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“Korea National Prayer Breakfast” and Protestant Leaders’ Prophetic Consciousness during the Period of Military Dictatorship (1962–1987)

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Abstract: This paper illuminates the prophetic consciousness of Korean Protestant leaders by examining the “Korea National Prayer Breakfast” (*Gukgajochangidohoe*, 국가조찬기도회) that they hosted, particularly during the military regimes. In explaining the motivation for and intention of this special religious event in the political arena, most scholars have emphasized the Protestant leaders’ political ambition and their agendas to get the government support and expand their power in Korean society. However, we should take heed of the leaders’ religious aspirations to make the country righteous in God’s sight. They attempted to have a good influence on the inner circle of the military dictatorship, which some Christians regarded as an evil force. Though they preached to and prayed for the military regimes, their sermons were often unpleasant and challenging to the presidents and their associates. The Protestant leaders wanted to play the role of John the Baptist rebuking Herod Antipas rather than the compliant chief priests and scribes serving Herod the Great.

Keywords: Korean religion; Korean Protestants; *Gukgajochangidohoe* (Korean National Prayer Breakfast); prophetic consciousness

1. Introduction: A New Perspective on the Korea National Prayer Breakfast

The Korea National Prayer Breakfast (*Gukgajochangidohoe*, 국가조찬기도회) was first hosted and organized in 1966 by prominent pastors of Korean Protestant churches. Since then, leading authorities in Korean Protestantism, along with many Korean political leaders who are Christian or sympathetic to the Christian faith, have gathered together every year to pray for the country. This annual meeting began in Korea influenced by the U.S. Presidential Prayer Breakfast, the name of which was changed to the National Prayer Breakfast in 1970. Rev. Joongon Kim (1925–2009), who had founded Korea Campus Crusade for Christ (K.C.C.C) in 1958 and served as its president since then until 2003, was one of the first organizers of the meeting. He was personally acquainted with Rev. Clifton Robinson and Rev. Richard Halverson of the Fellowship Foundation, or “the family,” who organized the U.S. Presidential Prayer Breakfast and Senate-House prayer breakfast meetings. Kim was invited to participate in the joint Senate-House prayer breakfast meetings in 1963 and 1964. Subsequently, Robinson and Halverson were invited to Korea in 1964 and encouraged Kim to take the lead in organizing a National Assembly Prayer Breakfast in Korea. Kim accepted this suggestion and held the National Assembly Prayer Breakfast meeting with about twenty Protestant members of the National Assembly on 27 February 1965. The next year, Kim and many other Korean Protestant leaders cooperated for preparing and hosting the Korea Presidential Prayer Breakfast. But President Chunghee Park (in office 1961–1979), who was not a Christian, did not participate that year. Park, however, along with more than five hundred well-known figures, did attend the next Presidential Prayer Breakfast that was convened on 8 May 1968. Since then, this meeting became an annual event that was in principle carried out in May

every year. The title of the meeting was changed to Korea National Prayer Breakfast in 1976.¹ It is remarkable that the National Prayer Breakfast could successfully take hold in Korea, which in 1971 had a Christian population of only 12.2% (9.8% Protestant and 2.4% Catholic).²

Most scholars of modern Korean history or Korean church history who examine this meeting label it as pro-government. They assert that Korean Protestant churches received significant benefits from the government and that it is a conspicuous example of the mutual back-scratching relations between the government and the church during the period of military dictatorship, which began from the military coup of Chunghee Park in 1961 and were continued by the military insurgencies of Doohwan Chun (in office 1981–1988) on 12 December 1979 and 17 May 1980. However, we will demonstrate that Korean Protestant leaders planned and held the meeting in their wish for contributing to making the country prosperous and righteous from a Protestant Christian perspective. In other words, some Protestant leaders had the prophetic objective to exert a good influence on the inner circle of the military dictatorship, which many Christians in those days regarded as an evil force. We are not denying that the Protestant leaders received benefit through their close relations with the government and to expand influence and numbers of the Protestant church. However, we would like to emphasize that their religious motivation also should be considered.

In Judeo-Christian traditions, prophets often played the role of social critics and their teachings have been regarded as “attempts to denounce injustices practiced against the weak and powerless” (Sheppard and Herbrechtsmeier 1987, pp. 7425–26). Some Christian leaders in the period of the military dictatorship warned about the unrighteousness of the ruling regimes on the basis of this prophetic consciousness, sometimes campaigning against the government. In this article, we will illuminate the reflection and determination of the Protestant leaders who hosted the prayer meetings by articulating their prophetic messages which are seen in sermons delivered in the Korea National Prayer Breakfast meetings and their proceedings, and in contemporary news articles covering them.

As mentioned above, many scholars criticize the Protestant leaders for standing by brutal military dictatorships (Lee 2004, p. 277; Yoon 2016, pp. 51–54; Kwon 2015, pp. 194–96; Chang 2006, pp. 114–19; Han 2004, pp. 29–31). The “Prayer Breakfast for the Future of the Country and the Nation,” (국가와 민족의 장래를 위한 조찬기도회) which was broadcast live across the country in August 1980, is often regarded as the most notorious example of Korean Protestant support for the dictatorship. In this meeting, Rev. Kyungchik Han (1902–2000) prayed that Chun might become “the great leader whom God gave to our nation, just like Moses who saved the Israel from Egypt” and blessed Chun and the other new military cliques in the name of God. As this meeting was held right after the military junta had brutally crushed the Gwangju Democratization Movement, a civil uprising against the military on 18 May, some scholars say that Han’s blessing was an implicit sanction of the violent repression. They assert that the blessing of one of the most prominent Protestant pastors of that time signified no less than the support of the whole Korean Protestant church for the military (Kim 2007, p. 75; Kim 2011, p. 84). However, as we will demonstrate in Section 3, we should pay attention to the pastors’ aspiration to pray for a country in deep crisis, though it is true that the military used the endorsement of the Protestant leaders for political propaganda (Kim 2009, pp. 327–33; Chun 2014, pp. 40, 42;

