In this article we examine Korean Protestantism’s intrinsic fundamentalist bent, which has caused both numerous schisms within the Korean Protestant churches and exclusivist approaches toward other religions. First, we study how Korean fundamentalism has occurred in three characteristic theological controversies, and three tragic schisms in the Korean Presbyterian Church. It appears that Korean fundamentalism, as it has appeared in the history of Korean Presbyterian churches, is unique in that it has an intense Biblicism. Then, we scrutinize how Korean fundamentalism has taken on an intense Biblicism. The theology of the American Presbyterian missionaries in Korea, which determined the theological orientation of Korean Protestantism, was “notably conservative.” But unfortunately this conservatism was further strengthened by Korea’s lack of political freedom. Being unable to participate in socio-political matters, the missionaries and their Korean followers could not help but focus on Bible studies, prayer, and evangelism. Furthermore, Korean Presbyterians’ Biblicism was also heightened by revivalism and millennialism, which were especially rampant before and after the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910. So it was Korea’s revolutionary socio-political situation, which greatly facilitated revivalism, millennialism, and eventually fundamentalism in Korea. Thus, we find three different factors that have contributed to the development of Korean Protestantism’s Biblicist and fundamentalist leanings: 1) the Western missionaries’ strong conservatism, which emphasized the Bible, significantly due to Korea’s political instability, 2) revivalism, and millennialism, which were again stimulated by Korea’s revolutionary situation, and 3) Korea’s original religious teaching on millennialism. And it was Dr. Pak Hyŏng-yong, who was the most important Korean theologian in establishing Korean Protestant Christianity as a Biblical Christianity. Having gained an insight into the Biblicist nature of Korean Protestant
Christianity, Dr. Pak seems to have succeeded in combining it with the pietistic and Protestant orthodox (old Princeton) theology of the American Presbyterian missionaries to Korea, eventually making a unique Korean theology that emphasized the authority of the Bible. His theology, however, has a fundamentalist bent in that it rejects other ways of interpreting the Bible.

Key words: Korean fundamentalism, Korean Protestant church, Korean Presbyterianism, American missionaries in Korea, Pak Hyŏng-yŏng, Korean revivalism and millennialism

I. INTRODUCTION

This study is an attempt to understand Korean Protestantism's inherent fundamentalist aggressiveness, which has caused both numerous schisms within the Korean Protestant churches and exclusivist approaches toward other religions. It has been prompted by the recent heated conflict between Korean Buddhism and Protestantism. Lately quite a strong anti-Christian (Protestant) sentiment has been rising in Korea, where competing religions have been relatively tolerant toward each other. In the meantime, having gone political, Korean Protestantism has made an important contribution in electing a devout Christian, President (Mr. Myungbak Lee, who is an elder at a Presbyterian church in Seoul). The new President, however, has been accused by Korean Buddhists of having favored Christianity heavily over Buddhism. A powerful Korean Protestant pastor has also made Korean Buddhists very angry, by saying, “Buddhists monks shall convert to Christianity. Buddhist countries are doomed to perish.”¹ As a consequence tens of thousands of Korean Buddhist monks and their followers have been angrily protesting to the President, eventually making him propose a law banning religious discrimination in governmental affairs. These clashes between Korean Buddhism and Protestantism make one wonder why the former has been so antagonistic toward the latter. Here, however, we will not directly deal with Korean Protestantism's antagonism to Korean Buddhism, but with its fundamentalist inclination which is believed to have caused not only the antagonism, but innumerable schisms within it.

We will examine first how Korean Protestantism's fundamentalist tendency has appeared in its history, and, then, attempt to uncover the outstanding causes of the tendency. But before we deal with these subjects, we need to define what the essential elements of religious fundamentalism are, since the term ‘fundamentalism’ has too many implications. Here we utilize George M. Marsden's definition of fundamentalism.

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¹ Editorial, Segye Ilbo (Segye daily newspaper), August 26, 2008.
“Fundamentalism” is used in so many ways that a definition is the only place to begin. As I here use the term, “fundamentalism” refers to a twentieth-century movement closely tied to the revivalist tradition of mainstream evangelical Protestantism that militantly opposed modernist theology and the cultural change associated with it. Fundamentalism shares traits with many other movements to which it has been related (such as pietism, evangelicalism, revivalism, conservatism, confessionalism, millenarianism, and the holiness and Pentecostal movements), but it has been distinguished most clearly from these by its militancy in opposition to modernism. This militancy has typically been expressed in terms of certain characteristic theological or intellectual emphases: whereas modernism or liberal theology tended to explain life and much of religion in terms of natural developments, fundamentalists stressed the supernatural. Accordingly, their most distinctive doctrines (although not all have been held by everyone in the movement) were the divinely guaranteed verbal inerrancy of Scripture, divine creation as opposed to biological evolution, and a dispensational-premillennial scheme that explained historical change in terms of divine control.

What Marsden says here may be summarized as follows: 1) fundamentalists are militant in opposition to modernism (or post-modernism) especially on the basis of the doctrine of the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible; and 2) fundamentalism comes mainly from revivalist tradition. What we shall examine in this paper, therefore, are: first, some distinctive cases in which Korean Protestants were militantly aggressive toward modernists particularly using the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible; and then why and how the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy has become so deeply rooted in the Korean Protestant mind. While examining these two aspects, we will see how revivalism and millennialism facilitated Korean Protestants’ fundamentalist literalist position on the Bible, and how these two factors were in turn influenced by Korea’s socio-political instability in its revolutionary era (from the Sino-Chinese War in 1894 to the Korean War in 1950). Here it is to be noted that we will focus on the Korean Presbyterian Church, which has been not only the largest Protestant denomination in Korea, but the one which has experienced many historical schisms, that are believed to be caused by fundamentalism.


II. KOREAN FUNDAMENTALISTS’ OPPOSITION TO MODERNISM: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

1. The Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversies in the 1930s

Here we will look at some idiosyncratic cases in which Korean fundamentalists turned out to be militantly aggressive toward modernists predominantly using the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy. We will see, first, three similar theological controversies, which were raised by fundamentalists in the 1930’s, and then again three tragic schisms that were also caused by fundamentalists in Korea’s post-liberation period (1945–60).

It was in the 1930s in Korea that Korean fundamentalists, who had been dormant in the earlier years, were for the first time publicly on the offensive side against a few somewhat liberal Korean Presbyterian pastors. Beginning with the Great Revival of P’yŏngyang in 1907, Korean Protestant churches had experienced a rapid growth by revival movements, which had been raging like a wildfire all over the Korean peninsular. Experiencing a kind of exodus from Buddhism, Confucianism, Shamanism, or atheism, newly converted Korean Protestants came to form a distinctively Korean Christianity, which included fundamentalist elements: revivalist, emotional worship and prayer, simplistic Bible study, strict Sabbath observance, millennialism, and fervent evangelism. Especially they adhered to a literalist or Biblicist interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, which later became a root cause of Korean fundamentalism.

