

The early Korean Protestant Churches' impact on Korea's democratisation: With special reference to the Korean Presbyterian Church

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Note:

The present research has been conducted by the Keimyung Scholar Research Grant of Keimyung University in 2012.

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Dates:

Received: 31 Oct. 2013

Accepted: 01 Mar. 2014

Published: 20 June 2014

How to cite this article:

 Hwang, J-B., 2014, 'The early Korean Protestant Churches' impact on Korea's democratisation: With special reference to the Korean Presbyterian Church,' *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70(1), Art. #2089, 7 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2089>
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This study examines the significant influence of the early Korean Protestant churches in general and the Korean Presbyterian Church in particular on the early phases of Korea's democratisation. Firstly, the Western Protestant mission works in general were visibly conducive for dissemination and cultivation of egalitarian and democratic ideals, with the mission churches becoming sites of do-it-yourself democracy. Secondly, the Nevius (Mission) Methods of the Korean Presbyterian Church came to foster the democratic spirit of self-support and self-government, resulting in its rapid growth. Thirdly, with the implementation of a nationwide, representative and democratic polity (presbytery) with a constitution, the church even facilitated law-binding and institutional democracy for Koreans in general and Korean Christians in particular. Fourthly, the church's democratic working deeply inspired Korean democratic politicians, especially Mr Changho Ahn, who had an important influence on the making of the Provisional Government of Korea and its Constitution.

Introduction

The early Korean Protestant churches in general and the Korean Presbyterian Church in particular, with its Calvinistic, representative or democratic form of government, had a profound impact on the democratisation process of Korea, which has been 'an East Asian model of economic prosperity and political democracy' (Kim 2003:xv). In this study we will examine how the Korean Presbyterian Church in particular turned out to be an excellent school of democracy for modern Korea. However, before doing this, we will first study how the Western mission works in general in Korea influenced Korea's early democratisation, since the Korean Presbyterian Church succeeded and deepened what the Western mission works did. We will focus on the churches' seminal period (1884–1930s), when they could exert a great deal of democratic influence in modern Korea simply because of Korea's political instability caused by the Japanese militant colonial rule.

The theme of this study has had no due attention so far, yet three related studies are worth mentioning. Firstly, James E. Fisher (1928) in his *Democracy and mission education in Korea* describes that the mission schools in modern Korea became powerful instruments disseminating humanitarian, egalitarian, affirmative, and democratic ideals and practices. But this seminal study was focused mainly on the mission schools in modern Korea and did not deal with the mission churches' contribution to Korean democratisation. Secondly, Yun-Shik Chang (1998) illumines how the progressive Korean Christians led Korean democratisation movements during Korea's authoritarian regimes (1961–1987). However, this study is not only confined to the relatively recent era, but also mainly treats some progressive Korean Christian leaders' involvements in democratisation movements, overlooking the democratic nature and activities of the early Korean Protestant churches. Thirdly and finally, Seong-Won Park's study (2007) traces how the Korean Presbyterian Church has been involved in some famous Korean democratisation movements, ignoring how the church itself has been a good school to practice democracy. Hence it is very important to unveil how the Western mission works in Korea in general and the Korean Presbyterian Church in particular contributed to the democratisation of Korea, especially before Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945.

The contribution of the Western mission works in Korea in general to the democratisation of Korea

It is true that the Korean Calvinist, Presbyterian Church, being the single largest Korean Protestant denomination, has made a much larger contribution to Korea's democratisation than others churches.¹ Yet the church's works for Korea's democratisation went along with, and deepened,

1. It is to be acknowledged that the Korean Methodist church also made a notable contribution to Korea's early phases of democratisation, especially by establishing and running some famous mission schools, as it is demonstrated on the next page.

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the democratising works of the Western missionaries in Korea in general. Therefore, it is necessary for us to begin by examining how the Western missionaries in Korea in general were conducive for Korea's early democratisation.

