 1919 Annual Report of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. is revealing. Before the Japanese annexation in 1910, "the life of the Koreans was an isolated one" without any knowledge of the outside world and "the lives of the Christians were centered in their churches." In addition, the "majority of the earlier missionaries represented a single type of theology and religious experiences," and "the imitative Korean Christians naturally reproduced that type." But with "the tides of modern life" sweeping through Korea, the church had come to "compete with many secular interests," and the Korean Christians came to "freely recognize a wider variety of theological thought and Biblical interpretation than the simple-minded Koreans have ever known." The Korean Christian church was "passing through a period of transition" which had "many promising characteristics but also many dangerous ones."[36] Especially, as the "rising revolutionary spirit" linked to the Wilsonian idea of "the right of self-determination" had begun to stir the imagination of young Koreans in the wake of World War I, the missionaries found themselves "in a position of peculiar difficulty and delicacy." They faced a dire dilemma: "If they avow sympathy with the Koreans they incur the wrath of Japan and the danger of expulsion from the country. If, on the other hand, they avow sympathy with the Japanese they destroy their influence with the Koreans." Consequently, whatever their individual inclinations might have been, the missionaries in general came to feel that "they should be careful not to identify the cause of missions with a political movement" for independence,[37] maintaining "strict neutrality on political subjects."[38]

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[35] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 23-27.
[36] Eighty-second Annual Report of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, 1919, pp. 27-28.
[37] Ibid., pp. 25-27; Eighty-third Annual Report of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, 1920, pp. 29-32.
[38] Eighty-fourth Annual Report of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, 1921, p. 32.

This generalization, however, should not be reduced to simplistic notion that thanks to the missionary's position all the mainstream conservatives that included a wide spectrum of Christians, from lay people with evangelistic pietism to fundamentalist ministers, ended up tacitly collaborating with the Japanese authorities. On the contrary, an exceptional few of these conservatives with a single-hearted, Calvinistic, confessional faith dared to go to prison and even chose death before participating in compulsory Japanese Shinto rituals. The Presbyterian minister Chu Ki-ch'ŏl (1897-1944) who willingly died for his faith and patriotism was the best known martyr.[39] But it is true that most Christians, however, had to conform, and even socially committed prominent Christians who had become the target of brutal Japanese persecution wound up collaborating with the Japanese. Under the harsh, Japanese colonial rule, most Christians in major denominations were forced to observe the Shinto rituals, rationalizing their compromise matter-of-factly that it was like following requisite social rituals.[40]

In a way, we can understand the dynamics of the Protestant movement in Korea as an ongoing contest between a minority of socially conscious Christians and a variety of conservative majorities who held contrasting views of what Christianity was all about. Among those early, socially conscious Christian nationalist leaders were (besides Sŏ, Yun, and Rhee about whom we have already discussed) such men as Yi Sang-jae, Nam Kŭng-ŏk, and most of those Protestant leaders who assumed principal roles in the March First Independence Movement in 1919.

The increasing apolitical tendency among Korean Christians deeply bothered the intellectual reformers, who saw their conservative compatriots' turn to a personal and otherworldly pietism as an irresponsible escape from the principle of living up to the divine imperative to do God's work in the world. The critique by An Ch'ang-ho (1878-1938), a prominent nationalist leader who lived for

[39] Yi Man-yŏl, "Chu Ki-ch'ŏl moksaŭi sinang" [The faith of the Rev. Chu Ki-ch'ŏl], *Han'guk kidokkyo wa yŏksa*, pp. 255-303.

the cause of the reconstruction of the Korean nation through education, was typical. An was a humanistic Christian who preached a kind of ethical civil religion broadly dedicated to the ideals of freedom, human rights, nonviolence, and altruistic love, but without being narrowly confined to a particular sect. To him, the renewal of his people for the cause of independence and freedom was what really mattered. Christianity and, for that matter, Gandhi-ism and other religions and thoughts, might have been acceptable so long as they helped the cause of transforming the nation and people. He lamented the lapse of his contemporary Christians into what seemed to him age-old religious habits of the emotionalism of religious expressions, mystical quest for comfort, and egotistic self-absorption: "How in the world could we ever awake this stupid people!"[41] For him, to be holy was nothing other than to experience the presence of God within by loving others and the nation *in deed,* not just in words alone.[42]

