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Death Rites in Korea:
The Confucian-Christian Interplay

Chang-Won Park

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Ph.D. Thesis **2008**

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Death Rites in Korea:
The Confucian-Christian Interplay

Chang-Won Park

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Theology & Religion

Durham University

2008

ABSTRACT

Death Rites in Korea: The Confucian-Christian Interplay

Chang-Won Park

This study examines Christian death rites in modern Korea in the light of the complex interplay of Confucian and Christian values. It is based on the fact that Korea, once the most thoroughly Confucianized state in East Asia, has become one of the most dynamic Christian countries in the world within the space of a century. The study uncovers the ways in which Korean Christians, in their death rites, have struggled to balance 'religious piety to God' and 'filial duty to ancestors', which represent core Christian and Confucian values respectively. They cannot simply choose the one at the expense of the other as both are integral to their identity.

This study innovatively classifies death rites into three categories: ritual *before* death (bible-copying), ritual *at* death (funerary rites), and ritual *after* death (ancestral ritual). After presenting historical and contemporary data of the three death rites, the study provides two different types of analysis: one is a historical-theological analysis and the other sociological-anthropological. Drawing upon historical and theological perspectives, it reveals the underlying principle of complex phenomena surrounding the three death rites. The thesis then explores these death rites in terms of three sociological and anthropological theoretical themes, viz. embodiment, exchange, and material culture. The three death rites are viewed as a 'total social phenomenon', a concept derived from Marcel Mauss' study and employed here as an overarching interpretive framework.

No part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree at Durham University or any other Universities.

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

List of Plates

List of Figures

Introduction

Chapter 1 Interpretive Frameworks

Chapter 2 Bible-Copying (Ritual *before* Death)

Chapter 3 Funerary Practice (Ritual *at* Death)

Chapter 4 Ancestral Rites (Ritual *after* Death)

Conclusion

Bibliography

CONTENTS (details)

Introduction **1**

1. Research Purpose 4
2. Research Data 15
3. Research Method 20
4. Chapter Outline 30

Chapter 1 Interpretive Frameworks **33**

1. Total Social Phenomenon 33
   1) Marcel Mauss and the Concept 34
   2) Theoretical Insights 39
   3) Rites of Passage 40

2. The Confucian-Christian Interplay in Korea 43
   1) Korea (South) Today 43
   2) Historical Context of the Interplay 50
   3) Examples of the Interplay 58

3. Embodiment, Exchange, and Material Culture 65
   1) Embodiment 68
   2) Exchange 74
   3) Material Culture 78

Chapter 2 Bible-Copying (Ritual *Before* Death) **83**

1. The Practice of Copying the Bible 85
   1) The Bible-Copying Movement 85
   2) Copying the Bible among Old People 89
   3) Case Studies 93

2. A Historical-Theological Analysis of Bible-Copying 100
   1) Comparison with Other Historical and Contemporary Cases 100
   2) The Korean Attitude towards the Bible 103
   3) A Fusion of Christian Piety and Confucian Legacy 108

3. A Sociological-Anthropological Analysis of Bible-Copying 112

Chapter 3 Funerary Practice (Ritual *at* Death) **126**

1. Changing Funeral Customs in Contemporary Korea 127
 1) From Home to the Funeral Hall 127
 2) From Burial to Cremation 133
 3) Christian Reactions to Cremation 141

2. A Historical-Theological Analysis of Funerary Practice 153
 1) Changing Funeral Practice: A Mirror of Social Change 154
 2) Continuing Traditional Practices in Modern Funerals 160
 3) Christian Funerals: An Amalgamation of Confucian and Christian Practices 170

3. A Sociological-Anthropological Analysis of Funerary Practice 176

Chapter 4 Ancestral Rites (Ritual *after* Death) **190**

1. Ancestral Ritual and Christianity in Korea (1784-2006) 191
 1) Confucian Korea (1784-1910) 192
 2) Post-Confucian Korea (1910-2006) 211
 3) Contemporary Practices: 7 Cases 235

2. A Historical-Theological Analysis of Ancestral Rites 248
 1) Ancestral Ritual: A Perennial Problem in the Christian-Confucian Encounter 249
 2) From *Jesa* to *Chudoyebe*: Change and Continuity 263
 3) Ancestral Ritual and Social Change 271

3. A Sociological-Anthropological Analysis of Ancestral Rites 276

Conclusion **290**

Bibliography **296**

Acknowledgements

I like maps. Perhaps I like the dynamic interplay of simplicity and complexity that is unfolded while reading maps. My long-standing habit of reading maps has provided useful analogies for defining my academic work, one of which is to think of it in terms of making a 'cultural map', a map which draws the invisible webs of significance and provides another way of looking at some aspects of our life. From this perspective, I define myself as a 'cultural cartographer' and this thesis is an outcome of its practice. Upon its completion, it is a great pleasure to recognize the contributions of teachers, friends, institutions, and family to the development of my work.

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January 2008

List of Plates

1. The hand-written bible (example 1) displayed at the Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement.

2. The hand-written bible (example 2) displayed at the Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement.

3. The blank book specially designed for copying the bible by the Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement.

4. The inside of the blank heirloom bible.

5. Mrs. Choi copying the bible at her place in Andong.

6. One set of hand-written bibles in three languages dedicated to Andong Presbyterian Church.

7. The inside of the hand-written bible (Genesis, chapter 1 in Korean).

8. The inside of the hand-written bible (Genesis, chapter 1 in English).

9. The procession of the traditional funeral

10. Family graveyard

11. Family columbarium

12. Visitors paying tribute to the deceased in a memorial room within a hospital funeral hall (a secular family)

13. Confucian ancestral ritual (example 1)

14. Confucian ancestral ritual (example 2)
Reproduced from p. 49 in Myung-Hee Park *et al*. 2003. *Cultural Life in Korea: Scenes from Everyday Life*. Seoul: Kyomunsa.

15. Christian memorial service (example 1)

16. Christian memorial service (example 2)

Note:
1) Plates 1-4 are reproduced by kind permission of the Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement.
2) Plates 5-8 are reproduced by kind permission of Andong Presbyterian Church.
3) Plates 9-13, 15, and 16 are reproduced through Internet search.

List of Figures

1. Outline of chapters 2-4 32

2. Religious population 2005 48

3. Korea Gallup surveys on the venue of funerals 1994-2005 131

4. The places where death occurred 1985-2005 132

5. The nationwide cremation rates 1955-2005 137

6. Korea Gallup surveys on burial and cremation 1994-2005 138

7. Changing funeral venues and disposal methods since the 1980s 155

8. Belief in geomancy 1994-2005 163

9. Traditional family graveyard 168

10. New family columbarium 168

INTRODUCTION

While death ritual commonly refers to funerary rites in most Western countries, it involves two distinctive sets of rituals in East Asia: viz. the funeral itself and what is commonly known as 'ancestor worship'. In this study, another ritual is added to the existing two, thereby making up three death rites. In South Korea, a new and growing movement of copying the bible has emerged among ordinary Christians in recent years and it has been particularly popular among old people. Looking back on their life and thinking of their imminent death, they want to do something meaningful for themselves and for their family. Most of all, they wish to leave to their children something faith-related as an heirloom. A growing number of old people have chosen to make hand-written copies of the whole bible, a practice that requires a considerable investment of time and effort. This study is particularly concerned with old people's practice of bible-copying and interprets it as a death ritual, a long-term ritual practice in preparation for death. Therefore, this study examines three death rituals in Korea, that is, bible-copying, funerary practice, and ancestor worship, by classifying them into ritual *before* death, ritual *at* death, and ritual *after* death respectively.

As an overarching interpretive framework, this study employs the concept of the 'total social phenomenon' first introduced by the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1872-1950). The key idea of the concept, which will be further discussed in the next chapter, is that social phenomena are relational and inter-connected, and each social phenomenon contains 'all the threads of which the social fabric is composed' (Mauss, 1969: 1). This study approaches the three death rites from the perspective of the total

social phenomenon which emphasizes the related and whole feature of the social phenomenon. That is, it maintains that each death rite is deeply inter-connected with each other and other social phenomena, and each death ritual contains all the aspects of the social fabric.

From the perspective of the total social phenomenon, this study first provides historical and contemporary accounts of the three death rites, together with case studies, and then two different types of analysis: one is historical and theological, and the other sociological and anthropological. Drawing upon historical and theological perspectives, this study uncovers the underlying principles of various phenomena surrounding the three death rituals. One overriding principle concerns the continuing complex interplay of Confucian and Christian values. It is based on the fact that Korea, once the most thoroughly Confucianized state in East Asia, has become one of the most dynamic Christian countries in the world within the space of a century. Focusing on Christian death rituals which epitomize the complex Confucian-Christian interplay, this study examines the ways in which Korean Christians, in their death rituals, have struggled to balance 'religious piety to God' and 'filial duty to ancestors', which represent core Christian and Confucian values respectively. They cannot simply choose the one at the expense of the other as both are integral to their identity. This study then explores those three death rites in terms of three sociological and anthropological theoretical themes, viz. embodiment, exchange, and material culture. This analysis further reveals the intricate interplay of Confucian and Christian values in Christian death rites on the one hand, and it demonstrates the theoretical value of the three themes in understanding death rituals in general on the other.

Furthermore, this study challenges two established concepts, 'ancestor worship' and 'filial piety'. As will be discussed later in more detail, it argues that 'ancestor worship' sounds rather primitive and idolatrous because of the inappropriate combination of 'ancestor' and 'worship'. Similarly, this study contends that, because of the strong religious connotation of the term 'piety', the widespread concept 'filial piety' misrepresents the original idea (孝, *xiao* in Chinese; *hyo* in Korean), which concerns children's proper attitude towards their parents and ancestors, as exemplified in the following dialogue between Confucius and his disciple (*Analects* 2:5, my translation):

> Meng I Tzu asked Confucius what 孝 *xiao* was. Confucius said, 'it is not diverging (from your parents)'. Later, when Fan Chih was accompanying him, Confucius told Fan Chih, 'Meng-sun [Meng I Tzu] asked me about 孝 *xiao* and I answered him, "it is not diverging"'. Fan Chih asked, 'what did you mean?' Confucius said, 'When your parents are alive, serve them in accordance with propriety. When they die, bury them in accordance with propriety; and then venerate them in accordance with propriety.

As alternatives, this study suggests 'ancestral ritual' or 'ancestral rites' for ancestor worship and 'filial propriety' or 'filial duty' for filial piety respectively.

The remainder of this Introduction is divided into four parts. The first part explains the purpose of the study by critically examining existing studies, with a focus on the study of Christianity and Confucianism and death studies. In the second part, research data, i.e. the three death rites, are introduced while, in the third, the research method is explained. The final part provides an outline of chapters.

1. Research Purpose

Study of Christianity and Confucianism

In the preface to *Christianity and Chinese Religions* (1989), co-authored by Hans Küng and Julia Ching, major world religions are classified into three categories according to their origins.[1] Küng himself calls these three categories 'three great world religious river systems' (1989: xi) identified as being of: 1) Semitic origin and prophetic character (e.g. Judaism, Christianity and Islam) 2) Indian origin and mystical character (e.g. Hinduism and Buddhism) 3) Chinese origin and religions of wisdom (e.g. Confucianism and Daoism).[2]

Although this is an overly simple classification demanding appropriate reservations, as Küng himself admits, it remains quite useful for mapping major world religions and for understanding their essential characteristics in comparison with other religions of different origins. For instance, Confucianism and Christianity, respectively, exemplify not just religions of geographically distant civilizations but also qualitatively different types of religions. That is, while Christianity represents 'monotheistic and prophetic' religions originated from the Near East and developed in the European social context, Confucianism typifies 'non-theistic and humanistic' religions evolved in East Asian culture.

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[1] The book is a translation of *Christentum und Chinesische Religion* (Munich, 1988) which originally was a series of lectures delivered during the 1987 summer semester at the University of Tübingen. Julia Ching of the University of Toronto, herself Chinese by birth and one of the internationally most established scholars of Chinese philosophy and religion, gave lectures on Chinese folk religion, Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese Buddhism, respectively, with Küng providing a Christian response to each tradition.

[2] For further details on the classification, see Küng & Ching (1989), especially pp. xi-xiii.

Historically speaking, Confucianism and Christianity have respectively been the main religious forces in East Asian and Western civilizations. In other words, there is a parallel between the cultural location of Christianity in Europe and that of Confucianism in East Asia in terms of their influence and significance in each culture, despite their different historical trajectories. In this regard, it could be argued that the encounter of Confucianism and Christianity represents that of East Asian and Western cultures. The issue of Confucianism and Christianity, however, has received relatively little attention from scholars in the study of religions. This becomes clearer when one compares it with existing studies of other religious relationships such as Hindu-Christian, Buddhist-Christian, and Christian-Islam relationships.[3]

Perhaps two reasons can be suggested for this. One is that, like many other academic disciplines, the modern study of religions has been formed and developed primarily by Western scholars' experiences in which Confucianism has been of little or no influence. The other reason is that Confucianism itself has significantly declined within East Asia during the last century and the Confucian population appears negligible according to the statistics of the world religious population.[4] These factors may have contributed to constructing an academic context in which the study of

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[3] To list only a few examples of studies dealing with such encounters: Sharpe (1977); Tillich (1963); Cobb and Ives (1990); Graham (1969); Batchelor (1994).

[4] For instance, *Atlas of the World's Religions* edited by Ninian Smart (1999) provides the statistics of the world population by religion. Given the famous editor and publisher (Oxford University Press), the information in the book may have widely been accepted as authentic. In the book, however, the Confucian population does not appear and gives the impression that Confucianism is of little importance in terms of the religious population. According to the statistics, there were some 2 billion Christians (1,965,900,000), 1.2 billion Muslims (1,179,320,000), 0.8 billion Hindus (767,420,000), 0.4 billion Buddhists (356,870,000), and 15 million observant Jews.

Confucianism and its relationship with Christianity seems neither appealing nor rewarding.

However, this approach to Confucianism and its influence on the basis of these religious statistics is seriously flawed, for the actual situation of Confucian influence in East Asia is different from the statistical data. It partly reveals the distinctive nature of Confucianism as well as the problematic feature of religious statistics. The existing type of religious statistics may be valid for the religions of the first two 'great world religious river systems' in which religious membership is rather clearly maintained, and may also be relevant for the religious context in Western countries in which whether or not one belongs to a religion can to a degree be quite easily measured, but it is problematic for Confucianism as well as for the East Asian context. Because Confucianism neither involves an initiation process nor exists as an institutional religion, it is impossible to measure its membership. The existing method for producing religious statistics is also irrelevant for the East Asian context where multiple belonging is very common. Although Confucianism appears almost negligible according to contemporary religious statistics, its influence in reality is extensive, being deeply embedded in East Asian life. The Confucian tradition is indispensable for understanding the East Asian past and present. As John Berthrong has recently put it, Confucianism can be described as the 'cultural DNA of East Asian people' (Berthrong, 2000: 22).

Although it has been a peripheral academic subject, there has been a handful of scholars who produced monograph studies on the issue of Confucian-Christian relationship. These studies can be largely classified into three categories: the historical study of the Christian-Confucian encounter; the Christian-Confucian theological

dialogue; and the comparative study of Christianity and Confucianism.[5] Despite their different methods and perspectives, however, the primary interests of these studies lie in more conceptual and doctrinal issues than in those of practice and ritual. Put differently, existing studies, whether they are historical, theological, or philosophical, are more concerned with the issue of ideas than of practice. This thesis, however, is concerned with the encounter of Confucianism and Christianity, and does bring the issue of practice into the focus of research whilst not dismissing the realm of ideas. Rather, it reaches the issue of ideas through examining practice on the assumption that practice is a 'performed idea' and affords a dynamic channel for understanding ideas. The present study particularly focuses on the issue of death rituals, an issue which has been at the core of practical problems from the outset of the encounter of Confucianism and Christianity.

The reason for the choice of the Korean context is not so much that it is my home country as that it has a particular relevance to studying the issue of the Confucian-Christian encounter. It is based on the fact that Korea, once the most thoroughly Confucianized state in East Asia, has become one of the most dynamic Christian countries in the world within the space of a century. That is, the country had been a staunch Confucian state when Christianity was first introduced in the late eighteenth century and it has been transformed into a Christian-dominated country during the twentieth century. Indeed, the national census of 2005 has shown that Christianity is the largest religion with some 14 million members, 29 per cent of the total population

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[5] Examples of the first category are Young (1983), Baker (1983), Rule (1986), and Mungello (1999); studies belonging to the second category include Küng & Ching (1989), Berthrong (1994), and Heup-Young Kim (1996); studies of the last category include Legge (1880), Ching (1977), Sung-Hae Kim (1981), and Yao (1996).

(National Statistics Office, 2006b). Hence, in terms of the religious landscape, contemporary South Korea can be described by saying that Christianity has emerged as the largest institutional religion, while Confucianism has continued to influence Korean life as the substratum of the society. While Confucianism has been considered to be representing 'the traditional', Christianity is viewed as being representative of 'the modern'. Due to this distinctive religious history, Korea has maintained a unique social context in which the complex interplay of Confucianism and Christianity has continued. This study focuses particularly on practices at and around the time of death as it epitomizes the continuing interface of Confucianism and Christianity, tradition and modernity, and change and continuity.[6]

Death studies

While death has been considered as the undeniable, universal fact of life since the dawn of human existence, it is only recently that death studies as an academic area has emerged. Although there were previous studies to examine beliefs and practices surrounding death within various existing academic disciplines, it can be said that death studies *per se* began during the last decades of the twentieth century and is still at a formative stage. Some would still doubt if death studies can be considered as an independent academic area. Yet it is true that the study of death is now a burgeoning academic area with strong trans-disciplinary and inter-national trends. One can easily

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[6] It, however, does not mean to overlook the interaction of Christianity and other Korean traditional religions such as Shamanism and Buddhism, which are also strongly manifest in Korean life. Modern Korea has shown various distinctive social phenomena due to the complex confluence of traditional religions and Christianity. For the issue of the Christian encounter with Korean religious culture, see Grayson (2001), Don-Ku Kang (1998), Andrew Kim (2000), and Sook-Jong Lee (1995).

recognize it, for example, by looking at recent publications and conferences in relation to death.[7] Without doubt, it would be very interesting to observe the ways in which the study of death develops in the years to come. This study can be situated within such a contemporary academic context of rapidly growing death studies.

The modern study of death rites was pioneered by early anthropologists at the turn of the twentieth century. Two of the most influential scholars from the period are Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) and Robert Hertz (1881-1915). When they published their best-known essays in the first decade of the twentieth century (Hertz, 1907; van Gennep, 1909), the comparative study of ritual forms was of crucial concern to the majority of scholars in the young discipline of anthropology. Yet there had been a long period of silence in anthropological studies on death rituals, probably associated with anthropologists' decreasing interest in religion (Metcalf & Huntington, 1991: xi-xii). An important turning point was the publication of *Celebrations of Death* co-authored by Richard Huntington & Peter Metcalf in 1979, and its second edition in 1991. Since then the study of death rituals has received a renewed attention not only within anthropology but also from other disciplines such as biblical studies, history and archaeology.

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[7] A good example of academic publications in this area includes encyclopedias published in recent years such as *Encyclopedia of Death and Dying* (Howarth & Leaman, 2001), *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Death and Dying* (Kastenbaum, 2003) and *Encyclopedia of Cremation* (Davies, 2005b). In addition, the publication of *A Brief History of Death* (Davies, 2005a) and its translation into various languages within the short space of time is a testimony to a growing international interest in the subject. In the case of conference, a good example is a biennial international conference, the *Social Context of Death, Dying, and Disposal* (abbreviated DDD) which began in 1990. The most recent DDD 8th conference which was held at the city of Bath in the U.K. in September 2007 attracted about 230 delegates from a variety of national, academic and professional backgrounds. For abstracts of the papers presented at this conference, see a supplement edition to *Mortality* vol. 12 (2007).

Among many issues relating to death rituals, this study includes the issue of what is commonly called 'ancestor worship'. The issue of ancestor worship was much studied mainly by early anthropologists and Christian missionaries. It was among the most significant sources of reference for early anthropologists who were considerably preoccupied with explaining the origin of religion. Indeed, in his *Principles of Sociology* (1876), for instance, Herbert Spencer regards ancestor worship as the root of all religions. Christian missionaries had a different concern when they approached the issue, however. Missionaries in East Asia, for example, confronted ancestor worship as one of the most persistent obstacles to their missionary activities and they researched the issue in order to employ more effective missionary strategy. An example of this can be found in a series of debates over the issue at three major Protestant missionary conferences in China in 1877, 1890, and 1907 (Hui, 2002).

More recently, however, the issue of ancestor worship has received relatively less attention. As religion had been relegated to a merely supporting role in anthropological theory, anthropologists' interest moved into other less religious issues. As Christianity has been implanted into East Asian countries, the primary concerns of missionaries and indigenous theologians have been finding Christian alternatives to indigenous ancestor worship (e.g. Ro, 1985). Although an exception can be found in biblical studies, particularly in the Old Testament and related studies in which there has been a resurgence of interest in issues related to ancestor worship in recent years, it seems that the issue of ancestor worship is no longer appealing as an independent research subject.[8]

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[8] For a history of research on ancestor worship in biblical scholarship up to the 1980s, see Spronk (1986): 3-83. For more recent studies dealing with ancestor worship in biblical periods, see Lewis (1989); Schmidt (1996); Davis (1999); Hallote (2001); McCane (2003); Douglas (2004).

Ancestor worship sounds out of date to many contemporary anthropologists and idolatrous to most students of the Christian background.

It seems that such a disparaging and negative image of ancestor worship has much to do with the term 'ancestor worship' itself. At the turn of the twentieth century, there were various phrases referring to ritual practice in relation to ancestors. Most commonly used phrases include the following: 'the worship of ancestors', 'ancestral worship', 'memorials to the dead', 'ancestor-worship', 'cult of ancestors', 'ancestor worship', and 'ancestral rites'. Among them, the term 'ancestor worship' has been quite firmly established in subsequent scholarly discourse as an umbrella concept for referring to ritual practice regarding ancestors. The combination of 'ancestor' and 'worship', however, seems inappropriate. 'Worship' is a term which has been so deeply embedded in Christian usage that its combination with 'ancestor' has caused unnecessary misunderstandings. That is, the term itself gives an impression that the practice referred to as ancestor worship is idolatrous as well as primitive: perhaps this was the intention of the people who popularized the term. As has often been pointed out, however, applying concepts formulated by Western or Christian criteria to social phenomena of non-Western cultures has often resulted in unnecessary distortions and misunderstandings, and the concept of ancestor worship is just such an example.

This problematic usage of the phrase 'ancestor worship' can, however, be much redressed by simply replacing the term, and this study suggests 'ancestral ritual' or 'ancestral rites' as its substitute. Although it may sound a broader concept than ancestor worship, at least, the concepts of 'ancestral ritual' or 'ancestral rites' could eliminate, to a great extent, the accumulated negative connotations carried by the problematic term ancestor worship. Furthermore, the terms 'ancestral ritual' or 'ancestral rites' are more

relevant to the East Asian context, particularly to the Confucian rites in relation to ancestors. As will be argued later, the Confucian practice of ancestors is a form of memorial rite. It is a ceremony of remembering ancestors – the root of one's life and identity. It has much to do with the transmission of family tradition rather than worshipping ancestors.[9]

This study, therefore, replaces 'ancestor worship' with 'ancestral ritual' or 'ancestral rites'. By so doing, we could approach afresh existing studies of ancestor worship as well as various ritual practices regarding ancestors. Further, the study stresses the importance of the ancestral ritual issue from a perspective that is different from those of early anthropologists and missionaries. Although this study is not completely devoted to the issue of ancestral ritual alone – it is examined as one of the three death rites, it discusses the significance of ancestral ritual by uncovering the ways in which the principles behind the practice of ancestral ritual govern other death rites as well as the life of the living, a point which will be further articulated in the Conclusion particularly in relation to the issue of inter-generational relations. This is not just a reflection of a Confucian-influenced society alone. The issue of ancestral ritual involves a universal relevance to all human society in which ancestry is a fundamental fact of life.

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[9] Don Baker (1979; 1983), the well-known American scholar in Korean history, has also noted that it is misleading to translate the Korean term *Jesa* as 'ancestor worship'. According to him, *Jesa* refers to the Confucian rites to pay respect towards ancestors and it is memorial rites rather than the worship of dead ancestors. He suggests that better renderings of *Jesa* into English would be 'ancestral memorial service' or 'ancestral rites'.

The purpose of the study

The aim of this study is four-fold. First, it examines the encounter of Confucianism and Christianity in Korea, with a particular focus on ritual practices surrounding Christian death, which have shown a complex mixture of conflict and union between the two traditions. It attempts to articulate enduring Confucian ideas and practices in modern Korean life, and to examine their interaction with Christian ideas and practices, particularly in the realm of death rites. The emphasis of this study lies on the approach to Confucianism, Christianity, and their encounter not from the perspective of abstract ideas and doctrines but from that of practice, i.e. performed ideas.

Second, this study provides a new perspective on observing and analyzing death rites. By identifying three death rites and classifying them into ritual *before* death, ritual *at* death, and ritual *after* death, respectively, the study provides an extended framework of death rites, thereby contributing to the existing scholarship of death rites in which the funeral is the dominant realm of study.[10] For a case of ritual *before* death, as mentioned before, it examines a new and growing movement of making hand-written copies of the bible among old people. For ritual *at* death, this study considers the funeral, more specifically, two major changes in recent Korean funerary practice: viz. the increasing popularity of cremation against the background of centuries-old burial custom, and the emergence of the hospital funeral hall as the most popular venue for the funeral. For ritual *after* death, the study examines ancestral ritual, which has been widely practised in Korea not only as a death ritual but also as a core family practice for the transmission of its tradition. After establishing historical and contemporary data on the three death

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[10] The academic study of death rites in the West focuses primarily on the funeral, and some representative examples are Metcalf and Huntington (1991) and Davies (2002b).

rites, this study provides two kinds of analysis: one employs historical and theological perspectives while the other sociological and anthropological themes, viz. embodiment, exchange, and material culture.

Third, this study uncovers that there are persistent struggles in all three Christian death rites, struggles to balance 'religious piety to God' and 'filial duty to ancestors' which represent core Christian and Confucian values respectively. Korean Christians cannot simply choose the one at the expense of the other as both are integral to their identity. Hence this study employs the continuing complex interplay of Confucian and Christian values as an overriding interpretive framework for the explanation of the data. This study also contends that the three death rites represent three different consequences in the Confucian-Christian encounter: clash (negative), amalgamation (neutral), and harmony (positive). That is, while ancestral ritual has been a focal point of the long-standing clash of the two traditions and funerary rites have shown their continuing amalgamation without much conflict, the practice of copying the bible among old people exemplifies a harmonious interplay of Confucian and Christian values.

The final aim concerns the themes of embodiment, exchange, and material culture, which are employed in this study as another set of interpretive tools. The three death rites are examined from the perspectives of embodiment, exchange, and material culture respectively. On the basis of this exercise, the study proposes that each of the three themes is a self-contained theoretical perspective for observing social phenomena. Further, it suggests that a combination of the three themes could form an organic set of 'observational frameworks'. Practically speaking, it could mean that, for instance, good research can be done on any aspect of social phenomena either from the individual perspective of the three themes or from a combination of them.

2. Research Data

This study, then, examines the three Christian death rites of bible-copying, the funeral, and ancestral ritual by classifying them as ritual *before* death (bible-copying), ritual *at* death (funerary practice), and ritual *after* death (ancestral ritual). These three categories of death rituals thus constitute empirical data for this study. An overriding observational framework concerns the ways in which each of the three death rituals manifests the complex interaction of Confucian and Christian values. As indicated already, our data are an 'interpreted' form of information rather than 'raw' fact. In this regard, it is reminded here that description is also interpretation (e.g. Peacock, 2001: 85). An initially brief description of each of the three death rites is provided in the following.

Ritual before death: bible-copying

Since the 1990s, the practice of copying the bible has been increasingly popular among ordinary Christians irrespective of denomination, age, gender, and profession. By 2006, it is said that more than 300,000 Christians were participating in this practice. Numerous extraordinary cases have been reported (Chi, 2002). Particularly remarkable is the recent case of a ninety-year-old lady, Mrs. Ui-Sook Choi, who has completed twelve hand-written copies of the whole bible over the past twenty five years. More remarkable still, she copied not just the Korean bible, but also the Japanese and English bibles, completing four sets of hand-written bibles in three languages.

The practice of copying the whole bible is particularly popular among old people as it is perceived as one of the most meaningful tasks before their death. They wish to leave something spiritual and nonmaterial to their children. Many old people are hand-

copying the bible every day with a view to giving the completed copies to their children as an heirloom. They try to make the same number of copies of the bible as that of their children. The completed hand-written copies of the bible are given to the household of their children and they become a new form of heirloom and a spiritual inheritance within the family. An increasing number of Korean Christians are preparing for their death by making hand-written copies of the bible. This study interprets the practice of bible-copying among old people as a death ritual, i.e. 'ritual *before* death'. It is the first study of the movement of copying the bible and the first to interpret this practice among old people as a death ritual.[11]

Ritual at death: funerary practice

Confucianism has developed a very sophisticated system of ritual so that it could be described as a religion of ritual. Confucians have ritualized all domains of life and have emphasized ritual as the most crucial means for building up order and harmony among different classes of people. Particularly influential in the life of ordinary people and the elite alike have been death rites – the funeral and ancestral ritual. These, along with two other rituals for coming of age and wedding, constitute the 'Four Confucian Family Rituals'. Although the Confucian tradition is not much concerned with the afterlife, death rituals were the most important among the four family rituals. As a ritual expression of *filial duty* – one of the most essential Confucian values, they constituted

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[11] The movement of copying the bible has received little scholarly attention. The only existing study is a short article written by a Catholic nun and published in a monthly magazine for the Catholic laity (Hye-Jung Lee, 1999). In fact, it is not completely devoted to the movement alone and it provides comparative cases, notably Buddhist and Confucian, of copying sacred texts in Korean history.

the foundational rituals of the Confucian family and society. The two Confucian death rites were firmly rooted in traditional Korean society.

Unlike the case of ancestral ritual, the introduction and spread of Christianity did not cause any significant conflicts with existing funerary rites, perhaps because burial was the common method of body disposal in both the Christian and Confucian traditions. In other religious and cultural contexts, the introduction of Christianity caused serious social problems with regard to the issue of funerary rites. In countries like Nepal, for instance, according to Sharma (2005: 325-6), Christian burial practices have led to some serious confrontations with some Hindu-Buddhists who hold a tradition of cremation. Within the Korean context, however, the Christian principle of burial had been culturally intensified by deep-rooted Confucian burial practice, with many elements of Confucian funerary rites being assimilated into Christian rituals. Until the early 1990s, burial had been a norm for most Koreans in general and Christians in particular, while cremation had largely been practised among very poor people in urban areas and employed in the case of exceptionally bad deaths such as suicide. Despite its steady increase, the nationwide rate of cremation remained below 20 per cent until the early 1990s.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, however, Korean society is witnessing dramatic changes in funeral customs, among which two phenomena stand out: the rapid increase of cremation and the emergence of the hospital funeral hall. The nationwide rate of cremation doubled within less than ten years – 20.5 per cent in 1994 and 42.6 per cent in 2002. Exceeding 50 per cent nationwide and reaching 70 percent in major cities by 2005, the cremation rates in South Korea are expected to continue increasing. Another remarkable change has occurred in the venue of the funeral. Between 1994 and

2005, the rate of holding funerals at home dramatically decreased from 72 per cent to 7 per cent, while that of holding funerals at the hospital funeral hall increased from 23 per cent to 69 per cent.

Within many Protestant denominations, there are ongoing conflicting attitudes to cremation: whether it should be employed as a Christian method of body disposal has been one of the key issues of theological and practical debates in recent years. Having been conservative in their belief and practice, many Korean Christians are now facing a difficult choice at their death between the accepted practice of burial and a new growing practice of cremation.

Ritual after death: ancestral ritual

Ancestral ritual is a core ritual in Confucianism and could be compared with the Eucharist in Christianity in terms of symbolic importance. In general terms, there are four kinds of Confucian ancestral ritual: death-day ritual, seasonal ritual, special ritual on holidays like New Year's Day, and gravesite ritual. In traditional Korea, people commonly performed death-day rituals for four ascending generations, i.e. rituals for parents, grandparents, great grandparents, and great-great grandparents. It means that they performed ancestral ritual at least eight times a year for death-day rituals alone, plus four seasonal rituals, at least two holiday rituals and a gravesite ritual. Providing regular and frequent opportunities for all the family members to gather together, ancestral rites were important family events bonding its solidarity and reassuring the transmission of its tradition.

Introduced in the late eighteenth century, the Catholic Church condemned Confucian ancestral ritual as idolatry, regarding it as a prime example of something that

is completely against the First and Second Commandments: 'you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol… You shall not bow down to them or worship them' (Exodus 20: 2-4a). This Catholic ban on Confucian ancestral ritual inevitably resulted in the serious conflict between the Catholic Church and the Confucian state during the nineteenth century. Indeed, throughout the nineteenth century, there was a series of nationwide persecutions in which thousands of Catholics were killed, with the issue of ancestral ritual lying at the heart of those persecutions. Ironically, however, the Vatican acknowledged the ancestral ritual of East Asia as a civil rite in 1939, thereby lifting its ban on the Christian practice of indigenous ancestral ritual. The result is that most Catholics in South Korea now perform Confucian ancestral ritual with some modifications.

Introduced in the late nineteenth century, the Protestant Church also banned Confucian ancestral ritual, with most Western missionaries regarding the Confucian practice as the greatest idolatry that the Korean people had to give up. Indeed, one of the preconditions for baptism was to abolish Confucian ancestral ritual. As the Confucian dynasty was then beginning to decline, however, Protestants did not experience any of those nationwide persecutions that early Catholics suffered. Still there were serious conflicts at the family and local community levels. After abolishing Confucian ancestral rites, however, early Korean Protestants could not bear the strong sense of ritual emptiness, especially on the death-days of their parents. Accordingly they began to practise an alternative Christian memorial rite which has become prevalent among Protestants.

Currently in South Korea, apart from the majority of Protestant Christians, most of the population perform Confucian ancestral ritual whether they are Buddhists or non-

believers. This means that the issue of ancestral ritual continues to be one of the major problems among many Korean families whose members are a mixture of Protestants and believers of other religions. Within the Protestant Church, there are still conflicting attitudes towards the issue of Confucian ancestral rites: many Protestants think that Confucian ancestral ritual is idolatry while some do not agree with that and participate in it.

3. Research Method

We now discuss the research method employed in this study, beginning with the notion of 'the perspicacity of the researcher', a guiding principle for the exercise of research methods in this study, and then elucidating research methods used for data collection and analysis.

'Perspicacity of the researcher'

The term 'perspicacity of the researcher' is derived from Lévi-Strauss' discussion of the 'perspicacity of philosopher'. In *Totemism*, Lévi-Strauss shows how philosophers like Rousseau and Bergson were more successful than anthropologists in penetrating the meaning of totemic classifications: 'This explains the paradox, well illustrated by the history of the totemic issue, that Bergson is in a better position than Durkheim to lay the foundations of a genuine sociological logic' (1969: 170). Lévi-Strauss goes on to claim that Rousseau, living at a time when the very idea of totemism had not been formed, 'should have been able to penetrate the nature of beliefs and customs' (1969: 176).

Lévi-Strauss finds the reasons for the perspicacity of such philosophers in their ability for internalization, that is, their ability to attune themselves to the totemic way of thinking. Towards the end of his book, Lévi-Strauss writes (1969: 176):

> What matters to us, for the lesson we wish to draw from it, is that Bergson and Rousseau should have succeeded in getting right to the psychological foundations of exotic institutions (in the case of Rousseau, without even suspecting their existence) by a process of internalization, that is, by trying on themselves modes of thought taken from elsewhere or simply imagined. They thus demonstrate that every human mind is a locus of virtual experience where what goes on in the minds of men, however remote they may be, can be investigated.

The above argument set out by Lévi-Strauss could be read in several ways. First of all, it could give rise to a general impression that philosophers are superior to anthropologists in penetrating the nature of human and society. This, however, is neither what Lévi-Strauss meant nor the point that this study advances. Lévi-Strauss' emphasis is placed not on the comparison of philosophers and anthropologists, but on the better ability of some philosophers to penetrate the nature of even exotic beliefs and customs. In fact, by drawing on Rousseau's case, what Lévi-Strauss attempted was to identify Rousseau as the father of French anthropology, as the following quotation illustrates: 'The *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* is without doubt the first anthropological treatise in French literature. In almost modern terms, Rousseau poses the central problem of anthropology, viz. the passage from nature to culture' (1969: 172-173).

Second, the argument seems to imply that Lévi-Strauss undermines fieldwork, itself fundamental to the anthropological method. That is, by emphasizing Rousseau and Bergson's ability to penetrate the nature of totemism without experiencing it (in Rousseau's case, according to Lévi-Strauss, even before the idea of totemism had been formed), Lévi-Strauss seems to repudiate fieldwork method, a method which many see as the quintessential anthropological method, thereby being established as a rite of passage for becoming an anthropologist. Perhaps this reading of the argument might be true. In identifying Rousseau as the father of anthropology, as Deliège comments, Lévi-Strauss breaks with the Malinowskian brand of epistemology which formed the basis of the method of anthropological fieldwork, participant observation (Deliège, 2004: 20). Indeed, he himself poses a puzzling epistemological problem embedded in the practice of participant observation. In *Tristes Tropiques*, his only ethnographical work based on his expedition to the Nambikwara Indians, Lévi-Strauss says: 'They were as close to me as a reflection in a mirror; I could touch them, but I could not understand them' (1973 [1955]: 333). This experience convinced him that empirical observation was not the key to comprehension; rather, it lies in the patterns of human thought and language (Pace, 1983: 144). And yet, to undermine the anthropological method of participant observation is not the point in this study.

The other possible reading could be that Lévi-Strauss is advancing his structuralist propaganda which, summarized in a sentence, is that 'explanations can not be derived from the observation of reality, but must be the result of reducing reality into models, a formal set of relations' (Deliège, 2004: 28). In particular, the last sentence of the above quotation suggests a possibility of such reading: 'They thus demonstrate that every

human mind is a locus of virtual experience where what goes on in the minds of men, however remote they may be, can be investigated'.

The key point that this study draws from the Lévi-Strauss' argument, however, is his emphasis on the ability of internalization to penetrate the nature of the human mind and social phenomena, whatever method is employed. And the term 'perspicacity of the researcher' is used to signify it within the contemporary research context in which a variety of research methods exists. Certainly, different research methods need to be employed in relation to the nature of the subject matter and as appropriate for specific research purposes. Ultimately speaking, however, the most important thing is not so much *which* method one employs as *how thoroughly* one can engage with the subject matter. The point is that the choice of method, in itself, does not guarantee the success of a research venture. In the end, what matters is one's ability to penetrate the human mind and social phenomena through 'a process of internalization', to borrow Lévi-Strauss' term. In her foreword to the 1990 translation of Marcel Mauss' *The Gift*, Mary Douglas also underlines this point, when she discusses the importance of 'sound analysis' (Douglas, 1990: x):

> In some histories of anthropology the main difference between old-fashioned folklore and modern ethnography has been identified as the replacement of library research by fieldwork. But I would suggest that the main important change came from a new criterion of sound analysis. *The Gift* was like an injunction to record the entire credit structure of a community. What a change that involved from current ideas about how to do ethnology can be seen by reading any of the earlier books cited in the voluminous footnotes whose unsystematic accounts of beliefs and ceremonies provided the uninterpreted bare bones of the gift system.

Whatever research method is chosen, then, the most important element lies in the perspicacity of the researcher, an idea that has come to influence this study as a guiding principle for the exercise of research methods. Though it is difficult to achieve and perhaps impossible fully to attain the goal, this study lies in its pursuit.

Library research, online research, and field research combined

Bearing in mind this idea of the perspicacity of the researcher, the present study employs a combination of three research methods for data collection: library (textual) research, online research, and field research.[12] That is, in establishing the data for bible-copying, funerary practice, and ancestral rites, this study combines the three research methods, albeit the degree of the contribution of each method differs depending on the data. In what follows, we discuss the ways in which each research method contributes to establishing data for this study.

Although this study focuses on the practice of Christian death rites in contemporary Korea, it is necessary to consider the historical development of death rites over the last centuries in order to better understand the contemporary context. Hence, library research based on examining historical texts plays a significant role in this study, particularly with the issue of ancestral ritual discussed in Chapter 4, which examines the historical development of the issue of ancestral ritual over the last two centuries. For this purpose, I have consulted various historical texts including eighteenth-century Confucian texts, Protestant missionaries' reports at the turn of the twentieth century, and documents from early Korean Christian history.

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[12] The first two sometimes overlap as many books and journal articles are also available online, but they are considered here separately.

Online research involves all sorts of research activities based on the use of the Internet. In the case of this study, it principally includes database search, online-journal and online-newspaper access, website search, and email correspondence. Although online research cannot completely replace the traditional method of library research, it sometimes proves to be more helpful and efficient. This study has much benefited from online research especially as far as Korean materials and data are concerned.[13] In particular, the online research method has helped immensely in the early stage of research for Chapter 2 which deals with the practice of bible-copying. In the very beginning, I did not know anything about the Korean movement of copying the bible and was only aware that there were some people who were writing down the bible as part of their religious practice. I myself was surprised when I discovered through my Internet search the scale and popularity of the bible-copying movement. This was the beginning of my awareness of the movement and prompted the inclusion of the practice of copying the bible into this thesis as a chapter on ritual before death. In the absence of existing studies of the bible-copying movement, online research played a significant role in this developmental process from the discovery to its inclusion into the present thesis, with the process being complemented by field research.

The role of field research in this study is different from that of other anthropological studies in that it lies not so much in collecting or creating data as in verifying them. This study does not create its own data through fieldwork research but uses existing historical and contemporary data obtained through library and online

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[13] A useful online source for Korean materials is the research database (http://www.riss4u.net) run by the Korea Education and Research Information Service (KERIS). It provides comprehensive information on books, articles, and theses in relation to almost all the subjects written in Korean and, in the case of the last two, the full text can be downloaded.

researches. The opportunity to conduct a short field study emerged during the third year of my doctoral course, thanks to a research fellowship fund granted by the Golders Green Foundation Trust. The period of the field research was six weeks between late March and early May in 2007. As I had already established a considerable amount of research data, the purpose of the field study was to verify them and, as it turned out, the six-week period served well to that end. In this case, therefore, field research has functioned not as a major source of data collection, but as a point of reference to verify data which were already established through library and online researches.

Method of triangulation

This study has also employed the 'method of triangulation' for the process of establishing data and analyzing them. Social scientists borrowed the term 'triangulation' from geographical surveyors who 'look at something from angles or viewpoints to get a fix on its true position' (Neuman, 1994: 141). And they have used triangulation techniques to check the veracity and reliability of data. The method of triangulation refers to 'the process of verification, either time triangulation (asking the same person on several occasions), source triangulation (asking several people the same question), or method triangulation' (Bennett, 1996: 62).

The following is an example of how this study has applied the method of triangulation. When I was conducting field research in Korea I was very conscious of the method because much information had already been established before going to the field and an opportunity arose to check it. In other words, the method of triangulation was in operation when the data and their reality were compared. Second, the method of triangulation was applied when this study examined historical and contemporary data on

each of the three death rituals in the light of the interplay of Confucianism and Christianity. The method was also applied to the process of exploring various phenomena surrounding death rituals in terms of the theoretical perspectives of embodiment, exchange, and material culture. That is to say, the method of triangulation was also employed when various analyses were attempted on the selected data. Therefore, in this study, the triangulation method has been operating all the time between reality and data, between data and analysis, and between analysis and reality.

Theological, historical, sociological, anthropological approaches combined

Another characteristic of this study in terms of the research method is that it combines theological, historical, sociological, anthropological approaches in its own way. This reflects my own intellectual journey so far. During my undergraduate period in which I read theology in a university in South Korea, my intellectual quest focused on more philosophical and theological issues; during my seminary period in my country, it moved into more historical issues such as the relationship of historical fact and interpretation, particularly with regard to Christian origins; and, finally, during my Durham period, I became more interested in sociological and anthropological approaches, with a turning point being my MA modules such as 'The Social Sciences and the New Testament' and 'Theology and Anthropology'. Through this fascinating intellectual journey which was accompanied, sometimes, by much intellectual reassessment, I have realized that these perspectives should not be mutually exclusive but combined in current and future research, and I have consciously sought to do so in this research.

A concrete outcome of the exercise is that the study provides two different types of analysis. One is called 'historical-theological analysis' and it examines the three death rituals in the light of historical, theological and comparative perspectives. The other is called 'sociological-anthropological analysis' and interprets our data in terms of three theoretical themes in sociological and anthropological studies, viz. embodiment, exchange, and material culture. It is hoped that such a set of complementary methods provides a good example of work in the general field of the study of human and society.

Method of reflexivity

We now consider reflexivity to be another method for this study by reflecting on some reflexive issues which have been influential in selecting historical sources and accumulating ethnographic data. Those issues include my familial and religious background, the experiences of coming to the U.K. and the re-discovery of Korea, and the process of conceiving the three-fold structure of Korean death rites. Reflecting on such issues could reveal the ways in which my own personal background and experience have shaped this study as a 'method', thereby becoming explicit about an observational and interpretive bias inherent in the study.

I was born in Andong, South Korea, in 1972 and brought up there until I went to Seoul in 1991 for higher education. *Andong* has been regarded as the representative region preserving traditional Korean culture: particularly, it is well-known for its rich legacy of Confucian culture as it was a central region for the development of Korean Confucianism during the Confucian dynasty period (1392-1910). For this historic nature of the region, early Christian missionaries established one of their headquarters within *Andong* city and the Christian Church has played an important role in the modern

history of the region. My family has resided in the region for generations and, since my great grandfather (1873-1948) converted to Protestant Christianity, it has maintained strong Christian faith. My grandfather (1916-2001) was an elder and my father (1946-1986) became a pastor of the Presbyterian Church, the mainstream Christian denomination of the region and the country. The intricate interplay of my family background of deep-rooted Christian faith and the social environment of Andong's Confucian culture was deeply embedded in my upbringing and has been a continuing influence on the development of my religious and cultural outlook.

After finishing my first degree (in theology) and seminary education in Seoul, I came to the U.K. in the year 2000. I completed a taught MA course in the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University and, during the course, as mentioned above, I gradually became interested in sociological and anthropological approaches to religion. The experience of living in Durham and my intellectual engagement with social anthropology have provided me with another insight into my cultural and religious identity. In 2003, I started my doctoral research which examines the issue of the cultural encounter of Confucianism and Christianity, and the Korean practice of death became a focus of my research.

While the funeral and ancestral ritual are obvious death rites within the Korean context, the practice of bible-copying is interpreted as a death ritual by this study for the first time. From the outset, it was clear that Christian funerary practice and ancestral rites exhibit the complex interplay of Confucian and Christian elements. The practice of bible-copying, however, was little known to me until toward the end of the year 2005 when I discovered its popularity through internet search. I gave a paper on the Korean practice of bible-copying at a conference on spirituality which was held at Lancaster

University in January 2006.[14] Until then, the idea of interpreting the practice as a death ritual was not yet conceived and the conference paper was prepared as an extra to my doctoral research. Soon after the conference, I began to consider the practice of bible-copying among old people as a form of death ritual, a ritual practice in the preparation of death. Consequently, the three-fold structure of death rites emerged, with bible-copying being ritual *before* death, funerary practice ritual *at* death, and ancestral rites ritual *after* death.

As my research continued, it became clearer that the three death rites represent the three types of the Christian-Confucian encounter, viz. harmony, amalgamation, and clash. That is, bible-copying epitomizes a harmonious union of Confucian and Christian values while funerary practice exemplifies an amalgamation of them; the issue of traditional ancestral rites has become a representative case of the clash between the Christian Church and Confucian/Post-Confucian society. This framework gradually emerged from the examination of historical and ethnographic data, and it also influenced the choice of historical sources and empirical cases for the present study.

4. Chapter Outline

This study is divided into four chapters, along with an Introduction and a Conclusion. While Chapter 1 discusses various theoretical issues under the rubric of 'interpretive frameworks', the other three chapters examine the three death rites respectively.

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[14] 'Reading Spiritualities: Constructing and Representing Spiritualities through the Medium of Text: Literary, Sacred and Visual'. Department of Religious Studies, Lancaster University. 20-22 January 2006.

Namely, Chapter 2 deals with ritual *before* death with the practice of bible-copying, Chapter 3 discusses ritual *at* death in the funeral, and Chapter 4 examines ritual *after* death in ancestral ritual.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 deals with the interpretive frameworks used in this study and discusses three issues. First, it explicates the concept of the 'total social phenomenon', a concept that is employed as an overarching interpretive framework. Second, it discusses some introductory issues relating to historical-theological analysis, and finally, it introduces the three sociological and anthropological theoretical themes of embodiment, exchange, and material culture.

Structure of chapters on three death rituals (Chapters 2-4)

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 have the same structure, with each chapter consisting of three sections: data, analysis I, and analysis II. Each of these chapters first provides historical and contemporary data on the death rite concerned, along with case studies. It then provides two different kinds of analysis: one is historical-theological analysis and the other sociological-anthropological. Drawing on historical and theological perspectives, it attempts to uncover the underlying principle of complex phenomena surrounding each Christian death ritual. In this analysis, a major focus lies on the continuing complex interplay of Confucian and Christian values. As far as sociological-anthropological analysis is concerned, this study employs three sociological and anthropological theoretical themes to explore various phenomena surrounding each Christian death

ritual. The three themes are, as mentioned before, embodiment, exchange, and material culture.

	Chapter 2 Bible-copying	Chapter 3 Funerary practice	Chapter 4 Ancestral rites
1. Data	Historical and contemporary data followed by case studies		
2. Analysis I	Historical & Theological themes: the complex interplay of Confucian and Christian values		
3. Analysis II	Sociological & Anthropological themes: embodiment, exchange, material culture		

< **Figure 1**: Outline of Chapters 2-4>

CHAPTER 1

Interpretive Frameworks

> The tangible fact is Rome or Athens or the average Frenchman or the Melanesian of some island, and not prayer or law as such.... They [sociologists] all observe, or at least ought to, minds as wholes and not minds divided into faculties.... The aim and principle of sociology is to observe and understand the whole group in its total behaviour (Mauss, 1969: 78-79).

This chapter introduces key theoretical concepts that are employed for interpreting our data. It first deals with the concept of the 'total social phenomenon' which serves as an overarching interpretive framework. It then discusses two sets of conceptual themes which will be used to analyze the three death rites in the following chapters: one concerns the historical-theological theme of the Confucian-Christian interplay and the other the sociological-anthropological concepts of embodiment, exchange, and material culture. As all these concepts and themes serve as interpretive tools to explain our empirical data, the phrase 'interpretive frameworks' is chosen for the title of this chapter.

1. Total Social Phenomenon

Having been dissatisfied with mechanistic and compartmentalized approaches to humanity and society, an academic tendency that has been increasingly prevalent in modern times, I became intrigued by the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss' attempt

to understand each social phenomenon both as a totality and, at the same time, as interconnected with other social phenomena.[15] His approach is encapsulated in the concept of the 'total social phenomenon' and it is utilized in this study as an overarching interpretive framework.

1) Marcel Mauss and the Concept

In the history of anthropological and sociological thought, Marcel Mauss (1872-1950) does not seem to appear as a major figure. When he is introduced, the fact that he was the nephew of Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) is invariably mentioned, as if Mauss' scholarship was also of 'nephew status' compared to his uncle. In fact, he did not publish any book-length studies of his own: his most renowned work, *The Gift*, looks like a monograph according to the English version, but it is a long essay published in the journal *Année Sociologique*. As will be discussed below, he was not interested in formulating a grand theory either. This study, however, has discovered the extent to which he has influenced the subsequent generations of scholars, including Claude Lévi-Strauss and Pierre Bourdieu. Without intending to reassess Marcel Mauss, this study returns to his ideas on several occasions, one of which is his concept of the 'total social phenomenon'.[16]

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[15] It should be noted here that Mauss was not alone in such holistic approach among scholars in his generation.

[16] The following is brief biographical information about Mauss. Marcel Mauss was the most distinguished pupil and collaborator of Durkheim. Mauss assisted in the preparation of a number of Durkheim's works including *The Suicide*. He also helped his uncle to found the

A vague yet powerful concept

The concept of the 'total social phenomenon' or 'total social fact' has been commonly identified as one of Mauss' most important theoretical contributions (e.g. Ramp, 2006). In general, the phrase 'total social fact' seems more popular (e.g. Lévi-Strauss, 1987; Gofman, 1998), perhaps because it could be seen as a conceptual extension of the notion of the 'social fact' which was intensively discussed in the Durkheimian circle. However, this study adopts the phrase 'total social phenomenon' on the basis that Mauss himself uses it in a definitional statement in his work.

Mauss, however, did not provide any systematic theory or clear definition of the concept. Indeed, his discussion of the total social phenomenon is rather fragmentary and vague: what he offers are, in most cases, implicit conceptual orientations that are scattered throughout his works.[17] This shows not so much his inability to construct a well-defined concept as his refusal to construct general theories. That is, the ambiguity of the concept seems to derive from, as Alexander Gofman puts it, his own 'theoretical non-construction' (1998: 65). Indeed, Mauss himself showed more interest in facts than theories by advocating descriptive sciences rather than theoretical sciences. This approach is well captured in his intellectual self-portrait, when he says that: 'As a

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Année Sociologique ('The Sociological Year'), and eventually succeeded him as editor of the journal. After Durkheim's death in 1917, Mauss became the leading figure in French sociology. Mauss became a Sanskrit scholar and a historian of religions at the same time as he became a sociologist, and his main interest throughout his life was in comparative religion or the sociology of religion. In addition to several modern European languages including Russian, Mauss had a good knowledge of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Celtic and Sanskrit. His works are thought to have influenced many eminent social scientists, including Claude Lévi-Strauss, Louis Dumont, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, and E. E. Evans-Pritchard (cf. James & Allen, 1998).

