

# Korean Theologians' Ambivalent Responses to Calvinism

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## I. Introduction

Calvinism's influence has been unusually strong in Korea; its representative and democratic polity has had a profound impact on Korea's long process of democratization, and its conservative Biblicism has been the theological foundation of the Korean Presbyterian Church. The church's Calvinistic Biblicism, which superbly worked through the Nevius (Mission) Methods, has been a decisive cause not only for the church's spectacular growth during the Japanese colonial period, but also for its notorious schisms after Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945. The four major Korean Presbyterian Churches (two relatively conservative and two relatively progressive) which originated from the schisms have had their own Calvinistic theologies that are somewhat different from one another. But overall, the four Korean Presbyterian Churches have been at least constitutionally conservatively Calvinistic, accepting the Westminster Standards as their doctrinal criteria.

This study will examine how Calvinistic Biblicism has become the foundational theology of the Korean Presbyterian Church, as well as how its theologians have responded to it. So we will begin by scrutinizing the so-called Nevius (Mission) Methods, which laid the Biblicist foundation in Korea, emphasizing a simplistic and Biblicist approach to the Bible. Then we will check the Biblicist theology of Dr. Samuel A. Moffett and Dr. William D. Reynolds, who, as leading American missionaries in the formative period of the Korean Presbyterian Church, taught a strong Biblicism to hundreds of Korean Presbyterian pastors at Pyongyang Theological Seminary. Therefore, they are believed to be the persons who perhaps have been the most responsible for directing Korean Calvinist theology toward a strongly Biblicist one. Finally, we will see how Korean Presbyterian theologians, from both conservative and somewhat progressive wings, conducted their theologies concerning Calvinism.

Some Korean theologians have written about Korean Biblicist Calvinism, negatively or positively. However, almost all of them have paid attention to the conservative theology of Dr. Hyung Yong Park, who was believed to cause the notorious Presbyterian schisms in the post-liberation period. Thus they have seldom dealt with the fundamental factors of Korean Biblicism: the Nevius (Mission) Methods, and the theology of Dr. S. A. Moffett and Dr. W. D. Reynolds. After examining those factors, we will

check the ambivalent theological positions in question that both Korean conservative and progressive Calvinist theologians took regarding Calvinism.

## II. *The Biblicist Formation of Korean Calvinist Theology*

### II.1. *The Presbyterian Missionaries' Mission Focusing on Bible Study*

It is necessary, above all, to check the common theological denominator of the American missionaries to Korea around the turn of the twentieth century, who determined the theological orientation of the Korean Presbyterian Church to be Biblicist. Like most of the American Christians before the so-called Fundamentalist–Modernist controversy in the 1920s, the missionaries usually were educated with the old Princeton theology, which took the Biblicist doctrine of the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Bible for granted.<sup>1</sup> And it is safe to say that almost all of them had a natural inclination to Biblical literalism.<sup>2</sup> It is of the utmost significance, however, that for the missionaries the doctrine in question was not merely

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Charles HODGE, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I (originally published in 1872–73) (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883), 151–188; Archibald A. HODGE, *Outlines of Theology* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860), 66–81; B. B. WARFIELD, “The Inerrancy of the Original Autographs,” *The Independent* (March 23, 1893) and other related writings from: John E. MEETER (ed.), *Selected Shorter Writings of B. B. Warfield*, Vol. II (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), 542–587. See also Jack B. ROGERS and Donald K. MCKIM, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1979), 274–369. The authors insist that “Between 1893 and 1910 the [American] Presbyterian Church treated the Hodge-Warfield view on inerrancy as confessional and read it back into the history of Reformed theology” (ibid., 369).

<sup>2</sup> So says Arthur J. Brown, who was the Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, New York, USA. “The typical missionary of the first quarter century after the opening of the country [Korea] was a man of the Puritan type. He kept the Sabbath as our New England forefathers did a century ago. He looked upon dancing, smoking, and card-playing as sins in which no true follower of Christ should indulge. 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 ... [I]n Korea the evangelical liberal, whose interpretation of the Bible differs from the commonly accepted one, sometimes has a rough road to travel.” Arthur J. BROWN, *The Mastery of the Far East: The Story of Korea's Transformation and Japan's Rise to Supremacy in the Orient* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 540. According to Ryu Dae Young, “out of a total of 135 new American missionaries to Korea during the period of 1905–1909, 81 were SVM volunteers” who eventually “determined the character of Korea missionaries.” Ryu Dae Young goes on: “More important, the SVM's influence was seen in American missionaries' heavy dependence on revivalistic methods of personal conversion and especially their emphasis on Bible study, individual pietism, and evangelism. From the beginnings, the scriptures occupied a prominent place in Korea missions, perhaps unparalleled by any other mission field in the world.” RYU Dae Young, “The Origin and Characteristics of Evangelical Protestantism in Korea at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” *Church History* 77:2 (June, 2008), 390 and 392.

a theological matter, but, more importantly, a practical one: it was believed to be the most helpful way for church growth, which was the underlying end of all of the mission activities. This explains why the missionaries not only established a mission policy using a Biblicist Bible study, but also tenaciously held the doctrine even in a fundamentalist way later.

When they were searching for their mission policy in 1890, the American Presbyterian missionaries in Korea easily came to choose one focusing on simplistic and Biblicist Bible studies, since this was believed to be, not the best theology, but a very effective way for church growth. Because it worked exceptionally, the mission policy, called “the Nevius Methods,” later came to facilitate the Korean Presbyterian Church’s possession of a definitively Biblicist theological paradigm. Later, in 1907, the Biblicist theology the policy implied was even doctrinally sanctioned by the church’s constitutional creed, which was interpreted as emphasizing Biblicism. In the process, therefore, the church’s Biblicism became the cornerstone of the church’s theology, later causing some notorious modernist–fundamentalist controversies and schisms. So it is vital to see how the Biblicist paradigm took its roots in the church. Here it may be contentious whether, and to what extent, the mission policy focusing on Bible studies was Calvinistic, but it is clear that the missionaries believed that there was no disagreement with their Calvinistic *sola scriptura* tradition.

