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Glocalization of “Christian Social Responsibility”: The Contested Legacy of the Lausanne Movement among Neo-Evangelicals in South Korea¹

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Abstract: This paper examines the contested legacy of the First Lausanne Congress in South Korean neo-evangelical communities. In response to growing political and social conflicts in the Global South during the 1960s and 1970s, thousands of evangelical leaders from more than 150 countries gathered at Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974 to discuss the proper relationship between evangelism and social action. The meeting culminated with the proclamation of the Lausanne Covenant, which affirmed both evangelism and public involvement as essential elements of the Christian faith. However, the absence of practical guidelines in the Covenant opened the door for all sorts of evangelical social activism, whether from the Evangelical Right or the Evangelical Left, for years to come. In light of such diverse ramifications of the Congress at both the global and local level, this paper explores the various ways in which the idea of “Christian social responsibility” has been interpreted and implemented by two distinct generations of neo-evangelical social activists in contemporary South Korea in relation to their respective socio-historical experiences of the Cold War and the 1980s democratic movement.

Keywords: glocalization; generation; Lausanne movement; neo-evangelicalism; Christian Right; Evangelical Left; South Korea

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1. Introduction

Since the early 2000s, among socially-concerned neo-evangelicals in South Korea, a debate has proliferated concerning Christian public engagement with reference to the Lausanne Congress resolution on “Christian social responsibility” [1,2]. On the one side is a group of right-leaning neo-evangelical leaders of the older Korean War generation [3], who introduced the Lausanne movement into South Korea in the 1970s and 1980s and who, from then on, championed the gradual reform-oriented civic movement in competition with both reactionary conservatives and radical progressives. In 2004, they launched a new right-leaning civil organization, *Kidokkyo sahoe ch’aegim* (Christian social responsibility (CSR)) and more or less aligned themselves with conservative forces to suppress the ascendance of the liberal-left force in the public sphere [4,5]. On the other side is a group of neo-evangelical activists of the younger 1980s democratic movement generation [6]. In the mid-1980s, they were introduced to the Lausanne movement through some of the key founders of the CSR, and yet, even though they identify themselves as “the Lausanne generation”, this group generally takes a liberal-left position on many socio-political issues [7]. Thus, when the CSR was launched in 2004, most of the younger evangelical activists not only refused to join the organization, but also levelled criticism against their former mentors for allegedly deviating from the original spirit of the Lausanne movement [8]. In other words, although the senior Evangelical Right and the junior Evangelical Left drank from the same well of the Lausanne movement, they developed quite different understandings of its implications without being aware of their mutual divergences for almost two decades.

This paper uses this generational divergence of the Lausanne-inspired neo-evangelical circle in South Korea as a case study to explore how a religious idea, stemming from particular locales, has been projected onto the global field and differently adapted in other spatio-temporal localities. Thus, the overarching theme is the concept of “glocalization”, the idea that the global and the local are mutually constitutive and that globalization does not efface, but rather heightens and reconstructs, local particularities [9]. However, it must be pointed out that the glocalizing process has often been conceived within a societal framework implicitly based on binary terms, as in interactive relations between the universal and the particular or between the global and the local. Certainly, this model may work well at certain abstract-systemic levels, such as in cases of the glocalizing processes of the ideas and practices of modern nationalism or capitalism [10,11]. However, glocalization often takes place through multiple currents or waves, each of which simultaneously moves in interaction with, and in disjuncture from, one another [12]. In other words, there is a range of different socio-cultural “flows” or “-scapes” that move side-by-side with political and economic currents: e.g., the movements of people, media, technology, finance, ideology, sound, religion, and so on, along the global-local continuum [12–14]. It is therefore important to take into account possible variables that might condition and influence such pluralistic and multi-directional glocalization processes. After all, factors such as temporality, power dynamics and human agency, can effectively accelerate, impede, modify or even reverse the transmission of various political, economic and cultural waves [15–17].

To demonstrate this point, this study focuses on the ways in which the notion of “Christian social responsibility” has been variously appropriated by diverse evangelical actors with different interpretive lenses and practical concerns. Through the medium of ideology-carrying individuals or groups, this particular evangelical discourse has travelled from the mission fields, *ipso facto* a site of the global-local

nexus, of 1960s and 1970s Latin America to the global evangelical event of the 1974 Lausanne Congress in Switzerland and from thence to various evangelical communities around the world, including those in the United States and South Korea. However, at every juncture of its journey, the transmission of this idea was often blocked, interrupted and delayed by those who were uncomfortable with its left-leaning implications. Even after it became one of the key defining terminologies of the post-Lausanne global evangelicalism, the notion of “Christian social responsibility” has been variously re-interpreted and transformed according to given historical and socio-political circumstances.

This study is part of the author’s larger research project on the emergence and development of the Christian Right in contemporary South Korea. The data were primarily collected during fieldwork through a combination of semi-structured interviews and oral history, which intermittently took place in the Republic of Korea and the United States from 2010 to 2012. For this specific subject on the generational split of Korean evangelicalism, the author, from the perspective of an “outsider” to the evangelical tradition, interviewed a total of 22 evangelical pastors or lay leaders, who had been directly or indirectly involved in faith-based socio-political activism, as well as the controversy on the formation of the CSR in 2004 and 2005. To corroborate and crosscheck interviewees’ personal accounts, a range of historical research was also conducted on the development of the global Lausanne movement, as well as the process of its introduction to South Korean evangelical communities. The materials used for the related text-oriented research include documents of the Lausanne movement, articles in evangelical journals and magazines and secondary literature on Korean and global evangelicalism.

The following discussion starts with a survey of the contested legacy of the First Lausanne Congress, which has arguably become the authoritative reference point for all sorts of evangelicals’ socio-political engagement. Building upon this, the second section explicates why the Lausanne movement initially had limited influence upon Korean evangelicals in the 1970s, but was subsequently rediscovered by an emerging, neo-evangelical movement amid the revolutionary social environment of the 1980s. The final part explores how a generational rift was created within Korean evangelicalism and how that affected the evangelical socio-political orientations of different generations.

