

Article

# Building a New Nation: Chooyang, Han Gyeongjik and His Ideological Influence in Making Modern Korea

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## Introduction

Chooyang, Han Gyeongjik is one of the most well-known figures in the history of Christianity in modern Korea. He was the founder of Youngrak Church which is the single most influential church to date of Presbyterian denomination to date. He was deeply involved in direct and indirect ways in the formation of the Republic of Korea throughout the period of the U.S. Army Military Government and afterwards as a spokesman for the Korean Church during the First to Third Republic. His “Theory of the Establishment of a Christian Nation” stirred controversy from time to time on the issue of separation between politics and religion, but he consistently expressed his ideas on the kind of nation that should be founded on the Korean peninsula after its independence from Japan, and his ideas were reflected not just a little in the formation of the Republic of Korea through the political participation of his followers. Based on this prior understanding, the following paper will one by one examine the fundamental essence of the Idea of the Establishment of a Christian Nation which Chooyang advocated, how it influenced real-life politics, the limitations of his ideas, and also the tasks that he left us.

## The Korean Peninsula during the “Space of Liberation”

### *Liberation from the Japanese Empire and the Situation in the Korean Peninsula*

The end of Japanese rule triggered by Japan’s “unconditional surrender”<sup>1</sup> following the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki conventionally found its way to the Korean people in the name of “liberation.” After a brief enjoyment of an overwhelming thrill, a whirlpool of “liberation circumstance” awaited them, entailing desperate discussions brought up from different

1. Quotation from the 13<sup>th</sup> term of the Potsdam Declaration (of 1945): “We call upon the government of Japan to proclaim now the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces, and to provide proper and adequate assurances of their good faith in such action.” By issuing the Cairo Declaration, the United Nations demanded unconditional surrender from Japan at the end of World War II. However, some argue that Japan and Italy’s surrender, particularly the former, were not literally unconditional but only Germany’s was.

viewpoints concerning the urgent and unprecedented task: the “founding of a nation.” The face of “liberation” which came to the Korean people as a byproduct of the fight against Japan commenced by the U.S. and the Soviet Russia, the main powers of international society at the time, and not through the power and struggle of their own, was both a “gift” and a “burden.” The Korean people lacked a picture for the founding of a nation, as urgently as development after independence was immediate.

### *Various Political Ideas on National Building*

The situation where many different parties that fought for the independence of their nation simultaneously propounded their individual strategies for the establishment of a new nation inevitably led to contradiction and erratic chaos. 1) Members of the Korean Independence Association<sup>2</sup> aimed to establish a school for military officers in Manchuria, to restore the rights for the nation and to achieve independence. They wanted to raise soldiers of independence movements so that they could wage war against Japan once their forces were ready. After liberation, they rekindled their spirit of independence to help set up a nation, organizing the group for reestablishment. 2) The “Doctrine regarding the establishment of a nation,” which was advocated by affiliates of the provisional government in Shanghai, desired to base the principles of establishing a nation on the idea of three equalities as they faced national independence<sup>3</sup>. They imitated a kind of a system of democratic socialism which combined the identity of a democratic republic and the nationalization

2. They had planned to deport Koreans to Manchuria and to supply them with food as well as force of arms. They also organized institutions in a military fashion, emphasizing the following stratagems: to equip military force, to educate military officers, to train soldiers, to purchase weapons, to set up a military office, and to declare armed hostility. The Ministry of Finance and the Publicity Department were placed under the headquarters led by Park Sangjin (Commander-in-chief), Wu Jaeryong, and Gwon Yeongman (Commanding Officer). For Manchuria, Yi Seokdae was appointed as the Vice-Commander but when Yi passed away, General Kim Jwajin was dispatched instead.

3. The provisional government announced this doctrine in November 1941 with a specific elaboration of how to establish the nation after gaining independence. It consists of 22 terms in three parts including the General Creed (7 terms), Restoration (8 terms), and Nation-building (7 terms). Nonetheless, as the provisional government headed by Kim Gu failed to earn majority and declined, its doctrine and the idea of three equalities waned into insignificance.

of land and main industries. 3) The vision which President Rhee Seungman's affiliates dreamed of, inspired by President Wilson's principle of national self-determination, aimed to be an independent nation which possessed a guarantee of an everlasting peace as a buffer nation of North East Asia. 4) The moderates affiliated with Yeo Woonhyung's hoped to establish a utopia-like country which placed its people as the principal agents, neither inclined to the right nor to the left in its ideology. 5) And the labor party of South Korea, affiliated with Park Heon-Young, sought to strike down the comprador, pro-Japanese bourgeois, and establish a communist country within the solidarity of the proletariat class throughout the world. As one can see, even just in the viewpoint of South Korea all sorts of forces and parties brought forth policies based on their encountered positions and strategies to the date in their struggle against Japanese Occupation for the establishment of a nation.