The Nevius (Mission) Methods are usually summarized as “the three Self principles: self-propagation, self-support, and self-government,”<sup>3</sup> but the essence of the Methods is simplistic and Biblicist Bible studies for native Korean Christians. First, “self-propagation” was implemented through simplistic, Biblicist and systematic Bible studies, and it then enabled self-support, and, in turn, self-government. As an authority on the Methods says, therefore, “the Bible is made the basis of all the [mission] work, and the aim is so to fill the minds of the people with it that it will control conduct.”<sup>4</sup> Hence the missionaries, along with their Korean followers, concentrated their energy on simplistic Bible studies. Because it fitted the Ko-

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<sup>3</sup> KIM In Soo, “Nevius Methods,” in Scott W. Sunquist (ed.), *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 598f. A detailed explanation of the Methods is as follows: “1. Missionary personal evangelism through wide itineration. 2. Self-propagation. Every believer a teacher of someone and a learner from someone else better fitted. Every individual and group seeking by the ‘layering method’ to extend the work. 3. Self-government. Every group under its chosen unpaid leaders; circuits under their own paid helpers who will later yield to pastors. 4. Self-support with all chapels provided by the believers; each group as soon as it is founded beginning to pay towards the circuit helper’s salary. 5. Systematic Bible study for every believer under his group leader and circuit helper. 6. Strict discipline enforced by Bible penalties.” Charles Allen CLARK, *The Korean Church and the Nevius Methods* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1930), 33f. Also see, Harry A. RHODES (ed.), *History of the Korea Mission, Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.*, Vol. I, 1884–1934 (Seoul: Y. M. C. A. Press, 1934), 87f.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Allen CLARK, *The Korean Church and the Nevius Methods*, 27.

rean mind which reveres authorities, the Bible study system worked greatly, drawing a multitude of Koreans to the Korean Presbyterian Church. Assessing what they had done, the American Presbyterian missionaries in the 1930s in Korea said:

The place of the Bible in all the work of the [American Presbyterian] Missions has been made very prominent. To this emphasis also the Koreans responded. They have always venerated the scholar and books ... In 1906, the Mission passed a resolution of appreciation of the work of the Bible study groups as follows: – “The Christianity that is being developed in this country is pre-eminently a Biblical Christianity ... It is the Bible that is the daily food of the Korean Christian, his spiritual meat and drink. The Bible holds the chief place in the mental and spiritual nourishment of a multitude of people in this land.”<sup>5</sup>

The Korean Presbyterian Church had become so preoccupied with the Bible that it took on the form of, as it were, “a Biblical Christianity.” Here, it is necessary for us to examine on what theological basis the American Presbyterian missionaries and their Korean followers could take the Bible so seriously. Being the descendents of Anglo-Saxon Presbyterians, the missionaries knew Calvinism through the Westminster Standards, which, in fact, cherished the Calvinistic *sola scriptura* principle. They did not seem to doubt that they were correct not only practically but also theologically.<sup>6</sup>

Overall, the Korean Presbyterian Church’s “Biblical Christianity” worked very well not only because it fitted Koreans’ original religiosity which reveres traditional authorities,<sup>7</sup> but also because they were forced to confine themselves to religious activities like worship, prayer, and Bible study due to Japanese colonial rule.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the Bible study classes

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<sup>5</sup> H. A. RHODES (ed.), *History of the Korea Mission, Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.*, Vol. I (Seoul: Y. M. C. A. Press, 1934), 253. An American Presbyterian missionary in Korea also attests: “One of the large elements of strength in the Christian life of the Korean Church is found in the place occupied by the Bible. The study and the practice of the word of God play a large part in all church plans and church policies in Korea ... The Bible is the principal text book, studied systematically, book by book, and topic by topic. Usually ten hours a day is put in on this study. These classes last from a week to three weeks. There are separate classes for men and for women. Last year, fully 50,000 Korean Christians, or one in every five of the entire membership of the Church, took these courses of study. This constitutes one of the greatest Laymen’s Movements to be found anywhere on earth.” See, Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, *Students and the Present Missionary Crisis: Addresses Delivered before the Sixth International Convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions* (Rochester, New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1909), 309.

<sup>6</sup> An American Presbyterian missionary says that the Korean Presbyterian Church’s Twelve Articles of Faith, that emphasizes the Biblicist position, is better than even the Westminster Confession of Faith. See KWAK An-ryōn (Rev. Charles A. Clark), “Chosōn Yasokyo Jangnohoe Sinkyōgron (A study of the creed of the Korean Presbyterian Church)”, *Sinhakjinam* (Theological compass), Vol., 2, No., 2 (1919), 289.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. James S. GALE, *Korea in Transition* (New York: Young People’s Missionary Movement of U.S.A. and Canada, 1909), 49f.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Jae-Buhm HWANG, “A Study of the Fundamentalist Tendency in Korean Protestantism: with Special Reference to the Korean Presbyterian Church,” *Acta Koreana*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Dec. 2008), 127.

were through the famous Great Revival of 1907 combined with revivalist meetings, forming a uniquely Korean-style revival movement called *sakyŏnghoe* (meetings for [intensive] Bible study),<sup>9</sup> and they brought about an explosive growth of the church. And it was a natural course that the Bible became the most important Christian symbol for Korean Presbyterians and that it was regarded unsurprisingly as something infallible and inerrant. The Biblical Christianity of the Church became strengthened even constitutionally by its creed, called the “Twelve Articles of Faith” that included an article that was understood to retain the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy. This theme, however, will be treated in the next section.

