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Master's Thesis of International Studies

**A Research on Syngman Rhee's
Christian Ideology on People, Nation
and Church in *Sinhak Wolbo***

이승만의 기독교 사상을 통해 본 인민, 나라, 교회의
개념에 대한 연구
- 신학월보(神學月報)를 중심으로 -

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**Graduate School of International Studies
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A Research on Syngman Rhee's Christian Ideology on People, Nation and Church in *Sinhak Wolbo*

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Abstract

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Syngman Rhee's conversion to Christianity in Hansung Prison imposed a pivotal experience, impacting the construction of his religious and political ideology intellectually, and in practice. Such personal experiences in a particular moment in history provide a framework and context to understand his Christian ideology. Syngman Rhee's political ideology developed from ideas of nationalism, solidified through Christianity and performed through political performance during his presidency. This paper identifies the time articles written as the stage of solidification of ideology through Christianity, considering this time pivotal in his life and career. By doing so, it attempts to systematically recapture Syngman Rhee's Christian ideology through the complex nuances, meanings and ideas identified in the articles. The purpose of the paper is to study Syngman Rhee's Christian ideology by examining the concepts of people, nation and church in five articles written by Rhee in *Sinhak Wolbo*. The five articles introduce and explain the principles of Christianity, providing a guideline for how it should be applied to the context of Korea. This study performs a conceptual analysis to understand the meaning that religion, identity and society implies. For a comprehensive analysis of *Sinhak Wolbo*, this paper examines the evolution of ideology with his writings in the *Imperial Newspaper* and the *Korean Pacific Weekly*. The study finds that the ideas and meanings of Christianity disclose a form of a political model by implying that enlightenment occurs through the edification of people through Christianity, for the social, political and economic development of the nation. Syngman Rhee's writings present a guideline for the building of a Christian nation, at the same time putting forward his personal visions. His guidelines are supported by examples of model nations, while clarifying the role of the individual and the institution, interchangeably. Not one actor leads the change, but Rhee believes the intellectual and social unification changes the future of the nation.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Nationalist, political activist, politician, Christian elder, pastor and first president of the Republic of Korea are some of the key words that identifies Syngman Rhee. From receiving education at Pai Chai School to his imprisonment in Hansung Prison, he experienced several pivotal stages caused great influence in his life and career. At Pai Chai, he gained a democratic spirit that led him to become a nationalist and independence activist, working for the reformation of Joseon and independence from Japanese colonial rule. Several years later, he was imprisoned in Hansung Prison for being accused of joining the coup for political reformation. In prison he was introduced to Christianity, was converted, and grasped the belief that Christianity should be the foundation of the country. In prison, Syngman Rhee engaged in various prison activities, including teaching, writing and translating books for the enlightenment of people in prison. Rhee's experiences as an individual and the experiences of the country help understand his Christian ideology by providing framework and context.

This chapter will be organized as follows. The first section is a literature review on previous studies on Syngman Rhee. This section organizes the characteristics of prior research by examining the academic fields and perspectives in which research was conducted, types of sources used and methodology. The second section states the purpose of the research and research questions. The third section includes introduction of the research materials used for this study and a summary of five writings written by Syngman Rhee. The summary of the writings is supplement to understand the concepts in chapter three.

1.1 Literature Review

Previous studies are motivated by Syngman Rhee's personal history and achievements as a prominent public figure in Korean history. Broadly, research is mainly divided into two fields of study: politics and religion. Studies in the field of politics aim to explain, analyze and evaluate Rhee's political ideology and performance through his personal experiences within a historical context. On the other hand, Rhee is considered as a key figure in the history of Christianity in Korea, so there are also studies about Rhee from a religious perspective. Studies done from a religious perspective examines religious institutions and faith-based communities that Rhee was affiliated with and analyzes Rhee's faith, performance and influence to Christianity in Korea. Nonetheless, many scholars seem to agree that Rhee's faith has influenced the development of his view on State. Although Rhee's political history is inseparable from his religious belief, previous studies have chosen to categorize the two subjects separately. Presumably, the reason is because analysis differs depending on from which perspective Rhee's performance and ideology is understood. While acknowledging the inseparable nature of politics and religion in studies about Rhee, it is important to highlight that they are still divided because there is difference in the purpose and method of the research.

Syngman Rhee's personal experience is closely related with Korean history in different dimensions although largely divided into politics and religion. Such dimensions have contributed to the research that deals with subjects related to his affiliation with religious institutions, independence organizations, schools and publishing companies in parallel with his personal history. Commonly, many scholars studied Syngman Rhee's political ideology and strategies before and after the establishment of the First Republic in August of 1948, Rhee serving as the first president. *A Study on the Formation of Syngman Rhee's Christian State Theory* by Park states that Rhee's theory of State is a "Christian State" that is solidified through his experiences of studying abroad

and participation in the independence movement after his conversion to Christianity. The article analyzes Rhee's political ideology by revealing his attempts to overcome the structural limits of Confucianism in Korea. In regards to the term Christian State, *The 60 Anniversary of the Republic of Korea and Christianity in Korea ; Syngman Rhee's Vision of a Christian State* similarly identifies Rhee as a Christian politician building a nation based on Christian ideology. The paper focuses on the personal history of Rhee and his development of a vision of a Christian State through the period of Japanese colonialism and the U.S military government in Korea. The author analyzes Rhee's structuring of the Christian State one that is different from the Western Christian State, but rather a "Korean Christian State" with Confucian ethics in the background. Such research has focused on Rhee's intellectual development in the context of Korea consecutively under foreign rule. This intellectual development includes the influence of religion in the developmental stage of his political ideology.

Other studies have analyzed materials written about Rhee or directly written by him. Involved in activities affiliated with different organizations, industrial companies and media., there are many articles and books written by Rhee or published under his supervision. Young-seob Oh, in his research *Syngman Rhee's Publication of The Korean Pacific Magazine and His Independence Thought in Hawaii*, argue that in order to examine Rhee's political ideology accurately, it necessary to analyze the contents of the *Korean Pacific Magazine*. Among many performances of Rhee during the independence movement, the publishing of the *Korean Pacific Magazine* and *Korean Pacific Weekly* received the least attention and due to its anti-Japanese characteristic, it was banned from being distributed in Korea. However, Oh believes all such activities were based on his plan for a long-term route for independence. The paper finds that from the *Korean Pacific Magazine*, main ideas of Rhee's diplomatic independence theory was included. According to Oh, Rhee's political ideology was that in the event of a confrontation between communism and republicanism, the

Korean people must unite with a republican spirit and strive to achieve independence, which is the ultimate goal of the Korean people.

Related to this argument on diplomacy, *Syngman Rhee's Views on Church and State, and Diplomatic Independence Movement in Han'guk Kyohoe P'ippak* also highlights the emphasis Rhee put on diplomacy, stressing the importance of diplomacy on fairness under the public law of Korea.¹ *Han'guk Kyohoe P'ippak* is a book compressed of Rhee's political independence theory written by Rhee himself. The significance of this research was because *Hanguk Kyohoe Pippak* is a powerful channel for the creation of world public opinion for Korea's independence, and a very important document to examine Rhee's independence route.

Another important category of study is one that is strongly based on historical framework. Analysis based on a historical framework traces his life from youth to adulthood, necessary to understand the bigger picture in Korea's modern history. Understanding Rhee as one of the many political leaders in modern Korean history, Christianity meant something more than personal faith — something that he planned as a basis for a nation he wished to build.² From different periods and experiences in life, other studies focus on the impact of studying abroad and Christian education on individuals' view of the world. Extending from studies based on historical context, scholars applied theoretical framework to argue Rhee's political ideology. Studies based on theoretical framework lean towards studying Rhee's politics. One study argues the fundamental framework of early ideas that form the basis of Rhee's political ideology as Western centralism, and analyzed how it was expressed through writings. The article classifies the basic proposition as Western supremacy and Westernization, and focuses on analyzing how it appeared through the detailed items of Syngman Rhee's Christian civilization theory, the abolition of tradition, and the Western as a standard of

¹ Kyu Sik Chang. (2010). *Syngman Rhee's Views on Church and State, and Diplomatic Independence Movement in Han'guk Kyohoe P'ippak*. *The Study of Korean History of Thought*, 35(0), 211.

² 허명섭. (2009). 이승만의 초기 기독교 사회사상. *한국교회사학회지*, 24, 287.

morality, and what its realistic implications were.³ Mainly, Rhee's political performance is studied through his participation in the independence movement. Nation building theories are used to explain the true nature of nationalist movements. A study on social ethics in Syngman Rhee's independence movement and establishment of a nation argues that it is habituated in the system of Western democracy, and the development of his social ethical thought based on liberty and equality formed the foundation of Rhee's building of Korea.

Many research and studies done on Syngman Rhee has been done regarding his political ideology, Christian faith, life and the process of intellectual development analyzed through different tools. Scholars have proposed and analyzed Syngman Rhee from a political perspective and religious perspective. From this, studies found that Rhee put effort to make Korea a Christian nation based on a point where his political and religious ideology meet. However, prior research is limited due to repetitive content and inability to foster diversity of perspectives.

1.2 Purpose of Research

Previous research on Syngman Rhee separated politics and religion but share the same historical context. Repetitive stories, categorization of studies and not differentiating the stages of ideological development were some of the limitations. Furthermore, research was limited to few repetitive sources such as *The Korean Pacific Weekly* (태평양잡지), *The Spirit of Independence* (독립정신), weekly newspaper published by the Mutual Friendship Society of Pai Chai School (협성회회보)⁴ and others. To overcome such limitations, this paper aims to study Syngman Rhee's Christian ideology by analyzing concepts of people, nation and church from *Sinhak Wolbo*. Furthermore, this paper will examine additional articles written by Syngman Rhee before and after

³ 정승현, 강정인.(2014).이승만의 초기 사상에 나타난 서구중심주의.정치사상연구, 20(2),37.

⁴ 한원영. (2004). 한국신문 한 세기 : 근대편 / 한원영 지음.

the time he wrote in *Sinhak Wolbo* to examine the evolution of his perception of people, nation and community. By doing so, it will also support to answer why *Sinhak Wolbo* is the material used to examine Rhee's Christian ideology. This paper intends to proceed based on these research questions:

How did Rhee accept Christianity and why was his conversion significant? How does Syngman Rhee conceptualize people, nation and church? Why does Rhee believe that accepting Christianity in Korea is important? What are the conditions of a Christian nation?