2. Evangelism and Social Concern: The Contested Legacy of the Lausanne Congress

In July 1974, more than 2700 evangelical leaders from 150 countries gathered to take part in the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland. Seemingly, this global evangelical event was poised to repeat what Christians with evangelizing fervor had done for a long time: to take stock of diverse mission fields and discuss the particular tasks or challenges therein. A significant portion of its sessions were actually devoted to the conventional agendas of the traditional centers of Christian missions located in the Global North [18,19].

However, this year’s gathering was especially significant. Both the planners of the meeting and a fair number of delegates from the Two-Thirds World were well aware that one of the main points would be a discussion of the dispute concerning “the question of the proper place of social action in the overall program of the Church” ([18], p. 29). Seeking an answer to this question was the urgent reason many evangelicals of the Global South, as well as the new generation of evangelicals of the Global North made a trip to Lausanne, as they were finding it increasingly difficult to separate evangelism from the great many political, economic and racial problems that swept across the world

throughout the 1960s and 1970s [20,21]. It was against such a historical backdrop that the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization assembled an unprecedentedly large number of evangelical leaders from all over the world to discuss, and possibly determine, a consensus on a proper relationship between evangelism and socio-political concerns from the evangelical perspective.

Some liberal critics denigrate the Lausanne movement as an evangelical attempt to “pay lip service to the social and political changes underway in the Third World” ([22], p. 213). Nevertheless, as Tizon points out, there was a significant minority voice of the so-called “radical evangelicals” present at the First Lausanne Congress, who strived to redefine the traditional notion of evangelism as integrally related to social concern and political engagement [21]. During the Congress, those who took such a stance tried to insert their broader understanding of evangelism in the Lausanne Covenant. As a result, their voice was partly reflected in Article Five of the Covenant:

...We express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. *Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty.* For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man [*sic*], our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ...([2], emphasis added).

As it stands, this statement was a half-compromise between the two competing schools of thought among evangelical leaders in the 1970s. On the one hand, mainstream evangelicals strove to draw a clear line between “evangelism” and “social action” and affirm the primacy of evangelism over other missionary activities. Thus they managed to insert their view in Article Six of the Lausanne Covenant, which stipulates: “In the church’s mission of sacrificial service, evangelism is primary” [2]. On the other hand, radical evangelicals opposed the whole idea of separating evangelism from public engagement, let alone giving priority to one over the other. To a certain extent, they achieved a desired result in making the Covenant acknowledge the point that these two practices are both an essential part of “Christian duty”. Nonetheless, the Covenant not only made a distinction between “evangelism” and “social action”, but also failed to specify any concrete principle of action, on which evangelicals could determine “what is included in ‘social responsibility’, whose responsibility it is, and how it relates to evangelism” ([23], p. 171). This was partly the reason why, during the Congress, the radical evangelicals formed a special sub-group to issue a response to the drafts of the Lausanne Covenant. In a document, entitled “Theological Implications of Radical Discipleship,” they not only repudiated “as demonic the attempt to drive a wedge between evangelism and social action,” but also clearly articulated their positions on such socio-political issues as racism, class struggle, political freedom and economic justice [18]. In other words, the mainstream and the radical evangelicals reached an uneasy consensus, which opened the door for much confusion on the relationship between evangelism and socio-political involvement.

Then, it should come as no surprise that such a built-in ambiguity in the Lausanne Covenant allowed the proponents of each side to proclaim victory over the other. For instance, in his personal account of the first Lausanne Congress, as published in *Christianity Today* in 1975, C. Peter Wagner, then the professor of church growth at Fuller Theological Seminary in California and a strong advocate

of a traditional and narrower definition of evangelism, expressed his general satisfaction with the final outcome of the Lausanne Covenant. Throughout the Congress, Wagner reckoned, “evangelism had emerged intact” from “torpedoes” fired by those who tried to “divert the emphasis from world evangelization to other...aspects of the total mission of the Church” ([19], p. 7). In contrast, in 1985, an Ecuadorian radical evangelical leader, Carlos René Padilla, published an article with an overview history of the debate on the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility in the global evangelical movement. Therein, Padilla described the first Lausanne Congress as having made a decisive step in affirming evangelical socio-political engagement and opined that the Covenant brought “a death blow to every attempt to reduce the mission of the Church to the multiplication of Christians and churches through evangelism” ([24], p. 29). Although they were present at the same global evangelical event during the same period of time, Wagner and Padilla obviously drew very different implications from the Lausanne Congress.

For years to come after the First Lausanne Congress, the debate on the relationship between evangelism and socio-political concern continued in various working groups, conferences and *ad hoc* consultation meetings. First, the radical evangelicals continued pushing to expand the notion of Christian mission to include public engagement and elaborated their positions on such socio-political issues as human rights, political freedom and social justice. To be sure, they were numerically outnumbered by the likes of Peter Wagner, who wanted to keep evangelism separate from any social concern. Nevertheless, the voices of the radical evangelicals were more or less well represented in a few consultation meetings, such as those on “Simple Lifestyle” (Hoddesdon, England, 1980) and “The Church in Response to Human Need” (Wheaton, USA, 1983) [23]. Especially, the 1983 Wheaton consultation gathering produced a statement on “Transformation: the Church in Response to Human Need” [25], which, according to Padilla, articulated “the integral view of the church and its [socio-political] mission” more clearly than any other evangelical texts on the subject ([26], p. 15). This document explicitly condemned the tendency among conservative evangelicals to maintain political neutrality or quietist withdrawal from the world as being ultimately in the service of the *status quo* and unequivocally called for taking a side with the poor and the oppressed, even if this socio-political choice might lead evangelicals into direct conflict with worldly powers [25].