## II.2. *The Biblicist Creed of the Korean Presbyterian Church*

After significant growth, the Church formed an independent, nationwide presbytery in 1907, adopting a constitution including a Calvinistic and Biblicist creed called the “Twelve Articles of Faith” and a presbyterial form of government. Through this historical event, the Church connected itself with a centuries-old Western and Calvinistic tradition, giving despairing Koreans a sense of order and security and facilitating a rapid growth of the Church. However, the Calvinistic and Biblicist Twelve Articles of Faith strengthened the Church’s Biblicist theology.

The Twelve Articles of Faith was originally written by the Presbyterian and Reformed missionaries working in India around 1902. Those Calvinistic missionaries in India, the majority of whom were from the British Isles, wrote the Twelve Articles as a summary form of the Westminster Shorter Catechism in order to preserve their mother churches’ Calvinistic tradition. Nevertheless, the Twelve Articles do not have strong Calvinistic elements, omitting such Calvinistic hallmarks as predestinarian *ordo salutis*, the threefold offices of Christ, Christ’s spiritual presence in the Lord’s Supper, and the three marks of the church.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, article one of the Twelve Articles, which reads that “The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and duty,”<sup>11</sup> stands out, influencing Korean Presbyterians profoundly. This article does not necessarily mean that the Bible itself

<sup>9</sup> For the process in which *sakyŏnghoe* became an openly-recognized and organized devotional office for Korean Protestants, see: Jae-Buhm HWANG, “Rev. Kil Sŏn-ju’s Theology Emphasizing Spiritual Endeavour, Revivalism and the Biblical Inerrancy: Commemorating the Centenary of the Great Revival of 1907 in P’yŏngyang,” *Acta Koreana*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (July, 2007), 108f.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Jae-Buhm HWANG, “Daehan Jangno Kyohoe Sinkyŏng hogŭn 12 Sinjo yŏngŏ wŏnmunŭi saerowun bŏnyŏkkwa sinhakjŏk bunsŏk” (A new translation and theological analysis of the original English version of the Creed of the Korean Presbyterian Church or Twelve Articles of Faith), *Hanguk Gidokkyo Sinhak Nonchong* (Journal of Korean Christian theology), Vol. 56 (2008), 134f.

<sup>11</sup> Jae-Buhm HWANG, “Daehan Jangno Kyohoe,” 116.

is infallible, but that it gives us infallible teachings about our *faith and duty*. However, the word “infallible” has been translated into “*jŏnghwak-muo han*,”<sup>12</sup> meaning precise and inerrant, as if the article means that the Bible is literally infallible. As a result, the article has been understood as implying Biblical inerrancy: the Bible, containing nothing errant or fallible, can only be interpreted literally.

Thus, the first of the Twelve Articles has become the main cause for the Korean versions of the so-called “modernist and fundamentalist controversy,” which, in fact, brought about the condemnation of many Korean Presbyterian pastors.<sup>13</sup> It has been also the main catalyst for many disastrous schisms within the Korean Presbyterian Church.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, while the Biblicism of the Korean Presbyterian Church has facilitated its remarkable growth, it has also been a doctrinal stumbling block to the further development of Calvinistic theology in Korea. This explains why Calvinistic theology in Korea has been so poor that it is still often identified with the nineteenth-century Princeton theology.

### *II.3. The Biblicist Theology of S. A. Moffett and W. D. Reynolds*

In its theological formative period up to the 1930s, the Korean Presbyterian Church already had some inherent and underlying factors toward being Biblicist. The American Presbyterian missionaries, who were leading the church, were already armed with the old Princeton theology, which was Biblicist in its essence. They further had adopted not only the Nevius Methods focusing on the simple and Biblicist study of the Holy Scriptures, but also a constitutional creed sanctioning Biblicism. And most of all, the almost phenomenal growth of the Korean Presbyterian Church on the basis of the Methods was perhaps the greatest evidence that the Biblicism included in both the Methods and the creed was not only right, but also greatly effective. And when the time came when the church had to decide between fundamentalism and modernism from the 1930s onward, it willingly and definitely chose fundamentalism. We will first check how the church came to theologize about Biblicism, especially by examining the non-dogmatic and practical Biblicism of Dr. Samuel A. Moffett, and the

<sup>12</sup> Daehan Yesukyo Changhohoe Chonghoe (The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Korea), *Humbup* (The constitution), (Seoul: Hankuk Changnokyo Choolpansa, 2003), 32.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Jae-Buhm HWANG, “A Study of the Fundamentalist Tendency in Korean Protestantism: with Special Reference to the Korean Presbyterian Church,” *Acta Koreana*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Dec. 2008), 133.

<sup>14</sup> Concerning the Korean versions of the fundamentalist-modernist controversies and the Church's major schisms, see Jae-Buhm HWANG, “A Study of the Fundamentalist Tendency,” 116–125.

fundamentalist Biblicism of Dr. William D. Reynolds, who laid the Biblicist theological foundation of the church by teaching hundreds of Korean pastors at Pyongyang Theological Seminary (1901–1934).