From the 1930s onwards the Korean Presbyterian church, which was the biggest Protestant denomination in Korea, came to turn structurally fundamentalist through some notable theological controversies resembling the famous American fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the 1920s and 30s. Here I introduce three theological controversies all of which happened in 1934, and which caused Korean fundamentalists to be a hegemonic and aggressive ecclesiastical body. The first of the controversies was caused by a Korean Presbyterian pastor named Kim Chun-bae, who wrote a short article advocating women’s eligibility for eldership in the Presbyterian church, saying:

I cannot possibly understand why the Presbyterians do not yet allow women to be elders. Do they still hold fast to the outdated custom of male predominance over women [namjonyŏbi]? Or do they observe the worn-out [Confucian] practice that does not allow women to go out? Or do they still follow the Biblical saying that ‘women should be silent and are not allowed to teach,’ which was in fact a custom of a local [Corinthian] church two thousand years ago [cf. 1 Corinthians 14:34]? Is it really a truth that cannot
be changed forever?4

The problem, as the Korean Presbyterian church at the time saw, was Rev. Kim’s way of interpreting the Bible, which was believed to be against a literalist or fundamentalist way. The General Assembly of the church eventually made a judgment against him saying: “A liberal interpretation of the Bible is in its spirit a critical method, which is destructive. It is a grave blasphemy against the divinity and authority of the Bible to interpret the words in the Bible differently from their literal meanings and according to the desires of current people. Pastors who hold the Bible in contempt that way cannot be accepted as pastors for the Korean Presbyterian church, which subscribes to its Creed [12 Articles of Faith] that says: ‘The Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and duty.’”5

The second controversy was caused by another Presbyterian pastor, Kim Yŏng-ju, who wrote that “[the book of Genesis] was based on an ancient Hebrew myth,” when he co-authored an interdenominational Sunday school textbook. The General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church produced an indictment against Rev. Kim, saying: “Those who say that the book of Genesis is not authored by Moses despise and hold the authority of the Bible as well as that of Christ in contempt. . . . And they turn out to transgress the 1st Article of the Creed of the Church that ‘The Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and duty,’ and it is lawful for the church to forfeit their pastorates.”6

The third and largest controversy was about the publication of the Korean translation of the one-volume Abingdon Bible Commentary, which was done by a somewhat liberal group of Korean theologians, the majority of whom were Methodists. But among them were also Rev. Kim Jae-jun and Rev. Song Chang-gŭn from the Presbyterian side, who later became the champions of a somewhat liberal group that stood in opposition to Korean fundamentalists. Although it was not explicitly following liberalism, the commentary was written in the conviction that “The continuous advance in scientific discovery, in philosophic ideals, and in the social applications of these discoveries and ideals necessitates a new appraisal

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4 Rev. Kim, Chun-bae, “Changnohoe Ch’ŏnghoe e ollinŭn malssŭm” (Words submitted to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church), Kidok sinbo, August 15–22, 1934. Also see, Yi Tŏk-chu, “Kŭnbonjuŭi sinhak kwa Han’guk kyohoe” (Fundamentalist theology and the Korean [Protestant] church), Segye ŭi sinhak, (Summer, 1996), 134f.
5 Chosŏn Yesugyo Changnohoe Ch’ŏnghoe (The General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church), Chosŏn Yesugyo Changnohoe Ch’ŏnghoe ch’ŏnghoe ch’o 24hoe hoerok (The Register of the 24th General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church), 1935, 89.
6 Chosŏn Yesugyo Changnohoe Ch’ŏnghoe ch’ŏnghoe ch’o 24hoe hoerok , 85.
and a restatement of religious truth.” But these ideas were understood by the Korean Presbyterian leaders of the time to be modernist, evolutionist, and liberal. Thus Dr. Hyŏng-yong Pak, who was a leading fundamentalist theologian of the General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church at that time, charged that the authors of the commentary “interpreted the Bible with the method of destructive higher criticism and analyzed the revelatory [salvation] history through the eyes of religious evolution.” And then in the following year (1935) the General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church resolved that the “Abingdon Bible Commentary must not be subscribed to by the Presbyterian communion because it has many points incompatible with the Church’s doctrines.” It was also Rev. Kil Sŏn-ju, the illustrious leader of the P’yŏngyang revival movement, who publicly condemned the commentary in 1935, and led militant fundamentalism in Korea.

It is obvious here that the Korean Presbyterian Church, which had been implicitly fundamentalist until the 1930s, turned explicitly and positively fundamentalist through those modernist-fundamentalist controversies on the basis of the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy. The decade after 1935, however, saw no outstanding Korean fundamentalist uprisings, simply because Korean churches then were busy both internally and externally fighting against the forced Japanese Shintō-shrine worship. The inherent fundamentalist aggressiveness of Korean Protestants was only internalized and even strengthened by the extremely unstable socio-political situation that was caused by the revolutionary situation of the world around the Second World War. So it was no accident that the years following the fateful exodus of Korea from Japan in 1945 saw unsettled Korean fundamentalist uprisings, which were much more harmful than before: they were destructively uncompromising and separatist.

2. The Tragic Fundamentalist Schisms in the Post-Liberation Period

Here we will examine the three historical separatist schisms in the Korean Presbyterian Church, all of which were greatly affected by Korean

8 His first name “Hyŏng-yong” (형용) has also been read as “Hyŏng-nyong” (형룡), while in English literatures it has appeared as Hyung Nong or Hyung-nong.
10 Ibid.
fundamentalism, on the one hand, and, on the other, the after-effects of Japanese colonial rule and the communist takeover of North Korea. Many Korean theologians have been blaming the Korean fundamentalists one-sidedly for dividing the Korean Presbyterian Church. Yet fundamentalism itself is almost always a multi-faceted movement affected not only by some theological problems, but by many external and international influences. Korean fundamentalism in Korea's post-liberation era was apparently strengthened first by the after-effect of the Japanese imperialist dominance over Korean Christians and second by the communist revolution in North Korea, which forced the Korean churches not only to be divided, but to adopt a cold war mentality, which has a mind-set similar to fundamentalism. Korean fundamentalism in a narrower sense was based on the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy, but in a broader sense, it grew deeper and was heightened by revivalism and millennialism, which were in turn fuelled by the socio-political instability of Korea during Japanese colonial rule and the instability of the years that followed it.

During Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945), Korean Christians had been forced to be narrow-minded and fundamentalist, since they had to confine themselves mainly within the spiritual realm, having been unable to participate actively in socio-political affairs, which had been controlled by the Japanese. A great number of Korean Christians, therefore, escaped from the socio-political realms, just hiding and remaining in their houses or in the deep mountains, while many others escaped abroad to Manchuria (the Kando area in particular) and other nations. Then after the unexpected liberation of Korea from Japan in 1945, the suppressed political instincts of Korean Christians were bursting out almost uncontrollably. It was quite predictable, therefore, that they came to form many factional and separatist denominations according to their doctrinal positions or their hometowns. So it was, as expected, separatist fundamentalism that came to be the most obvious theological cause in those separatist movements.

After Korea's emancipation from Japan, Korean Christians' separatist fundamentalism came to be further strengthened by the cold war mentality that resulted from the pro-Russian North Korea's abrupt turn toward communism, and the innumerable North Korean Christians' sudden influx into South Korea. Furthermore, Korean Protestant churches had been in an anarchistic state for years before and after the liberation. The churches, therefore, had not been able to develop their own unified church polities and governments not only because

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12 For instance, Kyoung-Bae Min, *A History of Christian Churches in Korea*, 534 ff. Dr. Min tends to reduce the problems of the three historical schisms in the Korean Presbyterian church to those of the three different seminaries. Also Yi Tŏk-chu, “Kŭnbonjuŭi sinhak kwa Han'guk kyohoe,” 134 ff. Dr. Lee also does not significantly mention other factors apart from theological ones.
of the brutal persecution that took place under the Japanese, but also because they had already been divided into the North and the South due to the communist revolution in the North. Thus, it was apparent that the time for fundamentalist separatism was fully ripe. And it was no accident that the post-liberation era (1945–1960) of Korea saw three tragic schisms occurring within the Korean Presbyterian Church, which have caused numerable evils within Korean Protestantism. It was predictably Korean fundamentalists, who were one of the most important causes of the schisms.