On the other hand, mainstream evangelicals persisted in giving priority to evangelism over social concern, while tangentially accepting the idea of “Christian social responsibility” as an important, although not an essential, concern in Christian missions. In consultations on “World Evangelization” (Pattaya, Thailand, 1980) and “the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility” (Grand Rapids, USA, 1982) [23,27], as well as in the Second International Congress on World Evangelization, otherwise known as Lausanne II (Manila, Philippines, 1989) [28], the dominant mood was to affirm the primacy of evangelism based on the conviction that the root of all social problems lay in the sinful nature of humanity and that any attempts at social change would be futile without a regeneration of human souls [23,27]. Moreover, the rapid socio-political change taking place in the last decades of the 20th century added fuel to the rekindling of evangelizing impulses in evangelical missionary circles around the world. A combination of multiple historical factors, e.g., the intensification of millennialist expectations among Christians toward the end of the century, the signs of the disintegration of communist countries and the phenomenal church growth in the Two-Thirds World, inspired many evangelical Christians “to shift into high gear to fulfill the Great Commission...[and] the task of world

evangelization by the year 2000 and beyond” ([28], p. 346). The official catchphrase of the 1989 Lausanne II Congress, “Proclaim Christ Until He Comes”, clearly reflected the voice of traditional evangelicals who were more concerned about bringing the Gospel to the yet “unreached” population than promoting evangelicals’ socio-political involvement [28].

Nevertheless, it is hard to deny that many of those who previously insisted on keeping evangelism and socio-political concerns separate also underwent a paradigm shift from the 1980s onward. In the United States, for instance, a number of fundamentalist Christians, represented by Jerry Falwell and his Moral Majority movement, renounced their isolationist attitude toward the public sphere and made a strategic alliance with the conservative-evangelical wing of the Lausanne movement, which was growing increasingly anxious about the ascendance of young, radical evangelicals after the First Lausanne Congress. Together, this evangelical-fundamentalist alliance declared that “it is time we denied the ‘lunatic fringe’ of our movements and worked for a great conservative crusade to turn America back to God” ([29], p. 222). This alliance gave rise to the so-called Christian Right in the 1980s, and a number of neo-evangelical leaders who advocated public Christian engagement in the First Lausanne Congress, especially, Carl F. H. Henry and Francis Schaeffer, played an important role in their joint cultural war to fight against the so-called secular humanism in the USA [30].

Meanwhile, from the 1980s and onward, evangelicals of a Pentecostal-Charismatic bent also developed a greater interest in engaging in “spiritual warfare” against “the principalities and powers of evil” in the secular realm [31]. In dialogue with such new trends in the conservative evangelical circle, Peter Wagner, who used to be a champion of the narrower definition of evangelism, gave up his previous conviction about pre-millennial eschatology and recanted his earlier objection to radical evangelical attempts to link evangelism with social concern [32]. Using terms, such as “Dominion” and “Kingdom theology”, Wagner now strongly advocates evangelical commitment to “social transformation” and asserts that “it is the duty of God’s people to identify and change those ungodly aspects of culture so that God’s Kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven” ([32], p. 44). Granted, Wagner’s particular method of transforming society might not resonate well with radical evangelicals who are no less critical of market-oriented capitalism than centrally-planned economies of socialism ([33], pp. 27–28); for the premise of Wagner’s version of evangelical public engagement is an explicit promotion of capitalism in which wealthy “providers” or “anointed [fund] managers” mobilize material wealth for “the advance of the Kingdom of God” ([32], pp. 181–200). In any case, it is clear that there is now a growing consensus among a wide spectrum of evangelicals on the legitimacy and necessity of Christians’ active socio-political engagement with reference to the Lausanne Covenant’s discourse of “Christian social responsibility”.

In sum, the 1974 Lausanne Congress marked a landmark shift in the evangelical attitude toward the public realm, as it officially reinstated what had been thought to be a foregone conclusion of evangelicalism’s socio-political involvement before the so-called “Great Reversal”: namely, evangelical Christian withdrawal from the public sphere as a reaction against theological modernism and the Social Gospel at the turn of the twentieth century [34]. By retrieving and reaffirming the publicly-engaged tradition of Evangelicalism in the 1970s, the Lausanne Covenant has virtually earned a canonical status, to which socially-concerned evangelicals of all types repeatedly return to justify their social and political participation. Still, there seems to be no agreement among the global evangelical communities on what kinds of social, economic and political visions they should collectively espouse or how they

would translate those visions into actions in specific local contexts [23].

3. The Older Evangelicals' General Disregard for Christian Social Responsibility

Given that the Lausanne movement made such a great impact on evangelicals' mode of public engagement around the world, when and how was it introduced into South Korea? In pursuing this question, special attention will be given to the ways in which the neo-evangelicals of the older and the younger generations differently encountered the discourse of "Christian social responsibility" and selectively digested its implications in relation to their specific experiences at a given period of time. Just as there were multiple ways to interpret the Lausanne Covenant among the participants of the first Lausanne Congress, the different generations of Korean evangelicals also exercised a hermeneutic agency in digesting and reading into the imported text of the Lausanne Covenant, the agency that was a product of their distinctive historical experiences *vis-à-vis* contemporaneous socio-political situations.

A good way to explore the history of the reception of the Lausanne movement in South Korea is to ask why there was a ten-year gap between the 1974 Congress and the formation of the so-called Evangelical Social Concern Group in the mid-1980s; for the discourse of "Christian social responsibility" had limited influence on Korean (neo)-evangelicals of the older generation, although their temporal location was closer to the 1974 Lausanne Congress than that of the younger generation neo-evangelicals. How do we account for such a temporal lag in Korean neo-evangelicals' reception of the Lausanne movement?

