A Reverend on Trial: Debating the Proper Place of Christianity in the North Korean Revolution

Sandra H. Park

As the early North Korean state (1945–50) sought to groom "proper" revolutionary subjects, many Christian leaders publicly confronted the state. When Presbyterian minister Cho Ponghwan upset revolutionary sensibilities with political commentaries during an evangelical circuit around Hwanghae Province, the people's courts tried him as a reactionary. This article draws on surviving court records in the North Korean Captured Documents collection to elucidate the pedagogic aims that the state invested into Cho's trial. Instead of dismissing the people's courtroom as revolutionary excess, I engage Cho's trial as an intelligible debate over early North Korea's secularizing project. Beyond discipline, I demonstrate that the state laboriously instructed Christians on embodying desire for the revolution and refraining from transgressing the state-drawn boundary between religion and politics. Yet, due to the instability of this boundary, the courts also used Cho's trial to articulate and assert the state's sole authority over defining and redefining this boundary as a way to manage the sacred in North Korean society. Reading along and against the state's pen, this article excavates the North Korean people's court as a crucial site for ironing out the state pedagogy on the reactionary and the sacred in a postcolonial, socialist revolution.

Keywords: Christianity, secularism, people's court, North Korean Revolution, pedagogy

Between October 1968 and February 1969 the Presbyterian Church in America published in its *Reformed Bulletin of Missions* a serial on "Korean Martyrs" by Bruce F. Hunt. An American missionary to Korea (1928–76), Hunt had "originally prepared [the paper] . . . for inclusion in a Japanese edition of [John]

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Foxe's Book of Martyrs."[1] Though the edition never materialized, the journal reveals how the narrative of Christian martyrdom in North Korea persisted throughout the Cold War. Hunt claimed that, despite the subjection of Christians imprisoned for violation of compulsory Shinto worship (of whom Hunt was one) to "torture, malnutrition, exposure, disease and illness," the Japanese colonial state (1910–45) did not willfully execute Christians and followed established jurisprudence.[2] In contrast, the North Korean "persecution" of Christians was an "unprincipled, raw, physical force."[3] The underlying argument in Hunt's puzzling juxtaposition is that North Korea unintelligibly aimed to "liquidate" Christians, typifying the lens through which the United States constructs the "evil" of North Korea.[4] At stake is the denial of legitimacy to North Korean statehood and ghettoizing North Korea as antimodern and totalitarian in contrast to a democratically, religiously vibrant South Korea. In challenging this narrative, I do not invalidate the history of state violence toward Christians. Rather, I question the validity of suspending North Korea's disciplinary practices outside of modernity and history.

In scholarship, the paucity of sources has left a widening gap in the historical understanding of religion and secularism in North Korea, even as scholars have steered the literature on Christianity in South Korea in exciting conceptual directions.[5] Yet, bringing North and South Korea together into the discourse on secularization can destabilize the unhelpful categorization of the North as antimodern and the South as modern. As anthropologist Talal Asad discerns, defenders of the secularization thesis argue that "in order for a society to be modern it has to be secular and for it to be secular it has to relegate religion to nonpolitical spaces because that arrangement is essential to modern society."[6] According to this theory, North Korea would seem to have achieved the sine qua non for modernity, while South Korea exhibits the tenacious grip of religion, especially Protestant Christianity, on public life. The irony of the two Koreas reveals the internal contradiction of the thesis because "whether religious deprivatization threatens modernity or not depends on *how* religion becomes public."[7] No longer a question of whether or not religion enters public life, the discourse on secularization (i.e., modernity) actually revolves around whether a religion can bolster civil society and particularly Western liberal values.[8]

In the case of North Korea, I draw on Asad's theory further to argue that modernity has frequently been measured by how Christianity is received. Already, in interrogating the idea of Europe, Asad has astutely noted that Islam's "alleged antagonism to Christians [across time] then becomes crucial to the formation of European identity."[9] If this paradigm can extend to US–North Korean relations, the crux of the discourse on the modernity of North Korea has also hinged on the state's treatment of Christianity. Whereas countries in the Middle East are antimodern to the West due to an excess of Islam in public life, North Korea is deemed resistant to modernity because it supposedly banishes Christianity from public life. Secularization as a scale for assessing modernity, then, operates in

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this contradictory way because the West considers only Christianity suitable for entering public life. Therefore, secularism as pursued by North Korea has become a marker of the errant ways of communism from the path of modernity, while some have identified religious elements of North Korea's charismatic politics as the return of traditional forms of power.[10]

However, the state-driven secularization in North Korea has its basis in modern disciplinary regimes—most immediately in the preceding colonial state—and should be understood and critiqued as such.[11] During a time of profound rupture and reorganization of everyday life, the early North Korean state attempted to bring Christians under official regulation by employing techniques of citizen surveillance, policing, people's courts, and the Korean Christian Federation (Chosŏn Kŭrisŭdo Yŏnmaeng). Such techniques were not new, for the colonial state had seeped into the everyday lives of Koreans through an expansive police force and invasive disciplinary practices, such as torture and thought reform. Nonetheless, the North Korean state thoroughly decolonized the personnel and ideology of the police and penal systems to present a legitimizing framework for the remobilization of the techniques of the colonial police state. As Michel Foucault defined in a momentous study of modern disciplinary institutions, "Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise."[12] During a massive campaign to remake individuals into revolutionary subjects, at once a bottom-up impulse and top-down implementation, the North Korean state encountered many Christian leaders criticizing state policies. In response, the state found Christians useful as objects for correcting reactionary thought and as instruments for disseminating state pedagogy on revolutionary subjectivity.

While it is unknown how many other Christians were placed on trial, the surviving trial records of Cho Ponghwan attest to the importance of the people's court as a site for state building and subject making. Modeled in structure after the Soviet legal system, the North Korean judiciary established itself in early 1947 as a dual structure of the courts (spanning the Supreme Court and the provincial, city, and county people's courts) and the procuracies (headed by the procurator-general over local procurator's offices).[13] Individuals infracting a criminal law would first encounter a preliminary investigation by the local procurator and, if necessary, would be transferred to the county people's court for trial. Adapting the Soviet model, the North Korean state began appointing citizens as people's assessors to deliberate on cases alongside the judge. As depicted in Cho's trial, the county people's court saw two people's assessors alongside a judge, while the provincial people's court saw a panel of three judges, in addition to the prosecution and defense counselors.[14] In earlier studies of the North Korean judicial system, Sung Yoon Cho and Pyong Choon Hahm emphasized the educational role of the people's courts. Largely based on legal documents and official publications since the Korean War (1950–53), both works unmistakably view the people's court as "a weapon of the dictatorship of the proletariat" and "wholly inquisitorial," overemphasizing the monolithic coherency of the North Korean state.[15] Certainly, the

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people's courts were an important instrument for the state to iron out new legal procedures (i.e., the Code on Criminal Trials, 1946). Still, they were also intended for individuals to experience the courts as empowering spaces in a radical break from the colonial past.

Cho Ponghwan, the focal figure of this study, entered the court archives when his evangelical circuit was cut short by arrest in March 1947. Charged with violating the "principles of democracy," Cho was accused of causing "ideological confusion [*sasangjŏk tongyo*]" among the public by delivering "reactionary propaganda [*pandongjŏgin sŏnjŏn*]" under the pretext of sermons.[16] Although arrest alone or a trial by the county people's court might have sufficed to deter other Christian leaders from engaging in critical discourse against the government, the state's representatives in P'yŏngsan County, Hwanghae Province, saw the need to shuttle Cho through the entire span of the judicial system. Whereas other trial records at the US National Archives typically conclude at the county level, Cho's case stood out as singularly significant to the jurists. I argue that, beyond just another case of Communist oppression or revolutionary excess, the records show how the North Korean state invested a far-reaching pedagogic purpose in disciplining Cho Ponghwan through the jurisprudence of the revolutionary state.

