

CHRISTIAN IMPACT ON TWENTIETH CENTURY RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN KOREA

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Introduction

The phenomenon of the rapid growth of Christianity, particularly Protestantism, in the period following the effective end of the Korean War in 1953 has been commented upon frequently as has Christianity's effect on or relationship to modern education, social movements and nationalism. The 1995 National Household Census of the Republic of Korea¹, the most recent census to contain information about religious adherence, illustrates the strength in the national population of Christianity in all forms. First, of those people who self-identified themselves

Table 1: General Religious Statistics

Type of religion	Total adherents	% of population	Male adherents	% of population	Female adherents	% of population
Buddhism	10,321,012	23.2	4,870,853	10.9	5,450,159	12.2
Protestantism	8,760,336	19.7	4,087,356	9.2	4,672,980	10.5
Catholicism	2,950,730	6.6	1,339,295	3.0	1,611,435	3.6
Confucianism	210,927	neg.	113,951	neg.	96,976	neg.
W?n Buddhism	86,823	neg.	39,555	neg.	47,268	neg.
Ch'?ndo-gyo	28,184	neg.	13,215	neg.	14,969	neg.
Taejong-gyo	7,603	neg.	3,642	neg.	3,961	neg.
Taesun Chilli-gyo	62,056	neg.	28,916	neg.	33,140	neg.

Miscellaneous	170,153	neg.	76,645	neg.	93,508	neg.
No religion	21,953,315	49.3	11,782,401	26.4	10,170,914	22.8
Unknown	2,571	neg.	1,523	neg.	1,048	neg.
Total population	44,553,710	100.00	22,357,352	–	22,196,358	–

Note: Due to the rounding of the raw statistical figures, the percentages do not necessarily add up to one hundred per cent. Figures too small for a significant statistical comparison are designated as being 'negligible', or *neg.*

as adhering to one of the eight forms of organised religion recognised and stipulated on the 1995 census form, 51.8 per cent claimed to belong to a Christian denomination, six per cent more than the 45.7 per cent of the respondents who claimed adherence to a form of Buddhism. More striking, perhaps, is the second point to be drawn from the census statistics. Combining the total Christian statistics with those for various new religious movements such as Wŏn Buddhism, Ch'ondo-gyo, Taejong-gyo, and Taesun Chilli-gyo, more than a quarter (26.7 per-cent) of the general population of the Republic of Korea or 52.6 per cent of the religious population professes adherence to systems of religious belief which did not exist in the nation approximately two hundred years ago. By any measure, this represent massive religious change over the past two centuries. Moreover, all of these new religious movements, including Roman Catholic Christianity, have been influenced significantly in one way or another by the rapid growth of Protestant Christianity in the past century.

The 1995 census also reveals some interesting statistics about the age distribution of persons who self-identified themselves as belonging to one of the designated religious organisations on the census form. Christianity in both its Protestant and Catholic forms is primarily a young religion in terms of its age composition. Taking together all adults and youth above the age of fifteen, 72.5 per cent of self-identified Protestants are between fifteen and forty-four years of age. The Roman Catholic statistics show a similar age profile with 69.2 per cent of adherents

Table 2: Age Distribution of Different Religions (Adults and Youth 15 and Above)

Religious Group	Percentage	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 -
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	of Age Group 15-24					
Buddhism	17.7	19.4	23.1	16.9	13.4	9.4
Protestantism	26.5	23.6	22.4	13.2	8.1	6.8
Catholicism	22.9	21.3	25	14.2	8.8	7.7
Confucianism	11	11.6	13.3	17.3	24.8	22.3
W?n Buddhism	18.5	17.8	20.1	16.1	14.1	13.5
Ch'?ndo-gyo	18.3	19.9	18.8	13.8	14	15.2
Taejong-gyo	20.2	16.6	19.8	16.3	14.1	12.9
Taesun Chilli-gyo	20	27.4	23	13.4	9.7	6.6

being in the category of fifteen to forty-four years of age. This profile compares with 60.2 per cent of self-identified Buddhists who are in that category. Although the three major religious traditions have a generally young profile, Christians tend to be even younger compared with Buddhists. Indeed, Protestant statistics indicate that the largest single group of adherents is in the youngest ten-year group, persons aged between fifteen and twenty-four years. This group accounts for more than a quarter of all self-identified Protestants. Only Taesun Chilli-gyo, a development of the late nineteenth century new religion Ch?ngsan-gyo, shows a similar age profile to Christianity, making it significantly different from the other minor designated traditions. The age profile of this group shows that 70.4 per cent of its self-identified membership are between the ages of fifteen to forty-four.

