

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Goal of the Study

The goal of this study is to explore a new style of preaching that may contribute to a positive shift in the practice of preaching in the Korean church.

Traditionally, Korean preachers have favored a single style of preaching—namely, topical preaching—and a single form of sermon—namely, a deductive, three-point form. In the past decade, however, there have been discussions among some Korean homileticians on the necessity of transforming Korean preaching. The search for new directions in Korean preaching constitutes the context of this study.

The style of preaching that I wish to explore in this study is largely based on the homiletical theory developed by the American homiletician Thomas G. Long in his work *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (1989a). The main idea is that the literary-rhetorical dynamics of the text should shape the sermon. “The sermon’s task,” Long says, “is not to replicate the text but to regenerate the impact of some portion of that text” (1989, 33).

My exploration of the theory of preaching, which may be called “text-guided preaching,” seeks to be more than a theoretical discussion, as it includes an empirical research project. This project consists of a one-day preaching

workshop for graduate students at World Mission University. The purpose of the empirical component is to have some preliminary understanding of how Korean preachers will respond to text-guided preaching.

1.2 Theological-Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study of preaching uses a theoretical framework that is based on the practical theologian Johannes van der Ven's conception of practical theology as an empirical-theological research. Traditionally, the task of practical theology has been viewed as applying the results of historical and systematic theology. Being critical of this traditional position, J. A. van der Ven has developed an empirically oriented conception of practical theology.

To outline J. A. van der Ven's model of practical theology—it will be discussed in detail in chapter 5 of this study—the practical theologian carries out his or her task in five phases: formulation of the theological problem, theological induction, theological deduction, empirical-theological testing, and theological evaluation (1993, 119-156).

1. *Formulation of the theological problem.* The initial phase of the empirical research cycle involves identifying some theological problem relating to a traditional Christian practice. The theologian-researcher sets a goal, often in the form of a possible solution.

Our study is concerned with the practice of preaching in the Korean church. We identify the predominance of the static, three-point, deductive sermon as one of the major problems in the Korean church today. As a first step toward a new

direction in Korean preaching, Korean homiletics and preachers should explore new styles of preaching.

2. *Theological induction.* In the theological-inductive phase the theological problem is examined against available background information, which often includes some concrete observations, as well as some theoretical considerations based on recent theological literature. The examination leads to a research design that includes a specific empirical-theological question, method, unit, and other relevant features.

Our theological inductive investigation consists of a historical sketch of the Korean tradition of preaching and a discussion of major characteristics of Korean preaching (chapter 2). It also includes a study of new creative theories of preaching advanced by contemporary American homiletics (chapter 3)—most particularly, Long’s theory that the text should shape the sermon (chapter 4). Our research design draws on this inductive investigation (chapter 5).

3. *Theological deduction.* In the theological-deductive phase, the theologian-researcher, first, attempts to formulate some theories that express certain (causal) relationships between certain concepts and, then, develops hypotheses and questionnaires necessary for the validation of the theories. Theological deduction requires both testing and an evaluation of the results of the testing.

Rather than seeking some kind of validation for theoretically formulated causal relationships, our empirical research project focuses on seeking some general understanding of possible responses to a particular theory of preaching.

Instead of questionnaires, we rely upon a question-and-answer evaluation form for generating data. This study is going to make use of empirical research in order to try to **illustrate** the reception of a sample of people in practice of the theory for preaching which this study has set as its goal to try to develop for the specific Korean context.

4. *Empirical-theological testing.* In the testing phase, the researcher administers the questionnaire to a sample group, collects the data, presents the data with the help of statistical tools, and provides some causal explanations to account for the data. Because our research uses a question-and-answer format for generating data, it is expedient to use the same format for our presentation of the data.

This empirical research is therefore not explorative or descriptive, but it is an **illustration** of the **reception in practice** by a group of people, of the theory for preaching that the researcher is presenting for the practice of preaching in the Korean context, which I have in mind regarding the problem researched in this study.

5. *Theological evaluation.* The theological-evaluative phase completes the empirical research cycle by relating the causal explanations of the results back to theological induction and eventually to the theological problem posed at the very beginning of the cycle. Some general understanding of possible responses to a new theory and practice of preaching may be helpful in debating possible directions for Korean preaching.

1.3 The Theological Problem

The main problem with Korean preaching is that it is dominantly topical and deductive. Most Korean preachers carry out the task of sermon preparation in three steps. First, they choose a topic for the sermon. Second, they select a biblical text and search for a timeless truth or idea. Third, they explicate the biblical truth or idea in a deductive manner.

What is problematic with topical-deductive preaching is that in the hierarchical structures of Korean society, the preacher, as the sole interpreter-communicator of the timeless truth, can easily be elevated to a position of nearly absolute power. Moreover, one of the critical issues concerning the deductive approach is that such an atomistic, analytical reasoning cannot be applied to all sermons.

Korean preaching had been shaped by the nineteenth century American missionaries, who first brought the Protestant tradition to Korea. The central focus of the American missionaries was conversion of individual Koreans. One of their methods was topical preaching that expounded the basic biblical and theological themes of salvation. Since the beginning of the Korean Christian community in the 1880s, topical preaching has been the style of preaching favored by a vast majority of Korean preachers.