¹ Though President Park was not a Christian and did not have a specific religion, he showed respect to Korean Protestant leaders by attending the Korea Presidential Prayer Breakfast. He attended the Korea Presidential Prayer Breakfast from 1968 to 1974. The 1975 meeting did not convene because of the unstable political situation affected by anti-government protest movements. Park again attended the meeting in 1976 when the title of the event changed to the Korea National Prayer Breakfast. From 1977 to 1979, the year when Park was murdered by one of his right-hand men, the director of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, the chairman of the National Assembly or the prime minister attended and acted for the president. Though President Chun participated in the special prayer breakfast meeting held in 1980, which was before he became the president, and the 1981 National Prayer Breakfast, he neither attended nor sent the prime minister instead from 1982 to 1987 (Choi 2002, pp. 49–50; Han 2004, p. 28; Chang 2006, pp. 114–15).

² According to the 1971 census, 9.8% of the Korean population was Protestant and 2.4% was Catholic, among a total population of 32,882,704. The census shows that Buddhists were 21.7% and those without religion were 45.4% (Korea Research Institute for Religion and Society 1993, p. 174). For reference, according to the most recent census in 2015, Protestants were 19.7%, Catholics 7.9%, Buddhists 15.5%, those without religion 56.1%, and others 0.8%.

Yoon 2016, pp. 56–57). Han's blessing was a part of a process of exhorting the military and delivering to it religious and ethical messages, rather than justifying it.

Another common criticism is that the Korea National Prayer Breakfast helped the Korean Protestant church receive exclusive benefits from the military government during the 1970s and 80s that other religions could not enjoy (Choi 2002, pp. 75–77; Chang 2006, pp. 122–25; Yoon 2016, pp. 49–51). This criticism is often supported by the fact that the government granted valuable lands in Seoul to K.C.C.C, the founder and president of which, Joongon Kim, was one of the organizers of the early prayer meetings. Besides this, some critics point out that the military allowed the Protestant church to hold massive revival services in public areas of Seoul and other major cities. They argue that permission for these massive rallies is evidence of the government's exceptional support for the Protestant circle, as the freedom of press, publication, assembly and association had been strictly restricted since the October Restoration in 1972, a self-coup through which president Chunghee Park reconfirmed his dictatorial powers (Chang 2006, p. 123; Chun 2014, p. 40). It would be worthwhile to mention two super-massive revival rallies that were held during this period.³ First, on 3 June 1973, about 1.1 million people attended an evangelistic rally at which Billy Graham preached. Han was the main organizer of the evangelistic rally, which was held at the Yeouido Plaza. This rally is famous as "Graham's largest ever Crusade" (Billy Graham Evangelistic Association 2018). Second, Joongon Kim organized the "Explo '74," revival services that were held at the Yeouido Plaza from the 13th to 18th of August, 1974. It is said that some 6.5 million participants attended over the six days (Chang 2006, p. 123). However, the military governments of the period pursued a policy of treating Buddhism, Catholicism, and Protestantism, the so called three major religions of Korea, where Catholicism and Protestantism are often regarded as different religions (see Shin 1998). Though Catholics and Buddhists did not seek to hold massive public services or to secure new strongholds in Seoul other than temple or church sites, they also received remarkable benefits from the government. When the government began to designate religious facilities as cultural heritage and subsidize them in 1970s, the main beneficiaries were Catholics and Buddhists, not Protestants (Kim 2016, p. 302). In addition, Buddhist military chaplains were authorized in 1968 and Buddha's Birthday became a national holiday in 1975. President Chun and the New Military offered unwavering support to the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1984 and allowed the Catholic Church to hold a special mass at Yeouido Plaza in which about 600,000 Catholics participated (*The Kyunghyang Sinmun*, 6 May 1984). In short, it is not at all clear that the benefits that the Korean Protestant church received thanks to the National Prayer Breakfast were significantly greater than those of the other major religious traditions.

This overemphasis on the benefits that the Protestant church allegedly enjoyed by cooperating the dictatorship is based on the one-sided idea that religion is passively affected by the socio-political realm. According to this view, religion maintains its authority and sphere of power by reacting to and adapting itself to social influences. However, by paying attention to the particular religious aspirations of the early organizers of the National Prayer Breakfast to have God's will be done on earth or, more concretely, to make Korea into a righteous and just country, we will confirm that religion also can exercise influence on other areas in a society and cause its changes. Peter L. Berger points out that the relationship between religion and society is dialectical, suggesting that religious ideas often lead to changes in the social structure and that religion has the potency to act back upon its infrastructure in specific historical situations (Berger 1967, p. 128). Likewise, Andrew Greeley emphasizes that "religion is an important predictor variable in the modern world" (Greeley 1995, p. 28). He reminds that Max Weber and Émile Durkheim, two pioneers of sociology, demonstrated strong influences of religion over other elements in a society. Then, Greeley asserts that even in our "modernized,

³ Those who first organized and hosted the Korea National Prayer Breakfast were evangelical Protestant pastors, though they tried to include non-evangelical Christians also in the Prayer Breakfast meetings. It was American and Canadian evangelical missionaries who exerted critical influence on the beginning of the Korean Protestant churches in the late 19th century. Since then, the evangelical Protestants have been the mainstream in Korean Protestantism.

urbanized, rationalized, Western world," religion still has considerable influence on human attitudes and behaviors in the social, political, and economic sphere (Greeley 1995, pp. 29–30). This article will contribute to overcome the limitations of precedent researches that stress the passivity of religion, by articulating that religious motives of the Protestant leaders for exerting positive effect on the country were an important factor in hosting the Korean National Prayer Breakfast.