First, it is to be noted that the Korean Presbyterian Church's Biblicism was not formed through doctrine, but decades-long practical experiences that the simplistic and Biblicist approach to the Bible was the best way to establish churches and to nurture devoted Christians. Dr. Samuel A. Moffett (1864–1939, pioneering American Northern Presbyterian missionary in the Northern Korea, 1890–1934; founder and president of the Presbyterian Seminary in Pyongyang; 1901–1922)<sup>15</sup> was one of those who, himself having vividly had those experiences, emphasized a kind of non-dogmatic Biblicism. Having worked with “his single-minded adherence to the goal of winning men to Christ and planting churches,”<sup>16</sup> Dr. Moffett well showed how a non-dogmatic Biblicism worked in his revised Nevius Methods:

1. It is the duty of every Christian to do the work of evangelism;
2. The Bible is the inspired Word of God so that systematic Bible instruction for the whole Church is indispensable;
3. The Korea church should be self-supporting from the beginning;
4. The church should be self-governing at the earliest possible time;
5. Medical work should be an effective evangelistic agency;
6. Educational work should be primarily for the children of the Church and for the purpose of developing Christian leaders; and Mission workers should rely from the first to last on the Spirit of God to regenerate individuals and guide and empower the Church.<sup>17</sup>

This is almost the same as the Nevius Methods, yet what is outstanding in it is No. 2: “The Bible is the inspired Word of God so that systematic Bible instruction for the whole Church is indispensable.” Moffett surely believed that “the best way to produce a growing Church in such responsive areas [as the Northern Korea] was to teach the eager, prospective believers how to study the Bible, how to pray, how to receive spiritual nourishment and to feel a personal responsibility for evangelism.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>15</sup> Being a pioneering missionary to Korea's Northern regions, Dr. Moffett not only planted and directed numerous local churches, but founded and guided the Pyongyang Union Christian College and Theological Seminary, “which for several years had the largest enrollment of any divinity college of the Presbyterian denomination in the world.” Quoted from: “Sketch of Rev. Samuel Austin Moffett, D. D.,” Presbyterian Church Archives, Record Group 360, Folder: Samuel A. Moffett. Also see, William N. BLAIR, “Samuel A. Moffett: On His Seventieth Birthday,” *The Presbyterian* (1934), 6, cutting found in Presbyterian Church Archives, Record Group 360, Folder: Samuel A. Moffett.

<sup>16</sup> Roy E. SHEARER, “The Evangelistic Missionary's Role in Church Growth in Korea,” *The International Review of Missions*, Vol. 54 (1965), 468.

<sup>17</sup> BLAIR (see above, n. 15), 6.

<sup>18</sup> SHEARER (see above, n. 16), 464.

with his unparalleled evangelistic success through Biblicist Bible studies, Dr. Moffett came to take the Biblicism implied in the Methods for granted. Yet no clear evidence has been found that he definitely advocated or developed the doctrine of the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible. So his position on Biblicism may be called a non-dogmatic Biblicism.

It was surely Dr. William D. Reynolds (1867–1951) who put dogmatic flesh on the non-dogmatic Biblicism of Dr. Moffett. An American Southern Presbyterian missionary in Korea, Dr. Reynolds was also heavily involved in evangelistic ministries following the Nevius Methods, as was Dr. Moffett. Yet, while teaching systematic theology at Pyongyang Theological Seminary (1905–1934), Reynolds became the first theologian in Korea to teach the doctrine of the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible. His underlying theology of the Biblical inspiration seems to be that particular doctrine, as it was conceived by A. A. Hodge.

Dr. Reynolds introduced the doctrine to Korean readers in 1920, by translating into Korean a writing of Dr. Charles F. Wishart, who was teaching theology at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago (1915–1919). Reynolds somewhat reservedly insisted that the inspiration of the Bible was not mechanical, but “verbal” and “plenary.” According to him, some books of the Bible (including genealogies and chronicles) might be less verbally inspired than Romans, yet the Holy Spirit so sufficiently inspired the hearts of all of the Biblical writers to write down God’s will that the readers of the Bible may also be inspired to believe in Jesus Christ and to be saved.<sup>19</sup>

Reynolds further emphatically spoke of the Bible as “the infallible Word of God,” translating into Korean a writing of R. A. Torrey (1856–1928),<sup>20</sup> who was one of the best disciples of Dwight L. Moody. However, having fervently advocated the inerrancy of the Bible, Reynolds was becoming more and more fundamentalist: regarding a theological modernist as “a betrayer of Christianity” or “an anti-Christ,”<sup>21</sup> on the one hand, and, on the other, denying evolutionism.<sup>22</sup> Reynolds eventually irrevocably established a Biblical literalism in Korea by publishing a textbook of systematic theology, which strongly advocated the doctrine of the “verbal”

<sup>19</sup> LEE Nul-Seo (W. D. REYNOLDS), “Sinhak Pyönjungron” (Christian apologetics), *Sinhakjinam*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (April, 1920), 77f.

<sup>20</sup> LEE Nul-Seo (W. D. REYNOLDS), “Sönggyöngün muohan hananimüi malsam” (The Bible as the infallible Word of God), *Sinhakjinam*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (October, 1927), 23–30.

<sup>21</sup> LEE Nul-Seo (W. D. REYNOLDS), “Gündae sinhakjuünün baedohanün il” (Theological modernism as betrayal of Christian truth), *Sinhakjinam*, Vol. 14, No. 6 (November, 1927), 20–25.

<sup>22</sup> LEE Nul-Seo (W. D. REYNOLDS), “Jinhwaronül buinhanün jesasil” (Many facts denying evolutionism), *Sinhakjinam*, Vol. 16, No. 5 (September, 1934), 47–50. Notable was Rev. Walter C. Erdman (1877–1948; missionary in Daegu, Korea: 1906–1931), who, being the younger brother of Rev. Charles R. Erdman, also rigorously denied both evolutionism and higher criticism.



and “plenary” inspiration of the Bible.<sup>23</sup> Thus, it is safe to say that Dr. Reynolds laid a fundamentalist Biblicist foundation in the Korean Presbyterian Church. The conservative wing of the church, therefore, has regarded him as one of the founders of its conservative, Biblicist theology, still accepting his doctrine of the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible as true.<sup>24</sup> However, it was Dr. Hyung Yong Park who transmitted the American missionaries’ Biblicist Calvinism to their next generations, insisting on an even more radicalized Biblical literalism.

