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THE PUBLIC ROLES OF EARLY KOREAN PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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Abstract

This study explores how the early Korean Protestant movement - a movement that experienced unprecedented vitality in the late 19th and early 20th centuries - initiated a number of positive societal changes in Korea, promoting various forms of human rights. Martin Marty's notion of public Church provides a helpful lens through which this movement can be analysed. Early Korean Protestantism not only guided the future direction of the nation, transcending class and gender. It was a major force in reforming Korean society. The Protestant Church served as a positive agent of social change, enlightening Korean people through the abolition of the class system, the promotion of women's rights, the healing of incurable diseases, the use and spread of a refined linguistic system, resistance to Japanese imperialism, and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. Using Marty's terminology to analyse the Protestant movement will thus allow us to synthesize the notions of 'public' and 'private', doing away with bifurcations that have limited such discussions in the past. The upshot of our historical analysis will be an exhortation to today's global theological community: we must take up a more specific and detailed public theology that communicates appropriately with the many publics that make up our global society.

Keywords: Christianity, Korean, private, public, Protestant

1. Introduction

The earliest forms of Protestantism in China, Japan, and Korea were marked with similar characteristics: mission activities occurred in or around the 19th century, during a time when ruling classes in all three countries believed in Confucianism. The theologies of Protestant missionaries were broadly evangelical, and they were empowered by a mission theology that compelled them to spread the Gospel while simultaneously performing educational and medical work on behalf of the communities they felt called to serve. Nevertheless, the Protestantism that seemed to take root in Korea did not take root in China and

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Japan. Currently, only about 5% of the Chinese population are Christians. In Japan, the number of Christians today is less than 0.2% of the total population [1]. In China and Japan, Protestantism was unwelcomed, especially by the ruling class, as it was associated with Western imperialism and other forms of Western ideology. But in Korea, the opposite held true. In South Korea today, Protestants make up around 20% of the total population [1].

The development of Christianity in Korea coincided with the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945), which acted as a political ideology against imperialism, and was welcomed by the majority of Koreans, especially the elite. Using terms established by Martin Marty, a distinguished religious historian in the United States, we can observe that early Korean Protestantism was a public Church movement. Of course, this does not mean that early Protestants in Korea used the theological term public Church or that the term reflects the same spiritual culture of the United States. When Marty uses the term 'public Church', he is referring to American religious culture in which Church communities based on various Christian denominations maintain the public order that must be fulfilled. Thus, it is not accurate to claim that early Protestantism in Korea was identical to the historical phenomenon of the public Church in the United States. Our claim is that, when we set aside the external structure of the American Church, one can find a number of similarities between the internal elements of the early Protestant movement in Korea and Marty's notion of 'public Church'. In the conclusion of Public Church, Marty writes: "A renewed sense that Christians must think, must even out-think someone, and not merely experience, is evident. The metaphor of the journey for the spiritual life has pulled people out of selfish security." [2]

Marty asserts that Christians cannot fulfil the social role of being the salt and light of Jesus, that is, pursuing a 'public' engagement, if they are locked up in the selfish 'private faith' of personal salvation. Persons of such belief do not think publicly. They ignore the needs of the elderly, disabled, women, immigrants and war refugees among other marginalized communities. Christians belonging to the public Church must cultivate their personal faith in line with the tradition of the Church to which they belong; but at the same time, they must attend to the suffering neighbours outside the Church. The backdrop of Marty's term 'public' is the pluralistic culture of a society rather than the merely private lives of individuals. For him, public Church is based on social ethics such as justice, peace, humility, compassion and proper action, a kind of universality that can be accepted by all (public), while acknowledging the specificity of each individual (private). In a society lacking this theological ethic, the public Church not only refuses to engage in fruitless theological discourse, but also fights dehumanizing socio-political forces. If we apply Marty's notion in this way to the early Korean Protestant community, we find that the beginning of Korean Protestantism can be largely included in Marty's concept of 'public church'.