Some researchers have already illumined that the Western mission works in general in Africa were also fountains of democracy. Following Aboagye-Mensah (1994), Dalmalm (2000) argues that:

the organizational structure that the missionaries introduced and that an [African] church continued to manage, has during a long time constituted as oases of democracy—fragile, of course, but real—in the society characterized by the dictatorship, the arbitrary, and the control. (p. 342)

This was also largely the case in Asia (Dennett 1918), mission churches and institutions being good schools of democracy. Dr A.J. Brown (1921:469–486), the prominent American mission leader and scholar of the early decades of the 20th century, also insists that the missions had reconstructive forces: economic, social, intellectual (educational), moral, political, spiritual, and international, which generally paved the way for democracy in Asia or Africa:

Missions are a reconstructive social power. They have effected striking changes in the popular attitude toward women, in the status of the wife, in the education of girls, in the care of the sick, and in creating a sentiment against harmful drugs. (p. 471)

Here, however, we will not check the general cases in Africa or Asia, but will focus on particular ones in Korea, which may also be applicable in those two continents. Reviewing the cases in Korea, we will see how such mission agencies as hospitals, schools, and churches of the Western missionaries entailed democratic influences.

Firstly, the mission hospitals in Korea turned out to be a solid democratising agency. Particularly influential were the missionary medical doctors' egalitarian and humanitarian treatments of the lower class people and women (Cynn 1920:131f.), which, together with their Christian messages of unconditional love and salvation, significantly raised the people's sense of human dignity and popular sovereignty.

Secondly, the schools established and run by the Western missions rendered a great service in the deepening of democracy in Asia in general and in Korea in particular. A Korean Christian leader who himself experienced it explains as follows. The first Korean modern school, *Pai Chai Haktang*, which was founded in 1886 by the American Methodist missionaries to Korea 'has done more than any other in ushering in the agencies and instruments that helped the people to gain the knowledge of modern democratic ideals' (Cynn 1920:134). The school's industrial department did a modern printing and publishing work for needy students for the first time in Korea. Then the press published the first English monthly, *The Korea Repository*, which was followed by the first Korean weeklies, the *Korean Advocate*, and the *Mutual*

Friendship Weekly, which both became great instruments in spreading democratic ideals. The school also held the public lectures that:

grew out into the formation of the famous Independence Club, which played so important and dramatic a part in infusing the principles of democracy and patriotism in the hearts of the Koreans... Hundreds of young men, after once passing through the halls of this school, wherever they went, have been walking testimonies for the excellence of Christian and democratic ideals. (Cynn 1920:135)

So, not only the very teachings, but also the various activities of the mission schools were instrumental in disseminating democratic ideals in Korea.

It is notable that the humanitarian, egalitarian and democratic education of the mission schools in Korea was more profoundly working than in any other Asian country, because Koreans had been unusually suffering from political instability caused by both the authoritarian Confucian *Chosun* dynasty (1392–1910) and the following Japanese colonial government. An American professor (Fisher 1928:96) who was working at a Korean Christian college in the 1920s listed the 'human values' of the educational works of the Western missions in Korea, which inherently included democratic elements:

1. A more scientific care of the sick and injured.
2. A more intelligent and better organised care for orphans, outcasts, and poor ...
3. A change for the better in attitude toward, and treatment of, women.
4. Ideas of democracy. A greater self-respect and a revaluation of themselves as a people by the Koreans.
5. Some progress toward the breaking down of class distinctions, and the introduction of ideas of more democratic human relations. (p. 96)

Like those educational works, the mission works in general significantly raised not only Koreans' sense of human dignity, but that of socio-political responsibility, nurturing their sense of popular sovereignty, which is the root of democracy.

Thirdly, the very Christian message in the modern Korea also had a socio-political meaning, which was favourable for democracy. The Christian messages like God's sovereignty, God's unconditional salvation that is given to anyone regardless of sex, class, or education, and equality of people in front of God, were powerful democratic ones that enhanced the native people's sense of dignity and popular sovereignty. Dr Brown (1921) also testifies:

The ideas of God, of man [*sic*], and duty which Christianity inculcates invariably effect profound changes in the body politic. They did this in Europe and America, they are doing it in Asia. Christianity alters a man's [*sic*] outlook, upon life, gives him new conceptions of responsibility, strengthens moral fibre, and nerves him to oppose tyranny and wrong. (p. 475)

It is to be noted that the past Western missions in Asia in general and in Korea in particular usually did the three mission

works together: church, school, and hospital, resulting in a notable synergy effect. A socio-political observer (Dennett 1918:243), who was not positive for Western missionaries, also gives us a good explanation of how the three kinds of mission works worked together to have a synergy effect for democracy:

The missionary first asks for religious liberty, and then proclaims the inclusive and sweeping doctrines of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men. He establishes schools which not only teach the elementary branches, but set the example of equality by opening their doors to the poorest and most oppressed. The missionary hospital places a new value on the human body and sets standards for the conservation of life. It teaches charity and mercy, which create the ideals of brotherhood and democracy. (p. 243)

It is remarkable that in Korea the Protestant churches' role in democratisation was especially crucial in their early years (1884–1909) and in the Japanese colonial era (1910–1945), and in the rural areas. Having existed before the militant Japanese colonial government, and led by the Western missionaries, the churches then were perhaps the only democratic non-governmental organisation that had their national grass-root networks throughout the Korean peninsula. Hence the churches did not only teach democratic ideals, but they could also strongly appeal to nationalistic Koreans, for whom Christianity meant a Western, modern, and democratic civilisation by which to fight against the Japanese colonial power. This explains why the Korean Protestant churches, equipped with Western and democratic ideals and polity, worked much better than their Catholic counterparts in those days. So the Protestant churches in Korea then were having a great synergy effect for democracy, drawing hundreds of thousands of Koreans to the local churches. Having already practiced democracy with the Nevius Methods, as we will see below, the Korean Protestant churches in general and the Korean Presbyterian Church in particular could all the more meaningfully exercise democracy at their local churches as well as at their higher ecclesiastical courts. A researcher in Korean political history (Pak 2006) well reveals how effectively the mission churches exercised democracy in the modern Korea:

Inculcating the values of equality, justice, and courage unto death as well as proselytizing a new vision of society, the Christian church became a site of political praxis, or do-it-yourself democracy, for Koreans. The Church offered a public forum for speech and discourse, and instructed its congregation to live by both the rules of the promised covenant that governed individual and collective behaviour and the procedures and mechanisms of self-government. Inspired by Christian learning-by-doing lessons, this new sort of democracy became a compelling means and end for the Korean nationalist struggle. (p. 116)

So it is clear that the mission churches in Korea themselves were exemplary democratic institutions, following 'the procedure and mechanisms of self-government'. Furthermore, the Korean Presbyterian Church provided a revolutionary way for their lay members to be leaders (elders), a democratic

way of self-rule. So the mission churches in Korea could profoundly appeal to Koreans in general, and in particular to women and those who were disadvantaged. In a sense, the Presbyterian church itself practicing a democratic ideal and polity was a gospel for the impoverished Koreans: this partly explains why the Korean Roman Catholic Church, which had no way for laypersons to be leaders, did not grow much during those days.

The contribution of the Korean Presbyterian Church to Korea's democratisation

The Korean Presbyterian Church's mission policy: The Nevius Methods and their democratic implications

Having examined that the Western mission works in general were beneficial for the early stages of Korea's democratisation, it is now necessary to see how the Korean Calvinistic Presbyterian church in particular was significantly helpful for Korea's on-going democratisation. Following Turchetti (2009), who verified Calvinism's significant contribution to the birth of modern Western democracy, we will examine the two factors: how the Korean Calvinistic church fostered the sense of 'popular sovereignty,' which is conducive in the development of democracy; and how, as a result, it came to produce 'a representative [democratic] ecclesiastical government' (Turchetti 2009:2369–2650). These two factors are interrelated and very hard to distinguish. Yet the former is concerned mainly with the people's democratic consciousness, and the latter with the political form of their ecclesiastical government.

Firstly, we are going to examine what kind of a mission policy the American Presbyterian missionaries to Korea employed to facilitate their Korean members' sense of the popular sovereignty. It is well-known that the Korean Presbyterian Church has rapidly grown since it adopted what is known as the Nevius Methods, which, we assume, have been very beneficial for cultivating Koreans' democratic mind and habits.

The Nevius Methods, which were adopted by the American Presbyterian missionaries to Korea in 1890, are summed up as 'the Three Self principles: self-support, self-government, and self-propagation' (Kim 2001:598f.), which are not only based on, but also promote, the Calvinist sense of popular sovereignty, and which often motivate to adopt a representative, democratic ecclesiastical government. Here a detailed explanation of the Methods (Clark 1930:33f.; Rhodes 1934:87f.) is helpful:

1. Missionary personal evangelism through wide iteration.
2. Self-propagation. Every believer is a teacher of someone and a learner from someone else better fitted. Every individual and group seek 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.

