

CHAPTER 3

CONTEMPORARY ECCLESIOLOGY AND HOMILETIC PRAXIS IN THE KOREAN CONTEXT

In chapter 2, I argued that homiletic theory is related to a faithful and relevant ecclesiology in transition, the hypothesis being that a homiletic theory primarily has to focus on the formation of a biblical and contextual identity for the local church. The perspective here is a hermeneutic-communicative one. In this chapter the other hypothesis of this study will be explored and tested from an empirical perspective. This hypothesis is that the contemporary homiletic theory and praxis of the churches in Korea, which are related by means of an accommodated ecclesiology to contemporary culture cannot form a faithful and relevant ecclesiology.

This study proceeds by exploring contemporary ecclesiology in Korea and demonstrates how a homiletic theory and praxis is related to and expressed in preaching. One of the tasks of practical theology when it is associated with change is to carry out a social and theological analysis of religious praxis, and interpret it from a hermeneutical perspective (Pieterse, Scheepers & Wester 1995:37). The aim of this chapter is to analyse and interpret contemporary Korean church ecclesiology in the light of the phenomenon of declination or stagnation of Korean church membership from the mid '80s and its relationship with Korean preaching – its theory and praxis.

To this end I begin by explaining the contemporary ecclesiology of the church in Korea. To do so I employ two processes: on the one hand, firstly I give a brief survey of Korean church history to help the reader to understand the identity of the church; secondly I analyse and interpret the ecclesiology of the church in Korea from the sociopolitical, religious, and ecclesiastic perspectives. I also identify and evaluate homiletic theories and praxes in relation to contemporary Korean church ecclesiology. The method I employ is qualitative research of the homiletic literature.

3.1 CONTEMPORARY ECCLESIOLOGY OF THE CHURCH IN KOREA

3.1.1 A brief history of the church and its ecclesiology in Korea

The first task of this chapter is to identify some of the characteristics of the ecclesiology of the Korean church by providing a brief survey of the history and growth of the Korean church. Korean church history can be approached through some key events that had a big impact on both the Korean church and Korean society.

3.1.1.1 The dawn of Protestant Christianity in Korea (1884-1910)

The introduction of the Protestant faith into Korea coincided with the advance of the Western colonial powers towards Asian countries. While the Tae-Won-Gun (Prince of the Great Court) was exercising power as a regent (1864-1873), he practised a policy of isolationism. But on his retirement Korea was forced to establish relations with foreign powers. Korea signed a treaty of amity with Japan in 1876, a trade treaty with America in 1882, a treaty with Great Britain, Germany, Italy and Russia in 1884, and one with France, Austria, Belgium and Denmark in 1886. In this situation of flux in Korea, the Protestant mission was able to avoid persecution (Lee 1999:404).

In this situation, the first western Protestant missionary, Horace N Allen, a medical doctor, arrived from the Presbyterian Church of the USA in September 1884. A year later, the first ordained missionaries, the Methodist Henry G Appenzeller and the Presbyterian Horace G Underwood, were sent by two American mission societies.

Before these western missionaries came to Korea, however, the Scottish missionary John Ross, who had been working in Manchuria, had baptised about a dozen Koreans and had begun to translate the New Testament into Korean in 1875. In 1882 Ross, together with his fellow missionary John McIntyre, translated the Gospel of Mark with the assistance of Ung-Chan Lee. In 1883 he translated the Gospels of Matthew and

Mark and the Acts, and in 1887 eventually the whole of the New Testament (Brown 1997:12). Between 1882 and 1884 the first portions of the Korean translation of the New Testament were being circulated in Korea. At the same time, one of the early Korean Protestants, Sang-Yoon Suh, who helped the missionaries to translate the Bible into Korean, moved with his brother into Sorae, a region in west central Korea, and formed a small Christian community, the first Protestant church in Korea. Suh also introduced the Christian Gospel to people by going around selling Korean copies of the Bible (Kim 1992:59-65). It was striking that a Bible-centred and lay-oriented local church was born before the missionaries initiated and organised their work (Brown1997:13). The early American missionaries could therefore enter Korea with the Korean version of the Bible (Kim 1992:65-66; Yi 1998:95). During the same period, Su-Jung Lee, the first Korean to be baptised in Japan, translated part of the Bible into Korean, and started the Korean Church in Tokyo.

The first Protestant missionary, Horace N Allen, sent by the Presbyterian Church in the USA, arrived in Seoul, the Korean capital in September 1884. Dr Allen, as a doctor of the Korean royal court, enjoyed the King's confidence and had a profound impact on missionary work in Korea. He opened the first Westernised general hospital in Seoul, named Kwanghyewon, in 1885 (Kim 1992:67). On Easter Sunday in the year 1885, the first ordained missionaries sent from the two mission societies in the USA arrived in Korea: the Methodist Henry G Appenzeller (1858-1902) and the Presbyterian Horace G Underwood (1859-1916).

Over the next decade, missionaries from other mission societies successively entered Korea. The Plymouth Brethren established a presence there in 1886, the Presbyterian Church of Victoria in Australia in 1889, the Canadian Baptists in 1889, the Church of England in 1890, the Presbyterian Church (South) in the US in 1892, the Canadian Presbyterian Church in 1893, the Methodist Episcopal Church (South) in the USA in 1896, the Seventh Day Adventists in 1904 and the Salvation Army in 1908 (Kim 1992:68-71; Kim, BS 1995:39).

At first, the Protestant missionaries in Korea did not provoke the government by directly engaging in the work of evangelism. Instead they focused on education and the practice of medicine, which created a positive image of foreign missionaries. They built hospitals and schools, and their contribution to the welfare of Korea was well received by the people. The first school was built in 1886, and other schools were opened soon afterwards. The traditional institutions for education were Suh-Dang (Primary School), Hyang-Gyo (Secondary School) and Sung Kyun-Kwan (University), where the Confucian classics were studied. With the collapse of the Yi dynasty partly through Japanese imperialism, this traditional educational system became defunct. The new educational system introduced by foreign missionaries was welcomed by most Koreans.

The missionaries provided many vital medical services, particularly for the poor and for women, and built many Western hospitals. The Methodist missionaries placed special emphasis on education. The Rev Henry Appenzeller opened the first school (BaeJaeHakDang) 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. The missionaries also opened orphanages (Brown 1997:23) and actively participated in the translation of the Bible and other literary works into the Korean language (Kim, BS 1995:40-41).

Thus the missionaries gained the people's confidence through their involvement in medical service and education, which in turn had a positive influence on evangelisation. Moreover, the evangelistic work was enhanced by the adoption of the Nevius Method which emphasised the self-reliance, self-propagation, self-government and independence of the church. While this method was not popular either in China or in Japan, it was widely accepted by the missionaries of the Northern Presbyterian Church in Korea after Dr Nevius (1829-1893) had visited Seoul and taught it to them in 1890. The method strongly emphasised the Bible study class system, the church's self-determination, and the need for natives to carry on the evangelistic work (Kim, AE

1995:40; Hunt 1991). WN Blair (in Brown 1997:31) says “more than anything else, Bible classes accounted for the rapid growth and revival of the Korean Church”. The early Korean Protestants enjoyed attending Bible classes and conferences, which lasted from four to ten days and were held annually in most churches (Yoo 1987:61). They were also earnest evangelists: as Nelson (1995:248) noted, they often travelled away from home on evangelistic trips, but more often they led people to Christ in their own villages through individual evangelism.

The beginning of the twentieth century, which was marked by increasing Japanese dominance in Korea, was a period of impressive growth for Protestant churches in that country. In 1901, the Pyung-Yang Theological Seminary was opened by the Presbyterian Council. The seminary was composed of the four participating Presbyterian missions and its theology was related to the so-called “old school” of Princeton Theological Seminary (Conn 1966). It taught above all the verbal inspiration of the Bible. Later, the seminary was to follow Gresham Machen’s line, namely Fundamentalism (Brown 1997:40).

Within the Protestant churches, intra-denominational and interdenominational cooperation and coordination increased significantly during this period. The Committee for Translating the Bible into the Korean Language was organised by the early missionaries in 1887, and finished translating the whole Bible into Korean in 1910. In 1905, the four Presbyterian missions and the two Methodist missions created one council, with the title of The General Council of Protestant Evangelical Mission in Korea, for conference and advice on questions of common interest. The General Council aimed to achieve not only cooperation in missionary work but also the constitution of the united evangelical church in Korea. A church newspaper (*The Christian News*) was jointly issued, common hymns were sung, educational and medical endeavours were combined, common textbooks for Sunday School were published, and the youth mission was coordinated. To prevent the churches from competing with one another for members in the same areas, the General Council arrived at a final agreement in 1909 regarding the division of territory among the missions. The agreement was adhered to for nearly 30 years (The Institute of Korean Church History 1989:194-218).

Such cooperation and coordination were made possible by a common cultural background and theological framework. The early missionaries were inspired by the so-called modern missionary movement, with its typical Biblical and ideological assumptions, motivation and concern. They were revivalists and conservative evangelicals, who shared an urgency and a call to preach and teach the Gospel to the heathen, those who were lost and had to be saved by Christ before he returned (Brown 1997:21; cf Yoo 1987:42-55).

These ecumenical endeavours were strengthened by a phenomenal event in the early Korean Church:

[I]t was the Great Revival of 1907, which arose in the midst of great “despair and deep national humiliation”, before the Japanese annexation. The old foundations had been shaken, and the old order was passing. ... National humiliation induced melancholy and the intense hatred of the unconquerable enemy produced a deep sense of fear. Thus the problem of the Korean people was at bottom a spiritual one (Yoo 1987:74).

In such hopeless circumstances the Korean Christians were seeking new hope from God. The new hope was associated with the American missionaries who were filled with “Puritanical zeal and Wesleyan fervour” at their Bible conferences and prayer meetings. The Great Revival, begun in January 1907 in Pyung-Yang, gained new impetus to become a nationwide revival movement. Revival meetings were held throughout the country. Wherever there were Christians, the revival experiences were repeated: they bitterly repented of their sins, experienced the fire of the Holy Spirit burning their sins, renewed their lives and gained new hope from God. They gathered at the church to fervently pray together and to study the Bible, and then scattered to spread the Gospel. The subsequent result fully demonstrated the genuineness of the movement. This was the spiritual rebirth of the Korean Church, a phenomenon that is still regarded as the source of the spiritual life of the Korean Church today (Yoo 1987:74-85).

The Great Revival intensified the passion of the renewed people for winning souls and grew into a nationwide evangelistic movement, called “the Million Movement”, which was launched in 1909-1910 (Yoo 1987:89-90). The movement aimed at a speedy mass

evangelisation of the whole country. According to the slogan, “a million souls for Christ”, the whole church participated in the campaign with faith and unparalleled enthusiasm. As WM Baird (in Yoo 1987:93) put it, “the Gospel was preached as never before, all over Korea. We do not know how many were saved, but we do know that a great multitude have been persuaded to enter the churches and express a desire to believe”.

The impressive growth of the Korean Protestant church was also articulated by the establishment of the first presbytery of the Korean Presbyterian Church. On September 17, 1907, thirty-three foreign missionaries and thirty-six Korean elders constituted the Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Korea. The first seven theological graduates were ordained at the first Presbytery (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1989:284). At the time, under the Presbytery there were 7 Korean ministers, 53 elders, 989 congregations, 19,000 communicants and 70,000 believers (Yoo 1987:99-100). In September 1912 the Presbytery formed a General Assembly with 7 presbyteries. At the time there were 65 Korean ministers, 225 elders, 224 helpers, 2,054 congregations, 53,088 communicants, and 144,260 believers (Brown 1997:50). The North Methodist Mission organised the Korea Annual Conference in Seoul in 1908 and the South Methodist Mission organised a conference in 1918. The two conferences were united into one body in 1930 (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1989:288).

During the period of Protestant beginnings the membership of the Protestant church in Korea showed rapid growth: 250 believers (1890); 18,081 (1900); 167,352 (1910) (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1989:261).

The characteristics of preaching in the early Korean church can be identified from sermons delivered by early missionaries. Their sermons were normally topical sermons, which were prevalent in the early 20th century in America, while Korean preachers preached textual sermons (Kim, MG 1991: 257). Because of language barriers, they used illustrations. This characteristic was to influence Korean preachers later. CA Clark, an early missionary who taught at the Pyung-Yang Theological Seminary suggested a practical guideline and method of preaching (The Institute of Korean Church History

Studies 1989:258). He argued that because preaching was a unique means of bringing salvation by proclaiming the Gospel, it should be based on the Word of God, properly interpreted (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies :258). In theological terms the preaching was individualistic and pietistic owing to their mission policy, which stated that the church and state should be separate (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies :263). Sermons focused on Christian life rather than Christian dogma, which was attractive to the Korean people who were part of the Confucian culture.

In brief, this period in the Korean Church demonstrates healthy growth in all dimensions: in membership, in the development of faith, in cooperative mission work, and in diaconal services for the people. Though the Christians numbered around one percent of the whole population in 1910, their influence was felt in society. In spite of its minority status, the Korean Church at the time was, in a real sense, the light in a dark age.

3.1.1.2 The church under Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945)

The Korean churches entered a new era when the country was annexed by the Japanese in 1910. At first Japan instituted a policy of strict control over every aspect of life, especially as regards restricting opportunities for education and leadership for Koreans (Underwood 1994:67). The churches were the only organisations in Korea that were not totally under Japanese control and, thus, became one of the few avenues for Korean leadership. Although the Japanese administrative policy toward the churches was seemingly friendly at first, – precipitated, at least in part, by the government's recognition of the importance of Christian support to the success of Japanese rule – it gradually developed into a policy of open oppression and hostility (Kim, AE 1995:42). In addition, the Japanese authorities generally assumed that the missionaries were in Korea as political agents of a Western power and that Korean Christians associated with them were paid agents of the same foreign power. The degree of persecution under the Japanese varied. With the rise of Japanese militarism after 1933, this control was tightened even more. The church was in fact the most powerful organisation in Korea

and appeared to be protected by Western missionaries. It thus became the first target of Japanese persecution.

One fabricated incident by which the Japanese authority attempted to weaken the Korean Church was the Conspiracy Trial of 1912. On a fabricated charge – the planned assassination of the Japanese governor-general, Terauchi Masatake – the government arrested and tortured hundreds of teachers and students. In total, 122 persons were accused, 107 of whom were Christians, mostly prominent Christian leaders. This incident linked Christianity closely with Korean nationalism (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1989:308-322).

After the above incident, all church ministries, including not only medical and educational ministries but also evangelism, and even the content of teaching in the church and the ordination of the ministers, came under the strict control of the Japanese government (Kim, AE 1995:42-43). The Japanese policy of oppression of the Church and the Christian schools began to be expressed more openly. In 1915 two religious laws were promulgated. One was the Private School Law, which prohibited the Christian mission schools from teaching the Bible and Korean history or worshipping in the chapel (Yi 1987:228). The pro-Japanese Methodist schools immediately obeyed this law and stopped their religious activities, while the Presbyterian schools appealed to the government for reconsideration and prayed that the law would be withdrawn (Rhee 1995:263). The other law was the Religious Propaganda Law, which required the church to obtain the government's permission for establishing new churches and to report church statistics and activities. This ensured tight control of the Church (Yi 1985:157).