Another blistering critique of evangelist-fundamentalist stances was presented by Kim Kyo-sin (1901-1945), the leader of the so-called Non-Church Christian Movement (*mugyohoe undong*) that had begun in 1927 as an indigenous, voluntary religious movement to controvert the ways of the established Protestant denominational churches. Searching for an indigenous theology and authentic, informal Bible-centered faith community, the new movement severely criticized the narrow sacerdotal principle of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* that held that salvation is not available apart from membership in a specific denominational church that controls the distribution of grace. It also criticized the fact that churchgoers had strayed from the authentic Christian way and that the hierarchically oriented and authoritarian clergy had sold out to American missionaries and their

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[40] Min Kyŏng-bae, *Kyohoe wa minjok* [The church and the nation] (Seoul: Taehan kidokkyo ch'ulp'ansa, 1981), pp. 270-279.
[41] Chu Yo-han, ed., *An Tosan chŏnjip* [Complete works of An Ch'ang-ho], Seoul: Samjungdang, 1963), p. 28, see also pp. 26-28.; for the idea of reconstruction, see pp. 102, 544-549; for the renewal of his people, see pp. 71-73; 828-839.
[42] Ibid., pp. 549-552; For An's emphasis on activism that seems to have an affinity with the theory of the unity of knowledge and action emphasized by Wang Yang-ming, see p.102.

whitewashed ecclesiasticism to safeguard their vested interests. The original leaders of this movement were the disciples of Uchimura Kanzō (1861-1930), the founder of Japanese Non-Church Christianity. Like their Japanese mentor, they all emphasized the intensive study of the Bible rather than mindlessly following the ecclesiastical doctrines, rituals, and duties of the church. They were all well educated and skeptical of the uninhibited, Pentecostal, emotional expressions of religious feelings of the evangelist-fundamentalists. Unlike the blessings-bound religion of non-privileged classes, theirs was a religious movement of virtuosi or intellectuals attempting to attain grace through autonomous and rational ethical achievement based on a particular belief in a transcendental God. Deliberately shunning the ecstasy and the emotional piety of the lower classes, they held on to an intellectual religious attitude that took the ethical and social requirements of everyday life more seriously.[43]

Kim and his associates such as Ham Sŏk-hŏn (1901-1989) and the Christian nationalists and liberals respectively pursued a different dream. Yet they shared a great vision and penetrating insight that Koreans were in dire need of awakening from centuries of ignorance, superstition, and selfish waywardness to the stark necessity of an independent, free, and just Korea. Ham, who succeeded Kim as the movement's leading figure, was a maverick who took a stance independent from his associates by developing the idea of *ssial* (literally 'seeds'). The word *ssial* had originally been conceived by Ham's associate, Yu Yŏng-mo, to render the Chinese expression *chin-min* (loving the people) in the *Great Learning* into Korean. Yu did not take *chin-min* in the sense of *hsin-min* (renewing the people), as the twelfth-century Neo-Confucian thinker Chu Hsi had. Rather, like Wang Yang-ming who had contended against Chu, Yu interpreted it to mean not only the ideas of educating but

[43] No P'yŏng-gu, ed., *Kim Kyo-sin chŏnjip* [The complete works of Kim Kyo-sin], 6 vols. (Taegu: Ilsimsa, 1981); Kye Hun-je et al., eds., *Ham Sŏk-hŏn chŏnjip* [The complete works of Ham Sŏk-hŏn], 20 vols. (Seoul: Han'gilsa, 1983-1988); see especially vol. 3, which covers Ham's views about Christianity and the task confronting Korean Christianity, and vol. 8 for Ham's view of *ssial*. For a general introduction of this movement centering on Kim Kyo-sin, see Min Kyŏng-bae, *Kyohoe wa minjok*, pp. 310-332.