People, nation and church are core concepts that function as building blocks of Syngman Rhee's Christian ideology and contributed to his political career. Articles from *Sinhak Wolbo* are relatively written in the developmental stages of his politics, but since this paper aims to study his Christian ideology, the concepts and material seem appropriate. Answering these questions will help understand Rhee's Christian ideology, evolution of key concepts in his life and political career.

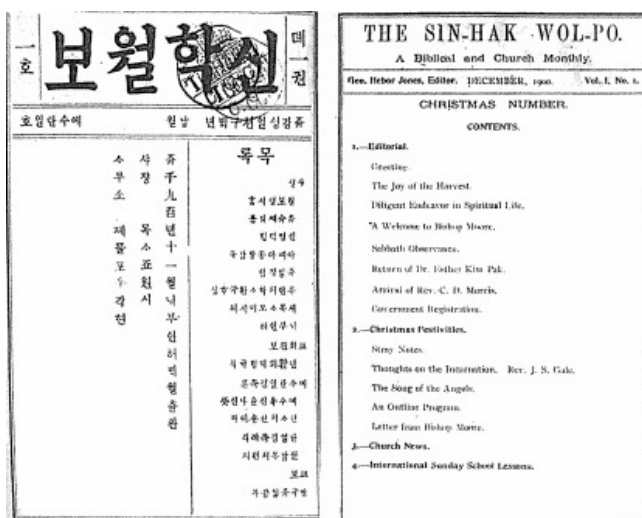
1.3 Research Material

This paper analyzes articles from *Sinhak Wolbo*, a Christian journal containing papers on theology, Biblical annotations, sermons and articles related to faith, confessions and other related materials. This study primarily focuses on three key concepts: people, nation and church. These concepts are analyzed from five articles written by Syngman Rhee in *Sinhak Wolbo*. All five articles were published between years 1903 and 1904, shortly after Rhee's conversion to Christianity. Compared to other publications often used in research related to Syngman Rhee, this source is less used in prior research. The assumption is that due to the distinct identity of the journal, which is published to serve a religious purpose, it may have been insufficient to identify characteristics that support studies related to Rhee's politics. However, *Sinhak Wolbo* serves as a strong source in research related to his faith and studying his Christian ideology.

The significance of *Sinhak Wolbo* in studying Syngman Rhee is that articles published through this journal shows that his identity and ideology is most clearly based on Christian values based on time written and content. Written not long after his conversion to Christianity, it is very conceptual and explanatory. However, these writings serve as an excellent source to analyze the earlier stages of his Christian ideology, attempting to find out the continuity or disconnection of ideas in his future political career. This source is valuable in that it holds strong religious identity and includes writings of Syngman Rhee not long after his conversion to Christianity, which serves well to perform an analysis of his Christian ideology. This chapter will introduce *Sinhak Wolbo* and provide a short summary of the five articles used for the analysis of Syngman Rhee's Christian ideology. For a more comprehensive analysis, this paper compares additional articles in the *Korean Pacific Weekly* and the *Imperial Daily Newspaper* written by Syngman Rhee before and after the articles in *Sinhak Wolbo* to examine the evolution of his perception of people, nation and community.

1.3.1 *Sinhak Wolbo* (신학월보 [神學月報])

Figure 1. A Cover of *Sinhak Wolbo* in Korean and English [Vol. 1 No.1]⁵



⁵ 감리교회 & 한국감리교회사학회. (1988). 신학월보, 제1호 1권.

Sinhak Wolbo is a theological journal published from 1900 to 1909 from the Korean Methodist Church printing office, written in Korean. A Methodist missionary stationed in Jaemulpo led the publishing of the journal with the cooperation of a Korean evangelist by the name of Choi Byung Hun. The journal was published for the purpose of delivering news to publicize the activities of missionaries, early Korean leaders and churches, and included news and information about evangelical and revival movements, church establishment and activities, educational institutions and hospitals, and the life of immigrant Koreans in Hawaii. Important contents introduced in the *Sinhak Wolbo* included editorials by nationalist figures, religious ethics and the parliamentary system of the early Methodist churches. According to the Korean Society of Christian History, *Sinhak Wolbo* made three main contributions to the Korean Christian History. First, it is a professional theological journal written fully in pure Korean, contributing to the formation of Korean theology. Second, it served as a textbook for seminaries, contributing greatly to the cultivation of future pastors at a time when there were limited number of accessible theological books. Third, it has symbolic influence on early Korean modern poetry and modern novels by including the literary works of Korean leaders and missionaries. Although it holds clear Christian identity, it is meaningful to note that it not only contains news affiliated with the church and members but it is also valuable as an essential data for research in the early parliamentary system of the Korean Methodist Church and research in Korean church history as well. *Sinhak Wolbo* served as a powerful media channel that surpasses its primary purpose as a theological journal and consolidate Christianity and nationalist movement in 19th century Korea.

Additionally, to better understand and analyze articles in the *Sinhak Wolbo*, this paper applies a comparative methodology and examines Syngman Rhee's writings published by the *Korea Pacific Weekly* (태평양주보) and the *Imperial Daily Newspaper* (제국신문). Articles selected are written by Rhee, each published before and after the articles from *Sinhak Wolbo*. The *Imperial*

Daily Newspaper was published in August 10, 1898, signaling that social conditions were being formed for the Korean people to publish newspapers on their own. Before this, there were only a few newspapers published by the western missionaries. Until it ceased publication in 1910, it was a representative national publication having many women and working class readers. Syngman Rhee wrote in the newspaper in the early days. Although it was temporarily suspended several times due to the difficulty in management and oppression of Japanese colonial government, local and foreign leaders gave help so that the newspaper could work for the enlightenment of the people and independence of the country. The *Korean Pacific Weekly* was published in September 20, 1913 under the supervision of Syngman Rhee. Syngman Rhee was the chief editor and many nationalist and independence activists were active as writers. The newspaper published reports, editorials and advertisements. Before the liberation from colonial rule in August 15, 1945, it dealt with the news of the Provisional Governments and the issue of independence in Korea. After liberation, it reported information necessary for the lives of Koreans living in Hawaii and news about their homeland. Articles by Rhee from the *Imperial Daily Newspaper* is written before his conversion to Christianity, and articles written in the *Korean Pacific Weekly* comes after the articles written in *Sinhak Wolbo*, more engaged in both political and religious activities by this time.

1.3.2 Article Summary

1) Evangelism in Prison (옥중전도)

Published in May 1903, it was written by Syngman Rhee in prison. The article summarizes and explains the two things that he learned while in prison: enlightenment and gratitude. Rhee stresses the importance of education, supporting it with his own experience given the opportunity to read while in prison by Paster Banker, who gave books into prison. The importance of reading and writing, ability to learn language and reading the Bible were some of the things he emphasized. He

confesses that amidst the pain, being able to teach the Bible gave him joy, and this would have been impossible without the support of many people. Although unfortunate that there were less books related to politics, there were many books all in English, Korean and Chinese and many people enjoyed reading. Rhee declares that Christianity touches the heart of the sinners with God's holy will and all is thankful and enlightened because of God's grace and believes it will reap what has been sowed in the future.

2) The Foundation of the Future of Christianity (예수교가 대한 장래의 기초)

Published in August 1903, as Syngman Rhee writes that people, whether one's body, family or country is in a dangerous situation as a whole. Politics in Korea ruled the country in unified form with Confucianism, but it has proven insufficient and is corrupt. The strength in the nation was people having a warm heart, but it is no more with the changing generation. He says that there is a logic that can save them from the difficulties, and suggests them to belief and act accordingly. Rhee suggests a model of a Christian nation, where its core values are to teach God's way to people to make the whole nation virtuously. Whatever is good prospers and God's way is the only way to salvation. There are two ways in which salvation can be earned. First, it is when there is change in the institution and second, when we obtain collective identity with the logic that individuals' change leads to change in the group. Syngman Rhee emphasizes that as from good seed comes good fruit, there is no better seed or better soil than Christianity.

3) Two Biased Views (두가지 편벽됨)

Published in September 1903, this article holds the United States and United Kingdom as a model nation. He believes that a country that is enlightened has received salvation, and a country that has not yet opened cannot escape hardship and destruction due to following their own way instead of the way of the Lord. Christianity is therefore the most effective medicine in the poorest,

loneliest and troublesome places. Thus, the new hope for the Korean people is Christianity. However, there exists two biases that is an obstacle to this will: political impatience and being bias towards edification. Politics and edification has to be distinguished, although church is the root of the government. By suggesting phased development goal through Christian faith, Rhee confidently states that the individual needs to change to change the community, ultimately changing the country.

4) Church Governance (교회 경략)

In this article published in November 1903, Rhee writes about three visions of Korea: ① building the first Christian nation in Asia, ② becoming a powerful country in mission work, and ③ therefore becoming a rich and powerful country like England and the United States. Furthermore, Rhee highlights three characteristics that we should hold to achieve the visions of a strong Christian nation: equal duty, independence and autonomy—the ultimate principle being equality. Specifically discussing world politics, Rhee states that what it is to come can be measured through past history. In such terms, Christianity in Korea has settled well compared to other Asian countries, due to good performance in church governance.

5) What Korean Brethren Should Strive to Do (대한 교우들이 힘쓸 일)

Published in August 1904, Syngman Rhee's argument is based on the belief that the value of Christianity is equality. The equality is earned through the grace, which has saved us from the bond of all sins, tradition and law. Spreading the logic of the Bible, becoming united through edification and setting out characteristics of servanthood with loyalty and patriotism for the independence of the nation is what people should strive to do. Notably, Rhee gives three examples to support his argument. First, he raises the example of independence of the United States. The United States believe that all men are equal before God, and no other country comes forward to lay the foundation

for him. Second, Rhee highlights how England does not stop praying in unity for the salvation of each and every soul, and people do not hesitate to show servanthood. Lastly, he gives an example of a figure from the Bible. Moses is a leader in the Bible who led the Israelites out of Egypt from slavery into the land promised to be given to them by God. Moses believed in God, worked to save his tribe from slavery and with the help of God they were able to escape from Egypt. These examples all encompass values of equality, rights and grace. Rhee writes that these core values of Christian faith should be the model for the future of Korea.

