

**The Eschatology of the Korean Church from 1945–2018 and its Significance in
the Light of Korean history and Theology**

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Abstract

There is a clear sense that eschatology has been absent, lacking, and neglected in the present Korean church and that this absence was caused by the *shihanbu* eschatology that appeared in 1992. But I will argue during this dissertation that shihanbu eschatology does not fully explain the absence. Rather, complex historical events have caused eschatology to evolve in the Korean church from its source in Western theology (from American missionaries). That is, the situation in Korea has affected how people perceive the end in the light of current conditions. In this research, I contend that eschatological studies have to be more than theological; they need to consider the historical context, and the discussion of eschatology cannot be limited to millennialism; rather, it needs to consider any eschatology's interaction with the historical context. Furthermore, in Korea, eschatology has interacted with different historical settings and different theological thoughts, and this interaction has ultimately altered the way people have thought about eschatology.

There are three objectives to this research. The first is to understand the eschatology of the Korean church after 1945, especially the Hapdong presbyterian denomination, in the light of history, which has affected Korean Christians' understanding of eschatology. The second is to examine the underlying theology, imported or domestic, which could have affected the understanding of eschatology and how the delay in the second coming of Christ has changed Korean churches' premillennial faith, which emphasized the imminent return of Christ, and caused them to neglect the concept of the coming of the kingdom in general today. The third is to assess how this neglect has affected the general life of the Korean church.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

It has been argued in journal articles, dissertations and newspaper articles has shown that the neglect of eschatology stems from Lee Jang Rim's *shihanbu*¹ eschatology² of 1992, which was condemned by the Korean church³ as a heretical and unacceptable "extreme" form of eschatology. (The term "Korean church" is referring to Protestant Christianity in Korea, which will be explained further in chapter 2.) To distance itself from this form of eschatology, the Korean church not only distanced itself from dispensational premillennialism but from premillennialism in general and from discussions of eschatology as a whole. Almost all Korean theologians and pastors believe that the imminent and dualistic view of premillennialism was behind many of the extreme behaviours of new Christian sects, which disregarded the present and predicted the date of an imminent second coming, thereby bringing disruption to Korean society. To disassociate itself from these movements, which are collectively called *shihanbu* eschatology, the Korean church has neglected eschatology altogether. The terms "neglect" and "absence" are used by Korean theologians and pastors to express the lack of eschatology in the Korean church today (Y.J. Kim, 1993; Y.K. Park, 2000; Cho, 2009; Choi, 2011; Y.J. Kim, 2016). Lee Kwang Bok used the phrase "absence of eschatology" in an interview with *Kidok Shinmoon*, pointing out that because of its neglect of eschatology, "the Korean church is very poor in ... the eschatological faith. It is the reason why the Korean church has lost its (spiritual) power today" (Jung, 2009).

This became more evident when Lee researched how Korean church members study eschatology; 46.6% said that they learn through the pastors' sermons. However, to the question "On how many occasions were eschatological sermons delivered during the Sunday worship service in 1998?" 60% answered once or twice, and 4.8% answered not at all (Lee,

¹ The meaning of *shihanbu* in Korean language can be translated into limited or terminal in time.

² *shihanbu* eschatology in general refers to extreme form of eschatology which predicts the exact time of the second coming of Jesus. This term will be defined in Korean historical settings.

³ The "Korean church" to which I refer in this dissertation will be specifically the Hapdong Presbyterian Church, the major Protestant denomination in Korea. The Presbyterian Church of Korea split into two larger denominations in 1959, Hapdong representing being the more theologically conservative.

2000). According to a study by Choi, before independence, preachers of the Korean Evangelical Holiness Church referred to the second coming in 50% of their sermons, especially during the persecution of those who rejected Shinto shrine worship. Between 1937 and 1941, 43% of sermons focused on the second coming, but during the time of the rebuilding of the Evangelical Holiness Church in 1946–1950, only 2% did, and in 1953–1959, only 4% did. At the same time, there was a clear increase in sermons on the social responsibility of the church (Choi, 2011: 98-104). While the Japanese colonialism and its persecution made the Korean church think about the coming kingdom, after the war and after the 1992 rise of *shihanbu* eschatology, the Korean church drastically changed its message to sermons on Christians' responsibility in the world (Cho, 2009; Choi, 2011).

One reason for the decrease in the importance of eschatology in the Korean church was the advent of new Christian sects with extreme views regarding an imminent kingdom and a dualistic stance that coincided with the very strong tradition of premillennialism that dated back to the very first Western missionaries to Korea. The term “premillennialism” is explained in detail in the next chapter. In relation to the Korean church, however, it is associated with the imminent and physical return of Christ to restore the fallen world before the Millennium. The timing of before the Millennium makes the return unpredictable.

However, in this dissertation, I argue that while the neglect of eschatology in the Korean church became almost total after the 1990s, this neglect is rooted in the events after the 1945 liberation from Japan. That is, the presuppositions and theology of the Korean church started to shift out of premillennialism when it was impacted by historical events that changed its perception of Korean society's present and future. The Korean War was a near-death experience, with its annihilation of lives and infrastructure, and the people experienced the anticipated end in a different capacity and so shifted their focus to rebuilding in the present. And after the rebuilding, economic and democratic progress was made through people; the success of this rebuilding gave people confidence that they could have a bright future through their own efforts. Thus, this waiting for a future second coming transitioned to focusing on the present and seeking God's blessing, which was to take the form of economic improvement for

the church and society. With the Korean church divided, as the liberal church focused on what is here and now, but the conservative church was still trying to hold on to premillennialism's view of the second coming. Thus, this dissertation will ask, how did it change before and after the Korean War? How has millennialism changed theologically during this time, and what impact or effect has the emergence of theological discussions and cultural phenomena had on eschatology?

I will argue that as the Korean church is shifting out of premillennialism through historical contexts, theological discussions and cultural phenomena, the theological focus is on who becomes the principal agent bringing the kingdom of God. While the Hapdong Presbyterian Church of Korea believes that it will be God and the second coming of Jesus that will restore the kingdom of God, liberal theologians and their churches focus on humans as the principal agents to bring the kingdom of God here and now. The history of Korea and this theme of the principal agent of the end will vacillate between them as the focus of the eschatology continues shift back and forth. I will explore the Korean church's shift out of premillennialism by digging into the historical events and conditions that affected eschatology. I will also look into concepts like *gibok shinang*, *minjung* theology, and the problem of the Korean churches' sanctification brought up by Kim Seyoon. Also, the new Christian sects that focused on extreme views of imminence and dualism ultimately took the focus off of a future second coming to what is here and now. My conclusion is that the present neglect of eschatology by the Korean church is more than a side effect of new Christian sects' *shihanbu* eschatology and a reaction to criticism; rather, this neglect started after 1945 because of the changes in historical conditions and the resulting theological debates.

1.1. Purpose statement

This thesis will concentrate on the historical context of the Korean church; this context has affected the church, affects the church now, and has shifted its theological concept of eschatology, including the relationship between eschatology and history in terms of the

different versions of millennialism—premillennialism, amillennialism and postmillennialism. (These terms will be defined in the next chapter.) Furthermore, it is evident that the way eschatology has been approached theologically has been influenced by the contemporary context in which it was written. The Korean church was still dominated by dispensational premillennialism and its literal interpretation of a theocratic thousand-year kingdom, but discussions of eschatology began to move away from the realm of millennialism to the downplaying or neglect of eschatology.

Changes in eschatology during 1884-1945 have been researched fervently by many academics; however, there is a clear absence of such studies after this period. Because of absence of in-depth scholarly work on Korea after 1945, it is a good starting point for any study of eschatology in the Korean setting. Pak Ung Kyu's 1998 dissertation *From Fear to Hope: The Shaping of Premillennialism in Korea, 1886–1945*, is a major study, a comprehensive understanding of eschatology in the context of Korea that begins with the reception of Christianity. It succeeded in stimulating interest in the study of eschatology in Korea in general, but it stops at 1945 with the liberation of Korea. Although one cannot diminish the significance of the Japanese occupation and its effects on the Korean church's eschatology and its people, I believe there has been a significant shift in the discussion of eschatology since that time.

Only a handful of publications deal with eschatology as a doctrine and social phenomenon outside of 1884–1945, and those that exist deal with only specific kinds of eschatology; there is no comprehensive study of Korean eschatology after 1945. With studies limited to the negative side effects of premillennialism in Korea and one or two theologians or denominations, the history of Korea and the changes in the eschatology of the Korean church have been neglected.

This study, therefore, aims to continue the narrative from 1945 to the present day with a focus on various impacts of premillennialism and its changes in the Korean presbyterian church. The term *Korean church* refers to the churches of the Korean people living in the geographical, socioeconomic, and political context of South Korea. I will also call this the *orthodox church of Korea*, especially in making claims about heresy. And the term Korean presbyterian church is

associated especially with the Hapdong denomination unless noted, which tends to be more on the theologically conservative side. (This term conservative will be defined in next chapter)

1.2. The research problem and the area and domain of the research

1.2.1. Approach of the study

This study traces not only how Korean churches have understood eschatology within their varied contexts but also how certain individuals have influenced the Korean church and its dogma, which has changed along with the history of Christianity itself. The study of eschatology is not only about theological changes, and limiting it to theology would limit the scope of the study; it must include contextual and historical analysis that brings about changes in the study of eschatology. Furthermore, the purpose of this study is not to judge the past, recounting what is wrong with the eschatology of the Korean church. Rather, it is to trace how the Korean church has defined its eschatology in its own historical setting and in response to the growing negativity toward Korean churches.

It seeks to account for the development of theological thought in the Korean church. It is more than a mere history of the development of tradition per se. Rather, its main thrust is to account for the theological confessions of Korean Christians.

This study may shed new light on the adoption of different views of the millennium in Korean churches that have ceased to exist as well as those that have survived. It will examine why these movements have survived and the challenges they have faced. Some consideration of the validity of each movement's theological understanding is somewhat unavoidable, but the main purpose of this study is to consider their teachings in light of their historical circumstances. This will add another layer of understanding of the eschatology of the Korean church as many times the cause of the lessening interest in eschatology is oversimplified as being due to *shihanbu* eschatology, which is closely connected to premillennialism. This study will give reasons other than the *shihanbu* eschatology and give a model of how to look at eschatology holistically in a

certain society. This process will be more than just looking into one important event in isolation; it will look into the whole history and theological movements and how they stirred the currents that would ultimately dictate the direction of eschatology. Furthermore, this study will provide a wider understanding of the development of theology in Korea with its connections to the Korean society and its history.

1.2.2. First section of each part

This dissertation will consist of four parts of three sections each. Each section will be divided into the historical time frames which I feel reflect significant shifts in the discussion of eschatology. Each section will start with historical aspects of Korea and the Korean church that could be used to analyse the eschatology of that time, providing both general and specific events using historical research that involves search for documents and other sources that contain facts relating to the subjects of dissertation. Furthermore, it will look at the Korean church and how it reacted to its history.

Historical analysis for this section is done by collecting the sources that are relevant to the time frame and reading and selecting documents that will give balance to the historical analysis, interpret the data and make a judgement based on the historical facts and the primary sources that I have acquired. The historical methodology for this study has been based on library research. Data to be analysed were collected from written documents such as published books, periodicals, minutes, reports, theses, dissertations, magazines, letters, and newspapers. Both primary and secondary sources have been collected.

1.2.3. Second section of each part

Following the methodological approaches to history, the second section of each part gathers sources that determined the theological discussions of these times. It starts by looking at the Hapdong Presbyterian denomination with its understanding and discussion of eschatology and focus on millennialism. I gather sources of theologians' writings and analyse what caused them to hold their particular view of eschatology in the theological sense. It also looks into how the Korean church has developed its sense of the end. Rather than following the trends of

theological discussion, it examines how different leaders of the Korean church have contextualized its eschatological messages to fit its people. In this section I gather written documents, looking most closely at primary sources like sermons, writings, and journals of famous pastors and theologians that have impacted the Korean church and Christians.

1.2.4. Third section of each part

The third section of each part takes a holistic approach to this issue. It examines not only clear historical events but key themes in society and Korean churches that arise through history that impact eschatology. It defines these themes and their effects on the church, connects them, and presents arguments that eschatology in Korea has moved beyond the theological discussion of millennialism, while the theologians of the Presbyterian church have moved on to amillennialism, and Presbyterian society has started to neglect eschatology to focus on applying ethics in the same way the world does, following in the footsteps of postmillennialism.

Much of the primary data collected is written in Korean and concerns the Korean Presbyterian Church. These sources were collected in Korea from Korean institutions such as Calvin University, Chongshin University and the Department of Documents and Records of the Institute for Korean Church History in Seoul. Through the University of Leeds and Queen Mary, University of London, and Korea's online resources, I have accessed Korean and English documents concerning Korean Protestant church history and theology.

The principal approach chosen for the study is textual, content, and thematic analysis. In particular, this study makes use of close textual analysis texts documenting the history of Christianity in Korea and the development of theology in the context of inception and contextualization in its history. I have observed texts to focus on the theme of eschatology and the process of how eschatology has changed to become contextualized in Korea, as well as the sociohistorical development of the Korean church. Complications within history with various social and economic factors will be examined, as well as how they have affected eschatology in the Korean church.

For discussions of Korean history, I have used various influential textbooks, including different journals. This study has covered the particular topic of eschatology over an extended period of time and so will give valuable historical insight into its development. It is hoped that the use of the exact words and quotations of well-studied and prominent researchers, scholars and pastors will aid the credibility of this study's argument. Such a method of close textual analysis invariably requires staying close to the content of the sources under scrutiny.

1.3. Limitations of the study

While the conducting textual analysis has its strengths, I recognize the limitations in this study. Differences in language limit the research, and translations and the definitions of foreign terms in different languages poses a challenge to the depth of this study. I will also be translating many Korean documents to English. Thereby, I am aware of these limitations of textual analysis when making different assertions based on my examination of various texts.

The study will focus on the theology of the Presbyterian tradition with which the author is affiliated, that of the (Hapdong) Presbyterian Church of Korea, which has been in the mainstream of the conservative theological development in the Korean church. Its historical origin, its position, and its size are proof that it is a leading denomination. However, this affiliation will also cause to label certain denominations as liberal or conservative. This labelling is viewed from the Hapdong Presbyterian Church of Korea, which might not satisfy all parties.

1.4. Organization of the thesis

The development of the problem, its theoretical and methodological frameworks, and its limitations and significance are introduced in the introduction to part 1.

Part 1 consists of a brief introduction to the history of Korea, Korean society, the Korean church, Western missionaries, the transmission of Western theology, Indigenous religions, eschatology and its reconceptualization, and globalization, with an emphasis on politics, economy, and culture. It is also a prelude to the study and presents a brief overview of the literature on the eschatology of the Korean church prior to 1945. It discusses the

premillennialism of this period of Japanese colonialization and how the suffering and hope of the imminent return of Christ was portrayed in the church during these times.

Part 2 concentrates on the impacts of international politics and relations before and after the Korean War in the aftermath of World War II and the midst of the Cold War, the rebuilding of the nation, and the church's theology after the war. The church's connection to politics due to its experience of Communism and desperate circumstances brought two significant changes in the church: a focus on rebuilding churches and a focus on present blessing. The trauma of the Korean War gave a new spiritual dimension to their faith; all of this was tied to their understanding of eschatology. How the churches' leaders perceived the eschatology during this time will also be discussed.

Part 3 evaluates how the Korean church deals with economic growth, the military dictatorship era, and how eschatology was affected by the capitalistic ideas that everything was acceptable if it brought wealth, as well as what the pastors emphasized in their efforts to bring about an external revival during these times. There were two extreme views of the end during these times, both of which led many to predict the second coming of Jesus and take extreme measures to prepare for it. It also discusses the shift from premillennialism to amillennialism as Koreans brought back theological education from United States.

Part 4 describes the modern development of the church within the context of progress in society through movements that gave people confidence that they could affect further change in the future. This confidence brought about a focus on humanity as the agents of change rather than God as the ultimate restorer, and because the second coming has not happened this confidence displaced people's expectations of the second coming. It shows how Korean churches continued to deal with *shihanbu* eschatology and the problem of justification, as well as how young people are thinking about the future in connection with eschatology.

Lastly, the study concludes by revisiting findings and the personal analysis of the eschatology of the Korean church and suggesting how the study of eschatology has to move forward if Korean churches are to have a healthier standing in Korean society; that is, how the Korean church can

position its eschatology so that it can not only accommodate the present context but also lead its people missionally. Finally, it evaluates some of the solutions called for by theologians and pastors in Korea.

Chapter 2. Definitions, Terms and Theological Background of Korean Church

2.1. Introduction

Most discussion of eschatology in Korea before 1945 is about what the term *premillennialism* means. Although this dissertation focuses on eschatology after 1945, anyone studying the eschatology of Korea needs prior knowledge of premillennialism and the surrounding ideas. The terms that keep appearing in Korean contexts especially need to be defined, as they might have different meanings in the context of this dissertation. The dissertation will specifically define the term “conservative church” and describe what a conservative church believes and how eschatology came into the Korean church. While the theological aspect of eschatology is heavily influenced by Westminster Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, USA, which Hapdong Presbyterian Church is heavily influenced by, so it will discuss its theological tradition as well. Thus, this section will review different terms, including eschatology in the Korean context and literature, that are crucial to the understanding of the eschatology in Korea and will give an accurate account of its definition in the Korean setting.

2.2. Eschatology

The study of eschatology is not confined to doctrine; eschatology is associated with “a belief that the present time is showing signs of its end, whether as future state or revealed *telos* in the present” (Skrimshire, 2019: 521). So the study of eschatology in Korea needs to consider its geopolitical and socioeconomic context and how the Western theology that was brought into it was Koreanized in different situations.

Furthermore, the way that most Koreans, especially in the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Hapdong denomination), understand eschatology is as various forms of millennialism, interpretation of the “thousand years” in Revelation 20:1-6. Any millennialism is an interpretation of the “thousand years” in Revelation 20:1-6. The way one interprets the “thousand years,” whether as a literal thousand years or as a symbol of a long period, will

determine how one understands the coming and reign of Christ in this world and how one will prepare for the coming of Christ. For the purpose of this dissertation, the millennialisms found in Korean churches are attempts “to explain God’s tolerance for evil in this current world as a test, and anticipate an apocalyptic resolution” that will fix the broken world and its problems (Landes, 2008: 1093). This definition from Landes, who is a sociologist, not a theologian, provides the approaches of this study: my focus on eschatology is not always simply theological; rather, I argue that the present state of Korean eschatology is the result of many Korean historical and cultural phenomena.

Perhaps the most important study done of eschatology in Korea comes from Pak Ung Kyu. In Pak’s dissertation, which became the book *Millennialism in the Korean Protestant Church*, he argues that “the apocalyptic character [of Korean eschatology] fit in well with the major implications of traditional Korean religious thought” (Pak, 2005: 222). His biggest contribution is arguably his connection of the premillennialism of the American missionaries with the pre-existing religions and the suffering under Japanese colonialism, which resulted in an emphasis within the Korean church on the imminent return of Christ. However, Kruger warns that “the danger of becoming oversensitive to daily challenges at the expense of the vivid expectation of the coming of the Lord can indeed deprive believers of the relatedness of eschatology to all aspects of life and of a theology of profound hope” (Kruger, foreword in Nel, 2019: viii). While Pak considers the eschatology of the imminent return of Christ as aligned with the historical circumstances, with Korean history and “daily challenges,” I concur that this expectation of the coming of the Lord provided hope, as Pak argued. But, as Kruger argues, the imminent nature of premillennialism brought different side effects when the Japanese colonialism ended in 1945.

The German theologian Jürgen Moltmann emphasized the integral value of eschatology through his *Theology of Hope*. According to Moltmann, “it is hope for God’s glory, hope in God for the new creation of the world, hope in God for the history of human beings on the earth, and hope in God for the resurrection and eternal life of people” (Moltmann, 2004: 156). While the connection between the theology of salvation and the coming of the kingdom of God is

evident, “it was not just theoretical problems that elicited a new formulation of eschatology— problems about the relationship between history and eschatology, completion within history and at its end, millenarianism and apocalyptic” (Moltmann, 2004: 210). Furthermore, according to Bauckham, what Moltmann does in his *Theology of Hope* is to make eschatology not a set of doctrines that lives outside of the world but rather an eschatological orientation for the world, a hope based on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, which creates hope for the future. I agree with Moltmann that eschatology penetrates people’s lives and theology by interaction with the history of one’s particular society because “every eschatology in its own way plays a part in the judgments which we ourselves bring upon our world” (Moltmann, 2004).

Arguably as a result of this, biblical interpretation of eschatology has changed over time, although this is just as much a product of changes in society, politics, economy and international relations. The reason for the focus of eschatology in this analysis is because I am attempting to see the changes in Hapdong denomination in Korean presbyterian church. These factors play an important role in our interpretation of eschatology just as our own hope helps us to contend with the reality and concept of the end of the world. From its source in Western theology (from American missionaries), it has continuously changed in a manner that that has become increasingly intertwined with Korea’s geopolitics and socioeconomics. As a result, it is possible to observe the unique development of eschatology in Korea, something akin to a theological Koreanisation.

2.3. Conservative theology and liberal theology in Korea

I will define in this section two opposing theologies; these definitions will be crucial to the understanding of eschatology, as both theologies will determine the meaning and application of eschatology with respect to their denominations. This thesis will focus on the Hapdong presbyterian denomination in Korean church, in which the terms “conservative” and “liberal” are often used to denote opposing theological trends or positions. *Conservative theology* and *the conservative church* is a term used by Korean theologians and churches, especially in the

Hapdong denomination of the Presbyterian Church of Korea, to describe itself. Suh Chul Won, long time professor of systematic theology at Chongshin University, lists six characteristics of conservative theology:

Belief in the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture.

Belief that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God.

Belief in the Triune God.

Belief in a temporal creation and fall.

Belief that salvation is not an uplift of existence but a deliverance from sin and death.

Belief in the second coming and resurrection of the Lord. (Suh, 1996: 158)

So, the centre point of conservative theology is that there is no error in scripture as it is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that sinful and corrupted humans need redemption through Christ and through the cross, death and resurrection. And that this redemptive work is through God's agent, Jesus Christ. When Suh talks about second coming of the Lord, it is emphasizing the culmination of redemptive work in Christ that will bring about kingdom of God in this world.

Chong Kyung-Ok, a Methodist theologian representative of what conservative theologians call liberal theology, claims that the most important focus of liberal theology is that the "supreme ideal of humanity was realized in the person of Jesus Christ. In other words, the divine-human person of Christ was none other than the highest consummation fulfilled in all human experience . . . following, imitation and practice of Jesus' humanity The ultimate goal of human life and history for him was the realization of the moral Kingdom of God on earth. In this respect, his ethical thought was strongly experiential and optimistic" (quoted in Lee, 2013: 117). Drastically different emphasis is placed on the human being as the liberal theology is concerned with following the practices of Jesus. The human becomes the focused agent of God where through its actions that changes occur. This is problematic for conservative churches where Jesus is the agent of God.

In Korea, then, when Hapdong denomination is referring to liberal theology or theologians, it tends to think of a weak view of Scripture through a focus on humans rather than on Scripture and the work of Jesus. Naturally, conservative theologians would attack liberalism for not

focusing on what God has done through his redeeming work on the cross and instead concentrating on the works of humans as the agents of God. This, I believe, is one of the keys to understanding eschatology in Korea: these trends of thought have had a greater impact on the discussion of eschatology since 1945 than they had before 1945. This is because, according to Pak (1998), prior to 1945, the whole focus of the Korean church was on the historical condition of keeping the faith despite severe persecution during the Japanese occupation; the church hoped for the imminent coming of Christ. But after the liberation, formation of different denominations with different theology became more apparent. So, when I refer to liberal theology, theologians, or churches, my meaning will be in accordance with what conservative theologians and churches thought of liberal theology in Korea. Because this dissertation mainly focuses on the development within the Hapdong denomination of the Presbyterian church in Korea, which self-describes as “conservative,” liberalism will mainly feature in my thesis as a foil for conservatism.⁴

2.3.1. The fundamentalist-modernist controversy

This controversy is a crucial part of the background to this thesis, because the continuing theological debates from this controversy continued after 1945 in Korea. As the fundamentalists and modernists had their differences, the conservative and liberal theologians had the same lines of discussions. Thus, it is necessary for me to briefly describe this controversy to show clearly the theological conditions behind the discussion of eschatology.

Amid the claims of German scholars of the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution initially caused controversy and shook the world, going beyond the world of science into religion. Webb provides some insight into why the controversy was so problematic from a theological and religious standpoint:

⁴ Some may disagree with the proposition that all Hapdong denomination of the Presbyterian Church of Korea considers other denominations including Tonghap to be liberal. And many in Tonghap would disagree that they are liberal as Hapdong claims them to be as they believe they have more similar traits with Hapdong than other denominations. There might not be a straight line that divides the conservative to liberal. However, I draw a line from the perspective of the Hapdong denomination so that these general ideas of conservatives or liberals show the mainstream of differences.

Darwin's rejection of design was similarly unfounded, as "the denial of design in nature is virtually the denial of God." At root, Hodge's rejection of Darwin remained a religious one. The Princeton theologian rejected Darwin because he had failed to develop an explanation of nature based on "truth," a common failing of all evolutionary theories. "Science, so called," Hodge wrote, "when it comes in conflict with truth, is what man is when he comes in conflict with God." The answer to the question "What is Darwinism?" was simple: "It is atheism." (Webb, 2015: 18)

This had a direct effect on interpretations of the Bible, which was the primary source for many of the ideals that shaped the culture. Through Scottish Common Sense philosophy, "reality was considered to provide a sure base for the rational and scientific confirmation of the truths of the Bible and the Christian faith" (Marsden, 1980: 16). Despite efforts to reconcile evolution and the Bible and the interrelationship of faith and science, the Bible was not able to stand up to scientific standards to prove that God created the universe and human beings, who consistently questioned the literal facts of the Bible. The "skepticism and rationalism" of Europe challenged the Americans with the advanced higher critical view of Scripture (Marsden, 1980: 18). Although higher criticism was created as an important tool to improve Christianity, "providing more accurate translations of religious material, biblical criticism represented another attempt to assimilate American religion into an increasingly secular community marked by a scientific outlook" (Webb, 2015: 54).

Although it has been thought that fundamentalism was created during the anti-evolution controversy as a reaction to the contemporary issues coming out of modernism,

Fundamentalism has existed as a religious movement, possessing structure and identity, from about 1875 up to the present day. The movement was rooted in concern with two doctrines—the personal, imminent return of Christ (millenarianism), and the verbal, inerrant inspiration of the Bible (literalism). (Sandeem, 1970: 57)

And Kim adds,

Three strong concussions were felt almost simultaneously—evolutionary naturalism, higher criticism of the Bible, and the newer idealistic philosophy and theology. (Y.J. Kim, 2016)

Through the new idealistic philosophy in the age of reason, historical study had to be integrated into philosophical reflection. Because of this intellectual development in Germany through Georg Hegel's (1770–1831) philosophical system, theology became hostage to philosophy. Building on this, Johanne Strauss went further to complete the negation of the history of traditional Christianity in order to make it a truly philosophical religion: "The first was the one Strauss himself eventually adopted, according to which Christianity could not be reconciled with modernity because historical thought inevitably undermined its plausibility" (Erickson, 1998: 18). This went on to further effect the eschatology:

One branch fixed religion in value judgments and made Christianity largely a matter of ethics, or what one does. Another, taking the lead of Friedrich Schleiermacher, conceived of Christianity as primarily a matter of feeling. These two branches agreed that Christian dogmas and beliefs must be carefully scrutinized, evaluated, and justified, not simply held credulously. This gave a new cast, or a new key, to theology—including eschatology. (Erickson, 1998: 18)

However, Johannes Weiss, in his 1892 publication "Jesus' Preaching on the Kingdom of God," rebuts the idea that the teaching of Jesus was "thoroughly eschatological, or even apocalyptic and futuristic in his outlook," arguing instead that this kingdom is brought about purely by God's activity: "the present age is still in operation, and the kingdom is purely future" (Gathercole, 2000: 276–277). Instead of an ethical rule of God in the hearts of men, Weiss believed that the kingdom would enter history in a dramatic fashion in the future (Erickson, 1998: 21–22). He refused the liberal interpretation of eschatology and the transcendental and supermundane aspect of a kingdom which would make everything new.

Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) produced *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, in which he thoroughly examined and virtually demolished the liberal "lives of Jesus" and then proposed an alternative construction. Weiss had applied the idea of consistent eschatology to the teachings of Jesus; Schweitzer, however, applied it to the New Testament as a whole (Erickson, 1998: 22).

Schweitzer "[aimed] to destroy the portrait of the Jesus of liberal German theology which tried to make him a nineteenth-century figure who could be a relevant example, and to reinstate the real historical Jesus . . . to bring an end to world history" (Gathercole, 2000: 263). The mission

of these theologians was to de-eschatologise the entire history of Christianity; according to them, the idea that the church is living during a short interim between the two comings of Christ should be abandoned, and the church should now see itself as on a long line of historical continuity (Hoekema, 1994: 111). This clearly brings the discussion of Korean eschatology back to the question of how the kingdom of God will emerge, how or if God will restore Korea and reign over the evil that brought about suffering and injustice. One constant thread runs through the history of Korea and the Christian church to the effect that people have a responsibility and duty toward the end and another that the responsibility and duty is to rely on God and God will be the one responsible for the coming kingdom. These theologies show not only whether one's theology is liberal or conservative but how one would apply eschatology in Korean settings.

Alexander Chow sees the problems of German scholarship in two ways. The first is that they did not account for the millennial movement in America and the global shift of Christianity and so missed out on understanding both contemporary and historical views of eschatology. The second is that different historical contexts will give rise to different theological responses and views of eschatology (Chow, 2016: 202–203). I agree with Chow and will try to apply that to this study of Korean eschatology as it will give contemporary and historical views of eschatology with account of millennialism.

2.4. Westminster Theological Seminary and its influence on the Korean church

In this section, I will discuss how Westminster Theological Seminary is closely related to the Korean church, how its theology was transferred to Korea, and how its theology has affected not only theology in Korea in general but the discussion of eschatology in specific. One of the most significant influences on the Hapdong denomination is its association with Westminster. This has affected the Hapdong Presbyterian Church of Korea, keeping it from straying from a conservative view of theology and a high view of Scripture which stresses God as the centre of theology and the agent in control of history.

The discussions of millennialism were confined to the shift out from premillennialism to amillennialism, but most importantly, these shifts of eschatology and of theology in general

were because of the great influence of Westminster Theological Seminary. For that reason, my discussion of eschatology as theology is mostly influenced by the doctrine of Scripture (which I will be discussing it in many parts of the dissertation) and the influence of particular historical events in Korea; most of Hapdong presbyterian denominations theological influences come from Westminster Theological Seminary and its theology, which in turn goes back to the days before its split from Princeton Theological Seminary before 1929 due to the fundamentalist-modernist controversy.

2.4.1. Westminster Theological Seminary⁵ and Authority of Scripture

Park Yong Kyu, a long-time Korean church history professor at Chongshin University⁶, while summarizing and concluding his tenure as a theologian and professor in 2020, confessed that he has tried to understand the Korean church's theological identity, which closely followed the influence of 'Augustine, Calvin, American church history, fundamentalism, the history of evangelism, Korean Presbyterianism, the Korean church, the PyungYang Great Revival, the world revival movement, and the revival of Bible' (Park, 2020: 47-48) But he acknowledges that the foundation of his theology for forty years was the doctrine of Scripture and its inerrancy, which was at the very core of PyungYang Theological Seminary, which changed its name to Chongshin. He professes that he acquired more understanding of the importance of the doctrine of Scripture during his doctoral days at Westminster Theological Seminary (Y.K. Park, 2020). It is very clear that he believes that the foundation of Korean theology, at least in the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Hapdong), had a close theological connection with Reformed theology, the Reformed doctrine of Scripture, and Chongshin and Westminster Theological Seminary.

⁵ Westminster Theological Seminary was established in 1929 after the controversies regarding the liberal direction of Princeton Theological Seminary. Its leader, J. Gresham Machen, was closely connected with the Presbyterian Church of Korea through Park Hyung Nong and Park Yune Sune.

⁶ Established in 1901 in PyungYang as Chosun Presbyterian Theological School, it changed its name to Presbyterian Seminary and moved to Seoul after the Japanese colonialism ended. It changed its name once again to Chongshin in 1951 and became Hapdong's school after the schism of the Presbyterian Church in 1959. It is still known as the leader of conservative theology in Korea today.

Kim Eui Hwan, former president of Chongshin University, has explained the role of J. Gresham Machen as the one who brought conservative theology to Korea through his students at Westminster Theological Seminary, mainly Park Hyung Nong and Park Yune Sune. While they were practising in different fields of theology and their views of Scripture had different impacts on their studies, Westminster's impact on the doctrine of Scripture is still a very important part of the development of Korean theology in general.

Current president of Westminster Theological Seminary, Lillback states,

Westminster was founded in the midst of the raging controversies in the 1920s. The heart of the matter was the gulf between true supernatural Christianity and a watered-down, naturalistic version of Christianity. In this context, defending the supernatural character of Scripture was paramount. This defense was most clearly expressed by some of the founders of Westminster, specifically J. Gresham Machen, Robert Dickson, and John Murray. (Lillback and Gaffin, 2013: xxiii)

At the same time, Machen refused to become involved in the fundamentalism of his day in its battle against the theory of evolution (Silva, 1988). Instead, he was convinced that the Scripture was filled with historical facts, such as of narratives of Jesus which could not be disconnected from history which the liberalism was doing. (Russell, 1973) Machen states, "the Bible contains a record of something that has happened, something that puts a new face on life" (Machen, 1915: 2).

Russell concludes that Machen was a Calvinist Christian rather than a fundamentalist (Russell, 1973). This shows in his response to premillennialism, where he states premillennialism's end is a "belief . . . [that] is an error arrived at by a false interpretation of the Word of God; we do not think that the prophecies of the Bible permit so definite a mapping out of future events. The Lord will come again, and it will be no mere 'spiritual' coming in the modern sense—so much is clear—but that so little will be accomplished by the present dispensation of the Holy Spirit and so much will be left to be accomplished by the Lord in bodily presence—such a view we cannot find to be justified by the words of Scripture" (Machen, 2009).

When one talks of conservative theology in Korea, it bases in the strong conviction that the Scripture is the absolute authority for faith and theology. The authority of the Bible is the foundation of all theology taught at Chongshin University. Oh (2007) believes that what Westminster did was to pass on the tradition of the early missionaries; their fundamentalist view of the Bible through the 1950s became more intense with its opposition to liberal theology and *minjung* theology. The centre of discussion always has been how one views the authority of Scripture and who is the principal agent of change and restoration. (See the section on *minjung* theology.)

And furthermore, when asked about the difference between conservative theology and liberal theology, Park answers,

Is it God-centered or people-centered? Conservative theology believes that God gave the Bible and that the resolution of all problems, such as salvation and sin, depends on God. The premise of this thought is that God created all beings, including humans. However, progressive theology intervenes behind the scenes of humanism. In many cases, I see a case where human judgment takes precedence. (Kim, 2010)

This difference that Park states will continue to be perhaps the most important issue in defining eschatology in the Hapdong denomination and elsewhere. And after the 1960s, Westminster became more influential, with a growing number of students from abroad bringing back amillennialism from Westminster, starting from the authority of the Bible and developing into the doctrine of a sovereign God and how he is interpreted in redemptive history.

While the Hapdong Presbyterian Church of Korea was initially more concerned with keeping the tradition they had inherited from the first missionaries on the view of the Bible in interpreting eschatology, especially the fundamentalism, it was later greatly influenced by Westminster's theology, and many still believe that this theology from Westminster Theological Seminary is the last line of defence for conservative and Reformed theology in Korea in the midst of pluralism and postmodernism. And I believe this connection has strongly affected the theological tradition of Hapdong, especially after 1945. While conservative churches like Hapdong continued to stress the importance of authority of Scripture, it shifted to

Westminster's view of scripture which stressed redemptive history by God. This has reduced interest in premillennialism's imminent return of Christ but still stressed God as the agent of change and restoration (This will be dealt more in section of amillennialism later). This influence became greater with more students educated in Westminster returning to Korea.

2.5. Premillennialism in Korea prior to 1945

Understanding of Pak Ung Kyu's definition of premillennialism is prerequisite to further research into the Korean eschatological scene because it provides not just the theological meaning, but a comprehensive understanding of premillennialism in the context of Korea:

To qualify as a premillennialist, all one has to believe is that there will be an earthly reign of Christ that will be preceded by his second coming. Premillennialism is not so much a theology as it is a particular view of history. Premillennialists reject popular notions of human progress and believe that history is a game that the righteous cannot win. For them, the historical process is a never-ending battle between good and evil, whose course God has already conceded to the devil. People may be redeemed in history, but history itself is doomed. History's only hope lies in its final destruction. (Ung Kyu Pak, 1998: 10)

Pak emphasizes in his definition of premillennialism that there will be an "earthly reign of Christ." This earthly reign focuses on an actual physical return of Christ and his physical reign here on earth; of utmost importance in premillennialism is the physicality of Christ's reign here on earth. Furthermore, after the tribulation of this world, his physical return will destroy all of Satan's rebellion and will usher in the golden age of God's reign.

Pak believes that premillennialism "brought a powerful message of hope" in the midst of persecution and suffering under Japanese colonialism and that this message of hope through premillennialism was effective because it brought the "expectation of the imminent end of the world" that would end all the sufferings of living in this world (Pak, 1998: 11). And people were hoping for the abrupt end not only of the world but of individual suffering; they hoped that the injustices of the Japanese occupation would ultimately cease and be replaced with God's reign here on earth. Kim Keun Soo believed that and states that in fact, this reign of God is precisely

what the kingdom of God is: “It is an expression of God’s involvement with man in history” (Kim, 2003: 4). When one is talking in Korea about premillennialism and the kingdom of God, the discussion is about *when* and *how* his reign will physically subdue this earth.

The main differences between the three millennialisms concern the timing of the second coming of Jesus Christ. Postmillennialism does not see the millennium as literal 1000 years but “some postmillennialists have the millennium cover the entire period of the church. Those who do not, however, see the present age simply blending into the millennial age” (Erickson, 1998: 57). And that the second coming is after the millennium of the golden age through the spread of gospel and its reign here on earth. So the reign through the kingdom of God will be present but not the bodily Jesus Christ. Amillennialism treats that “millennium is the period of time between the two advents of our Lord, with the thousand years of Revelation 20 being symbolic of the entire interadvental age” (Riddlebarger, 2013: 40). Amillennialism is the belief that through Jesus and his work a period has already started in which the kingdom of God is here on earth and will continue until the return of the Christ. “At the end of the millennial age, Satan is released, a great apostasy breaks out, the general resurrection occurs, Jesus Christ returns in final judgment for all people, and he establishes a new heaven and earth” (Riddlebarger, 2013: 40). So, the major difference between postmillennialism and amillennialism is about what will bring about the second coming. For postmillennialism, it will be the progress of the gospel that brings the golden age, but for amillennialism, it will be the will and sovereignty of God. On the other hand, Premillennialists believe that there will be traumatic events as fulfilling elements of tribulation, which in their interpretations through literal reading of the scripture that the end is near. The “great tribulation” precedes the millennium (some believes it to be literal 1000 years), which “will actually heighten the effects of the millennium,” (Erickson, 1998: 90) and signals the end of the present world with the bodily return of Christ. And that this return of Christ will restore order and bind the satan for 1000 years then it will be vanquished forever.

This question of *when* is answered by different beliefs of millennialism, so Grenz might be right when he states that “they [amillennialists] seek to balance and blend the two into a nonmillenarian outlook The future is neither a heightened continuation of the present [i.e.,

postmillennialism], nor an abrupt contradiction to it [i.e., premillennialism]” (Grenz, 2000: 619). So, postmillennialism’s golden age will come through the spread of the gospel, and then the return of Christ will occur, while amillennialists would say the kingdom of God is already here through the first coming of Jesus (inaugurated eschatology), but it is not yet in the sense of the physical return of Christ. On the other hand, premillennialists believe that the golden age will occur after the physical return of Christ, so the return might be soon.

Also, the question of *how* is different in these views of the millennium. How would the reign of Christ occur? Postmillennialism emphasizes people being the agents of God’s work through the gospel and other works, while premillennialism stresses the imminent timing of the return of Christ, for which one is fervently waiting. Amillennialism takes away the timing of the imminent kingdom, yet it tries to keep watchfulness for the coming kingdom without putting the whole responsibility of the reign of God in this world on people as the agents of God’s work in the present (Gaffin Jr., 1990; Chung and Blomberg, 2009; Riddlebarger, 2013).

So, when Pak describes premillennialism before 1945 in Korea, he is stressing that premillennialism’s biggest contribution to Korean society and church was in conjunction with the history of the Japanese occupation. He states that the church’s stress was on premillennialism’s imminent coming, the soon return of Christ and God to reign alone and end the injustices and suffering that the people were going through. This, according to Pak, is the hope that premillennialism brought; he even calls it the “fear to hope” in his dissertation.

He also notably connects premillennialism with the conservative theology brought by the missionaries to Korea: the theologians who were fuelled by fundamentalism (discussed in more detail in the next chapter) emphasized the literal reading of Revelation, and historical conditions also matched the expectations of conservative theology. Pak has successfully engaged the discussion of eschatology pre-1945 and aligned the dominance of premillennialism to historical conditions. But as the dominance of premillennialism has lessened after 1945, it is this study that will continue the work of Pak in the study of eschatology in Korea.

2.6. Historic premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism

Historic premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism are both forms of premillennialism—the belief that after Christ returns, he will reign for a literal thousand years before the final judgment and consummation. And the early Korean church’s eschatology was closely connected with premillennialism, which became the dominant form of millennialism up until 1945. Furthermore, understanding premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism will be crucial to the understanding of *shihanbu* eschatology in chapter 12.

But there are significant differences between them: the term “dispensational” derives from defined periods known as dispensations into which biblical history can be divided. This form of premillennialism is traced back to John Nelson Darby and made popular through the *Scofield Reference Bible*, which promoted seven eras of God. (Bock and Blaising, 1993; Ice, 2009; Hoekema, 2018) According to Ice, dispensational premillennialism grew because it

furnished a reasonable explanation for how God could be sovereign over a world that seemed to be increasingly evil. Americans had difficulty retaining postmillennial optimism in view of the Civil War and World War I, the development of slums, immigration, rising crime, big business, and other social conditions. . . . Dispensationalism made sense to many Calvinists who were pessimistic about individual human nature and it followed that society as a whole was in the same condition. Just as individual salvation requires a miracle from heaven, so would society if it were to be changed. (Ice, 2009: 8)

Both of the premillennial views support the following: a literal and future thousand-year (millennial) kingdom and the personal, visible reign of Christ on earth over an earthly kingdom centred in the city of Jerusalem. (Park, 1996; Hoekema, 2018)

According to Ericksen, one of the major differences between historic premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism is that the latter insists on maintaining a distinction between the nation of Israel and the church. Dispensational premillennialism teaches that Israel always is referred to as ethnic Israel in the Bible, and the promises that were given to Abraham must be

fulfilled by Abraham's physical offspring. "Dispensationalists, of course, apply this hermeneutic more stringently and thoroughly than do historical premillennialists" (Erickson, 1998: 105)

The "rapture" of the saints, the removal of the church before the tribulation, is an additional way in which dispensational premillennialism separates the church from Israel. As the first event in the second coming, the rapture segregates believers from nonbelievers in an eschatological event in which both dead and living believers are caught up in a moment to meet Jesus in mid-air (1 Thes. 4:17, 1 Cor. 15:52). This leaves the tribulation for Israel and not for the church. And "after the rapture those that were left behind would be thrown into seven years of tribulation, the Christians in their glorified forms would return to earth, led by Jesus Christ, to fight the Anti-Christ at the battle of Armageddon" (Tapia, 2002: 268). This concept of the rapture has not only spawned theological divisions, but there were concerns that it would result in "widespread panic, as trucks collide without their drivers, parents search in vain for their children, and governments lose control of nations driven to a state of chaos" (Guest, 2012: 476).

But what made some dispensational premillennialists pinpoint the exact dates of the end time was the social situations that left many powerless and losing hope in this world. With social instability, the predictions become a sign of hope that the suffering and injustice of the world will end. In this prediction, there was no preliminary sign that needed to appear, but the prediction itself became the sign itself that the secret second coming could come at any moment. And with the belief that the world is moving forward to Christ's coming, dispensationalism's dualistic view of the world became so extreme that some adherents believed there was no chance of restoration without God's intervention. Its primary emphasis is that the world's condition is worsening and so it desperately needs Christ imminent return.

