

## **CHAPTER 2 INTERACTION: PREACHING IN THE INTERACTION BETWEEN CHURCH AND CULTURE IN KOREA**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I discussed the methodology of this study. This chapter is a critical description of the interaction between the church and culture in Korea (2.2) and of preaching with regard to this interaction (2.3). Empirical interpretations based on a qualitative interviewing give relevance to this study (2.2.5 & 2.3.3).

### **2.2 Interaction between church and culture in Korea**

#### **2.2.1 General historical trends**

The church's standpoint on her culture depends on the historical time and context. At times, the church takes a position that is positive to her culture, at other times, it has a negative attitude towards it, and at times, it stands in between. Christianity's social status and the domain culture type affect this trend. In the early church history, for example, the church took a negative standpoint to Greco Roman and Jewish culture. However, later on, the church took a positive view of the Christian culture constructed during the time in which Christianity had become one of the state religions in the Roman Empire and evangelized most European countries. When the Western society was secularized, the church went back to its negative standpoint towards the surrounding culture (S W Cho 2001:31).

This relationship between church and culture is also based on realistic and existentialistic trends: for example, the church would take a negative position against culture if the church's social participation was prohibited or at least not welcomed by her culture (H R Niebuhr 1951; 1996:143-191).<sup>25</sup> In brief, historical trends of the interaction between church and culture depend on (1) the historical time and context, (2) Christianity's social status and the domain culture type, and (3) realistic and existentialistic trends.

### **2.2.2 Historical trends in the Korean church**

What about then the Korean church? Where does the Korean church stand between the models discussed above? Is the Christian culture marginalized among cultures in Korean society? Is there vital contact between the Korean church and the Korean people? Does the Korean church give positive and constructive influence to Korean culture?

This section will search for the answers for the questions above. If I had to respond briefly to the last two questions, however, the answer would unfortunately be "No." I without doubt notice that there are many churches which have some vital contact and impact on their communities and surrounded cultures. I do not deny that. I am not referring to a particular church or to some churches, but I refer to the Korean church as a whole. This response does not come only from myself as the researcher, but from many others. In Chapter 1 (1.2.4.2) I have already pointed out the following common agreement among many contemporary theologians and socialists in Korea: The irrelevance of the church's presence and style in society is one of the main reasons behind all these crises phenomena (W G Yi 1987:13; Y S Park 1987:354-58; B S Kim 1989:328; S S Kwon 1997:379-81; 1998:65-74; J K Un 1999a:299-232; S H Myung & J G Park 2000:58; and C M Son 2002:9).

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<sup>25</sup> He deals with this issue more politically in his book. He edited unpublished writings by W S

This section will attempt a historical sketch of the Korean church in order to examine historical trends of the interaction between the church and culture. In doing so, this study limits its scope to the Korean Protestant church. A brief history of the Roman Catholic faith in Korea will however also be considered because it was first introduced into Korea before the Protestant missions. After this discussion, the interaction between the Korean church and the Korean Culture (2.2.3) will be studied. This includes the cause effect relationship between some findings from 2.2.3 and the present ecclesiologies of the Korean church (2.2.4).

For classifying the period this study adopted K Y Shin (1999:851-81)'s time frame and modified it to use as follows: 2.2.2.1 The period during which the Korean church takes the cultural initiative (1884-1945), 2.2.2.2 The political and social chaotic period (1945-1970), and 2.2.2.3 The period during which the Korean church lost her cultural initiative (1970 to the present).

### **2.2.2.1 The period during which the Korean church takes the cultural initiative (1884-1945)**

The following first two clauses describe the related history holistically, but mainly in terms of the interaction between the Korean church and her culture. Each topic is studied, such as Korea and the Korean Catholic church. The next two clauses and the summary, depict its history within a certain time frame.

#### **2.2.2.1.1 Korea**

Before the Korean War in 1950, not many people around the world knew what the word "Korea" meant. Virtually a hermit nation,<sup>26</sup> Korea's doors to the West

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Johnson in 1996 (especially Chapter 5: Religion and the democratic tradition).

<sup>26</sup> The whole peninsula became united under the Kingdom of Chosen, meaning "The Land of Morning Calm," in 1392. At that time, the nominal protectorate of China was acknowledged by Korea, and for hundreds of years this land was closed to all outside influence except China. The name of the "a hermit nation" came out of this historical background. For further detail, see

gradually opened with the Open Door Treaty in 1882. However, because of the 88 Summer Olympic Games, the eyes of the world were at last fixed on Korea. There has been special interest in Korea's remarkable economic growth, especially since the devastation of the country during the Korean War. Similarly, Christians worldwide are amazed at the explosive growth of the Korean church, especially over the last two decades (B R Ro 1995:336).

How has a tiny suffering church from a century ago been able to evangelize one quarter of the total population of 46.8 million in Korea and to send over 10,000 Korean missionaries in 156 other countries?<sup>27</sup> Many Korean Christians today believe that Korea has become a *chosen* race (1 Pet 2:9) for God's purpose of evangelizing the world with the gospel in this generation. In fact, during the Yi Dynasty (1392-1910), Korea had been called the *Chosen* Dynasty (ibid).

Culturally speaking, before the transmission of Christianity, Korea could boast of a culture tested and refined through a five thousand year history. The Koreans spoke one common language. There were no dialects causing the kind of barriers seen in other countries like China and Japan. They wore the same kind of clothes, ate the same kind of food, and lived in the same kind of houses. In the villages, people still worshiped spirits and maintained burial mounds of their ancestors. The men worked in the fields and the women assumed the responsibilities of house keeping and caring for the children at home. Such homogeneity was an incentive to the maintenance of a single culture. It was into this homogeneous Korean culture that Christianity has been grafted (S J Lee 1995:230). It is believed that such homogeneity could be the fertile ground for the seed of the gospel to be sown.

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Stanley T Soltau, *Korea: The hermit nation*, (Toronto: World Dominion Press, 1932).

<sup>27</sup> These figures are based on the estimated data given by Patrick Johnston & Jason Mandryk's *Operation world* (21st century edition) published in 2001. Figures of population given are for 2000: these figures are not rounded but are exact quotes of estimates from the 1998 UN population database. According to this, the population of Korea in 2000 is 46,843,989. The estimated number of Korean missionaries is about 12,000 in 166 agencies of which an estimated 10,646 are serving in 156 other countries. These figures are different from the data of the KWMC (8,206), according to *Operation world*, because many Korean missionaries were not part of that survey.

Politically speaking, however, there was also a serious disadvantage. From the time of the foundation of the Chosen Dynasty, its rulers adopted the Confucianism of Zhu Xi (1130-1200) as their political philosophy in all areas of religion and politics. By replacing the Buddhist Koryo regime, by eradicating Buddhism, and by elevating Confucianism to the national religion the founder of the Chosen Dynasty, all realms of society were regulated. In this process, Confucianism also oppressed and expelled Shamanism (H M Yim 1996:6; see J M Han 1986:108; D W Kim 1988:33-41; D S Ryu 1985:164). In the course of time, the Confucianism of the Chosen Dynasty developed into a highly rigid system based on the orthodox mentality. This happened because Confucianism did not allow any alternative idea, trivial deviation, or any divergent school or faction. Therefore, its schematic dogmatism, which dualistically defined truth and heresy, was solidified (Yim 1996:7; see C S Park 1982:23).

Under the dualistic principle of the Confucian truth or heresy, the Chosen Dynasty of the 18th century began to isolate itself from foreign countries. It expelled foreigners and banned all foreign ideas.<sup>28</sup> When the foreign powers asked the Chosen Dynasty to open its ports, political conflicts<sup>29</sup> could not be avoided (H M Yim 1996:8). The orthodox dogmatic character of Confucianism prevailed in the Chosen society for over 500 years. The mentality which distinguished heresy from orthodoxy pervaded the life of all the people living under the Chosen Dynasty, especially the ruling class and the educated people in all the areas of politics, society, culture, and religion (ibid; cf Y S Park 1986:133).

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<sup>28</sup> The strict policy of isolation of Korea towards foreigners and foreign forces was expressed as follows: "Signposts along the way as late as 1880 said, 'If you meet a foreigner, kill him; he who has friendly relations with him is a traitor to his country'..." (George T B Davis, *Korea for Christ*, London: 1910, 44; quoted in H M Yim, *Unity lost-unity to be regained in Korean presbyterianism*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996, 8)

<sup>29</sup> For example: against French warships (1866), against the American commercial vessel General Sherman (1866), American warships (1871) and against the Japanese warship Unyangho (1875).

It is clear, however, that Confucianism did not prevent the oppression of the masses. Neither did it prevent general poverty, treachery and corruption of officials, and the degradation of womanhood, which were so characteristic of Korea at that time in history. L George Baik (1929:21) comments on this as follows:

In the last century, there was much that was splendid and admirable in Confucianism at its best. As practiced in Korea, however, it had many deplorable results. It nourished pride, it taught no higher ideal than that of a superior man, and was agnostic and atheistic in its tendency; it encouraged selfishness, exalted filial piety to the position of the highest virtue and made this hide a multitude of sins; and it imbued every follower with a hunger for office that resulted in simony and sinecure. Religiously, the system taught nothing that goes beyond what is known and seen.

In this deteriorating situation, “the people were ready for any new religious appeal” (Hagwonsa 1960:353). They began to realize that one of the reasons for the unrest. Disorganization and weakness in their nation was the factionalism and the corruption of Confucian politics (Y B Kim 1981:84). They became concerned that the only way to save themselves from these disasters and misery was to turn to a new religion (S J Lee 1995:240). It was just at this time that Christianity presented itself as the bearer of a new religion, a new civilization, and a new political hope.

#### 2.2.2.1.2 The Korean Catholic church

The Korean Catholic church mission began in Korea a hundred years ahead of the Protestant church mission through China in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Catholic church was established in the 1780's by a small group of politically reformed minded literati and religiously Confucian scholars called *Sohakza* (Shilhakza or Shilhakpa), such as Yak Chon Chong, Il Shin Kwon, and Tok Cho Lee. Since they were deeply attracted to Catholicism (which had already been introduced

in China), they studied Matteo Ricci's *Tianzhu* (The True Doctrine of the Lord of Heaven) brought into Korea by Doo Won Chong in 1963. This enabled them to get a taste of and grip a new religion, a new civilization, and a new political hope. The first Korean diplomat, who was baptized in Beijing in 1783, was Sung Hun Lee who came back to Korea to spread his faith. Catholicism, therefore, officially started in Korea in 1784 before any foreign missionary entered Korea (cf B R Ro 1995:336; A E Kim 1995:35).

Since then, Catholicism was identified as a religion by the Korean government. When it spread among the noble class, however, some conflicts arose. This was due to the differences between the orthodox characteristics of Confucianism and of Catholicism. The main reason for the persecution of the Catholics was a challenge to the orthodoxy of the Confucian Chosen Dynasty (cf K B Min 1982:67). For example, in order to maintain the doctrine of the Catholic faith, Catholics from the noble class abolished ancestor worship called *chesa* because they regarded it as a spiritual act of idolatry. At the same time the government understood it as a violation of the cultural property (cf H M Yim 1996:8). This was the first hermeneutical conflict between culture (tradition) and gospel (theology).