### **The “Space of Liberation” under the U.S. Army Military Governance**

The approximately three years of rule by the U.S. and Soviet Russia, south and north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel respectively, was an extremely critical time, which determined the course of history for the Korean people in the years to follow. After the U.S. and the Soviet Union decided to each rule half of the Korean peninsula, the 24<sup>th</sup> Corps of the U.S. army landed in Incheon on September 8, under the instruction of Lieutenant General J. R. Hodge. They moved into Seoul and on the 9<sup>th</sup>, they announced the military rulership of the area under the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Lieutenant General J. R. Hodge received the official document of surrender from the Governor General of Korea Abe Nobuyuki, and on September 12, he appointed Chief A. V. Arnold to be minister of the military government. A full-scale American military leadership was heralded after the special features, roles, organization, and key leadership staff were appointed.

Some decisions that were made during the period of American military leadership included the denial of the People's Republic led by the Left, and the dismissal of the Korean military preparation force which was a private military group formed after the Independence on August 15. The launch of the National Defense Guard Group took place and the law of fair registration

was announced.

The U.S. military government was aiming for the establishment of an autonomous independent government by the Koreans after a certain period of control. For this reason, they organized an Administration body with the participation of Koreans in mind from the beginning. On October 5, 1945, they appointed 11 Koreans for military administration leadership positions, including Kim Sungsu for the chairman position. In December, they began Korean and American bilateral directorship system. On February 14, the following year, they appointed Kim Kyusik as a chairman for the organization that they created called “South Korean Interim Legislation Committee” with the chief purpose to give advice for the U.S. Lieutenant General Hodge. Afterwards, in February 1947, An Jaehong, the interim legislation officer that represented the centrist force, was appointed as a civil administrator.

During this period, many parties were formed and their activities were vigorous. Out of these, the leading political forces were the leftist force by Korean communist-South Korea Labor Party, the moderate left led by Yeo Woonhyung, the moderate right led by Kim Kyusik who formed the People's Independence Alliance, Hanmin party of the right wing, the Handok party with Kim Gu at the center, as well as the Central Committee of Independent Promotion-National Chamber of Pressure led by Rhee Seungman, and so on.

### **“The Idea of the Establishment of a Christian Nation” by Chooyang Han Gyeongjik**

#### *A Brief Biography of Chooyang*

Chooyang, Han Gyeongjik was the firstborn son of Han Dupoong and Mrs. Lee from Cheongju in the Kanlee village, Kongduk-myeon, Pyungwon-goon, Pyungnam on December 29, 1902. In 1916, he graduated from Jinkwang Primary School. As was the custom at the time, he married Kim Chanbin who was 3 years older than him according to a pre-planned marriage arrangement. After that, he graduated from Osan School and returned to studies at Soongsil University in Pyongyang after briefly teaching at Youngsung School in Pyongyang. Osan School and Soongsil University were schools set up by missionaries and they offered education based on the Christian spirit. With

the help of a missionary, he went abroad to the U.S. in 1926, and finished the 1<sup>st</sup> year at Emporia University receiving the qualification of a Bachelor of Science. Afterwards, he entered Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey, U.S., to begin a full theological training. Exhausted by heavy workload while studying in a foreign country, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. The time of sickness was extremely painful but he eventually recovered, coming back to Korea in 1932 to teach as a chaplain and teacher at Soongin Industrial School in Pyongyang, and as a lecturer at Soongsil University.

In 1933, Chooyang was ordained as a pastor at Dandong Cheil Church, which belonged to the Uisan Presbytery. He was invited by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Church of Shinuijoo for head pastorship, and there began his full-scale life of ministry. While he was heavily involved in pastoral care for his parish, he opened a charity called Borinwon for orphans in nearby neighborhood areas and became its first director as he realized that they lacked the facilities for orphans at the time. In 1942, he gets expelled from the church while resisting the Japanese imperialistic-oppressive governance, and focused solely on running Borinwon. On August 15, 1945, with the independence of Korea, which he had anticipated, he organized a committee called Shinuijoo Self-government Association as well as the Christian Social Democratic Party. He acted as the person in charge of his area and in October of the same year, due to the suppression of North Korean communist group, he decided to move to South Korea. In December of the same year, he founded Bethany Church in Seoul, which later grew to be the Youngrak Church. During the Korean War, also 6.25, he started a Christian Parish National Assembly in Daejeon where he fled to and resisted against the plunder of the communists, and a year later established Tabitha Mother-and-Child Shelter in Busan, also a place of evacuation. In postwar times, he held positions such as the World Vision chairman, Director of Youngrak Mother-and-Child Shelter as well as the first Dean of Soongsil University. In 1981, he was appointed as a Chairman of the Board for the Commemoration Event Committee of 100 years of Christianity in Korea. He showed his capability as a leader among all the different denominations and branches of Korean Protestantism, and recognized for his pastoral leadership and community service experience, he was awarded the grand prize from the World Ethics Chancellor in 1986. In 1992, He was awarded the Templeton Prize. He passed away on April 19, 2000.