In the March First Movement of 1919, the Korean people eventually rose against Japanese rule, proclaimed the Declaration of Independence signed by 33 representatives of the people, and engaged in a nationwide peaceful protest demonstration for one year. The Church's preparation for the Movement was very self-governed and secret: there was no prior consultation with the missionaries. From the first demonstration on 1 March 1919 in Seoul, more than two million people participated in 1,542

demonstrations (Rhee 1995:263). The Korean Church also participated actively in this anti-imperialist resistance. Of the 33 signatories to the Declaration of Independence, 16 were Christians. In almost all towns and villages, it was at the churches that Koreans gathered to read the Declaration and to begin their demonstrations (Yang 1993:179). More importantly, it was the Christians who insisted on non-violence. The protest was essentially a pacifist movement, for the Korean demonstrators did not have any weapons. Nevertheless, the Japanese soldiers and policemen responded to the peaceful demonstrations in a most brutal way. They violently killed 7 509 Korean people, injured 15 961, and arrested about 47 000 (Rhee 1995:263). According to the statistics of the military police at the end of that year, the Christians numbered 3 426 among 19 525 arrested Koreans, which was 17,6 percent of the total number (Yi 1985:163). This means that the Christians were the largest group of all those arrested. Considering that the Christian population made up about 1,5 percent of the whole population at the time, the number shows that the Church played a great role in the Movement (Yi 1985:164). As a result, the Church suffered severe persecution from the Japanese government via the police and military forces.

After the Movement, many Korean Christian politicians and intellectuals went abroad to continue promoting the independence movement (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1990:59-63). Korean Christians also left Korea for China, Manchuria, Russia and the USA, where they lived and established many Korean churches (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1990:99-146).

Generally speaking, church ministries in Korea were discouraged after the Movement. Church membership thus swiftly declined. Church statistics, which summed up the membership of Methodist and Presbyterian churches after the movement, showed 2 177 congregations and 179 544 believers, namely 88 congregations and 22 409 believers fewer in comparison with the statistics for the previous year (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1990:38). By actively participating in the movement, however, the Korean Church was able to demonstrate deep sympathy with the nation's suffering, and also to gain great confidence from the Korean people, who began to recognise

Christianity as a religion for the people (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies :40).

After the 1920s the Korean Church began to separate religion from politics for many reasons: the missionaries were theologically conservative and the sending mission boards demanded that the missionaries should preserve political neutrality. Further, the Korean Church's situation was exacerbated by the infiltration of Russian communism and the ongoing political oppression and economic exploitation by the Japanese government. During the 1920s and 1930s Japan changed her policy toward the Korean Church and became more tolerant in order to restore its international standing. The Japanese government needed to regain its respectability following the international pressure that had condemned its brutality toward the Independence Movement of 1919.

Moreover, Japan planned to conquer the whole of Asia and thus wanted to have a good relationship with the US government, which ultimately supported the Japanese imperial quest in Asia. Under these circumstances, the US government and the mission societies demanded that the missionaries in Korea should not involve themselves in "political affairs" against the Japanese government. The demand was easily acceded to by the missionaries, whose theological position tended to be conservative both theologically and politically. They were thus concerned with purely "church affairs", in order to avoid political conflict with the Japanese government (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1990:42-46). The Japanese government encouraged the Korean Church and the missionaries to promote so-called "pure social movements" or "transforming people's lives" such as a village movement for farmers, abstinence from smoking and drinking, prohibition of the use of opium, and abolition of licensed prostitution (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies:215-241). At a stage when the press was at least partially free, the Korean Church published various church newspapers and periodicals, which had to be neutral to "political affairs" (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies:71-83).

The revival movement also abandoned "political affairs" such as the immediate national liberation, and instead limited itself to working for personal salvation; it thus tended to

be futuristic, transcendental and mystical (Yi 1985:173-174). Even though this kind of futuristic, transcendental faith played an important role in preventing a small minority of the members of the church from being perverted in the 1930s and 1940s when the majority of the church accommodated Japanese Shintoism, it was responsible for the Korean church being threatened by Communism. A small group of church members who were disappointed with the church's non-radical attitude to "political affairs" left the church and joined the Communist resistance movement against Japanese rule. This group bitterly criticised and attacked the church for not participating actively in the liberation of the nation. Soon other anti-Christian organisations arose and engaged in antagonistic action against the church. Many intellectuals and patriotic leaders openly published writings against the church (Min [1982], 1993:454-458). Korean Christianity thus came to be surrounded by hostile forces. In time the Korean church learned that the radical Communistic ideology could never coexist with the Christian Gospel. The Church also learned that it should preserve a distance from nationalism; it believed that real patriotism lay in building a Christian nation like the USA.

In the meantime ecumenical endeavours which had been promoted actively in the early Korean church withered owing to conflicting denominational interests and exclusivity, resulting from "denominational theology" and provincial clericalism (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1990:149-169).

During the 1930s and early 1940s, the Korean church encountered its last great crisis under Japanese rule: the confrontation with Japanese Shintoism (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1990:258-301). It was the most challenging and controversial problem that the church had had to face (Kim, ST 1991). At the time Japan needed the Korean people to actively support and take part in its imperialistic war, which aimed at the unification of the whole of Asia under Japanese rule. Under the banner of war, the Japanese government confiscated materials, buildings and facilities belonging to Koreans and conscripted all available male and female workers, sending them to military camps. Under the Japanisation programme, the use of the Japanese language was strictly enforced at all schools and meetings, including Christian services, while the Korean language was firmly suppressed and the Japanese government attempted to

eradicate Korean culture. Further, all Koreans were ordered to change their Korean names to Japanese names. The names of churches were also to bear Japanese titles (Kim, ST 1991:274-278). From the early 1930s the Japanese nationalists had a vision of conquering the Chinese mainland and the continent, and they realised that they needed not only an army but also faith. They found that faith in Shintoism, popularly known as the worship of the Japanese emperor as the divine descendant of *Amaterasu* the sun-goddess, cultivating its usefulness as “an agency of political and military control” (Holtom 1963:168).

Finally, all Koreans, including Christians, were compelled to worship *Kami* and *Amaterasu* at Japanese Shinto shrines. *Kami* designates 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 religion (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1990:285). Among all the gods, *Amaterasu* was identified with the ancestor-deity of the imperial family of Japan.

From the early 1930s the Japanese nationalists realised that they needed not only an army but also a faith in order to accomplish their vision of the Asian conquest (Kim, AE 1995:43). To this end, Japan attempted to impose Shintoism on the Koreans, as well as the Japanese. In 1935 the Japanese government ordered all schools, including Christian schools, to participate in Shinto shrine ceremonies and to bow down to the gods. While the missionaries at first refused to allow students and teachers at Christian schools to attend Shinto rituals, they could do nothing in the end to resist other than to close the schools or accept the Japanese government order under duress. Many Christian schools were abolished. The Pyong-Yang Theological Seminary which had been established by the Presbyterian missions was closed on account of its refusal to accept shrine worship in 1938. Mission works were also restricted. Many missionaries were deported to their home countries (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1990:294-299).

In contrast to this protest, the Korean Catholic church accepted the Japanese government order in accordance with the Vatican ruling of May 1936 that Christians

might worship at the Shinto shrine, which was considered no more than a ritual expressing patriotism and loyalty to the state. A month later, the Korean Methodist Church also allowed their congregations to attend shrine worship as a duty for every citizen (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1990:299-300; Kim, SK 1991:438-444).

Finally, the Korean Presbyterian Church, the largest denomination in Korea, decided to comply with the government order, at the Presbyterian General Assembly in February 1938. A few leaders and their followers, however, planned the Anti-Shrine Worship Movement, and strongly protested against Shinto worship (Kim, HK 1998:103). In contrast, the liberals in the Korean Presbyterian church who had emerged in the mid 1920s opened the Chosun Theological Academy for “liberty from the dominion of the Western missionaries and from conservative theology” in Seoul in 1940. This Academy trained people to be faithful ministers for the Japanese government (Kim, HK 1998:109): “To the liberals, the issue of shrine worship and the assimilation of the Christian faith with Shintoism was really not a serious matter to be dealt with” (Kim, HK 1998:112). One notable result of the shrine-worship issue was the polarisation of the Presbyterian church and its theology: to date there is still a divide between the conservatives and the liberals. The differences were too wide and extreme to permit dialogue with each other (Kim, HK 1998:111-112).

In the early 1940s the Japanese authorities became hostile to the Korean churches. The authorities ordered the placement of portable Shinto shrines in churches and used many church buildings as lodging for soldiers. The churches could not even hold meetings without police permission. Nearly 200 local churches closed their doors. About 2 000 Christian leaders who were involved in the Anti-Shrine Worship Movement were imprisoned for professing their faith. More than 50 Christians suffered martyrdom (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1990:337-338). On July 29, 1945, about a month before the end of the war, all the Protestant churches discarded their denominational distinctions and were combined into the pro-Japanese Korean Church, “the united Korean Japanese Christian Church”, by government order (Kim, AE

1995:45). On 15 August 1945 the Japanese emperor announced Japanese surrender, and Korea was liberated.

In this period, the nature of preaching in Korean churches was influenced by the political situation and foreign missionaries' mission policy that the church and the state should be separate. The theological background of missionaries was puritanical, pietistic and evangelical (Park, JW 1996: 424). As explained previously, the Korean church suffered severe persecution by Japan owing to the issue of Shrine worship. The church therefore engaged in personal evangelism to avoid conflict with Japan. Preaching emphasised individual faith and an *other-worldly* way life (Hong, KM 1990:285).

3.1.1.3 The church during the Korean War and subsequent recovery (1945-1960)

With the liberation from Japanese rule, Korea faced the major task of restoration of its sovereignty. The Korean church also primarily needed to restore itself. Fulfilling such tasks did not come easily, however. At the time, Korea faced great political and social upheaval. The agreement between the USA and the Soviet Union to participate jointly in the surrender of Japan in Korea split the country into two opposing sides. With the US force in the south and the Soviet counterpart in the north, the two camps brought about the establishment of two separate governments in Korea in 1948: the communist government of the North and the democratic government of the South. The division of the two Koreas was perpetuated through the Korean War (1950-1953), caused by the struggle between the two Super Powers (Kim, AE 1995:45).

Under these traumatic conditions, the Church in the North inevitably suffered severely. The Communist government in the North severely persecuted Christians in its territory since it viewed the church as a major threat to its rule. The government interfered with all church activities. In 1948, the government created the Christian League to which all church leaders were required to belong. By 1950, most church workers who had not joined the league were arrested, tortured and executed for opposing the government's

religious policy. Shortly before and at the outbreak of the Korean War many Christians in the North fled South for freedom of faith. The Communist invasion of the South swiftly followed, however, and many church leaders were killed or carried off (Clark [1971] 1992:247).

Meanwhile the First Republic of Korea in the South was initiated by Christians. Syng-Man Rhee, a devout Christian elder and patriot who had returned to Korea after 33 years of political exile, was elected the first President in 1948. Most seats in the Cabinet and Parliament and other important positions were filled by Christians. This was achieved through the President's personal favour and the democratic ability of those trained in church activities, as well as through the powerful support of the missionaries who had returned to Korea or had been newly sent from the American mission bodies. It could be said that at this time Korea had a "Christian" government (cf Kang, IC 1996). This is reflected by the fact that the South Korean churches enjoyed high privilege and status in spite of the fact that Christians numbered less than 5% of the population (Rhee 1995:270).

Unfortunately, however, according to JS Rhee (1995:270), the Korean Churches failed to relate properly to the government for the following two reasons. Firstly, the Korean Churches were not yet mature enough to understand, theologically, the spiritual nature of the state or political power, and to criticise the sinful ambition for political power of the 'Christian elder' President. Eventually, in 1960, the first government was overthrown by the Student Revolution for its massive injustice and corruption. Thereafter, the Korean Churches were often accused of being 'a pro-government group' that was loyal to any government (Rhee 1995:270).

Secondly, the Korean churches could not afford to pay attention to political affairs, since they had a primary inner issue to resolve. This issue was the reformation of the churches through the serious and public repentance of the sin they had committed by officially supporting Shinto shrine worship (Kim, YJ 1992:237-246). In the process of a national reorganisation of the Presbyterian church there was strong disagreement between the former pro-Japanese "collaborators" who wanted to retain the Japanese-

imposed structure of church union and the advocates of the Church Rehabilitation Movement supported by church leaders who had been incarcerated by the Japanese. The former group still held the initiative in church government and made the Chosun Theological Seminary the seminary of the South Division General Assembly in June, 1946. The latter group clearly recognised that the Church should be reformed not only spiritually, through repentance and renewal, from the sin of apostasy, but also theologically from Chosun Seminary's liberal theology (Conn 1967:40).

With regard to the Church Rehabilitation Movement, the Presbyterian church was split into two conservative Presbyterian churches – PCKH and PCKT (Kim, HK 1998:132). One of them, supported by Dr Park Hyung-Yong, emphasised the union of the Presbyterian church and its propagation more than its purification. The other, supported by the Rev Han Sang-Dong, did not quite agree with Park and did not trust the missions, whose theology had become modernist or liberal, nor the leaders in the General Assembly who did not actively advocate the Church Rehabilitation Movement.

In 1953 the General Assembly ostracised the Rev Kim Jae-Joon, who persisted in criticising orthodox theology. He and his followers therefore organised the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PCROK). In 1959 the Korean Presbyterian church suffered the third division, a major Presbyterian split, caused by complex reasons, such as controversies concerning the ecumenical movement, a power struggle for hegemony in church government and the control of mission financial support. The church split more or less evenly in two: the Tong-Hap Presbyterian Church (PCKT: the Ecumenical or KNCC group) and the Hap-Tong Presbyterian Church (PCKH: the NAE group) (Brown 1997:86-87). In the meanwhile the Korean Methodist Church was also floundering in internal disputes (Kim, YJ 1992:246-248). The internal disputes in the Korean churches prevented them from taking on a leadership role in a society in turmoil.

The outbreak of the Korean War on June 25 1950 drove the Korean church, as well as the nation-state and the whole society, into even worse turmoil. The War was an ideological conflict, and therefore caused a permanent split between the two Koreas.

