

On This Topic



Christianity, the Cold War, and the Construction of the Republic of Korea

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Adopted in 1988 by the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK), the “Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Unification and Peace” began with praise and thanks to God for the gospel of Christ. Then, in a section with the heading “Confession of Sins Regarding Division and Hatred,” the authors delivered their central message. The Protestant denominations affiliated with the NCCCK confessed “that the deep and long-held hatred and enmity toward the other side, within the structure of [national] division, was a sin.” Unprecedented in the history of Christianity in South Korea, representatives of mainline Protestant denominations cast South Korea’s anti-communist ideology as akin to *religious idolatry*, repudiated hatred and enmity toward North Korea as sinful, and characterized the division of Korea in 1945 as “the sinful fruit of the present

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world political structure and existing ideological systems.”¹

The milestones that led up to the NCKK’s 1988 Declaration speak to not just the history of the ecumenical movement, but also to the centrality of the Christian Church in South Korea’s democracy movement. Some of the milestones in the democracy/ecumenical movement include the 1973 “Declaration by Christians” against the Yushin (Park Chung-hee) dictatorship and its manipulation of the national unification issue as a tool for regime maintenance, the 1984 Tozanzo (Japan) Report, which declared that the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula has to be the goal of a concrete practice of the gospel of reconciliation, and the 1986 meeting sponsored by the World Council of Churches, in Glion, Switzerland, that was attended by church representatives from both North and South Korea.² As Kang In-cheol has pointed out, it has to be kept in mind that liberal or progressive Protestants who supported such peace and reconciliation efforts accounted for less than one in five of South Korea’s Protestant population.³ A year after the 1988 Declaration, many conservative churches and denominations left the NCKK to form the Christian Council of Korea (CCK). Starting in the 2000s, conservative Protestants affiliated with the CCK began taking to the streets, waving American and South Korean flags.

Since the early 2000s, the theological and political differences between the more liberal Christian Church and the bulk of the Protestant Church have been overtly visible. In 2002, when the George W. Bush administration referred to Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as forming an Axis of Evil, and then a year later sought South Korea’s participation in the post-invasion phase of the Iraq War, both the NCKK and the Catholic Church of Korea declared their opposition to sending troops. The conservative Protestant churches actively supported the deployment of ROK forces. In 2007, responding to conscientious objectors, the Roh Moo-hyun government

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1. This 1988 “Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Unification and Peace” was adopted unanimously and with a standing ovation by the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches in Korea. See M. Kang (1988, 174). The first quoted sentence is in section 3, while the second is in section 2 (National Council of Churches of Korea 1988).
 2. “Hanguk geuriseudoin seoneon” (A Declaration by Korean Christians) (1973). See Yi (2006).
 3. Today, that percentage is probably even smaller. See I. Kang (2013, 265–268).

introduced a service system that would count as an alternative to mandatory military service for men. Catholic and Buddhist leaders quietly accepted this initiative, but conservative Protestant leaders strongly opposed it. The political activism of conservative Protestants in South Korea today includes opposition to feminism (feminists are variant Marxists), opposition to the movement to enact the Anti-Discrimination Act (advocacy for the rights of the LGBTQ community is an effort by leftist forces to expand their influence), opposition to granting refugee status to Yemeni asylum seekers (they are Muslim), as well as opposition to any initiative that might strain South Korea's political and military ties with the United States.⁴

The 1988 NCCK Declaration had pointed indirectly to the United States and Christians as two principal creators of “the present world political structure and existing ideological systems” that gave rise to the sin of hating one's fellow nationals. While South Korea's political and religious terrain has shifted significantly since the late 1980s, this special issue shows how the cleavages that continue to structure that terrain originate from the liberation period (1945–1948), if not earlier. More specifically, this special issue sheds light on how the origins of the Korean War and the *architecture* of South Korea come more clearly into focus when we consider the communism vs. Christianity opposition, and the genealogy of Korean Protestantisms (Kun-woo Kim) over the span of the entire 20th century. The contributors, each with a specific focus, examine the pivotal role played by Korean Christians like Helen Kim (Kim Hwal-lan, 1899–1970), and Catholics and Protestant missionaries from Europe and North America, in establishing South Korea as an anti-communist state.

4. When Lee Myung-bak assumed the presidency in 2008, the proposal for an alternative service system was scuttled. As Kang In-cheol puts it, the vast majority of Protestant Christians/churches are not only militantly anti-communist (anti-North Korea), they are militaristic. See I. Kang (2018). In 2018, the Constitutional Court ordered the South Korean government to create an alternative service system. In October 2020, the first group of conscientious objectors entered training camp to start their three-year service. They will work, eat, and sleep in prisons. But they will live apart from other inmates, receive military pay, and will not have a criminal record.

In traditional church history, especially Protestant church history, the predominant narrative presents missionaries from Europe and North America as the principal conduit or bearers of modern civilization to Korea. In narratives about the creation of two Koreas in 1948, Christians are usually portrayed as victims of communist oppression, principled opponents of totalitarian oppression and subversion, and humanitarians who gave food and shelter to orphans and refugees during and after the Korean War. As this special issue makes clear, however, the relationship of missionaries and Korean Christians to democracy (*demos + kratia*) in post-liberation South Korea has been understudied (Jong-Chol An). Missionaries and Korean Christians were not mere victims of political violence. They were active participants in the violent process that led to the establishment of two Koreas in 1948.

