The Church as a Public Space: Resources, Practices, and Communicative Culture in Korea*

Yong-Shin PARK**

Introduction

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Korean society was unexpectedly thrown into waves of change through a widespread globalizing process. Some view this as marking the ultimate inroad of capitalism into pre-modern agrarian Korea, whereas others argue that it was the beginning of the end of its five hundred years of sovereignty. There are, however, several other features of social change in Korea that beg for some additional analysis. What is perhaps most interesting among them is that the motif of self-assertion was beginning to make its appearance in a variety of ways. Protestant Christianity acted effectively at this historical juncture to challenge a world-view in which nobody was free from the fetters of traditional habits, namely doing full justice to the social positions one occupied. It had the potential of being a social and cultural movement to reshape this world-view. It sought not only a

---

* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the symposium on “The Impact of Christianity on Korean Culture” at the Center for Korean Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, held on May 7, 2004.

** Professor, Emeritus of Department of Sociology, Yonsei University
religious expansion, but also a fundamental transformation of the social structure in Korea. Protestant Christianity as a cultural challenge raised difficult issues with regard to participation, social action, and public space.

The purpose of this essay is to consider the activities surrounding the early Christian churches and their influence on cultural life\(^1\) in Korea. In particular, the paper examines the ways in which Koreans confronted the newly emerging forces of globalization in social and cultural terms.

### Some Structural Characteristics

Confucianism took hold firmly in the early years of the Choseon dynasty and maintained a degree of constancy in its perspectives and values. The nation-builders earnestly endeavored to fashion the dynasty as a pure embodiment of Confucian ideals and made Confucianism the state religion throughout the years of the Choseon dynasty (1392-1910) (Deuchler, 1992: 24-27). It subordinated Buddhism, the state religion of the Koryo dynasty (918-1392), and the indigenous religion of *musok* (shamanism) to the requirements of Confucian supremacy.\(^2\)

It furnished not only detailed rules for almost every facet of social behavior, pertaining to matters such as interpersonal relationship, rituals, ceremonies and so forth, but also served as an elaborate guide for every social institution such as the family, educational system, social status and bureaucracy. It was an integrated system of moral, religious and socio-political rules (Y. Park, 1979: 91-93). What is of critical importance from the present point of view is that the cornerstone of the social value system in Choseon society rested on “fusion”, as Robert N. Bellah (1965: 194) termed it.\(^3\)

Moral duty in Confucian society was expressed by the rules governing the five basic human relationships, namely ruler-subject, husband-wife, father-son, elder-younger and friend-friend. With the exception of the first and last of these, it can be seen that the moral principles of Confucianism were centered on family relationships. Choseon Confucian elites
emphasized the maintenance of harmony within the context of social relationships, but they viewed the family and family relationships as being of paramount importance. In familial relations a personal obligation to the head of the family constituted the basis of expectations in action processes (Y. Park, 1994: 111).

In a society where social life was built largely around family or quasi-family units such as the village, obedience to the heads of these collectivities took precedence over all other considerations. Filial piety was an unquestionable foundation of Confucian values and was reinforced by ancestor worship, which focused attention on the honor rendered to the family members of older generations. The emphasis on obedience to the head of one's family symbolically characterized the frame of loyalty to the ruler--the king. Disobedience to the ruler might well be considered as equivalent to disobedience to one's parents. But filial piety was not as concordant with loyalty to the ruler as was the case in the Japanese system. One's contribution to the needs of the family unit, as in China, was strongly emphasized relative to one's duties to the state. As a result of this, the respect for family ties took precedence over the attainment of the system goal.

The family or quasi-family structure in old Korea was the basic unit in terms of which almost all aspects of life were carried on. The family unit was at the same time the agency of both economic and religious activities. So self-sufficient was the family unit that family or quasi-family interests served as the basic reference point of social action processes (Y. Park, 1994: 111-112).