It is to be noted that after the fateful liberation of Korea from Japan, a considerable number of separatist movements arose in the Korean Presbyterian Church, which were led by the so-called ch’urok sŏngdo (saints freed from the [Japanese] prisons) and anti-Japanese pastors and lay leaders with a strong fundamentalist theology. Predictably, those factional separatist fundamentalist movements took place strongly first in North Korea, whose anarchist status after liberation was further amplified by the communist revolution. The South Kyŏngsang Province area also saw a strong growth of fundamentalism, not only because it had many prominent anti-Japanese pastors, but because it was very remote from the Seoul area, where Christians were still resisting forming separatist factions and were longing for a unified church government. The claims of the separatist movements right after Korea’s liberation were mainly that the existing church government and its hierarchy were corrupt, having bowed down before the Japanese gods in the Shintō shrines and having collaborated with the Japanese colonial government. It was particularly ch’urok sŏngdo who not only led the separatist movements, but, as a result, formed independent schismatic church governments. And it was clearly a fundamentalist theology, which they took advantage of, especially in attacking the existing ecclesiastical establishment. But in North Korea separatist movements were thwarted by the communist takeover. The separatist movement in the South Kyŏngsang Province area experienced quite significant counter-attacks from the existing Presbyterian church government, but eventually in 1952 succeeded in forming an independent Presbyterian denomination called Koryŏp’a (a noble and pure denomination). This first tragic schism in the long-time unified Korean Presbyterian Church requires closer examination.

This schism bore a considerable resemblance to the Donatist movement of the fourth century, which fought against the corruption of the existing hierarchy. During Japanese colonial rule, the majority of the Presbyterian Church leaders accepted Japanese Shintō-shrine worship, with many of them even explicitly

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supporting Japanese rule. Consequently they were regarded as irredeemably corrupt especially by those who had fought against the Japanese persecution. This was particularly the case in the South Kyŏngsang Province area, where anti-Japanese pastors and the so-called ch’urok sŏngdo were prevalent.

Those ch’urok sŏngdo and formerly anti-Japanese Presbyterian pastors and elders in South Kyŏngsang Province area, who had been imbued with pietism and fundamentalism, exploited the anarchic situation during the post-liberation years, establishing in 1945 a presbytery (a local Presbyterian Church government) which was virtually independent of the General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church. To secure their position in the Korean Presbyterian Church, they even created in 1946 a theological seminary, namely, the Koryŏ Theological Seminary. Thus they later came to be called the Koryŏp’a (a noble and pure denomination). They argued that the existing Presbyterian Church was “too liberal, too ecumenical, and too tainted with Shintō collaborationism,” as an American missionary, who witnessed this schism, stated. He goes on:

Ministers guilty of compromise had been censured by the General Assembly and removed from their pulpits for two months of penance and repentance, but this did not satisfy the purists. Collaborators, they say, are permanently unfit for church leadership, no matter how they repent.  

The Koryŏp’a further claimed that the General Assembly’s Chosŏn Seminary in Seoul was denying the inerrancy of the Bible by accepting critical methods in Biblical studies. So the claims of the “purists” were surely those of fundamentalists, and it was no accident that they became separatist, forming in 1952 an independent Presbyterian denomination. Here it is to be noted that the fundamentalist movements in Korea at that time were significantly influenced by the American fundamentalist movement, which was led by Rev. Carl McIntire, who has been called an “apostle of discord.” To justify its existence, the Koryŏ Theological Seminary needed American recognition for which it accepted two American missionaries, who came from “fundamentalist mission bodies related

14 Chŏn Taek-pu, Han’guk kyohoe palch’ŏnsa (A history of the Korean church’s development), 289.
16 Ibid.
18 Samuel Hugh Moffett, The Christians of Korea, 115. According to Moffett, McIntire was “a professional schismatic who has three times split his own church.” Also cf. Ralph Lord Roy, Apostles of Discord: A Study of Organized Bigotry and Disruption on the Fringes of Protestantism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953), 186 ff.
to the Orthodox and Bible Presbyterian schisms in America, which were all too
eager to accuse other Presbyterians of liberalism.”

Koryŏp’a dissidents themselves belied their fundamentalist problems, when
they selected Dr. Hyung-yong Pak, who had already led fundamentalist wars
against theological liberals, as we have seen above. To justify its existence in the
historical Korean Presbyterian Church, the Koryŏ Seminary needed some
prominent theologians, and it, therefore, chose Dr. Pak, who took up his position
as its president in 1947. But Dr. Pak discovered that the Koryŏp’a Presbyterian
Church was too isolated from the General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian
Church, and that the leaders of the Seminary including the American
missionaries were too authoritarian and separatist. Furthermore, Dr. Pak, who
had been accused of being fundamentalist and separatist himself, had to leave
Koryŏ Seminary in 1948. Returning to Seoul in the same year, Dr. Pak, however,
found himself in a much more severe fundamentalist-modernist controversy,
which gave birth to another more tragic schism in 1953 and resulted in the
formation of Kidokkyo Changnoheo or Christ Presbyterian Church, whose
official English name has been the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea.

This second historical Presbyterian schism that was caused mainly by Korean
fundamentalism arose in the years from 1947 to 1953, while separatist
movements were raging quite out of control, as we have seen above. It should be
mentioned, however, that this schism was not caused by Korean fundamentalism
alone, but also by the socio-political problems of Korea that occurred after its
liberation from Japan in 1945. P’yŏngyang, once called the Jerusalem of Asia, was
dominated by pro-Russian communists after 1945, and the venerable P’yŏngyang
Theological Seminary, which had trained some hundred Korean Presbyterian

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19 Samuel Hugh Moffett, *The Christians of Korea*, 114. Cf. Kyoung-Bae Min, *A History of Christian Churches in Korea* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2005), 544. Here the author does not mention the Bible Presbyterian Church, which with its mentor, Carl McIntire, continued to influence Korea’s fundamentalist movements. According to Min, the two American missionaries were Revs. B. F. Hunt and F. E. Hamilton, who were probably sent by the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Mission, which was led by the factional Orthodox and Bible Presbyterian churches, whose mentors were J. Gresham Machen and Carl McIntire. Cf. George Marsden (ed.), *Evangelicalism and Modern America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 5. Here Joel A. Carpenter says: “J. Gresham Machen, founder of Westminster Seminary, believed that any denomination that refused to discipline theological liberals and harassed conservatives was no longer a true church and was not worthy of true Christians’ loyalty. This separatist impulse spawned . . . the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1936, and the Bible Presbyterian Church in 1937, while scores of congregations became independent of any denomination ties.”


21 This name was apparently chosen to distinguish this church from the existing Korean Presbyterian Church called Yesugyo Changnohoe or Jesus Presbyterian Church.
pastors, had been closed since 1938, because it rejected Shintō-shrine worship.