It is remarkable that the 'the three Self principles: self-support, self-government, and self-propagation' themselves have strong democratic implications. They brought about two significant things for Korean Christians: their higher sense of popular sovereignty, and their readiness for democratic discipline and government. Firstly, the Nevius Methods (no. 2) emphasised a self-growth, that is, 'self-propagation,' which both stimulated, and was strengthened by a serious Bible study. This is why the Methods (no. 5) stressed a 'systematic Bible study.' The strong Bible study even with 'strict discipline enforced by Bible penalties' (no. 6) did not only give Korean converts a sense of becoming a Christian as a new, pious, and moral being, but also a totally new way for an ordinary Korean to become a new kind of leader, that is, elder or pastor. This is notable because traditionally Korean laypersons like peasants or merchants or mechanics or women could hardly become meaningful leaders in their communities. But now a Korean peasant Presbyterian Christian could be a leader-elder for his church, and this was quite a revolutionary thing for his fellow Koreans. Through this new process, Korean Presbyterian Christians could develop their sense of popular sovereignty.

Secondly, this new political process stimulated 'self-support' (no. 4), eventually paving the way for a better, democratic 'self-government' (no. 3). So overall, the Nevius Methods gave birth to a good cycle with a new authority (the Bible) taught by the Western missionaries, in which Korean Presbyterians could become leaders with their higher sense of popular sovereignty, and form a church with a new (democratic) form of ecclesiastical government.

The good cycle that the Nevius Methods brought about is also found in 17th-century England:

The Reformed scheme not only endowed the layman [*sic*] with a new sense of vocation in his ordinary occupation and his home life, but brought to his notice rights and responsibilities in connection with organized religion. The new devout, independent, educated layman as well as his simpler but equally pious peasant brother was given a place of dignity and opportunity as not only a member, but an ordained office-bearer with a divine calling in the Church as representing his fellow-members. (Henderson 1954:70f.)

A Korean authority on Korean church history also observes:

The Nevius Methods caused an unprecedented transformation of the Korean society: a rapid upgrade of the lower classes, and the widening of the middle class citizens, and they gave impetus to the birth of the modern Korea as a civil society. (Min 1996:202)

The Nevius Methods, especially the 'self-government' principle (no. 3), naturally led Korean Presbyterians to

practice do-it-yourself democracy, particularly by electing the elders as their leaders. In 1900, for the first time in Korean history, a democratic practice of election was held in local Korean Presbyterian Churches (Kwak 1918:19). Although the election of elders in a local Presbyterian church was, of course, an ecclesiastical affair, it was dramatically against Korean traditional political practices, wherein natural conditions such as sex, age, lineage, and status were usually the most important factors. Instead of those natural conditions, the Korean Presbyterian Church emphasised not only Christian values such as baptism, devotion, and temperament, but also democratic leadership to rule over a local church. Thus, not only did the church introduce a new, democratic election process to Korea, but also set a new standard for Korean leaders – a healthy process for democratisation of Korean grass-roots.

The Korean Presbyterian Church's democratic government, on the basis of the Nevius Methods, was a good school for Korea's future democratic politicians, among whom Mr Changho Ahn is worthy of mentioning. Having learned the do-it-yourself democracy working amongst Korean Presbyterians on the basis of the Nevius Methods, he came to play a crucial role for Korea's democratic movements, especially by becoming one of the core founders of the Provisional Government of Korea in 1919:

In previous scholarship, the democracy-building practice inherent in the Nevius Method has not been much recognized for its formative significance and contribution to the democratic development in modern Korean history. Through an examination of Ahn's early life, however, it becomes apparent that the Nevius Method was of crucial importance to Ahn Changho's emergence as a constitutional democrat. The Nevius Method quintessentially embodied the self-defining path of Ahn, as he came to translate and reconstitute the theory and praxis of the Presbyterian self-government into the Korean independence movement as a constitutional democracy movement. (Pak 2006:128)²

Here it is of the utmost importance that the American Presbyterian and Calvinistic missionaries to Korea stressed the authority of the Bible, whose authoritative teaching helped powerless Koreans have a sense of being new people and leaders with a new paradigm of belief and conduct. This may explain why the missionaries so emphasised the 'systematic Bible study.' Thus the Methods read (Clark 1930:27) that '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.' So the Korean Presbyterians were taught by their Calvinistic missionaries that the Bible was the *infallible* yardstick by which to believe and to conduct themselves. Then it was with the doctrine of the infallible authority of the Bible that Korean Presbyterians, who were a small minority of Koreans, could accept the truthfulness of the Christian teachings, as this practice