Chapter 2. Christianity in Korea and Syngman Rhee

Over the past few centuries, Christianity has become an important feature of Korea's religious landscape, having impact on the secular realm as well.⁶ The Association for Asian Studies reported that Christianity has a long history in Asia from India to China and Japan.⁷ Though individual Christians have been important in shaping the modern histories of these countries, Christianity has never enjoyed truly mass appeal, and the percentage of Christians in China and Japan historically has ranged in the low single digits.⁸ While Asia is a stony ground for Christianity, Christianity in Korea has been successful.⁹ According to report in 2021, 17% of the population identify themselves as Protestant, 16% as Buddhists and 6% as Catholics.¹⁰ Although the population of Koreans who identify themselves religious is showing a decreasing trend overall, Christian

⁶ Baker, D. 2016. THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON MODERN KOREA : AN OVERVIEW. *Acta Koreana*, 19(1), 45

⁷ Clark, D. (2006). Christianity in Modern Korea. *Education about Asia*, 11(2), 35

⁸ "Christianity in Modern Korea." *Association for Asian Studies*.

⁹ "Why South Korea Is so Distinctively Christian." *The Economist*, *The Economist Newspaper*, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2014/08/12/why-south-korea-is-so-distinctively-christian>.

¹⁰ "한국인의 종교 1984-2021 (1) 종교 현황." *갤럽리포트*

population still shows the highest percentage of those who identify themselves with religion. The success of Christianity in Korea is a reflection of events in Korean history.¹¹

The representation of Christianity as an influence for modernity in Korea had a socioeconomic and political component.¹² The socioeconomic component is led by the introduction of Western education and medicine together with the entrance of foreign missionaries. The introduction of Christianity was initiated by Korean scholars who took an academic interest in Christianity as a teaching of Western civilization.¹³ This group of scholars was open to Western education, thus welcomed Western missionaries and foreign investments.¹⁴ In the 1880s, Protestant missionaries entered Korea. With the ultimate goal being the evangelism of Koreans, their mission work included education and medicine. Missionaries founded churches, trained and appointed Korean leaders, established schools and hospitals, and taught Korean Christians how to read and write so that they could read the Bible. Christian education grew notably, receiving strong demand from secular Koreans as well, for modern education in other fields additional to the basic literacy education aimed at familiarity with the Bible.¹⁵ As a result, the introduction of education, medicine and evangelism contributed to the socioeconomic development.

Second, the political component includes the introduction of democracy and autonomy. Whether delivered consciously or unconsciously, missionaries established a church structure where board of deacons and prestige elders give church members leadership positions and prestige in their communities, and such structure has been a practicum of the politics of democracy.¹⁶ Autonomy—

¹¹ Clark, D. (2006). Christianity in Modern Korea. *Education about Asia*, 11(2), 39.

¹² Baker, D. (2016). THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON MODERN KOREA : AN OVERVIEW. *Acta Koreana*, 19(1), 50.

¹³ “From Persecution to Prevalence - Christianity in Korea.” *From Persecution to Prevalence - Christianity in Korea - Korea100*.

¹⁴ Clark, D. (2006). Christianity in Modern Korea. *Education about Asia*, 11(2), 33.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 36.

¹⁶ “Why South Korea Is so Distinctively Christian.” *The Economist*, The Economist Newspaper

was also a key component of the strategic plan for mission work in Korea known as the “Nevius Method,” a development plan that pushed early independence for Korean Christians from missionary support in the form of urgent development of a Korean pastorate, autonomy for Korean churches, and complete responsibility for self-financing.¹⁷ Protestant Christianity was identified with democratic practice and autonomy.¹⁸ The process took more than a generation, but by the late 1930s, the major Protestant denominations were self-governing, the Presbyterians with their own General Assembly and the Methodists with their own Korean bishops.¹⁹

Historical circumstances and social factors help explain the growth of Christianity in Korea during the 20th century.²⁰ Experiences of colonialism, resistance and struggle for independence, efforts made by educated Christians to reconcile Christian and Confucian values, encouragement of self-support and self government among members of the Korean church, and the identification of Christianity with Korean nationalism all contributed to the growth of Christianity in Korea.²¹ Baker (2016) writes that “the vibrant democracy we see in South Korea today would not have come about if Christians had not insisted that the state should not interfere in religious affairs, and if Christian faith had not inspired so many to fight authoritarian governments.”²²

Many nationalist leaders who fought for the independence of Korea were also Christians. A pivotal incident that led to the conversion of a group of leaders is known as the “Hansung Prison Conversion Incident” (한성감옥 집단 개종사건). This study finds this incident very important in

¹⁷ Clark Charles Allen. (1930). *The Korean Church and the Nevius Methods*. New York: Fleming H. Revell.

¹⁸ Buswell, Robert E. & Lee, Timothy S. (2006). *Christianity in Korea*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 287.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 300.

²⁰ Baker, D. (2016). THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON MODERN KOREA : AN OVERVIEW. *Acta Koreana*, 19(1), 50.

²¹ Savada, A. M., Shaw, W. & Library Of Congress. Federal Research Division. (1992). *South Korea: a country study*. Library of Congress.

²² Baker, D. (2016). THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON MODERN KOREA : AN OVERVIEW. *Acta Koreana*, 19(1).

the development of Rhee's Christian ideology, allowing the formation of fundamental logic behind his political performance in the future. In the 1890s, the Independence Club led by So Jae Pil, along with other organizations and groups were organized for nationalist movements. Dedicated men gathered to discuss nationalism, democracy and social reform. A group of zealous nationalist men who organized protests against the Japanese and Russian Empires was implicated in a plot to remove King Kojong from power, resulting in imprisonment.²³ During the time in prison, missionaries sent books for the prisoners to read. Among the books was the Bible. As a result of prisoners reading the Bible, many prisoners converted to Christianity.

Among the prisoners was Syngman Rhee, imprisoned from January 1899 to August 1904.²⁴ In 1894, he enrolled in Pai Chai (배제학당) founded by Henry G. Appenzeller, a Methodist missionary, and received western education. He learned English, and was first introduced to Christianity during his time of study at Pai Chai. However, due to the influence of a father who followed Confucian beliefs and devout Buddhist mother, he did not become a Christian follower at the time. At Pai Chai, he became captured by western political ideology on democracy, freedom and equality, which eventually drove him to join the Independence Club. On the border between life and death, his conversion to Christianity posed great influence on his personal beliefs. His writings show that he prayed for his salvation and the salvation of the nation. In prison, he experienced a spiritual enlightenment.

In prison, Syngman Rhee devoted himself to studying English, explored books related to enlightenment, converted to Christianity, developed friendship with Western missionaries, published essays in *Tongin Sinmun* (독립신문) and *Sinhak Wolbo* (신학월보) and established libraries in prison to inspire and perform movements to enlighten other prisoners, evangelize other

²³ Lee, Chong-Sik. (2001). Syngman Rhee: The Prison Years of a Young Radical. *Seoul: Yonsei University Press*.

²⁴ Chung, Soojin. (n.d.). Rhee Syngman, First President of the Republic of Korea. Boston Korean Diaspora Project

prisoners, translated several books to contribute to the development of the people and the promotion of independence, wrote poetry, and above all establish Christian nationalism to achieve national unity through Christianity for the cultural wealth and independence of the nation.²⁵ Through such various prison activities, Syngman Rhee in his late 20s was growing into a decent national activist.

Holding more than 400 prisoners, Hansung prison was known for its harsh treatment of prisoners and poor living conditions. However, Syngman Rhee and others who converted to Christianity called it a ‘Bokbang’ (복방) translated as ‘a blessed room.’²⁶ Rhee evangelized more than 40 prisoners, at least 7 of them from the yangban class.²⁷ Notably, it was the first time this many intellectuals from the yangban class converted to Christianity. In the history of Korean Christianity, it was a momentous event that men from the yangban class were evangelized because although there were many missionaries in Korea at the time, no one was able to gain converts from the yangban class.²⁸ After released from prison, prisoners who were converted with Rhee and prisoners evangelized by Rhee all became key members to support Syngman Rhee in his career. Through the pivotal experience of converting to Christianity, time in Hansung Prison became a place where his political and religious views harmonized.

²⁵ “수천 만 구원의 밑알이 된 이승만의 한성감옥.” 뉴데일리, 5 June 2017, <https://www.newdaily.co.kr/site/data/html/2017/06/05/2017060500047.html>.

²⁶ Young Ik Lew. (2005). The 9th Yung-ik Memorial Lecture : Dr. Syngman Rhee and the Korean Church. *성결교회와 신학*, 13(0), 13.

²⁷ *Yangban* (양반) - the highest social class of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910) of Korea. The status of Joseon people were divided into the yangban, commoners and cheonmin (“the lowborn class”). As an elite class, yangban enjoyed many privileges and actively sought to preserve the purity and exclusivity of their group, composed of well-educated, scholarly class of male Confucian scholars.

“Yangban: The Cultural Life of the Joseon Literati.” Metmuseum.org, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/yang/hd_yang.htm.

²⁸ Lee, Chong-Sik. (2001). *Syngman Rhee: The Prison Years of a Young Radical*. Seoul: Yonsei University Press.

Chapter 3. Syngman Rhee's Christian Ideology

National Integration to the State as an impending aims of the government and recovery of the division as a political task of the leaders has often been conflicted or coexisted till now (Park 2015). Many studies about Syngman Rhee seem to acknowledge that his political ideology and performance was influenced by Christianity. His political ideology developed from nationalism, solidified by his conversion to Christianity and enforced through the advocacy of the One-People Principle (일민주의). This paper focuses on the stage of solidification. The experience of conversion to Christianity in prison and the application of Christian belief to his established belief is foundational to what we identify as Rhee's Christian ideology. The reason why Syngman Rhee's experience in Christian faith and conversion are important is because his political ideas and Christianity are connected. He learned the spirit of democracy by attending Pai Chai and realized the importance of self-reliance for achieving independence. After conversion, he came to believe that Christian beliefs and foundational values allows humans to have a right consciousness, and that Christianity should be the basis of the country.

This chapter analyzes the concepts of **people**, **nation** and **church** from Rhee's five writings in *Sinhak Wolbo* to examine his Christian ideology. The terms specify societal units at the individual and institutional level, and is also related to both political and religious realms. Without having understanding of the concept of these three terms, the development of Syngman Rhee's Christian ideology is incomprehensible.