### *Chooyang's Political Philosophy*

To understand Chooyang's Idea of the "Establishment of a Nation," his political philosophy needs to be examined first. Fundamentally, Chooyang understood politics through the worldview based on the Bible. Human beings, who are God's creation, experienced a fall at a certain space and time, which caused serious distortion of human nature. Since then, its effect manifested itself in human history ceaselessly. He understood human nature through the teachings of the Bible. As a result of the downfall, the wickedness of human beings had to be controlled by a form of an institution such as the "government." Wickedness is first and foremost in the hearts of human beings. If there is no wickedness in human nature, then it would be possible to realize a state of no government. However, the reality of human history is not as such. If people could live out their lives according to the Sermon on the Mount, then governments would not be necessary. But this is only our ideal, not the reality. Therefore, a government is "formed in order to punish the ones that perform evil," according to the Bible (Han 1949, 141).

If wickedness did not exist in human nature, human beings would be capable of controlling themselves through their own good, and hence not be in need of any authority governing them. However, unfortunately, human beings in reality are wicked in nature, and therefore relationships which include themselves and others often produce a discord of conflicting desires. Therefore, they have come to need some sort of higher authority which can control and adjust this discord, and this, Chooyang claims, is the government, developed throughout the course of human history. Thus, it can be said that to Chooyang, government is the substance that is established to punish the ones who do evil (Han 1949, 141).

However, the government as a "coercive force" accompanies the question, "where does the basis of its authority stem from?" Regarding this, Chooyang reviews the relevant theories, from the Divine Right of Kings of the Middle Ages, which claims that the king is the source of authority, to the theory of the Divine Right of People which states that the people are the source of authority. Within the theory of the Divine Right of people which form the basis of modern democracy, Chooyang sees that one can delineate an atheistic divine right of people and a theistic divine right of people. Chooyang views the latter cases, the theistic divine right of people endorsed by Western nations. In the

case of U.S., the darling of democracy, Chooyang saw that both the natural law and the divine law are mentioned together in the Constitution, the womb of a nation's founding, to emphasize that the causal origin of sovereignty stems from God. In other words, Chooyang illustrates the divine authority as revealed in the Bible—or the teaching of the theistic right of the people—as its basis, that “there is no authority that does not come from God. Therefore, every person is held accountable before God; the person with authority must remember that he is a servant of God” (Rom 13:6; qtd. in Han 1949, 143).

In accordance with the teachings of the Bible that the source of authority derives from God, Chooyang stresses that all authorities need to exercise control according to the will of God. Just as there is a natural law in nature and moral law between human beings, there exists a consistent principle in politics, which is none other than the fact that it must be faithful to its original purpose of pursuing the happiness of all people. “God has given the person executing this politics the sword, the authority in order to punish the wicked. But if he does not for these uses but for persecuting the good, slaying the prophet and letting people like pastor Joo Kichul die in prison, then this would not be justice applied in accordance with the law. God has to destroy the politician who causes the righteous to bleed and die in prison” (Han 1949, 145).

The case of pastor Joo Kichul's death in prison, which was Chooyang's real-life example of “justice not used in accordance with the law,” refers to the resistance against shrine worship which was a representative example of Japan's oppressive rule, followed by his death in prison.<sup>4</sup> When the authority established to carry out the will of God through justice and public law loses its essential reason for existence, God surely asks for just payment, and an exemplary case of this is shown by the collapse of the Japanese Empire.

Another example of authority unjustly used for Chooyang was the behavior of communism. After liberation, Chooyang allied with Pastor Yoon Hayoung who was a pastor at Shinuijoo Cheil Church and set up a party mainly composed of Christians in Pyonganbook-do in September 1945. They

attempted to establish a democratic government and work for social reform based on Christian spirit. They formed branches in each province under the name “Christian Society Democratic Party” in order to reach North Korean citizens, working to extend their party influence. But the Soviet Union force, which was ambitious from early on about ruling North Korea, made an initial attack against committee members using communist force. On November 16 of the same year, the party held a meeting in Yongampo, which belonged to a small steel factory. Taken aback by the growing power of the Christian Society Democratic Party, communists assassinated the chairman Jang Wonbong, and Hong Sukhwag, an elder of Yongampo Cheil Church, and so on, as they sought for policies of suppression. This attack outraged the students of Yongampo to start a demonstration movement, which became one of the causes for the Shinuijoo Students' Tragedy. Due to this incident, the Soviet Union military force declared martial law all over North Korea and demanded the leaders of Christian Society Democratic party to be arrested. Just prior to the happenings in Yongampo, Han Gyeongjik had already sensed the communists' behavior and fled south. The Christian Society Democratic Party formed by the key roles of Yoon Hayoung and Han Gyeongjik was really the first party to be set up in the Korean peninsula after liberation. However, due to the suppression and persecution of Soviet communists and their followers, the party met a tragic end before it even got a chance to bear any fruit. This personal experience caused Chooyang to live as an anti-communist for the rest of his life.

