

The Great Revival Movement of 1907
And its Historical Impact on Korean Church

By
Dr. Young Hee Park

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1907 PyungYang Great Revival Movement¹ and Its Historical Impact on Korean Church

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¹ For Christians, the city of PyungYang in 1907 must have been an amazing place to be. PyungYang (which literally means a city of peace) earned the reputation “the Jerusalem of the East.” The Christian Church in PyungYang must have paralleled that of Jerusalem in the first century in her spiritual vibrancy. Some have already referred to 1907 PyungYang as the Great “Revivalism” which would be inaccurate. “Revival Movement” is a better translation than Revivalism.

Introduction: The Historical Meaning of the Great Revival of 1907

(Summary: The Great Revival of 1907 is a significant event of the Korean Christianity. Rather than lending ourselves to the events that merely commemorate the work of the Lord, it is important for us to examine and understand the elements that made up the groundwork and the reasons for this work of the Holy Spirit which took place a century ago. There is a relevant and applicable message in what took place in 1907 and the subsequent years in Korea.)

The year 2007 is the 100th anniversary of the Great Revival of PyungYang. It is therefore significant for us to seek the meaning both from the Church History and the Missions perspectives. It's because this Great Revival Movement provided the cornerstone of the Korean Church. The Movement was based on the Word-centeredness and Penitence. Additionally, this historic occasion can provide an opportunity for us to rediscover the purity of the Church and her true identity. I firmly believe that we can renew and restore the new life in Christ by restoring the Gospel's true essence through repentance and reconciliation. Lastly, by refocusing on this Movement, we can discover how the faith of our forefathers was precious and sincere. Therefore, the study of the Great Revival Movement of PyungYang is tremendously beneficial and personal to us.

Generally, we have fondness towards this Great Revival Movement because of the Movement's strong emphasis on the Word as well as the great manifestations of the Holy Spirit which was evident through the supernatural and absolute presence of God. This was witnessed through the Bible Studies and worship services. We believe that this Movement has served as the driving force behind the formation of the Korean Church's spirituality.

According to Professor Lee, JangShik, the Korean Churches take on two forms of spirituality—one of confession and one of apologetics. However, I would like to say that the Korean Church takes on more of the confessional spirituality. By “apologetics,” we assume that the truth must be defended through logic and reason. The result of apologetical spirituality is such that even the supernatural revelation of God must be somehow first comprehended by human cognition prior to being accepted. However, “confessional” spirituality produces faith as a fruit of the proclamation of the Truth and receiving such proclamation as the Revelation of God. This is true of the Early Church Fathers, such as Tertullian. The Reformers also strived to discover the form of the truth in the Word and from the Scripture-centered perspective. However, the Medieval Scholasticism focused more on the human intellect as the primary means to understand the Word. For example, Anselm would articulate that the faith must rest on what we ultimately understand which is quite different from the Reformer's perspective.

The Reformers supported the mindset of faith that believes the revelation of God through the Word. Thus, according to the liberty of conscience our faith is confessing the truth of the Scriptures as-is. Perhaps, the art of apologetics was a natural consequence of seeking to justify the reasons for the faith.

The early missionaries to Korea were earnest men of godliness who placed supremacy of the Bible in Christian living. In other words, they urged every Christian's personal decision to believe in Christ to reflect their confidence in the proclamation of the truth through the revelation of the Word. Therefore, they believed the Preached Word to be the Word of God. The early missionaries to Korea taught the Korean Christians to read the Word above all and to memorize the Word. They taught the Bible systematically and in order to support their work, they were diligent in translating the Bible into Korean. They also encouraged the Korean Churches to study the Word. I am confident that we will better understand the circumstances surrounding the sovereign intervention of God in granting the Great Revival of 1907 as we better understand the context of the missionaries' work and their philosophy as mentioned-above.

Therefore, we will take a look at the background of the Great Revival of 1907 and the subsequent Movement. We will also take a look at the early missionaries to Korea as to their theological background and their theological uniqueness. What were their challenges in spreading the Gospel? What were the basis and the origin of their mission's strategy and the philosophy? How did the prayer meetings and the Word-centered revival meetings influence the Presbyterian Church in Korea? How did the Great Revival of 1907 produce the driving force for the church growth and the subsequent prosperity? Finally, how did the entire event connect to the vision of evangelizing one million people in Korea? We will take a look at these questions and in part discover the unique development of the Korean Presbyterian Churches.

It is in this line of thinking that I make the following suggestions and recommendations to the Coalition of the Korean Churches (PCA).

During the centennial year of 2007 there were 270 events that were on the way in commemorating the Great Revival of PyungYang. We cannot list all but the main thrust of this work has done by the Presbyterian Churches. For example, an event called Transformation 2007 brought over 40,000 for the purpose of fasting and praying for the hope of real transformation that goes beyond the mere hope of revival.

However, in spite of many events, there is a legitimate concern for these events merely reflecting a romantic longing of what had taken place a century ago.

I. The Historical and Theological Background

A. The Historical Background

(Summary: It is important for us to understand the socio-political situation surrounding the Korean Peninsula in the early 20th century. It's easy for us to think of Japan as the sole player. Indeed, Japan did play a major role in Korean peninsula; however, there were other nations such as China, Russia, Great Britain, France, and the United States of America that all had a factor that led to the illegal Japanese occupation of Korea in the early part of the 20th century. The Great spiritual Revival of PyungYang was taking place at the time the future of Korea (then Chosun) seem the bleakest.)