Granted, a fair number of evangelicals of the older Korean War generation had direct contact with the Lausanne movement in the 1970s. Wesleyan theologian and head of the Korean delegate, Cho Chong-nam, reports that there were some 65 Korean delegates present at the first Lausanne Congress [35]. Among them, more than half a dozen leaders were deeply involved in the proceedings of the Congress as they presided over sub-committee sessions or presented papers therein [18]. In addition, the Lausanne theme of tying evangelism to social concern was almost immediately introduced to Korean churches by a handful of neo-evangelical scholars of the older generation in the 1970s, who acted, in a sense, as "forerunners" of the younger radical neo-evangelicals of the 1980s democratic movement generation ([3], p. 308). Through the efforts of these "forerunners", the Lausanne Covenant, as well as its related documents were introduced to the Korean church as early as the mid-1970s. For instance, in his 1974 article "*Sŏn'gyo wa sahoe chŏngŭi* (Evangelism and Social Justice)", Calvinistic moral philosopher, Son Pong-ho, translated the entire Section Five of the Lausanne Covenant into Korean, and opined that "if the Gospel of Christ involves liberation of the weak, the poor, and the wretched..., social structures must be transformed to make [liberation] take place in the society where the Gospel is preached" ([36], p. 70). In a similar vein, upon returning from the First Lausanne Congress, Cho Chong-nam published a report on this global evangelical gathering, in which he explicitly refers to the section on "Christian social responsibility" as one of the most prominent and memorable aspects of this meeting [35].

Therefore, it might not do full justice to say, as many evangelical activists of the 1980s democratic movement generation often claim, that Korean evangelicals of the pre-1980s were completely unaware of, or unaffected by, the Lausanne Covenant's teaching on "Christian social responsibility" [37]. There were indeed some (relatively unknown) cases in which a handful of neo-evangelical leaders of the

older generation spoke up, if not openly acted out, against political oppression and economic injustice under the right-wing authoritarian government during the 1970s. As Son Pong-ho reflects upon the history of Korean evangelicalism, “[Evangelicals] might not have stormed into the street or been on hunger strikes but made efforts to speak out as the voice of conscience in accordance with the teachings of the Bible” ([38], p. 3). Certainly, his apologetic remark does not fully provide an answer to the criticism that, to borrow words from the American radical neo-evangelical, Ron Sider, “South Korean evangelicals seem hesitant to speak out for justice and freedom” ([39], p. 28). Overall, this is indeed an accurate description of the general Korean evangelical attitude towards socio-political matters during the 1970s and early 1980s. Nevertheless, the point is that the evangelical church in South Korea has constantly readjusted and revised its mode of engagement with the public realm, and the introduction of the Lausanne movement into Korea marked a crucial turning point in its relationships with state or civil society. In this sense, Kim Myōng-hyōk is mostly correct, when he points out that, from the mid-1970s and onward, “the Korean evangelical church *began* to examine itself...and gradually became concerned about its socio-political responsibilities” ([39], emphasis added). In one way or another, the 1974 Lausanne Congress served as an important “encouragement” for the Korean evangelical church to make the first small, but irreversible, step of taking a critical stance against the incumbent authoritarian state, which had often been thought to represent divine authority in this world [39].

That being said, a qualification must be added to the impact of the Lausanne movement on the evangelicals of the older Korean War generation. When all is said and done, in the 1970s socio-political atmosphere in South Korea, the evangelical Christians who showed a mere appearance of civil disobedience were minority voices and could not form a standing group or sustained faith-based social movement. Meanwhile, the majority of fundamentalist-evangelical Christians were generally preoccupied with individual salvation and numerical church growth. The point is that it was mostly this latter kind of evangelical leader who represented the Korean church at the first Lausanne Congress in 1974.

The 1960s and 1970s was the time when the evangelical church in Korea experienced exponential growth and underwent a transition from receiving foreign missionaries to sending out their own as a rising hub of the Christian mission in the Asian region. Inspired by the record-breaking success of the Billy Graham Crusade in 1973 and anticipating the Campus Crusade for Christ’s EXPLOR (evangelistic conference) in August 1974 [40], the main concern of the Korean delegates at the Lausanne Congress was, first and foremost, to continue “the unfinished task” of carrying the Gospel to the yet unreached population, while turning deaf ears to mounting criticism against the traditional form of Christian mission as ideologically and politically intertwined with colonial enterprise in the era of decolonization. Therefore, they were generally uninterested in the proposition of the radical evangelicals to critically revise the inherited notion of evangelism and associate it with public engagement in responding to the contemporaneous social and political upheavals across the world. Their complete preoccupation with worldwide evangelization is clearly articulated in No Pong-nin (Bong Rin Ro)’s personal recollection of the first Lausanne Congress:

Although I met numerous people and heard many lectures [at the Congress], nothing has really stuck in my mind. Yet there was one thing that I have never forgotten. In the

hallway...was an electrical population clock. It showed the world population growth rate-adding two persons...per second, and indicated that six hundred thousand people were newly added to the world during the week-long session of the Congress. Thereby, it encouraged me take up the grave responsibility of delivering the gospel to the fast-growing world population ([41], p. 55).

In parallel with the Korean delegates' great preoccupation with church growth and worldwide evangelization, it is important to note that they were politically aligned with the incumbent right-wing authoritarian regime and therefore sought to favorably represent the governmental manhandling of political dissidents before evangelical leaders from all over the world. Earlier in 1974, the general-turned-president Park Chung-hee not only issued several "Emergency Decrees" to silence those who criticized his regime, but also concocted trumped-up charges against thousands of political dissidents and student protesters for allegedly making plots to overthrow the government. By the time the Lausanne Congress took place in July 1974, stories about the Korean government's repression of political dissidents and religious leaders had spread throughout the world via transnational church networks and the international media [42,43]. In the midst of such growing tension between the government and the anti-authoritarian movement, the Korean evangelical delegates at the Lausanne Congress acted as a sort of spiritual guardian of the authoritarian regime and reported to their fellow global evangelical leaders that the recent media coverage concerning "religious or political oppressions and persecutions" in South Korea was mostly "distorted" and "false" ([18], pp. 1398–99). Given the Korean delegates' pro-government stance toward the oppressive, authoritarian state, it must have been far from their intention to share the radical evangelicals' confession that: "We have frequently denied the rights and neglected the cries of the underprivileged and those struggling for freedom and justice" ([18], p. 1295).

