

Critical Reflections on the Stubborn Uniformity of Korean Protestantism: Focusing Its Repulsion Toward Darwinism and Queerness

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I. Introduction

It is not uncommon to hear that Korean Protestantism is at stake. It was mere an uncertain rumor until “2005 Korea Census of Population and Housing” showed the decrease of Protestant population for the first time. According to the Census, Protestant population diminished from 8,760,000 to 8,616,000 persons for ten years, which meant decrease by 1.6% point (144,000 persons).

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What was also noticeable in the Census was that, contrarily to the decrease of Protestant population, the whole population of religious people slightly increased by 5.6% point (2,448,000 persons) and that, among diverse religions, Catholic population greatly increased by 74.4% point (from 2,951,000 to 5,146,000 persons).¹⁾ This change attracted much attention not only from Protestant Christians but also from Korean society in general, as it was the first evident symptom of decrease in the whole history of Korean Protestantism which had never stopped growing since its first introduction to Korea in the late 19th century.²⁾

- 1) The National Statistical Office, “Bodojaryo: 2005 ingu jutaek chongjosa (ingu bumun) [Press Release: 2005 Census of Population and Housing (Population Section)],” <http://kostat.go.kr/>

(measure: thousand persons)

	1995		2005		Increase/Decrease	
	Population	Component Ratio	Population	Component Ratio	Population	Ratio of Change
Whole Population	44,554	100.0	47,041	100.0	2,488	5.6
Religious people	22,598	50.7	24,971	53.1	2,373	10.5
Buddhism	10,321	23.2	10,726	22.8	405	3.9
Protestantism	8,760	19.7	8,616	18.3	-144	-1.6
Catholicism	2,951	6.6	5,146	10.9	2,195	74.4
Confucianism	211	0.5	105	0.2	-106	-50.4
Won-Buddhism	87	0.2	130	0.3	43	49.6
Others	268	0.6	247	0.5	-21	-7.7
Non-religious people	21,953	49.3	22,070	46.9	117	0.5

- 2) The result of “2005 Korea Census” was published in May 2006 and the news of the decrease of Protestant population was followed by several comments of media. For example, see, “‘Uigoeui gaesingyo’ dulpagureul chajara [‘Protestantism at Stake’ Find a Breakthrough]”, *Donga Ilbo*, June 15, 2006; “Hanguk gaesingyo gaehyeog uihae ggeunimeobsi noryeog haeya [Korean Protestantism Must Incessantly Endeavor for Reformation]”, *Hankuk Ilbo*, July 21, 2013; “Ugi eui hanguk gyoheo, bosuro uhyangu [Korean Protestant Church at Stake, Turning Right to Conservatism]”, *Hankyoreh sinmun*, July 31, 2013. More recent census in 2015 shows Protestantism’s growth to surpass Buddhism

Since the 2005 Census, many Protestant Christians have tried to diagnose the causes of the decline and to find out its solutions. Though those diagnosis and solutions may be meaningful for Protestant Christians, I will not introduce or examine them in this paper. What draws my interest is the fact that, despite various efforts of Protestant Christians, the decline has not stopped but rather has been accelerated. In September 2013, several mainstream Protestant denominations held the annual general assemblies and most of them reported that their church members have been sharply decreased over the past several year.³⁾ It seems that the efforts to overcome the decline might have been not so effective.

I guess the decline of Korean Protestantism may continue for a time being. The results of Census surveys during last decades show that the half of the whole Korean population are non-religious or, at least, do not affiliate themselves to any established religion. Furthermore, most of the another half, i.e., the religious population, belong to one of three major religions: Buddhism, Protestantism and Catholicism. These three religions

and become the most large religion in Korea. As 2015 census was not a complete enumeration but a sample survey, it requires some interpretation and revision. Though 2015 census shows relevant success of Protestantism compared to other religions, this does not necessarily mean the increase Protestant believers. See, “Gaesingyo ingu jeungga, eotteoke bwaya halgga? [Growth of Protestantism, what does this tell us?]” *News n Joy*, Dec. 26, 2016. <http://www.newsnjoy.or.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=207932>.

3) “Gaesingyo sindo olhae deureo gamsose [The Number of Prostants Shows a Decreasing Trend over the Past Year]”, *Chusun Ilbo*, Sep. 13, 2013; “Il nyeon sae hangk gaesingyo juyogyodan gyoinsu gondubagjil [The Number of Believers in Mainstream Protestant Denominations Has Fallen Headlong]”, *Cheonji Ilbo*, Sep. 13, 2013.

have complicatedly interacted with one another in playing pivotal roles in modern history of Korea. And there has always been a tendency toward an equilibrium among these three religions.⁴⁾ In the case of Korean Protestantism, however, though it is ranked as having the second largest population (the first is Buddhism), few may deny that it has been the most conspicuous religion with rapid growth, privileged opportunities, diverse religious and social activities, etc. This means that, as the most energetic religion, it is somewhat inevitable and expectable that Korean Protestantism will someday become supersaturated and bump against the ceiling of growth. I guess Protestantism will continue to decrease to a certain degree until diverse religions arrive at a new equilibrium.