Following a brief discussion on reading through the North Korean archive, this article first contextualizes the social space of the people's court to illustrate the courts' heightened attention to everyday encounters, such as condescending behavior. As Christian leaders were reprimanded for obstructing the revolution, the category of "reactionary" emerged dialectically with the language that was defining a new revolutionary subjectivity for the masses. To carry out the "purge of all colonial vestiges," the first order of business in the Twenty-Point Platform announced on March 23, 1946, the provisional government (North Korean Interim People's Committee) worked with urgency to decolonize material and social relations through sweeping reforms, such as the land reform of 1946, labor reform, and women's equal rights.[17] Moreover, to elevate the social status of women, peasants, and laborers, nationwide literacy campaigns and mass political participation (e.g., rallies and appointments to local government positions) were encouraged. In this context, the courts' denunciation of a Tokyo-educated minister's "condescending" behavior becomes legible as a form of decolonization inseparable from the larger revolutionary project. The public admonition of Cho for "insulting" a newly minted bureaucrat's intelligence thus signaled North Korea's rupture with the colonial social structure. By bringing acts of social aggression into the courtroom, the North Korean state aimed to empower the revolutionaries while disciplining uncooperative individuals.

In addition to targeting social relations as a site for reform, the courts' more urgent task in Cho's trial was to articulate the state's secularization project to the public. By reproaching Cho for inserting social and political commentaries into sermons, the courts attempted to define what religion in the public life of the revolution would look like. Attending to the prolonged courtroom debates

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on separating religion from politics, this article stresses that the people's court labored to define and enumerate the reactionary elements in Cho's sermons to show that Cho was being indicted for a violation of the revolutionary platform and not for his occupation or beliefs. By prosecuting Cho, the state instructed Christian communities and the broader public that the food shortage, transportation deficits, and tax-in-kind were all issues that fell outside the purview of religious leaders and that any pessimistic remarks would and should be interpreted as reactionary pessimism toward the revolution. This pessimism (*pigwanjŏk*) embodied by the figure of Cho was repeatedly targeted and criticized by the courts, who were unmistakably juxtaposing Cho's ambivalence against the mass participation of North Korean society in revolutionary politics. Therefore, the courts' inculcation that proper religious discourse ought to be shorn of any political concerns also amplified the state pedagogy on articulating revolutionary desire.

The third and final objective of the courts was to dispel any notion of a Christian nation after Cho alarmed the state with his call to transform Korea into a religious nation (*chonggyo kukka*). In urgent response, the people's court set a legal precedent for subsuming the sacred under the state. Despite assuming an intrinsic boundary between the sacred (*sinsŏnghan*) and politics in their instructions for Cho to confine himself to the sacred teachings of the Bible, the state purposely reached over that line to manage the sacred (i.e., which biblical teachings could not be taught). Concerned with Christian ministers' long-standing influence in northern Korea, the state bristled at scriptural references to believers in Christ as ultimate victors on Earth and moved quickly to limit the kinds of biblical references that would be permissible. Despite echoes of earlier Christian agrarian critiques of the socially destructive effects of capitalism in Cho's sermons, the courts appeared interested only in what they identified as the reactionary elements in Cho's discourse. Therefore, even as freedom of religion was successively guaranteed in the provisional government's Twenty-Point Platform, the Workers' Party Congress platform, and later in the constitution, the state found itself having to define and redefine religion's proper place in North Korean society—an ongoing process, as demonstrated by the reopening of Christian churches in Pyongyang in the late 1980s. That is to say, the sacred space to which the North Korean state was attempting to relegate Cho was a constructed category for the state to manage the remaining Christians. In this regard, the North Korean state was building on the rationalizing infrastructure of the preceding colonial state's "regulatory power over all evangelizing activities . . . promot[ing] religious freedom only within the bounds of properly religious, and not political or social, activity."[18]

THE REVEREND, THE COURT RECORDS, AND THE ARCHIVE

A thirty-four-year-old Presbyterian minister in 1947, Cho Ponghwan had graduated from the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary (Tonggyŏng Ilch'i Sinhakkyo)

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in 1943. With his wife and two sons, he resided in P'yŏngsan County, Hwanghae Province, which spanned the southwestern region between Pyongyang and the thirty-eighth parallel. This region also had one of the longest histories of Protestant Christianity in Korea, while social tensions across class and ideological lines were particularly acute because "landowners and middle-class farmers who were heavily influenced by Christianity and Catholicism dominated the region."[19] Widespread perception of landed Christians who retained their socioeconomic privileges during colonial occupation fomented neighborly hostility upon liberation in August 1945, and these sentiments were easily amplified in a social revolution aimed at remaking the subjectivity of the people from colonized to revolutionary nation builders. Owing in large part to existing social conflicts that worsened under colonial rule, Hwanghae Province was already a charged battleground for Christians and communists when Cho was arrested. Furthermore, this exact region would later witness one of the most violent flashpoints of civil conflict in the Sinch'ŏn massacre in the fall of 1950.[20] While knowledge of the Sinch'ŏn massacre helps map Cho's trial onto the larger social context, the future Korean War was in no way foreseeable to anyone in the courtroom of Cho's trial.

Nevertheless, Cho Ponghwan appears to us through a hostile representation that has been preserved by the bureaucratic processes of two different states: the North Korean state in the original production and filing of the court records, and the US military in seizing and classifying North Korean documents as enemy documents during the war.[21] In a methodological intervention into the reading of religious life through such hostile archives, the late Sonja Luehrmann approached documentation—or "documentary acts"—as social practices among and between Soviet bureaucrats and religious citizens. Drawing from microhistorical and discursive (postcolonial) traditions of reading against (and along) the archival grain, Luehrmann presented the acts of documenting and filing in the Soviet Union as "an active struggle [with religious communities] for control over information and historical memory."[22] Rather than mine for truths and falsities in these ideological documents, Luehrmann called for a deconstruction of the archival logic to trace the shifting relationship of power between a state caught between a desire to uproot religion and the need to govern religious persons and citizens who incurred official disapproval but relied on state services. Similarly, North Korean court records also ask historians to read through an archive that was hostile to the individuals represented. Unlike the Soviet case, the North Korean archive available to scholars is even more fragmentary and under the custody of the United States, which maintains belligerent relations with North Korea. For researchers, the classification of these North Korean records under enemy documents in the US National Archives further warns of the untrustworthiness of the authorship. However, my concern is not with exposing the hostility of the state toward religion but with reading the trial for clues to the emerging relationship between Christian leaders and the North Korean state.

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Due to the Korean War's disruption to the archival continuity and custody of Cho's story, Cho unfortunately disappears from the archive after the trial. Yet, excerpts of the trial records have been reproduced in Kim Hŭngsu's *A History of the North Korean Church since 1945: Research, Testimony, and Materials* (1992); in the twentieth volume (1995) of the National History Compilation Committee's source collection, *Historical Materials Related to North Korea* (*Pukhan kwan'gye saryojip*); and in the four-volume *Christianity-Related North Korean Captured Documents from the Korean War* (*6.25 Pukhan nohoek munsŏ Kidokkyo kwan'gye charyojip*) printed by the Institute for Literature of Korean Church History (Han'guk Kyohoesa Munhŏn Yŏn'guwŏn).[23] Although Cho's trial has not received serious scholarly attention, the reproduction of the trial in the above compilations demonstrates the proliferation of official and public projects in South Korea for gathering knowledge of North Korea since the 1990s. While two of the compilation projects were undertaken by South Korean researchers of Christianity, Cho's trial records remain obscure in Korean and English-language scholarship. One possible explanation might be the perception of a self-apparent narrative in a North Korean people's court trial against a Christian minister. After all, what more did the communist state desire than to harass Christians?