The only opportunity for Chooyang to be involved in real politics was through his participation in Christian Society Democratic Party activities. But the failure of this party caused him to keep a distance somewhat from the real politics and his life as a pastor. Since then, Chooyang basically set forth his philosophy that politics and religion should exist separately in their own realms. He recalls that, throughout history, when politics and religion were not separated and intruded each other's space, great damage occurred. One is reminded of the negative effect in past Western society when the influence of the Church was so strong that the secular rulers laid in their hands, suppressing humanity and wielding absolute power in the name of God. On the other hand, political power which suppresses religion or declares itself to be the performer of religious tasks also reminds us that this is another form of distortion. Chooyang's model for the ideal relationship between the state

4. Rev. Joo Kichul, who strongly rejected Japanese shrine worship, delivered his last sermon “Five Prayers of Mine” at Sanjeonghyeon Church. This sermon caused the police to arrest him and the presbytery to expel him under an agreement of its members. At the same time, Sanjeonghyeon Church where he had ministered was dismissed and closed. After serving five years in prison, Rev. Joo became ill and was sent to a prison hospital on April 13, 1944, met his wife Oh Jeongmo for the last time on the 20th of that month, and died of his illness in the prison on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

and religion based on the Bible is the Netherlands and the U.S.: “The spirit of separation between the Church and the State can be found in countries like the U.S. or the Netherlands where Calvinism is regarded as their spiritual seedbed. As the Lord made it clear to ‘give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s,’ complete separationism is fitting to the teachings of Christ, and therefore the Church is to be completely free within spiritual boundaries and indirectly become the nation’s spiritual foundation” (Han 1949, 147). He claims that the theory of Calvinistic Church and State is the one where the two areas of governance by Church and State respectively devote themselves for the proper instruction of the spiritual life and devotion toward it. On the other hand, the theory also states the governance of the secular life of human beings and instructions. These two remain mutually separated and respect each other’s domain, administering an own realm for their own purposes of existence.

That is not to say, of course, that Chooyang thought negatively of personal participation in politics for the sake of the nation itself. Rather, he advised that each Christian be active in participating in politics for the nation. Particularly after Liberation, when every citizen sought to make an effort to establish a new nation, he believed Christians to naturally bear the responsibility of making practical efforts to realize God’s will on earth, and actively encouraged Christians accordingly<sup>5</sup>: “Society is an organic body and so is a nation. We have responsibility in solidarity to each other because we are connected with each other. Especially in a democratic nation, the citizens bear the ultimate and last responsibility. Presidents are chosen by the vote of the citizens, and so are members of Parliament, and the National Assembly is formed by citizens, and so runs the nation itself. Therefore, before we criticize our National Assembly, we need to realize our own responsibility. Before we criticize our government, we need to understand what our responsibility is” (Han 1988, 12). Chooyang awakens the responsibilities of Christians through these words.

### *The Bible and Christianity as the Foundation of Democracy*

The heart of Chooyang’s Idea of the Establishment of a Christian Nation can be said to be his belief in democracy with the Bible and the Christian ideal at its core. He believed that having to establish the structure for a new nation in the liberation space is a “golden opportunity.” He thought that the structure was God’s providence and superintendence to build a nation of free democracy, and encouraged that all the Korean citizens make a unified effort for it. For him, the number one subject of avoidance in the scenario of the establishment of a nation was the emergence of materialistic autocracy. He was cautious of the confusing situation at the time and remarked as the following: “How, then, can we Christians fulfill the calling of our heavenly father? Is there a best way to fulfill this duty? First of all, we must face the reality of Chosun (Korea). Presently all areas are truly in a chaotic situation. The fundamental reason behind it is due to the confusion of ideals. The youth, students, peasants, the petit bourgeoisie, and the general public are flustered amidst crossroads of ideals such as theism, atheism, democracy, dictatorship, Christian society, communist society, construction, destruction, civilization, and barbarism” (Han 1949, 148).

In fact, Lieutenant General Hodge, who was skeptical of the policies of the Soviet Union regarding the Korean peninsula, declared to activate a Cabinet and a Legislation body that Koreans could participate in before the establishment of the interim government when the first U.S./Soviet Union Common Committee fell apart, ushering an indefinite recess on May 8, 1946. What he had in mind, however, was the form of government establishment that supports the movement of the left-right collaboration that started between Kim Kyusik, a member of the Democratic Party, and Yeo Woonhyung of Minjeon (a leftist federation) on May 25, 1946. He wished to lead the state of affairs through the moderating reaches of the centrist force without being able to embrace the key inner circle such as Kim Gu and Rhee Seungman who were active for anti-trusteeship between the trusteeship/anti-trusteeship divide. Chooyang, who aimed at the establishment of a nation that guaranteed freedom based on principles of a more transparent democracy, could not hide a certain uneasiness toward present powers that did not clearly perceive the said leftist forces, and became further convicted about the need to expose the behavior of communists more clearly.