In addition to this, there were severe persecutions of the government due to the involvement of some Catholic elites in factious politics. These were: the Shinyu persecution (1801), Ulhae persecution (1815), Chonghae persecution (1827), Kihae persecution (1839), Bongo persecution (1846), and the Bongin persecution (1866-1873). The Bongin persecution in particular was the cruelest and lasted for seven years during the time that three foreign military powers from France, Russia and America invaded and resided illegally in Korea. Thus prince Taewongoon (1820-1898), who carried out this long and harsh persecution, identified the Catholic missionaries and their followers as agents of foreign powers. For over a hundred years of persecution, more than 10,000 Catholic missionaries and followers were martyred (cf A E Kim 1995:37-38; Rhee 1995:228).

In spite of these brutal persecutions against the Catholics in the early history of Korea together with other historical factors, such as the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), Korean War (1950-1953), military dictatorship (1961-1987), and modernization (industrialization) in Korean society, the Catholic church continued to grow numerically to 2.1 million today (see P Johnston & J Mandryk 2001:387). C D Kwak (2000:17) however, criticizes this numerical growth because of the Korean Catholic church's neutral attitude during the first decade of the twentieth century when the Japanese dominance increased in Korea. According to Kwak (ibid), this attitude was in contrast to the Korean Protestant church, which attempted to protest against Japanese colonial rule (see S K Kim 1991).

I cannot fully agree with Kwak because what he argues is only a half-truth. It can be proposed that the Korean Protestant church protested against Japanese rule (1910-1945), while the Catholic church did not. It can also be proposed that while the Catholic church protested against the extension of the military regime in another time (1961-1987), most of the Korean Protestant church did not (see B R Ro 1995:337). As mentioned earlier, the irrelevance of the church's presence and style in society is surely the main reason behind all the phenomena described as crises, regardless of which the church was numerically growing or declining.

#### 2.2.2.1.3 The Korean church<sup>30</sup> in the beginning (1884-1910)

The beginning of the Korean church was similar to that of the Korean Catholic church. Before American missionaries actively carried out their missionary work in Korea, the Christian Gospel had been transmitted to the Korean people by various channels. A few European missionaries, such as Carl A F Gutzlaff (a German of the Netherlands Missionary Society who had worked for the East

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<sup>30</sup> Since this study defines the Korean church as the Protestant church as a whole in South Korea, the Korean church will refer to the Korean Protestant church from this point onwards in this thesis.



India Company), had visited Korea shortly and tried to distribute religious tracts and Chinese Bibles (see Y H Lee 1985:57-69; I S Kim 1994:67-85; C D Kwak 2000:17).

However, most of the missionary works were irregular attempts in order to preach the gospel to the Koreans who were residing in Manchuria, the northeastern part of China, and not in Korea. In fact, a native of Wales, Robert Thomas, landed at the river Taedong in North Korea in September 1865 to witness to Koreans but he was arrested and executed by the government. John Ross and his brother in law, John McIntyre, who were missionaries of the Presbyterian church of Scotland, witnessed to Koreans in Manchuria and baptized two Seo brothers, Sang Yoon Seo and Kyung Jo Seo, in 1878. In 1883 Sang Yoon Seo brought a Chinese New Testament to Korea. With his brother, who became one of the first seven ordained ministers in Korea, he started the first Korean church in the village of Sorae in the spring of 1884. This was before the foreign protestant missionaries even founded their first church (B R Ro 1995:337; H M Yim 1996:10).

After the persecutions of the Catholics, the pioneer Protestant missionaries from Western Europe experienced the following difficulties: indifference, martyrdom, and the limitation of their activities. As a result, they could hardly plant the Gospel or establish a church in Korea. Protestant churches of the European style could therefore not take root in the soil of Korea (H M Yim 1996:10).

Official Protestant missions began in 1884, exactly a hundred years later than Catholicism started, with Northern Presbyterian missionaries from the United States, Drs J W Heron, Horace J Allen, and Horace G Underwood and the first American Methodist missionaries, Drs H G Appenzeller and W M Scranton. The first medical missionaries, Drs Heron, Allen, and Scranton, with Western medical knowledge made an enormous impact on the royal families, as well as on Korean society. Other foreign missions agencies sent their missionaries to Korea at the end of the 19th century: Plymouth Brethren (1886), the Australian

Presbyterian Mission (1889), Canadian Baptists (1889), Church of England (1890), Southern Presbyterian church in the United States (1892), Canadian Presbyterian Mission (1893), Southern Methodist Episcopal church in the United States (1896), Seventh Day Adventists (1904) and the Salvation Army (1908) (C D Kwak 2000:19; see Y J Kim 1992:68-71; A E Kim 1995:39; B R Ro 1995:337).

The Korean church mission led by these foreign missionaries contributed mainly indirectly and culturally. They built many schools and hospitals to provide educational and medical services.<sup>31</sup> They diligently enlightened and mobilized intelligent young leaders who were converted into Christianity. These young leaders later worked for political, social and cultural transformation in the Korean society, through the YMCA, and the Independence Society or the All People's Cooperative Association. They even held a huge party for celebrating the Korean king's birthday and displayed a Korean national flag at the churches every Sunday (K Y Shin 1999:864). Such inculturation<sup>32</sup> did not just happen because direct preaching of the gospel was difficult due to the government's hostility towards the foreign religion. It happened rather because it was purposefully well planned and practiced with careful endeavor.

As a result, the foreign missionaries began to earn the devotion of the Korean people. Their work towards inculturation had a positive influence on preaching the gospel. The spiritual awakening of the Korean church, historically called the

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<sup>31</sup> The Methodist missionaries especially stressed education. Dr Appenzeller opened the first school (Paejae Hakdang) in 1886 to teach boys English. In the same year, Mrs Scranton started the Ehwa Girl's School, which was developed into a college (1910) and later, into one of the largest women's universities in the World. Presbyterian missionaries also soon established schools of their own. By 1910, there were some 800 Christian schools spread all over Korea and accommodating over 41,000 students, which was about twice the total enrolment in all Korean government schools. See for more A E Kim (1995:40-41) and C D Kwak (2000:19).

<sup>32</sup> In recent years a new term has surfaced to describe a style of mission that allows for an aggressive promotion of the Jesus tradition without seeking to dominate or destroy another culture. Pedro Arrupe (1978:172-81) defines inculturation as "the incarnation of the Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about 'a new creation.'" See more on this G F Snyder (1999:1-5).

Great Revival of 1907 in Pyongyang, ignited a nationwide revival movement and occurred while the church was preaching the gospel with such cultural sensitivity. This period therefore shows that the Korean church had kept the sound and balanced ministry of preaching the gospel spiritually and culturally both in church and society.<sup>33</sup>

#### 2.2.2.1.4 The Korean church in Japanese oppression (1910-1945)

The year 1910 marks a fatal disgrace and deep grief to Koreans because it was during this year that Japan annexed Korea. Korea became a victim of Japanese imperialism. Many of them left their country to Manchuria, China, and America, in order to fight for the independence of the nation. Many of them came to church during this period in order to divert their minds from sorrow. Christian leaders were prominent in organized societies such as the YMCA, the Independence Society, and the All People's Cooperative Association, in order to enlighten Korean resistance to colonization. Many regarded the church as a refuge from Japanese oppression (U Y Kim 1999:23).

During this period, the Korean church led by foreign missionaries tried to preserve political neutrality and concentrated more on religious efforts in order not to create conflict with the Japanese government. The Japanese administrative policy towards the Korean church was friendly at first and everything was seemingly fine. However, the Japanese government gradually changed its policy to an open policy of oppression and hostility toward Korean people and the Korean church (K Y Shin 1999:864).

In the beginning of the year 1919 there were two memorable events that took place in a month's time. The first event was the March First Independence Movement that proclaimed the Declaration of Independence by 33

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<sup>33</sup> With the influx of American Protestant missionaries into Korea in 1884, there were potential problems of the church division later in Korea. H M Yim (1996:10) prophetically points out. In a sense they came from various Protestant denominations and imported their own confessions

representatives of the people, and engaged in a nationwide peaceful protest demonstration. The Korean church took the initiative of this movement: 16 of the 33 representatives were Christians and the church's preparation was very self-governed and secret. There was no prior consultation of the missionaries. From this day, in Seoul, more than two million people participated in 1,542 demonstrations. It was at the churches that Koreans gathered to read the Declaration and to begin their demonstration in practically all towns and villages. In addition, the Christians insisted on non-violence. However, the Japanese government responded brutally to these peaceful demonstrations by killing 7,509 Korean people, injuring 15,961 and arresting about 47,000 (Yang 1993:179; Rhee 1995:263; C D Kwak 2000:23).

The second event was the most tragic incident. It is known as the Jaeamri Methodist church Incident and that took place on April 15 1919. Japanese police officers locked congregations inside the church and burned them to death. The fire killed about 30 believers. The Korean church experienced severe persecution from the Japanese government since then because of her initiation and active involvement in the independence movement (U Y Kim 1999:24; see The Institute of Korean church History Studies 1990:35-41; I S Kim 1994:219-21). As a result, many Korean Christian politicians and intellectuals went abroad to continue promoting the independence movement, and the sending of mission boards, mostly theologically conservative, who demanded that their missionaries should preserve political neutrality (cf The Institute of Korean church History Studies 1990:59-63). By actively paying attention and participating in cultural and contextual issues around her, however, the Korean church was able to attain not only a priceless tradition of deep sympathy with the nation's suffering, but also great confidence from the Korean people, who began to recognize Christianity as a religion for the people (:40; C D Kwak 2000:24).

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into Korea. The Korean church accepted them without any serious theological reflection.

The Korean church, however, was not just active in contextual matters culturally, but also desperate in keeping her faith spiritually. During 1935 when the Japanese government ordered all schools and churches to participate in Shinto shrine ceremonies and to bow down to the gods,<sup>34</sup> the Korean church and the missionaries refused to do so. The result was that the schools and churches were closed. Lives were threatened.<sup>35</sup> Many missionaries were deported to their home countries. Due to the restricted missionary works, nearly 200 local churches were closed. About two thousand Christian leaders who were involved in the anti Shrine worship movement were imprisoned, and more than 50 Christians suffered martyrdom for preserving their faith (The Institute of Korean church History Studies 1990:294-99, 337-8).

#### 2.2.2.1.5 Summary

The period (1884-1945) during which the Korean church took the cultural and social initiative was reflected on so far. Although this initiative and the Korean church's healthy growth during the period were God's will and divine providence, the following observations can be made from the discussion above:

First, the Korean church's initiative came from her partnership with foreign missionaries that resulted in the spreading of the Christian (not the Western) culture into Korean society. The Korean church is often criticized for that she needs to repent her worship of Western culture (cf S W Cho 2001:33). Such an attitude of the Korean church can be argued, started much later than this period

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<sup>34</sup> All Koreans, including Christians, were compelled to worship "Kami" and "Amaterasu" at Japanese Shinto shrines. "Kami" designated a deity, which the Japanese believe to be revealed in awesome natural phenomena, mythological figures, historical heroes, and the spirits of their ancestors. Shintoism, therefore, can be said to be a polytheistic and syncretistic religion of Japan. Among all the gods, "Amaterasu," the sun-goddess, was worshipped as the highest deity, and at the time was identified with the ancestor-deity of the imperial family of Japan. For further detail, see The Institute of Korean church history studies 1990:285ff).