### III. Calvinism and Korean Presbyterian Theology

#### III.1. Korean Conservative Theology and Calvinism

As we have seen above, the Biblicist paradigm of the Korean Presbyterian Church has been so firmly indigenized in the Church that it gave Korean Calvinism a Biblicist form. Here we can easily divide Korean Presbyterian theologians into two groups: the conservative wing upholding the Biblicist and conservative paradigm, and the somewhat progressive wing rejecting it. To see how differently the two wings conceptualize and use Calvinism in their theology, we will examine the works of Hyung-Yong Park (1897–1978) and Yune-Sun Park (1905–1988), both of whom represented the conservative wing. And then we will examine how two other important Korean Presbyterian theologians, Jae-Jun Kim (1901–1987) and Jong-Sung Lee (1922–2011), have presented their theologies, which were formulated as alternatives to the Biblicist and conservative theology. Three factors are noticeable in the Korean Presbyterian conservative theology, as it has been done by both Hyung-Yong Park and Yune-Sun Park: first, that both of them regard the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible as paramount; second, that they both identify the Princeton theology emphasizing the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy with Calvinism; and third, that their Biblicist theology has a fundamentalist tendency.

First, it is no doubt clear that at the core of the theology of both Hyung-Yong Park and Yune-Sun Park, who were disciples of both Drs. Moffett and Reynolds, is the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy.<sup>25</sup> Here we shall

<sup>23</sup> LEE Nul-Seo (W. D. REYNOLDS) (ed.), *Gidogyo jŭnghŏmron* (Evidences of Christianity), Systematic Theology, vol. 1 (Pyongyang, Korea: Jangnohoe sinhaggyo, 1931), 68–70. This book was originally written by a Chinese theologian, Chia Yu Ming, who authored it on the basis of Strong’s *Systematic Theology*.

<sup>24</sup> Ji Chan KIM, “Chongsin guyakhakŭi todae” (the foundation of the O. T. theology of the General Assembly’s Seminary), *Sinhakjinam*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (June, 2007), 92–135, especially, 126–129 and 130.

<sup>25</sup> PARK Hyŏng-yong, *Park Hyŏng-yong baksa jŏjak jŏnjip* (The whole writings of Dr. Park Hyŏng-yong) Vol. I (Kyoŭi sinhak sŏron [dogmatic theology–prolegomena]) (Seoul: Park Hyŏng-yong baksa jŏjak jŏnjip ganhaeng uiwŏnhoe, 1983), 235–367. Here Hyung-Yong Park

consider two things: their educational background and the polemical situation in which they came to emphasize the doctrine. Having grown up in Korea while it was a Neo-Confucian country, all of the early Korean Presbyterian pastors and theologians, including both Parks, had been educated in Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, which fostered a fundamentalism opposed to Buddhism as well as Confucian heterodoxies.<sup>26</sup> Then, having converted to a Christianity which had been dominated by the American Presbyterian missionaries in Korea, both Hyung-Yong Park and Yune-Sun Park came to cultivate a Christian fundamentalist paradigm that regarded the missionaries' Biblicist (Princeton) theology as orthodox and all other theologies as heretical.<sup>27</sup> And as both Parks later got involved in fundamentalist-modernist controversies, they militantly defended the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy. Through those educational and polemical processes, both Parks came to regard the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy as the most important. So Hyung-Yong Park, who has been called "Korea's J. Gresham Machen," made an extraordinary effort in establishing his doctrine of Biblical inerrancy, and in the same logic, he also made the utmost effort in refuting so-called modernist views of the Bible.<sup>28</sup>

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deals with "Chapter 4: The Revelatory Nature of the Holy Scriptures," "Chapter 5: The [Plenary and Verbal] Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures," and "Chapter 6: The Inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures." Yune-Sun Park also takes the doctrine of the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Bible for granted, even saying that Calvin himself upheld the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Bible. See, Yune-Sun PARK, "Uriüi Söngkyöng," (our Holy Scriptures), *Sinhakjinam*, Vol. 137 (Summer, 1967), 13. When he speaks of Reformed theology, Yune-Sun Park just highlights its doctrine of the Bible, simply emphasizing the infallibility of the Bible. See Yune-Sun PARK, "Gyehyökjuüi sogo," (A brief study of Reformed theology), *Sinhakjinam*, Vol. 185 (Fall, 1979), 13–24.

<sup>26</sup> Korea during the Confucian dynasty (1392–1910) had a strong Confucian orthodox fundamentalism against Buddhism and Confucian heterodoxies. As Martina Deuchler explains, "From the beginning [the thirteenth century] the Neo-Confucians were in control and fully committed to transforming Korea into a Confucian state in which [Chu Hsi's] Neo-Confucianism would be properly preserved. The development of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy (*chönghak*) gained momentum through its contest with heterodoxy (*idan*)." See MARTINA DEUCHLER, "Reject the False and Uphold the Straight: Attitudes Toward Heterodox Thought in Early Yi Korea," Wm. Theodore de Bary et al. (eds.), *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 376.

<sup>27</sup> In Jae-Jun Kim's words, "Having the political hegemony, Korean orthodox Neo-Confucians following the Chu Hsi school oppressed heterodox Confucians following Wang Yang Ming. In the same way, [in the Korean Presbyterian Church] the Reformed orthodoxy was oppressing other theologies." Jae-Jun KIM, "Hankuk üi jaerae jongkyo wa gürisdokyo" (Korean traditional religions and Christianity), *Kidokkyosasang* (Christian thought), Vol. 13 (Aug. and Sept., 1958), 71.

<sup>28</sup> Hyung-Yong Park wrote a thick book containing his critiques of most of the modernist theological trends: Hyöng-Yong PARK, *Gidokkyo byöndae sinbak nanje sönpjöng* (Critique of selected modern theological problems) (Seoul: Ünsöng Chulpansa, 1975). Yune-Sun Park condemns modernist theologies to be products of unbelief. See, Yune-Sun PARK, "Söngkyöng üi kwönwi" (The authority of the Bible), *Sinhakjinam*, Vol. 152 (1971), 6–19.