Then, it may be more useful for Korean Protestantism to stop worrying about its decrease but to seek new ways of playing a significant role for Korean society. Fortunately, there are some Protestant churches and believers that have been seeking such new ways. Unfortunately, however, most Protestant churches and believers still seem to be more interested in quantitative growth. In addition, regarding important religious and social issues, most of Protestant churches and believers have showed a uniform attitude. While there exist impenetrable walls among different denominations, it even seems that, upon some specific issues, there are little differences among denominations. I think this

4) Regarding the interaction and equilibrium among Buddhism, Protestantism and Catholicism in Korea, see, James H. Grayson, *Korea: A Religious History*, London: Routledge, 2002 (2nd ed.), 147-235; Seung-Yong Yun, "Hanguk geundae jonggyoeui seongnipkwa jeongae [The Formation and Development of Korean Modern Religions]", *Sahoewa yeoksa* [Society and History] 52, 1997, 11-47.

stubborn uniformity of Korean Protestantism is one of the causes of stagnancy and the very obstacle that hinders it from seeking new ways for the future. In this paper, I will take two examples of this stubborn uniformity, analyze them and suggest the necessity of diversifying Korean Protestantism. They are (1) Anti-evolution and (2) Homophobia.

II. Anti-Evolution Convulsion

On September 5th, 2012, the Korea Academy of Science and Technology (KAST) convened eleven scientists from diverse areas and held a press conference at Korea Press Center in Seoul. The eleven scientists were representatives of different scientific groups such as KAST members, evolutionary scientists, fossilologists and specialists of Basic Science Council. At the press conference, they showed their position regarding the contents of biological evolution in high school science textbooks. And they announced a statement titled as “The Guideline for Correcting and Supplementing the Contents of Evolutionary Theory in High School Science Textbooks”.⁵⁾ The Guideline specified its purpose as “a reply to the petitions of some people that, because the evidences of evolution are open to disputes, evolutionary theory as a mere hypothesis must be erased from science textbooks.”⁶⁾

5) Right after the press conference of The Korea Academy of Science and Technology on September 5th, most major and minor media in Korea reported the conference and its guideline in detail.

6) The Korea Academy of Science and Technology, “Bodojaryo: Jinhwarone daehan hyeondai gwahagjeok haeseogeul banyeonghan ‘godeunghaggyo gwahak

The petitions in question here were about the contents of the evolution of archaeopteryx and horse. And then The Guideline presented three essential criteria of correcting and supplementing science textbooks:

As evolutionary theory is one of the essential theories of contemporary science that has been established through scientific counterevidence, it must be taught to all students who learn contemporary science.

As contemporary scientific understanding has not secured enough scientific evidences regarding the emergent process of life, it must be separated from contemporary scientific understanding about the process of biological species' evolution. And these two topics must be taught separately.

It must be taught that biological evolution has not unfolded linearly with a teleological directivity but instead has unfolded according to complicated processes of tree-like shape (tree of life).⁷⁾

After having presented the main principles, The Guideline explicated the reasons why the contents about the evolution of archaeopteryx and horse should not be erased, and then elaborated how to correct and supplement the errors of textbooks with more proper evidences. Throughout the whole statements, The Guideline was focusing only to scientific issues. Outwardly,

gyogwaseo jinhwaron naeyong sujeong bowan guideline' [Press Release: 'A Guideline for Correcting and Supplementing the Contents of Evolutionary Theory in High School Science Textbooks' Based on Contemporary Scientific Evolutionary Theory], Sep. 5, 2012, <http://www.str.or.kr/>

7) *Ibid.*

therefore, it looked like just a pure scientific document. But there were two other sub-contexts in it. One is obvious, and the other is unseen. Though KAST did not mention the unseen sub-contextm it already was enough known to not a few people. Because the press conference of KAST was not an abrupt event but an expected one in the history of ‘evolution vs creation’ debates.