<sup>35</sup> This Shinto shrine worship issue later on resulted in the division of the churches in Korea between those who considered them as preservers of faith during the Shinto shrine crisis and those who failed to do so. After the liberation of Korea in 1945, for example, the aftermath of Shinto shrine worship caused chaotic conflicts that resulted in the divisions of the Koryo group and the Jaegun group in the Presbyterian church (see H M Yim 1996:52; H K Kim 1998:111-2).

(1884-1945). It may be argued that the early missionaries led the first efforts of indigenization and that the Korean leaders were second (see S J Lee 1995:231; D S Ryu 1980:12). However, according to my own understanding, it started as a partnership between the two on a large scale and in some cases, the Korean leaders even took the initiative. For example, Sung Hun Lee officially initiated Catholicism by in 1974 before any foreign missionary came to Korea (cf B R Ro 1995:336; A E Kim 1995:35). The first Korean protestant church was also established by Sang Yoon Seo in 1984 before the foreign protestant missionaries founded their first church (B R Ro 1995:337; H M Yim 1996:10). Likewise, two Koreans, Bin Jung and Sang Jun Kim founded the Korean Holiness church in 1907 (M J Lee 1929:51 in S U Jeong 2000:75).

Secondly, the works of inculturation, such as the educational, medical, and evangelical ministries of the Korean church in the Korean society during this era have become the tradition of the Korean church and provided the background for the later development of the indigenous church of Korea. Accordingly, D S Ryu (1980:13) analyzes rightly the characteristics of the early Korean church as follows: “The first is the establishment of the church for the spiritual liberation of human beings... The second is medical work for liberation of human beings from a disease... And third is educational work making possible intellectual liberation.”

Finally, by actively and deeply paying attention to and participating in Korean society and culture, the Korean church was able to earn great confidence from the Korean people, who began to recognize Christianity as a religion for the people and the Korean church as a refuge that deeply sympathized with the nation's suffering.

#### 2.2.2.2 The political and social chaotic period (1945-1970)

After the liberation from Japanese oppression in 1945, Korea faced not only the great task of restoring its sovereignty, but also great political and social chaos.

The agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States, to participate jointly in the surrender of Japan (regardless of the Koreans' strong opposition movement) split the country into two opposing sides, namely the communist government of the North, supported by the Soviet Union, and the democratic one of the South promoted by the United States in 1948. The division of the two Koreas was perpetuated through the Korean War (1950-1953) and caused by the struggle between the two powers (A E Kim 1995:45).

During this chaotic and melancholy period, the church in the North was severely persecuted by the Communist government since it viewed the church as a great threat to its rule. Shortly before and at the time of the outbreak of the Korean War, many Christians in the North thus fled the South for freedom of faith. The Communist invasion of the South, however, took place so quickly that many church leaders were killed or carried away back to the North. During the Korean War, many churches were destroyed, for example about 152 Presbyterian churches, 84 Methodist churches, 27 Korean Holiness churches, 4 Salvation Army churches, and so on. There were the kidnapping of church leaders by the Communist North government: 177 (Presbyterian), 46 (Korean Holiness), and 44 (Methodist) (ibid: see K W Kang 1999:107).

The Korean church in the South, however, had high privilege and status because of the different political and social atmosphere from the North. Accordingly, in this period, the Korean church began to develop her close relationship with political culture (see S K Lee 1995:65-98; H S Kim 1997: 289-307). There are various interpretations on this. One finds the cause in the free and different atmosphere created by the Christian President and leaders in the Democratic Parliament (Rhee 1995:270). Others insist on the influence of the American churches and missionaries as a main reason (I C Kang 1996:270-74; C D Kwak 2000:32). Others consider anti-communism as a product of the period that related to the existential motive of the Korean church. During this period both government and churches experienced the brutal massacre by the communists during the Korean War and observed the severe persecution of the

North Korean communist government towards Christianity after the War (H S Kim 1997:289-307; K Y Shin 1999:804-5).

In my own opinion, all three of these factors affected the Korean church's close relationship with political culture. According to the earlier three points on historical trends involving the interaction between church and culture (2.2.1) Rhee's argument is well based on my second point, *Christianity's social status and the domain culture type*. Kang and Kwak too are clearly right in relating it to my first point, *the historical time and context* which the United States initiated and politically and militarily dominated over the Korean government. Kim and Shin's argument is fair enough and depends on my third point, *the realistic and existentialistic trend*.

However, because of her positioning in that pattern, the Korean church could not easily criticize the government and the Christian president when they practiced injustice and misused their political power. In addition, the Korean church was often accused of being a pro-government group (Rhee 1995:270). It is very ironical that before she was a symbol of the religion of the nation and a refuge of people, and now she was called pro-government. Although the Korean church flirted with the government for a certain time, she began to lose her cultural initiative since then. It is not certain whether she realized it or not.

There was yet another issue where the Korean church began to mislay her cultural initiative: in the divisions of the churches. By the end of the 1950's, the Korean church experienced three great divisions in the Presbyterian church: the division of the Koryo and the Jaegun in 1952, the split of the Kijang and Yejang in 1953, and the division of Hapdong and Tonghap in 1959 (H M Yim 1996:52-73). The first division was ascribed to the issue of the Shinto shrine worship that was mentioned above. The second and third division, however, emerged from the theological conflicts between conservatives and liberals. The major reason for the second split was the difference in understanding the inerrancy of the Bible and its inspiration. The third split was as a result of the conflict between



the pro-ecumenical group based on tolerant evangelistic theology and the anti-ecumenical group based on fundamentalist theology (:85-98).

Later many other denominations also experienced the painful schism: For example, the Korea Holiness church was divided into two groups, namely the Yesung (anti-ecumenical group) and Kisung (pro-ecumenical group).<sup>36</sup> The Protestant church continued to split into officially 43 denominations (see D H Kim 1986: appendices; H M Yim 1996: xvii). Such denominationalism inside church caused the Korean church to fail to pay attention and participate in national issues outside the church. With these two major characteristics, pro-government and schism, the Korean church began to lose the cultural and social initiative and confidence that she gained from the Korean people and society in the early history.

Nevertheless, the Korean church continued to grow explosively during this period (1945-1970). This is abnormal and problematic because this growth was not based on sound theological foundation or sincere participation in the surrounding culture and context as discussed above. During the 1970's, many people in Korea and all over the world celebrated the marvelous growth of the Korean church as God's blessing. Now many inside and outside Korea obviously notice the stagnation of the growth since the mid of 1980's and are in quest of the reason for this. Someone may argue from the religious sociological perspective that the sufferings experienced by Korean people during the Japanese occupation in Korea (1910-1945), the Korean War (1950-1953), and the constant threat of Communism from North Korea, have encouraged them to find their security in God and from this point the Korean church continuously and rapidly grew (C J Ro 1998:21).

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<sup>36</sup> Generally speaking, the Korean church has dichotomized into two groups: conservatives, representing an orthodox theology (Yesung, Yekam and Yejang) and liberals, representing a liberal theology (Kisung, Kikam and Kijang).

According to what has been discussed until now, I however consider it as a forecast tragedy. No church can continuously grow if it ignores its context. No church can even survive if it loses contact with people. Although the Korean church kept growing during that time, however, at the same time she kept on creating many problems that can now be observed both in the Korean society and the Korean church.

### **2.2.2.3 The period during which the Korean church lost her cultural initiative (1970 to the present)**

This period in Korean history can be described as an era of change in every aspect. Firstly, on a political level, there were dictatorship and political struggle for democracy. Secondly, on an economic level, there was the prominent development of the industrialization of the nation. Thirdly, socio-culturally, there was the rapid change of lifestyle (using all kinds of high technology and electronic media freely), with an increasing interest in the Korean traditional culture and increasing critics on the Western culture (see B J Jung 1989; H Y Cho 1994). Fourthly, on a religious level, there were the multi-religion phenomena, created by the emerging interest of traditional cultures, while Christianity became marginalized. This was in a society that suddenly changed the religious atmosphere. It gave no religion the absolute authority or influence over the Korean society (see E Yun 1994; K Y Shin 1999:866-8). Fifthly, inside the Korean church, polarization took place between the conservatives and the liberals<sup>37</sup>. The emergence of Korean theology or the indigenization of theology such as the Minjung theology,<sup>38</sup> the rapid and famous church growth movement

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<sup>37</sup> During this period, the difference of these two sides was obvious. The conservative churches more concentrated on extending their church influence by quantitative membership growth while the liberal churches involved in various social and cultural movements based on Minjung theology in 1970's (K Y Shin 1999:865).

<sup>38</sup> Minjung theology has emerged out of the Korean situation and of the involvement of Christians in the struggle for social justice in Korea since 1970's. *Minjung* are those who are oppressed politically, exploited economically, alienated sociologically, and kept uneducated in cultural and intellectual matters. For more on the minjung theology see my discussion later in this thesis (2.2.2.2.3); N D Suh, "Toward a theology of Han," in *Minjung theology*, ed. The Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia (Maryknoll: Orbis

(U Y Kim 1999:34), mass evangelical meetings,<sup>39</sup> and the arising need for a re-engagement between the Korean church and the Korean culture that she had lost (K Y Shin 1999:867).

J H Kim (1991:120) insists that the Korean church's growth in this period had doubled each decade and that she was internationally evaluated as the model of a growing church. In 1960, the Korean church's population numbered only about 700,000. In 1970, however, membership exceeded 3 million, which was more than four times of that in the 1960's. The 1970's and 1980's were no less remarkable for membership growth: 7 million in 1980 and 12 million in 1990 (Gallup Korea 1998:218). Since the mid 1980's, however, the church growth began to decline.

Why did the Korean church grow so rapidly in this period? Why did the number of Korean Christians decrease from the mid 1980's? There would be no single factor of church growth in Korea. Several factors may combine to create a fertile environment for church growth in all dimensions, not just in the numerical growth of the Korean church. With regard to this, S K Lee (1998:96; 1995:3) analyzes the reasons of church growth in Korea as follows:

Although the reason for the Korean church's growth was basically God's will and divine providence, some explanations have been given for its leveling out: 1) It originated in the mission policy of the early missionaries in Korea, which undertook mission by means of education, medical aid, the Nevius Method, the division of the mission field and so on. This assertion was strongly made by the missionaries in Korea, such as C A

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Book, 1981); W S Han, *민중사회학 (Minjung Sociology)* (Seoul: 종로서적, 1984); and A S Park, "Minjung theology: A Korean contextual theology," in *Pacific Theological Review* 18 (1985).

<sup>39</sup> During this time, mass evangelical meetings permeated into the Korean church: Billy Graham Crusade of 1973, Explo '74, '77 Evangelization, '80 World Evangelization Crusade and Protestant Centenary Celebration in 1984 (A E Kim 1995:48; E S Cho 1996:348). These mass crusades had a great impact on the Korean church which exploded into zeal for soul-winning and in fact had earned a great number of souls: for examples, Explo '74 led around 272,000 people to the decision to believe in Christ and in '80 Crusade about one million people became new Christian believers (J G Kim 1995:59).

