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# Guwonpa, WMSCOG, and Shincheonji: Three Dynamic Grassroots Groups in Contemporary Korean Christian NRM History

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**Abstract:** The new religious movements (NRMs) initially emerged in the regional societies of East Asia in the middle nineteenth and early twentieth centuries including Joseon (Korea). The socio-political transformation from feudalism to modernisation emaciated the religiosity of the traditional beliefs (Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, shamanism, and folk religions). Colonial Korea experienced the major turning point in which various syncretic NRMs surfaced with alternative visions and teachings. What is, then, the historical origin of Christian NRMs? Who are their leaders? What is their background? What is the main figure of the teachings? How did they survive? This paper explores the history of Korean Christian new religious movements from the 1920s Wonsan mystical movements to 1990s urban and campus movements. Through the contextual studies of denominational background, birth, founder, membership, key teachings, evangelical strategy, phenomenon, services, sacred rituals, globalisation, and media, the three grassroots groups of Guwonpa (Salvation Sect: Good News Mission), WMSCOG (World Mission Society Church of God), and Shincheonji Church of Jesus the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony (SCJ) are argued as the most controversial yet well-globalised organisations among Christian NRMs in contemporary Korea.

**Keywords:** new religion; Korean Christianity; Guwonpa (GNM); WMSCOG; Shincheonji; mysticism

## 1. Introduction

The development of Korean new religions is often comprehended within the five stages of socio-political transformation from 1860<sup>1</sup>: (1) the period of the nation's opening (1860–1910); (2) under Japanese colonial rule (1911–1945); (3) after the nation's independence (1946–1960); (4) under rapid industrialisation (1961–1980); (5) and post-industrial period (1981–present).<sup>2</sup> The first Korean NRM was Donghak (東學, Eastern Learning) launched by Choe Je-u (최제우, 崔濟愚, 1824–1864). The Korean NRMs were then divided into thirteen categories and over five hundred sects: Suun (수운계, 水雲

<sup>1</sup> Most of the Korean names are written in the style of Revised Romanisation (RR), while some Christian NRM groups are expressed in McCune-Reischauer. For Korean names, the surname will be first before given name.

<sup>2</sup> Woo (2010).

系)<sup>3</sup>, Ilbu (일부계, 一夫系)<sup>4</sup>, Jeungsan (증산계, 甌山系)<sup>5</sup>, Dangun (단군계, 檀君系)<sup>6</sup>, Bongnam (봉남계, 奉南系)<sup>7</sup>, Gaksedo (각세도계, 覺世道系)<sup>8</sup>, Buddhist<sup>9</sup>, Confucian<sup>10</sup>, Taoist<sup>11</sup>, Christian, Shamanistic<sup>12</sup>, foreign<sup>13</sup>, and ambiguous ones.<sup>14</sup> What about Christian NRMs? What is their origin? Who are the most successful groups in contemporary Korea? What are the secrets of success?

## 2. Mystical Movements in Colonial North Korea

Protestantism was transplanted into Korea by American and other Western missionaries in the 1880s, about more than one hundred years after Catholicism.<sup>15</sup> The first Protestant church was established by Seo Sang-ryun (서상륜) and the first Protestant missionary to enter Korea was Horace Newton Allen in 1884.<sup>16</sup> However, the Christian NRMs did not emerge until after the 1907 Pyongyang Great Revival Movement. The Korean churches led by missionaries and local leaders were cooperative in the 1910s even under the political transformation of colonial authorities.<sup>17</sup> The Korean church then

<sup>3</sup> Sicheongyo (시천교, 侍天教, 1906), Cheonjingyo (천진교, 天真教, 1913), Donghakkyo Bonbu (동학교본부, 東學教本部, 1915), and Suungyo (수운교, 水雲教, 1923) belonged to one of the native groups, Suun NRMs (수운계, 水雲系), followed the teaching of Donghak (東學, Eastern Learning). Park (2015).

<sup>4</sup> The text was a revised version of *I Ching* (주역, 周易, *Chinese Book of Change*). Ilbu NRMs (일부계, 一夫系) that are based on the Jeongyok (정역, 整域, Correct Book of Changes, 1881) of Kim Ilbu (김일부, 金一夫, 1826–1896) were Hasangyeok (하상역, 河相易)'s Daejonggyo (대종교, 大宗教, 1909), Cheonilgyo (천일교, 天一教, 1944), and Yeongga Mudogyo (영가무도교, 詠歌舞蹈教, 1960).

<sup>5</sup> Jeungsan NRMs (증산계, 甌山系) carrying on the Cheonjigongsa (천지공사, 天地公事) teaching of Kang Il-sun (강일순, 姜一淳, 1901) include Seondogyo (선도교, 仙道教, 1911), Bocheongyo (보천교, 普天教, 1911), Maitreya Buddha sect (미륵불교, 彌勒佛敎, 1918), Taegukdo (태극도, 太極道, 1918), Suncheondo (순천도, 順天道, 1920), Samdeogyo (삼덕교, 三德教, 1920), Donghwagyo (동화교, 東華教, 1928), Bohwagyo (보화교, 普化教, 1930), Yonghwagyo (용화교, 龍華教: 大韓佛敎龍華宗, 1931), Jeungsan Beopjonggyo (증산법종교, 甌山法宗敎, 1937), Mueulgyo (무을교, 戊乙敎: 大韓佛敎彌勒宗, 1942), Daesoon Jinrihoe (대순진리회, 大巡眞理會, 1969), Jeungsan Jinbeophoe (증산진법회, 甌山眞法會, 1973), and Jeung San Do (증산도, 甌山道, 1974).

<sup>6</sup> Dangun NRMs (단군계, 檀君系) are from Na Cheol (나철, 羅喆, 1864–1916)'s Daejonggyo (대종교, 大宗教, 1909). They are Kwangmyeongdo (광명도, 1947) and Hanolgyo (한얼교, 1965).

<sup>7</sup> Bongnam NRMs (봉남계, 奉南系) followed the teachings of Kim Cheongeun (김천근, 金天根, 1948): Sambeop Sudogyohwawon (삼법수도교화원, 三法修道敎化院, 1952) and Cheonji Daeando (천지대안도, 天地大安道, 1952).

<sup>8</sup> Gaksedo NRMs (각세도계, 覺世道系) that was created by Lee Seonpyeong (이선평, 李仙枰, 1915), are Gaksedo Bonwon (각세도본원, 覺世道本源, 1969), Gaksedogwan (각세도관, 覺世道觀, 1956), and Gaksedo Cheonji Wolligyo (각세도천지원리교, 覺世道天地原理敎, 1975). Gaksedo (2018).

<sup>9</sup> Buddhist NRMs were Wonbulgyo (원불교, 圓佛敎, 1924), Jingak Order (진각종, 眞覺宗, 1947), Jogye Order (조계종, 曹溪宗, 1962), Taego Order (태고종, 太古宗, 1970), and post-1960's orders.

<sup>10</sup> Kang Daeseong (강대성, 姜大成)'s Gaengjeong Yudo (강정유도, 更定儒道: 一心敎, 1929) represented Confucian NRMs.

<sup>11</sup> Taoist NRMs include Moaengyong (모행용, 牟幸龍)'s Cheonjonhoe (천존회, 天尊會, 1984).

<sup>12</sup> Shamanistic NRMs (巫俗系) are reflected by Choe Nameok (최남익, 崔南憶)'s Cheonugyo (천우교, 天宇敎, 1988).

<sup>13</sup> Foreign NRMs were International Moral Association (국제도덕협회, 國際道德協會, 1947) of Yiguandao (一貫道), Scientology, International Raelian Movement, Neopaganism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Flying Spaghetti Monster (FSM). Among them, there were many Japanese NRMs, such as Tenrikyo, SGI (Soka Gakkai International, 創價學會), Rishō Kōsei Kai (입경교성회, 立正成會), Ōmoto-kyō (大本), Geumgwanggyo (金光敎), Happy Science (幸福의科), Aum Shinrikyo, Kamiyamahoe (神山), Joe Ray Centre (세계구세교, 世界救世敎), and O-en Network.