More significantly, the total fusion between the family structure and the Confucian value system tended to sanctify the social-cultural status quo. The educational and religious spheres were also interwoven. Education in the Choseon dynasty was far more detailed and more restricted than that of the preceding dynasty (Choo, 1961; Son, 1964: Ch. 3), owing to the fusion between education and Confucian ideals. It goes without saying that any ‘critical’ reconstruction of the educational process or curricula was almost completely absent. A similar phenomenon can be found in
another important social organization in Choseon society--the yangban-dominated bureaucracy (Deuchler, 1992: 302-303). This, of course, was “heavily clan-oriented” (Sohn, 2000: 204), very closely linked to familial and quasi-familial interests. Strict conformity to Confucian teachings was characteristic of yangban status orientation, and therefore thwarted any possibility of transcending the pursuit of familial or quasi-familial interests.

The Church as a Movement Organization

This fused structure was far from conducive to the recrystallizing of social stratification, social organization, status orientation and, above all, symbol systems. In the absence of any differentiation between the levels of cultural symbols and social ideology, any minor deviation from fixed routines was likely to provoke ultimate religious sanctions. This thus tended to limit the possibilities not only for the growth of reformist movements necessary to develop viable alternative social institutions, but more importantly for the emergence of any center of society that could forge new symbols for legitimating social transformation. The lack of capacity for reform within traditional Korean society may be considered to be somewhat similar to the way in which most traditional societies were organized. Choseon society, however, as suggested above, was remarkable in that it contained an inflexible social structure that perpetuated the social, political and cultural status quo. Moreover, there was no sharp differentiation between the religious and secular aspects of the social institutions of traditional Korea. The social value system maintained the claim to control the educational process by laying down the prescribed framework for intellectual enterprise. It also asserted the right to prescribe familial and inter-personal relationships. In short, the value patterns that resulted from the fusion system prescribed rather inflexibly all types of behavior. In an almost total fusion between Confucian ideals and other secular spheres, and in the absence of
autonomous secular centers, everything had religious implications (Y. Park, 1978a: 133-142).

Protestant Christianity arrived in Korea in the closing years of the nineteenth century. It soon began to show transformative potential and sought fundamental change from a universalistic belief system. The missionaries chose religious and social strategies to create organizational forms that encouraged participation and empowerment. At the early inception, Protestant Christianity, unlike indigenous religions, founded something like ‘house’ churches as the organizational forms of religious and social activity, alongside the missionary hospitals and schools specifically designed for the poor. Adherents of different social backgrounds were invited to take part in a variety of church activities, whose primary objective was to foster capability to reject the assumption of the Confucian particularism. New forms of social and cultural life were anticipated.

In the wake of missionaries' and evangelists' travels throughout the country, their meeting places began to spring up and multiply. The proselytization necessitated the establishment of organizational bases for regular gatherings of people. So far as the emergence of these gathering places is concerned, we have some hints in the missionary records. In the beginning the missionaries rented the sarangbang or the guest room and used it as a place where they, along with Korean assistants, received and talked with visitors. A Korean evangelist was placed in the sarangbang to stay there constantly, whereas the missionary was supposed to come to stay for two or three hours and talk with visitors. Later on, the sarangbang became a meeting place where Christians gathered for prayer meetings and the Bible study (Shearer, 1966: 46).5

One missionary in Seoul, along with his assistant, began the day singing hymns in their sarang room and the people from the street not over ten feet away came in and looked to see what the commotion was. The assistant then told them that this was the way Christians sang hymns, and with this opening he began his preaching. Sometimes the people came inside but more
often they stood outside in the adjoining shed and listened to the message.

A particular room of this kind was a place where all the early converts met to sing hymns together and learn the religious messages. It was the early church used for the gathering of Christians.

The Religious Center

Although it was a room within the house, the sarangbang differed in function and purpose from the guest-room used by the master of the house in that visitors of diverse social backgrounds began to come to the sarangbang. As L. George Paik (1929: 155) notes, "A large proportion of the first Christians were household servants, language teachers, colporteurs, and teachers in school who received compensation or salary." This kind of early converts had to gather in the sarangbang and form a community of believers inside it. They came into contact with Christianity to question the fundamental meanings of social life. Everybody was asked to do the same. Protestant Christianity was a counterculture of Confucianism.