Clark and Samuel Moffett. 2) It was caused by the Korean mentality-religiosity, religious emotion and peculiar religious zeal. This was emphasized by the Methodist theologians, such as S B Yoon and D S Ryu, and S Palmer who had worked as a missionary in Asia. 3) Another opinion is held by those who explain the growth in terms of religious syncretism in the Korean church, which accommodated an understanding of the Korean traditional religions with the Shamanistic world-view. David Chung, who argues for it in his thesis, entitled “Religious syncretism in Korean society” in 1959. 4) The most persuasive reason of all is that of the social contextualization or historical contextualization theory. This explains the Korean people’s receptivity of Christianity in the context of the historical lives of Koreans. A representative of this contention is C S Chung. The theory that the growth of the church has a deep relationship with the contemporary social context has already been ratified in the history of the Western church as well as of the Korean church.<sup>40</sup>

As mentioned above, the Korean church’s growth and decline, was affected by many reasons, arising from not only a spiritual or theological dimension, but also from the sociological and contextual dimension. At the same time, however, there is agreement that the problem facing the Korean church was her negligence of social responsibility and service. This is very clear especially when I compare the early Korean church to the present one: The early Korean church (1884-1945) grew steadily and soundly in all dimensions because of her healthy and balanced ministry (spiritually and culturally) in both the church and society. On the contrary, since 1960, the Korean church concentrated more on her own issues and needs and church growth has only been in numerical growth (cf C D Kwak 2000:41).

Many criticize today that the Korean church was much grown but little matured. In my own opinion, such a problem is closely related to the Confucian orthodox

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<sup>40</sup> This was originally written in Korean, translated into English by C D Kwak (2000:43-4) and

mentality. This state of mind does not allow any alternative idea or trivial deviation, and possibly caused the Korean church to isolate herself from all other new and fresh ideas because of her lack of serious theological reflection on them. This prevailed for long enough in Korean society to influence all the areas of politics, society, culture, and religion (H M Yim 1996:7-8; cf C S Park 1982:23).

In relation to this, I C Kang (1996:270-74) rightly argues that another factor, namely the American churches and their missionaries, also decisively influenced the Korean church. This can be understood when considered that most of the missionaries were educated in the conservative seminaries in the United States.<sup>41</sup> The Korean church under the auspices of the USA government after the Korean War tended to be a conservative political position, whether theologically conservative or liberal (:259-70). Since then this trend has become a socio-cultural tradition and has impacted continuously on the formation of the theological tradition of the Korean church. In contrast with it, here I strongly feel the need for the formation of Christian culture and ultimately the necessity of regaining the cultural initiative of the Korean church.

### **2.2.3 The Korean church and Korean culture**

The historical trends of the interaction between church and culture in the Korean church have been discussed above in large. To avoid repetition, I will briefly but specifically summarize my interpretation of the relation between the Korean church and the Korean culture as follows:

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modified by me for the emphasis in this thesis.

<sup>41</sup> There were 144 missionaries of the Northern Presbyterian Missions in Korea: 8 unordained men, 40 ordained men, 9 male doctors, 32 single women, and 55 wives. Among the ordained men, 7 theological seminaries are represented: Princeton comes first with 16, McCormick next with 11, San Anselmo with 4, and Union in New York with 3. About 10 Bible institutes are represented, Moody easily leading with the Bible Seminary in second place. For more detail see H M Yim (1996:16).

Firstly, the Korean church has a weak set up regarding the relationship with her culture. S B Lim (1997a:4-5) argues that the Korean church's crisis is a result of this weak set up. More specifically, he insists that the Korean church has difficulty to relate to the traditional culture as well as to mass culture (:4). This is a significant observation, because as noted before, many Koreans today are interested in the traditional culture. They understand that it would give an idea of how the Korean church understands and connects with people. The relationship with the traditional culture can also provide a historical basis to understanding the Korean church and mass culture influences. In addition, this relationship influences the present and future Korean church.

Looking at the Christians in Korea, the question may be asked: Are they really Christians? The reason why I ask this is because Christians in Korea have often heard that they are not like true Christians, especially when their traditional rituals and life styles are exposed. For example, if someone goes to church only to be blessed, then I may think his or her faith is not a genuine Christian faith, but rather a Shamanistic type of faith. S W Cho (2001:31-2) critically points out that this Christian's dualistic attitude shows no relevance between their lives in faith (church) and their lives in culture.

The problem is however, that no one, in real sense, can throw away his/her identity as a Korean because he/she becomes a Christian. Regarding this, M J Lee (2000:65) argues rightly that the Korean church needs to go beyond such a single lined theological thought and attitude that tries to reject all traditional factors. M J Lee (:66), however, is not insisting that the Korean Christian identity is multifold such as Shamanistic Christian or Confucianistic Christian as the liberal theologians claim in relation to religious pluralism. He argues that such a twofold or multifold identity does not fit to Korean religious ethos (:67). After all, it is the task of the Korean church to help Korean Christians to have their Korean Christian identity.

Secondly, the Korean church has no serious theological reflection when she rejects or accepts a new culture. The previous discussion helps me to understand that this trend of the Korean church is related to the Confucian orthodox mentality that does not allow any alternative idea, trivial deviation, any divergent school or faction, or the American missionaries who were mostly conservative. As a result, the conservative Korean church tends to be against new trends of culture when she encounters them for the first time and accepts them eventually without serious theological reflection on them.

Thirdly, pastors and Christians in the Korean church are interested in and even eager to know about culture, especially those on the liberal side. They however do not always know how to deal with it, especially those who are on the conservative side. Society is the place for human activities and consists of culture as a production of the human activities. It is very right, therefore, for the church to have an interest in society and culture. Church exists in the world. Although the church is universal and mysterious, as far as she exists here on earth, she cannot be free from the influence of the world. At times, worldly culture emerges into the church and at other times, the church takes the initiative of the history and culture of the world. It is again very just for the Korean church to know more about this significant interaction between the church and culture and to act more effectively in it.

The Korean church's diakonia trend, shown in the early Korean church, has been lost as the church has become too busy to deal with social and cultural issues. It does not necessarily mean, however, that she needs some cultural outreach for the community or society. It would rather be from inside the church. S C Moon (2001:133; see L T Tisdale 1992:5-9) stresses that the Korean church also needs to look at the inside of the church from a multi-cultural perspective. According to Moon (*ibid*), there are multi-subcultures in a single local church. The Korean church needs to seek a balanced attitude both in the church and in society, locally and globally.

Fourthly, the Korean church is often criticized that she has not been rooted well in Korean culture (S B Lim 1997b:189-90). This is the tendency among many Koreans as they still consider Christianity as a western religion. This was not a problem at all when the Korean church participated actively and deeply in Korean society and culture, especially in a dark and hopeless age under the Japanese oppression. The Korean church was able to earn the great confidence from the Korean people, who began to recognize Christianity as a religion for the people and the Korean church as a church that deeply sympathized with the nation's suffering. This thought became serious among young people, who did not know and experienced the early Christian history, and marginalized the Korean church from the social trends emphasizing nationalism that emerged since the 1980's.

In brief, I conclude that the deficiencies in the Korean church's relationship towards her culture are as follows:

The Korean church firstly has a weak set up of the relationship with her culture (the deficiency of set up). Secondly, the Korean church has no serious theological reflection when she rejects or accepts a new culture (the deficiency of theological reflection). Thirdly, the Korean church was unfaithful to equip the pastors and members to deal with their culture properly because she thought that to do so was not her responsibility (the deficiency of knowledge and responsibility); and fourthly, the Korean church has not been rooted in Korean culture well (the deficiency of contextualization or indigenization).

From these findings, it has to be asked whether the Korean church lacks an obvious and healthy ecclesiology. In the next section, this study will investigate the present ecclesiologies in the Korean church and whether there is a cause and effect relationship between the deficiencies found and the ecclesiologies in the Korean church today.



## 2.2.4 The present ecclesiologies of the Korean church

Many pastors, theologians and religious socialists in Korea, who insist on the renewal or revival of the Korean church, see the present ecclesiology of the Korean church as problematic and that it needs to be changed. In order to define the present ecclesiology of the Korean church, I will critically adopt the five models of the ecclesiology based on Avery Dulles (1978; 2002).<sup>42</sup>

The first model is *the church as institution* (A Dulles 1978:39-50; 2002: 26-38). The notion of the church as society by its very nature tends to highlight the structure of government as the formal element in the society. Thus it leads easily, though not necessarily, to what I shall call the institutional vision of the church, that is to say, the view that defines the church primarily in terms of its visible structures, especially the rights and powers of its officers. A characteristic of the institutional model of the church is the hierarchical conception of authority. The church is not conceived as a democratic or representative society, but as one in which the fullness of power is concentrated in the hands of a ruling class from God.

This is the very characteristic of the present ecclesiology of the Korean church. The Korean church has been very hierarchical: pastors have been authoritative and treated as divine as Pharaoh. The Confucianism, that respects elders and teachers, accelerated this atmosphere much more – both in church and society. Even though the Korean church and society are experiencing rapid changes in every aspect, (except for a few recent growing churches), this is still one of the main characteristics that became the tradition and ecclesiology of the Korean church and reduces the laity to a condition of passivity that makes them a mere appendage of the apostolate of the hierarchy.

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<sup>42</sup> J K Un (see 1999c:36-40) also uses these models for suggesting a new paradigm of the Korean church, but here I adopt them for defining the present ecclesiology of the Korean church.

Dulles' second model, *the church as mystical communion*, is obviously different from the first one. In modern sociology, according to Dulles (2002:39-54), it has become commonplace to contrast two types of social relationship: a formally organized or structured society, and an informal or interpersonal community. The two types are often referred to by their German terms, *Gesellschaft* (society) and *Gemeinschaft* (community).<sup>43</sup> *Gesellschaft*, in this categorization, corresponds approximately with the kinds of grouping we have analyzed in the first model under the heading of institution and visible society. It is a human association characterized by formal organization, structures and office, such as the secular state, the school, the hospital, and the hotel. The organization is maintained by competent authority, which is normally institutionalized in the form of office. Such societies are governed by explicit rules, often written.

Since the institutional categories, as we have seen, cannot do justice to the full reality of the church, it is to be expected that we would turn to the other member of the pair to illuminate the nature of the church. Charles H Cooley (1967:23-31) further developed the notion of *Gemeinschaft* in Tonnies' classification. It was done according to the description of "primary groups."<sup>44</sup> The main characteristics of a primary group, according to him, are as follows: 1) face to face association; 2) the unspecialized character of that association; 3) relative permanence; 4) the small number of persons involved; and 5) the relative intimacy among the participants.

As examples of primary groups, I understand that Cooley referred to the family, household, and the old fashioned neighborhood like the early church community in the biblical era we can imagine. Since Dulles writes his book and introduces these models from a Roman Catholic point of view, some Protestant arguments have to be considered as well: In some Protestant circles, this model has been

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<sup>43</sup> This antithesis owes its popularity to Ferdinand Tonnies, who in 1887 published his classic work, *Gemeinschaft und gesellschaft* (English translation, *Community and society*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963).

<sup>44</sup> See Charles H Cooley, *Social organization* (1909; reprinted New York: Schocken Books, 1967).

developed in an anti-institutional sense. Rudolph Sohm, for example, teaches that the essential nature of the church stands in antithesis to all law.<sup>45</sup> Emil Brunner (1952:17) argues that the church in the biblical sense is not an institution but a brotherhood. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1963:123) develops the notion of the church as an interpersonal community.