Syngman Rhee's ideology separates the work of men and work of God. The duty of men relies on the work of the individual and the institution. Institution, in this context, may refer to the church, nation or both. Nonetheless, it is conceptualized as the social, political or religious group at an institutional-level. The reason individual and institution is put together is first because group of people form are the members of any institution and second, the fundamental value of Christianity

lies in “loving your neighbors as yourself” (Matt. 22:37-40).²⁹ Rhee observed the principle of reverence within the church, and the power that Christianity has to change everywhere it goes. He clarifies that only when people realize this relationship, teach each other and encourage each other to do new things with sincerity, can they establish foundation. These are such things that people should work in unity for to establish the foundation for the church and the nation. Then there is the work of God. If the duty of men is to work together with love, build and preserve family, church and restore the country, God’s work is salvation. Salvation is a biblical term defined as a process with a beginning and an end, and involves the paradox of human freedom and divine election.³⁰ As an overriding, multidimensional theme of the Bible, the Bible speaks about salvation in the context of a very simple and concrete relationship between humans and God.³¹ There are many Bible references to salvation as “belonging to God” (Rev. 7:10)³² or “God brings salvation to everyone who believes...” (Rom 1:16).³³ In Romans 1:16, Paul uses the term “salvation” to denote deliverance from sin and its deadly consequences, with the meaning of ‘deliverance’ or ‘healing.’³⁴ Similarly, Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines salvation as deliverance from the power and effects of sin, or the preservation from destruction or failure. Syngman Rhee’s Christian ideology focuses on the work of men. The work of men, which includes both institution and individual, should be considered as one, all connected. Syngman Rhee describes this logic as follows:

²⁹ [full text] “Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

³⁰ “Salvation - Biblical Meaning and Definition in Christianity.” *Biblestudytools.com*, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/salvation/>.

³¹ “Key Terms of Salvation in the Bible - Salvation Definition.” *NIV Bible*, 26 May 2021, <https://www.thenivbible.com/blog/key-terms-salvation-in-bible/>.

³² [full text] “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:10)

³³ [full text] “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.” (Romans 1:16)

³⁴ “Key Terms of Salvation in the Bible - Salvation Definition.” *NIV Bible*, 26 May 2021, <https://www.thenivbible.com/blog/key-terms-salvation-in-bible/>.

There is a true reason to be saved, so be busy to learn, believe and take action. There is no better seed and better soil than Christianity. In the church, people love other as one loves their own body. Seeds are sown by the grace of giving one's life for the sins of others, first rooted in one's own heart, and later spreading to others. Gradually, when we protect each other with love, there will be joy in the nation, and unknowingly become united. After that, can one person be saved, family will be preserved, and the nation will be restored. Then will humans living on earth in agony gradually feel earth like heaven and gain eternal salvation together.³⁵

The 'true reason' he states above refers to Christianity. Not only should the people learn and believe, Rhee says that we have to take action as a unified body, whether it be the person, family or nation because if the country is in peril, it also means that all institution and individual within the nation share the same situation. He believes that nothing stands alone, but is all connected and interdependent. Thus, change in the individual will lead to the change in the institution, and once the individual and institution become likeminded, it will eventually empower the nation. Then we might ask, why Christianity?

First, the customs of this generation should change and worship the new, but it is difficult to obtain benefits without taking the new law as the root of edification. But Christianity has changed and empowered everyplace it goes, and because its principle is in the reverence of the church, they do not shed blood and last for a long time. Second, it is in the principle of loving others as you love yourself. Now England and the United States are the countries that have the most Christians in the world. If there is something that harms the country or the rights of the people, everyone will not stop to pray altogether in one heart and mind.

³⁵ 이승만. 「에수교가 대한 장래의 기초」 신학월보 1903. 8.

Rhee's answer to the question is this. He identifies the acceptance of Christianity as the solution to crisis, and writes that this crisis can be solved in a non-violent, peaceful way. Syngman Rhee believes that Christianity can change customs and bring people together to become united. Applying this to the state of Korea, Christianity and its principles was the solution. Korea was in the face of oppression and threat, and Rhee believed that no one else can save the country other than themselves. How can they save themselves? Syngman Rhee says, "the United States gained independence and established an everlasting foundation like that, by revealing God's rationale and realizing that everyone is born equal to God."³⁶ People should know principles of God's rationale. The basic rationale is freedom and equality, and it is given by God by breaking the bonds that block us from gaining freedom and equality. Rhee identifies three bonds broken in Christianity: law, ceremony and sin. First is break from the law in the Old Testament. The law that had been observed since the time of Moses did not allow people to think freely. Law was uncompromising and absolute. By breaking the bond from this law, people were freed from the bondage of oppression. Second, it broke the bond from ceremony. In the Old Testament, various ceremonies were kept to commemorate and celebrate something meaningful to its people. No more did they have to refrain from healing the sick during the Sabbath or not being able to eat without washing one's hands. The bond was broken to keep people from being bound by futile and foolish customs irrelevant to the truth. Lastly, there is the break from sin. People are ignorant of the life after and live in selfish ways. For the everlasting blessing, people are freed from the sins that keep us from having an altruistic mind. This has allowed us to think about what's more long and wide so that life is meaningful. The bonds broken in Christianity identified by Rhee talks about freedom. Rhee confidently states that the only one that knows of the rationale are the Christians and so are they the only ones to worry about a nation with freedom and equality absent.

³⁶ 이승만. 「대한 교우들이 힘쓸 일」 신학월보 1904. 8.

Unity should be achieved through Christianity. To Rhee, the vision of bringing enlightenment in Korea on the through Christianity is a long term project that holds great value. Christianity is an enlightenment that empowers and unifies people to build a liberal democratic nation upon values of freedom and equality.

Individuals are socially connected to others within the community, so any change in a person will affect the social group, or community in which they belong to. In this specific religious context, membership, or social identity guides the beliefs and religion functions to impose and shape psychological and social process.³⁷ Religious identification though Christianity offers a distinctive worldview and membership, and religiosity can be explained by marking emotional and cognitive value that the religious group membership provides.³⁸ Christianity here, is not limited to forming membership and identification in the group organized of Korean Christians, but Rhee believes it to provide both conceptual and practical solution to the development of Korea.

When a new political thinking asserts itself, it begins by contesting the established order, and the first task lies in identifying the essential features of what it proposes to demolish (Levi 1998). Likewise, Rhee identifies the old society as an essential feature of what should be demolished. From this political motivation to overcome the limitations and existing features of old society, Rhee found that the role of the intellectuals was to enlighten people, the object of the spiritual revolution.³⁹ As a result, Rhee's experience of an intellectual and ideological development defined a new conceptual framework which gave basis to the idea of people, nation and church.

³⁷ Ysseldyk, R., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2010). Religiosity as Identity: Toward an Understanding of Religion From a Social Identity Perspective. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 60.

³⁸ *Id.* at 61.

³⁹ 최종원. (2014). 이승만의 기독교 수용과 기독교국가건설론 연구, 43.

3.1 Concept of *People*

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the term '*people*' is used to refer to everyone, or informally to the group one is speaking to.⁴⁰ In essence, it is a comprehensive term conceptualized in sociology, politics, religion and other fields as well. In politics, it is a term that refers to the collective or community of ethnic group, a nation, to the public or common pass of people of a polity.⁴¹ Sociologically, people is defined as a collective term of human beings.⁴² Biblical definition of people is the body of persons to compose a community, town, city or nation.⁴³ These definitions of people defined from different subjects may slightly differ in how they apply in context. However, they all seem to agree that it means 1) a collective group of individuals and 2) there is some sort of membership that holds the group. Founded on this definition, the concept of people in Rhee's writings indicate the *ethnic* and *political* bond as the 'membership' that holds the group. It means that the Korean people are bounded by ethnic homogeneity and political bond formed from the collective experiences of external and internal political struggles.

But before that, to understand the concept of people, we cannot go about without defining what society is, and what the relationship it has with an individual. Hossain and Ali (2014) describes that "the relationship between individual and society is both philosophical and sociological because it involves the question of values." It is in the society that an individual is surrounded and encompassed by culture, as a societal force, and also requires conformity to the norms, occupy statuses and become members of groups.⁴⁴ Although individuals have autonomy over oneself, we cannot disregard the fact that at the same time belonging to a group. First, it is

⁴⁰ "People." *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/people>.

⁴¹ Miller, Darrel A.H., et al. (2013). The Meaning(s) of 'The People' in the Constitution." *Harvard Law Review*

⁴² "People." *Open Education Sociology Dictionary*, <https://sociologydictionary.org/people/>.

⁴³ "KJV Dictionary Definition: People." *AV1611.Com*, <https://av1611.com/kjbp/kjv-dictionary/people.html>.

⁴⁴ Hossain, F. and Ali, M. (2014). Relation between Individual and Society. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 2, 132.

important to understand that as the smallest unit, and individual and the society is mutually dependent. The inherent capacities of a person can develop in society, society creating the conditions and opportunities for all round development of individual personality.⁴⁵ The interdependence of society and individual thus means that they both have great influence on each other, positively or negatively. Different from Durkheim who examined society as existing apart from the individual, Syngman Rhee understands that it is impossible to understand the individual apart from the society, and the society apart from the individual.⁴⁶ Society and individuals are bound by an intimate and harmonious bond and in an ideal society, harmony lasts longer.

Second, society is a system. It is a system of usages and procedures of authority and mutual aid many divisions of controls of human behavior and of liberties.⁴⁷ The term means relationships of social beings expressing their nature by creating and recreating an organization which guides and controls their behavior in myriad ways, and society liberates and limits the activities of men.⁴⁸ Thus, it is a necessary condition of every human being and need to the fulfillment of life.⁴⁹ By understanding society as a system, it also means that individuals within a society seek something and also has the ability give. A society can be illustrated as an economic, social or industrial infrastructure, made up of a varied collection of individuals.⁵⁰ Third, individuals thoughts and actions are influenced in large measure by social relationship with others. Everywhere there is a social life that surrounds an individual, and the social life sets limitations that predominantly

⁴⁵ *Id.* at 134.

⁴⁶Greenwald, D. E. (1973). Durkheim on Society, Thought and Ritual. *Sociological Analysis*, 34(3), 158.

⁴⁷ MacIver and Page (1965) *Society*. Macmillan and Company, London, 5.

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 6.

⁴⁹ Hossain, F. and Ali, M. (2014). Relation between Individual and Society. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 2, 133.

⁵⁰ Lenski, G., Nolan, P. and Lenski, J. (1995) *Human Societies: An Introduction into Macro Sociology*. McGraw-Hill, Boston, 11.

influence individual action.⁵¹ Thus, people cooperate and associate whether through political preferences, religion, education, family or anything else that builds up modern life.⁵²

So in a society, people engage in some kind of social relationship and associate through political or religious preferences. In this premise, this study shows that Syngman Rhee's concept of people is conceptualized as individuals' association by national identity and political experience that has the potential to prompt collective action, and religion stimulates the action. Syngman Rhee calls for participation and urges individuals' to not be complacent. Rhee's effort to warn people of their idleness is written as follows:

Since the soldiers of other countries started a war in their own country and strive to win, do we think that we will only be comfortable with the fact that we are safe right now and be peaceful forever? Do you believe that other countries will come help us if we sat still? People in other countries volunteer to die as soldiers for their country, fight to death and glorify their country, and people not at war are devoted to pay money and goods and prepare to help the war. Even if no one in Korea knows, Christians should know what to do. It is not the duty of the subjects to live indifferently, nor is it their intention to guarantee the property and rights that God has given equally.