The history dates back to 2011. On December 5th, an amateur scientist group, Society for Textbook Revision (STR), filed a petition to the Ministry of Education demanding to erase the contents of archaeopteryx from high school science textbooks.⁸⁾ For the reason of the petition, they presented two points: First, there are not sufficient evidences that show archaeopteryx was a transitional species between reptile and bird; Second, there are different and contradictory opinions about the identity of archaeopteryx among scientists. Having approved the petition, the Ministry of Education advised the textbook publishers to correct or erase related contents in forthcoming new science textbooks. And many publishers accepted the advice of the Ministry of Education.⁹⁾ At that time, such a fact was known neither to the

8) The Society for Textbook Revision (In Korean, The Society for Revising Evolution in Textbooks), “A Petition for Correcting 2011 High School Textbooks: (Theme) Archaeopteryx is not a Transitional Species between Reptile and Bird”(Dec. 5. 2011), <http://www.str.or.kr/>; Though there are several natural scientists in the Society to Revise Evolution in Textbooks, all of them belong to different fields irrelevant to the topic of biological evolution. And most of the other members are middle or high school science teachers. In this sense, STR can be said to be an ‘amateur’ scientist group.

9) The Team of Mathematics Education Policy, “Collection of Publishers’ Replies to the Demand of Erasing the Contents of Archaeopteryx”(Jan. 2, 2012),

public nor to the scientific circle.

A few months later, in May, 2012, STR filed their second petition demanding to erase the contents of horse's evolution from science textbooks. The Ministry of Education approved the petition again and the textbook publishers also again agreed to correct or erase the related contents. This time, such a fact became known to some people, though neither media nor scientists paid attention to this yet. Question was brought forth from outside of Korea. On July 7th, *Nature*, a scientific journal of worldwide authority, released a long and detailed article about the science textbook issue in Korea.¹⁰⁾ The article introduced the development of petition cases of STR and concluded with anxious remarks about the future of science in Korea.

Having been stimulated by the article of *Nature*, Korean media began to release numerous related articles.¹¹⁾ And scientists also began to seek their response to the petition cases of STR. A few weeks later, scientists announced a refutation statement and then filed their own petition to the Ministry of Education demanding to dismiss the petitions of STR.¹²⁾ This also was spotlighted by numerous media and draw much attention from both the public

<http://www.str.or.kr/>

10) S. B. Park, "South Korea Surrenders to Creationist Demands", *Nature*, Vol. 486, June 7, 2012, 14.

11) About fifty related articles are found.

12) The Paleontological Society of Korea & The Committee of Promoting Evolutionary Science, "Official Refutation Statements against the Petitions of the Society to Revise Evolution in Textbooks"(June 20, 2012); Korea Association of Biological Sciences, "A Petition for Dismissing the Petitions that Demands Correction of the Contents of Evolution in High School Science Textbooks"(July 5, 2012).

and the scientific circle. As the result, the Ministry of Education approved the petition and asked consultation from KAST. And on September 5th, finally, KAST came to announce “A Guideline for Correcting and Supplementing the Contents of Evolutionary Theory in High School Science Textbooks”. These series of process are the first obvious sub-context lying beneath The Guideline. And there is no hint of religious background lying in the second invisible sub-context.¹³⁾

To excavate the second invisible sub-context, we need to go back to much earlier time. In the late 1970s, several engineering scientists returned from USA to Korea after having finished their degrees. In USA, they studied not only their own major fields but also were fascinated with another seemingly scientific tradition. It was Creation Science. At that time in USA, Creation Science was in its initial stage and began to have influence on numerous Protestants. These Korean scientists gathered, began to teach Creation Science in university campuses and Protestant churches, and established the Korea Society of Creation Science (KSCS) in 1981.

The KSCS worked vigorously. To meet Protestant students in universities, to tour Protestant churches to deliver lectures for believers of all ages, to train new lecturers, to raise funds, to

13) For detailed analysis of the background of KAST’s press conference and The Guideline, see Dayk Jang. “Wae hanguk gaesingyoneun gwahagi doeryeo haneunga? Gyojinchueui gwahag gyogwaseo panuneul jungsimeuro [Why Does Korean Protestantism Want to be Science? The Case of The Society for Textbook Revise]”, *Jonggyo munhwa yeonggu [Journal of Religion and Culture]* 19 (Hanshin Institute for Religion and Culture, 2012), 137-169.

increase regional branches, to hold domestic or international conferences, to publish books, newsletters and academic journals, etc. Among diverse activities of KSCS, one of the most important and well-known activities was the establishment of the Exhibit Hall of Creation Science. At first, there was no fixed space for the Exhibit Hall. The KSCS installed a small booth of Creation Science at the Daejeon Expo in 1993 and held the same exhibit showcase several times in Seoul and Daejeon after then. Nine years later, in 2002, the KSCS acquired a space within the student union building of Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) in Daejeon. Once the Exhibit Hall was settled down, it soon became a famous and popular place for Protestants to visit. It became a sort of sacred place of gospel within the very center of science in Korea.¹⁴⁾ In 2010, the Exhibit Hall moved to a new space within a missionary building of Pure Gospel Church in the downtown of Daejeon.¹⁵⁾

Despite such diverse activities and the powerful influence upon

14) Regarding the history of the he Korea Society of Creation Science, see The Korea Society of Creation Science ed., *Twenty Years' History of The Korea Society of Creation Science: 1981-2001* (Seoul: The Korea Society of Creation Science, 2001).