In the meantime, Rev. Kim Chae-jun and Rev. Song Chang-gŭn, who had been virtually exiled in Seoul because of their involvement in the translation of the *Abingdon Bible Commentary*, were running a theological seminary called Chosŏn Theological Seminary (presently Hanshin University and Seminary), which was considerably opposed to fundamentalist theology. In spite of its theoretically somewhat liberal position, this seminary became the Presbyterian Church’s official seminary, not only because there was no alternative during this tumultuous period, but also because it was located in Seoul, which had a much more open and liberal atmosphere than Pyŏngyang. But the extreme turbulence of the times also worked against the Chosŏn Seminary, not only because many North Korean refugees were crowding into Seoul, but also because Koreans were becoming the victims of the Cold War mentality, which was raging wildly not only in Korea, but all over the world. As a consequence the Chosŏn Seminary’s somewhat liberalist aberration would not go unchecked for long.

It was the seminary’s conservative students who initiated the war against its professor Kim Chae-jun, accusing him of being liberal, which at that time meant anti-Christian. The students, who turned out to be fundamentalist, presented a petition to the General Assembly of the church, which stated:

> The Presbyterian Church is a church that has been established on the belief in the absolute authority of the Bible. We have a supernaturalistic view on the Bible that it was written by the divine revelation and the inspiration [of the Holy Spirit]. ‘The Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, and the inerrant and infallible rule of faith and duty.’ This article has been our article of pure faith that the Korean Christians before us and we ourselves shall trust from generation to generation. . . . But we now feel that our belief in that article of faith and our view on the Bible, which we have cherished from our childhood, are being turned upside down, while we are learning about the Bible and theology here at Chosŏn Theological Seminary, which is the official seminary of the General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church.\(^{22}\)

The petition of the students, which clearly reflected a fundamentalist, literalist position on the Bible, was so explosive that even the Korean War in 1950–53 could not quench its flames. It was unfortunately Dr. Hyŏng-yong Pak, who, having come from Koryŏ Seminary in Pusan, led the fundamentalist war against

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\(^{22}\) Kim Yang-sŏn (Yang-sŏn Kim), *Han’guk kidokkyo haebang sinmyŏn su* (A history of the ten years after Korea’s liberation from Japan) (Seoul: Taehan Yesugyo Changnohoe Ch’ŏnghoe Chonggyo kyoyukbu, 1956), 216.
Rev. Chae-jun Kim in 1948. Dr. Pak, who was appointed by the General Assembly to review the case, indicted Rev. Kim that he carried out “a higher criticism of the Bible, which destroys the authority of the Bible,” and “put an indignity on the church.”

These theological and ecclesiastical problems were regrettable even worsened by the Koryŏp’a’s schismatic movement, and the Korean War that broke out in 1950. Therefore, the majority of the Presbyterian leaders, many of whom were North Korean refugee pastors, had become even more fundamentalist, uncompromising, and separatist than before perhaps because of the raging communist thrust from North Korea. In 1951 they established another seminary temporarily in Taegu, thus accelerating their conflict with the Chosŏn (at the time Han’guk) Seminary group. Finally in 1952 the General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church, that was convened while the Korean War was still raging, resolved the case by excommunicating Rev. Kim Chae-jun from the church.

Then eventually in 1953 Rev. Kim Chae-jun and other somewhat liberal leaders of the church, who had considerable strength in Seoul as well as the area of South Chŏlla Province, split from the General Assembly, and created a new Presbyterian church called Kidokkyo Changnohoe. This second disastrous schism was caused not only by theological problems, but by the socio-political problems of Korea, which were caused by centuries-long regional factionalism, which had been worsened by Japanese colonial rule, Korea’s tragic division into two, and the Korean War. It is regrettable that Korean theologians have seldom paid attention to these socio-political and international factors that contributed to the schisms.

The third and most disastrous schism in the Korean Presbyterian Church that was caused by Korean fundamentalism was also led chiefly by Dr. Hyŏng-yong Pak. But what was at issue this time was not only fundamentalist theological problems, but a financial problem that was caused by Dr. Pak. Having been president of the General Assembly Seminary since 1953, Dr. Pak was found in 1958 to have committed “financial misdeeds.” As a result, he was forced to leave the Seminary, but he still had a large number of followers, who insisted that “he had been ousted not because of any financial misdeeds, but because the liberal,

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23 Min Kyung-bae, Han’guk Kidokkyo haebang sinmyŏn Sa, 523. Also cf., Kim Yang-sŏn (Yang-sŏn Kim), Han’guk Kidokkyo haebang sinmyŏn Sa, 229f.

24 Cf. George T. Brown, Mission to Korea (Board of World Mission, Presbyterian Church, U. S., 1962), 217. Here the author, a long-time missionary to Korea, only alludes to the two great factions in the General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church, which made a significant contribution to the division of the Korean Presbyterian church according to regional background: namely, the North Korean refugee leaders and those from the South-Western Chŏlla Province area.
ecumenical wing of the church wanted him out.” And the followers of Dr. Pak turned out to be militantly fundamentalist, asserting that the church’s ecumenical involvement was “pro-communist.” So Dr. Pak’s so-called “anti-ecumenical” faction was exploiting Korea’s increasing anti-communism to attack the ecclesiastical establishment (pro-ecumenical group).

What was worse, Dr. Pak’s “anti-ecumenical” and fundamentalist faction was also utilizing the American fundamentalist movements that were being carried out by ICCC (International Council of Christian Churches), which was formed and led by Dr. Carl McIntire, the “apostle of discord.” In the meantime, there had been some attempts at reconciliation especially by American Presbyterian missionaries in Korea. But around 1959 “Dr. Carl McIntire of the ICCC was also at this time touring Korea, sowing seeds of discord. As a result, this compromise solution was rejected by extremists in the anti-ecumenical faction.” Eventually in 1960 the Korean Presbyterian Church, which had already experienced its two historical schisms, split into two denominations, the one (Tonghap), somewhat liberal and pro-ecumenical, and the other (Haptong), very conservative and anti-ecumenical.

As we have seen above, Korean Presbyterian churches have turned out to have a fundamentalist inclination in that they have exerted their “militancy in opposition to modernism.” But what makes Korean fundamentalism distinctive from that of other nations is the intensity of Korean fundamentalists’ Biblicism or fervent belief in Biblical inerrancy. What is at issue here from a theological perspective is how Biblicism has been so deeply rooted in the Korean Christian mind. So in the following section we will examine both this process and also look into how Korean Christians’ Biblicism has been reinforced by three elements: 1) revivalism and pre-millennialism, 2) Koreans’ original religiosity (Confucian, Buddhist, and Shamanism) and 3) the turbulent socio-political conditions of modern Korea.

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25 Ibid., 218.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 219.
III. BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY: KOREAN PROTESTANTISM’S INHERENT FUNDAMENTALIST INCLINATION

1. Western Missionaries’ Conservatism

As we have seen above, Korean fundamentalism has been based mainly on the doctrine of the Biblical inerrancy. Here we will examine why fundamentalist Biblicism has been so deeply rooted in the Korean Presbyterian Church that it has been the ground of Korean fundamentalist militancy against out-groups and other religions. As Korean Protestantism began with the Western missionaries to Korea, whose majority were American Presbyterian and Methodist, we will reflect on how they were related to the fundamentalist Biblicism in Korea. The Western missionaries who brought Christianity to Korea over a century ago were usually American pietistic and revivalist ones, who had a potential fundamentalist leaning. So observes Arthur J. Brown, who was a prominent leader in the Far Eastern mission works those days, being the Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, New York, U.S.A.

