

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **AN ADJUSTED THEORY FOR PRAXIS**

On the basis of my analysis of the theory and praxis of contemporary churches in Korea, I will propose an adjusted theory for the upbuilding of the church in Korea. A homiletic theory for the upbuilding of the church should be applied effectively to the praxis of the preaching ministry in Korean churches. Through dialogue between a theoretical theory and contemporary theories and praxes in the Korean church, an adjusted theory for praxis will be identified.

#### **4.1 A THEORY OF PREACHING FOR FORMING A FAITHFUL AND RELEVANT ECCLESIOLOGY**

In a modernising society, the church has been secularised and marginalised. The changes this has brought about have been responsible for the crisis of identity and mission of the church. In this crisis, the church has to be built up by the Word of God, the biblical and traditional basis of the relationship between preaching and the church. This is to say, the church was created by the apostles' preaching and the Holy Spirit and the church's life must be governed by the Word. As some homileticians point out, the temptation for homiletics is tempted to serve its own interests rather than those of the church.

##### **4.1.1 Preaching and Ecclesiology**

Homiletics must sustain a dynamic relationship with the life of the church – that is, a faithful and relevant ecclesiology. With regard to this, Heitink (1999a:275) argues that a homiletic theory for praxis needs to be developed from a practical-theological ecclesiology.

In order to serve the life of the church in a period of transition, a homiletic theory should support the formation and transformation of the identity of the church and its mission. A homiletic theory needs to be developed from the relationship with a faithful and relevant ecclesiology in a period of transition.

A faithful and relevant ecclesiology has recently been developed from a missional perspective as discussed in previous sections (see section 2.1). The church as an alternative community is a missional community. Its mission is to be community, servant, and messenger. In this understanding of a missional community, the primary task of the church in transition is to build itself up so that it is a community of faith fit for its mission.

#### **4.1.2 Three models for the formation of the community of faith**

With regard to the development of the community of faith, Paul Ricoeur provides three models for the formation of the collective narrative identity (See section 2.3). The identity of individual and community has two perspectives – temporal and relational one. The identity of individuals and the community is a communicative identity. Therefore, this identity must be communicated continually to help shape the community of faith from these two perspectives. Ricoeur provides three models for forming the identity of community. These three models are the model of translation, the model of exchange, and the model of forgiveness (See section 2.3.3).

#### **4.1.3 A homiletic theory for the upbuilding of the church in transition**

A homiletic theory for the upbuilding of the church is developed by the application of a faithful and relevant ecclesiology and Ricoeur's three models of the formation of the church as the community of faith.

##### **4.1.3.1 Preaching as an act of translation**

In order to form the identity of community, the individual's identity has to be communicated each other. With regard to it, preaching must be an act of translation. Ricoeur's term "translation" is used in a wider context in Europe. The translation ethos means the ethos of the communication of identity. Therefore, preaching is to be an act of the communication of identity for the formation of the community of faith. Seen in this way, the relevant communication style for translating the identity is a dialogic communication. In this communication of dialogue, the individual's identity can be communicated and formed into the community of faith (See section 2.4.1).

#### **4.1.3.2 Preaching as an act of exchange**

In context of dialogical communication, the identity of the individual must be exchanged for the formation of the community of faith. Preaching should be an act of exchange for the formation of the collective identity. With regard to this, the act of exchange includes both remembering and sharing. Remembering must be done from two perspectives: the temporal dimension and the relational dimension.

To this end, a homiletic hermeneutic must be considered from two perspectives. First, a homiletic hermeneutic should be based on a co-remembering act. Second, a homiletic hermeneutic should be based on a faithful and relevant ecclesiology. This study develops an ecclesial homiletic hermeneutic as follows: the first step is to analyse the contemporary ecclesiology of the church in transition; the second step is to evaluate contemporary ecclesiology critically, with what is termed "ideological suspicion", on the basis of a faithful and relevant ecclesiology; the third step is to approach the biblical texts exegetically from such a dominant ecclesiological perspective; and finally the fourth step is to interpret the message anew in terms of an ecclesiology that is faithful and relevant to biblical interpretation (See section 2.4.2.1 and 2.4.2.2).