15) The Exhibit Hall was scheduled to move out of the campus of KAIST from its early period but could not realized because of the problems of site and money. The necessity of relocating the Exhibit Hall was raised again in July of 2008, which was triggered by several scholars' criticism on the impropriety of religious facilities within national schools or institutions. I was one of the critics. Regarding this issue, see Jaeshik Shin, Yunseong Kim & Dayk Jang, "[Serial Letters] Dialogue between Science and Religion: nos. 13~15", *Pressian*, July 21~August 4, 2008; These letters were published as a book, *Religion War: Is There a Future for Religion?* (Seoul: Science Books, 2009), 345-443.

nation-wide Protestant churches and believers, however, there are two important things that the KSCS could not have done. One is the acknowledge from mainstream scientific circle. Other scientists, especially biological scientists, ignored them thoroughly. Such ignorance is reasonable, because creationists' claims are redundant, deficient of objective evidences and always recursive to the Bible not to the scientific methodology.

Another one is the entry into the public high school education.¹⁶⁾ In USA, the camp of Creation Science have tried to insert their claims into the science textbook of public high school. Of course, the history of this effort has been a series of failures. But anyway, the camp of Creation Science in USA has had chances to try. Differently, however, the Creation Science camp in Korea have had no chance. The difference is mainly resulted from the different religious situation of the two countries. While Protestantism is the most important religion in USA, it is, in Korea, just one religion among diverse religions. Korean Protestantism has always had to compete with Buddhism and Catholicism, and even with the non-religiosity of the half of the whole population.¹⁷⁾

In the case of USA, the camp of Creation Science have found a new solution. It is the Intelligent Design Theory. This theory

16) There is no contents about evolution in elementary school and middle school science textbooks; Differently from USA and other countries, it is meaningless to distinguish public and private schools in Korea. Though about 80% of schools are private schools, all of them receives governmental subsidy and, as the result, are incorporated into the public education system.

17) Refer to footnote 1).

has appeared as an alternative new strategy that bleached most of religious traits from scientific creationism. Till now, of course, this new strategy have not succeeded in entering into high school education. Meanwhile, Korean camp of Creation Science seems to have decided to take a different strategy. In Korea, the Intelligent Design Theory has not achieved notable influence upon Protestants. Instead, the influence of Creation Science is still very strong. In such a situation, the camp of Creation Science have found a whimsical new strategy. If it is impossible to enter into the classroom, it may be necessary to bring down the evolution theory itself. This thought have resulted in the establishment of the Society to Revise Evolution in Textbooks in 2009, who filed petitions to erase some controversial contents of evolution from science textbooks in 2011.

Though STR identify itself as a pure scientific organization without any connection to Protestantism, there are few except themselves who do not recognize their close relation to Protestantism, especially to the camp of Creation Science. Anyway, after the failure of previous two petitions, STR filed the third petition in December of 2012 (about the chemical origin of life) and presently is preparing other successive petitions (about pepper moth, tree of life, human origin, etc.). Meanwhile, having received the third petition, the Ministry of Education have not showed any response yet.

In the scientific circles of the world, Creation Science is regarded as a religious movement not as a normal science. It is even called as a pseudo-science. Why then Creation Science and

the activity of STR are problematic for Korean Protestantism? There are three reasons: First, their influence upon Korean Protestantism is so great that any other opinions are not allowed in most churches. Not to say in conservative churches, it is not easy to talk about evolution theory even in liberal churches. Of course, there are a few theologians who accept evolution theory and unfold thoughts of theistic evolution, the reality of churches is different from the academic ivory tower of seminaries. The fact that Korean Protestantism is overwhelmed by Creation Science is itself a problem that kills the diversities within churches; Second, Creation Science and STR is shown to most non-Protestant people as being irrational, anti-scientific, anachronistic and obstinate. It is necessary to remember the Scopes Trial in 1925, USA. At this famous trial related to the Tennessee State's prohibition of teaching evolutionary theory in public school, creationists won the case thanks to the state law. But they could not rescue themselves from being ridiculed both nationally and worldly.¹⁸⁾ Under the monolithic big umbrella of Creation Science, Korean Protestantism may meet a similar fate and this is already an urgent reality to a certain degree.