As the Presbyterian Council of Missions in Korea defined, Christian "adherents" were those who "have in some sense detached themselves from their old relations and placed themselves under the influence of Christianity" (Shearer, 1966: 52-53). In order to keep the church members completely under its influence, early missionaries made enormous efforts to train the new attendants of the church. Their training programme included an instruction on how to read and write the vernacular language of Korea, hanguel, as a means of having access to the Christian tracts. Under the direction of Scottish missionaries working in Manchuria, Korean converts began translating portions of the New Testament from Chinese into the Korean vernacular. Finally some of them were printed, brought into the peninsula by Korean merchants, and were circulated by Korean colporteurs (Reynolds: 1930, 187). It is
actually worth mentioning a few words about hangeul. Hangeul is a phonetic alphabet completed in 1443 and yet remained neglected until the missionaries began using the Korean script for the translation of the Bible and religious literature. Rhee Syngman (Yi Seung-man) (1912: 97) describes how learning in Choseon society was gender discriminatory and how hangeul was disregarded:

When I was six years old I finished the book (One Thousand Characters) by committing to memory over half of the one thousand characters almost without knowing the meaning. Then I was sent to a school about two miles from home over a hill. Twenty or thirty boys reading their lessons in a small room bewildered me to the utmost and I wished not to go to school again. But they would thrash me if I refused to go or to study Chinese. Oh, how I wished I were a girl; she would never be sent to school nor is she obliged to learn those mysterious characters. She is nothing and so will be left home separate from the boys to help in house-work or study Unmoon (Korean alphabet) which is very easy and therefore called Ahmkul or female letters.

This brief piece of his autobiographical writing, which Rhee published upon his return from studying in the United States, illustrates both the status of hangeul versus Chinese and the failure of the traditional education system to provide an education for women. Hangeul was, like the fate of women, disregarded by the ruling yangban. The Christian community, however, rejected the existing way of social and cultural life and advocated the adoption of the native language along with the opening of education to the masses, including women. It was a case of mobilizing a pre-existing yet disused resource.7

Though fully recognizing that the Chinese script was widely respected and thus prestigious, the missionaries showed no sign of indecision before appreciating the richness of the Korean language and its practical value as means of reaching all levels of people. They were convinced that hangeul should become the medium for popularizing the Bible and other Christian literature among all classes since it was a “wonderfully simple language” to learn (Gale, 1909: 137-138). It is interesting to note that the advocates
of hanguel were not Koreans but foreign missionaries and that Protestant Christianity made contribution to the creation of a national identity by desinicization or hanguelization at all levels of social life.

Hanguel was effectively used by the missionaries as a vehicle for evangelizeing the Christian message among all classes and it was widely circulated among the Korean people due to the Christian missionary activities. In this sense the spread of hanguel was inexorably tied with the expansion of Protestant Christianity (Y. Park, 1996: 39-69). Because hanguel was taken as the medium of communication, it inevitably exalted the hitherto excluded commoners and women to the position of fraternal communication. The whole church rejected the old social distinction and fostered the commitment to egalitarian beliefs and values. In short, there was a homology between communicative opening and social levelling. To value hanguel was to value communicative and social equality. The church was seen as a religious body which took everybody where they were and gave capability to be essentially equal members within.

A ‘Christian Culture’ Space

In those years when Protestant Christianity undertook criticism of the main cultural stream of Choseon society, the churches needed more than abstract words about the traditional view of man conceived in terms of birth and social status. Their Christian belief had to level out all social distinctions and make fraternal fellowship possible. It must liberate Koreans, men and women, the ruling yangban and the commoners from the Confucian fetters into being God's sons and daughters. This type of a Christian community was present virtually from the beginning and became the dominant mode of Korean Christianity.

The Confucian samjong-ji-do (three obligations) was made the basic moral code for women: for a woman to be moral, she had to obey her father-in-law (and her father before marriage), her husband and her sons (Y. Park, 1978a: 105). Within the frame of this moral obligation, the role
assigned to females confined them strictly to household duties, serving
the family, preparing offerings for sacrificial rites, and receiving quests.
Korean women were expected to dedicate themselves to the males within
the confines of their household. The vision of society within the classical
Confucianism was that of the male-dominated public domain, which was
secured only through the restriction of the female to the private domain.