In hindsight, the older evangelical leaders had more than enough chance to learn firsthand of the Lausanne's central theme of the relationship between evangelism and social concern. Nevertheless, except for a few forerunners, most of the evangelicals of the Korean War generation did not pay attention to the practical implications of evangelical social responsibility as articulated in the Covenant or seriously considered applying it to the South Korean situation. Carried away by explosive church growth, on the one hand, and closely aligned with the authoritarian *status quo* on the other, the Korean evangelical church of the pre-1980s was generally out of tune with the Lausanne movement's key agenda of relating evangelism with socio-political participation.

4. Generational Rift within the Evangelical Social Concern Group

If the Covenant's precept of "Christian social responsibility" was mostly neglected by older evangelicals in the 1970s, it started to receive renewed attention in the revolutionary crucible of the 1980s. As discussed earlier, the Lausanne movement and its principle of tying evangelism with social concern were introduced into the Korean evangelical church as early as the mid-1970s by a handful of older neo-evangelical leaders. At that time, however, there were no "ears to hear," so to speak, who would seriously pay attention to its messages and translate them into practices.

It was not until the 1980s that what may be called the Evangelical Social Concern Group emerged, which belatedly (re-)discovered, enthusiastically absorbed and self-consciously practiced the Lausanne Covenant principle of "Christian social responsibility" in view of the tumultuous contemporaneous

socio-political atmosphere. The credit of re-introducing the Lausanne movement into South Korea in the mid-1980s is generally given to two neo-evangelical leaders of the older generation, namely Yi Sŭng-jang (1942~) of the Evangelical Student Fellowship (ESF) and Ko Chik-han (1952~) of the Korean Intervarsity Christian Fellowship (IVF). Through his global connections in the ESF, Yi had a chance to come across the radical evangelical tradition of the Lausanne movement sometime in the 1970s, but simply shrugged off its existence and let it slip from his mind for almost a decade [44]. Only later, during his graduate study at the London School of Theology in the U.K., did he begin to re-appreciate its significance. After returning home, Yi published a full translation of the Lausanne Covenant in the ESF's magazine, *Sori* (Voice), in 1985 [45]. Likewise, Mr. Ko first encountered the Lausanne movement when he was studying the history of the world mission in Australia from late 1982 to early 1986 [46]. Upon returning to Korea and re-assuming a leadership role in the Korean IVF in 1986, one of the first things he did was to create the Social Concern Group and disseminate the writings of radical evangelicals among his younger evangelical students.

When compared to the aborted reception of the Lausanne movement in the 1970s, its successful re-introduction in the mid-1980s was largely due to the importers' social location as leaders of campus ministry organizations where they had direct contact with a number of young evangelical college students of the 1980s democratic movement generation. This later group was already searching for theological justifications for socio-political activism, even before they learned about the existence and content of the Lausanne Covenant [47]. Therefore, the emergence of the evangelical social concern group in the 1980s was only possible through a convergence of the older and younger neo-evangelicals who flocked under the banner of the Lausanne movement.

In light of the eventual split of this group into two competing camps in the 2000s, it is significant to note that there were signs of such a politico-generational division right from the start. It is true that those who belonged to the Evangelical Social Concern Group were generally in agreement on many points, including the approval of Christians' public engagement, the necessity of democratization and political freedom and Christian advocacy for the poor and the underprivileged ([48], pp. 10–13). If it were not for such agreements, the formation of this group would not have been possible in the first place. Nonetheless, evangelicals of the different generations had varying reasons and motivations to take part in faith-based social activism, which from the outset contained a seed of intergenerational conflict. To illustrate this point, one needs to compare the ways in which the evangelicals of these two generational groups came to join the Evangelical Social Concern Group in the mid-1980s.

4.1. The Younger Evangelicals of the 1980s' Democratic Movement Generation

Hwang Pyŏng-gu's personal history exemplifies a case of the younger neo-evangelicals whose socio-political stance was dramatically transformed through the influence of the contemporaneous anti-government student movement. Born in the predominantly conservative Taegu-Kyŏngbuk province in 1967, Hwang grew up in an evangelical family. His father was a Korean War veteran and his mother a college alumna of then-president Park Chung-hee. Expectedly, in his childhood, Hwang naturally imbibed a right-leaning political worldview under the influence of his parents and the right-leaning social milieu.

However, an intergenerational tension wormed its way into his family, when his elder brother and

two sisters entered Seoul National University in the late 1970s and early 1980s. As college students, his siblings were, one-by-one, swept up by the students' opposition to General Chun Doo-hwan's coup in 1979 and his bloody suppression of political resistance in Kwangju in 1980 [49,50]. Living through one of the most troubled moments in modern South Korean history, Hwang's brother and sisters were compelled to change their intended life trajectories due to either government sanctions or acute psychological breakdown induced by the horrible news from Kwangju. Like his siblings, Hwang also underwent a dramatic shift in his worldview, when he entered the college in 1986 and witnessed a cacophony of conflicting events on 20 May:

Hwang: [The events] took place during the campus festival. On the one side, the Campus Crusade for Christ was holding a student revival meeting, called the Jesus Great March. On the opposite side, student activists gathered for a mass political rally, where [*Minjung* theologian]² Rev. Mun Ik-hwan was a keynote speaker. The two mega-rallies collided at the main square....On the CCC's side, [evangelical students] were praying and singing hymns, who must have appeared to be religious fanatics to many [non-evangelical] students. On the opposite side, Rev. Mun was giving a fiery speech [on the subject of "the significance of the Kwangju Resistance in national history"]. At some point, a student named [Yi Tong-su] set fire to his body and threw himself from the rooftop of the Students' Hall [in protest against American imperialism and Chun Doo-hwan's fascist regime]. These three events happened in the same place at the same time....