Both the modernization and freedom narratives were, of course, constructed at the height of the Cold War: the modernization narrative starting in the early 1960s, and the freedom narrative soon after Japan's defeat in World War II, when US forces occupied Korea south of the 38th parallel. In authoring the freedom narrative, as in the formation of South Korea, Christians and Christian organizations both within and outside of Korea played a key role, providing rhetorical, institutional, and material support to the totalitarianism vs. freedom paradigm that would explain and justify American military presence in South Korea, Asia, and elsewhere. That is to say, Christians and Christian organizations were more than complicit in the escalation of violence against revolutionary aspirations that had broad support in post-liberation Korea. Throughout the Korean peninsula, those revolutionary aspirations included not only land reform and the removal of the colonial elite from positions of power, but also the dismantling of patriarchy and *superstition* (that is, religion).⁵ This special issue considers the extent to which the atheism of the communists might have been the decisive issue for Christians in post-liberation Korea.

5. On feminism and revolution, and the effort to create a socialist modernity in pre-war North Korea, see S. Kim (2013). See also Cumings (2010).

Religion and the Cold War

In the field of Cold War studies in the United States, it now seems obvious that religion—Christianity—mattered during the Cold War. British and American policy makers in the late 1940s thought the atheism of Marxism-Leninism had to be the Achilles' heel in communism's appeal (Kirby 2002, 2). In mid-twentieth century America (1945–1960), the Christian crusade against communism included support for McCarthyism at home and providing assistance to anti-communist forces all over the world. Indeed, a broad spectrum of Christian thinkers sought to make Christianity synonymous with Americanism. Liberals like Reinhold Niebuhr supported labor and civil rights, and were fearful of communist subversion. Anti-communist Catholics like Cardinal Francis Spellman believed that a “true American can be neither a Communist nor a Communist condoner, and... the first loyalty of every American is vigilantly to weed out and counteract Communism” (Cooney 1984, 148).⁶

Anders Stephanson has pointed to the theological origins of the Truman Doctrine (March 1947), and NSC-68 (April 1950), which provided policy guidance for the militarization of the Cold War. Given “foundational status by the Korean War,” the language of NSC-68 drew on the theme of an epic struggle between freedom and slavery.⁷ Moreover, Seth Jacobs has argued that Christian statesmen like Secretary of State John Foster Dulles (a Presbyterian elder) “were so fiercely anti-communist precisely because they were so religious.”⁸ At the same time, Andrew Preston would remind us that

6. See Preston (2012, 109–130). Regarding Niebuhr's fear of the communist threat, Preston points to Niebuhr's political writings, especially the chapter, “The Soviet Threat,” in Davis and Good (1960).

7. As Stephanson points out, “propagandists of the revolutionary era, in attacking the putatively despotic attempts of George III to enslave the colonies, did not stop to consider very long, if at all, the central, and indeed decisive, role of actually existing slavery in the colonial economy and society (Stephanson 2000, 83).

8. Jacobs adds, “(Christian statesmen like Dulles) supported a South Vietnamese dictator as a direct consequence of their racist assumption that the Vietnamese, being childlike and primitive, required authoritarian government if they were to be kept out of the communist bloc” (Jacobs 2004, 18).

there were Christians who spoke out against the anti-communist fixation of US foreign policy: Pacifists and Christian socialists like Reverend A. J. Muste and Dorothy Day called for decolonization, nuclear arms control, and global social justice.⁹ In the South Korean context too, there were important differences within Christian anti-communism. But for Korea, the historiographic question to be addressed is not only about comparability but about interpellation, and the structures of choices created by Japan's defeat in World War II and occupation by American and Soviet forces.

Interpellation does not imply the creation of subjects, or social actors, who then have predispositions which they simply execute. That is to say, missionaries and mission boards did not hail Korean subjects who then fought against communists because they were Christians. Moreover, the Cold War was a global Cold War in which not just state actors but also missionary boards (Paul Cha) and the Vatican (Jieun Han) were influential participants in places like post-liberation Korea. That is to say, both communists and Christians were more than capable of thinking strategically, and globally. For example, it was not out of Christian beliefs or feminist principles that the Christian educator Helen Kim/Kim Hwal-lan organized "gisaeng parties," mobilizing Ewha students and alumnae to entertain UN soldiers and officials (Haeseong Park). Historians have to take into account the religious and political networks that mattered most to Helen Kim, and explain how those affiliations and interests might have structured the choices that she perceived, swayed how she evaluated those choices, and prompted purposeful action.¹⁰

In that sense, interpellation points to the co-formation of Korean Christians and missionaries: Koreans became Christians and missionaries became missionaries via their interaction within networks that were regional and transnational. Interpellation also points to the co-formation of South Korea. That is to say, the *architecture* of South Korea was designed not just

9. Pacifists and Christian socialists' critiques of American racism and imperialism was incisive. But, they were not able to mount any serious challenge to the Cold War anti-communist consensus that had emerged by the late 1940s, and certainly not after the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 (Preston 2012).