Second, having been faithful disciples of the American Presbyterian missionaries in Korea, both Hyung-Yong Park and Yune-Sun Park accepted and defended their Biblicist Princeton theology as orthodox, even assuming that it was virtually identical with historical Calvinism. Seldom quoting either John Calvin or historical Calvinists,<sup>29</sup> therefore, both Parks simply regarded the Princeton theologians, as well as H. Bavinck and L. Berkhof, as the best interpreters of Calvin and Calvinism, insisting that these theologians commonly upheld the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy. Both Parks regarded the Westminster Standards as the most important Calvinistic standard, simply assuming that the Standards teach the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy. The conception of Calvinism held by both Parks, then, was often very shallow and superficial, an Achilles heel for their conservative Calvinism.<sup>30</sup>

Third, the fundamentalist tendencies of both Hyung-Yong Park and Yune-Sun Park were based on the Princeton theology's premise that Calvinism is the best form of Christianity. It is no exaggeration that both Parks, along with the Princeton theologians, had a theological hubris of regarding Calvinism as the most perfect form of Christianity, while disregarding such other theologies as Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Arminianism.<sup>31</sup> So their Calvinistic theology became generally polemical, often dividing theologies into two: the orthodox and the heterodox, according to whether they accepted the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy or not.<sup>32</sup> This was much more the case for Hyung-Yong Park, an apologetic theologian, who, by often attacking those Korean Presbyterian theologians who did not fully accept the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy, caused many fundamentalist-modernist controversies and schisms. Yune-Sun Park also had an inevitable fundamental-

<sup>29</sup> One of Yune-Sun Park's disciples criticized him for not citing John Calvin. See Sung-Soo KWON, "Park Yune-Sun Paks'a ūi Sōngkyōng Haesōkhak" (Biblical hermeneutics of Dr. Yune-Sun Park), *Sinhakjinam*, Vol. 222 (Winter, 1989), 116.

<sup>30</sup> Hyung-Yong Park presents Calvin's theological principles by and large according to the so-called five points of Calvinism. See Hyung-Yong PARK, "Kalvin Sinhak ūi Gibonwōnri" (Theological principles of John Calvin), *Sinhakjinam*, Vol. 122 (Fall, 1962), 252–255. When he speaks of "Reformed theology," Yune-Sun Park presents just a summary of vague conservative theology, even without making any significant reference to Calvinism. See, Yune-Sun PARK, "Gyehyōkjuūi sogo," (A brief study of Reformed theology), *Sinhakjinam*, Vol. 185 (Fall, 1979), 13–24.

<sup>31</sup> This position is well expressed by B. B. Warfield, who classifies Calvinism as the best form of Christianity over and against "sacerdotalism" (Catholicism) and "universalism" (Lutheranism and Arminianism). See Benjamin B. WARFIELD, *The Plan of Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1942). This position is reflected in: Hyung-Yong PARK, *Park Hyung-Yong Paks'a Jōjak Jōnjip*, Vol. XIV (The collected works of Dr. Hyung-Yong Park) (Seoul: Hankuk Kidokkyo Kyoyuk Yōnkuwon, 1981), 164f.; and Yune-Sun PARK, "Hankuk sahoeka jihyang haeya hal todōkkwan" (The ethic which the Korean society shall adopt), *Sinhakjinam*, Vol. 156 (Spring, 1972), 23–26.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Jae-Buhm HWANG, "A Study of the Fundamentalist Tendency in Korean Protestantism: with Special Reference to the Korean Presbyterian Church," *Acta Koreana*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Dec. 2008), 116–138.

ist tendency in that he made an unusual effort not only to criticize, but to anathematize modernist or liberal theologians including Karl Barth. But Park's focus was often on Karl Barth,<sup>33</sup> not because Barth was more problematic than others, but because he had been favored by progressive Korean Presbyterian pastors and theologians, whom Park had regarded as his theological enemies. So both Parks were very conscious of their theological enemies' position and constructed their theology accordingly, a point that will be further developed in the next section.

### III.2. *Korean Progressive Theology and Calvinism*

While conservative Korean Presbyterian theologians including both Hyung-Yong Park and Yune-Sun Park have referred to Calvinism mainly in order to defend their doctrine of Biblical inerrancy, relatively progressive Korean Presbyterian theologians have stood considerably aloof from Calvinism, seldom having due reference to it. Because the Korean Presbyterian Church, as we have seen above, was theologically conservative and Biblicist, it was its conservative camp that took ecclesiastical power, while its progressive camp was only a small minority. Therefore, when modernist theological controversies arose in the church beginning in 1934, the conservative wing attacked the progressive one by appropriating their doctrine of Biblical inerrancy, which was believed to have its historical origin in Calvinism. Then, the progressive camp correspondingly came to have a strong enmity toward the church's conservative Biblicist theology and Calvinism in general; these two somewhat related entities, the conservative theology and Calvinism, came to be regarded as the same thing. Yet having been in a Presbyterian tradition, the progressive camp needed its historical-Calvinistic-reference, and chose Barthianism, a modern expression of Calvinism, while rejecting the conservative or orthodox (Princeton) Calvinism. This odd situation has made the progressive camp ambivalent toward Calvinism. Here we investigate this ambivalent and somewhat tragic situation, especially by examining the theologies of both Jae-Jun Kim and Jong-Sung Lee, who have been regarded as two representatives of relatively progressive Korean Presbyterian theologies.