O'Leary notes that "the omnipresence of evil in the world, and the apparent futility of reform, prompts a search for an ultimate solution to the world's ills. The announcement of this solution in the form of an imminent end of time attracts believers who seek a wider audience for their urgent message" (O'Leary, 1998). The evil in this world throughout history clearly has monumental effects on how one thinks of the end. As we shall see, the Korean church fits

O’Leary’s description: it tried to find the ultimate solution against the ultimate enemy, who was threatening the church’s existence during the Japanese occupation, and this solution appealed to those who were still experiencing suffering in the present. They found hope in an imminent end that would solve all life’s evil and problems.

The history of Korea shows that extreme millennial movements arose from not only historical conditions that clearly portray the “evil” world, but unfair social conditions brought about by extreme injustices that one might experience because of the advancements and improvements in the world. As Tapia (2002) points out, economic imbalance and deprivation in matters of status had cropped up in Korean society and, as can be seen from history, even within the Korean church. After the Korean War, economic imbalance became a more important issue as the society and churches were trying to rebuild a visible kingdom here on earth; now, rather than seeking what is to come and abandoning injustices in the present world, Korean Christians became more sensitive to the physical dichotomies brought about by economic progress. That is why people turned to *gibok shinang*.⁷ It wasn’t any millennialism’s vision that has captured the Korean church; rather, it was a condition that captured the church as it tried to adapt to the condition that no longer stressed the coming kingdom. And as time went by, marginalized people were not benefitting from this faith either. As the church started to turn away from the need for an imminent kingdom to focus on what is here and now, the neglect of the doctrine of the second coming became more severe.

More than the theological debates in the Korean church, and which position it holds, it was social conditions in the 1980s and 1990s, along with the backfiring of the emphasis on growth and blessing, that brought about many eschatologies that started to predict the exact time of the second coming and the rapture (Cho, 2009). These eschatologies captured marginalized people who were victims of injustice in society and the church (S. Kim, 1992; S. Lee, 1992). So it is fair to say that while the most popular form of Korean Christian eschatology was premillennialism through the 1980s—I agree with Pak that during the period of Japanese

⁷ This concept will be defined in Chapter 7. *Gibok shinang* is defined as faith that seeks present earthly material blessings rather than intangible spiritual blessings.

colonization it was the suffering through persecution and the pain of losing the nation that triggered the extreme eschatology of the imminent coming of Christ—however, during the last two decades of the twentieth century, injustice in this world caused some marginalized Koreans and orthodox Christians to fall into *shihanbu* eschatology. When O’Leary (1998: 49) references “scriptural prohibitions against calculating the time of the end”, he is not referring directly to Korea, but its connotations can certainly be applied to the Korean church, which observed a similar strictness in regards to such predictions. As such, the emergence of a radical eschatology making such predictions in the 1980s and 1990s was a huge blow against the Korean orthodox church. In turn, the Korean orthodox church lost credibility with the Korean society and started to downplay eschatology in general.

2.7. Amillennialism

When amillennialism resurfaced in the twentieth century, as Richard B. Gaffin, an emeritus systematic theology professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, argues because some did not share in premillennialism or especially postmillennialism, whose adherents ‘consider the millennium to be coextensive with the entire interdenial period’ (Gaffin Jr., 1990: 199). At least for Gaffin, postmillennialism believe that there will be a future ‘golden age’, where the church achieves progressive cultural victory, resulting in a ‘period of global supremacy and control by Christians over every area of life’ (Gaffin Jr., 1990: 200). According to White, Reconstructionist postmillennialism believe that ‘the personal and the culture/corporate/social are linked ethically, judicially, eschatologically, and historically by the principles of definitive and progressive sanctification’ (White, 2000: 163). That is, Christ, who is in authority, exercises in history through the progressive sanctification of his guided people a gradual future victory. Amillennialists differ, arguing that the current present kingdom will be fully victorious only through the return of Christ, when Christ will ‘put all his enemies under his feet and hand the kingdom over to God the Father’ (1 Cor 15:24–28). Postmillennialists focus on the sanctification of believers, amillennialists see that through the spirit’s power the church will complete the gospel proclamation to all nations (Blaising et al., 1999). Gaffin argues against the

postmillennialists that without the return of Christ, there is no full recovery through works of men:

There is no 'golden' age coming that is going to replace or even ameliorate these desert conditions of testing and suffering. No success of the gospel, however great, will bring the church into a position of earthly prosperity and dominion such that the wilderness with its persecutions and temptations will be eliminated or even marginalized. That would have to be the outcome if prosperity—understood, for instance, in the terms of Isaiah 65:17ff.—is to be at all meaningful. Such prosperity and blessing for the church are reserved until Christ returns. (Gaffin Jr., 1990: 17)

The church is to faithfully endure earthly tribulation in faith, as it is identical to the death on the cross where Christ suffered but resurrected; the return of Christ will defeat the evil one and resurrect the believers.

The difference Gaffin sees between amillennialism and postmillennialism is that amillennialism does not see the millennium as a physical thousand years but as an age that begins with the incarnation of Christ and lasts until the second coming of Christ. Gaffin calls this the inaugurated eschatology, a period starting from Christ's exaltation, in which the church genuinely enjoys union in Christ through the Spirit to carry out the mandate to the nations (Gaffin Jr., 1990). This aspect significantly changes the view of the current state of the world. Where the postmillennialist emphasizes the cultural mandate as the Spirit working through the hands of God's people, amillennialism emphasizes and focuses on the importance of this world as where the union of Christ with his people occurs through gospel proclamation and sufferings as they carry out the Great Commission. 'That mandate, then, is bound to have a robust, leavening impact—one that will redirect every area of life and will transform not only individuals but, through them corporately (as the church), their cultures; it already has done so and will continue to do so, until Jesus comes' (Gaffin Jr., 1990: 221).

While amillennialism takes away the sense of an imminent kingdom, it does not let go of watching for a coming kingdom. While postmillennialism is not focused on the coming kingdom, amillennialism keeps readiness in mind through its anticipation of a kingdom that can come at any time. And while premillennialism puts nothing in the hand of the people but to wait for the

imminent coming of Christ, and postmillennialism puts very much in the hands of people, amillennialism balances both with its focus on Christ's return and redemption and the Great Commission.

Therefore, this study will show through the examination of many factors the transition from premillennialism to amillennialism in Korea. This change has lessened the pre-1945 expectation of the imminent coming of Christ as a way to escape earthly suffering and injustice. The change to a Reformed stance was natural, as were the historical and social changes that demanded that the Korean church become more involved in social matters. Christian leaders educated in Reformed seminaries in the United States came back to Korea and dominated the theological trends of the day. And amillennialism provided a path for the church to remain biblical but to abandon the residue of premillennialism, specifically belief in the imminent coming and the dualistic worldview. While criticism of the Korean church's lack of maturity continued, the church had to deal with issues of sanctification, and amillennialism provided theological reasons for maturity and a balance between liberal theology and the expectations of society. But the church clearly started to lose what had once been a firm belief in Christ's imminent coming, which had caused the church to be on its toes and not lose sight of eschatology. With its focus shifting, however, the Korean church started to lose sight of eschatology.

2.8. Eschatology and the pre-existing religions of Korea

Finally, Pak's (1998) and Lee's (1997) dissertations both discuss in depth Korean eschatology in connection with the previously existing Indigenous religions and their impact in shaping Korean eschatology. While this connection is important because there is much literature dealing with Indigenous religions and Christianity, it would be unnecessary for this dissertation to go into how Indigenous religion shaped Korean eschatology, but I will briefly summarize.

Shamanism, Buddhism and Confucianism coexisted throughout the millennia. This coexistence between these religions that in turn ensured an almost hybrid understanding of these religions by the Korean population at the time. Concerning Korean religions, Kim (2002) notes,

First, they are syncretic religions, combining Buddhist, Confucian, Taoist, and Christian beliefs and practices with Korean Shamanism to create a new system of belief. Second, these religions promise the advent of a utopia in this world following an apocalypse. Third, most of these new religions (Christianity) stress the advent of a savior—none other than the founder of each sect—with the coming of the new world. Finally, most of these new religions comprise strong nationalistic doctrines, e.g., Korea and Koreans as the chosen land and chosen people, respectively. (Kim, 2002: 293)

Analysis of the mindset of the early Korean Christians shows that traditional religions provided much of the framework for the conceptualizations of the new religions. In the process of the contextualization of Christianity, the Korean church perceived the idea of Christianity as similar to their traditional religions because it was easily understood in the Indigenous cultural forms and ideas. Thus, the contents of the teaching of the Bible were formed in the hearts of Koreans based on their conceptual understanding of former religions. (Kim, 2003; Lee, 2010)

Furthermore, Koreans' conversion to Christianity did not mean that their religious doctrines or orientations were completely erased. Indeed, the concept of the "end" was no different in this regard.

Korean people due to [Korea's] history and geography caused various psychological anxieties and fear, which led to special attachments to and reliance on its religions. (Pak, 2002: 177)

It is said that in order to understand Korea and its people, their religion must be studied (Covell, 1982).

Pak summarizes as follows:

- 1) The syncretistic nature of various religions appeared in the formation of Korean eschatology.
- 2) The dualistic and fatalistic tendencies of premillennialism are rooted in Korean apocalyptic ideas.

- 3) The idea that dead souls, especially the spirits of ancestors, have a good or evil influence on the real world made ancestor worship an essential part of Korean life. In addition, the family and clan-centred social view was fixed, resulting in a weak will to transform the entire social structure.
- 4) Koreans tend to view the eschatological structure as a conflict between this world and the next, so there is little room for acceptance of the Christian eschatological “already” and “not yet” tensions. (Pak, 1998)

One of the key concepts that triggered premillennialism in abundance is the dualistic nature of previous religions that saw the historical setting under the Japanese as dualistic: the Japanese were evil and the Koreans were victims of that evil who ultimately needed a saviour. So, Ridderbos’ concept of “already but not yet” is not translated as a kingdom which is here already but the physicalness is not yet; rather, the evil is already here, but the saviour is not yet.

Pak, Lee and Kim, all of whom wrote distinctively on Korean church history, stress in one way or another the important influence of the pre-existing religions on the shape of the concepts of eschatology, evangelical Christianity and the kingdom of God in Korea. While some offered more generalized descriptions of the pre-existing religions and their history, they failed to show their significance and connect it to the theology of the Korean church. However, I argue that while these influences of the past religion still exist after 1945, and while I understand that they influenced and shaped premillennialism before 1945, their significance will be drastically reduced during the turbulent times of shift, as I will lay out in the dissertation. I will be discussing in detail the bigger impact of the historical and societal settings, political and cultural shifts, and theological discussions on the Korean church. And I believe that the residue of these religions waned after 1945 and the eschatology is impacted more by the different conditions in Korea, shifting away from premillennialism.

Part One

1884 - 1945

Chapter 3. Historical background of Christianity in Korea, 1884–1945

3.1. Introduction

Last chapter, I introduced terms and background on literature that would give a better understanding of this dissertation. This chapter will now quickly trace the historical background during the transmission of Christianity in Korea and how Christianity vacillated between its political stands and spiritual stands to contextualize its message to the Koreans. It will also introduce how particular global and local contexts of Korea received Christianity, and this historical analysis will provide a deeper understanding of how eschatology was developed and Koreanised. This idea will be developed more in later chapters.

During the modernization, Christianity was one of the ideological forces that competed for the loyalty of the people of Korea. Due to complex situation of the influences of foreign powers, Japanese colonialism, and Western modernity, Christianity became the force who protected Korea. On the other hand, Japan who were the colonizer became the enemy of the people and Christianity fought against the Japanese. Christianity sided with the Koreans in nationalist movements and helped modernize education and health systems, and during these times of suppression, it provided not only a way forward, but an upward vision. Christianity was not a colonizing modernity but a modernity that helped the colony (Jung, 1986; Kim, 1998). With its influence, Christianity was able to input its hope for the future in people's lives as people were struggling with their identities and suffering under Japanese colonialism. This chapter will trace some of Christianity's influence through some key historical events under Japanese occupation which made the people of Korea lose hope in this world and conditions and seek the imminent coming of the kingdom. It will particularly look at the transmission of Christianity into Korea, the Great Revival of 1907, the March First Movement of 1919, and the Japanese Shinto shrine worship. This chapter will also review some of the previous works done in Korea so that it will provide a background to the eschatology prior to 1945 described in the next chapter.

3.2. Korea's historical background before the transmission of Christianity, 1884–1907

Before the nineteenth century, Korean rulers did not allow foreigners to enter because they wanted to minimize the effects of foreign influence and protect the land. However, Korea's closed-door policy did not stop the outside from influencing the culture. Through wars and commerce, as well as transnational conflicts and global politics concerning the Korean peninsula, various cultures were transmitted into Korea. Foreign cultures were infused especially because Korea was physically connected with many surrounding nations, and other nations used Korea as a transportation hub for the Pacific Ocean and to Eurasia. One of the strongest impacts on Korean culture was the transmission of religions (Lee, 1991; Kim, 1998; Min, 2004).

The Chosun dynasty (1392–1894), due to its geographical situation on a peninsula and the nature of the surrounding countries, was involved in constant struggles with foreign and neighbouring powers. However, despite its struggles, Chosun was politically independent from international society. While trying to protect its borders through isolationism, Korea stirred international conflicts by persecuting foreign Catholics and sinking the SS General Sherman for trespassing in 1866. This incident were important factors to the opening of its doors to international society (Lee, 2010: 77–79).

Japan, which also exercised a closed-door policy to exclude Western influences, mainly Christianity, when given the chance to become an imperial power, opened its ports, first to the United States and eventually to European countries (Beasley, 2012). Through the threat of military action and with the goal of colonialization, Japan signed a Treaty of Amity with Korea in 1876, eliminating the Chinese presence in Korea. As a countermeasure, China encouraged Korea to make a series of treaties with the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, and France (Kang, 1997; Cumings, 2005). Through these treaties, Christian missionaries were able to enter Korea. While Japan's acceptance of modernization was primarily an attempt to boost its economy and military, it included the model of emulation of the imperial powers. When the treaty opened the doors, Japanese were able to "acquire the 'spirit' of the West; namely, that of self-reliance and rationality, in addition to its material trappings" (Beasley,

2012: 31). They not only adopted Western values but used them to contribute to their culture and welfare. Building on this “spirit” and its accompanying techniques, they still wanted to keep their traditions amidst modernization, but they also wanted to bring modern ways of living to other Asian nations by expansion. Beasley (2012) argues that they justified this by analogy with what the Western powers had done, they were able not only to open the doors to the “Hermit Kingdom,” but to colonize it. Park writes,

All these events led to a decisive breach in Chosun’s social and historical continuity. Korean society was suffering from the fatal defect of the Confucian system; it had no flexible symbol and value system which could come to terms with wider, more complex realities. In other words, the symbols and value system of Chosun Korea lagged too far behind to be capable of explaining and making sense out of a series of abrupt changes. As a result, Korean society underwent an intensive and wide-ranging structural breakdown. This situation presented people with a persistent ambiguity in not only defining their personal and social identity but also handling the existing codes of behaviour. The established ways of perceiving and thinking became less and less satisfactory, making people feel cut off from the old symbolic and cultural centres. (Park, 2000: 510–511)

In facing modernity and voices of changes within Korea, Japan entered Korea with the purpose of modernisation through colonialization.

3.3. The Beginning of Christianity in Korea

When Dr. Horace N. Allen, the first Protestant missionary to Korea, came in 1884, the Gapshin Jeongbyun (Coup d’état of 1884), but Allen was able to save the prince Min’s life through three months of medical treatment. As a result, the government not only gave permission to Allen to practice medicine but opened numerous opportunities for Christian ministries in Korea, including education (Kim, 1998; Min, 2004). “While Japan was regarded as an enemy, America was regarded as a friend by most Koreans, especially by nationalists who wanted to awaken and reform their declining nation to prevent an impending Japanese annexation.... A favourable image of the U.S. became widespread in Korea around the turn of the twentieth century” (Pak, 1998: 176). Furthermore, it was in the interest of these nationalist elites to restrain Japan through involving the United States in their diplomacy and proposing a program of reform. King

Kojong was unsuccessful in his attempt to resuscitate the dying Chosun dynasty and to protect its national sovereignty by modernization, which included abolition of the hierarchy, educational reform, and industrialization. In a desperate attempt to abate the process of Japanese expansion, the nationalist elites turned to Christian missionaries, who advocated, as pioneers of modernity, for the consciousness inherent in the new religion to be kept to fight against the foreign power. I believe this process gave Christians the opportunity not only to help Koreans with their current situations but provided entry into Korea to spread the gospel and the concept of the kingdom of God in Korea. This also gave different resolutions to current problems of state and individuals as Christianity helped with nationalist movements and the fight against the Japanese (Kim, 2003; Kim, 2009; Lee, 2010).

The entry of missionaries from other countries radically changed the perceptions of the Korean people, but this did not mean that the tradition changed abruptly. This entry did, however, give them modern ways to see the world and new ways of constructing a modern society. "Koreans saw Christianity as the root of Western values and ideas and the very embodiment of Western modernity, and not as just one of main intermediaries for channelling Western ideas and values" (Lee, 2017: 18). So when Koreans accepted Christianity, not only were they responding to the religion, but also they were converting to modernity. When Koreans accepted the possibility of ways to modernity, they also consumed its religion in the process. The conversion to Christianity and modernity came at the same time; it came naturally with the mission of Christianity. And this transmission of Christianity gave Korean people the choice of new ways of interpreting the past, living in the present, and hoping for the future.

Christianity entered Korea during the time when its kingdom was being taken away by the Japanese. Japan declared Korea a protectorate in 1905, and in 1910, it annexed Korea as a colony. During this time, it subjugated the Koreans with a military dictatorship and denied them political involvement. Nationalist leaders in the church started an educational movement to reform intellectual life and to promote nationalism by "political enlightenment." This movement not only recruited Koreans into the fight for independence but holistically improved educational systems and promoted the development of modernity in general.

Kim (2003) argues that during this period, the missionaries were not able to teach about the kingdom of God because Korea's physical kingdom was in state of disarray. Furthermore, the concept of kingdom was understood not at a societal level but more at a personal level, as the devastated and hopeless people took some form of refuge in the church. During this time of the modernity of Christianity, the Japanese colonial government and Korean nationalism were competing for the ideology of the Korean people. At this point in history, Christianity in Korea began, and the church was filled with people who had many different motives; some sought to find shelter in the church, and others sought the church's help to revitalize the movement for independence. However, the Presbyterian Council of Missionaries emphasized in their published guidelines that missionaries should not be involved in political affairs. While missionaries did not directly involve themselves with political affairs, it was clear that "they instilled in people the spirit of independence and democracy, which inspired many of them to fight against the Japanese" (Pak, 1998: 180). There was a distinctive connection between the faith of Christianity and nationalism, which people believed went hand-in-hand (Kim, 2004). The Japanese soon realized the influence Christianity was having on Korean nationalism and accused it of having a role in anti-Japanese nationalism (Y.-S. Park, 2000).

3.4. Readjustment of Korean Christianity through the Great Revival of 1907

There was a significant spiritual movement within the Korean church. This was the Great Revival of 1907, which can be traced back to a prayer meeting of Methodist missionaries at Wonsan in 1903, where the Spirit's movement toward repentance started with the missionaries. One of the Canadian missionaries, Dr. R. A. Hardie, wrote,

After I had entered upon a realization of the fullness of the Spirit and with shame and confusion of face confessed my pride, hardness of heart, and lack of faith, and also much that these had led to, they saw for the first time what conviction and repentance mean in actual experience. I told them of how by simple faith in God's promise I had claimed the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Quoted in Paik, 1980: 368)

Also, many claimed that the repentance experiences continued on at missionary meetings and realized that the church had become too "overtly politicized, which was a real possibility, and

so they pushed the Korean Christians to repent of their sins of hating the Japanese” (Paik, 1980: 92). Many missionaries, despite the political situation in Korea, believed that the church should not be impacted by feelings of hatred within Korean society. They continued to preach against hatred, especially hatred of the Japanese, and during the Pyongyang meeting for men, Korean people started praying out loud, repenting of their sin of hatred against others, including the Japanese. It is recorded that during the course of this event people stood up and began to pray, calling out, “Father God!” as recorded by Blair and Hunt:

It seemed as if the roof was lifted from the building and the Spirit of God came down from the heaven in a mighty avalanche of power upon us.... Some threw themselves full length upon the floor, hundreds stood with arms outstretched toward heaven. Every man forgot every other. Each was face to face with God. I can hear yet that fearful sound of hundreds of men pleading with God for life, for mercy. The cry went out over the city till the heathen were in consternation. (Blair and Hunt, 1977: 73)

Pak (1998) analyses this event as the pure spiritual experience of public confession of sins, which quickly spread to the whole nation and resulted in increased church membership, evangelism, and prayer life. But Paik (1980) believes that this spiritual movement was also based on a nationalistic feeling of resentment against the control of the Japanese. “Some historians criticize the Revival movement as an attempt to divert the concern of Christians away from the political desire for independence to otherworldly concerns” (Pak, 1998: 194). And this has turned the movement for social justice in the Korean church to self-centred individual salvation. This trend will continue, as we will show in the discussion of eschatology, and we will concentrate in later chapters on how this movement for social justice and the church’s view of salvation will dictate the discussion of eschatology in Korea. But many would agree that the outcome of Great Revival of 1907 brought about balance in the spiritual consciousness of the church (Cho, 1998; Lee, 2001; Jones, 2009). I believe this revival of 1907 gave a new spiritual lens to the Korean church through which to see the situation of Korea. With the perspective of the situation of Korea, the focus of the church shifted to spiritual needs, whether to support the nationalist fight against the Japanese occupation or to take care of the needs of the people. The involvement of Christianity becomes greater because its influence in the March First Movement of 1919.

3.5. The March First Movement of 1919 and its consequences

The March First Movement of 1919, in which an important role was played by Christians, can be seen as one of the most significant events in Korean nationalism. Sixteen out of thirty-three signatories of the Declaration of Independence were Protestants. Lee (2017) states that “this is a prominent example of how a foreign religion became nationalized and Koreanised in a relatively short period, becoming deeply involved in the national liberation movement. The Korean ‘success’ in Christian mission history is often compared with the general failure of Christianity in Japan” (Lee, 2017: 24.) As an immediate consequence of this demonstration, forty-seven churches were burned and destroyed, hundreds of Christians killed, and many more imprisoned or tortured (Min, 1982). Moreover, Japan put on further restrictions, following their concerns over the strong link between Christianity and Korean nationalism.

Not only did the Japanese see Christianity as an agency of modernization, they believed that it had been successfully contextualized into Korean society, assisting Koreans in their participation in a national liberation movement. In their response, apart from restrictions, the Japanese had “manipulated the Korean resistance by giving hope to the Korean people that Japanese rule would be more liberal and humane [and] effectively countered the Korean nationalist propaganda which demanded Japanese withdrawal” (Caprio, 2009: 139). The Japanese, believing that Japanese policies would provide a far superior hope and solution than that of Christianity, were trying to provide hope that was radically different from what the Koreans had experienced through Christianity. It was Christianity, however, that lived up to its promise of liberation, modernity, and increased welfare for Koreans.

However, after the failed attempt to gain independence during the March First Movement in 1919, hope of getting the country back started to fade, as did passion for independence. “Now, having learned from the failure of the March First Movement, Korean nationalists realized that a successful struggle for independence demanded a viable political leadership and central coordination, not a naïve, nonviolent religious leadership and loose organization” (Park, 2003: 140). Japan also altered its strong-armed colonial policy during this time to more lenient

policies on press, assembly, and association to cope with Koreans and to boost its international image (ibid., 2003).

Following the Great Revival of 1907 and the failure of the March First Movement of 1919, the church slowly dissociated itself from issues of society, politics, and international affairs and focused on the spirituality of individuals. Furthermore, within the church, members were disturbed by the past participation in activities other than spiritual. One theologian criticized church leaders, saying,

Let the church leaders reply.... Do you follow Christ for a nationalist cause? If so, the day will come when you leave Him. One who loves his nation more than Christ is not fit for Christ. Do you follow Christ as a means to improve society? If so, the day will come when you forsake Him. One who loves society more than Christ is unfit for Christ. (Park, 2003: 147)

In the beginning of Christianity in Korea, Korean people were interested in its knowledge of modernity, which they thought would be the force that would free them from the Japanese occupation. Furthermore, people joined the church to become part of the political force behind the church, which provided social reform and shelter for whoever was in need. Because it provides for the spiritual needs of Koreans in despair, some view the church as a political institution. However, with the Great Revival of 1907 and the failure of the March First Movement, the focus of the church shifted from society to individuals' spirituality. Thus, it can be concluded that Christianity after the failure of March First Movement adjusted and contextualized the gospel by providing hope to needy people, by introducing orthodox doctrines, and by revitalizing its spirituality to move away from the politics of modernity. Apart from their efforts to separate the church from politics, Korean nationalists who believed that Christianity would be in the forefront of these independence movements were clearly feeling that they were not doing enough. Those who thought that churches were not doing enough were especially dissatisfied with the church positioning its teachings above the situation in Korea. There is a clear distinction between the church being a modernity for people in the beginning of the century and what it was after 1919. Many nationalists abandoned the Korean church for its teachings and lack of involvement in social issues when it started to focus more

on what is to come rather than what is here during persecution. This ultimately shifted the focus of the church to the return of Christ, which would bring not only independence but complete restoration from severe persecution. This shift provided an open path to receiving premillennialism's imminent and physical coming of Christ as the ultimate hope.

3.6. Assimilation and persecution (1931–45)

Through the wartime years (1931–45), Japan forced an assimilation policy to eradicate the identity and culture of Korea. It forced personal name changes, as well as “efforts to eradicate the Korean language, forced labour, and sex slavery”. Looking through the lens of the Japanese on the change of policies, some including Caprio (2009) suggest that interest among the Koreans in Japan increased. “The pamphlet ‘Korean Administration Past and Present’ noted increases in the number of people entering Japanese shrines since the 1937 Marco Polo Bridge Incident (from just under 1.2 million in 1937, and just over 2 million in 1938 to more than 3.6 million in 1939, before dipping to over 2.3 million in 1941)” (Caprio, 2009: 169). It is reported that increased numbers of Korean children were entering the Japanese-run schools, and males were volunteering to join the Japanese military. These statistics cannot be explained as just interest among Koreans in Japan. Rather, they tell the story of how harsh and strict policies were enforced on Korea. Although there were Koreans who accepted colonization as modernity, most of the people still longed for independence. By destroying the Korean national identity and the Christian faith, the colonial government hoped to mobilize all aspects of Korean society to war (Pak, 1998: 282).

The Japanese stance on the Korean church changed as well. The national movement in the church was prohibited. Shintoism was imposed on churches, and Koreans had to cooperate with the war effort. Strong emphasis was placed on active participation by Korean Christians in Shinto shrine worship (Kurata, 1989).

3.7. Shinto shrine worship and the persecution of Korean church

Throughout the long history of Japan's isolation, it was firm on its nationalism. In 1882, in order to strengthen its nationalism, the state set up State Shinto, where the rituals are offered up to

the emperor and his ancestors, but this was labelled as a patriotic, not religious, act. Thus, religious faith became nationalism and vice versa; the government insisted that shrine worship was just to show patriotism (Grayson, 2001), but these “patriotic” rituals were exactly the same as the religious rituals. This is perhaps why the Japanese were conscious of Christianity’s movements and associated it with Korean nationalism. Kim writes,

The primarily particularistic orientation of Japanese society prevented them from discovering any viable alternative to an emperor-centered nation. The attitude of absolute submission to a specific person of a specific authority can be by no means treated simply as a social phenomenon of a feudal society. Rather this attitude of total submission could be clearly observed among the modern Japanese, and it culminated in ascribing absolutely divine attributes to the individual at the top of the hierarchy of Japanese society. Emperor worship is thus established. Ultra-nationalism developed in close relation with this worship of the Emperor as a living god. (Kim, 1989: 173)

When this Shinto shrine worship was implemented on Koreans, it was attacking not only their nationalism but also their religions. After the Manchurian Incident, the interest of Japan’s unification under assimilation implemented this conformity (Kim, 1989: 189).

This stirred fundamental Christianity as the church moved out of its association with politics. While the church was still considered as a hope for modernity and nationalism, different decisions made by Catholics, Methodists, and Presbyterians ultimately characterized whether the church would confront oppression as culture or as persecution (Kim 1989). The effect of the decision about how they would handle this problem of imposed Shinto worship would have a long-lasting effect on the future of Korea and its theology. Not only would these decisions affect how denominations would move forward, but also they ultimately affected what would be the main focus of the Korean church’s theology. The association between State Shinto and Japanese nationalism made things more complex as the church was deciding whether to see State Shinto as a religious act. While the Methodist church considered it a cultural act and accepted it, this put political pressure on American missionaries, for they saw this not only as an act of religion and treason to Korean nationalism but as idol worship (S.-T. Kim, 1992; Caprio, 2009; B. Lee, 2017).

The Japanese government enforced the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1938, considered one of the more conservative on the issue, to pass a resolution supporting shrine worship. The Assembly took away those who were against the law and put them in jail until the Assembly was over. Without much objection, this motion, as recorded by the General Assembly, was passed:

General Assembly resolves that obeisance at Shrines is not a religious act and it is not in conflict with Christian teaching. It should be performed as a matter of first importance, thus maintaining the patriotic zeal of the Imperial subject. (General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Korea, 1938: 9)

This decision of General Assembly would be an issue during the coming years and the cause of division over the next few decades.

Furthermore, the Japanese pressured the church with a set of laws, the Religious Bodies Law of 1939, which dictated not only matters of property but also matters of doctrine of the church. This would result in the evacuation of missionaries and more pressure on the church. B. F. Hunt, a noted historian who was in Korea at the time, wrote,

At first, pressure was put on individuals, pastors, and prominent Christian leaders, not on the church as a whole. And more than seventy Presbyterian church pastors were imprisoned and more than fifty of them died in torture, and the pressured increased to the lay people in the congregation. People were varied in dealing with the pressure of Shinto Shrine worship, and they tried to flee from their living situations and local church not to worship in it and suffer. (Quoted in Young, 1961: 83)

It is estimated that between twenty and fifty people (some estimate more) were killed between 1938 and 1945 as a direct result of refusing shrine worship (Min, 2004). There are various accounts of martyrdoms of famous people during these times that are still used by churches today. One of the most famous account of a Shinto shrine martyr is Rev. Chu Kichul. He was imprisoned twice before dying of the “severest torture” for not abandoning his opposition to Shinto shrine worship. “During Chu’s time in prison, the membership of the Sangjunghyun Church supported his stand with prayers and other activities with the result that many of them were persecuted and tortured as well” (Grayson, 2001: 296). There are accounts of church

members who remembered watching how these martyrs died. One said right before her death, "I am going to my Father." Others resisted Shrine worship, saying, "To the very end." These stories set unprecedented examples to rally other Christians who were being persecuted for their faith.

However, I agree with Choi (2012) that these many stories of martyrs in the church portray and exemplify the life and death of Christ in this physical world. It illuminated hope in the midst of suffering and persecution and gave people new choices to make at the time. This hope in the midst of suffering and persecution illuminated the coming kingdom and the return of Christ rather than hope in the present world. Those who thought there was no hope in this world tended to look forward to future rather than the present.

3.8. Conclusion

Korea has always been physically located in a natural place of conflict, and it has just as naturally been influenced by the outside world. Japan, opening its doors to international powers to partake of their modernity, started to emulate Western imperialism, and this had a direct impact on Korea and its own policy of opening its doors to the global community. In response to this, Korea tried to use Christianity to oppose Japanese imperialism. The consequences of this were twofold: firstly, Christianity effectively became a political shelter against Japanese colonialism despite its annexation to Japan in 1910, and secondly, Christianity was contextualized into the culture of Korea as modernity.

This period of Korean history was defined by two key turning points in the development of Korean Christianity and its struggle against Japanese imperialism. The Great Revival of 1907 brought about changes to Korean Christianity by shifting it from political motives to a religious goal. Through the failure of the March First Movement, nationalism in the church started to fade away. This was compounded by Japan punishing the church for its involvement in nationalism. Through its war period, Japan tightened its assimilation programs in Korea, and these were enforced on individuals and targeted the church.

The study of eschatology will be impacted by the two views on how the Korean church will deal with the Shinto shrine worship. Japan tightened its assimilation programs in Korea, and Shinto shrine worship was forced on the church; some Christians accepted it as cultural, and some conservative churches opposed it. This opposition brought persecution to the Korean church—beginning with its leader—suffered greatly as a result. This would bring about a different view of hope for the future. These two views will continuously argue as they form into a theology of their own, ultimately affecting the Korean eschatology in the future. One would focus on what the church and individual can do in the present to change the situation, and one would argue that the only hope in these situations was from the coming kingdom and the return of Christ. It would not be fair to say that accepting Shinto shrine worship was something one could do to change the situation for the better; however, it still possessed the hope for the future that the world will get better and the belief that it will be a ‘heightened continuation of the present’. Some church leaders that would accept the Shinto Shrine worship would say that, living rather than dying will be more beneficial in as there will be possibility of doing further work for the Christ.

On the other hand, there is the clear stance with the persecution and suffering that the people would not give in even in death but would wait for second coming to restore and heal the injustices caused by the evils of the present and physical world. And it is no doubt that, after the Great Revival of 1907 and the martyrdom of those who opposed Shinto shrine worship, Korean Christianity, instead of competing to become the society’s ideology, provided a doctrine-based alternative hope. While the Japanese persecuted the Christians and instilled fear, Christianity provided hope that overcame the fear.

Pak (1998) argues that it was the premillennialism that came to Korea through the American missionaries that helped them go through these persecutions, and I would agree with Pak that it was the example of these premillennialists in action that brought and spread about the meaning of hope for the future. This hope for the future will be further discussed in the next chapter. My argument will be that after the devastation of the Korean War, when the world

seems as if it is getting better, this expectation of the second coming will be lessened. And this will lessen the impact of the Korean church's strong stance on premillennialism.

Chapter 4. Eschatology in the Korean Church in the context of its history and global history, 1884–1945

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter analysed how Koreans have developed their understanding of Christianity within the frame of its history. This understanding has been the starting point for anyone studying the history of Korea's theological development. The matter of contextualization was just as important as the transmitted doctrine itself. Although Christianity was easily transmitted to Korea due to globalized conditions that allowed the importation of Western missionaries, Koreans' doctrines did not always stay orthodox. Sometimes, their doctrines were altered from their original meanings in the process of translation and adaptation. By adapting to particular contexts and cultures, the new religion deviated sometimes from what was transmitted. Moreover, the Korean people interpreted these doctrines according to their own personal or social needs. Their needs were determined by their thought patterns, which were shaped by existing religions and current circumstances. The doctrine of eschatology was no different. Koreans' concepts of the "end" was influenced by current situations whether political or personal. Thus, it was a collection of several overlapping religious, theological and socio-political considerations that were just as crucially moulded by the historical context in which the doctrine was developed.

In this chapter, I will revisit American eschatology and its transmission to Korea through missionaries, the eschatology of the Korean church and the contextualization and development of eschatology in Korean Christianity with its historical contexts and cultures. Furthermore, I will try to analyse the eschatology of the Korean church through the context and lens of global history, eschatology developed through German scholars in light of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, and their effects on the eschatology of Koreans. Moreover, it will investigate the eschatology of some prominent, influential pastors who have affected the study before 1945.

This section will prove that it is crucial to understand Korean eschatology not only in light of American premillennialism and the Korean context, but also as part of the bigger picture of the fundamentalist-modernist debate. It was not the premillennialism that the missionaries taught but the fundamentalist literal interpretation of Scripture that laid the foundation for premillennialism within the context of Korea under Japanese colonialism.

Furthermore, one of the major changes that came with the failure of the March First Movement of 1919 in regards to the eschatology of prominent pastors like Kil was the lost hope for international help. This led to further emphasis on the imminent return of Christ and shifted Koreans' interests from nationalism to the afterlife (Pak, 1998: 186). The failure was of a movement organized by people who now shifted to needing the help of God to fix the world at hand. The accumulation of failures, sufferings and persecution prompted the shift to premillennialism; it was a result not just of the teachings of American missionaries but of contextualization into the Korean situation.

4.2. Development of American eschatology

Where "certain peculiarities" of Korea's history provided Christianity with a fertile environment in which to thrive, it was left to the predominantly American missionaries to seize the "unique opportunity" afforded to them in the country (Cho, 2010: 65). The success of the first Western Protestant missionary, the aforementioned Dr. Horace N. Allen, was integral in easing Korea's "general hostility" to foreign faith and beliefs (Cho, 2010: 72). A period of expansion followed with an influx of western missionaries arriving in Korea.

The number of foreign missionaries continued to increase during the five-year period of the protectorate, 1905-1910. When that interim period ended, there were 205 missionaries in Korea, three-quarters of them Protestant, mostly American, with French and other European priests forming the majority of the Catholic evangelists. So, the Japanese had difficulty controlling the influence exercised by Christian missionaries' evangelism. One of the essential factors in the formation of indigenous Pentecostalism must have been the American missionaries' gospel. (Jeong, 2001:125-126)

Prior to its arrival in Korea, American eschatology was influenced by the zeitgeist of Western colonisation and settlement around the world. The struggles of settlement and advancement caused vacillation between different millennialisms: whilst many believe that most Puritans held the premillennial view of an imminent return of Christ, Davidson (1977) believes that the Puritans did not have clear millennial categories. In the same way, “most early (Korean) Christians interpreted Revelation 20 quite literally and expected a millennial age following Christ’s return. Such views are called premillennialist because they place the second coming before the millennium” (Chung and Blomberg, 2009: 300–302). Their ultimate belief is that the

divine judgment will begin with an apostate Christendom; the millennial age will follow God’s judgment on the earth and the second coming of Christ; and the second coming is imminent, a view based on a particular way of connecting prophecies in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 to current events. (Chung and Blomberg, 2009: 405-408)

The premillennial view does not always associate with an imminent return of Christ, yet it does have very close connection to the historical events that determine the coming of Christ. Rather than using eschatological terms, the messages of premillennialists spoke of the biblical events of suffering, judgement, and grace in soteriological terms (Davidson, 1977: 131-132). Despite the influence of contemporary events, American eschatology was in a constant state of flux between premillennial and postmillennial views of the end.

One of the biggest shifts to postmillennialism was through the works of Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), wherein he argued that the millennium had begun with the Great Awakening and was to make progress thereafter. This was a time of peace and technological advancements, where people were optimistic about the culture. Koester (1995) adds that for Edwards, carefully examining the present times and corresponding with them was a way of expressing and spreading his faith in God’s redemption; he witnessed religious awakenings in New England and pressed for prayer for the Holy Spirit to use human works for bringing about the Kingdom in this world and ultimately the return of Christ. Building on Edwards, Koester claims “a new kind of postmillennialism was growing in America, a vision that linked God’s future ever more closely with politics and nations” (Koester, 1995: 139-140). This politicization of religion took on

even greater importance in Korea, where it became associated with the nationalist struggle against Japan.

In a situation not too dissimilar to that domestic and neighbouring developments within the United States had Americans thinking more about their views of the millennium. The French and Indian War (1754–1763), the presence of France in Canada and the growing tyranny of Britain in the Thirteen Colonies had forced Americans to consider the ways in which they could achieve the millennium through social transformation. Whether this was a period of social optimism or pessimism is arguably a debate for another study, but any optimism that a perfect society and the kingdom of God could be achieved started to dissipate after the Civil War (Koester, 1995). “In the defeated south, it became harder than ever to believe that history was progressive, while in the north, political scandal and growing poverty in the industrialized cities meant, among other things, that the reign of Christ with the saints was nowhere in sight” (Koester, 1995: 143). Pak states that “premillennialism was gaining increasing acceptance, as the nation urbanized and industrialized, and as waves of European immigrants, most of them Catholic, reached American shores. The influx of Catholic immigrants from Europe and social deterioration shattered the dream of Christianized America” (Pak, 1998: 83).

During the nineteenth century, the rise of fundamentalism came amid social and economic changes. Fundamentalism dissociated its first adherents from the situation and crisis that they were experiencing and provided them with theology that they could stand on whatever the turbulent nature of affairs. These fundamentalists were more concerned about the changes in theology and wondering how the new theology could last through times of change (Shafer, 1994: 4). At the beginning of fundamentalism in the USA, there was concern for Scripture in the raging fires of modern reason:

During the post-Civil War period, evangelicals developed an increasingly pessimistic view of the world. And the doctrine of premillennialism became the touchstone for fundamentalistic evangelicals to differentiate themselves from those who tended toward liberal theology. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, many evangelicals became premillennialists. (Pak, 1998: 88.)

In contrast to postmillennialists, who focused their efforts on social change, premillennialists concentrated their evangelistic efforts through many revivalists, including D. L. Moody, until the end of the nineteenth century and beyond. They did not see the need to change this present world to be ready for the return of Christ; rather, his imminent return called for more conversion and mission. Premillennialism put new pressure on evangelism and foreign mission. The movement of premillennialism has “played an important role in the Student Volunteer Movement, missionary training schools, and Bible institutes, and probably made up from 75 to 85% of the worldwide missionary force by the 1920s” (Weber, 1979: 81). These student movements led to the formation of the first purely foreign mission organization, and the missionary expansion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was “largely marked by the spread of the American version(s)” of premillennialism (Kuzmic, 1986: 147). I believe this same process of history is affecting eschatology in the United States with different historical conditions that have been transmitted to Korea, not only how it received one aspect of millennialism but how one interpreted eschatology in one’s society. This transmission of eschatology from the United States continues to be a big part of how one not only adopts a different millennialism but how it is translated in society.

4.3. Development of eschatology in Korea before 1945

Within Korea, the theologies of the first missionaries from America has been the subject of much debate between scholars. Hong Chi Mo, a professor of church history in Korea, observed that their theologies were closer to fundamentalism despite their claims that they were conservative Calvinists (Hong, 1984: 129). Dong Soo Lee (2014), however, states that most of the first missionaries were Calvinistic in their theology but argues that it is their eschatology that is associated with fundamentalism that understands the implication of the end in Revelation as literal. Whilst this theological debate is not central to this particular study, it does help to illuminate their eschatological backgrounds, particularly as fundamentalism—in its emphasis on the authority, inerrancy, and strict literal interpretation of the Bible—has been transmitted to the Korean church. Though there is a lack of sources on the eschatology of the first missionaries, Lee adds that it can be assumed that their seminary training under

premillennialism affected them, but it was only able to be stabilized by the situation in Korea. More important than the eschatology they brought was its contextualization. Korea, following years of subjugation and oppression under the Japanese, became a fertile ground for the application of eschatology. Moreover, Lee (2014) recognises that even in the sermons of missionaries it is hard to find coherent teachings on eschatology. This lack of teaching provided the opportunity for other eschatological concepts to come into the church.

Brown's *The Mastery of Far East* provides information and perspectives on the situation between Korea and Japan up to the 1910s, the international political competition surrounding Korea, the political and economic situation, missions of the United States, and Christianity in Korea and Japan. It also provides a contemporary insight into premillennialism's successful contextualization in Korea:

No questions regarding miracles or inspiration trouble the Korean Christian. He implicitly believes everything that he has been taught by missionary teachers. The typical missionary of the first quarter century after the opening of the country was a man of the Puritan type. . . . In theology and biblical criticism he was strongly conservative, and he held as a vital truth the premillenarian view of the second coming of Christ. The higher criticism and liberal theology were deemed dangerous heresies. (Brown, 1919. 540.)

The first Christian missionaries into Korea, to prevent theology from being contextualized, prohibited study abroad so that Koreans would fully receive the missionaries' theology. However, while premillennialism had a strong presence in eschatology due to the first missionaries' teachings, it was validated only through the situation of Korea.

4.4. Eschatology of prominent Korean pastors

The renowned pastor and theologian Kil Sun Joo was perhaps the first fruit of the first missionaries. Widely believed to be the creator of early morning prayers (*saebuyuk-gido* and *tongsung-gido*), Kil is often credited as the force behind the Great Revival of 1907 since his emphasis on early morning prayers became the spiritual backbone of the movement (Lee, 2014: 145). He preached over seventeen thousand times, and the number of people who heard

his sermons is close to 380,000. When he was imprisoned for the March First Movement, it is said that he read the Book of Revelation more than 10,200 times (Kim, 2016: 28). Kil was strongly influenced by the Northern Presbyterian missionaries who came from McCormick Seminary and naturally received dispensational premillennialism (Pak, 2000: 207). He preached on the imminent return of Christ, repentance, the faithful spiritual life, and preparing for ultimate judgment. These eschatological messages not only warned people but also gave them hope (Kim, 2016: 29).