One of the characteristics of the early American missionaries was their “strict biblicism” (Hahn 2002, 47). Taking the Bible to be the main source of preaching, they approached the biblical text for a timeless truth or principle to preach on. Historically, Korean preaching has always taken such an approach

to the biblical text. Chang Bok Chung, one of the most influential Korean homileticians of our time, still defines preaching as the interpretation and proclamation of “biblical truth.” “Real preaching occurs,” Chung asserts, “only when the preacher becomes the contemporary instrument of biblical truth” (1999, 156).

The traditional practice of proclaiming the biblical truth through the sermon assumes certain roles for the preacher and the congregation. The preacher is perceived as the one who understands and delivers the biblical truth. The congregation is a group of receivers who depend on the preacher for the knowledge of the biblical truth.

In the context of Korean culture, which supports a patriarchal hierarchy, the preacher who knows the biblical truth assumes unlimited power over the congregation. This is one of the most serious challenges for Korean preachers. As the theologian Jung Young Lee says, Korean preachers “must be prepared to alter the patriarchal and hierarchical leadership style of today” (1977, 96).

For more than a century the Korean tradition of preaching has principally relied upon a single form of sermon. Sermons preached in most Korean churches today have a three-point, deductive shape. The early American missionary who had taught homiletics for many years at the first Korean theological seminary, Charles A. Clark, emphasized a deductive sermonic form. Chang Bok Chung’s major work on homiletics published in 1999 similarly emphasizes the importance of developing the central idea of a sermon into three or four closely related points (1999, 207-208).

Reliance upon a single form of sermon sets boundaries to what preaching as a hermeneutical-communicative practice can achieve. It is disadvantageous to insist on one communicative strategy, when there are other communicative strategies, such as narrative, inductive, and metaphorical. Deductive sermons rely upon an atomistic, analytical reasoning. To insist on deduction is to limit our imagination and experience. Moreover, if preachers insist on deduction in preaching, it would convey the idea that “the gospel is only a set of major concepts with rationally divisible parts” (Long 1989b, 96).

1.4 Theological-Inductive Investigation

In J. A. van der Ven’s empirical-theological cycle, theological induction connects the theological problem with a research design. The theological problem is closely examined and further clarified in light of some relevant information. The goal of theological induction is to reformulate the theological problem into a legitimate empirical-theological question. So the theological-inductive process calls for some theoretical considerations, which require a review of current theological literature.

The major problems of Korean preaching may be understood much more clearly if we engage in some historical survey of its development from the beginning of the Korean church. It is also necessary to examine Korean preaching in connection with the recent debates within the American homiletical tradition. The debates usually concern preaching’s purpose, content, and form and have resulted in a variety of creative homiletical ideas. The constructive

discussions taking place among American homileticsians provide us, who are seeking a new direction for Korean preaching, with useful theoretical insights.

Chapter 2 of this study will deal with the historical and hermeneutical reflection of Korean preaching. Chapter 3 will deal with the new directions in the American tradition of preaching. Here we want to briefly touch upon some key ideas that are directly relevant to our study of Korean preaching.

One of the fundamental ideas of the new American homiletical movement is that there are many forms of reasoning and communication. Indeed, the movement has produced a variety of preaching styles: inductive, narrative, story, phenomenological, conversational, and others. It can be said that the contemporary American homiletical tradition is a movement from a single dominant style of preaching (that is, deductive preaching) to a variety of dynamic styles of preaching.

Another important feature of new theories is the redefinition of the roles of the preacher and the listeners. In the traditional situation of preaching, the preacher assumes an authoritarian stance while the congregation assumes the role of a passive learner. American homileticsians are fully aware that there is a gap in the preacher-listener relationship and have proposed ways to encourage the value of collaboration.

A third general feature of new theories is the identification of the content of preaching with the dynamic meaning of particular biblical texts. In the traditional situation of preaching, the preacher delivers to the congregation some timeless biblical truth or principle extracted from the text. Many American homileticsians

have challenged the hermeneutical practice of identifying the message of the Bible with some theological knowledge. They argue that biblical texts may express a diversity of meaning. Particular biblical texts may communicate some cognitive content, some experiential meaning, or some course of action.

We find Thomas Long's to be a well-balanced theory of preaching that incorporates and advances many of the creative and important insights of the new American homiletics. For this reason, it will serve in our study as a contact point between the new homiletics and Korean preaching. In chapter 4 we will present text-guided preaching, which is based on Long's idea of text shaping sermon.

Korean preaching needs a new direction. Korean homileticians have to engage in debates that would articulate both the limitations of the current practice and possible solutions. It is hoped that the empirical component of our study will contribute to such a discussion. The empirical-theological question we want to ask is "Can text-guided preaching persuade Korean preachers to be open to new possibilities in preaching?"

1.5 Empirical Research Design

The empirical research project included in the study (chapter 5) aims to explore whether or not text-guided preaching would enable Korean preachers to see the limitations of the traditional practice and motivate them to experiment with new homiletical strategies.

A one-day preaching workshop for a small group of theological students at World Mission University constitutes the core of the empirical project. It offers a setting for presenting text-guided preaching, interacting with the new theory and practice of preaching, and collecting feedback. This approach uses the case study method, which, according to Robert Yin, has a distinct advantage when the research is concerned with a “how” or “why” question or with an exploratory “what” question (2003, 9).

The agenda for the preaching workshop includes: presentation and application of text-guided preaching, practice of sermon preparation, and evaluation of the theory and practice. The evaluation form asks four formal questions. The first two questions, which ask to identify and describe the “most significant” and “most difficult” part of the theory of text-guided preaching, are intended to assess how participants would respond to the new style of preaching. It is assumed that their responses would also indicate where they are in terms of general attitudes toward preaching.