About five million people were killed during the War and the whole country was devastated. Millions of war refugees suffered physical injury and impoverishment. The Communist Army of the North singled out Christians as being anti-communist and sympathetic to American imperialism; hence, tens of thousands of Christians perished. The War engraved on the consciousness of the Korean church a deep awareness that communists were the implacable enemies of Christianity. Fortunately, the period immediately following the war provided a most opportune time for evangelisation. Huge amounts of foreign aid poured into Korea from “Christian countries”, particularly the USA, further fuelling the Koreans’ favourable perception of Christianity. The Catholic and Protestant mission-related agencies brought into Korea millions of dollars’ worth of relief supplies, ranging from food and clothing to medicines, which were distributed to needy people. The mission bodies’ relief supplies and their relief programmes, therefore, became a “badge” of the charity and compassion of Christianity, which presented a striking contrast to traditional religions, such as Buddhism and Confucianism (Kim, AE 1995:46). In the period from 1953 to 1960, both the Catholic and the Protestant churches grew rapidly in membership from 500 000 Protestants and 166 400 Catholics in 1953 to 700 000 Protestants and 451 000 Catholics in 1960 (Rhee 1995:228).

IC Kang (1996:270-274) insists that the Korean Protestant church was decisively influenced by the USA churches and their missionaries in this period [1945 to 1960]. The American missionaries deeply implanted anti-communism and pro-Americanism in the Korean churches. Under the auspices of the US government, they also influenced the South Korean government’s decisions on religious matters: they helped the Korean churches to obtain far more benefits and autonomous status from the government in contrast to those obtained by other religions. They also helped Korean Christian elites to attain political power. The churches remained loyal to the government. In other words, all the Korean Protestant churches, whether theologically conservative or liberal, maintained a conservative political position (Kang, IC :259-270).

Furthermore, the missionaries who were in the highest positions in the church power structure, by providing financial resources for the Korean churches, controlled all

spheres of church structures and activities. They were deeply involved in theological education at seminaries, implementing their own particular theological tradition, such as theological exclusivism, denominationalism and religious triumphalism. They governed the planning of church activities such as evangelism and social ministries. They also intervened in structuring church organisations. They drove out anti-Americanists and religious nationalists from the churches. In brief, the powerful intervention of the US churches and missionaries in the Korean churches encouraged the churches to establish the following sociopolitical tradition: anti-communist, pro-American and pro-government (Kang, IC 1996:309-310). Since then, this tradition has impacted continuously on the formation of the theological tradition of the Korean churches.

In his article, “Influence of preaching to church growth”, MK Kim (1990:285) described the following characteristics of preaching after liberation from Japan, the Korean War and the recovery: Firstly, the conception of preaching became uncertain during the Japanese colonial period. The church pulpit had been devastated by the events of the previous 36 years. Secondly, preaching focused on liberation and freedom. Thirdly, preaching emphasised repentance. Fourthly, sermons on spiritual growth were heard.

3.1.1.4 The church in “the conversion boom” period (1960-1990s)

The Korean student democratic movement, which brought about the collapse of Syng-Man Ree’s regime in 1960, held out the hope that a sound democratic system could be established. But Chung-Hee Park, a general in the Korean army, pulled off a coup d’état in May 1960. General Park, who had been inaugurated as president in December 1963, propped up his military regime with an anti-Communist ideology on the one hand, and a growth-centred economic policy on the other. The two policies were to some extent able to meet the people’s expectations for security and material wealth. Unfortunately, President Park indulged his insatiable appetite for power so that his rule extended into a prolonged dictatorship that lasted until he was assassinated in 1979. The military government continued under Presidents Jun Doo-Hwan (1980-1987) and Ro Tae-Woo (1988-1993).

The Korean churches failed to respond adequately to national political issues. The social disorder of the 1950s after the Korean War stimulated the Korean people to long for the strong government provided by the nation-state. Most people therefore welcomed the military coup by General Park Chung-Hee in May 1960. The Korean churches also welcomed his rule (Kim, YJ 1992:276).

During the period of military dictatorship (1961-1987) the Korean Churches were polarised into two groups: the KNCC (Korean National Christian Council) and Catholic group and the non-KNCC group. The conservative non-KNCC group actively supported the government by prohibiting any criticism against it within the church, and even by publishing support documents on controversial government matters. On the other hand, the KNCC and Catholic group protested against the extension of the military regime. But the latter group also fell into political secularisation by uncritically identifying with any anti-government group, employing some Marxist methods of violent protest and labour instigation in the name of “Minjung Theology” (Rhee 1995:271).

Ironically, both groups were greatly influenced by Western churches and their theologies, namely American conservative evangelicalism or the WCC’s political theology. In other words, the Korean churches showed a lack of theological, critical reflection on national political issues. The rapid numerical growth of the conservative evangelical churches was not based on a sound theological foundation, but was instead caused by their socio-psychological situation. The churches accommodated themselves well to the Korean people’s needs. The people who had long suffered social turmoil yearned for a peaceful society, but postponed the realisation of a just society.

The process of industrialisation and urbanisation was accelerated by the government’s plans for economic development which were implemented from the 1960s. By the 1980s a society centred around primary industries had become one centred around tertiary development (Gwak 2000:34). This shift in the industrial structure encouraged people to move to the cities (Ro, CJ 1998:18-19). In 1961, the population of Korea was about 75% rural and 25% urban. By the late 1980s, the figures had been reversed (Ro, CJ :34).

Even though the urban middle classes enjoyed an increase in income caused by the rapid economic growth of the nation, they suffered feelings of deprivation, alienation and insecurity (Lee, WK 1992:72). They desired more possessions for the sake of future security. This acquisitive drive created in people a sense of relative deprivation through comparison with others who enjoyed higher status or living standards, or through disappointment in their desires. Furthermore, social conflict was deepened by distributive inequality. In the process of urbanisation many immigrants from the rural areas also felt a sense of alienation through losing their sense of belonging to a local community. Rapid industrialisation and urbanisation finally resulted in social and psychological insecurity among the people. Uninterrupted political disturbance, as well as the hostile confrontation between the two Koreas, aggravated people's anxiety about an uncertain future (Ro, CJ 1998:19-20). It came as no surprise, therefore, that political, economic, and social insecurity resulted in the rapid numerical growth of the Korean churches. Speaking in terms of the sociology of religion, such insecurity usually operates as a pubertal "pushing factor" which drives people towards religion (Ro, CJ:21). Many Koreans regarded Christianity as the most powerful religion and one that could deal effectively with their insecurities. They could not trust traditional religions, which had not adapted to the process of modernisation of Korean society (Lee, WK 1992:32).

Many Korean people were well disposed towards Christianity because they believed that Christianity had led the modernisation of Korea since the advent of the first American missionaries. The Korean government also equated modernisation with Americanisation (Ro, CJ 1998:26-27). The government implanted in Korean society the American mode of modernisation, whose two ideological axioms were the free market system of capitalism and anti-Communism. Most Korean people therefore easily believed that both capitalism and anti-Communism were the necessary ideological foundations on which Korean society could be firmly established.

At the same time, they presumed that to become a powerful country Korea should become a Christian country like America. After seeing the united mammoth meetings of the Korean churches, Korean people considered the church to be the most powerful

organisation in Korea. In Seoul's Youido Plaza, the public square which is the main site for mass rallies, five mass evangelism crusades were held: the Billy Graham Crusade of 1973, Explo '74, the '77 Holy Assembly Crusade, the 1980 World Evangelisation Crusade and the Protestant Centenary Celebration in 1984. In August 1984, for example, the Protestant Centenary Celebration drew about 3.5 million Christians to a number of rallies to hear sermons by well-known world Christian leaders, including Billy Graham (Kim, AE, 1995:48).

These mass crusades had a great impact on the Korean churches, which exploded into zeal for soul-winning. Yoo (1987:219) insists that two crusades in particular, Explo '74 and the 1980 World Evangelisation Crusade, "were a spiritual turning point in the nation". Through the crusades, he says, the suppressed Han of the "Pentecostal MinJung", whose mind had been in a desperate state caused by long national suffering from wars and political and economical instability, was resolved into a new vision towards national salvation. In other words, the crusades led the national evangelisation movement of the Korean churches. Explo '74 held by the KCCC (Korean Campus Crusade for Christ; presided over by the Rev Kim Joon-Gon) led around 272 000 people to a decision to believe in Christ. During the 1980 Crusade, it was reported that about one million people became new Christian believers (Kim, JG 1995:59).

The Catholic church also showed people its united strength through constant prophetic protest against the military regime and through the bicentennial mass event in 1984, at which Pope John Paul II canonised 103 martyrs from early Korean Catholic history (Kim, AE 1995:48).

The Korean people were astonished to see the prominent activities of Christians in every sphere of Korean society. The people thus assumed that Christianity could effectively fulfil their needs for socio-psychological security. In this period the Korean churches experienced a conspicuous increase in membership. The churches focused on the self-fulfilment, self-gratification or self-realisation of their members. Various Christian church communities that primarily tried to provide psychological support to their members who were suffering from the effects of the exigent national conditions

stimulated people to join the church. A so-called “conversion boom” took place in the Korean churches (Kim, AE 1995:47-48).

In 1960, South Korea’s Protestant population numbered only about 700 000. In 1970 membership exceeded 3 million, which was more than four times the number of members in 1960. The 1970s and 1980s were no less remarkable for the growth in membership of the Protestant church: 7 million in 1980, and 12 million in 1990, according to the statistics which summed up denominational reports. The membership of the Catholic churches also roughly doubled every decade: around 400 000 (1960); around 777 000 (1970); 1 321 293 (1980); 2 711 566 (1990) (Rhee 1995:228). According to the census by the government in 1985, whose data were more reliable than the denominational statistics, Christians numbered around 8 354 679, which comprised 20,7% of the total Korean population (40 419 652). The Gallup survey of 1989 showed that Christians were 26,2% of the total population (Gallup Korea 1998:218).

The Korean Churches, however, lacked the sound understanding of the Gospel through which they should have evaluated capitalistic ideologies, such as materialism, quantitativism, individualism and group egotism. Furthermore, they should have pointed Korean society towards the new direction the Gospel proposes. Instead, by uncritically assimilating modernism and secularism, they neglected to fulfil faithfully their mission of transforming Korean society in the light of the Gospel. The Korean churches’ assimilation of such capitalistic, modernistic secular ideologies resulted in their having to confront serious moral problems (Rhee 1995:276-281).

One problem facing the Korean churches was their neglect of social responsibility and services. CJ Ro (1998:191) presents statistical data from his analysis of church financial expenditure in 1992, As an example of this problem: 201 churches (81,7%) in 246 sampled churches expended less than 5% of their gross receipts on social service expenses, including almsgiving expenses; only 4 churches (1,6%) expended more than 10% of their gross receipts on them.

Notwithstanding, most congregations made every effort to maintain and extend their membership and physical assets. The church extensionalism to which special attention was paid, has produced the so-called “mega-church”: over ten churches in Korea have a membership of over 10 000 (the Full Gospel Church in Seoul claims approximately 800 000) and many more have between 5 000 and 10 000 members (Underwood 1994:74).

Rhee (1995:279) voices the criticism that the Mega-Church Movement in the Korean churches lacks a sound basis of theology: some evangelical pastors and churches have copied Yong-Gi Cho’s “Prosperity Theology”. Another evangelical group has tried to use several techniques and methodologies that achieved some measure of quantitative success in America. Yet other groups have attempted to develop different methods of attracting people, such as Christian versions of Shamanistic demonology, psychological mass hypnotism, spiritual surgery and imminent eschatology, related to unsound charismatic movements.

In brief, it is correct to say that most Korean churches are oriented towards individualistic success and quantitative growth (Son 1995:258). The success-oriented Korean churches had a serious problem, because they were “not only a product of materialism but also an inherent cause of separatism and individualism” (Rhee 1995:279). Evangelism, group Bible study, discipleship training, preaching and even prayer were mostly focused on their numerical growth. This local church expansionism was based on competitive individualism or “capitalistic composition” (Son 1995:266ff). Such churches could not help competing with each other. As a result, many congregations suffered divisions. Denominations were also easily divided. It is notable that church division is most acutely represented in the Presbyterian churches in Korea (Park, KW 1986:613).

In 1979, the PCKH (Hapdong) which was the biggest denomination in Korea was divided into many denominations due to conflicts caused by a hegemonic power struggle among denominational leaders. There was only one Presbyterian church body in Korea before the Second World War but by 1991 there were 67 different Presbyterian denominations; the total number of denominations in Korea being 97 (The Korean

Christianity Great Annual of 1991:215-216, in Kim, YJ 1992:356-358). Church division aggravated vicious regionalism and individualism in Korean society. But a more serious problem facing the Korean churches was that they tended to attribute the troubles caused by local church expansionism and competition and church division to Divine Providence in the belief that this might accelerate growth in membership. The tendency in the churches was thus to postpone repentance and the endeavour for church unity.

In this period, another problem facing the Korean Churches was the impoverished condition of the rural churches in contrast to the urban churches which, as a result of urbanisation, were growing in membership, financial resources and church activities. According to a report, in 1989, a rural congregation averaged 44 members, while a congregation in Seoul averaged 556 members. Most of the rural churches could hardly support themselves but the urban churches were not active in helping them (Lee, WK 1994:62-71). Instead, a boom in overseas missions was evident in the urban churches. As Leo Oosterom (1990:114-115) puts it, the successful ministry and the material affluence of the urban churches caused them to adopt a stance of self-complacency, running overseas missionary work in “triumphant mood”.

In summary, rapid social changes that were spurred on by the processes of industrialisation, modernisation and urbanisation generated culture shock among the masses, many of whom turned to Christianity as an alternative belief system that could ameliorate their feelings of anxiety. However, we conclude that the growth of the Korean churches was not healthy and balanced during this period: church growth in dimensions other than numerical growth was greatly impeded.

In this period homiletic characteristics were related to a dominant ecclesiology, that is, a success-oriented one (Kim, MG 1991:289). KM Hong (1990:284) describes the characteristic of preaching as follows: “recently through the development of church growth theology the Korean church grew rapidly. Against this background, there were sermons which focused on the delicate psychological approach to the Korean people....The two types of sermon which lead church growth in the Korean church were material blessing and positive thinking.”

3.1.2 Analysis and Interpretation of Ecclesiology of the Korean Church

This section will identify the characteristics of the ecclesiology of the Korean church, by considering some of the reasons for the growth and decline of the church. Since the early 1990s most mainline denominations in Korea have experienced a stagnation or decline in membership and attendance. In the 1980s the average annual growth in membership was 4,4 percent. Government statistics show that the growth rate was 3,9 percent in 1991, 0,6 percent in 1992 and minus 4 percent in 1993. Some denominations are beginning to see downward growth in their membership. A major Presbyterian church in Korea reported a decrease of 1,8 percent in membership in 1998 (Hong, YG 2000:190-190).

The reasons behind the stagnation in growth in the Korean church are made apparent by an examination of the reasons for the rapid growth of the Korean church in the past.

With only a few exceptions, “stagnation” has continued to be the trend in all Korean churches, especially in the mega-churches. The shock of church stagnation has elicited a wide range of diagnoses in recent years. Young-Jae Kim, a young systematic theologian, focuses on the “authoritarian clericalism” of ministers and the “rigid ecclesiasticalism” of the church structure and identifies them as the prime negative forces which prevent the church from growing. Won-Kyu Lee identifies “the displacement of goal” as the reason for stagnancy. Byung-Suh Kim and Young Shin Park see “the irrelevance of the church’s presence and style in society” as the primary cause. All these diagnoses offer one primary message: in spite of its growth, the Korean church has lost touch with ordinary people, with society, and perhaps with history at large (Gwak 2000:44-45).