In the second section, we will examine the characteristics of faith and theology of the Protestant leaders who took the lead of the meeting. Special attention will be paid to their theological views on society and country, which were obviously reflected in the meeting, because these views are helpful in understanding the goal that the leaders wanted to attain through the prayer meeting. The third section analyzes the prophetic consciousness of the Protestant leaders that was revealed in the prayer meeting. We will scrutinize their religious anguish and aspiration that are seen in their sermons, prayers, speeches, and writings.

2. Theological Views of the First Organizers

Joongon Kim, Kyungchik Han, and Sinmyeong Kang (1909–1985) are often considered as the Protestant leaders who played the most important role in planning and organizing early National Prayer Breakfast meetings (Chun 2014, pp. 37–38; Yoon 2016, p. 52; see Appendix A, Table A1). By investigating their theological perspective, in which they all emphasized the responsibility of Protestant Christians for the society and country, we will be able to understand better the messages they wanted to deliver to the rulers and the vision of the country's future they tried to suggest through the National Prayer Breakfast.

Joongon Kim, who first introduced prayer breakfast meetings in Korea, gave sermons or led prayers at the Prayer Breakfast meetings in 1966 and for five consecutive years from 1969 to 1973. In Kim's theology, the most important work for Korean Protestant Christians to do for their homeland was evangelizing Korean people. He did not separate loving the country from spreading the gospel to people. That was the reason he emphasized "national evangelization" so strongly. He officially announced the launching of the "national evangelization movement" at midnight on New Year's Day, 1971 on the Christian Broadcasting System, saying poetically and ardently, "let us invite the season of Christ into this country by imprinting the bloodstained Christ upon the mind of every Korean person" (Kim 2005a). By "national evangelization," Kim meant the endeavor to make Korea a country where "Jehovah becomes our nation's God, Jesus becomes our Lord, and the Old and New Testaments become the standard of our nation's faith and deeds." He hoped that "Korea will become the second Israel, the only non-Western Protestant country" (Kim 2005a). To fulfill this purpose, he did not hesitate to be actively engaged in missionary work within the socio-political realm. In order to make Korea a real Protestant country, he promoted the "Total Religionization Movement in the Military Services," (전군신자화 운동) in which he used the term of "religionization" in the sense of evangelization (see Kim 2006), in addition to engaging in overseas missions, and founding the Korea National Prayer Breakfast.

Kyungchik Han played the key role in the Prayer Breakfast meetings of 1970, 1971, 1974, 1980, 1984, and 1987, preaching, leading prayers, and giving benedictions. He was very influential not only in the Protestant circle but also in society at large, which is to be seen at the Prayer Breakfast in August 1980, where he prayed while laying hands on military dictator Chun, who was a Buddhist. Han thought that the church should have a positive influence on politics. On the one hand, he put a great deal of value on national security and emphasized anti-communism. According to Han, the Protestant church should be actively involved in politics when it came to national security, even if the church could be politically exploited. But at the same time, he also placed emphasis on the church helping the socially weak. At first glance, his sermon focused on personal salvation and changed lives of individual Christians who were saved. However, he went further and stressed that the church, the congregation of the saved individuals, had the responsibility of evangelizing the secular world. He even believed that the democratization of Korea could be realized by the obedience of Christians and the church to God (Kim 2011, p. 168). In concrete, he believed that Christians should have good

fellowship with the socially weak and provide services for them in obedience to God. He said that the church should establish a theology for the poor and neglected and that it had the mission of helping and caring about them. He also argued that Christians should practice their faith by siding with laborers and peasants.

If we see Christianity through the glasses of social thought, it sympathizes more with laborers and peasants than with capitalists. (. . .) Christianity has had the mission of giving good news to the poor and releasing the oppressed. (Han 2009 [originally from the sermon in 1947], vol. 1, p. 91)

In this passage, Han, who was an anti-communist, so strongly emphasized social justice that he even seemed to be sympathetic to communist propaganda. Furthermore, he advocated building up a democratic nation both on the basis of the Protestant ethic and evangelicalism of the Korean people. From the early period of his ministry, he insisted that the Korean Protestants should make Korea “a country where ideals of a Protestant state, especially liberty, equality, and fraternity, were achieved on a foundation of righteousness” (Han 2009). Just like Joongon Kim, Han also believed that a new Republic of Korea could be built only through the evangelization of the nation because the virtues necessary for a democratic state, such as freedom, equality, and ethics, came from the Protestant faith. According to Han,

Evangelization of the nation is the greatest patriotic movement. (...) Let’s make the spiritual root of our democratic state strong by evangelizing our nation. The ideals of human dignity, liberty, and equality came from the Bible. When all of our people come to believe in the Lord, the democratic state will be firmly established. In addition, national evangelization will make our ethical foundation solid. Only a person with complete ethics can enjoy complete liberty. Evangelization will make the whole nation new. Real social purification, social stability, and national consensus will be necessarily achieved through national evangelization. (Han 2009 [originally from the sermon in 1980], vol. 16, p. 199)

In reality, Han was not exactly right in that not all democratic states are Protestant. But it is obvious that Han tried to argue for the inseparable relation between democracy and Protestantism by saying “those who do not understand Protestantism do not understand democracy” (Han 2009). His assertion is that not only in Korea but also in any other countries in the world, building a democratic nation was impossible without Protestantism (Han 2009).

It was an important theological view of Kim and Han that national evangelization was necessary for making Korea a just and moral democratic country in which liberty and equality were guaranteed. They strived to persuade politicians to embrace their conviction that national evangelization was needed to make Korea a better country. We will examine this view in more detail in the next section.