5. After Liberation, Chooyang tried to awaken Korean Christians about their responsibility through his sermons at Youngrak church: “We may have gained national independence but building up the nation following Christian ideals falls on our Christian shoulders. What should we do if the nation is built and led by a materialist dictator? Now we are facing a golden opportunity. We must carry on our responsibility with a clear understanding that our actions have a strong impact on our descendants” (Han 1949, 148).

Chooyang possessed a firm repulsion against communist forces of Soviet Union based on his personal experience. He recounted his experience as the following in his latter days: "I am one of the people most familiar with communism. I am originally from North Korea and I have seen what they did. Do not be deceived by them. Do not be deceived by the principles of communism and do not be tricked by their propaganda. The core idea of communism is so-called materialism. Materialistic philosophy is the foundation of communism" (Rev. Han, Gyeongjik Centenary Memorial Society 2002, 267-68). Chooyang took it upon himself as his calling to warn about the dangers of communism as he sensed danger in the fact that communism based on materialism might not be taken with due seriousness in South Korea.

"Materialism is basically the recognition of everything material and the rejection of the spiritual about the universe or the human being. 'There is only matter to the existence of space and nothing else.' It denies the existence of God when it sees the universe, composed only of matter. Therefore, the materialist is an atheist and when he sees a human being, he only sees the body. 'There is only matter to a human being. Therefore, there is no difference between a human being and an animal.' It denies the existence of the human psyche. It is all but false ideas" (Rev. Han Gyeongjik Centenary Memorial Society 2002, 268). In the end, communist philosophy based on such materialism antagonizes any person outside of one's measuring stick as an object to overthrow, and exposes a destructive barbarism that justifies the use of violence adopted for this purpose. He regarded that the brutal purge activities in North Korea at the time were the manifestation of this kind of destructive barbarism.

To be sure, Chooyang's criticism against communism was not something restricted to the dimension of personal preference based on his own experience. In his paper titled "Christianity and Communism" which he wrote in a relatively meticulous manner, he states, "the most epidemic narrative to arise in the realm of ideas after the liberation on August 15, is communism. It has been confusing many a people recently through its unwarranted renaming as neo-democracy or progressive democracy, and it monochromically colored North Korea, no different now than any other foreign nation due to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, into a communistic political society, and the Church now undergoes truly undeserved persecution. As dire are the present circumstances, I intend

to evaluate and criticize this idea as a Christian believer under the name Christianity and Communism, so that we believers might recognize with clarity the path that we must walk in the midst of the chaotic realm of ideas, bringing glory to God above and shining the true light to all compatriots below" (Han 1949, 198).

On the outside, communism seems similar to Christian ideals in its purpose when it propagandizes that it is about "everyone eating, wearing, and living together without private possession, being affluent with little amount of labor, being gratuitously educated provided by the government, curing of diseases without any medical fee, working based on one's ability and payment according to demand, abolition of classes and advocacy of gender equality." However, it can only remain a utopia at the rainbow's end with an appealing facade, and inevitably devolves into a democracy-annihilating form of dictatorship. Chooyang criticizes as follows about the reason why Marxist communism is bound to head for dictatorship, far from democracy: "What makes people work is from the impulse to possess and to create. In a communist society, the people will work only by the latter without the former, which will establish a very small minority. In other words, in such communist society, the people will not work hard. Therefore, without the use of dictatorial violence to force labor, it will become difficult to maintain the country. But the people will try to possess as much as they can without laboring due to the desire to possess, which is human nature, necessitating dictatorship for suppressing this desire. Across the ages, there was never a case that a dictator voluntarily gave up his own power, and also power always corrupts (J. J. Rousseau). Revolution is needed to purge it and revolution is always followed by dictatorship, continuing autocracy once again" (Han 1949, 210-11).

Chooyang's theory of the establishment of a Christian nation is on the one hand developed around the criticism against materialism-based communism, and on the other centered on the biblical theory of human beings which stands in opposition to it. He emphasizes that the picture of a new nation must always aim for the creation of a democratic nation with freedom at its center. He contends that the basic factors of democracy which can always guarantee freedom are "first, a thorough understanding and belief in the basic principles of democracy, second, idea of respect for order and law, third, the moral dignity of the citizens that can use freedom properly" (Rev. Han Gyeongjik Centenary Memorial Society 2002, 246). For Chooyang,