10. This theoretical insight comes from Adam Przeworski. See Przeworski (1986, 145-146).

by certain Korean political factions and the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK), but also to a surprising degree by missionaries, Korean Christians, and their transnational networks. Former missionaries who served as civil affairs officers in the USAMGIK were immensely influential, even if their overriding desire was the establishment of Korean sovereignty (Elizabeth Underwood). On the other hand, missionaries not formally affiliated with the USAMGIK sometimes made choices that were distinct from US policy preferences (Paul Cha). As for Korean Christians, Kun-woo Kim, in the lead article, argues that the “design” for the Republic of Korea was drawn up in large part by Protestants from northern/North Korea who moved south before and during the Korean War. The argument here is similar to that Andrew Preston made for the US context. There were a small number of Christians who were progressive and pacifist, many more Christians who were conservative and militantly anti-communist, and a significant number of Christians in the middle who grew increasingly anti-communist after the creation of two Koreas.

Varieties of Anti-Communism

In August, 1945, when the United States proposed dividing Korea along the 38th parallel, leftists had broad support in the American zone, and Protestant Christians had greater influence in the Soviet zone. Indeed, Kai Yin Allison Haga has argued that Soviet support for Kim Il-sung had to do, in part, with his appeal as an anti-Japanese fighter who came from the Pyongyang area *and* because he had a Christian family background. Immediately after liberation, however, it was Cho Man-sik (1882-1950), a Presbyterian elder, who emerged as the leader of the Pyongyang People’s Committee. He had studied law at Meiji University, taught at Osan School, had been imprisoned by the Japanese colonial government for his role in the March First Movement, and in the late 1920s had led the Singanhoe in the northwest region. The Soviet occupation appointed Cho Man-sik head of the

Five Provinces Administrative Bureau.¹¹ But in November, 1945 he founded the Joseon Democratic Party (Joseon minjudang), and then in December opposed the Trusteeship Agreement. In January 1946, when Cho Man-sik resigned from the South Pyeongan Provincial People's Committee over the question of Trusteeship, the Soviet occupation placed him under house arrest. That ended the possibility of a partnership between communists and Christians in northern Korea. In fact, Haga argues, "Cho Man-sik's fall ended any possibility of a peaceful unification" (Haga 2012, 90-92).

Given the enormous influence of Protestants and Protestant institutions in northern Korea, when 70,000 to 80,000 Protestants came south before and during the Korean War,¹² they had a decisive impact on South Korea. Kun-woo Kim's analysis of the impact they had is genealogical, identifying typological differences between "Protestantisms" based on geographic clustering. It was the conservative Protestantism from the Northwest region (Pyeongang and Hwanghae provinces), nurtured by American Presbyterian missionaries, that became a foundational axis of South Korean society. Protestantism from the northeast region (Hamgyeong province) and eastern Manchuria, however, was significantly less conservative. At the time of liberation from Japanese colonial rule, many expected communists to come to power, and Christians were preparing for life under a communist government. Speaking just days after liberation, Rev. Kim Jae-jun, who taught at Eunjin Middle School in Yongjeong, Manchuria, and founded what is now Hanshin University in Seoul, laid out the conditions that would make a communist government acceptable:

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11. As noted by Bruce Cumings, American intelligence suggested that no central government emerged in northern Korea at this time. In the early months of the Soviet occupation, People's Committees continued to recognize Seoul as the political center and the Five Provinces Administrative Bureau (Buk Joseon odo haengjeongguk) made no claims to being a central body (Cumings 1981, 391-393).
 12. According to Kang In-cheol, the approximately 70,000 to 80,000 Protestants who came south represented 35-40 percent of total Protestant population in the North. As for Catholics, between 15,000 and 20,000 migrated south, representing approximately 25 percent of total Catholics in the North (I. Kang 1992, 134-135).

A government that deserves our gratitude is one that guarantees the freedom of religion and worship, freedom of thought, freedom of press, assembly, and publishing, and the freedom of individual conscience. While we are well aware of the alarm that the so-called communist movement is liable to raise as a problem immediately confronting us, we have to give communism its due for giving us a social scientific analysis of the reality of economic institutions and a plan of action for how a better society might be reconstructed...Given the current reality of Korea, our initial response to any government, communist or not, that guarantees the freedoms enumerated above is one of grateful acceptance.¹³ (quoted from Kun-woo Kim, this issue)

Kun-woo Kim associates the origin of this kind of *openness* to communism with the progressivism of Canadian and German missionaries, who were active in the northeast region, and the influence of Japanese Protestants like Uchimura Kanzō.¹⁴ While it can be argued that, on the whole, there was an anti-communist consensus among Christians in 1945, fierce anti-communism came from Protestant Christians from the northwest region.