Rev. Sinmyeong Kang, another leading figure in organizing early Prayer Breakfast meetings, began to attend from 1966. He gave the benediction in 1969 and 1976, led a prayer in 1973, and preached in 1978. While he did not explicitly state national evangelization in sermons, he was the Protestant leader who articulated the prophetic mission of the church more clearly than any other figures of the time (Kim 2009, pp. 261–63). In order to fulfill the mission, according to him, Korean Protestants should not limit the gospel within the church but contribute to society by active involvement in public concerns. He thought Protestantism had the capability of changing a value system of a society. Through this capability, the Protestant church should contribute to social reform as well as personal salvation. In this respect, it is said that this world and the world to come are not separated in his theology (Kim 2009, p. 288).

On the basis of this theological view, Kang tried to be actively engaged in socio-political issues. He agreed with President Park on anti-communist policies, the pro-American stance, and the ideal of nation building. But he clearly opposed the dictatorship and the corruption of the Park regime, which he thought “interfere[d] with the cultivation of personal and social ethics and the formation of

democratic citizens” (Kim 2009, p. 286). In 1963, he directly criticized the Park regime, which was trying to prolong the military administration, by announcing a public statement demanding President Park’s fulfillment of his promise to transfer power to a civilian government in the name of the National Council of Churches in Korea (*The National Council of Churches in Korea 1974*, pp. 296–97). Since then, he kept openly declaring opposition to Park’s unilateral rule and anti-democratic policies: The conclusion of the Treaty on Basic Relations between the Republic of Korea and Japan, despite the strong public protests, in 1965; the constitutional amendment called *Samseon Gaeheon* that allowed the incumbent president to run for a third reelection in 1969; the October Restoration in 1972; the harsh crackdown on *Mincheonghangnyeon* (National League of Democratic Youth and Students) in 1974 (Kim 2009, p. 314). Kang persistently called up Park’s anti-democratic consciousness and the corruption of his regime, even in the prayer he led at his funeral in 1979 (Kim 2009, pp. 311, 320).

Kim, Han, and Kang shared the theological view that the Protestant church should contribute to society. Kim thought that the Protestant church should help Korea become one of the developed nations. Han regarded caring about and aiding the socially marginalized as the mission of Protestants. Kang asserted that Protestantism could bring about positive changes in Korean society. While these pastors argued for the church’s active involvement in society, they all gave the first priority to the gospel by emphasizing that it should be based on “the gospel of Jesus” (Kang 1960, p. 42; Han 2009; Kim 2009, pp. 369–70). Kim and Han believed that the Protestant church would be able to contribute to Korea through national evangelization. Kang’s definition of social justice was the realization of the God’s will in this world. This theology was expressed at Korea National Prayer Breakfast meetings as prophetic voices delivered to military regimes.

Another common belief of these three pastors was that Christianity, especially Protestantism, was necessary for enhancing morality and establishing a democratic state. For all three, their experience in the United States was critical in the formation of this belief. All three had studied in the US: Kim attended Fuller Theological Seminary, while Han and Kang studied at Princeton Theological Seminary. It was with the influence of his own experience in the States that Kim preached as follows in the sermon delivered at the National Prayer Breakfast in 1969:

Let us consider the basically Christian countries of the United States and Europe. Modern democracy sprang from these countries in which the majority of the common people had a basic Christian outlook. Even modern science flowered in these countries. (. . .) The German spirit of science and art was rooted in the religious spirit. (Kim 2006 [originally from the sermon in 1969], p. 77)

Kim and other first organizers of the Prayer Breakfast thought that Korea should follow the example of the United States and Europe, which to them were advanced countries whose foundations were laid on Christian principles. On the basis of this belief and experience, they put forth the argument that Korea could be renewed through being evangelized and they tried to persuade the non-Christian participants to convert in the Korea National Prayer Breakfast.

We should be careful lest we conclude that they attempted to win the favor of the dictators for this evangelization, though it is true that the Protestant leaders stressed the importance of evangelizing the country so strongly. They were not too Protestant-centric, considering that they tried to avoid exclusive Protestant collectivism in the Prayer Breakfast by inviting Catholic leaders, which was successful in 1969 and 1970 when Bishop Ginam Noh and Cardinal Suhwan Kim read the Bible in order. More importantly, they did not endeavor to make the meeting palatable to the military dictators. The organizers did not prevent those who were unfriendly towards the government from participating actively in the event. Various denominations with different political stances played parts in the meetings of this period and pastors from the Presbyterian Church in the Republic Korea (PROK), which is said to be the most liberal and progressive denomination in Korea, also took roles to preach,

lead prayers, or give benedictions.⁴ Rev. Jaejun Kim, who was one of the founders of PROK and a democratic activist ([Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development 1983](#), p. 10), delivered the benediction at the Prayer Breakfast in 1968, which was the first meeting that President Park attended. Ilhyeong Jeong, chairman of the preparatory committee of the Prayer Breakfast from 1968 to 1972, was a National Assembly member of the opposition party. He was very critical of Park's dictatorship and finally lost his seat in 1976 due to his open opposition to the October Restoration regime ([Chun 2014](#), pp. 37–38). By hosting the National Prayer Breakfast, the prophetic objective to make the country better and more righteous in God's sight was a crucial part of their motivation.