Christianity is not only a new religion which is young, it is also an urban phenomenon. In Table 3 below, the designated religious traditions are compared as a proportion of the regional population.² This table shows that in those places where Buddhism is strong, Christianity tends to be weaker and vice versa. In the area of the nation's capital, Christianity

represents a third of the population, or nearly twice the size of the Buddhist groups in the

Table 3: Religious Adherence as a Proportion of Regional Populations

Type of religion	S?ul Metropolitan Region	East	Central	Southwest	Southeast	Cheju-do
Buddhism	18	23.2	22	13.5	35.7	34.6
Christianity	33.6	21.2	24.2	28.9	15.5	14.3
Protestantism	25.2	16.2	18.5	22.9	10.9	8.3
Catholicism	8.4	5	5.7	6	4.6	6
Confucianism	0.003	0.005	0.005	1.1	0.004	0.004
W?n Buddhism	0.0001	neg.	neg.	0.007	0.001	0.004
Ch'?ndo-gyo	neg.	neg.	neg.	neg.	neg.	neg.
Taejong-gyo	neg.	neg.	neg.	neg.	neg.	neg.
Taesun Chilli-gyo	neg.	neg.	neg.	neg.	0.001	neg.
Miscellaneous	0.004	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.005	0.004

same area. In the southeast and on the island of Cheju-do, the situation is reversed. In the eastern and central region of the Republic of Korea, there is rough parity between Buddhism and Christianity. Generally, the proportion of Catholics to Protestants throughout the country tends to be on the order of one to three except in Cheju-do where the Catholic population is about three-quarters the size of the Protestant community. In the southwest region, Buddhism is strongest and Christianity weakest. This is the same region in which W?n Buddhism and Taesun Chilli-gyo have a representation within the population which rises above statistical negligibility. Both of these movements arose in this area, and W?n Buddhism currently has its headquarters there. All of these observations point to the general fact that Christianity is strongest proportionately in the capital region, the area of the country which is the most highly urbanised

and undergoing the greatest social change, whereas Buddhism is strongest in the most traditional areas of the country.

The fact of the essentially urban character of modern Christianity is indicated by another set of comparative statistics, regional religious adherence as a proportion of the national adherence statistics for individual religious organisations. Table 4 indicates that all groups

Table 4: Regional Religious Adherence as Proportion of National Adherence

Type of religion	S?ul Metropolitan Region	East	Central	Southwest	Southeast	Cheju-do
Buddhism	35.2	3.3	9.4	6.8	44.2	1.6
Protestantism	58	2.7	9.3	13.6	15.8	0.004
Catholicism	57	2.6	8.6	10.8	20	1
Confucianism	30	4.1	11.1	27.6	26.1	1
W?n Buddhism	27.7	0.007	6	45.3	18.3	0.008
Ch'?ndo-gyo	45.8	3.2	10.6	11.7	27.9	0.008
Taejong-gyo	48.3	4.3	11.1	11.3	24.6	0.003
Taesun Chilli-gyo	47.1	2.5	12.5	7.1	29.6	1.2
Miscellaneous	42.8	2.8	7.7	10.2	35.2	1.5

have a strong presence in the nation's capital, and usually with a strength which is greater than in any other part of the country. The only exceptions to this observation are Buddhism and W?n Buddhism which find their greatest strength in either the southeastern or southwestern part of the nation. It is interesting to note that the traditional religions of the country are weaker in the capital than in comparison with new religious movements, either Christianity in its Protestant or Roman Catholic forms or movements such as Ch'?ndo-gyo or Taesun Chilli-gyo. Moreover, certain traditions

such as Wŏn Buddhism and Ch'ŏndo-gyo remain strongest in those parts of the country in which they originated. Confucianism maintains its comparative strength in the southwest and the southeast with a proportion of its membership in both regions which is equivalent to its strength in the capital. Thus, although Christianity is strong in most regions, it is strongest in urbanised communities.

Korean Christian History and the Theory of Emplantation

How can we explain the rapid rise of Christianity and its immense socio-cultural impact on Korea? In examining the question of the transmission of religious traditions, and in looking at the history of religion in Korea in particular, I developed a theory called *emplantation* to describe the process of religious diffusion. According to this theory, a religion which derived from an alien cultural context when transmitted to a new culture had to undergo a three-stage process of development before it could be said to have become emplanted in the new cultural soil. These stages were called Contact and Explication, Penetration, and Expansion. Success at a prior stage was important for development in a later stage. In the first stage, exponents of the new religion, formal or informal missionaries, are principally concerned with the primary explication of the tenets of their faith in terms which are comprehensible in the cultural norms of the receptor culture. In the second stage, it is recognised that the new religion has become established, at however small a numerical level, as a feature of the host culture and society. In the third stage, the new religion has become a major feature of the culture and society and enters into a stage of contention with the other religious traditions which may lead either to a state of pre-eminence over the other traditions or a state of complementary equilibrium. The theoretical model, however, makes no attempt to predict what the whole life of the new religion may be within the greater cultural history of the society, but only states that any new religious tradition coming from outside an indigenous cultural context must pass successfully through these three stages to become emplanted in the cultural soil of the society, in order to achieve a state of pre-eminence or equilibrium.³ My research on Protestant church history in Korea has shown that Protestantism achieved a state of penetration in Korean culture by the middle of the twentieth century, and has now entered into a stage of growth and contention with the other religious traditions.⁴ In my view, Protestant Christianity has proved to be the most dynamic religious force within modern Korean religious culture and has had a significant impact, formally and informally on the growth and development of the other religious traditions.⁵

Using the theory of emplantation, it is the purpose of this paper to show both how Protestant Christianity developed rapidly and how it came to influence the other religious traditions of Korea. To do this, we shall especially examine the types of influence exercised by Protestantism over the pre-existent traditions and the new religions. The influence which Protestantism has exercised on the other religious traditions of Korea are three-fold:

- 1) competitive stimulation,
- 2) emulation and modelling, and
- 3) acceptance or utilisation of distinctly Christian religious concepts.