Kim (2016) believes that although Kil's eschatology was always dispensational, the failure of the March First Movement enhanced the anticipation of the imminent return of Christ. Kil was one of the thirty-three signatories of the Declaration of Independence, thus helping to further establish the link between nationalism and faith. However, the nation was not able to save itself because of weakness and lost hope, so it turned from the desperate present to an eschatological hope of the future. While it is believed that the eschatology of Kil was "messianic nationalism" before the failure of March First Movement (Kim, 1993: 154), he separated from it upon his release from prison in October 1920 and instead opted to focus on the imminent return of Christ (Pak, 2002: 188). After the failure of the March First Movement, Kil's millennial view came to be oriented in the direction of having no hope in human efforts to build a millennium on earth. Kil strongly believed that only Christ's second coming could change the present world (Jeong, 2001). Over ninety percent of his sermons from early morning prayers and revivals were about suffering and the return of Christ to a population that could either relate to the former or hoped for the latter. Furthermore, he predicted the big war—albeit not its exact dates—but he nevertheless argued that the time of the return of Christ can be known.

At the same time, Kim Ik-Doo, a pastor known as the "D.L. Moody of Korea,"⁸ ministered through sermons on eschatology and healing miracles. His message was aimed at Korean people who were suffering through the national crisis. He healed the hearts and bodies of people through hope in the imminent return of Christ, focusing on repentance. His messages

⁸ Moody known to Korea as one of the greatest evangelists of America and his influence goes beyond America to Korea with his influence to first missionaries to Korea.

centred on the hope of Christ's return and preparation for the afterlife through enduring the difficult suffering of this present time. But while teaching the imminent return of Christ, he used a dualistic approach, segregating the earthly body and the soul, and understanding the kingdom of God as pertaining only to the latter. This shows that more than Kil, Kim was influenced by dispensational premillennialism despite promoting similar themes to that of his counterpart (Y.K. Park, 2000; Pak, 2002; Y.J. Kim, 2016).

However, Kim Keun Soo (2003) believes that as for the Korean Presbyterian Church, it was not until Park Hyung Nong, one of the most influential theologians in Korea, returned to the country in 1927 that proper premillennialism was taught; before Park, it was fundamentalist eschatology, shaped by the Korean context under the Japanese, that had the characteristics of premillennialism.

Park "was one of the student leaders who participated in the March First Movement" (Chang, 1998: 6). "He was influenced by the American missionaries at Pyungyang and the Christian nationalists, who believed in Christianity but were also concerned about the future of Korea" (Chang, 1998: 40). Park, who based his thought on "Common Sense Realism," was afraid of the infiltration of such new trends as historical relativism and existentialism. For such reasons, we can find that he tended to have an "outsider" mentality that included "self-righteousness, separatism, cultural defeatism, and anti-intellectualism. He identified his theology with fundamentalism" (Chang, 1998: 6-7). He was greatly influenced by Kim Ik-Doo, at one of whose revival events he accepted Christ. Indeed, the early missionaries' literal interpretation of Old and New Testaments and dispensational or at least historical premillennialism had affected him from an early age.

Park (1978: 41–42) focused on the apologetic aspect of theology, which "makes attempts to defend every department of theology from a treacherous attack of the enemy in order to secure the safety of theology as a whole. Whereas the other department describe theology positively, apologetics . . . concentrates on the defensive aspect of theology." From the first, even when he was in Korea, Park kept in mind the Christian's face-to-face confrontation with

modern science. He was fond of using military metaphors to describe this defence of Christianity (Chang, 1998: 54).

Park studied at Princeton Theological Seminary during the years of the fundamentalist-modernist controversies (Chang, 1998; 53). While studying at Princeton, Park took exactly the same position as the Princeton apologists regarding the relationship between science and religion. He refuted naturalistic monism with a dualistic worldview. Though the sphere of science was separated from that of religion, the two spheres were interwoven, and religious truth was based upon historical and scientific truth. For him, when science seems to conflict with the Biblical narrative it is only because scientific development is imperfect. (Park, 1978; Chang, 1998).

4.5. The Presbyterian controversy

Church historians themselves, who have interpreted in the context of the controversy between Park and Kim Jae Jun⁹ and in the context of two different denominations (which were a by-product of the controversy), were accustomed to understanding the controversy against the background of American church history. Harvie Conn writes, “The fundamentalist-modernist controversy that swept the United States in the pre-war decades displayed similar excesses and received similar accusations” (1967b: 27). Park Yong Kyu states that a “very similar controversy to the fundamentalist-modernist or ‘controversy concerning Scripture’ in America has repeated itself [in the Korean church]” (Park, 1991: 358). The ‘liberal’ side in Korea also has a Western-oriented view of the controversy. Whenever they called Kim’s theology ‘liberalism’ or Barthianism, it connotes in their minds “Schliermacher, Ritschl, Fosdick, the Auburn Affirmation, the Reorganization of Princeton and the Confession of 1967” (Chang, 1998: 130-131).

⁹ Kim Jae Jun is known for representing progressive and liberal theology against Park Hyung Nong, where he emphasized the theology of active and responsible historical participation. He also stated that when the influence of the Holy Spirit dominates all aspects of life, the kingdom of God has come (J.S. Park, 2002). Park and conservative theologians have continually criticized Kim for his focus on human as the agent of God’s work, rather than God’s sovereignty.

Kim Kil Sung questions the claim that all of Park's learning except his eschatology matches that of Princeton and Southern Baptist Seminary, arguing that while many at Princeton during those times were amillennialists and postmillennialists, Park's firm belief in premillennialism after his education in America is a question that theologians need to answer (K. Kim, 2014).

Kil and Kim were a great influence on Park during the revival movement and, thus, also on his premillennial beliefs. When he returned from America after his studies, though, his strong stance on inerrancy and the literal interpretation of the Bible against liberal theologians influenced how he thought he ought to treat the problems of eschatology. Though he was being taught by amillennialist and postmillennialist teachers in America, the bigger challenge that he accepted was to defend the Bible against the liberals. Yet, Park's biggest contribution was bringing Reformed theology to Korea and defending it against liberalism, which in turn marked a shift from dispensational premillennialism to historical premillennialism by the first missionaries and Korean pastors.

Park disagreed with dispensational premillennialism because he believed that dispensations caused to misinterpret the Bible. (This will be discussed in more detail in following chapters.) In Park's interpretation, "these terms are synonymous, and the Scofield Reference Bible is making a false distinction. Hence, according to the Scofield Reference Bible, the church will avoid the Great Tribulation while Israel will have to endure it. For Park, this is nonsense and all people will have to endure the Great Tribulation" (Park, 1978: 257).

Park wrapped up his argument by proposing premillennialism without dispensationalism. Park explained that premillennialism was allegorical in the way it takes into account the literal interpretation, but also the more hidden allegorical aspects of such literature: "Premillennialism never overlooks the spiritual meaning of prophetic literature, but it tries not to incline too much as to lose the whole truth. The reason why premillennialism takes a prudent attitude in spiritual interpretation and a positive manner in literal interpretation is because its goal is to obtain full explanation" (Park, 1978: 265). As a result of premillennialism's focus on the imminent coming of Jesus, Park's neglect of social work and negative view toward this world has been criticized. However, his healing miracles add to the belief that his message of the

imminent return has been divinely affirmed, as has his message of a future full healing of the situation through God's reign at Christ's return.

Premillennialism was not limited to Presbyterian churches; rather, it was found also in other denominations. Whilst not equally endorsed by these other denominations, premillennialism was predominant in others. For instance, in evangelical holiness churches, their leading pastor, Lee Myung Jik, and others treated postmillennialism as heresy. His premillennialism was close to that of Kil, which was dispensational premillennialism. His influences went beyond his denomination. Scholars agree that the reasons for the spread of premillennialism in Korea are the impact of the fundamentalist theology of the missionaries, the dismal conditions under the Japanese and the remnants of Indigenous Korean religions. With the addition of the colonialism of the Japanese and the fear of the persecution of the church, people gave up hope in this world to seek hope in the world to come through the return of Christ (Yoon, 1961; Park, 1991; Pak, 1998; Pi, 2003).

Although it was the Great Revival of 1907 that had a spiritual impact on the church's interest in the afterlife, it is clear that the impact of the failure of the March First Movement had a significant effect on pastors at the time. While still hoping for earthly recovery with the independence of Korea, its failure in 1919 fostered disappointment and encouraged a turn towards dispensational premillennialism. This is where American premillennialism took root in the Korean context and how the eschatology of Korea became a solution to present challenges faced by the Christian population in Korea.

Although premillennialism provided hope that the coming kingdom will restore all the ruin and injustice of this world, it was criticized for its neglect of the present and society, and while focusing on the future, pastors started to pinpoint the exact day of the return of Christ. The immense problems this *shihanbu* eschatology began to cause during the 1920s and 1930s will be examined in later chapters.

While Pak and other scholars researching the eschatology of this era faithfully describe the complicated concepts of previous religions, the effects of American premillennialism, and the

successful rooting of American eschatology in the Korean context of suffering. Pak's dissertation well describes that it is vital to understand the contexts in which Korean eschatology develops. However, it is evident that after 1945, the eschatological study of Korea has mostly concentrated on its relations with theology instead of with history. The following section will shed more light on the importance of investigating the historical background and its effects on Korean eschatology. The following section will analyse the transmission of eschatology through transnational relations with United States and the historical conflicts between Korea and Japan prior to the transmission of premillennialism to Korea.

4.6. The Background of Eschatology in global history

4.6.1. The global rise of premillennialism

Through the turbulent nature of the history of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Adventist movement believed in the imminent return of Christ promised in the Bible. Like fundamentalism, Adventism surged in correlation with historical crises, including threats to social, political, and intellectual security.

Premillennialism grew in "Germany and Russia amid the Napoleonic Wars, its adherents viewing Napoleon's ever-expanding rule as the reign of Antichrist;" it grew in "England among Southcottians and similar sects" who confronted "the cataclysmic changes in industrial practice;" and it grew in North America among the "Shakers, Millerites, Christadelphians, and other Adventist groups expecting the imminent return of Christ." (Rasmussen et al., 2017) Especially after the impact of World War I, evangelicals all over the world had become concerned with world conflicts. This apparently confirmed premillennialists' predictions of disasters leading to Christ's return.

Starting with the United States, the world witnessed an increased interest in apocalyptic literature, and conferences drew large crowds. In late May 1919 the Philadelphia Conference witnessed the creation of a new organization, the World's Christian Fundamentals Association, which redirected the anti-modernist movement toward an emphasis on the fundamentals of the faith (Sandeem, 1970: 59).

4.6.2. Significance of the March First Movement in the light of global history

The March First Movement of 1919 is one of the turning points in modern Korean history. It was the first organized mass movement against the Japanese colonizers, uniting Koreans and demonstrating to the world their desire for independence. This movement went beyond the intellectual elites to people everywhere, showing the world that this uprising was the culmination of decades of suppression and suffering and a clear call for political and social change.

But the more immediate factor was the Fourteen Points speech made by President Woodrow Wilson of the United States. First delivered in January 1918, nine months after he had convinced Americans to join the Allies in the World War I, Wilson's speech seemed to promise the right of self-determination to colonized peoples everywhere. (Baldwin Jr., 1969)

The speeches by Woodrow Wilson in 1917 and 1918 outlined the vision of a new approach to international relations in which all nations would be seen as equals and where an international tribunal would serve to adjudicate disputes. Manela (2007) argues that these movements around the world by colonies like India and Korea were triggered by these speeches and made them rise for self-determination.

As the peace conference began, they resolved to ensure that Korea would be part of the transformation that Wilson's declarations promised. On the morning of March 1, 1919, thirty-three prominent religious and civic leaders in Seoul gathered to sign a document they called Korea's Declaration of Independence. The declaration, which adopted Wilsonian language to assert Korea's right to liberty and equality within the world of nations, launched a broad popular movement against Japanese rule. Over the following months, more than a million people across the peninsula participated in demonstrations and protests for independence, which involved Koreans of every province, religion, education, age, and occupation. (Manela, 2007: 119)

Koreans adopted the Wilsonian vision and saw this as an opportunity for Korea to emerge as an independent, equal member of the expanding global community of nations. The declaration of independence not only recounted the history of Japanese injustices in Korea, but it associated itself with the worldwide movement of reform, emphasizing that a new dawn was upon the

world and justice would henceforth replace force as the arbiter of international affairs. This offered Koreans “a great opportunity to recover our country and move with a new current of world thought”, with “the conscience of mankind” on their side” (Lee, 1963: 111-112).

Since the American President proclaimed the Fourteen Points, the voice of national self-determination has swept the world, twelve nations, including Poland, Ireland, and Czechoslovakia, have obtained independence. How could we, the people of the great Korean nation, miss this opportunity? Our compatriots abroad are utilizing this opportunity to appeal for the recovery of national sovereignty; now is the great opportunity to reform the world and recover our ruined nation. (Lee, 1963: 111-112)

Although many independence movements failed, including the one in Korea, it is undeniable that the movement across the world in 1919 was not a coincidence but part of a global movement. And through this movement, the Shanghai Korean Provisional Government, one of most important steps toward the independence of Korea, was established in April 1919.

This had a lasting impact on eschatology in Korea. With the failure of the March First Movement, along with the international failure to help Koreans achieve their independence, the Korean people were devastated and lost hope. Pak believes that his lost hope in this world caused him to seek the coming kingdom and the second coming of Christ. And this incident had a tremendous effect on Christian leaders’ complete settlement on the premillennialism of the first missionaries, colonialism lasting more than 25 years after the March First Movement. With Kil imprisoned for his participation in this movement, the shift to premillennialism has had a lasting impact to this day.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed past research and brought greater understanding of the contextualisation of eschatology into the situation of Korea as part of the global phenomenon. It has shown the need for a different method of studying the eschatology before 1945. Although very limited research has been done on the eschatology of the Korean church in the context of the Japanese colonization, it is clear that the Presbyterian guide to eschatology during this period relates with the dissertation of Pak. Thus, Pak attributes this American

premillennialism in Korea to the context of suffering, which caused a shift “from fear to hope”(Pak, 1998).

However, it is crucial to understand Korean eschatology not only in light of American premillennialism or the Korean context, but also as part of the bigger picture of the fundamentalist-modernist debate. It is not the premillennialism that the missionaries taught but the fundamentalist literal interpretation of Scripture that laid the foundation for premillennialism within the context of Korea under Japanese colonialism.

Furthermore, one of the major changes that came with the March First Movement of 1919 in regards to the eschatology of prominent pastors like Kil was the failure of this movement and the lost hope for international help. This led to further emphasis on the imminent return of Christ and shifted Koreans’ interests from nationalism to the afterlife (Pak, 1998: 186). The failure was of a movement that was organized by people who now shifted to needing the help of God to fix the world at hand. The accumulation of failures, sufferings and persecution has prompted the shift to premillennialism; it was a result not just of the teachings of American missionaries but of contextualization into the Korean situation.

The next part will investigate the eschatological changes in Korea starting with the historical conditions after the liberation from Japanese colonialism.

Part Two

1945 - 1960

Chapter 5. Historical background of Christianity in Korea, 1945–1960

5.1. Introduction

The effects of the short time leading up to the Korean War on the Korean people, society and church were immense. I will argue that the Korean War and the rebuilding after it has impacted how people view the future. The Korean War presented itself as the near end experience, and those who survived did not need to wait for another second coming but started to focus on what one can do to survive today and to have a better future. This rebuilding of the nation and society has had an impact different from the one a few years previous under the Japanese colonialism. I believe that this near end experience of the Korean War and the subsequent rebuilding provided a shift out of premillennialism. Rather than waiting for the end expectantly, society and the people started to focus on survival in the present and cooperation with the divine for a better future here in the physical world. Accordingly, the Korean church adapted to the historical conditions in what I would call the beginning of the end of premillennialism. This idea is very important to the study of eschatology in Korea after 1945, especially after the Korean War. It is part of the history of the Korean nation and its people's fight for their sovereign power.

This chapter will provide information on the historical background which will enhance our understanding of the development of the eschatology that is affected by it. It will also show the role of international politics; the gaining of independence from Japan and the ensuing Korean War changed the course of the Korean churches in the years between 1945 and 1960. The aftereffects of the Korean War will also be analysed in regards to how the societal response and that of the Korean church affected attitudes towards eschatology. This analysis will allow for a better understanding of Korean eschatology and how it changed during in the period after World War II and the Korean War. The information in this chapter will provide us better understanding for the discussion of eschatology in the Korean church 1945–1960 in the next few chapters.

5.2. Global politics after independence

After the Japanese colonialism, Korea's independence in 1945 was seen as an example of postcolonial survival (Millet, 2001: 921). The residue of the Japanese occupation, however, was everywhere, and its shadow continued to loom over Korea through its independence and its continuation in global politics. While interference by other nations provided an independent state, it also divided Korea and brought on the Korean War and, with it, dependence on foreign nations. Through imperialism, "globalization and conceptions of a new world order represent different sorts of challenges for indigenous people. While being on the margins of the world has had dire consequences, being incorporated within the world's marketplace has different implications and in turn requires the mounting of new forms of resistance" (Smith, 1999: 33).

As the end of World War II drew closer, the great powers and winners of World War II, started to discuss post-war settlements of the Japanese colonies. The Soviet Union wanted to take part in the war against Japan to gain influence over the United States in the Korean Peninsula and so moved its troops to Pyongyang (Lankov, 2002: 12). "The fate of Korea was of such minor consequence that Stalin readily agreed with the U.S. request that the Red Army limit its post-World War II occupation of Korea at the 38th parallel" (O'Neil, 2000; 20).

To check this move by Russia, the United States suggested partitioning the peninsula along the 38th parallel. This move was to ensure that the United States would have hegemony over Seoul, the traditional capital of Korea, where the bureaucratic structure, the economic capacity, and two-thirds of Korea's population were concentrated. The United States initially had reservations about Korea's readiness for independence, but this was soon counteracted by the creation of two zones in which the United States would play a politico-ideological role by its military presence and occupation in the South. This military presence reminded the Koreans of Japanese colonial rule, but to secure its independence from Russia and the communists, it had to be dependent on the United States (Krishnan, 1984: 13). Although it was clear that the United States thought Koreans were not fit to govern themselves and did not want immediate Korean independence, it gave a head start to the establishment of the Republic of Korea in the South on 15 August 1948. In September 1948, the North Korean People's Committee declared

the birth of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Finally, the international plan for Korea, which had been promoted by the world powers, ended in its being divided in two (Krishnan, 1984: 8).

Even after the establishment of its new governments, global interference by other nations continued to hamstring Korean sovereignty. The Soviet Union, through its advisors and the Soviet Civil Administration, started to control North Korea (Armstrong, 2003: 53). Having found its dealings with Korean nationalists in the North somewhat difficult, the Soviet Union gave its full support to a man to whom they had provided refuge in 1940, Kim Il-Sung. Through Kim, they strengthened the Communist Party in the North and also armed North Korea. At the same time, the United States installed a U.S.-friendly anti-communist Christian, Rhee Syngman, as the president of South Korea. "For the better part of the late 1940s, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union had any interest in promoting a conflict on the Korean peninsula. By 1949, however, the situation had changed dramatically" (O'Neil, 2000; 20). By the end of the decade, Korea had been divided along the 38th parallel into opposing sides of an increasingly volatile Cold War conflict.

Despite its newfound sovereignty, Korea found itself intrinsically tied to the global developments of the Cold War. As such, neo-colonialism took the place of colonialism as Korea's dependency on the "superpowers"—the United States, the Soviet Union and China—ensured the nation became a microcosm of the ideological global divide. This development after the independence is very important, because even through the independence, Korea's fate is still decided not by its people but with the situation of global politics and now with situation of domestic split. I believe this is very important thread of history that would affect the study of eschatology because, post-1945 is about people of Korea or individuals trying to be the sovereign power over situation of global politics, politics or individual situation. After the long duration under different powers and continuing authoritarianism in 1960, its people continue to struggle and fight for sovereign power of their own (This will be discussed in more detail in following chapters).

5.3. Before the Korean War

The uniqueness of the Korean War, its devastation of Korea and the question of how Korea was to re-establish itself are important to the study of eschatology after independence. I believe the Korean War was the beginning of the decline of premillennialism, which had been predominant, through providing a “near end”.

The Korean War is inseparably connected to the Cold War, though other views limit the Korean War to a domestic matter. For example, Cummings (1981) argues and sees the Korean War as a civil war. However, an argument can also be made that the war was Russia’s attempt to dominate all of Korea and neutralize Japan. The reality of the Korean War is that it was both a domestic conflict and battleground in a wider global power struggle, a war “created by the intensity of ideological conflict among Koreans and a Cold War framework that enabled superpower interventions” (Westad, 2017: 159).

With the repeated requests of Kim Il-Sung to invade South Korea, the Soviet Union was aware of the situation and provided what was needed to carry out the war. At first, Stalin refused, but by the 1950s, he “saw an opportunity to build on the communist success in Asia and, by so doing, relieve some of the pressure on the Soviet Union in Europe” (O’Neil, 2000: 21). The United States did not believe that “the world was so interconnected that the growth of Communism in one area would have drastic ramifications all over the globe” (Jervis, 1980: 573). However, there were clear warning signs that Russia was willing to start aggressively pursuing the spread of communism. The United States believed that if the Soviet Union did not succeed in Korea, then it would simply shift its attention to another country to test how the United States would respond to communist expansionism (Jervis, 1980: 588).

One of the reasons that Korean nationalists brought socialism to the country in the 1920s was that the March First Movement of 1919 had failed. Christian intellectuals started spreading the ideas of socialism and tried to integrate socialism and Christian doctrine. Yi Taewi and Yu Kyongsang, young students who were influenced by socialism, would brand Jesus as a social revolutionist and a socialist. However, frustrated by the lack of social involvement by Christians

at the expected level, the socialists ultimately denounced Christianity. This estrangement between the two groups would continue throughout the twentieth century as the global ideological struggle of the Cold War ensured a more general hostility to the Marxism in the Western-influenced South (Lee, 1991; Kim, 1998; Lee, 2010; Lee, 2010).

However, communist movements were not limited to Korea; they were also in Japan. In a similar mould to Christianity, communism became another form of nationalist movement, but it was not successful. Many communist movements went abroad and tried to bring communism to the mainland, but they were not successful until 1945 (Lee, 2009: 51–52). Once the communists were heavily influenced and supported by the Soviet Union and China, they returned to Korea, and by Liberation Day, 15 August 1945, they stopped struggling against Japan and began fighting each other to gain power after independence, “a conflict that would have occurred whether the United States and Soviet Union had divided Korea into occupation zones or not” (Millet, 2001: 927).

To the aged people who had suffered from suppression from an endless series of foreign countries, Communism was a hope—a magic torch endowing them with revolutionary passion; whereas, to the young people, it was a new approach for solving the accumulated social problems and class struggles with which their ancestors had dealt for a long time. (Suh, 1985: 127)

In the “hope” it offered with its revolutionary rhetoric against foreign interference and class struggle, Korean nationalism was drawn to communism. In comparison to its colonial subjugation under the Japanese, communism was seen as a form of modernity in a way similar to that of Christianity. Crucially, there were no internal struggles to fight against communism in Korea, as it had originally been a target of the Japanese’s suppression of Korean nationalism, but in the 1950s, it became one of the key reasons for the United States to intervene in Korea. This was confirmed by the Truman Doctrine; “a commitment to contain communism everywhere and one that originated in the events surrounding the Korean War” (Warner, 1980; 98). The Cold War had gone global, and Korea was at the epicentre of its struggle.

Sometimes, the fight was against a foreign nation and sometimes against its own authoritarian leadership, but during the process of getting sovereign power and democracy, what people have realized is that they no longer need powers from outside to protect them. This is also crucial for understanding eschatology because prior to 1945, they depended fervently on God to come and right the wrong in this world. However, after the Korean War, their emphasis shifted to building back their lives and the devastated nation with their own efforts.

5.4. The Korean Church after independence

The process of rebuilding the church after the Japanese occupation was a complex one with many problems needing to be addressed and resolved. Firstly, a major issue facing the church came in the form of the church members themselves. Many had been imprisoned for their anti-Japanese participation and, after being freed following Korean independence, there was evident animosity towards those who had participated in Japanese Shinto shrine worship. Secondly, there were theological disputes within the church between conservatives and liberal theologians. Thirdly, in the midst of the revival movement during the transition and the settlement of these issues, new Christian heresies arose. These issues brought about changes in the personality and character of the church in the 1950s (Jung, 1983: 107). The behaviours of the Korean church in this period after the Korean War was meticulously written through Kim Heung Soo and I have looked at Korean history and Korean church history books and journals that generally described this period after the Korean War.

The message of the church was split into two. On the one hand, the natural process was for the Korean churches to focus on independence, freedom, and a new start for the church—areas in which it found meaning in Christianity. On the other hand, the church also asked its members to give materially so the church could be revived and rebuilt. Those who had been imprisoned raised their voices for the repentance of the church. They pointed out the corruption of the society and the church after independence and the lack of repentance after the Japanese occupation. They condemned the church's close ties with the Japanese toward the end of the occupation, in which it had cut ties with Western missionaries and cooperated with the policies and the making of "Japanese Christianity" (Kim, 1992: 13). They also sent warnings about the

future, saying that it would bring about another disaster without repentance first, that true peace and freedom would come from faith, and without faith there would be no nation.

Park Hyung Nong, a famous theologian and leader of the Korean Presbyterian church, sent his support for the imprisoned Christians, saying that for the Korean church to be pure, it needed discipline and repentance. There were constant fights among the Presbyterian churches on how to handle the past situation of Shinto shrine worship in the church. Some would say that those who were imprisoned suffered, but so too did those who fled to foreign lands or those who were subservient to Japan for the sake of protecting the church. These various positions ultimately brought about splits in the churches which in turn extended to differences in theology as well (Kim, 1998; Cho, 2010).

The scholarly consensus is that the church's message ranged from warning about the future to blaming the lack of national repentance for the Korean War (H.S. Kim, 1999a; Yang, 2005). Son Yang Won, who was imprisoned by the Japanese and lost his two sons because of their resistance to Shinto shrine worship, emphasizes in his sermons the four sins that led to the Korean War: the sin of the nation's leaders, the sin of the whole nation, the negative effects of the presence of the United States Army, and the sin of Korean Christians. For some Presbyterians, this was the main message of the church during these times (Jung, 1983: 120).

After the nation was split into North and South, churches in the North endured further suffering under the totalitarian communist regime. While they tried to keep the faith, some had once again either to bow the knee, face martyrdom or flee to the South to keep their religious freedom. The North at first tried a conciliatory policy to accommodate and to use the church for propaganda purposes, but at the same time, it decreased the church's social effectiveness by limiting and restricting their religious practices (Park, 2004).

As Kim Il-Sung was organizing the Communist Party in the North, Yoon Ha Young and Han Kyung Jik, prominent Christian leaders in the North, were trying to establish a democratic government with a Christian mindset. The result was the formation of the Democratic Christian Social Party. However, the communists responded by implementing a series of policies that confiscated the

church's lands and buildings, collapsed its economic base and interfered with its activities by kidnapping or killing pastors. As such, Christians in the North came to regard their suffering under the communists as a continuation of the trauma they had endured during Japanese rule and the Korean War (H.S. Kim, 1999b; H.S. Kim, 2000). This section shows that there were many internal struggles in the Korean church that needed to be resolved. Even after independence, the church still struggles to fix the problem of the past with Shinto shrine worship, and it has failed to adopt to the split of Korea into North and South.

5.5. The Korean War and the Korean church

During the Korean War, 43 percent of commercial space and 33 percent of residential space in the country were destroyed. About one and a half million people were killed, over three million were injured, and over ten million family members were displaced. This brought about unimaginable tragedy, with orphans, widows, refugees and hunger (Lee, 2001: 10; Park, 2010: 110). However, in addition to people dying and property being destroyed, contagious diseases including tuberculosis, smallpox and cholera thrived in the ensuing chaos. Even after the war, this suffering continued for more than ten years, and with most of the population desperately poor, each person was dealing with life and death on a daily basis (Park, 2010: 111).

However, the war's legacy was not just restricted to physical damage; it destroyed and altered the order of the society, the traditional norms, and personalities. Kim provides the overview that this brought destruction to the people who witnessed what hell looked like in modern society (Kim, 1999). This experience of the "end" for many Koreans would have a profound impact on the development of eschatology in the decades that followed. Before this, however, the Korean church found its entire existence under threat. Within the first six months of the war, 1373 churches were destroyed and 660 were partly destroyed. There were plenty of cases where Christians were killed by the communists for being Christian (Park, 2010: 113). About 240 pastors, 177 of them Presbyterian, were kidnapped (Min, 2004: 526). Throughout the war, the church was continuously in conflict, and new Christian heresies continued to rise. In its relations with society, the church's interest in national independence during the Japanese occupation changed to the rebuilding of the nation, and after the war, social restoration (Kim,

1999: 5). This theme of survival, restoration and rebuilding continued in its message into the 1960s and 1970s. The message of the church after the war was comfort for the people during their continuous suffering and a call to repentance, viewing the war as the result of the nation's sin. However, as time continued, the emphasis on repentance weakened. Preachers focused on the grace of God to comfort and give new hope in this world (Kim, 1999: 6). In the following chapter, we will explore how the message of the churches was manifested in the sermons of pastors who succeeded in growing their churches.

The Korean War changed the church's stand on theology, and particularly on eschatology. Hope in the coming kingdom during Japanese colonialism changed to hope in this world and an improvement of the current situation. These conditions after the war and how the society has cope with the devastation has penetrated the Korean church. It shifted its message from enduring suffering from Japanese colonialism to the hope of rebuilding. Through the experience of "the end" in a manner different from the imminent return of Christ, Christians' focus shifted to the hope of rebuilding in this world through movement and physical rebuilding of church buildings, the fight against communism, and participation in politics.

5.6. The Korean church after the Korean War

After the destruction of churches during the war, U.S. aid to Korean society came. Korea was able to regain religious freedom, Western missionaries had a chance to return, and those in need—such as orphans, war victims and the elderly—were able to receive help and aid from Western missions. Crucially, they also gave financial support to the Korean church. In the aftermath of the North's systematic attack on Korean Christians, the church needed to rebuild, both physically and in terms of membership. With help from funds from churches around the world, twenty-five hundred new church buildings were built, twelve hundred of them Presbyterian (Park, 2010: 123).

With its Great Revival in 1907, Pyongyang had always been the centre of Korean Christianity. However, because of North Korea's communist oppression, Pyongyang's Christians escaped to the South, settling near the urban area of Seoul. After the war, with its destruction of the

church in the North, Seoul became the centre of Korean Christianity and has remained so ever since (Heo, 2004: 156–157). The Christians wanted to rebuild the new church in the South whilst retaining the spirituality of the North, and this became a catalyst for a revival in the South (Oliver, 1952: 170). Through the mid-1950s, 90 percent of the two thousand newly established churches consisted of refugees from the North (Kim, 1956: 102). The relocation of these individuals from the North to the South was a direct consequence of the war, and this became the reason for the explosive growth of the church in the South.

Unsurprisingly, given the influx of Christian refugees from the North, communism became one of the main challenges facing the Korean church as a result of the Korean War. Its fearful experience of communism in those years was further compounded by the direct experiences of those who had fled the North to escape it. Although they escaped, the fear of communism followed those individuals to the South. When oppression started in the North, one-third of the Christians escaped and were adopted into the leadership of the church in the South. Just like the nationalists had done with their anti-Japanese rhetoric at the beginning of the century, those from the North brought the anti-communist message into the church with them. During those times, it was communism that the church in the South contested against (Heo, 2004: 162-163). This is the testimony of the South's experience with communism:

South Koreans' experience with communism is limited to only three months, June 25–28, 1950. Despite the short time, the reason that there is strong anti-communism left is because of how destructive the experiences and shocks were. . . . The people of South Korea remember strongly the war and the reign of Communism that started on June 25 of 1950, and this experience has been embedded more than anything. (Park, 2002: 196)

Since the Korean peninsula was divided and ruled by the Soviet Union and the U.S. military, Koreans could not unite in the name of race-based nationalism; rather, they were motivated by two different ideologies. Churches in the North and South were also moved by these political ideologies. With the fear of communists after the war, Korean Christians were involved in politics and became the representatives of anti-communism in Korean society. Roh notes that the goal of Korean Christianity was to oppose communism and to establish Christendom in its place (Roh, 1995: 14)

In another sign of the globalisation of the period, the Korean War had placed Korea at the forefront of the global ideological power struggle. Even more so, Korea was a national case study of the overarching Cold War; a nation literally divided by the two competing political systems of democracy in the South and communism in the North. In the South, the Korean economy depended on the United States, and this only improved relations between the two. For that reason, aspects of U.S. culture were increasingly transmitted to Korea after the war, and this only furthered the anti-communist ideology and movements (Roh, 1995: 11). The first president, Syngman Rhee, was a conservative Christian with a strong anti-communist ideology, and the proportion of leaders in politics, government, parliament, the army and the higher ranks of the military that were Christians was much larger than the proportion of Christians in the national population. When the Christians and the anti-communists took power, this ideology became the nation's founding principle until the 1980s. To challenge anti-communism was to challenge the nation itself. The majority of the Korean church welcomed President Rhee's leadership and gave it full support. In return, the church got favours from the government. As result of those favours, Korean church leaders' concern was for the political issues of the church at that time. While they stood on the side of government, Christians enjoyed political favours. In return, the politicians enjoyed monopolized support from the church.

Kim (2003) considers this era as one in which the church thought not of the coming of God's kingdom but of a kingdom to be built in this world. Because the church had previously failed in its attempt to overthrow the Japanese and subsequently lost government support during the Japanese occupation, Korean church leaders became very political. They wanted to make the nation a visible kingdom of God. "As time passed, the area of interest of Korean Christian pastors focused on the visible body of Christ. They wanted to equip the church with political awareness. Some began to seek the visible body of Christ in the political realm" (Kim, 2003: 121). The focus of the Korean church now was no longer on dealing with the residue of Japanese occupation but on rebuilding the church after the devastation. The devastation of the Korean War made individuals and churches focus on survival in the present.

I believe this is the single biggest historical impact on eschatology that caused the shift out of premillennialism. The Korean people and church were no longer interested in the future. Dealing with daily survival made the people focus on the here and now. Furthermore, this shift of focus to daily survival blurred the focus on the need of an imminent coming of the kingdom. The preaching message of the church also shifted (which will be dealt in the next chapter) to focus on rebuilding here and now.

5.7. The failure of the Korean church after the Korean War

Despite the alignment of the Korean church with the politics of the South, there were various internal problems hindering the church as well. Among these were territorial divisions among the missionaries, which had an impact on the division of denominations. In addition to this, there were questions over how conservative theology would win the power struggles within the church, how the church would relate with missionaries and foreign Christian powers, and what to do about those who had been involved in Shinto shrine worship and pro-Japanese actions. All of these questions brought about different, often competing, opinions on how the church should move forward (Roh, 1995a: 307-310).

At the same time, there was criticism of the church's satisfaction with its current state instead of national and social participation, which were limited to certain leaders. During this period, there was tremendous growth in the church. In 1949, there were 649 Presbyterian churches with 385,215 people, but at the end of the decade, in 1959, the number of churches increased to 3527, with 892,983 members (Rhodes and Campbell, 1964: 403, 409).

However, the churches' limited participation in social affairs and its focus on church rebuilding projects could not keep in check the corrupt long-term dictatorial government, which included many Christians (Chung, 2003: 187). Consequently, its failure to accommodate the people within and outside of the church, as well as its lack of sensitivity to the spiritual needs of the people, meant there were over twenty new Christian sects within five years after the start of the war. These new Christian sects were effective in bringing back the mysticism of old Korean religions which focused on present blessings (Heo, 2004: 167). They focused on providing new

visions of Korea as where the return of Christ would happen, and with this eschatological vision, provided physical healings and blessings. These non-conformists were not interested in the Shinto shrine worship of the past or theological debates; instead, they were able to provide new comfort, healing, blessings and hope in the return of Christ, which the Korean church had failed to provide. Furthermore, different Christians sects that the orthodox church had condemned as heretical started to use these types of comfort, healing, blessing and stress on the coming of Jesus to a church that separated reality to a world that was either all good or all evil.

With independence came both hope and anxiety about the future. If independence and freedom were the sources of hope, uncertainty about the future in the rebuilding of the government amid new surroundings were the sources of anxiety. This hope would be the realization of anxiety and fear in the devastation of the Korean War. The kingdom of God that had first been anticipated by premillennialism had been realized in the Korean War. Hell had been realized in this world and confirmed the concept of the “end” to many Koreans. It was this world that the kingdom needed to rebuild. Thus, the church rebuilding movements were largely successful, but at the cost of people’s spiritual needs never being met (Ma, 1961: 23-24).

Although Park argues that “through the extreme despair” there was a reactionary response of absolute hope for the future (Park, 2002: 38), the people had tasted the end through the Korean War, but I would suggest on the contrary that the focus shifted to rebuilding their present lives and blessings that would come about in the present. Through this extreme despair of the war, I believe rather than seeking for imminent second coming, they shifted to rebuilding their present lives.

With these kinds of wants, some churches, such as the Pentecostal churches, responded with the “blessing through faith” (*gibok shinang*), and their messages of blessings on this earth were one of the keys to growth in this era. However, the Presbyterian church, while focused on the fight with liberal theology after independence, was once again in theological debates not only with the Christian sects but with the “faith of blessing.” These theological debates in the

Presbyterian churches failed to heal the secular divisions, so the Presbyterians divided themselves into three denominations.

5.8. Conclusion

Kwak Sun Hee, the emeritus pastor of SoMang Church, has said,

Eschatology became a positive factor in the Korean church, motivating it for gospel mission Also, this premillennial faith increased motivation for spreading the gospel. . . . In such a matter, the expectation of the imminent end used to stir up in the church activities for spreading the gospel. (Kwak, 2000: 233-234)

As Kwak has stated premillennialism has brought positive factors where it increased motivation for spreading the gospel. However, the devastation of the Korean War, as we have dealt in depth in this chapter, has brought different conditions to Korean society. As it was seeking the imminent coming of Christ with the judgment that would bring justice under Japanese colonialism, now with the experience of the near “end” and devastation of the Korean War, the Korean church and its leaders, particularly Han Kyung Jik and Kim Jae Joon, shifted its focus to rebuilding the kingdom at hand as its focus on premillennialism began to wane. I do not want to completely equate the waning of interest in premillennialism with the waning of interest in eschatology. However, I will argue that abating and lack of perspective of premillennialism’s second coming, has indeed made Korean Christianity lose interest in second coming and future. The focus on rebuilding neglected the premillennialism that had hoped for the physical kingdom to come during the Japanese occupation. Church’s move to ethics through active participation in society was a postmillennial phenomenon in the sense that it sought to bring about the prosperity of a millennium before the second coming as opposed to the premillennial belief that the latter will bring about the former. Nonetheless, such a shift in focus is evident in the declining mentions of the second coming by preachers of the Korean church. If the March First Movement marked a major shift in the development of Korean eschatology, the devastation of the Korean War and global interconnections dictated what the Koreans thought about the “end” after independence.

In the eyes of many, however, the Korean War was the “end”. If Japanese colonialism caused fear for the hope of independence, the Korean War and its devastation was fear realized and hope extinguished. Its devastation, both physical and mental, was widespread, and by the end, it had split Korea in two along the 38th parallel. Whereas the church’s message after independence was split between repentance and solving the problems of the past, this shifted to a need to physically rebuild the nation after the devastation of the Korean War. The devastation of war continued after that, and its only hope was in rebuilding. Yonggi Cho, who during this era planted the Yuido Full Gospel Church, which is now the biggest church in the world, said in one of his sermons,

Our poor people in town are not interested in heaven or hell. Their life is exhausted by their only interest, which is how to survive today and tomorrow and what to eat. They have no spare time to think about the future. Whichever home it is, it is figuring out about food, clothing, and shelter. (Quote in Kim, 1999: 7)

People were busy rebuilding their lives for survival, but Korean churches were also experiencing rebuilding movements and witnessed a great revival. Unfortunately, these were tainted by theological debates within the church and corruption linked with the government. When Christians participated in politics, they did so to ensure that the suffering caused by the Japanese and communists would not happen again. While church leaders at the end of the Japanese occupation were criticized for being involved with the Japanese to build their own power, at the same time, this participation in politics caused the pro-American, anti-communist movement in the church. All of this gave way to a neglect of the people, prompting new Christian sects to arise after the Korean War. These new sects focused on what they believed the Korean church had neglected as a result of its politicisation: a spiritual and eschatological vision.

Chapter 6. Eschatology in the Korean Church in the context of Korean history, 1945–1960

6.1. Introduction

In the last chapter, I provided the historical background to the discussion of eschatology in the Korean church 1945–1960 and beyond. In this chapter, the first part will examine three of the most prominent theologians/pastors in the Presbyterian church in Korea before and during the schism—Han Kyung Jik, Kim Jae Jun Kim, and Park Hyung Nong—and analyse how they perceived eschatology through their theological stances; the conclusion will state why Park seemed to stress premillennialism and how the eschatological stance with theology have split further apart after the schism of the Korean presbyterian church. These discussions of theology will provide how the Korean church has started to focus on present instead of the imminent coming of Kingdom of premillennialism.

According to Ryoo, after the devastation of the Korean War, their messages focused on the desire for a new start. Sometimes sermons were lectures or speeches on the current situation rather than messages from God. There were still voices calling for repentance, but they were heard less frequently as the church focused more on rebuilding. Furthermore, after experiencing the Korean War, the church called for the prosperity of the nation, changes in society, and the revival of the church (Ryoo, 2011).

Premillennialism was still the dominant theology of the period, but it was limited to theologians. But the pastors who had direct access to the people and truly understood their situation were not strong premillennialists during these times; instead of focusing on the second coming, they emphasized hope for a second chance in life through rebuilding.

However, despite the society's and churches' focus on the present and rebuilding, premillennialism's view of an imminent return existed in the conservative church and focused the interests of its adherents on individual evangelism rather than on political, social, or public reform. Their pessimistic view of injustice in history and how it unfolded during the Japanese

occupation made the premillennialists believe that only the return of Christ would heal and overcome this present world. Furthermore, it was believed that the sin of the world would only get worse as the end neared and so any effort for societal reform was meaningless. With this view, conservative Korean churches focused on the salvation of the individual rather than on the salvation of society. Cho (2009) believes that this premillennialism brought hope to people living in the devastation of the Korean War, but it also brought excessive focus on the end. This was particularly true with the Presbyterian church in Korea, especially the Hapdong side that concurred with the premillennialism of Park Hyung Nong.

6.2. Han Kyung Jik and Kim Jae Joon: Theologians focused on kingdom on earth

With an influence over the church that lasted more than 60 years, Han Kyung Jik can be regarded as one of the most prominent figures in the Korean church in the twentieth century. As a student at Princeton Seminary during the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, Han decided to remain at the school whilst many conservative students—including Park Hyung Nong—left with John Gresham Machen, the leader of the conservatives, to establish Westminster Theological Seminary. This decision shows that he was influenced by the liberals, which affected his theology and ministry (Han, 1993: 94–96). From this and because of incidents surrounding the translation of the Abingdon Commentary into Korean, Park accused both Han and Kim Jae Jun, who participated in the translation work, of being liberal theologians. Those who followed Han would say that since he was a pastor, he did not have enough opportunity to present his theology systematically, and many believed that he was not a liberal theologian (Yang, 2005: 131–134). Indeed, despite his longstanding role in the church, it is “still hard to have a clear objective evaluation of his theology” because his theology itself was unclear (Han, 1993: 96); for that reason, he has come to be regarded in the moderate sphere of theology between conservatives and liberals. Crucially, it is this lack of clarity and focus on circumstances over theology that has resulted in Han being regarded as a pastor rather than a theologian.

Although he believed and professed that salvation is totally the sovereignly initiated work of the grace of God and justification through Jesus Christ, Han also put much emphasis on the

bearing of fruit through works and ethics, saying that these works and ethics in society would ultimately bring sanctification. He ceaselessly emphasized that Christians should bear critical roles in society. Christians must discard greed and raise their religious and social voices and practices for the benefit of Korean churches and society. This coincided with the situation of Korea after the war, as the Korean church tried to rebuild the nation and the church by focusing on works and morality, and Han believed that serving others would bear the real fruit of salvation after it overcame the absolute poverty that followed the war. The main outlet for this was through the Young Nak Presbyterian Church, founded by Han in Seoul in 1945. Between independence and the Korean War, the Young Nak Church had grown rapidly, predominately as a result of increased membership from the continued influx of Christian refugees from the North. By 1955, he had over 5500 people under the influence of the Young Nak Church, demonstrating that service was the best form of evangelism. Moreover, he understood the ecumenical movement as not doctrinal but part of the movement of sanctification within the church (Yang, 2007).