3. National Prayer Breakfast Organizers' Prophetic Consciousness

The early organizers of the National Prayer Breakfast exhorted the rulers including the presidents to repent of their wrongdoings and to cultivate moral virtues, such as humility, mercy and integrity. They also suggested a concrete future vision for Korea, namely, making it a democratic nation on the basis of the spirit of Protestantism. In a situation where the country should overcome political turmoil, economic backwardness, and moral laxity, the pastors tried to give sermons and prayers, which were motivated by their religious aspiration for the country. Their prophetic sense of vocation for leading Korea in crisis to the right way is confirmed in their messages carried in Prayer Breakfast meetings. We should not neglect their genuine religious motivation though some of them may have wanted to expand influence and numbers of the Protestant church by supporting the military governments and winning their favor.

The focus of most sermons was on the restoration of general morality, which they thought was necessary to make Korea a just and orderly country. The Protestant leaders during the period of the military dictatorship thought that not only the general public but also those in power should repent and be changed. They pointed out that a person of higher social standing should have greater moral responsibility. Joongon Kim called on the participants of the meeting to resolve on a moral revolution because "the moral resolution of a person in the position of leading ten thousand people will influence ten thousand and that of a person leading ten million people will influence ten million" ([Kim 2005a](#)). While messages for the general public were spread in the church or massive revival rallies, exhortations for those in power to be morally awakened were given in the National Prayer Breakfast. It was in this context that the preachers blessed the presidents by quoting biblical figures. Though they mentioned very often Israelite leaders from the Old Testament such as Moses, Joshua, David, and Solomon, they neither used expressions of flattering Park and Chun nor identified the dictators with these great persons. Pastors did not say that the presidents were like heroes in the Bible, but they encouraged the presidents to become like the heroes who had the virtues of gentleness, integrity, faith, wisdom, and humility ([Kim 2005a](#)).

The main message of Han's sermon preached at the "Prayer Breakfast for the Future of the Country and the Nation" in August 1980, which was mentioned in the first section, was that the rulers should enact justice, love kindness, and act humbly. Though Han might seem to have accepted Chun's dictatorship for the simple reason that he hosted the meeting, he emphasized the importance of Christian virtues such as mercy, justice, kindness, and humility. This sermon, which was based on Micah 6:6–8, ended with Han's exhortation that Chun and other members of the National Security Emergency Measure Committee should be blessed by having these virtues ([Han 2009](#)). It is true that Han blessed Chun when he prayed. But he never stated that Chun was the legitimate leader of the country in his sermon unlike some scholars' critiques ([Kim 2007](#), p. 75; [Kim 2011](#), p. 84).

⁴ These different political stances of the participants in prayer breakfast meetings are not found during the period of President Myungbak Lee (2008–2013) and President Geunhye Park (2013–2017), who were supported by a few conservative Protestant pastors on their presidential election campaigns. Some criticize that a few influential Protestant leaders maintained and showed off a cozy relationship with the presidents by hosting the National Prayer Breakfast while the presidents tried to bring around the Korean Protestant circle through the meetings (*The Christian Newspaper*, 12 February 2018).

The early organizers also often argued that the whole country should fight against corruption. In the sermon delivered at the meeting held in 1970, Joongon Kim seemingly credited the coup in 1961, which was carried out by Park, saying that he had been deeply moved to see corruption lessen in Korea after the coup (Kim 2006). However, he was actually stressing an urgent need of eradicating corruption rather than supporting the coup itself. The next part of the sermon clearly shows that his focus was on anti-corruption. He quotes the dying words of Dr. Frank W. Schofield, a widely respected missionary in Korea, who came from Canada and died a month before the meeting. "From his death-bed he [Schofield] said that the only hope for Korea is to rid herself of injustice, corruption and divisions. This is a painful rebuke for us" (Kim 2005a). Then he asserted that the government, the political leaders, and the whole nation must repent to God for the prevailing social evils. He went further and said,

This dishonesty is a deadly disease for our nation. We cannot continue to live like this. Something needs to be done urgently. Of course, these things don't just happen overnight. They are the accumulation of a long history of social evils. Because of these shameful practices which have divided our country we have often been subject to foreign powers. Let us not forget the days spent under Japanese and Communist domination. We had no freedom and no security for life or property. We must not bequeath these evils to our children. (Kim 2006 [originally from the sermon in 1970], pp. 99–100)

In this part, we can see that his focus was not on the legitimation of Park's regime but on the reprimand for corruption and immorality of Korea. In other words, Kim was pointing out that the coup failed to change the moral integrity of Korea though the military ostensibly sought to it.

In the 1978 meeting, Sinmyeong Kang preached that Christians be spiritual and moral guides of the nation. He emphasized the responsibility of Christians for eradicating social illegality, corruption, and irregularities. Relating the story of the Prophet Ezekiel, he preached as follows:

It was the responsibility of prophets who were called as the watchmen of the Israelite people to receive the words of God, with which they treated both the good and the evil in place of God. They exhorted the evil to listen to the words of God, to turn from the evil way, to come back to God and be saved, and to get life. They also forewarned the good and righteous to listen to the words of God, to keep living the good and righteous lives, and to be careful not to betray the words of God in spite of temptations and seductions. (. . .) We Korean Christians are also the watchmen of this nation. We should accomplish our mission as watchmen in every area in which we are involved. We should encourage righteousness while we reprimand and warn of sins and injustice to set the sinners on the right track. (Kang 1987 [originally from the sermon in 1978], vol. 1, pp. 169–79)

In this sermon, Kang articulated that Protestant Christians should have the prophetic mission, just like the Israelite prophets, to be watchmen of the nation. He also said that Christians should play the role of "the conscience and spiritual anchor of the nation." By this message, he encouraged Christian politicians to take the responsibility of prophets. At once, he was urging non-Christian rulers to turn from injustice and sins and to make every effort to conduct their offices in a good and righteous way.