By competitive stimulation, I refer to the rapid numerical growth of Protestant Christianity acting as a stimulus to the other religious groups to create proselytisation movements to significantly increase the size of their own membership. By emulation and modelling, I refer to the use by leaders and significant figures in non-Protestant religious groups of the forms of Protestant worship, activities, and evangelistic movements as models for their own religious practice and proselytisation. The third form of Protestant influence on the other religious traditions of Korea refers to the extent to which particularly Christian or indeed Protestant theological concepts have been adopted by other religious groups. This influence may have been absorbed at a purely formal and superficial level, or at a deep, inner level restructuring or reformulating beliefs. Of the three forms of influence, the third type represents the most profound level of cultural impact. Although all three of these forms of religious influence may be shown to have affected the non-Protestant religious traditions, not all of these traditions have been influenced by Protestantism in all three ways.⁶

Protestant Impact on Roman Catholicism

As is well known, the history of the Roman Catholic Church in Korea beginning with movements in the late eighteenth century is considerably longer than Protestant history, and was characterised for nearly half of its history by severe governmental repression of the movement as a socially and politically subversive body. The severity and duration of the suppression had two inter-related effects. Beginning with the first major suppression of the Church in 1800, the character of the Church changed from being principally the religious practice of certain members of the elite sector of society to being a religious movement amongst the poorest and

most rejected members of late Chosŏn society (1392–1910). Secondly, the lengthy and severe formal suppression of the Church created a ‘ghetto’ mentality amongst the membership, a deeply ingrained sense of the need to hide or cover up their adherence to this proscribed religion. Consequently, many early Catholics physically hid themselves by fleeing to remote mountainous parts of the peninsula, or hid themselves by disguising their true class status and religious beliefs by becoming a member of one of the despised orders of society.⁷

The first seventy-five years of Catholic history, dominated by persecution and the fear of persecution, influenced the development of the Church well into the middle of the twentieth century. Although the Roman Catholic Church in Korea once freed of the fear of governmental suppression in the late nineteenth century did conduct an active campaign of missions and evangelism, significant numerical growth did not take place until the late 1950s and the early 1960s. From the 1890s onwards, records show both a steady increase in the membership of or adherency to the Church, and the absence of any significant periods of decline in membership. Notwithstanding these continued increases in adherency, the per-centage representation within the national population remained constant from 1914 to the late 1950s between 0.5 to 0.6 per-cent. This contrasts with Protestant figures during the same period which, while giving evidence to at least two periods of significant disaffection, also show that Protestantism more than tripled its per-centage representation within the national population from 1.2 per-cent to 3.7 per-cent. By the end of the 1960s, this figure had nearly doubled to 6.0 per-cent. To use my terms of analysis, the Protestant churches in Korea had achieved a position of penetration within Korean culture and society some time in the early 1950s from which point began the very significant period of per-centage growth within the national population which lasted well into the 1980s. It was during this period of remarkable Protestant growth that the Roman Catholic Church for the first time began to show both numerical and per-centage growth. These two facts are closely related in my view.⁸

One factor which I believe hindered the per-centage growth of the Roman Catholic Church was what I have referred to as a ‘ghetto’ mentality. By the 1960s, three factors came together which collectively broke down this ‘ghetto’ mentality and created within the Catholic community a fervour for evangelism which has continued down to today. In fact, recent statistics show that the Roman Catholic Church in Korea is the only denomination which is continuing to make per-centage gains within the national population. The three factors are:

- 1) the visibility and acceptability of Protestant Christianity,
- 2) the effect of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, and
- 3) the onset of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation.

The significantly increased size of the Protestant Christian community in the 1950s, Protestantism's clear relationship to many patriotic issues, and the dominance of the political scene by Protestant Christians (however one evaluates their character and the effect of their work) made Christianity not only distinctly visible in the nation, but acceptable in a very positive sense. This factor must have given many Catholics the sense that it was alright to be Christian, and to want to express and share their faith. At the same time that this idea arose, the Second Vatican Council dramatically changed the Tridentine Catholic view of the world, especially the Church's view of other Christian denominations and other religions. The views of the Second Council led to a greater ecumenicity and a desire to be involved together with other Christian groups. These two factors came together to create an ethos which made significant national evangelism an acceptable and desirable goal.

Concurrently, the nation began its race to become one of the major industrial states of the world, changing the nation from an essentially rural to an urban, from an agricultural to an industrial nation. This meant massive dislocation of the population from a rural to an urban setting, and impoverishment of large parts of the population. The dispossessed urban proletariat provided a major field for national evangelism for the Roman Catholic Church as it did also for the Protestant churches. I would only point out in passing that to the shame of many of the Protestant churches, the Catholic Church has never lost the memory of its origins amongst the dispossessed members of society and has made evangelism and ministry amongst the poor a primary focus of the work of the Church.⁹

From my perspective, the influence of Protestantism on Catholicism has been principally at the level of competitive stimulation, the sense that if members of one branch of Christianity could openly and vigorously work to expand their membership, Catholics could too. One might also argue that developments in style of worship – instrumental and vocal music, alternatives to the traditional emphasis on the Mass, approaches to evangelism – owe more to Protestant models than Catholic origins. None the less, the principal Protestant influence on Roman Catholicism in my view has been stimulus through example, the breaking down of the

‘ghetto’ mentality which in turn has led to the significant and ongoing growth of the Church.