2. Dr Pak (2006:126) goes on concerning Ahn's learning of democracy through the Nevius Methods: 'Ahn Changho learned and participated in the implementations of the Nevius Method[s] by attending a Korean Presbyterian Church. The experience profoundly changed the way he viewed individual and collective destinies and endeavors, as well as private and public spheres ... Ahn was initially exposed to the idea of democracy and politics by the unique practice of the Nevius Method[s] in the formative phase of Korean Protestant Christianity.'

fitted the Koreans' reverence for the Confucian classics.³ So, with the doctrine of the absolute authority of the Bible, Korean Presbyterians could easily have the belief that they could not only be a new kind of people, but also new kinds of leaders – elders and pastors. This explains why they emphasised the authority of the Holy Scriptures as well as the equality of all people even in their constitutional confession of faith:⁴

Article I: The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and duty.

Article II: There is but one God, and He alone is to be worshipped.

Article V: God created man, male and female, after His own image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, with dominion over the creatures. All men have the same origin, and are brethren. (Han 1913:24–30)

With the doctrine of the 'infallible' authority of the Bible even with a constitutional sanction, the Bible became an absolute, but knowledgeable source of study, which was necessary for the Korean Presbyterian Christians to be leaders – elders or pastors.⁵ This process, therefore, boosted the 'self-propagation' on the one hand, and the 'self-government' on the other, making the Nevius Methods work outstandingly. However, it is to be mentioned that the doctrine of the Biblical infallibility, as it was stressed so much in Korea, came to have a negative result: a fundamentalist inclination, which caused some disastrous schisms in the Korean Presbyterian church in the post-liberation era.

The Nevius Methods and the nationwide Presbyterian polity with its constitution

Having grown quite explosively thanks to the Nevius Methods, which entailed democratic self-government, the local Korean Presbyterian churches came to form their sessions consisting of the elders and the pastors they had elected. They then came to establish a nationwide church government – a presbyterial polity, which is representative and democratic in its essence. This nationwide polity, which was actually the political consummation of the Nevius Methods' democratic system, was that without which the Methods had no long-lasting influence. The first nationwide autocratic body of the Korean Presbyterian Church was called 'Council of missions holding the Presbyterian form of government,' which began in 1893 and ended in 1900, and whose members were only Western Presbyterian missionaries (Kwak 1918:16). This Council, in turn, in 1901 became an integrated body of Western Presbyterian

3.Koreans of those days, who had been inculcated with the classics, usually regarded them as literally true (see Hwang 2013).

4.The Confession of Faith, also known as the 12 Articles of faith in Korea, along with 'Form of government' formed the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in Korea, which was historically founded in 1907, in Pyongyang, North Korea. The original English version of this document is found in: The Presbyterian Church in Korea (1907:3–6). For a detailed description of the Confession, see (Hwang 2011:200–210).

5.This process is well described by an American missionary who was leading the Korean Presbyterian Church in the early decades of the 20th century. 'A great incentive to attend the [Bible] Classes lay in mankind's instinctive urge towards wanting to shine in his or her social group. Those who attended the Classes were those chosen to be "Leaders" [pastors and elders] and deacons or women leaders. If any man neglected attending the Classes, he was apt soon to be dropped from his coveted place of leadership. There was no salary attached to the positions, but there was honor in his company' (Clark 1930: 113).

missionaries and Korean elders, and eventually in 1907 was consummated in the establishment of the independent national presbytery (known as *Doknohoe*, which means an independent national presbytery) consisting of 40 Korean elders and 38 Western Presbyterian missionaries from the United States of America (USA) (North and South Presbyterian churches), Canada, and Australia, who were in fact nationwide local representatives.

The nationwide democratic, presbyterial polity strengthened a fledgling democracy implemented by the Nevius Methods. Both the Methods and the polity, therefore, went hand in hand rather than separately, and both together worked exceptionally in Korea, bringing about an unusual church growth, especially since 1907 when the democratic, presbyterial polity began working properly.⁶ What was even better for the process of the democratisation of Korea was that the presbytery adopted a constitution perhaps for the first time in Korean history. The Korean Presbyterian Church's constitution of 1907⁷ was adopted a dozen years before the Korean government (the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea) adopted its constitution in 1919. With its constitution, the Korean Presbyterian Church was inspiring Korean leaders in general by showing a good example of rule of law. The problem with the Korean Provisional Government's constitution was that it could not work properly simply because Koreans then were not in a position to keep it, being under the Japanese iron rule up to 1945, and the Korean Presbyterian Church's constitution became all the more meaningful for Korea's democratisation process especially, before Korea's liberation from Japan.