2. Research methods

Our study will highlight the early Protestant movement in Korea, from the end of the 19th century to 1960. During this time, Protestantism flourished in Korea. Korea itself developed into a modern industrial society after its liberation from Japan in 1945, and the rebuilding of South Korea after the Korean War (1950-1953). The numerous historical events experienced by Koreans during this period were uncanny. They should not be interpreted at the level of individual Koreans. We must instead view those experiences from the perspective of the many-sided public spheres within a complex socio-political-religious inter-relatedness. Consider the following examples: the class system of the Yi feudal kingdom, the prohibition of women's participation in public society, various diseases recognized as incurable, the intransigence of illiteracy among Korean commoners, Japan's brutal colonial rule and the devastation of the Korean Peninsula during the Civil War. After Protestant Christianity entered Korea, it became impossible for the pioneering Church to ignore such events. In this study, we will show that early Korean Protestant Christianity helped address a variety of inequities, captured in these events in various public ways, although it did not use such theological terms as public Church or 'public theology' to describe itself at the time.

Early Protestant missions in Korea were closely related to American Methodist missionary Robert S. Maclay (1824-1907). In June 1884, while carrying out his missionary work in Japan, he visited Korea to explore the possibility of missionary work and met Gojong (1852-1919), the ruler of Korea [3]. Maclay told the monarch that medical and educational ministries could be done in a Western style for the modernization of Korea, and he received permission. Gojong was open to Maclay's proposal since Korea had already signed the Korea-US Trade Treaty in 1882 and considered the United States to be a friendly country. (In reality, the U.S. government was not very interested in Korea and allowed Japan to rule Korea through the 'Katsura-Taft Secret Agreement' in 1905.)

Inspired by the king's approval, Methodists and Presbyterians among American Protestant Churches immediately started sending missionaries to Korea. In September 1884, Horace Allen (1899-1932), a missionary from the American Northern Presbyterian Church (ANPC), entered Korea as a physician at the American legation in Korea. In 1885, Horace Grant Underwood (1859-1916) of ANPC and Henry Gerhard Appenzeller (1858-1902) of the American Methodist Church (AMC) entered Korea on the same day, 5 April, and missionary work in Korea began in earnest [3, p. 304-325]. Since Presbyterians and Methodists drove much of the missionary activity at the time, our study will mainly use these two denominations to summarize the public impact of the Korean Protestant community.

3. The public roles of early Korean Protestants

3.1. Break the status system

In 1894, the Joseon [Korea] government (1392-1910) carried out the 'Gapo Reform', which abolished the tiered status system of nobility (yangban), middle class, commoner, and low class (cheonmin), but various forms of discriminatory classes remained [4]. The yangban were the ruling class of Confucian scholars; the middle class was made up of individuals in specialized occupations such as interpreters and physicians, commoners were peasants or merchants, and the cheonmin were the outcast - groups like prostitutes and butchers (baekjeong, 白丁). Cheonmin were treated as slaves run by yangban or middle class. They were sold as if they were goods, and their identities were based on their genealogies. Once born as a baekjeong, an individual and all his children were destined to become butchers. The baekjeong was isolated from the general public and lived in a special humble village.

Against this class system, the Korean Protestant Church responded strongly from the beginning of its ministry. Gondangol Church in Seoul (now Seungdong [Presbyterian] Church) was a good example. This Church was established in June 1893 in Gondangol (currently Lotte Hotel area) to deliver the Gospel of hope to the poor by missionary Samuel F. Moore (1860-1906), who received theological training at McCormick Seminary in the United States [5]. One day, a boy attending the church sought Moore's help. His father, Park, whose occupation was baekjeong, was dying of typhoid. Moore immediately went to King Gojong's doctor, a medical missionary named Oliver Avison (1860-1956), and asked him to treat Park. But their care did not stop there. Prior to his interaction with Samuel Moore, Park was known only by his solitary surname. He had no first name. Later on, when Moore baptized Park, Moore gave Park the full name Park Seong-Chun.

Park was later ordained as an elder of the church. In 1914, Lee Jae-Hyeong, a relative of royal blood, who was one of the highest-ranking members of Korean society, was elected as an elder of the same church. Motivated by their theology of inclusion, Moore and other missionaries included everyone in their worship. Both royals and non-royals could worship together at the same time at the same place. When the news that there was no distinction between the noble and the lowly in Christ and that men and women could listen to the Bible stories and sing hymns together spread through the slums of Seoul, many lowly people gathered at the church. Moore established sixteen local Presbyterian churches and divided them into different regions. Dongmak Church at Mapo in Seoul and Daehyeon Church in Seodaemun district were representative examples of such churches [5]. Early Protestant Churches like these challenged the inhuman status system that had marked Korea for hundreds of years. They spoke openly about the equal status of all people in the church and eventually experienced significant growth. The early Korean Protestant Church was a place of liberation and hope, where anyone could boldly claim human dignity.