A third question, which asks to indicate the “most difficult” part in practicing text-guided sermon development, is intended to assess the participants’ ability to interact with the new style of preaching. The last question concerns perception of the present situations of Korean Christians. The reason for this question is to assess how well the participants in the case study understand everyday concerns of Korean believers. Interpreting and understanding the listeners is a crucial task of text-guided preaching.

CHAPTER 2

KOREAN PREACHING

2.1 Introduction

There is unquestionably a great need in the Korean church today to improve its traditional practice of preaching. Unyong Kim, one of the few Korean homileticians who have explored new theories of preaching in the Korean context, contends that Korean preachers have maintained “the single method—topical preaching style or three-point-making preaching style—for the last one hundred years, which they learned from the early missionaries” (1999, 64). The historical portion of this chapter will survey the uses of topical-deductive preaching in the Korean context.

In the hierarchical structure of Korean culture, the traditional style of preaching, which tends to elevate preachers above their congregations, creates a serious problem. Generally speaking, in the context of the Korean church the preacher could easily assume the role of the father, who in Korean culture and society exercises enormous power. “Thus, the preacher, symbolically the head of the religious community, has unlimited power,” the theologian Jung Young Lee writes (1997, 94). This and other problems will be discussed in the evaluative portion of this chapter.

2.2 A Historical Sketch of Korean Preaching

One style of preaching has served the Korean church through the various stages of its development and experience. The early American missionaries, who had played the greatest role in starting and nurturing the Korean Protestant community, preached topical, deductive sermons to convert the Korean people to become the people of God.

As the church grew, Korean church leaders have largely depended on the same hermeneutical-communicative strategy to address the diverse needs of the church and the people of Korea: conversion, evangelism, spiritual formation, Christian education, revivals, nationalism, prosperity, church growth, and many others.

2.2.1 The Early Missionaries and Preaching (1885-1910)

During the 1880s Korea was grappling with critical internal conflicts. The foreign influence of China and Japan had been increasing steadily, as they had been more than willing to assist the Korean government. As the rivalry for political influence intensified, it was inevitable for the Chinese and Japanese forces to clash. With Japan's surprising victory in the Sino-Japanese War, its sole dominance of Korea began.

The Korean government sought to counter the Japanese with the help of the Russians. But in 1904 the Russo-Japanese War broke out and once again Japan's victory ensured Japan's sole control of Korea. In August 1910, Korea was annexed to Japan, ceasing to exist as a separate nation.

Korea and its people were utterly destitute of protection and hope. Protestant missionaries from the United States and other countries began to penetrate the Korean population, especially the reform-minded groups. As Kyung Bae Min observes, many influential leaders, “who sought to replace the traditional elitist system with a western, egalitarian system, enthusiastically supported the Protestant missionaries, acknowledging the substantial contributions they made” (1974, 37).

Protestantism in Korea began in the 1880s when American missionaries began to arrive and made serious attempts to evangelize Koreans. The first two decades of Protestant missionary work saw a steady rise in membership. Then came a great revival in the first decade of the twentieth century. “It was a spiritual revival, explosive and spectacular, sweeping through the peninsula from 1903 to 1907, that touched off the massive ingathering of the church and permanently stamped its character with revivalistic fervor” (Moffett 1962, 52). During this short period alone the number of Protestant Christians in Korea increased fourfold from some fifty thousand to two hundred thousand (Moffett 1962, 50).

What is now widely known as the Great Revival took place in January 1907 in the city of Pyongyang. Korean preachers were conducting a regional Bible study conference at Chang Dae Hyun Church with about 1,500 men. At a service Sun Joo Kil preached on the way of salvation and the life in the Holy Spirit. As he spoke, many men—including some prominent leaders—were so overwhelmed by the power of the Holy Spirit that they began to confess their

sins in public. This empowered the whole congregation to seek God's forgiveness.

The presence of the Holy Spirit was unmistakable. Ik Noh Chung, an elder of the church, described his personal experience (Y. Kim 1981, 86):

I saw the presence of a power and a sense of holiness in the face of the Sun Joo Kil. It was just like the face of Jesus. He did not see me, but I could feel his eyes searching for me. Then the awareness of my sins frightened me. I saw some men walking out, and when they returned, they cried out to God for mercy. God spoke to us through the words of Sun Joo Kil, and we could not help but confess our spiritual complacency and immoral behaviors.

The extraordinary revival experience was followed by powerful evangelistic campaigns, as those who were touched by the power of the Holy Spirit felt the impulse of evangelism. Evangelism in Korea became an indigenous movement. The great revival spread to other cities and villages across the entire country, catapulting the Korean church as a whole to a higher spiritual level. Leadership passed from the missionaries to Korean leaders.

Since the Great Revival of 1907, revivalism became a central feature of Korean Protestantism (Hahn 2002, 69). In order to continue the revival movement, missionaries carried out a plan to reach "one million souls for Christ" through revival meetings. Revivals, accompanied by Bible classes, had been quite effective in shaping the moral life of the young Korean church. John Hahn writes that revivalism

had a remarkable impact on the whole Korean Church. It definitely led to a notable numerical increase in the Korean church membership, but more importantly, the revivals led to the emergence of new, pragmatic

Christian ethics and a high moralism among the believers. What had hitherto been considered as the norm in the traditional, Confucian culture now became branded as taboo in the Christian churches. (2002, 75)

Charles A. Clark, who had taught homiletics for many years at Pyung Yang Theological Seminary, the most influential theological school in the early period of Korean Protestantism, developed his theory of preaching with Korean preachers in mind. His preference for topical preaching, which tended to undermine the centrality of the Bible in preaching (H. Lee 2005, 216), reflected the young Korean church's urgent need for growth through evangelization.