<sup>14</sup> Lee Sangpil (이상필, 李尚弼)'s Kumkang Daedo (금강대도, 金剛大道, 1910) and Im Chunsang (임춘생, 林春生)'s Yeongjugyo (영주교, 靈主敎, 1937) are considered to be part of ambiguous NRMs. For more details, see *Korean New Religions* (2018). The Korean NRMs can also briefly be categorised as native NRMs, Buddhist NRMs, Christian NRMs, other foreign NRMs, and new spiritual movements. *The Dictionary Committee of the Korean Academy of New Religions, The Dictionary of Korean New Religions* (2017).

<sup>15</sup> As oral traditions, Portuguese Jesuit priest Gregorius de Cespedes was the first Catholic missionary in Korea, arriving in Busan on 27 December 1593, and that Japanese leader Konishi Yukinaga during the Japanese invasions of Korea (1592–1598) married a Korean Christian woman, who had adopted Julia as her name. Another narrative is that in 1603, Yi Gwang-jeong, Korean diplomat, returned from Beijing carrying several theological books written by Matteo Ricci, an Italian Jesuit missionary to China. Yet, Catholicism in Korea more generally began in 1784 when Yi Seung-hun (1756–1801) was baptised while in China under the Christian name of Peter. He later returned to Korea carrying religious texts and baptised many fellow countrymen. The Church in Korea continued without formal missionary priests until clergy from France (the Paris Foreign Missions Society) arrived in 1836. Lach (2008), p. 721; Yu (1996), p. 141; Tudor (2012), pp. 125–36; Kim (1983), p. 5; *Catholic Book Publishing Company* (1992), pp. 17–18.

<sup>16</sup> Allen was a North Presbyterian missionary who became an American diplomat. Kim (1996); Oak (2015).

<sup>17</sup> Among the local leaders, the activities of Gil Seonju (길선주, 1869–1935) and Kim Iktu (김익두, 1874–1950) were worthy of close attention. Kim Jangho (김장호) was rejected by the major church group due to his liberal interpretation of the narratives of Moses' crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 13:17–14:29) and of Jesus' five thousand feeding (Mt 14: 13–21, Mk 6: 30–44, Lk 9: 10–17, and Jn 6: 1–15). Jeong (2018), pp. 46–51.

began to witness the alternative phenomena, not by ordinary church services, but through prophetic activities of ‘prayer mountain (기도원, 祈禱院)’ and ‘revival meetings (사경회, 查經會)’ in early 1930s–1940s.<sup>18</sup> The native leaders, mainly from Protestant churches, progressively created their own religious figures in the context of mysticism, eschatology, and arbitrary interpretation of the Bible.<sup>19</sup> Lee Sang Gue presumes that the economic crisis and colonial pressure in the 1920s caused the internal strife of personal belief in the apocalypse.<sup>20</sup>

The so-called, ‘Wonsan Sinhaksan’ (원산신학산, 元山神學山) group organised by Baek Nam-Ju (백남주) was the initiation of the mystical movements through an indirect influence of Swedish Swedenborgianism (by reading the books written by Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) and Sundar Singh (1889–1929)).<sup>21</sup> One of Baek’s colleagues, Yu Myung-hwa (유명화) who was a member of the Methodist church, argued that Jesus incarnated in her body and that the presence of Jesus dwells in her.<sup>22</sup> As part of the Wonsan Sinhaksan group Lee Yusin (이유신) was also known as the person united with Jesus, called ‘Jeopsinnyeo’ (접신녀, 接神女, woman united with Jesus). They created a new doctrine (‘the way of a new life’) that the Old Testament teaches life and the New Testament shows life but ‘the way of a new life’ offers a chance in order to complete the promise of the Bible.<sup>23</sup> Lee Yongdo (이용도, 1901–1933), likewise, established a local church called ‘Jesus Church (예수교회)’ before 1933.<sup>24</sup> The key thought was familiar that Christ and himself (Lee) are intimate and that there is no intermediation between Christ and human beings. He criticised the formalism of church tradition, doctrine, and rituals. The special quality of the clergy was also denied, but the condition of silence was kept as an important part of their character.<sup>25</sup>

Under the influence of Baek Nam-Ju (백남주), the Seongju church (성주교, 聖主教, Holy Lord Church) was established by Kim Sung Do (김성도, 1882–1944) in Cheolsan (철산) as she herself was the new Lord. Kim, through divine revelations, taught that the root of original sin was caused by the obscene act of Eve with Satan (disguised as a snake), not by eating the fruit of Good and Evil. The second coming of Christ was believed through the body of the woman. The Seongju church followed the nationalistic belief that Korea is the place for the second coming of Christ.<sup>26</sup> Heo Bobin (허보빈), who was the director of the Pyongyang branch for the Seongju church, encountered the presence of Jesus after forty days of prayer and fasting. She similarly maintained that Jesus dwells in her body like the Tenri-Ō-no-Mikoto (天理王命) of Japanese Tenrikyo. The followers of Heo Bobin were called as Bokjunggyo (복중교, Inside the Belly Church).<sup>27</sup> The words of Heo were eventually recognised as the words of Jesus who dwells in her body.

Hwang Gukju (황국주) (a line of Wonsan Sinhaksan) from Jangyeon (장연) of Hwanghae Province (황해도) also announced that he himself is the incarnation of Jesus. He, afterwards, moved to Seoul and taught the doctrines of *Pigareum* (피가름, meaning that Hwang’s blood was physically changed by the blood of Jesus) and *Mokkareum* (목가름, meaning that Hwang’s head was physically transformed as the head of Jesus).<sup>28</sup> Meantime, Kim Baikmun (김백문) established the Yasogyo Israel abbey (야소교 이스라엘 수도원) in 1945.<sup>29</sup> For him, 2 March 1946 was the day for the Second Coming of Christ.

<sup>18</sup> Lee (2014b), pp. 5–10; Choe (2009), pp. 25–45.

<sup>19</sup> Kim (2007a), pp. 9–37.

<sup>20</sup> Lee (1992), pp. 114–20.

<sup>21</sup> The prophetic books of *Heaven and Hell* (1758) and *Divine Love and Wisdom* (1788) were popular among Koreans. Kim (2007a), pp. 31–35; Kim (2012a), pp. 15–36.

<sup>22</sup> Lee (1992), pp. 123–25.

<sup>23</sup> Yang (2009), pp. 239–66; Lee (1992), pp. 126–28.

<sup>24</sup> Yang (2009), pp. 247–48.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. (Yang 2009).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Lee (1934a, 1934b, 1958); Ryu (1984); Song (1982); Min (1969), pp. 45–68.

<sup>27</sup> Lukas (2018).

<sup>28</sup> *Pigareum* is known as a folk belief of the colonial time. Koreans thought that those who helped Japan have the Japanese blood in their mind. Counter-colonial Koreans tried to avoid the Japanese personality through shamanistic rituals. Yang (2009), pp. 256–61; Lee (1992), pp. 121–23.

<sup>29</sup> Kim (2012a), pp. 18–21.

Based on the apocalypse, Kim Baikmun published five theological books including ‘Söngsinsinhak’ (성신신학) and ‘Kidokkyogünbonwölli’ (기독교근본원리).<sup>30</sup> Thus, most of them opposed the traditional doctrine of Western Christianity through the creative view of Jesus-Incantation theology.<sup>31</sup> The mystical movements, mainly originating from the prophetic teachings of Wonsan Sinhaksan’s Baek Nam-Ju (백남주), were not settled down well because of the religio-political persecutions from the colonial authorities and mainstream churches. Yet, the unrooted individuals became a significant foundation for the early Christian NRMs in the 1950s–1960s.