the most foundational aspect of democracy can be found in the idea of the respect of an individual, which respects the individual's basic human rights and guarantees his/her freedom. If the royal authority is respected in a monarchy and the authority of the bureaucrat in a bureaucracy, the basis of democracy which enables the right of an individual citizen and one's claim to it can be found in none other than the social idea in which an individual, that is, human rights, is respected. Everyone knows that the true idea of the equality of human beings, not discriminated whether you are rich or poor, high or low, or male or female, is the foundation of democracy. Chooyang believed that the very roots of this respect for an individual lies in the teachings of the Bible. In other words, when God created the human being in the Bible, he breathed his own image (*Imago Dei*) in him. There is no better explanation of the teaching for the reason why an individual human being is so valuable than the Bible which defined his/her nobility in a divine dimension. Although human beings exhibit similarities to other animals in their bodies, the image of God exists in their soul, and therefore emphasizes the guarantee of freedom and equality which is the basic human right given by the heavenly Father to human beings who are the children of God, made by him (Rev. Han Gyeongjik Centenary Memorial Society 2002, 246).

As mentioned above, Chooyang stressed that it is only proper for the cornerstone of a new nation to be founded upon Christianity, pointing to the respect of an individual, the idea of personal freedom and the idea of the equality of all human beings which Christianity aims at. Traditionally, Buddhism was the foundation of the Three Dynasties era, unified-Shilla, Koryo dynasty, and Confucianism during the Chosun era, but there was a perception that the two religions of Buddhism and Confucianism ran its course in meeting the demands of their times. It was assented with emphasis that the only realistic alternative to the present circumstance of the homeland was Christianity: traditional moral and customs had been forgotten, the negative effects of war psychology still persisted through the period of Japanese Occupation, social and economic difficulty raged on and the misunderstanding or abuse of the idea of freedom transpired (Han 1949, 193-95). For Chooyang, the flower of democracy could only bloom in the field of Christian culture, and he claimed that the advanced empires at the time such as the Netherlands or the U.S. were the representative examples of democratic nations that blossomed from Christian culture.

### **The Aspect Regarding Realistic Application of Chooyang's Idea of the "Establishment of a Christian Nation"**

Regarding the political condition under U.S. army military leadership, Chooyang has revealed his anxiety of heart at the reality of his country which was now liberated from Japanese colonialism but still under foreign occupation, and thus still not independent when he asked, "what kind of role do we have to play then, for our nation especially at this period of time?" perceiving that "our Korea still did not take full possession of independence. Therefore, we have the responsibility first and foremost to complete our independence process. There will be no freedom of faith or any other kind of freedom without political freedom. Therefore, it is hypocritical Independence! This is the great commission of our people" (Han 1949, 148). He did not hide his mind which expected and hoped that the possibility of the establishment of a new nation led by a Christian leader who possessed Christian ideals duly existed, since the hope of achieving a complete independence meant the development of hope in establishing a nation centered on Christianity.

"From a national perspective, Christianity became the central force in patriotic movements. The role Christianity played in the March First Independence Movement need not be mentioned again, and it is an undeniable fact that the majority of the patriots who dedicated their lives to their homeland's revival were Christian believers. From Sir Dosan and Sir Namgang, to extant leaders such as Doctor Rhee Seungman, Premier Kim Gu, Doctor Kim Kyusik, and many other patriots who sacrificed their lives for their country will only be known by God" (Han 1949, 104-05). Chooyang gives his heart's support mainly for the politicians who put Christian ideals into practice out of the political forces that were active during the post-liberation situation. Particularly, one can find Chooyang's hope for a practical alternative for the stabilization of the society while he watched the so-called 101 Youngnam incident which caused many casualties and not little chaos due to the incitement of the leftists triggered by the demonstration of train laborers in Daegu on October 1, 1946.

A nation that does not achieve true governance by the law cannot practice democracy, and the main point of the establishment of a nation is the assurance of the order of enjoying a life of security. If in the old period of monarchy, loyalty to the king was in effect loyalty to the nation, and loyalty to one's

sovereign the purpose of past Confucian society, the essence of a democratic society is the respect for the law and the maintenance of order through it (Rev. Han Gyeongjik Centenary Memorial Society 2002, 248). The activities such as the struggle through the use of violence by the South Korean communist force and the organization of South Chosun Labor Party revealed from the Youngnam incident could jeopardize the hope for establishing a new nation which blooms democracy. Are not evasion of the law and disorder, indeed the most cancerous factors that threaten democracy? Moreover, did not a form of government become organized in their own way when the North Korean People's Committee, excluding the word "interim," equipped themselves with respective administrative government departments with Kim Il-sung as their chairman both nominally and virtually by holding a committee board meeting for district, city, and province on February 17, 1947 in North Korea? Rhee Seungman, sensing such movements, crossed the seas to the U.S. in December, 1946, in order to "request the establishment of an independent government at least in South Korea," suggested that the U.N. solve the problem of Korea for the first time, and this suggestion bore fruit in the following year when they introduced the case by transferring the problem of Korean Independence from the responsibility of the four major powerful nations to the U.N. on September 17<sup>th</sup>. This finally meets the stage of reality when the independent government of South Korea gets established on August 15, 1948.