Clark believed that the primary goal of preaching was evangelistic. He viewed preaching as religious discourse aimed at persuading people to turn away from a sinful life of evil thoughts and deeds and to accept Jesus Christ for salvation (H. Lee 2005, 220). He also was aware of the need of the Korean church to guide its members to moral and spiritual maturity.

Kerygmatic or evangelistic preaching—a proclamation of the life, death and resurrection of Christ that calls people to repent and receive him as Savior and Lord—was an essential component of the revival movements in Korea. The evangelistic message typically emphasized sin and its consequences and offered God's forgiving and saving grace. It also addressed the issue of spiritual complacency. Korean converts had to hear the gospel regularly so that they may continuously renew their commitment to Christ and their Christian way of life.

The early Korean churches were shaped by the nineteenth-century American evangelicalism. The early American missionaries introduced to

Korean Christians “strict biblicism” (Hahn 2002, 47). Many of them were trained in evangelical seminaries and Bible colleges in the United States and firmly accepted the Bible as the inspired Word of God and the only infallible rule of the Christian life.

One of the most remarkable achievements of the early American missionaries was Bible study programs (Hahn 2002, 54). All the new Korean converts were required to read the Bible diligently and to enroll in Bible classes. Bible classes were integral to revival meetings.

2.2.2 The Young Church and Preaching (1910-1960)

In 1910 Korea was formally annexed to Japan, which thoroughly suppressed Korean political participation. On March 1, 1919, a group of thirty-three Korean religious leaders met in Seoul and formally declared the independence of Korea. Peaceful demonstrations for independence swept across the entire land. The Japanese government suppressed the unarmed Koreans with a brutal force. After the Independence Movement, the Japanese government instituted policies to undermine the cultural foundations of national identity.

A large number of church leaders were thrown into jail for their participation in the movement. The oppression of the church in Korea by the Japanese government became widespread. Meanwhile, the missionaries insisted on a position of political neutrality. Korean church leaders, however, questioned the missionaries' attitude toward the Japanese rule. As a mistrust of the

missionaries became widespread, Korean Presbyterians and Methodists began to seek independence from foreign missionary organizations.

By 1930 all Koreans were required to bow before a Shinto shrine as a way of honoring the Emperor of Japan. But many Korean Christians rejected the ritual as idolatry and paid the consequences. Japanese church leaders tried to persuade Korean church leaders to accept the practice as a simple patriotic act. Instead of accepting the compromise, many Korean pastors chose to be tortured and imprisoned. Some paid the price of martyrdom.

The infant Korean church, nevertheless, had experienced periods of remarkable growth during the Japanese oppression (1910-1945) and during the years before and after the Korean War (1950-1953). The Korean Protestant population, which was numbered 200,000 in 1909, grew to 375,000 by 1935. By 1960, the number reached 1,300,000 (Moffett 1962, 50).

The Korean church had largely depended on revival meetings for evangelism and growth. The church's active involvement in the Independence Movement of 1919 attracted a significant number of Koreans to the Christian faith. In fact, the pulpit became a rallying point for the oppressed Korean people. Revivals emphasized the spiritual power to sustain the suffering masses, as well as resistance to the colonial policy of complete cultural assimilation.

A remarkable aspect of the new revival movement was that the revivalists were Korean. In other words, it was an indigenous movement. It was in fact an evangelistic and patriotic movement. Sun Joo Kil, Ik Doo Kim, and Yong Do Lee were among those who had profound impact on the church under oppression.

Kyung Bae Min describes Ik Doo Kim's national influence in these terms (1991, 280):

He was a national hero who resuscitated the people and the church of Korea from the disappointment and suffering which followed the failed independence movement of 1919. He was a prophetic pastor who gave voice to a new ideological search, new social expectations, and a renewed orthodox faith. He possessed an unusual ability to speak directly to the needs of the disinherited masses.

Preaching in the young Korean church reflected the orientation toward evangelism and revivalism that characterized the homiletical practice of the early American missionaries. What is significant for a study of Korean preaching is that the preaching of the native Korean preachers reflected the Korean people's struggle for independence from the Japanese occupation. The popular sermonic themes were the coming of the Kingdom of God and nationalism. As John Hahn states (2002, 90), premillennialism

appealed to the Korean believers, especially because of the chaotic and gloomy historical situation of the time. Resenting the present bondage under Japanese colonialism, they desperately yearned for the coming of the kingdom of God.... It was especially spurred by the revival rallies of Rev. IkDoo Kim and SunJoo Kil in the 1920s.

Sun Joo Kil was a popular revivalist who led numerous revival meetings and Bible conferences in the 1920s and 1930s. An analysis of his *Kangdae Bogam*, collection of his sermons, shows that Kil preferred topical preaching and the three-point sermonic form (U. Kim 1999, 27). Kil believed that preaching required not only the study of the Word of God but also of the life-situation of the audience (U. Kim 1999, 27). Many of his sermons dealt with eschatology,

emphasizing that Christians should “relinquish the hope for peace on this earth and to yearn instead for God’s supernatural deliverance through the return of Jesus Christ” (Hahn 2002, 91-92). John Hahn writes (2002, 93),

Although his revivalistic influence ceased with his sudden death in 1935, Kil’s premillennial messages, along with those of IkDoo Kim, played a pivotal role in popularizing premillennialism in the early Korean Church. Their amazing popularity coincided with the harsh reality of the Korean nation at that time. Their highly emotional message on the millennial kingdom neatly matched the frustration of the oppressed Korean church under Japanese colonialism.