Jae-Jun Kim (1901–1987) was not as influenced by Biblicist and conservative theology as Hyung-Yong Park, primarily because Kim had not attended the Korean Presbyterian Church's official seminary (Pyongyang Theological Seminary), where the conservatism of the American Presbyterian missionaries to Korea, including Drs. Moffett and Reynolds, was prevalent. Kim atypically received relatively progressive and Barthian theologi-

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<sup>33</sup> Yune-Sun PARK, "Karl Barth Romasö Sönpöyng" (Critique of Karl Barth's commentary on the Romans), *Sinhakjinam*, Vol. 141 (Summer, 1968), 91–115.

cal training in Japan (1926–1928) and the USA (1928–1932). When he became involved in fundamentalist–modernist controversies for almost two decades (1934–1953), Kim courageously fought against the conservative wing. Because he had rejected the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy during a Korean historical fundamentalist–modernist controversy in 1947, Kim was eventually excommunicated from the church in 1953. As a result, Kim and his followers were separated from the Korean Presbyterian Church (*Yesukyo Changnohoe*), establishing a new, somewhat progressive Presbyterian church in Korea (*Kidokkyo Changnohoe*).

Jae-Jun Kim was ambivalent toward Calvinism; while he was critically influenced by Barthianism, he tried to stay aloof from Calvinism in general. Kim had unfortunately developed a very negative perception of Calvinism while fighting against Hyung-Yong Park and his conservative camp:

It was the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century American [Presbyterian] missionaries who brought Christianity to Korea. But they indoctrinated Koreans with their orthodox theology, which was something developed before the pre-scientific age of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The missionaries taught that their orthodox theology was Christianity itself, and anathematized other theologies as heretical teachings. The missionaries did that for 50 years, and it was identical with the Medieval Dark Ages of the Western world.<sup>34</sup>

Here it is clear that Kim identified the conservative theology of the American Presbyterian missionaries in Korea with the 17<sup>th</sup> century Reformed orthodoxy, which he again identified with Calvinism itself. Kim even mistook the fundamentalist version of the Princeton theology as both Reformed orthodoxy and Calvinism proper:

The orthodox theology that the American Presbyterian missionaries brought to Korea was a theological system that, on the basis of the doctrine of the Biblical inerrancy, accepts the Virgin birth of Christ, his atonement through his blood, and his bodily resurrection as the most important of Christian faith ... The doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible was [originally] an open topic, as it had been so for Origen, Augustine, and Luther. Yet over against their Catholic counterpart, the Protestant theologians asserted that the Bible was verbally authorized [inspired], being the verbally inerrant Word of God. And they made it the ground of their ecclesiastical power, by rationalizing it in the name of orthodoxy ...<sup>35</sup>

So it is fair to say that Jae-Jun Kim ended up regarding Calvinism as something negative, seeing those three different theologies (the Biblicist and conservative theology of the American Presbyterian missionaries to Korea, the Princeton theology, and Calvinism) as the same thing. Thus Kim seldom referred to either John Calvin or Calvinism, having a kind of historico-theological vacuum in his theology. Yet because he still needed a his-

<sup>34</sup> Jae-Jun KIM, “Kwönwi wa jisöng üi kaldüng” (The conflict between authority and intellect), *Kidokkyosasang*, Vol. 119 (April, 1968), 33.

<sup>35</sup> Jae-Jun KIM, “Hankuk üi jaerae jongkyo wa gürisdokyo” (Korean traditional religions and Christianity), *Kidokkyosasang* (Christian thought), Vol. 13 (Aug. and Sept., 1958), 71f. Also see, Jae-Jun Kim, “Hankuk kyohoe üi sinhak undong” (Theological movements of the Korean [Presbyterian] Church), *Kidokkyosasang* (Christian thought), Vol. 28 (Jan., 1960), 13.

torico-theological justification for his theology, Kim referred mainly to Barthianism.<sup>36</sup> So overall, with the help of Barthianism, Kim tried to take on a Christo-centric theology in order to overcome the Biblicist and conservative theology of the Korean Presbyterian Church.<sup>37</sup> Yet, Kim's Christology seems to be quite far away from Karl Barth's, since reference to Barthianism is not so substantial in Kim's thought:<sup>38</sup> his Christ lacks Calvinistic and Barthian depth, even having no reference to the distinctively Calvinistic doctrine of Christ's threefold offices.

Being almost a generation younger than both Hyung-Yong Park and Jae-Jun Kim, Jong-Sung Lee (1922–2011) has been able to consider Calvinism more positively and objectively. Overall, however, Lee has still failed to use Calvinism constructively in his theology. He has tried to take Calvinistic tradition seriously, attempting to overcome Hyung-Yong Park's conservatism, by first demythologizing Calvinistic orthodoxy and then differentiating it from Calvin's own theology:

It is not John Calvin himself, but the Calvinists [of the 17<sup>th</sup> century], who established the system of the Calvinistic orthodoxy. This system, therefore, includes the elements that do not always pertain to Calvin's theology: some of them have been even radicalized [to be fundamentalist]. The Korean Presbyterian Church's Calvinistic orthodoxy has its immediate origin in America's 200 year-long [Puritainical and Princeton theology], which came from Scotland and Ireland through the Westminster Confession of Faith in England, having started from the Netherlands as a [rigid] theological system. There has been a gap of 300 years and tens of thousands of miles between Korea's Calvinistic orthodoxy and the theology of Calvin himself. Therefore, one must not forget that the Calvinistic orthodoxy that has come to Korea may be much different from the teachings of Calvin himself.<sup>39</sup>

Having come to know the difference between Calvin's theology and historical Calvinism, Jong-Sung Lee has directly dealt with Calvin himself, even translating into Korean part of Calvin's *Institutes* and other works on Calvin. This is the result of his conscious effort to overcome the fundamentalist tendency of the Korean Presbyterian Church. Yet, overall, it is the case that Lee seldom constructively uses either Calvin's own theology or Calvinistic theology: he often ends up just listing it as one of many theo-

<sup>36</sup> Jae-Jun KIM, "Hankuk ūi jaerae jongkyo wa gūrisdokyo," *ibid.*, 73.