### 3. Emergence of Native Korean Christian NRMs in Post-Korean War

More systematic groups with organisation skills and alternative theology successfully emerged in Busan and Seoul.<sup>32</sup> Na Oong Mung (나운몽, 1914–2009), who used to be an elder of Supyo Methodist church in Seoul, operated the group of Yong Moon San Prayer Mountain (용문산 기도원) in 1954. There he taught that Hananim (하나님, the Korean God) is the Yahweh of the Bible. Park Tae Son (박태선) himself titled as the ‘righteous figure of the East.’<sup>33</sup> He then linked himself to the return of Christ as one of the two witnesses or olive trees in Revelation 11. Park’s followers claimed he would never die or, at least, that the last day would come within his lifetime. The worship service was somewhat Presbyterian in form but came to involve hours of frenzied hymn-chanting, hand-clapping, and drum-beating.<sup>34</sup> The new faith community was developed into the Olive Tree Church (한국예수교전도관부흥협회, or 전도관) in 1955.

Moon Sun Myung (문선명) under the impact of Baek Nam-Ju (백남주), Lee Yongdo (이용도), and Kim Baikmun (김백문) promoted a similar perspective that he himself was the saviour or messiah of physical salvation. He eventually became the founder of the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (세계기독교통일신령협회, Moonism) in 1954.<sup>35</sup> The canon of the Unification Church is divided into three books of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Seongya (Holy Promise) which indicates the *Divine Principle* (원리강론, 原理講論).<sup>36</sup> While there were other native groups such as Tongbanggyo (동방교, 1956), Yesunim gaehyökkürisüdogyohoe (예수님 개혁그리스도교회, 1955), and Kuwönsinsaeng wön (구원신생원, 1956), the followers of Na Oong Mung and Pak Tae Son were bigger than any others including the Unification Church at that time. They commonly followed the doctrine of *Seonghyeol Jeonsu* (성혈전수, a meaning of ‘changing blood through sex’) which was previously performed by Hwang Gukju (황국주) and Jeong Deukeun (정득은) in the 1940s.<sup>37</sup>

The 1960s witnessed over fifty new religions such as Ch’ön’gukchint’ongp’a (천국진통과, 1960), World Work Process Society (세계일가공회) from Holiness Church (1964), Kwiirowön (귀일원, 1965), Hosaenggidowön (호생기도원, 1966), Samgwang sudowön (삼광수도원, 1968), and Hananimüi sönghoe (하나님의 성회, 1969).<sup>38</sup> The Christian NRMs in the 1970s started to approach students at university campuses with the unique thoughts of the second coming, the elect, salvation, shamanism,

<sup>30</sup> ‘Sinangin’gyöngnon’ (신앙인격론), ‘40nyön sinangüi kil’ (40년 신앙의 길), and ‘Kach’igaja hasidön tangsinigie’ (같이 가자 하시던 당신이기예).

<sup>31</sup> Yang (2009), pp. 262–63.

<sup>32</sup> In 1947, Na Oong Mung founded Aeyangsuk (애향숙 愛鄉熟) which used to play a part in popular movement such as faith movement and poverty eradication. It became the mother of the Korean Protestant prayer movement. After the Korean War (1950–1953), he experienced mysterious experiences including healing and speaking in tongues of the New Testament prophecy. He then led revival meetings where he performed the gift of being anointed within a spirit of God. The revival meetings were gradually transformed into the form of a monastery prayer movement. Shim (1985), pp. 103–8; Baker (2010), pp. 57–91; Tark (2007), pp. 149–67; Chung (1992), pp. 147–233.

<sup>33</sup> Kim (2012a), pp. 15–36; Lee (2014b), pp. 5–10; Choe (2009), pp. 46–62.

<sup>34</sup> Park Tae Son, who was originally an elder of Protestant church, formed many faith villages from 1957. During the community life he taught the principle of how to be saved based on the teaching of Hosea chapter 14. Bae (2013), pp. 11–13; Lee (2009).

<sup>35</sup> Also called as ‘Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU). Kim (2007a), pp. 32–35; Pokorny (2018), pp. 323–24.

<sup>36</sup> Lee (1992), pp. 131–34; Tark (2006), pp. 165–79.

<sup>37</sup> Kim (2007a), pp. 32–35; Kim (2012a), pp. 18–21; Pokorny (2018), pp. 323–24.

<sup>38</sup> Hananimüi öriyang yesu kürisüdotüi kyohoe (하나님의 어린양 예수 그리스도의 교회, 1964), Saeilssudowön (새일수도원, 1965), Yesuüi yönggyohoe (예수의 영교회, 1965), The Temple of the Tabernacle (장막성전, 1966), and Segyebogümsön’gyohoe

and leader worship. They were Pangsuwönüi chonggyo böbwangh'ong (방수원의 종교법왕청), Kuinhoeüi ch'on'guk pogümjondogwan (구인회의 천국복음전도관), and Kimdong hönüi yöngsaengch'on'guk (김동현의 영생천국).<sup>39</sup>

Ninety-six new religions were accounted for in 1983.<sup>40</sup> Many of them were derived either from the Unification Church or the Olive Tree Church. Saengnyönggyohoe (생령교회), Ch'öngsugyohoe (청수교회), and Ujusillyönhakhoe (우주신령학회) were from the Unification Church.<sup>41</sup> Han'gukkidokkyo edensönghoe (한국기독교에덴성회), Yöngsaenggyo (영생교), and Hananimüi sönghoe (하나님의 성회) belonged to Pak Tae Son's Olive Tree Church.<sup>42</sup> The Korea society witnessed the eschatological works of Pambillia ch'usukkun chiptan (밤빌리아 추수꾼 집단), Chibanggyohoe (지방교회), and Ich'osöngüi han'gugyerusallemgyohoe (이초석의 한국예루살렘교회) in the 1990s.<sup>43</sup> They commonly approached educated people rather than lower-class people. The individual contact was the main method with the new worldview of social and ethical issues.<sup>44</sup> The eschatological view of Korean church was creatively interpreted by those new religious movements during the period of rapid industrialisation (1961–1980).

#### 4. Three Dynamic Grassroots NRMs in Contemporary Korea

Thus, the Christian NRMs can be considered into three waves of origin. The first wave was the foreign NRMs which came to Korea in the early twentieth century such as Seventh-day Adventist (1905), Jehovah's Witnesses (1912), Salvation Army (1932), Pentecostal Movement (1937), and Mormonism (1956).<sup>45</sup> The second wave was the native Korean origins based on the influence of the International Christian NRMs<sup>46</sup> as well as Korean Presbyterian and Methodist churches. The last one was the second generational movement of the Korean Christian NRMs. Among them, Guwonpa (구원파, 救援派, Salvation Sect, Good News Mission-GNM), the World Mission Society Church of God (WMSCOG or Church of God), and Shincheonji Church of Jesus the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony (신천지, 新天地, SCJ) are most dynamic and grassroots movements in the contemporary society of Korea (Shincheonji Church of Jesus the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony 2018).<sup>47</sup> While the native NRMs of Donghak, Daejonggyo, Wonbulgyo, and Jeungsan movements were conservative and nationalistic,<sup>48</sup> these latest Christian NRMs taught prophetic and mystical theology in the perspective of globalisation that often challenges the members of traditional churches.

The three Korean Christian NRMs of Guwonpa (GNM: Good News Mission), Church of God (WMSCOG), and Shincheonji (SCJ) are not interrelated but have their own roots and independent

(세계복음선교회, 1968). There were about twenty-five Christian NRMs in 1969. Mun (1972), pp. 54–66, 269; Kim (2007a), p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> Chönbyöngjoüi p'aryöngsan'gidowön (전병조의 팔영산기도원), Pakchonggiüi sionsan'gyohoe (박종기의 시온산교회), Kiminyöngüi sun'gümdüngdaegyohoe (김인영의 순금등대교회), Igyöngch'onüi pungömyöngdang (이경천의 불어명당). Kim (2016), pp. 283–12; Jeong (2018), pp. 46–74.

<sup>40</sup> Kim (2007a), pp. 32–40.

<sup>41</sup> Saengsugyohoe (생수교회), Kuseyönguhoe (구세영우회), and T'ongirwönip'a (통일원이파). Unification Church (2018).