Q. Where were you at the moment? Which group did you belong to?

Hwang: I was not part of any of these events. I was in the Students' Hall, watching over these events. It was a chaotic situation. I am sure many students were very confused as well...From then on, my identity as a Christian was thrown into question, as I witnessed self-immolation or radical protests of my colleagues in college, and began to reflect upon my faith in relation to these events throughout that year. Should I pray? The Bible seemed to teach me nothing about this kind of situation [37].

Note here the ambiguous position of Hwang Pyöng-gu. He was not part of the conservative evangelical group represented by the CCC or the anti-fascist, anti-imperialist activist student group represented by the *Minjung* theologian Mun Ik-hwan. Strictly speaking, Hwang was a third-party bystander. Even so, he was by no means blithe or uninterested in what was happening around him. In agony and distress, Mr. Hwang was there to witness these events, wondering how he could deal with the contrast of the two radically different modes of Christian life in such a conflict-ridden situation and what he should do about it.

From then on, Hwang Pyöng-gu began to lead a "double life," participating in anti-government, democratization student rallies with campus colleagues and continuing his faith life with Christian brethren and sisters [37]. Obviously, it was difficult to hold together these two conflicting social

² *Minjung* theology is a Korean version of liberation theology. This progressive Protestant movement grew out of liberal ecumenical Christians' struggle for democracy and social justice during the authoritarian years of the 1970s and 1980s. The term, *Minjung*, comes from the Greek biblical word ὄχλος (ochlos), which basically means a crowd or a mass of people. However, when used in the theological context, *Minjung* refers to those who suffer from oppression and injustice.

relations, modes of life and worldviews together, marked as they were by the political consciousness of the 1980s' democratic movement generation on one side and on the other by a conservative evangelical identity. At that time, evangelical campus ministry organizations (Hwang was a member of the JOY Mission)³ did not offer an environment in which evangelical students could openly talk about socio-political issues. On the other hand, students participating in the anti-government movement generally considered evangelical students as political quietists or other-worldly, "conformist ascetics" solely "engrossed in individualistic piety toward God" [51]. In the first half the 1980s, the young evangelicals were constantly pressured to choose between the quietist church life and the radical student movement, since there were few evangelical student groups that embodied and practiced the Lausanne movement's principle of "Christian social responsibility". Nevertheless, Hwang refused to choose one over the other. While his evangelical faith was something that he grew up with and could not be easily divorced from his personal identity, Hwang also felt a strong tie to his generation. When asked why he was not content with his pre-existing worldview and had to lead a "double life", Hwang replied: "The arguments of the students were more credible than those of the government. And it was undeniable that the government was wrong on many points. Although I did not seriously study social sciences or Marxist ideologies, I think the [contemporary political] circumstance led all students to develop a similar moral sense of distinguishing between right and wrong" [37]. In other words, Hwang's politico-moral sensibility underwent a trans-valuation process, which tied him to the generational consciousness of the 1980s' student activism regardless of his conservative, regional, religious or family backgrounds.

Significantly, in the 1980s, Hwang was not the only one leading such a "double life" of compartmentalized evangelical faith and socio-political activism. To his surprise, it turned out that there were a fair number of young evangelical students who more or less sympathized with the anti-government movement of the 1980s [7]. Although constantly pressured to stay out of "rebellious activities" by their "senior church leaders" [52], the students nevertheless sought out and collaborated with other like-minded evangelical students through several newly-established para-church venues like the "fair election campaign" of the Evangelical Youth and Students Council and the Christian student group within the Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice in the late 1980s. By participating in these evangelical student organizations, the young evangelical activists tried to compensate for their feelings of "indebtedness" towards anti-government student activists fully devoted to resisting the authoritarian *status quo*. Such a transition from evangelical students' frustration with their inaction to a call for socio-political engagement is clearly displayed in the following public testimony, which Hwang Pyŏng-jun, then a twenty-one-year-old college student, narrated in front of thousands of evangelical students on 29 October 1989:

The God whom I believe in should be the King and Lord of the entire universe...But when I came to the campus, I realized that it is not really the case...While our friends are dying and the world is rife with violence and injustice, we have stubbornly insisted within our closet, our church, that God, who is apparently not a King, should be the King no matter

³ The JOY Mission is a non-denominational, evangelical campus organization based in South Korea. The name, JOY, is an abbreviation of "Jesus first, Others second, You third."

what. In the campus, our friends are hit by tear grenades and fall down, while the police are hit by stones and pass out. Even so, we pray to God to grant us His peace. [In this situation], praising God is not a joyful experience for me anymore. It is rather a pain. It only gives me a burden, a feeling of indebtedness...Nevertheless, I am sure that God is alive...I need to find proof that Yahweh God, our Lord, cannot be less powerful than political protests organized by mere humans. If there is no such proof, I feel that I should make one up. In order to demonstrate His Lordship over the world, we should go through an ordeal. If humbling ourselves might lead people to take note of His Lordship, we should be poor both in spirit and body and endure hardships. In the world where injustice is rampant, we should fight against injustice, [social] contradictions, and evils, both visible and invisible, to proclaim His love and justice [51].