<sup>37</sup> Jae-Jun KIM, "Hankuk kyohoe ūi sinhak undong" (The theological movements of the Korean [Presbyterian] Church), *Kidokkyosasang* (Christian thought), Vol. 28 (Jan., 1960), 16. So says Kim: "Christ so enlightens our hearts and minds that he may make us, before him, question about [his] truth with our humble freedom. It is in this sense that we interpret the Bible with Christ's help. What evaluates Christ is not the Bible itself, let alone a doctrine of the Bible; we re-assess and interpret the Bible with the light and heart of Christ. With this point, we reject the fanatic faith in the orthodox doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Bible."

<sup>38</sup> Kim himself confesses that he has been free from the theology of Karl Barth or Emil Brunner, having studied it from a bird's eye view. See, Jae-Jun KIM, "Naega yonghyang badūn sinhakja wa gū jōsō" (The theologians and their works that have influenced me), *Kidokkyosasang* (Christian thought), Vol. 78 (July, 1964), 42.

<sup>39</sup> Jong-Sung LEE, "Park Hyung-Yong kwa hankuk Jangnokyoehoe" (Hyung-Yong Park and the Korean Presbyterian Church), *Sinhaksasang*, Vol. 25 (1979), 52.

gies. Lee has written a twelve-volume systematic theology, which, however, fails to convey or to creatively develop a Calvinistic theology. Lee's one-volume systematic theology<sup>40</sup> does not convey anything particularly Calvinistic either; it even omits such Calvinistic subjects as God's election (or God's predestinarian covenant for humanity), Christ's threefold offices, and Christ's spiritual presence in the Lord's Supper. Calvinism, therefore, has no critically significant position in Lee's theology.

### V. Conclusion

This study has examined how a Calvinistic, Biblicist theology has become the theological foundation of the Korean Presbyterian Church, and how its theologians have responded to it. First, we analyzed how the Nevius Methods of the American Presbyterian missionaries to Korea facilitated Biblicism for their Korean followers. It was through simplistic Biblicist Bible studies availed through the Methods that brought about "self-propagation," which, in turn, enabled both "self-support" and "self-government." So with the spectacular church growth made possible through the Methods, the church has come to take Biblicism for granted. Second, the church's Biblicism was even doctrinally sanctioned by its constitutional Calvinistic creed of 1907. Third, we examined the non-dogmatic and practical Biblicism of Dr. S. A. Moffett, and the fundamentalist Biblicism of Dr. W. D. Reynolds, who led the church to be even more Biblicist. The latter had a clear tendency to be fundamentalist, since he not only denied the theory of evolution, but also condemned higher criticism as anti-Christ and un-Christian.

Fourth, the Korean Presbyterian theologians' responses to Calvinism have been noticeably ambivalent. The church's conservative wing represented by Hyung-Yong Park and Yune-Sun Park used Calvinism mainly to defend their Biblicist theology, even identifying the old Princeton theology of the early twentieth-century American Presbyterian missionaries in Korea with historical Calvinism. And they failed to develop a Calvinist theology that is different from a fundamentalist Calvinism. On the other hand, the relatively progressive wing of the church represented by Jae-Jun Kim and Jong-Sung Lee was perhaps overwhelmed by the conservative wing's rigid Calvinistic and Biblicist position, and tried to stand aloof from Calvinism. So, overall they had also failed to use Calvinism constructively. Calvinism, whether the church likes it or not, is the historical ground on which the church can have an authentic polity and theology; it is still not too late for the church to creatively study and develop it.

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<sup>40</sup> Jong-Sung LEE, *Yiyagi-ro punŭn Jojiksinhak* (A narrative systematic theology), (Seoul: Daehankidokkyosŏhoe, 1997).

## SUMMARY

This study examines how the Korean Presbyterian Church's foundational theology has become Calvinistic and Biblicist, and how its theologians have responded to its Calvinistic Biblicism. First, it is the Biblicist "Nevius (Mission) Methods" of the American missionaries to Korea that determined the church's theological orientation to be Biblicist. The Methods emphasizing simplistic and Biblicist Bible studies brought about a spectacular church growth, through which Biblicism was taken for granted. Second, the church's Biblicism was even doctrinally and publicly sanctioned by its constitutional Calvinistic creed of 1907. Third, it was Dr. W. D. Reynolds, a leading American Presbyterian missionary and theologian, who led the church in becoming even more Biblicist and fundamentalist. Fourth, Korean theologians' responses to Korean Biblicist Calvinism have been rather ambivalent; while their conservative wing has been quite obsessed with conservative, Biblicist Calvinism their progressive wing has been quite aloof from Calvinism in general.

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Diese Studie untersucht, wie die grundlegende Theologie der koreanischen presbyterianischen Kirche calvinistisch und biblizistisch geworden ist und wie ihre Theologen auf diesen calvinistischen Biblizismus reagieren. Erstens sind es die biblizistischen »Nevius (Mission) Methods« der amerikanischen Missionare in Korea, welche die theologische Ausrichtung der Kirche biblizistisch beeinflussen. Diese Methoden, welche ein simples und biblizistisches Bibelstudium fördern, brachten ein spektakuläres Wachstum der Kirche hervor, durch den der Biblizismus als selbstverständlich erachtet wurde. Zweitens war der kirchliche Biblizismus noch doktrinär und öffentlich durch sein verfassungsrechtliches calvinistisches Bekenntnis von 1907 sanktioniert. Drittens war es Dr. W. D. Reynolds, ein führender amerikanischer presbyterianischer Missionar und Theologe, der die Kirche noch biblizistischer und fundamentalistischer werden ließ. Viertens blieben die Antworten koreanischer Theologen auf den koreanisch biblizistischen Calvinismus eher ambivalent; während ihr konservativer Flügel von einem konservativen, biblizistischen Calvinismus vereinnahmt war, hat sich ihr progressiver Flügel vom Calvinismus im Allgemeinen distanziert.