Of his 611 sermons, seven were on eschatology, and only 1% were on the hope of the afterlife in heaven. This tells us that after independence, sermons on eschatology were fleeting. Instead, even when talking about the judgment of the end times, he would put more emphasis on the responsibility of the Christian's calling in the world. Here is an excerpt from a 1954 sermon on Revelation 20:4–14 (Choi, 2011):

We have to clearly realize. My thought, my words, my action, if a student as a student, if a teacher as a teacher, if a secretary as a secretary, if an assemblyman as an assemblyman, if a president as a president, if a pastor as a pastor, we have to remind ourselves that all our deeds will be accounted for in the judgment of God. (Han, 2009: 388)

This is one example of how Han was very focused on positions of responsibility of the leadership of the church. In contrast to Han, Kim Jae Jun after studying in Japan went to Princeton Seminary with Han Kyung Jik and came back to exercise influence as the principal of Chosun Theological Seminary between 1943 and 1946. During that time, Chosun came under direct management as one of the General Assembly's seminaries. In 1947, fifty-one students

petitioned the General Assembly in protest of his liberal tendencies and in favour of a biblical perspective of conservatives. While Han was lenient toward Kim, Park criticized Kim after his return to Korea, and through Park's recommendation, the General Assembly recommended that Kim go to the United States to study for a further year. Chosun Seminary rejected the recommendation, however, and went on to create a new General Assembly, KiJang; Chosun Seminary also changed its name to Korea Theological University (Cho, 2010: 148–151).

While he was known for liberal theology, he focused on the practical side of faith. In his book, *Righteousness of God and life of human*, he states:

We should not desire the transcendency and mysticism of the mountaintop. I am not denying that they are completely unnecessary or heathenish; however, what is stronger than anything in God's commands is to put my complete existence (possession and life) on the altar and the call to put my cross in the middle of life. We need to come down from the mountain with Christ—meditation to life, worship to service, silence to activity—and find our place down from the mountain. As faithful people of God in this land, we need to prepare to greet the Lord over the loud darkness when he returns. (Kim, 1985: 55-57)

He is emphasizing in his book that not only is he distancing himself from premillennialism, but he is calling to action: the kingdom of God does not reside in the waiting but in the actions of Christians.

Kim argues that Han focused on the world and its problems with sin, ignorance, and poverty. To solve these problems, his ministries were ultimately geared toward evangelism, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations, making numerous and valuable contributions (Kim, 2015: 59-60). Kim also had a wider view of the kingdom as universal. He expanded the life of Christians to politics, economy, education, commerce, and culture. Beyond the church, he was focused on faith being lived out in the world (Kim, 2015: 63). The concepts Kim and Han held of the kingdom during these times dictated what their eschatology was and had a massive influence over many decades. However, it did not concur with the literal interpretation of the Bible favoured by premillennialism and conservatives like Park. Yet, neither the concept of the kingdom nor eschatology was the reason for the schisms in the Presbyterian church.

6.3. Park Hyung Nong: the attack on liberal theology

Known in the Korean theological field as the Machen of Korea, Park Hyung Nong's thesis and journals introduced Old Princeton orthodox theology to Korea; he made it his life mission to enforce this theology. When liberalism and neo-orthodoxy began to come into Korea in the 1930s, Park was on the front lines in protecting the church's conservative doctrine of Scripture, especially against higher criticism. For instance, Park had been a key figure in alerting the churches about the World Council of Churches (WCC) and their ecumenical movement in the context of the broader movement against orthodoxy and ultimately becoming involved in all three schisms of the Presbyterian churches in the 1950s (Park, 2019: 54-56).

It is well known that during his time at Princeton and Westminster, his relationship with Machen was more than just that of a student with his teacher. Although he does not mention Machen or cite him in his writings, there are consistent accounts of Park sending his students to learn under Machen at Westminster. One notable story of Park asking Machen for financial help and Machen obliging by sending money to Korea to help Park sheds some light on the relationship the two shared (S. Lee, 2012). This has naturally led to church historians in Korea questioning how Park was able to avoid adopting amillennialism given the strong influence of Machen on him.

Roark (1963) argues that although Machen criticized the dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible, he also argues that Machen did not regard the subject of the millennium as defining a theological stance:

Be it said therefore with the utmost plainness and insistence that never have we or to our knowledge has anyone else in the Presbyterian Church of America or in the Faculty of Westminster Seminary asserted that the holding of the Premillennial view of the return of our Lord is incompatible with maintenance of the Reformed System of doctrine or that it prevents a man from subscribing honestly to the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church of America. (Machen and Stonehouse, 1936: 42)

Eui Hwan Kim has examined Machen's theology and found that Machen believed that healthy doctrine brings about a right and healthy Christian life. At the same time, he emphasizes that

Machen did not see all doctrines as equally important; instead, he argued that if the main doctrines are concurrent, other doctrines can be flexible. Kim states, “With the return of Jesus, even if we disagree on the method of the second coming like the premillennialists, we are still able have fellowship as brothers” (Kim, 1988: 179-180). Even in his *Christianity and Liberalism*, Machen does not mention eschatology.

With this in mind, Park was aware of Machen’s position, but he tried to adapt to the situation facing the Korean church in the midst of its shift from fundamentalism to evangelicalism. Caneday believes that with this shift there was movement in the United States away from extreme and radical fundamentalism and towards a stance that is amicable to science and tolerant of different types of eschatology, more responsibility on social issues, and most of all, dialogue with liberal theologians. It was in the 1920s, with the rise of the fundamentalist movement from 1916 (the year of the first article of the collection of texts called *The Fundamentals*), that strict divisions between modernists and conservatives began to surface. Fundamentalism in the United States particularly divided evangelicals of many denominations, and it 1930s and 1940s was beginning to be controversial within the Presbyterian churches in Korea (Caneday, 1995; Sandeen, 1970; Marsden, 1980; Park, 1991; Hart, 1997; Park, 2001)

Seeing first hand how the evangelicalism started to embrace the liberal stances in United States and how Machen ultimately started Westminster Theological Seminary due to his fight against liberalism, with these influences, Park has turned his eyes to the rise of liberalism in the Korean church. He was able to identify and has been aware of the inroads of liberalism in Korea since the 1930s. What he had found in the controversy around the Shinto shrine worship and the reconstruction of the church was that the liberals in the church had been behind the compromise. Therefore, Park would now turn the focus of his attack from non-repenting present powers to theological liberalism (Chang, 1998: 232). According to Park, the church is based on doctrine and the church needs to prioritize keeping these doctrines. He believes that theology is not just given, but created, while the calling of the church—the mission to spread the gospel—is kept. He was not a pessimist or a premillennialist who just hoped for the return of Christ; he believed the work of the gospel would bring about changes.

Park exclaimed, “Christians, wait for the time of God’s ruling with all the world united!” (Park 1978, 19:328). He was talking about not the thousand-year rule of God and the saints but the liberation of Korea. In his very first sermon after the liberation of 1945, he boldly affirmed his faith in the progress of history and the God who rules over the world with justice from behind the scenes:

Now is the time when the ruling and judgment of a just God is revealed, as the oppressor has been utterly defeated, the prisoners liberated, and the weak come to stand in equal position with the strong. This world is a world worth living in, a history in which meaning can be found. (1978, 18: 94)

In his 1950 article “Orthodox and Neo-Orthodox,” while presenting his theological stance, he attacked neo-orthodoxy for negating the unity of Bible and revelation and for denying the inerrancy of the Bible and its authority above all else (Park, 2019: 85). Furthermore, reiterating a literal interpretation of Revelation, he attacked Barthian eschatology by restating that the eschaton and second coming will be physical, in the present time and space.

Rather, Park had an optimistic view of history based upon the sovereign providence of a just God, stating that history is the place where the just God will give victory to the righteous. “Likewise, the human world is stable, progressive and moral. The time will come when God’s will be done as it is in heaven. Isn’t this one expression of God’s unchanging faithfulness?” (Park, 1978 18:58-9). Park never had a pessimistic, escapist, or other-worldly worldview. He inherited the faith in moral and religious progress that was shared by the nineteenth-century evangelicals, like the missionaries to Korea. In a way, he did not inherit the binary biblical worldview of complete good and evil or of a world that was unrecoverable. He is criticized by some because he did not experience the suffering of the people when they were leaving Korea as refugees, and he did not know the severe torture and persecution of the “imprisoned saints”; he did not go through grief and agony over the depth and intensity of man’s evil.

Park Yune Sune, Park Hyung Nong’s student to whom his torch was passed, was profoundly affected by the latter and adopted premillennialism. However, Jung argues that even in Park Yune Sune’s interpretation of the millennium in Revelation 20, the distinction between the

literal and the symbolic meaning is very vague. Even more, he argues that Park did not go into the details of millennialism at all and what detail he does go into is very limited, as only 18 of the 755 pages of his book *Reformed Doctrine* deal with millennialism, and he spends even less time explaining the millennial kingdom in his Revelation commentary (Jung, 2013: 138).

One thing this dissertation will unpack is the question of why Park Hyung Nong's premillennialism was so dominant in Korea for so long. He did not have a completely pessimistic view of the world. Rather, as I have shown, he believed in God's progress in the current world. What is puzzling is why his stance on premillennialism was so adamant. Although his son Aaron Park claimed that he softened his stance on premillennialism, some professors coming back to teach in Korea claimed that Park would not allow amillennialism to even be taught in seminary, and so the nature of that solidarity is still questionable.

Many have argued that premillennialism was part of conservatives' fight against liberal theology and their stand on the authority of the Bible. So when there were conflicts between the conservative and liberal theologies, this stance on premillennialism was brought in to defend conservatives' theological stance on the authority of and literal understanding of Scripture. Furthermore, the effects of the first missionaries and pastors in Park's life in earlier days probably convinced him that, despite the influence of the amillennialist Machen, premillennialism would fit better with the context of Korea under Japanese occupation and during the Korean War. So I believe Park pushed strongly for premillennialism because he wanted to use it as a tool against the liberal theologians' view of Scripture. But even against amillennialism, he was very adamant.

6.4. Reason for the schisms in the Presbyterian church in the 1950s: separation of conservative and liberal theology

There are many claims as to why the schisms happened during the 1950s, yet there remains no consensus on the reason behind it. The first schism was with KoSin, which started with Korea Theological Seminary, over the issues of how to deal with pro-Japanese Christians and Shinto shrine worship. Many imprisoned pastors who wanted the stricter punishment brought in Park,

who was a refugee at that time, to be the first principal of Korea Theological Seminary. The only difference between Park and the imprisoned pastors was that Park focused on the reconstruction of the church through theological movements, while others desired discipline in the church. Park resigned within six months of seeking unity in the church. The imprisoned pastors were pressing for harsher punishment, which would ultimately bring division within the church: in 1952 they established KoSin General Assembly.

The second schism during these times came about because of the problems in dealing with Kim Jae Jun. Park's criticism of Kim's stances on biblical inerrancy and inspiration arose and continued after independence. Kim had been influenced by Barth, and his neo-orthodoxy was attacked as a kind of liberalism. The Presbyterian General Assembly, with help from conservative pastors under Park, ultimately expelled Kim and stripped him of his ordained pastorship. Furthermore, Chosun Theological Seminary's students were denied ordination, leading to those who cooperated with Kim to establish the Kijang General Assembly in 1953.

The third major schism involved Park and Han. Park became a prominent theological figure and became the principal of Presbyterian Theological Seminary. While he was operating the school, there was an incident involving Park trying to buy land so the school could move to a different location; in essence, he was conned, and this caused an immense problem because he had not involved the board of directors of the seminary in the purchase. The fight began as one faction was trying to keep Park as the principal and the other was trying to remove him. The fight ultimately involved the General Assembly's position on whether to join the WCC and their ecumenical movement or not. Park opposed it, but Han was for it. Park, looking at unification movements around the world starting with the Church of England and the Baptists, claimed that the ecumenical movement focused more on church unification than on mission. The general meetings in Geneva in 1948 and Princeton in 1953 were in line with ecumenical movements, which were dictated by liberal leaders. Through his assessment, the General Assembly ultimately split into two denominations, one led by Park and the other opposing Park and including Han, in 1960 (Lee, 1991; Kim, 1998; Park, 2004).

This is a very brief history of the schisms in the Presbyterian church in the 1950s. There are many reasons for them, as opposed to a single outstanding cause. Some claimed that the existence of forty-two mission agencies in Korea was an obstacle to the unity of the Korean church. Some believe that the political situation in the American church, with a split between fundamentalists and evangelicals, influenced Korea. Yang (2005) argues that none of these schisms were for theological reasons; however, Cho (2010) rebuts that argument, saying that beneath the surface, it was always Park's motive to push for conservative theology that affirms the Scripture, and that push would have eventually brought the schisms, either in the 1950s or later. In this light, and as will be shown in greater detail, the discord within the Presbyterian church reflected a more general socio-political divide in Korea that itself was a product of a greater struggle between the forces of traditional conservatism and liberal progressivism in the decade. Furthermore, this major schism will ultimately dictate how each denomination will not only interpret eschatology but determine who will be the agent of the end, God or humans.

6.5. Conclusion

Anticipation of the imminent return of Christ provided comfort to the people who suffered under Japanese colonialization, and it became a source of faith for martyrs as many were refusing the Shinto shrine worship. Liberation, however, did not mark the end of trouble for Koreans as the coming of civil war in 1950 afflicted an already desperate populace. This war caused a crisis that shook the foundations of society and placed families and individuals into life-and-death situations. There were many pivotal moments in modern Korean history in regards to eschatology, but the period from 1945 to 1960 witnessed divisions emerge in theologies of the end. Furthermore, the theology of premillennialism shifted along with its context after the annihilation that caused devastation for most Koreans and left them hopeless. Where the Japanese persecution had provided a certain hope of the end and its judgement which would restore the injustices, Koreans did not view the Korean War as progress toward the end; rather, they felt that the Korean War was a sudden apocalypse that shifted hope from an imminent second coming to the realization of the end of this world. It was not the end that premillennialism was waiting for with God being the agent of end, but an alternate ending that

was brought by the human that needed a completely new start. Because they had experienced a different end in the Korean War, they no longer needed or were waiting for the imminent return of Christ. They had experienced the end of the world, and now they needed a different hope. In this period, Korean eschatology was adjusted according to society and individuals. The Korean War, like any civil war, shook the nation's very foundations, not just dividing the nation between North and South, but creating deep chasms in ideology, society and religion, many of which remain irreparable in the present.

This brought about many reactions and responses by people, particularly in the church, and eschatology was no exception; there was still a residue of premillennialism that continued to provide people with the hope of an imminent kingdom. However, it no longer accorded with the focus of rebuilding the society and church in the present world; instead, its emphasis was on a kingdom to come.

The different theological stances have ultimately caused schisms that not only affected the formations of many denominations with their theological focus, but I believe it also have affected the eschatological discussion. While, Park still concentrated on his premillennialism's position, the historical events (that was discussed in previous chapters) and theological and pastoral stances started to decamp from imminent coming of kingdom to it focus on present kingdom here on earth. Han and Kim, has shifted to focus on the present world and fixing its daily problems. This also accorded with Kim's view of the kingdom as universal. And following Han and Kim, their new denominations started to focus on politics, economy, education, commerce and culture. Their interpretation of kingdom of God caused pressure on the conservative churches who were very much in line with theology of Park Hyung Nong. Not only was he the most influential theologian but fervent believer of premillennialism. And what premillennialism contains is the restoration and renewal through physical coming of Kingdom through God as the agent. Park saw the eschatological theological issue as not only issue of when but how the scripture should be interpreted. Thus, despite the changes in Hapdong denomination's stance to premillennialism to amillennialism, Park, Park Yune Sune and Park Aaron, stand firm on premillennialism in the denomination. It is vital to understand this schism

because this their view of theology continues to effect discussion of eschatology in future. These schisms furthers their stances so much that this eschatological stance completely becomes binary which completely shuts out others interpretation. This has caused the Korean presbyterian churches not to be balanced but having to choose one over another. And when eschatological stance became problem of the church in 1992 with DaMi Mission Society, instead of seeking for balanced eschatology, they neglected to respond in turn neglected eschatology in general.

Chapter 7. How the eschatology of the church changed in Korea from 1945 to 1960: Hope of Christ's return to hope of this world

7.1. Introduction

In the past two chapters, I have laid out the historical and Korean church backgrounds before and after the Korean War. This section will show the changes in eschatology due to the factors of Korean history and theological debates that occurred during this period. This chapter will firstly take a look at how the concept of premillennialism diminished due to the devastating conditions that wiped out the infrastructure that was needed for life. Some would argue that conditions after the Korean War were far worse than during the Japanese colonialism. After the Korean War and its effects, contextualizing eschatology to the conditions led to the neglect of eschatology and the abandonment of society and social responsibility and to a focus on present blessing, *gibok shinang*. Secondly, the chapter will look at the radical response to eschatology, where extreme views of eschatology gave birth to new eschatological Christian sects during this period. These responses will affect and change the scope of eschatological development in the discussion of Korean eschatology for the foreseeable future. And all these changes in setting will ultimately make the Korean church seek not hope in Christ's return but hope of rebuilding in this present world.

7.2. Eschatology after the Second World War

Michael Barkun (1986) argues that disaster is one of element that produces millennial eschatological movements. The "disaster" of which he speaks is not just one single disaster but a complex of disasters. Charismatic leaders interpret disasters through the lens of millennial doctrine, but in Barkun's thesis, at least, the concept of disaster and millennium are not as distinct or dissimilar as they initially appear. Millennial movements arose essentially during transitional periods when societies were insecure. The Second World War, the atomic bomb and the chance of nuclear war have caused sudden changes in society and have created anxieties that cannot be changed by themselves (Kyle, 1998). Toffler (1989) has pointed out

that the transitional times will bring about many new religious sects because the values and ideologies that were accepted are completely wiped out by high technology and science; people living during these times will experience tremendous psychological shrinking, and new religious sects will break out (S. Lee, 1992). According to Barkun, "Disaster produces the questioning . . . only in its wake are people moved to abandon the values of the past and place their faith in prophecies of imminent and total transformation" (Barkun, 1986: 6). I agree with Barkun; the Korean War became a disaster-like event that brought about transformation in Koreans' thinking. The Japanese occupation and suffering inclined them towards premillennialism's imminent coming, but the Korean War inclined them away. While according to Barkun, disaster was a sign that pointed the end, the Korean War was the end itself. So after the Korean War, an imminent end was no longer needed. There was a new focus with new works ahead which allowed different religious sects to formulate their own contextualisations. The old system of religion rooted in past experiences no longer had significance in the new world.

Berger's (2000) attitude is similar to that which seems to have developed in Korea between the end of the Second World War and the Korean War, a sense that the worst the apocalypse had to offer has passed.

In representations after the Second World War, the apocalypse became, to a much greater degree, a matter of retrospection. It had already happened. The world, whether it knew it or not, was a ruin, a remnant. More destruction could occur, but it could only be more of the same. Nothing more could be revealed. All subsequent, post-apocalyptic destruction would be absolutely without meaning, mere repetition. (Berger, 2000: 390)

Berger continues by highlighting nuclear annihilation as one of the four principal areas of post-Second World War apocalyptic representation, alongside the Holocaust, apocalypses of liberation and postmodernity (Berger, 2000: 390). According to Weigert, the nuclear context gives the threat of the end, total destruction at the hands of humans.

For the first time, the greatest threat comes, not from natural forces; not from God acting through nature, but from God, or no one, acting through humans. For the first time, humans can "end the world" themselves; persons of all ideological persuasions

have a totally new and shared responsibility for eschatological action. (Weigert, 1988: 178)

Weigert reiterates what Gunther Anders had observed earlier in the decade, that humans were now the “Lords of the Apocalypse”, simultaneously the “the first titans” and “the first dwarfs” (Alvis, 2017: 7). For Anders, it is this paradoxical relationship between the limitations of humankind and the limitless potential of technology that threatens obliteration as the former seeks to use the latter for its own desire for omnipotence (Alvis, 2017: 7).

In August 1945, this had been showcased with devastating effect in Japan, prompting scenes of an almost post-apocalyptic nature in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Both its political relationship and geographical proximity to Japan would have prompted an increased feeling of vulnerability within Korea. The strategic importance of the Korean peninsula ensured it remained inexplicably tied to the concept of a nuclear apocalypse throughout the Cold War as the ensuing nuclear arms race promised weapons of an even greater destructive nature. The Korean War only solidified this anxiety as consideration was given to the use of nuclear weapons as a means of ending the war (Westad, 2017: 174). “Most simply wanted the conflict to end before it spread to their part of the world,” particularly in Japan where—despite some profiteering from the conflict by politicians and businessmen—significant anti-war protests reflected the nation’s trauma of nuclear apocalypse (Westad, 2017: 177). Such a fear would hang over Korea, the region and the rest of the world for the remainder of the Cold War.

With this fear and the possible end or disaster in the hands of people, theologians gave eschatological responsibility to people. In the case of Bultmann, we are able to see the change from Christ-centred eschatology to human eschatology. This has shifted the understanding of eschatological events so that they are “not to be understood as a dramatic cosmic catastrophe but as happening within history, beginning with appearance of Jesus Christ” (Bultmann, 1957: 151). Moltmann writes, “Eschatology means the doctrine of the Christian hope . . . revolutionizing and transforming the present” (Moltmann, 2002: 16). The essence of eschatology has changed from the hope of waiting for the return of Christ and now has as its end human responsibility here and now (Weigert, 1988: 182–183).

Bae argues that after the Second World War, the object of interest changed from being the individual to the society. Before the Second World War, gospel-centred societal involvement was neglected in the religious life of the United States because through the First World War and the Great Depression, Christians had been drawn into apocalyptic eschatology that neglected efforts to reform this world. However, after the Second World War, there were voices in the eschatological discussion that demanded that the church pay attention to its obligation to society. Consequently, after the Second World War, eschatology has been more diverse as a result of the increased mobility and globalisation of communities and ideals, and it has thus become more difficult to pinpoint what the world's eschatology was during these periods of rapid societal change (Bae, 2013: 76–77). However, though this pinpointing is difficult on a global scale, in Korea, premillennial eschatology, with its imminent end and God's intervention, became less popular because of the historical conditions and because liberal Korean churches started to pay attention to their responsibilities and obligations to society.

7.3. Korean eschatology with its focus on present blessing: *gibok shinang*

While social responsibility became an important part of the church's discussion of eschatology, the Korean church walked a different path because of its devastation through the Korean War. Heung Soo Kim (1999a) argues that after the Korean War, there were three structural and psychological changes in society. Firstly, there was a large-scale drift of the population and collapse of pre-existing social strata. Because of the war, many had to adjust to death, horror and famine during the new conditions of their lives. Secondly, there was a dissolving of the traditional cultural system through the experience of war. Confucian social values and morals dissolved because of the need to survive, and it affected people's ways of living by causing individuals to try to protect their profit and advantage with self-centred individualistic behaviour and values. Thirdly, the spread of psychological anxiety through the shock of the war caused people to be anxious regardless of their behaviours. (H.S. Kim, 1999a; H.S. Kim, 2000)

These psychological conditions ultimately brought about two aspirations. One was the anticipation of a messiah who would give them an escape route out of the difficult reality (H.S. Kim, 2000). The other was the pursuit and possession of material wealth that would extinguish

anxiety. Naturally, many turned to the church in the hopes of finding the former, but Shim argues that the latter desire continues to be stronger as churches contextualize to the society, which is trying to escape from the realities of poverty and is seeking blessing in this present world (Shim, 1990). The Korean church, instead of stressing the future end, turned to stressing present blessings. For a long time, this present blessing through faith, *gibok shinang*, was central to the discussion of the church. The Korean church for a long time had an individualistic view of present blessings, thinking that all the weaknesses, diseases, poverty, accidents, disasters, failures, and short lives were punishments from God, while health, wealth, success, honour, and long life were considered blessings from God—all bestowed on individuals as individuals. Those who had experienced the disaster of the Korean War visited the church to escape these punishments, and the churches contextualized their message, preaching that if a person only believes in Jesus, all difficulty and suffering will be defeated. The connection between the blessing of the gospel and this realistic, materialistic view of blessing brought about eye-opening growth in the church during this period. This outlook on present blessings brought about revival in the Korean church and turned the tide from a view of the world as a place where injustices can be fixed only by the restoration of the second coming to one in which the church can nourish a better life in this world through faith. Its concentration on the future started to differ vastly from what it had been before 1945 under Japanese colonialism.

I believe that the war gave a survival instinct, and this has been extended to meeting the needs for survival stressed and strengthened through the belief that present blessing comes through Christian faith. With the extension of the effect of the war into the 1960s, with its industrialization and economic growth, this faith in present blessing has become the basis of the entire doctrine of God, the Holy Spirit, and Christ. Kim agrees that this emphasis on present blessing, how to live well, was exchanged between society and the church throughout this period (Kim, 2000: 13–14). Kim furthers that people trying to escape ordeals and suffering had a strong desire to hope for a messiah who would lead them to heaven on earth or to transform traditional Christianity into something that matched their desire for present blessing. This was strengthened through capitalistic commercialism and the ideology of growth. Great disasters affect human emotions, bringing feelings of confusion and chaos and ultimately transform

religious desires and behaviours. These situations justified and made appropriate the seeking of blessing and healing. So wherever there was a chance of healing or blessing, people were drawn into it with hope (Kim, 1999: 112-132).

After the Korean War, Cho Yonggi, late emeritus pastor of Yuido Full Gospel Church, the biggest single church in the world, realized that there was a gap between the gospel and the devastated reality that was causing people to struggle. Furthermore, he believed that theological knowledge was of no substantive help to the people. Prior to the war, the gospel of sin and punishment and heaven and hell was not effective for people who were suffering from disease or for those who had lost hope and were living in despair. He was preaching about the God of the future and that this God was present during their suffering. The God of the Bible as the God of the past or the God of the afterlife or the God of judgment would not be of interest to people who are living the present (Lee, 2014: 199). The conservative Presbyterians (Hapdong) concentrated their eschatology on premillennialism but failed to contextualize, while liberal theologians concentrated on social responsibility, which failed to capture people who were struggling for daily survival.

Imported from the United States and emerging from radical evangelism (such as the Holiness movement), the Pentecostal movement, especially Cho Yonggi, has tried to combine the above factors into the “five-factors of the gospel,” *ojoong bogeum*, and the “threefold blessing,” *samjoong chukbok*, contextualizing theology into people’s lives as a combined theology, present blessing, and view of eschatology. The five factors of the gospel summarize Cho’s theology, which includes salvation, being filled with the Holy Spirit, healing, blessing, and heaven and the return of Christ to this world. If the five factors of the gospel formed his ministry’s theoretical background, the three factors of blessing—spiritual blessing, environmental blessing, and physical blessing—were applications of it (Lee, 2014: 195). While Cho was emphasizing the return of Christ, he was also stressing blessing in this present life.

Lee believes that the reason for the success of Pentecostalism was its contextualization and naturalization into society, politics, and economics; when theology is contextualized into a situation, God’s Word goes into the life of the people, and Cho’s threefold blessing and faith

was one of those contextualizations. I side more with Lee that adjustment has been made to eschatology in the different setting, and people are feeling completely different from how they felt before 1945. And through the ruins of the Korean War, what was necessary for the Korea was not philosophical or speculative theology but a message of hope that was contextualized into people's lives (Lee, 2014: 198). I agree with Cox and Lee that Cho's approach not only has penetrated into people's daily lives but has also shifted from the premillennialism that was firmly held before and from eschatology seen from a theological perspective and has focused more on how to contextualize theology.

Thus, Korean Christians were faced with a choice after the Korean War between a theology that stressed eschatology and one that stressed earthly, present blessings. The latter not only engaged with the immediate needs of a war-torn population, but it also provided the kind of hope that was absent in eschatology.

I believe the experience of the Korean War gave Korean Christians an "end" different from what they had been anticipating, which was a physical end that would bring about justice through Christ's return. Instead, the "end" they experienced was the Korean War, which left the Korean people in worse conditions which needed a rebuilding. This was a situation quite different from that of the Japanese occupation and its persecution, where the church needed spiritual hope to keep them in the faith. Rather, the Korean War left them needing physical hope to keep them in the faith. In its wake, the population began to look towards the present. Blessings specifically touched the lives of Koreans: the poor by the hope of material blessing and the sick by the hope of healing and ultimate salvation from the last judgment upon the return of Christ. These messages of blessing were contextualized as hope (Lee, 2014: 199–200). Jung Sung Koo evaluates the situation through the history of sermons and concludes that this period in Korean church is one in which "there is a clear polarization between the afterlife and present life" (Jung, 2000: 25–26). Ultimately the church shifted its focus from the premillennialist afterlife to the present and individualistic kingdom of this world.

7.4. Developments since the Korean War

I have stressed numerous times that the Korean War completely destroyed the infrastructure of society. After the war, Korean society and the church shifted their focus to rebuilding. Churches realized the main problem of the society was poverty. And the church through *kibok shinang* gave hope for the rebuilding of a kingdom that would ultimately save people out of poverty. Churches focused on the physical rebuilding of the church with the faith that when one sacrifices for the church it is for Christ. During the 1970s, for those churches that did not have their own physical buildings, it was their aim to possess physical buildings through growth, and so they started emphasize evangelism and offerings. The ones that had physical buildings concentrating on constructing bigger and more beautiful ones. There are numerous stories of people sacrificing their lives to build a church, selling their homes, and having a certain monetary goal to help out with the building. Most of their churches' goal was the construction of a new building:

In the process of the growth of large churches, there existed stories of miraculous lives of pastors who overcame hardships such as death or poverty. The fact that these churches turned the impossible into the possible and became megachurches was presented as evidence of God's "miracle" and blessing. Growth was the meaning of God's blessing, so the church had a religious justification for having to grow. The church could prove God's blessings and miracles only through quantitative expansion and growth. Building up the church was not because of the need for space but as a means of preparing to experience and realize greater development and blessings. Building a new chapel or demolishing an existing chapel and building a larger chapel meant a willingness to fulfil a new dream given by God. (Yi, 2018: 213–214)

People would align themselves with the church as they saw the church's growth of blessing as theirs.

They also witnessed to changes in their own lives or of those other Christians who testified to God's blessing that had brought them out of poverty. In other words, Christians had not only set the material manifestation of spiritual blessings as an achievable goal of Christian life but also actually experienced it in their lives and the life of the whole nation. (Kim, 2007: 44)

Some people received benefit from the improving situation of society. All the blame for the neglect of eschatology should not be put on the historical and societal background, but the injustice and unfairness that people were experiencing through extreme conditions did influence their view of the importance of eschatology. While the society was improving drastically, there were some people feeling despair that was not too different from what people felt because of the conditions of Japanese colonization and the after-effects of the Korean War: they felt left behind. What I am trying to stress is that there are clear shifts in the Korean churches as they stress present blessings and physical rebuilding, but there are still people who are looking for an imminent return of Christ; the need for the imminent coming of the kingdom was felt most by the very marginalized. Ironically, as the economy improved, widening inequality meant more people were left behind. There were people still looking for ways to a better and fairer world ahead.

These paved the ways for *shihanbu* eschatology. The *shihanbu* eschatology of Korea has developed from not only the benefits of rapid growth but its downside. Its historical and societal background is one in which change and reform seem impossible, and the turbulent nature of the future makes it hard to predict. Moreover, the situation of Korea is one in which there is the constant stress of a divided nation and struggles between social classes and radical changes in society through development. To comfort such people, they have predicted the date of the return of Christ to settle their fears in the present and give them hope for the future.

Furthermore, there were many schisms in Korean churches. After the splitting of the Presbyterian church into two dominant denominations, Hapdong and Tonghap, it is estimated that within twenty years there were more than 150 Presbyterian denominations. There were splits in individual churches. This has caused many to wander confused among the denominations. The Korean church, while in the stage of growth and expansion, became hierarchical; power belonged to those who were powerful in society and those who contributed more money to the church. The main focus of the pastors was on the powerful people, and the weaker people became marginalized. Furthermore, the churches became corrupted in the midst of this growth, with scandals concerning money and marital fidelity within the church

leadership, and this has disappointed many people. The church has failed to show itself different from the rest of society. On top of this, the churches' lack of theological training has led to doctrinal deficiencies. Because of this, church members were not able to distinguish and protect themselves from aberrant theologies, including eschatology (Park, 1993; Kim, 2009; Kim, 1998). This has led to the forming of new Christian sects and extreme forms of eschatology, like *shihanbu* eschatology.

7.5. Eschatology and new Christian sects

Throughout the short history of the Korean church, there have been many cases of extreme forms of eschatology quite different from that of the orthodox Korean church. One of the most representative case was in the 1920s and 1930s, when through the mix of mysticism and eschatology, Yoo Myung Hwa and Hwang Kook Joo claimed themselves to be the returned Christ. Sunggun believes that these eschatological phenomena were transformation of millennial eschatology into the tangible environment and situation of Korea (Sunggun, 1992: 1–2). But many believe that heretical Christian sects began and continued to have an impact through Kim Sung Do, who claims to have had two face-to-face divine meetings with Jesus. Kim received a revelation on the first day that “the root of sin is lust” and on the second day that “the returned Christ will physically come to Korea.” When she was excommunicated from the church in 1925, she announced punishment from heaven on the established church's pastors, and when that did not happen, many of her followers went back to the church. One of the key essentials for the leaders of these new Christian sects was direct, divine revelation to them. In February of 1931, she revealed to her daughter that she was the new Lord, and people started calling her New Lord. Almost all of the subsequent new sect leaders followed her footsteps by revealing themselves as the newly returned Lord (Heo, 2017: 30–31). This clearly shows that the Korean church does not have a settled theology of eschatology that can weed out eschatology that is not biblical. Furthermore, it cannot be discounted that the concept of eschatology is still in a stage of confusion while it is being contextualized into Korean society. However, with more Christians receiving theological training abroad and in Korea, it becomes easier to identify unbiblical eschatology. The study of eschatology after 1945 will concern itself

with finding the more biblical eschatology that relates with the Korean society. Eschatology in Korea after 1945 was greatly influenced by conditions in Korean society, so that study of eschatology will be concerned with finding what eschatology remained most biblical and least a product of social contextualisation.

Pre-1945, there was no proper training that laid out theology systematically and which could prevent the mixture of Indigenous cultures and religions. When the first missionaries brought in their eschatology, the people in the churches were not able to understand the meaning or the intention of dispensationalism. Nor did they have the knowledge or ability needed to understand it systematically by just reading the Bible. The lack of theological education training mixed with dispensationalism brought in these heresies (Ko, 2006: 165).

As shown in the last chapter, after the Korean War, although Korean churches were still dominated by dispensational premillennialism, the move to rebuilding society after the war ultimately led to other millennialisms. As it was before 1945, there was no coherent eschatology or millennialism that dictated the direction of the Korean church; rather, its discussion of eschatology expanded into other millennialisms. (This will be proven in upcoming chapters.) Others lost hope and passionately waited for the imminent return of Christ; impoverishment, lack of morale, crises in daily life, and churches splitting for theological reasons caused them to seek only the afterlife. Simultaneously, new Christian sects sprang up in and out of the church (Shim, 1997: 49). These new Christian sects completely denied the present realities and focused on the afterlife. Representatives of movements during those times were Park Tae Sun, who claimed to be the “olive tree,” and Moon Sun Myung, who claimed to be the returned Christ (Kim, 2009). Shim Chang Sub argues that because their eschatology is intertwined so deeply with Protestant faith, new Christian sects using unique eschatology have poached people away whenever there are circumstantial changes or societal instability (Shim, 1990; Ko, 2006).

These sects and their unique practices were particularly appealing to South Koreans in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It was an era of upheaval in South Korean society, which was in the process of transforming from a poor, agrarian economy torn apart by a

devastating civil war to one of the world's most modern and developed economies—all in a single generation. . . .

Many, Kim said, sought “internal peace” and these Christian sects filled the void. (Berlinger, 2020)

After the war, many revival meetings and prayer meetings had people seeking the Holy Spirit for healings of specific health issues. In the middle of the 1950s, the belief was that disease was cured for saints by faith rather than by doctors and medicine. Sick people wanted the laying on of hands rather than medical treatment. During these times, new Christian sects with a mix of eschatological mysticism, like those of Moon Sun Myung and Park Tae Sun, have proclaimed themselves as the Messiah and promised a message of the realization of an ideal society without instability in this present world, proclaiming that this world is the kingdom where the afterlife will occur. Park and Moon believe that the kingdom of God will be established here on earth as promised (H.S. Kim, 2000).

Furthermore, as Rho Gil Myung explains (as quoted by Jung), new Christian sects appear for two reasons: Firstly, Myung claims they occur when there is rapid change in social structure, which causes instability. This has brought great chaos and confusion and changes in values and worldview, and through these conditions, sects can penetrate people's lives. Secondly, he argues they come when there is an increase in social pathology. The new Christian sects come as people's religious movements, providing identity and meaning of life to those who are not able to adjust to these societies (Jung, 2012: 26). These new Christian sects with different view of eschatology penetrated Korean church in the height of rapid changes and during transitional times that brought about instability in society or in individuals. Furthermore, there is close connection between what happened with *shihanbu* eschatology in 1992 and historical and cultural developments after the Korean War.

7.6. Conclusion

Premillennialism was one of the eschatological doctrines that has helped Korean churches experience great revival cannot be discounted, but it has also brought about problems. This

view has helped Koreans in the midst of suffering, but when the despair of the Korean War left people with no hope but to survive, they turned away from faith in the imminent return of Christ; that is, they shifted their views of the kingdom of God from the future into the present. While the eschatology has turned its hope for people to social reform, Koreans have turned to the kingdom of this present earth and well-being.

This has led the churches to contextualize with the traditional religions and to accept the concept of present blessings, which give the hope of security and safety. The church knew that the people's lives were a daily struggle to survive. It had to focus on daily survival or the people would have no future. From the despair of the destruction of Korean War and the recovery that followed, people needed not only the future hope but also the hope that today's work and struggle will bring benefit tomorrow here on earth. As a result, Cho Yonggi and other church leaders shifted their message to the present blessing through faith, preaching that faith and dedication to God, the church and work here on earth will be blessed, not only spiritual blessing but the physical blessings of health and wealth. Ultimately, the church has started to shift its focus from the future of the coming kingdom to the present church. This concept of *gibok shinang* has brought immense growth to the church and led to reliance on the economy and capitalism in the following years. Furthermore, this change has started the neglect of the return of Christ.

However, this brutal remnant of social conditions after the Korea War has produced extreme versions of eschatology that expected an imminent return of Christ. Some started to predict the dates, which gave comfort to people who had no hope or could not be comforted by *gibok shinang*. This has also brought about problematic side effects: new Christian sects graft extreme dualism and millennial faith. They have taught that this dualism is not something that can be overcome, and they divide the world into imminent destruction and anticipation of a new world order. I agree with Barkun that these confrontations of the old world and the new world, when people cannot find hope in the old world, bring about a new regime and new order against the collapsing chaos and disorder of the old world (Micheal Barkun, 1986), and the new regime, combined with the idea of the millennial kingdom, has produced many new eschatological

Christian sects. Korea's liberal denomination extended its meaning of salvation to social equality and justice. Moreover, Korean Pentecostals have extended salvation's meaning to salvation from poverty, disease, and sin and to spiritual and material blessing. There was a clear break not only from the previous interpretation of eschatology but from what can be experienced here and now, as well as a belief that the kingdom of God is not severed from the present but has continuity with it. The kingdom has always been revealed through the history of humanity and has created hope.

Part Three

1960–1980

Chapter 8. Historical Background of Christianity in Korea, 1960–1980

8.1. Introduction

As we shift to new period of 1960-1980, this part of the dissertation will consist of a discussion of history where how unsettling sociological and political occurrences that focused on economic growth had a drastic effect on the Korean church and how trends in theology after the Korean War have influenced the nation and the Korean church. During this time, the theological discussion of eschatology was a debate between premillennialism and amillennialism, and it did not have much impact on the lives of Koreans or their churches. After the Korean War, however, there was a clear sense that while the nation was focusing on rebuilding, the Korean church was following in parallel and focusing on erecting church buildings and the growth of the church. With its concept of the kingdom at that time, the Korean church started to move away from discussion of the second coming and eschatology and focused instead on its kingdom on this earth. This section will describe important changes in society. As the government strives for a better future, the Korean church follows its lead as it focuses on the visible kingdom here in the present world. I will argue that these changes in history will distance the Korean church from premillennialism and cause the neglect of eschatology in the twenty-first century.

8.2. The rise of Park Jung Hee and the promise of a better future

Sauter sees the only hope of Christianity in Jesus Christ the Omega and response to the covenant; there is a true hope in the future fulfilment of this covenant, though not through anything humans can do (Sauter, 1999; 2000). However, in the context of Korea, the pre-Korean War premillennialist belief in the imminent return of Christ, which agreed with that of Sauter, had turned to disappointment because of the devastation of the war and the delay of the kingdom. People had to struggle to survive each day without any assurance that there would be a tomorrow. They were so focused on survival that instead of a need for Christ to return, they needed Christ's help to survive daily. Daily struggles for food and shelter became the main concern, making the coming of the kingdom irrelevant if they did not survive day to

day. Hope now became more about surviving than waiting for the second coming. This was not only the situation of the Korean church but of the Korean people as a whole (H.S. Kim, 1999b; H.S. Kim, 2000). This need for hope of rebuilding was also the concern of Park Jung-Hee, and his solution was economic revival, which he hoped to bring in through a military coup. And during Park's reign, the hope of better life provided through different government policies would coincide with the needs of the people. Park successfully overthrew the second Korean government in 1961 and as president installed a military dictatorship that existed until 1979. (Ko, 1989; J.K. Kim, 2014).

The military dictatorship tried from the beginning to justify its existence through appeals to the benefits of capitalism, reasoning that if the people could experience wealth as a result, all would be well. This provided some relief, and the government's focus on economic growth whatever the cost continued on into the 1970s, when the SaeMaEul (New Village) Movement clearly defined the good life as economic prosperity (Ko, 1989; Chung and Nam, 2013).

The military coup focused in this period on one thing: the economy. Park reasoned that if the economy were doing well and everyone were "living well," it would not matter how the government was bringing that good economy about. Only the results mattered. During his long reign, President Park, while lacking justification for the coup that had made his presidency possible, tried to relieve poverty and rebuild the nation with a Five Year Plan for economic growth through an industrialization policy in the 1960s, and in the 1970s through the SaeMaEul Movement with its slogan of "Let's live well" (Kim, 2000: 10–12).

This movement began to modernize farm villages while seeking well-balanced regional development. Chung and Nam (2013) see the SaeMaEul Movement as a psychological movement to overcome socioeconomic difficulties in line with the tenets of modernity. Woo (2013) has analysed this economic movement as the government's effort to gain the people's participation and cooperation so they believe that they can achieve what they need to do to "live well." Yim (2015) states that there were clear connections between the Korean government and the Korean church, even suggesting that the initial idea for the SaeMaEul Movement came from Christian leaders. The Korean churches' priorities changed since the

Korean War. The physical kingdom has become the focal point of rebuilding in the Korean church as well. Rather than fervently waiting for God's intervention to achieve justice, people shifted to rebuilding their physical lives in the present world. This is the beginning of the journey out of premillennialism in the Korean church. While before the liberation from the Japanese, the Korean churches focused on spirituality by waiting for the physical return of Christ, now they were seeking spirituality within the process of rebuilding their physical lives.

Kim (2014) concludes from his analysis of the *SaeMaEul* Movement that the two Five Year Economic Development Plans (1962–1966, 1967–1971) brought confidence to the people and that through the *SaeMaEul* Movement the government was successful in sharing its ideology with the people. Toward the end of the 1960s, the government's focus on economic growth clearly started to be reflected in real changes in the society. And while capitalism increases free economic production and exchange, when economic gain becomes its most important aspect, the result is commodification, economic oppression, and greed (Chung, 2014; J.K. Kim, 2014).

The development of the Korean economy from the early 1960s included adverse by-products of rapid socioeconomic change on the living standards. Although there was positive social development in Korea, such as an increased life expectancy, a decreased infant mortality rate, and an increased middle school entrance rate, "unbalanced growth . . . generated all kinds of undesirable side effects . . . a worsening distribution of income and wealth, proliferating unearned income, institutionalization of political rent-seeking and corruption, unstable labour-management relations, and government control of the banking industries" (Kwon, 1997: 8).