Chooyang was at heart a thorough anticommunist and he felt very relieved that Woonam, Rhee Seungman, a representative of the right from the nationalist camp, became the first president. While the knowledge of whether leaders of the nationalist camp such as Cho Mansik and so on were dead or alive became an opaque matter in the North, the establishment of a government which could get rid of the cloudiness in South Korea and restore order was an event consistent with his usual belief.<sup>6</sup>

## Realistic Limitation and the Time of Trial of Chooyang's Idea of the "Establishment of a Christian Nation"

Hope grew that Chooyang's idea of the "Establishment of a Christian Nation" gained foothold for practical blooming when President Rhee Seungman, a thorough anticommunist and a Christian, rose to power following the establishment of a single government for South Korea on August 15, 1948. In fact, the very first opening session of the National Assembly during the time of the First Republic opened with the prayer of Lee Yoonyoung, a Methodist pastor at the time, and the inauguration of the first president Rhee Seungman, elected via indirect election, was held in a Christian liturgical way. "One nation principle," the ruling ideology of the first half of the Rhee Seungman administration, was founded on Christian characteristics. Rhee Seungman repeatedly expressed his conviction that Christianity must be the foundation of the nation before and after he became the president, and in this sense he is perhaps the figure who most dramatically implemented Chooyang's theory of the "Establishment of a Christian Nation" in real-life politics. President Rhee Seungman made sure to maintain the system of employing a pastor in prison and celebrating Christmas as a holiday, as was introduced during the U.S. military government. He further implemented national ceremonies to be executed through Christian formalities (Gang and Park 2009, 91-122). The forms of such phenomenon where Christian beliefs are continually reflected in institutions such as the government and the National Assembly as well as judicial agencies followed by the establishment of the Republic of Korea can be traced in various areas with constancy.<sup>7</sup> Upon a glimpse, it was a time

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established after the election supervised by the United Nations. We have gone through a state of disorder year after year; in spite of this, a democratic government was set up at last and our living standard has been greatly improved with economic growth."

6. Rev. Han Gyeongjik (2002, 294-95) expressed his thoughts about that time later in his acceptance speech for the Templeton Prize: "When Japan surrendered on August 15<sup>th</sup> 1945, Korea was divided into two nations, North and South, by the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel latitude. We still witness two Koreas. For this reason, I am very pleased to see those two German republics being unified into one nation. You may not understand how much we Koreans have longed for a united nation as Germany. We also look forward to seeing churches in the north resuming their activities. I sincerely hope that this prize for this year will contribute to the reconstruction of North Korean churches. As you know, North Korea is still under the dictatorship of a Communist regime. I barely made an escape from the north to the south in late 1945. The South Korean situation was also chaotic but a democratic government was

7. Rhee Seungman's government offered many privileges to Korean churches upon their request as follows: 1) replacing a salute to the national flag with a nodding, 2) introducing a Chaplain program, 3) assisting a church to establish the first private broadcast station in Korea providing financial support for its management, 4) enabling Christians to keep the Sabbath on Sunday, 5) restricting any men who have a concubine not to become public officials, 6) doing away with superstition, and 7) leading a movement to expel sect religions. In addition, symbolic aids such as awarding a medal or a letter of appreciation to Christian figures along with material support-tax redemption and transferring Japanese colonial government property should be considered in this sense (Gang and Park 2009, 91-122).

when one could stop to think that the “Establishment of a Christian Nation,” which Chooyang dreamed of as his life’s mission, was becoming a reality. However, this situation birthed a completely unexpected circumstance not long afterwards, first of which was the outbreak of the Korean War, and second of which was the downfall of the Rhee Seungman administration following his corruption scandal.

Chooyang’s theory of the Establishment of a Christian Nation seemed as if it was being reflected in real-life politics through the first president Rhee Seungman’s rise to power. As mentioned above, the advancement of Christians into the respective fields of legislation, jurisdiction, and administration of the newly birthed Republic of Korea ensued worthy of close attention, and Christian characteristics were heavily reflected in various systems or formalities. But such reality changed into a time of trial not long afterwards. The trial arrived in the form of the Korean War, the tragedy of the Korean people. The Rhee Seungman administration constantly shows the phenomenon of reinforcement of anticommunist ideology as it goes through the war set off by the North Korean communists, and in turn becomes entangled in its own net. In his congratulatory speech of the establishment of the government on August 15, 1948, Woonam, Rhee Seungman cries out that “it is a matter which we all consider as of great regret if there is anyone among our people who think that there is no way forward during this time of hardship except through dictatorship; or also is the presence of those who might think that there is no answer other than dictatorship due to the lack of wisdom and ability to solve the grave problem of the destructive movements of communist fractions. We must do now once again, at this time when the mirror of history is reflecting upon us, what we have been doing for thirty years when we decided to adopt democracy.”<sup>8</sup> But could he have possibly guessed that what he aspired to would one day morph into a political reality which will drag his own feet down? After the Korean War he formed the Liberal Party, and subsequently repeats making the wrong moves such as selective constitutional amendment, rounding off for constitutional amendment, and the fraudulent election of March 15<sup>th</sup> in an attempt to remain in power. Most of the justifications for these were by rendering the logic of “protecting the nation from North

Korean communism,” and it was used as the means to get rid of his political opposition. In the end, he stepped down from presidency of the party due to the movement of students and citizens provoked by the rigged election of March 15, 1960.