[17] For a detailed list of Mauss' works which entail the concept of the 'total social phenomenon' or its related issue, see Lévi-Strauss (1987: 24-26).

positivist, believing only in facts, I go so far as to maintain that descriptive sciences attain greater certainty than theoretical sciences' (1998: 29). Gofman, in his essay for a centenary tribute to Mauss, argues that despite its obscurity and ambiguity Mauss' concept has 'aroused a great deal of theoretical interest' (1998: 63). He goes on to claim that Mauss' concept is in line with the cases of other key concepts in sociology such as 'alienation' and 'social class' whose incomplete and vague nature is 'one of the most effective stimulants to its subsequent development' (1998: 64-65).

Definitions

One of the clearest definitions of the concept of the 'total social phenomenon' appears at the very beginning of his influential work, *The Gift*[18]. Mauss writes (1969: 1):

> For, in these 'early' societies, social phenomena are not discrete; each phenomenon contains all the threads of which the social fabric is composed. In these *total* social phenomena, as we propose to call them, all kinds of institutions find simultaneous expression: religious, legal, moral, and economic. In addition, the phenomena have their aesthetic aspect and they reveal morphological types (original emphasis).

[18] The French original work, 'Essai sur le don', was first published in *Année Sociologique* in 1923-24. It was later republished in the collection of Mauss' writings, *Sociologie et anthropologie* (1950). Two versions of its English translation are available: earlier version, published by Cohen & West Ltd in 1954, was translated by Ian Cunnison with an Introduction by E. E. Evans-Pritchard; and the other version was published by Routledge in 1990 in a translation by W. D. Halls and with a foreword by Mary Douglas. As far as the concept of the 'total social phenomenon' is concerned, this study has been based on the earlier version, namely, Cunnison's translation.

According to Mauss, social phenomena are not separate from each other and each social phenomenon contains 'all the threads of which the social fabric is composed'. He calls this related and whole feature of society the 'total social phenomenon'. Mauss further mentions that the total social phenomenon involves religious, legal, moral, economic, aesthetic, and other dimensions.

Another definitional statement which is useful for our purpose is found in his 1924 essay, 'Real and Practical Relations between Psychology and Sociology' (Mauss, 1979: 1-33).[19] Towards the end of his essay, Mauss writes (1979: 24-5):

> In reality, in our science, in sociology, rarely or even hardly ever (except where pure literature, pure science are concerted) do we find man divided into faculties. We are always dealing with his body and his mentality as whole, given simultaneously and all at once. Fundamentally body, soul and society are all mixed together here. No longer do special facts of such and such a part of mentality, but facts of a very complex order, the most complex imaginable, concern us. They are what I venture to call phenomena of *totality*, in which not only the group, but also through it all the personalities, all the individuals in their moral, social, mental and above all corporeal or material integrity, take part (original emphasis).

Two points emerge from this quotation. The first is that the concept of the 'phenomenon of totality' is equivalent to that of the total social phenomenon. Just as all social phenomena are interconnected and each social phenomenon contains all the threads of

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[19] This essay was later republished in the collection of Mauss' writings. The collection's original French title, *Sociologie et anthropologie* (1950), was rendered in its English edition as *Sociology and Psychology* (1979). Lévi-Strauss wrote his influential preface to this 1950 French edition and the English translation of the preface was published into a separate book, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss* (Lévi-Strauss, 1987).

which the social fabric is composed, so the phenomenon of totality involves groups of individuals, with each individual possessing social, mental and corporeal integrity. In this regard, his concept of the phenomenon of totality can be regarded as a conceptual parallel to the total social phenomenon.

Second, Mauss stresses social phenomena in their totality because they themselves exist as a whole and not in fragments. By the same token, he contends that 'the triple consideration of the body, the mind and the social environment must go together' (1979: 31). The same argument is found, for example, in his other two essays: one is 'The Physical Effects on the Individual of the Idea of Death Suggested by the Collectivity (1926)' and the other is 'Body Techniques (1935)'. In the former essay, Mauss argues that one has to consider the physical, psychological, and social dimensions in order to describe social phenomena as a whole: 'these facts are also "total" facts of the type I think should be studied. Not even a consideration of the psychical or rather of the psycho-organic is enough here, to describe the complex as a whole. The social also has to be considered' (Mauss, 1979: 53; original emphasis). In 'Body Techniques', Mauss stresses that it is not possible to have a clear idea of all the facts about body techniques such as running and swimming, unless one introduces a triple consideration of physiological, psychological, and sociological aspects. He writes, 'it is the triple viewpoint, that of the "total man", that is needed' (Mauss, 1979: 101; original emphasis).

2) Theoretical Insights

Gofman seems to exaggerate when he identifies the concept of the 'total social phenomenon' with key concepts in sociology such as 'social class' and 'alienation' in terms of later theoretical development and influence. It is so because, in comparison with these concepts, Mauss' concept, in fact, has not witnessed much theoretical development: indeed, it is difficult to identify subsequent scholarly work which employs or develops the concept.[20] However, he seems right when he emphasizes the incomplete and vague nature of those concepts as a stimulus for subsequent scholars' thinking.

Surely it has been the case for this study. Despite, or rather because of, its vagueness and incompleteness, the concept of the total social phenomenon has been a constant source of insight into various issues in approaching the chosen three death rites. Perhaps its strongest merit lies in its emphasis on the relational and inter-connected nature of social phenomena. That is, the concept underlines the need to understand each social phenomenon in close relation to other social phenomena as well as to the social system in which they are set. In this regard, this concept could be credited as a theoretical precursor to Lévi-Strauss' structuralism. Furthermore, the concept stresses that each social phenomenon contains 'all the threads of which the social fabric is composed'. According to Mauss, each social phenomenon is part of total society and yet it contains all the elements of the society. In other words, each social phenomenon is a miniature of the whole society. This idea of totality is another

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[20] From bibliographic search including the First Search, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Database, and JSTOR, this study has found that only a few studies have employed Mauss' concept (e.g. Mestrovic, 1987; Lea, 1992).

powerful aspect of the concept. All in all, the concept of the total social phenomenon spurns a mechanistic and compartmentalized approach and spurs an organic and holistic approach.

This study approaches the three death rites from the perspective of the total social phenomenon. It maintains that bible-copying, funerary practice, and ancestral rites are all deeply interconnected and yet each death ritual contains 'all the threads of which the social fabric is composed'. The perspective of the total social phenomenon also provides a theoretical foundation for employing a combination of theological, historical, sociological, and anthropological interpretation.

3) Rites of Passage

Another theoretical scheme relevant to the present study of the three death rites concerns the concept of 'rites of passage' first introduced by Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957). In his most influential work *Les rites de passage* (*The Rites of Passage*) originally published in 1909, van Gennep observes that virtually all human societies employ ceremonial rites to mark significant transitions in the social status of the individuals. They are performed on such occasions as birth, puberty, marriage, and death and he classifies those rituals into a special category of 'rites of passage' (van Gennep, 1960: 10). Comparing the structure of such rituals in various cultures, van Gennep discovers that rites of passage share similar features which involve a sequence of three phases, viz. separation, transition and incorporation. That is, a rite of passage contains the phase of separation from everyday life (pre-liminal phase), the state of

transition from one status to another (liminal phase), and the process of incorporation into the social order with a new status (post-liminal phase) (van Gennep, 1960: 21). The three phases are not equally marked in all rites of passage, according to van Gennep. The phase of separation is more important in funerary rites, while that of incorporation in marriage. The transitional phase, during which an individual is detached from one status but not yet incorporated into the next, is most conspicuous in initiation rites.

Van Gennep's ideas have attracted much scholarly attention and have been further developed by subsequent anthropologists, among others, by Victor Turner (1969) and Maurice Bloch (1992). Moreover, his ideas have served as a useful conceptual scheme for interpreting funerary rites (Davies, 2002b). For its overarching interpretive framework, however, this study turns to Mauss' concept of the total social phenomenon, a concept that has received relatively little attention from existing studies: by doing so, the study seeks to contribute to the theoretical advancement of Mauss' concept. While recognizing the theoretical merit of van Gennep's ideas, this study does not engage with any further discussions of them. Instead, the three death rites of bible-copying, funerary practice, and ancestral rites are here briefly considered from the perspective of van Gennep's conceptual scheme of rites of passage.

Each of the three death rites can be viewed as corresponding to each of the three phases of rites of passage. That is, the practice of bible-copying, ritual before death, can be understood as a long process of separation from the living while funerary practice, ritual at death, can be considered as that of transition from the dead to ancestor; ancestral rites, ritual after death, can be regarded as a phase of incorporation into ancestral status. This perspective enables us to see an aspect of the ways in which the

three death rites relate to one another, an issue which will be further discussed in Chapter 4 and the Conclusion.

From a different perspective, we could see that each of the three death rites entails a sequence of the three-fold phase. The old people's practice of bible-copying involves the three-fold phase of separation, transition, and incorporation. It is clearly observed, for instance, that the hand-written copy of the bible undergoes a sequence of the three phases. When the practice of bible-copying begins, the ordinary blank book is separated from other ordinary blank books; while the bible is being copied over several years, the book experiences a long process of transition from an ordinary status to a sacred one; after the copying is completed, the hand-written copy of the bible is incorporated into family life with a special meaning being attached. In an ideal context, we observe that the daily practice of bible-copying also entails the three-fold phase: people experience separation from the engagement with daily concerns when they start copying the bible; they undergo a process of transition in terms of the state of mind and body while copying; and, after finishing a session of bible-copying for the day, they come back to their daily routine with a renewed attitude to life.

Similarly, ancestral rites also exhibit the three-fold phase: when family members gather together to perform ancestral ritual, they withdraw from everyday activities; while performing ancestral rites, they have a transitional experience through communion with ancestral spirits and family members; after finishing the ritual, they resume their daily routine with a renewed sense of identity. In the case of funerary rites, whether they involve burial or cremation, the phase of separation is particularly emphasized. Various rituals during the funeral mark the separation of the dead from the living and, when the funeral ends, the dead is incorporated into a group of ancestors.

2. The Confucian-Christian Interplay in Korea

This section introduces a key theoretical theme for the historical and theological analysis of three death rites, that is, the complex and dynamic interplay of Confucian and Christian values in Korea. First we present some basic information about contemporary Korea which is considered to be relevant to the understanding of the issue of death practices, and then provide the historical and social context in which the Confucian-Christian interplay has proceeded in Korea. Finally, we offer some empirical examples of the interplay which would enhance the understanding of the symbolic environment of Christian life, not to mention the understanding of the theme itself.

1) Korea (South) Today

We now begin with basic information about the country, focusing on some facts and data which are relevant to our discussion of death rites. The statistical information in this section is largely based on various documents released by the National Statistical Office during summer 2006 unless stated otherwise. This means that those documents contain the official statistics of the country as of 2005.

Land and population

The physical environment of a country is an important factor for shaping a people's mode of living in general and death customs in particular. For instance, people who live in big countries such as China and Australia have a different sense of space and distance

from those who live in small countries like Singapore and Switzerland. People living in desert countries and in mountainous countries have developed different death customs, much influenced by their different natural environments. During the last century, many countries adopted cremation for their mainstream funerary practice as it was viewed as one of the best ways to tackle the issue of space caused by the constantly increasing burial land, as well as for other reasons (Davies, 2005b).

The Korean peninsula is located in East Asia surrounded by China and Russia on its north borders and Japan towards the south east, with the sea separating the peninsula and the Japanese archipelago. Because of its geographical nature as a peninsula, it has throughout history witnessed numerous invasions from neighboring countries. The peninsula itself is fairly mountainous, with about 70 per cent of the land being made up of mountains. There is no oil production within the territory and the oil consumption of the country completely depends on the import from foreign countries such as the USA and Saudi Arabia. The condition of the soil is relatively fertile and agriculture had been the main industry until the mid-twentieth century. Natural resources, however, are not abundant; hence the development of human resources is something high on the national agenda in modern times. In fact, South Koreans are highly educated, with some 34 per cent of the total population being first degree or higher degree holders (National Statistics Office, 2006b).

The peninsula had maintained the condition of being a united nation for more than ten centuries until it was divided into Communist North Korea and Democratic South Korea in 1945. North Korea is slightly bigger than South Korea in terms of the size of territory but is even more mountainous. While the size of the Korean peninsula is

similar to that of the United Kingdom, Romania, or Ghana, the size of South Korea alone is similar to that of Portugal, Hungary or Jordan.

In 1955 when South Korea began to rebuild the country after the three years' civil war (1950-53), its population was some 22 million. With a population of some 47 million (47,280,000) by November 2005, South Korea was the twenty-fifth largest country in the world in terms of the national population and the third in terms of population density.[21] But, in fact, since the usable land is only some 23 per cent of the total land, practically speaking, South Korea is the most densely populated country in the world. The urban population has dramatically increased during the last decades of the twentieth century and by 2005 some 82 per cent of the population was living in urban areas.[22] In particular, about 48 per cent of the total population (23 million) was living in or near Seoul, a region which is commonly called the *sudokwon* (the metropolitan area of the capital).[23] It is the third most populous metropolitan area in the world after the Tokyo and New York areas. As will be discussed later, the high level of population density and urban residency has significantly affected recent dramatic changes in death practice in South Korea.

During the year 2005, the number of the dead was 245,511, which means, on average, 673 people died daily, while that of births was 438,062, on average 1,200

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[21] The city states such as Singapore are not included in the statistics on the density of the population. By 2005, the most densely populated five countries in the world were Bangladesh (985), Taiwan (632), South Korea (474), the Netherlands (392), and Japan (339). The figure in parentheses is the number of people per square kilometre.

[22] In 1862, Seoul and Pyongyang were the only two cities with a population of more than 20,000 persons (Hyo-Jae Lee, 1971: 17). In contemporary Korea, towns with the population of 50,000 or more are classified as a city although there is one exceptional case, a city with the population of 32,000.

[23] By 2005, the population of the city of Seoul was about 10 million (10,296,802).

babies were born daily. Over the last three decades, however, the annual number of births has significantly decreased from 1 million in 1970 to less than half million in 2005, while that of deaths has been rather steady at the level between 240,000 and 270,000.[24]

Korean economy and technology

A series of national disasters during the twentieth century including the Japanese colonial period (1910-45) and the Korean War (1950-53) resulted in an unprecedented scale of chaos and devastation to both the physical and social landscape of the country. During the colonial period, the Japanese colonial government extorted natural and human resources from Korea: for instance, many young men were forcibly conscripted into Japan for slave labor for the war that Japan was waging, and countless young women were put to the Japanese army as 'comfort women', that is, sexual slaves. Moreover, the country was ravaged by the three years' civil war and almost everything had to be rebuilt from the ashes. South Korea's GNP in 1960 was only $79 per person and the country had to depend on foreign food aid for basic sustenance (Myung-Hee Park *et al.*, 2003: 10). Since the 1960s, however, the South Korean economy has advanced rapidly and it was the world's eleventh largest economy according to its GDP of 2006 – the United Kingdom ranked the sixth.[25]

Along with the economic success, the country has achieved a remarkable technological advancement within the short space of time. South Korea is now among the world's most internet-connected countries: by 2006, it had the fourth most

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[24] For a comparison, 611,960 people died in 2000 in the UK, the annual number of deaths being between 650,000 and 610,000 over the last three decades (Jupp, 2006: 169).

[25] The CIA World Fact Book (2007): www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook.

broadband Internet users among the OECD countries following Denmark, the Netherlands, and Iceland – the United Kingdom ranked the tenth.[26] As will be discussed later in more detail, this economic and technological advancement has resulted in the emergence of new forms of practice surrounding death. One example is that memorial activities through the Internet have increasingly become popular. Cyber ancestral rituals, cyber memorials and cyber letters to the deceased are the most popular forms of such memorial activities. People can upload the photos, video clips and voices of the deceased into the Internet webpage, and can get access to it wherever they go and whenever they want.

Religious population

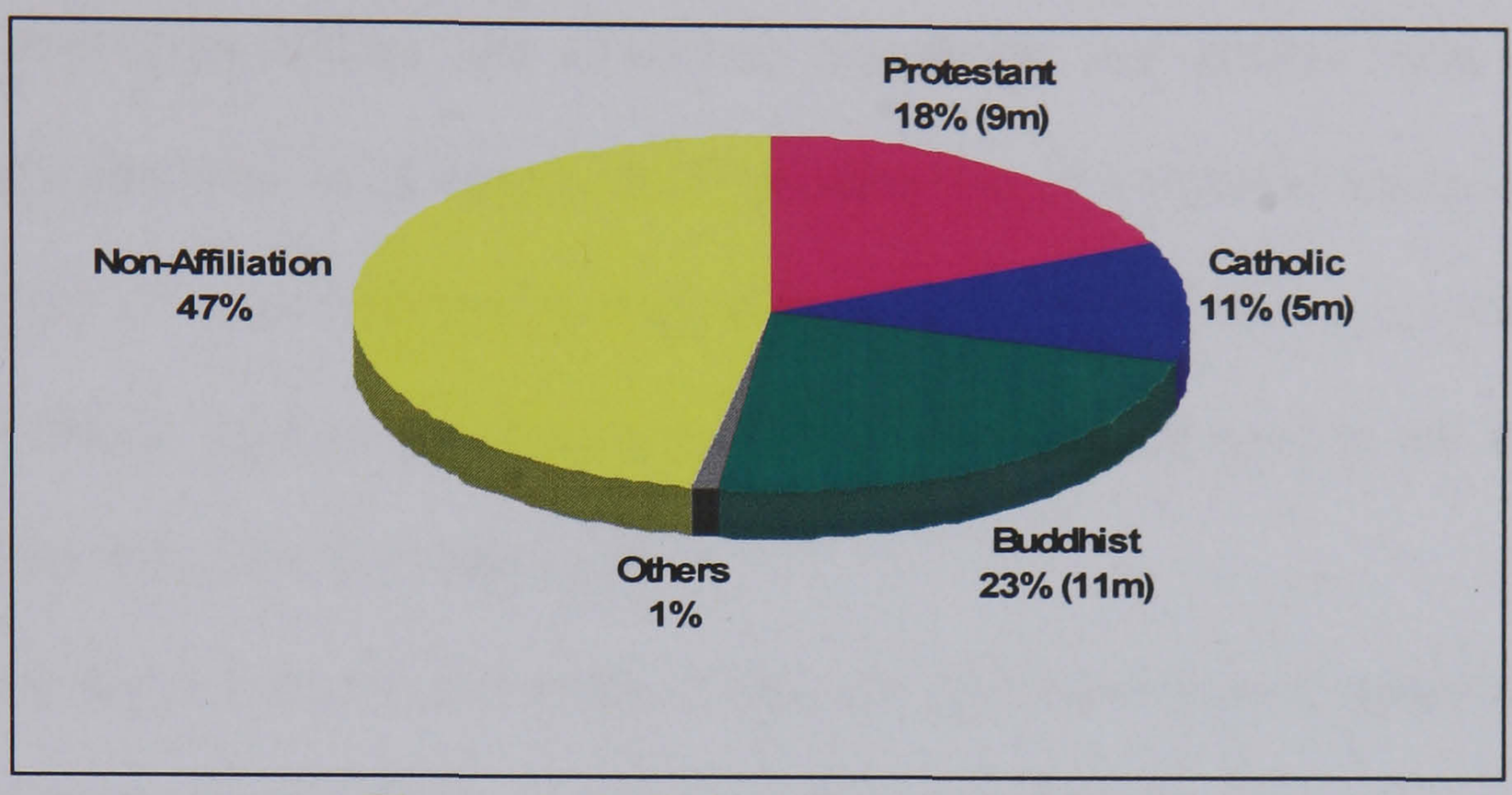
Korea is a mono-ethnic yet multi-religious society. Major influential religious traditions are, to list in order of their existence in the country, Shamanism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity. In contemporary South Korea, while the latter two represent major institutional religions, the first two are influential as the substrata of the society. This is why the Confucian and shamanistic populations appear either negligible or non-existent on the following statistics released by the National Statistical Office, despite their strong influence upon people's life.

As of November 2005, it was surveyed that some 25 million people, 53.1 per cent of the total population, had affiliation to religions while the rest did not have any religious affiliation. The largest religious group was Christianity with some 14 million members, about 29 per cent of the total population. The details of the composition of the religious population are 11 million Buddhists (22.8%), 9 million Protestants (18.3%), 5

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[26] For the OECD broadband statistics to June 2006, visit www.oecd.org/sti/ict/broadband.

million Catholics (10.9%), 130,000 Won Buddhists (0.3%)[27], 100,000 Confucians (0.2%), and 250,000 people practising other religions (0.5%).[28]



<**Figure 2**: Religious Population 2005>

When compared with the 1995 statistics on the religious population, some interesting points can be made in relation to the changing religious landscape in contemporary South Korea. The religious population in 1995 was 50.7 per cent and it has shown a slight increase over the last ten years (an increase of about 2.4 million people). The increase of the religious population is due in part to the increase of the Catholic population: while the Catholic population has shown an increase of about 2.2 million members and the Buddhist population an increase of some 400,000, the

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[27] Won Buddhism is a reformed Buddhism originated in Korea during the early twentieth century.

[28] According to statistics from the Ministry of Education compiled in 1966 (Hyo-Jae Lee, 1971: 73), the religiously committed population in South Korea was some 11.7 per cent of the total population of 29 million. This population can be subdivided into 3.2 per cent Buddhist, 3.1 per cent Protestant, 2.7 per cent Catholic, 2.3 per cent other religions (mainly new religious sects of either Buddhism, Confucianism or a combination of these). Each religious body, however, claimed that the official statistics underestimated its membership. Still we can see here the significant increase of the religious population over the last four decades.

Protestant population has decreased (a decrease of 144,000 members). The decrease of the Protestant population is unprecedented in the history of Korean Christianity. Although there were several reports on the decrease of the 'growth rate' of Protestant membership during the 1990s, the Protestant population had always been on the increase. For the first time in its history, the Protestant Church witnessed the decrease of the actual number of its membership during the decade of 1995 - 2005. Hence the result of the 2005 statistics has been shocking news to Korean society in general and a severe blow to the Protestant Church in particular.

More strikingly, it is said that among many new members of the Catholic Church over the last decade, there have been many from the Protestant Church. This suggests that the social perception of the Protestant Church has turned more negative while that of the Catholic Church has gained a more positive social recognition. As will be discussed later, it has been to some extent influenced by different policies of both Churches on death rituals. That is, while the Catholic Church permits the traditional Confucian form of ancestral ritual, the Protestant Church still adamantly rejects ancestral ritual as idolatry. It seems that the Protestant Church's increasingly conservative approach to general issues as well as to the issue of ancestral ritual has influenced the recent Protestant loss of its membership. From information on contemporary South Korea, we now turn to the issue of the interplay of Confucianism and Christianity, beginning with the historical development of each tradition in Korea.

2) Historical Context of the Confucian-Christian Interplay

Confucian Korea (1392-1910)

It is commonly held that Confucianism was introduced to Korea around the turn of the first century C.E. It soon became influential among the ruling class as a scholarly and political system. Confucian writings were used as textbooks for elite education and Confucian ideas became influential in governmental structure. It is fair to say, however, that Confucian influence was largely confined to the elite class until the Confucian dynasty was established in the late fourteenth century. It was Buddhism, introduced into the country during the fourth century, that became a dominant religious force as the state religion for almost ten centuries before the establishment of the Confucian dynasty.

When the *Joseon* dynasty (1392-1910) adopted Confucianism as its sovereign ideology and state religion, therefore, it was against the background of the deep-seated influence of Buddhism. The new government employed the Neo-Confucian tradition as orthodoxy, especially the Zhu Xi School which advocated strict principles of textual interpretations and had a highly elaborate metaphysical and codified ritual system. Under the new regime, not only were Buddhism and folk religions suppressed but also teachings from other Confucian schools were rejected.

From the outset, the Confucian government endeavored to confucianize the nation by implanting Confucian social values and family rituals. For instance, while rejecting the long-standing practice of Buddhist cremation, the Confucian government promoted Confucian burial by promulgating a new law prohibiting cremation in 1470. Under this law, the established practice of cremation became a crime. However, the transition from

a long-standing Buddhist country to a Confucian nation was a radical undertaking in many respects and it was a long process. Despite such a strong anti-cremation policy, Buddhist cremation was still practised especially among ordinary people until the mid *Joseon* dynasty. According to historical studies, it was by the seventeenth century that Buddhist cremation had almost disappeared and Confucian burial became prevalent in all social classes (Deutchler, 1992; Haboush, 1991).

Historical evidence suggests that Korea had eventually become a normative Confucian society by the eighteenth century: 'by the close of the eighteenth century, Confucian ethics and mores had spread to lower strata of society' (Haboush, 1991: 109). That is why the *Joseon* dynasty of Korea is regarded as the most thoroughly Confucian state in history (Oldstone-Moore, 2003: 19-20, 102; Grayson, 2002: 177). In fact, the dynasty once prided itself on being a more orthodox Confucian nation than China, the homeland of Confucianism (Yao, 2000: 121).

Confucian legacy in contemporary Korea

Although the demise of the *Joseon* dynasty in 1910 meant the collapse of Confucianism as the state ideology and official religion, the once-deeply-embedded Confucian values and customs have continued to influence twentieth century Korea. Indeed, family relationship, social networking, and many other aspects of modern Korean life show the indelible influence of the Confucian tradition and many people identify the country's cultural identity with it. In addition, Confucian institutions and organizations did not totally die out with the collapse of the Confucian dynasty and they have continued to exist in skeleton form. In this regard, modern Korea can still be called as a Confucian nation (Koh, 1996; Yao, 2001; Grayson, 2002: 178-181). Indeed, many Western

anthropologists of the late twentieth century have observed that 'Koreans out-Chinese the Chinese in their devotion to Confucianism' (e.g. Osgood 1951: 332; Peterson 1974: 28; Janelli 1982: 177). The followings are examples of Confucian-influenced aspects of life in contemporary Korea.

First of all, the Korean language has a very sophisticated system of honorific expressions that reveals the strong influence of Confucian values. Depending on the relationships between speakers, there are at least five levels of honorific or honorific-related expressions. While in the English language, for example, people may use 'Good night' to everybody irrespective of relationships, Koreans have to choose one of the five honorific expressions depending on the age, social status, and the degree of intimacy with the person concerned. Confucian emphasis on propriety and seniority in family and social life lies behind the development of honorific expressions in the language.

'Filial duty' (*hyo*) is a core Confucian virtue which denotes the respect and obedience that children should show to their parents. It demands not only that one serve the parents while they are alive, but also that one pay respect to them after they have deceased. In this regard, ancestral ritual becomes an essential part of Confucian life and is still widely practised in modern Korea. The basic spirit of filial duty, however, is not unconditional with blind submission to parental authority, but involves a recognition of and reverence for the source of life. As both idea and practice, it is one of the most deeply embedded Confucian values in family and social life in modern Korea. The virtue of filial duty is derived from the parent-child relationship within the family and it is extended to the virtue of loyalty and propriety in senior-junior relationship in social life at large.

An essential Confucian teaching is self-cultivation through learning. In Confucian Korea, at the heart of Confucian learning was studying core Confucian writings such as the Five Classics and the Four Books.[29] Although the Confucian curriculum is no longer present in the current education system, the Confucian respect and enthusiasm for learning continues in modern Korea: yearning for learning is a prevalent attitude among most Koreans regardless of gender, profession and age. It accounts for the distinctive Korean eagerness for education as exemplified by following some statistical reports. According to data released by the Korean Educational Development Institute in 2002, the majority of secondary school graduates (81%) wanted to pursue higher education and the number enrolling in higher educational institutions totalled over 3.5 million, equivalent to 7.3 per cent of the total population (Jeong-Kyu Lee, 2006). The 2005 national census has shown that some 34 per cent of the total population are first degree or higher degrees holders (National Statistics Office, 2006b). It is also well-known that Korean parents place their children's education as their first priority and are ready to sacrifice their standard of living for the sake of their children's better education.

The strong emphasis upon family relationship, another Confucian element of Korean life, may be related to the fact that most Korean families have kept their genealogical record book (*Jokbo*), the record of a patrilineal lineage succession.[30] The practice of keeping the genealogical record book was popularized during the Confucian

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[29] The titles of the Five Classics are *Book of Poetry*, *Book of History*, *Book of Changes*, *Book of Rites*, and *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The titles of the Four Books are *Analects*, *Book of Mengzi*, *Great Learning*, and *Doctrine of the Mean*. They were key text books for Confucian education and for the civil service examinations in traditional Korea.

[30] When Lévi-Strauss visited South Korea in 1981, it is said that he was much surprised by the well-preserved practice of genealogical record books in Korean families.

dynasty. In the past, the book basically recorded person's birth, death, marriage, and tomb site, with a brief mention of any accomplishments in his life such as success in the civil service examination and the title of rank in the governmental office. The genealogical record book embodies various Confucian social and family values and its continuing popularity in modern Korea shows an aspect of the deep-rooted influence of Confucianism. As a distinctive material which manifests one's family identity, the genealogical book contributes to the maintenance of family solidarity. As it primarily records male succession, it marks the Confucian emphasis on male-centred family tradition. Influenced by the Confucian idea that the transmission of family tradition is through male succession, the preference of sons over daughters has continued, although its degree has much decreased in recent years. At the turn of the twenty-first century, various methods and patterns of keeping the genealogical record have emerged, one of which being the popularity of electronic genealogical record books.

When applying for any kind of job, as elsewhere, a curriculum vitae is required and yet it should be hand-written in South Korea, a very interesting practice when one considers that the country is among the world's most technologically advanced countries and that electronic administration is so widespread. Perhaps it is best explained as an aspect of Confucian influence. That is, requiring a hand-written curriculum vitae shows the importance of good handwriting which is derived from the tradition of Confucian calligraphy. In the Confucian tradition, calligraphy has been employed as a means of self-cultivation and character-building. Although Korean people do not use calligraphy for their everyday writing, they keep the principle of calligraphy in their handwriting. It is a common presumption in the society that one can read one's personality and integrity through one's handwriting. Calligraphy is still

taught in elementary schools and the issue of pupils' handwriting is a particular concern of elementary education.

The final example that shows the continuing influence of Confucianism in modern Korea is the existence of a Confucian-established institution for higher education, *Sungkyunkwan* University (http://www.skku.edu). Perhaps it is the only Confucian-founded University in the world. The literal meaning of '*Sungkyunkwan*' is 'an institution for building a harmonious society of perfected human beings'. Its history traces back to 1398 when the Confucian national academy was established, with its major role being to offer prayers and memorials to Confucius and his disciples, and to promote the study of the Confucian classics. *Sungkyunkwan* was Korea's foremost institution of the highest learning under the *Joseon* dynasty education system. During the 1940s, the old *Sungkyunkwan* was reincorporated as a private western-style university. Its Confucian identity, however, has been kept in the modern University and it is well reflected in its motto: 'Humanity, Righteousness, Propriety, and Wisdom'. These four cardinal Confucian virtues reflect the basic spirit of Confucianism and express humankind's four inherent elements of spirit, action, conscience, and intellect. These four principles are the basis for all Confucian education's goals, the search for truth and the establishment of social justice, and the University employs them as its philosophy of instruction.

Christianity in Korea

Christianity was introduced into the country during the late period of the *Joseon* dynasty, when the country was under the strongest influence of Confucianism. The first Catholic community was established during the 1780s and Protestantism was introduced

a century later. Once introduced, Catholicism at first appealed to a group of isolated Confucian scholars who were eager to seek novel ideas which could be used to reform the rigid Confucianism of the time. The new religion also rapidly spread among lower-class people. The rising popularity of this new Western religion among the gentry and peasantry was not ignored by the ruling elite. Afraid of the potential threat to the very root of existing social structure, the Confucian government reacted by persecuting hundreds of Catholic converts, including a few foreign missionaries and even female converts of the royal family. At the heart of the persecutions was the issue of ancestral ritual: the Catholic Church banned the Confucian ritual as idolatry. It caused a huge social conflict, and Catholicism was perceived as a religion that made people despise their parents and ancestors. A series of governmental persecutions and social discrimination towards early Catholics continued throughout the nineteenth century.

The late nineteenth century was marked by ceaseless challenges from outside powers to open Korea's gates, and she was finally pressured into signing a series of treaties with such Western powers as the United States, Germany and France, as well as with neighboring China, Japan, and Russia. The opening of the country to foreign interests resulted in the freedom of religion, and foreign missionaries poured into Korea during the period from 1884 to 1910. According to a historical study, 575 Protestant missionaries arrived in Korea during the period, among which 419 were Americans (72.9%) in terms of nationality and 276 were Presbyterians (48%) in terms of their denomination (Oak, 2002: 480-497). This historical fact conditioned the later development of Korean Christianity, thereby American influence becoming dominant and the Presbyterian Church becoming the mainstream denomination.

During the twentieth century, the country witnessed many national tragedies and dramatic social changes, notably the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), the Korean War (1950-1953), and rapid urbanization and industrialization in later decades. During these unstable periods, Christianity has emerged from a marginal foreign religion to a major Korean religion with the largest membership. While Christians comprised only about 200,000 in 1920 (1.3 per cent of the total population of 16 million), at the turn of the twenty-first century more than a quarter of South Koreans are Christian – 29 per cent of the total population of 47 million (9 million Protestants and 5 million Catholics) in 2005. Korean Christianity showed an unprecedented level of church growth and one of its resultant examples is that the country has the world's largest Christian congregation: *Yoido Full Gospel* Church in Seoul was established in 1958 and claims to have more than 800,000 registered members. In addition, the country has the largest Presbyterian and Methodist congregations in the world, respectively.[31] Christianity is now a dominant religious force in the society in terms not just of the population but also of social influence.[32]

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[31] *MyungSung* Presbyterian Church in Seoul, found in 1980, is currently the largest Presbyterian congregation in the world and *Kumnan* Methodist Church in Seoul, found in 1957, claims to be the world's largest Methodist congregation.

[32] For a recent sociological study of the Christianization process in Korea during the twentieth century, see Andrew Kim (1996).

3) Examples of the Interplay

In the previous part, we have examined the ways in which Confucianism and Christianity have respectively evolved within Korean society. We now turn to social and cultural phenomena which exhibit the interplay of Confucian and Christian values.

Seating patterns of congregations

One of the Confucian teachings which has been influential in the daily life of all Koreans is that of a clear gender distinction and emphasis on decent manners according to gender. This teaching is encapsulated in a saying that 'boys and girls should not sit together after they have reached the age of seven'. It was strictly observed in traditional Korea and there was a clear physical and social separation of men and women. In the case of women, for instance, outdoor activities were not permitted. They had to stay at home and, even within the house, there was a separate space for women's residency.

This Confucian custom has influenced the building structure of churches and the seating patterns of congregations in the early period of Korean church history. Many church buildings were built in the shape of the letter V, with a women's wing being on one side and a men's wing on the other. The pulpit was placed at the merging point of the two sides: while the preacher could see both male and female congregations, male and female congregations could not see each other during services. Later, church buildings were built on the nave pattern with one side of the church designated as the men's side (usually the left side on entering the church building) and the other side as the women's. And a curtain was commonly hung down in the middle of the nave so that men and women could not see each other (Allen Clark, 1971: 118-119). Although the

curtain was removed in the later period, this physical separation of men and women during worship continued in most churches until the late 1970s and, even until the late 1980s in the case of churches in a more traditional region. Since the 1990s, however, many new church buildings have been built in the theatre pattern and accordingly the visible division of men and women's seats has significantly been weakened (cf. Grayson, 1995b).

Biblical names with Confucian elements

An interesting case of the Confucian-Christian interplay in family life concerns Christians' names. In general terms, in Korea and other East Asian countries, contrary to practice in Western countries, people put their family name first and then their given names. In most cases, Korean names are composed of three characters – family name, generational name and individual name. Let us take my name for example. My name is Park Chang Won. Park is my family name; Chang my generational name; and Won my individual name. The generational name, which might be unfamiliar to Western people, is a name which is shared by the family members in the same generation. For instance, all my paternal male cousins have Chang for their generational name: I have four cousins and their names are Chang Jong, Chang Gyu, Chang Yol, and Chang Hyon. But, in some cases, the generational name could come last depending on the family tradition. This element of the generational name is a unique practice of Korean Confucianism.[33]

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[33] During the *Joseon* dynasty, as the society became more confucianized, the use of the generational name came to be more inclusive. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, for instance, only brothers or first cousins were given the same character designating a generation in their names, but in the seventeenth century many families used the same character as widely

The three components of a person's name exhibit the ways in which Korean people identify a person within society and the family, which is a typical example of Confucian influence. That is, the formation of one's identity is shown in addressing one's name in order of family name, generational name and individual name. Each generation within a family has its own shared name and generational distinction is clearly marked through that generational name. The practice of combining generational and individual names, in most families, applies to sons only. According to Confucian practice, the family line continues through male succession and, for this reason, generational names are needed for sons in order to indicate generational rank within the family. The practice of generational names can be easily recognized when one looks at the genealogical record book in any family. Indeed, the general rule of making Korean male names is closely related with the practice of keeping genealogical records, a visual manifestation of the transmission of family tradition through male succession.

Towards the last decades of the twentieth century, however, the practice of generational and individual names became weaker and people began to break the traditional rule by naming their child or children with their own choice. This reflects changing family structure in modern Korea. As a family with a single child or two children has become a normal size of family, the generational element in family life in general has relatively weakened. On the one hand, for many families with no son, the practice of the generational name has become irrelevant, while on the other, some families continue the practice by using the generational name for daughters.

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as second cousins, and in the nineteenth century the generational name was often shared by the entire lineage (Haboush, 1991: 107).

From the late twentieth century, Christians gradually began to use names from the bible for their children's name. Popular biblical names for boys, for example, are Moses, Samuel, and John. These names are favored as they have good biblical meanings and do not sound foreign to Korean ears when transliterated into Korean. To employ biblical names, however, is most likely to break the traditional practice of combining generational and individual names. One interesting phenomenon has emerged in this regard and it is to combine the generational element and biblical name. An example can be found in my family. My maternal aunt has two sons and a daughter, all of whom were born during the 1980s. Two sons' names are Yu Yosep and Yu Yohan, respectively. Yu is their family name. Yosep is the Korean transliteration of Joseph and Yohan is that of John. 'Yo' ('Jo' in English) functions as their generational name and the rest as their individual names. By applying the rule of the generational name to the 'Yo' part of their given names, my cousins' names combine biblical names and the Confucian tradition of the generational name. It is a concrete example of the exquisite interplay of Confucian and Christian values in Christian family life.

Framed bible passage in calligraphy

Another aspect of the Confucian-Christian interplay is evident in the material culture of family life where it is very common to see many big and small frames of bible passages in the house of Christians. Most commonly used passages for the purpose include Psalm 23, 3 John 2, Job 8: 7, and 1 Chronicles 4: 10. Before the discussion of the issue, those passages are quoted here as follows.

> *Psalm 23* – 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads

me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long'.

This Psalm is one of the most popular bible passages among Korean Christians regardless of age, and many of them could recite it instantly without hesitation. The other famous passage among Korean Christians is 3 John 2:

> Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul.

Based on this passage, Rev. Yong-Gi Cho, the senior pastor of *Youido* Full Gospel Church, has preached his theology of three-fold blessings: the blessing of soul, the blessing of wealth, and the blessing of health. As the church grew to the biggest Christian congregation in the world, the passage also became well-known among Korean Christians.

> *Job 8:7* – 'Though your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great.'

This passage has been particularly favored by people who just opened their business. So, for instance, it is common to see a frame with this passage placed on the wall of the newly-opened shop or office.

> *1 Chronicles 4:10* – 'Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from hurt and harm!" And God granted what he asked.'

While Psalm 23 and 3 John 2 were more popular in the past, this passage from 1 Chronicles, commonly known as the Jabez' prayer, has recently come into vogue.

The biblical origin of the practice of displaying biblical passages can, in a general sense, be found in the Old Testament: for example, 'write the words of God on the doorposts of your house and on your gates' (Deuteronomy 6:9). In Korea and other East Asian countries, however, the practice of hanging framed poems or sentences has long been popular. The poems and sentences are commonly derived from Confucian classical texts and they are invariably written in calligraphy. Christians began to replace Confucian texts with biblical passages and yet calligraphy continued to be employed. Hence frames of biblical passages written in calligraphy have become popular. Calligraphy, an influential Confucian legacy, does not seem to cause any troubles to Korean Christians. Rather Calligraphy seems to serve to evoke the sense of honoring the Word of God more than other forms of ordinary writing. That is, when written in calligraphy, bible passages appear to be more authentic and sacred to most Korean eyes.

Wedding ceremony

Another telling social context that reveals basic cultural values is that of the wedding. It is commonly observed in modern Korea that Christians perform two sets of the wedding ceremony: a Christian service for the major ceremony and then another ritual called

paebek which is derived from the traditional Confucian marriage ceremony.[34] While the former involves a more public aspect of the ceremony as it is performed in front of all the family members and visitors in a big service hall, the latter is more private as it is performed in front of the groom's parents in a room specially prepared for the ritual. While the bride and groom wear western-style costumes for the first service – mostly the bride wears white dress and the groom black tuxedo, they wear traditional marriage costumes for the second ritual.

After the first ceremony is completed, the bride and groom change into the traditional marriage costumes and the newly married couple and the groom's parents enter a specially prepared room for *paebek* ritual. The bride and groom offer their first ceremonial greeting as a married couple to the groom's parents in the presence of close family members. The ceremonial greeting involves traditional deep bow called *jol* and the offering of bride's gift to her parents-in-law. The parents-in-law in return give their new daughter-in-law a gift and a word of blessing. In traditional weddings, this *paebek* ritual was performed at the groom's parents' house after the marriage ceremony and it meant the bride's first formal greetings, as a new family member, to the groom's parents and senior members in the family. While many other elements in traditional weddings have disappeared in the course of time, this *paebek* ritual has continued as an extra ceremony along with the major Christian wedding service. The two disparate rituals have been naturally amalgamated and it has now become a popular format for Christian weddings.

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[34] In the Confucian wedding ceremony, *paebek* refers to the first greetings of the bride to the groom's family members at the groom's house after the wedding ceremony.

3. Embodiment, Exchange, and Material Culture

In the previous section, we have discussed some initial issues for the first form of analysis, historical and theological analysis. The present section serves as an introduction to the second form of analysis, namely, sociological and anthropological interpretation. Three conceptual themes have been selected for interpreting phenomena surrounding death rites, viz. those of embodiment, exchange, and material culture. This section provides a theoretical discussion of each theme to prepare the ground for the interpretation offered in the following chapters.

'Total conceptual phenomenon'

Embodiment, exchange, and material culture can be considered as both social phenomena and analytical concepts. Each of them is a representation of reality as well as an instrument for its analysis. That is to say, they combine, to borrow Davies' phrase, 'basic information and the analysis of information' (2002a: 19). Although each of them has become an increasingly important theoretical idea in recent sociological and anthropological studies, they seldom seem to be discussed together as they will be in this study, where they are combined as a set of theoretical perspectives.

This study has been an interesting process of realizing how useful the three concepts, both individually and in combination, could be in understanding social life in general, and in observing various phenomena surrounding death rituals in particular. When it was first decided to employ these three concepts for this study, however, I had only superficial knowledge of them and they did not appear to be particularly related to each other. In the early stage of research, much effort was made to understand those

concepts on the one hand, and to consider how they could be used for this study on the other. And as research proceeded, their mutual theoretical value became apparent. The three themes which initially seemed like an arbitrary choice then emerged as a new and efficient set of interpretive tools. Moreover, this study has increasingly discovered that they themselves are deeply interconnected whilst also being a self-contained conceptual theme. In this regard, I would propose to call the set of these three theoretical themes a 'total conceptual phenomenon'.

More specifically, this study has discovered the following three points in relation to aspects of the three themes as a 'total conceptual phenomenon'. First, it is the fact that each of the three themes has considerable theoretical merit and analytical potential, perhaps because of their pervasiveness within our social life: indeed, embodiment, exchange, and material culture are universal aspects of social phenomena, regardless of period and culture. In a sense, these phenomena are so widespread that it is easy to take them for granted. For the very same reason, perhaps, it would be difficult to form a theoretical perspective which could satisfactorily explain such ubiquitous social phenomena. Nevertheless our social life deserves a renewed and closer observation, and it particularly applies to the taken-for-granted aspects of embodiment, exchange, and material culture. As far as these three themes are concerned, it appears that there is much more to be done in relation to their theoretical advancement.

The second point which has evolved within the process of this research concerns the organic relationship of embodiment, exchange, and material culture as both social phenomena and analytical tools. Just as these three are internally linked to one another as social phenomena, so they achieve their full analytical potency in tandem with the others. That is to say, as both an analytical tool and a social phenomenon, material

culture cannot be conceived as separate from embodiment. Likewise, exchange activities inherently involve the issues of embodiment as well as material culture. This organic relationship of the three themes as concepts and phenomena will become clearer when we examine each death rite in the following chapters.

Finally, this study has also discovered that, in terms of the historical development of these three ideas in sociological and anthropological studies, one influential tradition of approach to all three concepts can be traced back to Marcel Mauss. Two works have become particularly influential sources for later theoretical developments: one concerns *The Gift* (1923-4) and the other 'Body Techniques' (1935). If Mauss' essay on the gift can be considered as having established a basis of exchange theory, it can also be regarded as a starting point for subsequent studies on the materiality of the gift (Carrier, 1995; Weiner, 1992; Miller, 1993). In her essay entitled 'French Anthropology and Material Culture', Laurence Faure-Rouesnel (2001) stresses that Mauss' essay *The Gift* has been one of the two influential sources of material culture studies in France.[35] Furthermore, Mauss' essay on body techniques involves various issues of embodiment, especially when he discusses the notion of 'the social nature of the *habitus*' (Mauss, 1979: 101). In what follows, each theoretical theme will be introduced and how it is applied to interpret our data will be briefly discussed.

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[35] In her essay, Faure-Rouesnel provides a critical review of three recent books that have been published on material culture in France, and the anthropology of techniques is discussed as the other influential source of material culture studies in France.

1) Embodiment

Embodiment and the social sciences

In his *Death, Ritual and Belief*, Douglas Davies provides a brief description of the notion of embodiment and its general status within scholarship: 'Embodiment has become an increasingly important theoretical idea in recent anthropology and is an attempt at dealing with the wide range of experience, mood, and gesture which provides the context and medium of human life' (Davies, 2002b: 13).

Indeed, while the issue of embodiment has been discussed within the areas of cognitive science and philosophy for decades, it has recently emerged as an important theoretical perspective in anthropological studies. One example is the fact that the term has recently begun to appear in the reference materials of the social sciences. The result of a search for seven major dictionaries and encyclopedias in the area shows that only one of them includes an entry on embodiment: the single-volumed *Encyclopedia of Social Theory* published by Routledge in 2006.[36] Among the seven reference materials, three were anthropology dictionaries and none of them has entries on embodiment. More surprisingly, the twenty-six volumed *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (2001) does not include an entry on embodiment. The very recent

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[36] The titles of other six reference materials are listed here in order of the year of their publication: *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 18 vols (1968) published by Macmillan Company and the Free Press; *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, 4 vols (1992) published by Macmillan Publishing Company; *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*, 4 vols (1996) published by Henry Holt and Company; *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (1996) published by Routledge; *The Dictionary of Anthropology* (1997) published by Blackwell; *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 26 vols (2001) published by Elsevier.

appearance of the term 'embodiment' in reference materials is an index suggesting that the importance of the concept has just become more explicitly recognized within the areas of the social sciences.

This, however, does not mean that there have not been any serious studies on the issue of embodiment within the social sciences. Quite the contrary, a number of contemporary social theorists have paid attention to the issue of body and embodied experience, with major theoretical contribution being made by such theorists as Mary Douglas (1970), Michel Foucault (1979 [1975]), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962 [1945]), Luce Irigaray (1985 [1977]), Jean-François Lyotard (1993 [1974]), and Donna Haraway (1991).

The source of theoretical insight for this study

This study derives its major theoretical insights not from any of the above thinkers but from other sources: notably Marcel Mauss, Pierre Bourdieu, Thomas Csordas, and Douglas Davies. A key factor combining these scholars is their employment of the notion of *habitus*.

The Latin term *habitus* is originally a medical term referring to the external appearance of the body and face in relation to the internal state of health or sickness, and Mauss was the first to apply this medical term to human social life in order to describe the level of the material experience of the body (James & Allen, 1998: 20).[37] The term was further developed by many subsequent scholars and the above three scholars represent its contemporary discussion in relation to the perspective of

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[37] It is noted that the term was also used by Max Weber and Norbert Elias among others (Robbins, 2006: 240).

embodiment. The notion of *habitus* is not only a basic idea to the perspective of embodiment but also a core conceptual impetus for its theoretical development.

Body techniques – habitus – embodiment

In his 1935 essay 'Body Techniques', Mauss discusses 'the ways in which from society to society men know how to use their bodies' (1979: 97).[38] Although Mauss' essay makes no reference to the concept of embodiment, it contains various theoretical and empirical sources which could provide much insight into exploring the concept. One example is his brief discussion of 'the social nature of *habitus*' in relation to the techniques of the body. After talking about differences among societies, nations, and ages about body techniques such as swimming, digging, marching, walking, and running, Mauss introduces the notion of the social nature of *habitus*. By this notion, he underlines aspects of these body habits which 'vary especially between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions' (Mauss, 1979: 101). He then stresses that we should observe 'the techniques and work of collective and individual practical reason rather than, in the ordinary way, merely the soul and its repetitive faculties' (Mauss, 1979: 101).

Pierre Bourdieu expands considerably the meaning of *habitus* and adopts it as one of the key concepts for his theoretical scheme (1977; 1984). For Bourdieu, *habitus* refers to socially acquired and embodied systems of dispositions through which we

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[38] The essay consists of four parts: 1) Mauss first explains the notion of body techniques with various examples including swimming, marching, walking, and running; 2) he provides principles of the classification of body techniques; 3) Mauss offers a biographical list of body techniques that an individual could learn from birth; 4) he then provides general considerations.

perceive, judge, and act (1977: 72).[39] His own explanation of why he chose the term in relation to the idea of 'habit' is helpful to grasp his notion of *habitus* (1993: 86):

> Why did I revive that old word? Because with the notion of *habitus* you can refer to something that is close to what is suggested by the idea of habit, while differing from it in one important respect. The *habitus*, as the word implies, is that which one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions. So the term constantly reminds us that it refers to something historical, linked to individual history, and that it belongs to a genetic mode of thought, as opposed to essentialist modes of thought.

While Mauss introduces a more ordinary and literal sense of *habitus*, Bourdieu offers a much more abstract and figurative elaboration of the notion.

Thomas Csordas has been one of the leading scholars in the theoretical discussion of the perspective of embodiment within the area of anthropological studies (1994; 1997; 2002). In particular, his essay 'Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology', published as a journal article in 1990 and later reprinted as a chapter in his 2002 book, has laid the groundwork for his later studies. In it, Csordas critically examines Bourdieu's theory of embodiment focusing on the notion of *habitus* and employs the notion as a guide for his analysis on the ethnographic cases of religious healing services and glossolalia practice in contemporary North American Christianity.

Another advancement of the perspective of embodiment in terms of both theoretical and empirical aspects has been made by Douglas Davies (2000; 2002a). In

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[39] Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* has been refined both empirically and theoretically in each of his major works. His most sophisticated explication of the concept is found in *Pascalian Meditations* (Bourdieu, 2000: 131-146, 208-237).

his 2000 book, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation*, Davies examines the notion of *habitus* in relation to embodiment and then applies it to Mormon culture. His pioneering study *Anthropology and Theology* (2002a) attempts a conversation between theology and anthropology by employing the concept of embodiment as the major theoretical perspective. In these books, he compared the notion of *habitus* with other two notions (2000: 108-109; 2002a: 41-42): one is that of 'gesture' which was introduced by Tyson, Peacock and Patterson (1988) and the other is that of '*gestus*' which was utilized by Talal Asad's 1988 essay, 'Towards a Genealogy of the Concept of Ritual'. While Tyson, Peacock and Patterson's use of gesture involves a more literal sense of the term, Asad's *gestus*, which is derived from Hugh of St Victor's notion of *gestus*, contains a more complex and expanded meaning of gesture. For Asad, the notion of *gestus* refers to 'the position of an entire structure of thought, feeling and behaviour which must be properly learnt and controlled' (1988: 84). Here, we could see that, as Davies also points out, Asad's *gestus* is very similar to Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* (Davies, 2000: 109). Further, it could be said that the conceptual relationship of gesture and *gestus* is analogous to that of Mauss' *habitus* and Bourdieu's *habitus* in that while gesture and Mauss' *habitus* have more literal meanings, *gestus* and Bourdieu's *habitus* involve conceptual extension.

For this study, Mauss' discussion of body techniques in relation to the notion of *habitus* has been a concrete basis for conceiving ideas relating to the perspective of embodiment. Bourdieu's expanded notion of *habitus* provides a good case of conceptual experiment which could lead to a more imaginative and creative exploration of the perspective of embodiment. Csordas and Davies' empirical applications of the perspective of embodiment to contemporary religious cultures exemplify its theoretical

utility and value. As briefly shown here, the three notions of body techniques, *habitus*, and embodiment summarize a conceptual development of the perspective of embodiment. Furthermore, they form an organic conceptual cycle: that is, they are conceptually inter-related and inter-dependent.

It is, then, through this aspect of embodiment that the present study examines death rituals. In doing so it is worth suggesting that ritual too could be included in the conceptual cycle as it also evokes various aspects of the phenomenon of embodiment and entails both conceptual and practical connections with body techniques, *habitus* and embodiment.

Embodiment and the three death rituals

The entry on embodiment in the *Encyclopedia of Social Theory* (2006) defines the concept as follows: 'the term embodiment refers to the cultural meanings attributed to the body, the ways in which these are inscribed on and through individual bodies' (Potts, 2006: 164). It focuses on the human body, both as a biological and social entity, as the focal venue for the phenomenon of embodiment. With this basic and literal understanding of embodiment in mind, the present study employs a much broader view of the concept, by embracing not just the human body but also material things related to persons as the subject of embodiment phenomena. Further, in this study, embodiment also refers to any concrete and visible form, whether that is the human body, material things, or social phenomena, which manifests abstract and invisible ideas.