The characteristics of contemporary ecclesiology in Korea are related to various issues and traditions. These will be broadly evaluated from the perspective of the sociopolitical, religious and ecclesiastic tradition of the Korean church. The Korean churches are a product of the Korean sociopolitical situation and Korean religious

culture. This study investigates how the Korean churches have responded or accommodated themselves to that situation and culture. A more important question is how the Korean churches have theologically and ecclesiastically justified such responses or accommodation. This question leads us to examine the ecclesiological characteristics of the Korean churches. This section aims at analysing what influence such traditions have had on the growth of the Korean churches and the formation of their ecclesiology.

3.1.2.1 Sociopolitical perspective

In this section, I discuss those sociopolitical aspects that have had an influence on the ecclesiology of the church in Korea.

The characteristics of a sociopolitical tradition in Korean Protestantism during the period 1884-1945

According to Jae-Yong Chu (1983), a church historian, the most powerful factor that triggered the growth of the Korean church was political. For the past one-hundred years, Korea has been in a state of political crisis. This began with Japan's victories in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), and was followed by the Russo-Japanese War (1894-1905), and then by Japan's takeover of Korea in 1910. For Koreans, Japan's takeover meant not only the loss of their country, but also the termination of 4 000 years of national history and existence.

The Korean people as a whole became disillusioned by the powerlessness and helplessness of the Yi Dynasty, Confucianism, and the feudal system of old Korea. Many church historians and sociologists of religion view the political and ideological vacuum created by this political crisis as the critical background to the arrival of Christianity in Korea. With the nation in the process of total disintegration, the Christian Gospel and its teaching became a source of hope, both spiritual and political.

James H Grayson (1995:44-49) points out the four particular sociopolitical characteristics which were conducive to Korea's rapid acceptance of Protestantism: the rejection of the values of traditional society and a strong yearning for new values; the lack of conflict between the core values of Protestantism and those of society; general political tolerance of the Korean government towards Protestantism; and the lack of organised resistance to Protestantism.

By the nineteenth century, when the social and political world of Confucianism in Korea had fallen into decline owing to the gross political corruption of Confucian literati-bureaucrats, the progressive Korean leaders were persuaded that it would be advisable to adopt Protestantism as a means to regenerate their people morally and to modernise the country. The missionary policy, especially the Nevius Method, emphasised indigenous leadership, financial self-sufficiency, and administrative autonomy and thus helped Korean Christians to learn the modern values of independence and democracy. By 1919 the Protestant churches had developed into a leading social force and were providing the nation with its most effective leadership, particularly in the March First Independence Movement (Chung 1996:619-620).

During the subsequent period, from the 1930s to 1945, a period of harsh repression and despair under Japanese imperialism, Korean Protestantism continued to help the people keep alive the hope of national liberation and independence. It promoted a variety of alternative strategies to strengthen the nation and managed, through various educational endeavours and programmes for economic enterprise, to raise the standard of living and to protect the national economic basis (Chung 1996:530).

More positively, KW Park (1986:610-611) argues that the miraculous success of Korean Protestantism is the result of the credibility that the early Korean church established with the people. He explains that this credibility of the church in the eyes of the people was gained by means of the following three factors. Firstly, the early Korean church became a source of energy for the country's modernisation movement. The second factor is that right from the start the church was deeply and actively involved in the people's movement for national independence. A third factor that enabled the

church to gain the people's respect and trust concerns the church's endeavours to promote Korean culture and education against the Japanese policy of suppressing them.

What must be appreciated is the energetic, patriotic devotion of Protestant leaders to the nation's restoration along with the services provided by missionaries, such as medicine, nursing, and education. American missionaries earned a good public image as those who had come to aid the people of Korea. "Such friendly attitudes, a law-abiding spirit, and an unobtrusive manner helped pave the way for the acceptance of Protestantism by the Korean government and the people", and in particular by the young and progressive leaders (Chung 1996:525-526). Through Western medicine, education, and human welfare programmes initiated by missionaries, the Korean Protestant churches were able to cope positively with the frustrations and sorrow experienced under Japanese domination (Chung 1982:619-620).

The Korean Church's positive association with the politics of modernisation and national liberation, even though this might have been best for its mission at that time, tended to produce in the Church an uncritical accommodation to ideologies that were opposed to the Gospel, such as nationalistic patriotism, Constantinian triumphalism, secular humanism and modernistic progressivism (Chung, CS 1996:530-531). When Christianity, which is completely grounded in Western thought, comes into contact with a different cultural sphere, Christianity inevitably distances itself from the existing culture. The Korean case is no exception. Undeniably, Christianity was a vital power that gave the Korean people new direction and hope in the corruptive Confucian society which "was attributable to the selfish motivation to climb the ladder of bureaucratic success, patrimonialism, and the oppressive hierarchical system"(Chung, CS 1996:528).

However, Korean Protestantism's apparent disjuncture with the Confucian sociopolitical values of the Yi dynasty proceeded to another extreme, namely, to absolute continuity between Protestantism and modernisation or Westernisation. At the time most Korean Protestant leaders tended to identify Christianity with Western culture, holding a negative, exclusivistic attitude towards traditional culture and

religions. Such uncritical accommodation to Western modernism has become a root characteristic of Korean Protestantism as a whole.

Korean Protestantism's sociopolitical propensity during the period 1945-1990s

In modern society, political systems provide security and welfare to the people. Korean political systems, however, were unable to provide such benefits to the people, who then turned to religion, which fulfilled this function (Lee, WK 1990c:69). The Korean people experienced Japanese annexation for 35 years, and a civil war with the North Korean communists in 1950. These events caused the people to experience a period of spiritual aridity, and religion filled the vacuum.

After 1960s, there was continued unrest, fear, conflict and political tension in Korea. There was long-term, centralised and dictatorial governance. Tension reached its peak after the mid-1970s. Political unrest made Korean people dependent upon God. Christianity grew rapidly during this period. The political structure at this time provided favourable societal conditions for church growth. It seems that Christianity was the most appropriate of all the religions to provide psychological comfort to the people.

One of the leading sociologists in Korea, Byung Suh Kim (1995:21-41), sees the contemporary political and economic changes that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s as the crucial context for the growth of the Korean church. The period of exponential growth was from 1960 to 1980, the period when Korea also experienced rapid industrialisation.

As radical economic policies of development were pursued by the military government during the 1960s and 1970s, thousands of people became deprived and alienated politically, economically, and socially. After the 1960s, the "Five-Year Plan of Economic Development" was put into effect five times successfully. The first development plan was implemented in 1962-1966, and the second in 1967-1971. The period from 1977 to 1981 saw the peak years of industrialisation in Korea (Kim, BS 1985:65). National income and exports increased. The standard of living improved and

many buildings, apartments and roads were constructed. In the industrialisation process, the Korean government also initiated “The New Village Movement.” The New Village Movement has claimed success in overcoming many of the poor living conditions in rural communities.

In the initial stage of modernisation in Korea, a range of problems emerged: there was a sharp distinction between “haves” vs “have nots”, economic growth vs economic injustice, bureaucratic domination vs lack of freedom, and urbanisation vs loss of community. A deep sense of confusion, anxiety and uncertainty permeated Korean society in the process of modernisation, according to Kim (Kim, BS 1985:65). This led Koreans to raise questions of an existential, social, and spiritual nature. Christianity provided a viable response to these questions.

WK Lee (1992:233-238) interprets the rapid numerical growth in the Korean Church on the basis of the socio-psychological deprivation theory. He first notes the unstable social situation of Korean society, which heightened the people’s need for religion as religion plays a socio-psychological role in providing a sense of belonging and well-being, as well as generating feelings of comfort, security, and satisfaction among people who are experiencing socio-psychological deprivation caused by unstable conditions and the rapid shift in their social, economic and political situation. According to Lee (1992:233ff), those who were politically deprived in this process of social change found the church to be a place where they could receive compensation through political activists such as the human rights movement and the anti-government movement. Those who were economically deprived in society found the church to be a place where they could be compensated through the prospect of material blessing. The promise of material prosperity, coupled with the preaching of “positive thinking” in the so-called mega churches attracted thousands of people to the church. Yet another form of deprivation was identified by Lee (1992:233ff). Those who were deprived of meaningful community in the process of urbanisation and migration experienced great loneliness and alienation. They found the church to be an important community of identity and belonging.

After the 1970s, many churches which emphasised blessings in the present were growing in membership. Many urban churches stressed material blessing and the positive thinking of Robert Schuller. This accelerated the growth of the church. “The explosive growth of the Korean churches is therefore, a feature of rapid industrialisation and modernisation, along with the traditional characteristics of the Korean church” (Kim, BS 1985:70).

The Korean churches have played a leading role in implanting Western modernism in Korean society. Protestants apparently doubled their membership in South Korea between 1972 and 1981. The remarkable growth seen in recent years may have been fostered by South Korean industrialisation and urbanisation. Since the late 1980s Korean society has increasingly enjoyed improved stability both politically and economically. Further, political stability has played an important role in reducing people’s sense of discomfort. In 1993 the so-called civil government was established, and then, as a result of the presidential election of 1998, the candidate of an opposition party became the new president. There was a peaceful change of government. The improved social security system and better income levels also gave the population an enhanced feeling of security. Various social trends show that Korean society is entering the status of a post-industrial society (Ro, CJ 1998:23-24). In particular, the urban middle classes have become increasingly interested in their leisure activities. The enjoyment of leisure must surely be a stumbling block that hinders people from participating in church activities, since leisure becomes a functional alternative to religion. Recently in Korea the leisure and entertainment industry has spread throughout the country (Ro, CJ :25).

According to Lee, Korea gained new energy and became revitalised as a result of the restoration of democracy, the realisation of economic justice, and the expansion of social welfare that took place immediately prior to 1990. In this social transformation, those previously deprived politically, economically and socially, who had found solace in the church, slowly began to leave the church and find new forms of compensation in the political, economic and social realms. The church was no longer as attractive to deprived people, especially those who were spiritually deprived. According to WK Lee,

the church is currently being replaced by new, “functional alternatives,” such as sports, movies, videos, leisure time activities, cable television, and computers. This is an interesting and compelling interpretation.

Lee’s interpretation is also accepted by CJ Ro (1998:13-29), who explains the Korean Churches’ rapid growth in membership in socio-psychological terms, namely in the context of the rapid modernisation, industrialisation and urbanisation of Korean society. Conversely, WK Lee (1994:195-196) argues that the recent decline in membership in the Korean church is linked to the pervasiveness of industrialisation. CJ Ro (1998:18-25) interprets the recent decline in membership growth from a socio-psychological perspective. His argument is that the very socio-psychological factors which triggered rapid growth in membership during the past three decades have been operating in reverse to cause the recent decline in membership.

Religion closely unites people and serves as a source of satisfaction in their lives giving them a sense of belonging and creating meaning in their lives. In this way, it is understandable that growing churches emphasised human relationships and orderly living. Further, “many people looked to Christianity as a means of improving lifestyles, securing advantages in an unfamiliar social context and sharing in the national prosperity” (Park, KW 1985:55). The church grew as a result of this new social mood. When we say that a church is growing, we imply that the church must be located in an urban area. “Church expansion was realised mostly in the urban regions” (Kim, BS 1985:71).

The impact of modernisation together with industrialisation and urbanisation had an enormous effect on the Korean people from the 1960s to the 1980s. As a result, although undoubtedly the rapid economic growth brought about a tremendous improvement in economic life; yet a lot of disturbing issues and problems such as military dictatorship and economic imbalance between the “haves” and the “have-nots” were also emerging in Korean society. The changing situation overwhelmed the Korean people with a sense of insecurity and uneasiness. Such psychological insecurity and uneasiness had originally caused people to turn to the church. In brief, social stability

has diminished people's psychological insecurity, which in turn has undermined their reliance on religion. Social improvements have ultimately contributed to bringing about a numerical decline in the Korean church.

CJ Ro (1998:26-31) indicates that the fundamental reason why the Korean churches have become secularised is their uncritical accommodation to modernism. He explains that modernism has been connected with three ideologies in the case of Korea: capitalism or the ideology of progress; pro-Americanism; and anti-Communism. What is of relevance is that the Korean churches have played a leading role in transmitting such modernist ideologies to Korean society. At one stage most Korean people appreciated the leading role of the Korean churches in the process of modernisation, since they hoped that Korean society would develop rapidly and that Korea would become a developed country like the USA. However, postmodernism which presents a critical reflection on modernism has emerged in Korean society. The negative implications of modernisation are now being contemplated: Korean society is suffering a moral crisis due to materialism and the ideology of success and progress that capitalism produces. Following the changing socio-cultural situation, the people have now begun to criticise the Korean churches which advocated modernist ideologies.

In similar vein, as KO Kim (1993) argues that most Protestant congregations in the cities are strengthening their middle-class orientation. They are attempting to serve the needs of the middle class, such as the extension of middle class personal productive activity and self-realisation, and personal conformity to the personal legitimacy of middle class success and fulfilment. They are neglecting to explore, as a result, "the possible alternative to the reigning values of egotistic individualism, hedonistic and materialistic consumerism, family-centred group egotism, and authoritarian patrimonialism" (Chung 1996:535). Modern Korean Protestantism has become a popular religion, which represents the middle class and supports the established powers and the status quo.

According to IC Kang's (1996) analysis of the Korean church's sociopolitical character in the period between 1945 and 1960, the Korean Protestant church had a decided

advantage in the religious free market situation owing to the active support of the USA government and churches. In the modernisation process in Korea, the USA in particular influenced Korea pervasively.

From IC Kang's (1996) sociopolitical perspective, it can be concluded that the USA's pervasive influence accelerated the political and moral secularisation of the Korean Protestant church. The conservative non-KNCC group in the Church actively supported the Korean military governments without any theological reflection on the sociopolitical situation of Korean society, and simply enjoyed the status quo, following the policy of the USA government. At the same time, the Korean churches generally encouraged people in their all-out pursuit of physical and material security, as well as high social status, by introducing the American way of life to the Korean people without any critical reflection.

The Korean people's perception of the USA has begun to change: they object to the USA's protracted and unjust support of military dictatorship in Korea. Furthermore, increasing anti-American sentiment has been prompted by the USA's attempts to open up Korean markets to American agricultural products. Now most Korean people, not only intellectuals and students but also ordinary people like farmers and businessmen, have become increasingly doubtful about whether the USA is the friendly nation it was always thought to be (Kim, JW 1994:36-47; Kang, WJ 1997:117-126). In the light of their altered perceptions, the people have also begun to criticise the Korean evangelical churches which have always stood by the USA.