In his analysis of a collection of sermons by prominent Presbyterian preachers between 1912 and 1958, Chang Bok Chung (1999, 48) finds that most of the sermons were topical and had either didactic or kerygmatic purpose. Kerygmatic preaching is chiefly evangelistic, aiming at conversion of unbelievers. Didactic preaching is essential in nurturing new converts, in helping them “to understand the meaning and basis of the new existence, to explicate the content of their faith, and to make their lives conform to faith” (C. Chung 1999, 189).

Chung’s analysis reveals that most sermons dealt with such topics as regeneration and repentance, discipleship and Christian life, parousia and eternal life (1999, 51). The overall message, Chung writes, “was fixed on the world-to-come. The present world was regarded as so utterly lost that it could not possibly be saved” (1999, 66). It appears, Chung continues, that many of the early Korean preachers understood their main task to be to “preach deliverance, that is, to exhort, witness, baptize, and gather out the selected for preparation to Christ’s second coming.”

In the early years of the Korean church, preachers favored allegorical interpretation (S. Chung 1986, 102-103), a method consisting of finding some timeless, spiritual message behind a biblical word or phrase. The tendency toward allegorizing was due to the fact that most of the early Korean preachers did not possess much biblical knowledge. Also, the Korean people under foreign rule readily accepted "real" or "spiritual" meanings of the biblical texts. Of the influential revivalists, Sun Joo Kil and Yong Do Lee relied upon the allegorical method extensively (Min 1979, 311).

Looking for the "spiritual" meaning of a text without regard for its historical or literary particularities could have been no more than a simple subjective undertaking. Also, the allegorical approach to the Bible, as practiced by Koreans, tended to render the message of the Bible irrelevant to everyday life. On the positive side, it gave to preachers some sort of spiritual authority and to listeners a sense of spirituality.

2.2.3 The Growing Church and Preaching (1960-Present)

In August 1945, Korea was liberated from the Japanese occupation. The Korean people were jubilant, but the celebrations were short-lived, as a communist regime was set up in the north. A democratic government was formed in the south, but in June 1950 the communist north invaded the democratic south. The devastating military conflict had dragged on for three years and at the end of the Korean War the country was divided into two independent and hostile nations.

From the misery of foreign occupation the Korean people transitioned into the shock and devastation of a civil war. Then the democratic South Korea embarked on the course of modernization in a breathtaking pace. The church in the south underwent a transformation that closely paralleled that of the larger community.

A great number of Christians fled North Korea in search of religious freedom, resulting in a rapid growth of local congregations in South Korea. In fact, the number of local churches in South Korea doubled after the war (Clark 1971, 251). During the years of recovery from the social and economic devastations, the Korean churches preached the message of hope and comfort.

During the 1970's South Korea began to experience a rapid economic growth and expansion, which was later termed as an "economic miracle." The new economic reality was accompanied by urbanization and social mobility. Responding to the enormous national transition, the Korean churches began to focus on national evangelization. So South Korea's economic miracle was accompanied by a "miracle of church growth."

The national evangelization movement, which had mobilized all the major denominations and thousands of local churches, significantly contributed to the remarkable growth the Korean church. Billy Graham's Korea Crusade in 1973, which mobilized over one million people, introduced a new, powerful method of evangelism to the Korean church. As a result of the Crusade, denominational leaders, local pastors, and lay leaders were united under the common purpose of evangelizing the nation.

Korean evangelists had conducted mass evangelistic crusades in major cities, as part of the national evangelization movement. Their ongoing cooperation promoted an extraordinary evangelistic ecumenism. The movement culminated in the World Evangelization Crusade in 1980. To support the Crusade, 411 executive committees were organized in cities and towns and 90 percent of the local churches were mobilized (J. Kim 1995, 59).

There is no question that mass crusade evangelism was a primary factor in the explosive growth of the Korean church in the 1970s. From 1974 to 1978 the number of Korean Christians increased from three million to seven million (J. Kim 1995, 58). The Korean Presbyterian Church (Hapdong) alone saw 1,200 new churches and 300,000 new members. In the 1980s the growth had been stabilized.

However, the Korean Protestant community as a whole has seen virtually no increase in membership since 1990. This trend is shocking to many church leaders. The rate of annual membership growth dropped from 4.4 percent in the 80s to less than 1 percent in the 90s (Oak 1998, 30). In the first half of the 90s, the three largest Protestant denominations—the Presbyterian Church (Hapdong), the Presbyterian Church (Tonghap), and the Methodist Church—all had grown by less than 0.1 percent annually.

It is true that many of the largest congregations in the world are in Korea. It can be said that the Korean church is witnessing an age of mega-churches. The number of churches with thousands of members has been increasing steadily. It seems, however, that growing Korean churches are largely a result of

membership transfer. They have been successful in attracting believers who have grown dissatisfied with their local churches.

The Korean church is undergoing a period of stagnation, because local congregations have turned inward on themselves and have been preoccupied with the issues of maintenance. Christians have lost desire to share their faith with those who do not know Jesus Christ. For many, regular Sunday attendance and fellowship with church members constitute their understanding of the Christian life.