Even those who learnt hanguel did from their mothers or other females
only within the household. As Rhee Syngman pointed out, girls were
“nothing” so as to be “left home” to “help in house-work” and learn the
easy “Unmoon” called “Ahmkul or female letters.” Korean women as a
whole were more abjectly degraded by men than were the common
people by the ruling yangban class. Confucian Choseon morality was a
barrier to free communication and passage between different social
positions. People had little opportunity to express their human potential. It
was necessary for the church to include both male and female believers—a
marked difference from the Confucian moral system. The church had to
break the shackles of oppression. One of the first steps it took was to play
the role of teaching the hitherto excluded members of the society. The
church taught them how to read and write hanguel. In a fundamental
sense, the abasement of hanguel and the discrimination of women are the
same. The church was an educational institution and paved the way for a
new role for women, distinct from the traditional female role totally
attached to household. To be enrolled in a church program meant entering
into a new activity in non-familial life. This produced Bible-women,
evangelists of sorts, teachers, and even those who studied further in such
fields as medicine (Scranton, 1896: 9).

The distinction based on social status was also repudiated within the
church. The church appealed not only to the sangmin commoners, but
also to the yangban class. The church broke the social distinction by
demanding all the believers to attend the services together, pray together,
sing hymns together, and act together. The yangban were initially
reluctant to go along the way of fraternal fellowship in the church, but
they had to accept the fellow believers and church practices. An American
missionary translated a yangban's experience in a congregation in the following:

Four months ago I was ashamed to be here at the sarang (room), and when the congregation bowed down to pray I felt very queer, and sat up straight, but after a little while I began to bow down too, and the feeling of shame is all gone. God has given me a believing mind, but it is not a sign of craziness to worship the true God. To be sure, I am a Yang Ban (a distinguished person), but God did not make one man a Yang Ban and another a Sang Nom (low fellow). Men have made that distinction. God made all men equal (Moore, 1894: 120).

This shows how the protestant churches broke down the barriers and integrated people of very different social backgrounds into a spiritual community. Despite the pressures of Choseon society, whose social customs had the sanction of Confucianism, some of the yangban joined the church and took an active part in church affairs, associating with people from lower strata. Most awkward though, a break with the social custom “often [became] a test of conversion” (Jones, 1893: 394). Members of the church were thus admitted into the congregation on the same terms with no distinction. They sang the same hymns, read the same Bible, and used the same Lord's Prayer and the same Apostles' Creed, publicly stating that God had not made him/her a yangban or sangmin, an esteemed man or a despised woman. They were all admitted into the church as one, as written in the Bible: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” They all belonged to one fellowship of believers. The members of a church learned their responsibilities as well as their rights in it.

The church was a space where the consciousness of equality was practiced as a way of life. The Christian community confronted the beliefs and customs of Choseon society in roughly the same manner as the yangban convert stated above. Conversion to Protestant Christianity required an extraordinary determination to abandon old loyalties and
stand firmly against the worldly injustice. The traditional ranking of status relations was not revered in the church. Since the church as an egalitarian organization evaluated its members according to their performance within it, not on the basis of who they happened to be, there were instances when men of humble background assumed important duties and consequently came to exercise influence, however mild, over men of noble birth. The church was an instrument for transforming the system of social status distinctions systematically into a system of equality.

To keep the community of Christians pure, proof of conversion was strongly emphasized by both the missionaries and Korean Christians. In practice this set two stages whereby the convert was first a catechumen or probationer who was admitted as a full member through re-examination after a six-month's probationary period. Through such a scheme of careful and thorough examination, the early Christian community was able to distinguish itself clearly from the larger society. Questions that would be regarded as reflecting a fundamental version of Christian belief system were directed to the candidates for baptism. Baptism was understood as a symbolic practice of coming into “union with Christ,” and thus a breaking-point when man would become “a part of the body of Christ.” Such a ritual was followed by the confessional statement, “The Rules for the Native Church in Korea,” which was publicly read and assented to at the baptismal ceremony. The statement included the following: “Since the Most High God hates the glorifying and worshiping of spirits, follow not the custom, even the honoring of ancestral spirits, but worship and obey God alone”, and “Since God has appointed one woman for one man, let there be not only no abandoning of each other, but let there be a wife and no concubines, a husband and no lewdness” (Speer, 1897: 17-18).