It is important for us to speak of the role Japan played in Korea, then Chosun. The time of the Great Revival was one of the darkest periods in Korean history. Politically speaking, Japan, China, and Russia were in the background. Great Britain, France, and the United States of America also were influential players in what was happening in Korea. Due to the aggression and the oppression laid out by Japan, Korea was extremely weak in all aspects—social, political, and so forth. Japan found it necessary to wage a war against China, fearing China's influence in Korea. Japan was successful in defeating China and later following the 1902 Treaty with the Great Britain; Japan was even successful in defeating Russia in 1904². These victories paved the way for Japan to establish the groundwork necessary to make Korea as a subject nation without her own autonomy (1904 Korean-Japanese so-called "Agreement" with 6 articles which in essence stripped Korea of her independence all in the name of "protection" for her by Japan). The result of the 1904 Treaty or Agreement was the loss of independence expressed in the daily lives of Koreans in all aspects of life, including but not limited to communications, transportation (railroad), fishing industry, development of new land, and more.

In April of 1905, Japan declares unilaterally Korea as the annexed country and dispatched Ito Hirobumi to Korea to dethrone the king of Chosun (then the last Emperor of Chosun Dynasity). Perhaps in one of the most shameful part of the Korean history was forced upon by Japan when it forced Korea to sign the Eulsa Treaty or Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty. King GoJong sought H. B. Herbert to seek help and intervention from the United States of America (November 2, 1905). However, this effort was discovered by Japan right away. Furthermore, in 1907 as the Hague Peace Conference was being held, the King GoJong secretly dispatched Lee, Joon and Lee, SangSeol as the Korea's Emissaries. However, their efforts were proven futile, largely by the damaging and distorting work of Japan. The Korean Emissaries were not even allowed to speak at the Conference. Lee, Joon gave up his life in Hague (the circumstance of his death is still clouded) as the only testimony of Korea's plight to the world. Japan began her official rule by using Lee, WanYong as the Prime Minister overseeing the affairs of Korea (May 22, 1907). During this period the Korean military (albeit numbering only 8,000) was disassembled for the reasons of financial burden. It is important for us to note that during this time the Western countries were more interested in checking the ever-growing influence of Russia

² The Russo-Japan War of 1904-1905

in the East, and Japan proved to be a good ally for them in serving their interest. The impact and the direct consequences of the purposeful partnership with Japan by the West meant oppression by Japan of Korea. Koreans found themselves leaving Korea and settling in Manchuria and Vladivostok Region of Russia. Because the Great Revival took place under such bleak political situation historically, some scholars are critical of the genuineness of the Revival in PyungYang, preferring to see it as more politically motivated than the Spirit-led.

Dr. George Paik (1895-1985) observes that the early missionaries practiced the policy of focusing on the spreading of the Gospel alone apart from the involvement in the politics. He critically notes that the focus of the Gospel and the non-involvement in the socio-political issues of the country led to the exclusion of the so-called intellectuals from the Church. Furthermore, such definition supposedly forced the Korean Independence Movement to be held outside of the Church. Dr. Paik's criticism of the early missionaries is merely an attempt to show the lack of broad appeal of the Gospel to the Koreans. However, apart from Dr. Paik's assertion, we find the contrary to be true. The Gospel-driven and-focused missions work in Korea indeed showed a broad appeal and helped to settle the Church in Korea.

What was the historical background from the Church History side? Underwood and Appenzeller formed the Scripture Union in February 7th, 1887. In 1900 which was 13 years later, the New Testament was translated into Korean. In 1911, the Old Testament was translated. This was a great improvement over the John Ross Bible which did not properly take into account the various nuances in the Korean language.³

The beginning of contextualization in the theological dimension started with the work of bible translation. It is a great blessing that even before the first protestant missionary came to Korea, the Korean people already had the Scriptures, translated by Ross and McIntyre. Ross continued to print Acts, John, Matthew and Pauline Epistles. In 1887, he printed the whole New Testament which was named Jesus New Testament. W. Reynolds indicated there were three stages in the preparation of the tentative version:

1. The Individual Version made without the aid of one's fellow translation.
2. The Provision Version, made by the original translator upon the basis of written criticism and suggestions of the other member.
3. The board's Version reached in protracted session by majority vote on disputed readings in the provision version. The tentative version was to be circulated for three years and then Authorized Version was to be issued. Many missionaries and Korean helpers were involved in this work, and some of them began to print each set of the Scriptures given to them. The first Authorized Old Testament version was late in coming out, but in 1911, it was finally printed. The circulation of the scriptures grew from 2997 copies in 1896 to 127,269 copies in 1906.

³ In Missions, the role of the proper translation of the Bible is quite critical. The work to produce the Korean Bible took 24 years in the making.

A.D. Clark explained how this expanded circulation. This wide circulation was due partly to the fact the early missionaries laid great stress on the importance of the converts learning to know their bibles and insisting, so far as possible, that each own his own copy. The importance of the bible in standardizing in spoken language, and the spelling of it, and its part in decreasing illiteracy, especially ability among women and children to handle can be overestimated.

B. The Theological Background of the Early Missionaries to Korea

(Summary: The role of the Nevius Methods in Korean Christianity is important. It allowed the Korean Churches to be quickly self-supporting. The make up of the early missionaries is also a significant factor as they emphasized the centrality of the Bible as well as the Puritan Disciplines as the hallmark of their ministries.)

What kind of theological background did the early missionaries to Korea have? This question is important because we believe the missionaries and their theology were the driving force behind the Revival Movement in Korea.⁴ A. J. Brown, then the General Secretary of the Northern Presbyterian Church in the USA described the early missionaries as “Puritan Type.”⁵ In addition, the early missionaries were Conservatives who considered the Liberal Theology as apostate.

Dr. Harvie M. Conn mentioned in his article “the History of Korean church in its early Years” was the history of conservative and evangelical Christianity. That history must be credited to the missionaries of the Presbyterian faith who brought it. As with any church young or older convictions are molded by those who plant the seed. The missionaries who led the Presbyterian Church in the early formative years were men of such conviction that they did not hesitate to ground the church in those conviction.