3.2. Improving the status of women and reforming the education system

When Protestants began their ministry in Korea, the status of women was very poor. Women followed the social ethics laid out in 'the Three Ways of Obedience' (三從之道), which was formed in the patriarchal tradition of Confucianism [6, 7]. It defined a woman's life: when a woman is young, she lives as her father dictates; after marriage, she obeys her husband's will; and when she becomes old, she obeys her son's instructions. According to this ethic, a woman's identity was formed only in relationships with men - father, husband, son; and in the end, women were merely subjects of housework within the framework of instructions given by men. Women were not allowed to participate in the 'public force' of external politics.

In this social atmosphere, pioneering missionaries in Korea established countless specialized educational institutions for women and thus paved the way for various forms of women's liberation. One example was Ewha Hakdang, a school for women built in Jeong-dong, Seoul in February 1886 by the AMC missionary Mary F. Scranton (1832-1909). Scranton took orphans and beggars to live in school dormitories and began teaching Korean, English, Chinese, and the Bible. The Korean royal family welcomed the school and gave it the name 'Pear Flowers School' (Ewha Hakdang), referencing the hope that students would grow up to be clean and beautiful like cherry blossoms [8]. This school has now become a prestigious Ewha Woman's University in South Korea, contributing greatly to the higher education of Korean women. The second example was Speer Girl's School in Gwangju, which was located in the south-western part of South Korea. The school began in 1907 as a modern educational institution for a small number of boys and girls at the residence of American Southern Presbyterian Church (ASPC) missionary Eugene Bell (1868-1925). As the number of children to study increased, the ASPC Gwangju Mission Station built new school buildings to separate boys and girls. The school for boys was called Soongil Boy's School, and the school for girls was called Speer Girl's School [9, 10]. In these schools, students were educated in the Social sciences and Humanities, studying subjects like Korean, English, Mathematics, Geography, History, and Physical education [11]. Their curriculum was innovative, especially when compared to the exclusive focus on classical Chinese studies in schools of the Joseon period.

Of course, the educational philosophies of early Protestants would not stand up to current standards, but it was nevertheless a startling shift from the cultural patterns of Koreans past. Korean women did not have a name. When an older woman introduced herself to others, she said, "I am someone's wife, someone's mother or grandmother". Young girls would say, "I am an honorable horse" [12]. When a woman introduced herself after marriage, she would say something like 'Seoul-daek' (a woman from Seoul) or 'Busan-daek' (a woman from Busan) or 'the village dog' [12]. In this male-dominated Korean society, women were forced into a state of resignation and abandonment. Deep skepticism, despair and self-pity took hold in their lives [13]. However, with the onset of educational

ministry, women were enlightened and began to use their own names. They also attempted to change the social fabric of prejudice and inequality against women.

3.3. Disease eradication and treatment ministry

Until the early 20th century, Hansen's disease was incurable. Korea was no exception. Once caught, Hansen's disease would slowly destroy one's entire body. Those infected were forced to remain isolated in their homes, quarantined to an extreme. They were removed from their families, including parents, relatives and friends, and had to await their death in the isolation of mountains or fields.

In April 1909, Willy H. Forsythe (1873-1918), a medical missionary from the ASPC who ministered in Mokpo, was urgently ordered to Gwangju. His fellow missionary, Clement Owen, was suffering from pneumonia. While rushing to Gwangju on horseback, Forsythe found a young woman suffering from Hansen's disease on a roadside in Yeongsanpo, near Gwangju [9, 14, 15]. Forsythe immediately put the young woman on his horse and took her to Gwangju. He attempted to admit her to the Jejung Hospital but was rejected. Her condition was so bad, the hospital staff and patients refused to let her enter. Since Hansen's disease was known to be a terrifying epidemic, everyone was afraid to stand around the patient.