Here are some examples of the interpretations of each of the three death rituals in terms of embodiment. The practice of copying the bible is discussed as a harmonious embodiment of Christian and Confucian spiritualities, namely, Christian piety for the

Word of God and Confucian devotion to self-cultivation through learning. The popularisation of cremation during the past ten years against the background of the centuries-old practice of burial is argued as an embodiment of rapidly changing social values in relation to death practice. Finally, the Protestant practice of *Chudoyebe* (Christian memorial service), a Christian alternative to traditional Confucian ancestral ritual, is argued to be an embodiment of Christian and Confucian values, most of all, Christian piety to God and Confucian filial duty to ancestors. From the discussion of embodiment, we now turn to one of the most direct contexts of embodiment, social exchange.

2) Exchange

Human life, from the cradle to the grave, involves a series of incessant encounters with other people. Whenever people meet each other, they exchange something, whether that involves visible or invisible, tangible or intangible, or material or nonmaterial elements. Aristotle contended in his *Ethics* that 'if there were no exchange, there would be no social life' (Godelier, 1999: 36). Indeed, one of the most defining aspects of social life is the pervasiveness of exchange activities, whether they involve a material aspect of exchange or a symbolic aspect. This also holds true for death rituals.

Such exchange is the second theme of this sociological and anthropological analysis of our three-fold data on death rituals: bible-copying, funerary practice, and ancestral ritual. More specifically, this study examines the kinds of exchange that each of the three death rituals involves, the functions of those exchanges, and the significance

of exchange activities in each death ritual. Much insight for analysis is derived from Marcel Mauss' study of gift exchange and its further developments by the later generations of scholars, particularly the work of Maurice Godelier (1999). Although there are a few existing studies of death rituals approached from the perspective of exchange (e.g. Barraud, 1994; Lok, 1991; Baudrillard, 1993), it is still to a great extent an unexplored area of study.

Mauss' study of the gift (1923-24)

The pervasiveness and variety of exchange activities in human life attracted much scholarly attention during the last century and, in more recent years, there has been a significant theoretical advancement in relation to exchange theory (e.g. Willer, 1999; Cook & Rice, 2001; Molm, 2003). Among classical studies of exchange phenomena during the early twentieth century, perhaps Marcel Mauss' *The Gift* (1969 [1923-24]) has been the greatest influence on the development of the contemporary theories of exchange. His work is considered 'the first systematic and comparative study of the widespread custom of gift exchange' (Evans-Pritchard, 1969: ix).

The key question Mauss asks in his study is 'in primitive or archaic types of society what is the principle whereby the gift received has to be repaid? What force is there in the thing given which compels the recipient to make a return?' (Mauss, 1969: 1). In order to answer this question, Mauss analyzes data derived from various societies, ranging from Polynesia, Melanesia, and North-West America to Ancient Rome, the Hindu classical period, and Germanic societies. According to Mauss, gifts are voluntary in theory but, in fact, they are given and repaid under obligation. For him, the core of

gift exchange lies in the three obligations that appear to exist in all societies: to give, to receive and to reciprocate.

During the past decades, inspired by Mauss' gift theory, a number of scholarly works on gift exchange have appeared (e.g. Strathern, 1988; Cheal, 1988; Weiner, 1992; Godbout, 1998; Godelier, 1999). For our analysis, particular attention is given to Maurice Godelier's *The Enigma of the Gift* (1999). In it, Godelier revisits Mauss' classical study and advances the idea of the 'inalienable gift', an idea that serves as a conceptual magnet in this study, attracting other concepts particularly in relation to symbolic aspects of exchange. As will be discussed, 'inalienable' in this context means 'non-exchangeable' (Godelier, 1999: 61).

Godelier's study[40]

Godelier stresses the fact that the idea of the 'inalienable gift' was not first proposed by himself, but by Mauss. According to him, Mauss already distinguished between alienable and inalienable gifts: 'the two categories of objects, those that must or may be given or exchanged, alienable objects, and those that must be neither given nor exchanged because they are inalienable' (Godelier, 1999: 32). Drawing on Mauss' further illustration on two kinds of copper objects among the Kwakiutl, Godelier further confirms that Mauss observed that there are two spheres of goods, alienable and inalienable. In Godelier's own words (1999: 32):

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[40] Maurice Godelier was born in 1934 and first trained in philosophy. According to his own account (Godelier, 1999: 5-7), he has become an anthropologist since the reading of Mauss' *The Gift* (French title: 'Essai sur le don').

> Mauss saw clearly, then, that there are two spheres of wealth, one comprised of alienable goods and the other, of inalienable goods, and that the former opens onto the vast, frantic field of gifts, counter-gifts, and other forms of exchange, while the latter follows the paths of transmission, of anchorage in time.

According to Godelier, however, the aspect of inalienable things in gift exchange touched upon by Mauss has been almost neglected by Lévi-Strauss who claims to be Mauss' faithful successor and other subsequent scholars (1999: 8; 29; 32-36). Criticizing this oversight of existing studies, Godelier asserts that Annette Weiner exceptionally managed to find in Mauss 'what a half-century of commentaries had overlooked' (1999: 33; 59). Inspired by Weiner's studies, particularly her 1992 book *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-while-Giving*, Godelier reassesses the works of Mauss, Lévi-Strauss and others in terms of objects that can not be exchanged, 'things that are sacred' (1999: 108). Godelier then argues that the existing theories of gift exchange are flawed because they consider only exchangeable objects.

Drawing on his own fieldwork among the Baruya of New Guinea, Godelier provides a detailed study of three coexisting categories of objects: viz. sacred things that must be kept, valuable things that can be exchanged as gift, and objects that function as a kind of currency (1999: 108-170). By emphasizing the role of non-exchangeable sacred objects – 'things that can be given but must be kept', he thinks that he has solved a neglected 'enigma of the gift'. Godelier shows that such sacred objects deriving their meaning from birth, death, ancestors, or sacred powers are given yet should be kept at the same time: their ownership is inalienable in the end, while the right of usage may be passed on to others.

Inalienable gift and Korean death rituals

The idea of inalienable gift discussed by Mauss and Godelier is particularly relevant to the interpretation of our data: it helps us approach and analyze the Korean Christian experience of the powerful presence of ancestors and God in daily life. In particular, Christian death rituals exhibit rich dimensions of inalienable exchange in expressing and maintaining their relationship with both God and ancestors. At this juncture, one example would suffice to make the point: the case of bible-copying.

After completing copying the bible, in most cases, old people distribute their own hand-copied bibles to each household of their children. For instance, the first completed hand-copied bible goes to the first son's family; the second to the second son's family, and so forth. By giving their own hand-copied bibles to their children, old people never want the same thing or something equivalent to be returned from their children. They just want those bibles to be cherished and want themselves to be respected by their descendants. The hand-copied bible becomes a family treasure and a spiritual inheritance. It becomes an 'inalienable thing' which serves as an 'anchorage in time', relating children to both their ancestors and God (Godelier, 1999: 32; Davies, 2002a: 195).

3) Material Culture

Material dimension of death rites

The last theme in our sociological and anthropological analysis concerns the material aspect of the death ritual of bible-copying, funerary practice and ancestral rites. As

Godelier aptly puts it, all of man-made material objects are 'a mixture of tangible, intelligible realities, and of mental and cultural concepts, all embodied in matter' (1999: 137). This study attempts to uncover those complex symbolic and social meanings embedded in materials of death rituals. It first asks what kinds of materials are employed for each death ritual and how the list of the materials has changed over generations. The study then poses more interpretive questions on the function of those materials: what is the relationship of those artefacts with the dead or participants in death rituals? Are there any materials which express religious or personal identities? What kind of symbolic and social meanings are embedded in those death materials? Through such questions, this study investigates the materiality of the three death rites and the relationship of their material aspects and symbolic domains.

This study takes seriously two points that the editors of *The Handbook of Material Culture* (2006) stressed in their co-authored introduction: one is that 'materiality is an integral dimension of culture and there are dimensions of social existence that cannot be fully understood without it' (Tilley *et al.*, 2006: 1); the other is that 'things matter and the study of things makes a difference to the way in which we understand the social world and can make a unique and valuable contribution to the broader concerns of the social and historical sciences in general' (Tilley *et al.*, 2006: 6). Applying these general ideas to our more specific cases of death rituals, this study maintains that the examination of the material dimension of each death ritual not only deepens our understanding of death rituals, but also provides further insights into human minds and social relations exposed through those rituals. Although the issue of material culture constitutes one of the three themes for our sociological and anthropological analysis, this study contends that the perspective of material culture alone could form a

comprehensive and integral theoretical category for investigating death rituals in particular and social phenomena in general.

Studies of material culture

Studies of material culture, historically speaking, originated within the disciplines of archaeology and anthropology. While material culture itself has been integral part of archaeological studies, the study of material culture has oscillated between being highlighted and being dismissed in social anthropological studies. The study of artefacts formed the core of anthropological research in the early decades of the disciplinary history.[41] But it was relegated to a peripheral concern when social relations became the primary concern in anthropology through the advent of functionalist and structural-functionalist approaches from the 1920s. The shift of theoretical dominance from functionalism to structuralism and symbolic anthropology since the 1960s has resulted in the re-emergence of an emphasis on material culture in anthropological research.

Material culture studies have undergone a profound transformation during the past twenty years (Tilley *et al.*, 2006: 1). They are no longer a distinctive field of study within archaeology and anthropology alone, and questions of materiality are lively discussed within a wide range of disciplines in the human and social sciences. Studies of material culture gained momentum when the *Journal of Material Culture* was first published in 1996. The recent years saw a growing number of publications devoted to this area and some examples are *The Material Culture Reader* (Buchli, 2002), *Material Culture: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences* (Buchli, 2004), and *The Handbook of Material Culture* (Tilley *et al.*, 2006). In particular, the last one, which aims to provide

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[41] For example, see the five chapters on the 'Arts of Life' in E. B. Tylor's *Anthropology* (1881).

a comprehensive review of the field in a single volume, marks another important momentum in the development of material culture studies. As a recent flood of publications shows, the study of material culture is now 'among the most dynamic and wide-ranging areas of contemporary scholarship' in the human and social sciences (Tilley *et al.*, 2006: 1).

Death and material culture studies

While there is an abundance of literature on material culture, it is, however, relatively rare to find studies of death and death-related issues approached from the perspective of material culture.[42] One recent exception is Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey's *Death, Memory and Material Culture* (2001) which deals with Western experiences through 'the materials that have constituted memories in anticipation of and in the aftermath of death' (2001: 20). Two distinctive aspects of the book concern its focus and method. The focus of the study lies not on the large scale and public forms of memorial and commemoration but more on marginalized memory practices associated with mundane and ordinary deaths that have received comparatively less scholarly attention (2001: 2, 10). In terms of method, it combines ethnographic fieldwork (anthropology) with archival and museum research (cultural history), thereby providing both historical and contemporary data in relation to the issue of death, memory and material culture (2001: 10).

The material culture of death rites *per se* still, however, remains a relatively unexplored area to which this thesis seeks to make a contribution. As will be discussed,

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[42] Recent articles or conference papers on the issue of death and material culture include Pointon (1999), Hockey, Kellaher & Prendergast (2004), Rowlands & Tilley (2006), and Garattini (2007).

a variety of materials are employed in the death rites of bible-copying, funerary practice, and ancestral ritual. Among those materials, in particular, our attention is given to things which exhibit emotional attachment between the living and the dead and express the religious identity of the family. This study observes the ways in which symbolic meanings become associated with specific materials and the ways in which this material-symbolic association passes to the next generation through death rites. By examining symbolic meanings embedded in the material culture of the three death rites, this study reveals a universal human propensity for materialization.

CHAPTER 2

Bible-Copying (Ritual *before* Death)

Because it expresses the inexpressible, because it represents the unrepresentable, the sacred object is the object charged with the strongest symbolic value (Godelier, 1999: 174).

This chapter examines the practice of copying the bible among old people, a practice that is innovatively classified as 'ritual *before* death' in this study. The Korean practice of making hand-written copies of the bible as a movement began during the late 1980s and it has been increasingly popularized among ordinary Christians irrespective of denomination, age, gender and profession. It has become particularly popular among old people from the outset of the movement. Thinking of their imminent death, old people want to do something meaningful for themselves and for their family. Moreover, they wish to leave something spiritual to their children. For many, making hand-written copies of the bible is considered to be one of the best choices and they try to make hand-copied bibles equal in number as to the number of their children. When completed, hand-written bibles become a spiritual inheritance within the family and a religious inspiration to the wider Christian public.

In this chapter, we situate both the movement of copying the bible in general and the old people's practice in particular within a broader context of the cultural and religious interplay of Confucianism and Christianity. It is argued that the practice of copying the bible exemplifies the *harmonious* interplay of Christian and Confucian values: it combines Christian piety for embodying the Word of God and Confucian

devotion to self-cultivation through learning and calligraphy. Through copying the bible, old people are materializing the love for God and the love for their children, which in turn will be memorialized by their descendants. Indeed, completed hand-written bibles by old people become sacred materials to their children, which evoke Christian 'religious piety to God' and Confucian 'filial duty to ancestors'.

The practice of copying the bible is considered as a 'total social phenomenon' in the sense that it contains 'all the threads of which the social fabric is composed' (Mauss, 1969: 1). As Marcel Mauss sees the practice of gift exchange as a total social phenomenon in his influential work *The Gift*, this chapter regards the Korean movement of copying the bible as a total social phenomenon. That is, although the phenomenon of copying the bible is only one feature of Korean society in general and Korean Christianity in particular, it involves all the threads of the social fabric which constitute its total feature: it is a miniature of contemporary Korean Christianity. By extension, it suggests that there are various principles behind this social phenomenon and no single study can claim to be unfolding all the threads of the social fabric interwoven in this phenomenon. This chapter, therefore, shall be focused on exploring some aspects of the phenomenon.[43]

The chapter is divided into three sections, the first being descriptive and the other two being analytical. First, it introduces this unique Korean phenomenon of copying the bible by providing a historical account of the movement in general as well as by describing major aspects of old people's practice in particular. The chapter then offers historical-theological and sociological-anthropological analyses respectively. Drawing

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[43] This is also applied to the analysis of the other two areas of death rites, funerary practice and ancestral rites, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

on historical and theological perspectives, the second section examines the rationale motivating the practice of copying the bible, focusing on the continuing interplay of Confucian and Christian influences. The final section explores this phenomenon in terms of three sociological and anthropological theoretical themes, viz. embodiment, exchange, and material culture.

1. The Practice of Copying the Bible

1) The Bible-Copying Movement

The beginning

The practice of copying the bible, as a popular movement within Korean Christianity, traces its origin to 1987. One Presbyterian church called *Dong-In* Church in Seoul is credited with initiating this movement. In October of the year, the church's pastor (Rev. Sang-Sop Chi) recommended female lay groups to hand-copy the Old Testament book of Proverbs in the two months leading up to 'Bible Sunday'.[44] To everyone's surprise, as many as 42 people completed copying out the text of Proverbs (Chi, 2002: 225). Most participants in this practice claimed that they had qualitatively different 'spiritual experiences' from other religious practices such as reading the bible.[45]

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[44] 'Bible Sunday' is the second Sunday of December, which the Korean Protestant Church keeps annually like many other Protestant churches in the world.

[45] The religious experience of bible-copying is a topic for further research. An initial attempt was made in my paper given at the British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR) annual conference held at the University of Edinburgh in 2007 (Chang-Won Park, 2007b).

In January 1988, Rev. Chi announced to the whole congregation that the church decided to launch a campaign to copy the Old and New Testaments (Chi, 2002: 67). As the year was the twentieth anniversary of the church's establishment as well as the first occasion that the country held the Olympic Games (the 24th Olympics in Seoul), the new campaign of copying the whole bible was considered as a meaningful exercise for celebrating both ecclesiastical and national events. The members of the congregation increasingly participated in the campaign during the year and, in subsequent years, copying the whole bible became a continuing movement among the laity within that church.[46]

The people engaging in the practice of bible-copying had various 'spiritual experiences'. They reported gaining a deeper understanding of the Word of God, a sense of spiritual growth, the improvement of family solidarity especially between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, and even the miraculous cure of chronic illness, not to mention the great sense of achievement (Chi, 2002). Reports of such experiences rapidly spread to nearby churches and, through Christian broadcasting and newspapers, the *Dong-In* Church's campaign of copying the bible became known to many churches across the country. It became a nationwide movement within a short period of time.

Some of the key issues are discussed in the third section of this chapter under the heading of 'religious experience and body techniques'.

[46] At the end of 1988, *Dong-In* Church published a book on copying the bible, which is a collection of participants' stories about their experiences during the period of bible-copying. The book was updated several times with a fourth edition published in 2002 (Chi, 2002).

Later developments

The movement of copying the bible became more systematized and entered an early phase of institutionalization when the 'Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement' was established in 1991. From the beginning, the Centre was a pan-denominational Protestant organization. In 1992, the Centre convened the first conference on the practice of copying the bible, which has become an annual event. Also the Centre started an exhibition of hand-written bibles during the week of 'Bible Sunday'. The exhibition has become a biennial event on the assumption that it usually takes about two years to complete a hand-written copy of the whole bible. Both conferences and exhibitions organized by the Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement have significantly contributed to the popularization of bible-copying practice.

From the earliest stage on, many churches, irrespective of denomination, have actively joined the movement by running various programmes to promote the practice of bible-copying. Moreover, since 1995, the practice has been introduced into prisons across the country and has also become widespread among old-age homes, hospitals and the army. Even Korean Christians living in foreign countries such as the USA, China, and Japan have increasingly participated in this movement. Furthermore, this is not just a Protestant phenomenon, because within the Catholic Church too, copying the bible emerged as a lay movement beginning in 1994 and became increasingly popularized thereafter (Hye-Jung Lee, 1999).

The practice of copying the bible is now prevalent beyond the boundaries of denomination, age, gender, and profession. It is reported that participants numbered over 300,000 by December 2006, a figure that includes Protestant Christians only. The Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement aims at increasing its membership to one

million by 2010. Its main slogan is that 'the practice of copying the bible leads to the spiritual growth of individual believers, and then to the revival of the church where they belong, and ultimately to the Second Reformation' (Gukmin Ilbo, 06 December 2001: 16). The Centre employs the concept of tithe for bible-copying: 'if one devotes a tenth of a day (i.e. 2 hours 24 minutes) to copying the bible, one can complete a hand-written copy of the whole bible in a year'.[47] Moreover, in July 2005, the Centre set up the 'Mission Society for Bible Transcription' which aims to spread the practice of copying the bible into other countries. Its effort has already reached nearby countries such as Japan, Mongolia and Russia, as well as African countries such as South Africa, Swaziland, and Mozambique. Furthermore, the Centre launched its Internet website in March 2006, thereby adding another realm to the activities for promoting the bible-copying movement.[48]

The Korean movement of copying the bible is characterized by three features: it is lay, ecumenical, and missionary. As a lay movement it involves ordinary Christians from all ages and educational backgrounds, and it is successfully ecumenical by transcending the boundaries of all sorts of Protestant denominations. Although there have been various efforts to realize ecumenism within Korean Protestantism, it has been difficult to see any enduring and successful cases. Perhaps partly because of that, the movement of copying the bible has been welcomed and supported by many Protestant church leaders from various denominations as a good example of the ecumenical ethos.

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[47] In Korean Christianity, especially within the Protestant Church, the practice of tithing – contributing 10 per cent or more of one's income to the church – is very common. Hence the concept of tithe is already familiar to most Korean Christians. The Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement applies this familiar concept of tithe to the practice of copying the bible and thereby it extends the concept by involving both money and time.

[48] The Centre's Internet web address is http://btmkorea.hompee.org.

More recently, bible-copying has also become a missionary movement reaching nearby countries and other continents.

Materials employed

Various methods and materials have been employed for copying the bible. From the early stage on, the Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement and other Christian publishers have manufactured various types of 'blank books' specially designed for bible-copying: e.g. blank books respectively for children and adults, the family bible type, and the portable binder type. Such blank books have been increasingly popularized.

Along with these specially manufactured blank books, people also write on ordinary blank books using ordinary pens. Some people copy the whole bible in calligraphy. They use the same brush, ink, and paper as those which were used for traditional calligraphy (see Plate 3). Also, there are people who prefer to copy the bible by typing on a computer keyboard. Very rarely, there are individuals who copy the bible on vellum in order to experience the original process of making the manuscript bible.

2) Copying the Bible among Old People

The heirloom bible

Although bible-copying has been popular among all ages, it has been particularly popular among old people. Looking back on their life and thinking of their imminent death, old people want to do something meaningful for themselves and for their family.

Most of all, they wish to leave to their children something 'nonmaterial', 'spiritual', and 'faith-related' as an heirloom, against the background of increasing capitalistic and consumerist trends in everyday life. The hand-written bible is regarded by many old people as one of the best choices: the practice of copying the bible is favoured by many as the last 'sacred' task before their death.[49]

Since the earliest stage of the campaign, one of the slogans employed by the Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement has been 'let us leave to our children the hand-written bible as a spiritual inheritance.' In fact, one of the various types of blank books the Centre has manufactured has the 'heirloom bible' as its title (see Plate 4). Such attempts of the Centre seem to have appealed to many older Christians and perhaps that is one of the main reasons behind the popularity of copying the bible among old people.

A new ritual practice before death

The practice of copying the bible has now become a new ritual practice among older Christians. It is no exaggeration to say that their daily life consists of continuous prayers for their family. In many cases, their daily routines start from praying at the dawn prayer meeting at the church. The dawn prayer meeting is one of the distinctive aspects of Korean Christianity, particularly of the Protestant Church. Its origin dates back to the 1900s when there was a great evangelical revival and, by the time the Korean War (1950-53) ended, it had become a routine practice of the Protestant Church across the country. The majority of churches hold it every morning at 5am or 5:30am depending on the season. The minister leads a short service lasting about 30 minutes and it consists

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[49] According to the statement of Mr. Jae-Ok Kang, the representative of the Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement, about sixty per cent of the total participants in this practice are old people aged over sixty (Jae-Ok Kang, 2007).

of hymn singing, scriptural reading, brief sermon, and prayer. After the service, the participants may remain as long as they wish for private prayer and it usually lasts about 15-30 minutes. One of the basic ideas behind this dawn prayer practice is to devote the first time of a day to praying in the 'house of God'. In an average Protestant church, about 10 per cent of the church members regularly participate in the dawn prayer meeting (Timothy Lee, 2007: 422-423).

At this dawn prayer meeting, older Christians pray for themselves but mostly they pray for their children and grandchildren. Apart from their own social engagements and various mundane activities for their family such as baby-sitting, their daily routine involves continuous prayer for their descendants through reading the bible and singing hymns. While this used to be a common feature of daily life among older Christians, the practice of copying the bible has recently been added to this repertoire by many as another form of prayer for their family. In this sense, we speak of the practice of copying the bible as a new ritual practice added to old people's daily life.

The old people's practice of copying the bible may, then, be viewed as a death ritual, i.e. ritual practice *before* their death. It is a slow and long-term process which takes at least one year or, more commonly, several years to complete a hand-written copy of the Old and New Testaments. In many cases, however, old people are not content with making the hand-written bible only once and, if possible, they wish to complete as many copies as time allows before they die. In short, many Christian parents are now preparing for their death through copying the bible. For them, making hand-written bibles is a long-term ritual practice in preparation for their death.

The completed hand-written bibles

After completing a hand-written copy of the bible, most old people give it to their children. In many cases, they try to complete as many copies as the number of their children, so as to give a hand-copied bible to each household of their children. For instance, when the first hand-written copy of the whole bible is completed, it goes to the first son's family; when the second is completed, it goes to the second son's family, and so forth (see Case 1 below). In some cases, parts of the completed hand-copied bible are distributed to their children and grandchildren. For example, the hand-copied Gospel of Matthew goes to the first son; of Mark to the first daughter; of Luke to the second son; of John to the first grandson, and so forth.

By giving their own hand-written bibles to their children and grandchildren, old people want themselves to be remembered by their descendants. They want their hand-written bibles to be cherished by their children as a symbol of their prayer and love for them. A well-known prayer of the New Testament comes to be embedded within the process of making the hand-written bible and becomes their own wish for their family, that – 'all may go well with their children, and that they may be in good health, just as it is well with their soul' (3 John, 2). Furthermore, old people wish their descendants to continue Christian family tradition in the multi-religious context of South Korea.

For children, the hand-copied bible becomes an invaluable family treasure and a spiritual inheritance kept as the most precious heirloom. For them, it is a testimony to the will of their parents to strengthen both family solidarity and faith succession. When they open it, what they see is not just the Word of God, but the Word of God inscribed by their father or mother's whole body and spirit. It is a moment when a potentially abstract God becomes the 'God of my father' or the 'God of my mother'. The hand-

written bible becomes a sacred material which invokes both 'religious piety to God' and 'filial respect to ancestors'.

3) Case Studies

Case 1: Mrs. Choi

Numerous extraordinary cases of bible-copying have been reported so far (e.g. Chi, 2002). Particularly remarkable is the case of Mrs. Ui-Sook Choi. Mrs. Choi, ninety years old, has completed twelve hand-written copies of the whole bible over the last twenty five years starting in 1980. She copied not just the Korean bible, but also the Japanese and English bibles: that is, she completed four sets of hand-written bibles in three languages.

She has been living in *Andong* city (south eastern part of the country) with her husband (Rev. Dr. Kwang-Hyun Kim), a retired pastor of *Andong* Presbyterian Church which is the oldest Protestant church in the region and also my home church. The couple have five children, three sons and two daughters. Mrs. Choi began copying the bible in 1980, well before bible-copying became a popular movement. Because she studied in Japan for her first degree during the Japanese colonial period, she did not find it so difficult to copy the Japanese bible – the most difficult for her was copying the English bible.[50] In general, she is said to copy the bible for eight to ten hours a day. It took her one and half years copying the Korean and Japanese bibles, respectively, and

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[50] Mrs. Choi studied at Seiwa College (聖和大學) in Japan.

two years for the English bible. This means that it took her five or six years to complete one set of hand-written bibles in three languages.

After completing the first set of the bibles in three languages, she gave it to her first son, who is now a senior pastor of a renowned Presbyterian church in Seoul. When giving it to her son, her words to him were, 'My son, minister to your congregation according to the Word of God.' She gave the second set of hand-written bibles to her second son. The congregation of *Andong* Presbyterian Church, to which she belongs then asked her to make yet another set of bibles for her 'spiritual children' as well. So she completed the third set and dedicated it to the church. In August 2005, she completed the fourth set and it was given to her third son, who is also a pastor in the *Andong* region. Her next task is to complete another set of hand-written bibles with a view to giving it to her two daughters. Mrs. Choi's case was first publicized in 2004, and now it is well-known within Korean Christianity (For some photographs of Mrs. Choi and her work, see Plates 6-11).

Case 2: Mrs. Cho

Mrs. Hyo-Soon Cho, eighty-one years old, is a member of the congregation of *Dong-In* Presbyterian Church which initiated the bible-copying movement during the late 1980s. Mrs. Cho began to copy the bible in 1988 when the church's pastor invited the congregation to participate in the practice of copying the whole bible. When hearing the announcement for the first time, she felt that the practice would have nothing to do with her since she had not even completed elementary education and did not have confidence even for reading the whole bible. However, while reading the bible one day, the following passage caught her attention: 'I can do all things through him who strengthens

me' (Philippians 4:13). After reading this passage, she gained the courage to participate in the practice of copying the whole bible, which was a great challenge to her in many respects. Most of all, she believed that the practice could be one way to please the Lord since she thought that she had done little to please the Lord as a Christian throughout her life.

But copying the bible was not at all easy for her. She had to sit at the desk for a couple of hours everyday, which was physically and mentally so demanding a task for her in old age. On many occasions, Mrs. Cho thought of giving up copying as she felt immense pain in her shoulder and an increasing deterioration of her eye sight. When in difficulty, she regained strength and will-power by remembering bible passages such as Isaiah 41:10: 'Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand'. Surprisingly, she experienced that the shoulder pain and the eye problem disappeared as she continued the copying practice.

While Mrs. Cho copied the Old Testament stories in which parents bless their children, she stopped copying for a while and blessed her own children in her prayer. She intends to copy the bible as many times as possible while she has energy to do so. Her practice of copying the bible has exerted a very strong influence on her children and grandchildren, particularly her grandson, who was preparing his university entrance examination, and was prompted to study harder when thinking of his grandmother's prayer for him through bible-copying practice. Mrs. Cho recommends the practice of copying the bible to many people by saying that it is good for both our spiritual growth and the prevention of dementia.

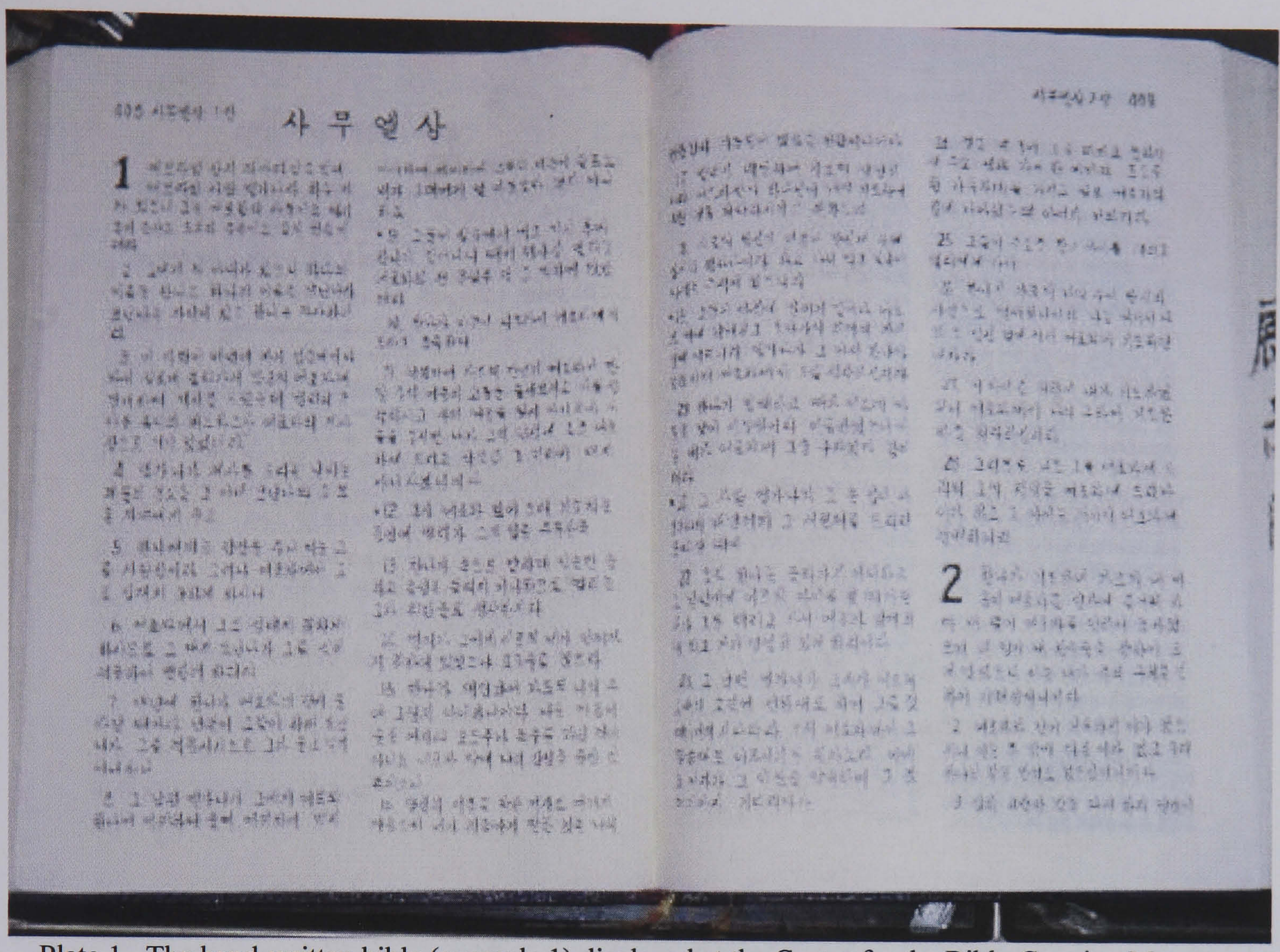


Plate 1. The hand-written bible (example 1) displayed at the Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement

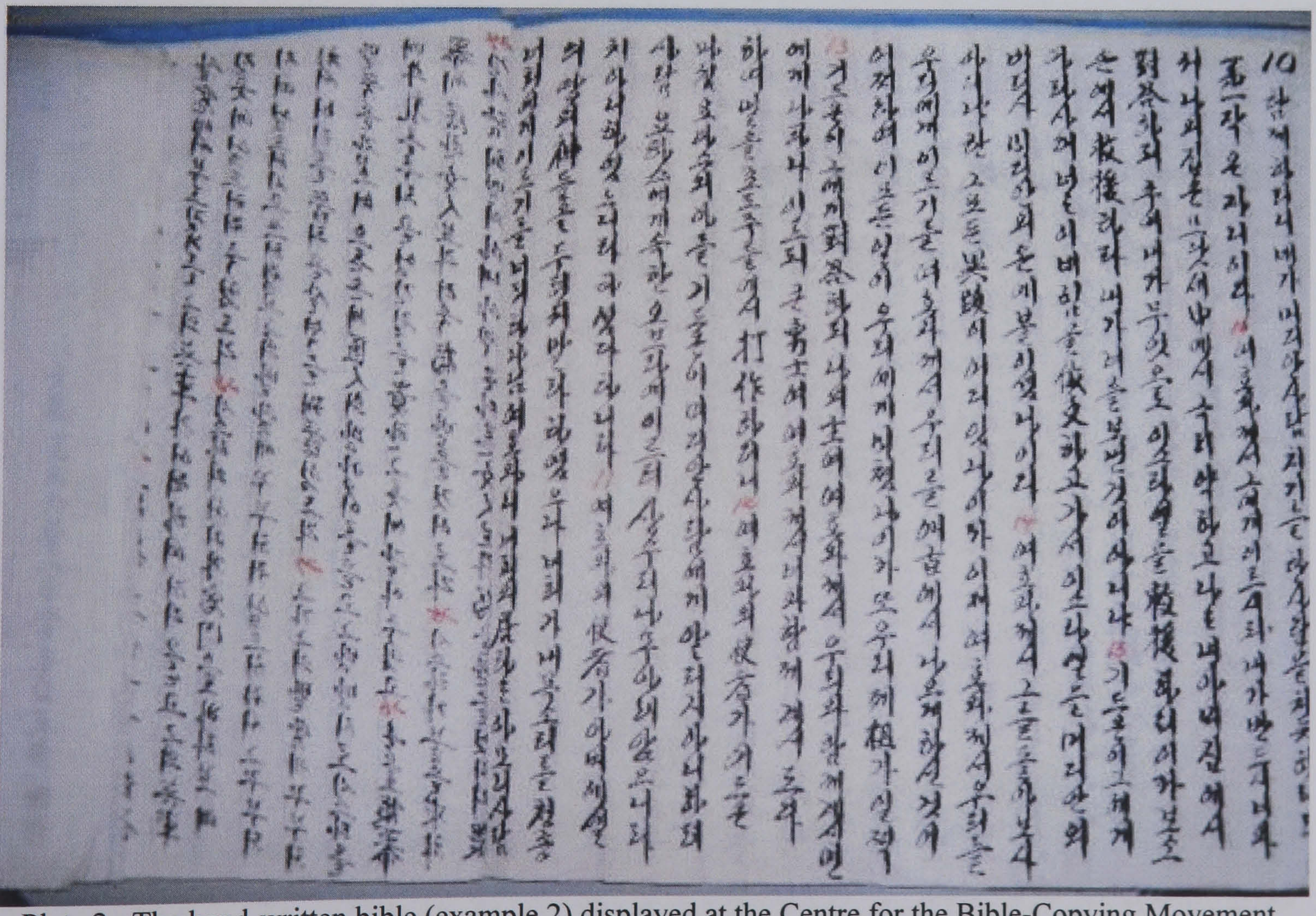


Plate 2. The hand-written bible (example 2) displayed at the Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement

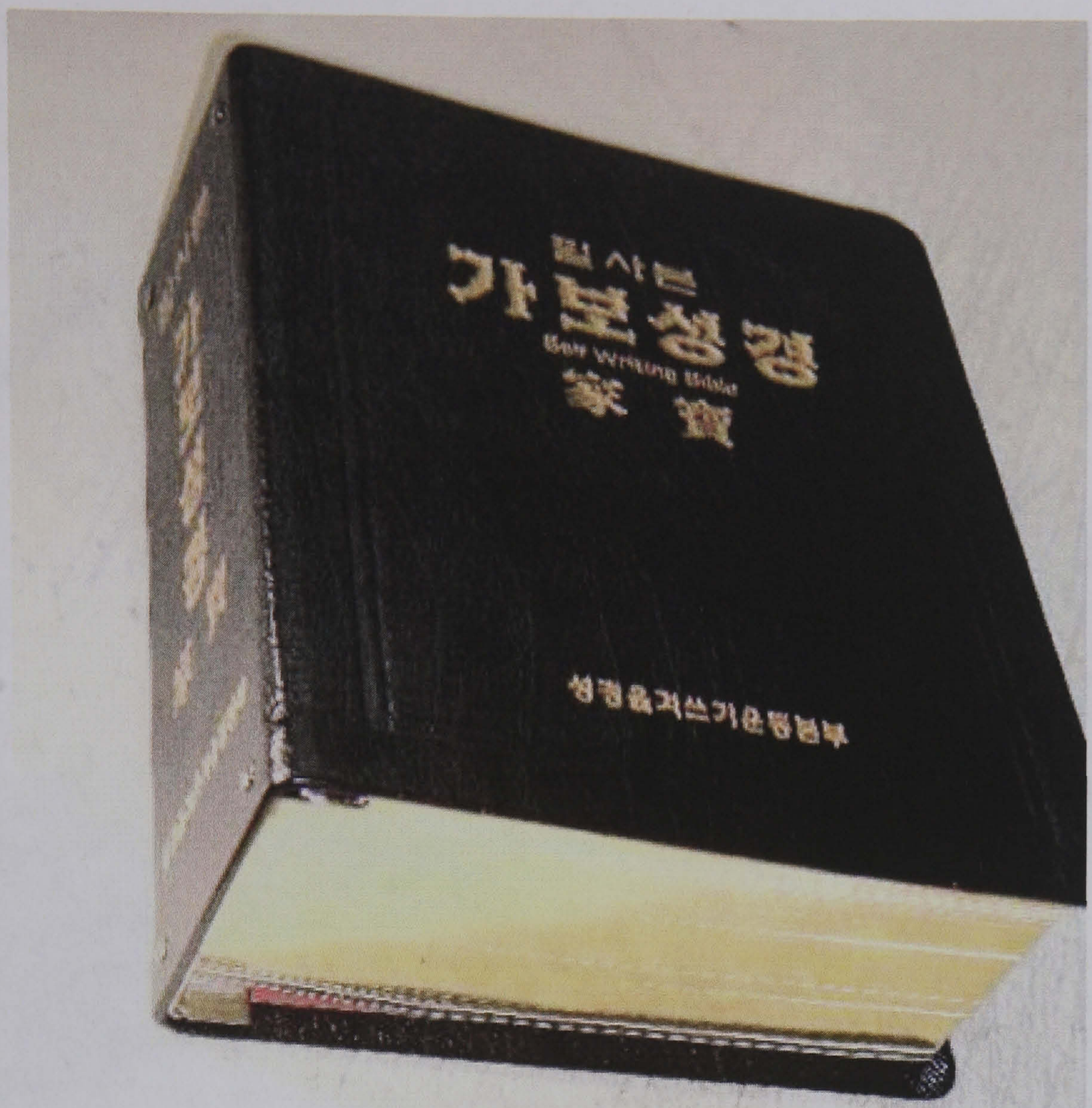


Plate 3. The blank book specially designed for copying the bible by the Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement. Its title is the 'Heirloom Bible'.

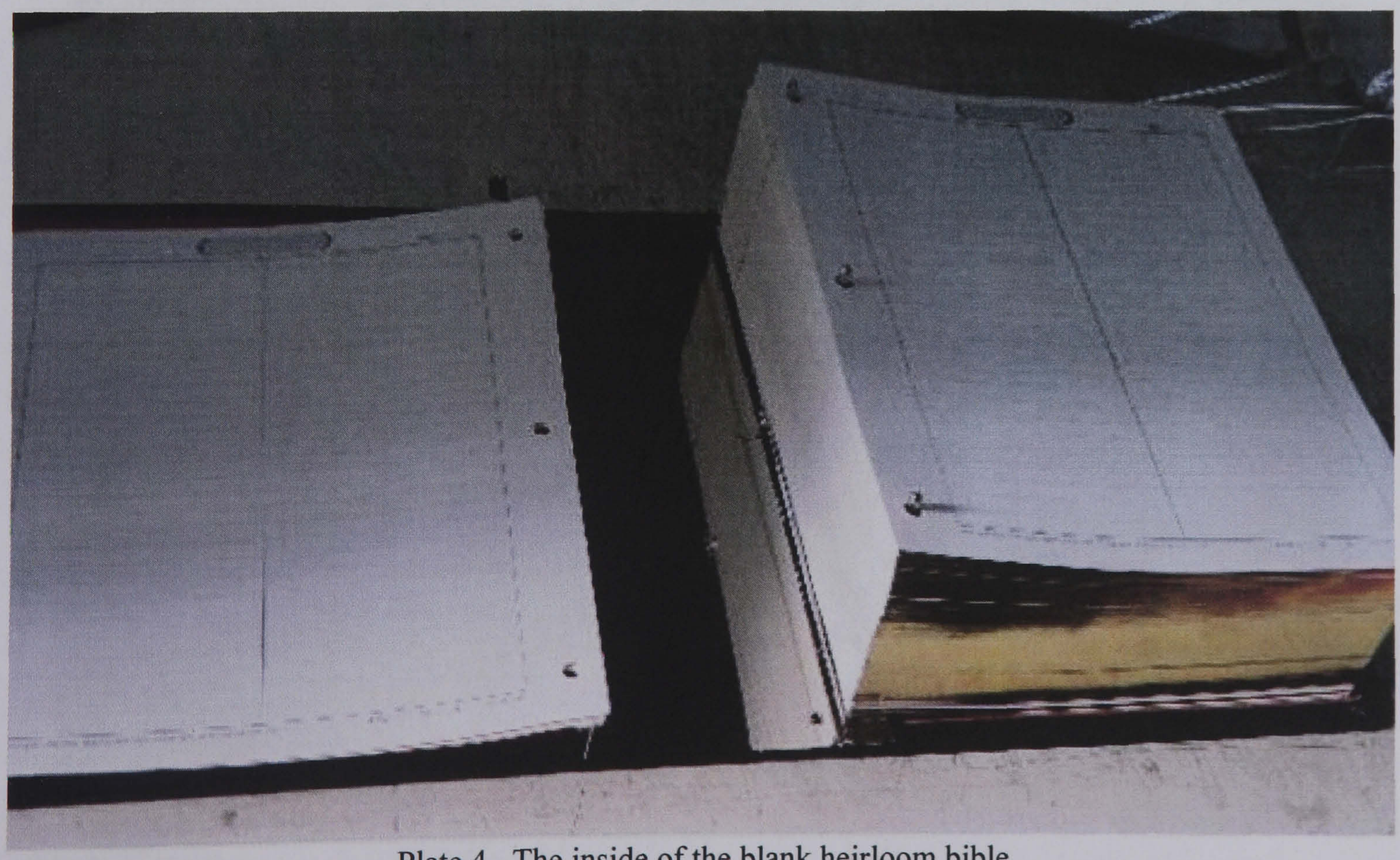


Plate 4. The inside of the blank heirloom bible.



Plate 5. Mrs. Choi copying the bible at her place in Andong



Plate 6. One set of hand-written bibles in three languages dedicated to *Andong* Presbyterian Church. From the left side, they are the Japanese bible in 7 books, the English bible in 7 books, and the Korean bible in 5 books.

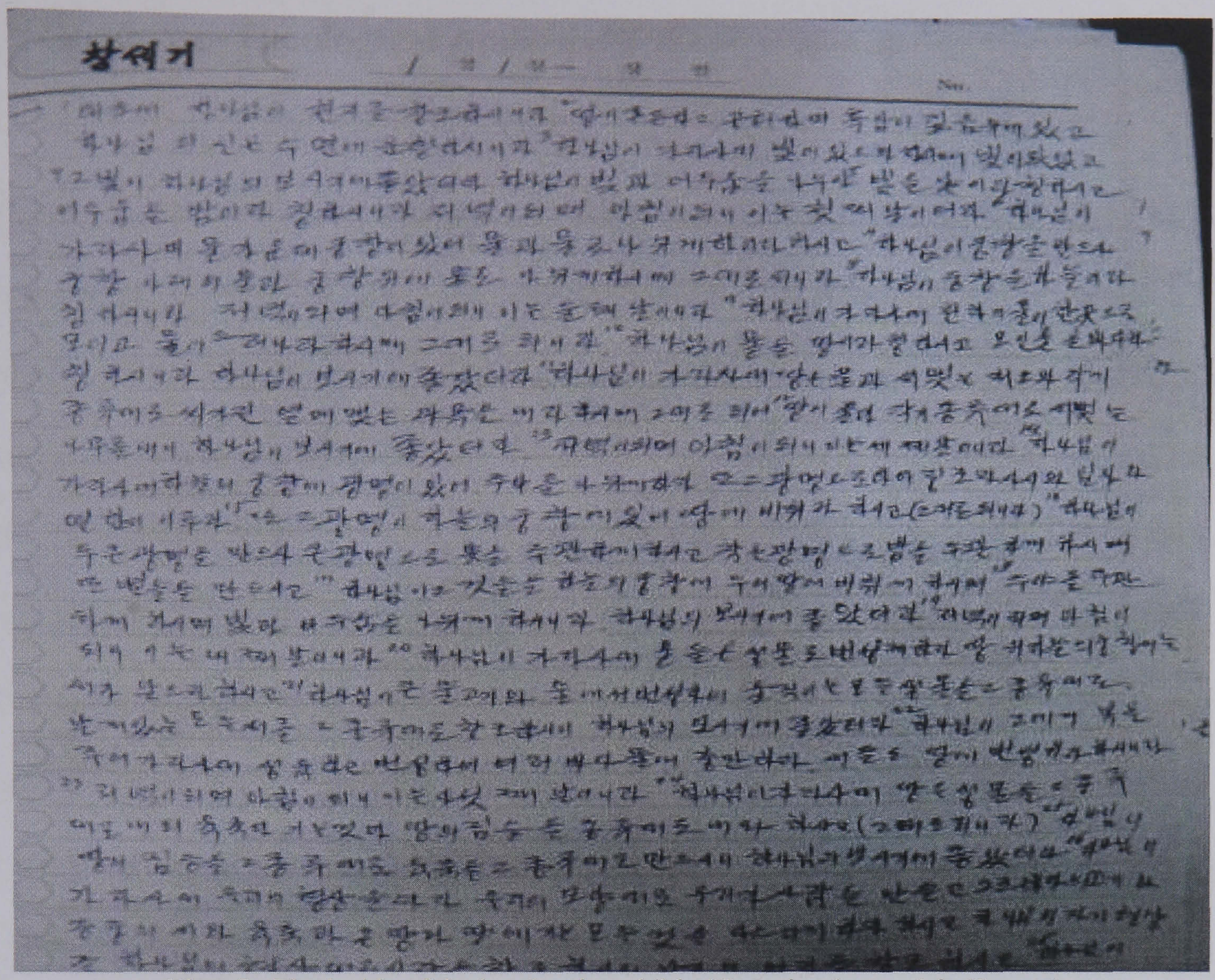


Plate 7. The inside of the hand-written bible (Genesis, chapter 1 in Korean)

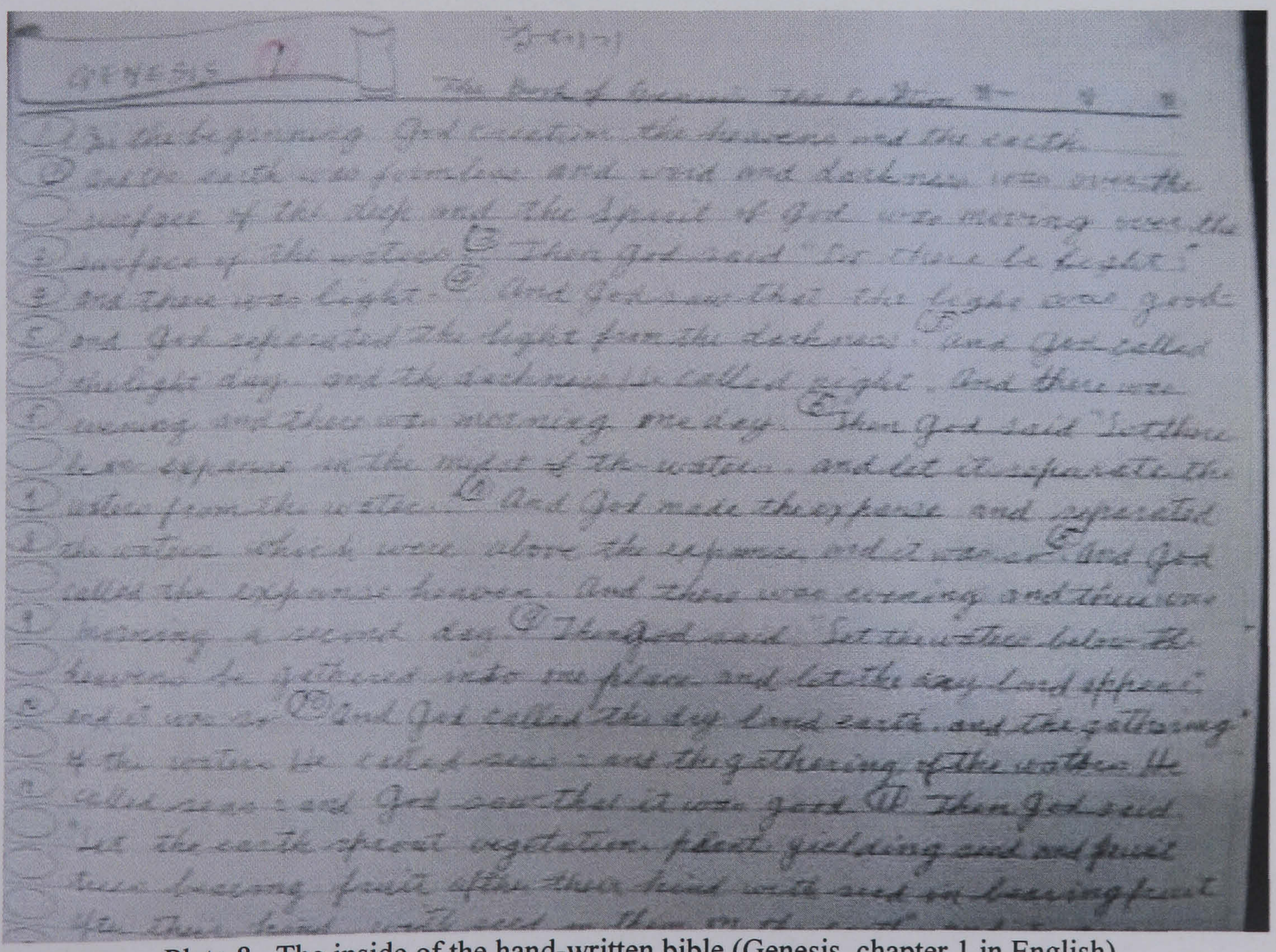


Plate 8. The inside of the hand-written bible (Genesis, chapter 1 in English)

2. A Historical-Theological Analysis of Bible-Copying

This section provides a historical and theological analysis of the practice of copying the bible among Korean Christians in general and old people's practice in particular, focusing particularly on the rationale which motivates the practice. It first examines some unique aspects of the Korean movement of bible-copying through comparison with other historical and contemporary cases of copying sacred texts. It then considers some influential factors behind the Korean practice by situating it in a larger cultural and religious context. This allows us to discern the cultural and religious factors that make the practice of copying the whole bible acceptable and even appealing to Korean Christians. Further it shows how the movement may be interpreted as a harmonious interplay of Christian and Confucian values.

1) Comparison with Other Historical and Contemporary Cases

Historical and contemporary cases

Copying the bible is not unique to contemporary Korean Christianity. As a form of spiritual practice, such copying of sacred texts is found in the history of Christianity and other religions, as well as within Korean religious history. One of the best examples in the Western Christian tradition is the case of Thomas à Kempis (c.1380-1471), who is said to have copied the whole bible four times during his monastic life of more than seven decades. In traditional East Asia, sutra copying was popular among the Buddhist population and there was even a time when 'blood writing' involving the mixing of

one's blood with ink was widespread (Kieschnick, 2000). Within Korean history as well, the practice of copying Buddhist scriptures was popularized especially when Korea was under strong Buddhist influence (Hye-Jung Lee, 1999).

In the contemporary period, too, there has been a variety of projects for copying the bible in the world. In 2003, for example, the Swiss Bible Society carried out a project to produce a hand-written bible through which more than 2,000 people from various linguistic backgrounds participated to complete a six-volume work. Earlier than this, similar projects were carried out by the Bible Societies in Asian countries such as Indonesia (2000), Hong Kong (2001), and Taiwan (2001). Likewise, the Bible Societies in Ireland commenced in May 2006 a project to complete a hand-written English Bible through the participation of the Christian public.[51] Moreover, at an Adventist Youth Conference in Chile in 2002, more than 6,000 youngsters combined to write down the whole bible in 16 minutes. Furthermore, the Saint John's Bible Project, commissioned by a Benedictine Monastery in the USA, begun in 1998 and scheduled to be completed in 2008, is well-known as the first hand-written and illuminated bible since the invention of the printing press.[52]

The distinctive aspects of the Korean movement

Compared to both historical and contemporary cases, however, the Korean movement of copying the bible is unique in many ways. Most of all, it is neither a programmed project organized by the Bible Society, nor a one-off cooperative project to produce a hand-written bible through the participation of the Christian public. Rather it is a long-

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[51] For more information, visit the website of the Bible society at www.biblesociety.ie.