The Early Missionaries were Bible-centered, “Fundamentalists” when it came to Theology. Many of the missionaries prior to 1900 were Presbyterian Ministers and the graduates of the McCormick Theological Seminary. In 1909, 40 missionaries were commissioned by the Northern Presbyterian Church in the USA. 16 were graduates of Princeton Theological Seminary, and 11 were from McCormick. Dr. Yongkyu Park of the Presbyterian General Assembly Theological Seminary of Korea states that this is significant in the following way. (1) They were the leaders in directing the Missions work, especially in the North West of Korea. (2) They built Christian Schools (SoongShil and PyungYang) that raised up Korean Christian leaders. (3) They belonged to the Old Princeton School of Theology and yet they were open to the D. L. Moody’s Revivalism.

⁴ According to Harvey Conn (OPC Missionary, Westminster Professor), the early missionaries possessed healthy theology and were not afraid of building the churches upon the firm foundation of their theology.

⁵ By “Puritan Type,” he meant the strict observance of the Lord’s Day as the Sabbath, the prohibition of certain activities such as dancing, smoking, and playing cards.

Furthermore, they embraced John Nevius Principle of Missions. Their influence continued well into 1920's. The circuit preaching and the zeal of Samuel Moffet (1889-1939) could not be surpassed by any. Samuel Moffet exemplified the diligent work of the missionaries to Korea in the early years.⁶

Another example is seen in William Baird⁷. He is also a graduate of McCormick and an instrumental figure in establishing churches and schools in Korea. And, there is countless number of early missionaries whose healthy theology and earnest zeal provided the ground work for the Korean Church's vibrancy for the years to come.⁸

C. The Missiological Dilemmas of the Early Missionaries.

(Summary: Should Christians be involved in the political events of the land? Unlike the Roman Catholic missionaries, the Protestant Missionaries took the approach of non-involvement in the political affairs of the land. Once again, the Nevius Method helps us to better understand which route the Korean Church takes in this turbulent times.)

Early protestant missionaries debated whether to become more active in government politics. The Roman Catholic missionaries entered Korea illegally, however the protestant missionaries waited until a formal treaty was signed between Korea and the United States, allowing them to enter the country legally and avoid political attention. The Catholic missionaries choose to live among the Korean people, taking as active role in the movement of the church. The protestant missionaries segregated themselves from the people and trained key Korean individuals to serve as pastor of local church. Ultimately, however they elected to remain independent.

In general, the Christians in the Roman Catholic Church were less educated in the Scriptures. However, due to the Protestant Missionaries emphasis of the Bible translation as well as the education, the Protestant Christians were much better equipped in the Word. The overall translation of the Bible took over 24 long years. However, the systematic translation of the Bible provided immediate results among the Korean Protestant Churches. This credit is due to the early Protestant missionaries focus and emphasis on the Bible and its authority in all affairs of life. Even John Bunyan's classical work, "Pilgrims' Progress" was translated into Korean in 1895.

The contrast between the Roman Catholic Missionaries and the Protestant Presbyterian Missionaries does not end with the centrality of the Scriptures. The Roman Catholic missionaries in general were more involved with the political events of the era. The Protestant missionaries did not want to get involved politically and respected the Law of the Land even if this meant delay in the Missions work.

⁶ Samuel Moffet became a pastor of PyungYang Jangdaehyun Church as well as serving as the President of PyungYang Theological Seminary, as the Moderator of the Presbytery and as the Moderator of the General Assembly of 1919.

⁷ William Baird (1862-1931) was born in Indiana. He arrived in Korea in 1890.

⁸ Allen Calrk, W.D. Reynold, and Underwood are just a few of those worthy of mention.

“Should the Christian Missionaries get actively involved in the political affairs of the day?” This was a relevant question that had to be answered. The philosophy and the approach of the foreign missionary’s involvement in the new land set the tone and lay the ground work for the Church. We see many evidences of the Protestant missionaries with this question with respect to establishing the Korean Church as an autonomous and independent organization. Why this is an important question for our days is better understood as we examine the Nevius Principles.

II. The Theological Uniqueness of the Great Revival of 1907

A. Biblical Theological Parameters

Just as in the theological background of the early missionaries, the early Korean Church has the uniqueness of having the supremacy of the Bible as the parameter of the Biblical Theology. Here, once again the importance of Nevius Principles is highlighted.

The second article of Nevius Principles emphasizes the centrality of the Bible in all areas of ministry. Not only the authority of the Bible but the assurance of salvation, the personal evangelism mindset, had the duties of a Christian and more flowed out of the Bible. As it should be, the Bible’s position in the Korean Church was uniquely central from the very beginning. According to Dr. Allen Clark, this emphasis of the centrality of the Scriptures made it possible for the Korean Christianity to have a deep spirituality, vibrant prayer life, great faith, and the radically generous offering mindset. Of course the high view of the Holy Scriptures was largely a factor brought by the missionaries who were faithful in the distribution the Gospel tracks whenever it was possible.

They believed in the Centrality of the Scriptures and through which the purpose of the original Missions could be accomplished. The framework of the Korean Church was based on the Centrality of the Scriptures, the Righteousness by faith which stemmed from the Reformation thoughts in the mind of the missionaries.

It is not surprising therefore that Korea would experience so much of the vibrant Christianity. The vibrant Christianity of the Puritans also led to the Great Awakenings in Korea just as it led to the Great Awakening in America.

Being confident that it was the Word that ultimately regenerated and transformed the people, the early missions work always emphasized the faithful preaching of the Gospel rather than external behavior conformity to the Christian religion. Indeed, the Word-centeredness led to the Great Wakening of 1907.