The successive social upheavals, in particular the Korean War (1950-1953), had a decisive impact on the formation of the following distinctive sociopolitical characteristics of the Korean churches: anti-communism, pro-Americanism, and a pro-government stance (Kang, IC 1996). After the post-war period, the majority of the Korean churches actively supported the anti-Communist state ideology of South Korea and remained silent regarding the political repression and social injustice of the ruling regime under the pretext that Christianity should positively contribute to national security and stable economic development (Chung 1996:531). Chung (1996:531) argues

that such characteristics of the Korean Churches almost exactly reflect the general sociopolitical conservatism of Korean society:

The Christian activism for political reform of the past three decades, during which Christianity has shown phenomenal growth, has been limited at best to a minority of Christians. It is hardly a general characteristic of Korean Christians. In a predominantly homogeneous and conservative culture that lacks the heritage of tolerating heterodoxy or deviation, mainstream Christians as a whole are still quite conservative. They are more to the right of what we associate with the term “mainstream” in the United States today.

Grayson (1995:50-51) discusses the background of such conservatism in the Korean Churches, by explaining that the Korean Churches have accommodated themselves to Confucian hierarchical culture at the behavioural level despite a certain disjuncture between Korean Protestantism and Neo-Confucianism. For example, even though most Korean Protestant churches, whether Presbyterian, Methodist, or Holiness churches, have a Presbyterian type of church polity, the ordained minister usually holds a paramount place in all affairs of the church, both religious and administrative, while the elders are expected to play a subordinate and supporting role and the lay people are required to be obedient to the minister and the elders. Church ministry tends to be minister-centred.

Another protest against modernism is revealed by the people’s renewed recognition of traditional culture and religion and national identity. Koreans take issue with Westernised Korean Christianity, which has disregarded Korean traditions. At the same time, the South Korean people eagerly hope for South-North reunification, believing that such an event would transcend all other ideologies, whether communist or anti-communist. They prioritise the united national identity of the Korean people (Kang, WJ 1997:163).

However, there are two additional factors beyond the sociological phenomena singled out above. One has to do with revolutionary changes in the structure of human consciousness. Korea, like other developing countries over the past thirty years, has begun to glorify and even deify the myths of “capitalism” under the auspices of modernity. Capitalism has been hailed as a Utopian hope for the future of the nation, a

myth gaining even more credence in the light of the ideological vacuum created by the fall of communism. Winning in the endless competition of the global markets is the “gospel” that capitalism preaches.

As a result, Koreans are becoming more secular and competitive, and less ethical and religious. The structure of human consciousness has been shifted from the moral, the humane, and the religious to the conditional, the impersonal, and the unethical. The Korean context, whether personal or communal, is saturated with a post-religious and post-Christian ethos. The Christian message, no matter how good it is, seems increasingly irrelevant in this context. This is the loss of inner connectedness with society, referred to above.

However, this sociopolitical conservatism has resulted in the silence of the majority in most Korean churches on national sociopolitical issues. NH Yang (1993) addresses the problem that the Korean Presbyterians, conservative evangelicals, lack one of the essential aspects of the Reformed tradition: they lack a consistent concern for sociopolitical responsibilities (Yang 1993:2). This problem is serious, because Korean Presbyterian Christians are in the majority. Yang believes that this failure has resulted in the loss of the churches’ credibility in society. JS Rhee (1995:228-281) concentrates on the political and moral secularisation in the Korean Protestant churches (Korean churches) throughout his contextual analysis of the Korean church. He assumes that such secularisation has made the Korean churches lose their credibility in society.

The Korean church grew by political, social and economic factors in the past. One of the standards of measurement for church growth is whether the church is engaged in God’s mission in society. The church should assume leadership for social service, because community service involvement and leading social services are an important role of the church. To do this, the church should adopt social concern and action. Evangelisation is the most effective means of social reform. Participating in social action restores the credibility of the church. The Korean church should not disregard its social responsibility. The Korean churches have played a leading role in implanting Western modernism in Korean society. Accordingly, the Korean Protestant church has

shown conservatism in its sociopolitical engagement with the resulting modernised society (Kang, IC 1996). Such conservatism has successfully fulfilled the need of the urban middle class masses in the processes of industrialisation, modernisation and urbanisation (Lee, WK 1992:233-238; Ro, CJ 1998:13-29).

3.1.2.2 Religious perspective

Every culture is closely related to religion. A culture can be defined as “a complex of significant symbols and practices, enclosed within an overarching meta-narrative, which shapes the perceptions, experience, and sense of identity of a community” (Yeago 1997:150). IS Markham (1996:7), referring to Emile Durkheim, defines religion as “a way of life (one which embraces a total world view, certain ethical demands, and certain social practices) that refuses to accept the secular view that sees human life as nothing more than complex bundles of atoms in an ultimately meaningless universe”. He also correctly says that “a religious history is a history of entire cultures” (Markham 1996:6).

The above definitions of culture and religion imply that each religion must be “a coherent cultural entity” (Yeago 1997:152). Generally speaking, every religion that enters a foreign cultural sphere cannot help but be influenced by the previously existing (religious) culture and vice versa (Kang, DK 1998:106). When Christianity, which was completely grounded in Western modernisation, entered Korea, it inevitably entered into dynamic relations with the traditional culture and religions. “The encounter between Christianity and Korean culture involves not only a process of inculturating Christianity in Korea but also a movement towards the Christian transformation of existing Korean culture and values into a new pattern of synthesis with the gospel’s moulding influence (Chung 1997:21).” Therefore, without a study of Korean religious culture, either traditional or contemporary, a correct understanding of the Korean churches is almost impossible (Rhee 1995:230).

Korean Christianity accommodated itself to Korean traditional religious culture, such as Confucian dyadic thought, a hierarchical class system, propriety, and household customs, as well as Shamanistic materialism and spiritualism. Such accommodation of

Korean Christianity to traditional Confucian and Shamanistic culture heightened the people's receptivity of Christianity (Grayson 1995). As Rhee (1995:228-281) argues, however, the Korean Churches have been secularised by failing to avoid powerful syncretism in Korean religious life: "Korea has always been a powerful melting pot of the world religions, including Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Christianity (1995:232)." Korean Christians are often not even conscious of being captive to their inherent religiosity (Chung 1997:32).

This section considers the accommodation of Korean Christianity to the five major traditional religions of Korea: Buddhism, Confucianism, Shamanism, Taoism and Chundogyo. The purpose is not to develop a systematic analysis of each religion but rather to articulate some elements in them which have had either a positive or a negative influence on Korean Christianity.

Korean Shamanism

Shamanism, known as Mu Gyo (Shamanist teaching) or Mu Sok (shamanist practices), is regarded as the foundation of Korean culture, because it is an indigenous religion which deeply penetrates the ethos and life of the Korean people (Lee, JY 1997:29). Shamanism has interacted with other religious traditions such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, permeating and influencing them (Lee, MJ 1999:400). BW Yoo (1987) depicts the character of Shamanism, which was the earliest religion in Korea and which has profoundly influenced the culture and personality of the Korean people, as follows:

Because Shamanism stems from pre-literate societies and has lacked a systematically expressed doctrine, it is difficult not only to comprehend it but also to isolate it from other religions. Moreover, because of its very nature, it has easily borrowed from others and has tended to vary in its expression in different times and places. Because of its ready adaptability and accommodation, it has penetrated and become part of other religions without any great resistance (Yoo 1987:10).

Shamanism, according to BW Yoo (1987:11), believes in a three-storey cosmos. In the upper storey the bright heavenly world above, Hanulnim and benevolent spirits reside. The present world where man and all animate and inanimate things live constitutes the

middle storey. In a lower storey, hell, live all evil spirits. It is said that man, after this present life, will either ascend to the upper storey or descend to the lower one.

The concepts of *Hanulnim*, heaven and hell, and benevolent and evil spirits imply that Shamanism, in origin, has some primal notions of sin and judgment, and some concern for morality. The early Koreans believed in *Hanulnim*, the Supreme Deity of Heaven, and thus practised Heaven-worship: “[T]he ‘Heaven’ is the highest being who created and governs the world, and thus has been personalised as Hanulnim and affectionally worshipped by the whole Korean people” (Rhee 1995:233). In this Heaven/*Hanulnim* worship, great emphasis was placed on purification: because *Hanulnim* was believed to be pure and holy, thus every worshipper was required to be pure in his or her body and mind in order to approach the altar of Heaven.

Despite *Hanulnim*-worship, Shamanism is a polytheistic or polydemonistic cult; it is related to “ten thousand gods”. At the deep centre of the early Koreans’ psychic world, man and the spirit of the dead or gods shared a common, intimate life (Chung 1982:608). In the actual practice of Shamanism, the people primarily sought for liberation from evil spirits to achieve a happy life in the present world. They believed that earthly blessings, such as success, the continuation of lineage, health, longevity, harvest and human well-being, were achieved by not offending any spirit who brings troubles (Rhee 1995:237). Korean people prayed to *Hanulnim* for rain and good harvests. This belief made them concentrate on propitiating spirits, in particular evil ones, through proper rituals with repeated prayers and offerings rather than on pursuing communal welfare and ethical transformation.

In the course of history, religious differentiation progressed in parallel with a gradual differentiation of society, and specialists in Shamanistic techniques emerged. Accordingly, Shamans enjoyed high prestige and commanded the respect of the people (Chung 1982:609). Shamans, who were usually spirit-possessed women called *mudang*, played a central role in the magico-religious life of the community. Their role included the rites of exorcising evil spirits that were troubling people through the magical ceremony called “gut” (Chung 1982:609; Yoo 1987:11; Rhee 1995:236-237). As they

believed that the spirits were intimately involved in their everyday life, every activity of daily life, especially important occasions of family or community life, took place in consultation with the presiding spirit. The relations between the spirits, namely *kwishin*, and human beings were arranged by shamans, who helped them to achieve harmony and unity (Lee, MJ 1999:400).

Even though, with the ascendancy of Buddhism in the Koryo period and Confucianism in the Yi dynasty, Shamanism was gradually discredited and officially condemned, it has still preserved its influence on women, who have a very low status in the home as well as in society. Until quite recently many Korean women have tended to be so confined by the general demand of household chores that they easily became enmeshed in Shamanistic beliefs and practices. However, according to CS Chung (1982:609, 624), “shamanism has always been at the center of the religious life of traditional and even modern Korean society” since it has been “the most truly indigenous” to the religious culture of Korea. “Imported religions”, which include Christianity, “had to be modified and adapted to indigenous Shamanistic elements before they could implant themselves in the Korean cultural soil” (Chung 1997:33).

Shamanism was considered as the basic building block of Korean civilization. It was rejected and persecuted by other, especially Christianity. Shamanism is not only primitive in appearance, but its adherents also believe in many spirits and gods, particularly ancestral gods. Because of this belief in spirits, Shamanism was called idolatry by Christians. The animistic and polytheistic tendency of Shamanism was certainly not entertainable by the monotheistic Christian religion. Thus to be a Christian meant rejecting Shamanism (Lee, JY 1997:30). In recent years *minjung* theologians have studied Shamanism and tried to integrate it into Christianity (Lee, JY 1997:31). However, Shamanism is already a part of the Korean Christian experience.

Korean Taoism

In the fourth century BC, Chinese Taoism became established in Korea without causing much conflict with Shamanism, for both shared the religious view of nature as divine.

Moreover, the imported form of Taoism was a Chinese folk religion of sorcery and divination to predict fate and conjure fortune according to the Book of Changes [I-Ching] and its Yin-Yang theory (Rhee 1995:237).

This similarity between the imported Taoism and Korean Shamanism has formed the Taoist-Shamanistic basis of Korean culture. The following Taoist-Shamanistic beliefs and practices have been popular among the commoners, in particular, women: divination, prayers by women to the seven stars of the Great Bear, astrology, fortune papers and geomancy for tomb and house. Through these beliefs and practices the masses have believed that they could manipulate the fundamental forces of the cosmos and attain their immediate goals on earth: health, peace, longevity, and fortune (Rhee 1995:238; Chung 1982:611-612).

Among the various Taoist techniques, geomancy is deemed the most important. Fortune or misfortune depends on the art of selecting the right residence for the living (ie house) and for the dead (tomb) in harmony with the essence of the cosmic forces, yin and yang. This idea was readily accepted by the Confucian society, which emphasised filial piety and ancestor worship (Chung 1982:612).

Korean Taoism is also concerned with long life and semi-immortality (with the perpetuation of a youthful body) through natural medicine and self-discipline: it teaches that human beings can obtain the power of longevity in nature, by pursuing the attainment of a perfect harmony with nature through strict self-discipline. Such an ideal person is known as a “Tao master” and is held in special respect by ordinary people. This attitude has, in fact, encouraged the instigation of a kind of spiritual elitism in Korean religious culture (Rhee 1995:238-239).

During the turmoil of the Yi dynasty, Korean Taoism developed the function of geomantic prognostication. *Chung-Kam-Nok* was the most widely accepted of the apocryphal writings on prognostication, whose message was the imminent fall of the dynasty and the promise of the founding of a new society through a miraculous change.

These millenarian beliefs are still popular among several religious groups, apart from Taoism, particularly among the new religions (Chung 1982:612-613).

Korean Buddhism

As Chung (1997:22) says, “for a long time [Mahayana] Buddhism has given the Korean people a transcendental spiritual reference”. It was introduced during the period of the Three Kingdoms, AD 372 in Kokuryo, 384 in Baekjae, and 535 in Silla. In particular, Zen (which means meditation) Buddhism, which flourished during the Koryo dynasty (918-1392), contributed to the spiritual life of the Korean people by cultivating their minds. “Koryo Buddhism, however, gradually declined. Under the patronage of the state the monks became increasingly involved in politics. The privileges of monastic landholding and tax exemption not only corrupted Buddhism but also undermined the national economy. The corruption of Buddhism became one of the dominant factors in the downfall of the dynasty in 1392. ...Because of its easy accommodation to other [folk religious] beliefs and practices, [such as geomancy and the yin-yang theory of Taoism and Shamanism], Buddhism became too adulterated to retain its own identity” (Chung 1982:613). With the Yi dynasty (1392-1910), Buddhism was replaced by Confucianism as the state religion. Buddhism was treated as heterodoxy and its monks and nuns were forced to withdraw from cities and towns.

Despite the severe suppression by the Confucian Yi dynasty, Buddhism survived as a popular religion among the lower classes and women. Among several reasons for its survival, two are given by Chung (1982:614-615): one is its syncretic ability, and the other is its transformation to a mystical, eschatological and messianic religion.

The Buddhist idea of reward in the future life blended with the utilitarian, fatalistic Taoist ideas of luck, fortune, and longevity. The Buddhist law of retribution (karma) could well be used to support Confucian filial piety and ancestor worship. The Buddhist compassionate bodhisattva (an enlightened being) *Kuan-yin* (Avalokitesvard), responding to the earnest prayers of women to have sons, became a very popular figure,

since Confucianism emphasised the important status of a male descendant to assure the continuity of the family lineage (Chung 1982:614).

The Buddhist *Pure Land* and *Miruk* (the messianic saviour) sects were very popular among the masses as salvation religions throughout the nineteenth century towards the end of the Yi dynasty. These sects greatly helped to alleviate the suffering of the oppressed masses by planting eschatological and messianic hope in their minds (Chung 1982:614-615).