<sup>42</sup> Additionally, Chaech'angjogyohoe (재창조교회), Taehan'gidokkyo chöndogwan (대한기독교 전도관), Shincheonji Church of Jesus the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony (신천지예수교 증거장막성전), Ch'on'gukpogüm jöndohoe (천국복음전도회), and Han'gukchüng sanggyohoe (한국증상교회). Kim (2007a), pp. 35–41.

<sup>43</sup> Pagyunsigüi taesönggyohoe (박윤식의 대성교회), Pangmyönghoüi elliabogümsön'gyohoe (박명호의 엘리아 복음선교회), and Ijangnimüi tamisön'gyohoe (이장림의 다미선교회). Kim (2007a), pp. 41–43; Lee (1992), pp. 137–40.

<sup>44</sup> Ahn (2013), pp. 207–10; Kim (2007b), pp. 14–27; Cho (2009), pp. 63–72.

<sup>45</sup> The Salvation Army (1932) and Pentecostal Movement (1937) are currently recognised as mainline denominations in contemporary Korea even though it was not like that in the beginning.

<sup>46</sup> Unification Church (1954), the Olive Tree Church (한국예수교전도관부흥협회, or 전도관, 1955), Cheonbugyo (천부교, 天父教), Evangelical Baptist Church (기독교복음침례회, 基督教福音浸禮會, 1962), and Temple of the Tabernacle (대한기독교장막성전, 帳幕聖殿, 1966). Jeong (2018), pp. 51–74.

<sup>47</sup> Although the group of Park Ock Soo wants to be known as 'Good News Mission (GNM)', they are generally recognised as Park Ock Soo's Guwonpa group in the Korean society. Chung (1992), pp. 185–233; Lee (2014b), pp. 10–15.

<sup>48</sup> Since this is a pioneering work on the social history of such Korean Christian NRMs, secondary sources and countercult literature are used in many places of this paper. The main reason is that the internal sources are not often available for outsiders. The sacred sites are not also open to non-members. Kim et al. (2008).

narratives. All of them have rapidly grown in the last two decades (in the 2000s and the 2010s). Although the membership of Guwonpa (구원파, GNM) was once seen as 200,000 in 2004, they had 760 churches in 80 different nations in 2014.<sup>49</sup> Afterwards, 838 International churches were established in overseas while 178 churches are in Korea. The passage, “ye shall be witnesses unto me unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1: 8)”, has guided their commitment to dispatch 214 missionaries from Korea and 400 ministers by international churches (2013). The religiosity of the mission is proved by the number of 4442 short-term missionaries dispatched from 2002.<sup>50</sup>

The Shincheonji (SCJ) gradually grew as follows: 60,000 (2008); 70–80,000 (2010); 122,826 (2014); 172,755 (2016); and 180,000 (2017) (Lee 2018). The movement was spread into 24 nations.<sup>51</sup> Further, the Church of God (WMSCOG) was the most recognised international organisation in the Korean Christian groups. There were 500,000 members in 2009. The membership increased to 2,000,000 (2013) and 2,700,000 (2017). (The Church of God (WMSCOG) n.d.) Among the total 7000 churches, 5600 were established in 175 countries.<sup>52</sup> None of the Korean Christian organisations could affect the religious market of the contemporary world like them except the Moonies (approximately 1–2 million worldwide and 10–30,000 in Korea and the US only).<sup>53</sup> Yet, Jun Hyung Joon criticised that most leaders have family problems, self-love personality disorders, and offensive phobic symptoms.<sup>54</sup> The leadership of each movement, unlike Yonggi Cho (1936–, the biggest church in the world with 800,000 members in 2015), was neither Pentecostal and charismatic nor familiar with the English language. However, they have more foreign followers than the Yoido Full Gospel Church (YFGC) in Seoul because they established many creative organisations for social campaigns than planning mission churches for conservative teachings.

The above Table 1 can be divided into four parts as successful or attractive components: origin, key teachings, ritual patterns, and globalisation. The origin part covers the contexts of denominational order, birth, and founder. The key teachings demonstrate theological and philosophical doctrines they keep as well as evangelical strategies. The ritual patterns explore the religious phenomenon, services, and sacred rituals. The last one regards the methodology they apply for globalisation including the role of social media.

**Table 1.** A comparative study of three Korean Christian NRMs.

| Details \ NRMs                   | Guwonpa (GNM)   | Church of God (WMSCOG)                             | Shincheonji (SCJ)                              |
|----------------------------------|---|--|--|
| <b>Denominational Background</b> | WEC   | Seventh-day Adventist                              | Olive Tree Movement, Temple of the Tabernacle. |
| <b>Birth</b>                     | 1972  | 1964   | 1984   |
| <b>Founder</b>                   | Park Ock Soo (Park 2006)  | Ahn Sahng-hong, Zahng Gil-Jah.                     | Lee Man Hee, (Kim Nam-Hee).                    |
| <b>Membership</b>                | 200,000 (2004)<br>178 Korean churches,<br>838 Foreign churches<br>(2018), 80 nations. | 2,700,000 (2017),<br>7000 churches<br>175 nations. | 180,000 (2017),<br>24 nations.                 |

<sup>49</sup> Since this is initial research on such Korean Christian NRMs which are often isolated, the sources are mainly dependent on social media and criticism from outsiders. Some dates may be incorrect or old ones. Good News Mission (2018).

<sup>50</sup> Good News Mission (2018).

<sup>51</sup> Shincheonji Church of Jesus the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony (2018); Shincheonji Tabernacle (1997), pp. 29–49.

<sup>52</sup> Tark (2007), pp. 155–57; World Mission Society Church of God (2018).

<sup>53</sup> The Moonies are referred to members of the Unification Church, firstly used in 1974 by the American media. Unification Church (2018).

<sup>54</sup> For example of family problems, the children of NRM leaders often lack of parent’s love since they spend less time with their own children or stern. The social phenomenon of self-love personality disorders is also related with their previous suicidal experiences or parents’ family breakdown. For more details, see Jun (2014), pp. 297–305.

Table 1. Cont.

| Details              | NRMs | Guwonpa (GNM)  | Church of God (WMSCOG)  | Shincheonji (SCJ)   |
|----------------------|------|--|---|---|
| Key Teachings        |      | Salvation,<br>Kaedareum,<br>Repentance of Justification,<br>No leadership,<br>No the Lord’s Prayer.  | God the Father,<br>God the Mother,<br>Saturday,<br>144,000 saints,<br>Books of Truth (Canon),<br>No Cross,<br>Eschatology,<br>No Christmas. | Revelation,<br>144,000,<br>Tree of life,<br>Doctrine of the elect,<br>Harvest field and its<br>worker,<br>Denying pope,<br>Book of life.                                  |
| Evangelical Strategy |      | Campus,<br>Bible Seminars.   | Two in one,<br>House to house.  | <i>Bogeumbang</i> ,<br>Targeting traditional<br>churches.   |
| Phenomenon           |      | Prophecy,<br>Occultism.  | Prophecy,<br>Occultism.   | Prophecy,<br>Occultism.   |
| Services             |      | Sunday morning,<br>Sunday evening,<br>Wednesday evening,<br>Regional services,<br>Men’s meetings,<br>Ladies’ meetings,<br>Youth meetings,<br>Students’ meetings,<br>Sunday School,<br>Executive meetings,<br>Teachers’ meetings,<br>Prayer meetings,<br>camps. | Passover,<br>Unleavened Bread,<br>First Fruits,<br>Feast of Weeks,<br>Feast of Trumpets,<br>Day of Atonement,<br>Feast of Tabernacles.      | Commemoration day,<br>Passover,<br>The Feast of Tabernacles,<br>The Shavuoth,<br>Sunday Service,<br>Wednesday service,<br>Friday night service,<br>Early morning service. |
| Sacred Rituals       |      | Offerings (tithe)  | Baptism,<br>No crosses, statues,<br>and stained glass,<br>Women’s headcover,<br>Anti-Jesus Christmas.                                       | No chairs in the church,<br>White and black clothes,<br>Interviews,<br>Surveys.   |
| Globalisation        |      | IYF:<br>WCE,<br>CSOVW,<br>IYF Magazine,<br>Gracias Choir,<br>Alternative Schools,<br>Mahanaim College,<br>GNMV.  | International WeLoveU<br>Foundation,<br>NLWF.   | MVA,<br>MIYC,<br>IPYG,<br>IWPG,<br>HWPL.  |
| Media                |      | GBS  | WATV  | Daily Cheonji,<br>Haneul Saemmul.   |