The typical missionary of the first quarter century after the opening of the country [Korea] was a man of the Puritan type. He kept the Sabbath as our New England forefathers did a century ago. He looked upon dancing, smoking, and card-playing as sins in which no true follower of Christ should indulge. In theology and biblical criticism he was strongly conservative, and he held as a vital truth the premillenarian view of the second coming of Christ. The higher criticism and liberal theology were deemed dangerous heresies. In most of the evangelical churches of America and Great Britain, conservatives and evangelical liberals have learned to live together in peace; but in Korea the evangelical liberal, whose interpretation of the Bible differs from the commonly accepted one, sometimes has a rough road to travel.29

This was still the case by the 1930s, as the American Presbyterian missionaries themselves classified their theology as “notably conservative,” while they reflected on their own theology when celebrating the Jubilee anniversary of their mission works in Korea.30 Also there are quite abundant sources that prove the

very conservative or even fundamentalist bent of nineteenth and early twentieth century American missionaries. So here we may safely say that the missionaries’ theology in general was “notably conservative,” and that it was not always fundamentalist. In other words, their conservative theology had a potential to turn fundamentalist, but the time had not yet come for it to be actualized until modernism or liberalism was meaningfully expressed in Korea. It is quite obvious that the American missionaries in their Korean mission fields had no outstanding reasons to turn significantly fundamentalist until they came to meet Christians with modernist or liberal views on the Bible in the 1930s. It is an injustice to the missionaries, therefore, if we blame their theology for being consistently fundamentalist.31

It is to be noted that the conservatism of the missionaries, however, was unfortunately further strengthened by the unstable socio-political situation of Korean Christians, who were forced to remain in a spiritual realm, having been expelled by the Japanese imperialists from the political realm. Here it is important to understand that the missionaries themselves prevented their Korean followers from participating in political matters, thus beginning a long process of de-politicization.32 By the turn of the twentieth century Korea was gradually falling victim to the Japanese colonial power, which was considerably opposed by the newly converted Korean Christians, particularly those who belonged to the Independence Club (Tongnip Hyŏphoe). Opposing the encroaching Japanese colonialist advance was a Korean Christian’s natural, and just response to it. The missionaries as the leaders of the church, however, not only discouraged Korean Christians’ political activities, but even made a public resolution to forbid them, a tragic action that has contributed to the dualism and spiritualism of Korean Christians. The resolution titled “Some Conditions about the Church’s Relation to the State” was passed in 1901 by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian missionaries in Korea, and its points read as follows:

1. We pastors [missionaries] shall not meddle in Korean national and governmental affairs.
2. . . . . The church is to be separated from the state, and we shall not interfere in the state’s affairs. . . .

Church in the U.S.A., June 30–July 2, 1934 (Seoul: The publisher not recorded, 1934), 56.
31 For instance, Dr. Choo Chai-yong (Chu Chae-yong) says: “The missionaries with conservative theology consistently had a fundamentalist position on the Bible. . . . For them the Bible is a book containing only those five fundamentalist points, and inerrant being a book written from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.” See Choo Chai-yong, Han’guk Kŭrisŭdogyo sinhaksa (A history of Korean Christian theology) (Seoul: Taehan Kidokkyo sŏhoe, 1998), 98f.
32 Cf., Kyoung-Bae Min, A History of Christian Churches in Korea, 165f.
5. The church belongs to and lives by the Holy Spirit, and is not a governmental office; it therefore to be used for worship, education and ecclesiastical affairs, and not for political purposes. In the church no one is allowed to publicly discuss political affairs. It is even more forbidden for a Christian to speak at the parsonage of the political affairs which cannot be discussed publicly elsewhere.\footnote{Quoted from Gil Sop Song, Han’guk shinhak sasangsa (History of theological thought in Korea) (Seoul: CLS, 1987), p. 119. This resolution originally comes from: Kŭrisŭdo Sinmun (Christ Newspaper), Vol. 5, no. 40, October 3, 1901.}

It is fairly hard to understand why the Presbyterian missionaries took that kind of an extreme anti-political measure. Is it not the case that their anti-political measure was a corollary of their conservative and revivalist theology having no high regard for the socio-political dimension of the Christian life. Did the missionaries themselves not already have a separatist and dualist theology—making a sharp distinction between the West and the East, the Christian and the heathen, and the holy and the secular, and so on? Here it is necessary for us to see the missionaries’ attitude toward the Japanese, since it determined their attitude toward the colonized Koreans. It seems that the missionaries well read the political fate of Korea by the turn of the twentieth century: it was becoming a prey of the Japanese colonial power, which they were forced to accept willingly or unwillingly.

After winning the Sino-Japanese war (1894–95) in and around Korea, Japan was already virtually colonizing Korea, and the missionaries as a third party might have been deeply perplexed in deciding how to face the Japanese colonizer while working with and for the colonized Koreans. This situation was quite unique in the history of Christian missions. Korea was the only country (except for Formosa or Taiwan and Manchuria) which was colonized by a non-Western country, which was Japan. At any rate, the missionaries got to know that Korea could not possibly escape from the grip of the Japanese imperialist power, which was tacitly supported by both Great Britain and U.S.A. So the American Presbyterian missionaries made a resolution to ask their Korean followers to recognize the Japanese as their king. So Arthur J. Brown, the leader of the Korea mission of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., created the term “loyal recognition,” saying:

[L]oyal recognition is, I believe, the sound position. It is in accord with the example of Christ, who loyally submitted himself and advised his Apostles to submit themselves to a far worse government than the Japanese, and it is in line with the teaching of Paul in Romans 13:1. . . . So far from
missionaries inciting Koreans against the Japanese, they have really done more to influence them to submit to Japanese Government than any other class of men. Repeated efforts to embroil the churches in revolutionary propaganda have been suppressed by missionaries.34

Here we need not to talk about whether the missionaries’ measure, “loyal recognition,” was just, ethical, and Christian, or not. Nevertheless, its impact on the Korean Christian mind was profound, stimulating Korean Christians to escape from the socio-political realm and remain in the spiritual one. This explains why Korean Protestants fervently turned to the Bible studies.

2. The Preoccupation of the Missionaries and Korean Protestants with the Bible due to Korea’s Lack of Political Freedom

Being unable to participate actively in socio-political matters, Korean Protestants got to focus on Bible studies. For them, the Bible meant not only a religious book, but the single most important book that had given rise to Western civilization, which they so admired. Furthermore, Bible study with the Western missionaries was very different from the traditional Confucian way of studying, which often lacked intellectual dialogues between the teacher and his or her pupils. So Korean Protestants fervently attended Bible study classes, even walking over one hundred miles to find one. As Rev. James S. Gale, a leading Canadian Presbyterian missionary in Korea, who was fairly against the Japanese colonialist encroachment into Korea, explains:

[T]he Church of Christ is not a political organization and must not be; the moment it becomes so, its spiritual influence is gone. Willis [an American missionary] saw at once that the only way to meet it, was by a deeper spiritual influence among the people, and his efforts were directed towards training classes, that assembled at various places for Bible study and prayer. At the classes no politics were discussed.35

Rev. Gale, who had been watching Korea’s sovereignty being taken away by the Japanese around 1908, again explains how Korean Christians came to be confined to the Bible.