In 1945, the political stance of Protestants in the South ranged from moderate to somewhat left of center.¹⁵ Protestants who hailed from Korea's northeast (Hamgyeong province and eastern Manchuria) were more progressive. Here, Kun-woo Kim makes explicit what he had only alluded to in his earlier work: that is, the genealogy of a progressive Protestantism that was deeply influenced by theological training in Japan. In the charged

13. This passage is quoted from Kun-woo Kim's article in this issue. Not discussed in Kim's article are Christian socialists like Yeo Un-hyeong (1886-1947) who organized the Korean People's Republic, a week before American troops arrived in September 1945. Yeo studied at Baejae Hakdang established by Methodist missionaries in Seoul, and in his mid-20s studied for two years at the Pyongyang Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Until his death in 1947, Yeo was central in efforts to create a left-right coalition that would include the communists. He was assassinated by a right-wing activist. Yeo is one of very few politicians respected in both North and South Korea.

14. The kernel of his argument is drawn from K. Kim (2017).

15. Haga argues that, in 1945, Christians in the South "tended to be politically moderate or even somewhat left of center. They supported peaceful unification, democracy, religious freedom, and land reform" (Haga 2007, 198).

atmosphere of post-liberation Korea, while concealing their association with progressive Christians in Japan, this stream that included Ham Seok-heon presented a coherent vision of social reform, and emerged as a numerically small but powerful rival to the militant anti-communism of Protestantism from the northwest region. Taken together, Kim argues, the fervent anti-communism of Protestantism from the northwest region, along with anti-communist and yet progressive Protestantism from the northeast region, were central to how the *architecture* of South Korea—that is, the horizon of political possibilities—came to be established.

As for Catholics and Catholicism, Jieun Han's article looks at the role played by the Vatican, Bishop Patrick Byrne (the Vatican's apostolic visitor to Seoul), Archbishop Spellman (archbishop of New York, nicknamed "the American Pope"), and Bishop Ro Kinam (bishop of the Seoul diocese), in shaping not only the political orientation of the Catholic Church in post-liberation Korea but also the policies of the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK). Archbishop Spellman accompanied the American occupation forces as military vicar, and on September 9, the day after US forces arrived in 1945, he led a mass at Myeongdong Cathedral with Koreans and large numbers of American military officers. Two days later, Bishop Ro was invited to a meeting with Colonel Cecil Nist, chief of military intelligence (G-2), to recommend Korean leaders who could work with the USAMGIK.

It could very well have been Archbishop Spellman, then, who prompted the USAMGIK to approach Bishop Ro Kinam. Bishop Ro gave the Americans a list of sixty persons, including Syngman Rhee (1875-1965), Kim Gu (1876-1949), as well as Song Jin-u (1887-1945), and Kim Seong-su (1891-1955). Bishop Ro's list did not include any communists, socialists, or their sympathizers. This is not surprising. As Giuliana Chamedes has pointed out, in the early 1930s the Vatican had founded an organization known as the Secretariat on Atheism that played a significant role in the formation of a transnational anti-communism. The Vatican disseminated its own form of anti-communism, distinct from that of Nazi and fascist forces. Grounded in Catholic teachings, the Vatican campaign avoided the anti-Semitic and nationalistic motifs that characterized Nazi-fascist propaganda,

to unite Catholic groups across Europe and the Americas. In practice, however, the Vatican campaign led to the toning down of both the pope's public denunciations of Nazi-fascism, and papal sanction of violence against purportedly communist enemies (Chamedes 2016, 261–290).

At the end of World War II, many Americans still regarded the Catholic Church as a *foreign* church. Mass was celebrated in Latin, many Catholics were recent immigrants, and they were *Roman* Catholics. As Robert L. Frank has pointed out, “Catholics lived in a nation in which Protestantism was generally regarded as the national religion.” Anti-communism, then, provided a way to renew the Church's commitment to Catholic doctrine *and* to affirm the Church's place in American society and culture (Frank 1992, 39–56). In Korea, although Catholicism was introduced in the late 18th century, in 1945 Catholicism was still viewed as a foreign religion. While the number of Catholics in Korea was miniscule, Jieun Han's article shows how the Vatican was able to create a bridge that linked the USAMGIK and the Korean Catholic Church. The Vatican's appointment of Bishop Byrne as apostolic visitor to Korea was part of its transnational effort to fight atheistic communism, and to secure the Church's place in postcolonial Korea.

Jieun Han interprets Bishop Byrne's appointment as apostolic visitor to Korea as expression of the Vatican's wish to recognize Korea as an independent nation even before the Republic of Korea was established on August 15, 1948. In that sense, she argues that the establishment of an anti-communist state in Korea came to have a significant religious dimension. Is it possible, then, to say that the Korean War and the Cold War in Korea were in important respects *religious wars*? To what extent was the anti-communism of Catholic Church leaders in Korea a religious anti-communism? Kun-woo Kim states explicitly that in the post-liberation period, the political force that stood in opposition to communism was Christianity, not capitalism nor liberal democracy. Indeed, the articles in this special issue show, in a variety of ways, how anti-communism became central to Christian identity and practice in post-liberation Korea.