4.1. Origin

Most Korean ethnic NRMs launched their movement in the political transformation era of Japanese colonisation (1910s–1930s) in which Koreans went through the emotional and psychological processes of frustration, incapacity, and helplessness. Likewise, the three dynamic Christian NRMs emerged during the social transition of democratisation (1960s–1980s). They had the mind of alternative mission and religious renewal over the traditional teachings of Christianity. Guwonpa (구원파, Good News Mission) was derived from the missionary work of the Worldwide Evangelisation for Christ (WEC) International Mission of the United Kingdom.<sup>55</sup> In August 1954, Norman Grubb, the President of the WEC witnessed the post-war realities of the Korean church. Kays Glass and Derek Earl were then

<sup>55</sup> Park (2014a), pp. 110–19.

dispatched to Korea in 1956 and 1962. Dick York (Shield of Faith Mission, Bend, OR, USA), Marlon Baker (Christians in Action, Fresno, CA, USA), and Harry Wyman (Christian Literature Crusade, United Kingdom) joined and established a missionary school. There are three major figures who were influenced by the missionary work in Daegu region: Yoo Byung-eun (유병연, 兪炳彦, 1941–2014), John Lee (이복칠, 李福七), and Park Ock Soo (박옥수, 朴玉洙, 1944–) (see Figure 1).<sup>56</sup>



Figure 1. Park Ock Soo with Kays Glass, public domain.

None of them belonged to the Baptist church, but the name of each movement is related to the denomination. Yoo Byung-eun (기독교복음침례회, Evangelical Baptist Church, 基督教福音浸禮會)<sup>57</sup> and John Lee (대한예수교침례회, Life Word Mission (Baptist), 大韓耶蘇教浸禮會)<sup>58</sup> were once under the leadership of Kwon Shin-chan (권신찬, 權信燦, 1923–1996), but created their individual movement: Yoo was a son-in-law of Kwon, and Lee was a disciple of Kwon.<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, Park Ock Soo had a Presbyterian Church background in his hometown, Seonsan. As he always felt guilt and pain due to his problem of sin, Park was questioned about his salvation through Kays Glass (a missionary from WEC). By 1962, the young man experienced severe pain that even made him feel suicidal, but on October 7 of that year, he was delivered from the sin issue. This personal experience gave him a strong aspiration to deliver the happiness of redemption through the Gospel.<sup>60</sup> As he got the nickname of ‘Redemption Pastor’, Park independently established the ‘Good News Mission’ (GNM, 기쁜소식선교회) under the direct influence of Kays Glass and Dick York in 1972. The new movement grew rapidly with a global mind. The *Secret of Forgiveness of Sin and Being Born Again* is now Park’s all-time bestseller—over a million copies published—that has led many to join his new community.<sup>61</sup>

The Guwonpa leadership of ‘Good News Mission (GNM)’ does not argue a supreme figure, but the World Mission Society Church of God (WMSCOG or Church of God) adores their leader replacing the divine character of the holy trinity.<sup>62</sup> Ahn Sahng-hong (안상홍, 安商洪, 1918–1985) was born to Buddhist parents in the Myeongdeok-ri of North Jeolla Province under Japanese rule.<sup>63</sup> After the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) and World War II (1939–1945), Ahn and his mother attended the local congregation of the Seventh-day Adventist in Incheon in 1947. Ahn reported getting revelations and proclaimed that ‘Within 10 years there will be the Second Coming of Jesus.’

<sup>56</sup> Park (2014a), pp. 96–103.

<sup>57</sup> The religious landscape of pre-Korean war was very liberal in which many individual leaders themselves called of Baptists. Such social pattern was changed when the Korea Baptist Convention was officially formed in association with the Southern Baptist Convention USA in the 1950s. Kim (1997).

<sup>58</sup> *Gospel Serve, Glossary of Christianity* (2013); *Life Word Mission* (2018).

<sup>59</sup> Tark (2011), pp. 53–57.

<sup>60</sup> Park (2003), p. 120.

<sup>61</sup> It is translated into 24 major languages, including English, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, German, Russian, Tagalog, etc.

<sup>62</sup> The name of the WMSCOG or the Church of God is a verbatim designation of 1 Cor. 1: 1–2: “Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, to the church of God in Corinth, . . .”

<sup>63</sup> Tark (2007), pp. 155–57.

He grew critical to teachings within the Seventh-day Adventist, and the church excommunicated him in 1962 over disputes about the cross as a religious symbol. Twenty-three people followed Ahn and two years later, he established his own church called 'Witnesses of Jesus Church of God (WJCG)' in Busan.<sup>64</sup>

Shortly after his death in 1985, a schism took place dividing WJCG into two sects. The New Covenant Passover Church of God (NCPCG in association with Ahn's wife and their three children) and the World Mission Society Church of God (WMSCOG). Both organisations claimed Ahn as their founder; the NCPCG regarded Ahn as a teacher, but the WMSCOG was administered by Kim Joo-cheol (김주철) and Zahng Gil-Jah (장길자, 長吉子, 1943–).<sup>65</sup> Their headquarters were relocated from Busan to Bundang (Near Seoul), Kyunggi Province. They advocated Ahn Sahng-hong as Jesus Christ. The belief has been developed into the new teaching of 'a spiritual motherhood' that Zahng Gil-Jah is 'God the Mother', the female image of God (or 'Heavenly Mother'). The New Jerusalem Temple (in Bundang) is the central Church of the WMSCOG. The role of Ahn is further seen as 'the Holy Spirit' and 'God the Father.' Therefore, the WMSCOG's beliefs claim God the Father and God the Mother. Zahng is the spiritual wife of Ahn who can be transmitted in the Trinity forms of God, the Saviour (the Second Coming of Christ), and the Holy Spirit.<sup>66</sup>

The supernatural character of the grassroots NRMs is also demonstrated in the leadership of Shincheonji (SCJ, 新天地) which does not have the direct influence of foreign Christian groups, rather relate to the native Christian phenomena of the 1950s–1960s. Shincheonji that was founded by Lee Man Hee (이만희, 1931–) in Gwacheon of Gyeonggi Province means the abbreviation of 'New Heaven and New Earth,' and it signifies the new tabernacle and new saints: "But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (2 Pt 3:13).<sup>67</sup> Lee previously involved two mystical groups of the Olive Tree Movement and the Temple of the Tabernacle. Park Tae Son's Olive Tree Movement (한국예수교전도관부흥협회, or 전도관) was a faith-healing group in the 1950s. The Temple of the Tabernacle (장막성전, 帳幕聖殿) was founded by Yoo Jae Yul (유재열, 柳在烈, 1949–) in 1966, also known as 'the Young Servant (아기종).'<sup>68</sup>

After the Temple of the Tabernacle was incorporated into the Presbyterian church, Lee Man Hee established his own movement of Shincheonji (SCJ) in 1984, which, he says, is "the year that the universe completed its orbit and returned to its point of origin."<sup>69</sup> Lee asserted that the Bible is made up of parables and secrets and that one must understand the exact meaning of these passages in order to be saved.<sup>70</sup> Lee then claimed to be the only person who can impart a complete mastery of the scriptures. The apocalyptic movement teaches that the world has already ended and that they are now all in the afterlife. The founder is seen in various figures including as the 'Promised Pastor' who supersedes Jesus. In other words, Lee teaches that he is the messiah (the second coming of Jesus Christ) or the spokesperson of the messiah. For them, Jesus is not God. The Holy Spirit is just a bunch of angels.<sup>71</sup> Lee is additionally sustained as 'the one who overcomes' from the Book of Revelation. Further, not only the figure of John the Apostle but also the figure of the Holy Spirit (Counselor) are often applied to him. Though the founder (88 years old in 2018) teaches he will never die like the argument of Park Tae Sun (the Olive Tree Movement), the leadership is arranging for a

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Oh (2014), pp. 133–45.