As for the third problem, it may be necessary to write somewhat longer. It is the problem of ethics. Let's look into the topics of immorality that Creation Science camp shift responsibility to evolution theory:

18) Regarding the Scopes Trial, see, Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and American's Continuing Debate over Religion*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

1) Evolution theory is the very root of diverse evil social phenomena: It encourages materialistic world-view and emphasizes the survival of the fitness and the law of the jungle. It aggravates firstism, egotism, hedonism, contempt of life. It causes drug addiction, homosexuality, sin against heaven, school violence, out casting, sexual violence, suicide, abortion, intake of human flesh, and so on. It removes the sense of sin and makes society sick.

2) Evolution theory is the very root of bad historical events: It justifies imperialism and war. Nazism and Communism were the fruits of evolution theory.

3) Evolution theory aggravates racism: Racial eugenics claimed a hierarchy from anthropoids, through blacks and yellows, and to whites. It was a theory blossomed from evolutionary theory. Upon it, Hitler killed numerous Jews in Auschwitz and the whites trampled the human right of the blacks with the slavery.¹⁹⁾

It may not be necessary to criticize above statements one by one. Numerous items are listed randomly with few valid logic and basis. For example, it is well known that social evolution theory wrongly redirected biological evolution theory for the interests of the West. It is right, of course, that diverse historical evils were the result of social evolution theory. But it is wrong to trace its root up to biological evolution theory. Rather, today, biological evolution theory plays an important role in enhancing ecological ethics and human equality with the thought that all living things and all human beings have the same common

19) Homepage of STR, http://www.str.or.kr/xs/menu01_09

origin and are deeply interconnected with one another. If some other people with rational mind read above statements, they cannot but thinking those statements are based on misunderstanding and might have been written by a bigot. Above statements are full of exclusivism and moral chauvinism that regards Protestantism as the only truth, Christianity as the only and the last bastion for morality, and Creation Science as the only correct science. Such thoughts can be the very cause of Protestantism's isolation and decline.

III. Devout Homophobia

On September 30th, 2013, five representatives of five Protestant organizations held a press conference at a room within the National Assembly Building in Seoul. The five organizations were National Assembly Breakfast Prayer Meeting Group, Coalition of National Assembly Evangelization, Corporation of National Breakfast Prayer Meeting, Headquarters of World Holy City Movement, and Korean Christian Council for Public Policy. These organizations were member groups of the Korean Protestant Special Task Force Against Pro-Homosexual Textbook and Same-Sex Marriage which launched on August 22nd.²⁰⁾ At the press conference, they announced a statement titled as “The Manifesto of Korean Protestant Special Task Force Against Pro-Homosexual Textbook and Same-Sex Marriage.”²¹⁾

20) *Kukmin Ilbo*, Aug. 22, 2013.

The Manifesto, reminding President Keun-hye Park's presidential election pledge of the preceding year to guarantee the freedom of religious education, urged the Minister of Education to fulfill three demands: (1) To restore the right of religious education at religion-based private schools; (2) To supplement the insufficient contents about Protestantism in Korean history textbooks; (3) To correct ethics textbooks that regard homosexuality as a normal sexuality and to amend "Seoul City's Municipal Ordinance for Students' Rights"²²⁾ that aggravates homosexuality. The first and second demands were a kind of preconditions for the third demand, which The Manifesto regarded as the mostly urgent issue. The third demand was as follows:

Thirdly, we demand the Minister of Education to immediately correct textbooks that regard homosexuality as normal and to amend "Seoul City's Municipal Ordinance for Students' Rights" that aggravate homosexuality about which almost people regard as abnormal.

The contents in high school ethics textbooks that regard

21) *Kukmin Ilbo*, Sep. 30, 2013; *Gidok Gongbo*, Oct. 7, 2013.

22) "Seoul City Municipal Ordinance for Students' Rights" was promulgated on January 26th, 2012. Including the ordinance of Seoul City which was the third promulgation in Korea, all three city ordinances for students' rights include sexual orientation and sexual identities as items of anti-discrimination ("Seongjeok jiyang myeongsi seoulsi haksang inkweonjorye tonggwa [Seoul City approved the bill of student's rights including anti-discrimination against sexual orientation]," *Oh My News*, Dec. 19, 2011; http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/view/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0001672613); For the full text of Seoul City's Municipal Ordinance for Student's Rights, see related website (<http://st-rights.or.kr/>).

homosexuality as normal are going to be erased next year. Therefore, right now from this fall semester, teachers must be urged to discard present wrong contents and instead to teach corrected new contents.

It is a good thing that some publishers decided to erase the problematic contents in next year's forthcoming high school textbooks that regard homosexuality as normal. This means that publishers, authors and the Ministry of Education have acknowledged the previous contents were wrong. Therefore, other publishers also must be urged to erase the wrong contents. In addition, according to the right of equality, the guidelines of ethics textbook must be corrected to include not only the human right of sexual minorities but also that of people who regard homosexuality as abnormal.