The trial confronted by Chooyang’s idea of the “Establishment of Christian Nation” is *in actu* directly connected to the failure of the Rhee Seungman administration. Although Chooyang argued for free democracy, governance by the law, and the respect for order which were all founded upon the Christian spirit and he welcomed the holding of important positions in the government by the democratic personnel of Right-wing members who shared the same values, especially Christian personnel, he could not hide his significant disappointment at the fact that in reality, parasitic pseudo believers raged rampant amidst the reinforcement of political powers. The collapse of the administration itself was brought on as its shocking result. The situation was as if Chooyang’s idea of the “Establishment of a Christian Nation” was deeply scarred and in despair before it bloomed at all. Chooyang grieved more than anyone at the circumstance where the nation’s law was damaged and justice was undefended. As a response, he recollects the patriotism of Nehemiah who exhorted to “weep for yourselves and for your house.” He rebukes the crumbled evasion of the law and the phases of the times: “God tells us to do justice. Those who truly repented will wholeheartedly do justice and righteousness. There must be justice in the business world. There must be justice between capitalists and laborers. There must also be in politics, needless to say. There must be in election, needless to say. There must be justice from now on” (Rev. Han Gyeongjik Centenary Memorial Society 2002, 258-63).

Chooyang turns his primary interest thereupon to the agendas of national evangelization and national unification. For him, as important as the foundation of a nation was the equipment of each individual with the morals incumbent for its prosperity, and he stressed the need for the doctrine of practical actions for the purpose of overcoming the reality of the division of the nation (Rev. Han Gyeongjik Centenary Memorial Society 2002, 287-92).

8. Quotation from Seungman Rhee’s Congratulatory Speech for the Establishment of the Republic of Korean Government (August 15, 1948).

## Conclusion: Chooyang and the Formation of Modern Republic of Korea

Chooyang received the Templeton Prize at the age of 90. This award is called the Nobel Prize in the field of religion, awarded to those who contribute greatly to the growth of a religion. Every year, persons who contributed to the spirituality of humanity have been awarded the prize. Chooyang gave his award speech on April 29, 1992 at the Schauspielhaus in Berlin and on May 7 received the plaque of the award and the \$102 million (approx. 800 million Korean won) prize money at the Buckingham palace of the British royal family. He donated the whole of it as his offering toward missionary work for North Korea. He ceaselessly inculcated to himself and to those around him the passion for the unification of the divided nation and the evangelization of the nation for its prosperity, as well as for his lifelong task of a nation founded on Christianity. He also developed the movement for not leaving an inheritance as the chief director of the Namgang Culture Foundation. Leading the movement mainly with Christian businessmen, he contended that an inheritance should be returned to society and the church. He encountered the statistical figure proving the annual growth of the number of people participating in this cause. Following his own contention, he left nothing but a Bible, a few pieces of clothes and his walking stick as his inheritance.

His life is interspersed with happiness, anger, sorrows, and pleasures just like the modern history of the Republic of Korea. But what is definite is that his faith, philosophy, and the legacy of his life not only influenced those around him but also the formation and the developmental process of the Republic of Korea. The Korean Republic of today owes in all respects to Chooyang's spiritual world and the implementation of it in his life.

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## Abstract

Chooyang, Han Gyeongjik was one of the most outstanding pastors in the history of the Korean Protestant Church. He was a famously known clergyman not only as a founder of the renowned “Youngrak Presbyterian Church,” but also as an organizer for building up modern “Republic of Korea” by participating in the U.S. military Government (Sep. 1945-Aug. 1948), right after the “Independence” from Japanese colonialism, and the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> Administrations of the Republic of Korea (Aug. 1948-Oct. 1972). From time to time, his argumentation, the so-called “New nation under the Christian belief,” raised hot controversial debates on the relationship between politics and religion. However, his main ideas for building up a new nation gave much influence to seek an appropriate political ethics in the “newly- born country.” The writer discusses the ideas of Chooyang, concerning the “building a new nation” through his address, sermons, books, and interviews at first. How were his ideas on the political practice reflected in the living political world? What was a limitation of his ideological suggestions in a real political formation? In what scope and extent, was his assertion adopted? Through these discussions, we could come to have a more concrete understanding on the “Establishment of a Christian Nation for Modern Korea.”

**Keywords:** building a nation, anti-communism, Christian nation, sinful nature of human being, liberal democracy, church and state