With the rapid industrialization and modernization, people in urban Korea faced various problems such as pollution and inadequate housing and transportation. On the other hand, the people in rural Korea suffered from a lack of such public goods as education, health care, and sanitation. Economic policy-making was done by the centralized political power structure, and economic power was concentrated in several major conglomerates, referred to as *chaebols*.

The concept of the nation's development was centred on economic growth driven by government-led top-down policies. Although it is true that the government exercised authority

over the general public based on the Confucian ethic that authority is to be respected, there was resistance at the local level. Various demonstrations and protests against the authoritarian military government and in favour of democratization began to take place in the 1980s. Many other Christian scholars including Lee and Kim believe that the government and the church started to share the ideology that economic growth is the most important factor in society and GNP is the most important indicator of whether the government is succeeding. (Lee, 1991; Kim, 2003) S. Lee (2005) says this ideology brought about the denigration of the value of anything else, producing "*homo economicus*" and decisively affecting the Korean church.

Berlinger states,

From 1964 to 1995, per capita gross national income in Korea rose from \$100 to \$11,432, but the economic gains were not all shared equally. Those who did not reap the benefits of the Park government's moves "were disappointed by government policy after the Korean War," said David Kim, a professor at Australian National University and expert in Korean religion. Many, Kim said, sought "internal peace," and these Christian sects [Protestants and new Christian sects] filled the void. (Berlinger, 2020)

The reality of these programs was that while GDP increased, not everyone benefited from the government economic programs. There were people still struggling to survive, there was unbalanced growth, and consideration and care for the disadvantaged were lacking. The burden and responsibility of welfare was completely in the hands of individuals. This slogan of "Let's live well" did not transfer to all individuals, and Korean churches tried to fill the void for neglected people by intermixing faith with present blessing: *gibok shinang* focused on here and now rather than looking ahead.

8.3. The Korean church after these movements and the shift in eschatological outlook

While the church in modern Europe has decreased in numbers, the Korean church during this time has experienced explosive growth. Why have some Korean people chosen the church, more specifically the Protestant church? The outer goal of Koreans was to protect themselves from communist attack, and the inner goal was to beat poverty and to live well. In this sense, the goal of the Korean government and that of Korean churches in general were identical. The

Korean church, along with the Korean society as a whole, concentrated on concrete growth: it focused on the reconstruction of the physical church and the growth of the congregation (Lee, 1991; Kim, 1998; Kim, 2003; Min, 2004). To achieve this, the church had to focus on the importance of material wealth as a blessing from God. Kim argues that, corresponding to movements in Korean society, the church put church growth as its main goal and justified encouraging the desire for material wealth by including it as an aspect of social stability (Kim, 2000). People were interested in religion because the fast-paced economic growth, industrialization, and urbanization were accompanied by an air of anxiety. Ko considers this an adverse effect of industrialization, which brought inflation and inequality within society (Ko, 1989: 233–238). This economic growth did not relieve either poverty or anxiety; instead, it brought inequity, which in turn brought about distrust in the government. The economic growth of the 1960s brought not stability but instead confusion, with fast changes that did not benefit the middle class. The poverty that its members had experienced before did not go away with better economic conditions, and Christians were seeking stability the same way everyone else was, by trying to acquire more wealth through their religious practices (Kim, 2000: 21).

According to Jang (2018), not only has economic progress impacted the church, but the society's ideas of prosperity, abundance, and social climbing have come into the church unopposed. While the government tried to bring economic well-being to society, the church promised well-being to individuals as the fulfilment of what the society was promising. The well-being promised by society is different from the church's promise of present blessing, which focuses on faith; however, society and church both based achieving well-being on one's efforts. In a way, the promise of present blessing is a phenomenon that was brought into the church through what was happening in society.

Kim goes further with his argument that there has also been a shift in theology regarding the church's account of the kingdom of God: "The concept of the Kingdom of God held by the leaders in this period was of a visible kingdom that would be manifested in the institutional church" (Kim, 2003: 154). While before this period, the focus was on a kingdom of God in the future with the coming of Christ, during this effort to achieve material well-being, the church

started to focus on building the kingdom of God here and now. Kim rightly points out that the church became entangled in efforts to reach the goal of rebuilding society, which in turn went hand-in-hand with a concept of a kingdom of God different from what there had been before 1945 and the Korean War.

This shift in the concept of the kingdom, I believe, was due to its stance on hope. The hope before the Korean War and during the Japanese colonial occupation was placed in the coming kingdom, but when Christians experienced the “end” during and after the Korean War, the hope itself shifted toward what was in accord with government policy on the economy in the belief that that policy could give stability to people. This did not stop with materialism; rather, it went further into the meeting of physical needs and the ways of securing stability through spiritual fulfilment in the church. The church taught that individuals could achieve stability through work for the church in this world. These ideas ultimately decreased religious interest in what is to come, and some Christians stopped believing that Jesus Christ would come imminently and started believing that he will probably not come at all and so focused without guilt on the pursuit of glory in this world.

The visible Kingdom of God then was not much different from the secular society of Korea, especially from 1966 to 1988, which was under military government. The military government and Hapdong Presbyterian Church were common in seeking numerical growth: the former material wealth and the latter numerical church growth. (Kim, 2003: 161)

These economic results provided a rational justification for materialism as well (D. Lee, 2005). The Korean church started to connect spiritual blessing to material blessing and made it instrumental to faith, thus becoming a corporation focusing on results and seeking material abundance. The spiritual aspect was measured through the number of congregants and the size of the offerings. Park goes so far as to evaluate the church as a colony of materialists that sought and simulated government economic policy (Park, 2006). Capitalistic values were welcomed into the church, and it started making growth its priority and considering growth, spiritual or not, the result of blessing. This has brought not only tremendous growth in numbers and in offerings but in a focus on what is seen. During these times, the number of church

buildings built was significantly higher than before. The bigger the church, the more successful the church was considered, and senior pastors became like CEOs, paid according to their perceived success.¹⁰ Lee claims that this prioritization of growth has shifted the paradigm of success from the spiritual to an emphasis on only what is visible in capitalistic society (Lee, 2003: 147–148). This has led to two significant changes in the Korean church: it started to neglect social responsibility and, more to our point, the second coming of Christ.

This is a significant change because this is the time in Korean church history that the parousia was not understood to be imminent. Cullman(1950) holds that the delay in the coming of the kingdom did not diminish the eschatological expectation of the early church and applying Cullman’s reflections to the Korean situation, I suggest that the Korean church’s past expectation of the imminent return of Christ lessened due to its experience during and after the Korean War. While Korean theologians still tried to hold to Cullman’s view of the tension between the “already” and the “not yet” aspects of the kingdom (which will be discussed in detail with millennialism in the next chapter), the people’s perspective shifted from what is to come to how one can rebuild in this world. This shift in eschatology during this time caused Korean churches to start to shift their message of eschatology from premillennialism, how to prepare for the imminent end, to how to live well in the present world. Thus, Korean Christians’ interest in the coming kingdom started to decrease.

Kim (2003) considers this era as one in which the church thought not of the coming of God’s kingdom but of a kingdom to be built in this world. Especially seeing their failure to oppose the Japanese government and loss of government support during the Japanese occupation, Korean church leaders became very political. They wanted to make the nation the visible kingdom of God:

As time passed, the area of interest of Korean Christian pastors was the visible body of Christ. They wanted to equip the church with political support, and they also began to

¹⁰ In criticizing the income of megachurch pastor, Cho states, “take large amounts of income for granted, are dominated by a 'consciousness of qualification' that is a 'deserving reward for success'. They are immersed in the 'CEO mentality' that they should receive a huge salary and bonus because they have made a lot of profits for the company. This often leads to the privatization of religious institutions and churches” (Cho, 2008).

seek the visible body of Christ in the theological realm. The Kingdom of God seemed to be at a touchable distance in their minds. (Kim, 2003: 120).

The Korean church was focused not on the coming kingdom but on a kingdom that could be built by the earthly church.

This desire was furthered by huge revival meetings that were held throughout the country. These focused not only on going to heaven after death but also on success in business, the success and well-being of children and the healing of different diseases. Shin (2006) states that these types of sermons were in the majority during this time. This ultimately caused the church to shift its focus from future eschatology to realized eschatology. Mention of the end was not totally absent from the church's message. Lee Sung Bong, who is known to be on the front line of the revival in Korea, urged people to have eschatological faith in the second coming of Christ and to believe that the return of Christ would bring about the true healing of this world. Lee's intention is clear: people should keep Christ's return in mind, and one should be awake and live waiting for the end. But his message is focused not on the imminence of Christ's return but instead on how one will be restored by the return. And the Korean church, while not focusing on the end, tried to figure out a way to restore itself. One of the most intriguing aspects of this period is that while there is an emphasis on the "present blessing," the messages were also concerned with the end.

Cho Yonggi, previously discussed, was the pioneer bringer of the message of present blessing, making his church the largest in the world. One example comes from Cho Yonggi:

In the midst of this, I started to develop a philosophy in my sermons. I concluded that I needed to prove that the gospel of heaven and the living God is what solves the living [eating] problems in this present life. This is because it is through connection with the hearts of those who hear the sermon that they will be interested to come to church. . . . My sermons are wholly concentrated on the message of how life's problems can be solved. How can the Word of God solve those spiritual, mental, physical, and social problems that one faces in the real world? And I prepare the sermon manuscript to tell how church members can have good faith in God and how one can be a person of heaven and at the same time succeed in this world. Therefore, I teach strongly in the

hearts of church members the principles of God's word, which are faith, hope, and love. (Cho, 2007: 88)

While being firm in his belief in dispensational millennialism, he did emphasize the second coming of Christ. This was perhaps his way of promoting work for blessing in the present time and pressuring people to engage in it. The emphasis on the dispensational millennialism shows the limitation of time until the second coming; this limitation of time pressures people to do the work for blessing here on earth and well as the blessing that will come with the second coming.

Furthermore, the church's focus on individual blessing put much of the responsibility for that blessing on those individuals. If one was not rich and healthy, this was seen as a reflection of one's lack of works or the cost of one's sin. So both society and church were seeking economic results that would promote well-being. This made material wealth the criterion of the success of the church and of the faith of individual church members, thus inferring faith from nonessential results. This has made for commercialism in the church: the church sought rebuilding not for its own survival but for expansion to match that of society. This led to evaluating the numbers of members and workers and the amount of the offerings as measures of success.

Kim (2014) notes that the focus of sermons during these times was on spiritual blessings and material blessings and how they are interconnected: wealth, health, and success were the visible barometers of a person's spiritual status. Furthermore, he says that they focused on not only blessing in this world but blessing in the next life as well. The messages clearly connected the life of the believer with offerings to God: the more one gives, the more one will receive, and faith is ultimately faith in that connection. I would argue, however, that Kim fails to acknowledge that the focus in Cho's sermons was more concentrated on this world and that talk of the next life was only in connection with how a successful spiritual life had results in this present life; that is, the next life is only a reflection of how one does in this world. Indeed, Cho draws a direct link between "how church members can have good faith in God and how one

can be a person of heaven and at the same time succeed in this world”, thus implying that good faith in God can lead to success in the present life, but the two are not inextricably linked.

8.4. Conclusion

During the rebuilding of nation after the Korean War, Korean churches focusing on these present-blessing messages experienced rapid growth. One study shows that the Korean church grew from eight hundred thousand members in 1964 to three million in five years. The number of churches grew from 6,800 to 12,800 (Yoo, 1993). While opinions vary on the reasons for growth, it is clearly related to the Korean economy’s growth, which was triggered by changes in society that led people to have an appetite for the church with its message that complemented the economic well-being of not just society but individuals (Lee, 1998). With this attraction, leaders of the church tied present blessing with giving and evangelistic efforts that would bring about blessing in individual lives. The church not only has adapted by embracing unstable people in social-historical changes, it has implemented that change in a religious sense. The Korean churches gave people not only the hope of heaven but hope in this world that can be achieved as a reward for effort expended on behalf of the church: one who gives material to God will experience various kinds of blessing in life in return. This exchange required absolute faith and material devotion, and this faith and devotion drove the church’s broad expansion. These changes will ultimately affect how the Korean church thinks about and discusses eschatology and how it affects theology in general in the Hapdong denomination; all of this will shift the discussion of eschatology from premillennialism to amillennialism.

Chapter 9. The Eschatology of the Korean church, 1960–1980

9.1. Introduction

The last chapter concluded that after the Korean War the whole country was focused on rebuilding for survival. As a result, society and the Korean church started to shift their focus to the present. In this section, I will discuss the changes in eschatology within the Hapdong denomination and how Park Hyung Nong and his followers coped with changes in the denomination. With the change from fundamentalism to Reformed theology, there are also clear shifts from Park's premillennialism to amillennialism during this time. Along with explaining the reason for this shift, this section will discuss what changed with the shift from premillennialism to amillennialism and what effect it had on the eschatology of Korea. I believe this change from premillennialism to amillennialism has contributed to the neglect of eschatology in the present Korean church as it took away the imminency of the coming kingdom, which in turn took away the urgency from the Korean church. Furthermore, I will argue that, during this period, eschatology was not a discussion of merely millennialism but how one understood the theological concept of the kingdom of God. The past focus on the imminent nature of premillennialism's second coming shifted to a discussion of not when but how these historical events would usher in a new kingdom. While the conservatives still waited for the kingdom of God, the liberals went ahead with building the kingdom of this world. We will explore their differences and how it has affected the discussion of eschatology in general in the Korean church.

9.2. Fundamentalism's shift to Reformed theology

Kim Eui Hwan, church historian, former president of Chongshin University and student of Park Hyung Nong, while discussing Park's significance as theologian, quotes Lee Jong Sung as saying that it is hard to figure out what Park's theology was during the 1970s and 80s and that he was a Calvinist but not a scholar of Calvin. He probably makes this claim because Park was a fundamentalist and premillennialist, and it is important that the rest of the Hapdong

denomination is moving away from what Park claimed, with the exception of the inerrancy of the Scripture. Instead, Kim labelled Park as a representative of Korean conservative theology and divided his life into two parts, in the first of which he emphasized establishing Presbyterian theology and in the second he defended liberal theology as his contribution (Kim, 1997). This certainly shows that the focus of Park and the Korean church shifted from maintaining the conservative position of fundamentalism to defending liberal theology. But at the same time, Park was advocating fundamentalism to his conservative allies as they were shifting more toward Reformed theology.

Although Park's fundamentalism has remained important because of its supreme emphasis on the Bible and its divine authority, it also put the superiority of biblical authority over any other Christian doctrines. This brought about a clash with young Reformed theologians. But fundamentalism continued its emphasis on Scripture, "criticizing today's Dutch Reformed theology which emphasises the Holy Spirit's role in the inspiration of the Bible . . . that its over-emphasis on the Holy Spirit actually reduces the idea of Scripture's objective divine authority" (Park, 2001: 319). Park's protégé, Park Yune Sune, understood the Reformed theologians' concerns for fundamentalism's problem of doctrinal balance: fundamentalists tend to fragment the Bible instead of dealing with it systematically. He thus pinpoints the difference: the fundamentalist way of interpreting the Bible literally has a cause-and-effect outcome different from that of Reformed theology. I think the followers of Park's fundamentalism tried to blur its position on premillennialism to mend its relationship with the Reformed theologians while trying to defend it from liberal theologians. Park Yune Sune, while following the footsteps of Park Hyung Nong, did not have as strong a premillennial stance as Park Hyung Nong's; he knew of the change to amillennialism among the Reformed theologians, so he, like Machen, may not have thought that this question of millennialism should segregate one group from another in the Reformed camp.

And it was clear that it was hard in the educational institutions of those days to learn conservative theology but even harder to be a fundamentalist. The aforementioned Harvie Conn, former professor at Westminster Theological Seminary and a Presbyterian missionary

who moved to Korea in 1960, observed, “Since 1950, there has been a rapid increase [in Korean students studying abroad]. In view of the theological direction of western institutions, one can hardly expect the Korean student to return with stronger conservative convictions!” (Conn, 1972: 56). And when they do, they return with strong Reformed backgrounds from conservative institutions like Westminster Theological Seminary, which differs from Park Hyung Nong’s premillennialism.

In Daniel Park’s dissertation criticizing fundamentalism in the light of Reformed theology, he says,

Present-day Korean fundamentalism, as has been discussed earlier, mainly focuses on the five major doctrines (the inerrancy of the Bible, the virgin birth of Christ, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, the bodily resurrection of Christ and the bodily return of Christ in the Second Advent), and it practices theological hermeneutics only within those five doctrines . . . fundamentalism takes one part of God’s revelation into consideration, but disregards the other part which is revealed in history. Its theological doctrines are focused on God’s special revelation, while general revelation is recognized as partial and supplementary. (Park, 2001: 329)

Park is saying that while fundamentalism is very good on the theological doctrine of special revelation, its interpretation in the real world lacks understanding of “God and His concern for humanity” (Park, 2001: 329). Park Hyung Nong, a believer in fundamentalism, was firm on the fact that the meaning of the Scripture should transcend all contexts and mediators. And this was done through a literal interpretation of the Scripture. For him, this was the same as his stand on premillennialism. Through literal interpretation, fundamentalists accepted premillennialism’s literal understanding of a thousand-year kingdom, and through Japanese colonialism and the consequent suffering that gave no hope for life in this world, the Korean church accepted premillennialism and the imminent, visible second coming of Christ. But the aspect of imminency was of greater importance during and after the Japanese colonial occupation. This belief has become the traditional view of Korean millennialists, and this tradition has carried over into the post-Korean War era, as demonstrated in chapter 5.

After the Korean War, with the growing number of Reformed theologians in the Hapdong denomination, Park Aaron, who was a professor of systematic theology at Chongshin University and son of Park Hyung Nong, understood that amillennialism was rising in the theological stance of the church around the world and in Korea. While mentioning that even his father agreed, Park Aaron argued that all three understandings of millennialism are acceptable, but he urged the Korean churches to follow premillennialism (Park, 1992). I think that Park and his followers recognized not only liberalism but also the Reformed theologians as threats. While it seemed like they had similar views of Scripture, the concern was with its interpretation, which brought about divisions in their interpretations of millennialism. Perhaps the issue of Hapdong's millennialism had more to do with its stance on the interpretation of the Scripture. However, fundamentalists in the Korean church loosened its stance on amillennialism and reduced its emphasis on the imminence of the kingdom but increased its emphasis on the physical nature of the second coming. As a result, with ongoing historical conditions that lessened the importance of premillennialism, focus on the timing of the return of Christ decreased, replaced by focus on the identity of the principal agent of restoration towards the end time.

During these times, Park Hyung Nong was more worried that liberal theology was attempting to interpret the second coming as "symbolic or allegorical", limiting the second coming to Christ's spiritual presence in the life of believers and manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, he states that premillennialism "never overlooks the spiritual meaning of prophetic literature, but it tries not to incline too much as to lose the whole truth. The reason why premillennialism takes a prudent attitude in spiritual interpretation and a positive manner in literal interpretation is because its goal is to obtain full explanation" (Park, 1978: 265). With this view, Park has always strived to interpret what is written in the Scripture, that the second coming is bodily and visible, with glory and authority different from that of the first advent.

As we have seen in this section with this shift of fundamentalism to Reformed theology, I believe the focus from the imminence of the kingdom to the physical form the kingdom will take, three things contributed to the premillennialism shift to amillennialism. First, the historical situation has vastly improved during this period, lessening the need for hope that the

coming of Christ would save people from martyrdom or tribulation. There was no longer a serious threat to their lives; the only threat was economic, and that was being dealt with by the government. Economic plans were taking shape, and people started to see a way out of the poverty caused by the Korean War. The change from persecution by the Japanese to religious freedom meant that the intervention of God was no longer imminently required.

Premillennialism's second coming is about quick judgement to come, but Koreans no longer needed a judge; they needed a helper. This drastically lessened the need for the second coming in general, so an imminent return was no longer their focus.

Second, the theological concept of the kingdom of God changed during this period along with the historical situation. And this change in concept brought about support for a different eschatology. According to Kim Young Jae, because of the emphasis on the afterlife during the Japanese colonial period, the concept of heaven was limited to the place a person goes after he dies (Y.J. Kim, 1993). Analogous to Kim Young Jae, Kim Keun Soo says, "The concept of the Kingdom of God held by the leaders in this period was of a visible kingdom that would be manifested in the institutional church" (Kim, 2003: 153-154). This shows how not only the concept of the kingdom of God changed but how the nature of the kingdom the eschatology was expecting also changed. This concept that George Ladd (1974) states was adopted by the conservative church, including Hapdong denomination. This introduces the inaugural eschatology, which affirms that the kingdom of God as both already established.

The Kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God dynamically active to establish his rule among men, and . . . this Kingdom, which will appear as an apocalyptic act, has already come into human history in the person and in the mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver men from its power and to bring them into the blessings of God's reign. The Kingdom of God involves two great moments: fulfilment within history and consummation at the end of history. (Ladd, 1974: 218)

When the kingdom of God was limited to the place a person goes to after this present life, it does not matter what happens in the present life. The changes in concept of kingdom of God contributed to shift from premillennialism to amillennialism.

Third, Park and his followers battled against liberal theology. They tried to accommodate Reformed amillennialism by loosening their stance on the imminent nature of the return, but they maintained their belief in the physical nature of the thousand-year kingdom of premillennialism. In a presentation on the millennialism of Park Hyung Nong, Lee Sangwoong, professor at Chongshin University, summarizes that while Park did acknowledge that amillennialism is the theological position of Reformed theologian and cannot be ignored, his intention was to show that premillennialism is the most biblical system; he found weaknesses in amillennialism, the biggest of which is that “[it leaves] many prophecies about the last days as meaningless rhetoric without explanation” (Park, quoted in S. Lee, 2017) I believe that while Reformed premillennialism does exist in Korea, it has been disregarded as amillennialism became the major force, at least in the Hapdong denomination after the 1990s, in the wake of the *shihanbu* eschatology.

9.3. Park’s followers and the kingdom of God

When most Reformed theologians did not concur in understanding the thousand years in Revelation 20 as literal, Park loosened his stance for a literal thousand years and became open to amillennialism’s symbolic interpretation. He acknowledges that not everything in Revelation was literal and that it contained symbolic expressions.

However, it is true that the literary style of Revelation has symbolic expression intermixed. There are many cases especially in using numbers. . . .There is no reason for believers to argue about “1000 years” as literal meaning or symbolic meaning. Defer the argument and should seek only the Lord. (Y.S. Park, 2003: 497)

Jung argues that Park does not provide a legitimate reason for being open to both interpretations, that his openness is a contradiction of his stand for a literal thousand years, and that he has alternated between literal and symbolic interpretations of the thousand years in Revelation 20. He might have felt at odds with his literal interpretation of the thousand years because he had been influenced by the Reformed tradition (Jung, 2013).

But what Park managed to do was to keep the premillennialist view of a dualistic kingdom. Through its influence from the first missionaries, the general understanding of the kingdom of God was as the place where one goes after death, and this would make this world about gaining salvation for the afterlife (Jung, 1989). Park clearly kept the line between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God to come. This world was about spiritual preparation for the coming kingdom. Kim writes about Park's view of heaven:

Dr. Park's view of heaven is "Sinyonghan Chunkuk." . . . The word "Sinyoungghan" is understood as spiritual, divine or out of human affairs, the matters of God and the somewhat high dimension of ethical standards (god-like). He had a good knowledge of Chinese literature. . . . Nevertheless, he did not show any hint that his view was based on the Chinese traditional view of the "ideal state of utopia." (Kim, 2003: 145)

But Kim goes on to say that Park's idea of "heaven" perfects the Chinese ideal of the "inner world of man's spirituality." The focal point of his ministry was repentance. He states in his autobiography that all recovery starts with repentance, which ultimately leads to evangelistic work. So, on this earth, the Christian life is spiritual recovery of oneself from sin, rather than engaging in any earthly matters. In his testimony, he confessed that he never went out for a fun time with his family because of his commitment to teaching and writing commentaries. He also emphasized that the church on earth is not only not perfect but sinful, but it carries and bears the light of God through evangelization. Although many believe that Park eased up on premillennialism amid the shift to amillennialism in the Korean church, he still saw the physical world as a sinking ship and in need of God's intervention. Furthermore, the most important thing about life on earth was spiritual preparation for God's kingdom while evangelizing. Was this evangelism in any way connected to society? Only if it was works related to the spreading of the gospel (Kim, 2003; Park, 1980; Y.S. Park, 1994a; Y.S. Park, 1994b).

I believe this concept of the kingdom penetrated conservative churches that neglected this world and were not worried about what was happening on this earth. The conservative Korean churches including the Hapdong denomination neglected politics and social responsibility, concentrating their force on individual salvation, which was always the aim and the prerequisite for any church work. This is the very reason the conservative churches were criticized for lack of

involvement in society other than their efforts in evangelism. (These criticisms will be dealt with more in chapter 13.) Moreover, Jung asserts that conservative Korean churches considered political crises opportunities to evangelize, and they focused on individual evangelistic movements while concentrating on the increase in the number of people in the churches to justify their reasoning and to prove the result of their kingdom work on this earth (Jung, 1989). While premillennialism's view of the imminent return of Christ faded away, Korean Christians still felt that the further problems of this earth would not be solved without physical intervention by God. While liberal churches saw crises as opportunities to do kingdom work in this world, conservative churches saw them as opportunities for spreading the gospel (How this happened will be dealt in Chapter 13). With belief in the imminent return of Christ fading away, liberal churches started to focus on the physical world and works that needed to be done, and conservative churches like those in the Hapdong denomination still limited themselves to the spreading of the gospel. The kingdom of God and the work of the church was limited to gospel proclamation that would ultimately prepare people for the kingdom of God.

Ahn (2014) interviewed 150 people who spent time with Park Yune Sune. According to Ahn's study, while there are contradictory accounts of his ministry and his emphasis, his students focused on his role modelling and his emphasis on prayer. Park would always point out the rotten nature of this world and humans and ask his students to pray for the nation, churches, ministers, missionaries and other people. One would remember how he was concerned not only with the salvation of the people but also with how churches have to be aligned with the local society. Nor he was never focused on the number of members in the Korean church and its growth. But through prayer, he focused on being spiritual in this world not getting distracted from the coming kingdom and its work on this world.

This kingdom concept translates into his definition of "reform" as well. According to Chung (2010), one of the most important aspects of all of his ministries, including being the head of a school or denomination, was reforming. Reforming was the foremost word that he used, and when he had the chance to bring two separated denominations, Hapdong and Hapshin, together in 1984, he emphasized that reforming is more important than uniting.

Chung (2010) presented excerpts from Park's sermons explaining what he meant by *reform*:

Since we are in Christ and must stay there, we have urged each other to reflect on ourselves and not to criticize others. ... For those who do not support our theological movement, we must understand them and respect their position. And for those who oppose the Joint Theological Seminary, we must understand their reasons and not lose peace in our hearts. We shouldn't always stay in the foolish position of saying that only we ourselves are right. (Anon, 2000: 136)

We cry, "Reform! Reform!" But what are we reforming? First of all, we have to be really creative in these things. . . . Let this be the shape of the reformer. . . . The watchman sees himself first. It's serious to look at oneself. They look to make them feel their faults and their immaturity. (Chung, 2010: 253-254)

The movement of reform for Park started with the individual's spiritual life, the desire to live a truthful life in the present.

In light of Park Yune Sune's tremendous influence, it is inevitable that many of the students that studied under him followed in his footsteps. It is clear even through the interviews that the impact of this man is great, and he gave his students some life-altering experiences. Also clear is that while the discussion of millennialism shifted from premillennialism to amillennialism through Park Hyung Nong and his followers like Park Yune Sune, the emphasis on the question of the thousand years in Revelation 20 and the imminence of the return of Christ decreased, but the nature of the kingdom of God was still in the minds of premillennialists (Kim, 2003). This in fact caused the conservative denominations, especially Hapdong, to actively seek the coming of the kingdom. This in turn made its work more evangelistic than social, concentrating on work within the church and on numerical growth. While the intention of Park Yune Sune might not have been solely to increase numbers, his work resulted in the church dualistically segregating the kingdom on earth from the coming kingdom of God.

9.4. Park Aaron and the kingdom of God

Park Aaron, the son of Park Hyung Nong, was a stronger advocate of premillennialism than Park Yune Sune. While raising concerns about the growth of amillennialism in the Hapdong

denomination, he proclaimed that premillennialism was a long-time tradition in the Presbyterian church in Korea. He said many times that it should be premillennialism that Chongshin and the Hapdong denomination should follow, but he did see why they started to follow amillennialism (Park, 1992; A. Park, 1994; A. Park, 1993). For his main reason for following premillennialism, he goes back to his faith in inerrancy regarding the Scripture while admitting that not everything can be interpreted literally. However, in regard to Revelation 20:1–10, he argues that if the reign of God started by Christ’s incarnation can only be seen through the eyes of the faithful, the return of Christ at the end of the world will show “Christ’s reign, his glory and power, . . . so that we can see it through our physical eyes” (Park, 1996: 149).

This is understandable in the light of Park Aaron’s strong fundamentalist background, which he inherited from his father, whom he saw defend fundamentalism against liberal theology. But Park Aaron has stated that his father’s approach to defending against liberalism was a “complete blockade policy”: one should not even read or discuss the material of liberal theologians. However, he says that his approach is different from that of his father; he wants discussion of different theologies using what he calls a “method of situational criticism” (A. Park, 1994: 20). This method combines critical evaluation with a holistic vision to see the “situational contribution” of any theology. He denies that he is compromising; rather, this method will open dialogue with other theologies, which will help theology students find their own identities. As a Christian apologist, he used his platform constantly to dialogue with other theologies, including liberalism.

Many of his writings engaged and criticized liberal theology and *minjung* theology, and their concepts of the kingdom of God and the church. His major criticism of them was their belief that God’s revelation can be found not only in the Bible but also in history and human culture. Their emphasis on natural revelation could not be acknowledged by Park Aaron, who limited the revelation of God only to the Bible. Moreover, he objected to the idea that humanity can improve and make contributions, that the physical church has responsibilities in this world,

while he denied what humans can do and emphatically stated that the kingdom of God consists only of regenerated people and is ruled by God.

Although Park Aaron followed the strong footsteps of his father with premillennialism, his approach made it possible and opened doors for Hapdong theologians to discuss different millennialism. It is important to understand that there has been an important transition in the discussion of Korean eschatology, and there is now a strong current of amillennialism in regard to eschatology in Hapdong denomination of Presbyterian church. It has been said through the powerful voice of Park Hyung Nong that within the Hapdong denomination and at Chongshin, it was not possible to teach about anything other than premillennialism, but now both have started to tolerate and acknowledge diversity in the interpretation of millennialism.

9.5. Conclusion

During this period, unlike the period before, where the urgency of discussion of the return of Christ lessened due not only to historical changes but to theological shifts, discussion of when Christ would return changed from “soon” to secrecy about when. This occurred with fading influence of Park Hyung Nong and his son, Park Aaron loosening its stance on premillennialism. The Korean church adapted this and turned its focus from urgency to readiness. With urgency disappearing, it has significantly changed churches’ interest in eschatology. The churches lost the sense of urgency concerning the coming kingdom.

As I have shown, the residue of premillennialism lasted on with Park Hyung Nong and his followers and their concept of the kingdom of God. Rather than following amillennialism’s idea of the kingdom as the reign of the church era, many in Hapdong theologians and church leaders followed premillennialism’s concept of the kingdom as God’s physical reign in this world, waiting for heaven. This concept turned the Korean church from complete neglect of the present world during the sufferings under Japanese colonialism and the aftermath of the Korean War, but the responsibility of the church and its people was limited only to evangelization work, seeing this world as irreparable and in need of God’s intervention. During

this period, conservative churches prepared for the kingdom by focusing on the growth of the church, on revival meetings and evangelistic efforts. While the church was not the kingdom of God, the church was a tool of the kingdom of God for individual salvation and investment in the church infrastructure, which ultimately was to become the physical kingdom on earth.

This shift away from the premillennialism in Hapdong theologians to open the discussion on different millennialism after Park Hyung Nong, has been an important transition in the discussion of Korean eschatology. And now the Hapdong denomination have started to tolerate and acknowledge diversity in the interpretation of millennialism, which I believe brought in theologians that would shift the denominations stance to amillennialism.

While many consider diversity a positive result, the shift from premillennialism to amillennialism comes with a certain warning as well. Premillennialism caused the Korean churches to see the world dualistically, either all good or evil, and to neglect the world we live in, which caused new Christian sects to use this dualism as the starting point for their theology, for example, *shihanbu* eschatology (which will be discussed in the next part). However, the premillennialism also gave the Korean church urgency and tension and ignited it during the era of Japanese colonialism. This urgency concerning the return of Christ and the tension between now and the return has brought the church to more fervent participation in evangelism and repentance. This brought about much growth in the Korean church as well. Amillennialism, too, was not without its weaknesses. As Kim points out, there needs to be a balance rather than an assertion of one form of eschatology. While premillennialism is becoming less influential, it has some very important and positive factors (Kim, 2003). The shift to amillennialism in Hapdong has caused the imminent nature of premillennialism to abate and Korean Christians to relax, as if there is no physical kingdom that will bring about judgment. Because of the uncompromising premillennialism stance from Park Hyung Nong, made the Hapdong denomination to choose either premillennialism or shift to amillennialism. It neglected the positives that brought by both premillennialism and amillennialism. By calling for a balance in faith through different eschatologies, Kim recognises that it is important for both premillennialism and amillennialism to exist despite their fundamental differences.

Chapter 10. Liberal theology, liberation theology and its impact on eschatology in the Korean church, 1960–1980

10.1. Introduction

Last chapter, we explored the shift theologically in eschatology from premillennialism to amillennialism. While there were still strong tendency in premillennialism, it was concluded that many of those who stood for premillennialism, including Park Hyung Nong and Park Yune Sune were trying to defend from neglecting God as the agent of the end. In this chapter, I will explore liberal theology and how it penetrated into Korean society and designated humans as the agents of change in this world. I will explain the concepts behind the Korean words *han* and *minjung* and how they explain the major differences between the Hapdong denomination and liberal theology. And while these theologies did not have a major effect on the Korean church, they did make popular the idea of humans as the agents of change and set the stage for postmillennialism, as will be explained in the coming chapters. This will help us understand better the neglect of eschatology in the Korean church: premillennialism's waiting for God as the agent of the end shifted toward humans as the agents of change for a better present world.

10.2. Western theology and *han*

Liberals must occupy the slippery slope (as fundamentalists see it) of moral relativism and faulty human judgement. Or, as liberals prefer to see it, they are the true sojourners, leaving their encounter with God at Sinai to wander in search of the Promised Land. They are to be called the progressives, the innovators, the seekers after a deeper, more elusive knowledge of God than that known by the fundamentalists. (Wuthnow, 1993: 127)

The conservative church has discussed and “concentrated much attention in the areas of classic systematic theology, whereas Korean neo-orthodoxy moves more freely in the realm of ethics. It is also true that conservatives hold back from such forms of dialogue because of uncertainty as to how and, even whether, such dialogue may be carried on” (Conn, 1972: 72). While the

conservative church thought the growth and expansion of the church would bring the expansion of the kingdom of God, liberal theology in Korea started to focus on the realities of this world. One who would ask what millennial position they held would not quite know what their answer would be.

Park Aaron pointed out two problems with neo-orthodoxy, neo-evangelicalism and neo-Marxism: the rejection of the infallibility of Scripture and the neo-Marxist neglect of classic systematic theology, including the promises of God given in the Scripture of future resurrection and everlasting life (Park, 1997: 123). Park Aaron argues that what neo-Marxism

attempts to accomplish is to construct a “theology of praxis or action”, a theology which performs to transform the world and not just discusses its origin or its destiny. Their main concern is for the poor and the oppressed existing in the world today. And they consider significant tools by means of which the Christian church as the representative of God in this world should work socially and politically in order to uplift the poor and liberate the oppressed. (Park, 1997: 121)

Through the influence of the Western theologians like Jurgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Johannes Metz and Harvey Cox, and from the theology of liberation, liberal theologians recognized the “people’s experiences of political oppression, poverty, and social miseries in Korea” (Park, 1997: 123). Starting in the 1960s rather than staying within the text of Scripture, the Korean Methodist theologians began the process of contextualizing theology to escape the subordination of autonomous Korean theology to Western theology. Having gone through trying experiences and times of injustice, foreign invasions, colonialization, and the abuse of power in political and economic systems, Koreans are known for their unique emotion of *han*. (Cho, 2001) According to Kim,

Han is an essentialist Korean sociocultural concept that is popularly understood as a uniquely Korean collective feeling of unresolved resentment, pain, grief, and anger. *Han* is often described as running in the blood of all Koreans, and the quality of Korean sorrow as being different than anything Westerners have experienced or can understand. (Kim, 2017: 254)

Han is originally a psychological term that denotes the feeling of suffering. But *minjung* theologians see *han* not just as a psychological concept but as a socio-political biography of the Korean people's suffering. (Ko, 1987).

Han is still defined and expressed through language in the daily life of Koreans. The use of *han* by one person and/or society to express extreme feelings is proof of its existence. The meaning of *han* has been altered and transformed through its contexts and generational changes, but its gist remains the same. Considering Korea's history, it is not an exaggeration to state that Koreans are dealing with complex post-traumatic emotions with regard to their history. This daily use of the word *han* is itself an acknowledgment of its existence. And according to many theologians, including Ahn Byung Moo and Suh Nam Dong, the gospel should not be a once-done deal from 2000 years ago but should be incarnated today so it can deal with people's problems of today, the accumulation of *han* and the suffering they witness every day; Suh argues that we should see "Jesus as the theological truth for interpreting the reality of today's people, not as the subject of theology. . . ignoring the sufferings and struggles of the people means giving up on becoming a human being. . . and only when they make the suffering of the people their own suffering can they become a human being and the road to recovery of the community is opened" (Suh, 2001:180). Suh concludes that People must participate in the suffering which will bring about the return of the kingdom, which can come only through the liberation of people from the sound of *han* (Suh, 2001).

The liberal churches saw the absence of the experiential kingdom as an opportunity to promote a kingdom that would come through societal and economic liberation. In their eyes, while orthodox theology emphasized the history of the past, it castrated the history and turned it into religious symbolism, turning people away from physical problems to spiritual ones. For them, if the church cannot solve the physical problems that people are dealing with, their salvation cannot be realized (Suh, 2001). While the conservative church saw the solution as the growth of the church and the expansion of the kingdom, liberal churches through the Korean history of suffering said that it has to be physically realized in this world and the church and individuals need to understand their responsibility to bring it about. Realization of societal justice in a

democratic society was what the ideal kingdom of this world was to liberal theologians (Jung, 1989). This understanding of the kingdom on earth went beyond the understanding and spreading of the gospel (text) to how to participate in and solve the experiential problems of society (context).

As Korea suffered under Japanese colonialism, this problem of *han* grew, and the solution to the *han* under the Japanese was premillennialism's physical return of the kingdom and God as the agent of judgement. However, with the changes in the society that demanded the participation of the people, *minjung* theology provided a solution: the people are the agents of change for the kingdom here on earth. I believe that while *minjung* theology is not some force that shook the eschatological discussion, it expresses the mind of liberal theology that ultimately provided a factor in theology. There was no necessity for this physical second coming as the society begin to improve. *Minjung* theology did bring about changes in the eschatological scene in Korea with the human agent of change.

10.3. *Minjung* theology

Liberation theology began to develop during the 1960s, and *minjung* theology began to take shape in the 1970s. The social setting of both theologies is similar because they have arisen from the Christian experience of struggling for the liberation of the oppressed from dictatorships supported by the world capitalist countries (Ko, 1987:201). After the 1960s, through Park Jung Hee government's autocratic system and economic system, which focused on urban commercialism and sacrificed its working class, and through the incident of Jun Tae Il, who cried out, "We are not a machine" and "Can we see the sunshine at least once a week?" whilst burning himself to death, the people have awakened to start a new movement, which also had an important background in the beginning of *minjung* theology.

According to Chae, it was clear that the situation of Korea was not too different from that of the Third World countries and that Suh Nam Dong, Kim Yong Bok, and Hyun Young Hak were very much aware of the liberation theology of Latin America and did not hide the fact that they were influenced by Jurgen Moltmann, Gustavo Gutierrez and James Cone. While *minjung* theology is

not something completely new, it tried to justify its existence by contextualizing itself into the Korean history of oppression. What Suh tried was combining biblical liberation tradition, human rights and the democratic movements in Korea with the mission of God, stating that God's work is not in history but is being realized in midst of the *minjung* (Chai and Kim, 2003).

In a way, *minjung* theology was more than a contextualisation of theology into the Korean situation; rather, it was a specifically Korean theology. According to Park, *minjung* theology has become product of Korea, where "it is an attempt to solve the problem by renewing theology in Korea as a result of being stimulated by the contradictions of the current political reality while at the same time reflecting on Korea's culture, society, and economic" (Park, 1993: 7). But most of all, the task of *minjung* theology according to Suh is to deal with the *han* of the *minjung*. And he redefines orthodox Christianity's idea of sin as a label that the strong attach to the weak, claiming that salvation is how one deals with sin personally as a priest. In *minjung* theology, the sinner becomes a priest to release the *minjung's han* (qtd. in (C.R. Kim, 2000)). He sees the *minjung* not as a sinner but as the victim of sin.

"[In the] concept of *han*, let us take a look at the victim's circumstances. . . . Considering *han*, how can one construct a doctrine regarding sin and salvation? Inevitably, a transition of perspective is required. The problem of *han* breaks from its stand's focus on the sinner (depressor) to a place of discussion of perspective including the victims. (Park, 1993: 13)

But because the *minjung* theologians did not exactly define who the *minjung* were, the vague term was ultimately changed to "outcasts", which failed to accommodate more people as the social situation improved. And criticism from outside, equating the work of liberating the *minjung* as of the same capacity as God's salvation caused massive problems for the church. For the conservative churches, the work of salvation relies squarely on God's work and Jesus as the agent of salvation on the cross; *minjung* theology violated the core beliefs of conservative churches, including those of the Hapdong denomination. The slogan of *minjung* theology states, "*Minjung* is messiah," which was implied to the conservative theologians that the sinful human's process of self-liberation is God's saving work. From *minjung* theology's perspective, at the meeting of the *minjung* and Jesus within the context of the event of the liberating

process the two become one, and the history of salvation is the work of the history of the liberation of the *minjung*. This was problematical for conservatives, who saw this as focus on the context instead of on the text, the Scripture. According to Choi, the biggest criticism came from within the church: this *minjung* theology did not contain any doctrine of the church, nor did it provide enough practical help to show how a church should approach the problems of society. It failed to become a theology of the church rather than a theology of society (Choi, 1998). However, it showed what liberal theology was pursuing, especially in terms of humans as the agents of change, which ultimately became a major issue between liberal theology and conservative theology, impacting the eschatology.

10.4. *Minjung* theology and eschatology

In regard to the progressive movement and *minjung* theology, they use the word “spirituality” to explain their eschatology. Suh believes that it connects the historical Jesus, who accepted the realities of the *minjung* and equated himself with the outcasts of the society. It is not that he was similar, but he was one of the *minjung*. And for *minjung* theologians, this is the start of their spirituality. Lee writes,

Han and *dan*, and the critical transcendence are examples of the spirituality of *minjung*. *Dan* is the resolution of *han*, but not in a destructive or passive way, but in a constructive and spiritual way. It is different from the revival spirituality that tries to resolve *han* by neglecting or withdrawing from the reality. It is different from a secular liberation movement, because *dan* is not a bloody retaliation. . . . In *minjung* theology, spirituality is redefined as a political or emancipatory spirituality. (Lee, 2005: 105)

Lee is asserting that while Jesus starts the movement of the *minjung* while being one with the *minjung*, the cure of *han* is *dan*, which “cuts off the endless circulation of revenge” and “motivates the accumulated *han* of the *minjung* and makes with it the energy to change the oppressive social system” (Lee, 2005: 102). While *minjung* theology starts with Jesus, the ultimate cure for the *minjung* comes not from Jesus but through the *minjung*, with *dan*. So, when *minjung* theologians talk about “eschatological spirituality,” it is not something that comes down from heaven, but it is the spirituality that comes from understanding *han*, which

survived through death to movements that can only be realized through the spirituality of the *minjung*. Even in the midst of the eschatological danger of the end, it is the effort that strives for new justice for the oppressed.

One of the natural changes that has occurred as a result of the contextualisation of the present from the conservative theologians is that *minjung* theology is the neglect of the text and with it the concept of the kingdom of the future. That it has immersed with its concern for present situation without the clear concept of kingdom of God from the scripture and its future coming. So, according to the conservative theologians, *minjung* theology neglected the future aspect of the coming kingdom that is clearly written about in Scripture. Not only were *minjung* theologians focused only on present matters, but even more problematic was their neglect of Scripture.