The seeds of the conflict that would later become so pivotal were first sown in the 1920s. Albert Park has pointed out that, as in Europe, North America, and China, there were anti-religion movements in 1920s and

1930s colonial Korea. In China, anti-religion organizations such as the Anti-Christian Student Federation emerged. The mid-1920s was a period of *religious depression* in America. In 1927, Bertrand Russell's pamphlet "Why I Am Not a Christian" had an enormous impact. In colonial Korea, in left-wing journals like *Gaebyeok* (Daybreak) and *Bipan* (Criticism), Marxists denounced religion, especially Christianity, for supporting capitalism, imperialism, and for promoting an escapist life (A. Park 2014, 80–89). Jieun Han's paper does not explicitly trace the origins of the civil war/Cold War in Korea to the colonial period. She simply notes that "Pope Pius XII realized that communism posed a major threat to the Catholic Church in Europe. After the end of World War II, the Holy See therefore tried to create public support for resisting the expansion of Soviet communism into western Europe."

While Bishop Byrne played an important role in carrying out the Holy See's plan, the role played by Protestant missionaries like Horace H. Underwood was more individually distinctive, and arguably more profound. Born in Seoul to early Presbyterian Church USA missionaries, Elizabeth Underwood explains that Horace H. Underwood's sense of familial duty included working respectfully with the broader Korean Protestant community. The relationship with other missionaries was more fraught. As Donald Clark points out, the Korea Mission of the Presbyterian Church USA suffered philosophical and religious splits virtually from its founding in 1884. One of the worst splits erupted in the 1910s when Horace G. Underwood, father of Horace H. Underwood, decided to establish a liberal arts college in Seoul with his own family money, offering a modern—that is to say, *secular*—education that would expose Korean students to the Gospel while training them for careers in many walks of life. Many missionaries in Pyongyang who already had founded their own college, Sungsil (Union Christian College), were outraged. As Clark notes, "in the minds of the Pyeongyang group, the only legitimate objective of a Christian college [was] to prepare students for Seminary studies." According to Clark, "if the money had all been Mission money, the Pyeongyang/Sungsil group would easily have won the argument" (Clark 2008, 27).

Here, then, was a theological cleavage that was also geographic. In

Seoul, Underwood helped establish *Sinsaenghwal*, a socialist literary monthly of the 1920s, and served on its board. At Yonhui College (Chosen Christian College, today's Yonsei University), Underwood worked with intellectuals from across the political spectrum, including Paek Nam-un, the Marxist historian who taught at the college from 1924 until 1938. In the 1930s, the problem posed by Shinto worship was understood against the backdrop of the cleavage created in the 1910s over the question of secular/liberal education. Beginning in 1932, in response to the expanding requirements by the Japanese colonial government that schools participate in Shinto ceremonies, the mission majority voted to close schools. In Seoul, the Underwoods adamantly opposed their mission's decision and appealed for permission to keep schools open, and to "allow Koreans to decide for themselves." By 1934 Horace H. Underwood was president of Yonhui College, and he argued that "the feeling in the Korean church, though divided, is one of reluctance rather than conscientious objection" and that they "would probably favor continuance of the schools" (Elizabeth Underwood, this issue). It would seem that the insistence on listening to Korean opinion, and the use of the adverb "probably" in attributing Korean preference, provide clues to how Horace H. Underwood articulated—to himself and to others—the choices he made in post-liberation Korea.

Horace H. Underwood returned to Korea following World War II as a civil affairs officer in the USAMGIK. He spent much of his first few months back in Korea assessing Korean opinion and circumstances. In his tour of the southern provinces, Underwood's November 1945 assessment of the situation was that the most popular and active organizations were those associated with the People's Party of Korea (Joseon inmindang led by Yeo Un-hyeong, a Christian socialist), which he characterized as primarily, but not uniformly, "communitic." On the other hand, the "so-called Democratic Party" (Hanguk minjudang, led by conservatives like Kim Seong-su) was poorly organized or unorganized in most places. He concluded his summary by stating that the "military government cannot and should not discriminate against either Communists or People's Republic [Joseon inmin gonghwaguk] as political parties" (Underwood, this issue).

Elizabeth Underwood writes that the Underwoods, having advocated

for Korean autonomy, were initially happy with what they saw to be democratic participation in the 1948 UN-sponsored elections and establishment of the Republic of Korea. For Ethel Underwood, her work with Korean women's organizations reflected confidence in a Korean liberal democracy. But they mourned the division of the country and were deeply concerned about the increased probability of war. Moreover, they felt frustrated that in the exercise of autonomy "the new Republic of Korea itself was recreating some of the authoritarian methods and measures practiced earlier by the Japanese." By January, 1949, Horace H. Underwood was lamenting "the threat to democracy emerging from South Korean fears of an attack from the north and the ROK's use of 'terroristic methods' in response." By the outbreak of the Korean War, however, he had become "decidedly anti-communist," and his hopes stood firmly with South Korea (Underwood, this issue).

