



Textbooks used by Bible Correspondence School, Korea

Photo courtesy of Bible Correspondence School, Korea.

## Bible Correspondence School, Korea

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Korean Bible Correspondence School (KBCS) (aka. Seonggyung Tongshin Hakkyo) opened in January 1948 in Seoul, where the headquarters of the Korean Union Conference (KUC) is located, to spread the core Bible truths of the Adventist Church throughout Korea. The Bible Correspondence School, which began in 1940 in the U.S. and achieved great success worldwide, is a correspondence-based school with well-made textbooks and question-and-answer papers. KUC started the school project by translating the textbooks developed in the U.S. into Korean. Currently, the Korean Bible Correspondence School has developed and operated six courses for adults and five courses for teenagers, including *Study on the Book of Daniel and Revelation*. In the past, people

were provided textbooks and studied, but now all courses have been opened as an online system and operate much more efficiently.<sup>1</sup> However, the number of people completing the entire course is gradually decreasing as the times change.

## Founding

In Korea the Bible Correspondence School (BCS) was introduced by Theodora Wangerin. She came to Korea with her husband (R. C. Wangerin) in 1909 as a missionary and returned to the United States in 1940 for political reasons.<sup>2</sup> However, when Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule and the reconstruction of the church began, she returned to Korea in June 1947 and was appointed as the editor of *Sijosa* (Korean Publishing House) in August 1947. Recognizing the active development of the BCS while living in the United States, she began translating the English textbooks into Korean as soon as she returned to Korea. In October of that year, she introduced the BCS of the United States in detail through *Church Compass* (*Kyohoejinam*) and announced that the project would soon be carried out in Korea.<sup>3</sup>

The KUC opened the KBCS in January 1948 and appointed Theodora Wangerin as its director. Because she was the editor of the *Sijosa*, the BCS became a part of the *Sijosa*. The textbook used by the KBCS consisted of a total of 30 chapters, which contained core truths of Adventism, including the second coming of Jesus, the sanctuary of heaven and the Investigative Judgment, the Seventh-day Sabbath, the state of the dead, and the life after death.<sup>4</sup>

KBCS increased the number of people entering the course from the start. Therefore, a person in charge of this project was needed, and the KUC appointed Pastor Kyu-Hyuk Kim as the vice-director of the school in March 1948.<sup>5</sup> The management committee of the 15th General Meeting of the KUC, which was held in June 1948, decided to designate the fifth Sabbath day of each month as a special Sabbath to promote the BCS. As a result of these efforts, the number of enrolled students increased to 1,500 in four months. Of them, 380 completed all courses, receiving certificates at the first completion ceremony held on March 19, 1949.<sup>6</sup>

The KBCS was discontinued in June 1950 due to the Korean War and resumed operations in July 1952. The KUC reorganized the BCS, which used to be a part of the *Sijosa*, into a department of the KUC, and appointed Pastor Chi-Hwan Cho as its director. At this time the official name of this school was changed to "Voice of Prophecy Bible Correspondence School."<sup>7</sup>

## History

The KBCS ministry, which began again in 1952, grew remarkably in post-war Korean society. Those enrolled in the KBCS program consisted of a class of various professionals, college students, soldiers, and ordinary workers, especially Presbyterian, Methodist, and Catholic. In particular, lots of people registered as a group in local

churches, schools, and military units, and many were baptized after completing the course. Much of the BCS related news was introduced in the *Church Compass*, a newsletter of KUC.<sup>8</sup>

From July 1952 to May 1955, 1,208 students completed the Bible Correspondence School (BCS). They were members of 14 Christian denominations.<sup>9</sup> In particular, several churches were organized as a result of BCS ministry. One example is Hoehyeon-dong Church in Seoul. The church began in 1958 with the fruit of elder Sa-Young Jung and elder Byung-Jik Kim introducing and guiding the course of BCS to faculty and students of the Seoul Girls' High School in Namyeong-dong, Seoul.<sup>10</sup>