Forsythe fearlessly disinfected the patient's dirty body, and sometimes raised her body to sit or lay her down. Seeing this, many people around the hospital were greatly moved. For the first time in her life, the patient was treated like a human being by Forsythe. No one had ever treated her with such heart and sincerity. She was overjoyed, thanked Forsythe, and died peacefully. Choi Heung-Jong, who had been acquainted with Forsythe, was quite surprised by Forsythe's dedication and offered his land in what is now located Bongseon-dong, near Jejung Hospital, to build a residence and hospital exclusively for Hansen patients [15].

Jejung Hospital director Robert Wilson (1880-1963) was also moved and decided to treat Hansen's patients. Choi served as Wilson's assistant. As news of this treatment and the creation of a living space for individuals infected with Hansen spread across the country, scores of people flocked to Gwangju. Unable to accommodate all of them, Wilson resigned as director of Jejung Hospital and moved to Yeocheon, Jeollanam Province to establish Aeyangwon [11, 16]. Aeyangwon has since become a special residential space and treatment hospital for Hansen patients in Honam Province. Forsythe was infected with Sprue, a disease endemic to Korea, and returned to the United States. On 9 May 1918, he died at the young age of 45, and although his active service in Korea lasted only five years, his sacrificial love for patients created a new era in the treatment of leprosy in Korea [15]. At that time, many residents of Gwangju and Jeolla Province spoke highly of Forsythe, creating a solid reputation for Protestant Christianity.

3.4. Hangeul dissemination

The Korean language, Hangeul, was created under the name of 'Hunminjeongeum' (Correct Sounds for the Instruction of the People) by King Sejong (1397-1450), the great cultural reformer of the Joseon Dynasty. Hangeul has been celebrated widely by linguists: "Hangeul is not just the pride of Koreans, it is the great intellectual heritage of humankind. Professor Geoffrey Sampson of the UK asserts that Hangeul is undoubtedly one of the greatest intellectual heritages created by humankind. . . Nobel Prize winner Pearl Buck (1892-1973) praised Hangeul as 'the world's simplest and most wonderful script'. Missionary James Scarth Gale (1863-1937), a theologian and Korean language specialist, praised King Sejong. . . who invented Hangeul, as a prophet sent by God. . . [Hangeul] was registered as a UNESCO World Heritage and designated as National Treasure No. 70." [17]

Despite its wide celebration by scholars, Hunminjeongeum was not recognized for its importance in the 19th century. Confucian scholars, intellectuals and the ruling class preferred Chinese characters. It was not until the 1910s that a Korean linguist named Ju Si-Gyeong (1876-1914) saw the brilliance of Hunminjeongeum and began to make it accessible for the entire population [17]. Ju studied under Protestant missionaries at Baejae Academy [18]. His teachers emphasized the need to re-translate the Korean Bible, which was made in Manchuria by Scottish Presbyterian missionary John Ross (1842-1915). The Korean Bible at the time had significant problems with spacing and spelling, so a new work was needed if the Bible would be read by a wider public. In 1887, Presbyterian and Methodist missionaries formed the Bible Translation Committee and started working on the basic Bible translation: "William Davis Reynolds (1867-1951) was the most active missionary to translate the Old Testament . . . Reynolds, besides Underwood and Gayle, contributed the most to the translation of the New Testament, and the first publicly recognized Bible in Korea was published in 1906. . . His contribution to the Old Testament, published in 1911, was so outstanding. . . The Revised Korean New Testament translation project was carried out at the Mt. Jiri missionary village for five years from 1932 to 1936. John C. Crane (1888-1964), Frank William Cunningham (1887-1981), Samuel D. Winn (1880-1954), Reynolds, Korean theologian Nam Gung-hyuk and other Korean assistants participated." [17]

It is also important to quickly mention the role played by Korean Catholics, who began the dissemination of Hangeul a little earlier than Protestants. The first period when the Korean Catholic Church made a Korean Bible was Seonggyeong-jikhae-gwangik (聖經直解廣益), in which Choi Chang-Hyeon translated some of the four Gospels from the Chinese New Testament in the early 1790s. A complete translation of the four Gospels for Catholics was made in 1910, and the Acts of the Apostles was translated in 1911. The entire New Testament was translated into Korean in 1941, and the Old Testament was translated into Korean in 1977 [J. Nam, *The History of Catholic Korean Bible*

Translation, 2012, https://maria.catholic.or.kr/bible/bbs/bbs_view.asp?id=134633&SORT=R&menu=4797#::text].