B. Nevius Principles

Nevius Principles are better known for his emphasis on the independence and autonomy of the local indigenous churches. However, its significance is augmented by its emphasis on the centrality of the Bible in the Missions effort. In 1860, John Nevius visits Korea to teach for two weeks regarding the Missions Strategies. During that time, he taught many things of which the following three major principles were clearly expounded. They are (1) Training of the Christians to remain in their work places to support the Church financially, (2) To manage the growth to reflect the local church's own ability and the parameter which meant naturally establishing the paid staff as the church was able to afford them. (3) To plant and establish churches using the indigenous people's own resources. The above-referenced ideas are known as Nevius Principles of Self Supporting, Self Governing, and Self Propagating. These Principles were adopted at the 1893 Missionary Convention and they were foundational to the Great Revival of 1907.

Up until 1930's the 90% of the Korean population lived in cities/villages of less than 10,000 people. This enabled the missionaries to preach the Gospel in all of the villages. In particular the missionaries used the street evangelism and SaRangBang⁹ Evangelism which was culturally particular to the Koreans. These small group meetings developed into more organized school system which eventually became formal seminary schools. In 1896, a title of "Bible Woman" was adopted into the Presbyterian By-laws. This position was created for the women whose responsibility was to spread the Christian literatures and the Christian teachings. Paralleling the SaRangBang Bible Study, a women's Bible Study also started with five women. Here, the first step was to teach the older women how to read. Then, proper etiquette and the Bible were taught. This was a major change in a society where the separation of men and women began in early childhood. The "Bible Woman" was a title used by the Methodist Missionary, Mary F. Scranton. In 1887, two Bible Women were selected and hired for the Sunday school built for the women of EWha School for women and the ladies of the church. This example was seen as a good policy and was adopted by the Presbyterian Church in 1888. In 1891, Underwood invited 16 men into his own SaRangBang and taught them the Bible and Theology.

Having adopted the Nevius Principles, all of the missionaries were mandated to establish small group Bible study groups. As a result, the Korean Churches had held various kinds of morning Bible study groups and in the afternoons different classes such as "How to Run a Sunday school," "Personal Evangelism," and "Better Farming" classes were held. The evening was reserved for holding Evangelistic meetings geared towards the

⁹ SaRangBang: (Bang means a room. SaRang which sounds like the Korean word for love actually does not mean love. Rather, "Sa" means house and "Rang" refers to the man of the house. Therefore, SaRangBang refers to a room in a house where the home owner met the guests and visitors. This room was effectively used by the missionaries to have small group Bible studies.

unbelievers. All of these efforts led to the installation of Elders and Pastors at the PyungYang JangDaeHyun Presbyterian Church.¹⁰

Adhering to the Nevius Principles, the Presbyterian Churches established a more conservative theology, unlike that of the Methodist counterpart. Methodist churches emphasized the programs as the driving force. For example, Samuel Moffet established a church in PyungYang while W. J. Hall, a Methodist medical missionary, established a medical clinic as the initial mode of evangelization. Appenzeller also focused on more indirect way of evangelism. Underwood also saw education as the initial work for the sake of evangelism which was to follow. However, the Presbyterian Churches laid the groundwork of the churches according to the Nevius Principle of Independence of the indigenous churches. In order to spread the Gospel among the masses, they used the SaRangBang and the Bible Study as the main mode of evangelism. The spread of the Word was essential to the growth of the Korean Churches.

The negative element of the Nevius Principles was the holding back of the capable men from going as far as they can educationally. The Methodist Missions Board had the more progressive and liberal attitude towards educating of the capable young men for studies abroad which resulted in producing many pioneers and scholars of the Korean Christian Church.

C. Prayer Meetings and the Bible Study Meetings (查經會)

Often “Revival” meetings are associated with the personal conversion and experience of individual regeneration. The result is these meetings can be subjective, emotive, and individualistic. The Great Revival of PyungYang was not an instantaneous movement, nor was it an individualistic type of spirituality. The basis of the Great Revival was the prayer meetings and the bible studies. We often find meetings and programs driven by the quantity and results based on the notion “more is better.” However, the early missionaries to Korea were diligent in both prayer and the study of the Word. So, the early Church movement in Korea was characterized by the gathering for the purpose of Bible Study in both small and large scales. According to the 1904 Report of the Missions Board, more than 60% of the Korean (then “Chosun”) Christians participated in a Bible Study. According to the 1909 Report, there were 800 meetings with 5,000 participants.

The Prayer Movement was also a result of sustained prayer meetings. For example, in 1903 in a city of WonSan there was a regular prayer meeting held by some women missionaries. M.C. White who had served in China was one of the women. The other figure associated with the WonSan Revival Movement was Robert Hardie (1865-1949). Hardie and J.S. Gale had been influenced by Moody during the retreat at Mt. Hermon, Massachusetts. A student overseas missionary movement began as a result of this

¹⁰ 1901

particular retreat. A total of 229 students were sent as a missionary, of which 69 were sent to China, 46 to Japan, and 7 to Korea. Hardie¹¹ was one of the 7.

D. Great Awakening and the Transformation

Revival can be defined in many ways. I am convinced that Revival must be the objective works of the Almighty God through His outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the subjective work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people. Hence we cannot deny the importance of the human response. God continually works through human beings within their situation. In this sense the Revival of 1907 in Korea was a true and pure revival. It has caused the Korean church to long for return of revival throughout its subsequent history. They faced that they could overcome a great many difficulties and tribulations by means of the mighty assistance God provides through revival.