The Korean is a gentleman by instinct, he worships intellect and not the god of force. In his tears over his fallen divinity, he fumbles at the sword, thinking to try it, but the sword is not his, as it was not Peter’s. What shall he do for something that will take the place of all that he has lost? When in tears, just at this time there comes to him the Bible. . . . Let all hearts and hands unite in getting into his soul these divine and kingly truths [of the Bible]. Some how were never scholars in the ancient classics have become men of mighty influence, because the heart has been filled with the sayings of sages such as Moses, Daniel, Isaiah, Peter, Paul, and John.36

The preoccupation of Korean Protestants with the Bible, at any rate, worked extremely well, drawing a great crowd of Koreans to Protestant churches, a situation that perhaps had been facilitated by Korea’s continuously unstable socio-political situation.37 Thus, the missionaries even set up a mission policy called the “Nevius Method” according to which “the Bible is made the basis of all the work, and the aim is so to fill the minds of the people with it that it will control conduct.”38

The most important religious works for the part of Korean converts and catechumens, then, were simply listening to the missionaries preaching and teaching about the Biblical words, accepting and practicing them as authoritative words. Furthermore, Korean Protestantism in its formative years did not have such meaningful religious symbols as prominent hierarchical persons, outstanding church buildings, and significant rites. What Korean Protestantism had instead of those religious symbols was simply the Bible. And a Korean Protestant’s listening to the Bible, learning about it, and putting it into practice was the equivalent of a Catholic having a mass officiated by a respected priest in a grandiose cathedral. So the Bible’s position in Korean Protestantism has been by nature critically important.

Here we must understand that the importance of the Bible in Korean Protestantism has even been reinforced by the extremely unstable socio-political situation of modern Korea. Modern Japan was relatively stable socio-politically, and the Japanese people had no outstanding reasons to abandon their traditional

37 Cf. Charles Allen Clark, The Korean Church and the Nevius Method (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1930), 228. Some American missionaries, therefore, recognized that the Sino-Japanese War in 1894–95 was an important cause of the success of mission works in Korea. Another American missionary to Korea said: “The period of greatest evangelistic growth was the dark period just before and after the annexation of Korea by Japan.” Ibid., 236.
38 Ibid., 27. Also see, S. H. Moffett, 60; and Spencer J. Palmer, Korea and Christianity (Seoul: Hollym Corporation, 1967), 27.
religions and go to Christianity as a foreign religion. And only a few intellectual Japanese were drawn to Christianity primarily for intellectualistic reasons. But modern Korea’s situation was much different from Japan’s, especially because it had no real political sovereignty during the revolutionary era (from the last years of the Chosŏn dynasty to the Korean War in 1950–53). A large number of Koreans were drawn to Christianity probably to find some psychological security in it, as it was carried out by Western missionaries, who were believed to be superior to Asians. But what the missionaries had was mainly the Bible, and because of the large number of Koreans swarming to them, they were almost forced to focus on just simplistic Bible studies. Then what prompted this process were revivalism and pre-millennialism, which we will see a little later.

The Western missionaries and the Bible, therefore, in Korea with their fraternal, democratic, dialogical, rather than hierarchical and authoritative, teachings, made an indelible mark on Koreans, drawing a multitude of them to the Protestant churches. For the part of Korean Christians, however, the Bible was yet something very hard to understand, simply because up to the 1930s the majority of Korean Christians were in fact almost illiterate, and had nearly no knowledge of the Bible. And the only thing the Western missionaries could do for their Korean converts and catechumens was a simplistic Bible study: teaching about the content of each book of the Bible, and helping them to memorize the important Bible verses, and put them into practice.

Here it is helpful to see how the Bible had been treated at least up to the 1930s in Korea. The American Presbyterian missionaries testified as follows:

The Bible itself has been, of course, pre-eminently the greatest factor in the evangelization, as in all other countries, but it has certainly occupied a rather unique position in the work of Korea, and the Korean church derives its power, its spirituality, its great faith in prayer, and its liberality from the fact that the whole church has been, as it were, saturated with knowledge of the Bible.39

The missionaries went on:

The place of the Bible in all the work of the [American Presbyterian] Missions has been made very prominent. To this emphasis also the Koreans responded. They have always venerated the scholar and books. . . . In 1906, the Mission passed a resolution of appreciation of the work of the Bible study groups as follows:—“The Christianity that is being developed in this country is pre-eminently a Biblical Christianity. . . . It is

the Bible that is the daily food of the Korean Christians, his spiritual meat and drink. The Bible holds the chief place in the mental and spiritual nourishment of a multitude of people in this land.\(^40\)

A statement of faith that the missionaries and their Korean followers drew in 1926 also says:

> We believe that the world never needed more urgently than it does today an authoritative rule of faith and practice to guide it, and we affirm that we find such a rule of faith and practice in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which we accept in full as the inspired Word of God, given of God to reveal His holy will as to men’s earthly lives and as to their eternal salvation.\(^41\)

It is clear here that the missionaries’ mission works focusing on simplistic Bible studies, which presupposed a literalistic understanding of the Bible, worked well, facilitating a literally explosive church growth in Korea. Then, how did the missionaries’ Korean followers accept the Bible? They accepted it not only as the Word of God, but as an authoritative rule for life, the magnitude of its importance being much greater than even for American fundamentalists. The missionaries’ simplistic Bible studies usually converged on some practical teachings: winning the souls, carrying out temperance (especially no drinking and smoking), Sabbath observance, abandoning concubines, and so on.\(^42\) So the

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\(^{40}\) H. A. Rhodes (ed.), *History of the Korea Mission, Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.*, Vol. I (Seoul: Chosen Mission, Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., 1934), 253. An American missionary in Korea also attests: “Intimately related to the work of the Holy Spirit, is the interest which men manifest in the Word of God. One of the large elements of strength in the Christian life of the Korean Church is found in the place occupied by the Bible. The study and the practice of the word of God play a large part in all church plans and church policies in Korea. . . . . The Bible is the principal text book, studied systematically, book by book, and topic by topic. Usually ten hours a day is put in on this study. These classes last from a week to three weeks. There are separate classes for men and for women. Last year, fully 50,000 Korean Christians, or one in every five of the entire membership of the Church, took these courses of study. This constitutes one of the greatest Laymen’s Movements to be found anywhere on earth.” See, Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, *Students and the Present Missionary Crisis: Addresses Delivered before the Sixth International Convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions* (Rochester, New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1909), 309.

\(^{41}\) Charles Allen Clark, *The Korean Church and the Nevius Methods*, 107f.

\(^{42}\) An American Presbyterian missionary testifies: “[I]t takes from six months to two years to become full baptized members of the Church. It takes only a few minutes apparently to be put out of the Church if one does not continue to ‘adorn the doctrine.’ No one is baptized who uses liquor or handles it, nor any one who is living in irregular marriage relationship as concubine or the husband of a concubine. Those who do not keep Sabbath are not received. Any one guilty of
missionaries and their Korean followers had a strong tendency to reduce the Bible to a book containing historical and scientific truths and codes of acts, which were taught to have a universal value. This kind of simplistic approach to the Bible easily gives rise to fundamentalism, simply because it does not recognize other ways of interpreting or applying the Biblical teachings. On the other hand, Japanese Christians were usually saturated with intellectualistic studies of the Bible, and did not easily turn toward fundamentalism.