The Korean Bible translated at this time was the Korean language we use today. The Hangeul Bible was used by all Catholic and Protestant Churches in Korea, transcending denominations, and contributed greatly to the national dissemination of Hangeul. Although Hangeul was invented by King Sejong, its use was popularized by Catholics and Protestants pursuing a translation of their sacred texts. Unwittingly, these Christians helped propel a sense of Korean pride. When a country has its own language, citizens feel a sense of pride. The contribution of Korean Christians could be remembered as a precious public event.

Today, Korean has been adopted as a second language in many countries. Among overseas universities, the countries that offer Korean language and Korean studies are the US, UK, France, Germany, Australia, Canada in the Western world; in the Far East Asian region, China, Japan, Mongolia and Taiwan are included, and in other regions, Russia, India, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Kazakhstan and Vietnam are included [19, 20].

3.5. Against Japanese imperialism and the Korean independence movement

The Korean people lost their country to Japan in 1910, one of the most shameful events in Korea's half-million-year history. In the past, there were countless invasions by China, Mongolia, and Japan, but the Koreans fought and defeated them to preserve the country. Although Koreans lived on a small land called the Korean Peninsula, they were proud of living in an independent nation. The Japanese ruled these Koreans by force for 36 years, brutally violating the self-esteem and identity of Koreans. Japan forced the Japanese religion, Shinto, to annihilate Korea's indigenous culture. Educational institutions had taken measures to make Japanese the official language. Many young Koreans were recruited as soldiers or workers for Japan and were used as tools for the expansion of Japanese imperialism. Most Koreans resisted Japan's colonial policy, and the biggest event of that resistance was the March First Independent Movement (MFIM), which started on 1 March 1919 [21, 22]. The MFIM had several characteristics.

First, the MFIM was a united movement made by the leaders of Korean Protestantism, Chondogyo (Heavenly Way Religion) and Buddhism, transcending their religious doctrines. From the Protestant side, students of the Presbyterian and Methodist local churches, as well as para-Church institutions such as the YMCA and mission schools, participated together across denominations [3]. None of them thought that the struggle for Korea's independence was in conflict in the two fields of private personal salvation and public social salvation.

Second, the Korean Protestant leaders who led this movement carried it out independent of missionaries. They were aware of the missionaries' policies, which were based on the principle of separation between politics and religion. In

addition, they had a strong desire that Koreans should independently restore Korean sovereignty.

Third, the movement began on the first day of March 1919 and continued peacefully throughout the year. The leaders of MFIM demanded that the entire Korean society adhere to the policy of the independence movement very strictly. They instructed Koreans with rules such as: "Whatever you do, Do Not INSULT THE JAPANESE; Do Not THROW STONES; Do Not HIT WITH YOUR FISTS. For these are the acts of barbarians." [23] The cry 'Long live Korea's independence' served as a rallying cry in Seoul and other provinces. To stop this, the Japanese army and police were mobilized, and many people were sacrificed. According to the Japanese count, "553 people were killed, 1,409 injured, and 12,522 arrested. According to a Korean count, over 7,500 were killed, roughly 15,000 injured, and some 45,000 arrested." [24] In particular, the damage suffered by Protestants was horrendous. Numerous church buildings were destroyed and believers were abused in prison. On 15 April, 1919, at Jeam-ri Church in Suwon, thirty Church members were taken to their place of worship by the Japanese army and burned alive [3, p. 312]. However, Korean Protestants did not despair and continued peaceful protests in memory of Jesus' crucifixion.

Fourth, in the process of carrying out the independence movement, religious leaders presented 'the Declaration of Independence' and the code of conduct of the independence movement, but the actual movement was led by lay leaders: women, students, orphans, beggars, and gisaengs (singing and dancing girls) from the lower classes of society. It was a national movement that transcended gender, education, and occupation [25, 26]. Sixteen Christian leaders (Lee Seung-hoon and fifteen others), fifteen Chondogyo leaders (Son Byeong-hee and fourteen others), and two Buddhist monks (Han Yong-un and Baek Ryong-seong) were arrested and placed in prison. They were not able to lead the movement at the forefront, because they were constantly monitored by the Japanese police even after they were released from prison.