Jong-Chol An's article focuses on another missionary who worked in the USAMGIK. James Earnest Fisher (1886–1989) first came to Korea as a missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1919. In the 1920s, Fisher returned to the U.S. to pursue a PhD. He published his dissertation *Democracy and Mission Education in Korea* (1928) in which he sought to reorient mission education via John Dewey's ideas on democracy and education. As Jong-Chol An points out, democracy is a combination of the Greek *demos* (people) and *kratos* (power), and thus inherently political. However, in *Democracy and Mission Education in Korea*, Fisher's conceptualization of democracy hewed close to John Dewey's emphasis on the rules, norms, and social institutions that make up the social habitat. According to Jong-Chol An, Fisher's emphasis on democratic education that would "enable human beings to live more satisfying lives," in the context of 1920s colonial Korea, has to be seen as "circumvention of the political" (An, this issue).

James E. Fisher taught at Yonhui College (Chosen Christian College) until 1934, and then returned to the United States during World War II. Both Fisher and Horace H. Underwood worked with the OSS (Office of Strategic Services), forerunner of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). Fisher returned to Korea in January 1946 as director of political education in the

Office of Public Opinion, Ministry of Public Information of the USAMGIK. All political parties in the American zone had to report their membership and financial information to Fisher's Ministry of Public Information. Fisher's colleagues in the Ministry included Henry Doge Appenzeller, a second-generation Methodist missionary, and Induk (Indeok) Park, a Christian educator. Fisher was actively involved in US-Soviet Joint Commission talks in 1947. But even before the Joint Commission talks failed, Fisher and his colleagues were already prepared for a "democratic education" that would be anti-USSR and anti-communist. "Henry [Appenzeller] had a keen and active mind, and in his radio broadcasts was able to counteract much of the communist propaganda without openly attacking our Russian 'Allies.'"¹⁶

In his 1947 book, *Democracy as a Way of Life*, translated into Korean and published by the Korean Interim Government as *Minjujuuijeok saenghwal*, Fisher was primarily concerned with the status of the individual and respect for individual character. From this foundation, Fisher thought Korea's social institutions could be reformed. While Fisher could imagine the development of democratic institutions in Korea, where individuals could realize their potentialities, pressing political issues such as demands for land reform and removal of the colonial elite from positions of power were not directly addressed. For Fisher, the mission of the USAMGIK was "equal to Christian missionaries' works." Both as an official with the USAMGIK and as a Christian missionary, Fisher insisted that "the people's future destiny depends on how to clearly differentiate between democracy and totalitarianism" (An, this issue). In authoritarian South Korea, this democracy would be the sort of democracy where politics—whereby the people exercise power—would be circumscribed, if not circumvented.

If Fisher's work in the "political education of the Korean people in democratic ideology and practice" was a function of the USAMGIK as an ideological apparatus, Paul Cha's article examines what Althusser would have called the establishment of an ideological apparatus that is not directly controlled by the state. Cha's article examines the founding of HLKY, the

16. James Earnest Fisher, *Pioneer of Modern Korea* (Seoul: The Christian literature Society of Korea, 1977), as quoted in Jong-Chol An (this issue).

forerunner of the Christian Broadcasting Station and the first private radio station established in South Korea, in 1954. A stated purpose of the station was to combat communism, and as Cha points out, in conventional church histories both the radio station and its mission are presented as the result of a *natural* alliance between Christians and a state determined to protect religious freedom. But Cha makes visible cracks, if not cleavages, in the picture of both Christian unity and of Christians working with the state to combat communism. Clashes both among missionaries and between Western and Korean Christian leaders were an important subtext in the creation of HLKY. Korean Christian leaders may have welcomed missionaries and their support in the post-liberation period, yet many also sought to avoid a return to foreign missionaries occupying positions of dominance.

Korean Christians lacked financial resources however, and the reality was that missionaries wielded overwhelming influence: from planning, execution, and early administration, the founding of HLKY was a missionary project. It was also the product of Protestant ecumenism—the work of the Foreign Missionary Conference of North America (FMCNA). As Paul Cha points notes, the power of radio to disseminate Christianity both quickly and over seemingly limitless territory seemed crucial because of the growing concern about communism. FMCNA called on its Committee on Research and Consul (CRC) to investigate why communism was so popular. In the committee's reports produced in 1948, a common refrain was that the popularity of communism was the surface manifestation of deeper social and political ills. Radio fit into the broader plan of the FMCNA to demonstrate the power of Christianity to transform communities and improve the living conditions of people by sharing knowledge about horticulture, home economics, and even basic medicine.

For its part, the Rhee government saw in Christianity a natural enemy to communism, and by promoting Christian radio, Rhee could bolster his regime. Yet, though the interests of Christians and the South Korean state were roughly aligned, Cha points out they were not identical. Many former missionaries worked with the USAMGIK in the liberation period, but others questioned the wisdom of forging a close relationship with the state. By

1947, some missionaries came to believe that close ties with the USAMGIK presented problems, as the military government was not popular in Korea, and was not practicing democratic principles.¹⁷ In opposition to moves to create a separate state in the American zone, the Korea Committee of the FMCNA passed a resolution criticizing any measures that would lead to a “separate and independent southern Korea.” Drawing on both Soviet and American proposals, the Committee called for the militaries of both the United States and the Soviet Union to withdraw from the peninsula, and for an election to be held under the watch of the United Nations.