As it is stated before, the present, however, is closely linked with the future, but not with the coming and returning of Christ or the concept of premillennialism's focus and emphasis on Christ's return to renew the world. The renewal is now in the hands of the people. Even through the injustice and oppression, *minjung* theologians believe that the justice of God will be fulfilled while they hope for the change that will ultimately reach the *minjung*, who come from humble people of all places (Kim, 2011: 101). *Minjung* theology does not specifically support postmillennialism; however, it does align with it by focusing on the work that is presently needed to make this world a better place the way postmillennialism focuses on the work that is needed to bring about Christ's return.

According to Kim, *Minjung* theology does not have a redemptive or futuristic concept of salvation. Furthermore, instead of sin and repentance, it brings in the concept of *han* and *dan* as salvation—human rights and structural change as salvation. It brings the kingdom of the *minjung* through these struggles for social justice and equality, ultimately replacing Jesus with the *minjung* (E.H. Kim, 1989). This cannot be accepted by either the conservative churches or Hapdong, nor can its eschatology tolerate humans as the agents of the end.

10.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the main characteristics of the liberal theology that conservative theologians fought against and that was introduced in the last chapter. I introduced the main difference as the agent of change being human rather than God. Not only did this trigger further differences in theology, but its effects have penetrated into the discussion of eschatology. While *minjung* theology did not succeed as mainline theology, it contains factors that would be accepted by both liberal and conservative churches. It would cause people to rethink theology that focuses on salvation and the imminent coming of the kingdom but neglects the sanctification of the people. These different discussions with other factors will pull the Korean church out of premillennialism, which will ultimately weaken eschatology in general in Korea.

These movements and their criticisms of the orthodox church sparked many debates in the 1970s, including that of Park Aaron and Byun Sun Hwan. But because they had completely different premises regarding salvation, the church, and the concept of the kingdom, there could be no compromise between them. Most of all, the shift of the kingdom of God to the kingdom of *minjung* caused major problems for conservative theologians. As a result, *minjung* theology was not accepted by either conservative or some progressive churches because of its deviation from Scripture and the Marxist undertones of its struggle for social equality in a period where Cold War tensions were still simmering despite the supposed existence of *détente*.

In this period of Korean church history, I believe the concept of the kingdom was still influenced by the first missionaries' heaven, where one goes after death, and through the fundamentalists, who still believed in a kingdom that will enter this world and be ruled over by God. This was the conservatives' view that influenced the eschatology. The Marxist view of *minjung* theology denied any entrance of a kingdom of God, instead by its movements making a kingdom of people. But what the people needed during this period regarding eschatology was something physical and experiential, whether future or present. With these two extreme views further developed after the schism Korean presbyterian of 1959 (described in chapter 4), and while the Korean churches segregated, conservative church including Prebysterian church (Hapdong

denomination) abandoning this world, the other abandoning the return of the kingdom of God. This brought about confusion producing different eschatologies in the eyes of conservatives and premillennialists, something that will be explored further in part 4.

Part Four

1980–2018

Chapter 11. Historical background of Christianity in Korea, 1980–2018

11.1. Introduction

The last part has specifically investigated 1960–80 and the shift from premillennialism to amillennialism through historical events and theological changes due to changing circumstances in Korea. This part and this chapter will start once again to investigate the historical background from 1980 to the present as we continue to see not only the theological change but the historical change in eschatology. This chapter will provide historical information about Korean society and the church to assist in understanding the changes in eschatology as it provides different reasons for the neglect of eschatology in Korea other than the *shihanbu* eschatology, which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

The complexity of the historical situation in Korea in the 1980s and afterwards goes beyond the two major themes of industrialization and the democratic movement laid out by Bruce Cummings in his book *Korea's Place in the Sun*. However, these two historical streams have connections to eschatology and its historical conditions, and the improvement brought about by democracy in the twenty-first century has shifted people's focus to taking responsibility through different actions. This matches postmillennialism's expectation of a "golden age" to come through the gospel and its focus on works of the kingdom that is here and now (Gaffin, 1990; Gentry, 2009; Bahnsen, 2015). While postmillennialism as theology is not very influential in Korea, I believe its similar social and cultural priorities carry with them optimistic views of the future through human action. I will show in this part that while postmillennialism has little theological influence, secular social and cultural expectations coincide with postmillennialism, and Koreans in general are starting to be confident in their actions as they achieve economic success and political reform. Moreover, the power of the people through protests has increased the accountability of those in power, resulting not only in improved living standards but also in improved morals, ethics and justice. By pressuring for collective change, protest movements

tackled the immediate societal, political and economic issues facing Korea in the period between 1980 and 2018.

I believe Korean Christians became focused on improving their own society in the hopes of finding their own contemporary utopia rather than aspiring for the one desired by premillennialists. This is not to say that they have actively embraced postmillennialism, but the movements of the society paralleled postmillennialism's mindset of restoration through humans as the agents of God. I believe this is more of a social coincidence than the result of any influence of postmillennialism.

We will look at the different key moments in history when people started to control the outcome of politics, where they gained confidence that they would not only achieve financial success but fix injustices in this present world. However, while there are movements towards change, the younger generation has started to lose confidence in their future and has started to neglect future difficulties by focusing on the present. These two stories show that it is not just one trend in politics or one cultural movement that defines eschatology in Korea.

Rather, these two stories of people taking charge of change in this world and young people abandoning thoughts about the grim future as they focus on what is here and now will contribute to the thesis that these movements ultimately brought people to move away from generally seeking premillennialism's future. This ultimately brought down the interest in eschatology in general in Korea. As I stated in the introduction, to analyse the current status of eschatology in Korea is a multi-faceted process that focuses on not only theology but historical conditions. Eschatology is complex, as there is not just one leading trend. I will look into and tease out different discussions of society, theological debates, and historical developments that might have contributed to the discussion of eschatology in Korea as Koreans started to lose interest in eschatology in general.

This section will discuss how the flow of history affected the general eschatology of the Korean church. The picture emerging from existing scholarship suggests the neglect of eschatology began when people began to visualize the kingdom and the eschaton not as the product of

outside intervention but as in the hands of people trying to achieve a “golden age” not the result of an act of God. The results of sovereign power in the hands of people and their efforts to achieve the “golden age” during this period has changed the direction of eschatology in Korean society and in the church.

11.2. Postmillennialism in Korea and the lessening of the eschatological focus on the future

In 1999, there was a theological conference at Chongshin University,¹¹ the representatives of each millennialism in Hapdong denomination except of the postmillennialism was present. The term was introduced, but it was disregarded in the debate itself; the scholars present agreed that while it was regrettable not to have anyone defend postmillennialism, the absence was tolerable because postmillennialism had little significance in Hapdong denomination and some would say even the Korean church as a whole (E.H. Kim, 1999). As detailed below, and especially through the criticisms made by Park Hyung Nong, some Korean conservative churches saw postmillennialism as part of liberal theology (Park, 1964; Pak, 1998; K. Kim, 2014).

Park’s major concern was that a spiritual understanding of the world triggers the idea that progressive improvement is possible through human efforts. That is why Park sees postmillennialism as part of liberal theology, and he criticized this kind of interpretation as only being possible because postmillennialists do not take the Scripture literally (Park, 1964; Park, 1968).¹² Chung (2011) sees Park’s defensive stance on liberal theology sometimes causing misunderstanding in the Korean church about postmillennialism; Park’s premillennialist dualistic view of the world controls the narrative of how he interprets the actual world and leads him to conclude that progress in the world will only end in disappointment and despair. Park believed that progress is only temporal but not ultimate, and that the postmillennialists’ view that a “golden age” can be achieved is nowhere to be found in the Scripture. Thus, Park relates that postmillennialism sees the millennium as “symbolizing absolute perfection” rather

¹¹ I was present at the conference.

¹² Some in Hapdong denomination would not agree with Park on seeing the postmillennialism as apart of liberal theology.

than interpreting the Bible literally which Park believes that premillennialism does (S. Lee, 2017). Furthermore, Park's concern was that liberal theology's postmillennialism would ultimately cease to equip believers to be ready for the future return of Christ; it would make believers focus more on what is to be done presently than on being ready for the second coming (Chung, 2011).

Kim Jae Jun¹³, Park's nemesis, has emphasized that the church in Korea needs to devote its efforts to progress in real society and that putting society on a healthy base was the church's main goal. Instead of just waiting, the church has specific responsibilities and goals in the present world; the church needs to bring about long-term changes in morals and values in society. So he does have more of an ecclesial emphasis than Park:

The church, the "body of Christ," in history must also exist in that form. Dedication and worship for God, service and reconciliation for the world, training for the church, education and ministry, these things will be the appearance of the church in the world and serving the world. (Kim, 1965: 21)

Kim (1965) goes on to assert that the millennial kingdom will be realized in the actual world through human efforts, and it will improve the condition of people who are oppressed and suffering. According to Lee (2003), Kim's view of the world recognizes that Jesus entered history to start the "nation of peace", which is already present with his people; the outlook for the future is certain, full of hope and positivity. Lee goes on to interpret the end as not being the end of the world: "Rather, it means that through God's intervention and the resurrected Christ's manifestation, the oppression and the sufferings of the oppressed and exploited weak in this world are about to end" (Lee, 2003: 101). The meaning of the end to Kim and Lee is the end of injustice in this world; the believer is responsible for it to end as Christ has already intervened to give strength to his people through the Spirit and has already started the work of the end. This shifts the future intervention of God to the past through the incarnation, totally wipes out the focus on the future, and moves it to the present.

¹³ Kim Jae Jun was introduced in chapters 4 and 6.

The problem for Park was that the emphasis on what is here and now neglects the focus on the spiritual revitalization of society, is only concerned about the secular aspects of society and forgets that Scripture is concerned about the spiritual life. These secular aspects can be regarded as ones without a direct spiritual or religious connection and include, for example, the focus on rebuilding the economy after the Korean War and the class struggle of the *Chosun Hell* generation (discussed later in this chapter). However, I find Park's concern regarding postmillennialism legitimate, as postmillennialism affected the Korean church after the 1980s. As the focus of the society changed to *minjung* (the people), and what *minjung* can accomplish as it turned away from premillennialism, the idea that the end is the intervention of God for judgment has lost ground; people have found sovereign power within themselves as they fought against injustice. Through the *minjung* taking on the task reserved by premillennialists for the intervention of God, they ultimately did not see the need to have the sovereign power of God enter into the physical future. I believe this change lessened the regard for the second coming, and its equipping of people to be ready for the end declined as the society and its people started to focus on what is here and now.

As we have seen in the criticisms of Park, many postmillennialists believe that they have been misunderstood; they believe that in the future, the world will be entirely Christian because of the growth and prospering of the gospel and its effects on culture. This extreme interpretation is inferred from the "clear words of the commission[:] Christ commands his disciples to make disciples of all nations" (Gentry, 2009: 243-244). One such individual was the American theologian and apologist, Greg L. Bahnsen, who believes that this is the precursor to more holistic and progressive prosperity because Christ continues to reign with those who are following his commission: this progressive prosperity is not about a perfect future; rather, "there will be ups and downs, there will be periods of persecution, there will be immorality and lawlessness to deal with. Nevertheless, the overall pattern will be that of growth and success for the kingdom" (Bahnsen, 2015: 39).

Bahnsen summarizes this progressive improvement through Christians:

It will be impossible, as we understand Christianity, for there to be many, many more Christians in the world and yet for the world to still be going to hell in a handbasket, because if there are more Christians, they are going to make a difference in society. We are not going to see perfection by any means, any more than we see perfection in our individual lives. We will, however, see a general improvement in the earth's condition morally, culturally, politically, educationally, artistically, and on and on and on it goes. In which case, the prophecies in the Old Testament that speak of prosperity for God's Kingdom are to be interpreted both figuratively and literally, depending on the context, and depending on the author's intention. They point to the visible victory of Christ's kingdom between His two advents. (Bahnsen, 2015: 39)

Postmillennialists point out what they see as a serious flaw in other millennialists' view of them and claim that other millennialists wrongly accuse them of focusing on human effort and accomplishment and claiming that it is ultimately the sovereign power within people in the present that is needed to achieve the "golden age". Bahnsen constantly stresses in that vein that this prediction of gradual growth is not made because of a high view of human nature: it is completely up to God and his sovereign plan to use his people to do whatever pleases him. He reiterates that postmillennialists have "a very low view of human nature, but a very high view of God's sovereignty" (Bahnsen, 2015: 55). The success of the gospel comes from the power of the Spirit that lies with the preaching of the gospel. Erickson adds, "The preaching of the gospel will be effective. This will not be a human accomplishment, achieved through great skill or finely honed methodology, but a divine accomplishment, achieved through the Holy Spirit's convicting and regenerating men" (Erickson, 1998: 55-56).

As alluded to through discussions on Park, postmillennialism tends to be overlooked in the eschatological debate in conservative circles in Korea. It never was a strong current, but there are clear connections between the emphasis and history of *minjung* theology and postmillennialism. However, it will be a mistake to completely take postmillennialism as a part of liberal theology as Park treated it.

I do not believe that postmillennialism as a doctrine or theology affected the Korean church and Korean society through the church, but the changing historical conditions reflected similarities to postmillennialism. Thus, it is not postmillennialism but what was inspired through history

that matched postmillennial thinking. This mindset, which is similar to postmillennialism, challenged the dualistic worldview and showed the need for Korea's people to use their power to continually fight against injustice and the unfair system of government and elites. Because of its focus on present conditions, it de-emphasises waiting for what is to come and puts pressure on people to fix and determine their future. As a result of the fighting and protesting in the 1980s and later, *minjung* theologians started to get confidence in their sovereign power and think that despite the unfair nature of the world, they could bring progress to the world. If *minjung* theology was a factor in shifting the idea of the kingdom to the present (as I have discussed before), the *minjung's* history of protesting after the 1980s has caused the neglect of the future in eschatology.

11.3. The final years of Park Jung Hee's presidency and the Gwangju Massacre

South Korea's development after the Korean War has been called a miracle by many; the nation escaped the threat of complete nuclear annihilation and rebuilt its poor infrastructure and economy in a couple of decades. Its economic growth and success, however, often overshadowed its democracy. Due to its complicated situation with the North Korean communist government, the South Korean government had to navigate between economy, safety and democracy. After the Korean War, the focus was clearly on rebuilding its economy, both as a result of U.S. influence and capitalist propaganda, so that people would live well: the thinking was that anything that brought economic success was good; it would not matter who ruled, even if it was a military dictator for eighteen years. Economic development and "advanced social conditions generate a strong demand for diversification, including economic and political freedom, changes which eventually bring the institutionalization of democratic politics" (Park and Nam, 2018: 153). Koreans believed that the different civil movements did not have enough momentum to change the authoritarian leadership, but when the middle class was "greatly empowered based on the development of the domestic market" (Park and Nam, 2018: 167), the power shift affected the nation's political system. So, it is rightly assessed by Cummings, that democracy is closely related to capitalism. But after the 1980s, Korea has clearly vacillated between emphasising the issue of the economy and emphasising the issue of

democracy, and government has used the communism in North Korea to take the focus away from these two issues.

Yet by 1979, Park Jung Hee's reign was on a crash course with the resistance, so he wanted to use the military to suppress the protest movements. However, a disagreement with the chief of the KCIA, Kim Jae Gyu, led to the assassination of Park in October 1979. A struggle between those who hoped for the restoration of democracy and those who wanted to continue the military dictatorship of Park followed. General Chun Doo Hwan and future president General Roh Tae Woo staged another coup in December of 1979, called the 12.12 Coup, to continue the military regime; they made President Choi Kyu Ha resign after a couple of months in office. Most alarmingly, however, and to put a stop to national rallies and protests for democracy, Chun and Roh used a military operation to extinguish the movement in Gwangju, the capital of Jeolla province, killing hundreds of people; this was later called the 5.18 Gwangju Massacre. The government alleged that this incident was caused by people who were controlled by the North Korean communists attempting to overthrow the South Korean government (Yoon, 2005; Shin, 2020). Shin believes that this movement in Gwangju failed because "the organized power of the people acting together was helpless against the machine gun and bayonet of the state, and its price was the blood of innocent humans" (Shin, 2020: 246). This incident did not end in one day; rather, the trauma and death relating to this event went on for many years, including during the trial of Chun Doo Hwan.

According to Han (2012), there are limited resources available on the participation of Protestant Christians during and after the events and the resolution of this crisis. Although Choi (2020) agrees with Han that Christian participation was limited, there is clear evidence that churches in the area used their pulpits to criticize violence and made their churches available for protesters; the actual record does not fully relate what the church did. Chun Doo Hwan justified his political agenda of continuing the legacy of Park Jung Hee to continue to develop economic prosperity through stability as there were continual threats from North Korea. Democracy would be realized only when law and order became the priority of the nation. He in fact was criticizing the rallies and protests that were seeking democracy yet using violence,

stating that when one does not embrace the consciousness of community, then it is not democracy but anti-society (Kwag, 2018: 44-48). However, it is clear that there were indeed protest movements that were stronger and more organized than before and that could not be dominated by military empowerment again.

In June 1987, the demonstrations became nationwide with the inclusion of many different parties, and the use of the military to suppress them was abandoned as their size and intensity were greater than in 1980. The government had to promise a direct presidential election. Kern and Laux argue that the military regime suddenly changed its past methods of “house searches, arrests, torture, house arrests, etc.” because they did not work against the increased number of protests; instead, the people became the regime’s “negotiating partner” (2017: 260-261). The national referendum of December 1987 confirmed a democratic revision of the constitution and elected, rather surprisingly, General Roh Tae Woo over the two dominant democratic forces, Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung, whose feud had ironically harmed their chances of election. Nevertheless, it would be the last time that the military was involved in Korean politics.

This era is significant because not only was it the starting point for democratization, though there were later struggles to achieve it fully, but it also gave the people confidence that change could be made through organized collective action. This continues to be the case in South Korea as the focus of the people has turned to different issues of the time. Democratization and collective action have impacted the Korean church as they have pressured the church to become more involved in social movements. Lack of participation, especially in conservative churches, resulted in criticism towards the church (as will be discussed more in following chapters), which has caused some liberal denominations in Korean churches to focus on the issues of society, and they continue their efforts to bring a golden age to the present world through participation in the political process. This confidence completely neglected the need for a future coming of Christ and made the church more involved in present matters. This has changed the game for eschatology, as it has abandoned what had been one of the most important aspects of the faith: waiting for the restoration in the second coming.

11.4. Roh Tae Woo and Kim Young Sam: Firebomb protests as a catalyst for change

This period's history is significant to the study of eschatology because one can continually see the movement of people striving to achieve a better world through different set of actions. It was through demonstrations in this era and beyond that people become more directly involved in politics. And these political movements by people continue to be stronger in Korean society; it has become powerful enough to change the president. Furthermore, injustices they feel during these times will ultimately raise what I believe is the *minjung* movement of the twenty-first century, the candlelight protest, which will be discussed in the following section. This confidence accumulated by the people in their movement against politics will affect Korean society as the people overcome injustice with their own hands. This confidence will penetrate the Korean church, shifting people from waiting for God's justice to having the confidence to achieve their agendas.

Through Korea's first free election in 1987, Roh Tae Woo was elected president. Although there was an effort to reinvestigate the 5.18 Gwangju Massacre and to redefine it as an effort of the democratic movement, there were also still stark differences in the way the past was viewed. While the two Kims representing the democratic movement wanted to punish the related people and the government, Roh's government wanted to move forward to stability. In Roh's opinion, the violent protests that were part of the process of the democratic movement were a threat to stability (Yoon, 2005; Kwag, 2018). Two powers in politics disagreed about the way to achieve a truly democratic nation; one view was to move forward to becoming an "advanced country", and the other was to make sure the people responsible for the military regime were punished. "By emphasizing the national historical necessity for achieving *seonjingu* [advanced country], the ruling groups implied that the massive pro-democratic movements were activities of creating confusion and division and of weakening national power" (Kim, 2011: 324). Kim adds that with the success of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, the focus of the people of Korea expanded beyond achieving a democratic society or an economically prosperous nation to human rights issues and the quality of life.

In 1993, Kim Young Sam became the first non-military civilian president. The idea of national development that Kim held was drastically different from that of the former governments. It echoed the voices of the students' demonstrations and the labourers' protests. His first and foremost emphasis in nation development was on "democratization"; thus he even referred to himself as a "moral and ethical" president. By "democratizing Korea", Kim meant that attainment of democracy in Korea was urgent (Oh, 1999: 129).

Through this declaration, Kim justified political democracy as the means to the end of developing a capitalist economy. Kim did not present what might have passed as a sustained and well-developed treatise on democracy itself. In his inaugural address, Kim declared,

We are gathered here today to open a civilian and democratic era. . . . This government was made possible by the people's burning desire and noble sacrifices for democracy. . . . Deep in my heart, I have a dream of creating a new Korea. A new Korea shall be a freer and more mature democratic society. . . . Our reform must start with three urgent tasks: First, misconduct and corruption must be rooted out. (quoted in Oh, 1999: 130)

His second emphasis for national development was on economic vitalization. When Kim walked into the government, it was pointed out that after a period of rapid economic and social changes, Korea faced challenges such as continuous structural adjustment and reshaping of the policy regime, particularly economic policies (Kwon, 1997). The remarkable growth in output and income in the relatively short period of time was unbalanced. Reform measures to stabilize the situation and create more balanced growth were in order. He proclaimed the need to establish a "new economy" to restore economic vitality.

Kim declared that he himself would not accept political contributions during his presidency. This meant that he would put an end to the old practices under the presidents with military backgrounds. Park, Chun and Roh all had accepted "slush funds." At times, the president had accepted large donations at the end of private meetings with the chairmen of the largest conglomerates. The Kim government launched changes for political democratization through institutional change and a new economic plan for national development (Ko, 1989).

Furthermore, Kim's focus on the security of the nation was connected closely to the economy. Security from North Korea caused him major concerns during his presidency. According to Kim, stability would come only through security and economic growth. The difference between Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung was their approach to North Korea. During these two Kims' presidencies, even civilian presidents with democratic mindsets did not bring about stability in Korea. Kim Young Sam suffered greatly from the world economic problems that hit Korea and made for the worst economy in modern Korean history, forcing it to rely on the IMF. And there was continuing corruption with political figures; Kim Young Sam even set a precedent by going to jail after his presidency. It was a period where the people started to lose faith and see the limitations of representative democracy. Im notes,

First, in Korean society anti-communism has survived intact and has been an ideological entry barrier for representatives. Second, political parties have become the instruments of party bosses. Thus, elected representatives listen to the voices of their bosses and not of their constituents. Third, political forces have built a "cartel of elites" through "competitive collusion". (2011: 584-585)

With the failure of representative democracy, the Korean people had to bring about accountability themselves. Joo (2017) argues that civilian participation in politics has increased through voting throughout the twenty-first century and that disbelief in the government has often led to direct democracy by the people. The spirit of the firebomb in the 1980s has been transformed through massive participation to candlelight protest, a more peaceful yet powerful form of protest. These participations, whether in the form of protests or civil movements, have pressured the Korean church to also see the importance of participation outside the church. Rather than just waiting for the kingdom of God to come, different churches started to implement how they can bring about the kingdom of God in here on earth. These pressures or criticisms of lack of participation, I believe, had an impact on how the church has to go forward. The pressure of criticism for lack of participation has also affected eschatology, causing adaptation and change; Korean Christians are no longer content to be spectators waiting for the second coming. With these changes, taking charge of the situation instead of waiting for

outside help, which sometimes came from foreign aid and other sources, they started to seek autonomous power, and it became more systemised during this period.

The next section will look at the formation of systemised protests for change, which resulted in the candlelight protests. The reason for the importance, as I have emphasized, is that these conditions provided by the historical developments impacted and further weakened the premillennialism that the Korean churches possessed, which resulted in the neglect or absence of eschatology in the church today.

11.5. Candlelight protests as a catalyst for change

The power of one candle might be weak, but the Candlelight protests after 2002 showed the effectiveness of the collective efforts to confront different situations that people thought had been handled unfairly by the government. In 2002, U.S. Army armoured vehicle in Korea hit two middle-girls who died from the accident. This became an issue of injustice when the two U.S. soldiers were acquitted in the United States. According to Shin (2020), this triggered the candlelight protests that were suggested by a citizen on the Internet. The protest in front of Seoul City Hall started with a small number, but ultimately it became a hundred thousand in December and changed the outcome of the presidential election; a former human rights lawyer, Roh Moo Hyun, was elected. It also impacted the general election of 2004, when the National Assembly tried to impeach him for violating political neutrality. With 70 percent of the people against the impeachment, once again candlelight protests were more powerful. The impeachment was ultimately overturned by the Constitutional court.

In 2008, when Lee Myung Bak was president, a candlelight protest was triggered through the U.S.-Korea agreement to import U.S. beef. However, although fear of mad cow disease and lack of communication and ignoring of public opinion on the health rights of the people did little to alter the decision by the government, the protest was bigger than ever, gathering an estimated six hundred thousand in mid-June. The purpose of the protest was drastically different from that in the 1980s. While it had the specific purpose of democracy in mind, and its violent tactics included firebombs, it changed to peaceful candlelight protests that accommodated a variety of

issues in society. It has become not only a method for change but an expression of the people's confidence. Shin rightly argues that while the protests were confrontational in the past, candlelight protests have a very strong immediate impact on government action. While the protest itself is for political reasons, it is how one can make a difference and how one is satisfied with issues that become fixed. These methods and confidence will transfer to the church as the churches are still very inwardly motivated. However, these societal changes will affect the Korean churches to participate as well as adopt forms of eschatology that would concur with these positions of society.

Furthermore, it is argued that the people participating in candlelight protests were proof that democracy is more than voting; true democracy's sovereign power does not lie with elected officials but comes through the participation of the people. The confidence of the people lies no longer with the government but in people who can fix the government (Kim, 2017). This participation took another toll on president Park Geun-Hae's administration. With the candlelight movements and people achieving results from them, the people became confident, which I believe weakened the Korean church's belief in God as the agent of history. These historical events gave more power and reason for people to participate rather than to wait for outside help, including God's intervention in history.

11.6. Park, Sewol, Choi, impeachment

11.6.1. Rise and fall of Park Geun-Hae

The history of the rise of Park Geun-Hae was not only about injustices that people were trying to get rid of; rather, it was about the power of people who could embrace even the past with her father, who was a dictator. The people have started to have the sovereign power not only to give but also to take away. And this brought about confidence of the people that this collective effort will not only change the current status but the future. However, the most important contribution of Park Gun-Hae's narrative to the discussion of eschatology is that the people raising their voices through candlelight protests has become the acme of protesting: the people can pressure and overthrow the highest office in the nation. The story is twofold as it

shows that the injustice and unfairness of this world can change through people's action, once again proving that the power for restoration is in the hands of the people.

Although history is divided on its assessment of Park Jung-Hee, he is nonetheless one of the most important figures in modern Korean history and in Korea's economic boom. Whenever Korea's economy is in disarray, people remind themselves of President Park and how his policies stirred up various emotions. His legacy goes far beyond the economy because of what happened to him and his wife when, on August 15, 1974, an assassin tried to kill President Park as he delivered a National Independence Speech at Jang Chung Dong National Theatre, shooting him in the knee and accidentally, albeit fatally, shooting his wife in the head instead. Unable to attend the funeral due to security protocol, it was up to Park's daughter (and now First Lady), Park Geun-Hae, to represent the state at her mother's funeral. In doing so, she became a role model for the women of Korea, and the whole country was in sadness (Yoo, 2008).

The nation's overwhelming sadness was portrayed in many pictures and records of the time, with millions of people crying and lining up to pay their respects at the funeral. The nation was in shock as they went through the process of mourning. The picture of President Park watching his wife's funeral from afar due to the security protocol reflected the great sadness of the unpopular dictator. But the picture of his young daughter standing at the funeral gave different meanings to the various emotions that were felt by the nation. Five years later, the controversial President Park Jung Hee, whom many called a dictator, was shot by the chief of Korea's intelligence agency during dinner. There were mixed emotions about this assassination, but the emotions expressed toward the president's five children were overwhelmingly positive and empathic.

Despite these different emotions, Park Geun-Hae had risen to the head of her party by 2004. In 2006, an ex-convict attacked her while she was on the presidential campaign trail. She suffered a long gash to her face, and I believe this is when the tide of the people's emotions turned. This incident reminded the people of what had happened to her father and mother. When people saw her campaigning with a bandage on her face, it caused Koreans to view her father's crimes

through a lens of sympathy that continued for the rest of her life. Unlike her father, she was winning elections not through power but through emotion. Although she was defeated in that year's presidential election, she was democratically elected as the first woman president of Korea five years later.

11.6.2. Sewol Ferry and candlelight protests

A year into Park Geun-Hae's term as president, the Sewol Ferry accident happened. On Wednesday, April 16, 2014, the Sewol Ferry sank while traveling from Incheon to the Island of Jeju. The ferry sent a distress signal around 9:00 a.m. and capsized at 10:23 a.m. Once it had capsized, rescue efforts were meaningless. The ship was carrying 476 people, mostly high-school students and teachers who were on a graduation trip. A total of 295 lives were lost, and the whole nation watched as the ferry sank completely over the next three days. The media everywhere played recordings of students calling their parents in their last moments and showed students' last texts to their loved ones. This incident was considered to be of the same magnitude as the shock of 9/11. The crisis devastated a nation that had not experienced a major tragedy in decades. The fact that children were helplessly dying in the sea gravely saddened the nation (Seo, 2018).

Initial blame fell on the captain and the crew of the Sewol Ferry, who left the ferry first without following proper safety procedures. However, the people were furious about how the incident was handled by the government. "On the day of the Sewol Ferry incident, the government-initiated countermeasures through the Central Disaster Countermeasure Headquarters of the Ministry of Security and Public Administration. Immediately after the accident, the education Department of Gyeonggi Province announced that all students had been rescued, which was far from what had happened" (Chae, 2018: 48).

The whereabouts of the president were unclear too. There were many differing and inaccurate reports about what the president had been doing during the accident. However, after finding out that the information was inaccurate, and in the face of the deaths of many children, people

experienced and expressed anger and resentment toward the government for its poor handling of one of the nation's critical times.

In October 2016, reports came out that the media had found a discarded hard drive showing Park had been transferring confidential documents to a confidante named Choi Soon-Sil. Choi allegedly used her connections to the president to bribe and coerce donations from corporations to accumulate wealth. In November 2016, Parliament passed a bill to investigate Park and Choi. Park made a heartfelt apology to the Korean public and stated that "loneliness" and her tragic life had made her rely on Choi. Park tried to persuade the nation to sympathy by using emotions about her tragic life, and once again, this worked. However, greater than this wave of sympathy was the public's emotion of anger behind the Sewol Ferry incident.

The overwhelming support for President Park has waned since this incident. With all the speculations and conspiracy theories, President Park's whereabouts during the sinking became very uncertain. While the story about her whereabouts unfolded, there were clear changes in the emotions of the nation from sadness and devastation to anger and resentment for two years after the Sewol Ferry accident. As Ahmed (2015) states, "feelings become a form of social presence rather than self-presence" (277). When Korea's history is analysed, it becomes evident that Koreans' emotions have been tested during many different incidents. The nation experienced a sense of devastation especially through Japanese colonial rule for thirty-five years and the Korean War afterward, in which they lost just about everything. That was when Park Jung-Hee's regime brought the "Miracle on the Han River" through surprising economic growth. However, social injustice was rampant during his time in power. There was no alternative to what President Park Jung-Hee did with military strength. Korean's emotion of *han* was carried through his regime. But later, the Sewol Ferry accident's post-traumatic symptoms were expressed in the most primitive ways during the next two years of politics.

11.6.3. Impeachment

From the fall of 2016 to the spring of 2017, millions of Koreans in dozens of cities took to the streets for twenty continuous weekends of candlelight protests. These protests called for the

government to impeach President Park and fix the injustices that had been caused by her administration's scandals of corruption, bribery and abuse of power as well as to prosecute those who benefited from these things. This has translated into fighting against the daughter of the past leader of the military regime, the vestiges of which still exist today. Kim analyses this as direct democracy and representative democracy coming together to bring back sovereign power to the people. As he observed, the announcement of the Candlelight Rights Declaration on March 11, 2017, demonstrated that the "candlelight citizens" would not follow a "shell democracy", but "that they will develop their own capacity for democracy and move forward on a new path of democracy" (Kim, 2017: 16). Furthermore, this is clearly stated in almost revolutionary rhetoric in the declaration:

Our candlelight citizens . . . declaration, which we have made together, is a resolute determination not to take for granted discrimination, a politics that enforces slavery, excludes and oppresses someone, and a judicial system that is skewed to one side. Now, we, candlelight citizens, will change the field of life and the workplace with the intention of protecting the plaza even in the cold so that our democracy will never fall to the ground again and will develop the capacity of democracy from below. I declare that I will go on the path of democracy The Candlelight Civil Revolution turned the deplorable "Is this country?" into the hope of "This is democracy." It was also the citizens' responsibility to decide which path to democracy the group would take with the power of the citizens. . . . First, candlelight is a sovereign action that reforms the representative politics that dominate the people and advances democracy directly. (Emergency People's Action Division for Resignation of Park Geun-hye Administration and 2201 people who joined the <2017 Candlelight Declaration>, 2017)

Above all, the declaration emphasises the need to uphold democracy but outlines that it is the responsibility of the Korean people themselves to determine the path it takes and only they have the "sovereign action" to reform it. For instance, when Parliament voted to impeach Park in December 2016, it came after weeks of protests in Seoul and other cities. Park was suspended from presidential duties pending a decision from a constitutional court hearing. In March 2017, the constitutional court voted to uphold Parliament's decision to impeach Park, and the following day, the Candlelight Rights Declaration was announced.

In May 2017, the opposing party's candidate, Moon Jae-In, was elected to replace Park in a special election. In his address to the 72nd Session of the United Nations general assembly, President Moon mentioned the candlelight protests numerous times, acknowledging that these protests were an expression of the emotion of the people:

I believe the candlelight rallies last winter in the Republic of Korea created a historic scene that is evidence of the brilliant achievement of the spirit. . . . Some of you may remember the scenes of the candlelight rallies shown by the media: streets packed with hundreds of thousands and millions of lights, people expressing their opinions freely and joining in discussions on every street corner where there was singing, dancing and painting, the radiant faces of the parents who took their children by the hand to join rallies and the pride of young people who picked up trash on the streets afterwards—all these scenes were very much a part of democracy and peace. . . . The candlelight revolution in Korea started on a plaza where the yearning for the restoration of democracy and the Constitution awakened the citizens' collective intelligence. As a presidential hopeful, I too participated in the rallies myself just as a citizen.

Through this speech and many others like it, President Moon emphasized that it was the people through politics that brought about changes. He acknowledged that “people expressing” not only matters, but it is the foundation of changes that brought hope to the nation through the candlelight protests. These historical changes through the endless protests throughout the 1980s and 1990s show that the people no longer need outside forces to help them. During the Japanese colonial occupation, it was Christianity that offered the alternative option of the future of restoration; after the Korean War, it was international aid and government policies that gave hope of rebuilding; now, however, the injustices of the world can be controlled through the power of the people. The changes in South Korea's politics brought about by its people caused those people to change their thinking and realise that the power to bring about a better future lay not in something from outside but in the people themselves. The focus no longer is what the future will bring but what the people can do to bring it about. The confidence of the people has drastically increased.

There has been a movement since 1945 which continues to coincide with people taking charge of their present lives. The impeachment and the celebration afterward were the acme of

people's confidence in their collective effort against the government. The developments discussed in this chapter have had a significant impact on the study of eschatology because the historical conditions continue to affect how people feel about the present and their efforts in the present that will change the future. Furthermore, we are continuing to see this confidence completely eradicating the premillennial faith in Korean church, which waited for the urgent return of Christ for restoration. This focus on the people as the agent of change has had an impact on the eschatology of the Korean church. Now we are seeing the result: the Korean church is not only slowly pulling out from premillennialism but completely distancing itself from premillennialism.

11.7. The younger generation and its problems

The younger generation, because of the difficulties of the present reality, have become immersed in the present; they are not looking forward to what the future will bring. This is different from being focused on the present as described in the previous section, where we argued that people became focused on the present and gained confidence that their actions would bring about changes that would bring about a better future. But in this section, we argue that the younger generation is focusing on the present rather than the future for quite different reasons: it neglects what is ahead because of the difficulties of the current life. This is very different from the neglect that came from people's confidence. However, this has brought about the same result, a lessening in Korean eschatology of the focus on the need for the future coming of Christ.

This section delves deeper into the mindset of the younger generation, or what Pang and Yoo (2017) label as *the 88 Thousand Won Generation*, and how the political struggle of the 1980s by college students and the subsequent candlelight protests contributed to a polarisation of Korean society that has continued into the twenty-first century. These struggles of the younger generation will show that while changes and improvements have been made in Korean society, the younger generation has failed to become the principal agent of change and so loses and neglects the future. Yet these problems do not let the younger generation see the present as an opportunity to invest in the future; rather, they have decided to focus on the here and now.

The message of the Korean church and its future salvation does not reach young people, as it did not after the Korean War when people were simply trying to survive: they became more present-oriented pleasure seekers. I think this section will give a clearer picture to not only what is happening to minds of younger people but how it will effect the future of eschatology in Korea church and society. And it is clear that the effects of premillennialism no longer exist in younger generation.

However, at his inauguration address in May 2017, President Moon Jae-In famously exclaimed, “The opportunities will be equal, the process will be fair, and the results will be just.” This flow of thought was not just a recent effect of President Park’s removal; Moon’s 2012 speech after he was nominated for the Democratic United Party’s presidential candidate was similar:

A country where ordinary people have opportunities together, a society where common sense is shared and authority and responsibility are proportional, a society that is generous to the powerless and strict standards are applied to those who are powerful, and the fairness that citizens gave me when running—these are the demands of justice. When I become president, fairness and justice will become the fundamentals of state administration. Opportunities will be equal. The process will be fair. The results will be just. (C.S. Park, 2020)

This flow of thought is that the country is not fair and just to people who are weak, and the standards are not the same for all people. This is more clearly shown in the younger generations. Although college students were the frontline forces during the 1980s to achieve the long-term goal of democracy, they failed to benefit and become established as an independent and sovereign power (Choi, 2004). They never had the chance to benefit from the fruits of the democratic movement; instead, they were consistently seen as forces of instability to democracy.

While the movements brought about different changes, the pessimism regarding the future of young adults has been a major issue. Pang and Yoo (2015) argue that the pessimism of the young generation started in 2007 with the book *The 88 Thousand Won Generation (The \$880 Generation)*. This book argues that neoliberalism will use the younger generation just entering the workforce as a sacrifice by making them contingent employees so that the economy can

balance economic efficiency and productivity, ultimately lowering their monthly wages to \$880. This pessimistic outlook and the younger generation's abandonment of the 2008 candlelight protests were criticized by the older generation, which said that the younger generation was no longer the sovereign force that it was in the 1980s (Pang and Yoo, 2015). Song and Lee further their argument through the poverty of the younger generation's "issue of collective anxiety and fear penetrating inside as a sharp public issue requiring intervention in Korean society" (Song and Lee, 2017: 30). And without intervention, it is difficult for the younger generation to achieve or improve its stability in competitive society, which has caused them to be disappointed and in despair.

These emotions of the younger generation have led to terms like *Chosun Hell*, which implies that modern society, which is classed by income, is no different from the society of the *Chosun* dynasty, which was an actual class society. *Chosun Hell* is characterized by an "unequal distribution of wealth, lack of work opportunities, impossibility of a stable life, terribly uncorrectable sexual inequality, distrust in politics, prevalence in politics, lack of consideration for others, neglect of work and life" (Kim, 2016: 98). Ultimately, these problems convinced the younger generation that they have no hope of building their future by their own efforts and their goal of a stable life is not possible without help from their parents.

This phenomenon has led to another term that portrays the inferiority of the younger generation, Spoon Class theory, which says that unless a person is born with a golden spoon in his mouth there is no possibility of achieving a comfortable lifestyle. A person's class is already picked for him through his parents, and he inherits it at birth with all the injustices and unfairness that come with it. This is also a portrayal of how Korean society itself is not trusted by its people (Kim and Han, 2019). Thus, individual effort is limited, and upward mobility is nearly impossible within the reality of society. "Young Koreans have a strong perception that pre-emptive conditions such as socio-economic class determine their happiness in life, and they tend to recognize that inequality and polarization in Korean society will ultimately determine their present and future" (So, 2016: 126). This present situation has brought on impatience and

anxiety for the future. This uncertainty about the present and future has led to two major adjustments by the younger generation.

It is led to them being the “Three Po Generation” (Three Abandonment Generation): the younger generations, to survive, have had to give up three areas of life: dating, marriage, and having children. And if that were not enough, for some it is “Five Po,” now giving up relationships and buying a house, and for some, it is “Seven Po,” giving up hopes and dreams. It has been said that one gives up these parts of the future so that one can survive in the present. Pang and Yoo (2015) argue that the progressives in society are asking the younger generations to once again protest for change; that is their only hope, and without it, there is no future. In the eyes of the older generation, not only is this a problem for the younger generation, but it will have a monumental effect on the future of Korean society, which has a low birth rate and an aging population, and the intervention of government is needed to fix these problems.

Furthermore, with these problems, the concept of YOLO (“you only live once”) has dominated since the beginning of 2017. YOLO was already the word of the year in the United States in 2012 (Kwak and Hong, 2018). This YOLO concept has penetrated into the mindset of young people that life happens only once, and the present is all that matters. It implies that focusing too much on the future will only bring regret. Furthermore, with the present as its focus, the younger generation emphasizes spending and traveling (Kwak and Hong, 2018). Rather than investing in the doubtful future, many feel the need to fulfil present desires and are convinced that this fulfilment ultimately leads to happiness. The typical “patience is a virtue” mindset has been rejected by the younger generation; few are convinced that self-control will enhance their future. In early 2010, the bestselling book *It Hurts because It Is Youth*, written by Seoul National University professor Kim Hong Do, emphasized that being young is painful. But the concept of YOLO is the complete opposite of that, and Song does not believe that YOLO itself is all bad:

It is important to note that the experiences of pleasure through the immediate satisfaction of desires can also be a driving force for people to live more actively and energetically in certain contexts. In particular, the attitude of enjoying one’s present life in accordance with the concept of YOLO could bring positive results to people who have become lethargic and drained of motivation. (Song, 2017: 3)

This movement resonated with the younger generation's desire to take back control of life and focus on the present. Even President Moon's promise at his inauguration that "the opportunities will be equal, the process will be fair, and the results will be just" has been thrown back at him by those who point out how unequal the society has become. People are becoming disillusioned at the inability of the government system or protests to change the injustice and unfairness in the world. I believe that such a generational shift has invariably had a far-reaching cultural impact, not least on Korean eschatology, where postmillennialism has become more desirable than it previously was because of its focus on uplifting contemporary societal and political life. This generational shift went along with young people in the church disagreeing with the forms of premillennialism and its focus on the coming of the kingdom. Rather, these young people would not sympathize with the church's doctrinal stand but would concur with theology or doctrine that would satisfy what they believed and were trying to do. Thus, regardless of what doctrine of eschatology the church stands for, the young people would have a different mindset about the future and end.

It is quite clear that through the 1980s the *minjung* movements and other protests against the authoritarian military regime brought about changes to the government system. While it brought about democratic government, a civilian president, and direct voting, Koreans still felt injustice and unfairness in society. When people felt it, they went on to protest for change. In this regard, the *minjung* generation, where the spirit of *minjung* theology, which urges people to be the agent of change, can be seen as the original firebomb for democracy, which in turn helped to ignite the candlelight protests for changes from the injustices in government. People's confidence grew with more changes brought about by the candlelight protests, which ultimately brought about the impeachment of the president. This gave confidence to the people that they could change the future through present activity. At the core of both movements was the belief that the Korean people were the one and only sovereign power capable of restoring democracy to the nation. Moreover, the candlelight protests against Park Geun-Hae became symbolic of their fight against the military regime originally embodied by her father, Park Jung-Hee, and thus marked a continuation of the *minjung's* generation political struggle in the 1980s.

I believe this ultimately changed their stance on waiting for ultimate future intervention. To young people, it became more than waiting; it gave purpose to the present as life got better through their voices, bringing sovereign power to them. They became convinced that all things are possible through the people's voice and power. As Trueman argues, as people have gotten a better hold on the different conditions of society, "all these developments have served to weaken the authority of the natural world and persuade human beings of their power" (Trueman, 2020: 41).