There were other pastors who preached at the Prayer Breakfast that it was right in God's sight to obey God rather than those in power. At the Prayer Breakfast meeting held in 1977, Rev. Jingyeong Cheong said, "We should stand in awe of the unseen God who looks deep into us and sees the other side of history in depth. Fear God, not visible power" (Han 2004, p. 30). He made it clear that obeying God's will should not be equated with obeying those in power. In 1981, Rev. Seonhui Gwak urged the rulers to become wise persons which would be possible when they were willing to hear the voice of people, that of conscience, and that of God (Han 2004, p. 30). We can see that Protestant leaders gave the presidents and their associates in power the message that they also should fear God and that they should not delude themselves by thinking of their power as absolute.

Morality was the most important standard of judgement even when the Protestant leaders raised their voices outside the church or prayer meetings against a government policy. For instance, in July 1965, 215 Protestant leaders announced the statement of opposing the conclusion of the Treaty on Basic Relations between the Republic of Korea and Japan, which was signed one month before. The rally against the treaty was held in the Youngnak Presbyterian Church, of which senior pastor was Han (Kim 2005b, pp. 69, 107; Chang 2006, pp. 112–13). The statement, signed by several influential Protestant leaders including Han, Kang, and Jaejun Kim, first emphasizes a general morality, followed by leveling strong objections to the offering of humiliating diplomatic relations.

We Christians protest all forms of dictatorship, all injustice, illegality, and corruption. We denounce subordination or servility to foul and low foreign powers in economics, culture, morality, politics and any other area. And we promise to contribute to the construction of the history of our nation by following the lead of the Holy Spirit, prayer, and services. (Kim 2009, 315–16)

As we have seen, Protestant leaders consistently suggested a kind of moral crusade. Protestant leaders thought that moral virtues included in the gospel could be useful in overcoming conflicts and confrontations between political ideologies. By proclaiming this message to those in power at the Korea National Prayer Breakfast, the pastors exhorted them to repent of their wrongdoings and to cultivate their character. It would be impossible for them to admonish and reprimand the rulers without their senses of prophetic mission, considering the military government became suspicious of anyone who made minor criticism and often regarded them as dissidents or even communists. Their efforts have not been fully appreciated for the reason that they did not develop a protest movement against the military. But it cannot be denied that they tried to set the stage for facing the military regimes, pointing out their problems, and suggesting the direction the country should follow.

It is true that the Protestant leaders sometimes proclaimed the utmost importance of Christianity, especially Protestantism, and tried to evangelize those in power including the presidents. However, their point in talking about the significance of Protestantism at the Prayer Breakfast meetings was that it was needed for completing the moral crusade and making the country anew. As mentioned above, they did not just attempt to propagate Protestantism by building good relationships with the government, considering that they often said offensive words to the dictators and had some opponents of the government play roles in the meetings. Rather, they were proclaiming what they believed was necessary for the country on the basis of their faith and theology. They believed that only God's Justice and love could make Korea become a rich, strong, secure, democratic, and culturally developed country, in which all people would enjoy liberty and equality. Then, according to Kang, Korea would become "the kingdom of God established on the earth," a righteous and moral country based on the Protestant faith (Kang 1961, p. 37; Kim 2009, pp. 282–83). At the meeting held in 1969, Joongon Kim preached as following.

Our task for today is threefold: modernization, democratization, and national prosperity. In order to achieve these goals we must have the spirit of the New Frontier, courage, and power for living. In order to better our country, we must look to every possible source. (. . .) Especially for now, we should redevelop the vitality of faith. (. . .) Protestant faith is the never-failing source of vital energy that is necessary for the political, economic, and spiritual revival. (Kim 2006 [originally from the sermon in 1969], p. 72)

Kim and other early organizers believed that the economic development and the establishment of democracy would be impossible in Korea without the Protestant faith. According to them, a great many Koreans should become Protestants if Korea would become powerful and prosperous like the advanced countries of the West. In the sermon preached at the meeting in 1971, Han argued that a thorough understanding of the fundamental ideals of democracy, the moral dignity of people, respect for law and order were basic elements of a democratic country and asserted that all these

elements originated from Protestantism. It was the Protestant faith, he also said, that supported law, education, liberty, and morality, all of which were necessities for a democratic country (Han 2009). Then, he encouraged Park and other participants to become Christians.

Honorable Mr. President Park and all the participants here who have not had faith yet. Please receive the Lord now, in order to save your souls that are more valuable than earth and heaven, and to establish our homeland that you love more than your lives on an eternal spiritual foundation. (Han 2009 [originally from the sermon in 1971], vol. 12, p. 380)

Han was arguing that Christianity was needed not only for personal salvation but also for nation building. The basis on which he urged the non-Christian dictator president to have Christian faith was also the belief that it could help establish the country firmly. Though Han and other Protestant leaders tried to evangelize the rulers by delivering sermons to them at the Prayer Breakfast, they often said words offensive to the military regimes and even invited to the pulpit Jaejun Kim and Ilhyeong Jung who were outspokenly critical of the government.

4. Conclusions: John the Baptist Facing Herod Antipas

In this article, we have illuminated prophetic missions of Korean Protestant leaders through examining the Korea National Prayer Breakfast held during the period of military dictatorship. It was not our purpose to deny that political calculations were a factor also. We have emphasized that Protestant leaders' religious aspiration also should be considered. They ventured into the corridors of power and urged the rulers to become leaders of a righteous and just country by having higher moral standards and Christian faith. The first organizers of the meeting tried to help restore the morality of those in power in order to make the country just and clean-handed. They believed that they could influence the country to become prosperous, strong, and just by making the rulers have Christian faith. They exhorted the presidents and their associates to change for the purpose of having Korea become like "the kingdom of God," a country in which the love and justice of God reigned.