As he writes in the quote above, Syngman Rhee believes that people should have the initiative to stand forefront for the protection of their own country. He criticizes their idleness and urges participation regardless of one's position. To save the country, people have to take action. Some people might provide financial support, some by participation at war or by any other way. No work here is useless. People cannot remain in the old customs anymore. The enlightenment that has to occur among Korean people through Christianity is the transition from the traditional values to a

⁵¹ Sanderson, S.K. (1995) *Social Transformation*. Blackie Press, New York, 110.

⁵² Lenski, G., Nolan, P. and Lenski, J. (1995) *Human Societies: An Introduction into Macro Sociology*. McGraw-Hill, Boston, 11.

new value suggested by Christianity. Diligent and hard work, filial piety, and humbleness are some of the characteristics, or values respected by Koreans.⁵³ Although Rhee does not think that these values are unimportant, he advises that people should consider the crisis that the country is facing, and what people can do to save the country. He requests people to act in order to save their own country from an ordeal situation. In the progress of searching for a solution, Rhee observed other powerful, independent countries. The two main findings was that one, people valued freedom and equality and second, those countries were Christian nations. According to Rhee, the values of Christianity which is based on freedom and equality was the solution, and thus believed that these values will change or stimulate people to not just sit and watch, but act.

Syngman Rhee believes that individuals within a society organize voluntarily for religious, cultural or political purposes. The network of social relationships formed by individuals have great influence on the society. Thus, Rhee believes that the beginning of any enlightenment should occur at the individual level. Rhee writes,

Now, people in our country is in a state of peril, whether it be their body, family, or country. Each person should know that there is a way to avoid destruction of one's body, avoid disturbance in one's household and avoid danger in one's country. The way is not for one person to become kind, but Christianity involves the duty to make others kind as well, so that all mankind becomes kind all together. There is no place where kindness makes people prosperous.

Due to the nature of society, collection of individuals united by certain relations or modes of behavior have the power to influence the society. The mutual interaction and interrelation of individuals of the structure formed through membership in religion leads them to a better direction.

⁵³ Bennett, Sean. Chapter 15 Korean Culture, <http://freebooks.uvu.edu/NURS3400/index.php/ch11-korean-culture.html>.

To Rhee, Christianity allows people to have proper consciousness. The formation of this social system, or structure derived from learning about what Rhee referred to as “civilized” countries.

I am jealous. Civilized countries have earned the salvation of God through individual bodies, household and nation. In the land that has not yet opened, people, household and nation has not realized the way of God and have been inevitable from avoiding all kinds of hardships.⁵⁴

As a social identity anchored in a system of guiding beliefs, religious affiliation should serve a uniquely powerful function in shaping psychological and social processes.⁵⁵ Through affiliation with others in the church, individuals sense of belonging to a group and the positive or negative feelings associated with that membership is important.⁵⁶ But personal development is necessary to achieve all of this successfully, and this is what Syngman Rhee explains as the change that should occur at the individual level. Rhee writes that three of the most important political strategies for the church to individuals is equal duty, independence and autonomy.

First, people should realize that it is by the power of oneself that determines the root of the success or failure of church and nation and the happiness of its people. Thus people should not wish to work by the power of others but make the power grow from my work and my effort. Likewise each person and each neighborhood should bring joy by their work and for sure the nation should not rely on the power of others. Second, it is to maintain ones own power by

⁵⁴ 이승만. 「예수교가 대한 장래의 기초」 신학월보 1903. 8.

⁵⁵ Ysseldyk, R., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2010). Religiosity as Identity: Toward an Understanding of Religion From a Social Identity Perspective. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 62.

⁵⁶ Harwood, Jake. (2020). Social Identity Theory. *The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology*, 7.

oneself. It depends on the individual to serve God and ask for blessing. God is not the God of those who evangelize on behalf of your nation or the God of foreign missionaries, but by my effort and my acceptance of faith. Our country and our church will gain the rights with the empowering of the individual, and build churches and schools. We should not have any heart to ask others to cover for the payment of teachers and we should not have the heart to request it to anyone else. Third, God has made everyone equal and gave equal rights, so it is our duty to find this right. Those who can rule their own body will not be governed by anyone else, but those who cannot rule their own body cannot avoid the control of others. People in our country did not know this, which is the reason our country has been oppressed and difficult to preserve our rights to independence. If we cannot convert to Christianity, we cannot think of independence.

These are also referred to characteristics that people should have as members of the church. The secret to the success of Christianity in Korea compared to other Asian countries lies in the fact that people achieved these characteristics through unity. Again, Syngman Rhee emphasizes that people should accomplish all good things with a kind heart, find truth in Christianity, protect oneself with God-given rights and strive for education. These values correlate with values that can be identified from the One-Person Principle advocated by Syngman Rhee later during his presidency.

Unity is the ultimate goal and must be achieved before the political performance. Communities that achieve unity gain power- the power to change the country. With such power, people should apply what has been strengthened by education to politics, and thinking about what is important for the country. However, instead of respecting the individual as a independence person, Syngman Rhee looks at each person as a member of the church or the State. A person is defined through the affiliation with an institution and believed to have the potential to empower the institution, only when showing some sort of collectiveness. The collectiveness may be driven by a common goal, shared experiences or identity. Having received western education in Pai Chai, experiences and relationship with foreigners, Syngman Rhee suggested to take the United States and England as a model of a Christian, democratic nation. He mentions the United States and

England repetitively in “Church Governance,” “Foundation of the Future of Christianity” and “What Korean Brethren Should Strive To Do.” In three out of five writings he asserts the model nation. The following section will study the concept of nation, and how Rhee describes in his writings.

3.2 Concept of *Nation*

Syngman Rhee believe that the enlightenment and edification of people through Christianity is the only way to change the nation. Explaining the characteristics of Christianity, he writes that the more precarious the country, the more prosperous is the church. It means that difficult situation of a country is an opportunity for God. This statement is supported by comparing the status of Christianity in Korea and other Asian countries. The teachings of Christianity is a humble one, thereby reaching out to those the poor and the weak. As a result, Christianity has taken root and growing in Korea. The country’s difficult situation is an opportunity to change through Christianity.

Transforming a person is the way to make a great helper for their nation.⁵⁷

The concept of nation asserted from this statement by Rhee is that nation does not exist, or stand alone, but is apt to change depending on the values desired by the people within a nation. This paper uses the term ‘nation’ instead of ‘country.’ These terms are often used interchangeably, but there is a major difference between the two.⁵⁸ A country is defined as a physical territory with a government or a geographic region associated with sets of previously independent or differently

⁵⁷ 이승만. 「두가지 편벽됨」 신학월보 9월호 제3권 제9호.

⁵⁸ “Differences between Country and Nation: Nation vs Country.” *BYJUS*, BYJU'S, 23 Dec. 2021

associated people.⁵⁹ On the other hand, nation is a community of people formed on the basis of a common language, territory, ethnicity, etc.⁶⁰ Country is observed as mostly a political state defined in a geographical aspect, but also used to identify an independent state. Slightly different in meaning, nation is observed as a group of people who share cultural, religious or national identity being ethnically homogenous, defined in terms of people and common government.⁶¹

It is not our goal to unite the nation with politic, but to be unified in the Spirit. People hate and resent each other because their hearts are disconnected and cannot be united. We should all be soldiers who fight for heaven, defeat Satan and unite the world to make heaven. If by chance you suffer for Jesus, for righteousness and for the people in this world, you must go out and protect each other with one heart even if you were former enemies.⁶²

In this quote, Rhee clearly states that the nation does not gain independence through politics, but through unity, or the likeness of mind and heart. In Korean, he commonly uses the term *Nara* (나라)⁶³— meaning country in Korean — in all five articles. However, the study found the term ‘nation’ more appropriate to deliver the meaning of how Syngman Rhee conceptualizes the term. The key feature of Syngman Rhee’s concept of nation is common national, and religious identity. Those who are highly identified with their religious group not only share common beliefs but also, by definition, perceive their group membership as central to their self-concept, thereby gaining a

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Diksha. “Difference between Country and Nation.” *Difference between Country and Nation | Country vs Nation*, 13 Aug. 2015

⁶² 이승만. 「교회 경략」 신학월보 1903. 1.

⁶³ meaning ‘country’, ‘nation’ or ‘state’ in Korean

sense of personal or collective self-esteem from that membership⁶⁴ and a strong bond with other group members.⁶⁵ The national and religious identity members form in a social system creates a strong bond. Social identity theory suggests that individual and group belief systems drive the group response in such situations.⁶⁶

Think of the world, think of the nation, and think of neighbors. You can only know a person's faith by looking at the person working for others.⁶⁷

Syngman Rhee makes it pretty clear by repeatedly asserting the importance of having a sense of collectivity. Individual has power when coming together collectively. Thus, the attachment to this group and strong sense of identification to the group is important. While people may adopt social mobility strategy by leaving one in-group for a more socially valued group more likely when groups have little sense of identification in their group, people were strongly bounded by ethnic homogeneity.⁶⁸ This strong sense of identification within the ethnic group made non permeable boundaries clear from other groups.⁶⁹ But before defining what national identity is, we have to realize that national identity is differentiated from one's ethnic identity.

⁶⁴Luhtanen, R., & Crocker, J. (1992). A collective self-esteem scale: Self-evaluation of one's social identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 18, 302.

⁶⁵ Cameron, J. E. (2004). A three-factor model of social identity. *Self and Identity*, 3, 241.

⁶⁶ Harwood, Jake. (2020). Social Identity Theory. *The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology*, 2.

⁶⁷ 이승만. 「두가지 편벽됨」 신학월보 9월호 제3권 제9호.

⁶⁸ Umaña-Taylor, A. J. (2011) Ethnic identity. In S. J. Schwartz, V. Vignoles, & K. Luyckx (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research*, 800.

⁶⁹ Spears, R. (2011) Group identities: the social identity perspective. In S. J. Schwartz, V. Vignoles, & K. Luyckx (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research*, New York: Springer, 210.