As the BCS ministry developed, textbooks also improved. In September 1952, the textbook, which had been used for a long time, was renamed as the *Present Truth (Hyundae Jinri)*. In May 1961 a textbook titled *Study on the Book of Daniel* (12 chapters) was produced, and two years later the first and second volumes of *Study on the Book of Revelation* were published. Years later these two textbooks were integrated into *Study on the Book of Daniel and Revelation*. In May 1965 *Study on the Book of Genesis* was produced. And KBCS replaced the main textbook with *Faith for Today* (20 chapters) and began publishing the newly designed book in April 1967. In addition, in May 1969, *Along With Jesus* (18 chapters) was published as a textbook for teenagers, which translated Japanese textbooks into Korean.<sup>11</sup>

On March 28, 1961, KBCS held a joint completion ceremony at Seoul Sahmyook Middle School, following the visit of H. M. S. Richards, the director of BCS of the GC, when 164 people received certificates. Until then the cumulative number of people who completed the BCS course was reported to be 18,858.<sup>12</sup> In December 1961 Won-Sil Park was elected as the director of the school at the 20th General Meeting of the KUC.<sup>13</sup> In February 1964, at the 21st General Meeting of the KUC, the BCS reported that 16,958 students enrolled in the school and 7,813 graduates, of whom 977 were baptized.<sup>14</sup>

In 1971 *Faith for Today*, a textbook for adults, was reorganized into five pamphlets. These five textbooks were designed in a modern style in the form of magazines. In addition, the answer sheet to the questions attached to the textbook consisted of postcards, so there was no need for envelopes when students sent them. And the first and second volumes of *Study on the Book of Daniel and Revelation* also changed their long-standing styles and were published in a combined version.<sup>15</sup>

From February 1974 *Light of Life*, an embossed textbook for the blind, began to be published. Deaconess Jin-Bok Lee, a member of a certain Korean church in the U.S., donated \$1,000 in 1971 to the KBCS for the blind and donated an additional \$3,000 in the spring and fall of 1973. The KBCS has published *Light of Life* (14 chapters) in seven volumes as the embossed textbook with the funds of \$4,000.<sup>16</sup> And in April 1977, *Study on the Book of Daniel* was published as a textbook for the deaf with the same funds, as well. In March 1981 *The Way of Health* (12 chapters) was published as a textbook for the correspondence school, a Korean translation of what was published by the Singapore Union Conference. And in April of that year, *the Way of Hope* (12 chapters) was published as an adult textbook.<sup>17</sup>

In the late 1970s, KUC launched a campaign to recruit sponsored members to cover the KBCS's insufficient budget. The donations were set at 10,000 won for student members, 50,000 won for general members, 100,000 won for maintenance members, 300,000 won for special members, 500,000 won for lifelong members, and one million won for special lifelong members.<sup>18</sup> Many church members joined the campaign and contributed to the development of the KBCS. As a result, by 1987 KBCS had six courses, including *Faith for Today*, *The Way of Health*, *Along With Jesus*, *Study on the Book of Daniel and Revelation*, and embossed *Faith for Today* and produced about twenty thousand graduates each year. In conjunction with the "Revival and Reformation Movement" conducted by the KUC in 1990, KBCS launched a campaign to disseminate *Faith for Today*, and as a result, 17,407 people completed the course in the same year.<sup>19</sup>

In 1995 KBCS developed new textbooks and revised existing textbooks. Firstly, the newly developed textbook *Happy Home* was published, which was created for newlyweds and parents in need of a child's education. Secondly, *The Way of Health* was revised into *A New Start to Health*. In particular, this textbook was edited according to the NEWSTART health principles. Thirdly, *the Way of Hope*, a new version of *Faith for Today*, was printed in color, increasing the font size.<sup>20</sup> In May 1998, *Along With Jesus*, which has been used since 1969, was published in a new shape and content because it was outdated to attract children's attention and interest. And in July 1999, *Study on the Book of Daniel*, which was published in 1961 and has been in use for 38 years, was revised and published as a more fruitful textbook.<sup>21</sup>