also feeding and caring for the people, fully identifying oneself with the underprivileged. It was Ham who developed this idea by spelling out the meaning of the native Korean word, *ssial* as one that meant the oppressed people who had long suffered tyrannous oppressions and yet were conscious of their rights and able to stand up against a tyrannical rule in the spirit of non-violence. With this Korean word which indicates the oppressed people, Ham meant to eradicate *min*, the more familiar word of Chinese origin that had a pejorative meaning. The idea of *ssial* had engendered seed, germinating into *Minjung Theology,* which for a while seemed to be a promising political theology for the underside emerging in the crucible of the struggles for human rights in the 1960s and 1970s.[44]

It is in the context of this historical origin of the ideological splits within Korean Protestantism that we should understand the later outgrowth of the rivalry between such liberals as Kim Chae-jun (1901-1987) and extreme conservatives like Pak Hyŏng-nyong (Hyung Nong Park, 1897-1978) and his fellow travelers. Pak came under the influence of the American fundamentalist J. Gresham Machen under whom he had studied at Princeton Theological Seminary and became his representative in Korea. Upholding the idea of Scriptural infallibility, Pak took an adamant stance against any manifestations of liberal modernism such as the Social Gospel movement, Neo-orthodoxy, higher criticism in the study of the Bible, evolutionism, Marxist views of religion, mysticism, and non-Church Christianity. He had a calling to transmit what he thought was the

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[44] An Pyŏng-mu, "Ham Sŏk-hŏn ŭi kil" [The way of Ham Sŏk-hon], *Ssial ui sori* [The voice of people] (March 1989), 22-27; idem, "Sunsu wa chŏhang ŭi kil" [Purity and the way to resistance], in *Ssial, in'gan, yŏksa* [Ssial, human beings, and history], ed. Ham Sŏk-hŏn sŏnsaeng p'alsun kinyŏm munjip kanhaeng wiwŏnhoe (Seoul: Han'gilsa, 1982), pp. 15-23; idem, "Ssial ŭn sangja" [*Ssial* means commoners], *Ssial madang* [Sssial forum]1, no. 1 (November 1994): 5-12; see especially three articles on the meaning of *ssial, minjung,* and the merger of two stories, written, respectively, by Ham Sŏk-hŏn, An Pyŏng-mu, and Sŏ Nam-dong in *Minjung kwa Han'guk sinhak* [Minjung and Korean theology], ed. NCC Sinhak yŏn'gu wiwŏnhoe (Seoul: Han'guk sinhak yŏn'guso, 1985), pp. 9-14, 19-26, 237-276.

correct teaching that he had received from the pioneer missionaries and his teacher Machen to his contemporary Christians.[45]

In contrast, Kim Chae-jun, who also had studied at Princeton Theological Seminary, was more in line with the march of history. Claiming that Pak's fundamentalism was out of touch with the times, Kim supported the ecumenical movement led by the World Council of Churches. For him, Christianity was a reality situated in real history and society; any religious experience of the holy that was not connected to a history-transforming, experience-based "redemptive ethic (*songnyang yulli*) or the spirit of prophetic social criticism committed to transforming his beloved country was pointless.[46]

Despite the active engagement of the liberal wing of Korean Protestantism in reforming the conventional attitudes and practices of the popular church, the conservative evangelical and extremely fundamentalist faith orientations are still typical of the Korean church. In addition, the Japanese domination of Korea during the formative stage of growth, the division of the country since1945, and the process of industrialization and urbanization had powerfully influenced the shaping of the particular characteristics of Korean Christianity. Particularly the confusion of values and social networks in the wake of these changes and the struggles for democracy and human rights since the 1960s forced upon the Christians a difficult task. It is not possible here for us to delineate even the outline of the more recent development of Korean Protestantism, but let us point out some of the basic forces that influenced the specific shape of the Protestant development during the rest of the century.