Korean church leaders are aware that the church needs new understandings of Christian ministry. Traditionally, ministry has always been viewed as the sole responsibility of the local minister or pastor; and the people or congregation has always been viewed as the fortunate recipient of the professional ministry. As a result, the people have become dependent upon their pastor for all their spiritual needs and activities, while the pastor has become detached and isolated, usually suffering from exhaustion and stress.

To overcome the stagnation of the Korean church, pastors are seeking a paradigm shift in pastoral leadership. According to a new model, ministry is viewed as the responsibility of both the pastor and the congregation. They would maintain a relationship of mutuality and codependency. The pastor disciplines and equips the people, while the people actively participate in many areas of ministry.

One of the most significant changes in Korean preaching since the 1980s is the clear shift in its focus from personal salvation to church growth and

prosperity (U. Kim 1999, 35). As Korean economy grew stronger, Korean preachers catered their sermons to the aspirations of those Christians who were eager to improve their financial and social conditions. Preachers themselves aspired to build bigger congregations and larger church buildings and used the pulpit to promote their projects.

Certainly, sermons on how to receive the *bok*—that is, such “worldly blessings” as health, longevity, children, and prosperity—in the present life have been used effectively by Korean preachers to promote their church growth agenda. Jung Young Lee provides a personal account that underscores the connection between the message of prosperity and church growth in the Korean church context (1997, 80-81):

“You don’t preach on blessings,” my congregation often said to me. I thought I did. “Didn’t I preach on the blessings of joy, peace, goodness, and love?” I responded. They replied, “We mean the real blessings, the *bok*, you know.” They came to church to receive the *bok*, which meant wealth, success, health, longevity, and having many children at home. They want to have the *bok* now, but they also want to have it in its spiritual form in heaven. They told me that our church was not growing fast enough, because I did not preach on the *bok* or the material blessings of this world. Most growing Korean churches’ central message deals with the *bok*.

Unyong Kim (1999, 36) makes the observation that since the 1980s some Korean preachers began to explore new styles of preaching, most particularly, expository preaching. Such prominent preachers as Han Heum Ok, Jung Kil Hong, and Yong Jo Ha practice the expository style. According to Kim, the new trend has had a positive impact on Korean preaching. “The expository preaching style, as a substitute for traditional topical preaching, has provided a good

influence in the pulpit in the Korean church because it represents a rediscovery of the text-centered sermon” (1999, 36).

In the Korean church context expository preaching often involves uncritical interpretation of the text (J. Lee 1997, 67). Preachers tend to ignore the historical-cultural gap that exists between the ancient text and the contemporary audience. Jung Young Lee (1997, 69) offers personal observation.

An examination of the preaching in one of the fastest-growing Korean churches in my area illustrates how this uncritical exegesis functions in the Sunday morning service. The minister preaches like a Sunday school teacher. He goes through the text thoroughly from one verse to another.... The preacher is not interested in the historical and contextual importance of the passage, since the background of the passage he expounds is never explained. He is not interested in historical and biblical criticism at all. He attempts to prove the text through the use of other passages in the Bible. This, he is a typical Korean preacher who uses the so-called self-hermeneutic methodology, interpreting the Bible through the Bible.

Jong Seog Hwang’s recent study of the relationship between preaching and worship in the Korean church context has shown that Korean congregations consider the topical and textual sermons to be the most suitable forms of sermon for Sunday morning worship (2004, 80-82). 29.9 percent of those who participated in the research survey Hwang conducted for his study indicated that they wanted to hear topical sermons in Sunday morning worship. Another 27.6 percent of the participants preferred the textual sermonic form over other forms. The homily sermon was the choice of 11.9 percent of the respondents. The narrative sermon and the expository sermon were supported by 12.6 percent and 11.9 percent, respectively.

What the survey indicates is that Korean congregations prefer to hear need-oriented topical sermons that address their problems, as well as text-controlled sermons that move through the selected biblical passages verse by verse.

2.2.4 The Korean American Church

The number of Korean immigrants and their children in the United States was slightly over one million in 2000, according to the United States Census. Nearly all of the Korean immigrants came to the United States after the immigration law reform of 1965. Half of them were Christian at the time of immigration; moreover, a quarter of the immigrants would eventually become members of Korean churches (Kwon, Kim & Warner 2001, 15). It is widely accepted that there are currently over 3,500 Korean churches in the United States.

For the majority of the Korean immigrants in the United States membership in Korean ethnic churches is a way of life. Scholars explain that two major factors have contributed to the remarkably high rate of church involvement among Korean immigrants (Kim & Kim 2001, 72-74). The first factor is that nearly half of Korean immigrants had been practicing the Christian faith while they were living in Korea. The second factor is that church involvement helps Korean immigrants to satisfy their social needs.

One of the greatest challenges for the Korean ethnic church is to foster a sense of community among the congregation. A majority of Korean congregations has a membership of 100 or fewer (Kim & Kim 2001, 80). In its

annual report for 2005, the Korean American Presbyterian Church, presumably the largest Korean denomination in the United States, reported that over 90 percent of the denomination's 550 congregations had a membership of 100 or fewer.

Korean ethnic churches not only have small congregations but also struggle with "extreme fluidity of congregational membership" (Kim & Kim 2001, 80). It is widely accepted that Koreans tend to change congregations frequently. In fact, as Kwang Chung Kim and Shin Kim point out "almost half of the Koreans have been members of their congregation for six years or less, and close to one-third for less than three years" (2001, 80). It is not difficult to see that congregation hopping contributes to congregational instability.