In the 21st century, the BCS ministry was much weaker than in the past, and the main reason was the development of various media. To address this issue, the KUC expanded the BCS ministry in two directions. The first direction was to expand the BCS ministry in conjunction with the mission strategy of the denomination. In 2003 the General Conference launched the "SOW One Billion" movement, which was linked to the BCS. In order to actively participate in the movement, KUC also developed and promoted SOW programs linked to KBCS ministry.<sup>22</sup>

The second direction was to operate the KBCS curriculum as an online system in response to the multimedia age. The KUC established its official website in September 2004 and started operating the site of KBCS, as well. In 2008, the 60th anniversary of KBCS' foundation, the *Face for Today* was produced on DVD, paving the way for students to complete its course in digital media. In addition, the KUC established an Internet mission center under the BCS to promote the spread of Adventism on the Internet by 76 missionaries.<sup>23</sup> The KBCS began introducing the "App core" computer program on Nov. 24, 2011, and has been conducting "Faith for Today" classes since December. It was not until 2018 that all courses of KBCS were fully established as an online system. That year KUC opened the official KBSC site ([www.vop.or.kr](http://www.vop.or.kr)) and established six courses for adults and five courses for teenagers as online video lectures.<sup>24</sup> As a result, the ministry of the BCS can be operated around local churches.

## Legacy

KBCS played a very important role in the growth of the Korean Adventist Church. The school developed and provided effective educational media for those who wanted to study the Bible and Adventism. Many people accepted the faith and were baptized through the courses provided by this school. Those who enrolled in this school and completed the entire courses have belonged to various social classes. The Korean Adventist Church was able to lead many souls to the church through the courses of KBCS.

In addition, the textbooks provided by the school greatly helped the church members study the Bible. KBCS has been conducting a "Challenge! Golden Bell" program to encourage all church members to study these textbooks systematically. The program, which began in 2007, has drawn active participation from churches across the country and motivated all members to study the Bible.<sup>25</sup>

KBCS also plays a certain role in nurturing leaders who teach the Bible. Since 2008 KUC has implemented a program to train teachers who can teach BCS courses. The program later evolved into the coordinator's workshop. KUC recruited coordinators to activate BCS ministry and conducted regular workshops to train them. These efforts have resulted in nurturing Bible teachers.

Now the KBCS faces some challenges. KUC formed a research committee in May 2021 to develop the BCS ministry. The research committee held serious discussions on various agendas, including changing the name of the BCS, promoting BCS ministry centered on local churches, specializing in coordinators' activities, and strengthening public relations activities.<sup>26</sup> KBCS is working to solve these challenges and achieve the mission that the school pursues.

## List of Directors

Theodore Wangerin (1948-1952); Chi-Hwan Cho (1952-1959); G. W. Munson (1959-1960); Won-Sil Park (1960-1965); G. W. Munson (January to May 1965); J. R. Bailey (June to December 1965); Seong-Rae Kim (1966-1967); Dong-Jun Kim (1967- June 1971); Moon-Kyung Go (July to November 1971); Hyung-Hwan Lyu (December 1971-March 1973); Dong-Jun Kim (April to June 1973); Woon-Seo Lim (July 1973-1981); Chung-ui Oh (1981-1983); Yung-Seok Moon (1984-1987); Gi-Woong Um (1987-1991); Jung-Kwon Jeon (1991-1998); Hyun-Seo Gu (1998-2000); Hak-bong Lee (2000-2004); Kwang-Soo Park (2005-2009); Soon-Gi Kang (2010-2011); Hye-Joo Bae (2012-2015); Byung-Joo Lee (2016-2020); Kwang-Cheol Shin (2021- ).

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## NOTES

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3. Theodora Wangerin, "The Bible Correspondence School in U.S.," *Church Compass*, October 1947, 10.
4. Ibid.
5. *Church Compass*, July 1948, 18.
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7. *Church Compass*, December 1952, 51.

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9. *Church Compass*, July 1955, 19, 20
10. *Church Compass*, February 1958, 30.
11. Yung Lin Lee, *A Comprehensive Study in the History of the Adventist Church in Korea* (Seoul: Sunmyung Cultural Press, 1968), 206.
12. *Church Compass*, June 1961, 14.
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