<sup>67</sup> Most significant impact in the USA is in Orange County, California, one of the Korean residents focusing on the apocalyptic portion of Scripture. Grayson (2002); Shincheonji Tabernacle (1997), pp. 29–36.

<sup>68</sup> They had about 80 churches and 7000 members in the early 1970s. Mun (1972), p. 62; Lee (2011), pp. 138–43; Lee (2014b), pp. 10–15.

<sup>69</sup> Lee (2009), p. 105.

<sup>70</sup> Grayson (2002); Moos (1964), pp. 110–20.

<sup>71</sup> Lee (2009), pp. 121–45.

transition of power to Kim Nam Hee (김남희), the woman who used to head up Mannam (만남), a front organisation of the SCJ movement.<sup>72</sup>

#### 4.2. Key Teachings

These three grassroots groups, as mentioned, promote unique doctrines and teachings of their founder whose religious philosophy is neither interrelated nor syncretic. They are, rather, apocalyptic and deny some notions of mainline Christianity through Bible study activities. The main point of Guwonpa (구원파, Good News Mission) is that salvation can be delivered through one-time repentance of sins in the theological concept of *Justification*. The teaching of repentance in the process of *Sanctification* is not required. They believe that the spirit of man does not have sin, but the body of the man has transgressions.<sup>73</sup> The meaning of *Kaedareum* (깨달음, internal enlightenment) that our sins are already forgiven on the cross is strongly related to the requirements of salvation as the action of repentance.<sup>74</sup> They deny the role and the responsibility of the office system including elder and deacon. For them, the exact date they were born again is a significant event to remember. The doctrine of Park's Guwonpa (GNM) opposes or disregards the traditional Korean Christian actions of Friday prayer meeting, the Lord's Prayer, and benediction.

As an evangelical strategy (or methodology) of delivering key teachings, they regularly host Bible seminars led by the leader Park Ock Soo. In 1986, the Good News Mission (GNM) held its first Grand Bible Seminar at Busan Isabel Girls High School, through which over 700 people came along to be followers. Since then, the GNM has been opening bible seminars semi-annually at emblematic settings in various metropolitan areas, including Seoul Olympic Gymnastics Stadium, Busan, Daegu, Daejeon, Gwangju, Masan, Incheon, etc. The first World-Tour Bible Seminar is the driving force of their mission activities in 80 countries. The Bible Seminars have been held in countries where Christianity was unheard of, such as the inland of Africa, Indian villages in South America, Hindu and Islamic regions of India, and Buddhist origins in Myanmar and China. Further, the Mahanaim Theology School (MTS) that used to approach young people at university campus grew into the Mahanaim Cyber Theology School (MCTS). The online education reached its students through the Internet, allowing them to listen to lectures without the limitations of time, space, or language barriers.<sup>76</sup> They promote that Mahanaim is one of the most comprehensive cyber schools, attended by approximately 2500 students from forty countries, and delivers courses in English, Chinese, Spanish, and Korean, languages spoken by 70% of the world's population.<sup>77</sup>

The World Mission Society Church of God (WMSCOG, or Church of God) teaches about God Elohim: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,' . . . So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:26–27). The word 'Elohim that translates to 'Gods,' is interpreted in the notion that God exists in the female image, God the Mother, as well as the male image, God the Father.<sup>78</sup> Their theology was developed into the new teaching that the Second Coming Christ, Ahn Sahng-hong is God the Father and Zahng Gil-Jah is God the Mother as their God Elohim.<sup>79</sup> They likely divide the time of the Bible into the three eras: the Father era of the Old Testament; the Son era of the New Testament; and the Holy Spirit era. The principle is understood in the way that the law of Father's era was completed by the New

<sup>72</sup> The word Mannam is a combination of their first names. However, there is another unofficial rumour that Kim Nam Hee (김남희) lost her influence in the organisation at the end of 2018. Kim (2012b), pp. 130–59.

<sup>73</sup> Park Ock Soo asserts that "the sin and the acts of sin are (a) different (issue)." Park (2003), p. 30.

<sup>74</sup> Park (2014a), pp. 110–19.

<sup>76</sup> Eighteen theological courses are being taught by twenty-six faculty members who are pastors and missionaries. Kim (2016), pp. 294–301.

<sup>77</sup> Kim (2016), pp. 294–301.

<sup>78</sup> Elohim God (n.d.), p. 94.

<sup>79</sup> "The LORD said . . . 'Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other'" (Gen. 11:1–7).

Covenant of Jesus, but the New Covenant after the ascension of Jesus degenerated. Here, they teach that Ahn Sahng-hong restored the lost New Covenant in the Holy Spirit era.<sup>80</sup>

About the doctrine of human origin, the WMSCOG argues that all human beings were created as angels in Heaven. They nevertheless sinned against God and were sent to Earth. The only way for humans to return to heaven is to keep the Passover with bread and wine (symbolising Jesus' flesh and blood) and following the teachings of the Bible, as taught by Ahn Sahng-hong.<sup>81</sup> They do not use any cross outside of the church, for it can be an idol.<sup>82</sup> The (Roman) Catholic Church is regarded as a big Babylon, Satan, and antichrist. The number 666 is referred to the pope.<sup>83</sup> The number 144,000 is accounted as the people who do not experience death. They sustain that the number of people who already died but their spirit goes to heaven, is not set. They also believed the doctrine of immediate eschatology in 1988, 2000, and 2012 in relation to the return of Ahn Sahng-hong. In a local level, members (two in one in general) go around the house to house and in shopping malls, hospitals and college campuses to share their belief.<sup>84</sup> Further, the WMSCOG has many training facilities such as Okcheon Go&Come Training Institute, Elohim Training Institute, Jounyisan Training Institute, and the Church of God Theological Seminary. The six books of Ahn and *the Doctrine of New Believers* are called 'the books of Truth' as canonical texts along with the Bible.

The theological characteristic of Shincheonji (SCJ, 新天地) is close to the WMSCOG rather than Guwonpa (Good News Mission). The doctrine of Shincheonji is centred on the book of Revelation in which there are four primary theories. The theory of *Realism* (apostasy-destruction-salvation) which means that the prophecy recorded in Revelation was made in Korea in the 20th century. Here, Shincheonji interprets that Yoo Jae Yul (유재열, 1949-)’s Temple of the Tabernacle (장막성전, 帳幕聖殿) in Gwacheon is the place where the events of the Book of Revelation take place and is a testimony of the work of their apostasy, destruction and the subsequent salvation.<sup>85</sup> Until such apostasy and destruction happen, the Book of Revelation is not fulfilled and the work of salvation is not begun, and only the New Testament evangelical temple (SCJ) is the true kingdom of God. They believe that the process of fulfilling the prophecy is depicted in the parabolic history of the Temple of the Tabernacle and the emergence of Shincheonji. Yoo Jae Yul is defined as 'apostate.' Oh Pyeongho (오평호) of the Confucian denomination who received the Temple of the Tabernacle from Yoo is a 'perisher.' Lee Man Hee is taught as the saviour who comes after the apostate (Yoo) and the perisher (Oh).<sup>86</sup>

The 'theory of three times and the earthly heaven' is construed in the way that the time of the Old Testament is where seed would be sown, and the beginning of Jesus is the time of sowing the seeds of the Gospel. At the Second Coming, they go to the traditional church where the seed was sown and gather the harvest of the harvests, to the Mount Zion, which is the barn, and the heaven of the kingdom come to the mount. This mountain is the new heavenly land, the new earth in Revelation 21, where there is a holy city, the new Jerusalem, the heavenly kingdom of heaven, where the kingdom exists without death and sorrow. For Shincheonji, they are the heavenly kingdom on earth.<sup>87</sup>

Under the theory of 'unity and physically eternal life,' Shincheonji consists of four divisions (four creatures), seven superintendents (seven spirits), and 24 chiefs (24 elders). When the multitude of priests (shepherds: 144,000) was completed through the fruits of 12,000, the flesh of the martyrs and saints (unmarried people) became one body (unity of God). Since then, people from all over the world

<sup>80</sup> David and Sahng-hong (n.d.a) *Presentation of the Truth* 2-2, unpublished material, pp. 1–4.