The formation of the nationwide democratic, presbyterial polity of the Korean Presbyterian Church, and its adoption of a constitution in 1907 were very significant for Korea's democratisation. Firstly the timing, the year 1907, is important to understand the matter in question. It was in that year that the last king of Korea, King Kojong, was dethroned by the encroaching Japanese colonial power, Korea as a nation losing its national sovereignty. And it meant that the democratic presbytery was rising against the encroaching dictatorial and colonial Japanese government, demonstrating the excellence of democratic ideals. Secondly, the presbytery with a constitution was the first Korean nationwide representative, democratic and constitutional organisation, whose political structure and democratic methods (such as rules of decision-making and election) were good examples for almost all Koreans, changing the body politics of Korea.

The constitution of the Korean Presbyterian Church commands some more attention: it clearly includes every

6.The majority of the researchers on the Nevius Methods often do not pay attention to the relation of the Methods to the nationwide presbyterial polity. The Taiwanese Presbyterian Church also underwent a similar pattern of the Nevius Methods and the nationwide presbyterial polity: 'From 1915 onward, when the English Presbyterian mission celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, some local leaders, notably the Rev. Gou Hi-Eng, began to advance the missionary principle of "self-support, self-government, and self-propagation". This gradually led to the formation of a native and independent church' (Cheng 2009:195).

7.The Constitution consisted of 'the Confession of Faith,' also known as the 'Twelve Articles of Faith' and 'the Form of [Presbyterial] Government' (Clark 1930:245–252; Rhodes 1934:386).

element due to an ecclesiastical constitution: its creed and rules on form of presbyterial government, election of officers, and so on (Clark 1930:245–252). Yet it was so limited that it was supplemented a decade later in 1917 with a book of Presbyterian regulations (Kwak 1917).⁸ With this book, the Korean Presbyterian Church came to have almost complete constitutional regulations, whose contents were, in fact, almost those of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the USA at the time. The constitution and regulations of the Korean Presbyterian Church were nearly flawless *de jure*, whilst Korea did not yet have a constitution. So, with their constitution, Korean Presbyterians came to have a deep confidence in their faith as well as in their leadership for the larger Korean societies.

The Korean Presbyterian Church's exercise of democracy

Filled with the spirit of 'self-support' and 'self-government' on the basis of the Nevius Methods, Korean Presbyterians easily came to form not only an independent local church, but its session consisting of the elders and the pastor they had elected, which itself was an excellent democratic exercise. Although the first Korean church that adopted a Presbyterian polity was established in 1887 (Rhodes 1934:385), it was actually in 1900 that the church began the election of elders (Kwak 1918:19). This is still noteworthy, because in those days Koreans in general did not even know the term '*sōn-gō*,' meaning election by majority rule. In fact, the concept of election was dramatically against traditional Korean political practices, where in community leaders were seldom elected, but just silently acknowledged according to natural conditions such as sex, age, lineage, and status. Here it is to be noted that the election of elders came to fit both the Korean tradition of respecting the elderly, and the democratic ideal of election by majority rule. This explains why the Presbyterian mode of church government was so well accepted in Korea.

What was even better for the democratisation of the Korean Presbyterian Church was that the election of elders in a local Presbyterian church was followed by their representation at the national level – the national presbytery (1907–1911) and at the General Assembly (1912 – present), a complete democratic process in a nation. This process was surely an excellent exercise of representational democracy, reassuring the elders' sense of leadership. So in those days, many Korean elders became political leaders, among whom Mr Changho Ahn is the most conspicuous, as we will see later. This is why the democratic Presbyterianism in Korea worked superbly, drawing multitudes of Koreans to the Presbyterian churches. As one American missionary correctly observed:

Presbyterianism has had a hearty welcome in Korea. There has always been much of common democracy in the village life. The rule of elders fits their traditions. Oppressed in many ways in the past, the representative form of government, with votes for all, and the making of their own rules and sending of representatives

⁸This book is in fact a condensed and quite altered translation of the American version (Hodge 1882). Both Hodge's and Kwak's books in the main are a commentary on the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the USA (cf. The General Assembly of the PC(USA) 1913:349–392).