1. Preaching is an act of sharing of identity. In sharing the identity of individuals and the congregational identity, narrative preaching is a relevant communicative medium. However this study evaluates contemporary narrative preaching critically and makes some suggestions (See section 2.4.2.3). One of characteristics of narrative preaching is

the function of identification. Narrative preaching draws listeners into the story and through identification with the characters and the flow of narrative, they recognise themselves and reach a point where they have to make a personal choice. In order to bring about identification through narrative preaching, the preacher considers how to connect between two worlds – the world of the text and the world of the congregation. However, according to Campbell (1997:117ff), contemporary narrative preaching translates the biblical story into the hearer's life-story. This approach results in an anthropologically-driven approach to preaching. Therefore, to avoid the collapse of the biblical narrative into contemporary personal experience, firstly, the link is to be between "the Story of God" and "the story of the congregation," rather than between "the Story of God" and "the story of the individual." The identity of the church is formed by the encounter between the Story of God and the story of the church. In order to bring about an encounter between God and His people, the Story of God must be the main theme (or content) and movement (or plot) of the sermon. The world of individual has to be emploted into the world of congregation. In order to do it, the reading of the sermon text and the sermon event in worship is inseparable. There is a space for the emplotment of the individual's stories.

2. Narrative preaching communicates its message indirectly, functioning in such a way that at a given point the listeners recognise themselves, although no direct appeal, exhortation or demand is made on them. However, in the contemporary situation – in a non-Christian culture – a listener shaped only by open-ended narrative preaching will have no grasp of the reflective dimensions of faith (Thompson 2001:12). Because faith seeks understanding, the sermon has always been the occasion for deeper instruction in the faith. In order to achieve this, there is to be a space to share the experienced Word of God with each other.

With regard to a sermon language, the metaphoric language about the image of the church can create the identity of the church. This study suggests some information on it (See section 2.4.2.3).

#### **4.1.3.3 Preaching as an act of forgiveness**

To Ricoeur forgiveness is a mutual revision of the identity of individuals. Preaching as an act of translation and preaching as an act of exchange of memories culminate in an act of forgiveness. Through the act of forgiveness, the church is built up as the community of faith and recovers its credibility with regard to the world by being community, servant and messenger.

Through the exchange of the identity of individuals in the ministry of preaching, the identity of the community must be formed and transformed. With regard to this, preaching must be an act of forgiveness. Firstly, through forgiveness the church could be built up as a community of faith. In the world, by recovering and exemplifying the faith, and her relevant identity, the church becomes an agent of God's salvation. Secondly, preaching is not an event during the period of worship but a journey of the community of faith in the world according to Jesus' example. Finally the church must be a faithful and relevant messenger.

Preaching is an act of being a community through forgiveness. Preaching as an act of forgiveness is an act of mutual revision of the identity of individuals from the perspective of the community. Through this forgiveness the church will be formed and transformed into the community of faith. If preaching is to be an act of being a community through forgiveness, the characteristic of preaching need to be understood from the communal context. Secondly, preaching must be understood from a covenantal perspective. Thirdly, preaching must be understood from a journey. Finally, preaching is a *collaborative* ministry through its dynamic relationship with other ministries of the church.

In addition to being an act of community, preaching must play the part of a servant in the formation of the community of faith. Then preaching must be an act of performance of the preached Word.

By being the community of faith and being a servant through preaching, the church in its role as messenger needs to consider the mode of communication by which to form

the community of faith. This communicative style must involve testimony and overhearing.