Fifth, as a result of this movement, Koreans did not actually achieve independence. From an ideological point of view, the MFIM should not be regarded as a failure. It led to a singular achievement. At that time, many thoughtful political leaders fought for Korean independence in different ways in China, Russia, and the United States, avoiding the control and pressure of the Japanese colonial government. They did not have a unifying policy that all Koreans would accept. However, starting with the MFIM movement, all independence movement organizations were able to unite and establish the Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai, China. This provisional government was by no means a restoration of the past Joseon dynasty. It was a government of a republican political system for the entire Korean people, a form of Western democracy. The ideal of this republic is stipulated in the present Constitution of the Republic of Korea.

Yet, despite the fact that the aforementioned positive advances continue to have a considerable impact even today, we must keep in mind that all Korean religions, including Protestantism, were ultimately unable to tackle various

pressing issues at that time. While some 20,000 women suffered in misery as sexual slaves for the Japanese military in camps in Southeast Asia, many young men were conscripted as laborers or soldiers for Japan, compelling them to terminate their miserable lives [Y. Gil, *The Yoon government, 'white flag surrender' to Japan…Trampling on the 30-year struggle of forced labor victims*, https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/international/japan/1082616.html]. Although these crimes were being committed both inside and outside of Korea, the Christian community in Korea was essentially helpless to stop them. This is due to the fact that the powerful military rule of Japanese imperialism at the time was uncontrollable by the Korean religions of the period.

3.6. Protestant temperance movement

It was a significant public achievement for early Protestantism in Korea to have affected the alcohol and tobacco culture of Korean society. South Korea's smoking and drinking rate still ranks high among OECD countries. Historically, Koreans had a drinking and dancing culture, but smoking was welcomed by all classes of Korea after it was introduced through Japan in the 17th century [27, 28]. The testimony of a famous Confucian scholar called Yi Ok (1760-1815) was sufficient evidence of this: "When your mouth smells like garlic and fish after eating, smoking will make your stomach feel more comfortable right away. . . When you are freezing in the great cold, and your beard is covered with ice and your lips are stiff, smoking a cigarette is better than drinking hot water. . . When you twist your beard and bite your brush while thinking about the poetic verse, if you smoke at [this particular time] and follow the smoke, a poem comes to mind." [29]

The smoking culture in Korea that has become so prevalent is gradually shrinking due to the introduction of Protestantism and the implementation of modern medical education. Protestant missionaries accepted Koreans' smoking in the early days of their ministry but gradually changed their direction and said that smoking violates the teachings of the Bible. They stated that if a smoker dies, they cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The missionaries taught that since the believer's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, if one defiles the God-given body with smoking, one sins against God. The Protestant temperance movement, which started in the Protestant Church in the United States in 1874, was introduced to Korea in 1923 [A. Campbell, https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/religious/the-temperance-movement]. With this movement, the issue of alcohol and tobacco was applied to all Korean Protestant churches as the subject of a stronger ban [30]. As the temperance movement started during the Japanese colonial rule, Korean Protestant pastors argued that habitual use of alcohol and tobacco was spiritually sinful, and furthermore, it was not helpful for Korea's future independence. Thanks to these efforts, abstinence from alcohol and smoking is now established as a beautiful tradition of Protestantism in South Korea. The early interpretation of the Bible that one cannot go to heaven by drinking and smoking has of course been corrected because it is misleading, and the prohibition

of alcohol and tobacco is recognized as a voluntary practice in accordance with Christian pious ethics and a good attitude for health. Currently, the Korean government prohibits smoking in public places such as hospitals, daycare centers and kindergartens.

3.7. A sense of belonging and a place of refuge

From the 1950s to the early 1960s, one of the good influences of Protestantism on Korean society was to provide many people with a sense of belonging and a place of refuge. Korea was liberated from Japan in 1945, but was soon divided into South Korea and North Korea. The beginning of this tragedy was that the liberation of Korea was achieved not by the Koreans themselves, but by the strength of the United States and the Soviet Union. Japan gave the Allies an unconditional surrender in 1945. Concerning Korean matters, the two nations decided that North Korea would be managed by Soviet forces and that South Korea would be governed by American forces. These two nations believed that it would take a certain period of time for Korea to take the form of a modern nation. So, the Korean Peninsula was divided into two parts, with the Soviet Union in North Korea and the United States in South Korea. Through this process, North Korea became a Soviet-style communist state, and South Korea became an American-style democratic nation. The Korean War broke out in 1950 as a result of these ideological conflicts [O. Jeon, *Korean War*, 2015, http://world.kbs.co.kr/special/kdivision/korean/history/outline.htm]. The armistice was concluded in 1953, due to the participation of UN forces such as the United States in the war, and Korea remains a divided country today [22, 31].