Protestant Impact on Buddhism

Buddhism, established in the Korean peninsula since the era of the Three Kingdoms (4th to 7th centuries), had by the end of the Chosŏn period (1392–1910) begun to atrophy. This was due largely to the general policy for the suppression and control of Buddhism, which had been implemented, from the beginning of the dynasty in order to eliminate heterodox teachings and to create a thoroughly Confucian state and society. At several points during the long history of the Chosŏn state, suppression of Buddhism was replaced by fervent attempts to eradicate it entirely. The effect of five hundred years of an anti-Buddhist policy was the general degradation in the standards of monastic discipline and the knowledge of Buddhist teachings, and the effective elimination of intellectual leadership from within the Buddhist community. Whereas under the Koryŏ period (918–1392) the leadership of the Buddhist community came from the elite sector of society, in the Chosŏn period Buddhist monks were grouped together with butchers and prostitutes in the ‘untouchable’ class. Sympathetic foreign observers of Korean Buddhism at the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth centuries felt that its situation was so dire that it would disappear at some point in the not too distant future.¹⁰

This in fact has not happened. The most recent census statistics for Korea show that 30 or more per-cent of the population claims adherence to one of the branches of Buddhism. Anyone who is familiar with Buddhism in Japan and Korea, who has visited their temples and monasteries, will be familiar with the fact that Korean Buddhism – traditional monastic Buddhism – is more vigorous and active than its Japanese counterpart. What factors are to account for this *volte face* in the condition of Buddhism in Korea? Although the dramatic and rapid growth of Christianity in Korea has become the subject of much academic and popular discourse, the reversal in the fortunes of Korean Buddhism has gone practically unobserved by the academic world.

In examining the recent century of Buddhism in Korea, I have discerned three principal factors which have been at work:

1) assistance from the Japanese colonial government (1910–1945), the Government–

General of Chosen,

2) an indigenous reform movement for the revival of monastic Buddhism, and

3) the development and growth of lay Buddhism and lay Buddhist movements.

The Japanese colonial regime was clearly worried about the numbers of Protestant Christians involved in patriotic and nationalistic movements and by the continued growth of the Protestant Christian community. It became a policy of the colonial government to promote Buddhism as a countervailing force to the growth of Protestantism and Christianity in general. Various measures were undertaken including the institutional reorganisation of the Buddhist 'church' to regularise and standardise bureaucratic procedures. Aside from the proclaimed purpose of cleansing organised Buddhism, these institutional reforms had the two-fold effect of making it easier for the regime to control the Buddhist community, and to make it comparable to Buddhism in Japan, thus creating greater homogeneity throughout the empire. To ensure that the Buddhist 'church' had financial and capital security vis-a-vis Protestant Christianity, the colonial government gave large tracts of lands to the monasteries, ensuring that these communities remained wealthy down to the present day. These two factors alone, institutional re-organisation and the donation of significant tracts of land, regenerated institutional Buddhism so that it was able to reclaim a physical state which it had not possessed possibly since the fifteenth century. Japanese colonial support of Buddhism was not only at the institutional or organisational level. Many of the Buddhist movements and institutions which were prominent in the push for the 'modernisation' of the religion had the overt or covert financial support of the colonial regime. For example, many of the Buddhist magazines and journals of that era, including those associated with the nationalistic and modernising monk Manhae (1879-1944), were funded by the Japanese colonial government.¹¹

The factor of the support of the colonial government alone would not, and can not, explain the sustained revival of Buddhism in Korea. The revival of Buddhism is the result principally of two factors internal to Korean Buddhism, the revival of orthodox monastic Buddhism, and the appearance of lay movements. The purification and revival of monastic discipline, practice and the intellectual study of the Buddhist doctrines can be attributed to the efforts of the monk (1849-1912). Although one can talk

at great length about what he did to revive Buddhist monastic life, and however important monastic life is to an understanding of traditional Buddhism, the revival of Buddhism in Korea I feel is principally due to the emergence of lay movements beginning from the second decade of this century. The influence of Protestant Christianity is to be found here particularly. One of the major differences between the Protestant and Roman Catholic forms of Christianity is the emphasis which is placed on the work of the laity in administering the churches and in carrying out the ministry of the Church. Protestant churches are essentially lay-run institutions. However important the ministers are in the scheme of things, deacons, elders, wardens, stewards – whatever the lay leadership is called – play an essential role in the life and ministry of the church. In addition, para-church institutions, related or unrelated to individual denominations, such as the Young Men's Christian Association have grown up to provide both Christian fellowship and to act as a means for evangelism.

It was the idea of the 'laity' which seems to have most inspired the Korean Buddhists in the early part of this century. From the second decade onwards, the history of Buddhism in Korea is filled with the creation of various Buddhist youth movements and lay groups, and the holding of Buddhist lay conferences. These developments testify to the emergence of an organised lay Buddhist community which existed separately from the monastic communities which used to be the centres of Buddhist practice and life. As lay Christianity had meant that the focus of Christian life was in contemporary society, so too lay Buddhism meant that the focus of Buddhist life was taken out of the confines of the monastery and into contemporary society. With the stabilisation and regularisation of institutional monastic Buddhism, early twentieth century Korean Buddhists must have sensed an element of competition with the rapidly developing new religion, Protestant Christianity. This sense of competition would have been a stimulus which caused them consciously or unconsciously to model their programme for the advance of Buddhism along the lines of the two most distinctive features of Protestant Christianity, the idea of the 'laity' and lay movements.¹²