[52] www.saintjohnsbible.org.

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term and, in many cases, has become a lifelong practice among ordinary individual Christians. As in Mrs. Choi and Cho's cases, most participants attempt to copy the whole bible not just once but as many times as possible. More remarkable is its increasing popularization at the turn of the twenty-first century, when it has never been easier to obtain a printed bible. What are the motivating factors for the popularity of such an arduous and time-consuming practice within Korean Christianity in this internet age?

Various influential factors

One key factor behind the popularity of copying Buddhist scriptures in traditional East Asia was the widespread doctrine of merit.[53] According to Buddhist belief, one can acquire merit from copying Buddhist scriptures, and such merit can be transferred to one's intimates, in most cases, one's dead parents, to improve their lot in the other world (Kieschnick, 2000: 181). That is, the Buddhist doctrine of merit-making and merit-transfer provided motivations for the popular practice of copying Buddhist scriptures. In Christianity, however, there are no doctrinal or scriptural sources referring to the practice of copying the bible. In other words, the Korean Christian practice is not motivated by any scriptural or doctrinal sources.

As mentioned earlier, Christians who engaged in the practice of copying the bible had various unusual experiences. Apart from gaining a deeper understanding of the bible and a sense of spiritual growth, they reported gaining practical benefits such as the improvement of family relationships and even the miraculous cure of chronic illness. Such reports of spiritual and practical benefits could be one of the influential factors for

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[53] For more on the Buddhist doctrine of merit, see Obeyesekere (1968) and Tambiah (1968).

the popularity of the practice. Also competition among the members of the congregation might affect its popularization. Even so, benefit and competition alone cannot do justice to the increasing popularity of this time-consuming and arduous practice.

To be sure, one important motivation for the Korean practice of copying the bible is Christian piety: that is, the love for God and the love for the Word of God (the bible). This is also what most participants mention as the main reason for their practice (cf. Chi, 2002). But Christian piety alone does not seem to explain this unique Korean phenomenon either. If that is a major motivating factor, copying the bible could have been popularized in many other Christian countries past and present. Therefore, there must be a distinctive cultural context that made the practice not only acceptable but also appealing to Korean Christians. Certainly, a strong motive for old people's participation in the practice, as mentioned earlier, has been their wish to leave hand-copied bibles to their children as a spiritual inheritance but this, too, also demands a socio-cultural explanation. The remainder of this section attempts to address this issue by focusing on two aspects of Korean culture: one is the distinctive Korean attitude towards the bible and the other the unique Korean cultural context of the continuing interplay of Christianity and Confucianism.

2) The Korean Attitude towards the Bible

The Korean movement of copying the bible reveals a distinctive Korean attitude towards the bible, which has been influenced by both a cumulative tradition of the reverence for sacred texts and a distinctive characteristic of Korean religious mentality.

In order to explain this, which will partly account for the popularity of the practice of copying the bible, some account of the history of religions in Korea is needed.

History of religions in Korea

The history of religions in Korea, which to some extent parallels the political history of Korea, can be conveniently divided into four periods in terms of religious dominance: i) the era of the dominance of Shamanism – a tradition which claims to be the primal religion of Korea – up to the fourth century C.E.; ii) the era of Buddhist dominance between the fourth and fourteenth centuries; iii) the era of Confucian dominance between the fourteenth and the early twentieth centuries; iv) the post-Confucian era since the early twentieth century in which Christian influence is most dominant (cf. Grayson, 2002: 230-231). Contemporary South Korea is a multi-religious society in which Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shamanism co-exist, the first two being influential as major institutional religions and the last two being influential in the substrata of the society.

Of these religious traditions, historically speaking, Buddhism and Confucianism have been particularly influential in shaping the Korean attitudes toward sacred texts. As Buddhism and Confucianism have kept their own highly-developed systems of sacred texts and they have existed for long time in Korea, their sacred or religious texts have played a significant role in Korean religious and intellectual life. More importantly, the strong influence of the two religions has shaped the way Korean people approach religious texts. In other words, even before Christianity was introduced into the Korean peninsula during the late eighteenth century, there had already been

cumulative traditions involving enthusiastic attitude toward sacred texts, and those traditions have influenced the Christian attitude toward the bible.

The mentality of 'ad fontes'

The history of religions in Korea reveals a very distinctive religious mentality of the Korean people. Through the periods of Shamanist, Buddhist, and Confucian dominance, the Korean people have shown a very strong tendency to retrieve the original form of the religion. I propose to call this cultural tendency a 'mentality of *ad fontes*.' The term *ad fontes* means 'back to the sources' and this study has borrowed the phrase from Renaissance and Reformation scholarship. The *ad fontes* motif summarizes the key literary and cultural method of Renaissance humanism. It influenced the Reformation attitude to the bible, which can be encapsulated in one of the most famous Reformation slogans, *sola scriptura* – 'by Scripture alone' (McGrath, 1999: 44-45, 145-168). This study uses the *ad fontes* idiom to typify the collective mentality of the Korean people which is most concerned with the original form of religion and its realization on the Korean peninsula.[54]

If we accept the above depiction of the *ad fontes* mentality as characterizing the religious mentality of the Korean people, we can see how such a mentality has influenced various distinctive phenomena in the religious history of Korea. For instance, Confucianism in Korea for the last six centuries meant only the original Confucianism of Confucius and the Neo-Confucian school of Zhu Xi, to the exclusion of all other forms of early Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism. While various disparate

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[54] In his book *Korea: A Religious History*, James Grayson also discusses the religious mentality of the Korean people by characterizing it as the 'conservative nature of Korean religious experience' (2002: 231).

Confucian schools coexisted in China where Confucianism originated, the Zhu Xi School was the only orthodoxy in Confucian Korea. More importantly, the Confucian dynasty endeavored to realize the Confucian ideals in accordance with the Zhu Xi School's teaching, and its efforts over centuries eventually resulted in the emergence of the most Confucianized state in East Asia. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the dynasty once prided itself on being a more orthodox Confucian nation than China (Yao, 2000: 121).

Similarly, the mentality of *ad fontes* is also evident in the tendency of Korean Protestants not only to preserve the doctrines and practices of Christianity as received from missionaries more than a century ago, but also in their zeal to realize the original form of Christianity on the Korean peninsula. In this case, the original form of Christianity involves Christian doctrines and practices that are described in the New Testament and further articulated by Calvinist Reformed theology. One example can be drawn from the influential conservative theologian Rev. Dr. Hyung-Yong Park (1897-1978). In the introduction to his best known *Dogmatics*, he states that the purpose of his writing is to pass Calvinist Reformed orthodox theology that western missionaries introduced to the country eighty years or so ago to the next generation without any addition of his own opinion (Hyung-Yong Park, 1973: 1).

The Korean attitudes toward the bible

As the Humanist *ad fontes* method influenced the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*, so did the Korean mentality of *ad fontes* influence the extraordinary enthusiasm for sacred texts. During the period of Buddhist dominance, the Korean mentality of *ad fontes* resulted in inventing the first printing technique in the world in

the eighth century. Furthermore, it spawned the national undertaking of printing a large collection of Buddhist scriptures between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.[55] During the Confucian *Joseon* dynasty (1392-1910), this *ad fontes* mentality was even more consolidated by the strong Confucian influence which inherently emphasized the reverence for sacred texts.

Given such a cumulative tradition of enthusiastic attitudes toward sacred texts, it is no wonder that Korean Christians have such an unprecedentedly strong enthusiasm for the bible. From the outset of the history of Christianity in Korea, there were various extraordinary stories of Korean people's devotion to the bible. For instance, it is well-known that the first Protestant missionary entered the Korean peninsula carrying the Korean bible (the Gospel of Mark) already translated by a Korean convert (Soo-Jung Lee). Moreover, the Korean Bible Society has distributed the largest number of bibles in the world (cf. www.bskorea.or.kr). Furthermore, Korean churches, regardless of denomination, have successfully run various bible-related activities such as bible-reading programmes, bible-studying courses, bible-reciting contests, and more recently even the bible-copying movement.

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[55] The invention of printing is an outstanding achievement of Buddhists in East Asia, in which Korea took the lead. The world's earliest known printed document is a sutra printed by woodcuts on a single scroll of paper (5m x 10cm) in Korea around 750 C.E. It was found at one of the most famous Buddhist temples in Korea in 1968 (*Bulguksa, Kyongju* city). Korea also achieved the breakthrough of the first movable bronze type in the world in the early thirteenth century (1234). The world's earliest known document printed by the movable bronze type is also a Buddhist scripture of Korea (直指心體要節 직지심체요절 *Jikjisimcheyojol*, 1377), which is now kept at the National Library of France, Paris (Twyman, 1998; Sohn, 1959).

3) A Fusion of Christian Piety and Confucian Legacy

Distinctive religious context in Korea

Taking the preceding observation into account, this study situates the practice of copying the bible within the milieu of the continuing interplay of Christianity and Confucianism. When Christianity began in Korea in the late eighteenth century in the case of Catholicism, and in the late nineteenth century in the case of Protestantism, the country was at its zenith as a Confucian state. In the course of the Japanese colonial period (1910-45), the division of the country (1945) followed by the Korean War (1950-53), and rapid economic growth since the 1970s, however, Christianity emerged from being a marginal western religion to be a major Korean religion. Indeed, by 2005 Christianity had become the largest religious group in South Korea, with some 14 million members, 29 per cent of the total population.

As far as the religious landscape of the recent two centuries is concerned, thus, Korea has been transformed from the most Confucianized state in East Asia to one of the most dynamic Christian countries in the world. Although Confucianism has significantly declined during the last century, its influence can still be found in all domains of contemporary Korean society and it could be described as a Confucian nation (Koh, 1996; Kwang-Ok Kim, 1998). In contemporary South Korea, while Christianity is a major institutional religion with the largest number of adherents, Confucianism is still deeply embedded in Korean life as a substratum of the society. For this reason, the continuing interplay of Christianity and Confucianism is integral to the understanding of contemporary Korean society in general, and Korean Christianity in particular. Due to such a unique Korean religious context, there are various cultural

phenomena revealing the continuing interplay of Confucian culture and Christian influence, and some examples have been discussed in the previous chapter. The growing movement of copying the bible is regarded as another representative example of such phenomena.

However, this emphasis on Christian and Confucian dominance does not intend to overlook deep-rooted Shamanistic and Buddhist influences in Korean society. Particularly prevalent in popular culture are Shamanistic beliefs and practices. The Shamanistic mode of thinking and living is deeply ingrained in Korean Christian life as well. Many analysts have understood that the remarkable success of Christianity in Korea has much to do with the strong affinity of a deep-seated Shamanistic popular mind-set and the Christian gospel of prosperity. Indeed, within Korean Christianity, there are also various religious and social phenomena revealing the complex interplay of Christian and Shamanistic influence. In this regard, Korean Christianity, particularly at the more popular level, could be described as 'Shamanistic Christianity'.[56]

Confucian influence on the popularity of copying the bible

Of many popular Confucian legacies, the following three inter-related points are considered among the most significant factors influencing the Christian practice of copying the bible. First is the Confucian idea of self-cultivation through learning. All Confucian teachings can be summarized into one concept 'self-cultivation' (*Sugi* 修己). Confucians ask how to become fully human and how to create human society worthy of life. They find the answer not from divine powers or supernatural beings, but from humans themselves: the Confucian answer begins with self-cultivation. According to

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[56] For an anthropological study of the Shamanistic-Christian interplay, see Harvey (1987).

Confucian teachings, every person is endowed with the capacity to cultivate the self to the maximum effect. There is a saying that 'From the emperor down to the common people, all people must consider the cultivation of the individual character as the root'. The Confucian method for self-cultivation is not through belief in the divine or mystical meditation, but through learning, mainly by studying the Confucian classics. It is no coincidence that the opening sentence of the *Analects,* the most revered Confucian text in East Asia, is about learning: 'To learn something and then to practise repeatedly what you have learned – is it not a source of pleasure?' (*Analects* 1:1a). Indeed, begun as a scholarly tradition, Confucianism can be understood as a religion of learning, as the following passage further illustrates (*Analects* 17: 8):

> To love benevolence without loving learning is liable to lead to foolishness. To love cleverness without loving learning is liable to lead to deviation from the right path. To love trustworthiness in word without loving learning is liable to lead to harmful behaviour. To love forthrightness without loving learning is liable to lead to intolerance. To love courage without loving learning is liable to lead to insubordination. To love unbending strength without loving learning is liable to lead to indiscipline.

Probably the Confucian legacy of the devotion to learning explains the unrivalled enthusiasm, even 'fanaticism' for education among East Asian people in general, and Korean people in particular. Whether well-educated or not, young or old, Korean people are very eager to learn. For Korean Christians, therefore, influenced by this Confucian legacy of self-cultivation through learning, the bible is not just the source of believing but also a means of learning and self-cultivation. They take the arduous and long-term practice of copying the bible as an opportunity of learning and self-cultivation.

The second Confucian legacy which facilitates the Christian practice of copying the bible lies in the Confucian tradition of calligraphy. Calligraphy has played a significant role in Confucian learning as it has been employed as an essential practice for enhancing self-cultivation, and as an appropriate means of embodying the word of sages. Confucian calligraphy requires not just the practice of writing skills but also that of personal integrity, which is a life-long process of 'intellectual and moral striving' (Ching, 1977: 166). Confucian calligraphy serves as a criterion for judging one's level of learning and self-cultivation. In this sense, calligraphy is a visual manifestation of Confucian learning and self-cultivation. Against this cultural background, the practice of copying the bible can be understood as a Christian transformation of the Confucian calligraphy tradition. While copying the Word of God, Christians are reminded of the symbolic meaning of Confucian calligraphy. In fact, as mentioned earlier, there are some people who copy the whole bible in traditional Confucian calligraphy.

The final influential factor concerns the Confucian emphasis on family solidarity based on the idea of 'filial duty', the essential virtue in Confucian life. Although copying the bible is popular among all ages, as discussed earlier, it is particularly popular among the parental generation. The practice of copying the bible appeals to parents as another form of 'prayer' and spiritual concern for the family, especially for their children. The cases of Mrs. Choi and Mrs. Cho exemplify this aspect of bible-copying practice. Mrs. Choi puts two materials on her desk where she copies the bible, viz. the bible and the photos of her children. While she writes down the passage of the bible, she always prays for her children and grandchildren. For Mrs. Cho as well, copying the bible is another practice for praying for their children. As mentioned earlier, while Mrs. Cho copied the Old Testament stories in which parents bless their children,

she stopped copying for a while and blessed her own children in her prayer. After completing hand-written copies of the bible, as in Mrs. Choi's case, parents distribute their hand-written bible(s) to their children. For children, the hand-written bible given by their father or, in many cases, by their mother is considered as the most precious inheritance. Through the practice of copying the bible, parents not just experience their own spiritual growth, but also gain filial respect from their children. In this way, the hand-written bible emerges as a new material which consolidates family solidarity.

In summary, the contemporary Korean movement of copying the bible typifies a fusion of Christian piety and Confucian legacy. That is to say, the Christian love for God and the Confucian devotion to self-cultivation through learning are interwoven in the practice of copying the bible; Christian piety to embody the Word of God and the Confucian legacy of calligraphy are combined in the practice of copying the bible; through copying the bible, Christian parents materialize the love for their children which, in turn, will be memorialized by their children.

3. A Sociological-Anthropological Analysis of Bible-Copying

In the previous historical and theological analysis, we argued that the strong affinity between the Korean religious mentality of *ad fontes* and the Christian principle of *sola scriptura* has shaped the Korean enthusiastic attitude toward the bible; the movement of copying the bible represents a harmonious interplay between Christian and Confucian values, notably, the Christian love for the bible and the Confucian 'love of learning'.

We now turn to a sociological and anthropological analysis of the practice of bible-copying, examining the phenomenon primarily in the light of theories related to ideas on embodiment, exchange and material culture. Considering the practice of copying the bible as a ritual practice before death, this study argues that old people's practice of bible-copying epitomizes the positive consequence of the Confucian-Christian interplay. It has been partly argued in the previous section, and will be further argued in the following analyses.

'Thick' embodiment

As already discussed, Korean Christians have shown an unprecedentedly strong enthusiasm for the bible which is manifest in such activities as bible-reading, bible study, contests of bible-reciting, and bible-listening. Of these, reading the whole bible has been among the most popularized, with a variety of programmes sustaining it. It is very common for many ordinary Christians to read the bible on a daily basis according to their own plan to finish reading the whole bible in a certain period of time. Korean Christians can join the bible-reading programme of their own church as most Protestant churches are running such schemes.

There are even specialized Protestant institutions which provide short-term courses – most commonly a week's course – in which one is supposed to finish reading the whole bible in a week. One representative example is the Ezra House (www.ezrahouse.or.kr) in a remote area in the south eastern region of the country. Run by a Presbyterian minister (Rev. Woo-Ho Rho) since 1977, it provides a session of five days to complete reading the whole bible. The programme starts at 5am and ends at 11pm everyday, with all the intervening hours devoted to bible-reading, apart from meal

times. When starting reading each of the 66 biblical books, the minister gives a short introduction and then participants read it. By April 2007 the Ezra House completed the 180th session and the number of attendants for each session has gradually increased. The House has attracted diverse people ranging from ordinary Christians to ministers and theologians. Perhaps the low-cost of registration, about 40 pounds including meals and accommodation, is a contributing factor to the attendance of the wider Christian public.

Another popular practice in relation to the bible is bible-study. It has become a sort of norm within Korean Christianity for the church to offer various bible study programmes for the whole congregation from kindergarten children to the old, either before or after Sunday service. Bible-study is a central purpose for the 'Church School' (formerly called the 'Sunday School'). For adult Christians there are also bible-study groups divided, in most cases, by age. In addition to bible-study programmes run by the church, Christian institutions also offer various (short-term or long-term) bible-study courses open to ordinary Christians. Furthermore, there are numerous guide books or text books for bible-study to which ordinary Christians can easily gain access.

Korean Christians can also listen to the bible. In the past, it was common to buy cassette tapes in which the reading of the whole bible is recorded, and today, with the development of computer technology, there are more choices of audio and video materials such as CDs and DVDs. A widespread practice among ordinary Christians is to listen to their own pastor's or a renowned pastor's sermon and, in many churches, the pastor's sermon used to be recorded on cassette tape every Sunday and copies of the sermon were distributed to those who could not attend Sunday service. Now many churches also run their own internet homepages through which one can engage in various activities including watching previous sermons.

Bible-copying emerges as another bible-related practice among ordinary Christians at the turn of the twenty-first century. Like various existing bible-related activities, copying the bible is also a form of practice embodying the Word of God. Compared to the above-mentioned practices, however, bible-copying is a more intensive and arduous practice of embodiment. It requires the most bodily effort and takes the longest time to complete, at least one year if one devotes about three hours daily. Considering various bible-related activities as practices of embodying the Word of God, and comparing with other existing practices, I propose to call the practice of copying the bible a practice of 'thick' embodiment.[57]

Bible-copying: an embodiment of Christian and Confucian spiritualities

From this perspective, copying the bible in Korean Christianity is a practice of embodiment in a double sense. First, as discussed above, it is a thick embodiment – 'thick' practice – of embodying the Word of God and, second, it is an embodiment of Christian and Confucian elements, which will be discussed here in more detail.

The practice of copying the bible, as an embodiment of Christian and Confucian elements, involves two inter-related aspects. One is that bible-copying is a practice of the embodiment of the Christian love for the Word of God and the Confucian 'love of learning'. That was the main argument in the previous section of this chapter. Historically speaking, the established Buddhist and Confucian enthusiasm for sacred texts within Korean society ensured that the Protestant emphasis on the bible was readily accepted by Korean Christians. Indeed, the cultural affinity between the

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[57] The term 'thick embodiment' may be better understood if one is familiar with the anthropological term 'thick description' popularized by Clifford Geertz (1973b: 3-30).

indigenous enthusiasm for sacred texts and the Protestant emphasis on the bible resulted in the distinctive enthusiasm for the bible within Korean Christianity. Of the existing traditions in relation to revering sacred texts, more influential has been the Confucian 'love of learning'. That is why the bible has appealed to Korean Christians not just as a source of believing but also as a source of learning. As argued earlier, the combination of the Christian love for the bible and the Confucian love of learning is one of the main cultural and religious rationales behind the popularity of copying the bible. It motivates Korean Christians, young or old, to copy the whole bible as many times as possible and, more often than not, spurs many of them to copy the bible even in foreign languages.

The other aspect is that the practice of copying the bible is an embodiment of both Christian religious piety and Confucian family solidarity: behind the practice of copying the bible is the parents' devotion embodying the love for God and the love for their family. Although seeking to strengthen family solidarity is universal, it is particularly strong in Korean society as a major legacy of the Confucian tradition. It is particularly true in the case of old people's practice. The hand-written bible becomes an embodiment of the love for God and the love for their children. The Korean practice of copying the bible is a good example of the case that 'individuals are praised and prized when they further shared ideals by embodying them in their practice' (Davies, 2002a: 56).

The handwritten bible: an inalienable gift

Towards the end of his important study that develops Mauss' study of gift exchange, Godelier summarizes a double aspect of exchanges in human society as follows (1999: 200):

> More to the point, our analyses lead us to the conclusion that there can be no human society without two domains: the domain of exchanges, whatever is exchanged and whatever the form of this exchange – from gift to potlatch, from sacrifice to sale, purchase or trade; and the domain in which individuals and groups carefully keep for themselves, then transmit to their descendants or fellow believers, things, narratives, names, forms of thinking.

In this passage, developing Mauss' idea on alienable and inalienable gifts, Godelier distinguishes the domain of exchange and that of non-exchange. The former corresponds to Mauss' alienable gifts and the latter to his inalienable gifts. This Mauss-Godelier theoretical scheme can be applied to the phenomenon surrounding the practice of copying the bible. The hand-written bible can be understood as a form of 'inalienable gift' according to Mauss' distinction, and as an example belonging to the domain of non-exchange according to Godelier's.

According to Mauss, there are two spheres of goods: one alienable and the other inalienable. By alienable, Mauss means goods that are given as gift, counter-gift, and other forms of exchange; by inalienable, he means goods that are not exchanged but kept for transmission to the next generation (Godelier, 1999: 32). On the basis of this distinction, Godelier further elaborates the role of inalienable, non-exchangeable objects – 'things that can be given but must be kept'. According to him, non-exchangeable objects are sacred things that derive their meaning from birth, death, ancestors, or sacred powers: their ownership is inalienable, while the right of usage may be passed on to others, probably to the next generation (Godelier, 1999: 108-170).

Likewise, the completed hand-written bible is given as a gift to the children but it is not expected that there be a counter-gift or that it is given again to other people

outside the family. As soon as it is given to the children, the hand-written bible becomes a sacred thing that must be kept within the family. To be sure, it cannot be an object that functions as a kind of currency; it is not exchanged as gift to other people outside the family either. Rather, it becomes a family treasure that must be carefully kept and passed on to the next generation. The hand-written bible becomes an 'inalienable thing' which serves as an 'anchorage in time' and an anchorage of family tradition, relating children to their past and to their ancestors (Godelier, 1999: 32; Davies, 2002a: 195).

Symbolic exchange

The phenomenon of bible-copying shows non-exchangeable aspects of the gift and yet it also involves a non-materialistic aspect of exchange, which this study would call 'symbolic exchange'. Old people give their own hand-written bible to their children yet they do not receive in return any similar material objects from their children. Instead, they gain filial respect from their children. In other words, old people give their children a material gift which embodies their love for their children, and, in return, they receive a symbolic counter-gift from their children. In this regard, the hand-written bible is not a one-way gift without return. It is a material gift which seeks symbolic reward in return.

A practice of the living for the living

It seems that the Buddhist practice of copying sutra was popular as a practice of the living for the dead. In accordance with the Buddhist doctrine of merit-making and merit-transfer, Buddhists wrote down sutra in the hope that their dead parents' lot could be improved (Kieschnick, 2000: 181). Indeed, one Buddhist monk of eighth century Korea, for example, made a hand-written copy of a Buddhist scripture mixing his blood

with ink in memory of his dead parents and it became one of the oldest hand-written copies of Buddhist sutra in Korea (Hye-Jung Lee, 1999).

Similar motivation to the Buddhist case is also found perhaps in the history of Christianity. The Lindisfarne Gospel of seventh century England, for example, might be a case in point. This is a manuscript produced in the Northumbrian island monastery of Lindisfarne at the end of the seventh century, in honour of St Cuthbert. The manuscript Gospel is a precious relic of early Christianity in England and one of the nation's greatest treasures. A priest called Aldred from the mid-tenth century wrote about the book as follows: 'Eadfrith, Bishop of the Lindisfarne Church, originally wrote this book [the Lindisfarne Gospel], for God and for Saint Cuthbert and – jointly – for all the saints whose relics are in the Island' (Backhouse, 1981: 7). That is, the Lindisfarne Gospel was made in memory of Saint Cuthbert and all the saints in the region, who were all dead.

While Buddhist sutra-copying and Catholic bible-copying tend to be practices of the living for the dead, Korean bible-copying is a practice of *the living for the living*, for the next generation. Old people do not copy the bible in memory of their dead parents or ancestors. As discussed earlier, they do so for their children and descendants. The hand-written bible becomes a material object which facilitates generational exchange between parents and their children.

Spiritualizing material

Through copying the bible, Korean Christians can be said to be spiritualizing materials. As mentioned earlier, various materials are used for copying the bible, depending on the personal preference or situation. Most common materials that are used for copying the

bible are ordinary pens and notebooks. The Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement has manufactured various types of blank books especially designed for copying the bible and they have been increasingly used by many people. More often than not, some Christians copy the whole bible in calligraphy, using the same writing tools as those used in traditional calligraphy: viz. writing brush, ink stone, ink stick, water case, and traditional paper.

Regardless of type, such mundane materials are transformed into sacred materials in the course of copying the bible, a process of embodying the Word of God. While such materials themselves do not posses any inherent spiritual meaning, through the process of copying the bible they obtain a symbolic value and spiritual meaning. We remember, for example, the case of Mrs. Choi, the ninety-year-old lady, who has completed twelve copies of hand-written bibles over the past twenty five years. She has used ordinary pens and notebooks sitting at an ordinary desk for bible-copying, and yet for her those materials are no longer ordinary. Through the process of copying the bible, Korean Christians transform mundane materials into precious and spiritual objects. The process of copying the bible becomes that of spiritualizing material.

Materializing spirituality

We can, however, also approach this issue from another perspective and say that copying the bible is not just a process of spiritualizing material but also that of materializing spirituality. Through copying the bible, Christian parents materialize the nonmaterial. That is, Christian parents are materializing their love for God and their love for their children on the one hand, and their love for the Word of God and their love of learning on the other. Indeed, Christian parents who participate in the practice of

copying the bible invariably say that they copy the bible in order to express their love for God (their love for the Word of God) as well as their love for their children (Chi, 2002). For those Christian parents, the practice of copying the bible is a form of prayer for their family and an activity of blessing their children.

According to Godelier, 'the strength of objects lies in their capacity to materialize the invisible, to represent the unrepresentable. And it is the sacred object which most completely fulfils this function' (1999: 109). And this is especially true of the case of the hand-copied bible, where Korean Christian parents are materializing the invisible: their religious piety, their love for God, their love for their children, and their love of learning. To the children, the hand-copied bibles become the 'sacred object', materials which embody their parents' love for God and their love for them. It becomes a material of the strongest symbolic value within the family: 'because it expresses the inexpressible, because it represents the unrepresentable, the sacred object is the object charged with the strongest symbolic value' (Godelier, 1999: 174). In summary, through the practice of copying the bible, Korean Christians are spiritualizing material as well as materializing spirituality.

A new form of heirloom

At the turn of the twenty-first century, then, the hand-written bible emerged as a new form of heirloom within the Christian family. As in other societies, in contemporary Korea, too, the practice of transmitting and keeping heirlooms is commonly found within the family. What lies behind the popularity of the practice of copying the bible among the old is perhaps the identification of the hand-copied bible with another form of desirable heirloom. When old people are copying the bible, they expect the

completed hand-copied bible to be cherished by their children as a precious heirloom within the family.

Since the early stage of the campaign, as discussed earlier, the Centre for the Bible-copying Movement has adopted this concept of making a new form of heirloom among the Christian families. It has appealed to the Korean mind-set. In fact, of various kinds of blank books that the Centre and other Christian publishers have manufactured, one of the most popular is the one bearing the title 'heirloom bible' on the cover page. In this way, the movement of copying the bible among old people can probably be understood as a 'movement of making the heirloom bible'. The hand-written bible functions as a new material consolidating both faith succession and family solidarity. From this account of pre-death ritual we now move to consider the ritual at death.

Cultural intensification

As discussed earlier, existing Confucian culture has contributed to the popularity of the practice of copying the bible in Korean Christianity. Christian ideas and practices in relation to the bible have been intensified by the existing Confucian devotion to sacred texts, a phenomenon that can be described as 'cultural intensification'. The concept of 'cultural intensification' is first discussed in Douglas Davies and Mathew Guest's recent book (2007: 177-178). The concept is further developed in this study and is applied to a cultural phenomenon of the Confucian and Christian interplay. The movement of copying the bible is an example of 'cultural intensification'.

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, the Korean movement of copying the bible has recently become a missionary movement. Since July 2005, the Centre for the Bible-Copying Movement has attempted to spread the practice of bible-copying to

other countries. Mainly by means of missionaries in each country, the Centre has introduced the practice into nearby countries and some African countries. It would be interesting to observe the ways in which the practice of copying the bible is accepted in other countries where the existing cultural and religious contexts are so different from those of Korea. The Confucian elements which contribute to the popularity of copying the bible in Korean Christianity are not so strong even in other East Asian countries. Based on the discussion of cultural intensification, this study predicts that there is little prospect of seeing the movement of bible-copying being popular in other countries. If, however, the practice of bible-copying could be popularized in other countries, it would be interesting to examine what existing cultural elements contribute to the popularity. On the contrary, if it is poorly accepted in other countries, it would be still interesting to ask what cultural or social factors affect such a negative reception in the country.

Religious experience and body techniques

Many participants in the practice of bible-copying claimed that they had qualitatively different 'spiritual' or 'religious' experiences from other religious practices such as reading the bible. Perhaps, what they experience from writing down bible passages for many years cannot easily be verbalized. Even so, common experiences among the people include great sense of achievement, deeper understanding of the bible, sense of spiritual growth, improvement of family solidarity particularly between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law), and miraculous cure of chronic illness such as high blood pressure (Chi, 2002).

The issue of bible-copying practice and religious experience is, in itself, a topic for further research. Perhaps one promising approach is to employ Mauss' idea of body

techniques (cf. Chang-Won Park, 2007b). Mauss' idea can be found in his essay entitled 'Body Techniques' and, in it, Mauss discusses the ways in which 'from society to society people know how to use their body' (1979: 97). In the last section of the essay in which he mentions breathing techniques in Daoism and Hindu Yoga, he touches on the relationship of body techniques and religious experience: 'I believe precisely that at the bottom of all our mystical states there are body techniques… I think that there are necessarily biological means of entering into *communication with* God' (1979: 122; original emphasis). This distinctive remark seems to have attracted little attention from scholars who are interested in the issue of religious experience: among existing studies concerning the issue of religious experience, I have not so far found any study which employs the idea of body techniques. This study argues that the perspective of body techniques is an underutilized theoretical tool but it is uniquely appropriate to exploring the issue of religious experience.

As an initial and speculative attempt to explore the issue of religious experience and body techniques, we might suppose that different body techniques induce different types of religious experiences. Here, we consider the interrelationship of religious practice, body techniques involved, and resultant religious experiences. Let us take three examples for comparison. First, text-based religious practices such as reading, citing, and copying involve certain types of body techniques and they lead to certain types of religious experiences. For the sake of argument, we could call them 'Type A religious experience'. Second, meditation-based religious practices such as yoga, zen, and some forms of prayer involve their own distinctive body techniques which lead to certain types of religious experiences (Type B religious experience). Finally, there are music/dance-based religious practices such as shamanistic ritual and some forms of

worship in Pentecostal Christianity and they involve the use of the body different from the previous two examples, which lead to significantly different religious experiences (Type C religious experience). To be sure, just as music/dance-based practices cannot lead to 'Type A religious experience', so text-based religious practices cannot result in 'Type C religious experience'. From these examples, we could observe that the use of body (body techniques) is a key influential factor for generating religious experiences as well as for shaping their types.

CHAPTER 3

Funerary Practice (Ritual *at* Death)

> A funeral rite is a social rite *par excellence*. Its ostensible object is the dead person, but it benefits not the dead, but the living (Firth, 1951: 64).

The present chapter examines funerary practice which is classified as 'ritual *at* death' in this study. Korean Christians have not experienced much conflict with existing funeral customs, as far as the method of body disposal is concerned. Rather, the Christian principle of burial had been culturally intensified by deep-rooted Confucian burial practice, and many elements of Confucian funerary rites have been assimilated into Christian rituals. Perhaps the main reason is the fact that burial was the common method of body disposal in both the Christian and Confucian traditions. In terms of the issue of the complex interplay of Confucianism and Christianity, this study argues that funerary practices show an *amalgamation* of Confucian and Christian elements.

Despite various religious influences and continuing social changes, the basic format of funeral customs in South Korea had remained almost intact until as recently as the late 1980s, with the venue of the funeral being home and the method of corpse disposal being burial. At the turn of the twenty-first century, however, Korean society witnessed an unprecedented scale of changes in funerary practices, especially the growing popularity of hospital funeral halls and the rapid increase in cremation. This chapter focuses on these dramatically changing funerary practices over the last two decades.

The present chapter first provides a historical description of the ways in which Korean funeral practices have changed over the last two decades in the period between the mid 1980s and the mid 2000s. Its focus is on the emergence of funeral halls and the popularity of cremation. Special attention is given to Christian funerary practice in relation to the rapid increase of cremation and, as a case study, this study takes four funerals within my family over the last twenty years. The chapter then, like the previous chapter, offers two different kinds of analysis, historical-theological and sociological-anthropological. One of the major themes in the first analysis concerns the continuity and change of Confucian funerary practices in the complex interface of traditional and modern values. As far as sociological and anthropological analysis is concerned, three theoretical themes, viz. embodiment, exchange, and material culture, are employed.

1. Changing Funeral Customs in Contemporary Korea

1) From Home to the Funeral Hall

The venue for the funeral before the 1980s

In Confucian Korea, most people died at home because dying at home surrounded by the family members was considered as a good death. The funeral, then, invariably took place at home. Death away from home was considered to be a bad death and people were particularly concerned about such bad deaths, in which case they usually did not move the dead body home and they buried it without proper funerary ceremonies. This traditional practice largely continued until the 1980s.

As in many western countries, the mortuary in Korea was a place where the dead body was stored temporarily. Although, during the Korean War period (1950-53), mortuaries were used as make-shift places to hold funerals since most houses had been damaged, they were not generally considered as appropriate places for the funeral (Hyun-Song Lee, 1996: 55). For the Korean people, home was the only venue for proper funerals: other options were neither conceivable nor available. Whatever happened, people wanted to die at home or endeavored to get home before death. Accordingly, when a patient was expected to die in hospital, for example, it was very common that his or her family moved the dying person home in order to await the symbolic moment of the final breath and to hold the funeral there. Only rarely did a simple funeral take place at the mortuary.

Emerging mortuary funerals

From the mid-1980s, however, holding funerals at the mortuary of major hospitals became gradually popular, particularly among the urban middle and upper classes. This increasing change in the venue of the funeral was attested by a Korean sociologist whose study examined newspaper obituaries from 1985 to 1995 (Hyun-Song Lee, 1996). According to the study, holding funerals at home decreased from 75 per cent in 1985 to 38 per cent in 1995, while funerals at the mortuary increased from 20 per cent to 61 per cent during the same period of time. As this study was based on newspaper obituaries, the figures generally represented changes among the middle and upper classes at the time.

Holding funeral ceremonies at mortuaries, according to Lee's study, was originated by the upper and middle classes and later spread to lower classes by way of

imitation (Hyun-Song Lee, 1996: 56). The new pattern of funeral practice since the mid-1980s, therefore, became that of dying at home or in hospital, holding the funeral at the hospital mortuary, and then burying in a public cemetery or family graveyard.

From the mortuary to the 'funeral hall'

A mortuary funeral, however, was illegal as the purpose of mortuaries was to store the dead body for a day or two mainly for sanitary reason. Although hospitals could not provide enough facilities and spaces for the growing funeral practice, the mortuary funeral became even more popular during the 1990s with the government tacitly admitting the existing illicit practice of hospitals. In order to tackle various legal and practical problems caused by this increasing use of mortuaries for funerals, the government eventually legalized funerals at hospital mortuaries in 1993 and urged the existing mortuaries to provide enough facilities for the purpose. From 1996, the government also introduced a new mortgage system especially in order to help expand existing mortuaries or build new funeral halls within hospitals. These changes resulted in the emergence of the hospital funeral hall, a new Korean style of the funeral hall mostly housed within the premises of hospitals.

Another new phenomenon from the mid-1990s has been the emergence of private funeral halls run by private companies or religious institutions.[58] The number of private funeral halls has gradually increased since the mid-1990s and it reached more than 120 by 2003. But still the majority of funeral halls are located within hospital premises: by 2003, there were 502 hospital funeral halls and 121 private funeral halls across the country. Overall, since the mid-1990s there has been a dramatic rise in the number of

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[58] As Figure 3 shows, private funeral halls did not exist as recently as in 1994.

funeral halls from 321 in 1995 to 465 in 2000, a number that subsequently expanded to 714 by 2005.

The Korea Gallup Surveys

In March 2006, Korea Gallup released the result of a nationwide survey on funeral culture which was conducted between September and October 2005 (Korea Gallup, 2006b). The data were collected from 1,506 adults aged 20 or above through face-to-face interview, and participants were selected across the country with a method of stratified random sampling. This survey report is particularly useful in that it includes comparison with the results of the same surveys of 1994 and 2001. As the three surveys in 1994, 2001, and 2005 were conducted by the same institution, with the same method, and through a similar number of participants of some 1,500 adults, their comparison provides a reliable source for observing changing funeral culture over the last ten years or so.

The 2005 survey included a question on the venue of recently attended funerals and the response giving hospital funeral halls was dominant: some 69 per cent of the respondents said that it was at the hospital funeral hall; some 21 per cent answered that it was at the private funeral hall; and some 7 per cent visited home for funerals while some 4 per cent attended funerals held at religious institutions such as a church or Buddhist temple. This survey clearly indicates that the hospital funeral hall is the most common place for funerals in contemporary Korea.

A comparison of this figure with the results of the 1994 and 2001 surveys shows dramatic changes in the venue of funerals over the last decade (see Figure 3 below). For instance, while the figure of holding a funeral at home dramatically decreased from 72

per cent in 1994 to 7 per cent in 2005, the case of holding a funeral at a hospital funeral hall tripled during the same period of time, increasing from 23 per cent to 69 per cent. In addition, there was a significant increase in using private funeral halls which had not existed in 1994: the case of holding funerals at private funeral halls escalated from 6 per cent in 2001 to 21 per cent in 2005. The rate of holding a funeral at religious institutions, however, showed a minor decrease from 6 per cent in 2001 to 4 per cent in 2005.

	1994	**2001**	**2005**
Home	72.2 %	34.6 %	6.9 %
Hospital funeral halls	22.6 %	53.9 %	68.8 %
Private funeral halls	No existence	5.6 %	20.7 %
Religious institution	No data	5.8 %	3.6 %

< **Figure 3**: Korea Gallup surveys on the venue of funerals 1994-2005>[59]

All in all, the three Korea Gallup surveys reveal that the main venue of funerals has dramatically changed from home (72 per cent in 1994) to the funeral hall (90 per cent in 2005) over the last ten years or so. Holding funerals at hospital funeral halls, a new development since the mid-1980s, has become even more popular at the turn of the twenty-first century and now it is the most common place of funerals across the country. It is expected, however, that a further change might occur in this trend. The 2005 survey included a question on the ideal place for holding funerals: some 42 per cent of the

[59] Source: Korea Gallup (www.gallup.co.kr). No data are available for the use of religious institutions in 1994.

respondents favored hospital funeral halls, while some 43 per cent of the respondents preferred private funeral halls. Judging from the result of this survey and the dramatic increase in the use of private funeral halls over the last four years, the rate of using private funeral halls is expected to continue increasing.

Current situations

Currently, a dominant pattern of funeral practice is dying in hospital and holding the funeral at the hospital funeral hall. Even if death occurs at home or other places, in most cases, the bereaved family moves the corpse into the hospital funeral hall as soon as they can. As already indicated, it is completely different from traditional funeral practice which continued until the 1980s, which was dying at home and holding the funeral at home.

The growing increase in the use of hospital funeral halls matches the medical improvement of hospitals and the popularization of health insurance over the last two decades. These factors may have contributed to an increase of death at hospitals, which, in turn, has resulted in the popularity of hospital funeral halls.

	1985	**1990**	**1995**	**2000**	**2005**
Home	83.0 %	76.5 %	66.0 %	53.1 %	35.2 %
Hospital	8.8 %	13.8 %	22.8 %	36.0 %	49.8 %
Others	8.2 %	9.7 %	11.2 %	10.9 %	15.0 %
Total deaths	231,800	235,400	248,100	247,300	245,500

<Figure 4: The places where death occurred 1985-2005>[60]

[60] Source: National Statistics Office (www.nso.go.kr).

As Figure 4 shows, while 83 per cent of the dead were dying at home in 1985, some 35 per cent were dying at home in 2005. While dying in hospital was some 9 per cent of the total dead in 1985, it increased to some 50 per cent in 2005.

2) From Burial to Cremation[61]

Cremation before the 1990s

According to historical studies, the practice of cremation already existed on the Korean peninsula before the Bronze Age (e.g. Tae-Ho Park, 2006). As mentioned earlier, following the introduction of Buddhism in the late fourth century, Buddhist cremation had been introduced and popularized for many centuries in old Korea. The Confucian dynasty (1392-1910), however, endeavored to confucianize the whole country while uprooting Buddhist customs. Having advocated Confucian funerary rites based on burial, the Confucian government announced a ban on cremation in 1470. Although it then became an illegal method of body disposal, the once popular practice of cremation did not disappear easily. It persisted for a while especially among ordinary people but eventually became almost extinct towards the later part of the Confucian dynasty (Haboush, 1991: 102-103).

It was during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945) that cremation was re-introduced into the country. Through new legislation on 'grave, crematorium, burial and cremation' in 1912, the Japanese colonial government introduced the system of public cemeteries and the modern form of cremation. Its purpose was to promote cremation

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[61] For a brief history of cremation in Korea, see Chang-Won Park (2005).

and public cemeteries while prohibiting the centuries-old practice of burying at a private or family graveyard. This was a historic law in that it lifted the ban on cremation issued in 1470 by the Confucian government. The first crematorium in Seoul was built in 1930 with many others being built in the following years.[62] However, the Japanese policy to promote cremation was not at all successful. The cremation rate of the Seoul region, for example, did not reach even 1 per cent during the colonial period (Song, 2002: 207). The Korean people were reluctant to cremate because of their strong rejection of the Japanese coercive policy of cremation as well as their desire to maintain traditional burial customs. They understood that the Japanese cremation policy was part of its colonial strategy for obliterating Korean traditional customs. Cremation was not employed even during the Korean War when there was a need to dispose of a massive number of dead bodies within a short period of time.

Cremation remained something of a social taboo until the last decade of the twentieth century and we identify three major reasons for this. First, cremation was not appealing to the mind of the most Korean people who had practised burial for centuries, heavily influenced by Confucian values. For them, the practice of filial duty, the essential Confucian value, included burying ancestors in an auspicious site and caring for their graves through generations. Hence cremation, burning the bodies of their parents, was not considered as a suitable practice for fulfilling this filial obligation. Due to this mentality, cremation was not even popular among the Buddhist population, which constituted one of the largest institutional religions in modern Korea (Hyun-Song Lee, 1996: 51). Second, cremation was understood as a legacy of the Japanese colonial

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[62] From 1914 the Japanese government began to build public cemeteries and by 1933 there were 32 cemeteries in and around Seoul city, with 5 cemeteries being within the city of Seoul (Song, 2002).

period and, therefore, the national sentiment of reluctance to cremation continued even long after the liberation. Perhaps this national sentiment intensified burial practice as the Korean way of disposal. Finally, the unattractive buildings and poor facilities of crematoria added a further negative impression. Against this unpopularity, cremation was largely practised among very poor people in urban areas and was limited to the deaths of children and unmarried people, and other deaths socially classified as 'bad deaths' such as suicide. Until the mid 1990s, burial had been a norm for most Koreans in general and Christians in particular. Despite a moderate increase during the later part of the twentieth century, the national rate of cremation remained at less than 20 per cent until the early 1990s with the social perception of cremation remaining very negative: 1955 (5.8 %), 1970 (10.7%), 1981 (13.7%), 1991 (17.8%).

From conflict to consensus

From the late 1980s, however, a fundamental reform of existing funeral customs gradually became a major social issue. Various problems caused by the deep-rooted practice of burial lay at the heart of the issue, one of which concerns the increasing encroachment on land by graveyards. It was reported that by 1998 graveyards (998 km^2) occupied approximately 1 per cent of the gross area of South Korea, which was even bigger than the area of Seoul metropolitan city (605 km^2). About 9 square kilometres was said to pass into graveyard every year. Moreover, across the country the landscape was seriously deteriorating due to rampant private gravesites and many uncared-for private graves across the country. More serious still was the absolute shortage of burial sites in the case of Seoul and other major cities.

From the early 1990s, the South Korean government launched a new funeral

policy promoting cremation and restraining burial, whilst also modernizing crematoria, columbaria and other related facilities. From the outset, however, the government faced serious difficulties especially when its proposal of 1993 for the new funeral policy was completely rejected by the National Assembly, followed by a series of strong opposition moves from politicians, Confucians, and the general public. The same happened again in 1997 when the government submitted a slightly revised proposal to the National Assembly. A series of these governmental failures, however, resulted in unexpected consequences. Civic groups, religious organizations, and academic associations began to discuss the problem of existing burial customs and they attracted considerable attention from the media. Towards the end of the last decade of the twentieth century, the government, the media, and civic groups were working together to promote cremation as a viable solution to the nationwide problem caused by established burial practice. Public opinion was now gradually changing toward a more positive stance on cremation.

Rapid growth in cremation since 1998

It was during the year 1998 that the nationwide campaign for cremation gained real momentum: the existing negative social perception of cremation significantly changed and the national cremation rate began to increase dramatically. Perhaps two factors merit mention: one is natural and the other is social. The summer of 1998 witnessed a massive scale of loss of graves due to unprecedented heavy rains. This made many people seriously rethink existing burial practice in relation to the maintenance of ancestors' graves. The year 1998 also marked the cremation of some leading social figures including Mr. Jong-Hyun Choi, the chairman of the SK Group, one of the

nation's largest business conglomerates. The cremation of such figures caused a sensation and matched a full-scale supportive campaign by citizen groups. Since then the mass media have more actively supported the pro-cremation policy of the government and many more citizen groups have emerged to promote cremation-based funeral culture.

Revised legislation on funeral policy in 2001 also spurred the shift of funeral practice towards cremation, placing stricter controls on the size of graveyards and restricting the period for holding graves to a maximum of sixty years. The nationwide rate of cremation doubled in less than ten years and showed an even more speedy increase with the turn of the new millennium. It first reached 30 per cent level in 1999 and 40 per cent level in 2002. By 2005, the cremation rate recorded 52.6 per cent nationwide, with 128,251 cremated out of 243,886 deaths, and reached 70 per cent in some major cities – 74.9 per cent in Busan, 69.0 per cent in Inchon, and 64.9 per cent in Seoul.

YEAR	1955	1970	1981	1991	1995	2000	2005
RATE	5.8	10.7	13.7	17.8	22.0	33.7	52.6

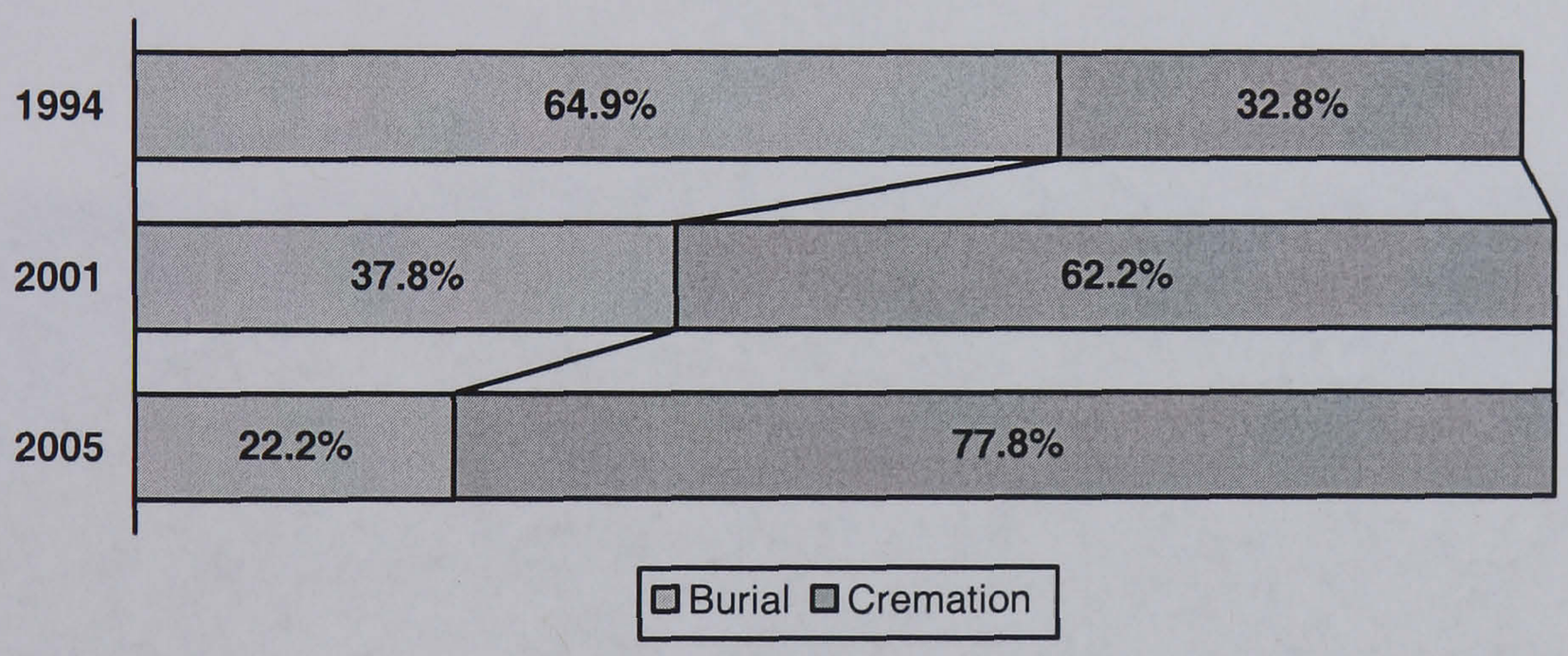
<**Figure 5**: The nationwide cremation rates 1955-2005>

The Korea Gallup Surveys

The 2005 Korea Gallup survey on Korean funeral culture included a question on the preferred method of body disposal between cremation and burial (Korea Gallup, 2006b). According to the result of the survey, some 78 per cent of the respondents preferred cremation, while some 22 per cent favored burial. The 2005 survey also

showed that preference for cremation was somewhat higher in female respondents (80.6%) than the male counterpart (74.8%). In terms of age, preference for cremation was over 80 per cent among twenties, thirties, and forties while it recorded some 69 per cent among people over fifties. As Figure 6 below shows, a comparison with the results of the 1994 and 2001 surveys clearly indicates a significant change in the perception of cremation over the last ten years or so. In 1994, only some 33 per cent of the respondents favored cremation and the figure almost doubled by 2001, a figure that subsequently expanded to 78 per cent by 2005.

Figure 6: Korea Gallup surveys on burial & cremation 1994-2005



The survey also questioned the preferred method for the disposition of cremated remains. There were three kinds of method that were most commonly employed: placing in columbaria (*Napgoljang*); scattering on a river, mountain, or sea (*Sangoljang*); placing under or around a tree (*Sumokjang*), a method similar to scattering yet recognized as a separate method. As to a question on the preferred method among the three, more than half of the respondents, some 53 per cent, favored the first method, while 27 per cent preferred the second method and 18 per cent the last.



Plate 9. The procession of the traditional funeral



Plate 10. Family graveyard



Plate 11. Family columbarium



Plate 12. Visitors paying tribute to the deceased in a memorial room within a hospital funeral hall (a secular family)

3) Christian Reactions to Cremation

General tendency

While change in the venue of the funeral from home to the hospital funeral hall has not caused any serious problems to Christian practice, the rapid increase of cremation has resulted in contrasting Christian responses. That is, the issue of cremation had experienced teething problems among the majority of Christians who are generally very conservative in their belief and practice. Historically, the issue of cremation was hardly discussed within the Christian Church before the 1990s. As cremation has come to be rapidly employed as a solution to the existing national problems caused by long-standing burial practice, however, it has emerged as one of the most intensely debated ecclesiastical issues. The turn of the twenty-first century witnessed the emergence of various Christian organizations promoting cremation as well as numerous Christian events and conferences in relation to the issue of cremation. While the Catholic Church has been rather unanimous in taking positive stance on cremation, there has been no consensus on the issue within the Protestant Church. Heated debates are still ongoing and Protestant reactions to cremation are largely divided into negative and positive positions. While more liberal Protestant denominations tend to be positive on cremation, more conservative counterparts, which constitute the majority of Korean Protestant denominations, tend to be negative towards cremating the dead. While a key claim of the former groups of the Protestant Church is that cremation is not anti-Christian, that of the latter is that cremation is anti-Christian.