However, we must recognize that God was working in a special way because of the social and political situation in those days. After Korea became a Japanese protectorate, Koreans were seriously demoralized, and looked for help from above. But we cannot say that the Revival of 1907 was caused purely for this human situation. Even though God used the desperate pessimism of those days to open the people's heart to his Grace, the Revival of 1907 was surely His sovereign work through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

In a letter dated July 4, 1890, Appenzeller wrote the following: "We need the power of true repentance, the baptism of God's cleansing of the sin. I long to see the day when the Christians of Chosun are surprised at the realization of their sin. This is the only way of saving the people of this hidden and closed land." Appenzeller's longing was realized albeit after twenty years.

Dr. Moffet describes the night's atmosphere as follows: "Unlike any experiences I had before, the fear of Sin entered my heart. I was so miserable, I ran outside of the meeting room. With the spirit fearful of death and condemnation, I cried out to God 'What must I do to be saved?'" On the last day of the meetings, missionary W. N. Blair preached from First Corinthians 12:27, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

¹¹ Hardie was depressed due to a "fruitless" labor in the Eastern province of GangWonDo, TongChun. He shared in the 1903 Southern Methodist Revival how he had been arrogant towards the Koreans. His confession and repentance brought profound blessing and inspiration to the other missionaries. God used missionary A. F. Robb in the following year's Revival Meeting (1904). It is recorded how there was a prayer group of 4-5 people around the clock. Nightly prayer meetings and aggressive evangelism followed. The Early Church of Korea prayed and prayed for the country, for the spread of the Gospel. They also prayed to keep the faith especially in light of the tension they felt of the 2nd Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. In August of 1906, the missionaries in PyungYang invited Hardie to preach at their meetings. The Holy Spirit continued to work in these meetings, including in the meeting held in September of the same year where H. A. Johnston spoke of the Holy Spirit's work in India and Wales.

Dr. Hardie expressed in his own experience, “after I had entered a realization of the fullness of the Spirit and confessed my pride, hardness of heart, the lack of faith, and also much that these had led to convictions and repentance”.

III. The Influence of the Great Revival of PyungYang and the Church Growth

(The most common character of growth in Korean churches regardless of denomination is the strength of conservative evangelical belief and teaching. Dean A Keller’s book, “Why Conservative churches are Growing” The Revival attempted to explain this phenomenon. According to him, if churches do not give a satisfying assurance to the meaning of human life, they will fail to grow. This is because people continually look for concrete answers to such an existential questions)

A. The Revival of the Church and the Growth

The after effects of the 1907 PyungYang spread throughout the whole country. Men who were filled with the Holy Spirit went back to their hometowns and spread the Gospel. It was then the Women’s Bible School was opened (March 16th). The work of the Holy Spirit spread to PyungYang Theological Seminary and the SoongShil University on the night of the 6th of April. Students repented. Their confession of sins continued into the deep of the night. The schools had to suspend the regular class schedule in order to accommodate the Spiritual Renewal taking place in the midst of them.¹²

The students of PyungYang Theological Seminary also opened the new school year with a Revival Meeting. This had been planned for a while. The School realized the significance of producing the future leaders of the Korean Church. The missionaries were also aware of this urgency. This shared sense of vision and urgency could not possibly be man made.

The servants of God who had experienced the Sovereign intervention of God in their lives sought after the mercy of God so desperately. Even though the school started on April 2nd, the school designated March 30th as the day of prayer. Along with the missionaries, about 74 students gathered to pray and they spoke of the “depth of faith” not experienced previously.¹³

Dr. George Paik has detailed what he believes to have been the key five results of the Revival of 1907:

1. Christianity acquired a hold on Korea and was adopted by the country.
2. The Revival resulted in a better understanding between Korean and Missionaries: the inferiority of Korean and superiority of missionaries were

¹² William N. Blair’s book, “The Pentecost of Korea.”

¹³ This according to Dr. NakJoon Paik and Missionary G. S. McCune

broken down. Missionaries strongly felt that overwhelming spiritual power of Korean Christians and greatly humbled by this.

3. It caused a revolutionary change in the moral life of Christian community.
4. It established Christian habit.
5. It provided the spiritual motivation for widespread evangelism.

B. The Formation of the Independent Presbytery

1907 was not only a significant year for the Great Revival of PyungYang but it was so for the first graduating class of PyungYang Theological Seminary. With these men trained in the Word of God, the Church with the Lord Jesus as the Head entered the new phase of fighting against injustice. The Korean Church will play a greater role in overcoming the earthly powers by the might of the spiritual revival in the land.

On September 17th, 1907, after complete negotiations with the General Assemblies of four Presbyterian Missions working in Korea, the independent Presbytery of Presbyterian Church of Korea was brought into being. The important thing that a Board of foreign Mission of the Church was decided to send Rev. Lee Ki-Poong as a foreign missionary to Cheju Island. Rev. Lee is one of the seven newly ordained evangelists and volunteered to go as a foreign missionary. A love offering was approved in all the church of the country, in order to celebrate the founding the new church. The first Korean Presbyterian General Assembly was held in 1912. Within five years the presbytery gave ways to the general assembly composed of seven presbyteries, and by 1933 the number of presbyteries had grown to 27, with a total of 103,013 communicants. Only 28 years after the first American sent her first missionary began work there, Korea sends her first missionary to China for the Chinese people, and there was active work among Korean nationals living abroad.

The Independent Presbytery of Korea adopts the twelve articles of faith which formed the theological frame of Korea. The work of the seven newly ordained men was remarkable. Only Ghil, SunJoo receives the call of a local church minister. The others receive the call of missions and evangelism.¹⁴

C. The One Million Souls for Christ in Korea

In 1909 three young Methodist missionaries felt the lack of power in their evangelistic work and believed that in their community, the Sprit of the great awakening of 1907 has begun to Wonsan. They revolved to devote a period to bible study and prayer, and for that purpose went to mountain side with a few Korean converts and spent a week in prayer. At the annual meeting of the southern Methodist Mission was held in 1909 was adopted 200,000 souls for Christ. Following the annual meeting the General council of

¹⁴ One man is commissioned to JeJu Island while the five are called to serve in the specific area of evangelism.

the Evangelistic Mission convened in Seoul. A One Million Souls to Christ was adopted by the council.