Korean churches in the United States provide a home for Korean immigrants, meeting their spiritual, psychological, and social needs. They are, however, relatively small in size, and have to struggle to keep their members. In order to promote healthy church growth and congregational stability, Korean churches need to focus on building a strong community among their congregations. They also need to invest in the spiritual formation of their members, as church conflicts and spiritual needs that are not fulfilled contribute to congregation hopping among Koreans (Kim & Kim 2001, 80).

2.3 Homiletical Evaluation of Korean Preaching

In this section we want to attempt an homiletical evaluation of Korean preaching in terms of purpose, content, and form.

2.3.1 Purpose

It can be said that preaching's purpose in the Korean church has traditionally been persuasion. The Korean preacher's aim is to teach the Word of God. The preacher tries to teach the congregation to see and accept the truth contained in the text so that they may grow in their biblical and theological knowledge and be more faithful and fruitful in their Christian life.

The Korean church's traditional understanding of preaching's purpose is deeply rooted in the theory and practice of preaching taught by the early American missionaries to Korea. They understood preaching as a religious discourse by means of which they could persuade Koreans to turn away from their sinful life without God and to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior to receive God's blessings, including eternal life. Korean preachers preached God's Word to convert non-believers to Christian faith and to teach new Christians how to grow in Christian life.

The traditional homiletical practice of delivering a biblical message or truth through the sermon presupposes a gap between the preacher and the congregation. Lucy Rose gives a useful explanation of the gap (1997, 15):

This gap is fundamental to the roles assigned to the preacher and the congregation. The preacher is the sender, the communicator, the one with a message or truth to transmit by means of the sermon to the congregation. The congregation consists of recipients. Although they are often described as actively participating in the process, their chief task is to give assent to the sermon's message. Across the gap between the sender and the receivers goes the sermon.

In Korean preaching the gap is highly problematic because of the hierarchical structure of the Korean church. Korean society has been a patriarchal hierarchy and the Christian church in Korea is largely patterned after the Confucian social structure. Confucianism regards the family as the foundation of society, and filial piety—that is, absolute submission to the will of the father—as the foundation of the family. In the Korean church the preacher assumes the role of the father with respect to the congregation. Jung Young Lee explains (1997, 94):

The authority of a preacher comes from the very structure of Korean society. If the father is the most powerful person in the family, and the family is the foundation of society, to be a father figure in the Korea community means to be the most powerful person in that community. The Korean preacher is often regarded as the father figure.... The unconditional obedience to the head of the family is a typical attitude of Confucian mentality. Thus, the preacher, symbolically the head of the religious community, has unlimited power.

One of the most difficult challenges for the Korean preacher is to find ways to establish the ethos of a Christian leader in the pulpit. Perhaps the Korean preacher's greatest "challenge is how not to become authoritarian.... The preacher must be prepared to alter the patriarchal and hierarchical leadership style of today to the more egalitarian style of tomorrow" (J. Lee 1997, 95-96).

Unyong Kim, drawing upon new ideas advanced by contemporary American homileticians, advocates that Korean preachers need to change their views of preaching in order to be effective preachers of the Word of God in the contemporary context of Korean Christians (1999, 233 & 245). They need to view preaching no longer as a religious, persuasive discourse but as a more

democratic process, as a dialogue that takes listening by the hearer quite seriously.

The Korean church must foster a new understanding of the relationship between the preacher and the congregation. Korean preachers must learn to view their “listeners as *God’s people* taking a trip into the Word of God together with the preacher” (U. Kim 1999, 247). As they approach God’s Word, they must ask themselves such important questions as “Who will be listening to my sermon?” and “How would my audience hear it?”

2.3.2 Content

Korean preaching has always emphasized the centrality of the Word of God. Even today many Korean preachers maintain strict biblicism held by the early American missionaries to Korea. Accepting the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, many preachers reject critical approaches to biblical interpretation and pay little attention to the historical-social gap between the biblical texts and contemporary life situations.

In Korean preaching, the sermon is understood primarily as communication of the timeless truth or principle contained in the text of the Bible. It is the preacher’s task to explore a biblical passage for its central truth and to communicate and explain by means of the sermon the relevance of the biblical truth to the life situation of the congregation. Generally speaking, the content of preaching in Korean preaching is biblical truth—the unchanging truth revealed by God in his Word, the Bible.

It is, thus, not surprising to find Chang Bok Chung, an influential theoretician, defining preaching as “the proclamation, interpretation and application of biblical truth by one person to many” (1999, 156). Chung asserts that the preacher’s central task is to “speak the vital and lively message of the Bible,” that is, “the biblical truth [that] records what God has done for human beings rather than human speculation” about God (1999, 157, 158). “Real preaching occurs only when the preacher becomes the contemporary instrument of biblical truth” (1999, 163), and the task of conveying the biblical truth involves three practical steps (1999, 164-174).

First, the preacher carefully listens to what the selected passage is saying. Chung asserts that “the preacher may not properly preach on a biblical passage without having listened to God speak to him/her personally through that passage” (1999, 167). Second, the preacher must have a concrete interpretation of the central meaning, message, or idea the passage conveys. “Nearly every text contains several leads. One always has central significance. Preachers must focus their eyes on this central idea and ask, ‘What does God want to say through this matter of central significance?’ It is this message which must emerge in the sermon” (1999, 169).