Cho's trial records survived alongside many others, including criminal cases against the fifty-year-old farmer Yi Sŏngsik and the fifty-seven-year-old farmer Ch'oe Pyŏngha, who were fined for illegal selling of liquor. Also included among the people's court records from Hwanghae Province is the trial of twenty-nine-year-old Kim Ponghan for "reactionary speech" by the P'yŏngsan County People's Court. Kim, another farmer, was sentenced to five years of imprisonment and had his appeal to the Hwanghae Province Court denied for telling people in South Korea (after "illegally crossing over") that the "land [in North Korea] will return to its [rightful] owners after the second liberation."[24] While Cho Ponghwan's trial had procedural similarities to these other cases, few cases were as prolonged or discursively laborious, since trials typically concluded at the county level and appeals to the provincial people's court were frequently dismissed. Moreover, Cho's records stand out as an example of the few surviving written records of the conflict between the revolutionary state and Christians, a confrontation that has mostly been told through the testimonial narratives of anticommunist Christians from the north. In these narratives, the state appears as a monolithic entity determined to eradicate Christianity from the north.[25] However, the trial records enable us to see how the public officials were learning and teaching the grammar of the revolution, for the local courts were rapidly but incrementally gaining self-assurance in the courtroom language.

Reading along and against the state's pen, we first meet a confident Cho heatedly debating local officials who were still learning the legal language of the revolution. At the final trial, however, the highly centralized Hwanghae Province People's Court denounced Cho as a reactionary in consistent, authoritative language, leaving little room (or patience) for Cho's self-defense. The local and

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provincial trials accentuate the intensity of discursive labor that went into standardizing the revolutionary language and legal framework through the North Korean judicial system. Moreover, the witnesses in Cho's trial progressively emerge in the records as cosubjects in the trial, as Cho's case became a catalyst for standardizing the criminal trial procedure for political crimes and refining the state-citizen surveillance apparatus. What appears certain from the shifting tone in witness statements is the subject-making function of the people's courts for the revolutionaries, as Aaron B. Retish describes the early rural Soviet courts.[26] As such, the normalization of the revolutionary (state) language is also under examination in this article, to consider the process of subject making for the governing and governed and the increasingly blurred boundary.

THE PEOPLE'S COURT AS A SITE FOR SOCIAL REFORM

One of the first and recurring items that the county court investigated was Cho's allegedly condescending remarks toward a *poansŏ* employee.[27] In the sermon notes Cho recalled correcting an official at the Namch'ŏn Poansŏ (police administrative district), during another encounter with the police before the evangelical circuit, for confusing "sŏgi 1946" as "1946 Soviet Era."[28] Cho's remark at the police station and the act of retelling it in a sermon to illustrate the need for improvements to the national education for the youth drew the attention of the state. While *sŏgi* refers to the Gregorian calendar marker, A.D., the *poansŏ* official may in all likelihood have intended to replace "western" (*sŏ*) with "Soviet" (*So*).[29] Whether it was an act of misinterpretation by the official or a misunderstanding by Cho, Cho upset revolutionary sensibilities by "expressing a lowly opinion of the *poansŏ* official."[30] The courts' concern with a minister's condescension may at first appear excessive, but it reflected a deeper anxiety over decolonizing social relations and sensitivity over educated individuals undermining the authority of newly appointed public officials.

In a related charge, the P'yŏngsan County Procuracy (*kŏmch'also*) denounced Cho for blaming the audience for misconstruing his sermons as "reactionary" because they had lower religious understanding and education. On the contrary, the indictment refutes, "the people in attendance were not even that undereducated. These people are nation-building fighters who are stoutly fighting to establish an active, independent, autonomous, democratic nation with a progressive spirit."[31] In contrast to the "progressive spirit" of the "nation-building fighters," the records portray Cho as an elitist who behaves condescendingly toward public officials and the masses. The significant court attention given to these two speech acts—embarrassing a *poansŏ* official and blaming the audience for misinterpreting the sermons—reflected the state's desire to elevate the social standing of the revolutionary masses while targeting social interactions as a site for implementing revolutionary reforms.

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Far from trivial, Cho's alleged condescension toward a local official and the rural masses became an inescapable object of state discipline as part of the state's social reform. In *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution*, Suzy Kim studies the practice of mass autobiographical writing as "not simply disciplinary measures adopted by the state, but pedagogic practices that enabled the authors to shed their colonial identity and become a modern subject capable of making history."[32] Through writing and rewriting one's life history, individuals ideally realized themselves as "instrumental in carrying the revolution forward."[33] However, when Cho corrected the local official and then drew attention to that official's mistake in a sermon, the state interpreted these acts as obstructive and offensive to the revolutionary climate for elevating the masses. And while Cho was being disciplined in the courtroom, the state saw another opportunity for continuing the pedagogic project of shaping individuals' revolutionary subjectivity. Cho's trial reveals what transpired when the courts scrutinized social conduct as a way to distinguish the reactionary individual from the revolutionary masses.

Cho was a colonial subject educated in Tokyo at the height of wartime mobilization, and his background conveyed an elitism that was out of step with the anticolonial climate of the revolution. Added in parentheses by the court scribe to punctuate Cho's statements, the numerous asides stressing Cho's self-righteousness and refusal to self-criticize guide the reader to detect the reactionary tone of Cho's statements as a way to prevent any misreadings. As Carlo Ginzburg observed of a late twentieth-century Italian trial, courtroom transcription is itself an act of translation where "in the passage from spoken to written word, intonations, hesitations, silences and gestures are lost."[34] However, they are not "entirely" lost, for "the court stenographers record, in parentheses, tears, laughter, failures to answer, or answers given with special passion."[35] While these asides describe the accused, they reveal more about the state. Akin to the clinical documentary techniques that merged the case-building mechanisms of examination and cross-examination (of the individual) into the mechanisms of discipline in modern hospitals, the archive of revolutionary jurisprudence similarly reveals "the modern play of coercion over bodies, gestures and behaviors."[36] Through the parenthetical commentaries in Cho's trial transcripts, the revolutionary state archive was claiming knowledge of the interiority of subjects that enhanced their ability to distinguish the pessimistic reactionary subject from the enthusiastic revolutionary subject.

Yet, categorizing Cho as a reactionary proved to be a complex case. At a time when a large segment of landholding Christians were defecting to the south, Cho made a conscious decision to remain in the north.[37] Toward the end of the final trial, an exasperated Cho retorted that he agreed with the "political line in North Korea" but would go to South Korea if the court did not think so. According to sermon notes, Cho even cited article 3 of the Twenty-Point Platform to reassure the audience that their gathering was protected under the "freedom of speech, publication, assembly and faith."[38] The fact that Cho opened a sermon that took place at a school (after hours) in Naedŏk-myŏn by appealing to the newly instituted

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legal order demonstrates that Cho had carefully studied the state language before claiming public spaces outside of the church for evangelism. In this way, Cho was attempting to work through the new legal framework rather than assert a divine-inspired prerogative to engage the wider public in evangelism. What further set the minister apart from Christian leaders from landed or commercial backgrounds was the fact that Cho had actually received land during the 1946 land reform, complicating the courts' portrayal of the minister's elitism (i.e., metropolitan education).