According to George Paik, it was an unusual action for a religious body to adopt a goal for a spiritual movement. The missions however believed it to be a psychological movement for launching a nationwide campaign for the evangelization of the country. In order to make the watchword reality, the Korean peasants pledged their own time to preaching and others were pledging the distribution of Christian literatures, especially portion of the Gospels.

The Korea Mission fields give the summary of these methods:

“Poor and hard-working Koreans were inspired to give at least 100,000 days of earnest personal work were done last winter, and this fall several hundreds of native workers gave a whole month to have a special service, going from house to house as well as dealing with men personally in retreat meetings. Many millions of tracts and 700,000 Gospels of Mark were purchased by native Christians and given to unbelievers with prayer and earnest persuasions; nearly every home in Korea has been visited and daily prayer has been offered for the by thousand Koreans”

Thus we see that through the Revival of 1907, God supernaturally purified Korean Christians and prepared them for the future. The Christian missions more now organized for close union and co-operation. Dr. Paik said that this logical outcome for these steps was a wide evangelistic movement. The nationwide effort for a speedy evangelization of the country which was launched in 1909-1910 is known as the million movements. Presbyterian Churches joined in this movement by the approval of Presbyteries.

D. The Establishment of the Theology of the Korean Presbyterian Church

The Korean church has been, from the beginning, a praying, giving, witnessing and Bible studying church. In the following months of revival, especially in 1907, the role of one Korean Christian leader was so significant.

The Christian leader name is Rev. Kil-sun-choo. The custom of Rev. Kil's early Morning Prayer was one source of the 1907 Revival according to Dr. Paik. It was also by God's special providence and the Revival of 1907 was held at Central Presbyterian Church when Kil usually led the earlier prayer meeting. He traveled widely as an evangelist. He also wrote several Christian books. He would memorize Bible verses for an hour everyday, study Bible for three hours and read other books for two hours daily. Rev. Kil prayed while fasting three days a week and prayed while fasting for weeks once a year. Thus Rev. Kil's life was so unique and special that no one found it easy to follow his life pattern. But this kind of his life clearly showed the spiritual depth of the Korean Christians. We are particularly concerned with the early prayer meetings and all night prayer sessions because these kinds of prayer forms have embeded on the Korean church.

The Early Morning Prayer Meetings and Prayer Throughout-the Night both originated from the revival of 1907 and rooted then into Korean soil deeply.

Dr. Aaron Park took serious note of the prayer forms as well and said, “This should be a pure Korean theology called the theology of early Morning Prayer Meeting”. Even today it is still very common to find the early Morning Prayer Meeting and the Prayer-Throughout the Night once a week, usually Friday night. In fact practice is so wide spread and had been so consistent that we are convinced that these prayer meetings are the most representative example of factors within Korean American churches. It shall be noted that this pattern originated with Korean Presbyterian Church. Because of this, if we care really understand the secret of the growth of the Korean church generally, it is the early morning prayer service. The Korean Christians always look back on it as the source of their spiritual life. The custom of early Morning Prayer Meetings accompanied by loud prayer together and special times of prayer throughout the night have been kept alive by the Korean church even since the Revival of 1907. The particular understanding of revival surely originated from the Revival of 1907. Korean churches frequently hold revival meetings two or three times a year. Whenever they are confronted with difficult things in church affairs, they seek to solve these problems through holding revival meetings. In the core of problems over the church final projects, leadership crisis, concern over non growth, and financial crisis, they still believe that holding revival meetings can solve their difficulties.

In those days, Christians experienced the supernatural powers of God. It particularly came upon those who were socio-politically oppressed and economically devastated, Korean churches were desperate, but through the revival they were enabled to glow even though no immediate political or economic solution came to their miserable situations.

IV. The Coalition of the Korean Churches and the Challenge of This Generation

What is the lesson that we learn from studying what took place in 1907? I believe there is relevant and applicable lesson.

How do we understand what took place in 1907? Do we share the burden of inheriting the faith of our forefathers that experienced the Great Revival? True penitence and sustained study of the Word formed the backdrop of the Great Revival in 1907. We must not merely join those who speak of the need for repentance but we must live the life of penitence in every aspect of our lives, including our ministry. We should learn from Missionary Hardie who threw away his prejudices and superiority. We must seek to repent earnestly and systematically. I suggest the following three as the first steps we may take.

A. The Task of Retaining and Rejuvenating the Reformed Theology

James Boice spoke of the absolute necessity of the true theology in the Church. John Piper defined theology as merely a fellowship with God and being near to God. According to John Calvin “theology means to know God and to communicate with Him.” The purpose of Institute of Christian Religion is to help to know God for Bible students in the preface of fourth edition of French. True theology comes from the Scriptures. Therefore true worshiper must seek the glory of God first, and not rely on theology infused with too much dogma and not enough vitality. Theology is an absolute necessity in the life of the church with respect to spirit filled and dynamic worship. Jesus called the twelve disciples so that he can train them to live according to the heavenly principles through consistent spiritual fellowship with them.

The 27th Stated Meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Korea¹⁵ abandoned the path of truth and devotion to God. They bowed to the Japanese Imperialism, and as a result, the Church and her purity were defiled at the Japanese Shrine Worship. The theological wall of protection fell apart and allowed all kinds of defilement to enter. The Korean Church was without God’s glory. Some believe that freedom may be gained by abandoning proper orthodox theology but unfortunately, it always results in great tragedy. I believe the departure of the missionaries in 1938 from Korea reflects this tragedy. Our calling is to build healthy churches that will not compromise with the changing tides of the world. However, where would we find those who will hear the call? Many churches of the West have already embraced the secularism, the materialism, heathenism, and post-modernism. Some have said that as a result the center of Christianity has already moved to South America, Africa, or Asia.