The "Seoul City's Municipal Ordinance for Students' Rights" includes sexual orientation and identity (homosexuality) as an issue of discrimination prevention. This makes students mistakenly think that homosexuality has no ethical problem like other normal issues of discrimination such as gender and race. It also allows teachers to teach the methods of homosexual intercourse and infringes upon the human right of teachers and students who oppose homosexuality. Therefore, the issue of sexual orientation and identity must be erase from the ordinance.²³⁾

The Manifesto draws our attention in three points: First, it was National Assembly members who took the lead in writing and announcing The Manifesto. Among five organizations of the Protestant churches' anti-homosexual task force, two are

23) *Sisa Times*, Sep. 30, 2013. <http://timesisa.com/news/view.html?category=96&no=6690§ion=93>

organizations of National Assembly members (National Assembly Members' Breakfast Prayer Meeting Group, Coalition of National Assembly Evangelization). They are big groups within the National Assembly. For example, the number of National Assembly Breakfast Prayer Meeting Group are 117 persons, which are 1/3 of the whole National Assembly members (300 persons). Considering that there are only a few National Assembly members who support the human right of sexual minorities and that most of other National Assembly members do not pay attention to this issue, the voices of those who announced the anti-homosexual manifesto are not weak but very strong.

Second, the two National Assembly members' organizations have a common trait of crossing party lines. Diverse members from ruling Saenuri Party (conservative)²⁴⁾ and from other oppositional parties such as Democratic Party (moderate and progressive) belong to these organizations. Though always in conflict with one another over political issues, they are closely cooperating in speaking one voice against homosexuality. There even seems to be no difference both among political parties and among religious denominations. This shows how strong the solidarity is among the overall Protestant churches and believers that oppose homosexuality.

Third, The Manifesto was announced right after the two previous pro-homosexual events. The Manifesto was a sort of direct reaction to those events. One of the events was the public

24) 'Saenuri' means 'new world'. Later, Saenuri Party became New Korea Party.

same-sex wedding ceremony of film director Kwang-soo Jho Kim and his partner. Director Kim's wedding ceremony was held at a bridge of Cheonggye Creek in the center of Seoul on September 7th. It was a very popular event in which numerous people including lots of star entertainers, several politicians and a few Protestant young people participated as guests. Though merely symbolical and without legal approval, it was the first public same-sex wedding ceremony in Korea. Of course, there happened some abrupt but somewhat expectable accidents. Several opponents tried to occupy the ceremony stage just before the marriage began. A man broke into the ceremony and threw a basket of filth (some mixture of soybean paste and human excrement) toward the personnel near the stage. And in the vicinity, some people continued demonstration with pickets and banners on which opposing phrases against homosexuality and same-sex marriage were written. Anyway, despite such trivial accidents, the wedding ceremony ended without severe mischance.²⁵⁾ What was noticeable here, by the way, is the fact that all the people who disturbed the wedding ceremony were Protestants. Though many other people and religions also have opposed homosexuality and same-sex marriage, in most cases, it has usually been Protestants who have taken actions. Protestants are

25) The symbolic same-sex wedding ceremony of film director Kim and the accidents during the ceremony were spotlighted by numerous Korean media including most of major news papers and TV stations. Several overseas media also gave prominent coverage to both the wedding marriage and the accidents. For example, see "Gay South Korean film director marries his partner in public," *Reuters*, Sep. 7, 2013.

surely advance guards in the fight against homosexuality.

Another related event that touched off the announcement of The Manifesto was the pro-homosexual demonstration against the August 22nd's launching prayer meeting for Korean Protestant Churches' Special Task Force Against Pro-Homosexual Textbook and Same-Sex Marriage led by several National Assembly members. On August 26th, some members of The Solidarity for LGBT Human Rights in Korea held a rally denouncing the prayer meeting and the National Assembly members who led it.²⁶⁾ They said in their statement that "The demand of correcting high school textbooks does not consider the existence of sexual minorities among students.... If textbooks become to contain a specific religion's claim that homosexuality is sinful and immoral, it is to ignore the principle of separation between religion and politics which is the basis of democracy.... We are indignant toward those National Assembly members who ignore the right of sexual minor adolescents.... We request those National Assembly members' instant apology."²⁷⁾ The National Assembly members in question did not apology. Instead, as we saw above, they took action to hold a press conference and announced The

26) "Dongseongaeja inkweonyeondae dongseongae hyeomo gukhoeuiweondeul gyutan [Solidarity for LGBT Human Rights denounced National Assembly members who aggravated abhorrence of homosexuality]," *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, Aug. 26, 2013.