This type of ecclesiology has a better basis in the biblical notion of communion. And this makes room for the mystical and spontaneous initiatives aroused by the Holy Spirit, who gives to each according to His good pleasure without prior consultation with the hierarchy. Moreover, this model has great appeal in our day because they meet a human need that is acutely experienced by many of the faithful. This type of ecclesiology has been found in many churches in Korea with, unfortunately, some negative factors as Dulles (2002:52-3) indicates first of all, this type of ecclesiology tends to exalt and divinize the Korean church beyond its due, especially when the church is seen totally as a free and spontaneous gift of the Spirit. This phenomenon is often seen in some charismatic churches in Korea. Secondly, this type of ecclesiology fails to give Christians a very clear sense of their identity or mission. Since we cannot take it for granted that evangelization, baptism, or church membership coincides with the bestowal of the Holy Spirit; the motivation for Christian mission is left obscure. This may cause them to be exclusive to those who are outside the church and make them escape from the reality especially when they consider this relates to eschatology as it happened in October 1992 in Korea.<sup>46</sup> With this type of ecclesiology, the Korean church has lost her contact with her society and culture along the way on her journey with Korean people.

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<sup>45</sup> Such is the view of Rudolph Sohm, as summarized and accepted by Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the church* (London: Lutterworth, 1952). 107.

<sup>46</sup> There was a happening in October 1992 in Korea created by a group of people in some churches associated with Dami Mission Society who acted as they believed: challenged by some prophecies they insisted they received, they expected Jesus Christ to comeback to the earth in the specific day, the 28<sup>th</sup> of October and it became a social issue that degraded the Christianity's social status.

The third model, *the church as sacrament*, appealed by many twentieth century Catholic theologians, establishes the theological meaning of the sacraments as based on the incarnation. Christ, as the sacrament of God, contains the grace that He signifies. Conversely, He signifies and confers the grace He contains. In Him, the invisible grace of God takes on visible form. However, the sacrament of redemption is not complete in Jesus as a single individual. In order to become the kind of sign He must be, He must appear as the sign of God's redemptive love extended toward all humankind, awaiting the response of all humankind to that redemptive love (Dulles 2002:60).

The church therefore is in the first instance a sign. It must signify the redeeming grace of Christ in a historically tangible form. It signifies that grace as relevantly given to men of every age, race, kind, and condition. The church thus must incarnate itself in every human culture (ibid).

This type of ecclesiology rose against the Protestant theology. It overemphasized the "word" instead of the "sacrament" which has been no exception in Korea. According to H M Yim (1996:219-221), the Korean church has neglected the sacraments or understood partially only. The Korean church emphasized baptism from the beginning, but partially, i.e. stressed its didactic and disciplinary character. This means that the church neglected the aspect of fellowship in baptism. This fellowship was essential in baptism because baptism is based theologically on the incorporation into the body of Christ. The Korean church also has neglected the celebration of the Eucharist from its beginning. Therefore, the fellowship aspect of the Eucharist could not be emphasized.

As a result, the Korean church could not develop theological concepts such as fellowship with one another. Because of the lack of fellowship, the church could not prevent conflict between the church leaders or overcome divisions. Accordingly, the Korean church needs to consider this ecclesiology in both historical and theological cases so that people may not experience again a

narrow sacramentalism that allows insufficient place for *diakonia* in the church's mission to the world.

*The church as herald*, as the fourth model, considers the "word" primary and the "sacrament" secondary and sees the church as gathered and formed by the Word of God. The mission of the church is to proclaim that which it has heard, believed, and been commissioned to proclaim. This type of ecclesiology is kerygmatic, for it looks upon the church as a herald, one who receives an official message with the commission to pass it on. The basic image is that of the herald of a king who comes to proclaim a royal decree in a public square (Dulles 2002:68-9).

The goal of the church, in this style of theology, is simply to herald the message. The ecclesiology goes with a strong evangelistic missionary thrust. The church's responsibility is therefore to evangelize all the nations in accordance with the great commission of Mt 28:18-20 (:76).<sup>47</sup>As a result, this ecclesiological type emphasizes preaching the word and places the preacher in the center of the church practices. In addition, this preacher-centered model, one of the most Korean ecclesiologies, tends to pursue a one-way communication to the congregation and neglect the importance or possibility of community and the laity ministry. This model can easily be observed in many churches in Korea today.

The fifth, *the church as servant*, is quite different from the previous four models in terms of the church's position to the world. In other words, all the models give a primary or privileged position to the church with respect to the world. In the institutional ecclesiology, the church teaches, sanctifies, and rules with the authority of Christ. In the communion type, the church is viewed as God's

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<sup>47</sup> One aspect that I cannot agree with Dulles (2002:76) on here is that he says, "The church's responsibility is not necessarily to produce conversion (only God can do that), still less to build the kingdom of God." Theoretically it is true that the work of conversion is not our work, but God's. Practically, however, it is not right because what he says seem to be based on a dualistic sense that separates the work of church and the work of God; and divides to convert people or

People or Christ's Body, growing into the final perfection of the Kingdom. In the sacramental model, the church is understood as the visible revelation of the grace of Christ. In the herald type, the church takes on an authoritarian function, preaching the divine word to which the world must humbly listen (Dulles 2002:81).

In all these ecclesiological models, the church is seen as the active subject while the world is portrayed as the object that the church influences. The church is produced by God's direct action, and stands as a kind of mediator between God and the world. God comes to the world through the church, and the world likewise comes to God through the church (:81-2). The fifth ecclesiology, however, brought with it a completely new understanding of the relationship between the church and the world of our day, a servant church, which set off from the Vatican Council II (1962) and was later challenged by the Uppsala Report of the World Council of Churches in 1968 (*missio Dei*). According to Dulles (:87), nearly all the ecclesiologists who had emerged into prominence have been, since the early sixties, representative of this new style of secular-dialogic theology. In English-speaking Protestantism and Anglicanism, the best-known representatives of this ecclesiology are Gibson Winter,<sup>48</sup> Harvey Cox,<sup>49</sup> and John A T Robinson.<sup>50</sup>

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build God's kingdom and to evangelize all the nation.

<sup>48</sup> Gibson Winter, in his *The new creation as metropolis* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), calls for a "servant church"-one that is no longer an institutional structure of salvation alongside the worldly structures of restraint but one that is that community within the worldly structures of historical responsibility in which recognizes and acknowledges God's gracious work for all mankind. The servant church is the community who confirm mankind in its freedom to fashion its future, protesting the pretensions to the ultimate in any human structures and suffering with men in the struggle against the power of evil.

<sup>49</sup> Harvey Cox, building on the work of Gibson Winter and others, included in his *The secular city* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), a characteristic chapter, "The church as God's avant-garde." "The church's task in the secular city," he wrote, "is to be the *diakonos* of the city, the servant who bends himself to struggle for its wholeness and health."

<sup>50</sup> Following up on Harvey Cox and upon his own previous work on the notion of the Kingdom of God, the Anglican bishop John A T Robinson, in *The new Reformation?* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), argued that the church is in drastic need of a stripping down of its structures, which can be an obstacle to its mission. To be of service the church must work within the structures of the world rather than build parallel structures. "The house of God is not the church but the world. The church is the servant, and the first characteristic of a servant is that he lives in someone else's house, not his own."

Like other models of the church, this servant ecclesiology has influenced in many areas such as the structure of preaching, Minjung theology (see I S Chang 1991), human rights missions, Urban-Industrial missions and world missions through the Korean church for last thirty years. These efforts were challenged by an idea that the modern world very much needs something that only the church can give: faith in Christ, hope in the ultimate coming of God's Kingdom, and commitment to the values of peace, justice, and human brotherhood, all of which are dominant biblical themes (:90). The servant ecclesiology reflects a consciousness of these needs of both the church and the world. It seeks to give the church a new relevance, a new vitality, a new modernity, and a new sense of mission.

Despite the strengths mentioned above, this ecclesiological model could not be rooting in the Korean church as a whole that is very conservative because of its somewhat extreme and radical nature: rather it is partially practiced on the liberal side, like in the Methodist church and among Methodist scholars.

I have critically analyzed the five ecclesiological models of Avery Dulles in order to define the present ecclesiology of the Korean church. What I found from this work can be concluded as follows: First, all five types exist in varied form in the Korean church. Positively speaking, It means that the problem here is not "either or" but "both and." The church needs all five factors for the ways she exists. Negatively speaking, however, it shows that the Korean church has not been taking serious and theological reflection for constructing a sound and healthy ecclesiology as I mentioned at the end of 2.2.3. If the Korean church can overcome this deficiency of serious reflection, she will be able to leave the abundant historical and theological property to the next generation.

Secondly, the present ecclesiological types of the Korean church show that the Korean church has been very hierarchical and mystical. It is known that there were the influences of Confucianism and possibly, of Shamanism and that such trends are related to the deficiency of contextualization or indigenization.

However, it cannot simply be concluded that such influences are right or not because it may also function as secularization or inculturation. It has also been my observation that the Korean church has been conservative and that it tends to reject new culture or thought. She is not willing to take the risk or responsibility to accept the new, but rather easily rejects it. It is therefore not only a deficiency of contextualization, but also a deficiency of responsibility of the church for the world.

Thirdly, the largest part of the present ecclesiologies of Korean type is *The church as herald* that emphasizes preaching the word and places the preacher in the center of church practice. This model can be seen in almost every church in Korea today. It has the tendency, however, to pursue a one-way style of communication to the congregation and therefore neglects the importance or possibility for participation by the community and laity ministry. It has become a tradition in the Korean church that reduces the laity to a condition of passivity that makes them a mere appendage of the apostolate of the hierarchy. The continuously growing churches among the many dying churches in Korea are all overcoming this problem, for example the Sarang Community church (cf Y K Park 1998).

The above concluding statements all point out that there is inevitable interaction between church and culture in Korea in terms of ecclesiology. To better understand this fact and to secure relevance of the previous work that was done, data from qualitative interviews with some individuals in *focus group* will be documented in the next section. These interviewees are viewed as conversational partners sharing their sentiments and experiences.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> In conducting and documenting these interviews, the approach taken was adopted from Herbert J Rubin & Irene S Rubin, *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1995).



## **2.2.5 The empirical interpretation of the interaction between the church and culture in Korea**

This section is based on the research carried out by qualitative interviewing. Qualitative interviewing is a way of finding out what others feel and think about the world around them. Through qualitative interviews, we can understand experiences and reconstruct events in which we did not participate (Rubin & Rubin 1995:1). Indeed, through what I heard and learned from the selected conversational partners, I was able to extend my intellectual scope over what I described and defined previously in this chapter.

### **2.2.5.1 Profiles of the conversational partners**

The purpose of these conversations was to be better informed and to understand the interaction between church and culture in Korea through the life experiences and stories of some Christian leaders. Consequently, these conversations would also secure the relevance of the previous discussions. Since the interviewees were required to be knowledgeable on this specific issue, they were selected from Koreans living in Pretoria, South Africa. Four of these are pastors and one is a layperson missionary. They are all doing their postgraduate studies at the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

The general condition that interviewees should have different perspectives on the subject was satisfied because the group was formulated with four pastors and a layperson. Furthermore, academic balance was sought: one interviewee studies the New Testament, one the Old Testament, two study Practical theology, and one studies Law. They have not only the academic careers, but also experience in ministry: all have over 6-10 years of church ministry or campus mission experience. All are married men aged in between 35 and 43.