Nevertheless, the courts assessed that Cho held an ambivalent position on participating in the politics of the north. During the first trial, the court questioned Cho's sincerity in supporting the revolutionary state by criticizing his tardiness in casting the ballot during the November 3, 1946, elections for the people's committees. Although prosecutor Sin Pogyun quickly moved on, there were heated confrontations between Christian leaders and the state on election day in 1946 and 1947. As Timothy S. Lee explains, Korean Protestants practiced Sabbatarianism, and "for them to yield to the communist demand meant violating this cherished practice. . . . They also saw the demand as a direct challenge to their authority."[39] Referring to the 1947 elections controversy, Suzy Kim notes that Christians "gathered at church for a prayer meeting on Saturday night and stayed through Sunday to boycott the vote collectively."[40] While it is difficult to ascertain to what degree or whether Cho "boycotted" the elections, to convince Sin that it was a one-time incident Cho insisted that he prayed at the church through Sunday night but still cast the ballot shortly after midnight.

Further frustrating the officials was Cho's steadfast refusal to accept the reactionary charges and appeal to God for judgment. They deemed Cho a self-righteous "reactionary [who had] internalized reactionary ideologies to the core."[41] However, indicting Cho as a reactionary on account of social conduct alone was not the only aim for the state's larger pedagogic project. The court officials still felt the need to iron out their language by deconstructing Cho's sermons to determine what speech, actions, and thoughts would be reactionary. Highly concerned with the people's reaction to Cho's sermons, the courts redirected their efforts into probing the minister's views on the "relationship between religion and politics" as a way to instruct society on observing the state-articulated boundary between religious discourse and political discourse, as well as what constituted religious discourse. The next two sections unpack how the North Korean state began to define and manage the sacred.

CORRECTING REACTIONARY DISCOURSE AND DEFINING *RELIGION*

During the early months after liberation of the Korean Peninsula in 1945, Christian nationalist Cho Mansik was initially considered by the Soviets as a potential

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leader in the new government, until Cho's outspoken protest against the trusteeship agreement. The Chosŏn Democratic Party (CDP), founded by Cho in November 1945, represented a significant portion of northern Christians and briefly formed the strongest opposition to the North Korean Workers' Party. By January 1946, however, Cho was placed under house arrest, and Kim Il Sung emerged as the uncontended leader of North Korea as chair of the North Korean Interim People's Committee. Although from early 1946 the CDP (like all other minority parties) was effectively under the control of the Workers' Party, the Kim government intensified surveillance of the speech and activities of the remaining Christians, especially those who refused to join the pro-government Korean Christian Federation. As long as Christians observed the state-mandated boundary between religion and politics, however, the state was willing to allow Christian churches to operate nominally in public life.[42] Yet the state-articulated boundary between religion and politics still lacked precision, and the state saw Cho's trial as an opportunity to begin its project to define *religion*.

While North Korea effectively used jurisprudence as a disciplinary mechanism to mute political dissent during the revolution, the late 1940s saw a similar expansion of domestic surveillance and discipline in the United States. Under the pretext of the Smith Act of 1940, the US government tried eleven leaders of the Communist Party between November 1948 and June 1951 for sedition based on a prosecution case spearheaded by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. As historian Ellen Schrecker argues, *Dennis v. United States* established a lasting legal and social paradigm for delegitimizing and demonizing communism in American society. Even though the Communist Party remained "theoretically legal," the US Supreme Court decision rendered the party's day-to-day activities illegal and exposed its members to "all other forms of repression."[43] Across the Pacific, political repression and violent counterinsurgency against "leftists" characterized the US military government policy in Korea from 1945 to 1948, and the National Security Act of 1948 created a permanent legal paradigm in South Korea for punishing anyone labeled a communist with imprisonment or execution. By placing the North Korean people's courts within a peninsular and transpacific context of expanding political repression in the early Cold War, we begin to see a global pattern rather than North Korean aberrance.

Rather, what Cho's trial helps uncover is the grammar of the North Korean Revolution. Aiming to project a uniform language of revolutionary desire, anti-imperialism, and secular civics for grooming proper subjects, the state found a pedagogic opportunity in prosecuting a Christian minister. The people's courts thus were not at the fringe of intelligibility but at the center of a bottom-up, top-down project to reshape subjects. Just as US interrogation rooms during the Korean War functioned as crucial subject-making sites for the emerging neo-imperial identity of the United States, the revolutionary trial rooms in North Korea were equally focused on molding new subjects.[44] In both spaces, authorities pursued a similar objective: "Not . . . the production of information,

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but rather the production of subjects."[45] As Monica Kim keenly analyzes, the US government projected the interrogation room as a "space of free will, where individual desire and not totalitarian forces were expressed."[46] In the late 1940s, North Korea was attempting to convey a similar "transparency, compassion, and objectivity," but as a foil to oppressive colonial police practices.[47] Yet, as the North Korean state began to resemble the colonial-era surveillance and disciplinary institutions, the state was determined to produce subjects who would passionately desire to participate in the revolution.[48] This desire was what Cho lacked, in the eyes of the courts. Instead of articulating desire, Cho's critical comments on the social and political conditions in North Korea conveyed pessimism toward the revolution.

Displeased with the minister's sermons, the prosecutor and judge asked Cho, "Can't you just not speak of such political issues [in your sermons]?"[49] Firmly believing that religious persons had an important role in society, particularly nation building in the postliberation space, Cho saw sermons as an appropriate medium for commenting on social and political conditions. Expressing frustration at the effects of the division of the peninsula, Cho had commented on the material deficits affecting the north. Distressed about the food shortage, Cho also questioned why Koreans must subsist on scraps of millet and pickled shrimp (typically consumed as a condiment) while other nations feasted. Turning to the debilitated transportation infrastructure, Cho then sarcastically remarked that the trains had gone on vacation, like the schools. Expressing skepticism of the mass support for the tax-in-kind, Cho also proceeded to question people's enthusiasm. This was interpreted as a bundle of hostile remarks on the policies of the provisional government, and Workers' Party members in the audience reported Cho for spreading pessimism among peasants ("nongmin ege pigwanjŏk ŭl chugo").[50]

When asked to explain why religion and politics cannot be separated, Cho replied, "Politics guide the people, and religion ensures that those people have the faith in order to live conscientiously."[51] Challenging Cho, county people's court prosecutor Sin then asked, "If that is the case, you could have just preached your sermons on the [sacred] text of the Bible. Why, then, did you go on to talk about the tax-in-kind? Is it not irrelevant to religion?"[52] When further pressed by the court, Cho maintained that it was entirely appropriate to make references to reality (social and political conditions in the present) in sermons and that they did not advance "reactionary propaganda." Given Cho's resolute position regarding his right to speak on social and political matters, it was unsurprising that he chose to appeal the county people's court's verdict. Further supporting Cho's firm belief in his innocence was the stack of sermon notes submitted with the appeal to the Hwanghae Province People's Court. On June 22, the higher court accepted Cho's appeal for a retrial. However, the reverend soon discovered that the provincial court convening in July had approved the appeal but was entirely unsympathetic to the defense.

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By July the judicial system had centralized significantly. Although the county people's court and provincial people's court questioned Cho on a similar list of items, the two trials differed in structure and tone. The P'yŏngsan County People's Court opened the trial proceedings by questioning the defendant first and posing more open-ended questions regarding Cho's comments and views on issues. When Cho took the stand at the Hwanghae Province People's Court on July 4, however, the judges, prosecution, and witnesses all conveyed teleological determination in the language they were using, and the charges laid against Cho appeared immutable. All wielded the term *reactionary* as self-evident, cornering Cho to either confess or deny the charges. The prosecution's witness statements at the provincial trial, moreover, were explicitly framed to prove Cho's reactionary subjectivity. In moving from the county to the provincial people's court, the witnesses were also demonstrating to the state their fluency in the revolutionary language and their ability to discern proper subjectivity from reactionary subjectivity.