The extent to which monastic and lay Buddhism has been influenced by Protestantism is quite striking. The development of the laity as the principal bearers of Buddhism, is an obvious example, but specific examples of influence on religious practice can also be described. The use of hymns with tunes borrowed from Protestantism, prayers used in daily life (before meals) which are common Christian practice may be cited along with youth and high school student associations which meet under the tutelage of a

monk at precisely the time on a Saturday afternoon when local Christian youth meetings are held. Protestant Christian models continue to provide a source of inspiration for the Buddhist leadership, perhaps the most notable of which was the creation of the Buddhist Broadcasting System in the early 1990s along the lines of the Christian Broadcasting System which was established in the 1950s. Thus, not only was the movement for a 'modernised' Buddhism stimulated by the presence of a strong laity and vigorous lay movements within Protestant Christianity, many of the very forms of 'modernised' Buddhist spiritual practice and Buddhist evangelism can also be shown to have been derived from or modelled on Protestant Christian practice.¹³

Protestant Impact on the New Religions

The first modern syncretic religion in Korea is Ch' ŏndo-gyo [Teaching of the Heavenly Way], which was founded in the 1860s as the result of a vision which the founder Ch' ŏe Che' u (1824–1864) had of the Ruler of Heaven. It became an important nationalistic and nativistic movement before the collapse of the Chosŏn state and during the Japanese colonial period. Originally called Tonghak [Eastern Learning], from its inception the religion contained certain elements of belief and practice which were a response to or a borrowing from Christianity. It is not surprising that nativistic types of syncretistic movements should emerge promising a revival in national fortunes at a time of national crisis. Internal corruption and the threat of invasion by foreign powers made nineteenth century Korea a fertile ground for nativistic movements. For the intelligentsia of the time, among whom Ch' ŏe Che-u has to be counted, growth of the proscribed religion Roman Catholicism must have been seen to be an aspect of foreign imperial power and a threat to the Confucian traditions of the nation. When Ch' ŏe was brought before a magistrate to explain his, by Confucian standards, heterodox teaching, he defended himself by saying that what he taught was not *sŏhak* [western learning = Roman Catholicism] but *tonghak* [eastern learning]. Thus from the beginning of the modern era, new religious movements in Korea were consciously or unconsciously comparing and contrasting themselves with the emergent Christian movement. Even at this early stage in the development of Christianity, an element of borrowing by Tonghak from Christianity can be demonstrated. Although the great being who revealed himself to Ch' ŏe Che-u was usually called *Sangje* [Chinese *Shang-ti*, Ruler on High], a usage deriving from ancient China, this being was sometimes called *Ch' ŏnju* [Chinese, T' ien-chu] or Ruler of Heaven, the Roman Catholic term for God in China and Korea. Although not a major influence on the

doctrinal teaching of the sect, the adoption of this term shows that the influence of Christianity on Tonghak in its early stages was not just negative stimulation.¹⁴

The effect of Protestantism on Tonghak/Ch' ŏndo-gyo was even greater, as illustrated by its influence on both the architecture of the sect, and its religious practice. In *Ch' ŏsen-no ruiji sh' ŏky' ŏ* [The Pseudo-religions of Korea], the survey of popular religion in Korea published by the Government-General in 1935, the architecture of the Ch' ŏndo-gyo places of worship show a strong similarity to Protestant churches of the same period. The central ecclesiastical building of Ch' ŏndo-gyo, although built in a Japanised version of Baroque architecture, resembles a Protestant church in both its architectural elevations, and in its interior layout. The plan for the main room in the central hall is laid out like a Korean Protestant church including a large raised and recessed area at the back where the principal celebrant or ceremonial leader would conduct the ritual.¹⁵ The atmosphere of the building is similar to many Korean Protestant churches of the time. The 'church' in P' y' ŏngyang in northern Korea is even more clearly modelled on Protestant lines. The exterior of the building with its sharp rectangular shape is indistinguishable from any provincial Protestant church of the time. The picture of the interior showing the congregation seated on the floor also demonstrates another feature which must be a relic of missionary influence – the leaders of the ritual are seated on Western-style chairs and speak from a podium.¹⁶ This usage of ritual space is identical to a Protestant usage which began with early churches such as Ch' ŏng-dong First Methodist Church in Seoul built in the 1890s – the congregation sat cross-legged on the floor, the celebrants sat in chairs. Further Christian, if not Protestant, influence can be seen on the architectural form of the central 'church' of a break-off of the Ch' ŏndo-gyo movement, the Sich' ŏn-gyo sect [Religion of Serving Heaven], which is closely modelled on the Roman Catholic Cathedral in the My' ŏng-dong area, S' ŏul.¹⁷

Ch' ŏndo-gyo ritual usage follows a Christian, and particularly a Protestant, pattern. Services are now held on a Sunday, use hymns often set to music drawn from Protestant hymnals, have periods of private prayer, and include an exposition of the Ch' ŏndo-gyo scripture, the *Tonggy' ŏng taej' ŏn* [Great Compendium of Eastern Scriptures]. As is obvious from the list of ritual features given above, Ch' ŏndo-gyo possesses both a canonical scripture and a book of hymns which is used for the purposes of worship and study. The architecture of the sect's ritual buildings, the form of its rituals, and the form of its ritual materials by the first third of the twentieth century

followed a Protestant pattern. Thus, the influence of Protestantism on Ch' ŏndo-gyo and the other new religions was as a model or a pattern for practice, and this in spite of the fact that many of these groups, and in particular Ch' ŏndo-gyo, possessed a highly nationalistic and nativistic system of beliefs.¹⁸