Our generation urgently calls for the clear theological stands of the Church. I believe this is even more urgent in the area of worship. While I agree that habitual and wooden worship is not what our God desires, the changes that alter the essential function of the worship is not the answer either. Our culture wages a war against not only the form of

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worship but also the essential basis of our worship. The early Korean Church held the healthy theological understanding in all aspects, including worship. This faithfulness resulted in the healthy growth of the church, and the church continued to be a missions minded church. Yet, the very country (i.e. America) that sent the missionaries that founded the churches in Korea no suffers from the theological and cultural compromises that have entered the church. Recently, D. James Kenney who is one of the most effective ministers of PCA was called to Heaven. James Dobson, speaking at the funeral mourned the loss of the departure of those who speak the necessary truth with courage in our generation. He was concerned how the message heralded by the likes of Kennedy could no longer be heard in the future.

I believe these sentiments reflect a generation that is losing the place of theology in the church. The theology that speaks of God's sovereignty has been losing its appeal. Yet, all is not lost. We find the missing theological clarity and courage in the newly established churches and seminaries in the new world. I also believe that it is possible that the English Ministry Pastors of the PCA Korean Churches can rejuvenate the diminishing movement of proper God-centered Theology and Word-based Revival. I am glad to note that as much as the American landscape is dim, the PCA still remains bright as the beacon on the hill regarding the Gospel and its immediate ramifications in the life of the Church and her theology.

B. The Task of the Church

I pray that our PCA Churches would reaffirm the benefits and the relevance of the Reformed Theology in the pastoral ministry based on what we have observed in the Great Revival of 1907. Of the historic Revivals that span the Christendom, what took place in Korea is distinguished by the centrality of the Word and the faithful teaching of it. This is unlike of the other revivals (such as the Revival of Wales or India) where often over emphasis of mysticism, over simplification of the Pentecost, or over emphasis of spiritual gift abounds. As noted earlier, the Korean Church was firmly established on the Word of God from the beginning. We had even at one point practiced the healthy penitence movement that resulted in the reality of Christian ethics. We mustn't forget this. I believe that we are being called by God for a life of renewed penitence and awakening before God in the place of our ministry. I hope and pray that we may affirm with one another that only our personal and corporate renewal within the Church would lend itself to the renewal of the society and the culture at large. I believe this is the Call of God in our Generation. When the pastors humbly kneel before the Holy Presence of the Lord of the Church, can we truly expect our PCA Churches to be the remnant of the hope in this dying world?

I read an article written by Billy Graham in the Decision Magazine. There he spoke of repentance that our God is seeking and will accept. The true repentance is not merely confessing of our guilt or being judgmental of one. Rather, it is the true remorse of sin and turning away from it to walk the new way of Righteousness. His call for true repentance is reminiscent of Peter's weeping when the rooster crowed the third time. One of the tasks of the Church is true, genuine, and sincere Repentance!

According to Pastor JyungHyun Oh, who is a well known PCA minister in an interview with the Korean newspaper, “News and Joy” said that the growth (or lack thereof) is not the most urgent task facing the Korean Church. Rather, it is the restoration of the holiness as the Church. The loss of the holiness resulted in the loss of God’s glory in the church. His comments resonate for those who seek to make the church healthy. The restoration of the Church in Korea must go beyond the soteriology of personal salvation to that of corporate renewal as seen in the 1907 awakening. The Church renewal that results in a transformed society is the genuine renewal that the Church must long for. The population of the Christians in 1907 was less than 1%, and yet they charged by the Holy Spirit went into the society and transformed it. This is in direct contrast to the current scene of the Korean Church that is impotent in her influence while boasting of 20% of the population purporting to be a Christian. What should our sights be set on? If the possibility of the Great Awakening requires our spiritual journey to scale the heights of true repentance, scale we must.

Discovering God’s Word during the Temple restoration, Josiah responded with true repentance. The King and the citizens of Nineveh responded with true repentance when the Word of God was preached. Our churches will not be restored or renewed without the genuine movement of penitence. I repeat. A genuine repentance is that leads to the transformation of the church that radically brings the transformation of the surrounding culture.

Today’s church lacks the tradition of the Korean Church that characterized the Great Revival of 1907 and the movement that followed. The hollowness of the churches in the area of holiness, both personal and corporate is alarming and deeply troubling. Do we need to discover new methodology? I think not. What we need is already witness by us in the changed and transformed lives of those who lived through the Great Revival of 1907.

C. The Task in Light of the Missions

1907 marked such significant events in the Korean Church as the formation of the independent Presbytery, the ordination of 7 who graduated from PyungYang Theological Seminary¹⁶. While the formation of the Presbytery is impressive, the most significant matter was the commissioning of the first Korean church planter¹⁷ who was sent to the Island of JeJuDo.

¹⁶ This was the first class to graduate from the school. PyungYang Theological Seminary (평양신학교) was founded by Samuel Moffet in 1901. In 1907, it produced the first seven men who would become the first Presbyterian Ministers to be ordained. Their names are as follows: 길선주, 방기창, 서경조, 송인서, 이기풍, 양전백, 한석진.

¹⁷ Lee, GuiPoong (이기풍) was originally very hostile to Christianity. It was so much so that he threw a rock at Samuel Moffet in PyungYang. However, the gracious work of Samuel Moffet leads to the conversion of this “thug” into not only a Christian but also into the first missionary of Korea. Samuel Moffet in his dissertations writes about him in

The work of the Presbytery in adopting the 12 Articles of Faith, the organization of the One Million Evangelization is noteworthy. However, seeing the Presbytery priority given to the commissioning of a missionary is perhaps the more significant and more beautiful work of the Korean Church in her early years.