However, there was another aspect of this period: younger people especially have become the victims of injustice and unfairness. Concepts like the \$880 Generation, the Spoon Class, and the Three Po Generation have portrayed a dismal future for them. Younger people were in the front line of the protest against the authoritarian regime during the 1980s, but they became victims of their achievements and were criticized for being different from former younger generations because they neglected protest movements. With a grim view of their future, they started to focus on what is here and now, started to neglect their preparation for the future, and were immersed in present feelings. The only source of hope for the future became *yung kkul*, "scraping together even the soul", to buy an apartment for future investment. Under these conditions, younger people did not look for an alternate future or an intervention of outside forces; instead, their concept of the present is as a time to live as if there is no tomorrow, and life is a quest to become happy in the present.

These effects have touched the church and its eschatology. One reason for the significant decline of younger people in the church is leisure activities on the weekend (Han, 2020), and this contributed to a general decline in the growth of the Korean church after 1980 that will be looked at in chapter 12. Furthermore, the outlook for the future has diminished with the focus on the present. And developments within the Korean church did not help either. The problems with megachurches have been magnified through different media. Numerous cases of sexual immorality have shaken the church in the 2010s. The credibility of the whole Korean church has been damaged in the eyes of the public. Furthermore, the habit of many senior pastors trying

to bequeath their churches to their sons has been a major issue, and many churches continue to fight it.

The history of Korea and its government's fight against democracy in the 1980s and subsequent injustices has come into the Korean church as well. There are more churches fighting for justice as younger people are leaving the church for many different reasons. As mentioned, rather than leaving the church or attending different churches, the modern trend in the church has become to fight against the injustices and moral failures within the church as they have become more common (Chang, 2020; Lee, 2021). This picture of church shows that what has happened in the society is ultimately transferring to the church as well. More and more, the church and its members are focused on fighting for what seems to be unfair and unjust even within the church. And because its focus on the present, it seems as the focus and the interest of eschatology has abated.

11.8. Conclusion

Korean history after 1979 has led Korean people to participate more actively in building their future. The protests of college students expanded confidently to movements to achieve democracy and have voices heard. Evolution of protests provided the Korean people with sovereign power so their government would do more than hold them accountable; it would fix injustices and build a just society, their utopia. By enforcing accountability on the highest office in the land, the people continued to achieve their goals and be a marginal line of democracy. Furthermore, in the case of Park Geun-Hae, it ultimately brought the impeachment of the president and the selection of a new president to lead them. As President Moon has stated many times, the people represented by the candlelight protest have become the sovereign power.

The history of democracy in Korea has become the driving force behind how people in Korea are gaining confidence in their power to protest and apply substantial pressure for change. They can also be the first line of defence of democracy against injustices. As Hans Rosling has concluded in his book *Factfulness*, the best-selling book in Korea in 2020, despite what we see

or feel, the world is becoming a better place through collective efforts (Rosling et al., 2019). The view of the future is confident as Korea has achieved economic success at an astonishing rate, becoming the fastest growing economy since the Korean War, claiming democracy through its protests, hosting the Olympics and the World Cup and numerous world events, and peacefully protesting with candlelight. These events have been a testament to the growth of Korea as a global power with the country finally achieving world recognition in its own right and away from the theatre of war or colonization.

I believe these events of history have made Koreans confident in change through their sovereign power. They have made the Korean church depart from premillennialism's dualism and desire for God's sovereign imminent intervention and align with a positive outlook and a progressive future. Although postmillennial theology as such has few adherents in Korea, the concept of a kingdom in the present world has been adopted by the church, as shown by more churches fighting and protesting for the reform movement in the church away from authoritarian pastors and their mistakes. I believe this demonstrates that Korean society and church have adopted the mindset of postmillennialism without adopting its doctrinal stance. This is because their overcoming of historical conditions gave them confidence in further future improvements and changes and transitioned their focus from a coming kingdom to actions in the present.

This clearly shows that the discussion of eschatology is not determined through theological discussion but through the perception of society. While the Hapdong presbyterian denomination is still holding on to the residue of premillennialism while most are changing to amillennialism, other Korean churches, including liberal churches, have started to go or already have gone toward the concept of postmillennialism if not the theological interpretation of postmillennialism. What is clear is the Hapdong denomination clearly thought of postmillennialism as a by-product of liberal theology. However, with the changes in society and its conditions, even Hapdong has started to gear toward the concept of postmillennialism in their churches and has started to focus more on sanctification than justification, discipleship training than evangelism, and more, which will be dealt with in chapter 13. It is felt that just

waiting for heaven is not what the church was supposed to do; rather, Christians should go out and change the world for the better. I believe this change from a strong belief in premillennialism has made the Korean church not think about the imminent coming of the kingdom for restoration by God but has shifted its focus to the kingdom at hand with people as the agent of change.

At the same time, it is also clear that the younger generation's response to their uncertain future has been different from that of the younger generation living under Japanese colonialism. During the suffering under Japanese colonialism, the suffering in this world brought uncertainty about the future and a desire for the imminent intervention of God through Christ's return; thus premillennialism was a major theme in the Korean church. However, it is clear that today's younger generation with its uncertain future does not seek for God to intervene but at the same time, they have no desire to be the agent of change for present. This effect has come into the church as Korean churches are in crisis with younger people leaving the church.

Chapter 12. Dispensational premillennialism and *shihanbu* eschatology in Korea

12.1. Introduction

The previous chapter provided historical information about the broader neglect of eschatology in Korea and showed that it is not solely the result of *shihanbu* eschatology. The study of *shihanbu* eschatology is needed, however, because it inevitably had monumental effects on Korean society and the Korean church. Hence, it is impossible to understand the full story of the neglect of eschatology without understanding *shihanbu* eschatology and its effects. This section will explore how *shihanbu* eschatology is closely related to dispensational premillennialism, and how it became more extreme along with its surroundings. I will revisit and compare the time of Japanese colonization and Lee Jang Rim's *shihanbu* eschatology in 1992, describing how their perception of the imminent coming of Christ changed along with changing. But with the incident of Lee Jang Rim's prediction that the rapture would occur on October 28, 1992, many mainline Christians and pastors participated in an extreme eschatological version that is deviated from the orthodox church and their responses to this and other predictions caught the eyes of Korean society. And it is argued that this incident caused the Korean church to distance itself from the discussion of eschatology. However, I will show in this and following sections that one simple incident did not cause the Korean church to distance itself from eschatology; rather, the complex movement of history, theological debates and *shihanbu* eschatology has changed the condition of the Korean church so that it distances itself and neglects eschatology.

During this time in Korean history people clearly concentrated on the present, whether in ascribing sovereign power to government or to themselves. These changes through history have impacted the way the Korean church has thought about eschatology, and its focus on the present has ultimately led believers to neglect the end in their minds.

12.2. The *shihanbu* eschatology of 1992

One of the best-known representatives of *shihanbu* eschatology is Lee Jang Rim. His failed prediction of the time of the return of Christ is the single most significant incident that almost all theologians believe to be the reason behind the lack of eschatology in the Korean church today. Thus, it must be studied meticulously. Lee studied and was ordained through a smaller sect of the holiness church and worked as the editor for a well-known Christian publisher, Word of Life. It is told that after he translated and published books on eschatology, including Earnest W. Angley's *Raptured: A Novel on the Second Coming of the Lord*, he went on to establish the Dami Mission Society in 1989. He wrote books on the eschatological end: *Prepare for the Coming Future*, *Heaven's Door Is Opening*, *Trumpet of Warning*, and *Fever of 92*, the last so named because of the prophecy that predicted that the rapture would occur on October 28, 1992 (S. Lee, 1992). The basis for this claim was the direct revelation that members received which coincided with signs of the world and with prediction of Nostradamus (Park, 2012).

Scholars attribute his prediction of the rapture as coming from three major influences: dispensational premillennialism in Korea, Percy Collet, and the Gulf War (Park, 2012; Choi, 1991). As argued earlier, many Koreans possess an overflowing interest in the end. Views of the end might represent different narratives, but interest in it is regardless very high. This is true not only of the dispensational premillennialism that was brought in with the first missionaries; the interest was already there, and dispensational premillennialism stimulated Koreans and was received naturally (Y.K. Park, 2012). This interest was transmitted to the leaders of the church during the time of suffering, when people were looking towards and hoping for the end. As dispensational premillennialism was accepted more widely, the leaders started to prophesy the date and time of the second coming. There were many numerous date-specific predictions, especially beginning in the 1960s, that the second coming would occur in 1992. But the others were not able to make a splash with their predictions.

Lee continuously wrote and spoke about Percy Collet's book about spending six days in heaven, *I Walked in Heaven with Jesus*. Lee repeatedly refers to Collet's book to support his view of the rapture. Collet's book became a consistent best-seller as a Christian book in the secular nation,

which reflects not only Koreans' interest in heaven but book's influence in Korea and the Korean church. Collet claimed that during his time with Jesus, Jesus revealed to him his doctrine of the second coming, which matches the sequence taught by dispensational premillennialism. However, after the book had been reprinted seven times, Collet's Korean secretary revealed that the whole premise of the book was false.

Lastly, Park believes that it was the 1991 Gulf War that sparked the Korean people's major interest in world events. Because of theologians' interests in Israel and the Arab nations, the Middle East was believed to be where the third world war would start and lead to Armageddon. In *Prepare for the Coming Future*, Lee predicted that during the seven-year tribulation, the Soviet Union would attack the Middle East and seven years later the Armageddon war would start. Furthermore, he built his case through worldly omens that included the collapse of communism and the forming of the EC (European Community), as well as through the descriptions in Matthew 16 of drought, flood, famine, and earthquakes, as well as abnormalities in the environment, specifically the ozone layer (Lee, 1992: 54). While the book makes many predictions that were proven false, it addresses issues that were important at the time. (Park, 2012; Park, 2013)

Furthermore, the influence of the Americans was just as important, as there were consistent relationships in many areas, especially in Christianity. "After the Immigration Act of 1964 removed restriction on Asian immigration to the United States, the Korean immigrant population grew significantly, from just 11,000 in 1960 to 290,000 in 1980, marking a 2,500 percent increase" (O'Connor and Batalova, 2019). Predictions also made it into popular media:

This prophecy movement has produced Christian superstars, such as Hal Lindsey, Church Missler, Edgar Whisenant, and Harold Camping, who are granted authority and legitimacy by the subjects of this study. Several of these Christian authors and radio or television personalities either revised earlier predictions or began to perceive that the actual date of the end of the world would be in the year 2000. (Tapia, 2002: 269)

Many of their books were translated into Korean. Lee even brings Nostradamus into the discussion:

It is said that Nostradamus' prophecy hit rate is close to 99%. If "The Great King of Fear" comes in July 1999, which he prophesied, the start of the destruction of mankind will be around 1992–1993, seven years before that. In other words, it is the time of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, "The Great King of Fear." Then the "rapture" will take place, evaporating about 1 billion people around the world. People of the world will see the "The Great King of Fear" returning to earth in 1999, but they will not see the scene of notarizing and taking the saints. If Nostradamus' prophecy is correct, it can be said that God foreshadowed the end of history through him nearly 500 years ago to prove his revelation outside the church. (Lee, 1988: 236)

The Y2K problem became an emotional issue around which the expectations of the apocalypse formed (Tapia, 2002: 267). Millennial Christian (North, 1990) interpreted the Y2K problem not as an opportunity for evangelism because of the confusion caused by its approach, but as a sign that the end of the world was near. All these different factors contributed to the spite of extreme prophecies exemplified by Lee in 1992.

While Lee Jang Rim used various factors as evidence for his prediction of the second coming of Christ in October of 1992, this was quite different from previous prophecies as more mainline churches and members believed him than had believed any previous predictor. One of the main differences between Lee Jang Rim and other Christian sects that were condemned as heresy by the orthodox church is that while others used their leaders' direct revelation from God, Lee argued that the blurriness of revelation clears as the fulfilment is approaching and with its imminence, more clear instruction comes out (Park, 2012; Park, 2013). He started with the end being in the twentieth century, which had only ten to twelve years left, and he shifted his prediction to 1992. Then he predicted that it would be in October. As he progressed to back his claim, he used direct revelations that according to him were brought to him from people praying in the world. So his claim was that the prediction was not his own only but backed by people who claimed to have received the revelation about October 28, 1992:

October 28, 1992, midnight! It is the day of the long-awaited Second Coming of Jesus and the rapture of the saints. It is written in the Bible that no one knows that day and when. Then, on what basis, is the persecution and small curse of heresy and conveying the day so boldly?

The 24 o'clock rapture on October 28, 1992, was not something people knew about because they wanted to know it, nor because they studied the Bible. From many years ago, He has informed by various revelations (dreams, visions, voices, etc.) many praying and awakening servants who live with the Lord passionately and hope in Heaven. He is telling us.

What is surprising is that the rapture takes place everywhere in the world at the same time, so the revelations to each country are as different as the time difference. Through the passion of love for the Lord, the purity of a child's heart, and the beautiful fruit of those receiving revelation, we can be sure that God has revealed it. (J.R. Lee, 1992: 53)

Lee emphasized that two things make his claims true. One is the plurality of testimonies and revelations, and the other is that children who are pure are able to receive God's revelations. He is also claiming that this revelation is identical to the revelation of the Old and New Testaments because it is to awaken and prepare Christ's lovely bride for his imminent return, so there is nothing wrong.

12.3. Growth of the Dami Mission Society and its effects to Korean society

In 1992, the Dami Mission Society led by Lee Jang Rim grew to ninety-two branches with four thousand people domestically, and it also had forty international branches with a thousand people. Some people who disagreed with Lee thought that people who got direct revelation should lead and go on to establish missions of their own. One of the more serious problems arose when people started abandoning their daily lives and going to spend their time in prayer and praise while waiting for the rapture. This caused the separation of families, younger people running away from their homes, people selling all their possessions, and even military servicemen deserting their posts. The Supreme Prosecutor's Office ordered an investigation into Lee Jang Rim because this eschatological belief was becoming an object of public concern and a social issue. They arrested Lee and reported that he had possession of \$3 million worth of Korean won that he had obtained from people who believed in the second coming and the rapture. But his arrest did not calm things down; instead, people believed that the arrest was identical to what had happened to Jesus before his crucifixion and that this was definite, positive proof that the rapture was imminent and would take place on October 28, 1992.

When the expected time of the rapture passed, Jang Man Ho, who replaced Lee because of his arrest, came out and apologized, saying that there had been no rapture and urging the people to go home and continue with their faith journeys. Soon it became a scene of chaos where people were yelling and complaining about the false prophecy (Anon, 1992c). It was estimated that more than twenty thousand people were involved at the end, but the influence of the protest went far beyond twenty thousand people. The Dami Mission Society published the next day an apology in major newspapers addressing it to the Christian society and citizens for causing a social disturbance (Anon, 1992a). This advertisement alone shows how extensively this affected the people of Korea and how people concentrated on its development.

After the rapture did not occur, the churches that had advocated for the apocalypse were seriously hit. Many of them had to stop their worship and close their meeting places. Still, they were convinced that the rapture would occur as it is a Christian promise from God. There were mainline churches who actively and directly participated, including Seoul HwaShin Church, SeungChun Church, Incheon BanSeok Church, Incheon Onnuri Church, Busan JungGeum Church, SunHwa Mission Church, Korean Central Church, and Pohang Central Church. Churches with dispensational premillennialism as their eschatology were not clearly against it, but many agreed that the second coming would occur in 1992. Park notes that this lack of theological knowledge caused *shihanbu* eschatology to penetrate the mainline church as many of these pastors involved were from established seminaries and had had proper training. This participation from within orthodox Christianity has blurred the line between it and the Dami Mission Society; to those on the outside, it was just Christianity (Park, 2013).

Furthermore, many members who participated in the Dami Mission Society had joined from established churches, which meant that there was a return to the original churches. Thirty to forty percent of the people who were involved in *shihanbu* eschatology returned to their denominations, but only five percent were able to continue their faith journeys; the other fifty to sixty percent have not returned but have suffered after-effects that have prevented them from joining not only the church but society (Anon, 1992b).

12.4. The result of the *shihanbu* eschatology of 1992 and Conclusion

Lee Jang Rim's failed prediction had a tremendous effect on the Korean church and Korean society. Park Yong Kyu (2013) calls it the biggest crisis in the Korean church's 130-year history. Because of their exposure in the media, Lee's predictions brought attention to Korean Christianity, as people were trying to figure out the uncertain future with the effects of the Gulf War and the impending new millennium and its supposed problems. Everyday people were swayed by this prediction of the rapture, but the bigger hit came to the orthodox Christian churches. Many believe that there was a significant decrease in the number of members of orthodox churches starting in 1992, and Christianity had never before had such a great impact on the nation.

This chapter has argued that dispensational premillennialism was driving *shihanbu* eschatology in Korea. I concluded earlier that people began to seek hope not in this world but in the coming kingdom because the extreme conditions they experienced during the Japanese colonization made the concept of the redemption of society seem unattainable at the time. One of the trends of studies in eschatology during this period was a concentration on *shihanbu* eschatology and defending the church against it. The denominations that denounced *shihanbu* eschatology as heretical distanced themselves from it, though they were being attacked by society because of it. Even before Lee Jang Rim and the Dami Mission Society came to the fore, different mystical groups had used eschatology as an escape route for people who were not adjusting to the fast-changing society. According to many, eschatology was something that the orthodox church refused to discuss, and so it was neglected. But Park believes that it was the Lee Jang Rim affair that revealed the seriousness of the problem of eschatology in and out of the church, especially the moral and ethical problems in the church (S. Lee, 1992; Y.K. Park, 2000; Cho, 2009; Choi, 2011). As the Korean church began to neglect and distance itself from eschatology, the moral and ethical standards of its members began increasingly to reflect those of Korean society as a whole.

Chapter 13. Challenges to the Korean church since 1980 and its relation with eschatology

13.1. Introduction

I have introduced the reasons for the shift from premillennialism to amillennialism. With the significant improvement in the historical situation in Korea from the prior devastation of Japanese colonialism and the Korean War, the theological concept of the kingdom of God changed during this time in congruence with the historical conditions especially in the presbyterian church, Hapdong denomination. I will explore the change in concept in more depth in this section, and this section will look closely at the situation of the Korean church in relation to eschatology since 1980.

Although some claim that the neglect of eschatology in Korea and the reluctance to talk about it began with the failed prediction in 1992 by Lee Jang Rim and the DaMi Mission Society, I have tried to explain the different factors, including various historical incidents and conditions and theological shifts, that contributed to the neglect of the discussion of eschatology in the present. The lack of literature on eschatology in the Korean church today is more evidence that eschatology is no longer important, and it shows a general lack of interest in eschatology in the Korean church and in Korean society. I am arguing that the eschatology of the Korean church is not only neglected but cannot be found. Eschatological discussion only appears in systematic theology in discussions of millennialisms. Perhaps this lack of sources proves that there is clear neglect by the church as mentioned in the introduction. As Lee has stated, the church is having a hard time teaching eschatology in the modern scientific world for various reasons, including eschatology being difficult for pastors to grasp and the perception of the society that eschatology is something alien (O. Lee, 2011). The academic study of eschatology is limited to the stances of famous theologians like Augustine, Luther and Calvin, and the church's teaching on eschatology is limited to certain passages in the Bible. Perhaps, this is precisely the reason why church leaders, theologians and churchgoers feel there is an absence of eschatology. In this chapter, I will continue to develop and present different reasons behind the Korean

church's distancing itself from eschatology and also present more details of the situation in the Korean church that has contributed to its neglect of eschatology.

In this section, I will go behind the scenes of the radical growth of the Korean church between 1960 and 1980, which brought about criticism that the church had to face in 1990 with the incident involving the DaMi Mission Society. I will discuss the church growth that astonished the world as the work of Spirit and was studied by many scholars overseas and the habits that grew out of this growth in relation to eschatology. I will also assess the criticism of Kim Seyoon regarding the Korean church's doctrine of justification, the process affecting the sanctification and maturity of the church, and how the church dealt with decline and criticism by readjusting their eschatology to amillennialism and focusing on "disciple making".

I will also discuss how amillennialism from the United States has affected the Korean church by discussing Richard B. Gaffin and Tim Keller and how the Korean church has adapted to this new concept of amillennialism. I will look into specific prominent preachers who are adjusting to the new concept of the millennialism situation in Korea. Furthermore, I will explore some of the criticisms of the Korean church while trying to embrace these criticisms and the changes made in response to them. All these reasons combined show that the changes in the eschatology of Korea and the suspected neglect of eschatology go beyond 1992's DaMi *shihanbu* eschatology. I will conclude that the church has further neglected eschatology, ultimately embracing the doctrine of a moral, ethical kingdom on this present earth.

13.2. Church growth in Korea prior to 1980

Park Aaron, professor of systematic theology at Chongshin University and son of the famous Park Hyung Nong, has written a preface to a journal that looks at the growth of Korean churches, and he gives thanks to God that there are clear indications that the traditional conservative church has a significantly higher rate of growth or revival than the liberal Korean churches. He acknowledges that the latter have contributed positively to human rights, anti-communist movements and social issues, but they have also denied the need for individual salvation and the infallibility of the Bible. He reiterates that the conservative churches through

the inerrant word of God focused where the church should focus, prioritizing the salvation of the soul and domestic and foreign missions, and this focus on Bible studies, revival meetings and discipleship programs has led to tremendous growth in the Korean church (Park, 1998). Lee (1999) and Lee (2004), on the other hand, attribute the main growth of the Korean church to the urbanization that resulted from modernization and industrialization. At the end of the 1960s, 20 percent of the population was in cities, but by the beginning of the 1980s, the proportion was 80 percent. To adjust to life in the city, many quickly joined the church, and this brought tremendous growth. Noh (2001) writes that the church was not only for personal salvation; it encouraged people who were struggling economically as it mediated help from the modern Western world, especially from the United States, which helped the Korean church during the Korean War and engaged in humanitarian efforts in conjunction with the Korean church afterward. Koreans viewed the church as more than a place where one would be saved.

One factor that many would agree on is the evangelistic efforts by the Korean church during these times. S.T. Kim (2012) attributes this passion for evangelism to the previously mentioned Nevius Plan, which directed the Korean church to strict Bible study and the application of it on the road to evangelism. Chil-Sung Kim (2016) goes as far as to say that some scholars believe that ‘under the strong influence of colonialism, the early missionaries planted these two perspectives’ (i.e., religious exclusivism and aggressive evangelism) in the Korean church (Kim, 2016: 90). He also believes that this tradition carried on into the 1970s and 1990s, where in any city in Korea could be seen the sign ‘Jesus—Heaven, Not believe—Hell’. But Kim believes that ‘many Korean Christians started to apply spiritual warfare principles when doing mission and evangelization’ (Kim, 2016: 89). The conversion through mission and evangelization is spiritual battle that can either save or lose lives. Park uses Porter in the context of the United States but says that ‘premillennialists were more likely to favour evangelism focused on immediate conversion because of the imminence of the tribulation in their views’ (Park, 2016: 249). Park summarizes this view of the premillennialist emphasis on evangelism:

The first reason of premillennialism is related to the focus on conversion, which stems from the view that Christ’s return is imminent. . . . One is similar to the Manichean view of the world that divides the world into the good and bad rather than the created and

the fallen, and premillennialism similarly holds a more pessimistic view of the world, and by extension, places more focus on evangelism and conversion as a way of escaping the 'bad' world. The second detail is the view that sin is personal rather than structural and that salvation is strictly a personal affair. (Park, 2016: 250)

But what is important is that the churches, while possessing the residue of premillennialism, emphasized and limited the people to service within the church; they also emphasized that evangelism is how one can maximize one's influence in society and transform it. So churches started to hold in-church revival meetings focused on why individuals and churches must evangelize. These church revival meetings invited famous pastors who were known for their ability to evangelize, and these often shared testimonies of how a person or a church is blessed through evangelism. These movements triggered more aggressive evangelism and competition with neighbouring churches, and this has translated into a focus on external growth and development. Furthermore, the focus on evangelism brought about another evangelical movement on an incalculable scale of revival meetings led by Bob Pierson and Billy Graham. These revival meeting movements coincided with what the Korean churches were pursuing at that time and would be criticized for later. But what I want to emphasise is that while premillennialism still has a residual effect on the church and its growth, the stagnation and decline in membership that started after the 1980s can also be attributed to the lessening of the effects of premillennialism's focus on the coming kingdom, which initially triggered fervent evangelism but now was being criticised by outsiders for lack of participation in society and by insiders for lack of concern for sanctification.

13.3. Billy Graham and the movement for church growth

Especially during the 1970s, as part of the Evangelical movement, large gatherings to convert people to Christianity were held. This is another case where one can see the Korean church focused on evangelism. There are still clear remnants of premillennialism that revolve around the coming kingdom and focused on conversion. These movements successfully involved millions of people and made conversions, but the Korean church was criticized for its lack of investment in the present kingdom.

These began with gigantic crowds gathering for Billy Graham's evangelism meetings, which had the slogan '50 million Koreans to Christ' from May 30 to June 3, 1973. To prepare for this event, there were prior evangelism meetings in six different cities. And through these four days, it is estimated that more than 1.1 million people were in attendance, with a 9500-member choir and 16,703 people who converted to Christianity through this event. These large-scale meetings continued to impact the Korean church through '74 Explo, '77 National Evangelization Conference, '80 World Evangelization Conference and so on. Min has concentrated on the '77 National Evangelization Conference, which was held without the help of foreigners, and concluded that the '77 National Evangelization Congress was an opportunity to raise the Korean church to world-class status and a huge driving force that made Korea the world leader in Christian movements (Min, 2004). These movements provided rapid growth to the Korean church, with people in the hundreds of thousands joining the church (Hong, 1998; Lee, 2004). This boost in growth carried on into the 1980s.

But beginning in the late 1970s, concerns about these meetings began to arise. As had been true with Billy Graham and his ministry, these meetings heavily focused on conversion experiences. As Lippy writes, "the problem which emerges is how to determine whether one's personal conversion is genuine, whether one has indeed apprehended the same divine presence as have others who claim to be born again. A private experience requires some public dimension at least so that the community of believers may assess its authenticity" (Lippy, 1982: 29). Wimberley et al. claim that attenders of these crusades are 'church-goers' and these 'converts' are not new believers per se; instead, the crusade 'stimulates the integrative re-affirmation of existing values rather than a turnabout acceptance of new values', which calls into question its legitimacy and effectiveness (Wimberly et al., 1975: 163). Barbier writes of Graham's influence in Germany that German pietists 'adapted Graham's language, organization approach, and focus on financial and audience statistics'; Graham's business model was consumerism and did not direct people to new ways of living (Barbier, 2014: 148). These movements focused on conversion but failed to accentuate the importance of continuing the journey to maturity. The situation of individual churches in Korea was no different. They emphasized individual salvation and defined living out this salvation as serving the church, and

so they failed to care for the maturity of their members, lacking programs beyond attendance and participation in worship services. This succeeded in getting people into the church, which fuelled the growth of the church; however, the image of the church and its inwardness has been the main criticism of the Korean church. These large gatherings and meetings that focused on conversion began to be reassessed in 1980 as the churches began shifting the criteria for healthy churches from the number of members and conversions to the maturity of members. The churches that still focused on increasing their size by building larger buildings were starting to be criticized.

These failures of maturity in the church were blamed on its focus on the coming kingdom rather than investment in the present kingdom. While there was a shift from the imminent coming of the kingdom to a delayed kingdom, these criticisms ultimately pointed toward the church's expectation of a coming kingdom. I believe these criticisms of the Korean church started because people were asking what a healthy church in the present era is. They were not only adjusting from looking for an imminent coming but seeking ways to participate in the present world, which affected the eschatology of the Korean church.

13.4. Decline in the growth of the Korean church

The Korean church enjoyed growth until the end of the 1980s, but this growth has stopped, and church attendance and the number of members has started to decline (Lee, 2004; Jang, 2018). Beginning in 2010, this decline has been reported in all of the Christian denominations (Yoon, 2020). Criticism has been growing of congregations, and aggressive evangelism tactics and lack of social participation have pulled the conservative church's credibility from the society. While the liberal churches continue addressing human rights issues and democratic movements, having fought against the military government through the 1970s and 1980s, the conservative church has kept silent.

The general public's approval of Christianity deteriorated by at least 5 percent and by perhaps as much as 20 percent between 1984 and 1997. With its failure to take on the issues that the broader public expected it to, its competition was for more growth in membership of the

church, and building physical sanctuaries and competing against other churches and religions. The church itself was very much immersed with growing the number of members in individual churches. The church fought nepotism as head pastorships became hereditary, and it lost the faith of the people that it was an institution that was different from the rest of the world (Lee, 2004; S.T. Kim, 2012). Rather than taking on social responsibility, the church became a social problem. The Korean church is losing public confidence (Kim, 2003).

The dilemma of the Korean church, according to Ryu and Lim, was how to accept the challenges of the social expectations of society while not giving into Marxism and liberation theology (Ryu and Lim, 2003). So they needed to find other alternatives in which the church will not only focus on justification but cope with the needs of the society. With that in mind, the church started to focus on discipleship training and practical application through sermons to deal with these criticisms. How they did so will be dealt with in the next section.

With education from the United States, especially at institutions like Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia, USA) and Calvin Theological Seminary (Grand Rapids, USA), where they were taught by the likes of George Ladd, Herman Ridderbos, Geerhardus Vos, Anthony Hoekema and Richard Gaffin, New Testament scholars like Kim Keun Soo, Kwon Sung Soo, and Yoo Sang Sub brought back with them new kingdom concepts in the 1980s and taught in Chongshin University. The kingdom of God, according to these scholars, is a present reality and not yet consummated. The “already but not yet” aspect of the kingdom spread through the Korean church, balancing the theology of eschatology from premillennialism’s coming kingdom to amillennialism’s balance between the kingdom here and now and the kingdom to come. I believe this has provided new ways of looking at the church and its works here in the present, especially in the Hapdong denomination. However, I believe this concept of the kingdom has drastically reduced the need for premillennialism’s imminent kingdom. Amillennialism has tried to heighten the readiness of the church for the coming kingdom, but as it has decreased the matter of imminency, it has deteriorated the urgency of the church, which was expecting an imminent kingdom.

Furthering this development, Riddlebarger states, “Geerhardus Vos, Herman Ridderbos and Richard Gaffin advanced the thesis that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was much more than the vindication of his redemptive work on Calvary and proof of his deity. Rather, Christ’s resurrection marked the dawn of the age to come and ushered in a new and final era of redemptive history” (Riddlebarger, 2013: 129–130). This understanding of the incarnation, resurrection and ascension was significant, viewing them as eschatological events.

This concept of the kingdom of God assured adherents that not only are they waiting for the future kingdom to come, but there is a present element. This was what Reformed theology was assuring them of with its redemptive historical interpretation of the kingdom of God and its transition out of premillennialism. Park Hyung Nong’s premillennialism was replaced at Chongshin University with amillennialism, with its concept of a kingdom that is already and not yet realized. This transition to amillennialism has many facets, but understanding the influence of Westminster Theological Seminary is crucial to understanding amillennialism, as this influence directed conservative discussion in Korea through Westminster’s students.

13.5. Justification, sanctification and eschatology in the Korean church

Furthermore, the change in its stance from premillennialism to amillennialism lessened personal readiness and longing for the kingdom; people did not think about the end, but without the end in sight, Christians’ moral and ethical behaviour calls into question the maturity of the church as salt and light in society. It is clear that the Korean church, with its theological change, started to keep an eye on the present world as the kingdom of God; however, its theology also did not lead it to actively perform in social and cultural contexts. The focus still was inside the church. As has been mentioned, criticism of moral failures in the Korean church had been growing since before the 1980s. Its ethical standards had been a point of attack by Korean society as a whole. In polls recently conducted through the Christian Ethics Movement Korea (CEMK) and Ji&Com Research and published by NewsNJoy, the typical Korean’s view of the Korean church came out 31.8 percent positive and 63.9 percent negative. As for positive credibility among the religions, Catholicism was rated at 30%, Buddhism at 26.2% and Protestantism at 18.9%, which continued the drop from the 2009 and 2013 results of 26.1

percent and 21.3 percent, respectively. It also showed areas of needed reform in the practice of opaque finances, the lives of church leaders, its attitude toward other religions, the lives of believers and church growthism. When asked how the Korean church might recover credibility, 49.8 percent answered improved ethics and moral practice, 27.9 percent said social services and relief activities, and 8.4 percent answered environmental, human rights and social movements (Lee, 2020). These criticisms were one of the reasons for the neglect of eschatology. I believe the Korean churches (Hapdong especially) were forced away from eschatology that taught the need for God's intervention through his return to eschatology that taught restoration through the work of the church and people here and now. Pre-1945 premillennialism and its residue still had a strong theological influence, yet society and the failure of premillennial churches to be positive examples pressured the church out of premillennialism.

These criticisms came not only from outside of the church but also from within. Kim Seyoon, a renowned NT scholar who studied under F. F. Bruce, criticized the Korean church for its doctrine of justification, which affected its view of sanctification. In *Justification and God's Kingdom*, which is the English version of *Justification and Sanctification*, which came out earlier in Korea, he charges the Korean church's doctrine of justification, which closely followed the Reformers' view that faith alone justifies, with ultimately causing the church to abandon sanctification. Kim is pointing to the fact the Korean church's focus on the justification as it did with Reformers has affected its focus on justification while it abandoned the sanctification. It is interesting that in this book and in a few lectures that he gave, his starting point is the lack of ethics in the Korean church. This lack of ethics is evidence that the leaders of the church and Christians in general have become morally corrupted. While accepting his criticism of the church, many in Reformed circles did not concur with his theological stance. What I will argue is that Kim's argument ultimately was not received by the Korean church, but it did fuel a movement, which had already begun, of certain churches towards maturity in terms of the progress it made on an eschatological front. Kim's argument will be discussed later in the chapter.

13.6. Korean churches' focus on maturity

13.6.1. The 1980s discipleship training movement

As we have seen, the Korean church was centred on worship services and larger gatherings, focused inward and emphasizing the doctrine of justification. Its focus on salvation and from observation of the lack of interest in growth in sanctification in individual Christians. The Billy Graham movements and the Korean church's growth were the parts of trend that triggered this focus. But criticism of the church pointed at the interest of Korean believers not in what to believe but in how to live is manifest in the interest in books written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, specifically *The Cost of Discipleship* (Kim, 1995; D. Lee, 2005). First published in Korea in 1965, it has become a steady seller, having been reprinted more than thirty times. Interest in it became apparent as theologians began to discuss his writings and life in the 1980s (T. Lee, 2011). Not only did his books contribute to *minjung* theology and its followers, but they penetrated into the lives of believers. He emphasizes that Christians are not to become yet another group of religious rituals but people who follow in the footsteps of Christ. This went counter to the movement of the Korean church that focused on consumer Christianity that I have discussed in an earlier chapters. The Korean churches started realizing that gathering might not be the ultimate goal of the true Christian church; rather they started to focus on sanctification. This is important in the discussion in Korean eschatology because the lack of interest in the future coming of Christ has been triggered through the church's focus on what is here and now, and seeing people as important agents of change in society rather than waiting for God's intervention at the end.

While evaluating missions organizations in universities and their training material, Oak Han Heum discovered that traditional churches focused on religious activities and lacked programs that nurture believers, so he decided to study discipleship and discipleship training abroad at Calvin Theological Seminary. When he came back to Korea, he started Sarang Community Church and implemented discipleship training. The training that Oak developed, despite the intensity of the program, was soon widely distributed among Korean churches, and the accompanying book, *Awaken the Laity*, became a bestseller among pastors. The popularity of

this book showed that pastors felt the need for a doctrine of justification that included sanctification. Along with the program, a movement of discipleship training in the Korean church through a biannual seminar was started. It was led by Sarang Community Church's Discipleship Ministries International and was geared toward church senior pastors (M.H. Kim, 2012). As of the one-hundredth CAL (Called to Awaken the Laity) seminar in 2015, there had been 22,123 graduates in its twenty-nine years (D. Kim, 2015). This shows the impact of discipleship training begun by Sarang Community Church. The church has grown to a membership of fifty thousand, building a mammoth building in 2013 that cost the church an estimated \$300 million.

Kim points to numerous positives that discipleship training has brought to the Korean church: it has brought maturity in the development of the church by changing the focus from worship and preaching to discipleship training, transforming the laity to the image of Christ by its repetitious method of daily training. This might be a far-reaching assessment, but Korean churches' focus did shift from 'Just believe' to 'Then what?'

But this discipleship training turned somewhat into programs that churches followed to increase the number of members, and it was also criticized for being not much more than a Bible study with some applications, limited to faith, doctrinal but not practical in real life. Most of all, by shifting its focus from justification to the practices of the sanctified life, it completely disregarded eschatology. As Oak states, preaching eschatology and things regarding the end is not suitable for those who have recently started to believe on account of its complexity and the risk of confusion (Oak, 1987). There is a risk of misunderstanding eschatology without proper prior knowledge, and its weirdness can intimidate new believers who are adjusting to the new language of the church and Christianity. He also suggests that the new believer will have a hard time digesting different concepts of eschatology, and its alien concepts will make it difficult for newcomers to adjust to the church environment. I am not suggesting that the neglect of eschatology is because of the church's effort to accommodate newcomers; however, it is arguably true that these different views of eschatology can confuse people and cause churches to disassociate from already-existing churches.

13.6.2. Practical sermons focused on morality

The sermons of the Korean church started to shift as well. While premillennialism portrayed the world dualistically, seeing this world as only hopelessly evil and all good as exclusively part of a future age, with no neutral ground or hope of progress, the Korean church started to move away from dualism, allowing room for advancement and the present world being fixable through one's efforts. As the general Korean populace was making changes in politics and policies through protests (as discussed in section 4.1), the Korean church started to focus its message on the connection between faith and works. This was not only in a few small churches; churches that had grown to be megachurches started to deliver sermons focused on works, work in the world and morality. This focus on works and application in the world has lessened interest in eschatology, which has come to be associated with premillennialists who are waiting for the second coming. Instead of waiting for the second coming, most Christians have started to focus on the works that will bring about the kingdom here on earth. This section will look at famous pastors whose churches grew during this time of decline in the Korean church, whose focus was away from premillennialism's imminent coming and instead on the works of churches and Christians. There will be many extensive quotations from sermons that will show that there is a lack of focus on the future; instead, these pastors concentrated on the present actions of the people making a difference, not in the future but in the present. This will show how the change in eschatology is coming from not only theological changes but changes in the pastoral focus of the Korean churches.

One famous pastor was Jeon Byung Wook, who took over the Samil Church in 1993, when it had eighty members. Within fifteen years, the church grew to more than sixteen thousand members. His sermons were criticized by many for the lack of exposition and background on the Scripture and his focus on practical application. This is part of his sermon on November 7, 2010, entitled 'Sticky Comradeship Can Be Formed Only by Fighting':

What is the message to the church members in Rome? 'You guys fought hard in the world'. Those things happened after they fought hard for the gospel. It is such a message. . . . It is said that the place where comradeship occurs the most is the

battlefield, right? When I go to the battlefield, it's uncomfortable at first, but when I fight with guns, my origin, background, academic background, and local colour all collapse, become one. . . . What is the feeling that the church loses the sense of unity through this kind of friendship and battle? Actually, there is no feeling of becoming one through battle. . . . What it takes to have a church fellowship is that you have to go to the battlefield. It means that you have to go to the field of evangelism.

Morality is a key theme in Jeon's sermons. The likening of comradeship in the church to that on a battlefield grounds. This application has appealed to young Christians who were looking for purpose in life, and his church has been flooded with young people. He continues:

Another thing is, why do you have fellowship? To share comfort. Verse 12: 'That is, that we may find comfort from one another . . .'. Why do we hang out? Why do we meet? The reason is simple. To receive encouragement. We live on encouragement. When everyone is encouraged and comforted, they get refreshed. So, when you meet people, you have to encourage them.

Above all, however, Jeon is encouraging a collective togetherness that he hopes to stir up with the analogy of battle. The focus is on the practical application of these values to foster selflessness and comfort rather than strictly interpreting the Scripture. Critics within the Hapdong denomination said that he was too focused on the practical side. When asked by Dong-A Ilbo what Korean Christianity was becoming and what it needed for reflection, he replied,

We must do missions according to common sense and courtesy. If I treat the other person with respect as to what they value, won't they also respect me? Christianity is a religion of repentance and renewal, so we must be humble with social criticism.

What do you do with others? I have to be good first. I hate pretence. I don't even want to get attention from society. In that sense, Lee Young-ae's evangelistic monologue in the movie 'Kindly Mrs. Geumja' is in his heart, saying, 'You should first be doing good.' (Oh, 2008)

It is true that in midst of the decline in the Korean church, churches with application-focused preachers enjoyed immense growth. Lee Chan Soo, who was regarded as one of the closest followers and imitators of Oak Han Heum, planted the Woori Church in the new planned city of

Bundang, on the outskirts of Seoul, in the biggest metropolitan area in Korea. The church nourished the movement to the suburbs from Seoul, and all the growth cannot be attributed to his style of preaching, which emphasized faith with works (Lee, 1999). Oak's fame and help during the planting stage cannot be ignored, but the Bundang church enjoyed much success due to many people wanting to get out of the city yet stay in the metropolitan vicinity. And many successful churches in Seoul planted satellite churches, or sister churches. During this time of fierce competition, Woori Church was planted in 2002 and within five years had more than six thousand members. While Lee attributes the growth of the church to the work of the Holy Spirit, many will agree that the impact of his sermons was very great, as they were listened to by many people besides his church members. In his book *Prove It with Your Life*, subtitled 'The most obvious proof that I am a true Christian in the world', written in 2012, he says,

In fact, due to the situation of the times, I tended to emphasize a lot of actions taken in the pulpit. It is important to underline in the Bible, but it is more important to underline in your life! Christians should live even more morally and ethically! Be honest! (Lee, 2012: 22)

In a sermon regarding his book, he says,

The title of the book, *Prove It with Your Life*, is why I am attached to it. . . . Do you believe in Jesus? Are you saying to him, 'Lord, Lord'? Then prove it with your life. This is my sermon. Also, it is a gospel life to live like that. . . . Our faith must be honestly borne witness to by our lives. Why did I have the framework for such a preaching? When I was a child, there were many adults who disappointed us who were too young. (C.S. Lee, 2017)

He tries to balance justification and sanctification, as it is not right to separate justification from sanctification as if they are different entities; rather, they are one.

Furthermore, Lee Dong Won, known as the main preacher who planted Jiguchon Church in Bundang and grew it to be one of the biggest Baptist churches in Korea, says,

My work is not set aside, as in Colossians 1, as Paul focused on preaching Christ, teaching each person so they will establish themselves as perfect people in Christ. And because Jesus proclaimed, taught and healed, I thought it would be nice to have a

holistic ministry and a balanced ministry. It may not be a ministry that reveals only one aspect, but it can be said that it is a ministry that builds up people by preaching the gospel and teaching it well. I also call and believe this as a whole-person (holistic) ministry, a balanced ministry and an educational ministry. (Kwon, 2010: 42)

Keun Mi Lee also says,

In addition, there are 'Christians who live a life of light and salt in balance between church and social life', 'Christians who live in harmony with the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit', 'Christians who live in a balanced harmony of responsibility for evangelism and social service'. . . . This reveals that church members have been educated from the perspective that it is important to live with a balance of interest in the church and the world. (K.M. Lee, 2005: 173)

It is understandable to say, based on a limited view of the ministry of certain pastors, that the Christians in Korea were moving in the direction of focusing on action and application because of the criticism from theologians and pastors of the lack of those things. Emphasizing action had different effects on pastors as well. First, the character and morality of preachers were needed and stressed. From the moment that preachers started touching on actions, they were also measured by higher standards of morality by the congregations. Preachers had to be blameless in what they were saying and in their actions. Furthermore, the church itself had to show high standards to its people through its actions and deeds, and it was this that determined what it meant to be Christian.

Oak Han Heum has criticized churches that focused solely on the morality and ethics of the church or individuals, saying that doing so undermines the gospel of grace. He emphasizes the 'imbalance in sermons in Korean churches', saying that this 'imbalance in sermons comes from pastors using sources other than the Word itself' and that illustrations need to be used only when they are absolutely necessary to complement the Word (Kim, 2008). Furthermore, he goes on to say that preachers only preached on what they wanted to instead of preaching on the whole Bible. This method of preaching came from sermons having too much emphasis on pleasing the listeners. However, he also concludes by stating that law and obedience are important; they should not be neglected, but exhortations about them should be directed at

the actions of the people. He also believes that preaching is for the people and they need to hear the Word if they are to change. Thus, the vision and future of the church have come not from the Bible but from the preacher himself. The Bible should be the centre of the church.