By 1947, the United States was searching for a way to disengage from Korea, and it turned to the UN as a way of doing so. But the idea of the UN organizing elections throughout Korea was opposed by the Soviet Union. The United States, and Syngman Rhee, then pressed for conducting elections just in the south. Canadian and Australian representatives in the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) were opposed to having elections only in the south, because it would inevitably lead to the creation of a government in the south and then a government in the north, with high likelihood that each would claim sovereignty over the entirety of Korea. Kim Gu, a right-wing nationalist, along with Kim Kyu-sik, visited Pyongyang in April, 1948, to try and find a way to create a unified Korean government. Because of their willingness to negotiate with Korean communists like Kim Il Sung, even centrist Christian leaders such as Kim Kyu-sik lost support among the increasingly conservative Christian community.¹⁸ Closer to the emerging anti-communist consensus among Korean Christians were educators like Helen Kim who mobilized Ewha students and alumnae to make the elections happen.

Haeseong Park’s article focuses on one of Helen Kim’s controversial activities that has not been examined in scholarly work: the so-called *gisaeng* parties, for which Kim mobilized Ewha students and alumnae to bring about

17. “Korean Committee of the FMC,” June 2, 1947 (Cha, this issue).

18. Elizabeth Underwood cites Ethel Underwood, who wrote that Kim Kyu-sik had come under attack after he visited Pyongyang to participate in the 1948 North-South leadership conference. Kim Kyu-sik had been raised as an orphan by Horace G. Underwood.

UN-sponsored elections that would establish South Korea in 1948, and then to secure political support and material assistance for South Korea before and during the Korean War. Organizing such events were part and parcel of Helen Kim's lobbying/public relations work on behalf of Syngman Rhee. Helen Kim's support for Syngman Rhee not only centered on publicity, promoting his image, but also his political agenda inside and outside Korea. When the Trusteeship agreement was announced in December 1945, Syngman Rhee had come out in opposition. Having opposed the work of the US-Soviet Joint Commission, by late 1946 Syngman Rhee was calling for the establishment of a separate state in the American zone. William R. Langdon, the State Department's advisor to the USAMGIK, surmised Rhee's motivation thus:

Although Rhee may be acting from patriotic motives, there is possibility that [Rhee's call for the creation of a separate state in the south] may be an attempt to steal the show at home...Rhee's final realization that we mean to go ahead with the Moscow decision which in the nature of things ruins his chances of being first president, crystallized his decision to fight Moscow decision.¹⁹

As a *modus vivendi*, Franklin D. Roosevelt's proposal of trusteeship was meant to involve Stalin in a collaborative effort to create a "One World." The Trusteeship Agreement signed in Moscow in December 1945 called for the establishment of a "provisional democratic government," which after five years would become independent. With Soviet involvement in creating a provisional democratic government, and with leftist organizations having broad support throughout Korea, chances were slim that Syngman Rhee and conservative Koreans could gain control. With the Soviets refusing to work with groups that opposed the Trusteeship Agreement—is it possible to work with groups that oppose the very process?—and conservative Koreans, especially Christians, refusing to cooperate with the work of the

19. Political Adviser in Korea (William R. Langdon) to the Secretary of State, telegram, December 10, 1946 (FRUS 1971, 778), accessed December 5, 2020, <https://apjff.org/2013/11/18/Vladimir-Tikhonov/3935/article.html>.

Joint Commission, Rhee was pushing the United States to walk away from the Trusteeship Agreement and to create a separate (anti-communist) state in the American zone.

The creation of the UNTCOK provided the opportunity for the United States to disengage from Korea, and for Rhee to bring about the creation of a separate state south of the 38th parallel. The problem was that only three of nine UNTCOK commissioners were willing to go ahead with elections just in the south. K. P. S. Menon, chair of UNTCOK, was holding firm to UNTCOK's original stance of establishing a government for the whole of Korea. As Haeseong Park shows, Rhee was able to win over Menon through "highly personal diplomacy." When Rhee learned of Menon's "attention to Mo Yun-suk" at a reception, Rhee "pressured, and other times pestered, Mo [a well-known female poet] into swaying Menon" (Park, this issue). It is impossible to know whether Mo Yun-suk's highly personal diplomacy with Menon shifted his stance. However, Menon did change his stance, and the UNTCOK went ahead with elections just in the south, creating a state in the south alone, for the south alone.

The public relations effort on Rhee's behalf had begun in earnest with the formation of the Nangnang Club, composed of twenty women, including Mo Yun-suk and Choi Rye-sun. The Nangnang Club was a subordinate body of the YWCA, and Helen Kim had been a key member since the YWCA's founding in 1922. Her relationship with American missionaries and her command of English served her well. As advisor to the Nangnang Club, Helen Kim taught Western manners and etiquette to club members. During the Korean War, the Rhee government found a house for the club to use in the temporary wartime capital of Busan, and Jang Myeon took care of the club expenses. During the war, under Mo Yun-suk's leadership, the Nangnang Club transformed into a lobbyist group.²⁰ In Busan, Helen Kim was able to purchase another house with funds provided by the Rhee

20. Haeseong Park notes that the US Army Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) thought the club might be engaged in espionage activities. The CIC reports were not conclusive. But the CIC did conclude that the club lobbied for President Rhee through lavish entertainments. President Rhee and First Lady Francesca Donner Rhee approved and sponsored the club.

government. She named it the Victory House (Pilsunggak 必勝閣), and there she entertained UN military generals, foreign correspondents, and diplomats. Some Ewha faculty members did not attend, nor sent their students, to those parties. Some people derided the events held at the Victory House parties as *gisaeng* parties, and called Ewha students *gisaeng*.