### 2.2.5.2 Hearing the sentiments

The data gathered from the conversations can be categorized under the following themes formulated by the questions asked:

(General)

-What is your understanding or experience of the significant problems in the Korean church?

-What did the Korean church do in order to deal with the problem you pointed out or experienced?

(Church and culture)

-What do you think about the relationship between these problems between the church and the culture that is changing rapidly? Are they related to one another? How?

(Preaching in the interaction between church and culture)

-Do you think the problems that you and your colleagues identified of the Korean church towards her culture are related to the problems of preaching?

The only first three questions will be dealt with here in terms of the interaction between church and culture. The last question on preaching will be discussed in *The empirical interpretation of preaching in the interaction between church and culture in Korea* (2.3.3).

*Q1 What is your understanding or experience of the significant problems in the Korean church in general?*

M1 sees the problems categorized in three areas: laypeople, ministers and church:

The most crucial problem is syncretism – that Christian principles and traditional religious mind, i.e., Shamanism, exist as a mixed form in an individual believer's life. In addition, such a problem often leads believers to only seek earthly blessings.

Ministers are not far from this tendency because of their poor philosophy of ministry, that is to say ecclesiology, and their distorted interpretation of the Word of God that results to the problems of preaching. Besides, the church in relation to her society is not participating much in her surrounding culture and context and is not exercising any positive role over the society.

M2 hesitates before answering for a while because he wants to first clarify what the problem is indeed. He finally says:

Before I talk about the problem of the Korean church, I want to recognize the problem that the Korean church might think concerns quantitative and numerical decline or qualitative issues. I am not saying numerical decline of membership is not problematic. Certainly, it is a problem. Nevertheless, more importantly, we have to argue why this happens. From my own experience and knowledge over years of church ministry, I know that it comes from the preachers and their preaching, which fail to answer the spiritual questions rising in congregations' hearts and tend to be merely ethical. People might say that we can hear such words outside the church, too.

There is also another fact – that the church is not taking her responsibility properly to her culture and society.

M3 believes that there is unbalanced church growth that is too much limited to numerical growth in Korea:

The problems that we<sup>52</sup> as Christians see as the problems of the Korean church come from the unbalanced church growth. Our churches focus far too much on quantitative growth. In such situation, the decline of church and membership might not be surprising at all.

M4 feels the problems that his colleagues are talking about, are nothing serious and nothing new:

The so called problems of the Korean church are nothing serious and nothing new because there have always been problems in Korean Christian history and in other countries as well. Despite this fact, there is the problem of identity: Individual Christians have a self-identity problem while the church has her identity problem, which is the problem of ecclesiology. The Korean church does not give her congregation a clear understanding of where they are and where they are going.

When people choose to go to a church in Korea, they very much depend on the preaching or the preacher. I believe that these problems today are related to the lack of our own theology in Korean Christianity and the historical background of the early Korean church had accepted the Western dogma without critical evaluation.

M5, a layperson missionary working with UBF (University Bible Fellowship), agrees with the point that M4 made above. He sees the Korean church's mistreating of her historical age and context as the most significant problem:

For example, the method of evangelism that worked in the past no longer works today. Nevertheless, taking good and extra care of the new generation at the same time often results in some negative phenomena.

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<sup>52</sup> Using the plural pronoun (we) instead of the singular (I) is a general language habit among Koreans who place more value on the community than on the individual.

Therefore, I rather place myself in a strong or charismatic character like teacher or herald in relation to them.

*Q2 What and how did the Korean church do in order to deal with the problem you pointed out or experienced?*

Most of the conversational regarded this question with the feeling that the response of the Korean church has not been proper and not good enough. M4 however did not agree here. He regards it positively in the transitional state. Some of the participants however, gave specific reasons why it was not good enough. M1, for example, pointed out the Korean church's problem of attitude or mindset:

Many churches now attempt to contribute to their neighboring community by opening their facilities for their neighbors to use, offering medical services, and providing music concerts or seminars for both the community and pastors. The problem is however, that they do these things not because it is the right thing to do, but because it is a good means of church growth or because other churches do.

M2 basically agrees with M1 and says the following:

The problem that most Korean pastors usually identify is the numerical decline of their church membership. If their churches would keep growing quantitatively, I am sure that they would say they have no problem at all.

*Q3 What do you think about the relationship between these problems between the church and the culture that is changing rapidly? Are they related to one another? How?*

Conversational partners show various views on this. But M1 and M5 seem to be in one position while M2 and M3 share the agreement. M4 differs from the

others. M1, first of all, says that, “Society or culture is the object of ministry. Church should minimize the negative function of it and show it where to go.” M5 warns of sinful factors in culture and society that may influence our attitude.

Concerning the positive role of the church towards her culture, M2 says: “We are in culture and society and we have to be the salt and light in our culture and society.” M3 agrees with M2, but refers to the negative or passive function of church: “The church should not ignore her surrounding culture, and at the same time should not follow it. The church is rather to be an oasis in the desert.”

M4 is more open enough to say that we as church people should not differentiate the Christian culture from secular culture. Rather, we need to confess that we are in the same pool and nothing different.

### **2.2.5.3 Interpreting the data**

Having heard the sentiments of the conversational partners, the next task was to interpret the data expressed in order to secure the relevance thereof and to extend my intellectual scope over the previous discussions in this chapter. The following are the thematic interpretations of the data:

#### *On the significant problems in the Korean church*

The conversational partners gave three crucial problems: syncretism, too much focus on numerical growth and the identity problem. I had also argued this, although I did not use the term *syncretism*, except one occasion where I quoted the words of S K Lee (1998:96; 1995:3) when I criticized the abnormal and unhealthy church growth during the time of 1945-1970 (2.2.2.3). I do not prefer the term syncretism for the reason that I cannot simply conclude that the influence of the traditional culture or religion is bad. On the contrary, I believe it could function positively as an act of inculturation. I have also discussed identity

crisis and argued that helping Korean Christians to have their Korean Christian identity should be the task of the Korean church (2.3.3).

I value the sentiments of the conversational partners because the three problems influence badly on believers, the church, preaching and community. For example, syncretism changes the Christian principles with the traditional or pagan religious factors and exists in an individual Korean Christian and affects his or her belief, belonging and behavior. Pastors are no exception to this. It also affects them, their philosophy of ministry, their ecclesiology, and their preaching. It may cause a dual attitude or dual thought (proclaiming heavenly things but seeking earthly ones), and an identity crisis for both the individual and the church itself. As a result, people outside church and community cannot see any difference between the church and other institutes in their society.

*On the response of the Korean church to the problems indicated*

Most conversational partners see what I also see in this study – that the response of the Korean church towards the problem expressed is not proper and not good enough. They warned that many churches in Korea respond in many ways but with the wrong motivation: they do this because of church growth as a management strategy. If there was no church decline, the conversational partners argue, there would be no such efforts toward their neighboring community and society.

*On the interaction between church and culture*

What the conversational partners said is related to not only what I have done, but also to what I will do in the next chapter. James M Gustafson (1974:73-96) sets out three models of the role of theologian (church) towards society (culture): *preserver*, *prophet* and *participant*. The *preserver* tries to maintain the existing social value and system, while *prophet* questions the moral and spiritual health of the society. The *participant* criticizes society, but at the same

time exerts influence to change and construct it (:73). I align with the *participant* model for the Korean church that stands between the two models of *preserver* and *prophet*, and participates within the process of social construction. The conversational partners presented different views on this:

M1 and M5, first, seemed to align with the *prophet* model for church because they see society and culture as the object of ministry and warn against sinful factors in culture and society. M2 and M3 both selected the *participant* model but have different perspectives: M2 sees the positive role of the church towards her culture, while M3 places the church in a passive function towards her culture. Choosing the *preserver* model, M4 saw no difference between Christian culture and secular culture.

Despite such various sentiments among the conversational partners, there was consensus that the Korean church is not participating much into her surrounding culture and is not exercising a positive role over the society. It has happened all the time in Korean Christian history except for the period of Japanese oppression (1910-1945) when the Korean church experienced a national crisis. As M2 points out, this is an ecclesiological problem (the Korean church does not have the solid and healthy ecclesiology).

The problem regarding preaching will be discussed in more depth in the following sections when I mention *Preaching in the interaction between church and culture* (2.3) and *the empirical interpretation of the interaction between preaching and culture in Korea* (2.3.3).



## **2.3 Preaching in the interaction between the church and culture in Korea**

### **2.3.1 Preaching in the Korean church**

In Christian history, church and preaching have been in mutual support or in a mutually controlled relationship towards one another. The church's crisis cannot be thought separately from preaching's problem. In other words, poor preaching could be the cause of church decline and the church's decline could cause the decay of preaching.

In this regard, preaching has been in the very center and driving force of all church activities and missions for the last century in the Korean church. The church has been growing marvelously through preaching. Especially in times of national crisis, the church encouraged and edified people through preaching. The last century of the Korean church has been the golden age of preaching. Preaching became, as Charles H Spurgeon (1980:96) states, the genuine experience of the sacred anointing to the preachers, the divine power to the congregation, and the absolutely primary factor above all other things in the Korean church.

There is, however, also a dark side to preaching in the Korean church. The stagnation of church growth forced the Korean church to reconsider her preaching historically, socio-culturally and theologically. The following findings from such effort are based on my own interpretation of the previous work (2.2), and on an analysis of the related recent literature. These findings will give the present address of preaching in the Korean church:

In the first place, preaching in the Korean church, has been following and practicing the traditional paradigm of preaching that is logical, propositional,

topical, and with three ideas in form.<sup>53</sup> It does not deliver the message as it rises from the text, but the message rather becomes, from the Bible as a mere proof text, an extraction of the preacher's own ideas and what he/she wants. The sermon is usually constructed according to the deductive method because it values logic. As a result, stories only function as the illustrations (U Y Kim 2000:169-73). Preaching in the Korean church thus remains on the level of teaching and transmitting as one can see in the lecture room or court. Its one-way communication overlooks the preacher's homiletical journey with the congregation and has difficulty to appeal those who live in the age of the visual, emotional and electronic communication (:173).

This traditional paradigm emerged from the earlier American missionaries who could not speak Korean well and were so young and that they used the topical sermon that had been popularized in the American churches in the early twentieth century (H M Yim 1996:154). It matched somehow with the Korean church in its hierarchical and authoritative structure created from 500 years old the orthodox Confucian society and culture (See H M Yim 1996).

It can be concluded from such an understanding that preaching in the Korean church is not much influenced by theological frame and change, but by historical and sociological and political situations. It is even more obvious when there is reflection on the history of the Korean church in relation to her preaching.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> About 80% of 1,100 sample sermons are topical with three ideas in form. See for the further detail 성서교재간행사 편집부 편, *한국설교대전집 (The Great Encyclopedia of Korean Preaching)* 1-12. Seoul: 성서교재간행사, 1978.

<sup>54</sup> Relating to preaching, U Y Kim (2000:164-8) classifies the history of the Korean church in five phases: 1) Missionary preaching period (1885-1910), 2) Growing church period (1910-1930), 3) Suffering church period (1930-1945), 4) Free church period (1945-1960), and 5) Contemporary church period (1960 to present). See for the further details: Unyong Kim, "Faith comes from hearing: A critical evaluation of the homiletical paradigm shift through the homiletical theories of Fred B Craddock, Eugene L Lowry, and David Buttrick, and its application to the Korean church". (PhD Thesis. Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education, 1999, 18-38).