This influence on the formal, overt aspects of the new religions of Korea does not seem to have been translated into significant influence on the doctrines, teachings, and beliefs of these new sects. Ch' ŏngsan-gyo, which developed at the very end of the last century, is an amalgam of many different religious traditions and is markedly different in one respect from many of the new religious movements of the past century. Unlike most of the new religions in which the founder claims to have had a vision of or experience with a celestial being, the founder of Ch' ŏngsan-gyo, Kang IIsun (1871–1909), claimed *to be* the Ruler of the Nine Heavens, the supreme being. This concept parallels an essential Christian teaching – the Incarnation of Christ, and may reflect either Catholic or Protestant teaching on the subject. The idea of incarnation propounded in Ch' ŏngsan-gyo is linked to a messianic idea that Kang had descended to earth to restore the affairs of the world, and to restore Korea to its rightful position in the world. Although this doctrinal element is probably derived from Christianity, it is not described in Christian theological terms, but is expressed in nativistic terms. Thus, in the early stages of the growth of these new religions, Christian influence was at the level of the adoption of formal elements without taking on the major theological views of Christianity.¹⁹

By mid-twentieth century, Protestant Christianity had become an even more potent religious force within Korean society. The *Ch' ŏsen-no riujish' ŏky' ŏ* divides the new religions of the first third of the twentieth century into six types – the Tonghak tradition, the Ch' ŏngsan tradition, the Buddhist tradition, the Confucian tradition, cultic traditions worshipping a particular spirit, and a miscellaneous group. In the 1930s, there were no new religious movements which claimed to be a Christian denomination or which had a significant number of beliefs which were closely patterned after Protestant Christianity.²⁰ By the 1950s, this situation had changed dramatically. The new religions which emerged or became strong after Korean liberation from Japanese rule were Christian new religions. In fact these groups so closely resemble orthodox Christian groups that in theological terms they must be called heresies. Typical among these many groups are the Ch' ŏndo-gwan Church [known in English as the Olive Tree Church] and the Unification Church. The founders of both of these groups had at one time been members of a Presbyterian church, and so had a

Protestant Christian background. The founder of the Chondo-gwan movement, Pak T'aesun, had been an elder in a Presbyterian church in Seoul, and claimed that his hands had the power to heal through massaging the head of a diseased person. The movement claims to be a Christian church, and its buildings resemble Protestant churches which are easily distinguished because of the large red crosses used to adorn the tower over the entrance to the building. The form of worship, the terms used to talk about their beliefs, and the beliefs themselves are all Christian. Although it does seem to have a strong basis in Korean folk religion, with an emphasis on a belief in magical healing, all of the formal structures of the group are modelled on Christian practices.²¹ This is an important change from earlier in the century when only a few elements of a new religion could be shown to have a Christian origin. Now, whole religious movements have come to resemble a Christian denomination.

This aspect of similarity to a Christian denomination becomes even stronger when we examine the Unification Church. It not only claims to be a church, it claims to be *the* fulfilment of Christ's ministry on earth. The full name of the sect is the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, which indicates that the sect claims to be the means by which the unfinished work of Christianity will be brought to completion. The central teaching of the sect is that Christ was unable to fulfil his ministry on earth, the spiritual *and* physical salvation of mankind. Instead, his early death only provided spiritual salvation. Another One would have to come to bring physical salvation, who is called the Lord of the Second Advent. This group not only claims to be a Christian denomination; it claims to be the true fulfilment of all Christian groups.²²

The only difference between orthodox Christian churches and these Christian-based syncretic groups is in the Christology of the sects. Otherwise, it is not immediately apparent that one of these sects is not actually a church. In more recent years, other new religious groups have emerged which are Christian in nature. In 1992, there were several eschatological sects which emerged proclaiming the end of the world on a specified date. The leader of one of these groups, the Tami Missionary Church, urged all his followers to gather together in the church to await the end. He collected large sums of money and was arrested when he attempted to leave Korea.²³ Other than the fact that groups such as this have been created in Korea, they are in no wise different from similar sects which have emerged during the same period in North America or Europe. Thus, by the end of the twentieth century, the influence of Protestant Christianity on the creation of new religions was not simply as a stimulus or

model, but actually provided substantial elements of the theology of these sects as well. Influence at the level of belief, the most substantive form of influence, illustrates that Protestantism had become fully emplantated in the cultural soil of Korea, and that it was the principal dynamic force in the religious culture of Korea by the end of the century.

Protestant Contention with the Other Traditions

It has been my view that Protestantism during the first two-thirds of this century has been the most dynamic force within the religious culture of Korea which is evidenced both by the rapid numerical growth in church membership, and – which is the focus of this paper – by the extent to which Protestant Christianity has influenced the development of the pre-existent religious traditions of the nation. This influence may have been at the level of competitive stimulation to cause the other tradition to grow or revive as was the case with Roman Catholicism and Buddhism, or at the level of providing a model for outreach and religious practice as was the case with Buddhism and Ch' ŏndo-gyo, or at the level of providing religious concepts as is the case with the contemporary new religions.

