Christian life narratives of young adults who have

non-Christian family members in the Republic of Korea:

Narratives of keeping faith

By

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ABSTRACT

The present research has been undertaken within a narrative approach which is based on social constructionism. For the purposes of fostering more effective communication between science and theology, I also adopt the postfoundationalist way of thinking which was suggested by Van Huyssteen. I made use of the seven movements that were proposed by J C Müller to present the research undertaken with four young adult Christians.

Korea is a multi-religious society in which various religions coexist, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Shamanism, Christianity and several new religions. In the religious background of Korea, people are free to choose their religion, but sometimes their religious freedom has been limited by the patriarchal family system. In particular, young adult Christians who are in the period of emerging adulthood may face an even more difficult situation when they practise a different religion from that of their family. They are still under the strong influence of their parents emotionally and financially, but they want to be adults with their own independent identity. Moreover, Korean social prejudice against Christianity causes the young adult Christians much difficulty in maintaining their faith life comfortably.

In order to listen to their stories regarding their faith life, I selected four young adult Christians who have non-Christian family members in their household, who are unmarried, and are therefore still dependent on their parents. With the co-researchers, individual interview sessions and group interview sessions were held, and a web-activity devised in which their stories were told and developed in collaboration with

various disciplines that were influencing their discourses within the stories. They were experiencing tensions with their non-Christian family members in maintaining their Christian faith life and were feeling powerless in the relationship with them. Furthermore, in their relationship with other Christians in the church the co-researchers complained about the lack of understanding, regarding their specific family background, shown by those believers who do have Christian relatives in their household.

The narrative research process allowed the co-researchers to interpret their difficult stories and to think through the meanings of these and their effect. In this manner, they could reinterpret their painful stories and uncover new meanings that might assist them to be more satisfied in the future. Having discovered new meanings for their painful stories, the co-researchers are not powerless people any longer; instead, they are active people who are dreaming for, or envisioning, a better future with their non-Christian family.

Key Terms

1. Narrative research

2. Social constructionism

3. Postfoundationalism

4. Practical theology

5. Co-researchers

6. Young adult Christians

7. Korean Christianity

8. Empowering

9. Traditions of interpretation

10. Retelling the story

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You have given me great love which has overflowed into my children. I love you, mom.

To my friends and church members in Korea. Thank you for trusting and encouraging me.

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CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH ORIENTATION

1.1   CHOSEN FIELD OF RESEARCH

In this study, I would like to focus on the Christian life narratives of young adults who have non-Christian family members or who live in an otherwise non-Christian family in the Republic of Korea. In particular, I would like to focus on stories of keeping faith by means of the narrative approach.

Various religions coexist in Korean society. Historically, Shamanism, Confucianism and Buddhism have affected Korean cultural traditions. Christianity has been practised in Korea for over 100 years and is considered an integral part of Korean cultural traditions. Several new religions[1] have also emerged in Korea. Against this background of numerous religions, people enjoy the freedom to adopt any religion, without any restrictions being imposed by the state[2]. Choi (1996: 177) refers to this multireligious situation as 'A Religion Mall'. He draws the analogy of a market where Korean people select a religion from a variety of available options without any oppression from the state. The present author agrees with his interpretation with regards to the particular situation of Korea and will consider this in further detail below. Eun (2001:132) insists that it seems to be difficult to adopt a religion that is

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[1] New religions are called *Shinhŭng chonggyo* which means, literally, newly emerged religions in Korea, such as *Chŭngsan, T'ongil-gyo, Wŏn pulgyo* (Grayson 2002:203-212).

[2] The Constitution of the Republic of Korea. Chapter 1. General provisions Article 20. (1) All citizens shall enjoy freedom of religion. (2) No state religion shall be recognised, and church and state shall be separated. (Amended on Oct. 29, 1987.)

different from the religious background of one's own family. When a person chooses a religion, s/he tends to consider his/her own family religion and/or the effect on his/her family members. Eun refers to this as the 'Religious identity of the family' (2001:131). In terms of this religious identity, the family is connected to the unique phenomenon of 'Korean familism', where Korean people regard the family, rather than the individual, as the basic unit of society. Thus, the personality of each individual tends to be ignored within the family, while identity and family values are viewed as being more important than the individual member. Furthermore, the value of the family can be extended to the larger society. Within this social mechanism, Koreans tend to consider the religious identity of their own family when choosing and/or converting to a religion even though they enjoy freedom of choice.

In fact, the religious homogeneity within the Korean family is high[3], which is understandable within the context of Korean familism. Within marriage, Koreans want to control and/or maintain their own religious identity in the family. Usually they tend to select a spouse with the same religion as themselves and/or their parents. Because of this process, the religious homogeneity within the family may be preserved to some degree.