**Ethos and Culture**

Christian converts must take equality and participation in the church seriously. The programme of the church did not privilege any particular
social group as its religious and social carrier, but demanded every member to differentiate himself/herself from the rest of the society. The missionaries pursued their missionary enterprise in a remarkably prudent way so as to content themselves with slow, gradual progress, avoiding precipitous moves in spite of their enthusiasm for the missionary task (Y. Park, 1985). However, they were decisive when their beliefs were at stake. They found it indispensable to repudiate the requirements of the established Choseon social value system. The neglected women were taken out of the traditional fetters of restricted family life. The particularistic norms of blood and privilege or the criteria rooted in the absence of ‘individual’ autonomy were shattered. The woman had no rights, liberty or life of her own. But in the church, she found herself, her dignity and her worth. Missionaries were “confronted by prejudices and habits which have dominated the people for hundreds of years”, and challenged them (Jones, 1893: 394). Women and commoners were set free from the restricted world and given opportunities to participate in the practices of the church as its members.

To be a Christian was to dissociate himself/herself from the traditional world-view and to publicly state his/her commitment to the new world-view. It was thus impossible for Christian converts to continue in the reproduction of social life that was constituted by their past. They had to define themselves under the rubric of new religious orientations. Early Christians were expected to live with a new set of cultural representations through which the Christian community attempted to produce a new mode of social life. The converts heard the Christian messages that were not only opposed to the existing social teachings but had to be exemplified in Christians' everyday life. They also took part in church practices that ranged from social and educational activities to ethical commitments to the Christian community and rituals such as sacraments, all of which exemplified the church itself as a set of cultural representations.

The early Christians were disposed to the hangeul Bible and religious literature and regarded their own written language as a useful means of
learning new knowledge. They formed a cultural force to grant a certain dignity to hangeul and break the pattern of elitist-Chinese-worship (Jones, 1905: 328-329).

The church (and its schools) also furnished a forum from which an appeal for mass education was made. Seo Jae-pil, in returning from his exile in America, turned to the reformist movement and founded the *Dongnip-sinmun* (The Independent), the first vernacular hangul newspaper in 1896 (Yi, 1971). Paralleling the publication of the newspaper was the organization of a civic political association, the *Dongnip-hyeophoe* (The Independence Club) as a base for the enlightenment movement (Seo, 1948: 215; Shin, 1976; Y. Park, 1995). Once founded, this organization set out to hold public meetings in parliamentary manner to discuss topics pertaining to political, economic, social, and cultural situations. It became a popular "debating Club," to use Seo's own words (McKenzie, 1919: 67). For example, its subject of debate for the fifth meeting was “Resolved: the education of women is right ethically as well as economically” (*Dongnip-sinmun*, Sep. 23, 1897). Young students held a meeting at a church in Seoul that was comparable to the debates sponsored by the *Dongnip-hyeophoe* and advocated a new consciousness among the general population. What was amazing was that even women stood up in the course of the debate and delivered speeches demanding equal education for women. Those women at the debate were apparently the first group of women in Korean history ever to participate in a public debate and to claim the right of women to receive an education previously restricted to men (*Dongnip-sinmun*, Jan 1, 1898).