As a result of this war, "the entire Korean peninsula was devastated, more than 200,000 war widows, 100,000 war orphans, more than 10 million separated families, and more than 45% of industrial facilities were destroyed" [31, p. 35]. Protestantism in Korea responded as follows: " Even in the midst of such extreme warfare, the Korean Church has carried out various projects for those who are trembling in fear of war. . . Above all, as the most powerful Church work at the time, various relief programs for people struggling in disasters were done." [32]

After the war, the Korean Protestant Church achieved a great revival. A large number of Christians who migrated to South Korea in search of religious freedom from North Korea flowed into the Church. These were those who kept their faith despite the persecution under Communist rule. They led fellow North Koreans to the Church to help them settle into South Korean society. North Koreans who had no relatives and friends in South Korea were able to start their new life in the warm welcome and service of the Church. At that time, the Church had become their second home and refuge.

In short, although early Protestantism in Korea did not develop a theological movement using the terms public church or 'public theology', it performed a public function in important events in Korea's early modern history.

4. Prospects of Protestantism in Korea and the necessity of 'public theology'

The public achievements of the Protestant movement in Korea have significant similarities with those claimed by Marty's *Public Church*. There was a unique concern for the marginalized and powerless in society. Early Korean Protestantism not only guided the future direction of the nation, transcending class and gender, but was also a major force in reforming Korean society. The Church played a pioneering role in enlightening the Korean people through the abolition of the class system, the promotion of women's rights, the healing of incurable diseases, use and spread of refined Hangeul, resistance to Japanese imperialism, and the temperance movement for social purification. So, many Koreans from the poor of Korean society to the royal officials welcomed the Church, experiencing the suffering and sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, and the justice and love of God.

However, after the 1960s, especially in the 1970s, Korean Protestantism grew explosively, gradually weakening the public function of the Church. Since the late 1980s, the Church's growth has slowed and now faces many problems that make it a concern for the future [33]. Let us discuss the problems that Protestantism in Korea currently faces and find solutions in Marty's structure of public theology.

4.1. The identity problem of the Korean Protestant Church

A recent study has found that the growth of Protestantism in Korea is seriously slowing: "Starting in the second half of 1980, the Churches experienced a period of stagnation and were contemplating uncertain future. Above all, the churches' most serious problem is that the faith of parents does not pass on to their children. . . However, most of the Sunday School students in Korean Protestant Churches are facing a tragic situation, with only about five percent remaining in the number of students in college and youth departments of the Churches. . . The Churches cannot have hope unless these problems are resolved." [34]

Why is the Church in this situation? The Church did not come to this state overnight. It was a gradual process. First of all, Protestant Churches in Korea have followed those in the United States, becoming divided in light of theological differences. Several representative Protestant Churches such as the Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church, Baptist Church, and Assemblies of God experienced divisions due to differences in theological views and ambitions in Church politics, but the case of the Presbyterian Church was very serious. The Presbyterian missionaries who came to Korea at the end of the 19th century were from the North and South Presbyterian denominations in the United States, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the Presbyterian Church in Australia. These early missionaries decided to combine their efforts and set up one Korean Presbyterian Church (KPC). This beautiful tradition was maintained for a long time, but conflicts began to arise between the leaders of the KPC when the KPC

accepted the Japanese shrine worship imposed by the Japanese government while Korea was under Japanese rule. The Presbyterian leaders who refused to visit the shrine, immediately after liberation, formed a separate Presbyterian denomination. They were not willing to associate with those who did not keep the purity of the Church. The Presbyterian denomination that was born out of this separation is the Goshin denomination established in 1952. The Gijang Presbyteran denomination in 1954 was a denomination that was founded as some Presbyterian theologians supported liberal theology and resisted conservative Reformed theology. Another division of the Presbyterian Church occurred in 1959, when the Tonghap faction accepted the theology of the World Council of Churches while the Hapdong faction refused [35]. Seeing these divisions, many citizens began to form a negative view of Korean Protestantism.