Seen in this light, it is fair to say that the radical student movement of the 1980s stirred up in the minds of the younger evangelicals an urge to develop social concerns. Granted, they hesitated to get fully involved with the student movement because they saw a sharp discrepancy between their belief in God and the progressive ideologies that pervaded among the radical students, ideologies that were materialistic, humanistic and anti-imperialistic [52]. However, it is undeniably true that the radical evangelical students of the 1980s democratic movement generation resolved to take part in socio-political actions because they were stimulated by and in step with the contemporaneous student movement. As Mannheim puts it, “history is surely shaped, among other things, by social relations in which [people] confront each other, by groups within which they find mutual stimulus, where concrete struggle produces entelechies and thereby also influences, and to a large extent shapes..., religion” ([3], p. 285).

4.2. *The Older Evangelicals of the Korean War Generation*

Shifting attention to the older evangelicals, some of them had been in contact with the Lausanne movement since 1974, and although confined within their denominational boundaries or academic training at different places of the world during the 1970s, they individually practiced its principle of “Christian social responsibility” by making critical remarks against the authoritarian military regime ([53], pp. 194–95). Even so, it was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s when some theologians and church leaders, after returning home and starting their ministerial or academic careers in earnest, began to raise their voices and consciously present themselves as “(neo-)evangelicals”, keeping a distance from both ecumenical liberals and evangelicals of the politically quietist bent. Thus, in the early 1980s, the neo-evangelicals of the older Korean War generation launched several inter-denominational, inter-ecclesiastical organizations, such as the Korean Evangelical Fellowship, the Korean Evangelical Theological Society and the *Kangnam yŏnhap sinang kangjwa* (Kangnam consortium for lectures on faith). While insisting that “Christianity should be at once a supernatural...and intra-historical...religion” ([48], pp. 10–11), these newly-established neo-evangelical groups served as important conduits to propagate the Lausanne movement’s social teachings in the Korean church [53]. When the young neo-evangelical students sought guidance in dealing with the revolutionary atmosphere of the mid-1980s, it was through these venues that, to borrow Ku Kyo-hyŏng’s words, they came to the “revolutionary awakening” that “it is not a sin to take sides with alienated neighbors or to participate in the democratization movement” [52]. Unlike conservative evangelicals who preferred social stability within an

authoritarian political structure to any disorderly social upheaval, the neo-evangelicals of the Korean War generation brought to the young evangelicals a new message that explicitly supported political democratization, legal equality, freedom of speech, respect for human rights and advocacy of workers' rights [48].

This notwithstanding, it must be noted that there was an important obverse to the older neo-evangelicals' affirmation of the Lausanne movement's teaching on "Christian social responsibility". While they generally disapproved of "authoritarianism and corruption," the older neo-evangelicals were also "second to none when it came to censoring progressive theology and communism" [38]. In fact, one of the very first acts the Korean Evangelical Theological Society performed was to unleash a barrage of criticism against liberation and *Minjung* theology that advocated "*hyönsil ch'amyo* (praxis in reality)" based on a Marxist analysis of the contemporary socio-political situation ([54], p. 10). From the perspective of neo-evangelicals of the older Korean generation, such radical progressive theologies tended to put more weight on the significance of structural evil over individual sin, thereby downplaying the fallenness of the human condition and reducing salvation to political liberation [55–57]. True, they advocated that Christians should be concerned not only with individual salvation, but also with political, economic and cultural problems of the time in light of the Lausanne Covenant. Nonetheless, their wariness toward communism and North Korea continuously prevented them from being sympathetic to or at least tolerant toward all progressive ideologies and practices, including the radical forms of the student or labor movements. The following public statement of the Korean Evangelical Fellowship, issued on 12 May 1986, well demonstrates such wariness toward the 1980s generation's radical political orientations:

We [that is, the older echelon of the Evangelical Social Concern Group] admit that students have performed an important role in awakening the older generation from moral numbness by crying for political democratization and social justice out of a pure heart, and they should continue to fulfill this role. However, it must not be ignored that the student movement could be swayed by impure motivations like personal aspiration, heroism, or political ambition, and, thus, easily manipulated by impure ideology. Especially, the revolutionary slogans and destructive violence of radical students in recent days run counter to the students' goal of reaching a just society, and would not be welcomed by the general people. Therefore, there should not be another social change caused by violence and revolution. Without peaceful measures and moral appeal, an equal and just society will never emerge. Above all, in the time of such a chaotic situation, we, evangelical Christians, firmly stand against an infiltration of atheistic communism, and urge all legitimate social movements which hope to achieve social justice, to not be manipulated by such an attempt ([48], p. 12).

When actually carried out, their anticommunist and anti-revolutionary stance largely took two forms: one characterized by preventing "impure," revolutionary passions from flaring up among the younger neo-evangelicals and the other characterized by channeling the students' simmering grievances against the authoritarian *status quo* into "pure" forms of moderate, law-abiding and reformist social movements. Thus, Ko Chik-han of the IVF adopted a two-pronged approach to the young radical evangelical students. On the one hand, he played the role of "an understanding senior leader who

empathized with younger students” with regard to their resentment towards the existing socio-political establishment [46]. On the other hand, he discreetly pressured, if not explicitly purged, from the IVF students tinged with Marxism or North Korean *Juch'e* ideology. As long as the leaders of the IVF could persuade the students to follow “the [Lausanne Covenant’s] teaching of coalescing evangelism and social responsibility”, Ko was confident that “[the younger neo-evangelical students] would not be swayed by ideologies based on class analysis or *Juche* Ideology” [46].