In the second place, there is the lack of hermeneutical balance between text and context in preaching. If a preacher delivers his/her sermon in text-priority position, which has been the main flow in the Korean church, he/she will forget about the human reason and neglect human condition and present culture in her congregation (see P H Yum 1985; D W Lee 1998; D Y Kim 1998; H W Lee 2001b). However, if a preacher takes a context-priority position and gives a sermon based on it, (this has been the new phenomenon today), preaching will lose its purpose and the church will become one that exists for congregation's need and convenience only, not for God's need and call (see S T Kim 2000:73-77).

Up to now, the Korean church has been endeavoring hard to hold one of these two, one at a time, so that there would be no healthy balance between the two extremes. The subject of preaching in the past was to provide hermeneutical ground for harmony between text and context. This is also the assignment of preaching in the contemporary and future Korean church.

In the third place, in relation to this, there is the problem of assumption that many preachers in the Korean church today assume that their congregations are Christians. Lloyd-Jones (1998:146) warns against this: "The main danger confronting the pulpit in this matter is to assume that all who claim to be Christians, and who think they are Christians, and who are members of the church, are therefore of necessity Christians." He also gives the right reason why it is fatally wrong: "This is dangerous and wrong for this reason, that if you assume that, you will tend therefore, in all your services, to preach in a manner suited to Christian believers. Your message will always be instructional, and the evangelistic element and note will be neglected, perhaps, almost entirely" (ibid).

It is even worse in the Korean church with its church growth syndrome when believers move around from one church to another. Because pastors want to have more members in their churches, they tend not to preach on sin too seriously. There is not much of a chance therefore to save people by preaching

the Word of God today. Since there are lately so many believers moving around from one church to another to choose a church where they want to go, preachers naturally think there is no need for conversional or evangelistic effort in their preaching. Flowing down this abnormal and not biblical stream, the Korean church has lost the proclamation of the gospel before she even realized it.

Thompson (2001:13) argues that although the new homiletic movement<sup>55</sup> is still new in Korea, it is indeed already 30 years old in America. In light this, it can be said that the well up-dated churches with it will add even more problems. Narrative preaching, for example, is reluctant to speak with authority or to make concrete demands for change in the listeners' lives. It is especially more irresolute in such an abnormal and unbiblical situation as in Korea, as pointed out above. The gospel cannot be preached without authority because the gospel makes claims on our lives.

To avoid misunderstanding, I would like to clarify that my argument here is not that the new homiletic movement is old and no longer useful or that narrative preaching is ineffective. I value very much the paradigm shift brought by the new homiletic movement and the narrative-centered or story like preaching that narrative theology provides. To be more precise, what I am trying to emphasize, is that one needs to consider the context of preaching before one preaches, whether one uses narrative preaching or not.

Another example: Inductive preaching, the new homiletic movement praises, which many young pastors in Korean like to grasp, serves best in a Christian culture in which listeners are well informed of the Christian heritage. However,

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<sup>55</sup> The New Homiletic Movement occurred in reaction to traditional homiletical theory and became mainstream in North American preaching. This claims the paradigm shift in homiletics, as E L Lowry (1994:95-6) well summarizes, from deductive to inductive, from rhetoric to poetic, from space to time... from science to art... from direct to indirect... from theme to event, from description to image... from authoritarian to democratic, from truth to meaning, and from account to experience. See my discussion in Chapter 3 and U Y Kim (1999:96-129) for more on this.

the problem is that, as mentioned above, some of the people who are in the pew are not really Christians. So to adapt merely a new homiletic theory or method, that becomes a trend or fashion, regardless of serious theological reflection on their relevance to the local church, is irresponsible to God and His church. This is a crucial problem of preaching rising in the Korean church today in the name of the recovery of preaching. Nevertheless, it just adds another problem (see M S Yang 1995:126-34; Lloyd-Jones 1998: 143-64; S T Kim 2000:68-85; J Thompson 2001:1-14).

In the fourth place, there is the lack of communal conversion in preaching in the Korean church. Ironically, this happens much often in the churches that emphasize sin and conversion in preaching not like what I discussed above. There are conversions happening in the individuals, but not much happens in the communal sense as a local church. This could answer the common critical question that is often asked, namely why does the Korean church, with such a great membership and world church-growth record, not influence her society.

I believe that the essence of the church's credible witness is her own ongoing evangelization. As the love of God in Jesus Christ is incarnated in the faith community, that love is demonstrated to the world. Witness happens in all that the church is, does, and says, but always in and through its forgiveness and its dependence upon God's grace. Unfortunately, however, the reality in our churches, including the Korean church, is different. The following statements are quoted from Guder's students' field reports in their local congregations (D L Guder 2000:149):

“The congregation I am in does not want to grow; it does not want new members; it does not want to change. They want the pastor to ensure that things will continue to be done the way they have always been done.”

“My congregation is divided into opposing camps. Meeting of the council is a battlefield. Everyone is trying to get the pastor to take sides.”

“The people are really nice in my congregation; they’ve made me feel very welcome. Nevertheless, they really want their church to be a religious social club... what they mean by evangelism is, in most cases, new member recruitment. There is virtually no sense of the calling of the entire community to be an evangelizing community in every dimension of its life”

These cases in a few American churches also represent the situation in the Korean church. Such congregations will really present questions concerning their conversion and their own evangelization, because there is the lack of the communal character of faith and there is the reduction of conversion to the experience of the individual.

In the fifth place, there is a certain tendency that values more on prayer than on the transforming power of preaching in the Korean church. It is more serious especially these days with the intercession movement. The intercession movement is a recent emphasizing program of prayer for others. This movement has spread over the country in Korea. Accordingly, in an article based on an interview with a well-known Korean pastor, he explains his difficulty of not having enough time to read and pray for preaching due to his busy schedule. However, because of the intercession team who prays for his preaching while he is preaching, he says, he is able to continue his preaching ministry. It is not surprising that the Korean church considers the prayer as one of the most powerful motives of church growth and as the very Korean Christian heritage (see A Park 1998).

However, a pastor without prayer and preparation for preaching cannot be excused. This cannot be biblical because preaching does nothing but prayer. In this regard, I agree with Lloyd-Jones (1998:274) who states: “There should be no such disjunction between prayer and preaching.” S T Kim (2000:75) also correctly argues such disjunction between preaching and other factor, i.e. believers’ moving one church to another. His answer to the question, “does good preaching result church growth?” is: “not always, because the church

growth we see today is mainly from the believers' moving from one to another and has nothing to do with preaching the Word of God." Consequently, giving value to other things rather than preaching in determining the work of preaching in the Korean church is wrong and not biblical.

In the sixth place, as many have indicated, congregations experience floods of preaching in Korea. They can hear the specific speaker's sermon they want and compare it with another through mass media such as radio, television and Internet. This change may challenge preachers but, at the same time, may also discourage them with too much demand and expectation created in that environment. It is thus absolutely not easy for a Korean pastor as a solo or senior pastor to manage at least 11 official preaching events a week (including a daily early morning service, a Wednesday evening service, a Friday prayer meeting, and a Sunday morning and evening service) without counting the special services during parish meetings, bible studies, and special occasions like birthday parties, wedding ceremonies, opening ceremonies, and so on (see H W Lee 2001a:1).

Finally, the severe and conservative atmosphere of worship may distract people to lead smoothly to and concentrate on preaching especially when they are visitors with a non-church background. Such a mood comes from the thought that the church has to be stern to be holy (cf S B Kim 1998:85). This was discussed in the section on the history of the Korean church, with the Orthodox Confucianism that went on for almost 500 years in Korean society and the early puritan and conservative missionaries who might have influenced it. Many criticize that the Korean church cannot experience the joy of worship. A worshipping community, however, binds the diversity of our culture, education and background, and brings us together into a corporate expression of worship. One of the most powerful appeals to people's mind today is a worshipping community (Ravi Zacharias 2000:27). Creating such a new atmosphere through worship may strengthen the church community that have become weak due to the many reasons presented up to now.

Although it is true that there are many weak points and limits when one looks at preaching in the Korean church from a preaching theological perspective, it is also true, as U Y Kim (2000:168) rightly points out, that the Korean church overcame them by preachers' complete devotion to God and their blazing enthusiasm to His Word. Based on these findings, the next section determines the present preaching theories of the Korean church.

### **2.3.2 The present preaching theories of the Korean church**

The word "theories" in this section's title might well be "theologies." This means that the theological understanding of preaching in the Korean church based on the discussion and findings so far will be concluded here. For this purpose, the following themes adopted from U Y Kim (2000:169-173) are used as categories: 1) purpose of preaching, 2) form of preaching, 3) content of preaching, and 4) theology of preaching.<sup>56</sup>

#### **2.3.2.1 The purpose of preaching**

In the Korean church, preaching in relation to its purpose mostly functions to persuade and advise with the biblical teachings and ethical guides. In this purpose, preaching is mainly a one-way communication with the preacher's authority. The preacher is a master or herald model of the knowledge and

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<sup>56</sup> "Purpose of preaching" here includes aim, outcome, focus, function of preaching, and preacher-listener relationship. "Form of preaching" means language, form and style of preaching. "Content of preaching" covers content and hermeneutical method of preaching. In addition, "theology of preaching" contains theological frame or paradigm and the relationship between text and context or Word and sacrament. I adopted U Y Kim's three categories (why, how and what) and added "theology" to them. For this I also referred to *The Great Encyclopedia of Korean Preaching* sampling more than 1,100 sermons of the early missionaries and famous preachers and U Y Kim's PhD thesis based on the sermon analysis of 40 contemporary figures' sermons. See U Y Kim, "Faith comes from hearing: A critical evaluation of the homiletical paradigm shift through the homiletical theories of Fred B Craddock, Eugene L Lowry, and David Buttrick, and its application to the Korean church". (PhD Thesis. Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education, 1999, Chapter two).



practice of the Word with charisma.<sup>57</sup> The relationship between the preacher and the audience is vertical and hierarchical. Such understanding had smoothly accepted without much trouble or conflict in the Orthodox Confucian culture in Korea (U Y Kim 2000:170). This affected the form and the content of preaching and resulted in the lack of understanding of congregation's condition and context, and of social ethical concern (P H Yum 1985:250-1; H W Lee 2001b:2-5).

However, we cannot deny that this structure has also been very strong and played a positive role in establishing the powerful pulpit and ongoing church growth for last a hundred years of Korean Christian history.

### **2.3.2.2 The form of preaching**

As discussed earlier above, preachers in the Korean church have been using a single style of preaching, regardless of the diversity of form that is mainly logical, propositional, and topical with three ideas. According to *The Great Encyclopedia of Korean Preaching* (Biblical Text Publisher 1978), about 80% of 1,100 sample sermons are topical with three ideas in form. Contemporary preachers who like to use the expository preaching also tend to be excessively addicted to the expository preaching only (U Y Kim 2000:171).