<sup>81</sup> They include believing in God the Mother, who is the Bride to give them life in the last days.

<sup>82</sup> David and Sahng-hong (n.d.b) *Presentation of the Truth* 1-8, unpublished material, pp. 3–5.

<sup>83</sup> Oh (2014), pp. 135–45.

<sup>84</sup> Kim (2016), pp. 283–312.

<sup>85</sup> Han (1987), pp. 30–37; Kim (2013), pp. 154–65.

<sup>86</sup> *Shincheonji Tabernacle* (1997), pp. 29–49; Lee (2015), pp. 163–83; Tark (2007), pp. 156–57.

<sup>87</sup> Tark (2007), pp. 156–57.

come in white clothes, so that the prophecies of the Bible are fulfilled as in Rev 7 and 14.<sup>88</sup> The skeleton of the doctrine is inherited from the teachings of Yoo's Temple of the Tabernacle.<sup>89</sup>

The Shincheonji Throne Emblem is a mark that symbolises the New Jerusalem that comes from heaven to New Heaven and New Earth reflecting their movement on Earth. They insist that Jesus, who came to the land of Judah, overcame the world (Jn. 16:33; Mt. 4; and Lk. 4) and created the twelve tribes of spiritual Israel through the twelve disciples. The twelve tribes that appeared in both the Old Testament and the first coming of Jesus (the NT time), appear again at the second coming—the time of Revelation. The 144,000 mentioned in Rev 7:4 are members of the twelve tribes of Shincheonji.<sup>90</sup> The group denies the Trinity of God but follows the doctrine of the elect that Rev 7:2 is a specific reference to Korea ('East') and to Lee Man Hee (the first 'angel') himself (see Figure 2).<sup>91</sup>



Figure 2. The 12 Tribes of Shincheonji, public domain.

The SCJ, as above, demonstrates several common features with the Olive Tree Movement and Temple of the Tabernacle. As the leader is seen to have a messianic role, the valley of Mt. Chungkye (청계산) is prophesied as a refuge and gathering place for believers in the end time. They, like WMSCOG, deny pope and approach local churches as the harvest field.<sup>92</sup> They also operate over 400 Bible study groups, 'Bogeumbang' (복음방, Gospel Room).<sup>93</sup> For the so-called 'Promised Theology,' they have the Zion Christian Mission Center in which they use of figurative terms: Heaven = Church leaders; Earth = Congregations; Sea = the World; and SSN = Seongseng Nim (선생님), the Korean word for teacher, referring to Lee Man Hee.<sup>94</sup>

#### 4.3. Ritual Patterns

The common phenomenon for the three Christian NRMs is that they have the characters of prophecy and occultism. Meanwhile, the Good News Mission is based on cooperation between the executive and the saints (meaning spiritually born-again members): ministers, elders, deacons, and teachers. Various services are held as Sunday morning (10:00 A.M.), Sunday evening (7:30 P.M.), and Wednesday evening (7:30 P.M.). There are also regional services, men's meetings, ladies' meetings, youth meetings, students' meetings, Sunday school, executive meetings, and teachers' meetings.<sup>95</sup> Prayer meetings are held in the early morning every day, and all-night prayer and fasting and prayer are on whenever needed. In summer and winter, there are camps in the retreat centres in Gangneung (강남) and Gimchun (김천). Camps for college students, as well as middle and high school students,

<sup>88</sup> Lee (1985), pp. 311–22.

<sup>89</sup> Kim (2013), pp. 154–65.

<sup>90</sup> "Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel (NIV)."

<sup>91</sup> "Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given the power to harm the land and the sea (NIV)." Kim (2013), pp. 154–65.

<sup>92</sup> The harvest workers are their evangelists. Lee (2015), pp. 163–83.

<sup>93</sup> Park (2014b), pp. 169–96; Lee (2014a), pp. 93–126.

<sup>94</sup> Kim (2013), pp. 154–65.

<sup>95</sup> Jeong (1995), pp. 150–81; Lee (2017), pp. 47–72.

meet separately every year. Offerings in forms of tithes or thanksgiving are given as closed offerings without any written names.<sup>96</sup>

The WMSCOG, in relation to salvation, celebrates the seven feasts laid in Lev. 23: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Feast of Weeks, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles. The church observes the feasts according to the New Covenant established by Jesus by distinguishing from the feasts kept in the Old Testament. About Sabbath, they keep Saturday, like Seventh-day Adventist, but celebrates it not from sunset to sunset but from sunrise to sunset.<sup>97</sup> Members are encouraged to attend the three services on the Sabbath day. Between services, members participate in various activities such as Bible studies, watching church-produced videos, or preaching in the local community (outreach). Ahn's birthday, death day and God the Father's day are the three special memorial days.<sup>98</sup> See Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Zahng Gil-Jah, God the Mother of WMSCOG, public domain.

The Church of God (WMSCOG) teaches that baptism is the first step towards salvation and must be done in the name of the Father (Jehovah), of the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit (Ahn Sahng-hong). According to the Church of God's interpretation of Ex. 20:4, items such as crosses, statues and stained glass are considered as a form of idolatry and are not erected on or in their churches.<sup>99</sup> The formal dress is encouraged for services, while men and women sit separately. Ahn argued that the practice of the apostolic early church had been distorted and his restoration doctrines and practices included the condition that women should wear headcovering while praying. Christmas is not celebrated as Jesus' birthday. Rather, it is taught as the anniversary of the sun god.<sup>100</sup>

The official season of Shincheonji (SCJ) is four times a year. In principle, they literally keep the dates as it is. The first one is the commemoration day of March 14 when Lee Man Hee founded Shincheonji. Passover is kept on January 14 as indicated in the Old Testament. The Passover is a day of celebration of the escape from spiritual Babylon, the perpetrator, according to the Shincheonji doctrine of 'apostasy-destruction-salvation', and transfer to the spiritual storehouse Zion (the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony). The Feast of Tabernacles is July 15 and commemorates the time until the gathering of 144,000 priests from spiritual Babylon (all churches except Shincheonji) to the day of the new union. The Shavuoth of Shincheonji is September 24, which is the day they, as mentioned, celebrate the spiritual harvest of the believers.<sup>101</sup>

Weekly, they, like other Korean churches, have various services including Sunday service, Wednesday service, Friday night service, and early morning service. However, as they do not have chairs in the church, the followers are instructed to sit on the floor during the services. They wear white shirts, dark pants and an identification badge around their necks. The main method of escorting

<sup>96</sup> There are special offerings for church construction and conferences. Jeong (1995), pp. 150–81.

<sup>97</sup> The WMSCOG considers the Sabbath to be a sign between God and God's people according to Ez. 20:12 and Ex. 31:13, and they keep as a service according to Lk. 4:16.

<sup>98</sup> Park (2017), pp. 106–9.

<sup>99</sup> Park (2017), pp. 106–9.

<sup>100</sup> Oh (2014), pp. 133–45.