## **4.2 AN ADJUSTED THEORY FOR PRAXIS**

### **4.2.1 A homiletic theory and practice need to form a dynamic relationship with a faithful and relevant ecclesiology in a period of transition.**

The Korean churches emphasise the importance of preaching for church growth. Most of the homiletical theory and praxis for church growth in Korean churches is based on the Fuller church growth theory, which has become a dominant ecclesiology in the Korean church. However, their conception of church growth mostly is mostly limited to numerical growth, according to the Fuller church growth theory and praxis (cf. Yang, YM 1999:51-60; Kim, CO 1999:21-29; Yun, HC 1998:22-26; Lee, HS 1997:7-14).

As discussed in chapter 3, this homiletic theory which is connected to a secularised ecclesiology of the Korean church cannot build up the church. The contemporary declining phenomenon of the Korean Protestant churches is result of this distortion of ecclesiology. The Korean church has grown on the basis on the Fuller church growth model, that is, the astronomical numerical growth of the church proves the reliability of this theory (Gwak 2000:59).

According to 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).

The Fuller church growth model has encouraged the emergence of contemporary church movements with a disposition towards effectiveness-centred ecclesiology such as the entrepreneurial church, the full-service church, the therapeutic church, the purpose-driven church, the seekers-sensitive church and the marketing oriented church (Gwak 2000:65). These movements, along with the Fuller model, positively, utilise various skills, insights, and social sciences such as sociology, pedagogy, communication theory, organisational theory, systems theory, management theory, and marketing theory (Gwak 2000:65).

However, 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 socio-political dimensions (Gwak 2000:66). This homiletic theory connected with a dominant ecclesiology of the Korean church cannot form and transform a faithful and relevant ecclesiology.

Therefore, this study suggests that a homiletic theory as a hermeneutic-communicative act has to be developed through the dynamic relationship with this identified ecclesiology. In order to do so, the preacher needs to understand the context of the church and interpret the reality of the church from a biblical and traditional perspective. This study provides a method of exegeting the world of the congregation.

#### **4.2.2 The task of preaching is the formation and transformation of the identity of the church as a community of faith.**

##### 4.2.2.1 The need for a space for communicating the identity of individuals and the community

In homiletic theories and practices in the Korean churches, there is no room for the communication of the identity of the individual. With regard to this, the communicative style in the Korean church is authoritative, rather than dialogic. This study suggests a

dialogue communication in preaching. Also, in order to form the community of faith, it is necessary to provide a space for the exchange of identity, as we discussed previously.

This study also suggests that the preacher consider making space to communicate the individual's identity. Firstly, the ministry of preaching needs to establish a relationship with the other ministries: cell meetings, worship, Christian education, and pastoral care. Secondly, for sermon preparation the preacher should use the cell meeting. Therefore the cell meeting needs to be changed to fit in with the ministry of preaching.

#### 4.2.2.2 The need of exchange of memory

##### *The need for an ecclesial homiletic hermeneutic*

In a contemporary homiletic theory of the Korean churches, there is no praxis for reading a sermonic text in the communal context (cf Yang, YM 1999:51-60; Kim, CO 1999:21-29; Yun, HC 1998:22-26; Lee, HS 1997:7-14). Some of the influential preachers whom we evaluated in 3.2.1 emphasise individual salvation and faith. The Bible has been interpreted for individuals rather than for the church. As Guder mentions, this results in the reductionism of a hermeneutic of the Bible.

Most of homiletical literature emphasises on the role of the preacher in the growth of the Korean church (cf Choi 1995; Kim, SM 1996; Yang, YM 1999; Lee, JY 1997). These authors emphasise the preacher's personality, spiritual authority, knowledge of the Bible etc. they believe, that the Korean church could be grown through renewal of this kind among the preachers.