Mastrotheodoros et Al (2021) defines ethnic identity as “a self-constructed internalization of a person’s group membership based on that person’s attitudes and feelings toward his/her cultural background, ethnic heritage, and racial phenotype, whereas national identity captures individuals’ ‘subjective or internalized sense of belonging to the nation.’” Although Rhee implies the homogeneous ethnic identity of Korea, Rhee’s writings is more comprised of the meaning of national identity. One’s national identity internalize and connect a sense of belongingness to the nation. The maintenance of social cohesion strengthens its national identity. As a very homogenous country, Korea’s national identity is characterized by ethnic homogeneity. In the same way, Rhee writes that the detachment from the national identity is the current state of Koreans, and is the reason why they cannot accomplish anything. The current state is expressed as “the heart of the people rotten, filled with selfishness and finding ways to devise others.”⁷⁰ Syngman Rhee states that restoration of the bond through national identity rebuilds the nation.

The second feature of Rhee’s concept of nation is common religious identity. According to Ysseldyk, Matheson and Anisman (2010), among individuals of “ascent” religions (e.g. Protestantism), group membership may be the value to the individual primarily because of the internalized belief system that members share. In a study wherein religious identification was assessed based on the importance of faith to the individuals’s sense of identity, Protestants reported higher levels of religious identification than other other religions.⁷¹ At the point Rhee is writing the paper, this identity is not yet achieved. But the purpose of the articles are to urge people to gain common religious identity.⁷²

⁷⁰ 이승만. 「두가지 편벽됨」 신학월보 9월호 제3권 제9호.

⁷¹ Cohen, A. B., & Hill, P. C. (2007). Religion as culture: Religious individualism and collectivism among American Catholics, Jews, and Protestants. *Journal of Personality*, 75, 731.

⁷² the religion is Christianity.

We should have people realize by spreading the principles of the Bible and teaching how we can save the country and our compatriots as a whole, and let them know that it does not lie in politics and law to save our compatriots and country but in enlightenment. So everyone should return and work with us and show loyalty and patriotism for the independence of our compatriots. If we have this, what worries do we have? What do we lack? Let us all work hard so that there is no one that does not know about this.⁷³

This quote highlights the wholeness of the country. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the term compatriot means “a person born, residing, or holding citizenship in the same country as another.”⁷⁴ By referring to the people as compatriots, Syngman Rhee creates a social connection among the Korean people. Especially, bringing up the difficult national situation and reflecting on the common purpose of independence accentuates the importance of having common religious identity. Greenfield et Al. (2007) writes that religion refers to “the person's self-identification as having a connection or affiliation with any religious denomination, group, body, or other religiously defined community or system of belief.” Likewise, Rhee sees that religiosity offers a system of guiding beliefs through which to interpret one's experiences and give them meaning.⁷⁵ Not only does it give meaning, but it creates solidarity and power that can define the nation.

Chan (2003) writes that recent theoretical discussion and empirical evidence have shown that national identity is important at both collective and individual levels.⁷⁶ Common national and religious identity of a nation not only offers a system of guiding beliefs and sense of solidarity, but

⁷³ 이승만. 「대한 교우들이 힘쓸 일」 신학월보 1904. 8.

⁷⁴ “Compatriot.” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compatriot>.

⁷⁵ Ysseldyk, R., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2010). Religiosity as Identity: Toward an Understanding of Religion From a Social Identity Perspective. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14(1), 61.

⁷⁶ Chan, Elaine. (2003). Defining Fellow Compatriots as ‘Others’ - National Identity in Hong Kong. *Government and Opposition*, 35 (4), 499.

is related to the common goal of the nation. Syngman Rhee indicate directly and indirectly that the goal of the nation is to become a liberal democratic nation. It may be his personal goals, but Rhee directly states that Christianity is the most qualified religion for Korea, and the articles indirectly expose the reason to why people should be evangelized. Christianity is the most qualified and necessary for Korea because it constitutes a nation based on ‘equal rights.’ Simply, according to Rhee, the nation’s common goal is equality and freedom, and the values emphasized in Christianity is alike. The establishment of a democratic nation grounded on Christianity and historical experiences of England and the United States empowered Syngman Rhee’s argument and allowed his Christian ideology to be credible.

3.3 Concept of *Church*

Our country’s faint bloodline depends only on the church of God.⁷⁷

The new stream of the Korean people is the church.⁷⁸

This is what Syngman Rhee wrote about the church. Both quote note that great hope is in the church, and imply the importance of the role of the church to the people. Emile Durkheim (1912) made the classic sociological assertion that religious beliefs and practices are both a group- and an individual-level phenomenon.⁷⁹ However, social identity theory —as a well developed social psychological theory that addresses the interface between groups and individuals— has not been widely applied to studying religiosity.⁸⁰ This study draws on social identity theory to investigate

⁷⁷ 이승만. 「대한 교우들이 힘쓸 일」 신학월보 1904. 8.

⁷⁸ 이승만. 「두가지 편벽됨」 신학월보 9월호 제3권 제9호

⁷⁹ Greenfield, Emily A, and Nadine F Marks. (2007). Religious Social Identity as an Explanatory Factor for Associations between More Frequent Formal Religious Participation and Psychological Well-Being. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 17(3): 250

⁸⁰ Ibid.

how religious membership strengthens common social identity to lead to collective action. Guided by social identity theory, this study investigated having a closer identification as a member of one's religious group as an explanatory mechanism for linkages between religious participation and displaying consensus in societal and political issues.⁸¹ As Hogg and Abrams (1988) noted, whereas many social theories focused on the "individual in the group," social identity theory draws attention to "the group in the individual." Nonetheless, articles written by Syngman Rhee focuses on both, helpful to understand his concept of people and church. To understand his concept of people, it was important to navigate the meaning of what it means to be a person belonging to or affiliated with a social, political or religious group. Moreover, comprehending the group in the individual (group may imply the church) promotes the understanding of Rhee's the concept of church.

Religious institutions are an important part of the vibrant civil society that has created a healthy democracy in South Korea.⁸² From race to religion, people belong to particular groups that inevitably shape their responses to a range of circumstances.⁸³ In the context, church is a religious institution. Implying the importance of the church as an institution, Rhee describes the relationship between Christianity and church:

Christianity is a core value of liberal democracy and is important because church is the institution that teaches and supports people to be able to learn and practice the beliefs and values of Christianity. Christian beliefs and values are the best prescriptions.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Greenfield, Emily A, and Nadine F Marks. (2007). Religious Social Identity as an Explanatory Factor for Associations between More Frequent Formal Religious Participation and Psychological Well-Being. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 17(3): 245.

⁸² Clark, D. (2006). Christianity in Modern Korea. *Education about Asia*, 11(2), 39.

⁸³ Ysseldyk, R., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2010). Religiosity as Identity: Toward an \ Understanding of Religion From a Social Identity Perspective. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14(1), 69.

⁸⁴ 이승만. 「교회 경략」 신학월보 1903. 1.

Christianity is especially beneficial to the world's poorest, evil, most trivial and most painful place in the world. Christianity takes what people abandon, raise what people despise and teach the most evil first. The power and difficult the situation, the faster the change occurs through Christian faith, and the more precarious the country, the more prosperous the church is.⁸⁵

This asserts the meaning that the current state of the country is in a state of pain or suffering, in necessity of a medicine or solution. Rhee believes that Christianity is the medicine, and the church is the pharmacy. In "Two Biased View," Rhee concludes the paper by saying that Korea's hope lies in the church. As an institution, the church plays an important role by reducing the uncertainties in the society, establish secure social relations and support the achievement of goals.

Now then, what is the role of the church and what are its goals? The role of the church is to deliver the word of God. But as Rhee points out, there are two obstacles for the church to take on this role: political impatience and bias. First, there is misconception that the church has a direct solution to the problem that the country faces. The church takes the role in education and evangelism, so we have to be cautious of becoming deaf to what the church speaks of and expecting change to occur in the short-term. Second, we should not be prejudiced about what the church can do and does. This may discourage oneself when the results do not meet the expectations while one struggles to think on its own. These two obstacles are caused by not being able to think deeply. Then, if evangelizing is the role of the church, for what is the church taking this role? What are its goals? Rhee believes that the core values of Christianity is freedom and equality, and has come to believe this by Christian countries such as the United States and England who has achieved democracy based on the reason that everyone is equal before God.

⁸⁵ 이승만. 「두가지 편벽됨」 신학월보 9월호 제3권 제9호

Politics is accompanied by the example the church sets, and the more people in the church are influenced, the more the foundation of politics will correct on its own. The edification of the people has to occur prior to the transformation of the nation because it is by the edified people that lead to the change in the nation. Just as there cannot be a fair government on top of corrupt people, the obligation of the church is in influencing the people. Hence, the participation of principled people in politics naturally induce a fair government. Therefore, it can be concluded that the church is the source of the government.⁸⁶

Syngman Rhee's concept of church is an institution that takes the role of educating the people with membership to the church for the goal of achieving equality and freedom to the nation. This quote clearly shows the relationship between the church and the government. Government alone is prone to corruption and may not always be able to bring people together. However, the nature of the church is different from the government. This logic seems to imply great power to the church. Rhee believes the country can change through Christianity, where the church and its members leads the change. Although he implies the capability of the church, he insists to distinguish church from politics. Church can last long only by bringing change with the power of the church, not by anything else. We must distinguish politics from edification so that it is not congested. On the surface, it may not look compatible, but in fact, some things come to convenience and assistance, so we must be watchful of political relations within the church.

⁸⁶ 이승만. 「두가지 편벽됨」 신학월보 9월호 제3권 제9호

Chapter 4. Evolution of Syngman Rhee's Perception of People, Nation and Community

As much as Christianity has functioned as an important part of modernization in Korea, it can be said to have “changed” Korea also by shaping the ideologies of political leaders at the time.⁸⁷ He wrote papers from prison and sent them to *Sinhak Wolbo* for the purpose of developing public opinion and enlightenment. Syngman Rhee writes that individuals can exercise their sovereignty to establish an independent state most effectively by experiencing a spiritual revolution through Christianity.⁸⁸ Jost, Nosek and Gosling (2008) writes that examining the role of belief systems reflect political ideology, and shaped by psychological and social processes. And by comparing his writings before and after he wrote in *Sinhak Wolbo*, it allows us to see the evolution of his ideology. The concept of people, nation and church examined through *Sinhak Wolbo* reflects his Christian ideology due to the context of his recent conversion. But writings before that does not expose any religious concepts and terms such as church, God, bible or Christianity. On the other hand, his writings after the conversion but more engaged in political activities along with having taken the religious leadership positions, his concept of people, nation and church exists, but have expanded further. This chapter aims to introduce the evolution of Syngman Rhee's perceptions on people, nation and community to imply the changes occurred on his perceptions before the 1900s and after the 1930s. Also, the implications derived from this study of Rhee's Christian ideology and examine if his religious and political ideology correspond in his political performance, or if they disaccord.