<sup>101</sup> Lee (2015), pp. 163–83.

is to use a route such as interviews, surveys, cultural centres, college clubs, and psychotherapy to find out personal information and contact the instructor who has the deep knowledge of the Scripture.<sup>102</sup>

#### 4.4. Globalisation

One of the hidden strengths they similarly have for global outreach is that they operate various international organisations as well as social media in relation to the social campaign for women, youth, and world peace. It is not verified that they would have learned from the Unification Church,<sup>103</sup> but Park Ock Soo (the Good News Mission) formed the International Youth Fellowship (IYF) in 1995 as a global youth organisation dedicated to the correction of youth and development of next-generational leaders in almost 80 countries.<sup>104</sup> Through the cases of the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting rampage and Terrorism (like the 9/11 attacks), IYF not only believes that interaction is crucial to building a bright future of young people, but also tries to solve global problems by creating interaction between communities and countries. Since the IYF World Camp started in 2005 in Wollongong, Australia, the United States, Austria, Thailand, Mexico, Kenya, Ghana, Malaysia, Peru, Paraguay, and other 30 countries have hosted the IYF Camps. Their goals are to influence and solve youth policies and problems, which is the major concern of each country.<sup>105</sup> Other IYF activities include World Culture Exhibition (WCE), College Students Overseas Volunteer Work (CSOVW; 3500 students in 80 countries), IYF Magazine (28,000 copies yearly), Gracias Choir Performance (30 times annually), Alternative (middle and high) Schools, Mahanaim College in New York, and the Good News Medical Volunteer (GNMV, treated 22,000 patients in 2010). For educating youths, the Guwonpa (GNM) runs GBS Broadcast which is an Internet broadcasting in Korea and government-sponsored terrestrial broadcasting in Kenya.<sup>106</sup>

After Ahn's death, Zahng Gil-Jah of the Church of God (WMSCOG) became the chairwoman of the International WeLoveU Foundation (국제위 러브 유 운 동) which was the alternative of the New Life Welfare Foundation (NLWF, 새 생 명 복 지 회).<sup>107</sup> The International WeLoveU Foundation that was established in 2007 as a non-profit,<sup>108</sup> operates various acts of volunteerism by which more than 150,000 volunteers in 50 countries are putting 'the love and devotion of a mother' into practice. Their aim includes the well-being of children, women, senior citizens, disaster victims, refugees, and low-income families, and the harmony and communication of the global society. The three campaigns they focus on are the Save World, the New Life Concert, and Walkathon.<sup>109</sup>

The Save World is again divided into two forms of Save Earth and Save Life. The Save Earth is a worldwide Clan World Movement (an environmental initiative) that cleans up polluted cities, parks, mountains, rivers, and seas, while conducting environmental protection campaigns, educational programs, and seminars, etc. The Save Life is a worldwide blood drive in helping ease blood shortage by letting people know the importance and need to donate blood. The New Life Concert is an event to help children with heart disease or rare and intractable diseases.<sup>110</sup> The WeLoveU Foundation extended the scope to teen heads of households, children from low-income families, senior citizens living alone, injured migrant workers, and multi-cultural families. The Walkathon project is a welfare activity to help needy neighbours in the world. Approximately 205,000 people have participated in the Walkathon in which the total length of the path which has been walked up is the equivalent of walking

<sup>102</sup> Every four years, an athletic contest named 'Heavenly Culture and Arts' is held.

<sup>103</sup> Yamamoto (1995); Daske and Ashcraft (2005); Introvigne (2000), pp. 47–52.

<sup>104</sup> International Youth Fellowship (2018).

<sup>105</sup> Lee (2017), pp. 47–72.

<sup>106</sup> Since GBS (Good News Broadcasting System) is based on a Christian mindset and emphasizes on the youth leadership training, the Kenyan government sponsors for the social improvement of local youth life. Jeong (1995), pp. 150–81.

<sup>107</sup> New Life Welfare Foundation (2018).

<sup>108</sup> International WeLoveU Foundation (2018).

<sup>109</sup> Oh (2014), pp. 120–45.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. (Oh 2014).

about eleven times around the earth. In addition, WATV (Witness of Ahnsahnghong TeleVision) Internet Broadcast delivers the internal news and teachings.<sup>111</sup>

Shincheonji (SCJ) that is often being criticized as ‘CS (Christian State) in Korea’ like ‘IS (Islamic State)’ in the Middle East, is a bit domestic in comparison with the other two NRMs, but the group under the leadership of Kim Nam Hee (김남희, the female leader close to Lee Man Hee), like Zahng Gil-Jah of the Church of God, is active in cultural and volunteer efforts through Mannam Volunteer Association (MVA), Mannam International Youth Coalition (MIYC), International Peace Youth Group (IPYG), International Women’s Peace Group (IWPG), and Heavenly Culture, World Peace and Restoration of Light (HWPL). Mannam Volunteer Association (MVA) is known to have over 80,000 members worldwide, for those who have a heart to volunteer and inspire people of all ethnic groups, cultures, religions and nationalities.<sup>112</sup>

The MIYC was formed from groups of young people with the vision and determination to unite people across borders, cultures, languages and races. They engage in collaborative projects throughout the year, meeting once or twice annually to participate in youth summits aimed at developing practical and sustainable solutions to the challenges in the pursuit of peace. The purpose of IPYG, likewise, is to create positive and lasting change through uniting major youth associations around the world. They support the development of communities in educating and motivating their nation’s active pursuit of peace.<sup>113</sup> The International Women’s Peace Group (IWPG) is to protect all precious lives with ‘the heart of a motherhood’ and leave a world of peace as a legacy for future generations. The IWPG has been carrying out a worldwide peace movement forming strong ties that bind the global 3.6 billion women. They argue that motherly love is a powerful force given by the heavens and that the power of women to give birth, nurture, love and embrace life is a foundation for peace.<sup>114</sup>

The Heavenly Culture, World Peace and Restoration of Light (HWPL) transcends culture, religion, ideology, and other boundaries to achieve peaceful harmony in the global society. They, as a voluntary NGO, are committed to bringing world peace and cessation of war through the establishment of an enforceable law compatible with UN’s Declaration of Peace and Cessation of War (DPCW) and the World Alliance of Religions’ Peace (WARP).<sup>115</sup> They also run several social-action activities. One of the popular events is an Olympics-style athletics festival. Lee Man Hee organised the national Olympiad in 1990 which is held every four years, but coincidentally on his birthday. Daily Cheonji (천지일보) is national newspapers (28,568 copies in three times per week),<sup>116</sup> while Haneul Saemmul (하늘샘물, Heavenly Spring Water) is the magazine including the social and doctrinal contexts of current issues, focus, prophecy, and fulfilment.

## 5. Conclusions

The history of Korean Christian NRMs can be comprehended in the notion that the foreign mystical sources of Emanuel Swedenborg and Sundar Singh during the early colonial era challenged Baek Nam-Ju’s disciples in North Korea. However, the post-Korean War (the 1950s) was the turning point where the native Christian groups emerged. The period of critical democratisation and rapid industrialisation (1960–1970s) was the moment Korean leaders were able to establish their own unique movement with new teachings. Eventually, when the traditional churches were rapidly growing in the post-1980s, the generation, who personally experienced the previous prophetic and mystical groups,

<sup>111</sup> Park (2017), pp. 106–9; WATV Internet Broadcast (2018).

<sup>112</sup> The International Division is specifically focused on expatriates who live in South Korea, providing the opportunity for them to experience Korea, as well as to make a difference in Korean society. The relevance of Kim Nam Hee (the female leader) with Lee Man Hee (the male leader) is still veiled. Jeong (2018), pp. 49–51.

<sup>113</sup> International Peace Youth Group (IPYG) (2018).

<sup>114</sup> ‘SHE CAN’ is a major project that is done based around the core initiatives: Share Happy Mentoring, Enlightenment, Culture and Arts, and Networking. International Women’s Peace Group (2018).

<sup>115</sup> Heavenly Culture, World Peace and Restoration of Light (HWPL) (2018).

<sup>116</sup> Daily Cheonji (2018).

challenged the urban society with the alternative theology. The salvation teaching of Guwonpa (GNM) that was based on the WEC missionary concept was geared well with the method of Bible seminars through IYF. Ahn Sahng-hong himself remained local, but the work of Ahn's consecration by Zahng Gil-Jah brought the global growth of WMSCOG (Church of God). Shincheonji (SCJ) that considers the traditional churches as the harvest field caused a lot of conflicts. However, the leadership of Lee Man Hee (and Kim Nam Hee) led progressive development and prosperity through the international organisations of youth, women, and world peace. Their counter-Christian theologies were often controversial, but the dynamic grassroots new teachings of *Kaedareum* (깨달음), *God the Mother* (God Elohim), and *Promised Pastor* (=Messiah) attracted more international followers than local people.

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