Third, the preacher must find ways to relate his or her interpretation of the central meaning or idea to contemporary life situations. “Truth does not change, but application inevitably changes,” Chung asserts (1999, 171-172). Application is a creative process. Chung asserts that preachers “must see the Good News penetrating a contemporary situation in which the Word of God is spoken. Again

and again, preachers must make the eternal truth incarnate in the seething, surging life of the preacher's own day" (1999, 172).

Chung's understanding of preaching represents the predominant traditional homiletical tradition that has been challenged by new voices in American homiletics in recent decades. Many contemporary American theorists have challenged the assumption that the Bible's message can be formulated into timeless, universal truths. Advocating what Lucy Rose calls "transformational truth" rather than timeless, biblical truths, new understandings of preaching pursue "a shift from epistemology to hermeneutics" (1997, 65).

According to Rose, many scholars who embrace transformational preaching—a preaching that seeks to lead the worshipers to a transformational experience—as an alternative to traditional preaching

reflect a diminishing confidence in epistemological methods for discerning objective truth.... Instead, the focus shifts to the interpretation of texts or, more specifically, to the power that texts have for shaping meaning in the interpreter. (1997, 65)

This shift to hermeneutics—a theoretical reflection on the interpretative process of understanding the meaning of the text and the responsibility of the reader—reflects new understandings of how language functions. One of the distinctive convictions of the linguistic turn is that language—including biblical language—performs many functions (1997, 65). Language is used not only to state facts to convey truths but also to command actions and attitudes and to evoke feelings and experiences.

2.3.3 Form

The topical style of preaching still predominates Korean preaching today. Unyong Kim's important study of sermon forms Korean preachers use has shown that they largely "neglected to consider the variety of homiletical forms. Instead, they have primarily kept the single method—topical preaching style or three-point-making preaching style—for the last one hundred years, which they learned from the early missionaries" (1999, 64).

Korean preachers and revivalists prefer the topical sermon because it gives them greater freedom. Chang Bok Chung lists five advantages of the sermon form (1992, 131). First, it gives the preacher freedom in developing a sermon. Second, it helps the preacher develop analytical and creative capabilities. Third, its contemporary flavor helps the listener follow the message with ease. Fourth, transparency of its purpose and direction motivates the listener to be attentive. And fifth, it can effectively unify various points of the message.

The popularity of the topical sermon is largely due to its relative ease in preparation. It does not require a profound understanding of a text. Because of this, it may lend itself to unbiblical preaching. Another potential problem in this form of preaching is that the preacher may choose to preach on some favorite topics and ignore others. There are pastors who specialize in the theme of material success. In spite of the problems, topical sermons will remain popular with preachers because of its flexibility.

Korean preachers have traditionally understood a sermon as a presentation of the truth contained in a particular biblical text in terms of a clearly articulated,

general statement of the biblical truth and few specific supporting points. Many Korean preachers study particular biblical passages for important theological or practical truths and translate them into suitable sermon topics. The traditional sermon-making process involves formulating the biblical truth into a single proposition or sentence. This topic sentence is supposed to tell what the sermon is about.

Charles A. Clark, the American missionary who is widely recognized as the father of Korean preaching, taught that the topic of a sermon should be developed into a series of major sections (H. Lee 2005,212). For him a clear outline of the major parts of the message provides the message the clarity and coherence it needs.

Chang Bok Chung, an influential contemporary theorist, similarly stresses the importance of developing the “proposition” or “central idea” of a sermon into three or four major points that demonstrate the rhetorical qualities of clarity, coherence, and progression (1999, 207-208). Chung explains that the primary function of illustrations is to explain or to prove the central proposition and major points of the sermon (1999, 218-219). In Korean preaching narration and induction typically assumes subordinate roles.

One of the critical issues regarding the predominant homiletical theory that emphasizes sermon outlines has to do with the assumption that there is only one type of logical thinking. An outline divides the sermon into major divisions and then divides these divisions into subdivisions and sub-subdivisions. As Thomas Long points out, “an outline conveys the inner logic of a main proposition broken

down into its component parts” (1989b, 95). Such an atomistic or analytical thinking, however, cannot be applied to all sermons. The American theorist Long writes

If every sermon were presented this way, the underlying message, presented over time, would be that the gospel is only a set of major concepts with rationally divisible parts. To be sure, every sermon should be logical, but there are many different kinds of logical structure—narrative, inductive, and metaphorical, just to name a few. Outlines—at least in the way we have been trained to construct them—reduce our logical options to a single choice. (1989b, 96)

Another issue concerning the traditional Korean understanding of the sermonic form has to do with the functions of narrative and inductive elements. In Korean preaching, as in the traditional American preaching, such elements are assigned the subordinate roles of supporting major points of the sermon. “Induction,” Rose writes, “is a subcategory under argument. Narration is a subcategory chiefly under explanation, although it may also help a preacher apply or illustrate a truth or idea” (1997, 19).

Many contemporary American homileticians, however, have challenged the traditional understanding of the sermonic form and some, most notably Craddock and Lowry, have developed the inductive and narrative forms of the sermon. For Craddock the inductive method enables the congregation to retrace the steps the preacher had actually taken in his or her search for the text’s message. For Lowry the narrative method unfolds, in view of the audience and following the sequential elements of a plot, what the preacher had actually experienced as he or she struggled with the text.

Korean preachers need to seriously consider the legitimacy and effectiveness of the narrative and inductive structures in communicating the Bible's message. Many more creative styles of preaching have been proposed by American homileticians in recent years and Korean preaching can benefit enormously by study them. This is the goal of the next chapter.