In the articles written by Rhee before writing through the *Sinhak Wolbo*, the concept of church is yet to be defined. Religion and the experiences that come with it did not captivate Rhee before his conversion. However, it shows that the concept of people and nation are similar. In the

⁸⁷ Clark, D. (2006). Christianity in Modern Korea. *Education about Asia*, 11(2), 38.

⁸⁸ 최종원. (2014). 이승만의 기독교 수용과 기독교국가건설론 연구

Imperial Daily Newspaper, Rhee wrote an article titled, “When Hearts are United, it is stronger than Iron,” published in two parts. Here he writes,

Because the country is weak, the people are humiliated in public and are looked down on. The nation’s instability does not become a fortress for the people, so people are worn out in starvation. All parts of the human body is essential, and if no one is in charge, these essential machines cannot be used properly. The owner is the heart, and although we have eyes, ears, hands and feet, if we do not have the heart to do so, it will not function. Although the heart does not exist in any form, if united, it is stronger than steel and sturdy as a stone. In other words, if a country becomes united, it will be strong regardless of how small the country is. If a family becomes united, a poor family will be rich, and if they try to do anything in one mind, there is nothing they can't do. No foreigner cannot find any gap.⁸⁹

He explains that there is no one part that is unimportant. It is the co-operation of each and every part that functions the body. Even in a small country, if people join together with one heart and mind, others cannot see any gap, and no matter how large the land is or has a powerful military, if people are not likeminded, it is useless. The unchanging principle is unity. The unification of people empowers the nation and in whatever the circumstance, if people do as they will with likemindedness, there is nothing impossible. In part two of “When Hearts are United, it is stronger than Iron,” Rhee writes about an anecdote of a person who has encountered a foreigner who is noble and wise. He says,

The noble and wise foreigner testifies that he was poor from birth, but education changed his life. Afterwards, he also build schools and taught students by believing in the power of education.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ 이승만. 「마음을 뭉치면 쇠보다 단단하다 (1)」 제국신문 1901. 2. 12.

⁹⁰ 이승만. 「마음을 뭉치면 쇠보다 단단하다 (2)」 제국신문 1901. 2. 13.

Being likemindedness in the value of education and striving for intellectual development is the source of power. There were schools in Korea, but Rhee asserts the need for more progress in education with more likeminded teachers. Even in the absence of Christian principles, unity is a fundamental value for progress, and education is a sector with the potential to lead the change.

By the time Rhee writing in the *Korean Pacific Weekly*, he has been grounding career in Hawaii affiliated with the Methodist Church, schools and other organizations. He took several leadership positions, active in independence movements and lay foundation for his political career. Although he has made advancements in his career in Korea and in Hawaii, he repeatedly asserts the same principles in the articles.

The idea of living comfortable alone, one individual or one country, is the road to destruction. The reason why I often write in this direction is hoping that my compatriots will realize, and to prove that the only way to live is if they forget their lives and property for the peace of everyone.⁹¹

As asserted in the quote, the basic principles remain the same where the ‘good of one is the good of all.’ But the perspectives of viewing and understanding the world broadened. He speaks of the state of world affairs and comments on the conditions of specific countries. In *Sinhak Wolbo*, Rhee emphasized the model nation as the United States and England. However, articles in the *Korean Pacific Weekly* such as “Sympathy for a Devastated Country” or “Taking Advantage of an Opportunity” mentions European, Asian and African countries, and explains world politics. In the article, he writes about other countries as follows,

⁹¹ 이승만. 「참화를 당한 나라에 동정」 태평양주보 1940. 6. 8.

Japan's ambition was allowed to rob the world, and now it is almost impossible for the so-called powers to escape defeat. Looking at the British and Americans, they have thought that it is all good if there was no damage to their trade interests. However, they have seen now that they cannot escape from self-made disasters, whether individuals or the nation as a whole. The spark that started in Asia spread to the West, and when Ethiopia disappeared, Britain, France and the United States stood still. Nearby countries just watched Austria fail, and the neighboring countries watched Poland, Czechoslovakia, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands and Belgium perish as if it had nothing to do with them. By the time the danger came to them, it was too late to react. Although countries perish because they are weak, strong countries like England, United States and France pretended to help neighboring countries but did not help with sincerity. Only when the flames hit their bodies did they try to start working. The reason why I often write in this direction is to prove that my compatriots will realize. They should forget the thought that they will live in comfort just by themselves but learn to give away their lives and property for the salvation of the whole nation.⁹²

Although principles of unity remain unchanged, what has changed is the spectrum of his understanding. If the concepts of people, nation and community was to change an internal problem at a national-level, now he thinks of it in terms of world politics. The scale grew from national to international. Unity of people and strengthening of Korea still matters, and still exists as a fundamental principle. But from his article, we can identify that the strengthening of Korea matters for the survival of Korea in the international arena, among relationship with other countries. Rhee seeks to find opportunities for Korea's independence not only in the relationship between Korea and Japan, but by reading the relationship between Japan and other countries within international relations. The core value of achieving his goals has not changed, but his broadened perspective, interpretation of the situation and analytical framework has changed.

Syngman Rhee's Christian ideology can be simply summarized as the belief in a modern nation of liberal democracy by edification through Christianity. After appointed as the first president of the Republic of Korea, he engaged in political activities as a political leader of a country. The evolution of his perceptions on people, nation and community shows the shift from principles

⁹² 이승만. 「참화를 당한 나라에 동정」 태평양주보 1940. 6. 8.

exempting Christianity to the development of a Christian ideology, lastly to an ideology captivated by the the value of freedom and equality fundamental in Christianity- asserting that change occurs within the nation but opportunity and solution derived from observing world affairs. Engaged in politics as the president, many studies have studied his political ideology. As aforementioned, Rhee's political and religious ideology have been categorized separately in previous studies. However, this chapter has shown the consistency in the fundamental principles throughout, although there were some addition of Christian values in the process. Despite minor shifts, the remains of his basic principles is can be found in *Ilminjueui* (일민주의), or the One-People Principle. The One-People Principle is an ideology presented by Syngman Rhee in 1949 as a justification for laying the foundation for democracy and against communism.⁹³ Presented by Syngman Rhee not long after the establishment of the Republic of Korea, this principle is well known, but less studied because it was controversial at the same time. Scholars have found the principle too simple to consider it as a political ideology or a policy.

The One-People Principle was advocated as a new political ideology to build an anticommunist system. Rhee argued for the necessity of such ideology for the following two reasons: First, Rhee believed in the need for a systematic ideology to fight against communism and second, he thought the ideology should reflect the nation's characteristic of ethnic homogeneity.⁹⁴ By nature, we confront an ideological struggle. However, democracy cannot theoretically counter communist propaganda with strict principles, so a new ideology—one that is more systematic is necessary. Regarding ethnic homogeneity, Rhee argues that ethnic homogeneity is a distinct characteristic of Korea. However, there are divisions in the society—rich and poor, regional and gender divisions—that tilts the nation and demand for a new ideology to overcome these divisions.

⁹³ 일민주의 [一民主義] (한국민족문화대백과, 한국학중앙연구원)

⁹⁴ 안호상. (1950). 일민주의의 본질. 일민주의연구원.

For these reasons, the new ideology suggested by Rhee propagate to maintain and protect the destiny of the people to create a unified nation for the people to enjoy freedom, peace and honor. Additionally, for the purpose of unification, it rejects communism and hopes overcome capitalism. While rejecting communism is comprehensible, effort to overcome capitalism may be questionable. This principle considers capitalism upholds money and puts greatest value, which is considered to have lost moderation and value.

The four major principles of the One-People Principle are: 1) breaking down the civil code to make no distinction between the rich and poor, 2) treat capitalist and working class equally so that they are equally beneficial 3) promote gender equality, 4) make no distinction between provinces.⁹⁵ Regarding such principles, it has received two major criticisms. First, the contents are way to simplistic and ideal. It does not differ much from the goals of the New Life Movement (신생활운동) promoted by the Ministry of Education.⁹⁶ Second, the logic that ideas and national opinions should be unified, and any obstacle to this unification should be removed includes totalitarian ideas, or fascist thoughts.⁹⁷

Despite the limitations and controversies, scholars write that research on the One-People Principle will be able to help interpret the political consciousness and political behavior of far right anti-communists, and understand economic ideology before the development of capitalism in the early stages of the government not long after its establishment.⁹⁸ Hence, if the One-People Principle is a political performance that reflect Syngman Rhee's political ideology, does his political ideology correspond to his Christian ideology? His Christian ideology is founded on the belief that the political expression of Christianity is liberal democracy. However, the nuance of his belief in the

⁹⁵ 서중석. (2005). 이승만의 정치이데올로기, 16.

⁹⁶ *Id.* at 17.

⁹⁷ *Id.* at 17.

⁹⁸ *Id.* At 19.

Christian value seems to have changed, or possibly become more concrete into a tool for spiritual revolution. Previously, if spiritual revolution through Christianity was equal to political revolution, it can be seen that the political behavior that Rhee's political regime and more specifically, the One-People Principle shows is a change into new state of political consciousness with a Christian spirit.

Nonetheless, there are two things that is still at the core of Rhee's religious and political ideology: freedom, equality and autonomy. Repeating numerous times in all five of his articles, Rhee puts strong emphasis in freedom and equality in Christianity.

The independence of the United States laid the foundation for eternal welfare, by revealing God's will and realizing that everyone was born equal to God. We are moved by seeing that people are memorizing the declaration of independence until this day. Now England and United States are the two countries that follow Christianity the most. Whether those who believe or do not believe, there is no one ignorant of the difficult situation of their country, but will not stop to pray day and night, and become workers united in one heart and sacrifice themselves.⁹⁹

Rhee says that the United States and England is a representative Christian nation. Rhee believes that the United States has gained its independence and lay the foundation of 'everlasting blessing'¹⁰⁰ by believing that 'everyone is equal before God.' Rhee observed that the England and the United States occurred when what once was ruled by man comes under the influence of God. This means that although the fundamental values of Christianity if freedom and equality, we cannot earn it for free. It is earned when people turn away from the evil ways and learn the way of God. Goodness changes the world, and goodness overcomes evil. The reason Christian nations are prosperous and stable is not because there are less evil people than other nations, but because there

⁹⁹ 이승만. 「대한 교우들이 힘쓸 일」 신학월보 1904. 8.