The seed of the horizontal communicative culture was now for the first time planted in Korean soil. To be a member of a local church meant entering into a public/non-familial activity different from a private/familial life. Participation in the church practices meant an increase in social learning capacity to move beyond the boundaries of traditional knowledge. Educational activities referred to a kind of avenue for deep-going social and cultural transformation within a broader context. Churches provided access to educational resources for commoners,
especialy women, and promoted socially and culturally capable knowledge and practices. Since Protestant Christianity was most rapidly growing in the northwestern part of the country and its gains were greatest among the common people, the number of social and cultural beneficiaries should be large in this geographical and social groups. They took actions to improve capacities of self-assertive expression at all levels. People with little education received informal education by taking part in a variety of church programs. Being a church member was tantamount to rejection of the existing way of life and adoption of egalitarian values. Christians, both men and women, had to participate in various church activities by leading in prayers and hymn-singing, teaching in church school classes, and sometimes preaching as lay persons. Every church member was brought up in a different communicative culture. Their activities were not confined to a small locality but expanded to the national level. In this way, Christians gained communicative capability and indeed earned distinction by the ability to express openly their own opinion. The churches were a cultural institution as much as a religious body. New churches continued to be established in every province and every district, and nurtured the culture of more status-free and situation-free communication. In this sense, the churches were not only the place of worship in a narrow sense but the center of a public life.

The culture of the church brought about horizontal communications between the *yangban* and the *sangmin*, men and women, old and young. This type of communicative culture was virtually absent from the mainstream mode of vertical communication which was crucial for the continued maintenance of the hierarchical *Choseon* social order. It was at this point that Roberts Rules of Order was translated into *Uihoe Tongsang Gyuchig*) in response to the growing interest in parliamentary procedure among Christian groups. The churches formulated and practiced horizontal communications through which a kind of public discourse was undertaken about issues of social equality, education, and women's status.

It is not necessary to say that public space has long historical precedents in Choseon society. Nevertheless, this space was more or less
confined to the ruling strata of the *yangban* class which monopolized the public sphere. That map also began to change in the late Choseon era. As diverse conflicts began to surface, hitherto excluded social forces embarked on to the public space. The space which had been confined to the center of upper class expanded to the peripheral classes (Y. Park, 2004: 8-21). It is the Christian churches that made significant contributions to this process. They worked as an institution for promoting and exercising 'horizontal' public communication.

**Concluding Remarks**

While Protestant Christianity is recognized as an important factor for the process of social change, it is rarely considered an integral part of challenging or changing mainstream culture. Culture is difficult to operationalize; and thus it is often dismissed lightly or left unanalyzed. Little attempt has been made to look into the cultural aspect of Protestant Christianity that embodied alternative values, organizational forms and collective identity. The creation of Christian communities meant the creation of alternative cultural forms, which in turn fostered social structural change.

A key element in the creation of alternative cultural form was hangeul. For the first time in Korean history, a religious doctrine and accompanying intellectual discourse resorted to using the script that had long been disregarded. Hangeul was the most appropriate means of extending literacy on a massive scale. The widespread use of the vernacular script as a general medium of communication was inseparably associated with Protestant Christianity. The growth of churches meant an emergence of the growing reading public. For the first time in Korean history a great number of educated population appeared on the social scene, capable of public speech and debates.

The churches contributed far more directly to enhancing public capability than any other social institutions. Their activities broke the
restriction of discourse to questions that would be regarded as public and created a Christian identity that sought to transform dominant cultural patterns by sharing the society's resources. Korea just after Liberation would not have seen the prominent role of the church and its leaders in the public sphere if Protestant Christianity did not advance public capability among its adherents (C. Park, 2003: 158f; C. Park, 2004).

Of course the churches today are different. Following the period of the rapid expansion of Protestant Christianity in the past few decades the churches have shown an unstoppable urge towards a “growth ideology” along the path of economic growth (C. Park, 2003: 3; Y. Park, 2000). The churches are instrumental organizations that tend to reflect on managerial efficiencies and bureaucratic rationalities. This suggests that the churches conform to rational organizational laws rather than the nurturing social communicative practices. Once a pioneer in stimulating the culture of public debate, the church is infected with the logic of efficient organizational management and losing its own historical legacy of participatory ethos. The church attempts to fit members into slots in its pre-determined organizational structures, rather than making space for members of different backgrounds to interact openly and speak publicly. It is a twist of fate that the churches took the "holy" form of what Max Weber (1958a: 181) called the "iron cage," which had not been heard nor foreseen.