From the beginning of the process of the emplantation of Protestant Christianity, the influence of Protestantism on Korean religious culture has been noticeable and has increased towards the end of the century. To return to the model of the emplantation of missionary religions which I outlined at the beginning of this paper, Protestantism had ‘penetrated’ Korean culture by the middle of this century and has now entered into the third phase of the process of emplantation – contention with the other religious traditions. Buddhism, in my view, is the principal religious tradition with which Protestantism will be in contention. This is so because there has been an extensive ecumenical rapprochement with Roman Catholicism (except for the most fundamentalist Protestant bodies), and because the new syncretic religions tend to follow Protestant practice. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, there has been a noticeable increase in the tensions between ‘Protestantism’ and ‘Buddhism’. There have been several recent accusations of ‘Christian’ (= Protestant ?) harassment of Buddhist ceremonies and the destruction of Buddhist religious buildings. Whatever the truth of these accusations is, they point to the fact of the increased tensions between ‘Christianity’ as a perceived monolithic religious institution, and ‘Buddhism’ as a similar monolithic entity.

Further examples of the perceived competition between these two groups may be seen in:

1) the extent to which the principal Buddhist order, the Chogye-jong, and other groups

have engaged in extensive programmes of local 'evangelism', and have conducted

well-planned programmes of overseas missions to spread the teachings of Buddhism in

both North America and Europe, and

2) the creation of such institutions as the Buddhist Broadcasting System to increase

Buddhist knowledge amongst the laity and as a means to extend the membership of the

Buddhist community.

Based upon historical precedent, the model for emplantation would predict that there are three possible outcomes for this process of contention:

1) the significant extension of the membership of Protestant groups so that Protestantism

achieves a state of numerical and spiritual dominance over the religious culture of the

nation, or

2) that Protestantism and Buddhism will both reach the greatest extent of their numerical

expansion and achieve a state of numerical and spiritual equilibrium between

themselves, or

3) that Protestantism will lose its evangelical momentum and begin a period of numerical

(if not spiritual) decline which will result in it stabilising at a position of subordination to

Buddhism. This third condition would be a strong indicator that Protestantism had lost its

momentum and was no longer the most dynamic religious factor in Korean culture.

It is hard to judge what the ultimate historical outcome will be, but it is worth noting that Buddhism is vigorously pursuing a policy similar to 'church growth', and that since the late 1980s, Protestantism has ceased to grow in per-centage terms within the national population. This may be an indication that Protestantism has reached the upper limit of its growth potential. On the other hand, Roman Catholicism continues to grow, which may mean that although in this era, Protestantism has ceased to grow, Christianity has not. What lies ahead in the future is unclear and can only be discerned after the next decade. As was mentioned at the outset, the model of emplantation can not predict the future but it can only help to explain why certain historical developments occurred in the way in which they did.

Notes

1. The religious statistics referred to here are contained in the 1995 Population and Housing Census Report, volume 1, pages 390 to 477. This report reveals that respondents who self-identified themselves as being members of the religious population of Korea accounted for only about one-half (approximately 50.7 per cent) of the entire national population. In the religious section of the census questionnaire, some eight religious traditions are designated as formal religious entities. The census questionnaire, however, does provide an open-ended response for religious bodies which are not included amongst the designated traditions. Unfortunately, these are not included in the final report of the census. Another peculiarity is the fact that the questionnaire asks for the religious affiliation for children beginning from the age of year '0'. These features of the census questionnaire raise certain methodological questions.

First, because children under the age of fifteen are included in the gross statistics, the religious statistics only give an indication of the size of the communities of adherents to a particular religion rather than an indication of all people who self-identify as members of a particular group or faith.

Second, there is a large group of people who are identified as belonging to miscellaneous groups. It would have been useful to know to what traditions these people belong. For example, we do know that there is a sizeable Korean Muslim community, and as well as a community of Orthodox Christians. As the organisations of these believers report community sizes as large as some of the designated groups whose statistics are reported in the Census, it would have been useful to know more precisely what the population of these communities is. Furthermore, there may be other groups which are not reported or otherwise well known.

Third, the category 'No Religion' is, as we have seen, nearly as large as the religious population (approximately 49.3 per cent of the national population). This group is assuredly not just the numbers of atheists and agnostics in Korea. I strongly suspect that in this category may be found a large number of people who, because they didn't fit any of the designated categories, or who did not feel that they belonged to any organised religion as such, put themselves down or were put down by the census recorder as having no religion. 'No Religion' in this case must mean no attachment to a designated religious organisation. I think that most of the people in this category are in fact practitioners of the cults of folk religion and other traditional practices. This point also raises an issue with regard to the Buddhist statistics. It is known that many of the followers of shamanistic practices will refer to their beliefs as being 'Buddhist', and consequently some people may have self-identified themselves as being Buddhist.

Fourth, there are also issues regarding the Protestant statistics. In previous reports, the author has seen cases where statistics for Protestantism included figures for the Unification Church, the Mormon Church and the Jehovah's Witnesses which on strict theological grounds (Christology) are not mainline denominations but new religious movements. Are groups such as those included in the Protestant statistics in this Census, or are they (or some of them) included in the miscellaneous category?