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[45] Yu Tong-sik (Dong Shik Ryu), Han'guk sinhak ŭi kwangmaek [The mineral vein of Korean theology] (Seoul: Chŏnmangsa, 1982), 186-199.

[46] Ibid., pp. 208-209, 199-212; see also Kim's essays on the theological movement in the Korean church, theological thought and theological education, and the problem of the freedom of belief in Korean history in Han'guk sinhak taehak ch'ulp'anbu, ed., *Changgong Kim Chae-jun chŏnjip* [The Complete works of Kim Chae-jun, 5 vols. (Seoul: Changgong chŏnjip ch'ulp'an wiwŏnhoe, 1971), 1:174-181, 245-252-252-259.

After the Japanese annexation of Korea, the nationalist movement developed along several discordant lines without any common ideology or leadership to provide a united front. The major division was between more extreme groups, such as militant nationalists, the nihilists, and revolutionary Marxists on one hand, and more moderate, gradualist nationalists on the other. The moderates wanted to raise the general standard of national consciousness, education, and economic strength in the society to develop a popular foundation. Of course, this was an outgrowth of earlier nationalist ideology that had originated from the Independence Club, the March First Independence Movement, and other similar cultural national movements. As new tides of Western thought such as socialism, anarchism, nationalism, and the home-grown Ch'ŏndogyo (The Teaching of the Heavenly Way) were claiming adherents from among the people, the Christian community was faced with a baffling choice between its ideological direction and "apologetic necessities." Despite its intramural ideological or doctrinal differences, Protestantism in general found its way out of this difficulty in the works that concern "the sphere of education," whether by way of academic or religious education. Thus, unwittingly Protestantism found itself at the center of the "cultural nationalism" movement.[47]

The Government-General that was set to consolidate its rule over Korea (1910-1945) perceived Protestantism as a threat because it was prone to encourage the individual conscience, national consciousness, civic morality, and social consciousness of the people. Accordingly, while the Japanese authorities had found Korean Confucianism and Buddhism more or less innocuous, they were particularly suspicious of the Christian church, especially Protestantism, allied with the

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[47] For the usage of the term "cultural nationalism," see Sallo Wittmayer Baron, *Modern Nationalism and Religion* (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), pp. 4-5; for cultural nationalism in Korea, see Michael Edson Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920-1925* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988); for the general ideological alignments during this period, see Chai-sik Chung, "Confucian Tradition and Nationalist Ideology in Korea," *South Korea's Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press), p. 85. See also *Foreign Missions, Chosen 1923*, P.USA, pp. 112-120; *Foreign Missions, Chosen 1927*, P.USA, pp. 95-96.

United States and Korean nationalist movement, eventually strangling it.[48] The so-called Conspiracy Case (1911-1913), fabricated by the Japanese authorities to indict leading Korean Christians, especially Yun Ch'i-ho and his associate such as Yang Ki-t'aek and Yi Sŏng-hun in the alleged plot to assassinate Governor General Terauchi, was a good case in point. These Christian leaders involved in the New People's Society (Sinminhoe) -- a secret society organized by Yun and An Ch'ang-ho for the cause of Korean independence through education and self-reform -- were "active men in a passive race" and therefore they became "objects of suspicion to an over-zealous [Japanese] police."[49] The Japanese attempts to contain Christianity became more vigorous especially after the March First Independence Movement (1919) in which Protestant leaders played a leading role.[50] Since the 1930s, as Japan had consolidated its rule over Korea to use it as a frontier base for its expansion throughout East Asia, the Japanese control of Protestantism has become more severe.

During the darkest years as the Japanese assimilation and mobilization efforts for world conquest became more intense, "all liberal and international ideals and institutions came into disfavor."[51] By the end of 1940, Japanese pressure made evangelistic work by missionaries and their teaching in classes and Bible institutes impossible; Christians were forced to accept Japan's emperor worship and Shinto rituals. By 1941, the Christian mission withdrew from the field of secular education, and the churches were at best holding their own; there were "very few signs of real spiritual life and growth."[52] During these difficult days, some Christians sought to sustain and revive

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48 This kind of antipathetic attitude was already visible as early as 1895. See W.M. Baird, Fusan, to Ellinwood, no. 84 (March 13, 1895), P.USA; W.M. Baird, Fusan, to Ellinwood, no. 88 (April 8, 1895, P.USA; W.M. Baird, Fusan, to Ellinwood, no. 99 (June 27, 1895), P.USA.