Simplistic Bible studies were what early Korean Protestants preferred to social practice of the Biblical teachings, perhaps because of their frustration about the loss of their national sovereignty and identity. The simplistic Bible studies also had been proved to have practical usages. So eventually in the Korean Presbyterian Church the Bible came to take an “infallible” and absolute position, as the church’s constitutional creed states: “The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and duty.” It is interesting to note that the word “infallible” in the creed from 1907 to 1929 was translated into “hwaksil ban” meaning certain, but in 1930 it was changed into “chŏnghwak muo ban” meaning “precise [or inerrant] and infallible.” By this creedal and dogmatic measure the Church meant that the Bible, having nothing errant and fallible, has to be interpreted only literally. Thus, the Church’s official doctrine of the Biblical inerrancy was so firmly established that it has been the most important yardstick in judging theological problems in the Korean Presbyterian Church. We have already seen that it was on the basis of this article that the church’s few pastors, for example, Revs. Kim Young-ju, Kim Chun-bae, Kim Jae-jun, were severely disciplined, when they presented even a slightly different view on the Bible from a literal interpretation of it. On the other hand, Korean Methodists have not had any strict constitutional measure to uphold the Biblical inerrancy, perhaps because their American missionaries were

those sins after admittance into the Church is first admonished, then suspended, and, if there be no repentance, he is excommunicated. Discipline is far more severe than in the American churches, but it nearly always seems to have had a salutary effect.” See, Charles Allen Clark, The Korean Church and the Nevius Method, 113.

43 An American scholar observes: “A second feature of the Korea mission program was indifference to the social application of Christian theology. . . . Community reform and social betterment were regarded as the use of time and energy that could be more gainfully employed in evangelism.” See, Spencer J. Palmer, Korea and Christianity (Seoul: Hollym Corporation, 1967), 26.

44 This is the first article of the so-called Sibi Sinjo (12신조) or Twelve Articles of Faith, which was the first official creed of the Korean Presbyterian Church. Concerning these Articles, see Hwang Jae-buhm, “Taehan Changno Kyohoe Sin’gyŏng’ hogûn ‘12 Sinjo’ ŭi chaksŏng mit suyong kwajŏng e taehan yŏn’gu” (A study of the composition and the reception in Korea of the Creed or 12 Articles of Faith of the Korean Presbyterian Church), Kidokkyo sasang, Vol. 573 (Sept., 2006): 200–224.
somewhat free from American Presbyterian orthodoxy, which contained dogmatic and fundamentalist elements.

3. Biblical Christianity Strengthened by Revivalism, Millennialism, and Original Korean Religiosity

Korean fundamentalism, which was developed through Korean Christians’ strong Biblicism, as we have seen above, was again heightened by revivalism and millennialism, which were in turn significantly stimulated by Korea’s dark socio-political condition especially before and after the fateful Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910. Here, it is helpful for us to see how Biblicist Christianity (fundamentalism) and revivalism go hand in hand. Biblicism is intimately linked to revivalism in two ways. First, revivalism emphasizes individuals’ decision making on the basis of simplistic Biblical teachings. So in a revivalist meeting, one is emotionally and unconsciously urged to take the Bible in a Biblicist or literalist sense. Second, because they need to reduce Biblical teachings to some codes of acts, revivalist leaders strongly tend to absolutize Biblical commandments, making the Bible the sole guide for Christians. We can see a good example of this in the work of the American evangelist Pat Robertson, who has mingled both revivalism (Pentecostalism) and Biblicism (legalism).

Pentecostalism has, in short, become an integral part of the spectrum of American legalistic Christianity. Indeed, the man whose name is, in most American minds, a veritable synonym from Protestant fundamentalism—Pat Robertson—is a Pentecostalist; more than anyone else, Robertson is responsible for bringing fundamentalism, Pentecostalism, and conservative evangelicalism together into a single coherent movement.

So it is generally true that the more revivalist a leader is, the more Biblicist (fundamentalist) he or she is also. And we need to recognise how Korean Biblicism—fundamentalism—was strengthened by Korean revivalism and millennialism. Here we shall also look at Korea’s revolutionary socio-political

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45 Cf. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925*, 224. Here Marsden relates Biblicism to revivalism through “religious individualism.” “Biblicism was closely related to religious individualism, also encouraged by revivalism. The individual stood alone before God; his choices were decisive. The church, while important as a supportive community, was made up of free individuals. The Bible, moreover, was a great equalizer. With the Bible in hand, the common man or woman could challenge the highest temporal authority.”

situation, which in turn greatly facilitated revivalism and millennialism.

Before and after the unfortunate annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910, Koreans were forced to pay attention to an unrealistic or religious world, being unable to positively participate in socio-political affairs, which were dominated by Japanese colonialists. For Korean Christians now the world meant something unstable and passing away, and they came to focus on the future. So millennialism, which often brought in revivalism, became prevalent especially in the P’yŏngyang area, where social upheavals were even greater than in South Korea.

Here is an explanation about P’yŏngyang’s desperate situation:

A second stimulant of the revival derived from the several decisive battles of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars (1894-95 and 1904) which were fought in the vicinity of P’yŏngyang. The wildest excitement prevailed. In the clash much Korean property was destroyed, fields were ravaged, and many suffered from wounds as well as great fear.47

So because of Korea’s extremely unstable socio-political situation, Korean Christians turned revivalist as well as millennialist.

The thought of the Korean churches, particularly among the common people, was fixed on a next world. The present world was regarded as so utterly lost that it could not possibly be saved. The duty of Christianity was to preach deliverance: to exhort, witness, baptize, and gather out the elect preparatory to Christ’s second coming. Community reform and social betterment were regarded as the use of time and energy that could be more gainfully employed in evangelism.48

In this milieu, millennialism and revivalism developed rapidly in Korea, resulting in the Great Revival of 1907 and the subsequent years that began in P’yŏngyang and spread like a wild fire throughout the Korean peninsula. Besides the socio-political reasons for this millennialism and revivalism, we may also present the missionary influence and that of Korean native religions’ millennialism. First, it is clear that the majority of the American missionaries “held as a vital truth the premillenarian view of the second coming of Christ.”49

Secondly, Korea’s original religions also had had quite a strong millenialist teaching.

47 Palmer, 83f.
48 Palmer, 26f.
Millennialism was a major feature of folk religion and instilled the idea of a future messianic deliverer in the popular consciousness. Belief in the prophecies of the the Chŏnggam nok (Record of Chŏng Kam), which predicted the fall of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910) and the establishment of subsequent dynasties, was widespread in late Chosŏn, especially during periods of social turbulence. Also prominent was faith in the coming of Mirŭk or Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future, who would descend from heaven and rule over a new age. Christianity, with its own message of a messiah to come, came to represent another way in which collective hope for a better life found expression. Some converts even drew direct connections between the older millennialist traditions and Christianity, seeing the latter as the ultimate fulfilment of the former.\(^{50}\)

So three different factors were at work laying the foundations for Korean Biblicist Christianity, which had a strong fundamentalist bent: 1) that of the Western missionaries’ Biblicist leaning, 2) revivalism, and millennialism, which were stimulated by Korea’s extremely unstable political situation, and 3) Korea’s original religious teaching on millennialism. And it was, first of all, Rev. Kil Sŏn-ju (1869–1935), the most important leader of the famous Great Revival of 1907 and further revivals of subsequent years (up to 1935), who almost perfectly combined those three factors, facilitating Korean Protestant Christianity to take on a definitely revivalist and fundamentalist form.\(^{51}\) In one sense, Rev. Kil was a heroic leader that helped the Korean Protestant churches rise from dust, but he was also ironically one who was very much responsible for Korean fundamentalism. The same is true of Dr. Pak Hyŏng-yong who in fact was the epitome of Korean conservative theologians.