2. The Sŭl Metropolitan Region includes the self-governing cities of Sŭl and Inch'ŏn as well as the surrounding province of Kyŏnggi-do. The eastern region refers to the province of Kangwŏn-do on the east coast, the central region to the provinces of North Ch'ungch'ŏng-do and South

Ch'ungch'ŏng-do and the self-governing city of Taejŏn, the southwest region to the provinces of North Ch'ŏlla-do and South Ch'ŏlla-do and the self-governing city of Kwangju, and the southeast region to the provinces of North Kyŏngsang-do and South Kyŏngsang-do and the self-governing cities of Taegu and Pusan.

3. A thorough discussion of the theory of emplantation may be found in my book *Early Buddhism and Christianity in Korea: A Study in the Emplantation of Religion* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1985). The theory is outlined in Chapter One.

4. Ibid, pp. 136–140.

5. The ideas presented in this article were first developed in a paper entitled 'The Interaction of Buddhism, Christianity and the New Religions' which was presented at a seminar held at the School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London on 11 February, 1988. This was elaborated and published as 'The Impact of Korean Protestant Christianity on Buddhism and the New Religions', *Papers of the British Association for Korean Studies* v. 1 (1991), pp. 57–73. A revised version of this article reflecting my further thoughts on the subject was published as 'Cultural Encounter: Korean Protestantism and Other Religious Traditions', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* v. 25 (2001), no 2, pp. 66–75. That article forms the basis for this paper.

6. Ibid, pp. 58–62.

7. Donald Baker of the University of British Columbia discusses the issue of Catholic isolation from mainstream nineteenth-century Korean society in 'From Pottery to Politics: The Transformation of Korean Catholicism', in Lewis R. Lancaster and Richard K. Payne, eds., *Religion and Society in Contemporary Korea* (Berkeley, California, Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1997), pp. 127–168. On pages, 135–136, he concludes that the effect of these severe persecutions was to create a 'siege' or 'ghetto' mentality. Previously, I have used the term 'ghetto mentality' (Grayson, 1985, op. cit., p. 98; Grayson, *Korea: A Religious History* (OUP, 1989), p. 208) to describe the inward-looking attitude of the early Korean Catholic community which was the result of their suffering and persecution.

8. Grayson, 1985, op. cit., p. 126.

9. Donald Baker in examining the radical change in the attitude of the Catholic Church from the 1960s to the 1990s attributes it to the attitude toward social involvement enunciated at the Second Vatican Council, the Koreanisation of the church leadership, and the urbanisation of the laity (Baker, op. cit., pp. 159–164). I concur with those observations but would add to those factors the example and stimulus of the large and active Protestant community.

10. A description of the policies pursued by the Chosŏn government may be found in Grayson (1989) pp. 151–154, 172–176, 221. A contemporary, early twentieth century comment may be found in Charles Allen Clark, *Religions of Old Korea* (1932, repr. Sŭl, Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1962), pp. 41–43.

11. Grayson (1989), op.cit., pp. 221–226.

12. The importance of the lay movements in modern Buddhism has been emphasised by Robert E. Buswell, Jr. in ‘Monastic Lay Associations in Contemporary Korean Buddhism: A Study of the Puril Hoe’ in Lancaster and Payne, op.cit., pp.101–120. In particular, he stresses the importance of the Christian model as being the source for the Buddhist lay associations, for which there is no precedent in Buddhist history. See pp. 116–118.

13. These comments on Buddhist accommodation are based on numerous personal experiences and observations. Buswell, op.cit., pp. 117–118 describes modern Buddhist lay songs which are based upon Christian hymnody.

14. Frits Vos, *Die Religionen Koreas* (Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1977), pp 189–202 and Grayson (1989), op.cit., pp. 234–235.

15. These comments are based upon personal observations. For a photograph, see Government General of Chŏsen, *Chŏsen-no riuji shŏkyŏ* (Seoul, 1935), photograph number 1.

16. Government General of Chŏsen, op.cit., photographs numbers 2 and 3.

17. Ibid., photograph number 8.

18. C.A. Clark, op.cit., pp. 155–160 and Grayson (1989), op.cit., pp. 237–239.

19. Lee, Kang-o, “Jingsan-gyo: Its History, Doctrines and Ritual Practices” , *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch* v. 43 (1967), 28–35 and Grayson (1989), op. cit., pp.241–245.
20. Government General of Chosen, op. cit., pp. 1–10.
21. Felix Moos, “Leadership and Organization in the Olive Tree Movement” , *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch* v. 43 (1967), pp.11–27, Vos, op.cit., p. 211 and Grayson (1989), op.cit., pp. 245–247.
22. Ch’ oi Syn-duk, “Korea’ s T’ ong-il Movement” , *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch* v. 43 (1967), pp. 167–189, and Grayson (1989), op. cit., pp. 247–250.
23. During 1992, there were several pseudo-churches which were predicting the imminent return of Christ, among which the Daverra Church predicted the end on 10 October, 1992, and the Tami Missionary Church on 28 October, 1992. Although the leader of the latter group was in his late forties, the Daverra Church was led by an eighteen year-old high school drop-out. The history of the last months of these groups may be traced in the *Korea Newsreview* for 1992 in v. 21, no. 34 (22 August), p. 11; no. 35 (29 August), pp. 10–11; no. 38 (19 September), p. 32; no. 40 (3 October), p.11; no. 42 (17 October), p. 11; no 43 (24 October), p. 11; and no. 45 (7 November), pp. 8–9. An Op-Ed comment appears in no. 46 (14 November), p. 33.

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