While Cho was on trial, the people's courts were also attentive to, even anxious of, the witnesses' (i.e., the public's) interpretation of Cho's sermons. Even as the courts were elevating the audience as "nation-building fighters" who were "not even that undereducated," they were also deeply concerned that rural audiences were misguided or "ideologically confused" by Cho's sermons. Several times the court asked Cho, "For what reason did you say such confusing words to ignorant peasants?"[53] Again, we see that the court was consciously constructing the reactionary subject vis-à-vis the revolutionary subject by admonishing Cho's condescension while elevating the masses to reinforce the larger social reforms to empower the North Korean people.[54] However, illiteracy and low educational attainment in the late 1940s were still pressing issues that the state was aggressively seeking to rectify, and the state language oscillated between empowerment and paternalism. The vocabulary for reshaping the people's subjectivities into revolutionary patriots was also vulnerable to condescending remarks on the intelligence of the masses, and thus Cho's trial was a pedagogic lesson across the revolutionary-reactionary divide.

By targeting Cho's comments on various material conditions and policies in the north, the courts aimed to draw the contours around acceptable religious discourse and, in turn, "correct" Cho's view that religion and politics were inseparable. Displeased, the courts sought to cloister religious discourse to a more liturgical form that was washed and wrung of any political or social tint. From then on, Christian ministers remaining in the north were to internalize the revolutionary pedagogy that sermons deviating from the "sacred text of the Bible" would risk disciplinary action from the state, enabled by a growing citizen-police surveillance apparatus. The North Korean people, on the other hand, would be able to detect "reactionary speech" by Christians. In addition to censoring sermons on such issues as land reform and food shortages, the state began to reach over the line it had drawn, to instruct Cho on what kinds of religious teachings were not acceptable in sermons, even if based on the sacred text of the Bible. Consequently, the court's

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attempt to police the line between religious discourse and political discourse further exposed the instability of any dichotomous concept of the political and religious. To further show how the sacred had to be defined and redefined by North Korea's secularizing project, the next section closely examines the heated debate around Cho's discourse on building a religious nation and Christian eschatology.

CONFRONTING THE STATE PEDAGOGY ON THE SACRED

The final lesson that the people's court wished to disseminate to Cho and the courtroom audience was that, even though there was a protected space for the sacred in revolutionary North Korea, this sacred space would constantly be under state management. To make this point, the people's court reached over the boundary between religion and politics that its language assumed, to enjoin Christian ministers on what kinds of scriptural teachings would not have a platform. As Asad has cautioned, neither the religious nor the secular is a stable or self-evident category.[55] Rather, Asad's thesis asserts that the "space that religion may properly occupy in society has to be continually redefined by the law" because the making of a secular society "continually affects the discursive clarity of that [religious] space."[56] In the context of the North Korean Revolution, the trial of Cho Ponghwan initiated a state project for defining *religion* and *politics*, one that is still ongoing in contemporary North Korea. In other words, the North Korean state used disciplinary practices to relegate Christianity into a space that could be managed by the state, not unlike other nation-states.

During the P'yŏngsan County People's Court session, prosecutor Sin Pogyun took issue with something beyond pessimism toward the revolution. Turning to Cho's sermon references to the end times, Sin asked Cho to explain the biblical teaching on who will "overcome" the world. Citing scripture, Cho answered, "It is written that the ones to overcome the world are those who believe in Jesus Christ."[57] Proceeding, Sin then asked Cho whether Jesus Christ will be the one to establish a religious nation on Earth. After Cho replied that it was not so, Sin asked Cho to define *chonggyo kukka* (religious nation). "If we become a religious nation," Cho answered, "it means that people will be able to practice conscientious living."[58] After a brief interjection by the judge, Sin continued to question Cho on the relationship between religion and the nation-state. Arriving at the crux of the questioning, Sin prompted Cho to "explain the relationship between a religious person and the nation."[59] Elaborating, Cho described a religious nation as attainable when people begin to communally share material possessions and live in harmony with one another. Further, Cho explained that Korea would achieve full independence when religious persons carry out their mission. Asked how Christians can fulfill their mission, Cho answered that it can be achieved by reviving all of Chosŏn. Complete postcolonial liberation, Cho clarified for Sin,

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would be the fruit of all Koreans believing in Christ. At this moment in the trial, the records reveal several clues into Cho's idiosyncratic views on nation building and its possible intellectual genealogy.

Thanks to the fortunate survival of Cho's sermon notes with the trial records, the following excerpt from a sermon delivered at a school facility in P'yŏngsan County, Munmu-myŏn, Muran-ri, provides more direct access to Cho's thoughts:

> Immediately after liberation, I went to Seoul and heard that there are more than 160 political parties. And I thought to myself, what are we to do with so many political parties that are all trying to achieve national unification? From a religious perspective, I believed that the issue was a lack of love, and that is what I told the people. For example, people say that countries like Switzerland and Denmark realized a heaven on Earth [*chisang ch'ŏn'guk*] by becoming a religious nation. In those countries, as long as they stick a price tag on products they do not need store clerks, and the people all love one another. If all of Korea believes in Christ, then there is no reason why we can't surpass such countries. Although there are numerous organizations, I will call the church of Christ the organization of love [*sarang ŭi tanch'e*]. If we all believe in Christ, we will be able to build religious families, a religious society, and even a religious nation through the organization of love.[60]

Based on this surviving sermon, Cho's call for a "religious nation" was neither theocratically revolutionary nor an anticommunist crusade. Rather, Cho's faith-based politics rested on a vision of a gradual realization of a religious nation upon each individual's acceptance of Christ and pursuit of a conscientious living (*yangsim saenghwal*). More important, Cho's reference to Denmark as a model for realizing a religious nation, or a heaven on Earth, evokes ideas from an earlier intellectual movement in colonial Korea.[61]

Building a heaven on Earth in the immediate, material sense harkens back to the agrarian movements of the early twentieth century. In *Building a Heaven on Earth*, Albert L. Park describes these rural programs led by the YMCA, the Presbyterian Church, and the Ch'ŏndogyo as faith-based social movements that advocated for agrarian reforms based on the Danish cooperative model in order to negotiate with the social and economic ruptures caused by capitalist, colonial modernity in rural Korea.[62] Through rural reforms, these movements articulated their vision of modernity through the concept of *chisang ch'ŏn'guk*, underscoring their commitment to actualizing social change in the present. In the 1920s and 1930s, Park notes, a global discourse on Danish-style cooperatives influenced individuals from many countries, and the discourse that took root in Korea exploded in newspapers and monthly journals.[63] Above all, Presbyterian and Ch'ŏndogyo leaders became key intellectuals of the discourse and initiated experimental cooperatives for farmers and programs for rural youth. If Cho was thirty-four years of age in 1947, he was possibly influenced by or had participated in the Presbyterian or YMCA youth programs of the 1920s or 1930s.

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Cho's language of organically realizing a harmonious Christian nation through "organization[s] of love" to emulate Denmark would have sounded familiar to the Presbyterian leaders of the cooperative movement, who "emphasized that the structure of Danish cooperatives fostered a cooperative ethic and a unified social body over time."[64] More specifically, YMCA leader Hong Pyŏngsŏn focused on the relationship of trust between individuals as the building block for achieving Danish-style cooperatives, while the Presbyterian leader Yu Chaegi critiqued capitalism for lacking love for the sake of profit.[65] Similarly, Cho articulated a vision of a Korean nation based on a cooperative ethic, trust, and love that would knit together each individual Christian into larger social bodies. While the fragmentary nature of the surviving sermon notes precludes any absolute certainties, the sermon notes and trial records strongly suggest that Cho was drawing on precirculating ideas of a moral economy and not the anticommunist discourse of many influential Protestant ministers from the north.