49 Seventy-eighth Annual Report of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., 1915, pp. 38-39; see also Seventy-seventh Annual Report of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., 1914, pp. 43-44; Kang Chae-ŏn, *Han'guk ŭi kaehwa sasang* [The enlightenment thought of Korea], trans. Chŏng Ch'ang-nyŏl (Seoul: Pibong ch'ulp'ansa, 1981), chap.6.

50 Eighty–third Annual Report of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, 1920, pp. 29-32, 193, 196-197.

51 *Foreign Missions*, 1942, p. 60.

52 Ibid., pp. 60-63; *Foreign Missions*, 1941, pp. 57-58.

their faith through eschatological, millennialistic hope or a mystic spirituality focused upon the salvation of individual souls and personal piety without any reference to a theology of incarnation and God's work in history. A good case in point is the inward mystical revivalist movement with a tinge of shamanism led by the Methodist poet-mystic Yi Yong-do (1901-1933) that had a substantial following.[53]

This form of contemplative and world-fleeing mysticism continued even during the post-liberation years (1945-1961) that were marked by the division of the country, political upheaval, ideological confusion, and the war that was followed by great social dislocation. During this turbulent period many turned to evangelical revivalism as well as Pentecostalism and millennialism for an escape from the seemingly hopeless conditions of life; such movements offered the immediate experience of God's help. This drift toward emotionally cathartic spirituality continued during the ensuing tumultuous decades (1961 to the present) of rapid social change marked by authoritarian military rule, industrialization, political and social protest, democratization, and globalization.

The vibrant feelings and emotional energies behind behaviors that one can easily observe in revival meetings, such as incantatory prayers, weeping, ecstatic raptures, and the fluttering of arms, are traceable to shamanic as well as Christian spirituality. This kind of subterranean, primeval spiritual energy helped people not only to survive the hard times of the Japanese suppression of Christianity and to cope with the difficult realities of modernizing changes, but also helped fuel the explosive bursts in membership in the Korean church during the last several decades. We can also suspect that the fundamentalist and conservative mentality that impels people to argue rigidly and self-righteously about doctrinal orthodoxy and purity -- a strain particularly marked in Korean Christian personality and ecclesiastical practices -- can be associated with the particular legacy of

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[53] See Yu Tong-sik, *Han'guk sinhak ŭi kwangmaek, pp. 120-132;* Min Kyŏng-bae, *Kyohoe wa minjok,* pp. 280—

Korean Neo-Confucianism. Thus, depending on one's viewpoint, one could positively or negatively evaluate the way Korean Protestantism has drawn on the various resources from the deep recesses of indigenous religious tradition. Broadly speaking, however, by decisively turning toward charismatic Pentecostal revivalism, evangelical prayer movements, otherworldly milennialism, and doggedly conservative fundamentalism, Korean Protestantism has forsaken its earlier dreams of creatively transforming Korean society and culture.

Toward the Historical Struggles for Justice and Peace:

One could maintain that elitist, socially conscious, and humanistic Protestants with their preoccupations with abstract principles, idealistic values, and institutions have been timid to tread, for example, a real world of the downtrodden and the oppressed. On the other hand, what characterizes the evangelicals and Pentecostals is their down-to-earth affirmation of this world, tender consideration of the real, diverse human needs of the parish, attention to intimate personal relationships and social networks, and exuberant initiative empowered by the spirit of positive thinking. These traits have led them to listen with sensitivity to the deep groans of the oppressed souls and the anguished cries of women. Giving vent to the sorrow of the troubled life experience through spontaneous and warm or even festive hymn-singing and fervent individual or group prayers so prominent in the pattern of worship of these groups also have helped the underside to easily relieve their wounded feelings and their injured hearts (*hanp'uri*). The depth, intensity, and rich imagination of popular religiosity, which attribute character to Korean religious culture in its own way, in part, account for the dynamism behind the phenomenal growth of Christianity in Korea. But this growth defies easy generalization.