One of the problems in Korean preaching is that it tends to be reductionistic, that is individualistic, shamanistic. This despite that fact that, as some Korean preachers believe that a sound interpretation would encourage numerical growth in the Korean church. Some problems have risen in relation to the homiletic interpretation of the Bible. Firstly, allegorical interpretation is a problem. Secondly, some sermons are purpose-driven to encourage numerical growth. Thirdly, some sermons foster

Shamanistic thought in the Korean Christians. Most of these problems in preaching are the result of incorrect interpretation of the Bible. HC Park (1991:77-87), a former professor of practical theology at a seminary, evaluates some problems of Korean preaching as follows: Firstly, sermons which are not based on the meaning of the text. Secondly, distortion of the meaning of texts and wrong citations. However, in order to exchange the individual identities, there should be an opportunity to read the Bible as the Book of the identity of the church in a communal setting. Therefore this study provides an ecclesial homiletic hermeneutic for the formation and transformation of a faithful and relevant ecclesiology, as described in 2.4.2.3.

#### *The need of variety of sermon form and language*

In the Korean preaching, preachers say the most suitable sermon is expository preaching (cf. Yang, YM 1999:51-60; Kim, CO 1999:21-29; Yun, HC 1998:22-26; Lee, HS 1997:7-14). JK Hong (1988:51) argues that the desirable sermon style in the Korean churches is expository preaching. However expository preaching in Korean homiletic praxis means a verse-by-verse explanation or thematic-topical sermon.

Several sermon forms have recently been suggested, but the form chosen would depend on the text and the congregation (cf Long 1989a; Tisdale 1997). The Korean churches also need to consider and develop a form that is relevant to the congregation in order to build up the church. In order to form and transform the identity of the church as a community of faith, this study suggests a narrative sermon form in section 2.4.2.4.1.2.

#### 4.2.3 The need of preaching as an act of forgiveness

4.2.3.1 Most homiletical literature and theses emphasise on the role of the preacher in encouraging quantitative growth in the Korean church (cf. Choi, HR 1995; Kim, SM 1996; Yang, YM 1999; Lee, JY 1997). The statement is frequently made that the preacher's personality, spiritual authority, and knowledge of Bible are important for church growth. Through renewal among the preachers, they believe that the Korean church could be grown. However, as stated previously, through forgiveness or mutual

revision, the primary tasks of preaching should be an act of the formation of the identity of the church as the community of faith. In order to do this, preaching must be an ecclesial act.

This study provides some suggestions: firstly, there is a need to reconsider the ministry of preaching so that preaching is not just something the preacher does but also an ecclesial act. The purpose of preaching is that it should contribute to be the formation of the community rather than the edification of the individual. Secondly, the understanding of the church needs to be changed from the aggregate of the individuals to the community of a faith. Thirdly, the congregation of the church should be encouraged to participate in this act. Through the participation of a congregation their identities have to be mutually revised.

4.2.3.2 One of problems of the Korean church is the loss of credibility of the church in society owing to secularisation, moral degradation and the lack of diaconal service in the public sphere, even though the ministry of preaching is very active. Normally the preacher in the Korean church preaches more than ten times a week. Now, if the credibility of the church is to be restored, the ministry of preaching should be reconsidered.

To this end, this study provides a deeper understanding of preaching. Preaching has to be performed – it is not just an *event* but a *journey*. The preached Word needs to be performed in the congregation's life. Especially in the cell group, the preached Word needs to be practiced for the cell group, the church, and the world.

4.2.3.3 The church as a messenger needs to consider the mode of communication to form the identity of the church in transition.

Contemporary homiletic theory and practice for church growth pay little attention to the communicative style (cf. Yang, YM 1999:51-60; Kim, CO 1999:21-29; Yun, HC 1998:22-26; Lee, HS 1997:7-14). In a secularised and pluralised society, the church considers some communicative strategies for forming the community of faith and

communicating the Gospel to the world. With regard this, this study describes testimony and overhearing styles.

### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

In this study, a homiletic theory for the upbuilding of the church has been developed from a hermeneutic-communicative perspective. This theory has been explained in the context of the Korean churches. Finally this study proposes some strategic suggestions for changing contemporary homiletic theory and praxis in the Korean Churches. This study wishes to contribute this theory in order to transform the contemporary ecclesiology of the Korean Churches into a faithful and relevant ecclesiology.