Examining the discordant theological outlooks of Presbyterian leaders during the colonial period also reveals an earlier point of divergence between conservative, mainline ministers and leaders like Pae Minsu (1896–1968) who represented the "official rural reconstruction movement of the Presbyterian Church" in Korea. Charting an alternative path from leading Presbyterian figures like Kil Sŏnju (1869–1935), who emphasized the formal conversion experience and millenarianism, Pae preached a theology that stressed the individual's personal, everyday relationship with God.[66] Understanding God's love as manifest through human relationships, Pae articulated a concept of *chisang ch'ŏn'guk* to claim the material present as the sacred site in which individuals could overcome and transform material insecurities exacerbated by colonial capitalism. When Cho Ponghwan responded to Sin Pogyun's questioning by asserting that human individuals and not Christ would be the ones to establish the religious nation, his emphasis on human agency in transforming Korea into a sacred space likely drew on the ideas circulated by Pae throughout rural northern Korea in the 1930s. If Cho was indeed an intellectual successor to the earlier faith-based rural movements, what the North Korean state failed to understand was that leaders like Pae critiqued capitalism while "stak[ing] out a middle ground" between materialism, which they believed alienated people from God's love (by instilling yearning for the urban future), and agrarianism, which created a nostalgia for a pastoral past.[67]

Where Cho departed from the earlier discourse, however, was situating the message within a narrative of postcolonial nation building and navigating bipolarized politics. If the disruptive effects of capitalist economy on rural communities under Japanese colonialism caused many Christian leaders to look to agrarian reforms to mediate the consequences, it seems that Cho reworked tenets of the Danish cooperative discourse as a way to negotiate with the changes brought by a socialist revolution and national division. In this way, Cho's argument that religion and politics were intimately intertwined was another example of Christians "reclaim[ing] society as a sacred space [to inform] new visions of a

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modern Korea . . . to address poverty and social inequality through . . . a heavenly kingdom on earth."[68] Furthermore, just as the colonial state shifted gears to war mobilization (in World War II) and intensified surveillance, censorship, and other disciplinary practices on social movements and discourse in Korea, the intensifying Cold War conditions drove North Korea to harshly bear down on any discourse that might develop into resistance or critique of the state's policies.

Thus, even while the United States was not mentioned in the sermons, Cho's reference to European nations became a gateway for authorities to investigate Cho's position on the United States. During the protocol of examination of the defendant on April 20, 1947, at the P'yŏngsan County Procuracy, Yi T'aegŭn questioned Cho regarding American missionaries' rapport with Korean Christians:

YI: So, as a religious person, you said that we should establish a religious nation?

CHO: Yes, that is right. I said that if all thirty million compatriots believe in Christ, we will become a nation of earthly paradise.

YI: Which countries have the largest number of Christian believers and have [Christianity] as their state religion?

CHO: Switzerland and Denmark.

YI: Which country has sent the most missionaries to proselytize Christianity to Korea? (The country that has sent missionaries in order to missionize.)

CHO: The country with the most is the United States, then the English and Italians.

YI: How are the Christians in Korea organized?

CHO: Presbyterian, Methodist, and the Holiness Church.

YI: Which denomination (of the three denominations) has the most believers in Korea?

CHO: The Presbyterian Church.

YI: How do the Christian believers in P'yŏngsan County number?

CHO: 800 Presbyterians, 700 Methodists. . . approximately 1,500. It may be not accurate.

YI: It appears that Christians automatically worship the Americans, but what is the reason?

CHO: Due to many American missionaries giving us cultural and national-cultural [*minjok*] consciousness during the colonial period . . . and despite being foreigners, it was only the Americans who actually came and built up [civic] culture, including religion. It is probably this kind of reason why many people worship them.[69]

The recorded exchange shows how Yi, uninterested in the significance of Cho's attraction to Switzerland and Denmark, steered the questioning to arrive at the state's more pressing concern: were all Korean Christians sympathetic to the

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United States? Cho's explanation that Korean Christians saw American missionaries as coauthors of Korean national-cultural (*minjok*) consciousness affirmed the state's conviction that Christians would uncritically accept American imperial tutelage.

While Cho's politics were distant from the viral anticommunist discourse of the *wŏllam* ministers (those who left the north and crossed the thirty-eighth parallel into South Korea), the North Korean people's courts were unconvinced that Cho's teachings on Christ as the one to overcome the world were not subtext for an anticommunist Christian eschatology. And when the state heard in Cho's sermon a call for Christians to form organizations (*sarang ŭi tanch'e*), every reference to the victory of Christ or Christians was suspected as a political message for subverting the revolution. On the one hand, Christian rhetoric of an eschatological struggle threatened to destabilize the mass-based politics of the provisional government by setting Christians apart from the nonbelieving masses. Moreover, the political threat of such rhetoric was perceived as real and material due to the violent crusading discourse disseminated by anticommunist Christian leaders throughout the postliberation years. Addressing the Christian youth in March 1948, Hwang Ŭn'gyun (1902–59) urged, "As the medieval knights did, we must fight for faith and freedom. We the Christian youth must fight for our freedom and happiness."[70] One of many northern Presbyterian ministers who went south, Hwang appropriated the history of the medieval European crusades as an interpretive frame for the postliberation politics to rally Christian youth to political action in Seoul.

Hwang's crusading discourse was joined by another Presbyterian minister from South P'yŏngan. Han Kyŏngjik (1902–2000), an influential church leader throughout the twentieth century, played a pivotal role in coalescing northern refugees as a formidable political force in South Korea after an aborted effort to politically organize in Sinŭiju in 1945. In a 1949 publication titled "Christianity and Communism," Han proclaimed the following: "The first lines of the Communist Manifesto presented by Marx and Engels in 1848 starts with these words, 'A beast is rampant over Europe.' As they say, communism is this very great beast. Right now, this beast is rampant over the whole land of Korea looking for people to swallow. Who will be the one to slay this beast? This image is the very red dragon in the Book of Revelation."[71] This crusading imagery invoked by Han was not mere allegory for Korean Christians at the time. As Kang Inch'ŏl has established, Han's Youngnak Presbyterian Church (founded in Seoul in 1945) was connected to the right-wing paramilitary Northwest (Sŏbuk) Youth Corps, which acted as what Bruce Cumings has called the "shock force" of the early South Korean state's violent suppression of the uprising on Cheju Island.[72] For leaders like Hwang and Han, a struggle between saints and beasts was to be waged over both the Korean nation and the heavenly kingdom, and the battle was near. Unlike Cho, who preached a message of building harmonious, cooperative communities, Hwang and Han saw an apocalyptic conflict between Left and Right, North and South.

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In the end, Cho Ponghwan's distinctive worldview was unintelligible to the courts. And during the Hwanghae Province People's Court, Cho yielded: "Religion as religion, politics as politics, I see no relationship between the two."[73] Yet, the court was unconvinced, and the prosecution continued to censure Cho's selection of verses from the sacred text. Uninterested in exploring the tensions within the theological discourse, the North Korean state made it clear to Cho that any biblical references to conflicts between Christians and non-Christians would be interpreted as an affront to the revolution, which sought to project a united front.[74] The people's court therefore invested discursive labor into instructing Cho to omit any biblical references that implicitly or explicitly conveyed conflict between opposing groups. In this context of heightened sensitivity to language and rhetoric, Cho's urging of his listeners to believe in Christ so that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" alarmed the state.[75] Turning to the defense's witness, Hwanghae court judge Kim Yit'ak asked twenty-nine-year-old Kim Sŏngwŏn to confirm whether he heard Cho declare that "only the Party of Love, the Church of Christ, will be victorious."[76] Kim, a fellow Christian who attended Cho's church, confirmed that "[Cho] preached that the Party of Love is the church of Christ but [Kim] did not hear Cho talk about any victorious party."[77] Irritated with the defense witness, the judge then questioned how Kim could not have heard Cho's reactionary words.