What, then, are the problems overshadowing the evangelical- Pentecostal-fundamentalist Christian churches in Korea? In sum, the trouble is that the experience of the power and presence of

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the Holy Spirit often does not result in a transformation of life, a life consecrated to authentic Christian service. Instead of the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit producing a religion that really works in everyday life, it is too often confused as a quick and effective means to attain mainly individual religious consolation and such worldly goods as money, success, and healing. When mammoth churches predominantly emphasize legalistic tithing, growth in membership and income, and serving primarily the vested interests of their particular ecclesiastical enterprises, despite their token participation in alms-giving and social service, they quickly lose credibility and draw feelings of disappointment and a mockery toward the church. How can one account for the ill-reputed authoritarian leadership style of some ministers of mammoth churches that are geared to perpetuate their domination of them through the manipulation of creed, ritual, and organization? Worse, how could these leaders justify their nontransparent management of the church finances and the outrageously disreputable nepotism which is so common?[54]

The trouble with the Korean church is that it has largely forsaken its prophetic function and the public good for the cultural code of the capitalist marketplace. Everything is thus reckoned in terms of buying and selling, quantity rather than quality, and crude functional utility, giving priority to meeting the customer satisfaction rather than responding to the call of moral responsibility and obligations to society. The cult of big church (the philosophy that money is church's supreme good), excessive emphasis on the Pharisaic duty of tithing, questionable motivations for sending large numbers of missionaries overseas beyond the call of need – these are some of the ills associated with the Korean preoccupations with the capitalist market mentality. What feeds this marked tendency in modern society toward privatism and entrepreneurial mentality is the indigenous cultural wellspring

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[54] Sŏ Kwang-sŏn, Chŏng Chin-hong, Han Wan-sang, Kim Kwang-il, *Han'guk kyohoe sŏngnyŏng undong ŭi hyŏnsang kwa kujo* [The phenomena and stryucture of the Pentecostal movements in Korea] (Seoul: Korea Christian Academy, 1982); see also Chŏng Chin-hong [Chin Hong Chung], "Changing Structural Characteristics of a Large Rapidly Growing Church in Korea: The Case of the Youido Full Gospel Church,"

of this-worldly shamanistic folk religious mentality, a distorted notion of Confucian family values that forsakes public good for family egotism, and a global capitalist culture.

Against considerable odds, a relatively small minority of the well-intentioned church leaders, theologians, and lay people have brought issues of ethics, morality, and the public good to a level of visibility in the decades since Korea's exposures to authoritarian political control, compressed industrialization, and urbanization. These are the leaven of reform working in an immoral and apathetic society for the causes of "justice, peace, and integrity of creation," and they can be considered the latter-day followers of the pioneer Christian reformers in terms of their moral imagination and sense of responsibility. The great imperative for the Korean church in this new century is to rediscover the dreams of the earlier pioneer Christian leaders, learning to mobilize the rich resources of charismatics, evangelicals, and liberals for the authentic service of the living God of justice and peace. The Korean church, especially its conservative mainstream Protestantism, is in great need of the emancipating and transforming presence and work of the Holy Spirit as it faces a new millennium.[55] The long march of the Korean people's struggles for a better future depends to a great deal on the spiritual encounter of Korean Christians with the historical challenge of regenerating themselves, their faith community, and their society for a new order of life.

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paper read at an International Conference on "Korea: Toward an Industrial society, Part II," held at the University of British Columbia, May 17-18, 1997.

[55] See Chai-sik Chung, "Global Theology for the Common Good: Lessons from Two Centuries of Korean Christianity," *International Review of Mission*, 85,no. 339 (October 1996): 523-538.