It is true that the prophetic consciousness of the Protestant leaders was obviously related to their ideal of evangelizing the country. This is one of the important characteristics of Korean Protestantism that is not seen in Western cultures where Christianity has been so prevalent. Be reminded that Protestantism has been one of three major religions of Korea and that its adherents constituted less than 10 percent of the population. However, it is also clear that the leaders aimed at changing their poor, unjust, and underdeveloped homeland into a better country. The prophetic mission of the Protestant leaders during the period of the military dictatorship was shouting for the country to become righteous and just in God's sight. This sense of mission was revealed in the Korea National Prayer Breakfast in which they proclaimed that Korea should become a prosperous and also democratic country where all people would enjoy liberty and equality. They sometimes urged all the participants, including the presidents, to become Christians. But it was because they believed that Christian countries of the West were the model for Korea to copy and so Christianity was necessary for Korea to become an advanced democratic country. Their aspiration to build the kingdom of God on earth was an important motivation for their organizing and hosting the Korea National Prayer Breakfast.

Jaejun Kim said that Protestants had the mission of prophets who should proclaim the righteousness of God in this world with strong historical awareness. According to him, Protestants, just like prophets, should not hesitate to speak forthrightly to politicians and rulers.

To see the historical situation is to face up to and criticize the present in terms of God's will. That is a warning. Then [the prophet] should prophesy the future under the present situation. It is a proclamation of the judgment that the country would collapse unless it turns from its sins of the present. (Kim 1973, p. 63)

In the Bible, we can find many models of this notion of the prophet Kim suggested, such as Elijah who chided the evil ways of King Ahab, Amos who sharply criticized the social corruption

and religious laxity in Judah, and John the Baptist who squarely rebuked the wrongdoings of Herod Antipas the tetrarch. Like them, Korean Protestant leaders warned of moral laxity and corruption of the rulers and boldly exhorted them to have Christian faith to establish Korea as a country which was founded on the justice and love of God. Though many scholars have criticized that the Protestant leaders played the role of the compliant chief priests and scribes serving Herod the Great, they actually tried to play the role of John the Baptist rebuking Herod Antipas.

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Appendix

Table A1. Persons who took on roles at the Korea National Prayer Breakfast, 1968–1987. (Choi 2002, pp. 51–52; Kim 2009, pp. 327–38; Yoon 2016, pp. 53–54).

	8 March 1966	1 May 1968	1 May 1969	1 May 1970	1 May 1971
Moderator		Insik Yun (N.A.M.)	Insik Yun (N.A.M.)	Samsang Kim (N.A.M.)	Joongon Kim (Pastor)
Opening Address	Hyeonsuk Park (N.A.M.)	Ilhyeong Jeong (N.A.M.)	Ilhyeong Jeong (N.A.M.)	Ilhyeong Jeong (N.A.M.)	Hyeonsuk Park (N.A.M.)
Opening Prayer		Seokgyu Kim (Pastor)	Daeseon Park (Yonsei U.P.)	Kyungchik Han (Pastor)	Changdeok Yun (Pastor)
Scripture Reading (O.T.)	Youngsam Kim (N.A.M.)	Hyeonsuk Park (N.A.M.)	Ginam Noh (Bishop)	Suhwan Kim (Cardinal)	Jongpil Kim (N.A.M.)
Scripture Reading (N.T.)	Jongpil Kim (N.A.M.)	Yeong-gwan Kim (Admiral)	Gyewon Kim (General)	Myeongsin Chae (Lieutenant General)	Insik Yun (N.A.M.)
Prayer for President	Hwal-lan Kim (Doctor)	Li-in Baek (Professor)	Okgil Kim (Ewha Womans U.P.)	Haeyeong Lee (Pastor)	Sangdeok Song (Pastor)
Sermon	Joongon Kim (Pastor)	Hwansin Lee (Pastor)	Joongon Kim (Pastor)	Joongon Kim (Pastor)	Kyungchik Han (Pastor)
Benediction		Jaejun Kim (Pastor)	Sinmyeong Kang (Pastor)	Hyeonseol Hong (Pastor)	Hyeongyong Park (Pastor)
Venue	Chosun Hotel	Walkerhill Hotel	Sejong Hotel	Chosun Hotel	Tower Hotel
President's Attendance	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
President	Chunghee Park				
	1 May 1972	1 May 1973	1 May 1974	1 May 1976	1 May 1977
Moderator	Insik Yun (N.A.M.)	Insik Yun (N.A.M.)	Insik Yun (N.A.M.)	Namjung Yun (Pastor)	Beomjun Lee (N.A.M.)
Opening Address	Ilhyeong Jeong (N.A.M.)	Hyeonsuk Park (N.A.M.)	Hyeonsuk Park (N.A.M.)	Insik Yun (N.A.M.)	Insik Yun (N.A.M.)
Opening Prayer	Hyeonsuk Park (N.A.M.)	Giseon Jo (Pastor)	Hwang-gyeong Ko (Doctor)	Indeuk Kim (Elder)	Jojun Park (Pastor)
Scripture Reading (O.T.)	Shin Kim (Minister)	Junhwan Jang (N.A.M.)	Ilhyeong Jeong (N.A.M.)	Dohwan Shin (N.A.M.)	Yundeok Kim (N.A.M.)

Table A1. Cont.