In turning Cho's discussion of the "organization of love" into the "Party of Love," the court sought to determine whether Cho was employing eschatological language to organize political opposition against the state. In one sermon, Cho urged for cooperation among factions and parties by presenting belief in Christ as the only solution for achieving unity. Fighting among the "reds" and "blues," Cho preached, was all nonsense among fellow compatriots. Instead, Cho advised, "Believe in Christ!" Despite Cho's insistence that he intended "to stress that fighting amongst brothers is shameful when we must all direct our efforts at nation-building," the court was disturbed by the minister's tendency to fold political commentaries into biblical teachings.[78] At the final trial, the people's court unequivocally categorized Christian eschatology as reactionary language that advocated the triumph of the church over the state. Further confirming the state's distrust of Cho was twenty-nine-year-old Kim Walsun's hostile testimony against Cho at the provincial people's court, stating that "the public considers [Cho] a large obstacle to the democratic project in North Korea."[79] As Kim was the secretary-general of the Naedŏk-myŏn People's Committee, her testimonies proved the most helpful to the courts in their case against Cho. To the courts, even if Cho was not the crusading anticommunist of the state's imagination, he was still articulating a dissenting vision for the nation's future.

To ensure that Christian leaders would not disseminate critical views of the government, the North Korean people's courts censored certain "sacred text[s] of the Bible" from Christian discourse. And by expressing displeasure at Cho's sermons on building a religious nation or heaven on Earth, Christ as the ultimate

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victor, and the perishing of nonbelievers, the courts wished to inculcate in Cho, the witnesses, and the public that Christian ministers should not discuss biblical references depicting either a celestial or terrestrial conflict between Christians and nonbelievers. In this way, discussions of Christian nation building and Christian eschatology, regardless of intent, were expunged from the public lexicon in the north while crusading rhetoric was increasingly taken up by anticommunist Christians in the south. At the same time, the courts instructed the public to aid the state in policing the speech, gestures, and actions of Christians to relegate Christianity to a carefully delineated sacred space in the revolution. In this climate of rising hostility toward Christianity, Cho's arrest was unsurprising. Many Christian leaders in the prewar north were harassed and detained for a range of activities deemed uncooperative to the revolution. While these accounts disrupt the sanitized, bureaucratic facade of Cho's trial records, the records nonetheless shed light on how the language of the revolution needed to be ironed out by defining the categories of religion and politics, reactionary and revolutionary, in a prolonged debate between judges, witnesses, lawyers, and a Christian minister.

CONCLUSION

In total, the final trial by the Hwanghae Province People's Court lasted five hours, and it was a grueling session for Cho. The judges, prosecutor, and their witnesses united behind a fluent revolutionary grammar, leaving little space for Cho to argue his case as he did in the county people's court. As Charles K. Armstrong has noted, "Until early 1947, if not later, central control was weak, local autonomy considerable, and ideological unity elusive."[80] This centralization can clearly be detected in Cho's "organization of love" becoming incriminated by the provincial court as the "Party of Love." And in another instance, the Hwanghae court charged Cho not for condescension (*hyungbon sasil*) toward the *poansŏ* official but for insulting (*moyok hayŏtta*) the official. These subtle shifts in the language reflect the highly poised and self-assured posturing by the legal system in Hwanghae between Cho's arrest in March and the final trial in July 1947.

When the trial came to a close at 6:50 p.m. on July 4, 1947, the panel of judges upheld the county people's court's ruling of a four-year sentence instead of approving the prosecution's request for five years. The court also counted Cho's months in detention as part of the four-year sentence. While the prosecution of Cho certainly exercised the disciplinary power of the North Korean state, the records leave more questions unanswered. Even as Cho's civil rights were severely curtailed and he remained detained for a crime that he denied to the end, Cho was not entirely banished from the political body. Furthermore, the gesture of leniency in the judges' sentencing betrayed a redemptive rationale on the part of the state regarding Cho's future in the new nation-state. However, the outbreak

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of the Korean War in June 1950 further dwindled the possible futures for Cho Ponghwan. The state-sanctioned summary executions, mass displacement, and destructive US aerial bombardment during the war all cast doubts on whether the minister even survived the violence of the war to complete the sentence.

If Cho did survive, then as explained by Philo Kim's research on the North Korean state's shifting religious policies from 1945 to the present, many individuals (and their families) who were previously "branded as reactionaries, impure elements" were eventually rehabilitated into North Korean society in the 1960s.[81] As recent scholarship on religion and the Cold War continues to clarify, "state secularization [is] not so much a process of eradicating religion as it [is] one of destabilizing and recomposing it."[82] In 1972 the Korean Christian Federation was reestablished to operate as the state-approved channel for Protestant activities.[83] Furthermore, the reemergence of Protestant and Catholic public worship in Pyongyang in the late 1980s, underground Christian activities, and the designation of the Sino-Korean border as an evangelical and humanitarian field all raise important questions around how nation-states, religion, and secularism continuously shape each other. Although historians still face archival challenges in accessing the earlier periods of North Korean history, this article has demonstrated a microhistorical approach to Christianity and North Korea that goes beyond the narrative of "the most dangerous country for Christians" by use of surviving people's court records.

NOTES

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1. Hunt, "Korean Martyrs—Part I," 1.

2. Hunt, "Korean Martyrs—Part III," 2. During the colonial period, the missionary discourse on the colonial state's mistreatment of Christians (i.e., the March First movement, Shinto worship) also reveals the slippage between modern and antimodern in their views of Japan. However, this discourse was much more ambivalent and on the whole accepted the Japanese empire's modernizing role in Korea. And by the time Hunt was writing, postwar Japan was integrated into the US-led order and redesignated as a mission field for American Christian missionaries. For the US narrative on religion and religious freedom vis-à-vis postwar Japan, see note 11.

3. Hunt, "Korean Martyrs—Part III," 2.

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4. North Korea has topped the Open Doors World Watch List as "the most dangerous country for Christians" for nearly two decades, while former US president George W. Bush named North Korea part of the "axis of evil" with Iran and Iraq in 2002.

5. Outside of key contributions from South Korean scholarship, the literature on Christianity in Korea is weighted toward the colonial period and/or post-1945 South Korea. The literature on Christianity and contemporary North Korea, especially North Korean migrants, has seen more robust growth. In *Migration and Religion in East Asia*, Jin-Heon Jung politically maps North Korean migrants' encounters with evangelical institutions in their process of becoming South Korean citizens.

6. Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 181–82.

7. Ibid., 182.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 169.

10. For the debate over understanding North Korea's political system as a neo-Confucian "dynasty," see Kwon and Chung, *North Korea*, 18–26.

11. The tendency to see aberrance in state-driven secular projects in East Asia also extends to narratives about pre-/postwar Japan. In a critical intervention, Jolyon Baraka Thomas rejects the prevailing diagnosis that prewar and wartime Japan was held hostage under an oppressive state religion. Rather, Thomas argues that the Meiji constitutional period saw buzzing debates over religion and religious freedom as part of its larger project with secularity. However, the US occupation in 1945 invented "state Shinto" as a way to herald their bestowing of "true" (i.e., universalizing) religious freedom to the Japanese in 1945. Thomas, *Faking Liberties*, 3–4, 21.

12. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 170.

13. Armstrong, *North Korean Revolution*, 201–2.

14. The attendees themselves do not appear on the records.

15. Cho, "Judicial System," 1171; Hahm, "Ideology and Criminal Law," 88.

16. Court records of Cho Ponghwan, 57.

17. Kim I., *Kim Il-sŏng chŏnjip*, 3:230–32. This provisional government, created on February 8, 1946, with Kim Il Sung as chairman, was the first centralized government that became the basis for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 1948.