Earlier in this essay, the reader was urged to take into account the religious and political networks that mattered most to Helen Kim, to see how those affiliations and interests might have structured the choices that she perceived. In her essay, Haeseong Park calls attention to two specific factors: masculine brutality and fear of communism, that together prompted “exacting sexual hospitality from her students.” The “brutality of men” is very suggestive here. From the late colonial period, Helen Kim would have been well versed in the theory and practice of total war, when masculine brutality was associated with forced mobilization of men and women to labor in mines, factories, and construction sites, and for women to *comfort* imperial soldiers fighting in China and elsewhere. The logic of total war was a statist logic, and just as in the late colonial period, *raison d'état* could displace or suspend (religious) concerns over conduct, rendering certain choices as necessity. Perhaps *raison d'état*, as articulated within religious and political networks that mattered most to Helen Kim, provided a cognitive frame for managing fear of masculine brutality and fear of communism. In that sense, the employment of *gentle and caring femininity* was a mode of (self) control at many levels, with much care taken to maintain elegance and etiquette. To put it differently, this was a cognitive frame that could engender certainty, and even pride, that entertaining foreign officials contributed to nation building.

Whatever the logic, Christians were violent in a massive way: organizations like the Northwest Youth League, in which Christian youth were core members, were right-wing terrorist organizations. The kind of violence they committed before and during the Korean War should dispel the notion that Christians were simply victims of communist oppression, and principled opponents of totalitarian oppression and subversion. In fact, a Minjung theologian and critic like Kim Jin-ho would say of Protestant Christianity, that in the course of the Korean War, Protestantism became “the

religion of fury (*bunno-ui jonggyo*), the religion of the slaughterers (*haksalja-ui jonggyo*).²¹ It would have to be pointed out, of course, that during and after the Korean War Christian organizations provided food, clothing, shelter, and medicine to orphans and refugees. Christian organizations also built schools, hospitals, and orphanages. Undoubtedly, this was part of Cold War humanitarianism. The Cold War had invested geopolitical significance to places like Korea. Christian organizations helped bring attention to massive suffering in Korea and made it difficult for people in the First World to remain indifferent. At the same time, Christian organizations had to wrestle with the dilemma of humanitarianism becoming an instrument of foreign policy, often in tandem with the application of military force.

Conclusion

The papers in this special issue tend to support arguments made by Cheng-Pang Lee and Myungsahm Suh: “It is not a stretch to say that the new state of the Republic of Korea had become something close to a Christian state... [When war broke out in 1950,] the already cordial church-state relations evolved into what may be referred to as the spiritual-military complex” (Lee and Suh 2017, 479). Focusing on the institution of military chaplaincy, Vladimir Tikhonov provides a similar assessment, namely: Christianity was the de facto state ideology in the years 1948–1960, and that it functioned as an ideology of capitalist modernization in the 1960s–1980s (Tikhonov 2013). Christianity as a state ideology, with a spiritual-military complex functioning as a core state apparatus—what logic drove this process? In a situation where an aspiring ruling bloc that included Christians, the landed class, and significant carryover of security forces from the colonial period, faced with a militant challenge from the left, the logic here would be that religion—especially Christianity—proved to be an indispensable ally for an incipient state that lacked broad popular support and other sources of legitimacy (Lee and Suh 2017, 475).

21. J. Kim (2018, 202), as quoted in I. Kang (2018).

But, as the articles in this special issue show, the formation of a spiritual-military complex, and Christianity as a de facto state ideology (from its inception until the April 19 Revolution in 1960), simplifies a complex and differentiated process: the interests of Christians and the South Korean state were roughly aligned, but not identical. The Christian *guests* who came to Korea were not cut from the same cloth. Christians who found inspiration in Uchimura Kanzō's pacifism, such as Ham Seok-heon, were resolute in their opposition to *raison d'état* and critical of American Protestantism. Myungsahm Suh argued that the USAMGIK set the basic tone for cooperative church-state relations. Indeed, this special issue shows how the USAMGIK relied on former missionaries and Korean Christians. These Christians served as intelligence officers, policy advisors, and publicists. They helped establish some of the fundamental structures of the South Korean state, including not just those conventionally related to missionary activities like education and medicine, but also administration, finance, and even public/national security (Rhodes and Campbell 1964, 379–380). In Cold War Korea—a timeframe that traverses the colonial/postcolonial divide—Christians and Christian organizations took various initiatives to broaden the religious function and scope of individual conduct. That history includes Christians who undertook critical reflections on Christianity's role in the Cold War and helped build what Namhee Lee calls the counterpublic sphere, to transform South Korea into a vibrant democracy, after decades of struggle (Lee 2007, 147–186).

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