Whether negative or positive, the Christian Church has struggled to establish a desirable Christian way of death and disposal against the background of swift changes

in funeral customs over the last decade. Even before the popularization of cremation, the issue of Christianizing funeral practice had long been recognized as one of the most urgent tasks within the Christian Church, both Catholic and Protestant. Many church leaders and theologians argued that existing Christian funerary practice was just an arbitrary mixture of Christian services and traditional indigenous practices. In particular, Protestant church leaders deplored the lack of standard guidance for Christian funerary practice. Despite concerted attempts for decades, however, there had not been any significant improvement, especially within the Protestant Church. The recent issue of cremation has further complicated the situation or perhaps it has called for more immediate action.

In general, public discourse in South Korea recognizes the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church as two different religious bodies rather than two sub-groups within Christianity. When Korean people refer to *Gidokgyo*, which means Christianity, they usually mean the Protestant Church alone. For the Catholic Church, they use different terms such as *Chonjugyo* and *Gatolic*, both meaning Catholicism. This practice is deep-rooted in everyday language and reflects the popular perception of the division of Catholicism and Protestantism within the Korean context. Reflecting this view, the following accounts treat Catholic and Protestant reactions separately.

Catholic reactions to cremation

The year 1964 witnessed a significant worldwide change in Catholic attitude to cremation. The Roman Catholic Church announced a new Instruction, a decision approved in the previous year by Pope Paul VI, in which its 1886 ban on cremation was lifted. As the following quotation from the Instruction shows, however, the Catholic

Church did not intend to replace the existing tradition of burial with cremation. In fact, it continued to encourage the burial tradition: 'The burning of the body, after all, has no effect on the soul, nor does it inhibit Almighty God from re-establishing the body again. Cremation does not, in itself, constitute a manifest denial of the above-mentioned doctrines... Christian people should maintain the present custom of burial and not abandon it unless driven by necessity' (cited in Jupp, 2006: 165). The whole effect, therefore, was the softening of the ban on cremation rather than the unconditional acceptance of cremation, which directly influenced Korean Catholic practice until the early 1990s.

Despite the Catholic approval of cremation in the 1960s, cremation had never been widely practised among Korean Catholics, and their funerary rites had until recently also been based on burial. Church cemeteries were the most popular place for the burial of the Catholic dead. As church cemeteries were rapidly getting full due to the widespread practice of burial, the Korean Catholic Church began to discuss the issue of the lack of burial sites as early as 1990. The Church suggested both the introduction of columbaria – for placing bone-remains – within church cemeteries and a new policy of putting a limit of 20 years on the usage of church graves. Still the issue of cremation was not present in the discussions of the early 1990s.

Then, in the late 1990s, cremation emerged as a desirable alternative to burial within Catholic discourse. In January 1997, for example, Bishop Chang-Moo Choi and ten other priests from the Seoul diocese took the lead by making their will in which they asked for their body to be cremated.[63] Since the year 2000, the cremation rate among

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[63] Similar cases can be found in the history of the development of cremation in the UK when, for instance, the cremation of the body of William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1944 spurred the popularization of cremation (Davies, 2005b: 116).

the Catholic dead in the Seoul diocese has increased by an average of more than 3 per cent per annum: 2000 (36%), 2001 (39%), 2002 (42.9%).

Positive Protestant reactions to cremation

The year 1998 saw the first organized attempt to take cremation positively within the Protestant Church. In December of that year, some influential Protestant ministers started a campaign to promote cremation by opening the 'Christian Centre for Promoting Cremation'. These ministers stated that cremation was not against the Christian doctrine of resurrection and asked other church ministers to take the lead in encouraging ordinary Christians to opt for cremation. The Centre also launched another campaign to make one's will in which cremation is specified as the disposal method of one's corpse.

The turn of the twenty-first century witnessed a growing number of conferences, seminars, and public lectures which aimed to promote cremation among the Protestant population. Major proposals suggested through these meetings include the following: existing burial practice involves many non-biblical aspects such as belief in *pungsu* (*fengsui* in Chinese) or geomancy[64]; if the Protestant Church, as a major Korean religion, could play a leading role in establishing new funeral culture based on cremation, the Church could not just contribute to improving the pressing social problems caused by deep-rooted burial practice but could also benefit in terms of evangelism.

In line with such a positive trend within the Protestant Church, several columbaria

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[64] One of the popular beliefs in *pungsu* is that if ancestors are buried in an auspicious site their descendants will prosper in this world.

reserved only for Christians have opened in recent years. In February 2002, for example, the first Protestant columbarium opened within the city's public cemetery in *Chonju*, a city located in the southwestern region.[65] The columbarium, a three-storey building, can accommodate up to 25,000 cremated remains. In order to be placed in this columbarium, one needs to be a Protestant Christian and to submit a reference from the minister of one's church. Fees are about £750 per person with the extra annual maintenance fees of £10, which is much more economical when compared to expenses for burial practice. In particular, the columbarium runs an internet homepage (www.hyojas.com) through which its members can upload the photos, voice, and a short biography of the deceased and also perform an online memorial service. In April 2005, another Christian columbarium, the Christian Memorial Park, opened in the *GyongGi* province, which is close to the city of Seoul. Its columbarium has eight buildings and can also accommodate up to about 25,000 cremated remains and, as in the previous case, this columbarium is also open only to Protestants.

Alongside the emergence of Protestant columbaria, an innovative practice of treating cremated remains has been introduced by some Protestant churches. It is commonly called the 'memorial-stone funeral' (*Chumobijang*) and is being recognized as a Christian way of disposing of cremated remains. These churches have made a small memorial garden and erected a memorial stone in it. The cremated remains of the congregation are brought to this memorial garden and, after the final funeral service in front of the memorial stone, the ashes are scattered on the ground of the garden. These

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[65] According to the population census conducted by the National Statistics Office in 1995, the province of which the city of *Chonju* is the capital showed the highest rate in the Protestant population (26.4%) and the lowest rate in the Buddhist population (12.2%). Given this factor, it is not surprising that the first Christian columbarium opened in this region.

churches have promoted cremation as a Christian method of body disposal and employed this memorial-stone funeral to contribute to tackling a pressing national issue of the shortage of burial land.

The first church which introduced this type of the funeral is well-known *Somang* Presbyterian Church in Seoul.[66] In 1994 when cremation was still negatively perceived within Korean society as well as within the Christian Church, the church made a small memorial garden in its retreat centre located in a remote area and erected a memorial stone within the garden. The church has offered an annual communal memorial service in the garden, where there is a noticeable quotation from the bible inscribed on the memorial stone: 'you are dust, and to dust you shall return' (Genesis 3: 19b). This garden, as the final resting place, has become increasingly popular among the congregation in recent years: it is said that the cremated remains of some 1,000 members of the congregation have been scattered in the garden.

The practice of *Somang* Presbyterian Church has become a role model for other churches, and now some ten influential churches across the country are said to employ this type of the funeral for the members of their congregation. The memorial-stone funeral has thus become increasingly recognized as a Christian funeral. One of the mega churches in Seoul recently joined this trend and it was reported by a national newspaper (Gukmin Ilbo, 20 July 2006). In July 2006, this *Gangnam* Central Baptist Church had

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[66] *Somang* (meaning 'hope') Presbyterian Church, one of the influential Protestant churches within Korean society, is typical of middle and upper class congregations in Seoul. The church was established in 1980 by Rev. Dr. Sun-Hee Kwak and witnessed an extraordinary growth during the 1980s and 1990s, with the current members of the congregation numbering some 30,000. Rev. Kwak, now retired, has been one of the pioneers among Protestant ministers who advocated cremation as a Christian funeral: he was one of the leading figures who founded the 'Christian Centre for Promoting Cremation' in 1998.

an opening ceremony for a memorial garden located within the church's retreat centre about 30 miles away from Seoul city. The church named its memorial garden 'Mamre Garden' – 'Mamre' is the field that Abraham purchased from the Hittites for the burial of his wife, Sarah (Genesis 23). The senior pastor of the church stated: 'The church has decided to build this memorial garden to promote an eco-friendly Christian funeral culture against the background of a growing social problem of the lack of burial ground. Funerals in this memorial garden serve a double purpose, as they bond the solidarity of the congregation and they become a heritage of the church to the next generation' (Gukmin Ilbo, 20 July 2006).

Negative Protestant approaches: a representative case

Despite these positive trends, negative approaches to cremation are still strong within the Protestant Church, though even so media attention has largely focused on the positive reactions. As a result, the Protestant situation can be misrepresented and the fact that the majority of Protestants are still choosing burial tends to be overlooked. The following is an example of a negative Protestant approach to cremation.

In 1999, the General Assembly of Presbyterian Church in Korea, one of the mainstream Protestant denominations, announced its official stance on the issue of cremation at its 84th annual conference (The General Assembly of Presbyterian Church in Korea, 1999: 344-352). In a short document entitled 'The Christian way of funerals: burial or cremation?' the denomination concluded that burial was the principal method of Christian funerals. As the document represents the general views of conservative Protestant denominations on the issue, it is worth closer examination. The document begins with the recognition of a recently growing increase of cremation and of some

Christian movements promoting cremation, and it asks what stance should be taken for the denomination that has maintained bible-centred Reformed theology and conservative faith. In an attempt to suggest a desirable Christian way of the funeral, the document consults the bible, the history of Christianity, and the tradition of Korean Christianity, respectively.

An examination of funeral customs within the Old and New Testaments, which constitutes the longest part in the document, emphasizes that people of faith were all buried while cremation was employed only for the death of severe criminals as God's punishment. In particular, quoting the original Hebrew text for the passage of Moses' burial in a valley in the land of Moab (Deuteronomy 34: 5-6), the document stresses that burial was a method of body disposal chosen by God himself. It goes on to stress the fact that funerals within the New Testament were also based on burial, the prime examples being those of Jesus (Matthew 27: 59-60; Mark 15: 46; Luke 23: 53; John 19: 40-42), John the Baptist (Mark 6: 29), and Lazarus (John 11: 37-38).

The document then moves on to an examination of funeral customs in the history of Christianity and its conclusion is that burial was the traditional Christian method of body disposal for the last two millennia. It states that although cremation was prevalent in the Greco-Roman Empire between the fourth century B.C. and the second century A.D., early Christians rejected cremation as a pagan custom negating the resurrection of the body. It stresses that, despite its variations, the funeral based on burial continued to be the normative Christian way of body disposal in the periods of the Middle Ages, Reformation, and afterwards.

Moving on within the tradition of Korean Christianity, the document mentions that, in line with the tradition of the bible and church history, Korean Christians also

practised burial from the early days. In particular, it refers to a statement made by Rev. Dr. Hyung-Yong Park (1897-1978), one of the most influential theologians within the conservative circle, in which he said that as cremation was not employed for the people of God, Korean Christians should avoid cremation which is of pagan origin. The document ends with a sentence summarizing the official stance of the denomination: 'burial is the principle of the Christian funeral yet cremation could be employed when burial is impossible'.

Two distinctive characteristics of Christian reactions to cremation

From our discussion of Christian reactions to government-led cremation, two distinctive characteristics can be discerned. The first concerns the absence of Christian discourse claiming that government policy is anti-Christian. Even the anti-cremation sectors of the Protestant Church do not see governmental policy on cremation as a 'persecution' of Christianity. They simply do not accept cremation as a Christian method of body disposal on the basis of literal interpretation of biblical and doctrinal sources. When the government proposed a new policy on cremation in the 1990s, strong opposition came from politicians and Confucians, but not from Christians. Indeed, there have been no organized anti-governmental activities from the Christian Church in relation to the issue of cremation. Rather, Christianity, especially the pro-cremation sectors of the Protestant Church, supplements the governmental policy by building Christian columbaria and establishing a Christian funeral based on cremation such as the memorial-stone funeral. The issue of cremation has never featured as a source of conflict between the Christian Church and the government; rather it could be said that the relationship of mutual support has gradually been established in order to promote cremation.

Another distinctive characteristic concerns the absence of the equation of the cremation movement with secularism or secularization. The history of the development of modern cremation in Western societies shows that cremation has been one of the major vehicles through which secularist ideologies could be pursued against the Church's authority (Davies, 2005b: xxiii-xxiv, 373-374). Indeed, the popularization of cremation in these societies, in many cases, is in parallel with the process of secularization. Although the Christian Churches in many Western countries have approved cremation in the face of its popularization during the twentieth century, they have not been proactive in promoting cremation. Within the Korean context, however, without equating the popularization of cremation with the process of secularization, the Christian Church, both Catholic and Protestant, has played an important role in transforming funeral culture from burial-based to cremation-based. Accepting the governmental propaganda, the Korean Church generally sees cremation as a way of modernizing death practice. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, Christianity has emerged as a significant non-state actor in the popularization of government-led cremation.

A case study: funerals of a long-standing Christian family in a Confucian region

As a case study, I will now describe four funerals in my own family over the last two decades. My father died in 1986, my paternal grandmother in 1996, my paternal grandfather in 2001, and my maternal grandfather in 2005, respectively. These funerals exemplify changing funeral customs in contemporary Korean society, particularly in terms of the venue of the funeral and the method of body disposal. As my family has a long-standing Christian tradition, those funerals show some aspects of Christian

reactions to cremation. In addition, as the family has maintained strong Protestant faith in *Andong*, a region renowned for its rich heritage of the Confucian tradition, the funerals of those four family members epitomize the characteristics of Christian funerals, the complex mixture of Christian and Confucian elements.

My father's funeral in 1986 was typical of traditional funeral practice which continued before dramatic changes in funeral customs occurred within the society. My father, a Presbyterian minister in a rural area of *Andong*, died of cancer at the age of forty. His last days were spent at a Christian retreat centre near Seoul. When his death was approaching, my family members wanted to move him home but he died in a car on the way back home. The funeral was held at my grandparents' house in a remote village where my father was born and raised. As I, the chief mourner, was too young (14 years old), my grandfather who was an elder in his church was in charge of all the funeral arrangements. The funeral period lasted three days and the body of my father was buried on the foot of a nearby hill associated with his childhood memory. Burial was employed as a matter-of-course and cremation was not something that we could even think of at the time. There were three funeral ceremonies, each of which was conducted by my father's colleague ministers and attended by many people including his congregation. The three Christian ceremonies were held on the second day when my father's body was placed into a coffin, on the third day when the bier left home, and on the same day when the coffin was laid in a grave in the ground. Apart from the three Christian services, the funeral had no further elements which could be indicative of a Christian funeral: the rest of the funeral process involved various elements of traditional Confucian practice such as mourning garments. All this was in line with the common practice of Christian funerals at the time in that the venue of the funeral was home and

the disposal method for the corpse was burial on the one hand, and the funeral was a mixture of Christian services and Confucian practices on the other.

My paternal grandmother and grandfather died at the age of 78 and 85, in 1996 and in 2001, respectively. My grandparents brought up nine children, five sons and four daughters, in a remote village of the *Andong* region and the couple lived there long after all their children left. A couple of years before my grandmother died, my grandparents moved into the city of *Andong* to live with the family of my uncle, their eldest son. My grandmother died at my uncle's house and her funeral ceremonies were held there, while my grandfather died at my uncle's house and yet his funeral was held at a hospital funeral hall in the city. This reflects that holding a funeral at home was still popular by 1996 while holding a funeral at a hospital funeral hall became common by 2001 in this region. Apart from the venue of the funeral, the two funerals did not show much difference in terms of funeral arrangements in that both showed a mixture of Confucian and Christian elements. After the three-day funeral period, they both were buried at my family's graveyard in a remote area, not far from my father's grave. There had been little change in the major pattern among the three funerals in my paternal family over the last fifteen years and it reflects a very conservative culture of the region.

However, the funeral of my maternal grandfather who died in the summer of 2005 at the age of 84 was very different from the previous three. When the moment of death was approaching, my grandfather was moved into a nearby hospital and died there. His funeral was held at the funeral hall within the hospital and his body was cremated according to his wish. Until his death, his job had been a farmer in a village of the *Andong* area where his clan had lived for generations and he had served his church as an elder. During the last years of his life, my grandfather already prepared the way his

funeral would be held. He built a family columbarium in the vicinity of his village which could accommodate 120 body remains. My grandfather collected bones from the existing graves of his ancestors and his dead relatives which were scattered across the hilly areas in the region, put them into individual urns, and re-placed them in the family columbarium that he had made. He himself decided to be cremated and his ashes became the first case of cremated remains being placed into the columbarium. My grandfather's funeral was very innovative in many ways in the region where traditional Confucian burial customs were still prevalent.[67]

2. A Historical-Theological Analysis of Funerary Practice

Following those brief outlines, this section attempts a historical-theological analysis of changing funerary practices in contemporary Korea. The analysis is divided into three major themes: changing elements of funeral practice, continuing traditional elements, and the issue of the complex Confucian and Christian interplay in Christian funerary rites. While the first two themes concern the Korean funeral in general, the last focuses on Christian funerary practice in particular.

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[67] It should be noted that, in this case, the columbarium was used for both bone-remains from burial and ash-remains from cremation, a hybrid phenomenon which has emerged in the process of funerary change from burial to cremation. This indicates that the columbarium can be associated with burial as well.

1) Changing Funerary Practice: A Mirror of Social Change

Changing patterns in funerary practice

While traditional funeral practices remained almost unchanged until the 1980s, Korean society has witnessed sweeping changes in funeral culture over the last two decades. As already mentioned, two most prominent cases of those changes concern the venue of the funeral and the method of body disposal. While the majority of funerals were held at home with burial employed as the appropriate disposal method until the 1980s, at the beginning of the twenty-first century the majority of funerals are held at funeral halls, especially at hospital funeral halls, with cremation being employed for more than half of the total deaths. As cremation has become popular, various methods for the disposition of cremated remains have emerged.

The major patterns of Korean funerary practice have thus changed quite considerably during the last two decades and their general trends can be discerned as follows. Until the 1980s, the most common funerary practices was dying at home, holding the funeral at home, and then burying at a family graveyard or public cemetery. Apart from the fact that the public cemetery was introduced during the Japanese colonial period and was popularized during the late twentieth century, the basic forms of funerary practices until the 1980s were quite similar to those of traditional practices in Confucian Korea.

As already discussed, since the 1990s, holding funerals at the hospital mortuary has become increasingly popular across the country, having begun as a novel practice among the urban middle classes in the mid-1980s and then becoming widespread across the social classes during the 1990s. The main pattern of funeral practice during the

1990s was, therefore, dying at home or in hospital, holding funerals at the mortuary, and then burying at a family graveyard or public cemetery. But this pattern did not last long as cremation became popular from the late 1990s.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, most major hospitals equipped facilities for holding funerals so that the mortuary transformed into the funeral hall. Another new phenomenon at the turn of the new century is the emergence of private funeral halls. The greatest change in the funeral culture of contemporary Korea, however, is the popularization of cremation. As cremation has been widely employed, various methods for treating cremated remains have emerged. Those deposition methods include placing in various types of the columbarium such as the family columbarium and the columbarium run by religious organizations; scattering in memorial parks; and burying under trees which is being increasingly recognized as one of the best methods for the future by the government and the general public alike. Currently, therefore, the increasing pattern of funeral practices is dying in hospital, holding the funeral at the hospital funeral hall, cremation, and then deposition of cremated remains through a multiple choice.

The following table (Figure 7) summarizes such changing major patterns of funeral practice over the last two decades.

	Dying	**Funeral**	**Disposal Method**	
Until 1980s	home	home	Burial	
1990s	hospital	mortuary	Burial	
Since 2000	hospital	funeral hall	Cremation	deposition with multiple choice

< **Figure 7**: Changing funeral venues and disposal methods since the 1980s>

Hospital: the place of birth, death, and the funeral

While most Korean people were born and died at home in traditional society, today most of them are born and die in hospital. Hospital has emerged as a place where life begins and ends. During the year 2005, according to a recent report released by the National Statistics Office (2006a), 98.4 per cent of the total babies were born in hospital while 1.3 per cent were born at home. In the same year, 49.8 per cent of the dead died in hospital while 35.2 per cent died at home. As this report shows, almost all babies were born in hospital and about half of the dead were dying in hospital. To be sure, home is no longer the place where life begins and ends. It has been almost replaced by hospital.

In Korean family life, hospital has long been established as a place where the family first greets its new member. In 1995, for example, 96.7 per cent of babies were born in hospital and only 2.2 per cent were born at home. This trend has continued over the last ten years without any fluctuation, the rate of hospital birth having an ongoing mild increase. Hospital as a common place of dying, however, is a relatively new phenomenon. In 1995, for instance, only 22.8 per cent were dying in hospital while 66 per cent were dying at home. Home, as the place of dying, has been increasingly replaced by hospital over the last decade (National Statistics Office, 2006a).[68]

The phrase 'from womb to tomb' well captures both poetically and phonetically where our life begins and ends. In modern Korean life, hospital has emerged as a passage through which one has to move after spending the womb period and before entering the tomb period. Not only have hospitals become the common venue of birth and death, but also they have increasingly become the popular place of the funeral. In

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[68] The governmental document (National Statistics Office, 2006a), 'Statistics on Birth and Death in 2005', provides data since 1995 and hence it is useful to observe the changing patterns in relation to the issues over the last decade.

this regard, the cycle of modern Korean life can be plainly described as 'from hospital to hospital'. Hospitals now stand as an overpowering institution that governs the passage of life from birth to death.

Changing housing types and the funeral

One of the main reasons for the dramatic decrease in holding funerals at home concerns changing housing patterns followed by rapid urbanization over the last two decades. The popular type of housing has dramatically changed from detached house to apartment and it has significantly affected the pattern of funerary practice. Broadly speaking, there are three kinds of housing types in contemporary South Korea: detached house, terraced house, and apartment. Within the Korean context, a terraced house is a building of four storeys or lower, while apartment refers to a building higher than five storeys. The detached house was the major housing type in traditional Korea and the other two emerged during the late twentieth century followed by swift urbanization.[69]

From the late 1980s, apartments emerged as a popular housing type for the middle class in Seoul and other major cities – it shows a significant contrast from Western countries such as the United Kingdom where apartment has been a popular housing type for poor people in urban areas. The South Korean government promoted this type of housing as it was considered suitable for such a densely populated country: as mentioned earlier, South Korea is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Since then, apartment has increasingly become a popular type of housing in the urban area throughout the country. Today thirty-storey apartment blocks or even much

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[69] The semi-detached house, one of the most common housing types in the UK, is not really present in South Korea.

higher apartment buildings are common in urban areas. Now more than half of the total housing consist of apartments: according to a recent national census on the population and housing released by the National Statistics Office (2006b), 52.7 per cent of the houses were apartment while 32.2 per cent were detached house and 13.5 per cent were terraced house.

One of the major changes in the transition of popular housing types from detached house to apartment or terraced house concerns the disappearance of *madang*, a large outdoor space of the traditional house which could be translated into a garden. But Korean *madang* is different from, for example, British garden in terms of its major function. While British garden is mainly for growing plants, flowers, or vegetables, Korean *madang* is a place where all sorts of family and community outdoor events take place. Until a generation ago, for instance, the *madang* of a bride's house was a common venue for holding a wedding ceremony.

The rapid increase of the urban population during the late twentieth century has caused serious housing problems and resulted in the popularity of apartment buildings and terraced housing in which *madang* hardly exists. According to the above national census, the figure for both apartment and terraced house that have no *madang* reached some 66 per cent. This change in the type of housing directly affected funerary practice. It was in *madang* that all the funerary preparations and ceremonies took place in the past. While traditional houses in rural areas had large *madang* for holding the funeral, today urban housing with no *madang* does not have enough space for holding such big events as funerals. This condition of urban housing resulted in a rapid growth of funeral halls in major cities from the late 1990s. Therefore, we may identify the emergence of

new institutions like funeral halls in contemporary Korea as due to the loss of *madang* in urban housing.

DIY funerals versus package funerals[70]

One of the widely circulated weekly newspapers reported Mr. Han's frustrations (Weekly Hankook, 6 March 2001). Mr. Han had recently held his mother's funeral in a traditional way at his house with all the funerary arrangements managed by himself. As his mother died a natural death in her old age, Mr. Han had time to prepare her funeral in advance and he was quite sure of achieving a well-prepared event. But as the day came, things were quite different from what he had anticipated. As it was raining during the funeral period, for example, it was even more difficult to get things ready for burial at the gravesite which was far from his house, and the carrying of the coffin to the private gravesite on a remote hill was problematic. Mr. Han decided to move the coffin into the foot of the mountain by car and to carry it to the gravesite by bier. But finding people who would carry the bier was not easy because at least twenty male adults were needed.

The basic message of the newspaper reporting Mr. Han's case is how difficult it now is to hold a funeral in a traditional way. Mr. Han's case, however, is becoming less common as more families are choosing the partly or fully packaged funeral. What can be called a 'package funeral' is a new phenomenon in line with the popularity of funeral halls. Funeral halls provide not just a place for the funeral but also all the other funerary arrangements and materials such as embalming, the coffin, shroud, mourning garments, funeral food, and car. When using funeral halls, customers can choose the range of

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[70] DIY: This familiar abbreviation is used for 'Do It Yourself'.

package from partial to full arrangement according to their need. One can hold a funeral with no trouble if one gives the dead body and a certain amount of money to a funeral hall. The last rite of passage is becoming like using a vending machine: as soon as one puts in a dead body and the required amount of money, the funeral can be processed. With busy urban lifestyle and changing family structure, the demand for such package funerals is likely to increase.

If modern funerals can be described as package funerals, traditional funerals can be called 'DIY (Do-It-Yourself) funerals'. As in Mr. Han's case, the traditional funeral was all prepared and processed by the bereaved family at home, while modern funerals are arranged by professional workers from the funerary business. The role of the bereaved family was more active in traditional funerals, whereas the bereaved family members cannot do much in the contemporary funeral. Although it is true that the package funeral lessens the physical and psychological burden on the bereaved family in preparing and holding the funeral, it is an irony that the bereaved family members become bystanders in the actual procedure of contemporary funerals. This transition from the DIY funeral to the package funeral typifies the changing family and social structures in modern times. It is also a modern social phenomenon in parallel with commercialism, consumerism, and capitalism.

2) Continuing Traditional Practices in Modern Funerals

For a deeper grasp of traditional funerals and of more recent development, one aspect of Korean behavior needs some explanation and that is *pungsu* or geomancy.

Pungsu: Korean geomancy

Homer Hulbert (1863-1949), one of the earliest American Protestant missionaries, stated in his 1902 book on Korean religions: 'if you want to know what a man's religion is, you must watch him when he is in trouble. Then his genuine religion will come out, if he has any' (Hulbert, 1969 [1906]: 404).[71] He then concluded that 'the underlying religion of the Korean' was 'spirit-worship' by which he meant religious practices associated with 'animism, shamanism, fetishism and nature-worship'.

Perhaps another religious practice which should have been included in the list of spirit-worship is belief in ancestor-spirits and geomancy which was prevalent among ordinary people. When something bad continued happening to a family, one of the first things the family members would do was to question whether they did anything wrong in choosing gravesites for their ancestors: also they would go and inspect their ancestors' graves to see whether something wrong had happened to them. This reflects the popularity of belief in *pungsu*, Korean geomancy (*fengsui* in Chinese), along with popular belief in ancestor-spirits. Influenced by *pungsu*, it was a common belief in traditional Korea that the location and state of ancestors' graves could affect the fate of their descendants.

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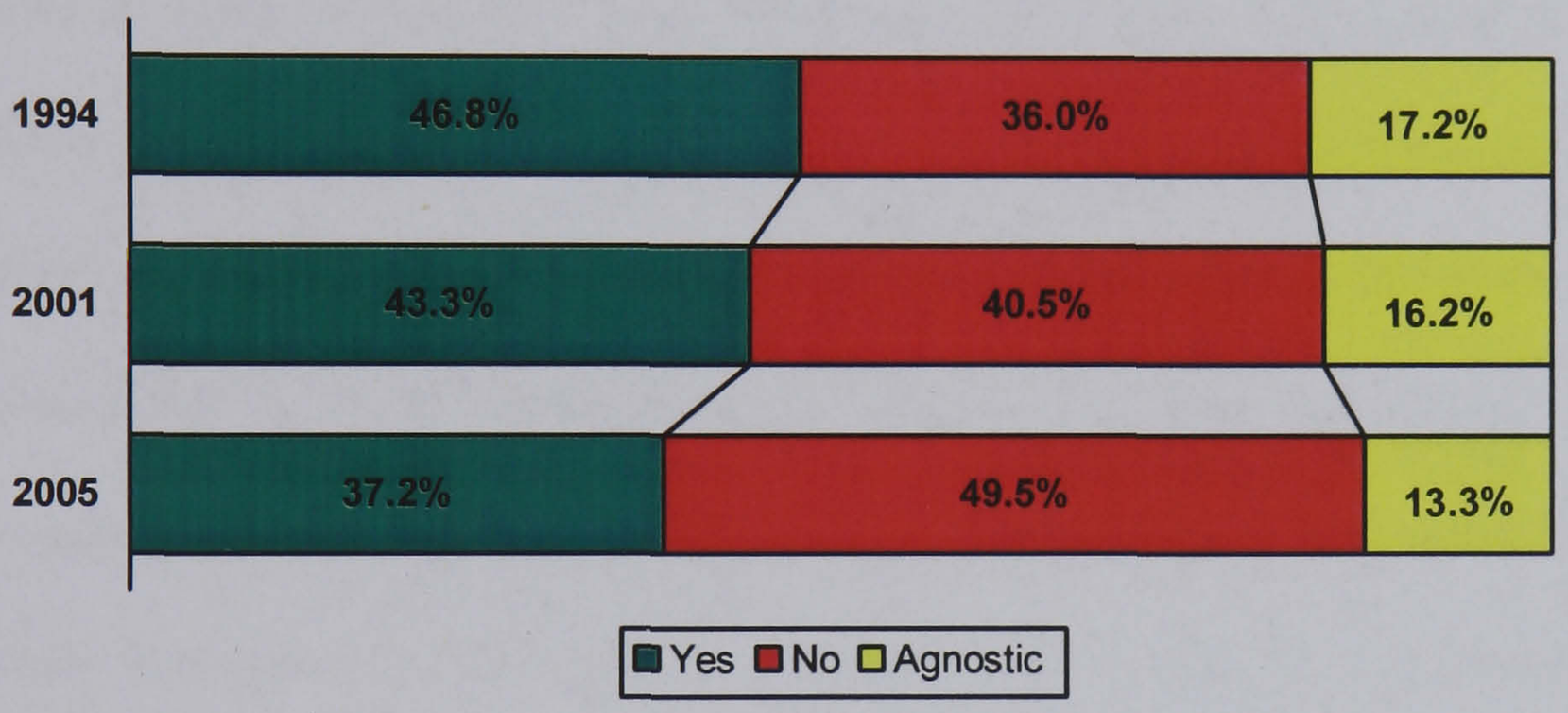
[71] Homer B. Hulbert graduated from Dartmouth College and Union Theological Seminary, New York. As an ordained Methodist minister, he lived in Korea for twenty one years from 1886 to 1907 serving the country as a missionary educator, editor, publisher, linguist, and sometimes diplomat. After the enforcement of the Japanese protectorate against which he had struggled, he was forced to leave Korea in 1907. He continued writing and lecturing about Korea in his home country and worked for the YMCA in France during the First World War. In 1949, at the age of eighty six, he returned to Korea at the invitation of the Korean President. He, however, died in a Seoul hospital just a week after his arrival back in Korea. He was buried in the Seoul Foreigners' Cemetery and his epitaph, spoken by himself, reads: 'I would rather be buried in Korea than in Westminster Abbey' (Hulbert, 1969: 4).

The theory of geomancy was introduced into Korea from China during the *United Silla* period (676-935 C.E.) and it soon became popularized in the country. While, in China and Korea, geomancy concerns both building and grave sites, in Japan it deals only with building sites (Janelli, 1982: 72). It is well-known that the first king of the Confucian dynasty chose Seoul as the new capital city according to the *pungsu* theory: since 1394, Seoul has become the capital city of the country. Before becoming the capital, Seoul was little more than a desolate village located in a river basin surrounded by mountains (Hyo-Jae Lee, 1971: 15). During the Confucian dynasty, the practice of *pungsu* was also widespread in choosing ancestors' gravesites as it was viewed as a way of fulfilling the Confucian virtue of filial duty. That is why the Korean people were so keen on choosing burial sites: they could even delay the funeral until they could find a good burial ground; they would go anywhere if they could find an auspicious site. It is well-known that, during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), the Japanese colonial government built its major buildings on auspicious sites according to the theory of *pungsu* while destroying existing Korean buildings which were built on auspicious sites. The practice of *pungsu* was thus deeply embedded in history, life, and death in traditional Korea.

The influence of *pungsu* has also continued in contemporary Korea. An interesting statistical report was provided by Korea Gallup which conducted nationwide surveys on funeral culture in 1994, 2001, and 2005, respectively (Korea Gallup, 2006b). In these three surveys, Korea Gallup asked a question on belief in the theory of *pungsu*. The question was whether they believed the statement that 'if ancestors are buried in an auspicious site, their descendants will prosper in this world'. The percentage of the respondents who said that they believed it decreased from 47 per cent in 1994 to 37 per

cent in 2005, while that of those who did not believe increased from 36 per cent in 1994 to 49 per cent in 2005. The figure of the respondents who showed agnostic attitudes decreased from 17 per cent in 1994 to 13 per cent in 2005 (see Figure 8 below). In all three surveys, within the group believing the geomancy theory, a higher tendency was shown in the case of women, people aged over 50, the lower education level, and rural residents.

Figure 8: Belief in geomancy 1994-2005



Another example of the continuing popularity of geomancy in South Korea concerns its current practice by leading politicians. During major electoral campaigns, the media commonly report candidates who have moved their ancestors' graves to more auspicious sites. It is well known among Koreans, for instance, that the former president, Kim Dae-Jung, moved his family graves from his home island in *South Cholla* province to an auspicious site near Seoul before his 1995 election campaign. His new family grave site was chosen by probably the best-known geomancer in the country, Sogu Son, who predicted that the site was auspicious enough to make Kim the president of South Korea (Hong-key Yoon, 2007: 212).

Although the above survey results suggest that the number of people who believe the theory of *pungsu* has gradually decreased over the last decade, it is fair to say that *pungsu* is still influential in the Korean mind in general affairs and, more specifically, in funerary practice. Indeed, belief in *pungsu* is an underlying force for the continuing practice of burial.[72]

Boisterous funerals

According to the Confucian tradition, to hold a funeral in as splendid a way as possible was of utmost importance for the bereaved family, as it was regarded as a way of showing respect towards the deceased as well as of saving face among the living. In this regard, one of the distinctive aspects of the traditional Korean funeral was its boisterous environment and this is commonly the case in contemporary funerary practice as well. A boisterous atmosphere is considered to help the bereaved family overcome the sense of bereavement. Perhaps three elements of the Korean funeral particularly contribute to this boisterous atmosphere: viz. the large size of funeral attendance, funeral food, and Korean card games.

In general, the funeral is the biggest event in Korean family life as it involves the attendance of the largest number of family members and visitors. The place where the funeral is held is almost always full of people throughout the funerary period, not to mention during particular ceremonies in the case of the religious funeral. Funeral attendance is considered to be an index of how virtuous the deceased had been in their life-time. As Korean funeral customs do not encourage quiet and calm funerals, a large

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[72] For studies on geomancy in other East Asian countries, see Freedman (1968), Feuchtwang (1974), Brunn (1996), Kalland (1996), and Tsu (1997).

number of visitors invariably results in a noisy and lively atmosphere, which is especially true of the funeral held outdoors. In fact, the more boisterous environment, the better the funeral.

Along with this large number of funeral attendance, another element contributing to this boisterous atmosphere is funeral food. Whenever visitors arrive, they are served food which includes alcoholic drinks, though in the case of Protestant funerals non-alcoholic drinks are generally provided. The place where funerals are held, whether at home or funeral halls, is roughly divided into two areas: the first area is a room which can be called a 'memorial room', where the coffin is placed until the funeral day – in the case of a funeral at a hospital funeral hall, the coffin is kept in a special refrigerator in a separate place and, instead, a photo of the deceased and wreaths are placed in this room; another area is usually bigger and can be called a 'reception room', where tables are set and visitors are invited for funeral food. Visitors go to the first area to express their condolences to the chief mourner and other bereaved family members, and then they are invited to the reception room.

The final element contributing to boisterous funerals has to do with Korean card games. The chief mourner and other bereaved family members cannot expect to have much sleep during the funeral period. This is partly because the memorial room is not supposed to be left unattended because visitors could arrive at any time during the funerary period. It is customary for the close friends of the bereaved family to stay with the family during the nights. And it is commonly observed that these friends and other overnight visitors play card games at night. This is a very distinctive element of the Korean funeral which some Koreans have criticized and over which many foreigners have expressed their curiosity.

In April 1996, the Severance Hospital of Yonsei University, one of the leading medical centres as well as the first Protestant-founded hospital in the country, announced a revolutionary policy on the use of its funeral hall, the Yonsei Funeral Hall.[73] Seeking to improve some existing funeral customs, the policy adopted the ban on five activities within the premises of the hospital funeral hall: viz. playing Korean card games, serving food to visitors, drinking alcohol, visiting the bereaved family after midnight, and ordering food from restaurants outside the hospital. By banning these activities, the hospital aimed to establish a quiet and frugal funeral culture. Indeed, using this funeral hall was to be cheaper than other funeral halls. The Yonsei Funeral Hall was the only one in the country to ban such funeral-related activities and it became well-known for its 5 NOs policy: that is, no alcohol, no cigarette, no *go-stop* (the Korean card game), no overnight, and no food within the premises.

The hospital, however, is reconsidering lifting the ban and it attracted national attention as almost all major newspapers reported this news in spring 2006. The main reason for the reverse of this policy was because the hospital funeral hall has long been in serious deficit. The number of customers has gradually decreased since 1996 when the hospital announced the ban on five activities and recently, on average, some 120 funerals per month were held in the hospital funeral hall. This means that only four or five out of the total fourteen sets of funeral rooms have been used on a daily basis. Also there have been constant complaints from many customers about the hospital's strict ban on five activities. This case typifies the continuing aspects of the traditional practice

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[73] The Severance Hospital of Yonsei University, the oldest hospital of western style in the country, was established in 1885 by an American missionary medical doctor.

of boisterous funeral culture: a calm and frugal funeral seems to be incompatible with the Korean mentality.

Traditional family graveyard and the new family columbarium

As already made clear, until recently, most of the dead in South Korea were buried in a family graveyard or public cemetery. Followed by the recent popularity of cremation, however, the turn of the twenty-first century witnessed the rising number of columbaria run by local authorities and religious institutions, 54 columbaria of 1995 becoming 126 by 2005. Alongside this development, an innovative form of the family columbarium has emerged. One may say that the public columbarium is equivalent to the public cemetery while the family columbarium is a counterpart of the family graveyard.

In 1998 the newly established Korean National Council for Promoting Cremation launched a new form of the family columbarium or *Gajok Napgolmyo* (Teather & Rii, 2001: 1489-1492). Depending upon its size and structure, this new type of the family columbarium can generally accommodate between ten and forty urns of cremated remains. Interestingly, the exterior of this family columbarium is almost identical to that of traditional graves, with the distinctive shape of a burial mound being the dominant characteristic of its appearance. While the traditional grave was usually a home for one body, this new family columbarium could be a home for all the family members. The family columbarium is, therefore, a hybrid phenomenon of traditional burial and modern cremation.



<**Figure 9**: Traditional family graveyard>



<**Figure 10**: New family columbarium>

The two pictures of Figure 9 and 10 are examples of a traditional family graveyard and a new family columbarium respectively. A brief explanation of each example is in order. The overall shape of the traditional family graveyard resembles a family tree. In most cases of traditional burial, a married couple were buried next to each other. The earlier generations were buried on the upper hill, while the same generations were buried on the same level of ground. While the traditional grave arrangement reveals close family ties with rigid hierarchy, the new family columbarium shows a rather different aspect of its arrangement in that cremated remains tend to be located in order

of death. The new family columbarium also has resulted in even closer family ties among the dead as they are placed within the same grave. In this particular case of the second picture (Figure 10), the grave has been filled from the left side to the right and half of the grave is still empty. As this type of grave is a very recent phenomenon, most of the already filled compartments are not likely to belong to recently dead family members but are the remains of ancestors: the family members have collected them from their original graves and replaced them in this new grave.

As cremation has become popular, various methods have been employed for the treatment of cremated remains. We have already noted the common practices of placing remains in a public columbarium, scattering on a favorite spot, and placing under a tree in a memorial park. Against the background of such a multiple choice, disposing cremated remains in this new type of the family columbarium has become increasingly popular since its introduction. For example, a company which has provided this type of the family columbarium successfully sold about 1,300 graves during January 2006 alone (Kyonghyang Newspaper, 25 June 2006). Its growing popularity reveals the symbolic importance of maintaining family ties between the living and the dead as well as the significance of the traditional shape of grave to many Koreans. The rationale motivating the popular option for this new family columbarium lies in its convenience for maintaining regular ritual visits to ancestors' graves. There has been the recognition, both at the state and family levels, of the need to establish a more efficient method to use space for the dead and for ancestral rituals at gravesites, and the new form of the family columbarium has met such demands in many ways. The popular transition from the traditional family graveyard to the new family columbarium shows a distinctive

interplay of traditional and modern values, and continuing traditional ideas and practice in a new cremation-based funeral culture.

3) Christian Funerals: An Amalgamation of Confucian and Christian Practices

Christian funerary practices in Confucian Korea

When the Christian (Catholic) Church was first established in Korea in the late eighteenth century, the country was at its zenith as a Confucian state. Confucian family and social values were deeply embedded in the lives of people from all the social classes. Despite regional variations and class differences as well as influences from other religious traditions such as Shamanism and Buddhism, the basic format of Korean rites of passage was largely shaped by the Confucian tradition. Indeed, the manual for family rituals written by the great Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi (1130-1200) and its later development by Korean Confucian scholars played an essential role in establishing and maintaining Confucian mores in family and social life. This means that, as far as funerary rites were concerned, the Confucian funeral based on burial was the most prevalent practice although other forms of funerals such as water burial and open burial existed in some remote regions: Buddhist cremation was already extinct by the time when Christianity was introduced.

Unlike the case of ancestral rites, which will be discussed in the next chapter, the early Catholic Church did not experience much conflict over funerary matters with Confucian society, mainly because its Christian funerary practice was also based on burial. One prime example can be drawn from the case of Mr. Sang-Yoon Kwon who

was beheaded in 1791 because he refused to perform Confucian ancestral rites during his mother's funeral, a case which will be further discussed in the following chapter. As part of the local Confucian elite, Mr. Kwon was probably well aware of the complicated procedures of Confucian funerary rites. He followed the Confucian way of funerary rites except for the elements of ancestral rites which was banned by the Church order. The Catholic Church did not have any doctrinal and practical objections to Confucian funerary rites and, therefore, early Catholics continued practising them.

The Protestant Church, established a century later than its Catholic counterpart, witnessed more moderate situations in relation to mission activities in general and death rituals in particular. When Protestantism was first introduced in the late nineteenth century, the power of the Confucian government was dramatically waning and Confucian social structure was about to collapse. The country was in huge internal turmoil and the situation was precipitated by constant Western threats to open the country's door. Benefited by this national crisis at the turn of the twentieth century, the Protestant Church could take root in the society without any serious persecutions or oppressions from the existing authorities. In fact, from its early stage, the Protestant Church gained a rather positive impression from some leading political leaders and intellectuals as it was viewed as a viable religion for the country's future.

As will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, however, the issue of ancestral rites did cause significant moral and religious dilemmas for many early Protestants. But, as far as the funeral was concerned, Protestant Christians, like the Catholic counterpart, had much less conflict with existing practices. Rather, as mentioned earlier, Christian funerals from the early stage showed a mixture of Confucian and Christian elements. The following is one of the earliest records on the

Presbyterian funeral published in 1898, and it illustrates what the early Korean Christian funeral was like (Christ Newspaper, 6 January 1898):

> Mr. H, a deacon of *Saemunan* Church in Seoul, lost his father and the funeral was organized by the congregation. On the day of burial, the church members gathered together at Mr. H's house and they carried bier into the burial site. The bier was not a Korean one but an imitation of American bier, which looked much simpler and more elegant. While carrying the bier into the burial site, the church members were singing hymns.

This short report itself could be a subject of cultural analysis particularly in terms of what it says and what it does not say about the funeral. It reports what was noticeable to the reporter while it is silent about what was too obvious to him: in a sense, it reveals more than it says. Without going further, we have to be content with the observation that this report seems to focus on new elements in a Christian funeral while it does not mention other existing practices. It highlights three elements of a Christian funeral different from contemporary Confucian funerary practice. First is the important role that the congregation played in this funeral. The funeral itself was organized by the congregation and the members of the congregation carried the bier into the burial site. If it was not a Christian funeral, the funeral was organized and performed by the members of the local community. That is to say, in Christian life, the church community replaced the role of the local community, a key social unit in Confucian society. Second is the use of the American style of bier. Perhaps early Korean Christians saw an American bier at the funerals of American missionaries and they made a bier for themselves in imitation of their American teachers. The reporter's comment that it looked much simpler and more elegant bears his own cultural interpretation. It is, however, not

certain whether the use of the American style of bier became popular among early Christians. The last new element is hymn singing on the way to the burial site, which was very different from contemporary practice in which a series of special folk songs for the funeral was sung by bier carriers and a lead singer.

The following is a report on one of the earliest Methodist funeral in 1897, which shows similar aspects to the above Presbyterian case (quoted in Myung-Keun Choi, 1997: 39):

> Our fellow Christian friend, Mr. Sohn, who was attending *Dalsung* Church has been a Christian for four years... He died happily on March 12, 1897... All his Christian friends went to his home and sang hymns there. The expenses for the funeral and the coffin were provided by the church. Sixteen days after he died, his coffin was brought into the church in Yongsan and he was buried. Rev. Lee, the American Methodist minister, went with them and officiated at the burial. About sixty believers followed the funeral procession, singing hymns.

Likewise, this report shows that the congregation played an important role in the funeral. In this case, even the expenses for the funeral and the coffin were provided by the church. It must have been quite impressive for the local people to see some sixty members of the church following the funeral procession while singing hymns. If it was a non-Christian funeral, the funeral procession was led by bier carriers singing special folk songs for the funeral and followed by the bereaved family wailing with distinctive tunes and other people from village. Another new practice mentioned in this case is that the coffin was brought into the church before the funeral procession began and a minister officiated at the burial service.

These two cases indicate that the early Protestant funerals did not involve any serious conflict with the family or the local community because of their Christian or Western elements of funerary practice. They exemplify a peaceful adaptation of Christian or Western elements into the existing practice of Confucian funerals.

Confucian format with Christian elements

The phrase 'Confucian format with Christian elements' characterizes not only the early Korean Christian practice of the funeral but also that of modern times. While both the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church had been very hostile to the practice of Confucian ancestral rites – although the Catholic approach has significantly changed since the 1930s, they both have maintained a rather tolerant stance on existing funerary practices. As a result, the so-called Christian practice of the funeral has not been significantly different from that of indigenous Confucian practice. Christians simply removed some traditional elements which looked superstitious or non-biblical, and then embraced Christian elements such as Christian services for some important moments during the funeral. This has been a continuing pattern of the Christian funeral from the outset, and hence the Christian funeral can be described as an amalgamation of Confucian and Christian practices or, to be more precise, as simplified Confucian funerary rites with Christian elements.

The Christian Church has never had a single standard form of the funeral. In practice, the whole process of funerals has varied, for instance, depending on region (i.e. whether in urban areas or rural areas) and the religious background of individual families (i.e. whether the family had a strong Confucian, Buddhist or Shamanistic tradition). Although, since the early period of Korean church history, there have been

various attempts to establish the standard practice of the Christian funeral, for instance, by publishing funerary liturgy, the funeral with a mixture of Confucian and Christian elements has continued until today. Funerary liturgies have not been sufficiently comprehensive as they mainly list the recommended elements for a funeral but do not specify, for example, how to prepare a funeral, what to wear for mourning, and how to perform the whole process of a funeral, against the background of existing Confucian funerary practice. This situation has caused significant confusions for many ordinary Christians, and posed an ongoing challenge for church ministers who have to officiate at the funerals of the members of their congregation.

A continuing struggle to establish a Christian funeral culture

In recent years, the issue of establishing a desirable Christian funeral culture has attracted considerable attention from theologians, ministers, and ordinary Christians. Some examples can be drawn from the growing number of Master's theses on the issue at theological seminaries and an increasing number of conferences in recent years. Perhaps this renewed interest has been enhanced by the recent rapid increase of cremation. While most people have agreed on the importance and urgency of the issue, however, there has not been any agreement on how to resolve the issue, particularly within the Protestant Church.

The Catholic Church seems to be more advanced on the matter. In October 2002, the Korean Catholic Church produced the *Catholic Liturgy for Funerals* for which the bishops' committee had worked for the past thirteen years. This is a significant achievement in that the book is the first Catholic official funerary liturgy which seriously embraces Korean indigenous elements. Due to its unified church structure, the

new liturgy is expected to affect the practice of ordinary Catholics more profoundly and efficiently.

Although the Protestant Church has not developed the standard practice of the funeral, a general pattern of Protestant funerary rites can be discerned. Existing Protestant funerary rites are based on burial and generally consist of four services: viz. services performed at the moment of death (*Imjong yebe*); when the body is placed in the coffin (*Ipgwan yebe*); when the coffin leaves for the burial ground (*Balin yebe*); and finally, when the coffin is placed in a grave (*Hagwan yebe*). In the case of cremation, the first three services are the same and the fourth service is replaced by the one at the crematorium followed by another service at the columbarium or at the other final resting place.

3. A Sociological-Anthropological Analysis of Funerary Practice

We now move on to a sociological and anthropological analysis of funerary practices. In what follows, they will be viewed from the concepts of embodiment, exchange, and material culture. As mentioned earlier, this study has increasingly recognized that these concepts, which are also applicable for understanding other areas of social life, are particularly useful for exploring various phenomena surrounding funerals.

Changing funerary practice: an embodiment of changing social values

As we have seen, Korean society has witnessed a dramatic change in major patterns of the funeral procedure over the last one or two decades. Traditional funerary practice which continued until very recently was dying at home, holding the funeral at home, and burying the corpse at a family graveyard, while a new growing pattern of the funeral procedure at the turn of the twenty-first century is dying in hospital, holding the funeral at a funeral hall, cremating the corpse, and placing the ashes at a columbarium or other appropriate places. Such changes in funerary practice embody changes in living conditions, family structure, and social values in relation to death.

Because of the persisting traditional idea that dying away from home was a bad death, people were very keen on dying at home until recently. By 1985, for instance, some 83 per cent of the dead died at home while only 9 per cent died in hospital. In 2005, however, some 50 per cent of the dead died in hospital with 35 per cent dying at home. Statistics show a more speedy increase of dying in hospital and a more rapid decrease of dying at home since the year 2000 (National Statistics Office, 2006a). Indeed, the traditional idea that dying away from home constitutes a bad death no longer seems to hold. Other practical reasons took over the long-lasted Confucian idea and now it is common that people move the dying person from home to a nearby hospital.

There have been even more dramatic changes in the venue of funerals over the last decade. Due to the traditional practice of dying at home, holding funerals at home was a matter-of-course. In fact, home was considered as the only proper place for holding funerals. According to statistics released by Korea Gallup (2006b), by as recently as 1994, some 72 per cent of the funeral were held at home, while 23 per cent were held at hospital funeral halls. By 2005, however, only 7 per cent of funerals were held at home

while some 89 per cent were held at funeral halls, either at hospital funeral halls or at private funeral halls. These figures show that there has been a clear shift in the venue of the funeral from home to funeral halls over the last ten years or so. No longer is home considered as the only proper place for the funeral.

Another significant change in funerary practice concerns cremation. Due to the cultural and historical reasons discussed earlier, the social perception of cremation was very negative until as recently as the mid-1990s. For the majority of Koreans, the association of the Confucian idea of filial duty and burial practice was so deeply ingrained that cremating the bodies of one's parents was regarded as unfilial behavior. That was why cremation was employed largely for such cases as early deaths, suicide, or deaths caused by serious accidents. Over the last ten years or so, however, the social perception of cremation has dramatically changed, with it coming to be regarded as not just a positive method of disposal but also a necessary one. The nationwide demand for a more efficient use of the limited land has necessitated the popularization of cremation and resulted in the adjustment to the traditional identification of filial fulfilment with burial practice. The growth of the nationwide rate of cremation is an index of the changing public perception of cremation: the national cremation rate which remained below 20 per cent until 1993 had increased to 52.6 per cent by 2005.

Funeral hall, crematorium, and columbarium: embodiments of multi-religious society

One of the most significant ramifications of these recent changes in funerary practice is that the funeral has increasingly moved from the domestic arena into the public domain. In the past, the funeral was a homely and private affair conducted mainly at home by family members. But it has now become a public event because part or all of the

procedures take place at funeral-related public institutions such as the funeral hall, the crematorium and the columbarium.

One significant feature of these funeral-related public institutions is that they reflect a multi-religious social reality. In many cases, for instance, funeral halls and crematoria have separate service rooms according to the religious affiliation of the customers. It can be commonly observed that a Buddhist funeral is taking place in one corner of the funeral hall while in other corners Protestant or other religious funerals are taking place. The internal structure of many public columbaria is also divided into several areas according to religion. A common classification is four-fold: Buddhist, Protestant, Catholic, and non-religious areas. This religiously diverse scene at death-related institutions reflects the multi-religious reality of contemporary Korea.

Mourning garments and periods: embodiments of the relationship to the deceased

In traditional Korea, mourning garments and periods varied depending on the kin relationship between the deceased and the mourner. That is, bereaved family members and relatives wore different mourning garments during the funeral and had different mourning periods according to their relationship to the deceased. This complicated system of mourning garments and periods was provided by the manuals of Confucian family rituals.[74]

According to Confucian funerary rites, bereaved family members should wear mourning garments from the moment when the body of the deceased was placed in a coffin. Mourning garments were prepared for all the paternal relatives who were related

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[74] For studies on traditional funerary rites which contain more detailed descriptions of the differing practice of mourning garments and periods, see Landis (1896), Dredge (1987), and Kwang-Kyu Lee (1989).

within eight degrees of kinship (*palchon*) and for some maternal and other relatives such as son-in-law. Those mourning garments were made of slightly bleached hemp and consisted of four main parts in the case of men's full apparel: a cap, a coat, leggings, and straw shoes. There were commonly five degrees of wearing mourning garments determined by the relationship between the deceased and mourners. For example, the sons and firstborn grandsons of the deceased wore the full apparel, while the nephews and cousins of the deceased wore the cap and the leggings but not the coat or the straw shoes. Relatives of the fifth and sixth degree according to the Korean system of measuring kin distance (*chonsu*) – first cousins once removed and second cousins – wore only the cap. The groups of kinsmen belonging to the seventh and eighth degree relatives had to attend the funeral but were not required to wear mourning garments.