Dong-Choul Kim concludes,

The Korean pulpit has long preached the consumptive sermon to solve the private problems of the hearer, so that the church finally has fallen into the well-being syndrome. In this sense, the Korean pulpit needs to apply the practice of public theology; that is, the preaching should reconnect the private realm and the public realm through proclaiming the redemptive work of Christ. Consequently, the Gospel should be proclaimed in terms of both ecclesial and public memory. (D.-C. Kim, 2004)

Furthermore, what needs to be studied is not only in the realms of justification and sanctification but their respective relationships to eschatology. Further investigative study is needed into sermons affected by different eschatologies or their lack thereof.

13.7. Kim Seyoon's criticism on the sanctification of Korean church

As mentioned, criticism of the Korean church and its doctrines of justification and sanctification reached a new level of theological controversy because of Kim Seyoon's lectures, which attacked the Korean church's view of justification and sanctification. More interesting is that Kim's approach to sanctification and its relationship to eschatology has brought more attention to readiness for the coming kingdom but also decreased attention on justification and the power of God. Not only has the debate that came after Kim's lecture brought attention to the theological problems of the Korean church's dealing with justification and sanctification, but it has also put more pressure on Korean churches to repent of their lack of social responsibility as they were being criticized for lack of spiritual growth. I believe that the trends of eschatology moving away from the imminent coming and premillennialism has also emphasised the responsibility people have to act out their salvation by living in the light of the end.

The world-renowned Korean theologian Kim Seyoon became famous while he was a student of F.F. Bruce. He has had tenure at many universities and seminaries around the world and was

invited to Korea in 2012 for a series of lectures on justification and sanctification. Printed in Korea and abroad in 2018, this series of controversial lectures came as a shock because of his harsh words, not only for Korean Christians and their leaders but for its theology of justification. The shock was even greater because many had believed him to be a Reformed scholar. He believed this crisis of the Korean church lay in theological and moral corruption and that the doctrine of justification lay at the core and was related to it all. He argued that through misunderstanding justification, the Korean church came up with a nonsensical soteriology that says, 'If you believe, you will be saved,' and the corruption had penetrated into the heart of the church.

In the introduction to *Justification and God's Kingdom*, Kim states that he does not agree with Albert Schweitzer, who denies the relationship between justification and ethics; Kim instead believes that justification does produce ethics. What Kim wants to do is to argue that justification and ethics are not distinct in Paul, but the problem in the Korean church is its wrong understanding of justification, which has separated the church from sanctification.

One of the critical mistakes Kim makes in his introduction and all through his lectures and books is to start his argument from the premise that his concerns move not from the theological to historical but from the historical to the theological. Many of the Korean churches, including Hapdong Presbyterian Church, believed that no condition can change the meaning of the Scripture and doctrine. The historical and societal conditions might alter the way the church approaches the practical side, but the inerrant word of God does not need to adjust to historical settings. So when his argument starts on the premise of the historical settings, it alerted the church. His argument is aimed at answering the question of why the Korean church's doctrine of sanctification did not work. Kim explains the gospel in terms of 'lordship change'. He puts it like this because he does not see the gospel and justification as part of a judicial system; rather, he interprets Paul's notion of justification as not a once-for-all type, like that was taught in Korea, where one moves out of the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God. This is significant because he puts justification in the context of eschatology: both justification and sanctification fall within a time frame, in which case both need to be

progressive. So Kim is claiming that justification is not a once-for-all situation; instead, it needs people's obedience so that justification can be achieved through sanctification. This reduces the power of justification to the level of a declaration that one has entered the kingdom, while the power to achieve it lies with the people in the kingdom who live according to God's will.

This notion of justification shifts believers into God's kingdom in order that they might have a relationship with God. Kim thus sees justification in an 'already and not yet' frame, one that puts the believer in right relationship with God out of evil and 'sets the believer toward living for a moral transformation in obedience to God's kingship' (60). This 'already' aspect of justification certifies only a relational change, but something more is yet to come. By limiting the 'already', present justification to relational change, he focuses on the 'not yet but future' aspect, which foretells that there will be a future process, which he refers to as sanctification. By separating justification and sanctification, he is rebutting the idea that justification as just a relational change, but he also moves away from justification by faith alone. While trying to hold on to the importance of both, he loses his grip on both.

Kim tries to lessen the focus on human effort for sanctification by future justification:

Judgment according to our works is nothing but an examination as to whether we have faithfully stood or persevered in the state of justification, availing ourselves by faith of the sustaining grace of the triune God or rendering 'the obedience of faith' to his saving rule, during the interim period between our baptism and the last judgment. (S. Kim, 2018: 115)

While he also stresses that this work of sanctification is through the Spirit, he ultimately calls on the one who has been justified to live in obedience and submission for future justification. I believe that what got Kim the most criticism is that to rebut Schweitzer's stand on the disconnect between justification and sanctification, he ultimately reduces justification to a relational level that needs human effort for sanctification. While he stresses that it is the Spirit who is doing the sanctifying, by claiming that one who is justified at conversion can lose his salvation through not being in right relations with God, he is ultimately stating that, until the day of judgment, nobody is sure of their salvation but is instead in need of works. Because the

'end-time justification' (73) is not settled, justification and the work of the Spirit to transform the believer's life have been reduced. So, end-time justification is not through faith alone but with works, ultimately opening the idea of rejection even among the people who are justified at conversion. Kim's definition of justification is thus a matter not of grace and gifts but of the quality of our works.

Kim also criticizes the traditional Korean church, saying that it is without the true understanding of what the Bible clearly says about salvation with works and final rejection at the end of days, that this teaching of justification by faith alone has caused the Korean church and its members to bypass eschatology and that introducing the possibility of rejection due to lack of works will ultimately strengthen the church's stand on sanctification. He is ultimately criticizing the way of life posited by premillennialism and amillennialism, which stresses the return of Christ and which lets go of the work of sanctification in the Korean church. Focus on justification in the Korean church, especially in the conservative Presbyterian church, has reduced the eschatology of the Korean church to waiting for Christ to come instead of working toward the sanctification which will provide justification. This, once again, coincides with the story that I have been arguing for. The discussion of eschatology lingers between stressing either the seeking of the kingdom on earth by human works or patiently waiting for God to bring about restoration. And I believe these lectures by Kim have paved the way for human works to be seen as what will bring about salvation and the kingdom of God.

Kim's lecture brought out roars of criticism from Reformed and conservative circles. His argument was a shock to many because justification and justification by faith alone is the unshakable rock on which these churches stood. This became more problematic as Kim was an insider who happened to have much influence; people looked up to him as a guide, and his fame was second to none (Lee, 2015; Choi, 2015). I believe that the Korean churches knew from the criticism they were receiving from society that all was not well and saw the criticism as persecution rather than an issue of sanctification. However, the conservative churches still believed that the problem came from the wickedness of the world and the last screaming attacks by the evil one and the consequences of evil, not their own doctrine of justification and

the power of the Spirit. The Korean church saw this fight in terms not of justification but of eschatological concepts.

The eschatology brought by premillennialism's focus on the imminent coming but also its focus on the God's intervention have caused sanctification problems which led to lack of actions in the Korean church. However, the attacks on Korean church by Kim was minimal I believe as it is hard to determine effect other than emphasizing repentance in Korean church, as justification by faith is secured by the counterattacks against Kim Seyoon. Furthermore, his eschatological stance brought back the relational aspect of justification: one needs to be ready for the final judgment because if a person's relationships are not made right through right actions, the person is not truly justified.

13.8. The Korean church responds to Kim Seyoon

There had been prior movements calling attention to the lack of sanctification and inability to live in accordance with God's righteousness and calling for repentance, and this series of lectures, with its fierce attack on the Korean church, ignited repentance and made it think again about sanctification. But the responses to Kim in the debate were intended not only to reassure the Korean church of justification by faith alone but also to reaffirm that God is the principal agent of salvation.

Choi Duk Sung, systematic theology professor at Kosin University, assessed Kim's approach as missing the most important connection between the *ordo salutis* and the perseverance of saints: because this connection is missing, justification according to Kim is delayed until the judgment day, which shifts his focus to people's works and efforts. Ultimately, Choi states, Kim has completely abandoned and contradicted the theology of the Reformers by saying that one is saved not by faith but by faith that is supplemented by righteous actions. Choi goes on to explain that once a person is saved by believing in Christ in the present, that person's identity does not change before the second coming, and the Spirit guides him to persevere to bear the fruits of works through to the ultimate judgment:

Justification and sanctification are not separate. It is not separated, but it is separated. . . . Sanctification is an ongoing process throughout life. At the same time, those whom Christ calls righteous are led to sanctification. Justification is the start of sanctification. Justification and sanctification are the dual graces of unity to Christ. 'Justification without sanctification' or 'sanctification without justification' is impossible. . . . Christians who have no sanctification at all must question whether their faith and salvation are certain. Justification is ultimately both an eschatological event and a present event. God has brought the judgment that will be pronounced upon us on the day of the Last Judgment on us now. Salvation essentially belongs to the future, but God's declaration of that future has penetrated into our present and has already been completed. God's salvation and justification are now perfect events. (Choi, 2015)

Furthermore, on the issue of the sanctification of the Korean church and its moral and ethical failures, those with a complete lack of sanctification need to examine whether they are really saved in the first place. One who completely lacks sanctification is not justified to begin with; Choi (2015) stresses that the church's mistake is in not teaching a holistic view of traditional justification, and this has caused ethical defects.

Lee Yoon Suk, pastor of Nam Seoul Church, has also written an article on Kim from the perspective of one who has been in ministry. He concurs with Choi on the subject of justification and the perseverance of believers, stating that those who are truly united with Christ through justification have sanctification. But he states, 'The life of sanctification is obligatory to the justified person. Responsible human participation is required in the process of sanctification' (Lee, 2015: 155), which is no different from Kim's argument that requires one to keep the commandments until the second coming.

Lee Okap, professor of systematic theology at KC University, criticizes Kim for bringing merit back into the church with his doctrine of justification. Lee argues that justification cannot come from anyone's merit—rather, it comes from the merit and work of Christ through God—and he also cautions that

the thought of seeing faith through fruits, seeing actions and knowing whether they have been saved, keeps people seeing actions and lives. The more anxious we are over the salvation problem, the more we should see Christ, who died on the cross and has

risen. Shouldn't we hold on to him and find comfort, confidence and peace there? However, when we look at the results, we believe that we know the cause, and if there is fruit, we can be sure of salvation, so we cling to our actions and become obsessed. (Lee, 2016: 185)

These arguments imply that while the Korean church still is firm on the stance of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, it needs to see the fruit of sanctification. While the Korean churches still emphasized the inseparable connection between justification and sanctification, they started to see the reasons behind society's criticisms of the church. Focus on church growth relied on getting justification to the people but did not sufficiently emphasize sanctification after salvation. These theological controversies did make it plain that churches need to concentrate not only on justification but on sanctification and ethical and moral behaviour.

This section showed that even someone like Kim, who was close to the Reformed and conservative circles, criticised the lack of sanctification in the Korean church. This exposed the weakness of Hapdong Presbyterian Church, which in fact made the Korean church more conscious of its theology of justification and its focus, which it has neglected in its actions in this present world. While it is hard to say that the reason for this is connected to the eschatology of the church, these criticisms caused the churches to re-evaluate their situation in the world, focusing more on the present aspect of its situation. These criticisms from within have made the church shift more away from premillennialism's concept of the future.

13.9. Tim Keller and amillennialism

One aspect of the changes from premillennialism to amillennialism is that of the approach to ministry from evangelistic to holistic. Tim Keller, arguably one of the most prominent American Christian figure since Billy Graham, has influenced the Korean church through his sermons and especially his books. His influence on the Korean church has been immense; among foreign authors, Keller, known as the 'C.S. Lewis of the twenty-first century', stands out the most, and it 'showed the power to increase the sales of previous books together with each new release' (D.W. Lee, 2016). His books address diverse topics from pluralism and marriage to culture, and many became instant bestsellers and must-reads for Christian leaders in Korea. A graduate of

Westminster Theological Seminary, he was heavily influenced by Harvey Conn, who was his supervisor and a long-time professor at Chongshin in Korea.

In his book *Center Church*, he spends much time explaining ‘the transformative model’, through which Christians actively involve themselves in and try to transform culture using a Christian worldview in daily jobs. This model suggests active involvement in the world and that Christians need to portray their difference from the world in the world. Furthermore, Keller emphasizes that church ministry is more than individual salvation; rather, it involves recovering the created world. One is not focused just on religious activities but on the kingdom of God through one’s different activities in the world. However, Keller also warns that following this model risks abandoning what is important in the church and just focusing on the outside world, as well as seeing the world so optimistically that one reduces the effect of the gospel by downplaying sinners’ need for redemption. He introduces other models like ‘the relevance model’, ‘the counter-culturalist model’ and ‘the two-kingdom model’ and discusses their positives and negatives and urges his readers to balance their concepts of culture in their world. It is clear, however, that he is striving toward the ‘transformative model’ (Keller, 2012).

Keller states that the church needs to distinguish what is moral from what is religious:

In the pre-postmodern era, [the typical person] answered the question of ‘what is most important in life’ as being a good and moral person. . . . However, in the postmodern world, when asked ‘What is most important in life?’ it is said that you become free, not good. It is not someone who talks about what is good, but [who] defines [good] for himself. Instead, it fills my longings and desires. . . . So far, I’ve talked about the difference between a religious person and believing in real Christianity. . . . Why are those who say, ‘Because I obey, God accepts me’ obeying God? I think I’m doing it to get to heaven and to get that power. But why you obey is that you are already in heaven and are obeying to enjoy joy in God.. (qtd. in N. Kim, 2018)

With Keller’s influence on the Korean church, his suggestion of a balanced biblical alternative to leaders who were focused on individual salvation and others who were focused only on social moral change was well received. Park concludes that Keller’s approach is different from the ‘traditional mission movements in its eschatology’; where premillennialism focused on the

individual's salvation, Keller's movement is more amillennial in the way it embraces the kingdom of the earth and focuses on 'cosmic redemption'. 'This eschatology and view of heaven gives a holistic thrust to the missional movement' (Park, 2016: 260-261).

13.10. Concerns

During these times in Korea, it has become clear that the change in stance from premillennialism to the kingdom concept of amillennialism has changed the focus of the church. Many believe that this change occurred due to many Christian heresies with wrong interpretations of eschatology and the second coming, as well as negative effects on Korean society and the Korean church due to Lee Jang Rim's DaMi Mission Society. Other factors affected the transition, one being Kim Seyoon's criticism of the Korean churches' concentration on justification that brought about the lack of sanctification that resulted in moral failures. I believe Kim's argument once again fuels the debate over who is in charge of the changes in this society now and for the coming kingdom. Kim's argument, I believe, is a continuation of trends begun with *gibok shinang* and *minjung* theology, societal movements that triggered confidence in people with their protests; the argument theologically weakened the eschatology brought into Korea through the first missionaries that caused those suffering under the Japanese to seek and pray for the imminent second coming where Christ would restore and renew this world.

First, the theologians who studied in the West, especially at Westminster Theological Seminary, brought back amillennialism that aligned with the Bible and Reformed theology. Theologians who graduated from Westminster have occupied many positions, including the presidencies of schools, for most of the 1990s and 2000s. Second, the decline of the Korean church and the criticisms forced the church to rethink its past strategy. Its focus has shifted during this period from evangelism to matters of maturity and nurture through discipleship training and more application-based teaching and preaching. Third, Kim Seyoon's criticism of the Korean church's notions of justification and sanctification caused churches to reflect on their position in this world. Although a strong conservative coalition fought against Kim, it is clear that the problem of the church's sanctification existed.

We have also examined Tim Keller's ministries and found that perhaps the salient issue was not the changes in history, thoughts and theology but the shift from premillennialism to amillennialism and the changed focus to the kingdom here on earth. Unlike in the West, the change to amillennialism has brought more focus on the here and now and to how one should respond to current events. Correctly or not, Kim Keun Soo (2003) has stated that the notion of the kingdom of God has become focused on the morality of the individual during this period in Korea, and I have demonstrated that the shift to amillennialism has had a tremendous effect on that change.

13.11. Conclusion

As we have seen throughout this dissertation, Pak's dissertation on premillennialism through 1945 has been the leading research on the topic of eschatology in the Korean church. He rightly argues that residue from Korean traditional religions was intertwined with the premillennialism brought by the first missionaries from the United States

While adapting to the new conditions in society from 1950 to 1980, the church was involved in rebuilding both society and the church. Christians provided hope through *gibok shinang* (blessing through faith) and brought tremendous growth to society and the church as they sacrificed for the church. As the economy and the population grew, the church grew as well. While premillennialism's emphasis on an imminent coming drastically lessened, its dualism persisted because of the imbalance of economic growth during the period of authoritarian dictatorship. Premillennialists still longed for the coming kingdom as the extreme growth produced binary results. The church still focused on the evangelism and individual salvation that Billy Graham and the revival meetings had ignited, but premillennialism's focus on and anticipation of the coming kingdom abated.

From the 1980s to the present, the church has grown, but its lack of participation in the social and cultural setting has drawn criticism, as has its lack of moral and ethical standards as churches have been involved in many incidents, including the scandal of Lee Jang Rim and the DaMi Mission Society. With these criticisms of the church's level of sanctification have come

changes to amillennialism and a shift in the church's teaching to a kingdom in the here and now, and its focus on waiting for the second coming has also shifted to training and developing moral and ethical values for today. It is clear that premillennialism's dualistic concept has changed to more of an emphasis on how one can transform society.

These results show that the Korean church, which was once very focused on the coming kingdom, now lacks a focus on the second coming. The apocalyptic eschatology described by Wright, where 'God breaks in from outside', or the 'imminent end of the world' (Wright, 2019: 130-131), has changed in the Korean church, and eschatology is no longer discussed in that sense. This effect has significantly reduced preaching and discussion about the end in the Korean church.

The changes in eschatology are not just theological in origin. They involve historical narratives that cause problems in the understanding of eschatology that are unique to Korea. First, there is ongoing tension about how eschatology is supposed to be interpreted. The fundamentalism that came with the first American missionaries emphasized the importance of the literal interpretation of Scripture and has impressed Koreans with its authority and increased their reverence for it, but it has also made eschatology more literal, causing Korean churches to accept premillennialism's stance on eschatology pre-1945. This tension related to the authority of the Bible still exists today and arises more often and is more important than any other theological issue.

Second, the residue of premillennialism still affects the Korean church even to this day. Its dualistic worldview, including an imminent second coming, caused the church to prepare for that event. How can elements of the Korean church remain true to its profession of faith in the second coming without falling into the social pitfalls that I have identified? How will the Korean church respond to its lessened interest in eschatology? How is the church going to prepare for and emphasize the end without dualism and its consequent sense of the imminency of the kingdom?

Third, with its amillennialism, the Korean church struggles to balance the notion of an end that depends completely on God with that of an end brought about by the efforts of humans as agents of God. How can the church balance not letting go of God's full control over the world with humanity's God-given dominion? Before 1945, premillennialism had posited an apocalyptic entrance of God into this evil world, but the changes in eschatology have put more stress onto the responsibility of people and the church, which the conservative churches do not accept. Conservative churches clearly oppose liberal churches' views of the kingdom of God and moral and ethical responsibility that either diminish God's control or strengthen the people's responsibility.

This leads to how one envisions the future of this world and how one should act. Skrimshire, explaining the apocalypse in relation to the issue of climate change, writes, "One may emphasize the power of apocalypse to envision world renewal. On the other hand, one may await passively its decline" (Skrimshire, 2014). That is, one's eschatology will determine whether one will wait or act. The Korean church's eschatology has led to questions and criticisms of its focus on evangelism and neglect of social, cultural, moral and ethical actions.

Chapter 14. Concluding reflection on Korean eschatology 1945-2018

14.1. Introduction

Through researching eschatology in Korea in relation to the currents of its history and theology, I have concluded that the beginning of this neglect of eschatology was not in the 1990s with the new Christian sects especially *shihanbu* eschatology; rather, it began shortly after 1945. This chapter will provide some of my general findings about eschatology in Korea and give an analysis that supports my claim that the neglect of eschatology began with the lessening belief in premillennialism because of historical events beginning in 1945.

14.2. Findings and Analysis

What the Korean church has done in assessing the neglect of eschatology in the twenty-first century is to blame it on the one particular event of *shihanbu* eschatology. This has been done to disassociate the orthodox church from eschatological heresies. But what I have argued is that this is too simplistic an answer for the neglect. I have tried to go back to the major historical events in Korea and show the connections that have been affecting the change of eschatology. I have concentrated on three major events or developments: The first is the effect of the Korean War and the rebuilding after that brought *gibok shinang* into the church; this tilted the focus from the coming kingdom to the kingdom here in the present world. The second is the historical development of the economic and democratic conditions. These improvements in the situation changed the people's perspective not only on this world but on how one's efforts can contribute to making a better world here and now. This has translated into the conflict that already existed between conservative and liberal theology. Eschatology was part of the package, as the two sides focused on whether the kingdom of God will be brought by the return of Jesus with Jesus as the agent or it is done by people as the agents. The third is the social conditions that might have impacted Korea in the twenty-first century. This is all to say that the neglect of eschatology is a result not only of the isolated impact of the *shihanbu* eschatology of

the 1990s but also of historical settings and theological discussions after 1945 that ultimately led to what one would call the “neglect of eschatology”.

This dissertation has been needed because there has been no extensive research into the eschatology of the church after 1945 since Pak, only speculation that the present Korean church has neglected eschatology and its importance in general.

14.2.1. The historical events after 1945 have had major impact to the neglect of eschatology in Korea today

While many focus on the 1990s *shihanbu* eschatology, I found that the devastation during the Korean War and its consequences completely changed the people’s minds about the end. It somehow provided an experience of the end to many and shifted the mindset of the Korean people to a new direction and a new start of rebuilding. This has impacted the Korean church and caused it to focus on the present blessing, *gibok shinang*. It might be that the sufferings under Japanese occupation made fertile ground for premillennialism’s imminent second coming, but the catastrophe of the Korean War shifted people’s desire from the second coming to rebuilding after a seeming end-time event.

One of the major findings and contributions to this research is that the Korean War, the rebuilding of the nation, the economic revival and the fights for democracy, perhaps even more than theological discussions, have contributed greatly to the shift in the way in which the Korean people and church have thought about the future and eschatology. While the Japanese occupation had a tremendous effect on eschatology before 1945, it was the impact of the Korean War and historical connections to it that shifted the change of eschatology after 1945. Thus, it is not possible to grasp the full picture of eschatology in Korea without understanding the impact of the Korean War and its subsequent history.

All of these historical events that have been mentioned in the dissertation closely align with societal movements that took the focus from the future to the present. The effects of the Korean War and the development that came with the rebuilding of the nation and its economy, was translated into a slogan of those days: ‘living well’. However, the unbalanced growth and

the policies that caused it were often unfair and left many in despair. While one person enjoyed the fruits of growth, others fought for their rights to that fruit, and both focused on the present. I believe this focus on the present ultimately cause the eschatology after 1945 for Korea to shift out of premillennialism and a belief in an imminent coming and no longer need of imminent coming of Jesus to fix and restore. This dissertation has shown many aspects including history, social conditions, politics and theology that interacted with the shift out of premillennialism after 1945. While the shift out was happening, premillennialism's major motivating force, the expectancy of an imminent second coming, was lessened. Landes puts it correctly: "The less urgent the sense of judgment, the less intense the commitment, and vice-versa" (Landes, 2008: 1093). He further describes its effect:

When believers accept that the Day is far off, on the other hand, they tend to passively accept the current conditions of suffering on the understanding that when that day comes, they will be justified and rewarded while the evil who now dominate this world will get their just punishment—pie in the sky by and by. (Landes, 2008: 1094)

I concur with Landes, who is a sociologist: belief that the judgment is far in the future allows Christians to accept the current conditions of society. The situation in Korea causes people to think that "the Day is far off." And, as we seen through different historical events and sociological changes apart from theology, the Day is no longer of interest to them or a need. This shifts the focus from actively waiting for the return of Christ, focusing on salvation through evangelism, and sometimes neglecting the belief that the imminent return of the Lord will cure the sufferings of the world. The Korean church has gradually changed with historical and theological shifts and has become very passive about the future aspect of the coming of the kingdom. On the other hand, those actively waiting for the imminent second coming often joined extreme Christian sects who believed in a set time. While trying to distinguish its differences from other new Christian sects, the Korean church shifted to passive beliefs about the future and started to focus on the present aspect of life, ultimately neglecting eschatology in general and discussion of it in church.

As Korean eschatology shifted its focus from premillennialism, the main focus of eschatology has changed from an imminent coming to humanity as the principal agent in eschatology. I have

shown not only the lessening of belief in the imminent coming but also the increase in interest in who is the agent of the end. Through the rebuilding process in Korean society after the Korean War, through the military regime and economic growth, the question of when has become the question of who exactly is in charge. Many conservative churches believed that it is only through the sovereign power of God that the end will emerge, but others, like the theologians behind *minjung* theology, believe otherwise. And the pro-democracy protest movements asserted that the sovereign power to construct the future was the power of the *minjung*. This shows that the focus of Korean eschatology is no longer on the proximity of a future dramatic transformation but on transformation through sovereign people. However, this change still occurred within the concept of millennialism.

14.2.2. The shift out of premillennialism did not come only through the impact of history

First of all, fundamentalism and its focus on Scripture's authority and how it needs to be interpreted had a very profound impact on eschatology as it pushed toward the real-life event of the imminent future. Its fight against liberal theology became the theological issue of the theology of the 1960s and onward as Park Hyung Nong and his followers at Chongshin University were at the centre of the fight, particularly on the issue of whether the sovereign power lay with God or, as stated by *minjung* theology, with the people. As Korean eschatology shifted its focus from premillennialism, the main focus of eschatology has changed from an imminent coming to who is the principal agent in eschatology. I have shown not only the lessening of belief in the imminent coming but also the increase in interest in who is the agent of the end. Through the rebuilding process in Korean society after the Korean War, through the military regime and economic growth, the question of when has become the question of who exactly is in charge. Many conservative churches believed that it is only through the sovereign power of God that the end will emerge, but others, like the theologians behind *minjung* theology, believe otherwise. And the pro-democracy protest movements asserted that the sovereign power to construct the future was the power of the *minjung*. This shows that the focus of Korean eschatology is no longer on the proximity of a future dramatic transformation

but on transformation through sovereign people. However, this change still occurred within the concept of millennialism.

During these turbulent times, there was also a theological movement affected by the shift in Western eschatology from premillennialism to amillennialism. The majority of professors at Chongshin University were especially impacted by conservative schools like Westminster Theological Seminary in the United States, where they had studied. Furthermore, Korean eschatology from the 1980s onward was shifting from premillennialism to amillennialism in effort to dissociate from the extreme eschatological views held by some premillennialists. This is not to say that all of theologians in Hapdong denomination are amillennialists. There are still many clear supporters of premillennialism. The neglect of eschatology became further evident as the academics failed to provide an eschatological stance on any literature; the study of eschatology in systematic theology courses consisted of just whipping through surveys of different types of millennialism. Thus, these theological background of fundamentalism, fighting for agent of end between conservative and liberal theology, and issue of sanctification in Korean churches brought on by Kim Seyoon also had impact on the discussion of eschatology. I believe, this theological background also attributed to further shift out of premillennialism, which weakened the awareness of the future return of Christ.

14.2.3. *Shihanbu* eschatology was also a factor in the neglect of eschatology after 1990s

I concur with the assessment that *shihanbu* eschatology was a big factor and have mentioned it many times in this dissertation. *Shihanbu* eschatology was a shock to the Korean church as well because it had already shifted away from premillennialism and its expectation of an imminent coming. I am not trying to diminish *shihanbu* eschatology as it is an important shift in the 1990s with its effects on Korean eschatology; the shift out of premillennialism preceded this event, and the event of 1992 added more to the neglect of eschatology and its discussion in the Korean church.

I have also argued that though the neglect of eschatology in the twenty-first-century Korean church is apparent, the reason for it is not as simple as one might think. It was not caused by

the appearance of radical extreme eschatologies of an imminent coming that predicted dates because those kinds of eschatology had always existed in Korea, though not with the level of media coverage brought about by advancements in technology.

Theology seems to follow historical events and their effects through the shift from premillennialism to amillennialism. Study of the millennialisms after 1945 shows that the Korean church and its members shifted their orientation toward the end of time to present time. Rather, it was history that led the people into belief that aligned with premillennialism, and it was history and its effects that led the people out of premillennialism and end-time speculation. And without this end-time speculation, not only the society of Korea but the Korean church lost its interest in the future coming of Christ, as it was more focused on the present and present life. Without the belief that judgement was imminent, it was less afraid for the future.

Through these findings, it is evident that there have been significant shifts in eschatology since 1945. And since 1945, eschatology has been considered by the Korean church to be of little or no importance. In fact, limiting the eschatology of Korea to different views of millennialism has brought a failure to examine the eschatology in the context of history and society. As a result, the Korean churches have limited eschatology to millennialism, which has failed to touch people's lives, and so eschatology has become irrelevant in the Korean church and society. Those waiting for an imminent second coming have brought on passivity regarding this world, and those whose focus in the action of present world have brought on neglect of the future hope of eschatology.

Chapter 15. Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I will briefly recount the history of Korean eschatology before 1945 and summarize my findings of three different historical periods post 1945. I will outline the historical, political, economic and cultural narratives and conditions that have driven eschatological discussions during these periods and the theological arguments that ultimately led to the general neglect of eschatology in the Korean church.

This study of eschatology in Korea has started by recognizing the complexity of the issue. Eschatology is not just a theology based on interpretation of Scripture; rather, it possesses enormous connections to history as it is recognized in its settings. This dissertation is an attempt not only to look at ongoing debates and discussions of eschatology as theology and its stands on millennialism, but also to dig deeper into how the different concepts of eschatology have been adopted in different settings. Thus, it was very important for every part in this study to begin with the historical background and a presentation of how the history affected and was adapted to by Korean society and the churches. I especially wanted to examine the times in history in which serious transition happened to eschatology in Korea.

I have dealt with the presupposition that the neglect of eschatology started in the 1990s with different new Christian sects' eschatology, especially the Dami Mission Society and reactions to it, that caused disturbances in the society and that caused the church to distance itself from eschatology after the 1990s, thus affecting the current Korean church. I have also dealt with the presupposition that the transmission of amillennialism to Korea in the 1980s weakened the position of traditional Korean premillennialism that was transmitted through the first missionaries to Korea. However, I have shown through the careful analysis of history and theology that the explanation is not that simple. My original contribution is my demonstration that the full picture of the current neglect by Koreans of eschatology is not that it started in the 1990s; rather, it began with the shift out of premillennialism because of the significant change in the historical situation after the liberation from Japanese occupation in 1945. What I want to argue in this dissertation is that, while I agree that the Korean church has neglected eschatology since the 1990s, this

neglect began with the events that followed the 1945 liberation from Japan; the presupposition of premillennialism in the Korean church and its theology was impacted by historical events that changed society's perception of the present and future.

Premillennialism and its hope for an imminent second coming arose out of the suffering, injustice, and fear under Japanese colonialism, and it has lost its power since 1945 with society starting to progress through rebuilding. As presented throughout this research, this lessening of premillennialism through history and theology has significantly changed the focus of the church from the future to what is here and now. The Korean church's expectation of the end has faded, and premillennialism is now only held fervently by those who see no hope of lasting change in this present world, as in the case of the Dami Mission Society. Moving away from premillennialism, the theologies surrounding eschatology continue to explore who will be the principal agent in restoration towards the end. I have continuously argued that one of the major issues of eschatology after 1945 was about the shift in expectation from an imminent coming of Christ who will restore this broken world to giving the people the responsibility of restoration now irrespective of the second coming of Christ.

15.1. Summary of history affecting the theology of eschatology

In part 1, I reviewed the history of Korea beginning with the transmission of Christianity, dealing with how neighbouring nations affected the future of the country. This period's eschatology was extensively studied by the leading Korean eschatology scholar, Pak Ung Kyu, and his dissertation concluded that because of the effect that the Indigenous religious tradition had on the reception of Christianity, the fundamentalism of the transmitted Christianity and the historical situation of Korea under Japanese colonialism, Koreans were primed to receive premillennialism's dualistic worldview and desire for an imminent kingdom. Pak rightly concludes that "premillennialism was introduced by American missionaries to Korea . . . but its apocalyptic character fit in well with the major eschatological implications of traditional Korean religious thought" (Pak, 1998: 222).

What I set out to do in part 1 was to concur with the methods used by Pak pre-1945 to bring in evidence that it was history that made Korean Christian eschatology. That is why I showed

that the shifts to premillennialism were connected with specific historical events including the 1907 Pyongyang Revival, the March First Movement and Shinto shrine worship. The suffering of the Christians who rejected Shinto shrine worship especially affected the church and its view of the hope and future. It brought about the hope in premillennialism's imminent second coming in the midst of suffering, and it also became the core theological base for future discussion of eschatology in the Korean church.

Different movements under Japanese colonialism and the consequent sufferings and the loss of the nation brought people's attention to how the future would unfold, so they took on the dualism of American premillennialism and its imminent kingdom. People started to anticipate the sovereign power of the second coming to end all the injustices and the suffering inflicted by the Japanese.

In Part 2, I analysed the historical events after the 1945 liberation from Japanese occupation, the disarray of the society before the Korean War and how the Korean War happened. I showed that the shift out of premillennialism's focus on the imminent coming kingdom had begun before the Korean War, which was a near-end event that represented the physical end of Korea and the lives of the people. With the infrastructure of the society wiped out, it was not the end that the premillennialists were waiting for, but it was the one they got.

As rebuilding started, I believe premillennialism started to fade as Korean society started to focus on what is here and now, the present. Even the church adopted what the society was going through by rebuilding its ruined churches. The erection of the new churches became a metaphor for how life could be rebuilt and be better if the church contextualized its message into a society that was looking for ways to acquire present blessings from God, *gibok shinang*. These messages by pastors about seeking present blessings have taken the focus away from premillennialism's imminent end and to the value of this present life as a fruit of blessing. This focus of society and individuals on rebuilding the present has produced bigger churches. I believe that the greatest significance of the Korean War in 1950 and the three years of despair was not predicted in the studies of eschatology in Korea; rather, it was the beginning of the neglect of eschatology that has become complete in present-day

Korea. Korean theologians have failed to see the connection between the Korean War and the fall in the popularity of the belief in an imminent coming of the kingdom.

Even up to the present day, people see no need for an imminent coming of the kingdom because they have already experienced the end with the despair caused by the war, and the outlook for the future that comes from the focus on the present has lessened the urgency of belief in the premillennialist view of the important future that is coming. The present rebuilding has become the core of the society, and it has penetrated the church in Korea.

Part 2 examined theology through its experience of the end of the Korean War and the near annihilation of Korea. The biggest change since the Korean War has been the change of its view of the kingdom from imminent to distant. The suffering under the Japanese lessened with liberation, and the near-death experience of the Korean War made them experience the end. After that, rebuilding took up the totality of people's daily lives.

Furthermore, as the Korean churches started to focus on the present, they failed to come up with a unified stand on eschatology; instead, the major schism was over the conservative versus the liberal frame of theology, and this brought about the divide between, respectively, premillennialists, who believed in an imminent coming, and postmillennialists, who emphasized work in society.

Part 3 presented twenty years of history under the military regime of Park Jung-Hee, where the economic growth justified the regime's existence as people started to have hope of building better lives for themselves. The development of the Korean economy from the early 1960s included adverse by-products of rapid socioeconomic change in the living standard of the Korean people. There was positive social development in Korea, such as increased life expectancy, a decreased infant mortality rate, and an increased middle-school entrance rate. Through the growth of the economy, the church also benefited from tremendous growth as it exercised *gibok shinang* and its focus on blessings in the present life. Although the church still had its core belief in premillennialism, there were clear societal movements that saw beyond premillennialism's focus on the future as it shifted toward more of what is here and now.

Furthermore, in this period of Korean church history, eschatological discussion centred not on millennialism but on how one understood the concept of the kingdom of God. The concept of the kingdom was still largely influenced by the first missionaries, who viewed it as heaven, where one goes after death, and through the fundamentalists, who still believed in a kingdom that would enter this world and be ruled over by God. This was the conservative view that influenced the eschatology. Though fundamentalism has faded in the Korean church, the emphasis of Park Hyung Nong and his son Park Aaron on premillennialism has become more about defending against liberal theology than about the nature of the millennium or the kingdom. The issue no longer is the imminent second coming but more what type of kingdom to expect. And *minjung* theology denied any entrance of the kingdom of God from outside, instead looking for a kingdom made by people. But what the people needed during this period regarding eschatology was something physical and experiential, whether future or present. With these two extreme views, the Korean churches segregated: one abandoned this world, and the other abandoned the return of a physical kingdom of God. This brought about confusion, ultimately producing different heretical eschatologies explored in part 4.

In part 4, I recount the history after the 1980s and its movement of people toward democracy after the death of Park Jung Hee, the military regime leader. After the Gwangju Massacre, the student protests with firebombs spread, ultimately achieving free elections in 1987. My analysis shows that the achievement of democracy was a moment in Korean history in which the people started to become the sovereign power to change and adjust the future and punish those who had committed injustices and unfairness. Also, the firebomb has given way to more peaceful yet effective tools of protest in the 2000s. Furthermore, through candlelight protests and the impeachment of President Park Gun Hae, daughter of Park Jung Hee, the election of a new president has given more confidence to people in their sovereign power. This has coincided with postmillennialism's progressive outlook for the future based on present-focused works. This mindset of the people's future has penetrated into the Korean church, not just to change their theology to postmillennialism (although many would not even know what that is or represents), but also to further push back premillennialism's views of an imminent second coming and a dualistic worldview, focusing instead on what the people can do.

By contrast, through continuous injustices and unfairness, many younger people have foregone thinking about the future and concentrated on the present conditions of their lives. Many social phenomena have occurred that have portrayed the younger generations as focusing only on the present and not seeking the future. These movements have impacted the Korean church in the twenty-first century: people fighting against immoral and unethical practices in the church are in conflict with younger people who are no longer seeking Christianity's future salvation. These different movements and criticisms of the Korean church ultimately brought about its focus on the present rather than the future coming of Christ.

I also discussed *shihanbu* eschatology and the radical dispensational premillennialist sects that caused a stir in the society, showing the damaging side of premillennialism and what the desire for an imminent coming can cause. Especially the 1992 incident of Lee Jang Rim has caused disturbances to the Korean society and to Korean mainline churches. The press and media magnified the problem, producing the most negative publicity about Christianity in the history of Korea, and many orthodox Korean Christians left the church as a result. More importantly, this was a shock to the Korean church as they saw the danger of premillennialism in its extreme cases. Furthermore, it showed the church how naïve the churches were against the extreme eschatology, and rather than educating Christians about mainline eschatology, the church distanced itself from teaching eschatology at all. The outsiders' views of the Korean church had a monumental effect on how Christians felt they should treat their views of the end. This is especially important as almost all of literature on modern Korean eschatology points to this incident as the reason the Korean church has distanced itself from eschatology. But I wanted with this dissertation to show that while that is true, the whole truth is not that simple; there is more to it.

Another reason that eschatology began to be neglected was that the church was being criticized for abandoning the present, and its focus on the future was criticized as an abandonment of a society that was focused on present work. The criticism came not only from outside but also from within: Kim Seyoon, the distinguished New Testament scholar, harshly criticized the church's stand on justification in relation to eschatology, saying that the Korean church was only focused on justification without sanctification, neglecting the present activity of believers.

All these different movements brought about changes in the stance of the Korean church in general. Historical events caused people to want an imminent second coming before 1945, but that second coming was not needed when they could focus on the present. The dualistic view of society has lessened with Korea's economic growth and progress after the liberation from Japan. But most of all, with injustice and unfairness remaining in the world, Christians have tried to obtain the sovereign power to bring about change in the world through their own efforts.

This changed the theology as well from premillennialism to amillennialism and its focus on the present. While I argue that the Korean people and society were not consciously postmillennialist, many if not most of them having never heard the term, they had the postmillennialists' outlook of a future golden age in mind.

The biggest failure of premillennialism according to its advocate Park Hyung Nong and his son Park Aaron was that they viewed premillennialism as the only view consistent with authoritative Scripture in the fight against liberalism in the Korean church. This blinded them from seeing eschatology in connection with history and the historical movements that became the narrative of the church. While amillennialism became the main eschatology of the Korean conservative church, the shifts began with Korea's liberation and historical events such as the Korean War, economic revival under the military regime and the fight for democracy. All these influenced the church, and premillennialism slowly faded away. Ultimately, the focus on the present has caused neglect of the urgent need for the second coming, and Korean churches now totally neglect the aspect of a future end.

All of these aspects come down to a few areas of discussion: How has the experience of the Korean War changed the scope of eschatology in the Korean church? What happened when the imminent view of second coming lessened? What happened to the tension of waiting for the end during the suffering caused by Japanese colonialism? How did economic improvements change the dualistic view of the present life? How did the change of focus from the world to come to the present life change the view of eschatology? After the 1980s, there was injustice and unfairness of society—would change come from the sovereign power of God in the future or from the sovereign power of people in the present?

These aspects—the hope for the imminent return of Christ, the dualistic view of the world, and the sovereign power of God’s intervention—the essential points of premillennialism in the Korean church, have taken a hit because of historical events. People instead have hope that the present sovereign power of the people will enable them to fight for progress toward a good future in this present world. As a result, theological interest in the future intervention of God has lessened drastically along with *shihanbu* eschatology.

15.2. Limitations of the research

As mentioned in the introduction, this dissertation was not designed to be a review of history or a theological debate about eschatology in Korea. It was designed to tell the full story of eschatology after 1945 concurrent with an assessment of the neglect of eschatology in the Korean church. What was most difficult was choosing different historical events and aspects that supported my answer. I had to limit the historical part because, while it is important, it is intermixed with other societal and theological developments.

The same goes for the Korean church. This is not the full story of the Korean church; rather, it is a very focused view as I have limited my research to the Hapdong Presbyterian Church. I have deliberately limited it to the Hapdong denomination because it represents the largest presbyterian denomination in the world and it is the most influential to the study of theology in Korea. Nevertheless, this is significant as it is the biggest story in the development of Korean history in general.

15.3. Conclusion

Many have argued that premillennialism’s extreme position and dualism have affected the 1990s, with the new *shihanbu* Christian sects bringing about another extreme position as the churches started abandoning the teaching of eschatology in general. As eschatology fluctuated with historical conditions, we have to first recognize that not only are the materials of eschatology and millennialism hard for lay believers to understand, but most Korean pastors might not have digested the true concepts of pre-, post- and amillennialism. The theological study of eschatology does not lead Korean Christians, who understood it only in terms of when and how the kingdom of God will come. While determining what is

more biblical depends on the traditions of denominations, when and how determines how the end is perceived.

In the Korean church before 1945, the premillennialist view of the timing of the end was the most important aspect of its eschatology. When the timing becomes the most important aspect, the only question debate is whether the end of evil in the dualistic world is imminent or delayed. However, as a result of the Korean War and the subsequent historical situation, the importance of the timing had lessened, and the expectation of it has decreased as well. When the future aspect of the timing changed, eschatology became more associated with the present.

‘In the twenty-first century, theology continues its confrontation with multiple evils, natural and human-made—indeed, in an age of massive ecological degradation, natural and human-made evils are becoming harder to separate’ (Muers and Higton, 2012: 275). With the condition worsening in the twenty-first century, many Korean theologians and pastors now seek to convey the truth that Scripture teaches about eschatology that the church can minister to its people. Amillennialism concentrates, instead of on an imminent coming, on the ‘secrecy’ of Christ’s return. It is very convincing that the secrecy of the timing calls for the people to be ready, as shown in the parables of Jesus, and it reminds the people that Christ is coming back, but Christ’s ‘secret’ coming has not been as effective as the tense expectation of the imminent return of Christ; rather, it has diminished people’s expectations as it has shifted them out of premillennialism. With the timing of the imminent return out of picture, it is hard for Korean churches to make its members keen on the last days.

This study started out with the presupposition that the Korean church has neglected eschatology in its stance in the twenty-first century. Not only is there an absence of discussion of eschatology, but literature on this matter is very scarce, and what there is simply puts the blame for this neglect on the societal effects of *shihanbu* eschatology. While the neglect is agreed upon, the reason for it goes much further than has been described. The historical situation starting from the end of the occupation by the Japanese in 1945 has changed drastically and has affected the theological view. The careful study and analysis of different events present evidence to prove that the neglect of eschatology in Korea started in 1945.

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