27) Solidarity for LGBT Human Rights in Korea, "Seongmyeong: Dongseongae hyeomoreul jojanghaneun gukhoeuiweondeureul gyutanhandha [Statement: We Denounce the Members of National Assembly Breakfast Prayer Meeting Group who Aggravate Hostility against Homosexuality](Aug. 22, 2013);" <http://www.lgbtpride.or.kr/>

Manifesto against homosexuality.

Though some other Protestant groups have also announced similar statements opposing homosexuality, The Manifesto of National Assembly members are very influential, as they are the representatives of people and all their words and behaviors grab the attention of both media and people. In this sense, therefore, The Manifesto is itself a remarkable symbol of Protestants' prevalent hostility against homosexuality.

At this point, it may be necessary to examine a recent article on the legalization of same-sex marriage written by a leader of the National Solidarity against Anti-discrimination Law.²⁸⁾ The writer worries about the future not only of the Korean church but also of the whole Korean society. Sighing at the news of director Kim's same-sex marriage, the writer warns the danger of legitimating same-sex marriage. After defining homosexuality as a sin, the writer says that society will collapse if same-sex marriage is allowed. In order to show the destructive result that the legalization of same-sex marriage will cause, the writer introduces several cases of USA and UK. They are stories about people who, according to the writer, were arrested because of their opposition against homosexuality. Actually, however, most of the cases are based on the writer's misunderstanding or fraud. For example, the writer takes an example of an American evangelist in London who was arrested because of his anti-homosexual sermon. That's all. There is no more detail

28) Yong-hee Yi, "Giroe seon jogukgwa hanguk gyohoe [Our Homeland and Korean Church at the Crossroads]", *Christian Today*, Oct. 9, 2013. <https://www.christiantoday.co.kr/view.htm?id=267368>

information. In fact, however, the evangelist in London was arrested not because of the contents of his sermon but because he preached aloud in the street and sprayed severe curses to passersby.²⁹⁾ Other cases are not different. The writer deceives readers by exaggerating or fabricating the cases in order to show the danger of legalizing same-sex marriage. What is more noticeable, however, is the concluding remarks of the article. It may be necessary to cite them:

The way to stop the legalization of same-sex marriage is to draw grand national cooperation. Besides Protestants, there are numerous people including teachers and parents who think homosexuality must not be allowed in order to preserve society and to protect children. There are also numerous religious people, Catholics, Buddhists, Won-Buddhists, Confucianists and Chondogyo believers, who think homosexuality must be prohibited.

During the Japanese Colonial Era, leaders of diverse religions cooperated and started the March 1st Movement to shout ‘Hurrah! Independent Korea’. Now, we have to draw national cooperation to preserve our mother country against homosexuality. National Mothers’ Assembly, National Parents’ Assembly and National Association of Voters have been trying to stop the legalization of same-sex marriage and we also need to cooperate with them.

Proponents of homosexuality manipulate media that it looks as if it is only conservative Protestants who are opposing

29) The original article about the anti-homosexual evangelist in London depicted the case with details. See “Christian Arrested for Calling Homosexuality a ‘Sin’ Warns of ‘Real-Life Thought Police’,” *The Telegraph*, July 4, 2013.

homosexuality. If our fight becomes a struggle only between proponents of homosexuality and Protestants, it may not be easy to win. In order to win, and in order to sanctify our mother country and the future generation, we need wisdom to concentrate the whole national will and power.

For Korean churches, for our mother country and for our children, this is the critical time to light a fire with our own body and to melt ourselves like salt.³⁰⁾

Well, reading this megalomaniac declaration of total war against homosexuality, I feel as if I had just arrived at a certain future by time machine. Though there have been some positive changes in general attitudes toward homosexuality, Korea is still a very homophobic country. As the writer rightly wrote, in Korea, it is not Protestants alone who oppose homosexuality. Though it seems that people has become rather tolerant to diverse sexual orientations, abhorrence to homosexuality is still the prevalent atmosphere in Korean society. I guess the legalization of same-sex marriage may be realized someday but not in the near future. It can be said, therefore, that Korean Protestants including the writer are preparing for an imaginary future war. Anyway, in the present or future war against homosexuality, Korean Protestants are not lonely. They are just one of the numerous groups opposing homosexuality. But it is sure they are standing at the very front line. Regarding the abhorrence toward homosexuality, Catholics may be more

30) Yong-hee Yi, *op. cit.*

stubborn than Protestants. But neither Catholics nor any other religion believers are coming to the front. Therefore, though Protestants are not alone in the fight against homosexuality, they are actually lonely at the far front line.

