



Born Again: Evangelicalism in Korea

Timothy S. Lee

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"Born Again" is the first book in a Western language to consider the introduction, development, and character of evangelicalism in Korea - from its humble beginnings at the end of the nineteenth century to claiming one out of every five South Koreans as an adherent at the end of the twentieth. In this thoughtful and thorough study, Timothy S. Lee argues that the phenomenal rise of this particular species of Christianity can be attributed to several factors. As a religion of salvation, evangelicalism appealed powerfully to multitudes of Koreans, arriving at a time when the country was engulfed in unprecedented crises that discredited established social structures and traditional attitudes. Evangelicalism attracted and empowered Koreans by offering them a more compelling worldview and a more meaningful basis for association. Another factor is evangelicalism's positive connection to Korean nationalism and South Korean anticommunism. It shared in the aspirations and hardships of Koreans during the Japanese occupation and was legitimated again during and after the Korean conflict as South Koreans experienced the trauma of the war. Equally important were evangelicals' relentless proselytization efforts throughout the twentieth century. Lee explores the beliefs and practices that have become the hallmarks of Korean evangelicalism: kibok (this-worldly blessing), saebyok kido (daybreak prayer), and kumsik kido (fasting prayer). He concludes that Korean evangelicalism is distinguishable from other forms of evangelicalism by its intensely practical and devotional bent. He reveals how, after a long period of impressive expansion, including the mammoth campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s that drew millions to its revivals, the 1990s was a decade of ambiguity for the faith.

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