¹⁰⁰ 이승만. 「대한 교우들이 힘쓸 일」 신학월보 1904. 8.

are more people with goodness than other nations.¹⁰¹ Syngman Rhee urges to utilize and use the God-given right to change the nation by saying,

What I wish to say out loud is that two thousand Korean population should put effort to not lose the inherent right that God has given to everyone alike. The gospel is not given specially only to our Western friends, but it is by them who have received first, to change their nation like heaven and go to other countries to spread the same word through evangelism. From today we should realize that we can make our nation like England or United States, and send out missionaries all over the world and evangelize to any ethnic group. By doing so, we will be blessed, our rights grow and our country will be glorified like England and United States.¹⁰²

Likewise, freedom and equality is a core value of the One-Person Principle as well, and Rhee suggests that it can be achieved through the unification of likeminded people. Second, autonomy is equally found in writings in *Sinhak Wolbo* and *The Korean Pacific Weekly*. Although not directly speaking of, articles in the *Imperial Daily Newspaper* that emphasizes education connote that education is important as an element in the intellectual development for the individual to declare autonomy. A study on the Christianity of Korea writes that “the political component of Christianity in Korea includes the introduction of democracy and autonomy.” Rhee writes that the four most important strategies for the church is equal duty, independence and autonomy. Also, the declaration of autonomy is directly stated in the One-People Principle. These concepts are repetitive in his writings and the guiding principle in his political ideology. On the whole, we can see that his religious and political ideology does not seem to equate anymore. Christian values of freedom, equality and unity was the answer that Rhee seeking for during his time active in nationalist

¹⁰¹ 이승만. 「예수교가 대한 장래의 기초」 신학월보 1903. 8.

¹⁰² 이승만. 「교회 경략」 신학월보 1903. 1.

movements. Nevertheless, there was an ideal model of such nation which was the United States and England. He saw potential in the Korean people and devoted his time, energy and passion to evangelize. The core message was that Christianity changes lives, and the changed lives can change the nation. Although this message is foundational to both his religious and political ideology, there is discrepancy when it comes to how his vision is concretized and expressed in forms of policy and governing principle. Thus, Rhee's political performance through policies such the One-People Principle shows that his political ideology developed to a new state of political consciousness that embraces Christian values.

Looking at the evolution of perceptions, Syngman Rhee accepts Christianity as a means of enlightenment and Christian values giving birth to a modern form of a nation. Throughout his writings, continuation of key values but a discontinuation with the Biblical meaning. Syngman Rhee believed in a modern nation of liberal democracy by edification through Christianity, and elements of his Christian ideology can be seen through his policies after becoming president. However, all his writings does not contain direct references from the Bible or elaborate on Christianity other than values of freedom and equality. From this we can observe that his writings lack biblical component and context despite his emphasis on building a Christian nation.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

From what the paper has seen so far, religious and ethnic elements are not combined when looking at Syngman Rhee's development of Christian to political thought. In Chapter 3, you can see that ethnic elements are not emphasized as much, but Christian values such as freedom and equal rights are highly emphasized. However, his later political ideologies emphasize ethnic elements and Christian elements or direct references to Christianity are hard to find. Therefore, we cannot but feel that Christianity is a means of individual enlightenment to Syngman Rhee. Syngman Rhee's writings present a guideline for the building of a Christian nation, at the same time putting forward his personal visions. By joining values of freedom and equality to Christianity, Rhee connotes his vision of establishing a nation of free democracy. The guidelines are presented by holding the examples of model nations, clarifying the role of the individual and the institution. Not one actor leads the change, but the collective action by different units within the society changes the future of the nation. The responses of Koreans to the Christian message, and to the opportunities that came with it, reflect values that are deeply Korean: the hunger for education, the deep concern that came with their national collapse in 1910, their need for affirmation and respect in the independence movement, and their struggle to deal with national division and democratic development in the second half of the century.¹⁰³ These circumstances created the fertile soil for growth. Rhee wanted to make Christianity the basis of national enlightenment in Korea. Although a Christian, he did not want the union of church and state. What he paid attention to in Christianity was the possibility of human edification. He thought it was impossible to establish a modern liberal democracy without experiencing the spiritual revolution through Christianity.¹⁰⁴ Protestantism was the core value of liberal democracy, and liberal democracy was the political expression of Protestantism.

¹⁰³ Clark, D. (2006). Christianity in Modern Korea. *Education about Asia*, 11(2), 39.

¹⁰⁴ “구현 실패한 이승만 기독교 정치사상, 현재 더욱 유효한 가치다.” 뉴데일리, 20 Nov. 2019, <https://www.newdaily.co.kr/site/data/html/2019/11/19/2019111900206.html>.

As a historiography, this study relies on the articles written by Syngman Rhee in *Sinhak Wolbo*. Syngman Rhee's writings in the *Sinhak Wolbo* since 1904 provide a glimpse of his thoughts. This paper identifies Rhee as a religious person urging people to accept Christianity for the development of themselves and the country. From his writings, we can identify what his Christian ideology looks like. Syngman Rhee's Christian ideology is interesting because it is intersectional. Although Syngman Rhee was more a religious person than a politician at the time he wrote the articles, the ideas and meanings of Christianity disclose a form of a political model. Thus to study his Christian ideology, it was necessary to identify concepts where his political and religious experiences meet, thereby conceptualizing people, nation and church.

People, nation and church comprehend social and religious significance but convey political meanings applicable to politics. Syngman Rhee insists the enlightenment of people by accepting Christianity. He believes that Christianity is based on freedom, equality and autonomy. These principles seem to continue to the One-People Principle, but the answer to the question of how it can be achieved cannot be found in Syngman Rhee's writings. Rhee believed that Christianity can enlighten people and concur with his vision. In addition to that, he emphasizes that the Christianity empowers the nation under common identity to build a liberal democratic nation based on the fundamentals of Christian principles. Thinking of the salvation of oneself alone is not the virtue of Christianity. For freedom and equality, individuals need to work for the good of all, unified in both heart and action. This unity among the people, formed within a nation secured from common national and religious identity, can overcome difficulties and induce a significant change to the country. Rhee asserted his vision of liberal democracy to be carried out by Christians and the church fulfilling its role within the nation— and it can be attained by embracing Christian principles and faith.

Syngman Rhee's concept of people, nation and church is considers all individual and institutional units as a collective, unified entity under the Christian belief. Not one unit stands alone,

or can achieve goals by itself. The reason is because people are connected and associated by membership to a social or political group. The smallest unit, which is the individual is considered as a member of an institution. Individuals must be enlightened for bringing change in the nation, and the church takes the role of enlightening the individual. This bluntly means that development of individual is not what's most important, but it is the development and achievement of the nation's goal that is important. Rhee does not disrespect individuals, but to Rhee, change has to occur from the smallest social unit, an institution has to guide the change and only in the success of this can the nation change. Rhee's focus was in the change of the nation, the empowerment of the nation through Christianity. Likewise, people, nation and church comprehend social and religious significance but convey political function. Rhee believes that by accepting Christianity, it will stimulate stronger bond due to the sharing of common national and religious identity, social group membership and potential preeminence of religious identification over other social identities in the lives of many individuals.¹⁰⁵ Syngman Rhee gained a greater appreciation of religious belief systems as identity, seeing the association with religious leadership as well as the physical structures and practices that reinforce religious identification.¹⁰⁶ His writings repetitively try to explain that social identities do not exist in isolation, and religious identification interact with other identities in unique ways to influence the whole group, or the nation.¹⁰⁷ Rhee's Christian ideology goes beyond the perceptions of religiosity but Christianity as guiding belief that creates social identification and provides a supporting social system that individuals can share to accomplish a political objective.

¹⁰⁵ Fenton, S. (2011). The sociology of ethnicity and national identity. *Ethnicities*, 11(1), 12.

¹⁰⁶ Ysseldyk, R., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2010). Religiosity as Identity: Toward an Understanding of Religion From a Social Identity Perspective. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14(1), 65.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

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국문 초록

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이승만이 한성 감옥에서 기독교로 개종한 것은 그의 종교적, 정치적 이데올로기 건설에 큰 영향을 미치는 중적인 경험이었다. 역사적 맥락에서 이런 경험은 그의 기독교 이념을 이해할 수 있는 틀과 맥락을 제공한다. 이승만의 정치 이데올로기는 민족주의 사상에서 발전했고, 기독교를 통해 다져지고 방향성을 제시하고, 대통령 재임 기간 동안 정치적 정책들을 통해 이행되었다. 이 논문은 기독교를 통해 다져지고 방향성을 제시하는 시기를 중점으로 두고 이승만의 글이 내포하고있는 복잡한 뉘앙스와 의미, 사상을 통해 이승만의 기독교 이념을 이해하고자 한다. 본 논문의 목적은 신학월보가 펴낸 이승만의 5개의 글에서 인민, 국가 그리고 교회의 개념을 살펴봄으로써 이승만의 기독교 이념을 연구하는 것이다. 이승만의 글은 기독교의 원리를 소개하고 동시에 기독교가 한국에 어떻게 적용되어야 하는지에 대한 지침을 제공한다. 또한 종교, 정체성, 사회의 의미가 어떠한 맥락에서 무엇을 내포하고 있는지 개념적 분석을 통해 이해하고자 한다. 그리고 이 논문은 신학월보의 개념을 더욱 정확히 이해하기 위해 비교방법론을 통해 제국신문과 태평양주보에 실린 이승만의 글을 가지고 이념의 진화과정을 살펴보고자 한다. 그리고 진화과정을 살펴봄으로 국민, 국가와 같은 개념들이 어떻게 바뀌었고, 어떤 부분들이 일민주의에 남아있는지 단절과 연속성을 검토하고, 그의 정치 수행에서 발견되는 기독교 이념에 의미를 발견하고자 한다. 이 연구는 이후 이승만의 정치 수행을 통해 기독교의 사상이 국가의 사회적, 정치적, 경제적 발전의 기반이되는 정치적 모델이 된 것을 발견한다. 이승만의 글은 기독교 국가 건설을 위한 지침을 제시함과 동시에 그의 개인적 비전을 내포하고 있다. 그의 지침은 미국과 영국과 같은 국가를 예로 들어 개인과 기관의 역할이 어떻게 상호 교환적으로 이루어져야 하는지에 대한 것이다. 즉, 이승만은 기독교 가치를 기반으로한 지적, 사회적 통일이 국가의 미래를 바꿀 수 있다고 생각한다.