Likewise, the mourning period varied depending on the relationship with the deceased and it was divided into five kinds, viz. three years, one year, nine months, five months, and three months. The followings are some examples. The mourning period for parents' death was three years, the longest mourning period. It was one year for paternal grandparents' death while it was five months for maternal grandparents' death. It was also one year for the death of wife, brother (five months for brother's wife), and sister (if the sister was married, it was nine months).[75]

The complicated system of mourning garments and mourning periods embodies the mourner's relationship to the deceased. Simply by looking at mourning garments, the visitor to a Confucian funeral would easily identify the mourners' relationship to the deceased. It was also an embodiment of the Confucian ideal of family structure and

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[75] For useful charts showing different mourning periods according to paternal relatives, maternal relatives, or wife's relatives, see Landis (1896: 340-41).

order. In a way, a much clearer family order was established during the funeral as different mourning garments and mourning periods were employed according to the mourners' relationship to the deceased. For ordinary people during Confucian Korea, however, it was not easy to keep all the details of the complicated system. In the case of a parent's death, for instance, ideal practice was to wear mourning garments for three years and to live next to the grave in a hut during that time, being away from normal social activities. In practice, however, few were able to make such sacrifices.

In modern days, the Confucian principle has continued but its practice has been much simplified in terms of mourning garments and periods. For example, it has been unusual for mourners to continue to wear mourning attire after the funeral. Instead, the sons and daughters of the deceased often pin small patches of the hemp cloth to their regular clothing as an indication of mourning, while continuing to participate in normal social activities. But still it is not difficult to identify the mourners' relationship to the deceased by looking at their mourning garments during the funeral, as far as the chief mourner and the direct member of the bereaved family are concerned.

Death of exchange?

One of the most defining aspects of social life is the pervasiveness of exchange activities. From the moment of birth to that of death, our life is a continuous process of material as well as non-material exchange. Our life is structured with an immense system of visible and invisible exchange and the term 'society' is a useful concept to refer to this ubiquitous system. The birth of an individual member of a society involves an increase in the network of this exchange system while his or her death incurs the loss of an agent of the system.

Death, however, does not mark a complete end of exchange: death is its partial end. Of course, death signifies the termination of exchange activities in the ordinary sense and yet it is also a beginning of a new dimension of exchange, for at death, the deceased moves to the world of the memory of the living. He or she no longer lives in the world of physical reality but continues to live in the world of memory. At death, material and tangible exchange with the deceased ends but symbolic and non-material exchange continues after death. This symbolic exchange is unilateral rather than bilateral in that it happens through the exercise of remembering on the part of the living. Death, therefore, is an end of the cycle of material and bilateral exchange on the one hand, and yet it involves a shift to symbolic and unilateral exchange on the other. In a different context, Robert Hertz once described death as 'not a mere destruction but a transition' (1960: 48) and his description also holds true when viewed from the perspective of exchange.

Exchange among the living mediated by the deceased

While funerals mark a ceremonial end of bilateral exchange between the deceased and the living, it is a venue for the continuation of such exchange among the living. The funeral is, in fact, a very special occasion of exchange among the living. As death is the universal fact of life which everybody will encounter sooner or later, funerals provide the living with a very strong sense of communal solidarity: to apply Victor Turner's influential concept (1969), the funeral is a social space of experiencing *communitas*. This sense of communal solidarity is expressed in various forms of exchange activities including verbal, emotional and material exchanges. These exchanges during the funeral period tend to be more intense than those in other occasions in the course of life.

The observation of funerals made by Raymond Firth also serves this line of discussion, when he states: 'a funeral rite is a social rite *par excellence*. Its ostensible object is the dead person, but it benefits not the dead, but the living' (1951: 64). Although Firth did not explicitly use the term 'exchange', his observation also can be understood as emphasizing the exchange aspect of the funeral. One saying of Korean society which implies the social significance of funerals is that: 'you must go to the funeral of somebody you know even if you did not attend other ceremonial events in their life'. It reveals the ways in which the funeral is perceived by the general public, one of which is that attending the funeral is a very significant activity in Korean social life. Funerals, in Korea and elsewhere, are, then, a social phenomenon of *communitas* which involves intense exchange activities among the living.

Condolence money

One of the most visible exchange phenomena of Korean funerals concerns 'condolence money'. When used at funerals this 'material' becomes condolence money while it becomes congratulatory money when used at weddings or other festive events. Giving money to the family concerned for special occasions is, in fact, a prevalent phenomenon in Korean life. Accordingly, when people visit the bereaved family during the funeral period, they bring condolence money. After putting cash or cheque into a white envelope, people generally write a short expression of condolence in Chinese or Korean characters on the front side of the envelope and, on its back side, they write their name, address, and the amount of the money. At the entrance to the funeral site, whether it is within the funeral hall or home, there is either a special box or a person from the bereaved family to receive condolence money. On site or later, the bereaved family

records all the money they received in a special book of condolence money, which will be kept for future reference for various purposes.

The amount of money basically depends on one's relationship to the deceased or the bereaved family as well as one's financial circumstances. Generally speaking, the closer relationship, the larger amount of the money. In many cases, however, it also depends on how much money the bereaved family or the deceased gave at previous ceremonial events of one's family. As each family keeps the records of condolence or congratulatory money, it is easy to trace the previous records of the money given by a particular family.

The practice of giving condolence or congratulatory money is a modern transformation of the traditional practice of helping each other among neighbors. In traditional society, special familial events such as weddings and funerals required large sums of money and labor, and neighbors tried to help the family concerned by giving money or by offering labor. Although many families in modern times do not need such material help from their neighbors any more, the practice has continued with more emphasis on its symbolic aspect. By exchanging condolence or congratulatory money, people continue to confirm the level of their relationship. This form of monetary exchange embodies the history of relationships between the families. In this social context, the funeral becomes an important occasion for continuing the chain of such exchanges.

Materials for funerals

One of the most prominent features in Korean funerals, perhaps in other societies' funerals as well, concerns the variety and abundance of materials. From the beginning

to the end, a funeral requires numerous materials so that it would be almost impossible to make an entire inventory of funerary materials. To enumerate only some of them which are widely present in Korean funerals, they are the death notice, shroud, mourning garments, a photo of the deceased, the coffin, wreath, condolence money, food, *hwatu* (the name of the Korean card game), urn (in the case of cremation), grave stone, and vehicle (car or bier).

Perhaps one way to classify them is to question whether a particular material is being used with a prime focus upon the dead or the living. For example, the shroud and the coffin are materials that are used to treat the dead, while mourning garments and food are used to serve the living. Although funerary materials could be classified into two groups, they are not mutually exclusive, at least in some cases when some materials may belong to both groups. For instance, the grave stone, as an identity-marker of a grave, can be understood as serving both the dead and the living.

Corpse: the primary material for the funeral

The funeral is a series of ceremonial activities involved in the treatment of the dead body. It starts when a living body turns into a dead body and it finishes when the dead body disappears from the space of the living. In practice, the starting and ending points of a funeral are often blurred. To be sure, however, the presence of the corpse is the very reason for the existence of the funeral. In this regard, it can be said that the dead body is the 'primary material' for the funeral. Other various materials are employed to assist the treatment of the primary material and they can be called the 'secondary materials'. Maybe the primary-secondary division is another way of classifying funerary materials, one that is relatively straightforward.

Each society has its own customs in relation to how to deal with the primary material until it is laid in its final resting place, as well as what to employ in order to assist the treatment of the primary material. Perhaps one of the most important factors in shaping the pattern of such practice is the method of body disposal. Whether the funeral involves burial or cremation affects the process of the treatment of the primary material and the details of the secondary materials. In traditional Korea, for instance, there was a highly sophisticated rule of what to put in with and where to put objects alongside the body within the coffin, a practice which was established on the condition that the body would be buried. The popular practice of cremation in recent years, however, has resulted in a significant change to this traditional practice: it is strictly forbidden to put other materials apart from the body into coffin. Mainly because of the issue of air pollution, the crematorium is keen on minimizing unnecessary gas emission while cremating and it has resulted in a strict regulation on putting any other materials within the coffin.

Material addition followed by ritual addition

Despite the variety of funerary practice in terms of the primary-secondary material, one universal practice concerns what might be called a 'material addition'. When a funeral begins, there is only a dead body, the primary material. During the funeral period, other materials are added to the body one by one: first, a shroud is added to the body, then the coffin, and finally the grave in the case of burial. Cremation involves a slightly extended order of added materials: body – shroud – coffin – urn – columbarium or other facilities for placing cremated remains. Shroud, coffin, grave, urn, or columbarium can

be regarded as the 'materials for the dead', and the funeral can be understood as a process of adding the 'materials for the dead' to the corpse.

Another interesting phenomenon in this process of material addition is that ceremonies, whether private or public, take place at or before each stage of material addition. For instance, many societies perform private or public ceremonies when a living body turns into a dead body; when the body is laid into a coffin; when the coffin is placed into a grave in the ground; when the body is cremated; and when cremated remains are placed in their final resting place. This uncovers a seldom recognized relation that the process of 'material addition' is deeply associated with that of 'ritual addition'. That is to say, whenever material addition takes place ritual addition is followed.

Materials and the religious identity of the dead

Among various materials used for funerals, there is a group of materials which reveals the identity of the dead, particularly their religious identity. Within the Korean context, places like the funeral hall and the crematorium where major funerary ceremonies take place often have separate religious service rooms, commonly divided into rooms for Buddhists, Protestants, Catholics, and non-believers, respectively. These separate rooms serve as most evident 'materials' for recognizing the religious identity of the dead. But not all the funeral halls or crematoria have those separate rooms. Even so, there are still noticeable materials which show the religious identity of the dead, viz. religious symbols. Religious symbols most commonly present at funerals are the cross (†) for Christians and the reverse swastika (卍) for Buddhists as they are considered as most important symbols for respective religions. In many cases, these religious symbols are

printed on a cloth for wrapping the coffin and inscribed on the gravestone or on the exterior of urns.

Other religious materials noticeable at Korean funerals, especially in the case of Protestants, include a set of the bible and hymn book that the deceased personally used, in some cases, for their life time. Korean Protestants invariably carry a personal set of the bible and hymn book whenever they go to church and church-related activities, or even when they go to their working place. For many Protestant Christians, a personal set of the bible and hymn book is one of the most important personal belongings that they carry all the time and care for dearly. At the funeral, the time-worn bible and hymn book of the deceased is placed on the memorial altar and they become powerful materials for expressing religious identity.

Cremation and the new material culture of death

The swift change in the method of body disposal in contemporary South Korea has, then, brought about various new phenomena in the area of the material culture of death. It is an interesting irony that cremation, which shortens the period of body decay, generates more numerous phenomena of material culture than does burial. Of those material phenomena, only the two most prominent are considered in the following, viz. the crematorium and the columbarium. Both are related to the ashes, a distinctive 'product' of cremation.

One of the most noticeable phenomena in the area of the material culture of death is the physical and social development of crematoria. Although the total number of crematoria has not much increased over the last decade – 43 in 1995 and 45 in 2005, the appearance and facilities of many crematoria, particularly those in big cities, have much

improved through the expansion or rebuilding of existing crematoria. The gigantic crematorium in Seoul, for example, has 23 cremators and some 82 bodies were cremated daily in 2006 while the one in Busan, the second largest city, has 15 cremators and some 37 bodies were cremated daily in 2004.[76] Perhaps, more important than the physical development of crematoria is that their symbolic location within the society has dramatically improved over the last decade. While the crematorium had been almost isolated from the life of the majority of people until the recent past, it now occupies a more central place in it.

Another prominent new aspect of the material culture of death is the emergence of public and private columbaria. When the government launched a new policy to promote cremation in the early 1990s, it also built several civic columbaria as part of the new policy. But the policy itself was rejected by the majority of the people and columbaria were deserted as an inadequate institution in the society. For many, they were simply unpleasant and unattractive modern buildings. As the positive perception of cremation has emerged and the actual increase of cremation has continued, the columbarium has been much in demand since the late 1990s. The turn of the twenty-first century witnessed the emergence of new Buddhist, Catholic, and Protestant columbaria alongside new municipal columbaria. In many cases, each of them can accommodate between 20,000 and 30,000 cremated remains. The new big buildings of columbaria surrounded by huge memorial parks cannot pass unnoticed. As in the case of the crematorium, new columbaria have been gaining symbolic importance within the society as a memorial institution. From the issues of ritual at death we now move to a consideration of ritual after death.

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[76] By 2005 the population of Seoul was 9.8 million people and that of Busan was 3.6 million.

CHAPTER 4

Ancestral Rites (Ritual *after* Death)

> In spite of the variety of ancestral practices and diversity of perspectives, the issue of ancestral rites could contribute to the study of human and society in terms of two facets of our common experience. One is obvious: we are all descendants. We all have many ancestors who make powerful claims on our lives. Ancestry is a fundamental fact of life and should be a fundamental category in religious studies (Friesen, 2001: xx).

This chapter examines the issue of ancestral rites, which, in this study, is classified as ritual practice *after* death. Transformed from a strong Confucian state into a Christian-dominated society over the last two centuries, Korea has witnessed ongoing complex conflicts between the Christian Church and Confucian/Post-Confucian society, with the issue of ancestral ritual lying at their heart. Overall, the history of Korean Christianity parallels the history of Christian conflicts with traditional ancestral ritual. Today, the issue of ancestral ritual remains one of the most frequently-raised problems within Korean Christianity, particularly within the Protestant Church. Moreover, Christians themselves have conflicting views on the traditional ancestral practice, which become another source of discord within many families. Although Korean Protestantism has promoted *Chudoyebe*, a Christian alternative to Confucian ancestral ritual (*Jesa*), it has not yet reached a consensus over the concrete practice of this alternative rite. Both these long-lasting Christian conflicts with Confucian ancestral ritual and the ongoing internal troubles surrounding the issue of ancestral ritual within Protestantism pinpoint the main theme of this study: the enduring Christian struggle to balance Christian faith and

Confucian practice, religious piety to God and filial duty to ancestors, and Christian values and Confucian values. In this regard, this study argues that the issue of ancestral rites is a representative case of the *clash* between Confucian and Christian elements.

With that in mind, the purpose of this chapter is two-fold, being both descriptive and analytical. First, it examines ways in which the issue of ancestral ritual has undergone changes and conflicts since the introduction of Christianity, not through a comprehensive history of the issue, but by focusing on specific influential events and debates, as well as by providing contemporary cases of ancestral ritual. Second, as in the previous two chapters, the present chapter also attempts two different types of analysis for our data: one a historical-theological analysis and the other sociological-anthropological. Drawing on historical and theological perspectives, the chapter aims to uncover the underlying principles of the complex phenomena surrounding ancestral ritual. This chapter then moves to a sociological and anthropological analysis of ancestral ritual, by employing theories related to ideas on embodiment, exchange, and material culture. Through such a multi-layered analysis, this chapter thus provides a 'thick study' of ancestral ritual approached from a perspective of the 'total social phenomenon'.

1. Ancestral Ritual and Christianity in Korea (1784-2006)

This section provides both historical and contemporary data on the issue of ancestral ritual in Korea, covering the period from 1784 when the first Catholic community was established to the year 2006. First, under the rubric of 'Confucian Korea (1784-1910)',

it provides an account of historic events and issues of ancestral ritual during the late period of the Confucian *Joseon* dynasty (1392-1910). Second, under the heading of 'post-Confucian Korea (1910-2006)', it deals with such events and issues during the period from the Japanese colonial era (1910-1945) to the present day. And, finally, it presents seven contemporary cases of ancestral practices with particular reference to those of Christian families. In this study, thus, the history of modern Korea is divided into two, Confucian society (1784-1910) and post-Confucian society (1910-2006), with its turning point being the year 1910 when the Confucian dynasty officially fell to the Japanese imperial government and Korea began a Japanese colonial period. By 'Confucian society', this study indicates the strong influence of Confucianism upon the society as the official ideology and institutional religion, while 'post-Confucian society' characterizes contemporary Korea in which Confucian influence has waned in degree and yet it has been still deeply embedded in all domains of the society. Still, the division based on the year 1910 should not be taken as absolute.

1) Confucian Korea (1784-1910)

While the introduction of Christianity did not result in any serious conflict with existing funerary practice, it caused serious problems as far as the issue of ancestral ritual was concerned. The early history of the Catholic Church, in particular, paralleled the history of bloody confrontation with the Confucian state because of the Catholic ban on Confucian ancestral ritual. Accordingly, we examine this early conflict of the Christian Church and the Confucian state and, to understand its background, we first turn to the Jesuit mission in East Asia.

The Jesuit mission in East Asia

While based in Goa in India, a mission centre for the East, Jesuits chose Japan for their first target country in the Far East. Francis Xavier (1506-1552) landed in Japan in 1549 and his experiences in the country gradually convinced him of the central position of China in East Asian civilization. Xavier noticed that 'whenever the Japanese were hard pressed in an argument, they always had recourse to the authority of the Chinese', and that 'they commonly asserted that if the Christian religion was really the one true religion, it surely would have been known to the intelligent Chinese and also accepted by them' (Ricci, 1953: 117-118). Although Xavier himself was determined to go to China his plan was not realized due to his sudden death in 1552 caused by a fever while waiting for the right moment for entering the Chinese mainland. It was, then, in 1583 that the first Jesuit missionaries entered China and one of them was the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552-1610).

From the outset, Jesuit missionaries in China were keen on stabilizing their existence in Chinese society, especially among the elite classes. At first, they assumed that Buddhism was the most influential tradition within the society and that a Buddhist appearance would secure their missionary activities, a policy based on the experience of their senior missionaries in Japan where Buddhism was dominant. So they shaved off their hair and beards, and dressed themselves in the grey cloaks worn by Chinese Buddhist monks. After living in China for years, however, they realized that it was not Buddhism but Confucianism that was most influential in China particularly among the intellectuals. Ricci and his colleagues then transformed their appearance from that of Buddhist monks to that of Confucian scholars. They assiduously studied the Confucian tradition and their knowledge of Confucian classics impressed Chinese Confucian

scholars. Their aim now was to present a complementarity between Christianity and Confucianism, which became one of the main messages that Jesuits tried to deliver to Chinese elite society.

In 1601, Jesuits succeeded in entering Beijing, the capital city of *Ming* China. This offered a better chance for the wider influence of their mission on the country and on other neighboring countries. Realizing the significance and efficiency of Chinese literate culture for their missionary work, Jesuits soon began to publish books in classical Chinese about European science and religion. According to historical research, Jesuit missionaries in Beijing published more than three hundred titles in Chinese during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Baker, 1979: 34).

Of such Jesuit publications, one of the most influential books in East Asian countries was Matteo Ricci's *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (天主實意, 1603).[77] Ricci's main thesis is that Christianity is compatible with Confucianism, particularly with early Confucianism. Being aware through his intensive study of the Confucian tradition that Confucian classics could be interpreted in various ways, Ricci challenged the contemporary Neo-Confucian interpretation of Confucian classics and believed that Neo-Confucianism had departed from the core meaning of early Confucianism. He argued that Neo-Confucianism, with its denial of the existence of a personal deity, had betrayed the teachings of earliest Confucians. He then contended that Catholicism, which was founded on the principle of the reverence for such a deity, represented a return to the spirit of early Confucianism (Ricci, 1985).

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[77] The English translation of the book (Ricci, 1985) is available and it is the first and only complete English translation.

The Beginning of Christianity in Korea

Catholicism was the first form of Christianity that Korean society encountered, mediated by the contact with seventeenth and eighteenth century China. The beginning of the Catholic Church in Korea is distinctive in that it was achieved through indigenous Confucian scholars' effort, rather than through foreign missionaries' work.[78] It is commonly said that the first Catholic community was established in Korea in 1784 by a group of the Confucian elite, with the first Catholic missionary (a Chinese priest) coming to the country in 1795, eleven years later. It was not until the 1830s that the first Western missionaries entered the Korean peninsula.[79]

It was mainly through Jesuit books that Christian ideas were introduced into Korea. From the early seventeenth century onwards, the Korean annual diplomatic envoy to the Chinese capital city had begun to bring news about Jesuit missionaries. Some of them actually met Jesuit missionaries in Beijing and were gifted several European artifacts and Jesuit publications on science, technology, and religion that were brought back to Korea and reported to the government as part of new materials collected in China.

During the eighteenth century, Jesuit books became increasingly popular among many Korean elites who were invariably Confucian scholars and who read them largely out of curiosity. An eighteenth-century Confucian scholar who was also a historian

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[78] Although there were various attempts by Catholic missionaries in Japan, China, and the Philippines to reach the Korean peninsula during the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries, they were not successful (see Grayson, 2002: 140-141). During the Japanese-Korean war period (1592-1598), the Portuguese missionary Gregorio de Cespedes came to Korea as a war chaplain for the Japanese troops and stayed near *Busan* about for one year. But he left no Christian influence upon Korean people.

[79] They were members of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris.

testifies to such a situation of contemporary elite society: 'Western books have been coming into Korea since the end of the reign of King *Sonjo* (r. 1567-1608). There is no respected official or learned scholar who has not looked upon them as belonging to the same category as Taoist and Buddhist works, books left on a library shelf for amusement' (quoted in Baker, 1983: 109).[80]

Confucian literati who read Jesuit publications were intrigued mainly by books dealing with scientific subjects. From ethical books they also found some compatible elements between the Confucian and European traditions, particularly in such issues as the pursuit of moral perfection. But most of them regarded religious books as heterodox teaching. Although many Korean Confucian scholars could agree with Jesuits on their argument concerning the similarity between the Christian God and the Confucian Heaven, they could not agree to the way the Westerners worship and fear their God. Moreover, they censured the absurdity of the Christian tenets such as the existence of personal deity, incarnation, spirits and miracles, paradise and hell, and life after death. For many Korean Confucians, Christian teachings sounded so selfish and childish as they seemed to encourage people to be good in order to gain rewards and to enter paradise after death. The following quotation is a representative of such criticisms of Christianity, which was raised by a Korean Confucian scholar in the early eighteenth century (quoted in Baker, 1979: 36)[81]:

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[80] This is the beginning part of Jong-Bok Ahn's critique of Christianity entitled *Reflection on Western Religion (Chunhakgo*, 天學考), which is a historical survey of East Asian reactions to western religion.

[81] The quotation is part of a systematic critique of Christianity, *A Critique on Western Religion (Sohakbyun*, 西學辯), written by Hu-Dam Shin (1701-1761).

The Christian goal of a reward in heaven is not something that a true son should think about when serving his parents or a true subject when serving his ruler... Christian teachings threaten morality and pervert ethical principles with their selfish aim of personal reward. How can we not despise such ideas! It really is a pity that they give priority to selfish intentions instead of making sincerity the foundations of their doctrines. Those who follow their teachings can never be true gentlemen.

For most Korean Confucians, the Christian teaching of reward for the good in paradise and retribution for the evil in hell was a disguise of Buddhist teachings which Korean Confucians had long despised as absurd. According to Confucian teachings, man should do good things for the sake of the good without aiming at any personal rewards.

Another Confucian scholar in the late eighteenth century re-affirmed such views. In his critique of Christianity written in 1785, he concludes by summarizing the fundamental differences between Confucian and Christian approaches to life and the world. Taking the form of a conversation between the author himself and an imagined conversation partner, the author concludes his criticism of Christianity through the conversation partner's mouth (quoted in Choe *et al.*, 2000: 132-133)[82]:

> He [the conversation partner] then said to me, "As I understand it, you are saying that this Christian religion is without doubt heterodox. Our Confucian efforts to illuminate virtue and transform the people all focus on this world. These Europeans, however, are only thinking about next world when they talk about doing good and avoiding evil. According to you, since people are born into this world, they should spend all their energy on things of this world and try to do their very best without concerning themselves the least bit with possible

[82] This is the concluding part of Jong-Bok Ahn's (1712-1791) *Conversation on Western Religion (Chonhak Mundap*, 天學問答).

rewards in afterlife. The Christian approach is really different from our Confucian. Their ideas all have their roots in individual selfishness. How can this be compared with our Confucian concern for doing what is right for the common good? From now on, I will listen to what you have to say." Hearing this, I [the author] smiled, and after my guest had left, I wrote down this account of our conversation.

For most Korean Confucian scholars, Christianity was heterodox religion. The key criticism was that the Christian teachings were rooted in individual selfishness.

During the late eighteenth century, however, a group of young Confucian scholars who belonged to a representative Confucian school at the time (the *Songho* School) began to take a positive approach to the European religion. From their reading of Jesuit books, they saw the compatibility between Christianity and Confucianism, which was the main thesis of the Jesuit arguments. They even thought that Christianity would help revitalize contemporary Confucianism that had been corrupted and had deviated from its original spirit. Some of them eventually began to practise Christian faith according to what they learned through reading Jesuit publications. One of them, Seung-Hun Lee, was baptized in Beijing by Fr. Louis de Grammont and he returned to Korea in the early spring of 1784. Mr. Lee began to baptize his friends, through which a Christian community was soon formed within the year. The year 1784 has been regarded as the beginning of Catholic Christianity in Korea (cf. Paik, 1929; Baker, 1983; De Medina, 1994).

The 1791 incident: Clash of Catholic faith and Confucian society

The belief and practice of early Korean Catholics were largely based on knowledge gained through reading Jesuit books. Their church administration was based on what

they knew of the Church in Beijing. They elected a bishop and priests on their own initiative, and performed sacraments and other ecclesial tasks. But they soon began to question the legitimacy of their self-taught Church ministries and made enquiries to the Church in Beijing. Their questions also included the issue of whether they could practise traditional Confucian ancestral rites, the essential family ritual in the Confucian world. In 1790, one of the reply-letters from the Bishop in Beijing informed the nascent Korean community of the papal ban on the participation in Confucian ancestral rites.

This letter of 1790 shook the early Catholic community to its foundation. Many early Korean Catholics could no longer retain their belief in Christianity's compatibility with Confucianism. Now Korean Catholics had to decide whether or not to continue to keep their new religion at the expense of abolishing the most essential ritual in their family life. The letter caused many, especially among scholarly elites, to drift away from the nascent Catholic community, whose leadership then passed to people from lower classes.

Then, in 1791, Confucian Korea witnessed the most appalling and unimaginable event. It happened in a town (*Jinsan*) of the southwestern region where two Confucian literati who had converted to Christianity during the late 1780s abolished ancestral rites in order to obey the papal instruction. When his mother died in the spring of 1791, Ji-Chung Yoon (1759-1791) and his maternal cousin Sang-Yon Kwon (1751-1791) performed Confucian mourning and funerary rituals but did not observe Confucian ancestral ritual for Yoon's mother. They not only did not make an ancestral tablet for the deceased mother, but they also burnt all the ancestral tablets in their possession and buried the ashes. This act brought a great disturbance to their relatives and local residents who attended the funerary ceremonies. It was conceived as the worst kind of

'crime' in the Confucian world. The case was reported to the local authorities for the breach of Confucian propriety and eventually reached the king.

Mr. Yoon and his cousin were brought to trial and tortured in a provincial court in October 1791. The following is what Mr. Yoon said during the trial (quoted in Baker, 1979: 52):

> The Heavenly Lord was the creator and the father of all men. Since I accepted the Heavenly Lord to be my great parent it would not be right not to follow the order of the Heavenly Lord. Since the religion of the Heavenly Lord [Catholicism] prohibits making a wooden ancestral tablet, I buried it under the ground. I would rather do wrong to my deceased mother than to the Heavenly Lord.

On receiving a report of Mr. Yoon's trial and petitions from many officials, the king commanded a sentence of execution for conduct contrary to Confucian moral and ritual obligations. In December 1791, Mr. Yoon and his cousin Mr. Kwon were beheaded and this was the first execution in Korea for belief in Christian faith. For the Confucian state, it was clear that the Western religion was 'evil teaching' which demoralized filial duty, thereby threatening family values and social order. In fact, the 1791 incident triggered the formation of an even stronger anti-Christian sentiment within the Korean government and precipitated a series of severe national persecutions during the nineteenth century (cf. Baker, 1983; Ki-Bok Choi, 1984; Chai-Sik Chung, 1997).

Nationwide persecutions of Catholicism during the nineteenth century

The 1791 incident was only the beginning of bloody confrontations between the Catholic Church and Confucian society. The Korean Catholic Church had to face severe

antagonism from the Confucian government throughout the nineteenth century, with thousands of Korean Catholics and missionaries dying for their faith in much local suppression and in a series of nationwide persecutions in the years of 1801, 1815, 1827, 1839, 1846, and 1866. Such conflicts between the Confucian state and the Catholic Church continued until the last decades of the nineteenth century when a treaty with France in 1886 became a turning point in the history of Korean Catholicism because it brought religious freedom for Korean Catholics and foreign missionaries, although limitations on religious activities were imposed.

Despite the 1791 incident, the membership of the new religion was growing. It is said that there were about 4,000 Christian believers when the Chinese priest arrived in Korea in 1795 and the figure increased to 10,000 believers by the turn of the nineteenth century – the majority of them were women and uneducated men (cf. Grayson, 2002: 143). The growth of this Western religious sect caused grave concern in certain circles of the ruling class. In this context, the sudden death of the king in 1800 and the enthronement of his little son resulted in dramatic changes in governmental structure. Since the new king was so young, his grandmother ruled as Queen Regent in his stead, and in 1801, under her aegis, the government began a nationwide campaign to eradicate the 'evil' Western religion as it was understood as endangering the moral fabric of society by its refusal to perform ancestral ritual. The campaign became more ferocious when a policeman found a secret letter written by a Korean Catholic, Mr. Sa-Young Hwang, to the Catholic headquarters in Beijing, appealing to Western countries for military intervention to protect the fledgling Korean Church. For the Korean government, this letter was unmistakable evidence that Catholicism was not just immoral but also anti-governmental. The letter resulted in a more severe scale of

persecution during 1801, in which more than a thousand Catholics were arrested and at least 300 were killed.

During another nationwide persecution in 1839, the first Western missionary, Pierre Moubant who had arrived in Korea in 1836 and other Korean Catholics were killed. The Confucian government disseminated an anti-Catholic edict across the country, stating that 1) Catholicism will eventually invite Western invasion; 2) it is against filial duty by destroying traditional ancestral ritual; 3) it also destroys the existing social order and cultural norm through its egalitarian teachings; 4) it deceives ordinary people with the teaching of hell and paradise; 5) it is a heterodox movement which should be eradicated. The Catholic population, however, was still on the increase: according to an official report to Rome in 1856, the church membership numbered over 15,000, which is a remarkable figure given the extremely harsh condition of nationwide and regional persecutions (cf. Paik, 1929; Grayson, 2002: 146).

In 1866, there was again a nationwide persecution known as the 'Great Persecution' which lasted for five years until 1871. Once more, the Catholic ban on ancestral rites was one of its main causes. Through this resolute exercise, the Confucian government attempted to eliminate once and for all the 'heterodox' teachings of Catholicism and the pernicious influences of Western culture. During 1866-1871, nine French clergy and about 8,000 Korean Catholics were executed, which resulted in the martyrdom of more than half of the Catholic population (Grayson, 2002: 146).

Early Protestant missionaries' attitudes to ancestral ritual (1884-1910)

The beginning of Protestantism in Korea has a similar story to the Catholic counterpart in that there was already a handful of Korean Christians in Korea before any

missionaries entered the country. Some Korean people in the north western region who were largely traders converted to Protestant Christianity through the contact with Western missionaries in China. For decades prior to the year 1885, when the first Protestant missionary entered Korea, there were also various efforts from mission bodies of nearby countries. Of such efforts, one of the most influential in Korea was that of Rev. Dr. John Ross (1842-1915), a missionary to Manchuria from the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Ross published the first Korean grammar book in English in 1877 and the first history of Korea to be written in a Western language in 1879. With the help of Korean converts, he also published the first Korean translation of the entire New Testament in 1887. It was the only complete Korean translation of the New Testament until 1900 and left a lasting influence upon later Christian development in the country (cf. Grayson, 2002: 155-156).

But it was the arrival of Protestant missionaries after 1885 that was the main force in establishing the early Protestant Church in Korea. The first official Protestant missionaries arrived in Korea on Easter Sunday in 1885. They were Rev. Horace G. Underwood (1859-1916) of the Northern Presbyterian Mission of the U.S.A. and Rev. Henry G. Appenzeller (1858-1902) of the Northern Methodist Mission of the U.S.A. After both the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches were introduced, the following foreign mission bodies continued to arrive on the Korean peninsula (Grayson, 1985: 103-115): Canadian Baptists (1889); Australian Presbyterians (1889); Church of England (1890); Southern Presbyterians of the U.S.A. (1892); Canadian Presbyterians (1893); Southern Methodists of the U.S.A. (1896); Seventh Day Adventists (1905); Oriental Missionary Society (1907); Salvation Army (1908); and Jehovah's Witnesses (1912). According to a historical study, a total of 575 Protestant missionaries (251 male

and 324 female) arrived in Korea during 1884-1910 (Oak, 2002: 480).[83] More than 70 per cent of them were Americans in terms of nationality; and about half of them were Presbyterians in terms of denomination. It has continued to be a dominant trend in Korean Protestantism: that is, American Protestantism has been the most influential and the Presbyterian Church the most prevalent Protestant denomination in Korea.

Those early Protestant missionaries in Korea were aware of the significance of ancestral ritual in Korean society. In his article on Korean ancestral practice published in 1892, for example, Daniel L. Gifford (1861-1900) noted that although the religious beliefs of Korea show a blending of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, 'the social fabric of the country is largely Confucian' and 'ancestral worship is Confucian' (Gifford, 1892: 169).[84] In 1891, George H. Jones (1867-1919) said that ancestral ritual was the state creed in Korea: its complicated system was an ever present factor in Korean life and no Korean could get beyond the sphere of its influence (Oak, 2002: 327-328).[85]

In general, the Korean Protestant mission's attitude toward traditional ancestral ritual was in line with the intolerant policy of the Chinese Protestant mission which was adopted at the General Missionary Conferences in Shanghai in 1877 and 1890 (Oak,

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[83] The details of their nationality and denomination are as follows (Oak, 2002: 480): 419 Americans (72.9%), 101 British (17.6%), 27 Canadians (4.7%), 26 Australians (4.5%), and 1 Russian (0.2%). In terms of denomination, there were 276 Presbyterians (48%), 175 Methodists (30.4%), 68 Anglicans (11.8%), 24 Salvation Army (4.2%), 9 Baptists (1.6%), and 7 Adventists (1.2%). The following is a more detailed figure of British missionaries (101 in total) during 1884-1910: Church of England (67), Salvation Army (24), BFBS (6), Oriental Mission Society (2), Plymouth Brethren (1), and YMCA (1).

[84] Rev. Daniel L. Gifford was one of the earliest American Presbyterian missionaries in Korea. After graduating from McCormick Theological Seminary (Illinois, USA) in 1888, he served as a missionary in Korea during 1888-1900.

[85] George H. Jones was an ordained Methodist missionary in Korea during 1888-1909.

2002: 330).[86] In other words, Protestant missionaries in Korea prohibited ancestral ritual as idolatry from the outset. For example, in his personal correspondence with his colleague missionary in 1895, the American Presbyterian missionary William L. Swallen (1859-1954) described Korean ancestral ritual as the greatest idolatry in the country, which sums up the missionaries' attitudes to the issue: 'Ancestral worship is the greatest idol the Koreans have to give up; all else is as nothing compared with it. I fear we have been too lenient heretofore on this subject' (quoted in Oak, 2002: 334).[87] Although there were some missionaries who took a rather positive stance, a dominant view was that ancestral rites were idol worship and hence Christians should not perform them. This has become the orthodox approach within the Korean Protestant Church.[88]

Another example of missionaries' intolerant policy toward Korean ancestral rites can be found in evangelical literature. In the early stage of mission in Korea, much Chinese evangelical literature was translated into Korean and was used by both the Presbyterian and Methodist missionaries for educating Korean converts. One required reading on the issue at theological training classes in Korea was a booklet entitled *Errors of Ancestor Worship* (祀先辨謬) written in 1859 by John Nevius (1829-1893), a Presbyterian missionary in China. In this 8-paged booklet, Nevius resolutely

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[86] Two missionary conferences paid a great deal of attention to the issue of ancestral rites. In the first conference (1887) almost all participants condemned the Chinese rite as an act of idolatry which must not be participated by Chinese Christians. Although the situation was not as one-sided as in 1877, the 1890 conference also approved the intolerant policy (Lo, 2003: 32-34).

[87] Rev. William L. Swallen, a graduate of McCormick Theological Seminary (1892), was a missionary in Korea for forty years between 1892 and 1932.

[88] Missionaries who adamantly advocated Korean ancestral rites as idolatry include James Gale, Daniel Gifford, Horace Underwood, Samuel Moffett, George Jones, and William Baird. Missionaries who did not condemn ancestral rites were, for example, James van Buskirk and Ray Shearer.

condemned the indigenous practice of ancestral rites as idolatry. He argued that although filial duty to the parents and ancestors was biblically sound, it should be expanded to the Heavenly Father and perfected in the worship of God. He recommended practical ways of filial duty: being dutiful to living parents and relatives and performing proper funeral services. Other Chinese evangelistic literature repeated such arguments, which became increasingly dominant views within Korean Protestantism (Oak, 2002: 331).

Abandoning traditional ancestral rites was among the first conditions to be met before any converts were baptized. Following church's teachings, new converts gave up ancestral rites and burned (or buried) ancestral tablets. Some gave ancestral tablets to missionaries as a token of their conversion. Missionaries also prohibited church members from eating and even touching ritual food offered to traditional ancestral rites. Basing their views on New Testament passages such as 'you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols' (Acts 15:29), they asserted that eating such ritual food was as sinful as participating in the ritual (Oak, 2002: 335-336).

The national and social context was then quite different from the previous century when early Korean Catholics were harshly persecuted by the Korean government. The Confucian government was beginning to lose its sovereign power and promulgated religious freedom during the 1880s. However, while the Protestant Church did not experience as severe persecutions as Catholics had a century before, the Protestant ban on ancestral rites caused enormous conflicts within the family-and-kinship rooted society. It was very common for Christian converts to be eventually cut-off from their clan and ostracized by their local community. According to Samuel A. Moffet (1864-1939), one of the earliest American Presbyterian missionaries, Christians who did not

participate in ancestral rites were often beaten by their family members because it was regarded as amongst the most unfilial behaviors towards their parents and ancestors: 'one of the Christians who this spring refused to sacrifice at his father's tomb showed me a scar on his forehead which he received from his aunt, who knocked him with an ink stone' (quoted in Oak, 2002: 337).[89] In 1893, James S. Gale (1863-1937) also reported a Korean convert who was almost dying of starvation because the local community ostracized him after he burned ancestral tablets in his possession (Paik, 1929: 214-215).[90]

Chudoyebe in the making

At the turn of the twentieth century, Korean Protestantism saw the emergence of what has been commonly called *Chudoyebe* (memorial service), a Christian alternative to Confucian ancestral ritual.[91] In the absence of any comprehensive studies of the origin of this Christian alternative rite, the following historical sketches will need to suffice as an account of its early development (cf. Oak, 2004b).

It was with the death of Dr. J. W. Heron in July 1890 that Protestant missionaries began to perform Christian memorial services for deceased missionaries. It is probable

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[89] Rev. Samuel A. Moffett graduated from McCormick Theological Seminary in 1888 and he served as missionary in Korea during 1890-1934.

[90] James S. Gale, a Canadian missionary, graduated from the University of Toronto in 1888 and he stayed in Korea for forty years (1888-1928). According to Gale, ancestral rites help children honor their parents but they are products of primitive society. He predicted that this old-fashioned ritual would disappear.

[91] The Korean term *Chudoyebe* means 'memorial service' which consists of two words: *Chudo* (memorial) and *Yebe* (worship or service). It is also called *Chudosik* or *Chumosik*, both meaning 'memorial rite'. In his recent study, James Grayson translated *Chudoyebe* into the 'grieving rite' (Grayson, 2007: 437).

that Korean Christians attending the memorial services gained some insight into the possibilities of a Christian alternative to their traditional ancestral ritual. Certainly Korean Christians needed to fill an enormous emotional and ritual vacuum left by the sudden abolition of deep-rooted ancestral practice.

In 1896, the American missionary William L. Swallen (1859-1954), based in *Wonsan* in the northeast region, reported what a new convert (Mr. Oh) did on the day of traditional ancestral rites (quoted in Oak, 2002: 347):

> He [Mr. Oh] invited some together with two of our Christians to come and be with him during the night, when the sacrificing [ancestral rites] should have been done, saying that he meant to burn up the tablet and fetish and everything connected with it at the midnight hour, the time when the sacrificing should be done, instead of offering the sacrifice. We had hardly expected so soon to see the idols of heathenism burned up for Jesus' sake, but God often grants the blessing even before we expect. We went and instead of the heathen ceremonies we found a heart prepared of him to worship God. We sang, read, and prayed.

This report tells us that a new convert abolished the long-standing family ritual of ancestors and, instead, performed a Christian service which involved hymn singing, bible-reading, and prayer. The following newsletter of 1897 reports a more detailed description of a Christian memorial service performed in the family of Mr. Mu-Young Lee, a military official and a Methodist in Seoul. It was his late mother's first death anniversary (quoted in Oak, 2002: 347):

> The brother [Mr. Lee] could not restrain the greatest grief and deep emotion. As Christians worship God and believe in the Savior, we ought not to spread out food and offer sacrifice like non-believers. Yet one who has filial piety cannot

pass the first anniversary of the late parent for nothing. So he invited brothers and sisters of the church to his house. He hung lanterns and put lighted candles on the floor. They prayed to God for the soul of the late lady, and sang a hymn. Remembering her faith in God, her words of admonition, and her attitude of generosity when she was alive, he wept for a moment. Church members prayed to God for Mr. Mu-Young Lee and spent the night together without sleep. It was a sacrifice to his mother from the true heart. How beautiful it was! Other church members may do the same when they observe anniversaries of their parents' death.

This report is one of the earliest records of the Christian memorial service and it conveys the mood and situation in which an early Christian family performed a Christian memorial service instead of Confucian ancestral ritual. As the reporter mentions, Christians were not allowed to perform Confucian ancestral ritual on the anniversaries of ancestor's death, and yet they found it difficult to pass such occasions without any memorial activities. In particular, in this case, it was the first anniversary of the death of Mr. Lee's mother. Mr. Lee invited his fellow Christians and performed a short Christian service in memory of the dead. Such a culturally assimilated memorial service became a model for other Christians. In 1903, for instance, when Mr. Uh-Jong Sohn of *Chemulpo* observed the first anniversary of his mother's death, he invited dozens of fellow Christians at night. They sang hymns, prayed, read bible passages, and reflected on her faith and deeds. After the service they shared food that the deceased had loved. Regarding this Christianized form of ancestral rite, a member of the church wrote: 'This would be a better filial piety to the parents than preparing the ancestral tablets and weeping the whole night with a hoarse voice' (quoted in Oak, 2002: 348).

It seems that the formation and spread of a Christian memorial service by Korean Christians' initiative was partly due to some senior missionaries' policy towards the

issue. Although they had a negative approach to traditional ancestral rites, some senior missionaries proposed that missionaries should wait until Korean Christians themselves solved the issue of ancestral rites. In September 1904 when a conference took place on the twentieth anniversary of the Korean Presbyterian mission, for instance, George O. Engel gave a paper on native customs. Emphasizing the need of adaptation to the Korean context, he suggested that missionaries should take an attitude of non-intervention toward Korean clothes, hair, food, and dwellings. Regarding the customs of a more religious character such as marriage and ancestral rites, he suggested the substitution of Christian ceremonies, not by missionaries' interference but by Korean Christians' initiative (quoted in Oak, 2002: 341):

> There are many things that will be changed yet by the Korean Christians as they receive more spiritual enlightenment. We can do very little, but God's Word and His Holy Spirit will bring about the changes in the customs of this nation that will make it a truly Christian nation, as truly Christian as ours in the west, and yet leave it oriental. May God grant that Western civilization, with its baneful influence, will leave the Korean church untouched.

The Canadian Presbyterian missionary James Gale displayed a similar view. He advised young and inexperienced missionaries not to touch the issue and to wait until the spiritually mature Korean Christians would solve it: 'the question, what shall be our attitude toward mourning customs, confronts all of us. We must deal gently with the Koreans, who, as they grow in grace, will gradually advance in such matters' (Gale, 1909: 78).

Chudoyebe became widespread among Protestant Christians as an alternative to Confucian ancestral ritual and this new rite was later included in the liturgy of the

Protestant Churches, beginning with that of the Methodist Church in 1935 (Grayson, 2007: 437). Most Protestant denominations now have their own liturgical books which contain the liturgy for the memorial service along with the liturgies for baptism, the wedding, and the funeral.

2) Post-Confucian Korea (1910-2006)

Since the fall of the Confucian dynasty, the Christian ban on Confucian ancestral ritual no longer became a source of conflict between the Church and the state. However, the issue of ancestral ritual has continued to be one of the enduring familial, social, and ecclesiastical problems. In what follows, we look at the ways in which the issue has featured during post-Confucian Korea.

The controversy over ancestral ritual in 1920

The Christian ban on traditional ancestral ritual became a wider social issue when a series of debates over ancestral rites was published in a major national newspaper in 1920. The occasion for the series of debates was an article entitled 'an innocent victim of Christianity', published in the newspaper in early 1920. It reported a story about a wife who committed suicide in order to atone for her 'unfilial' husband who did not perform traditional ancestral ritual for his deceased mother, after his conversion to Christianity. In response to this article, Mr. Sang-Jae Lee (1850-1927), the general secretary of the YMCA and a renowned Christian leader, published a special statement on the event in the same newspaper as follows (Donga Ilbo, 01 September 1920):

I think the husband did so without knowing the true teaching of Christianity. No religion would teach its followers to desert their parents. How can one who fails to do filial duty toward one's parents become obedient to God?.... Christianity teaches that one should not worship idols. It is, however, wrong to regard ancestral tablets as idols and to prohibit bowing toward deceased parents' spirits in the name of idolatry... Of course, as Christians, we would object to praying for good luck, blessings, and long life in front of ancestral tablets. But we would not object to any forms of ritual if the ritual is an expression of the love for and memory of deceased parents....It would be a mistaken belief if one rejects traditional ancestral rites on the account of belief in Jesus and thinks of participating in the ritual as forsaking Jesus. Such a belief could not be sustained for long.

As shown in the above quotation, Mr. Lee's main thesis was that Christianity should allow the performing of traditional ancestral ritual as an expression of filial duty: if traditional ancestral ritual was understood and performed as a means of attaining good luck and blessings, it is superstition and idolatry; Christianity, however, should allow the performance of ancestral ritual as an expression of filial duty. For him and most Koreans, filial duty was a basic norm of human ethics and ancestral ritual was its ritual expression.

Mr. Lee's arguments gave rise to counter-criticisms from other Christian leaders. For example, Rev. Joo-Sam Yang, the senior pastor at one of the influential Methodist Churches in Seoul (*Jonggyo* Methodist Church), criticized Mr. Lee. According to Rev. Yang, filial duty is the foundational principle of human moral life, but traditional ancestral ritual is only a changeable custom for its expression. The following passage reveals his key argument (Donga Ilbo, 04 September 1920):

> Honoring parents is the principle of human ethics..... Etiquette and custom could be abolished and established according to the development of human knowledge and the situation of the time..... Korean ancestral rites are not principle but only etiquette and custom. Thus ancestral rites could be abolished and established. The ritual is a form of superstitious custom which was prevalent when human society was run by childish ethical ideas. Christians are against ancestral rites as they pursue higher forms of ethical ideas. Sooner or later, even non-Christians, I believe, will realize that traditional ancestral rites are wrong custom and are not the principle of ethics. They will also abolish the rites.

Rev. Yang's article now provoked very strong criticisms from Confucian scholars. Mr. Yoon-Shik Kim, a senior Confucian scholar, published an article on ancestral rites in the same newspaper. The following is a paragraph showing his main argument (Donga Ilbo, 05 September 1920):

> I have also read most books on Christianity. The Old Testament allows ancestral rites and it does not prohibit concubinage. But the idea that performing ancestral rites and taking concubine are wrong is all based on the New Testament. Christianity which prohibits ancestral rites is so different from my way of life. Christianity does not allow ancestral rites but I cannot stop performing ancestral rites. I will continue performing ancestral rites in order to practise filial duty to my ancestors.

Following such debates, the newspaper began to deal with the issue of ancestral rites in a more serious way by publishing three consecutive editorials.[92] Generally speaking, the main thesis of the editorials was of rather strong criticism of the conservative

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[92] 'Ancestral rites and idolatry' (Donga Ilbo, 10 September 1920); 'The issue of ancestral rites reconsidered' (Donga Ilbo, 24 & 25 September 1920).

Christian approach to traditional ancestral rites. The following quotation is from the first editorial of the newspaper published on 10th September, 1920:

> Confucius' Heaven and Jesus' God are not different but the same... It should be noted that Confucius was a monotheist who believed in Heaven. Also we should bear in mind that Confucius neither worshipped idols nor believed in many gods: he only advocated praying to Heaven. Thus when Confucius taught the propriety of ancestral rites and he himself performed them, he did so not as a form of idolatry but as a means of propitiating the spirit of ancestors and remembering ancestors.... As Jesus also believed in the existence of spirit, it is clear that to propitiate spirit and to remember ancestors are not against the principle of monotheism.... Western missionaries always criticized savage people who were bowing toward big old trees and big stones saturated with fear and superstition and praying for blessings. Despising Korean culture, they had superficial understandings of ancestral rites and classified them as a custom of savage people. Regarding ancestral rites as idolatry, missionaries prohibited Korean converts to participate in the ritual. Christians blindly followed missionaries' teachings and Koreans themselves abolished traditional ancestral rites.... There are some aspects in Korean ancestral rites that have deviated from the original principle... I strongly criticize Christians for regarding ancestral rites as idolatry and equally criticize some aspects of current ancestral rites that fail to realize the original meaning of the ritual.

The above editorial clearly notes that the Christian abolition of traditional ancestral ritual is based on Western missionaries' misunderstanding of the rite, and it basically confirms Mr. Sang-Jae Lee's opinion. The subsequent two editorials expressed similar views. They also clarify the original meaning of Confucian ancestral rites by citing Confucius' teaching that emphasizes the importance of ancestral rites as ritual behavior based on the idea of filial duty.

This series of editorials on the issue of ancestral rites was supposed to continue but it was stopped suddenly after being kept under constant surveillance by the imperial Japanese government. In fact, the newspaper itself was indefinitely suspended, the main reason being that the Japanese imperial government was upset by the content of the editorials in which Shinto shrine ritual was mentioned as an example of idolatry.

Mr. Pyon's book on ancestral rites (1926)

As the editorial of the newspaper argued, Korean Protestants' negative attitudes to traditional ancestral ritual were shaped to a great extent by those of Western missionaries. Although it was a minority view, there were some Protestant Christians who were critical of contemporary Korean Christians as well as Western missionaries, particularly in relation to the issue of ancestral rites. A representative case can be found in Mr. Pyon's book.

In 1926, Mr. Young-Tae Pyon (1892-1969), a young Christian intellectual, published a book in English entitled *My Attitude toward Ancestor-Worship*. He was thirty-four years old when the book was published and was teaching English at a secondary school in Seoul. He later became a university teacher and, in his sixties, Pyon was appointed the Foreign Minister (1951-1955) and the Prime Minister (1954) in the country. His book is particularly important in that it was the first English book written by a native Korean on the issue of ancestral rites. The reason why Pyon wrote his book in English appears in the preface of the book (1926: i): 'This matter [ancestral rites] is first given out in English, not in my own native tongue, because it is the missionary's due to know it first. He started and, in the main, is still directing Christianity in this land. Here his understanding is first sought.'

His aim in the book was 'to refute all the unjust criticisms' of Korean ancestral rites (1926: 4). Pyon understood that such unjust criticisms had been formed by Western missionaries and had been accepted 'blindly' by most Korean Christians. For him, therefore, one way to correct the contemporary negative Christian approach to ancestral rites was to persuade the existing (and the new generation of) Western missionaries, who were still influential in the matters within growing Korean Christianity, to rethink the ancestral rites issue. That is why Pyon targeted Western missionaries as the main readership of his book and wrote it in English.

Consisting of nine chapters and 113 pages in total, the book demonstrates the false attitude taken by the Christian Church toward traditional ancestral rites and argues that a right attitude ought to be taken. Given the importance of his work we provide here a summary of his main arguments which are discussed in the first five chapters of the book.

In the first chapter, Pyon argues that he has a unique position as both 'insider' and 'outsider' of the issue. According to him, perhaps no foreign missionaries would excel him in understanding Korean customs, for he himself is a native Korean. And not every Korean would surpass him either, for he had long been out of performing traditional ancestral rites and could form a just opinion about the issue. So he believes that he is doubly aware of the prejudices of those who have never performed the ritual and of those who have practised the ritual all their life without ever questioning its grounds (1926: 4).

Chapter two entitled 'What ancestor-worship is' criticizes the term 'ancestor-worship' and suggests 'ancestor-commemoration' as a more appropriate translation for the Korean practice (1926: 7):

> I do know there is some sense of gross injustice in applying this term [ancestor-worship] to that in this land, unless the word 'worship' is used in its obsolete sense of 'recognition of merit'. Even in this construction of the word, the term is not well-chosen or to the point, though it is divested of its slanderous sense by so construing. Therefore I rather incline to give it a new name suggestive of its intrinsic, underlying motive. I suggest that it ought to be termed 'ancestor-commemoration', if there is no better name.