**Key Word**: Christianity, Church, Public Space, Communicative Culture, Korean Society

---

**Notes**:

1. Culture is here seen as lived values or ways of life as developed and cultivated in cultural studies. For a diverse view of culture, see Conner (1996: 340-368).
2. This is mainly based on Yong-Shin Park, 2000: 508f.
Even though Sohn (2000: 7) uses the term “homogeneous” when he points out that “In Korea, aristocracy and bureaucracy were homogeneous,” it seems to be congruous to Bellah's “fusion”.

It will be interesting to undertake a social-historical comparison between Chinese and Korean society. This is, of course, beyond the scope of this essay. For a glimpse of different perceptions regarding the principles of loyalty and filial piety, see Choi Bu, 1979 [1488]. For some of the differences as well as similarities in the governmental structure between China and Korea, see Sohn (2002).


Quoting Reports of the Statistics Auditing Committee, Minutes of the Presbyterian Council of Missions in Korea (September 1904).

American missionaries were convinced that Koreans were more attracted to Protestant Christianity than to Roman Catholicism which had made no efforts to spread the vernacular Bible among the people (Jones, 1905: 328-329).

The paekjeong, the lowest among the despised, raised the issue of common attendance in the church, but the missionaries continued to maintain the practice that paekjeong members “should attend the services held for ordinary believers” (Kim, 2003: 47). Andong Church was called a yangban church, not because it rejected common attendance but because it was founded in bugchon (northern village), the so-called yangban residential district in Seoul (Andong-Gyohoe Yogsapyonchan-wiwonhoe, 2001: Ch. 1).

Max Weber (1958b: 98) quotes this passage from Galatians 3: 28 when he tries to relate the emergence of the 'city' to Christianity.

For the relationship between Dongnip-hyophoe and Christian symbolism, see Y. Park (1978b).


REFERENCES:


7 Dongnip-sinmun (The Independent).


13 Korean Repository.

14 Moore, S. F. (1894) “An Incident in the Streets of Seoul”, The Church at Home and Abroad 16 (8).


29  Scranton, Mary F. (1896) “Woman's Work in Korea”, *The Korean Repository* 3 (1).


34 Son In-su (1964) *Han'gug Gyoyug Sasang-sa* (History of Educational Thought in Korea). Seoul: Jaedong munhwasa.


공공의 공간으로서의 교회:
한국에 있어서의 자원, 실천 그리고 소통문화

박영신(연세대학교)

이 글은 우리 사회에서 ‘공공의 공간’ 형성에 개신교 기독교가 어떤 영향을 미쳤는지를 따져본다. 먼저 기독교가 들어서게 된 조선 사회의 구조를 짤개 살펴 다음, 그 구조의 성격에 비추어 사회 변동을 일으키기 어려웠다는 점을 사회학의 분석 개념을 통하여 풀이한다. 이어 기독교가 조선 사회 속에서 펼친 활동들을 밝혀본다. 처음에 사랑방이라 하여 행한 작은 교회 공간이 생기고, 거기서부터 벌써 교회가 사회 배경과 지위 및 신분의 칸막이를 넘어서는 ‘공공의 공간’으로 기능하고 있었다는 점을 눈여겨본다. 이러한 공간은 조선 사회의 지배 이념과 가치와 습속으로부터 벗어나 새로운 믿음의 세계와 만나는 마당이었고, 성경을 읽을 수 있는 ‘한글 능력’을 터득하는 배움터였고, 남녀의 평등 의식까지도 일상화해야 하는 등 여러 활동을 통하여 새로운 윤리 지향성을 다져야 하는 살터였다. 이것은 우리나라의 소통 구조에 키다란 변화를 불러왔다. 조선 사회가 지켜온 ‘수직의 소통’ 문화와는 다른, 모두가 평등하게 참여할 수 있는 ‘수평의 소통’ 문화가 생겨났던 것이다. 물론, 이것은 오늘의 기독교회는 다르다. 교회가 커지면서 능률 위주로 움직이게 되어 공공의 공간에서 함께 소통할 수 있는 능력을 교회 스스로 갖추고 있기 때문이다.