In developing its logic, most Korean preachers take the deductive method because it values logic and as a result, stories only function as illustrations. Deductive here means stating the thesis, breaking it down into points or sub-points, explaining and illustrating these points, and applying them to the particular situations of the hearers (Craddock 1971:54). The problem with this, in Craddock's view, is what it does for the hearers. "There is no democracy here," he charged, "no dialogue, no listening by the speaker, no contributing by the hearer" (:55).

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Long introduces this is well-accepted model in the traditional homiletics. See

The language of preaching is usually argumentative and rational. It is more imperative than indicative. The preaching of the Korean church is thus not like helping the congregation to experience the Word of God, but like transmitting the information of it. Again this form has been influenced by the earlier American missionaries who could not speak Korean well and were so young that they used the topical sermon that had been popularized in the American churches in the early twenties century (H M Yim 1996:154). Nevertheless, it matched somehow with the Korean church in the hierarchical and authoritative structure.

### **2.3.2.3 The content of preaching**

The traditional understanding of preaching (that is preaching the Word of God and the proclamation of the gospel) has not changed much for last two millenniums of Christian history. There are a few characteristics of the content of preaching in the Korean church:

Firstly, preaching is more concerned about the individual than communal aspects. It touches for example significantly on the individual Christian's moral perfection, conversion and spiritual growth, but not much on communal faith or conversion in the congregation or local church (see 2.3.1). According to S K Lee (1999:208), since Confucianism influenced the early Christians in Korea, the early churches attempted something similar to the Confucian teaching that is moral and lawful in their preaching. This became the tradition. In addition to this, U Y Kim (2000:172) indicates the lack of social aspect in preaching.

Secondly, there is the strong tendency to emphasize the earthly success and prosperity of the individual and church as the blessings of God. This is influenced by traditional religion such as Shamanism, and the church growth syndrome led by the biggest church in the world, Yoido Full Gospel church

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Thomas Long, *The witness of preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989).

(700,000 membership as a single church) and Fuller church Growth School (S K Lee 1998:220-1). In this whirl, especially in the 1970's, people neglected dogma and did whatever was needed for church growth. It was a non-dogmatic age. As a result, it is very difficult today to find the dogmatic preaching, but very easy to hear the non theological in the Korean church today (:225-6; cf S T Kim 2000:74).

Thirdly, in a hermeneutical sense, the content of preaching depends, in many cases very much on the literal and allegorical interpretation, without serious observation of the background and biblical language of the text (U Y Kim 2000:172). It does not deliver the message that rises from the text, but rather extracts the preacher's own ideas, and what the preacher wants, from the Bible as a mere proof text (:173). Attempts of textual sermon been made of course. However, they are not beyond the literal verse-by-verse interpretation. As a result, they depended mainly on the allegorical method according to which the Bible texts are interpreted in an *eisegetisch* and not an *exegetisch* manner (H M Yim 1996:156).

Moreover, preaching the Old Testament text is more rare than preaching the New Testament text (S K Lee 1998:224-5). Having said that, there is the serious lack of the biblical preaching that the Korean church needs to take responsibility of.

#### **2.3.2.4 The theology of preaching**

The preaching of the Korean church is not much influenced by theological frame and change, but by historical, socio-cultural and political situations. According to the findings from the discussion above, there was not much theological knowledge and sensitivity among individual preachers and the church itself in Korea. This was due to her short history. There is also no correlation or the axis of unity between worship, preaching, teaching, and sacrament in the Korean church. In the early church of Christian history, they were an organic whole in

praising (worship), proclaiming (preaching), experiencing (sacrament and fellowship), and edifying (teaching) the Kingdom of God. The Korean church has a preacher-centered and preaching-centered structure and is missing the others (J K Un 1999c:253-4; 495-8).

There is the problem or theological assumption, that many preachers in the Korean church today only assume that their congregations are Christians. This theological assumption is not based on the right theology and creates the danger that they might preach in a manner suited to Christian believers in their services. Their message will be instructional without an evangelistic element. As a result, there will be no conversion, which in essence is the work of the Word of God (cf Lloyd-Jones 1998:146).

There is a trend that places more value on prayer than on the transforming power of preaching itself in the Korean church. This can however not be any pastor's excuse for lack of prayer or preparation for preaching. This trend cannot be biblical because preaching does nothing but prayer. It is therefore wrong to assign value to anything other than preaching to determine the work of preaching in the Korean church. It is therefore wrong and not biblical or theological at all.

### **2.3.3 The empirical interpretation of the interaction between preaching and culture in Korea**

This is the result due to the qualitative interviews with the conversational partners (as attempted in 2.2.5 under *The empirical interpretation of the interaction between church and culture in Korea*). The expectation is that it should give relevance to the work discussed until now.

### **2.3.3.1 Profiles of the conversational partners**

Conversational partners were chosen according to two criteria: that they should be knowledgeable and that they should have varied perspectives from the rest on the specific subject. With these criteria in mind, the participants were chosen among Korean postgraduate students at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. It was required that they resided in Pretoria, had 6-10 years of church ministry or campus mission experience. The participants were four pastors and a lay missionary who are all experts in different academic fields: one in New Testament studies, one in Old Testament studies, two in Practical theology studies, and one in Law studies. They are all married men aged between the age of 35 and 43.

### **2.3.3.2 Hearing the sentiments**

The following data were gathered from the conversations led by a theme question and follow-up questions for clearer understanding. The follow-up questions to one were different from the other and were given when they were needed. The following is the actual statement expressed:

*Q1 Do you think the problems that you and your colleagues identified of the Korean church towards her culture are related to the problems of preaching?*

The conversational partners agreed that there was an inevitable relationship between preaching and church problems. Although they agreed, they nevertheless had different perspectives. M1 said:

Because the church's function is much affected by preaching and most of people adapt the Word of God through preaching, the wrong function of preaching results inevitably the problem of church.

M2 sees such the wrong function of preaching as the cause of church decline in Korea today:

One of main reasons of church decline is related to preaching that is not functioning properly. I believe the preacher needs to be able to answer the spiritual questions that people ask and wonder about. People want to secure the certainty of salvation, of eternal life after death, and why they should keep their faith in the uncertainty life. The reality, however, is not like that. Preachers do not give them the right answers but depend too much on moral sermons.

M3 expressed the concern that cultural change may affect preaching:

It might be OK so far but not any more. Concerning the young and new generation, we have to ask how we as modern preachers deal with the postmodern congregations. We are living in the age of preaching crisis in which we cannot deliver the absolute truth as strong as we could, although there is a lot of preaching methods recently developed and proposed.

M4 sees the problem in terms of continuity and the consistency of preaching:

The most important problem of the preachers in the Korean church is their sermon's discontinuity towards their lives. Whether they live according to what they preach or not, is more significant than whether they preach well or not. This is yet another issue related to preaching's consistency to helps preachers to identify who they are in what they are doing. N J Kim, for example, a well-known pastor, can preach on and on and on the blaze of prayer, because he is consistent in his preaching.

M5 also agrees that there is very close relationship between church and preaching:

The church's problem comes from preaching that is far away from the gospel and that is not spiritual at all today. It is rather full of the preacher's own story, psycho-therapeutic words and earthly values.

### 2.3.3.3 Interpreting the data

Having been informed by the sentiments of the conversational partners, I asked follow-up questions to each participant to clarify the meaning and find the theme of what they said. The following is a thematic interpretation:

#### *On preaching in the interaction between church and culture in Korea*

For this interpretation, I once again borrowed the model of James M Gustafson (1974:73-96) that classifies the role of theologian (preacher) alongside society (culture). Using his model, I categorized what the conversational partners expressed on this theme.

M1 and M3 here assign themselves to the *prophet* model, emphasizing the essence of the preacher and preaching. M1 finds the reason why people leave church in the absence of exegetical ability among preachers because they do not know and do not preach what the Bible really says. As a result, people follow the earthly fashion and pattern. It can be compared to an echo of the need of biblical preaching (suggested at the end of 2.3.2.3) and the context of preaching ahead of the pattern of preaching (emphasized in 2.3.1).

Accordingly, M3 argues that the most important role of preaching is to build mature and spiritual Christians who could reject the evil that comes through secular culture. As *prophets*, they consider the world as an object to transform or to overcome.

Assigning themselves to the *participant* model, M2 and M5 see the world as an object to understand. M2 challenges preachers to better know their culture and

society while M5 stresses the importance of a preaching method besides preaching content in the age of change without authority. M2's statement is a basic issue that is continuously claimed throughout this thesis. M5's emphasis gives relevance to the discussion of form (in 2.3.2.2).

M4, the always *preserver*, defines the world as an object to serve and the preacher as a servant. M4 reminds of one of Dulles' models, (the church as servant in ecclesiological discussion - 2.2.4) and relates it to preaching. Although the participants (two *prophets*, two *participants* and a *preserver*), have different views on a theme here, the result from the wrong function or the missed function of all their claims and suggestions would be the same: people will leave the church and never come back.

## **2.4 Conclusion and remarks for the next chapter**

This chapter consists of critical and constructing descriptions on two dimensions with three significant factors. These descriptions are necessary in order to understand and define the problems of the Korean church.

In its first dimension, the holistic interaction between the church and culture in Korea was studied. In doing so, deficiencies were found in the Korean church's relationship to her culture. For example: deficiencies of setup, theological reflection, knowledge and responsibility, and of contextuality.

The present ecclesiologies of the Korean church were also found by critically using Avery Dulles' model as a window to look through. As a result, it was found that all five models were mixed in the Korean church. The Korean church has been very hierarchical and mystical and the most Korean type of the present ecclesiologies is *the church as herald* that stresses preaching the Word and places the preacher in the center of the church practices. The empirical interpretation of the interaction between church and culture (2.2.5) secured



relevance to such findings and suggested a solid and healthy ecclesiology for the Korean church.

In the second dimension, *preaching in the interaction between church and culture in Korea* (2.3), it was found that the Korean pulpit has been ignoring cultural changes and trends because the preachers have not been taught and properly guided how to respond to them. As a result, preaching in the Korean church experiences lack in the following areas: lack of diverse delivery methods, lack of hermeneutical balance between text and context, lack of congregational studies, lack of evangelistic or conversion preaching, lack of communal conversion, lack of valuing preaching itself, and so on.

More specifically, preaching in relation to its purpose mostly functions to persuade and advise with the biblical teachings and ethical guides. In the form of preaching, preachers have been using a single style of preaching, regardless of the diversity of form that is mainly logical, propositional, and topical with three ideas.

More seriously, regarding the content of preaching, it can be noted that preaching is more concerned about the individual than the communal aspect, earthly success than heavenly glory, and literal and allegorical interpretation than theological and biblical. In the theology of preaching, preaching is first, not much influenced by theological frame and change, but by historical and socio-cultural and political situations. The reason for this is that there was not much theological knowledge and sensitivity among the individual preachers and the church itself in Korea due to her short history. Secondly, there is no correlation or the axis of unity between worship, preaching, teaching, and sacrament. Thirdly, there is less value on preaching itself than on other aspects such as prayer. Fourthly, there is the problem of theological assumption that many preachers in the Korean church today only assume that their congregations are Christians and this has resulted in non conversion preaching. These findings

proved to be quite relevant through the empirical interpretation of preaching in the interaction between church and culture (2.3.3).

In Chapter 3, the interpretation of preaching in the interaction between church and culture from the normative Christian classic sources will be discussed biblically, historically and theologically by using D Browning (1991:49)'s second movement out of the four: Historical practical theology.