He then discusses the origin of ancestral ritual and its approval and inculcation by early Confucian scholars in China. Compared with the contemporary Chinese practice of ancestral rites which has diverged from the original spirit of the ritual and degenerated into mere 'mammonism', Pyon argues that Korean ancestral practice is 'pure memorial service', which has nothing to do with any fear or greed (1926: 14).

In Chapter three, drawing on passages on idolatry in the bible, particularly Exodus 20: 4-5 (the second commandment) and Colossians 3:5, Pyon provides his own definition of idolatry.[93] This he does by explicating its five distinct features (1926: 19-21): 1) 'it [idolatry] is something beside God, therefore against God, leaving its worshipper only one way of choosing between it and God'; 2) 'greed has been found to be one of the chief incentives to idol-worshippers'; 3) 'one of the features, by no means the least, is fear, obsessing the whole being of the worshipper.... If greed is the chief part of the backing motive of idolatry, assuredly fear fills the remainder'; 4) 'the fourth feature of idolatry is the fact that it is entirely unethical, and consequently irreligious

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[93] The second commandment (Exodus 20: 4-5a): 'You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them'.
Colossians 3:5 'Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry).'

(which has nothing to do whatever with worshipper's spiritual evolution)'; 5) 'the last feature of idolatry, which needs least mention, because it is almost self-evident, is that it involves a deified object of visibility – an idol (whether the object is visualized or not, it affects its worshipper's moral constitution in the manner as mentioned in the foregoing four features)'.

In chapter 4, on the basis of the above five distinct features of idolatry, Pyon tests whether Korean ancestral practice has all or some of these idolatrous features. His conclusion is indicated in the title of the chapter, 'Unjust charge of idolatry'. In the text too, he argues that 'the charge of idolatry is anything but just' (1926: 36). The summary of his arguments is as follows: 1) the Korean practice is not against God but an extension of the fifth commandment, 'honor your father and mother'; 2) as performing ancestor-commemoration often results even in bankruptcy, it has nothing to do with greed which is so conspicuous a feature in the case of idolatry; 3) its motive is not fear but filial duty; 4) the Korean ancestor-commemoration is ethical ritual which deals with a relation between ancestors and posterity; 5) unlike the missionaries' condemnation of the ancestral tablet as an idol, the tablet is a reminder of ancestors with some inscription on it: it is a piece of wood, paper in the case of the poor family, with some words such as 'Grandfather's (official position in his life, if any) noble spirit; His loyal grandson, (the name of the family head).' According to Pyon, Western missionaries in Korea 'never gave serious consideration upon the things which had been taking place for thousands of years among the indigenous people' (1926: 27). Pyon also criticizes Korean Christians for their tendency of blindly following missionaries' policy.

Pyon continues to discuss the following three aspects of ancestral tablets which substantiate his argument that they are not idols. First, in the case of wooden ancestral

tablets, the family keeps them in a separate place or ancestral hall, yet in the case of paper ancestral tablets, the family burns them after each ritual. Second, what Koreans put down on the ancestral tablets is not their ancestors' names but the relationship to the head of the family, though their official positions could be included on it. It is so because, out of reverence, Koreans do not mention or read their fathers' and ancestors' names, and even those words of different meaning but of the same pronunciation are forbidden to be read. Third, when the current family head dies, his eldest son succeeds him as the new ritual heir. And all the ancestral tablets have to be scraped off and rewritten because the relations between the new head of the family and his ancestors are different from those between the deceased and them; and also the most senior couple of ancestors (the fifth generation from the new family head's point of view) have to be taken off from the list of ancestral rites and are buried away (1926: 32-34).

In the fifth chapter, Pyon discusses that Korean ancestor-commemoration is a practice deeply connected with filial duty and human conscience; and that the evangelizing effort that goes directly against the conscience of Korean people 'wins no victory in the right sense or half victory at most' (1926: 37). According to him, missionaries give much heed to their own conscience but very little, if any, to that of Korean people (1926: 43). He advises missionaries to pay more cautious attention to the Korean ways of life: 'Only do not impose upon them conditions hurtful to their conscience. Do appreciate their old ways of life, so closely connected with their conscience, at their true value, and encourage them, rather than tear them, so to speak, out of them into those of fuller life in Christ' (1926: 45). He finishes this chapter by quoting a typical Korean response to missionaries' persuasive description of the blissful state of the future for the believers of Jesus (1926: 52):

> But you Christians are deadly against *chesha* [Jesa], the emblem of filial piety. You hold it to be a sin, at least, as a disagreeable thing. I would rather go to Hell than get into Paradise by turning my back to my ancestors. Neither do I believe that *Hananim* (the Korean word for God, meaning the 'Lord of Heaven') condemns men for showing signs of gratitude toward their fathers. If he be of such narrow spleen, as you have tried to make me believe, I had better suffer His condemnation than receive His reward.

It captures the general attitude of some Christians who were critical of missionaries and the majority of the Korean Christians' attitude toward traditional ancestral ritual. It vividly shows the extent to which the practice of ancestral rites is associated with fulfilling filial duty to ancestors.

The issue of Shinto shrine rites in the 1930s-40s

The Christian ban on Confucian ancestral ritual has naturally led to the Christian rejection of Shinto shrine ritual as both involve the issue of idolatry. During the 1920s, Shinto patriotism emerged with the expansion of Japanese military power on the Asian continent and the take-over of the Japanese government by the jingoistic military faction. In 1925, the Japanese colonial government erected the central Shinto shrine in Seoul, thereby forcing Korean people to attend the shrine's ceremonies.[94] Korean Christians were increasingly facing the question of how they should respond to this new force in the colonial rule of their country. For them, the issue was a two-fold problem:

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[94] Probably the first Shinto shrine in Korea was erected in *Inchon* in 1883. It was, however, intended for the use of Japanese residents. But from 1925 on, the Japanese imperial government began to impose the shrine ritual on the Korean population. By the end of the colonial era in 1945, there were a total of 1,140 shrines associated with the State Shinto cult in Korea (Grayson, 1993).

participating in the Shinto ritual would be a humiliation to their national identity as Koreans, and it would also be an idolatrous practice against their religious identity as Christians. The problem has been succinctly stated by a historian of Methodist missions: 'The shrine question was especially difficult for the Korean Christians, for it touched them both as Christians and as patriots' (Copplestone, 1973: 1195).

In 1925, the Japanese Governor, who recognized that there would be resistance to attendance at shrine rituals among Korean people, particularly Christians, issued a statement that the Shinto rites were dedicated to the nation's ancestors and were therefore patriotic and not religious in character. He further stated that attendance at the rituals was not being used as an attempt to compel Koreans to practise Japanese religion. Moreover, he affirmed the fact that all school pupils would be required to attend such ceremonies (Grayson, 1993).

From the 1930s, the colonial regime incrementally enforced the shrine rites upon Korean people. It continued to persuade the Korean people to take the Shinto ritual as a civil and national ceremony and forced the Christian Church to accept it. Here is an American Methodist missionary's testimony to the issue (Appenzeller, 1991: 69):[95]

> The infamous shrine issue was pressed home. An edict required the populace, including students, to make monthly visits to the Imperial Shrine in their city or vicinity, bowing to the edifice as a mark of respect...It was this Shinto cult which became a vital issue in the spiritual life of some missionaries and

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[95] Henry Dodge Appenzeller was the son of Henry G. Appenzeller (1858-1902) who was one of the first two official American missionaries in Korea. He was born in Korea in 1889 and lived there during 1889-1900, 1917-1940, and 1946-1950. His article 'Three Koreas I Have Known' written in 1951 yet only published in 1991 is about his experiences of Korea in three different eras: before, during, and after the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945).

Koreans, who maintained that to go to the shrine was to worship idols. Officially the Japanese government denied that this was religion, just respect for the Emperor, but to fanatical Korean patriots it amounted to a religious cult.

In 1937, the Methodist mission in Korea adopted a resolution accepting the Japanese interpretation of the patriotic nature of the rites, which was subsequently confirmed by the Mission Board in America in the following year (Grayson, 1993: 21). In September 1938, Japanese police officials forced the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church to pass a resolution that the shrine rites did not contravene Christian faith: 'We understand that the shrine cult is not a religion and is not contradictory to the Christian doctrine. Realizing that it is a patriotic national ceremony, we have decided to take the lead in participating in the shrine cult' (quoted in Myung-Hyuk Kim, 1984: 243). Once two mainstream denominations conceded, all other churches and church organizations were likewise forced to conform to the Japanese policy.

In spite of such Japanese enforcement, many Protestant Christians, particularly Presbyterians, stood resolutely opposed to the shrine cult and about two thousand Christians were arrested for their refusal to accept the cult (Grayson, 2002: 161). The strongest areas of Christian dissent were in the northwestern region of the peninsula, the furthest corner of the southeast, and some areas in Manchuria where the Korean diaspora lived (cf. Grayson, 1993: 22-23).

For the Catholic Church, much of the colonial era was a period of tranquil development until the last five years of the Japanese control, the period of the Pacific War. It was partly due to a concordat between the Office of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith and the Japanese Government which was signed on 25

May, 1936 and which announced that the Vatican accepted the Japanese Government's interpretation of State Shinto rites as consisting of 'patriotic' rituals. This permitted Catholics to attend the rites without any fear of committing an act of idolatry. Consequently, during the late 1930s and early 1940s, when many Protestants were incarcerated and killed over their refusal to participate in State Shinto rituals, there was no Catholic counter-action against these rites at least until 1944 when a priest was arrested for his refusal to participate in them (Grayson, 2002: 172-173).

After liberation from Japanese rule in 1945, conflicts arose within the Protestant Church over the issue of participation in Shinto rituals with a growing sense of antagonism between those who participated in the ritual and those who were imprisoned because of their resistance. The successors of a group of people who had opposed the Shinto cult refused to have fellowship with anyone who conformed to it. Such conflicts eventually resulted in a split within the Presbyterian Church. In 1952, the group eventually formed another branch of the Presbyterian Church called the *Koryo* branch, which was the first among many successive splits within the Korean Presbyterian Church. Since its establishment, the *Koryo* branch has been considered to be the most conservative of the four major branches of the Korean Presbyterian Church.

Catholic permission of ancestral ritual since 1939

The Catholic ban on ancestral rites which precipitated the 1791 incident and a series of persecutions in nineteenth century Korea was based on the result of what is commonly known as the 'Rites Controversy' in China. The Chinese rites controversy was mainly about two sets of problems. One concerned the proper Chinese terms for Christian *Deus* and other important concepts such as angels and the soul. This aspect of the

controversy, which can be distinguished from, but is also closely related to, the 'Rites' questions, is often labeled the 'Term Question'. The other set of questions related to the ceremonies in honor of Confucius and the cult of ancestors. The former was performed by the literati class in temples and halls dedicated to him; the latter was embedded in the social structures on all levels and manifested by such ritual practices as prostrations, incense burning, serving of food before the corpse, grave, or ancestral tablets. Here the question was whether Chinese converts should be forbidden to participate in these rituals, or should these be regarded as not having any religious significance, or at least not being contrary to Christian belief, and therefore be tolerated?[96]

Begun as a conflict between Jesuit and Dominican missionaries during the 1640s over the issue of Chinese ancestral rites and the cult of Confucius, the controversy later emerged as a conflict between the Vatican and the Chinese Emperor. Lasting for more than a century, the controversy was considered by eight popes and also involved leading universities in Europe: in 1700, for instance, the theological faculty of the University of Paris formally disapproved the Jesuit position (Latourette, 1929: 139). The oscillating announcements of the Vatican on the issues were eventually ended by the papal decree of 1742 (*Ex quo singulari*) which condemned the Chinese rites and prohibited even further discussion on the issue, and it was this decree that came to be known to the first Korean Catholics in the late eighteenth century.

Two centuries later, the papal decree was challenged by the Manchuria government when the newly created state revived the cult of Confucius to unite the nation and commanded citizens to participate in the cult regardless of their religious affiliation. As it caused serious troubles to Catholics, the Ordinaries of Manchuria

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[96] For more details on the Chinese rites controversy, see Minamiki (1985) and Mungello (1994).

decided to allow Catholics to participate in the cult of Confucius, a decision based on an official announcement made by the Manchuria government which declared the ritual to be void of any religious character. In 1935, Pope Pius XI permitted the cult of Confucius by approving this decision of the Ordinaries in Manchuria. Together with the Confucian cult, a number of customs practised at funerals have also been permitted including bowing before the dead and other external acts of respect (Voss, 1943).

These new and significant regulations were followed, in 1936, by the papal approval of Shinto shrine rites as civil ritual. The situation in Japan was, in a way, similar to that in Manchuria, with the difference that the ceremonies in question were not connected with the cult of Confucius but with state Shintoism. On certain occasions, students and citizens are to attend ceremonies which are held at state shrines in honor of the national heroes and royal ancestors. This again created difficulties for individual Christians and especially for mission schools, despite the fact that the Japanese government declared that such rituals had no religious significance and were merely a civic manifestation of gratitude and patriotism. In 1935, accepting the governmental declaration, the Apostolic Delegate to Japan advised the superiors of the various Catholic institutes and congregations to allow Catholics to take part in such civic rites. A year later, the Vatican gave its formal approval.

The next step in these developments was to extend the regulations laid down for Manchuria and Japan to China. On December 8, 1939, the newly elected pope Pius XII issued an edict, 'Instruction regarding certain ceremonies and the oath on the Chinese rites' in which the anti-rite decree of 1742 was annulled: the civil nature of ancestral rites and other related Chinese rites was acknowledged. The instruction permitted the cult of Confucius as a civic manifestation. Also it took a tolerant approach to ancestral

rites: inclinations of the head and other signs of civil respect in presence of the dead or before their images were allowed.[97]

Following the papal decree of 1939, the Korean Catholic Church announced a revised policy on the issue of ancestral rites. It allowed such ritual behaviors as bowing in front of a corpse, a tomb, or a picture of the deceased, burning incense, and preparing and offering ritual food in memory of the deceased. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) confirmed the tolerant policy of the 1939 decree and, within the Korean context, the result of the Council involved more positive efforts to reinterpret time-honored traditional ancestral practice.

In May 1984, Pope John Paul II (1920-2005) paid a visit to Korea to take part in the bicentennial celebration of Korean Catholicism. At that time, a million Catholics attended a mass held in the open place in central Seoul at which the Pope canonized 103 Korean martyrs as saints of the Church who were killed for their faith during the nineteenth century persecutions. This was not only the largest number of persons ever canonized at any one time, but the first time that a ceremony of canonization had been held outside Rome (Grayson, 2002: 175).

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[97] On December 23, 1939, the *Fides News Service*, a semi-official organ of Propaganda, in discussing the instruction of December 8, 1939, pointed out that the action taken by Propaganda is in no way to be interpreted as a reflection on the past or a new judgment on the historical question of the Chinese rites. According to it, the instruction simply takes cognizance of the fact that customs and ideas in the Orient have undergone a change: it is not the Church, but the Orient, which has changed its attitude to those rites (Voss, 1943: 549). However, this opinion is far from the historical truth. In 1700, the Chinese Emperor announced an edict in which he asserted that the Chinese rites for Confucius and ancestors were civil and social rather than religious. Whereas in the 20th century Rome was willing to accept official statements from the Japanese and Manchuria governments about the meaning of indigenous rites, in the 18th century Rome had rejected the Kangxi Emperor's edict (Mungello, 1994: 4).

In 1989, the Catholic Church organized a special committee for the revision of funerary and ancestral rites and in 1994 it published a revised 'Liturgy for ancestral rites'. Accepting traditional ancestral rites with some modifications, it reconfirmed that the fundamental spirit of the rites is to repay one's ancestors and offer a return for the benefits received from parents, as well as to recognize the dignity of life and to deepen the consciousness of one's roots (Chai-Sik Chung, 1997: 16).

Conflicting approaches within Protestantism

Although the Protestant Church has developed alternative Christian memorial services, the issue of traditional ancestral ritual has continued to be a persistent problem among many Protestant Christians due to the fact that many Christians are from families whose members are not all Christian. Probably influenced by the Catholic affirmative view of indigenous culture since the Vatican II, the Protestant Church also witnessed the emergence of more positive approaches to traditional Korean culture including the issue of ancestral rites from the late 1960s. In 1969, for example, the Presbyterian minister Rev. Ki-Suk Yoon published an article on the ethical aspect of ancestral rites in an influential Protestant journal, claiming that Confucian ancestral rituals can never be idol worship as they are ethical rituals expressing filial duty (Ki-Suk Yoon, 1969).

During the early 1980s, Protestant Christianity witnessed one of the most heated controversies among church leaders over the issue of traditional ancestral ritual, prompted by a sermon delivered by Rev. Yong-Ki Cho, the senior pastor of *Yoido Full Gospel Church* in Seoul. In his sermon delivered on December 19, 1979, Rev. Cho advocated traditional ancestral ritual as follows (quoted in Myung-Hyuk Kim, 1984: 243-244):

> Ancestral rites are nothing but honoring one's parents. I do not understand why people say it is idolatry.... Parents are parents whether they are alive or dead. Isn't it our custom to visit our living parents and prepare food for them?... It is quite natural that we think of our deceased parents on such days as of their birth or death. It is quite all right to prepare food thinking of our deceased parents as if they were present, erect a cross instead of an ancestral tablet, and bow down.....We honor our parents with bowing down. It is not a sin to bow down to deceased parents. It is not an idol.... Our deceased parents have gone either to heaven or hell. Even though they have gone to hell, they are our parents. Having an affectionate remembrance of them is keeping God's commandment... To perform ancestral rites is really a good thing. In the past we performed sacrificial rites to God.

Given the conservative nature of Rev. Cho's ministry and his congregation, such an affirmative comment on traditional ancestral ritual was astonishing because within the Korean context, as elsewhere, Christian conservatism had been almost synonymous with a negative approach to indigenous culture.

The sermon spread beyond the immediate congregation and eventually provoked intense discussion among Protestant leaders across the country. The *Christian Shinmun*, a widely-circulated weekly Christian newspaper, printed reactions of ten Christian leaders to Rev. Cho's sermon (07 November 1981). Most of them were very critical of the issue and some of the criticisms are as follows (quoted in Myung-Hyuk Kim, 1984: 244): 'We express our filial piety to our living parents. Deceased ones are not persons. Preparing ritual food and bowing is contradictory to the Commandment' (Rev. Prof. Sung-Koo Chung); 'Preparing ritual food and bowing to the deceased parents even without making ancestral tablets is an obvious idolatry. Jesus himself abolished the Jewish sacrificial system and instituted worship with prayers... Numerous men of faith

have suffered because of this problem of ancestral rites. It would be a disgrace to them if we said that bowing without the tablet is not an idolatry' (Rev. Prof. Kyung-Yon Chun); 'If there is a pastor who says that it is all right to prepare a sacrificial table and bow, he must be lacking in theological foundation' (Rev. Hae-Il Cho); 'Preparing ritual food and bowing is contradictory to theology and the bible' (Rev. Hoon Choi).

There was, however, a group of Christian leaders who took affirmative approaches to traditional ancestral ritual. For instance, Rev. Prof. Sun-Hwan Byun, a noted Korean liberal theologian, has expressed his affirmative view about traditional ancestral rites in the *Donga Ilbo*, a widely circulated national newspaper: 'Ancestral ritual is a social product of the large family system. To express filial piety and to perform sacrifices is following Heaven-designated ethics. Ancestral ritual is an expression of filial affection, not idolatry' (24 December 1983). In his public speech to a gathering of Christian leaders on December 16, 1983, Mr. Jin-Hee Lee, Minister of Cultural Affairs and Information and spokesman of the Korean government, has exhorted Protestant leaders to take a more affirmative attitude toward Korean culture and proposed a task of 'Koreanization of Christianity' (Myung-Hyuk Kim, 1984: 245).

Throughout the 1980s, many theologians and church leaders expressed their own views on the issue without reaching any general consensus. During December 26-31, 1983, over 100 theologians from seven countries of South and East Asia met in Taipei, Taiwan for a conference on 'Ancestral worship and the Christian response' sponsored by the Asia Evangelical Commission. In 1985, the conference papers were published as a book entitled *Christian Alternatives to Ancestor Practices* in which the papers of four conservative Korean theologians are included (Ro, 1985). They all expressed their negative views on traditional Korean ancestral ritual. In the same year in Korea, an

edited book on the issue of ancestral ritual was published by conservative theologians including some of those who gave papers at the Taipei conference (Jong-Yoon Lee, 1985).

The debate continued and in 1988, Prof. Jung-Young Lee, a theologian who was teaching in the U.S.A., also published a collection of articles written in English on the issue: *Ancestor Worship and Christianity in Korea*. Although many Protestant leaders and theologians paid much attention to the issue of ancestral rites during the 1980s, however, they failed to produce any agreed understandings of the issue and practical guides for ordinary Christians.

A survey in 1983 among Seoul residents

In 1983, as part of her Master's research, Ms. Bong-Ja Suh conducted a questionnaire survey on the practice of ancestral rites among the residents of Seoul (Suh, 1983). For her sample, she selected the parents of middle-school students, taking one class of one middle school from each educational district in Seoul. She distributed 411 questionnaires with 355 returned, reflecting a high return rate of 86 per cent. The religious profile of these 355 respondents was as follows: 109 Buddhists (31%), 103 Christians (29%), 111 non-affiliation (31%), 15 Confucians (4%), and 17 other religions (5%).

As to the question of whether they perform traditional Confucian ancestral ritual in their household, 198 respondents (56%) answered in the affirmative and 157 respondents (44%) in the negative. As to reasons why people did not perform ancestral rites, 97 respondents said it was 'because they are not the eldest son', 48 respondents 'because they are Christians', and 12 respondents gave 'other reasons'. The answer of

the 97 respondents suggests that many of them actually participated in Confucian ancestral rites held in the household of their eldest brothers. In other words, at least about 70 per cent of the total respondents were participating in traditional ancestral ritual. This survey also discovered that while 48 Christians out of 103 did not perform Confucian ancestral ritual, 25 Christians were participating in the ritual. It suggests that some 47 per cent Christians (14 per cent of the total respondents) were probably performing Christian memorial service instead of the Confucian ritual, while 24 per cent Christians were also participating in Confucian ancestral ritual.

A survey in 1985 among Protestant Christians

A further example of an academic survey on the issue of ancestral ritual comes from the Rev. Soon-Ha Ryoo's study. In 1985, Rev. Soon-Ha Ryoo submitted his comparative study of Christian worship and Korean ancestral rites to San Francisco Theological Seminary for the degree of Doctor of Ministry (Ryoo, 1986). As part of his doctoral research, Rev. Ryoo conducted a questionnaire survey on the issue of ancestral rites among Protestant Christians. He chose three Presbyterian congregations in three regions: *Bethel* Church in Seoul, *Youngju* Church in *Youngju* (mid-eastern region), and *Puyo* Church in *Puyo* (mid-western region). He also gathered data from church ministers in three Synods to which the three congregations belonged. All in all, there were 87 respondents from church ministers and 173 respondents from lay believers.

Some pertinent results of the survey showed that about 77 per cent of the church ministers regarded traditional ancestral rites as a pastoral problem and indeed 99 per cent of them reported that they had given personal counseling on the issue. As to the question of what answers they gave in their counseling, 9 per cent of the church

ministers advised their congregations that they might participate in traditional ancestral rites; 61 per cent told them that they might participate in the ritual if necessary; and some 30 per cent advised people never to participate in traditional ancestral rites (Ryoo, 1986: 126-149).

But what about the response from lay believers? Concerning the question of whether the issue of ancestral rites causes any problems within the family, 45 per cent lay believers considered it 'a major problem'; 30 per cent 'a minor problem'; and 25 per cent saw it as 'no problem'. This suggests that 75 per cent of the lay believers saw ancestral rites as causing trouble within their family, which suggests that these 75 per cent of lay believers lived in a family whose members were a mixture of Protestant Christians and believers of other religions.

As to the question of what they thought of traditional ancestral rites, 32 per cent of lay Christians answered that they were idolatrous; 19 per cent said that they were different from idolatry; and 49 per cent said that they reflect the observance of family ritual. That is, 68 per cent of lay Protestants did not consider Confucian ancestral rites to be idolatry. This is a surprising result, given the official stance of the Protestant Church. As to the question of the relationship between the issue of ancestral rites and evangelization, 89 per cent of lay Christians answered that the Protestant ban on ancestral rites was a major obstacle to evangelical activities. As to the proper Christian attitude to traditional ancestral ritual, 20 per cent said that they should be forbidden; 17 per cent said that they should be allowed; 54 per cent said that the rituals of other religions should be respected; and 9 per cent showed indifference (Ryoo, 1986: 149-167).

Contemporary Protestant context

During the period of the 10th January – 4th February 2005, a research institute of Hanshin University in Seoul conducted a national survey on the 'Korean understanding of family culture', with the result published as a monograph later that year (Hanshin University Theological Research Institute, 2005). As an interview-based study on individuals, the survey gathered data from 1,000 adults over 18 years old across the country. One of the goals of this survey was to compare data from Christians with those from non-Christians, and the issue of ancestral rites was included in the survey.

As to how traditional ancestral rites were interpreted by Protestant Christians, some 27.5 per cent saw them as idol worship, 23.2 per cent as venerating ancestors, and 26.1 per cent as bonding family solidarity. Non-Christians dealt with the same question as follows: idol worship (5%), venerating ancestors (47.2%), and bonding family solidarity (22.6%). As to the relationship of traditional ancestral rites and Christian faith, 53.1 per cent of Protestant Christians answered that ancestral rites are religious activities that are against Christian faith, and 36.6 per cent Protestants answered that Confucian ancestral rites express Korean traditional culture which has nothing to do with a violation of Christian faith. According to this survey, 24.9 per cent Protestant Christians approved the practice of traditional ancestral rites and, in fact, the survey revealed that 49.5 per cent Protestant Christians were participating in traditional ancestral rites.

A Korea Gallup survey

During December 2005, Korea Gallup conducted a nationwide interview-survey on the current practice of New Year's Day in which 1,502 adults over 20 years old participated.

According to its result released in January 2006 (Korea Gallup, 2006b), 94.2 per cent of the respondents were celebrating New Year's Day according to the lunar calendar rather than the solar: only 3.1 per cent said that they were observing New Year's Day according to the solar calendar. During the 1980s, the government once attempted to abolish the traditional practice of keeping New Year's Day according to the lunar calendar and encouraged the people to celebrate solar calendar's first day in the name of modernization. The policy, however, completely failed and the tendency of returning to the traditional practice has gradually increased particularly over the last ten years. This survey also included a question on ancestral ritual. According to its result, 77.8 per cent of the respondents conducted Confucian ancestral ritual on the morning of New Year's Day, while 15.4 per cent performed Christian ancestral ritual and 6.8 per cent did not perform any ancestral rites (Korea Gallup, 2006b).

A summary of survey results

What these surveys show is the widespread practice of Confucian ancestral ritual and its continuing popularity in contemporary Korea. In summary, the 1983 survey among Seoul residents revealed that about 70 per cent of the total respondents were participating in Confucian ancestral ritual. The Korea Gallup survey in 2005 showed an even higher rate of the practice of Confucian ancestral ritual when reporting that some 78 per cent of the respondents participated in the Confucian ritual on New Year's Day. These offer representative examples of how deeply Confucian influence has been embedded in Korean people's life.

Moreover, these surveys reveal that, despite the Church's official teaching on the issue, many Protestant Christians participate in Confucian ancestral ritual. According to

the Hanshin University's survey in 2005, the figure of such case reached half of the total Protestant respondents. It shows that there is a significant discrepancy between the Church's official stance and people's actual practice on the one hand, and that the issue of ancestral ritual continues to be a serious cultural and religious problem among many Korean families on the other.

Furthermore, these surveys suggests that we could misunderstand Korean religious life when we look at the religious statistics alone, according to which by 2005, 29 per cent Koreans were Christians, 23 per cent were Buddhists, and 47 per cent were not affiliated to any religions. As far as the practice of ancestral ritual is concerned, more than 70 per cent Koreans participate in Confucian ritual, which contradicts the official religious statistics. As discussed in the Introduction, this indicates an important aspect of contemporary Confucianism which is different from other institutional religions, as well as a limit of the conventional religious statistics in revealing people's reality of religious life.

3) Contemporary Practices: 7 Cases

Thus far, this chapter has presented historical data on the issue of Christianity and ancestral ritual over the last two centuries. It is now complemented by contemporary cases of ancestral ritual, with particular reference to Protestant Christian practice. Derived from an ethnographical study published in 1998 by the Oxford-trained Korean female anthropologist Professor Okpyo Moon, the seven cases presented here are divided into four categories: the Confucian family (2 cases), the Catholic family (1

case), the Protestant family having little conflict with traditional ancestral ritual (2 cases), and the Protestant family having serious conflict with the ritual (2 cases).[98]

Two cases from the Confucian families

First we consider two contemporary cases of Confucian ancestral ritual. This will highlight differences between Confucian and Christian ancestral ritual on the one hand, and changing aspects of Confucian ancestral rites themselves in modern Korean society on the other.

Case 1: Mr. Nam's family

This family is a descendant of a Confucian elite lineage that has kept its residence in a village in the *Dangjin* region (mid-western part of South Korea) for the past three hundred years or so. As the family of the first-born son of a Confucian lineage, the family has played a central role in the activities of the kinship community. This family has an ancestral shrine where eleven ancestral tablets are kept in five separate small rooms: these eleven ancestral tablets commemorate Mr. Nam's parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, great-great-grandparents, and the lineage founder and his two wives. Up until the late 1980s, this family had, every year, performed eleven death-day rituals (*Kije*), four special food offerings (*Charye*), four seasonal rituals (*Sije*), and a communal

[98] Okpyo Moon's study has been published into both English and Korean though they are not completely identical (Okpyo Moon, 1998a & 1998b). In her English article (1998a) from which the 7 cases of this study are derived, Moon introduces 9 cases of ancestral ritual which are categorized as 'the upholders of the Confucian tradition' (3 cases), 'Christian-style ancestral rites' (3 cases), and 'family conflicts surrounding ancestral rites' (3 cases). For better rendering, the cases are revised but not so as to damage the original study.

grave-site ritual in the autumn (*Sihyang*). Some of the expenses for various ancestral rituals are subsidized by its lineage association.

Some ten years ago, however, senior members of the lineage association agreed that the ritual burden of the first-born heir and his wife was too heavy, especially since they had to work as full-time farmers. It was decided, therefore, that the death-day sacrifices were to be reduced from eleven to ten (one death-day ritual for great-great-grandparents rather than two separate rituals), and that two of the four special food offering rites would be abolished. It was also decided that the responsibility for the seasonal rituals should be passed to another family within the lineage, and all the members of the lineage segment perform one large communal grave-site ritual in the autumn for all the ancestors instead of separate rituals for each ancestor.

Mr. Nam's family now performs ten death-day rituals, two special food offering rituals and a much-simplified communal grave-site ritual each year. To be sure, ritual burden has become somewhat lighter than it used to be and, in particular, it lessens the ritual burden of women who have to prepare all the ritual food. Women in this family, however, have never been allowed to participate in ancestral rituals: even the ritual heir's wife is not given a ritual role of the second wine offering, which is a common practice in other families. Ritual food is prepared by women in the kitchen, but they are excluded from its handling afterwards as well as from the main part of the ritual.

Case 2: Mr. Kwon's family

This is also a family of an elite Confucian lineage, originated from *Andong*, once a centre of Korean Confucianism and the town of the clan's seat. A clan's seat (*bongwan*) is the original place of the clan, the place where its apical ancestor resided. Decades

ago, the family moved to *Daejon*, one of the major cities in the country. Every year the family was responsible for more than ten ancestral rites including eight death-day rituals. In 1984, however, at Mr. Kwon's request, it was decided at a family meeting that the family would reduce the number of rituals by a half. Mr. Kwon was twenty-eight years old and just married at that time. His wife was not willing to prepare ritual food and did not want to participate in ancestral rituals either. As it was thought that the preparation of all the ritual food was too great a burden for his aged mother, Mr. Kwon insisted that the number of ancestral rites be reduced. Even his father was unable to raise objections to Mr. Kwon's request. The decision was also easier because Mr. Kwon's two uncles had not participated in ancestral rites for many years after their conversion to Protestant Christianity. Furthermore, having settled in a big city away from hometown, Mr. Kwon's family was now free from the pressures from the lineage association and the local community.

The family now performs only three death-day rituals for Mr. Kwon's father and grandparents, and two special food offerings a year: the family practises neither seasonal rituals (*Sije*) nor communal grave-site ritual (*Sihyang*). When Mr. Kwon's father was still alive, the family practised death-day rituals for great-grandparents as well, but these were discontinued after his father's death a few years ago. As his wife still does not want to take any responsibility for ancestral rites, however, Mr. Kwon doubts whether even his family tradition of ancestral rites will be able to be continued after his mother – who prepares all the ritual food – dies.

A case from the Catholic family

As mentioned earlier, since 1939, the Catholic Church has permitted traditional Confucian ancestral rites albeit with some modifications, and since then, many Catholic families in Korea have performed slightly modified traditional ancestral ritual as the following case exemplifies.

Case 3: Mr. Kang's family

This is a story of a devoted Roman Catholic family in Seoul. As Mr. Kang (aged 68) is a first-born son of the lineage, this family performs annual nine death-day rituals (*Kije*) for ancestors of four ascending generations and two special food offerings (*Charye*).[99] The family also performs a death-day rite for Mr. Kang's aunt who died single. The only element of this family's rituals different from traditional Confucian ritual is that this family does not place ancestral tablets on the ritual table. The family stopped using ancestral tablets about twenty years ago when the couple converted to Catholicism and, instead, the family places a picture of the deceased on the ritual altar. In this family, bowing in front of the ritual table, making ritual food, and offering wines are continued although some Catholic families have abolished these Confucian elements.

For Mr. Kang, a ritual heir of a small lineage segment, observing ancestral ritual is very important as it unites his kinsmen, especially the patrilineal descendants of the great-great-grandfather. He takes his ritual duty so seriously that, when he has to stay abroad for a while for his business, he either comes back home just for performing ancestral rites or passes the responsibility temporarily to his first son. Mr. Kang's wife

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[99] One of the ancestors had two wives. That is why this family keeps nine death-day rituals rather than eight.

prepares all the ritual food although she could easily buy ready-made ritual food from the market. The Kang couple always dress in special ritual clothes for ancestral rites, a practice that even many Confucian families abandoned long ago.

Two cases from the Protestant families with little conflict

Case 4: Mr. Kim's family

Mr. Kim (aged 51), a Seoul resident who is now a high-ranking official in the central government, was born and bred in a very traditional (Confucian) family in the south-east region. When he was young, Mr. Kim's grandfather used to practise full-scale Confucian ancestral rites but, soon after his father's untimely death, Mr. Kim's family moved to Seoul and his mother became a Christian. Since his family had less ritual pressure – his father was the second son of the family, Mr. Kim's mother could convert to Protestant Christianity without much trouble within the family. The family soon began to perform a Christian form of ancestral ritual (*Chudoyebe*) on the death-day of Mr. Kim's father.

The older brother of Mr. Kim's father used to attend his younger brother's Christian memorial service until his own death a few years ago. But as he was not a Christian, he was not given any ritual role in the service and Mr. Kim's mother usually officiated at the service. After an opening remark by his mother, everybody joins in singing a hymn selected by his mother followed by prayer offered by Mr. Kim's aunt (his deceased father's sister).[100] Then the second hymn follows and the Lord's Prayer is

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[100] If it were a Confucian rite, Mr. Kim's aunt would be excluded from the main part of the ritual, for, according to Confucian custom, a married woman is considered as belonging to her husband's family so she does not have any ritual duty or right in her parents' family. Being

recited by all the participants. Sometimes a bible passage is included before the second hymn, but normally the whole rite of this family is very simple, even compared to that of other Christian families. Mr. Kim's mother sometimes invites her church's pastor to officiate at the service, in which case it takes a bit longer than usual. Generally speaking, it looks like an extended form of prayer before a meal. In fact, the rite is performed with everybody sitting around the table on which food is placed. The food is ordinary and not specially prepared ritual food as in the Confucian rite. As the food table is already set, the service tends to be short and everyone shares the food after the service.

Both Mr. Kim and his younger brother converted to Protestantism following their mother and they both married Christian women. The family did not experience any serious conflict when they replaced Confucian ancestral rites with Christian-style ritual for the death-day of Mr. Kim's father. The family of Mr. Kim's cousin (sons of his father's older brother) continues to perform Confucian ancestral rites for their parents and grandparents. Mr. Kim does not attend ancestral rituals for the couple of his father's older brother, but he participates in the rituals for his grandparents: Mr. Kim's mother joins neither of them. When Mr. Kim participates in Confucian ancestral rites for his grandparents, he does not bow in front of ancestral tablets, while his younger brother bows and makes wine offerings to the ritual altar because for him, although he himself is a Christian, the tradition of the family is more important than Christian teachings of ancestral rites.

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herself a Christian, however, Mr. Kim's aunt not only participates in the service but is also given a role of offering a prayer.

Case 5: Mr. Min's family

Mr. Min's family is one of the oldest Protestant families in Korea, his grandparents having converted to Christianity in the early 1900s. As Mr. Min's grandfather was the third son, Mr. Min's family did not hold any ancestral rites even before his grandparents' conversion. Mr. Min's grandfather was a lawyer and worked in north China during the Japanese colonial period until his repatriation at the time of the liberation in 1945. Since his grandfather's death in 1970, Mr. Min's family began to perform ancestral ritual in a Christian style. Now Mr. Min officiates at four Christian memorial services a year for his grandparents and parents. Mr. Min's two uncles participate in his grandparents' death-day memorial services while the service for Mr. Min's mother is attended by his siblings and their families only.

The memorial services in this family are different from those of other families in that they have a relatively long-standing Christian tradition and the procedures for the rituals are much more formalized. The rites are always officiated by Mr. Min and the rites start with short silent prayer remembering the deceased concerned. Then there is hymn followed by the reading of a bible passage. After the bible-reading, there is always a short sermon which relates the meaning of the bible passage and the life of the deceased, and which emphasizes what the descendants ought to do to emulate the ancestor's good deeds. Mr. Min's father, who was an elder at his church until his death five years ago, had usually given the sermon. Now, one of Mr. Min's two uncles, both of whom are also elders at their churches, takes charge of giving a short sermon, and the other leads the prayer that follows the sermon. Under Mr. Min's oversight, the two uncles take turns in giving the sermon and offering the prayer every year. Then there is a second hymn and the rite is concluded with the Lord's Prayer. At the rite for Mr.

Min's mother, the sermon is given by Mr. Min himself, with his brothers and sisters, all of whom are Christian, taking turns in offering prayer. After the services, all the family members sit around the dining table and share a meal.

Two cases from the Protestant families with serious conflict

Case 6: Mr. Yang's family

Mr. Yang (aged 61), a university professor, experienced a temporary separation from his wife several years ago. After years of family conflicts surrounding ancestral rites, his wife left him without any sign of returning. She went to the U.S.A. to stay with her son who was studying there. Some twenty years ago, Mr. Yang, a ritual heir of a long-standing Confucian lineage, married a devoted Christian woman. He was responsible for at least eight annual death-day rites for each of the ancestors of the preceding four generations, in addition to numerous grave-site rituals and two special food offerings.

During the early years of their marriage, the heavy burden of the ancestral rites was taken care of by Mr. Yang's parents who were living with Mr. Yang's younger brother and his family in their hometown. Mr. Yang and his wife participated in those ancestral rites as other siblings did, and there was not much conflict. When Mr. Yang's mother died some ten years ago, however, it was thought that the venue for ancestral rites should be moved to Mr. Yang's Seoul residence. As Mr. Yang's father who still officiated at the rites came to live with Mr. Yang's family in Seoul, Mr. Yang's wife was now expected to take the responsibility for the preparation of ritual food. Endless family disputes broke out as Mr. Yang's wife refused to fulfil this obligation. Although she was, as it happened, unfamiliar and thus clumsy with all the elaborate procedures of the ritual food preparation, she thought that engaging in such work contradicted her

Christian faith which prohibits traditional ancestral rites as idolatry. She believed that it was sinful to prepare ritual food and to participate in Confucian ancestral rites. She thanked God when her eldest son whom she managed to persuade to study Christian theology sided with her. She left her husband to stay with her son in the States as a warning of divorce to her husband. This threat of divorce proved to be effective and the case was settled after some six months' separation when she returned home. Mr. Yang and his wife finally negotiated with each other and set down three primary conditions: 1) The ancestral rites and all the other family rituals be performed in the Confucian manner only during Mr. Yang's lifetime; 2) Their eldest son, who became a Christian, does not have to bow in front of the ritual altar; and 3) Mr. Yang will join the church with his wife. When Mr. Yang's father died three years ago, they performed the funerary rites in the Confucian style as previously agreed, and the family still performs Confucian ancestral rites with all the food offerings, ancestral tablets, incense, etc. though they are somewhat simplified compared to past years.

Mr. Yang's brothers and sisters, however, complain as they think the rituals are not performed properly. His younger brother, in particular, who once took care of their parents in their hometown even insists that Mr. Yang ought to pass his ritual right to him as Mr. Yang who became a Christian is no longer qualified as the proper ritual heir. Mr. Yang and his wife, despite all their marital conflicts arising from the issue, cannot agree with the younger brother's suggestion. The Yang couple suspect that the brother's complaint is only an excuse to conceal his real interest in the family ritual land that belongs to the ritual heir, the value of which had recently soared.

Case 7: Mr. Park's family

Mr. Park (aged 86) was born and bred in a very traditional Confucian elite family. After he had lost his job in the aftermath of the 1961 military coup, he moved to Seoul with his family from his hometown in the south-eastern region. Brought up in a Confucian family, Mr. Park always believed that a virtuous life can only be achieved by being properly filial to one's parents and ancestors as well as by taking good care of one's family and kinsmen. Indeed, these have increasingly occupied him ever since he became unemployed and moved to the unfamiliar capital city. He not only performed with utmost care all the ancestral rites that he was responsible for, but also participated in all the rites held at his close kinsmen's houses.[101] Even though Mr. Park had moved to Seoul, it is said that around 30-40 family members and kinsmen usually gathered at any given ancestral ritual held in his house.

Mr. Park has two sons and three daughters. Mr. Park and his wife lived with his eldest son who had married in the early 1970s. His second son, who married not long afterwards, lived abroad for nearly ten years to gain a doctoral degree until he came back to Korea in 1980. Mr. Park's eldest son's wife, ever since her marriage into this family, dutifully carried out her ritual obligation of preparing all the ritual food along with Mr. Park's wife. She became a veteran of the entire process of the food preparation and had mastered all the details of the family's ritual procedures. Accordingly Mr. Park felt very grateful to and proud of her.

Troubles began, however, when Mr. Park's first daughter-in-law became a Christian in the late 1980s. As a novice Christian, she took literally every word of the

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[101] According to the Confucian tradition in Korea, a man is expected to attend all the ancestral rites held by his *tangnaechin*, i.e. the descendants of the same great-great-grandfather.

pastor who taught her that the wine cups offered at Confucian ancestral rites are means of relating with spirits and an act of offering wine to spirits is an act of worship that ought never to be done by anyone who sincerely worships God. These teachings confused and troubled her until she reached a conclusion that she ought to convert other family members to Christianity. She believed that it was not only for her own faith but also to save their souls and that the first action to be taken toward this end was to eliminate Confucian ancestral rites from the family. She could not give voice to her thoughts, however, as the family tradition was so strong, and for some time she continued to carry out her ritual duty as before. She finally managed to persuade her husband to join her church. She and her husband then began to persuade Mr. Park to change their family ancestral rites into Christian-style memorial services. The couple kneeled down in front of Mr. Park and appealed to him, saying how important it was for them to remember ancestors in a Christian way rather than in a Confucian way. Mr. Park, however, found it extremely difficult to concede this idea because, for him, to observe ancestral rites properly was a sacred duty, a duty that no man of humane virtue could ever neglect. Also, for him, the only way to venerate ancestors properly was the Confucian way.

Mr. Park remained silent at first, but, being a gentle person himself, he was not able to resist their demands for very long. Also, his son and daughter-in-law's demand was aided by his younger sister and eldest daughter, both of whom became Protestant Christians even before his daughter-in-law converted. Such a demand was also supported by Mr. Park's wife, who had always been complaining that Mr. Park was only concerned about ancestral rites, and had not been able to care for his own family properly. Mr. Park's wife insisted that it was time for Mr. Park to take the burden of

ancestral rites off the shoulders of her son and his wife. Mr. Park finally conceded and told them to do as they wanted.

Upon hearing about the decision, however, Mr. Park's second son, who felt sure that his brother's couple forced the decision upon his father, was very angry and argued that he would himself carry out the ancestral rites at his house. The first son did not agree to this since he believed that it was his own right as the ritual heir to decide the form of family ritual. The second son again argued that sibling hierarchy for ritual right is a Confucian tradition and in order to claim his authority as the ritual heir he ought first to perform his role properly according to the Confucian way.

When the family held the ancestral rite in Christian style for the first time in the early 1990s, all the senior members of the family and lineage who would be the principals in a Confucian rite sat awkwardly and silently in the corner of the room without knowing what to do: they did not know any hymns or prayers. While it was their knowledge of the ritual itself that provided their authority in Confucian ceremonies, in a Christian service, they were completely muted as they lacked the required competence. The memorial service was led by Mr. Park's eldest son and prayer was given by Mr. Park's younger sister who holds the position of elder at her church. In both a short sermon delivered by Mr. Park's eldest son and prayer by his sister, what was said was not about their ancestors and descendants as in a Confucian rite, but mostly about God's grace and the ways to be a good Christian.

The second son thought that this was improper. The two brothers, the first and the second son, broke into a big quarrel after the rite. Mr. Park's cousins and nephews stopped coming to the Christian memorial service partly out of embarrassment they felt at the scene and partly because they could not find any roles in the new Christian

ceremony. Mr. Park's second son tried in vain to reinstate the Confucian ritual. His attempts were blocked not only by his older brother but also by many of his sisters and aunts who were all Christians. They began to participate in the family's ancestral ceremonies with ever-increasing eagerness once they changed to Christian memorial services. On lunar New Year's Day and on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month as well, the family offers hymns and prayers instead of performing the Confucian special food-offering rite, and the second son and his family no longer participate in any of the Christian family ceremonies.

2. A Historical-Theological Analysis of Ancestral Rites

On the basis of the data presented so far, this section now provides a historical-theological analysis, the major themes of which include the issue of ancestral ritual as a continuing problem in the Christian-Confucian encounter, the continuity and change of Confucian ancestral ritual (*Jesa*) particularly in relation to the Christian alternative rite (*Chudoyebe*), and the relationship of ancestral rites and social change. Where appropriate, the analysis complements the Korean material with data from the adjacent countries of China and Japan. The case of ancient Judaism is also included as it has continuing theological significance for the Christian practice of death on the one hand, and because it shows an interesting comparison with the case of the Confucian practice of ancestral ritual on the other.

1) Ancestral Ritual: A Perennial Problem in the Christian-Confucian Encounter

Ancestral ritual: popular practice versus Confucian practice

In his first volume of *The Principles of Sociology* (1876), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) regarded the cult of ancestor as the root of all religions. According to him, while *the fear of the living* becomes the root of political control, *the fear of the dead* becomes the root of religious control. For Spencer, the living might be called slaves of the dead because ancestor-worship, addressing the fear of the dead, is so influential in people's life. For concrete evidence, he lists cases from the ancient Egyptians who first reached a high civilization, the ancient Peruvians who were subject to a rigid social system rooted in ancestor worship, and the Chinese who have continued to practise a kindred worship from the ancient period (Spencer, 1876).

Indeed, in China, ancestral ritual has long been practised. According to written documents (Keightley, 1978a & 1978b), it can be traced back at least to the *Shang* dynasty (1766-1050 BCE) while archaeological findings suggest the existence of various forms of ancestral ritual even in the Neolithic period (Liu, 2000). Confucius and other early Confucian scholars employed the existing ancestral cult as a means of promoting filial duty, and bonding family and social order. Subsequent Confucian scholars further systematized the Confucian style of ancestral rites and published ritual manuals which specified ritual procedures, ritual food and its arrangement, proper dress and gesture, and other matters of ceremonial formality. In its rationale, thus, Confucian ancestral practice was different from ordinary people's practice of ancestral rites. In his *Treatise on Rites*, the early Confucian scholar Xunzi (453-221 BCE) said: 'the sacrificial rite [ancestral ritual] is the expression of man's affectionate longing. It

represents the height of piety and faithfulness, of love and respect. It represents also the completion of propriety and refinement... The superior men [Confucian scholars] consider it as the activity of man, while the ordinary people consider it as the activity to do with the spirit' (quoted in Fung, 1931: 340).

As Xunzi elucidates, while Confucians consider ancestral practice as a sort of social propriety, ordinary people consider it as having supernatural force. Ordinary people's practice had been heavily influenced by folk religions, its purpose having much to do with tackling the fear of the dead and satisfying the desire for well-being among the living and the dead alike. Spencer's observation of Chinese ancestral rites, however, does not seem to recognize the difference between ordinary people's practice and that of Confucian scholars. The Confucian practice of the ritual has more to do with the ritual expression of filial duty, the transmission of family tradition, and the enhancement of social order, than with the fear of the dead.

As already mentioned, the Chinese 'Rites Controversy' during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries originated from the conflicting understandings of Chinese ancestral rituals between Jesuits and Dominicans. While Jesuits positively understood them as a civil ritual for expressing filial duty toward ancestors, Dominicans regarded Chinese ancestral practice as idolatrous and superstitious. How could they reach such different conclusions? Although various factors such as the issue of church politics in the missionary field and different theological principles might have affected them, one of the key reasons can be found in the fact that they had experienced different forms of Chinese ancestral rites. While Jesuits mainly observed Confucian scholars' ancestral rites, Dominicans experienced ordinary people's practice in the rural area. That is, while Confucian scholars' practice was much more to do with ritual expression of filial duty

and the transmission of family tradition, ordinary people's practice involved much more superstitious elements associated with tackling the fear of ancestral spirits. This also corresponds to the early Confucian scholar Xunzi's observation quoted above.

The Confucian dynasty in Korea, established in the late fourteenth century, employed Confucian ancestral rites for its new state. In fact, they had already been introduced from China long before, but had not become established even among Confucian elites. The Confucian government propagated Confucian ancestral rites as a new social norm against the background of the popular Korean practice of an ancestral cult which had been deeply influenced by shamanistic and Buddhist ideas. Due to this adamant Confucian policy of the government, Confucian ancestral rites were rooted in Korean people's life by the eighteenth century (Haboush, 1991). The American missionary, Daniel Gifford, in the late nineteenth century was therefore quite right when he observed that although the religious beliefs of Korea showed a blending of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, 'the social fabric of the country is largely Confucian' and 'ancestral worship is Confucian' (Gifford, 1892: 169).

Although Confucian ideas have been so influential in Korean ancestral practice that Korean practice can loosely be called Confucian, other forms of ancestral rites have also coexisted in the society. That is, Korean ancestral practice varies from more rigid forms of Confucian ancestral rites among elite families to more shamanistic and/or Buddhist forms of ancestral rites among many ordinary people. As with the Chinese case, thus, the views of insiders (Koreans) and outsiders (missionaries) on indigenous ancestral rites have been different depending on the kind of ritual with which they have been more familiar. This is confirmed by both the historical and contemporary data presented in the first section of this chapter: some early missionaries and Korean

Christians who had more positive views of Korean ancestral practice tended to refer to more rigid Confucian ancestral rites, while the majority of missionaries and Korean Christians took negative approaches based on the popular practice of ancestral rites.

The Christian ban on traditional ancestral ritual

In his 1892 article, the American missionary Daniel Gifford recognized the difference between Chinese popular ancestral rites and the Korean counterpart (Gifford, 1892: 176). According to Gifford, the Chinese seem to believe that the happiness of the dead and of the living is directly connected with the practice of ancestral rites. Whether their deceased fathers are rich or not in the other world depends upon the fidelity of their living children in keeping up ancestral rites. Indeed, it was a prevalent belief that their ancestors would reward or punish the living descendants according to their faithfulness in conducting the ritual. Although Gifford's understanding of Chinese ancestral practice was largely based on his reading of the literature on the issue, it was not far from the reality: as Gifford noticed, popular Chinese ancestral practice had been heavily influenced by folk religions.

According to Gifford's observation, however, the Korean people seem to believe that the condition of the dead is permanently fixed upon their arrival in the other world as his report on two general views among Korean people on the meaning of ancestral rites indicates (1892: 176, original emphasis):

> As nearly as I can learn after considerable inquiry, two views are held among Koreans as to the significance of their ancestral worship. One class would hold that whether a man worships his father or not, does not affect the happiness of either the father or the son. It affects the *reputation* of the son among his

acquaintances, as being a man who shows disrespect to the spirit of his father living in the ancestral tablet in his house. Still other Koreans would say, that if they worship their ancestors well, Hananim, the head of the Korean mythology, will reward such a man with money, honors and other promoters of happiness and on the other hand will punish with trouble the man who neglects to sacrifice. Such are some of the features of the ancestral worship of Korea.

The first view echoes the Confucian elite's practice of ancestral rites while the second has much to do with ordinary people's practice.

The early Catholic ban on traditional ancestral rites was influenced by Dominicans' opinions which were based on the Chinese popular practice. In 1790, the infant Korean Catholic community was informed of the 1742 papal ban through a letter from Fr. Louis de Grammont, the bishop in Beijing. Without recognizing the different nature of Korean ancestral practice, the bishop just identified it with the Chinese practice. The news of the papal ban on the rite was much more devastating to Korean Catholics than it was to their Chinese counterparts. The bishop could not have expected that the Catholic ban would result in such a severe series of persecutions in nineteenth century Korea.

Through the 1791 incident and a series of national persecutions, the Catholic Church was regarded by many Koreans as an 'evil' religion which destroyed fundamental human morality by abolishing traditional ancestral rites. For many Koreans (especially for the Confucian elite), ancestral ritual was not just one of the traditional customs, but the essential ritual for expressing filial duty, the most essential virtue in Confucian society. Because it was the most important code of conduct in Confucian Korea, the Catholic abolition of ancestral ritual was, for the majority of Korean people, the most appalling behavior, more like that of animals. Accordingly, Catholicism could

not appeal to the Confucian elite, and indeed, many Confucian intellectuals who had founded the earliest Catholic community withdrew from the new religious movement.