even to General Assembly, has appealed mightily to them. Thanks to Dr. C.A. Clark, a church leader knows his church law almost as well as he knows the Bible. In spite of the absence of democratic institutions in their national past, the intelligent way in which the pastors and elders rule their Sessions, deliberate in strong Presbytery meetings and higher still, carry on the tasks of the Assembly year after year in great meetings, even through times of political turmoil before the critical eyes of the [Japanese] police and hungry newspaper reporters, and make few serious mistakes, is reassuring. Whether in the whole Orient, apart from national parliaments, there is another deliberative assembly comparable to the Korean General Assembly, is doubtful. The organized life of the church is a great training school. Strong men and women are here trained not only for the service of the church life but also for intelligent citizenship and for leadership in the advancing life of the nation. (Blair 1934:129)

The Korean Presbyterian Church did not only become an important school for the Korean Presbyterians to learn about democracy, as we have seen above, but also it externally influenced Korean political leaders in general, and Mr Changho Ahn in particular. Changho Ahn (1878–1938), often called 'Korea's Moses,' had learned about democracy significantly by seeing how the Korean Presbyterian Church was working (Rhie 1988:113–117), and later became the main author of the Constitution of the Provisional Korean Government, which, being written in 1919, has become the cornerstone of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea. For Ahn, along with other modern Korean political leaders, the Korean Presbyterian Church surely was a role model for democracy.

Having been educated in a school run by an American Presbyterian missionary, and baptised as a Presbyterian Christian, Changho Ahn saw the Church's democratic activities following the Nevius Methods (Pak 2006:126), as we have already seen above. Having gone to America in 1902, Ahn was further exposed to the American Presbyterian Church's democratic nature as well as its constitution. Returning to Korea in 1907 when the independent Korean presbytery was established, Ahn probably got to know how the Korean Presbyterian Church worked even on the national level. Overall, the Presbyterian polity's strong influence on Ahn is obvious. As an authority on Ahn has observed:

The relationship between Ahn Changho's democratic ideals and Presbyterian polities can be seen in the extant library of his books ... Ahn paid great attention to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, especially part 5, The Form of Government ... Here Ahn saw that the presbyterial assembly of the elders 'as the representatives of the people' behaved and operated as a legislative assembly, and the minister served as the executive head of the church government ... Ahn Changho's reliance on the Presbyterian constitution during the formative period of the Korean Provisional Government reveals not only his spiritual commitment, but also his understanding of socio-political organization and governance as fundamentally based on the Christian, and particularly Presbyterian, ideals of democracy. (Pak 2006:139)

Ahn favoured the Presbyterian polity over and against others, because he saw in his formative years how the

Korean Presbyterian Church provided not only an idealistic democratic locus, but also a sense of common Korean identity through the bond of a constitution. These factors testify to the significant contributions the Korean Presbyterian Church has made to Korea's democratisation.

Conclusion

The Western mission works in Korea in general and the Korean Presbyterian Church in particular with its representative, democratic form of church government have had a profound impact on Korea's long process of democratisation. Firstly the Western mission works in general were conducive for spreading and nurturing humanitarian, egalitarian, and democratic ideals, the mission churches becoming a site of do-it-yourself democracy. Secondly, with the adoption of the Nevius Methods emphasising the intensive Bible studies, the Korean Presbyterian Church came to cultivate the democratic spirit of self-support and self-government, resulting in its rapid growth. Thirdly, the rapid growth of the church on the basis of the democratic Nevius Methods entailed the formation of a nationwide presbytery in 1907 as a representative and democratic church government. This enabled Korean Presbyterians to exercise democracy not merely in their local churches (sessions), but on a national, representative level (presbytery and general assembly), making them sure of their leadership over the larger Korean societies. Fourthly, the church's constitution that was adopted in 1907 by the nationwide presbytery was what made the democratic system of the church even better, making rule of law possible. Finally, the church's democratic working deeply impressed Korean democratic politicians, especially Mr Changho Ahn, who became one of the core leaders of the Provisional Government of Korea as well as one of the drafters of its Constitution. So overall, the Korean Presbyterian Church became an excellent school for democracy in modern Korea.

Acknowledgements

The present research has been conducted by the Keimyung Scholar Research Grant of Keimyung University in 2012.

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

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