3. Korean Biblicist Theology Having Fundamentalist inclination: the Case of Dr. Pak Hyŏng-yong

It is Dr. Pak Hyŏng-yong who most clearly saw the fact that Protestant Christianity in Korea had taken a definitely Biblicist form, and tried to project it into his theology. He seems to have succeeded in uniting the Protestant orthodox (Old Princeton) theology of the twentieth century American Presbyterian missionaries in Korea and Koreans’ age-long, traditional Confucian veneration of

\(^{50}\) Chong Bum Kim, “Preaching the Apocalypse in Colonial Korea: The Protestant Millennialism of Kil Sŏn-ju,” Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Timothy S. Lee (eds.), Christianity in Korea (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006), 151.

classic texts, making a unique Korean Biblicist theology. So in this sense Dr. Pak Hyŏng-yong has been the most influential Korean theologian in shaping Korean theology in an outstandingly conservative form.52

On the other hand, because of his fundamentalist leanings, Dr. Pak has been called the J. Gresham Machen of Korea or a “typical fundamentalist.”53 Dr. Pak’s theology, as a matter of fact, literally accepts the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy, rejecting any kind of modernist critical method in studying the Bible, and has an inherent fundamentalist tendency—the Achilles heel of Pak’s theology. His fundamentalist leaning appears even more clearly in his triumphalist and exclusivist attitude towards other religions. So he says:

> Liberals say: we shall talk about coexistence and dialogue between Christians and people with other religions, each religion avoiding its absolutization, and seeking common missions and tasks. [They also say]: we reject the imperialist way of thinking that wants to conquer every religion. . . . But I believe that Christians’ appropriate attitude towards other religions is not compromising with them, but conquering them. And along with Dr. William Newton Clark, I think that the religion with the name of Jesus Christ shall not cooperate with, but attack and defeat, other religions. Christianity has been made for victory. Intention to conquer [other religions] is the nature of Gospel.54

So it is clear that Dr. Pak’s theology itself has a strongly fundamentalist tendency excluding not only liberalism, but other religions. As a matter of fact, Dr. Pak himself was not ashamed to call his theology fundamentalist, saying that “fundamentalism is nothing else but the only true Christianity,”55 and even going so far as to blame American Evangelicals including Billy Graham for being liberal and destructive.56

It is also true, however, that Dr. Pak’s had many aspects of constructive

52 Dr. Chŏl Ha Han, a leading Korean theologian, says: “Dr. Pak is the greatest theologian of the twentieth century throughout the world, since he is the only one who paid attention to and promulgated a simple [Christian] truth that had consistently existed throughout the history of Christianity.” Chŏl Ha Han, “The New Millennium and the Task of Evangelical Theology,” Sŏnggyŏng kwa sinhak (The Holy Scripture and theology), Vol. 28 (2000), 10.
53 Min Kyung-Bae, *Han'guk Kidokkyohoesa*, 468. See also Lee Jong-Sŏng, “Pak Hyŏng-yong kwa Han’guk Changno Kyohoe” (Hyŏng-yong Pak and the Korean Presbyterian Church), *Sinhak Sasang* (Theological thoughts) Vol. 25 (Spring, 1979), 55f.
theology especially in re-arranging traditional (Calvinistic) teachings for Korean Christians. This explains why he himself tended to classify his theology as “Protestant orthodox, Reformed, and puritanical,” and his followers have been reluctant to regard him as a fundamentalist.\(^{57}\) It is to be noted again that he had a great insight into the fact that Korean Protestantism had evolved through Koreans’ Biblicism or their pure love for the Bible. And he tried to reflect this insight in his theology. This explains why his doctrine of Biblical inerrancy is the most important part of his grandiose theological system.\(^{58}\)

Of course, Dr. Pak’s theology or dogmatics, the term he preferred to use, was generally made up of quotations from such American Reformed orthodox theological authorities as Charles Hodge, Benjamin Warfield, J. Gresham Machen, and Louis Berkhof, among others. But the most serious problem with his theology is not his frequent quotations from other theologians, but that it is based exclusively on the theological premises of the old Princeton orthodox theology: namely, the beliefs that the Bible can be known by modern people just as it was by the first century Christians and that the Biblical teachings can be reduced to some simplistic dogmas. This position was possible over one hundred years ago, but not any more, simply because now the world is much bigger and the church community has no significant power over the world. The time requires Korean Christians to recognise this fact and to see the world and the Bible from more than one—fundamentalist—perspective.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

We have studied Korean Protestantism’s intrinsic fundamentalist leaning, which has caused both numerous schisms within the Korean Protestant churches and exclusivist approaches toward other religions. First, we have seen how Korean fundamentalism occurred in three characteristic theological controversies, and three tragic schisms in the Korean Presbyterian Church, all of which were begun and dominated by fundamentalists. Then, we have examined why Korean fundamentalism established such deep roots in Korean Protestants’ preoccupation with the Bible. The theology of the American Presbyterian missionaries in Korea was of course “notably conservative.” But unfortunately it happened to be further strengthened by Korea’s lack of political freedom. The

\(^{57}\) Pak Yong-Kyu (ed.), *Chuksan Pak Hyŏng-yong paksa ŭi saeng’ae wa saasaeng* (The life and thought of Dr. Pak Hyŏng-yong) (Seoul: Chongshin Taehakkyo Ch’ulp’anbu, 1996), 331–403.

missionaries and their Korean followers were not allowed actively to participate in socio-political matters, and they could not help but focus on Bible studies, prayer, and evangelism. Furthermore, Korean Presbyterians’ Bibliism was also heightened by revivalism and millennialism, which were especially rampant before and after the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910. So it was Korea’s revolutionary socio-political situation, which greatly facilitated revivalism, millennialism, and eventually fundamentalism in Korea. Thus, we found three dimensional factors for Korean Biblicist and fundamentalist leaning: 1) the Western missionaries’ strong conservatism, which emphasized the Bible, significantly due to Korea’s political instability, 2) revivalism, and millennialism, which were again stimulated by Korea’s revolutionary situation, and 3) Korea’s original religious teaching on millennialism. And it was Dr. Pak Hyŏng-yong, who was the most important theologian in establishing Korean Protestant Christianity into a Biblical Christianity. Having had an insight into the Biblicist nature of Korean Protestant Christianity, Dr. Pak seems to have succeeded in combining it with the pietistic and Protestant orthodox (old Princeton) theology of the American Presbyterian missionaries in Korea, eventually making a unique Korean theology emphasizing the authority of the Bible. His theology, however, has a fundamentalist bent in that it rejects other ways of interpretation.
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