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Protestant Culture and Politics in Korea in the Twentieth Century

The paper presents an historic overview of Korean Protestant thought in the first half of the twentieth century, the period in which the Protestant community emerged as the standard bearer of political culture. Even with the vicissitudes of the first half of the twentieth century, with Japanese colonisation (1910), the loss of the Christian heartland Pyong-yang to the communist regime (1945), and the civil war (1950), Korean Protestants nevertheless played a decisive role in defining politics as an enlargement of religious culture, thereby rationalising its entanglement with politics as imperative to the advancement of both religion *and* politics.

I propose to trace the evolution of Protestant political culture from the self-conceived community of the elect to the civic associations and finally its full development as a self-conscious politico-cultural movement in the first half of the twentieth century in Korea. Such an analysis allows us to consider the reasons behind its success in a historical context and the impact it had had on the broader Korean political landscape ever since.