During the years 1910-1919, the time of early Japanese colonisation, Korean Buddhism was able to rebuild itself as a result of the Japanese religious policies. The recent Buddhist renewal movements, partly motivated by competition with Christianity, have generated new or refurbished Buddhist institutions of higher learning, youth activities, social welfare and human services, in addition to more Buddhist scholarship and publications (Chung 1982:615; cf Kang, DK 1998:114-118). The 1995 government census shows that Buddhism is the largest of the Korean religions: it then numbered more than 10 million adherents (23% of the total population).

Chung (1982:615) argues that “the peculiarity of contemporary Buddhism remains its syncretic character”. In many Buddhist temples, Shamanist and Taoist gods, such as the mountain gods and the god of the Seven Stars are worshipped along with Buddha. It is certain that “the other-world elements of Buddhism have been compromised to accommodate the *this-world-affirming* elements of Shamanism, Taoism, and Confucianism” (Chung 1982:615).

Korean Neo-Confucianism

Neo-Confucianism (more specifically, the scholastic system of philosophical teaching based chiefly on the authority of Cheng I and Chu Hsi) succeeded Buddhism as the state religion of the Yi dynasty even though it had appeared in Korea as early as the time of the Three Kingdoms. Because Confucian teachings comprised the content of the civil

service examination, Confucianism successfully became the leading force in the intellectual and religious life of the country.

Confucianism teaches that “man is born to be upright and virtuous: he/she can become a harmonised part of heaven and earth by fulfilling his/her given nature. The principle for the fulfilment of human nature in social relation is *yeh* (propriety) or the code of proper conduct”(Yoo 1987:15). This principle is extended to “the moral principles of status, order, and duties governing all the relations between superior and inferior in the family as well as in the society at large. It was believed that these principles were morally binding because they were rooted in the nature of man” (Chung 1982:616). The foundational form of the principles is filial piety. Ancestor worship is the result of extending filial piety to the dead (Yoo 1987:15).

For a while Confucianism penetrated deeply among the people through moral education from primary school to institutions of higher learning and through the exemplary life of the literati and the yangban (scholar-officials). But “Confucian political, social and religious thought remained too difficult for the uneducated masses to grasp, and Confucian rites were too complex for them to follow” (Chung 1982:616-617). During the period from the middle of the nineteenth century to the end of the Yi dynasty (1910), most Confucian communities (Yurim) confronted Western civilisation and disregarded the needs of the masses, by striving excessively to cultivate an individual moral character through religious devotion, and the rules of propriety and ritual. These communities were too closed-minded to manifest the spirit of moral improvement of the world (Chung 1996:527).

On the other hand, the yangban, who were involved in political factional struggles to protect the privileges of their parties or educational institutions (exemption from land tax and corvee, and the holding of slaves, land, and grain), did not respond any longer to the original Confucian moral and educational goals of forming a secure social order. The corruption of the yangban continued to develop sectarianism, provincialism, and endless political conflicts among competing parties, which resulted in the rejection of

the Confucian values by the younger, progressive social elite, as well as the gradual stagnation of Confucian influence on the masses (Rhee 1995:248; Grayson 1995:44).

This irrelevance of Confucianism to the masses made them continue to hold onto folk religions, such as Buddhism, Taoism and Shamanism (Chung 1997:23). Confucianist ancestor worship was performed for the worldly prosperity of the individual family. “Today, however, Confucian beliefs and values still persist as an important part of Korean culture and society”. These beliefs and values include “a tenacious memory of the past (customs, habits, and thought patterns); paternal authority; familistic collectivism; reverence for the aged; learning and personal cultivation; legalistic conservatism; a hierarchical society; rigidity of thought; and rigid social behaviour” (Chung 1982:618). Yoo (1987:14) thus correctly says that more than any other religion Confucianism has shaped the social and political forms of Korean culture.

Chundogyo and the New Korean Religions

Chung (1982:622) says that the Tonghak (Eastern Learning) is the oldest form of the new Korean religion, which emerged in the early 1880s to counter Christianity (Western Learning) and the process of disintegration of the established social order of that time. He continues to explain the characteristics of the Tonghak as follows:

The Tonghak arose as a nativistic movement to fill the spiritual vacuum of the people and to provide them with a religious and cultural identity. In a curious and crude admixture of borrowed Christian symbols with Shamanistic, Taoist, Buddhist, and Confucian elements, the Tonghak offered a new path to salvation as an alternative to the alien theme of Catholic salvation. It promised the coming of a new social order in this world in which the status of the under-privileged would be miraculously reversed and man would be one with God. This syncretic religious movement evoked a large following among the oppressed people, although it was condemned by the government as a dangerous heterodoxy (Chung 1982:622).

The Tonghak movement led an unsuccessful peasant revolt in 1884 against official corruption, grew to nationwide prominence as an organised politico-religious force, and was renamed the Chundogyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way) in the early twentieth century. The Chundogyo, along with Protestantism, played a leading role in the Independence Movement against the Japanese in 1919. By contributing, as a nativistic movement, to the formation of the Korean national spirit, the Chundogyo has survived despite its lack of intellectual leadership and organisational ability. In 1973 it claimed a total membership of over 700,000 in South Korea (Chung 1982:623).

More recently, especially since the Korean War (1950-1953), many new religions have emerged, which are, strictly speaking, not “new” but rather variations or syncretic combinations of traditional religions. The most significant reason for the proliferation of the new religions is that the masses have felt a sense of insecurity and discomfort due to a rapidly changing societal situation, and massive internal migration and urbanisation after the war. These religions have appealed, in general, to the lonely, troubled migrants, lower class people suffering from illness, unemployment, poverty, or family problems (Chung 1982:623).

Korean religious cultural influence on the Korean churches

All the religions that established themselves in Korea intermingled with Shamanism. Therefore, “the Korean church has a Shamanistic tendency, following the indigenous belief system – totemism, Shamanistic fetishism and other kinds of nature worship” (Kim, BS 1985:70). The Shamanistic tendency of religions appealed to the nature of the Korean people. The zeal, dedication, and enthusiasm of Korean Christians are very similar to extreme Shamanistic practices.

Korean Protestantism’s syncretic tendency, has been present from the time of its encounter with Korean religious culture. Korean Protestantism has influenced the grand shift of the Korean religious landscape by actively attempting to integrate other religions into Christianity. As Chung (1997:22) argues, Protestant Christianity entered Korea “at a moment in history when their traditional religions had lost vitality and

meaning in the lives of the Korean people”. The decadence of the traditional religions “provided fertile soil for the inception and growth of a new faith [Protestantism]”, as Horace Allen, the first Protestant resident medical missionary in Korea, diagnosed (in Chung 1982:619). In these circumstances, Protestantism appealed strongly to the people; since it was regarded as a religion with a clear ideology that appeared to the people as timely and pertinent to meet their various needs. Most early Korean Protestant leaders thought that the Korean religions were useless and powerless, and that only Christianity held the dynamic spiritual power that enabled the people to direct themselves towards a new purposeful life (Chung 1996:528-529).

Korean Protestantism’s endeavour towards religious integration meant that its primary concern was the fulfilment of the people’s immediate needs. At the time when Protestantism was introduced into Korea, the Korean government did in fact recognise freedom of religion, which was beneficial to the spread of Protestantism (Chung 1996:527). WK Lee (1992:233-238) stresses that the free market religious environment in Korean society made religions so relentlessly competitive that Christianity, which had satisfied the people’s need, won the competitive game. In other words, Korean Christianity fulfilled its socio-psychological function far more effectively than the other religions in the situation of a pluralistic religious society. This shows that Korean Protestantism was *this-worldly* oriented from the beginning.

To satisfy the people’s *this-worldly* and utilitarian concerns such as the desire for health, success, and a sense of security, Korean Protestantism has blended easily or unconsciously into the world-views of Shamanism. Grayson (1995:54-56) points to the accommodation of Korean Protestantism to Shamanism or Korean folk religions by giving as an example *kibok sinang* (belief in prayers for blessing), which “would appear to focus faith in God on his ability to provide material blessings, and the possession of such material blessings as a visible sign of the perfection of one’s faith”. The so-called three-fold gospel, material blessing, good health and wellness of soul, is entirely individualistic. Such a gospel is nothing more than the Shamanistic faith.

Most of the “successful” ministers who have huge Korean congregations, according to JungYoung Lee (1997:31), preach sermons which are basically Shamanistic in character. The emphasis in Korean Christianity on healing, on charismatic appeals in preaching and prayers, on material blessings through spiritual power, and on the experience of ecstatic trance during worship are all results of the Shamanistic influence.

Chung (1997:34) cites the Full Gospel Church as the most salient example of the Korean Churches’ compromise with Shamanism. He considers the central message of this Church to be based upon the theology of good fortune, which fits in well with the current ethos of a crassly materialistic, newly industrialising society that worships Mammon. He continues to argue that the Full Gospel Church and similar mammoth entrepreneurial churches have become captive to the power of consumerism and the market rather than the power of the Gospel.

They tend to rationalise the individualistic fulfilment of the middle class in society. Growth measured in tangible figures is what such churches are really concerned about (Chung 1997:35). Such a *this-worldly* orientation and quantitative commercial mentality in Korean Protestantism encourages its members to separate the faith they profess from the realities of everyday living. Ironically, many Korean Christians who fail to live a sanctified life in the world tend to proceed to the privatised, *other-worldly* way of life that Korean Buddhism emphasises. As a result, Christianity merely becomes a kind of “me-first religion”, which entices such believers to pursue a subjective experience of holiness, such as ecstatic trances, spirit possession, speaking in tongues and exorcism. It is really difficult to distinguish the subjective Christian experience of receiving the Holy Spirit from Shamanistic and Taoist trances (Chung 1997:35).

Korean Shamanism is a belief system of entirely earthly blessings – material wealth, good health, other personal and familial well-being, power and honour. The Shamanistic faith’s “emphasis on worldly personal blessing became a significant part of the Christian congregational life” (Kim, BS 1985:70). Under Shamanistic influence, Christian faith has changed to the “faith of supplication of blessing”. This means that Shamanisation of Christianity was diffused. Why, then, is faith of supplication of

blessing a problem? Because it could be Shamanism in another form. It brought with it materialistic thinking and a disregard of social responsibility. Materialistic thinking predominated within the Korean church and was seen as a result of economic development. Commercial and materialistic thinking “emerged particularly in the 1960s and was fuelled by the economic optimism following industrialisation. Secular “successism” as a factor in human motivation and faith is predominant in the overall picture of church growth and has been incorporated into the evangelical picture as a major inducement in terms of conversion” (Park, KW 1985:56). Therefore, often the Korean church is accused of being influenced by its Shamanistic cultural background.

If the church is excessively concerned about individual blessing, whether it is physical, material, mental, or spiritual, it may lure believers to the Shamanistic faith. If the church interprets success in material terms, and the believers accept this, this attitude puts the church on a commercial basis, and makes faith a means of blessing (Lee, WK 1990c:72). [This idea tragically] misleads people into believing that Christianity is a religion which offers material blessing as the highest measure of blessing in the church. It threatens the holistic image and credibility of the church.

A characteristic of Shamanism is a lack of consciousness of social responsibility, and non-practice of love and justice. Faith of supplication of blessing in Christianity gives rise to an individualistic faith that fosters a lack of concern about one’s neighbour and society, and promotes strict separation between religious life and social life, and between church and society. Then the concern of the church is limited to “spiritual” matters. Christians are not concerned with how to live in society as Christians or how to do their work in the world.

The Confucian influence can be seen in several aspects of church life and practice. The Korean people tend to be very clique- and person-centred. “Connected with such person-centeredness is a keen awareness of rank and position, leading to hierarchical structures, even within the church (Underwood 1994:66).” Along with the prevalence of hierarchical structures in church polity, the Confucian influence is also evident in the very paternalistic setting of rules and standards that are really ideals or goals. This

paternalism shows itself in literal legalism, dogmatism and nominalism. This paternalistic tendency easily and frequently develops into church conflicts and divisions (Underwood 1994:72-73). “When a dynamic leader disagrees on matters of doctrine, polity, or even church position, there is a tendency for personal followers to join in dissociating themselves and forming a new denomination (Underwood 1994:73).” Korean Protestantism focuses on clique-oriented personal relationships rather than on breaking the social barriers and forming “the church as a new community for the world.”

In addition, the syncretic feature in Korean Protestantism has been revealed in its uncritical accommodation to Western Christianity, as well as its official acceptance of Shinto shrine worship during the period of Japanese rule.

In a theological reflection on the problems accompanying the rapid growth of the Korean Church, Rhee (1995:276-279) indicates the materialism, quantitativism, and separatism of the Korean Church. “The Korean Church has been a channel for the capitalistic materialism of the West, and in addition the indigenous Shamanistic tradition has gradually infiltrated the Church to develop a secular concept of ‘blessing’ among the Christians....The Korean people have a long and strong tradition of this ‘religion’. That is, a this-worldly, selfish and amoral religiosity, therefore hardly understanding Christian love or sacrificial suffering for God and others, unless it is accompanied by a promise of ‘reward’” (Rhee 1995:277). “What they desire is their own family’s physical health, material blessing, social success, and the like, including the happiness of life after death” (Rhee 1995:278). Rhee regards this as the Shamanistic attitude, Korean Christianity having been compromised by Shamanism, one of the traditional Korean religions (1995:236-237). “This Shamanistic perspective holds that we can achieve physical and material prosperity by mystical power and has secularised the Korean Church so that they have become worshippers of both God and Mammon” (Rhee 1995:278). In this respect, there is no doubt that fervent prayers in the Korean Church focus on the individual dimension rather than the communal. Along with this, cell group meetings in the Korean Church, even though they contribute to improving identity formation, and a sense of belonging and security within the small-group, also

foster ingroup-oriented spirituality: “me-first religion”, “an anything-goes form of spirituality”, and “cheap-grace spirituality”.

According to Chung (1997:624-625), the salient factors in the Korean religious heritage can be summarised briefly as follows: Firstly, Korea demonstrates a high degree of cultural and social homogeneity, perhaps because of its mono-ethnic population, as well as its small geographical size, which has led to a more or less uniform, centralised value system. Secondly, Shamanism, the oldest religion in Korea, has always been at the centre of the magico-religious life of traditional Korean society, and has had a great influence on all imported religions. Thirdly, the concept of *Hanulnim* (the Heavenly God) is common to all religions in Korea. Fourthly, Korean complex religious culture can be defined as syncretic. All religions in Korea have blended into a synthetic whole in the spiritual life of the people. Fifthly, the predominant syncretic feature of Korean religiosity gives rise to an important problem. “A religious culture in which nature, man, society, and the gods are strictly integrated in a harmonious and immanent oneness may distance people from the cultural basis of their society and the possibility of change (Chung 1997:625).” Such a religious conservative tendency is also evident in Korean Protestantism, and will be discussed in the next section.