Most Protestant missionaries also held an intolerant policy not just towards traditional ancestral rites but also towards other indigenous customs, and intended to degrade and destroy customs such as early marriage, concubinage, and binge drinking: they wanted to replace them with a Christian culture. Such a missionary attitude is also found in the case of Karl Panzer who was a German Lutheran missionary to Papua New Guinea. Panzer wrote that the indigenous people should forget their traditions and attend only to God's gospel in the bible: 'If you read your ancestors' words, will it be of any good to you? If you continue to like their words, you run away from God, and it is Jesus who stepped on the Serpent's head [i.e. Jesus saved you from evil]. Read God's word and it will do you good because it is the only truth' (Friesen, 2001: 4, 12).

When a Korean Confucian scholar heard the Christian message at the turn of the twentieth century, he argued that he would rather be with his parents and friends in hell than on his own in heaven (quoted in Oak, 2002: 345):

> You [missionary] said that the way to hell is wide and its gate is large, so there are many who enter there; yet the way to heaven is narrow and its gate is small, so there are few who enter heaven. Thus many a friend of mine must be in hell. And as my parents had not believed in Jesus, they must be destined to hell. Confucius said that he who did not alter the way of his father was a filial son. It is right, therefore, for me to go to where my parents went, and it is joyful to be where my friends stay. How can I go to heaven by myself and become unfilial to the parents and unfaithful to the friends.

Such a response has been maintained among many Confucian elites to this day. An example can be found in the statement made by a Confucian during 1920 when the newspaper debates emerged. Another example is found in Mr. Pyon's above book when he quoted a typical Korean response to missionaries' persuasion.

From a national issue to a family issue

Historical data suggest that there have been two general patterns regarding the issue of ancestral rites over the last two centuries in Korea. One is the clash between the Christian Church and Confucian/post-Confucian society, thereby making it a national issue. The other is the conflict among Christians within the Christian Church, thereby making it a pastoral and family issue. Although both patterns have been overlapping and have co-existed from the outset, the major locus of the conflicts has gradually changed from the former to the latter. That is, while the Christian ban on traditional ancestral rites caused severe confrontation with Confucian society in the early stage and the intensity of such confrontation has increasingly diminished over the last century, the internal conflicts and debates among Christians have been persistent and have even escalated without any substantial agreement.

Perhaps it is possible, tentatively at least, to suggest that the turning point of the change occurred during the 1940s and 1950s. Historical data show that, from the late eighteenth century to the 1950s, the issue of ancestral rites was a national issue with many examples of severe clashes between the Christian Church and Confucian society. Some representative examples include the 1791 incident, nationwide persecutions of Catholicism during the nineteenth century, the newspaper debates in 1920, and the events surrounding the issue of Shinto shrine rites during the 1930s and 1940s.

As Korea moved from being a strong Confucian state to a post-Confucian society during the last century, conflicts regarding ancestral rites tended to become internal issues of Christianity, especially within the Protestant Church. Such a tendency parallels the waning Confucian influence as a dominant social force on the one hand, and the growing influence of Christianity as a major Korean religion on the other. As presented in the earlier section, conflicting Protestant approaches to traditional ancestral rites have become more prominent since the 1980s. The issue of ancestral rites is still recognized as a major dilemma by many Protestant Christians; church leaders and theologians have continued to work on the issue but have failed to reach any consensus.

The biological family versus the ecclesial family

Due to their refusal to perform traditional ancestral rites, early Christian converts provoked severe reproach from their family and their local community, costing them physical and financial suffering as well as social ostracism. One historical study refers to a person beaten nearly to death which was common among many Korean converts, who said that they would die in the faith of Jesus rather than offer ritual to ancestors (Oak, 2002: 338). Though corporal punishment and financial damage were very difficult to bear, more painful still was family repudiation and excommunication from the clan. The statement 'Your name will be deleted from our genealogy!' was a kind of death sentence to people in traditional Korean society. It only occurred to individual family members who brought grave dishonor and shame to the family and the clan, yet such harsh rejection from the family was what early Korean converts often had to face.

To many Koreans' eyes, however, Christian converts were 'immoral men in moral society'.[102]

Confucian society was based on the 'biological family' and promoted its continuing prosperity, with the practice of ancestral rites lying at the core of the succession of the biological family, 'the community of blood'. In the Confucian world, the biological family was the sure foundation of society and the nation. The concept of the biological family was then extended to larger societies such as the local community and the nation: the nation was an extended family. Indeed, in Korean, the term for nation, *Gukga*, consists of two concepts, one of which – *guk* – means nation and the other – *ga* – means family. By the same token, filial duty to parents and ancestors was extended to loyalty to the king and the nation. This is why, when Christian converts began to abolish traditional ancestral rites, the result was not only a family crisis but also a national threat. For many Koreans, the Christian ban on the rite was taken to be unacceptable conduct against both filial duty to ancestors and loyalty to the king. Inevitably, Christianity was regarded as an 'evil' religion with no propriety towards parents and the king.

Christianity, however, brought in a new concept of the family, which was almost unfamiliar to the Confucian world. It was the concept of the 'ecclesial family'. While the Christian Church, 'the community of faith', thus became a social and moral threat to Confucian society, it was also a liberating institution for many ordinary and underprivileged people. Christianity did not simply abolish traditional ancestral practice but it introduced egalitarianism: the equality of sexes and the equality of human rights.

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[102] The phrase 'immoral men in moral society' is derived from Reinhold Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932).

While it appealed to a small number of reform-minded intellectuals and many commoners, the spread of such a message was considered by the Confucian government as a destabilization of the country: it eventually resulted in a series of national persecutions in the nineteenth century.

The conflicts over ancestral rites between the Christian Church and Confucian society can thus be seen as the confrontation of two different religious systems: one based on the concept of the 'ecclesial family' and the other on the 'biological family'; the former emphasizes the prosperity of 'family-in-faith' whilst the latter that of 'family-in-blood'. As the issue of ancestral ritual shows, many Korean Christians have had to struggle to get a right balance between their duty to the 'community of faith' and their duty to the 'community of blood'.

Between God and ancestors: a continuing Christian dilemma

One of the main reasons for the Christian ban on Korean ancestral rites was that they were considered as idolatrous practice in the light of the first and second commandments: 'You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol….. You shall not bow down to them or worship them' (Exodus 20: 2-4a). For most missionaries and Korean Christians who took these biblical passages literally, the ancestral tablet was undoubtedly an idol and bowing down to it idol worship. That is why many Korean Christians, whether early Catholics or Protestants, abolished ancestral rites and burned ancestral tablets.

When forced to choose between 'ritual duty to ancestors' and 'religious duty to God', most Korean Christians chose the latter at the expense of the former, as is confirmed by historical incidents including Mr. Yoon's case. He was beheaded in 1791

for destroying ancestral rites having said the following: 'Since the religion of the Heavenly Lord [Catholicism] prohibits making a wooden ancestral tablet, I buried it under the ground. I would rather do wrong to my deceased mother than to the Heavenly Lord' (quoted in Baker, 1979: 52). Other examples are found in an annual report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of USA in 1896: according to Mr. Chang-Lin Song, the clock-maker, his first reason for not practising ancestral ritual was that 'it breaks God's commands'; Mr. Sa-Young Kim, a merchant, announced that he 'must remember his parents but performing ancestral rites for them is foolishness, like offering sacrifice to idols and evil spirits' (Oak, 2002: 334).

There were, however, cases in which Korean converts later changed their mind by returning to traditional ancestral practice, which also reveals aspects of Korean Christians' struggle. Some of them were, eventually, excommunicated by the church. In September of 1895, for example, the American Presbyterian missionary William Swallen reported what happened in his congregation (quoted in Oak, 2002: 334):

> We had the sad duty of expelling two of our members from the communion, because they returned to the worship of their ancestors and advocated this as the proper thing for others to do. Being unable to bring them to repentance or even to stop them in their mad course there was as we believed but one thing to do. Our little church was quite disturbed over the matter for a while, but the Lord directed us as I believe, and now our members all stand firm to a man upon the subject of ancestral worship. Ancestral worship is the greatest idol the Koreans have to give up. All else is as nothing compared with it. I fear we have been too lenient heretofore on this subject. This will be one of the subjects before us for settlement at the annual meeting this fall.

As the origin of the Christian memorial rite shows, many Christians who abolished ancestral rites still experienced strong 'empty' feelings on the death-day of their ancestors. They also noticed that the idea of filial duty is not just Confucian, but also Christian: when Christians were accused by non-Christians of owning a religion degrading filial duty, they refuted them by quoting the fifth command as a favorite proof text: 'Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you' (Exodus 20: 11). Christian memorial services have been firmly established as a Protestant alternative to traditional ancestral rites although its liturgy has not been unified among Protestants. It is considered as a unique Korean phenomenon because such an alternative to indigenous ancestral ritual has not been prevalent among Protestants in other East Asian countries (cf. Grayson, 2007).

The issue of ancestral rites exhibits Korean Christians' distinctive struggles between Christian values and Confucian values: that is, between 'religious piety to God' and 'filial duty to ancestors', between the second and the fifth commandments, and between the ecclesial family and the biological family. For many Korean Christians, religious duty to God has taken priority over filial duty to ancestors, the second commandment over the fifth commandment, and the ecclesial family over the biological family. As they could not neglect the latter elements, however, they have continuously struggled to balance Christian faith and Confucian values.



Plate 13. Confucian ancestral ritual (example 1)



Plate 14. Confucian ancestral ritual (example 2)



Plate 15. Christian memorial service (example 1)



Plate 16. Christian memorial service (example 2)

2) From *Jesa* to *Chudoyebe*: Change and Continuity

Jesa and Chudoyebe

Jesa, Confucian ancestral ritual, has been a quintessential practice of Confucian family rituals. Confucianism has systematically developed the four family rituals of coming of age, marriage, funeral and ancestral rites and they were deeply embedded in traditional Korea. Among the four rituals, ancestral rites played the most important role in Korean family life, exemplified by the fact that, in Confucian Korea, all of these ceremonies were held in front of the domestic ancestral shrine. Marriage was understood as a means of producing the ritual heir (son) in order to secure the continuity of ancestral rites. One passage in the *Li Ki* (*Book of Rites*) reads: 'the wedding rite is intended to unite the relationship of the two families, with a view to securing retrospectively the services in the ancestral temple, and prospectively the continuance of the family line' (Quoted in Fung, 1931: 344). It was legal to have a second wife or to adopt a son from relatives when the marriage failed to produce a son in Confucian Korea.

The practice of Confucian ancestral rites is still popular in contemporary Korea: Recent statistics suggest that more than 70 per cent of the total South Korean population participate in traditional ancestral ritual. For instance, a recent Korea Gallup survey showed that on the morning of New Year's Day, 77.8 per cent of the respondents were participating in Confucian ancestral ritual, while 15.4 per cent were conducting Christian ancestral ritual (Korea Gallup, 2006a). This is a remarkable figure given the religious statistics of contemporary South Korea, and it suggests that although Confucianism has much declined as an institutional religion, Confucian values and ideals have continued to underpin the attitudes and behavior of Korean people.

In general terms, as mentioned earlier, there are four kinds of Confucian ancestral rites: death-day ritual (*Kije*), special food offerings (*Charye*), seasonal ritual (*Sije*), and communal ritual (*Myoje*). The first three rituals are offered for ancestors up to four ascending generations. Death-day ritual is performed on death anniversaries of each ancestor; special food offerings are performed on New Year's Day and *Chusok* (harvest) holidays; and four seasonal rituals at the beginning of each season. They are all performed at home. Communal ritual, however, is offered for more remote ancestors (for example, from 5 to about 15 generations above the ritual heir) at their graves in the autumn of each year.

As already discussed, the Protestant church has prohibited Confucian ancestral rites as idolatry from the outset and has promoted what is commonly called *Chudoyebe* (memorial service) allowing Korean Christians, to some extent, to satisfy their need for expressing filial piety to their deceased parents. *Chudoyebe* is a Christian alternative to traditional Confucian ancestral rites. To be more precise, it is an alternative to death-day ritual (*Kije*): it means that Protestant Christians do not have alternatives to other Confucian ancestral rites such as special food offerings (*Charye*) or seasonal ritual (*Sije*). On such occasions when non-Christian families perform other kinds of ancestral rites, Protestant families are encouraged to hold a Christian service at home. Despite various concerted attempts to establish a common liturgy for *Chudoyebe*, the Protestant Church still lacks agreement. The format of the practice for *Chudoyebe* varies from family to family although there are some common elements as shown in the previous case-studies section.

From 'God-versus-my ancestors' to 'God-of-my ancestors'

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, we find that Korea has moved to its third century of Catholic history and its second century of Protestant history. There are now long-standing Protestant families with more than a century of history. The families of early converts have a Christian history of four or five generations. Because such families have established the tradition of a Christian memorial service, they no longer face any serious conflicts between 'religious piety to God' and 'filial duty to ancestors' within their own family (e.g. Case 5: Mr. Min's family). As mentioned earlier, however, it was common for early Protestant converts at the turn of the twentieth century to be excommunicated by their family and ostracized by their local community. For them, belief in God and ritual duty to ancestors were not compatible.

As the Christian tradition continues within a family, the confrontational relationship between God and ancestors turns into a conciliatory relationship: this we may describe as a gradual transformation from 'God-versus-ancestor' to 'God-of-my ancestors'. So, as historical evidence shows, early converts had to choose God at the expense of ancestors when they confronted the issue of ancestral rites. Within the long-standing Protestant families, however, ancestors are not in conflict with God any more: they believe the same God as their ancestors believed.

When, for example, Koreans from a long-standing Christian family read the Old Testament, they can associate their own family history with Jacob's answer to Pharaoh's question (Genesis 47: 8-9): 'Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How many are the years of your life?" Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The years of my earthly sojourn are one hundred and thirty; few and hard have been the years of my life. *They do not compare with the years of the life of my ancestors during their long sojourn*"' (my italics). They also have

great empathy with such phrases as 'I am the God of your father' (Genesis 26: 24; 46:3), 'the God of my father has been with me' (Genesis 31: 5), and 'the God of your ancestors has sent me to you' (Exodus 3: 15; 4:5). For many Korean Christians, these phrases are more powerful than simply 'my God'. In a sense, this is a desirable situation for many Protestant Christians who are still struggling against a dichotomy between God and ancestors within their family. Those who could once only utter 'my God' would understand how blessed it is when they could also profess 'the God of my ancestors'.

Confucian elements within Korean Protestantism

The clashes surrounding traditional ancestral rites represent key early conflicts between the Christian Church and indigenous Korean culture. Western missionaries attempted to eradicate indigenous cultural traditions as they regarded them as 'superstitious' and 'idolatrous'. They then aimed to implant their own gospels and Western culture into Korean society and tended to despise traditional Korean culture, an attitude that had become prevalent within Korean Protestantism. A good example may be found in the use of music within the Church: while Western musical instruments such as piano, organ, guitar, and even drums have been used for worship in most Protestant churches, playing Korean traditional instruments within the church premises remained something of a taboo. This tendency continued until the mid 1990s though there had long been some calling for a Koreanization of Christianity. For many Protestant ministers and ordinary believers, Korean traditional culture as a whole looked incompatible with their Christian faith. It was not surprising, therefore, that many non-Christian Koreans regarded Christianity as the vanguard in demolishing traditional Korean culture.

Ironically however, despite the Protestant's anti-indigenous attitudes, many elements of traditional Korean culture, especially in terms of some Confucian and shamanistic legacies, have been deeply embedded within Protestant church life. One example is that of the hierarchical system of churches, which displays much Confucian influence. While Christian egalitarianism contributed to attracting early converts, the contemporary Protestant Church shows a more rigid hierarchical system in its administration and organization. A clear hierarchical order exists between ordained ministers and lay Christians both in church activities and in informal gatherings. Among lay Christians, too, there is also a rigid hierarchy consisting of four or five ranks, with the status of elder being the highest. Although those ranks are decided through democratic election by the congregation in most Protestant churches, it is uncommon for younger people to be appointed to more senior positions, with age still remaining one of the important elements in these elections. So it is that within the Korean context, the Christian hierarchical system is based on age and rank derived from deep-rooted Confucian legacy.

Such a phenomenon is also found in the Christian memorial service. As the case studies of the contemporary Christian practice of memorial service show, Christians perform the ritual in various forms to meet their own family situations. One interesting phenomenon is found in the case of Mr. Min's family (Case 5). Mr. Min's family is one of the oldest Protestant families in South Korea, his grandfather having converted to Christianity in the early 1900s with his family continuing a Christian tradition. His family did not hold any ancestral rites until his grandfather's death in 1970: now Mr. Min officiates at four Christian memorial services a year for his grandparents and parents. This family's ritual procedures are much longer and more formalized when

compared with other Protestant families whose Christian history is shorter. Just as church structure has become hierarchical so, too, with the memorial service in Mr. Min's family.

Christian success in a most Confucianized country

Historically speaking, Korea has long been a mono-ethnic yet multi-religious society. While Shamanism is said to be the Korean primal religion, Confucianism and Buddhism were introduced into the country from China around the turn of the Christian era and the fourth century, respectively. Buddhism and Confucianism were first accepted by the upper class and later popularized as national religions at different periods. Korea was a strong Buddhist country for a millennium from the fourth century to the fourteenth century, with Confucianism coming to be adopted as the sovereign ideology and orthodox religion from the late fourteenth century to the early twentieth century. The introduction of Christianity in the late eighteenth century has marked another phase of religious history in Korea.

In contemporary Korea, major influential religions are those of Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shamanism. While the first two are the most popular institutional religions, the last two are deeply embedded in people's life as the substrata of the society: about half of the total South Korean population is either Christian or Buddhist while the total population, regardless of religious affiliation, is influenced by Confucianism and Shamanism. Korea is distinctive in that three of the major world religions – Christianity, Buddhism and Confucianism – are influential as living cultural forces (Yee-Heum Yoon, 1997: 1).

Within such a multi-religious context, the growth of Christianity as a major religion is a remarkable feature of contemporary Korea. One easy way to express Christianity's success is to relate it to the total population. While one Korean in a thousand was a Christian in 1890, one in fifty in the 1930s, and one in twenty in 1955, today at least one South Korean in four is avowedly Christian (Donald Clark, 1997: 169; Grayson, 2002: 164-168). Particularly impressive is the proliferation of institutions deemed to be 'mega-churches' in Seoul, of which *Yoido Full Gospel* Church (founded in 1958) with its membership numbering over 800,000 is best known. Moreover, it is said that eleven of the world's twelve largest Christian congregations are in Seoul. Furthermore, South Korea is also the world's second largest missionary sending nation after the United States.

Such figures are more striking when compared with the cases of nearby countries such as China, Japan, and Taiwan where Christianity was introduced much earlier. In Japan, for example, the Christian population has never risen above one percent of the total population and Christianity is still perceived as foreign rather than Japanese (Grayson, 2002: 158). In China, although the Christian population has rapidly increased over recent decades, it is still a minority within the society.

Why has such an unprecedented popularization of Christianity taken place in Korea especially against the background of opposition to ancestral rites? The Korean success of Christianity is a very complex 'total social phenomenon' involving historical, economical, social, religious, and many more factors: many 'emic' and 'etic' studies have already attempted to deal with it (e.g. Jung-Han Kim, 2004; Grayson, 1995a). While approaching it from the issue of ancestral rites would be no more than a partial explanation, it is worth an attempt because the existing studies, in focusing on large-

scale explanations, have marginalized this particular issue. Yet, in reality, the ancestral phenomenon is very important because the spread of Christianity is deeply related to the history of the individual family, and the Korean family system is inseparable from the tradition of ancestral ritual.

On the one hand, the Christian abolition of traditional ancestral rites has been a major obstacle to Christian mission in Korea, yet on the other, it has been a positive reason for conversion to Christianity. As the result of the 1790 letter shows, most intellectuals in Confucian Korea who have kept a very rigid family tradition of ancestral rites could not convert to a new religion which condemned the ritual. Such a tendency has continued to this day: it has not been common for the family of traditional Confucian elite lineages to convert to Christianity. It is people from lower classes or from less rigid Confucian families that were more susceptible to Christian mission. For them, most of all, the practice of so many ancestral rites (at least ten times a year) was a grave financial burden. The preparation of special ritual food was also a physically demanding task for women. In such cases, the Christian ban on traditional ancestral rites was an attraction to many people, especially to women who prepared all the ritual food yet were excluded from the ritual procedure itself. As the previous case studies show (particularly Cases 6 and 7), it has been common for married women who have suffered from enormous ritual burden to convert to Protestantism, and eventually to lead her husband and children to the church.

It seems that the Protestant alternative rite has also been a contributing factor for the popularization of Christianity. For many people who have been tired of traditional ancestral rites, the Christian alternative rite looked more efficient in many ways and it was a more modern way to express filial affection toward ancestors. With the Christian

memorial service (although it is much simplified compared to traditional ancestral rites) Christian converts could dispute the accusation of non-Christians that Protestantism is a religion with no filial respect to ancestors.

3) Ancestral Ritual and Social Change

Ancestral rites in Early Judaism and Early Confucianism

In the last chapter of her recent book, *Jacob's Tear: The Priestly Work of Reconciliation* (2004), Mary Douglas deals with the absence of ancestral rites in the Pentateuch. Given that the cult of the dead was popular in all the neighboring kingdoms such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and Canaan, it is highly likely, despite lack of evidence, that it was also widespread in pre-biblical Israel (Douglas, 2004: 180; Lewis, 1992: 240-242). In the Old Testament, however, the cult of the dead was utterly repudiated.[103] In her chapter, Douglas explores why the editors of the Pentateuch removed ancestor cults from their religion and how it happened (Douglas, 2004: 176-195).

Defeat by Babylon, the destruction of the temple, and a long period of exile in Babylon resulted in a total disruption of Jewish traditions. Post-exilic priests had to

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[103] The Pentateuch documented the prohibition against contact with spirits of the dead and even dead bodies. Any spiritualist consultation with the dead was to be punished by stoning (Leviticus 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27). The dead could neither help nor be helped. Any form of spirit cults was rejected: seers, sorcerers, witches, and diviners, any who cross the divide between the living and the dead, were denounced as outright evildoers (Douglas, 2004: 181). The bible also forbids the priests to officiate at funerals or even to go to them, or to mourn, except for their own close kin (Leviticus 21:1-5). The restrictions are more severe for the high priest (Leviticus 21:10-12).

recover their own traditions. Their main intension was not simply to rescue their old traditions from the rubble but to renew them. In carrying out this task, their vision was to establish 'true monotheism' against the background of other local cults and various new religions. According to Douglas, the priestly vision of true monotheism explains why the Pentateuch excised everything incompatible with the doctrine of one God. The cult of the dead was one of its major targets: 'The new religion, the religion of Leviticus, attacked communication with ancestors as it attacked communication with other spiritual beings, in defense of its central principle, monotheism' (Douglas, 2004: 182-183).

The removal of ancestral rites by post-exilic Judaism, however, is in stark contrast to the adoption of them by early Confucianism. Early Confucian scholars such as Confucius employed ancestral rites in order to enhance Confucian social values. Early Confucians were concerned much more with the obligations and appropriate behavior of children toward deceased forebears than with the fate of the dead or the nature of the afterlife (Oldstone-Moore, 2003: 86). Confucius saw rites for the dead as expression of filial duty which revealed the depth and sincerity of love for forebears. He emphasized the importance of the practice of ancestral rites as it could play an important role in insuring the continuity of the family. The system of ancestral rites had been further developed by later Confucian scholars and become a defining feature of East Asian civilizations. In short, while biblical Judaism repudiated existing cults of the dead for religious renewal, early Confucianism promoted them for a similar purpose.

Such contrasting approaches reveal the different nature of two religious systems which led to the different understandings of ancestral rites. To explain it in broad terms we could suggest that while biblical Judaism was most concerned with the issue of

'theology', early Confucianism was most concerned with the issue of 'ethics'. For the former, the issue of ethics was secondary in that ethical criteria were dependent upon theology. For the latter, ultimate concern lay in the question of how order and peace could be restored within the family and society, and the issue of theology did not play any significant role in it.

Early Judaism condemned everything incompatible with its central doctrine of monotheism. Such uncompromising monotheism did not have room for demons, ancestors, or magic: it could not credit ancestors with power to intervene in the affairs of the living. Apart from God, no supernatural powers whatsoever were tolerated: 'If something good has happened, God is to be thanked; if something bad has to be explained, God is angry, and the only thing that makes him angry is sin' (Douglas, 2004: 177). However, what early Confucians saw from ancestral rites was very different: it was not so much the popular belief of the ancestors' active intervention in the lives of their descendants as their transformative effect in creating a harmonious and ordered society. The motives for Confucian ancestral rites were neither the fear of the dead nor any rewards from ancestral spirits: the main motives were filial respect toward ancestors and a memorial to the family's past. Confucianism advanced ancestral rites as a primary way of expressing filial duty and family solidarity.

Changing Korean ancestral ritual

Although there are no historical or archaeological data which confirm the exact origin of ancestral rites in Korea, it seems clear that the practice of ancestral rites has existed for very long time. Historically speaking, the Korean practice of ancestral rites has changed according to the change of dominant religious forces in different periods. In

other words, changing ancestral rites is a clear manifestation of changing religious dominance in Korean society.

When Buddhism was adopted as the state religion during the *Unified Silla* period (668-935) and the *Goryeo* dynasty (918-1392), animistic and shamanistic indigenous ancestral practice was intensified by Buddhist ideas such as merit-making and merit-transfer. During the *Joseon* dynasty (1392-1910), the Confucian government attempted to confucianize the nation while suppressing Buddhist and shamanistic influence. According to recent historical studies, Korea eventually became a thorough-going Confucian nation by the eighteenth century, and it means that the Confucian system of family rituals which include ancestral rites was rooted in the life of intellectuals and commoners alike (e.g. Haboush, 1991; Deuchler, 1992).

Since the late twentieth century, Korean society has experienced another dramatic change in people's mode of life in general and in ancestral rites in particular. Various social and cultural factors have affected this with, perhaps two of them being particularly influential: the rapid growth of Christianity and swift urbanization (the latter will be discussed later). While, by the end of the eighteenth century, the popular practice of ancestral rites was dominated by Confucian ideas alongside some Buddhist and/or Shamanistic elements, the Christian ancestral rite (memorial service) had become part of Korean ancestral rites by the turn of the twenty-first century. In 2005, the Protestant population numbered some 9 million, constituting 18 per cent of the total population. According to the 2005 survey conducted by a theological institution, at least half of the Protestant population practise a Christian memorial service, rejecting traditional forms of ancestral rites (Hanshin University Theological Research Institute, 2005: 58-67). So, Korean ancestral practices of the tenth, fourteenth and twenty-first

centuries exemplify the changing religious landscape as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity, respectively, gained dominance.

Cyber memorial

Technological developments in modern times have changed the pattern of our life in general and death practice in particular. Particularly remarkable is the extent to which the Internet has revolutionized daily life over the last decade. As such the advancement of the Internet technology has brought a significant change to memorial activities and online memorial has become popularized in South Korea in recent years. The popularity of online memorial is deeply associated with the fact that the country is one of the most internet-connected countries in the world, as already mentioned in Chapter 1.

There has been a growing number of Internet websites which provide various activities for remembering and memorializing the dead, some examples being 'Cyber Memorial Home' run by the Seoul city crematorium, '*Hanulnara*, Home in Heaven' run by a funeral business company, and 'Peace in heaven' run by a Christian (Protestant) columbarium.[104] Members of these websites can up-load digital pictures, audio sound clips or video clips of the deceased into the allocated web-pages. They can visit these cyber spaces wherever they go and whenever they want. One of the most active and popular online memorial activities is writing letters to the deceased in cyber space. All those memorial websites have a designated section for this cyber letter and the section is, in most cases, open to the public. People write letters in memory of the deceased

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[104] Their web addresses are respectively www.memorial-zone.or.kr, www.hanulnara.co.kr, and www.hyojas.com.

while being conscious of other possible readers. Along with these various memorial activities, online ancestral ritual is also possible.

As the concept of 'continuing bonds' well expresses (Klass *et al.*, 1996), through various memorial activities, the relationship of the living and the dead continues as far as the former remember the latter. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the Internet emerged as a new medium to connect the dead and the living by creating a new 'cyber' space which has never existed in human history. Cyber memorial is a hybrid of the modern technology of the Internet and the traditional practice of memorial activities. It shows a good case of the interplay of traditional memorial practice and modern Internet technology. It involves both change and continuity of human memorial activities, i.e. changing medium and yet continuing principle.

3. A Sociological-Anthropological Analysis of Ancestral Rites

Confucian ancestral ritual: an embodiment of Confucian values

Confucian ideas and values have been embedded in Korean society in the form of 'family rituals', viz. the capping ceremony, the wedding, funerary rites, and ancestral rites. These four family rituals, which could also be described as the Confucian rites of passage, embody the Confucian values of life and death, generational relationship, patriarchal hierarchies, and family succession through patrilineal lineage.

Ancestral ritual plays a particularly significant role in manifesting those Confucian ideas and it has been regarded as the most important family ritual among the four

rituals. Most of all, ancestral ritual is considered as a ritual expression of a core Confucian virtue, filial propriety or filial duty. Confucius himself saw filial duty as the first step to become a 'person of virtue' when he says that 'filial propriety and fraternal submission, are they not the root of all benevolent actions?' (*Analects*, 1:2b). The Confucian value of filial propriety denotes the respect and obedience that children should show to their parents. The basic spirit of filial propriety, however, is not unconditional and blind submission to parental authority but recognition of and reverence for the source of life. It demands not only to serve the parents while they are alive, but also to pay respect to them after they have deceased. In this regard, ancestral ritual becomes an essential medium to consolidate the Confucian idea of filial propriety.

Furthermore, ancestral ritual perpetuates Confucian social and ritual hierarchies. As it is performed by male descendants and all the ritual roles are given to men alone, ancestral ritual embodies the Confucian values of male dominance. All the ritual food is prepared by women, but they are not allowed to participate in the ritual: some families have a tradition that only the wife of the eldest son (ritual heir) can participate in the ritual. Also ancestral ritual is performed, in most cases, at the house of the eldest son and thereby it consolidates the significance of the role of the eldest son within the family. It is hardly performed at the house of other sons and never at the house of daughters. The Confucian rule of the first-born son is such that when the eldest son dies, his eldest son rather than one of his brothers becomes the ritual heir (Okpyo Moon, 1998a: 156). In this way, ancestral ritual maintains the Confucian form of generational and gender hierarchy.

It is interesting to note that, in modern Korea, while other three Confucian family rituals have been significantly modernized or Westernized, ancestral ritual has kept its

traditional forms and elements, albeit much simplified. The capping ceremony almost completely disappeared with the implementation of the Haircut Decree during the early twentieth century. The majority of Koreans perform their wedding in Western style, i.e. wearing tuxedo and white dress, at the Western-style wedding hall or at church. Few people choose the Confucian wedding ceremony which is considered as the traditional (*gusik*) as opposed to the Westernized modern ceremony (*sinsik*). While an increasing number of Koreans are choosing the modern form of cremation for their funeral, a practice that contradicts the Confucian principle of burial, approximately two thirds of Korean families perform ancestral rites according to the traditional Confucian prescription (Okpyo Moon, 1998a: 152). Given the dramatic changes in the other three family rituals, this continuing Confucian ancestral practice shows its unique cultural location in a Post-Confucian society.

Christian memorial services: an embodiment of Christian and Confucian values

Among various kinds of Confucian ancestral rites, the most commonly practised have been death-day ritual, grave-site ritual, and special food offerings (cf. Okpyo Moon, 1998a: 151). As the first section of this chapter has shown, Protestant Christians have gradually developed a Christian alternative to Confucian death-day ritual. In addition, many Protestant churches provide a short liturgy of family services on special holidays such as New Year's Day and Harvest Holiday when non-Christian families perform Confucian ancestral ritual. All these Christian alternative services, distinctive in Korea, embody both Confucian and Christian elements. They exemplify the harmonious combination of core values in both traditions, i.e. religious piety to God and filial duty to ancestors. As discussed above, early Christians in Korea had to abolish the long-

standing Confucian family ritual of ancestors according to missionaries' order, and also, in many cases, by their own initiative. After abolition, however, they could not bear a strong feeling of emptiness without any memorial activities on the days when ancestral ritual was performed. Some even returned to the practice of Confucian ancestral ritual, thereby resulting in excommunication from their church. But an increasing number of Christians began to memorialize their ancestors with Christian alternative services. This early development and contemporary practice of Christian memorial services epitomize an embodiment of combining Christian faith and Confucian ritual.

Radical change and gradual embodiment

It has been commonly observed that death customs are slow to change, compared to other customs. In Ancient Israel, for example, the Canaanite cult of the dead persisted in the face of Jewish monotheism. Ancient tomb shapes and types of tomb offerings continued for millennia with few interruptions: Jewish burial customs have remained almost identical since the beginnings of the religion (Hallote, 2001). Another example is from contemporary China. In summer 1988, the Chinese press issued articles revealing that the government had not yet succeeded in its forty-year campaign to replace burial with cremation (Ebrey, 1990: 406).

However, there have been periods in which radical changes in death practices have occurred as three examples will demonstrate. The first can be drawn again from China: beginning in the tenth century, many people willingly gave up the long-established custom of burial to perform cremation introduced by Buddhism. Throughout the *Song* dynasty (960-1297) and the following *Yuan* dynasty (1260-1368), cremation flourished despite strong objections on the part of the state and the Confucian elite (Ebrey: 1990).

Another example of radical changes is found in Korean history. In the late fourteenth century when the Confucian *Joseon* dynasty (1392-1910) was established, many Korean people had long practised Buddhist-influenced cremation, and even Confucian elites were cremating the body of their dead parents, with Confucian ancestral rites not being properly performed. From the outset, the Confucian government instituted burying bodies in coffins as the legitimate disposal method against the background of deeply embedded Buddhist cremation. Also the government legislated that Confucian ancestral rites should be practised by all strata of society, and under strong law and harsh punishment, Korean death rituals had been dramatically transformed into Confucian forms by the eighteenth century.[105]

The final example of dramatic change in death rituals is the Christian ban on Confucian ancestral rites in Korea. For all converts to Christianity (particularly Protestantism), conversion has invariably meant a radical ritual shift from long-standing Confucian ancestral rites to new Christian memorial services. As discussed earlier, such a radical change has inevitably caused serious conflicts within many families: it was once a national issue which resulted in a series of severe persecutions during the first century of Christian history in Korea.

Upon closer examination, it can be suggested that there is a common denominator in all the three cases of radical change in death rituals, which could be generalized as a universal principle in human life. Namely, although change in death rituals can be

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[105] The number of generations for ancestral rites was different according to the social class. For instance, the upper-class family should perform the ritual for up to four previous generations, i.e. great-great grandparents. For the common people, the government allowed ritual for parents only. In later centuries, however, ancestral rites for the four ascending generations became a common practice of most Korean families and this persists in many families in contemporary Korea.

radical and swift, the actual process of disembodying old rituals and embodying new rituals is slow and gradual. Indeed, a Christian alternative to Confucian ancestral rites originated in the process of disembodiment from traditional ancestral rites. Protestant Christianity did not have any after-death ritual which could substitute for indigenous ancestral ritual. The abrupt abolition of deep-seated traditional ritual resulted in a deep feeling of ritual emptiness which led to an inception of the Christian memorial service.

Conversion is a complex process. In general, however, while cognitive conversion tends to be relatively quick, bodily and ritual conversion turns out to be 'slower'. In other words, changing practice is more difficult than shifting belief. Practice involves more comprehensive elements than belief due to the issue of physical and psychological dis/embodiment. Perhaps it simply reveals a universal nature of dis/embodiment: that is, the procedure of disembodiment and embodiment is invariably slow and gradual.

'Roots' and genealogy

In 1976, the American writer Alex Haley (1921-1992) published a 700-page novel, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family.*[106] When Haley was a boy, his grandmother Cynthia, who was emancipated from slavery with her family in 1865, used to talk to him a lot about her own grandfather and family history. Haley traced his ancestry, based on those stories and his own twelve-year-research into slave-trading and the history of Africans in America. He purported to have discovered the root of his American family history from the story of Kunta Kinte who was captured by slave traders in 1767. Covering over one hundred years from the eighteenth century, the book is an account of

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[106] He is also well-known as the writer of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965) which was based on interviews conducted shortly before Malcolm X's death.

the life of Kunta Kente and his descendants: his birth in a village of Gambia in 1750, his life as a slave in America, and his family history and its struggle for survival and freedom.

The book *Roots* was adapted into a hugely popular television mini-series which broadcast over eight consecutive nights in January 1977. It is said that approximately 130 million Americans tuned in at some time during the eight episodes. The concluding episode was rated as the third most watched telecast of all time. The programme was innovative in many ways, which could be part of reasons for its success. First, American history was shown from a black point of view for the first time. Second, it made a strong impression on people because it gave them a real sense of what slavery might have been like. Finally and most importantly for our discussion, it fascinated people because it looked so closely at the past, which was a fresh challenge to them. Living in a nation of immigrants, Americans have tended to think too often of the future and forget the past. Indeed, *Roots* inspired millions of Americans to find out about their own family roots.

Interest in family roots, however, is integral to the Confucian tradition. It is clearly embodied in compiling genealogical books which became popular in Confucian Korea so that now almost all families in contemporary Korea keep their own family's genealogical records. Historical evidence suggests that the popularization of genealogical books was deeply related with that of Confucian ancestral ritual (Wagner, 1972).

The history of genealogy compilation in Korea goes back to the early fifteenth century, the early period of the Confucian dynasty: the oldest extant printed genealogical book is that of the Andong Kwon clan which is dated 1476 (Palmer, 1972;

Shima, 1998). According to Wagner's historical study (1972), during the early period of the Confucian dynasty, the compilation of genealogies was limited to the Confucian elite class which constituted less than ten percent of the total population. As centuries passed, genealogy compilation became more popular. Genealogies, which used to be concerned with members of the ruling class, became concerned with recording all the agnatic descendants of shared ancestors.

The major force behind such development was the propagation of Confucianism and the spread of Confucian-style ancestral rites (Deuchler, 1992) so that the history of genealogy compilation demonstrates a process of Confucian transformation of Korea. While earlier genealogies were records of 'cognatic' descent relations, genealogies during the seventeenth century began to become 'agnatic' records as uterine descendants were eliminated from the records (Shima, 1998: 54). While the earlier genealogies contain only the individuals' names and official positions in the government, the genealogies compiled in the eighteenth century began to include information about the location of the tombs, and dates of birth and death, which became standard in genealogies compiled after the nineteenth century. The inclusion of information about death dates and tomb sites reflects the popularization of Confucian ancestral rites (cf. Shima, 1998: 55). In other words, the practice of Confucian ancestral rites was a practical reason for compiling genealogical records in late Confucian Korea.

If theology was known as the queen of the sciences in Christian Europe, it was history that was regarded as the most important subject in Confucian East Asia (Mungello, 1999: 68). Indeed, influenced by the Confucian tradition, East Asian civilization has fostered historical scholarship unparalleled in any other culture. Among Confucian classical collections, for example, two historical books (*Book of History* and

Spring and Autumn Annals) are included within the *Five Classics*. The emphasis on history (root), the compilation of genealogies, and the practice of ancestral rites are all interconnected phenomena as the hallmarks of Confucian influence. Family history, genealogy, ancestral rites have been trustworthy sources for the knowledge of the past, the intensification of family identity, and a strong sense of rootedness. In other words, the Confucian sense of rootedness has been embodied in genealogical records and ritually expressed in ancestral rites.

An exchange mechanism in the Confucian world

Under the rubric of 'Gift-giving, a double-edged relationship', Godelier elucidates what happens as soon as the gift passes from one to the other. He writes (1999: 12, original emphasis):

> The act of giving seems to create simultaneously a twofold relationship between giver and receiver. A relationship of solidarity because the giver shares what he has, or what he is, with the receiver; and a relationship of superiority because the one who receives the gift and accepts it places himself in the debt of the one who has given it, thereby becoming indebted to the giver and to a certain extent becoming his 'dependent', at least for as long as he has not 'given back' what he was given.

The two-fold relationship holds true for the relationship between parents and children in the Confucian world. In this relationship, parents are the giver and children are the receiver: parents are superior and children are dependent. What parents give to their children are, in most cases, inalienable gifts that cannot be exchanged. But children grow up with a sense of indebtedness to their parents. After parents die and become

ancestors, however, the giver-and-receiver relationship turns into the opposite. Now children become the giver and deceased parents become their dependents. In fact, in many cases, such relationship already begins when parents are very old.

Confucius and his followers emphasized 'filial duty' as the most essential human virtue. But it was not simply unilateral: the Confucian tradition also stresses the importance of parental love and care for children. The good relationship of parents and children is based on the incessant exchange of parental love and filial obligation. One distinctive aspect of Confucian filial duty is that it does not end when parents die but continues even after their death through ancestral rites. Perhaps 'Confucian filial duty' typifies natural human feelings to redress the sense of indebtedness to parents and ancestors. Korean ancestral ritual, whether Christian or Confucian, can be understood as an exchange mechanism in Confucian/Post-Confucian society.

Symbolic exchange between ancestors and descendants

Without parents, there are no children. It is an undeniable fact of life. Equally true is that without descendants, there are no ancestors. The dead do not automatically become ancestors. It is the descendents who make their forebears into ancestors: the ancestors' fate lies in their descendants' hands. According to the Confucian principle, for example, the ascending four generations of ancestors are individually memorialized while more remote ancestors are communally remembered. In theory, ancestors never die: through the descendant's effort, they remain as the *living* dead.

Regular ancestral rites, whether in Christian or Confucian forms, maintain the ongoing relationship between ancestors and descendants. Ancestral rites unite the family's past and present. Through the ritual, descendants express filial respect toward

ancestors' life and thought, and, in return, they gain a more intensified sense of identity and rootedness. Symbolically speaking, ancestral rites could be regarded as family gatherings of the living and the dead. These meetings between the past of the family (ancestors), the present of the family (parents), and the future of the family (children) evoke reverence toward the past, encourage affection toward the present, and envisage hope for the future.

Communication between the living and the living

Ancestral rites are also family feasts for bonding solidarity among the descendants. As presented earlier, according to a recent survey conducted in 2005, Korean people think that the enhancement of family solidarity is one of the major functions of ancestral rites (Hanshin University Theological Research Institute, 2005): as to the question of what traditional ancestral rites mean to them, Protestant Christians answered venerating ancestors (23.2%), bonding family solidarity (26.1%), and idol worship (27.5%), respectively; non-Christians answered venerating ancestors (47.2%), bonding family solidarity (22.6%), and idol worship (5%), respectively. Whether people recognize it or not, ancestral rites certainly contribute to the emotional and material exchanges between the living family members.

The highlight for such aspects of ancestral rites is when, after the main ritual, the family members sit around the table and enjoy food together. The scene is common in both Confucian ritual and Christian memorial services. Perhaps the most noticeable difference between them lies in the kinds of food served. Most of all, while alcohol is a necessary item for non-Protestant families, no alcoholic drinks are allowed in Protestant families. While non-Christian families tend to follow quite strict food rules according to

the ritual manual, Protestant families tend to prepare rather ordinary dishes including ancestors' favourites.

Ancestral ritual: ancestors' birthday party?

In Korea, the days that people always remember include their birthday, birthdays of their parents, and death-days of their grandparents. The days of ancestral rites (at least for deceased parents and grandparents) are such important days among annual family events. Just as parents remember their child's birthday and have a birthday party to celebrate it, so descendants remember the death-days of their ancestors and perform ancestral rites. In other words, ancestral rites (particularly death-day ritual) mark the days when deceased parents have become ancestors. Death-day is the day when the deceased is 'born' to become an ancestor. In this sense, perhaps ancestral ritual can be called an 'ancestor's birthday party'. In the Korean context, one has a birthday party while alive and then death-day ritual after death. A birthday party is celebrated until one dies and then death-day ritual (ancestor's birthday party) is performed until there are no descendants who remember it.

Ancestral tablets and ritual food: a materialization of ancestral memory

Confucian ancestral ritual is full of materials which remind the living of dead ancestors (see Plates 17-20). First of all, ritual utensils evoke ancestral memory as they are most likely to have been used over generations within the family. They are used with great care by the current generation and will be passed onto the next. Ritual food is another item which gives rise to a strong evocation of ancestral memory as it contains ancestors'

favorite food. Ancestral tablets are key items for the ritual which materialize the invisible ancestors' spirits.

While Confucian ancestral ritual involves various ritual materials such as ritual food, ritual utensils, and ancestral tablets, the Christian memorial service shows a minimal usage of materials (see Plates 21-23). While the former spurs material memorial with the use of abundant memorial materials, the latter spurns material memorial by eliminating the use of memorial materials. Indeed, all the traditional ritual materials are removed in the latter and the bible and hymn book alone are used for a short service, which shows the strong influence of the Protestant emphasis on words rather than icons and materials. In this regard, we could say that Protestantism in general and the Korean Christian memorial service in particular exhibit a tendency of minimizing the domains of material culture.

It would be interesting to see the ways in which hand-written copies of the bible could be used as a memorial to ancestral memory at the Christian memorial service. Although it is a new phenomenon within Christian families in South Korea and passing the hand-written bible onto the next generation has just begun to happen, it is not difficult to envisage the status and future of the hand-written bible within the family in the generations to come. The hand-written bible will continue to become not just a precious family treasure, but also a very symbolic object representing the identity of a Christian family. That is, it will constitute an essential part of each family's identity (Godelier, 1999: 120). Once the present generation who copy the bible passes away, which has not yet happened to any great extent, the descendants will take the hand-written bible as a memorial to their ancestors. In particular, on the day of death anniversary when the descendants gather together for Christian ancestral ritual, the

hand-written bible is likely to become the most important material for the memorial event. It will gain symbolic and ritualistic significance equivalent to that of the ancestral tablet in Confucian ancestral rites. That is, the hand-written copy of the bible becomes an important item in memorial ritual, a material which evokes a strong sense of ancestral memory.

CONCLUSION

Total social phenomenon: theory and method

One of the issues that has preoccupied this study concerns the complexity of social reality. It is commonly observed that a seemingly simple social phenomenon turns out to involve complex issues, and the more closely we observe a social phenomenon the more complicated it appears to be. In the task of coping with such complexity, this study has gained much insight from the concept of the 'total social phenomenon' and employed it as an overarching interpretive framework. The concept itself entails the complexity of social reality as it emphasizes the inter-connected nature of social phenomena. Moreover, the concept has a theoretical capacity to help to face the issue of complexity without losing both observational focus and interpretive consistency. Furthermore, it encourages the adoption of a multi-disciplinary method in approaching complex social reality.

By applying the concept of the total social phenomenon to the three death rites of bible-copying, funerary practice and ancestral ritual, this study has advanced the utility of the concept as both theory and method. As a theory, the concept of the total social phenomenon has helped in observing the ways in which both natural environment and social context have influenced the Korean practices of death. This study has viewed the three death rites, together, as a total social phenomenon in that those death rites are deeply connected with other social phenomena and they themselves become a miniature of Korean Christian life. From such a theoretical perspective, the present study has explored various issues surrounding the three death rites with an observational focus of

the Confucian-Christian interplay. That is, this study has argued that one of the overriding principles behind the complex practice of Korean Christian death concerns the continuing interplay of Confucian and Christian values.

As a method, the concept of the total social phenomenon has influenced the ways in which this research has been conducted. First, the concept has led to conceive the idea of the 'perspicacity of the researcher' which underlines the scholarly task for perceptive observation and deeper understanding, irrespective of research methods. Second, when the concept of the total social phenomenon is applied to the intellectual and cultural background of the present study, the reflexive relationship of this research and its researcher has become more explicit: that is, this study serves as a 'total social phenomenon' of my own intellectual and cultural experiences as discussed in the Introduction. Third, the inter-connected nature of the total social phenomenon has spurred this study to employ an inter-disciplinary approach which combines theological, historical, sociological and anthropological perspectives. A key theme in the historical and theological interpretation concerns the continuing complex interplay of Confucian and Christian elements in the three death rites. As far as the sociological and anthropological approach is concerned, this study employs the three conceptual themes of embodiment, exchange and material culture. Through the analysis of the death rites in the light of these three conceptual themes, the issue of the Confucian-Christian interplay has been further articulated. Further, the present study has sought to demonstrate not only the theoretical value of each conceptual theme but also the dynamic and organic inter-relationship of the three themes. Finally, as a method, the concept of the total social phenomenon has encouraged a combination of textual, online, and fieldwork research. By employing the inter-disciplinary approach and multi-

research method, this study has attempted to provide a 'thick description' and perceptive analysis of the three death rites.

Total Confucian-Christian phenomenon

Christianity has met Confucian culture and it has produced something more complex than the combination of the two. This study proposes to call it the 'total Confucian-Christian phenomenon', a concept which encapsulates the distinctive aspects of Korean Christianity developed in the context of deep-rooted Confucian culture. That is to say, the concept sums up all the Christian phenomena in Korea from its beginning to the present, which involve the intricate interplay of Confucianism and Christianity. The total Confucian-Christian phenomenon becomes a useful concept to describe and explain the two centuries' existence of Christianity in Korea.

The three death rites not only represent the complex Confucian-Christian interplay, but also reveal all the threads of which the social fabric of Korean Christian life is composed. In this regard, and, at this juncture, we could also venture to describe those death rites as a 'total Confucian-Christian phenomenon'. This study has revealed the manner in which the total Confucian-Christian phenomenon has been manifested in the three death rites. That is, it has argued that the death rites respectively characterize three different modes of the Confucian-Christian encounter, viz. harmony (positive), amalgamation (neutral), and conflict (negative). In Chapter 2, we have discussed the ways in which Confucian and Christian values are woven into the practice of copying the bible, which represents a harmonious interplay of the two traditions. Chapter 3 argued that Christian funerary rites have shown the continuing amalgamation of the practices of the two traditions without much serious conflict. In Chapter 4, we have

examined the ways in which traditional ancestral rites have been a focal point of the perennial clash between the Christian Church and Confucian/Post-Confucian society.

To put this differently, when Christian faith and Confucian values are in a conflicting situation, Korean Christians generally put the former over the latter, which invariably results in an inevitable clash if they are from a non-Christian family, as in the case of the issue regarding Confucian ancestral ritual. When those two are in a harmonious relationship, Korean Christians tend to feel most comfortable and produce a unique phenomenon of the exquisite combination of Confucian and Christian values, as we have seen a representative case from the practice of bible-copying. And finally, when those two are in an ambiguous context, Korean Christians mix them as the case of funerary practice has represented.

In general terms, however, Korean Christians have struggled to balance believing in God and honouring ancestors in their daily life in general and in their death rites in particular. They have tried to minimize conflicting elements while seeking harmonious solutions. When 'my God' and the 'God of my ancestors' are different, Christians have struggled to reconcile various conflicting situations in family life. When 'my God' is also the 'God of my ancestors' Christians have little conflict in their family life. As the origin and development of the Christian alternative to Confucian ancestral ritual show, Korean Christians have endeavored to live in a harmonious relationship between 'religious piety to God' and 'filial duty to ancestors', which represent core Christian and Confucian values, respectively. For Korean Christians, therefore, both God and ancestors are an eternal spring from which they may draw their truest knowledge of self and the courage to soldier on.

Inter-generational relations in the three death rites

One important issue entailed in all three death rites concerns that of inter-generational relations. The generations of ancestors, parents, and children take part in death rites with their own distinctive generational status and role, which will change with the passage of time. Death rites, which involve intense exchange in terms of both material and symbolic dimensions, become one of the most significant occasions for each participant to embody and express his or her generational status and role. By examining the cases of bible-copying, funerary practice, and ancestral ritual, this study has shown the ways in which the generational status and role are manifested as well as inter-generational relationships are recognized and facilitated. Through active generational interaction inherent in death rites, both individual identity and family solidarity are intensified. As earlier chapters have shown, the three death rites of bible-copying, funerary practice, ancestral ritual serve as a distinctive venue for expressing both individual identity and family solidarity.

With individualism and urbanization becoming a major characteristic of modern life, human relationships tend to be confined to inter-personal relations within a generation while lacking inter-generational reciprocity. In this context, death rites stand out as an important opportunity for maintaining inter-generational solidarity. In death rites, the stories of children, parents, and ancestors all intersect, and thereby inter-generational narratives emerge and they are repeatedly recalled in family life. Furthermore, death rites become one of the most significant educational events for transmitting family tradition into the next generation. Through the examination of the death rites of Korean Christians, this study has shown the manner in which family tradition is shaped and transmitted. In many cases, family tradition can involve the

combination of biological family tradition with its Confucian values and ecclesiastical family tradition with its Christian values. When the two traditions are in conflict as in the case of ancestral ritual, Korean Christians struggle to balance the two. When in harmony as in the case of bible-copying, Korean Christians embody both traditions without any psychological and cultural troubles.

In this inter-generational relation of death rites, the generation of the dead, i.e. ancestors, exerts considerable influence upon the generation of the living, i.e. parents and children. This study has revealed that the ancestors-descendants relationship has played a significant role in shaping the pattern of death rituals. As already shown, ancestral ritual, be it Christian or Confucian, exists as one of the most important family rituals within the Korean context and this makes people deeply conscious of becoming an ancestor while they are still alive. In other words, the sense of 'ancestorship', a distinctive social fact which has been developed in a culture where ancestral ritual has long been practised, is strongly manifested in the three death rites and other areas of life. For instance, this strong self-consciousness of ancestorship lies at the heart of the practice of making hand-written copies of the bible. Many old people participate in this practice thinking of a future situation in which they, after becoming the generation of ancestors, will be memorialized. That is, the living constructs a status and role of becoming ancestors while still alive. This inter-generational thinking becomes a driving force behind all the efforts the generation of parents makes in order to leave a good family legacy to the next generations. Indeed, inter-generational thinking, developed primarily through the practice of ancestral rites, is deeply embedded in the Korean psyche and becomes a powerful source of life energy.

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