The significance of the Korean Church's Missions work is profound. As noted by Dr. Francis Schaffer, the Church must have her internal fullness. Without this, the church lacks the gracious nature of her original beauty. The external manifestation of the church can only come as a result of the internal one.

1934 was the 50th anniversary of the Protestant Missions in Korea. In September of that year, Dr. Nahm, GoongHyuk published a report, "Reflection of the ChoSun Christian Church." The report contains valuable lessons relevant even to our days. Dr. Nam recognized and gave much credit to the work of the missionaries for the rapid growth of the Korean Churches, evidenced in Korean missionaries in Manchuria, Mainland China, and Russia to name a few.

However, the church faced dark days, beginning in the 1930's as the Imperial Japan began to tighten its grip of Korea. This oppression led to economic despair of the citizens of Korea which led to the exodus of farmers who moved to Manchuria. The impact of the Japanese occupation also meant social instability. All of the hardships and instability did not spare the life in the Church. One of the immediate cries of the churches that were facing the loss of its membership and the loss of the offering was to scale back the foreign mission work. We have the benefit of the historical lens as we see how important theology is in the mission work.¹⁸

Dr. Nahm clarified the matters in times of tumult in the church by stating that, "The mindset of the Christianity is that of Global Perspective. We must not stop serving the

this way: "He was a man who persecuted and stoned the church. However, he repented and received the baptism in 1896. Afterwards, he served as Allen Clark's personal helper and traveled with him extensively in Korea. Impressed with his enthusiasm for evangelism, I had appointed him as "MaeSuhIn" which means a man who distributed the Bible in Korean. Not too long after that, he became a "JoSah." Now, he is a leader in one of the newly developed mission field." In 1903, he entered the seminary upon the urgings of Samuel Moffet and graduated from the school in 1907. After being ordained and commissioned as a missionary to JeJu Island, he served 10 years. In 1920, he was recognized for his tireless work and in 1921, he served as the Moderator of the 10th General Assembly.

¹⁸ This is augmented even more so in recent days as the short term missionaries' plight in Afghanistan brought division within the church regarding the missions policy as to when it is appropriate for the church to continue (even to persevere) the work of the foreign missions when the "conditions" are deemed adverse.

others for the sake of our own preservation. We ought to remember that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Brothers, who have been given the special grace of our God, do not forget the Universal and Altruistic nature of the church!” We can read the missions theology of our church fathers. He spoke for the church then as we should act now. The following is an excerpt for Dr. Nahm’s defense of continuing the overseas missions work by the Korean Church in spite of the internal challenges she was facing:

“It is our pride in the Lord for our church which is young and is lacking much financial resources to be able to do this much missions work. We recognize that this is not done by our own strength but by the Grace of God and the Help of the Holy Spirit. Those who speak of retracting our work in China (ShanDong) forget that it was not our own strength to begin with in the first place. I repeat that our missions work in ShanDong will not stop for it represents our church’s work and fruit of our labor.”

I yearn to share Dr. Nahm’s high spirited commitment to the work of the missions with you today. If we understand anything about the spirit of the Great Revival of 1907, it is the spirit of Missions. I believe this is the most important lesson we must take away from today’s lesson. Combining the global nature of the Gospel’s calling with the altruistic call of the Cross, we must heed the call of our Lord Jesus Christ. While the local church’s effort is commendable, we must dream the possibilities of partnering with other churches that just might yield the kind of results that are available only through such partnership.

Conclusion

One of the remarkable things about the Great Revival of 1907 in PyungYang is that it demolished the egotistical tendency in certain groups within the Korean Christianity. The Great Revival began with the Korean Christians making the jump into Christian worldview from their previously held worldviews based on Confucius and philosophies by material blessings. The Revival began in the Church through the restoration of the Church’s essential qualities. Just as the Covenant Community’s true identity was restored at the Upper Room, the Church’s restored identity meant the restoration of the Covenant Community in Korea. One could say that the Christians, by participating in the attributes of the Triune God, experienced the transformation in their daily lives.

Dearly beloved co-laborers-in-Christ! Just like the saints in 1907, for to us there is only one way of fulfilling our duty as the Ministers of the Word; that is through our *own* obedience to the Word. Of all the people, we must not be an observer or a spectator when it comes to the matter of Gospel-obedience. Rather than merely copying other “successful” ministries, we must seek to be useful agents of God through piety witnessed in the Great Revival of 1907. Of course without this dedication and devotion to the Lord, our labor is met with obstacles that we on our own cannot overcome.

Having studied the Great Awakening of 1907, I am more convinced that the PCA ministers must seek to live a life of a missionary to this generation. We are called to be servant-leaders in the House of God. The Servant-leaders must possess two non-negotiable qualities; the first is the personal piety. God uses those who are being sanctified. The loss of the personal piety in a minister will always lead to a failure in ministry. This failure comes as a result of the loss of the presence of God and the ability of the minister to manage his affairs. Needless to say that pious living in itself is the spiritual worship and an act of living sacrifice before God. Secondly, for the ministers our vision must be fixed upon God Himself. While the vision is an important element of any leadership, for the ministers this vision must always be directed towards God. The covenant community will lose the vision as a group when such a vision is lost by the servant-leader. Therefore, we are called to live a life that is built upon integrity which is based on continuous self-reflection and proper penitence based always on the life that comes from the Gospel.

It is my prayer that in studying what happened at the Great Revival of 1907, all of us will also experience the Revival and the subsequent transformations in us and in the churches that we serve. May the Lord who granted the Great Revival of 1907 also grant this blessing so that our ministry and the missions will reflect piety and obedience in our generation!