3.1.2.3 Ecclesiastical Perspective

According to Gwak (2000:156), since the arrival of the early American missionaries, the American church’s influence has continued to help to form the ecclesiastical tradition of Korean Protestantism. The major ecclesiastical tradition of Korean Protestantism can be outlined in the following terms: religious activism, denominationalism, Congregationalism by the adoption of the Nevius Method, Revivalism, Pietism, theological conservatism or Fundamentalism, Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism (Gwak 2000:156-160). Other movements are the indigenisation movement and Christian activism for political reform among a minority of Christians. In this section the following five movements will be briefly summarised in order to identify the typical ecclesiastical traits of the Korean churches from the beginning to the present.

The Evangelistic Movement

Underwood (1994:68), who worked as an American missionary in Korea for over 40 years, states that “Korean Christians are best known for their evangelistic zeal.” He continues to argue that the strong emphasis on personal evangelism and on Christian duty in particular has resulted decisively in a rapid growth in membership in the Korean churches.

In the early Korean Church the evangelistic work was enhanced by the effective application of the Nevius Method. The Great Revival, begun in 1907, expanded into the nationwide Million Movement, which aimed to save “a million souls for Christ”. In particular this evangelistic zeal led to the five mass evangelism crusades, the Billy Graham Crusade of 1973, Explo ‘74, the ‘77 Holy Assembly Crusade, 1980 World Evangelization, and the Protestant Centenary Celebration in 1984. The churches also campaigned for membership growth at both a denominational level and a congregational level during the 1970s and 1980s (Gwak 2000:156).

As a result of the evangelistic zeal, there has been the “conversion boom” among the urban middle class during the three decades since 1960. Many mega-churches were formed. They accepted the theology and techniques of the Fuller church growth movement. Recently some mega-churches have attempted to develop effective programmes to attract young people, who are leaving the church, such as the seeker’s service and Worship and Praise. Such programmes are imported from the ministries of the contemporary “successful” churches in America.

The Ecumenical Movement

The early Korean Church actively promoted ecumenical endeavours, such as the translation of the Bible into Korean, mission conferences, the production of a common hymn book and textbooks for Sunday School, the division of mission territory, Bible conferences, prayer meetings, the mass evangelisation movement, and the national independence movement (Gwak 2000:157).

However, these ecumenical endeavours were undermined by denominational schisms which weakened denominational restraint. This has resulted in the strengthening of Congregationalism, which has contributed to still more splits and divisions in the denominations (Gwak 2000:157). Congregational extensionalism based on competitive individualism and capitalistic composition is currently the biggest stumbling block hindering the ecumenical movement.

In contemporary Korean Protestantism, there have been two polarised groups since the 1960s: the KNCC and the NAE groups. Recently the two groups have attempted to cooperate to assist North Korea, as well as prepare for the unification of the Koreas. Strictly speaking, the two groups tend to neglect earnest dialogue with each other. The conservative evangelical churches, the majority of the Korean Churches, are mostly antagonistic to the WCC and the KNCC.

The Diakonia Movement

From the beginning of missionary work on 1984 in this country to the restoration of Korea after the Korean War (1950 -1953), the medical and educational works of the early missionaries and the aid received from the Western church for the restoration of Korea after the Korean War (1950-1953) had a significant impact on the Korean churches as well as on Korean society. Although Korean Christianity is still actively involved in social work, regrettably, however, Christian institutions for social work are generally laying aside their distinctive motivation of Christian sacrificial love. They usually look after their own financial interests as secular institutions do. Some mega-churches are managing their own institutions for social ministry to the handicapped and the poor since they can afford to do so financially.

As part of the diaconal movement, the so-called *Minjung* theology was introduced during the 1970s and the 1980s by certain Korean liberal Protestant theologians, who gained theological insights and themes from liberation theology and recent Western political theologies (Gwak 2000:158). The aim of *Minjung* theology is to relieve the sufferings of the alienated masses, called 'the *han* of the *minjung*'(Kim, DS

1999:130ff). According to ND Suh (1981:55), *han* refers to the “tenacity for life of oppressed spirits”. *Han* is a tendency for social revolution as expressed in *Minjung* movements in Korean history. *Minjung* theologians consider that the Korean *minjung* have repeatedly been the targets of oppression through foreign domination and injustice throughout their long history. These theologians have tended to reach neither a large middle class nor the *minjung*. Moreover, *Minjung* theology is still largely the perspective of a limited group of intellectuals. Furthermore some *Minjung* theologians have embraced the internationalist perspective of economic and political domination as found in dependency theory and various readings of Marxism-Leninism, while others have opted for an exclusivistic *minjung* nationalism. By taking this radical line, they have become isolated from the ordinary Korean people, as well as from the predominantly conservative mainstream Christians (Chung 1996:533-534; 1997:38-41).

Recently as the counterpart of *Minjung* theology, the new evangelical movement which emerged in Korea in the 1980s, emphasises the sound social responsibility of the church. YK Park (1998) argues that this movement has played a leading role in the healthy growth and renewal of the Korean churches, since it pursues both faithful theology and effective practice: sound evangelical theology, the evangelical alliance movement, the laity movement, and a balanced practice of evangelism and social concerns.

Several new Christian social movements have emerged in the 1990s (cf Lee, SJ 1993). Korean Christians are increasingly participating on an individual level in a common mission for a just and peaceful community. They realise that modern life is fundamentally determined by the dynamic relationship between political, economic, cultural and environmental spheres. They are thus willing to join the Christian social movements, such as Citizens Coalitions for Economic Justice, the YMCA Consumer Movement, the Environmental Movement, the Supervisory Organisation for Just Election, and the Christian Ethical Practice Movement (Gwak 2000:158). Even though these movements have had a good influence on society, participants are limited to the elite group. However, the movements will only become real Christian social movements when the churches are faithfully and effectively involved in them.

The Mission movement

Church statistics show that Korean missionaries sent abroad have rapidly increased since the 1970s. In 1975 there were 42 Korean missionaries in 12 countries; in 1984 nearly 200 missionaries in 36 countries; and by June 1994 nearly 3,300 missionaries in 119 countries. In 1998 the number of missionaries amounted to 5,948. The aim of the Korean World Missions is to send out 10,000 missionaries to various countries in the world by the year 2000 (Yearbook of Religions in Korea 1993; Chung 1997:36; Park 1999:205).

The Korean churches' overseas missionary outreach which has been carried out mostly by the Pentecostals and the evangelicals has exposed the church to theological problems. Their missionary zeal, driven by the Great Commission to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth, has promoted an aggressive and triumphalistic missionary movement which disregards local culture and traditions. As Chung (1997:37-38) says, "it seems undeniable that Korean missionary expansionism has moved in the direction of a right-wing political alliance and towards a gospel of prosperity and entrepreneurial religious growth". Because of its strong emphasis on numerical expansion, the Korean missionary movement tends to lack Christian ethical and social responsibility.

The Church renewal movement

According to James H Grayson (1995:53), the church renewal movement of Korean Protestantism has generally focused exclusively on the repentance and conversion of the individual. The renewal or repentance movement has spread through revival meetings. The early American missionaries to Korea were pietistic revivalists, who had been influenced by American revivalism (Grayson 1995:53). The Great Revival Meeting held in Pyung-Yang in 1907 was the beginning of a tradition which has characterised Korean church life down to the present. The aim of the revival meetings is individual moral and spiritual regeneration. Since the 1970s, the individualistic nature of the revival meetings has been strengthened through their emphasis on physical and psychological healing (Grayson 1995:53).

This individualistic trait of the renewal movement, according to CD Gwak (2000:160), has always prevented the transformation of the community of faith. The failure of the Church rehabilitation movement can be cited as a good example. The Church rehabilitation movement accompanied the liberation of Korea from Japanese rule, and aimed at the serious and public repentance of the sin which the Korean Protestant church had committed by officially supporting the Japanese Shinto shrine worship. But instead, the movement resulted in the division of the church. The church renewal movements which have prevailed recently in the Korean churches are also guilty of failing to overcome this individualistic renewal trend, and consequently being unable to stand as a model of communal transformation in a fragmented and privatised society.

The characteristics of the ecclesiastic tradition of the Korean churches

Firstly, the theological tradition of the Korean churches, according to CD Gwak (2000:161), reveals that they have tended to be predominantly conservative.

It is not surprising that the conservative evangelical churches are in the majority (about 70% of all Korean Protestants). They are very critical of liberal theology and yet tend to make compromises with the dominant culture of the middle class without proper critical, theological reflection. This implies that these churches are accommodationists and pragmatists (Gwak 2000:161). This theological propensity of the mainstream Korean churches has in fact promoted individualism and an anthropocentric ecclesiology.

Although, the conservative church has grown, and a growing church follows the conservative faith, conservative churches tend to focus on personal salvation rather than social responsibility or social concern (Lee, WK 1990c:71). This orientation allows the church to grow naturally. Conservative Christians think that if all individuals believe in Jesus, all social problems will be solved; or else they believe that it is impossible to save society because Satan rules society. This attitude makes people disregard political corruption, economic inequality, labour problems, social injustice and ecological issues, and could cause the church to be branded as an anti-social, anti-democratic power, and

as a dehistorical consciousness. “Conservative churches, however, still claim nearly ninety-five per cent of the Christian followers and continue to expand their influence at a rapid pace through the Pentecostal movement, as for example, the Full Gospel Church. These churches invariably lack any social or political concern” (Song 1985:36). The dualism of holy and secular affairs, and of faith and works exists in their churches.

CJ Ro reported in his paper on “A Study of Financial Structure of the Korean Church” at the Korean Sociology Scientific Conference in 1994. Ro collected the financial balance reports for 1992 from 246 churches and analysed the reports. The result was that salaries represented 27.28%, administration and management costs 26.03%, the cost of building 13.16%, mission and evangelism 8.09%, education 7.41%, reserve 4.02%, social services 3.88%, and others 10.12%. Only 4% of the total balance was being used for social service.

The Ministry of Culture and Sports examined and analysed social service activity, and submitted the information to a member of the National Assembly that the estimated cost of social relief for Protestants was 1.3%, Catholics 3.8%, and Buddhists 3.5%. Among the Protestants, the figure for the “PCKT (Tonghap)” denomination of Presbyterians was 10%, “PCKH (Hapdong)” Presbyterians 4%, “PCROK (Kijang)” Presbyterians 1%, “PCKK (Koshin)” Presbyterians 0.7%, Methodists 1%, Holiness 2%, Salvation Army 35%, and Lutherans 0.1% (*Christian Herald*, 29 July, 1994). This data reveals that the Salvation Army is a major factor in the social relief work of the “Tonghap” Presbyterians and spends far more than the average rate on social services. This result also revealed that conservative denominations such as the “Hapdong” denomination and the “Koshin” denomination did not emphasise social concern.

Secondly, another ecclesiastical characteristic of the Korean churches is a church growth syndrome.

The growth-centred idea lures churches into overemphasising growth. “The size of an institution is understood as a measure of success” (Kim, BS 1985:71). Therefore, “many churches concentrate on the expansion of the congregation, the budget, and the church

building” (Kim, BS :71). Church expansion is a result of the Western imperialism of the 19th century which followed colonial expansion. Byong-Suh Kim diagnoses this as the “Bigness-syndrome” (Kim, BS :71). The idea that “bigger is better” prevails in Korean churches (Cho, ES 1996:96). However, the emphasis on numerical growth makes the church fat in external form without inner fruit, so that the true direction of faith is lost.

Furthermore, large churches tend to be impersonal, with human relationships counting for less, which may create a feeling of insignificance among the church members. Members’ consciousness of Christian community may be weakened and this may cause a crisis of identity. “Bigness-syndrome” results in the destruction of communality (Kim, BS 1985:71). The result is a reduction of functions of the church such as education, service, and fellowship (Lee, WK 1990c:72). Churches gradually begin to neglect the issue of the qualitative maturity of believers, and show concern only for increasing church members.

Church growth theology has done more harm than good to Korean churches in general. This theology is characterised by its naiveté or fatal lack of a critical attitude toward the materialism of modern culture. When an emphasis on numbers is introduced without any understanding of its materialistic cultural background, Korean pastors are unaware of the philosophy they are absorbing. Consequently, the witness of their churches to modern culture is weakened. The fact that Robert H Schuller of the Crystal Cathedral is becoming a hero to many Korean pastors suggests the degree of preoccupation of Korean Christianity with numbers. Numbers take precedence over the purity of church discipline and teachings. Numbers are even used to represent the quality of faith (Son 1983:336).

However, Korean church growth has suffered significantly by sacrificing qualitative growth. For example, the early Korean Church had a beautiful tradition and many blessed features such as Bible study, tithing and dawn prayer meetings, while maintaining morality through its devotional life. As time has passed, the beautiful tradition faded and some aspects of unwholesome faith appeared. This wholesome view of spiritual blessing has been replaced by the view of present blessing and value. The

church has also become secularised, and syncretism has distorted the church and its theology. The church has lost its original image and identity. Shamanistic tendencies have permeated the church and contributed more negative than positive factors to church growth. The Korean church should emerge from Shamanistic tendencies, by distancing itself from the illusion of cheap grace and commercialised gospel.

Another negative aspect of the Korean church growth movement is to think exclusively of one's own church. This is based on wrong ecclesiology. This is individualistic "churchism" (Hong 1990:115). Individualistic churchism means an individual church-centred thought and attitude: it pays attention to only "my church," and disregards other churches. It allows for individual church growth only, and it even seems to build a kingdom out of the individual church. This is the over-emphasis on Congregationalism and denominationalism. This attitude denigrates cooperation between denominations. Although interdenominational uniting movements have arisen with the aim of holding mass evangelical meetings, the growth-centred idea promoted by individual churchism weakens the consciousness of church unity. This is because "church growth often results in competition between denominations and between churches" (Park, KW 1985:56). This causes another negative result in that pulpit-exchanges are not feasible among different denominations.

It seems that individual churchism and over-emphasising earthly blessings has changed the church into a business enterprise, the minister into a business executive, and the church member into a consumer. The church growth movement tends to treat the church as another kind of business enterprise to sell a product – blessings. According to the church growth viewpoint, a growing church is a successful church and vice versa. If a church is not growing, this is seen to indicate a failure to analyse the market or a lack of investment (Gilbert 1993:14). One of the dangerous strategies that is pleasing to the "customer" is meeting "felt needs." This causes people to be more consumer-oriented in shopping for churches. Church membership is becoming an elevated, luxurious activity. This is the danger of "entertainment evangelism" (Peterson 1994:28-30). Pastors parade themselves as good executives or businessmen who manage the church well. Pastors could be saying that "I performed a good ministry so my church grew." The standard of

one's ministry is evaluated by quantitative growth rather than the minister's life and practice. This has caused ministers to pursue the ideal of the "successful" minister rather than the "faithful" and "respectable" minister (Kang 1991:36).

In conclusion: the most important reason for the recent decline of the Korean churches can be explained by several of their characteristics, such as excessive competition and conflict among neighbouring churches for increased membership ("congregational extensionalism"); pandering to people's privatistic needs; negative images of Christianity as immature and hypocritical; group egoism expressed in individualistic congregationalism, denominationalism, separatism, regionalism and nationalism.