18. K. M. Hwang, *Rationalizing Korea*, 166.

19. Han, "Ongoing Korean War," 102–3. However, this correlation between religious affiliation and land ownership should not be stretched to represent socioeconomic patterns across the peninsula. Mun Jeong-hyun's film *Halmae kkot* shows that rural South Chŏlla (southern South Korea) saw horrific intervillage violence during the Korean War after a working-class village adopted Christianity and right-wing nationalism while the adjacent land-owning villages adopted communism.

20. In 2001, Hwang Sok-yong's novel *The Guest*, marshaling testimonial evidence, claimed to correct the historical record by narrating the massacre through a crusade-like conflict between local Christians and communists. However, the contest over the history of Sinch'ŏn continues, with South Korea, North Korea, and the United States all having a stake.

21. Forming a vast collection of captured enemy documents, record group 242 is primarily known to scholars for its extensive German-language records seized during World War II. However, in North Korean studies, this collection represents the most substantive

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and accessible archives of early North Korea due to the US military's indiscriminate seizing of North Korean documents during the Korean War. Included in the extensive holdings are cultural productions such as magazines, textbooks, and translated publications, making this archive attractive to historians of diverse fields. Therefore, the inclusion of North Korean court records cannot be said to be part of any systematic reconnaissance of the US military, but it does speak to its anxieties in reading the "enemy." I connect this seizure of North Korean documents to the production of a paper archive around the captured North Korean prisoners of war by the US military during the Korean War. See Kim M., *Interrogation Rooms*, 21.

22. Luehrmann, *Religion in Secular Archives*, 44.

23. The Institute for Literature of Korean Church History's scanned reproductions are nearly illegible and so are not referenced in this article, but in two instances Kim Heung Soo's reproductions helped with the legibility of Cho's sermon notes, as I indicate in the citations. Otherwise, all analytical work in this article is based on the original records at the US National Archives in College Park, Maryland. The *Historical Materials Related to North Korea* volume's reproductions are valuable to historians but iron out differences in handwriting and omit the court clerks' meticulous tallying in the margins the number of word blocks deleted for each line. For this reason, I relied on the original records.

24. Court records of Kim Ponghan, 60–61.

25. Ann Laura Stoler's ethnography of the Dutch colonial archival production was a helpful point of departure for reading both the "violent capacities and anxieties" of the early North Korean state (*Along the Archival Grain*, 1).

26. In challenging the narrative of an exceptionally violent Soviet state and an exceptionally victimized citizenry, Retish explains that the "Soviet court's responses to illicit social violence during a time of upheaval should be seen as a larger attempt by the state to remake society" ("Controlling Revolution," 1804).

27. Court records of Cho Ponghwan, 18–19, 58, 81.

28. Kim H., *Haebang hu Pukhan kyohoesa*, 439.

29. *Sŏgi* (西紀) translates as "A.D." (anno Domini), with *sŏ* meaning "west." According to Cho, the official had misunderstood *sŏgi* as a shortened form of *Soryŏn tan'gi*, meaning "Soviet calendar."

30. Court records of Cho Ponghwan, 139.

31. Ibid., 60.

32. S. Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution*, 171.

33. Ibid., 141.

34. Ginzburg, *Judge and the Historian*, 19. In 1999, Ginzburg placed on retrial the evidence employed by the Italian state in its conviction of three radical leftists in 1988 based on their "fetishization" of a confession. Both the important role of the court clerk and the court's fetish over confessions can also be glimpsed in Cho's trial.

35. Ibid.

36. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 191.

37. A 1992 Christian yearbook reported that Hwanghae Province ranked third in the number of Christians after the P'yŏngan Provinces, with 57,667 Christians. See Kim H., *Haebang hu Pukhan kyohoesa*, 428. Kang Inch'ŏl estimates that, of the roughly 200,000 Christians, "around 35 to 40 percent" left for the south (*Han'guk Kidok kyohoe*, 416).

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38. Chŏng, "Pukchosŏn Imsi Inmin Wiwŏnhoe," 249–50.
39. Lee, *Born Again*, 64.
40. Kim S., *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution*, 93.
41. Court records of Cho Ponghwan, 59.
42. As Bruce Cumings clarifies, "Christian churches remained open until the war, and worship as allowed, but Christian political activities were ruthlessly stamped out" (*Korea's Place in the Sun*, 231).
43. Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 190–91.
44. As Monica Kim corroborates, "Whether American psychologists in the US military or Communist revolutionaries on the Korean peninsula, people in the postwar world focused their attention on the interior human world, as both empires and revolutions claimed the central project of decolonization" (*Interrogation Rooms*, 5).
45. Kim M., "Empire's Babel," 2.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. As Charles K. Armstrong notes, "DPRK advocated a sharp break with the past, but ultimately continued the penetration of the state into society, the regulation of everyday life, or what Michel Foucault called the 'governmentalization of the state'" (*North Korean Revolution*, 193).
49. Court records of Cho Ponghwan, 85.
50. Ibid., 96.
51. Ibid., 82.
52. Ibid. See also page 85.
53. Ibid., 49, 81, 158.
54. Retish recognizes in Leninist thought the place of courts "as a means to incorporate peasants into the state administration and empower them against exploiters and counterrevolutionaries" ("Controlling Revolution," 1792–93).
55. Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 25.
56. Ibid., 201.
57. Court records of Cho Ponghwan, 86.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., 87.
60. Kim H., *Haebang hu Pukhan kyohoesa*, 442.
61. Unlike the discourse on Denmark, the context for Cho's reference to Switzerland is difficult to locate, so this article focuses on tracing the discourse around the Danish cooperative.
62. Park, *Building a Heaven on Earth*, 150–51. From 1920 and 1937, rural Korea saw a massive dispossession of peasants who had to "commodify their labor" to the colonial state/economy to overcome material insecurities. The alarming effects on peasants prompted many leaders to turn to the Danish cooperative system for a modernized agriculture-based economy that also enabled cooperatives to "pool the labor and resources of individual peasants and create enough economic power" to negotiate with the colonial market economy.
63. Ibid., 155.
64. Ibid., 160.
65. Ibid., 159.

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66. Ibid., 107.
67. Ibid., 118–19.
68. Ibid., 17.
69. Court records of Cho Ponghwan, 52–53.
70. Reproduced in Kim H., *Haebang hu Pukhan kyohoesa*, 330.
71. Reproduced in Kim H., *Haebang hu Pukhan kyohoesa*, 300. A graduate of Soongsil University and Princeton University, Han held a decades-long clerical career in South Korea after establishing the Youngnak Presbyterian Church in 1945. In *The Korean War and Protestantism*, Yun Chŏngnan discusses at length the pivotal role played by Han in brokering US-Korean relations during the Korean War by monopolizing relief aid distribution from the United States.
72. Kang, *Han'guk Kidok kyohoe*, 216–20; Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War*, 198–203.
73. Court Records of Cho Ponghwan, 146.
74. Cumings notes, "Kim leadership adopted a 'united-front policy toward two major parties, the Chosŏn Democratic Party (CDP) and the 'Friends Party' of the Ch'ŏndogyo religion. . . . But this united-front policy gave no real power to these parties." Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 229.
75. John 3:16.
76. Court Records of Cho Ponghwan, 140–41.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid., 156.
79. Ibid., 139.
80. Armstrong, "Surveillance and Punishment," 332.
81. Kim P., "Protestant Households in North Korea," 34.
82. Heo and Kormina, "Introduction," 9.
83. Kim P., "Protestant Households in North Korea," 29, 36.

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