There was also a problem with the rapid quantitative growth of the Church. Through large-scale gatherings such as the national evangelization movement in the 1960s and Billy Graham's 'Expolo 74' in the 1970s, the Church achieved rapid growth. Each local Church invested significant time and resources into evangelism and missions. As a result, the Korean Church was able to have six mega-Churches, including the Yoido Full Gospel Church [22, p. 21]. However, the Church did not contribute much to issuing or implementing a public message for the realization of social justice appropriate to this growth. This political stance of Protestantism was an entirely distinct phenomenon from the way Korean Catholics responded, who at the time sharply decried social justice and the military regime and urged their modification [J. Strother, *South Korea's 'Catholic priests on the streets' giving a political voice*, 2014, https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/BL-173B-8141?responsive=y].

During the military rule of Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-han from the 1960s to the 1980s, the Church in general failed to function as an integrated prophetic voice and showed compromise with the government. The Church "is degenerating into an institutionalized 'church' type. [It is] immersed in unreasonable Church growth mentality, materialism-stained secularism, and traditional authoritarianism, so [it is] not recognized and highlighted as an attractive religion in Korean society." [36]

4.2. The necessity of renewing public theology

Now is the time for the Korean Church to restore the prophetic and public roles it had in the past. Above all, the Church must develop a renewed public theology that will heal past divisions and unite itself. It goes without saying that the identity of the Church lies in promoting the 'personal faith' of individual members according to the tradition of each Church. At the same time, the Church must play the role of light and salt to complete its identity. The public theology that harmonizes these two areas is the current challenge that both Korean Catholics and Protestants must pursue [37, 38]. This theology has been discussed by Korean Catholic theologians since around 2010, and Protestants have also begun to bring up public theology questions at about the same time, which is

highly encouraging for Korean Christians as a whole [K. Min, *Public Theology in Asia*, https://m.catholictimes.org/mobile/article_view.php?aid=364862].

In the past, the Korean Church had to resolve issues such as independence from Japan, the abolition of the status system, and liberation from poverty [39, 40]. Significant progress regarding these issues has been accomplished through the Church's public cooperation with other religions, civic groups, and state agencies. However, today, there are complex and subdivided social phenomena. The Korean Church should not only respond appropriately to the problems occurring in the various national issues of Korea such as peaceful reunification of North and South Korea, but also exercise its rights and duties as a member of the global community. The devastation of the Earth caused by pollution, resource depletion, and environmental destruction should be a concern for all of us. Problems such as food shortages, marriage avoidance by young Korean women, controversial issues of Unification Church, and declining rural population, various diseases such as covid-19, the occurrence of refugees due to many wars, and preparations for the Fourth Industrial Revolution are further issues that all countries and religions must solve together. Therefore, a public theology for today must present theories and practical methods that can properly respond to these socio-political-cultural changes. In this respect, Marty's concept of public church as a public theology could be used to enlarge its horizon in order to meet these complex socio-political issues. If we apply his public theology in this renewed vision, it can be applied to solve any problems across time and place in terms of its spirituality.

5. Conclusions

Today, we live in greater material abundance than ever before. Yet in this abundance lies poverty. This is because developed and underdeveloped countries coexist. Also, not all people living in the developed countries are happy. Many people compete fiercely in the wrong consumption culture, revealing excessive obsession and desire. Such a life is a good representation of our chaotic and divided mind. Now, we are at a point where we need to establish a mature theology that looks at the history of the world from both the individual and global community level. If we do not cooperate, the warning of the ecosystem that the entire global village will soon be destroyed is constantly happening around us. This is a serious problem that cannot be avoided by any religious person. Therefore, we need a 'public theology' that pursues individual and community happiness at the same time. All the spiritual, mental, and physical evil forces that oppress and exploit us are by no means private. To deal with them wisely, we need to broaden our horizons to the point of 'public' worldview.

The public theology we recommend does not mean a break with the history of the past. For example, the theology we are pursuing is a theology that inherits the beautiful tradition of public works performed by the Korean Church in the past. Also, it must have the spiritual capacity to be flexible in dealing with newly emerging socio-political-religious issues of both domestic and foreign affairs. In

short, we are obliged to construct the 'public church', which Marty has addressed with great emphasis since the 1970s.

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