Scripture Reading (N.T.)	Jongpil Kim (N.A.M.)	Byeonghwa Kim (Prosecutor)		Huigyeong Jeong (Educator)	Yeongtae Shin
Prayer for President	Joongon Kim (Pastor)	Sinmyeong Kang (Pastor)	Kyungchik Han (Pastor)	Changwon Park (Elder)	Gyeong-gyu Jang (Pastor)
Sermon	Daeseon Park (Yonsei U.P.)	Joongon Kim (Pastor)	Sang-geun Kim (Pastor)	Sang-geun Yu (Elder)	Jin-gyeong Cheong (Pastor)
Benediction	Jinhyeon Noh (Pastor)	Myeongsun Bae (Pastor)	Gyu-o Jeong (Pastor)	Sinmyeong Kang (Pastor)	Yunseon Park (Pastor)
Venue	Chosun Hotel	Chosun Hotel	Chosun Hotel	Chosun Hotel	Chosun Hotel
President's Attendance	No (The First Lady)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No (Prime Minister)
President	Chunghee Park				
	1 May 1978	1 May 1979	1 May 1980	8 August 1980	14 May 1981
Moderator	Beomjun Lee (N.A.M.)	Uryang Byeon (N.A.M.)	Byeonghak Jeong (Pastor)	Manpil Moon (Pastor)	Taeseop Lee (N.A.M.)
Opening Address	Insik Yun (N.A.M.)	Insik Yun (N.A.M.)	Insik Yun (N.A.M.)		Hojun Yu (Pastor)
Opening Prayer	Ikjun Kim (N.A.M.)	Dongjin Choi (Pastor)	Wonsang Ji (Pastor)	Hyangrok Jo (Pastor), Jigil Kim (Pastor), Indeuk Kim (Elder)	Yeongsu Lee (Pastor)
Scripture Reading (O.T.)	Je-eon Ryu (Minister)	Yundeok Kim (N.A.M.)	Bongho Kim (N.A.M.)		Seokho Nah (N.A.M.)
Scripture Reading (N.T.)	Sangnyeon Kim (N.A.M.)	Sangnyeon Kim (N.A.M.)	Hongseok Oh (N.A.M.)		Hongseok Oh (N.A.M.)
Prayer for President	Seong-eun Kim (Minister)	Seok-yong Oh (Pastor)	Gwanseon Kim (Chief of Chaplains)	Jin-gyeong Cheong (Pastor)	Bongseong Lee (Pastor)
Sermon	Sinmyeong Kang (Pastor)	Haedeuk Kim (S.A.C.)	Giwon Han (Pastor)	Kyungchik Han (Pastor)	Seonhui Gwak (Pastor)
Benediction	Huibo Kim (Pastor)	Myeongwon Park (Pastor)	Chang-in Kim (Pastor)	Seongchil Jang (Pastor)	Ju-o Kim (Pastor)
Venue	Chosun Hotel	Chosun Hotel	Silla Hotel	Lotte Hotel	Silla Hotel
President's Attendance	No (Chairman of the N.A.)	No (Prime Minister)	No (Prime Minister)	No (Doohwan Chun Chairman of N.S.E.M.C.)	Yes
President	Chunghee Park		Kyuhah Choi		Doohwan Chun
	4 May 1982	3 May 1983	29 May 1984	1 May 1985	14 May 1986
Moderator	Jeongsu Park (N.A.M.)	Hyeonja Kim (N.A.M.)	Gyeongsuk Lee (N.A.M.)	Se-eung Oh (N.A.M.)	Okseon Kim (N.A.M.)
Opening Address	Jin-u Lee (N.A.M.)	Jin-u Lee (N.A.M.)	Jin-u Lee (N.A.M.)	Seokho Nah (N.A.M.)	Seokho Nah (N.A.M.)
Opening Prayer	Gyeongrae Kim (Elder)	Hanbin Lee (Former Minister)	Jungwan Eun (Pastor)	Yeongsi Hwang (Comptroller General)	Sejik Park (Minister)

Table A1. Cont.

Scripture Reading (O.T.)	Byeonghyeon Ko (N.A.M.)	Jaeho Kim (N.A.M.)	Taesu Kim (N.A.M.)	Nakdo Choi (N.A.M.)	Seongsik Kim (N.A.M.)
Scripture Reading (N.T.)	Byeongbong Jo (N.A.M.)	Seongpyo Hong (N.A.M.)	Ujun Hong (N.A.M.)	Yeongjeong Kim (N.A.M.)	Yangsun Han (N.A.M.)
Prayer for President	Daesun Lee (N.A.M.)	Chang-gi Yu (Chief of Chaplains)	Sichae Jeong (N.A.M.)	Jungseo Kim (Supreme Court Justice)	Taeseop Choi (Elder)
Sermon	Ok Im (Pastor)	Hyangrok Jo (Pastor)	Hun Choi (Pastor)	Janghwan Kim (Pastor)	Jongseong Lee (Pastor)
Benediction	Seongwon Choi (Pastor)	Yonghwan Choi (Pastor)	Kyungchik Han (Pastor)	Changwon Choi (Chief of Chaplains)	Jigil Kim (Pastor)
Venue	Silla Hotel	Silla Hotel	Silla Hotel	Hyatt Regency	Silla Hotel
President's Attendance	No	No	No	No	No
President	Doohwan Chun				
1 May 1987					
Moderator	Daesun Lee (Minister)				
Opening Address	Seokho Nah (N.A.M.)				
Opening Prayer	Gitae Kim (Chief of Chaplains)				
Scripture Reading (O.T.)	Cheolgyun Shin (N.A.M.)				
Scripture Reading (N.T.)	Hyeong-gwang Kim (N.A.M.)				
Prayer for President	Sang-geun Yu (Elder)				
Sermon	Kyungchik Han (Pastor)				
Benediction	Jungseop An (Pastor)				
Venue	63 Building				
President's Attendance	No				
President	Doohwan Chun				

Abbreviations: N.A. (National Assembly); N.A.M. (National Assembly Member); N.S.E.M.C. (National Security Emergency Measure Committee); N.T. (New Testament); O.T. (Old Testament); S.A.C. (Salvation Army Commander); U.P. (University President).

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