In the recent positive mood of changing attitudes, lynchings and crimes against sexual minorities have increased and have become more violent. History shows that similar phenomena have recurred throughout the world when people's attitude toward homosexuality began to change rather positively. When situations change more positively for homosexuality, I guess, the abhorrence of objectors may become more severe. When war gets hard, it is the soldiers at the front line who die first. Though Korean Protestants' hostility toward homosexuality can be a concentrating power for a time being, it can also be the very item of Korean Protestantism's failure that may isolate it from the society in the future.

IV. Conclusion

There may be more cases that show the overall uniformity of Korean Protestantism. The anti-WCC movement is another example of such uniformity. Before the 10th Assembly of World Council of Churches (WCC) in Busan, Korea, from October 30th to November 8th, 2013, many Korean Protestants made a strong objection against it. They diligently played the media, conducted aggressive campaigns against the assembly and held continuous

protest demonstrations. According to the official website of the Headquarters of Accusing Movement against WCC (HAMC), the main hub of the anti-WCC movement, more about ten interdenominational organizations are enrolled in it.³¹⁾ Among the member organizations of HAMC, there is the Christian Council of Korea (CCK), the biggest Protestant organization in which seventy-two major and minor denominations are included. Though Korean Protestants' antipathy against WCC has a long history, opponents of WCC began to gather right after September of 2009 when Busan was confirmed as the venue of the 10th WCC Assembly.³²⁾ And now, they devoted all their energies to disturb the WCC Assembly.

Comparing to the anti-WCC attitude, however, the animosity against evolutionary theory and homosexuality is even much stronger. While not so many as anti-WCC opponents, the number and influence of pro-WCC Protestant organizations and denominations are not negligible anyway. But the situation of anti-evolution and anti-homosexuality are quite different. The name of Darwin and any word of sexual minorities' human right are taboos not only in all conservative churches but also in most of progressive churches.³³⁾ Even within progressive Protestantism,

31) Headquarters of Accusing Movement against WCC. <http://www.accusation.kr/>

32) Two weeks later after Busan was declared as the venue of WCC Assembly, The General Assembly of Presbyterian Church in Korea (GAPCK; Yejang habdong), the largest one of Korean Presbyterian denominations and of Korean Protestantism, decided to oppose the WCC Assembly at the very first and, sooner or later, many other denominations also made the same decision. See, *Kukmin Ilbo*, Sep. 24, 25, 26, 2009.

33) Regarding the spectrum of Korean Protestants' attitude toward homosexuality

there are only a few theologians and churches who openly talk about the necessity of accepting the evolutionary theory or of approving the human right of LGBT people. The issues of evolutionary theory and homosexuality are two centripetal axes around which the concern and competence of the whole Korean Protestantism are revolving.

Fortunately, of course, there have been some different voices within Korean Protestantism. Minjung theology since the democratization period of 1970s, women's theology since 1980s and ecological theology since 1990s are conspicuous examples of such different voices. And some theologians, pastors and lay people have endeavored to seek how to reform the Protestant churches. Though their resolute voices and practices have contributed to the change of Korean Protestantism in some ways, they are small and scattered. On the contrary, the influence of conservatism are rapidly growing stronger. Korean Protestantism are drowning into the sea of uniformity. In order not to be drowned, Korean Protestantism urgently need the life vests of diversity.

and same-sex marriage, see Rhyu Sungmin, "Dongseongae Dongseong gyeorhone daehan jonggyojeok ihae: Migukgwa hanguk gaesingyoreul jungsimeuro [Religious Understanding on Homosexuality and Same-sex Marriage: Concentrating around the Protestant Churches in United States and Korea]," *Jonggyo munhwa yeonggu* [Journal of Religion and Culture] 25, Hanshin Institute for Religion and Culture, 2015, 1-44.

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Abstract

Critical Reflections on the Stubborn Uniformity of Korean Protestantism: Focusing Its Repulsion Toward Darwinism and Queerness

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In recent days, Korean Protestantism begins to show symptoms of shrinkage. As a possible cause of such shrinkage, this thesis pays attention to the phenomena of uniformity that prevails among Korean Protestant churches regardless of denominational differences. Among several aspects of the uniformity, two aspects are conspicuous in recent days. One is the repulsion against Darwinian theory of evolution, the other the hatred against homosexuality. In this thesis, firstly, by analyzing several documents of evolution vs creation debates triggered by creationists' petition for revising high school science textbook, I diagnose the causes of Korean Protestants' repulsion against Darwinism. Secondly, likewise, by analyzing several documents of homophobic propaganda triggered by recent same-sex marriage issue, I diagnose the causes of the Korean Protestants' hatred against homosexuality. Through these works, I will show how Korean Protestantism is assembling under new banners of anti-Darwinism and homophobia and, as the result, is transforming itself into a rigid and asocial religion.

Key words: Korean Protestantism, creationism, anti-Darwinism,
high school science textbook, homosexuality, same-sex
marriage, homophobia