3.1.3 Conclusion

The problems facing the Korean churches, as discussed above, do not lie in numerical decline, but at a more fundamental level. The fundamental problem in the Korean churches is the way in which they have accommodated secularism and modernism, as has already been stated. This accommodation has resulted in the distortion of their dominant ecclesiology. CJ Ro (1998:32-33) and WK Lee (1994:190-194) insist that this kind of distortion in ecclesiology has mostly originated from uncritical acceptance of the Fuller church growth theology.

The Korean Churches have neglected to reflect theologically and critically on their dominant ecclesiology. At the same time, they have copied American ecclesiological models uncritically, even though the context of the Korean churches is far different from that of the American churches (Gwak 2000:58, 69, 79). The dominant ecclesiology of the Korean churches has tended to be effectiveness-centred: the Churches have neglected their faithful service and obedience to the kingdom and the will of God; instead, they have focused on success and numerical growth (Son 1995:258). Such an effectiveness-centred ecclesiology has encouraged churches to accommodate to the indigenous Shamanistic tradition, modernism, capitalism, materialism, pragmatism and modern technology. In short, the churches have attempted to pander to human need.

The dominant ecclesiology of the Korean churches has also shown an excessively individualistic tendency. The churches have suffered the loss of Christian unity because of excessive competition and conflict among neighbouring churches to increase their membership (“congregational extensionalism”), and group egoism expressed in individualistic congregationalism, denominationalism, separatism, regionalism and nationalism. The Korean churches have lost their distinctive nature as a new community. This loss has been accelerated by the fragmentation of modern Korean society.

A serious problem in the dominant ecclesiology of the Korean churches lies in their inadequate understanding of the relationship between the church, the world (culture), and the Gospel (cf Hunsberger & Van Gelder 1996; Guder 1998). The Korean churches should have seriously considered that they are called to witness to the Gospel in the context of a particular culture. Regretfully, they have failed to identify, criticise and reject certain elements in the inherited or dominant culture that stand in opposition to the Gospel (Chung 1996:535). The Korean church has either refrained from intentional disengagement from the dominant secular and religious culture or allowed itself to neglect meaningful and critical engagement of that same culture, and thus the church is losing its distinctive identity and mission. Therefore, it is argued that the root problem facing the Korean churches lies in their ecclesiology.

3.2 CONTEMPORARY THEORY AND PRAXIS OF PREACHING IN KOREA WITH REGARD TO AN ECCLESIOLOGY

The contemporary decline among the Korean Protestant churches has arisen from the distortion of ecclesiology. This section will discuss the relationship between the contemporary ecclesiology and the theory and practice of Korean preaching. In order to do this, some characteristic of preaching that relate to ecclesiology will be identified. In other words, I shall discuss the way those contemporary ecclesiological characteristics are expressed in Korean preaching.

3.2.1 Critical evaluation of the praxis of Korean preaching

This study, following the classification of Mary EJ Kim (1998:102-106), identifies some characteristics of Korean preaching, although all the sermons do not fall into the same categories with regard to theological content and homiletical style.

3.2.1.1 An emphasis on a personal relationship with God

Contemporary homiletic theory and most sermons that are preached by preachers in Korea emphasise personal salvation, holiness and consequent blessing in the present life. Yong-Gi Cho, the senior pastor at the world’s biggest church, focuses in his preaching on a personal relationship with God. According to the analysis of the themes of the sermons that were preached by Cho, his frequent themes are “life of the saints” (62 times), “faith” (54 times), “trial and triumph” (37 times), “prayer” (31 times), and “life” (27 times) (Suh 2000:76).

Theme	No. of sermons	Theme	No. of sermons	Theme	No. of sermons	Theme	No. of sermons
Family	22	Thanksgiving	6	Commandment	8	Suffering	17
Church	4	Salvation	11	Encouragement	2	Authority	9
Prayer	31	Joy	5	Vision	11	Power	5
Anxiety	10	Heart	24	Word	9	Faith	54
Change	14	Blood	4	Blessing	5	Blessing and thanksgiving	19
Service	2	Resurrection	14	Love	15	Evil	10
Purpose of life	14	New life	22	New year	8	Positive thinking	10
Mission	5	Holiness	6	Success	12	Life of saints	62
Holy Spirit	35	Growth	12	Hope	10	Obedience	11
Trial and triumph	37	Confidence	15	Healing	1	Judgement	4
Cross	14	Worship	1	Christ	28	Greed	1
Grace	15	Social justice	3	Selfishness	2	Neighbourhood	5
Understanding	2	Guidance	29	Life	27	Despair	10
Patriotism	5	Sin	8	Creation	3	Heaven	11
Loyalty	9	Recover	8	God	23	Happiness	6
Offering	2	Repent	9			Sum	783

Themes and times these themes occurred in sermons preached by YongGi Cho

JungMin Suh (2000:76) evaluates these themes as follows: With regard to themes of “church” (4 times), “service” (twice), “worship” (once), “social justice” (3 times), “neighbourhood” (5 times), Cho did pay some attention to them. He emphasises “sacramental church” rather than church participation in social and political affairs.

Sun-Do Kim, the former senior pastor at one of the world’s biggest Methodist church, also emphasised positive thinking and the faith of individuals (Kim, HS 2000:259). Heung-Soo Kim (2000:262) compares the style of preaching of Yong-Gi Cho and that of Sun-Do Kim as follows: While Yong-Gi Cho delivered messages about health and blessing to people who are in poverty after the Korean War, in the process of modernisation, Sun-Do Kim showed greater concern for individuals who were suffering loneliness and anxiety although they were living in abundance. Therefore to Sun-Do Kim, in order to alleviate this situation, the answer lay in positive thinking and faith. He approached his ministry from an individualistic and psychological perspective rather than a sociopolitical one (Kim, HS 2000:270). However, Heung-Soo Kim (2000:270) evaluates his sermons as follows: where religion is approached from a personal and psychological perspective, the theological themes of Christianity can be made subjective in order to explain the meaning of existence and the psychological condition of the individual.

Man-Shin Lee, a former pastor at the mother church of Holiness in Korea, emphasises “being born-again”, “holiness”, “healing”, and “second advent” according to the theology of the Full Gospel of Holiness (Suh, CW 2000:398). Lee (Suh, CW 2000:399) focuses on repentance by individuals and the state of being born again and considers that the Full Gospel of Holiness brings the transformation and growth to the church.

Jang-Whan Kim, the senior pastor at one of the biggest Baptist church in the world, also emphasises personal growth of faith (Hur 2000:437). According to Gin Hur (2000:433), in the sermons JW Kim seldom deals with academic or political and social issues. His sermons always focus on God’s power and salvation for individuals and the responsibility of Christians. He deals with individual rather than social issues. In his sermons, Kim seldom deals with social issues from a critical socio-political perspective.

Rather, he concentrates on the spiritual maturity of the individual Christian (Hur 2000:438).

According to the majority of sermons by Korean pastors at the mega churches, Christian redemption means the salvation of the soul obtained through born-again faith. They encourage the listeners to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and to increase their faith by devoting themselves to Bible reading, prayer, and church activities. Often texts are not explored completely but are subordinated to a personalistic gospel. Some sermons have emotive power to appeal to the individual listener's heart and mind (Kim, EJ 1998:102).

However, this personal and psychological approach, according to Kim (1998:103), entails both a theological and a socio-political risk. That is, most sermons that concentrate on a personal relationship with God are in danger of leading the listeners to ignore the sociopolitical roots of their problems without critical reflection. They often tranquilise the listeners' consciousness by giving them temporary relief rather than offering the liberating message of the Gospel to challenge them to solve their problems.

3.2.1.2 An emphasis on God's blessing as the fruit of personal devotion and faithful commitment to church activities

It is not an overstatement to say that most of the sermons examined are about how to obtain God's blessing. Most growing Korean church's central message deals with the *bok*, which means wealth, success, health, longevity, and having many children at home. For example, YongGi Cho promises the *bok* in his preaching, which satisfies people's appetite for material blessings. Cho (1978:28) said,

The preacher is like a gourmet cook.... There are many hungry people in the world. If the preacher prepares a delicious meal on the table, people will naturally be attracted to come to it. Thus how we prepare our gourmet meal to satisfy the appetite of the people will determine our success in ministry.

BongHo Son (1995:337-338) points out that the emphasis on material blessings is based on a naïve adaptation by the church of modern materialism. However, this kind of

thinking is actually deeply rooted in Korean Shamanism. People go to shamans to receive the *bok* from their ancestral spirits. They come to church for the same reason. Korean shamans always say, “The more you give to the spirit, the more you receive.”

Korean preachers emphasise in their sermons that God is the only source of these worldly blessings and that such blessings are given to individuals according to the degree of their personal piety and commitment to the church (Kim, EJ 1998:104). Likewise, the blessing of God is understood to be conditional. The key to gaining these blessings is to live according to the Word of God; to live according to the Word of God is to participate actively in church services and programmes.

The ideology of the present-centred worldly blessing had been familiar to Koreans for a long time through an indigenous Korean religion, Shamanism, even before Christianity was introduced to Korea (Lee, JY 1997:81). Koreans believed that the most blessed in the world were those who obtained five blessings from heaven – wealth, success, health, longevity, and many children at home. Korean Christians understood the Christian Gospel from their indigenous religious perspective and easily identified the blessing of God with the Shamanistic conception of blessing. They believed that the major goal of becoming a churchgoer was to gain these blessings from God, who was the real source of the blessings.

It is ironic that the more emphasis was placed on “faith of supplication of blessing”, the more growth the church realised. The Full Gospel Central Church, for instance, uses a church slogan from III John 2: “Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul.” Earthly blessing is disproportionately emphasised in sermons. YongGi Cho’s message contains “a heavy dose of “blessing theology”: ‘Cast your financial crises on Jesus, and they will be resolved’”. BongHo Son points out that “The church teaches that all believers will be rich in possessions, healthy in body, and prosperous in spiritual life. They call this ‘the triple metre faith’” (Son 1995:338). Believers are to eagerly pray for the healing of their illness and shamelessly pray for material blessings. One prominent Pentecostal leader advocates a “fivefold gospel”, namely salvation, healing, baptism in the Spirit, the

imminent return of Christ, and blessing (Menziés 1987:41). This aspect is deeply rooted in the religious consciousness of Korean Shamanism.

God's blessing is perceived as personal and material rewards in this world rather than social justice and ethical living (Lee, JY 1997:80). Contrary to the Scriptures, as Jung-Young Lee (1997:81) indicates, most sermons do not understand "joy, peace, goodness, and love" as God's blessings; rather, they convince the listeners that spiritual blessings are manifested in such worldly benefits in this life as wealth, health, longevity, psychological comfort, and prolific childbearing.

Korean preaching has catered to this prevailing secular idea of Korea by emphasising the listeners' personal devotion to the numerical growth of the church as the key to accomplishing their dream. It has neither awakened the listeners from the illusion of the distorted individualistic dream nor corrected the misconception of the blessing of God. Rather, Korean preachers have narrowed their theological views to a present-centred, individualistic materialism, and have ignored the future-oriented communal and holistic aspects of the blessing of God. As a result, they separate the Christian Gospel from the socioeconomic, political, and cultural context of the listeners (Kim, EJ 1998:105).

3.2.1.3 An emphasis on the church-growth model of evangelism

Many preachers see one of the major tasks of the church as evangelism. This is reflected in their sermons. With regard this, Yong-Gi Cho, the pastor at the world biggest church, the Full Gospel church, frequently refers in his sermons to church growth (1995:156-157). His emphasis on the church's numerical growth and his style of preaching have influenced Korean churches beyond his own denomination. Also, Sun-Do Kim, a pastor at one of the world's biggest Methodist churches, emphasises church growth and positive thinking in his preaching (Kim, HS 2000:259). Their sermons reveal that the preachers identify Christian mission with evangelising the unconverted, recruiting church members, and having their own church buildings. They stress in their sermons that their listeners should commit themselves to the numerical growth of the membership and instruct them on how to bring newcomers to church.

Some preachers seem to regard the success of the parish ministry as synonymous with the numerical growth of the church, and their sermons focus on how to increase the membership and how to fulfil their plan of having their own church buildings. They persuade the listeners that if they commit themselves to the growth of the church, they will be rewarded by God with material blessing in this world (Lee, EJ 1998:105).

Most of the Korean homiletical theory and praxis for church growth is based on the Fuller church growth theory, which has become the dominant ecclesiology in the Korean church (cf Yang, YM 1999:51-60; Kim, CO 1999:21-29; Yun, HC 1998:22-26; Lee, HS 1997:7-14).

According to CD Gwak (2000:65), the Fuller church growth model is sociological, missional and evangelical-charismatic in nature. The contribution of the Fuller church growth school to the theology of church growth can be described as follows:

Firstly, it stimulated the church, and made it take a greater interest in its life and growth. Secondly, it emphasised the positive factors of the church rather than the negative, thereby helping the church to propagate constructively the word of salvation. Thirdly, it developed various strategies of church growth utilising social sciences, such as sociology and anthropology. Fourthly, it had a beneficial influence on the church's evangelism (Gwak 2000:66).

Many theologians have concluded that the basis for Fuller's theories is biblically and theologically weak. These critiques indicate that Fuller church growth theology is number-oriented, is driven by American pragmatism, and commits a serious error in that it clearly divides human beings into spiritual and sociopolitical dimensions (Gwak 2000:66).

Korean preachers limit Christian mission to the evangelisation of unbelievers and the numerical growth of the local church. Although this understanding has contributed to the dramatic growth of Korean churches, their sermons do not help the listeners increase their spirituality or realise their responsibility as Christians for the community to which they belong. They neither give direction for the future of the Korean church nor offer a vision of a better society for the Korean community. Instead, they run the risk of

creating fierce inter-church competition. Korean preaching tends to reduce Christian faith and theology to a present-centred individualistic dimension. This tendency is deeply related to the general trends of Korean preaching (Kim, EJ 1998:106).

In conclusion, the preachers who preach in the mega-churches in Korea emphasise a personal relationship with God; God's blessing as the fruit of personal devotion and faithful commitment to church activities; and the church-growth model of evangelism. However, this emphasis on a homiletic theory of church growth and evangelism in preaching is related to the characteristic of contemporary ecclesiology in the Korean church, which is influenced by secularisation and modern individualism.

3.3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the other hypothesis of this study has been explored. This is that the contemporary homiletic theory and praxis of the churches in Korea, related to an ecclesiology which has been accommodated to contemporary culture, cannot produce a faithful and relevant ecclesiology. The unhealthy growth of the Korean church and its recent decline in membership are closely related to its dominant ecclesiology. Further, homiletic theory and praxis project this distorted contemporary ecclesiology.

In order to transform the dominant ecclesiology into a biblical and contextual ecclesiology, therefore, the contemporary homiletic theory and praxis of the church in Korea should be modified in accordance with a homiletic theory developed in chapter 2.