Moreover, the same concern for channeling the grievances of younger evangelicals turned into the older neo-evangelicals’ enthusiastic support for the nascent “*simin* (civil or NGO)” movement at the end of the 1980s. The socially-concerned neo-evangelicals of the Korean War generation more or less acknowledged that Christians should not shrink from publicly opposing social injustice. At the same time, they were severely critical of progressive groups resorting to law-breaking or violent measures to achieve their goals. However, the particular problem the evangelical activists faced was that, “although they talked about social participation,” they did not have a “well-defined methodology” of social movement [46]. Without clearly articulated principles and guidelines for evangelical social action, there was a concern that many evangelical youth and students might be easily swayed by the radical progressive ideologies and practices predominant within the 1980s’ student movement. It was at this juncture that the Christian activist, Sō Kyōng-sōk, reached out to the neo-evangelical communities to ask for endorsement, volunteer workers and sponsorship for the soon-to-be launched Citizens’ Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ) in 1989. By launching a social movement of, by and for all “*simindŭl* (citizens),” Sō and his colleagues at the CCEJ aimed to replace the class-based Minjung movement with a civil movement in the post-democratization context [58]. For many older neo-evangelical leaders, the CCEJ’s moderate, reformist social movement seemed like an effective safety valve that could satisfy younger neo-evangelicals’ thirst for social participation while simultaneously steering them away from the radical progressive student movement.

In short, while navigating the same socio-political situation, the neo-evangelical activists of the Korean War generation and those of the 1980s’ Democratic Movement generation reacted differently to the radicalized student movement of the 1980s. Certainly, they all agreed upon the necessity of democratization and social justice and collectively endeavored to organize faith-based social activism from the late 1980s and onward. Nevertheless, while the younger neo-evangelical activists were generally in step with the 1980s’ student-based democratization movement, their senior neo-evangelical leaders firmly opposed all radical social movements, deeming them to advocate a violent and radical social change. Seen in this light, these two groups of neo-evangelicals, one shaped by Cold War anticommunist sentiments, the other by experiences of the 1980s’ democratic movement, could not help but have different ideological and political horizons; and these differences, in turn, disposed them to different degrees of tolerance toward left-wing politics.

5. Conclusions

In light of the different motivations of the neo-evangelicals of the different generations in joining the Evangelical Social Concern Group in the 1980s, one can better explain why this group eventually split into the senior Evangelical Right and the junior Evangelical Left along generational lines. Although they agreed upon the necessity of evangelical socio-political engagement with reference to

the Lausanne movement, they followed different paths guided by their distinct political and historical experiences.

For many younger evangelicals, their initial venture into evangelical social activism under the guidance of their senior leaders was only a stepping stone to further their social concerns. As they grew older, a number of them became pastors, academics and full-time organizers and activists in their own right, and more or less brought their social concerns further to the left in conversation with a wide range of theological traditions, as well as other liberal-left actors having similar public concerns. Born after the Korean War and relatively free from the Red Complex of the Cold War, socially concerned radical neo-evangelicals of the younger generation tend to appreciate and acknowledge the validity of left-wing positions.

Among the senior neo-evangelical leaders, their involvement in evangelical social activism has consistently operated from a motive to oppose and suppress radical left-wing politics. The socio-political developments of the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s (for instance, the 1987 democratization, the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the growth of the middle-class, the prevalence of neoliberalism and the subsequent weakening of the progressive political force) almost made it unnecessary for the older neo-evangelical activists to deliberately pick a fight against their already wobbling opponent on the left, except to offer patronizing advice to give up a class-based social movement and let the reformist civil movement take the lead in moderate social reforms [59]. Nevertheless, when they faced an ascendance of the left-wing force of the 1980s democratic movement generation at the turn of the 21st century, their resentment drove them to organize anew a right-leaning evangelical movement organization that explicitly took its name from the discourse of the “Christian social responsibility” of the Lausanne movement.

By tracing the trajectories of “Christian social responsibility” discourse that circulated in global evangelical communities around the world, this paper has shown that the glocalization of religious ideas never takes place in a political or historical vacuum. Rather, they are always transmitted through the minds and speech-acts of individuals or groups of individuals, who are concretely embedded in specific relations of power and rooted in particular historical contexts. In one way or another, such politico-historical contingencies significantly affect the ways in which people engage with and absorb the religious discourses circulating in multiple glocal sites. Historical actors tend to encounter those ideas through certain interpretive “lenses” or “prisms”, which grow out of, and are modulated in accordance with, particular spatio-temporal circumstances [15]. It is through these “lenses” that ideology-carrying messengers as well as the recipients of that message selectively filter and variously refract what they communicate in order to suit their respective areas of interest and concern. Thus, the end result is always an open-ended possibility for selective assimilation, delayed acceptance, creative distortion, and the co-presence of hybrid interpretations. In the present case study, glocalization of “Christian Social Responsibility” discourse has actually resulted in a world-wide proliferation of evangelical-based socio-political activism, the varieties of which defy any easy classification of evangelical politics into either conservative or progressive camps.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Abbreviations

CSR: Christian social responsibility;
 ESF: Evangelical Student Fellowship;
 IVF: Intervarsity Christian Fellowship;
 CCC: Campus Crusade for Christ;
 CCEJ: The Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice.

References and Notes

- Historically, the neo-evangelical tradition refers to the socially-concerned movement within the conservative wing of American Protestantism. Those who belonged to this group tried to move beyond the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the 1920s by reconciling the traditional confessions of the Christian faith with the social teachings of the Bible from the 1940s onward. On the rise and development of neo-evangelicalism in the United States, see Arthur H. Matthews. *Standing up, Standing Together: The Emergence of the National Association of Evangelicals*. Carol Stream: National Association of Evangelicals, 1992. Such a (neo-)evangelical tradition began to emerge in the Korean church in the mid-1970s after the Billy Graham Crusade in 1973 and the First Lausanne Congress in 1974.
- Lausanne Movement. "The Lausanne Covenant." 1974. Available online: <http://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant> (accessed on 9 October 2015).
- The term "generation" here is based on Mannheim's discussion of social generation. It basically means a cohort of people who share the zeitgeist of a given period of time, usually demarcated by significant socio-historical events such as war, revolution, and economic depression. See Karl Mannheim. "The Problem of Generations." In *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. Edited by Paul Kecskemeti. London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1952, pp. 276–322. The Korean War generation then refers to those who are old enough to have directly experienced the effects of the Korean War in the 1950s and who generally hold strong anti-communist and pro-American sentiments.
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