Against this background, to pursue a religion different from one's family would result in serious trouble and/or conflict within the family. The main cause of dissension stems from 'conversion' to another religious belief. People can control and maintain the religious identity of the family through marriage to some degree,

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[3] Eun (2001:141) cited the report of the Korean Gallup (1998) that 72% of couples hold to the same religion, or irreligion.

but conversion of the spouse and children after marriage can be troublesome to the family. In particular, conversion to Christianity is contrary to the Confucian tradition of Korea, no matter what the religious identity of the family. A large number of Koreans still tend to consider Christianity an imported and alien religion in actuality, most Christians in Korea, thus, experience difficulties with various Confucian traditions in the family[4]. In Korea, Confucianism has existed as a major cultural tradition since ancient times. Thus, conversion to Christianity can result in greater disagreement in the family than a conversion to any of the other religions.

Within this study, I would like to listen to the stories of young adult believers who are in conflict with their parents, brothers and sisters in this respect. These young adults will be unmarried people; thus, they have not yet become independent from their parents. They are fully grown adults physically, yet still dependent on their parents materially and emotionally with regards to the influence of Confucian traditions and of Korean familism. Parents continue to strictly interfere in the lives of unmarried young adult children with regards to the religious identity of the family, while this interference may also extend to other aspects of the young adult's life. At the same time, the young adult believers might feel some kind of guilt towards their own family members because of their different religious affiliation and the difficulty this causes in their family.

Furthermore, I would also like to concentrate on the church life stories of young

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[4]In the study of 'Modes of Cultural Adaptation in Family Relations of Religious Converts: Focusing on contemporary Korean Protestants' by Moon, she explains that the most common difficulties of Korean Christians with non-Christian family members occur with respect to the ancestral rites (2002:58).

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adult believers with non-Christian families. Because of their specific faith background, they sometimes feel as though they are being marginalised by other Christians in the church.

1.2   MY CURIOSITY IN TERMS OF THIS CONTEXT

At present, I lead a number of small bible study groups in my church[5], in which I sometimes meet people who experience similar difficulties in their faith life. They experience tension and/or conflict with a husband and/or their parents in their attempt to maintain their Christian faith. These difficulties could occur in the form of arguments regarding religion, emotional pressures and/or physical punishment. I also endured similar experiences and by means of interviews with those who struggle in this regard, I found that the religious problem in the family not only causes tension or conflict but is one of 'maintaining faith'. In times of trouble with the family, some people reject their faith, while others continue to struggle with their family in order to maintain their faith while others succeed in evangelising their entire family.

Moreover, after selecting this context for my thesis, I communicated my research theme to certain congregations of my church as well as certain colleagues who are interested in my study. Interestingly, I encountered some common responses from them. Most of the people who have a Christian family found it difficult to understand the theme of this study. However, once I explained the background and necessity of this theme, they understood the purpose of the research. On the contrary, most people

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[5] The church is Pungsunghan Presbyterian Church in Gwang ju si, Republic of Korea.

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with a non-Christian family expressed great interest in my topic and wanted to volunteer to be a co-researcher in this research conversation. This indicates that the stories of such situations are marginalised in our faith life and therefore need to be studied.

Through the present research, I would like to draw the stories of Christians who have non-Christian family members into our present life journey. I hope that such people will find meanings in their difficult faith life stories, which could help to open up a number of possibilities for the future, which I expect could lead them to a more satisfied faith life. Furthermore, I anticipate that their marginalised stories will be heard through this research work. I would like to empower these stories to be heard, so to speak. When they have a voice in our society, their discourses will be more evident and this could stimulate new possibilities for deconstructing and reconstructing the latter. This could become a starting point to discover alternative stories which might offer us different view points for understanding the stories of Christians who are struggling with their non-Christian family.

1.3   MY STORY

1.3.1   Becoming a Christian

I started going to church when I was eight years old. Strangely my mother allowed me to do so even though my parents were Buddhists although not enthusiastic followers. Sometimes, my mother went to the Buddhist temple with her children for peace of mind and the sake of the family.

One day, my mother heard about the 'Sunday school' which was held at the church closest to our house and decided to send her children there to spend Sundays. Sunday school was just a great idea to keep her children busy on boring Sundays with fun programmes and she trusted that the Sunday school teacher would teach good social ethics to the children. Because of this simple reason, my sister, brother and I could attend 'Sunday school' where I spent joyful times learning about so many interesting things, such as, God made the whole world and me; Jesus loves me; Jesus is always with me and protects me. This was attractive news for me and I enjoyed going to church. Unfortunately, my younger sister and brother were not interested in the church and soon stopped attending.

When I was about ten years old, I became a close friend of Jesus. In the meanwhile, our family sometimes went to the Buddhist temple and carried out sacrifices in front of the huge Buddhist statue. Moreover, once or twice a year we attended the ancestral rites which were conducted at the house of the eldest brother of my father. During the ancestral rites, we were required to bow down to several huge tables which were set with various foods for the ancestors of our family. During those times, I felt some guilt with respect to Jesus, but I could not refuse those formalities. I was too young and therefore had no power to refuse …

1.3.2   'I want to go to the church!'

Korean people are very passionate about education. From grade 7, students prepare for matriculation and university and they work hard from early morning until late

evening. My parents were also highly passionate about education. They even moved to another house for the sake of a better education, so that I could enter a famous, highly reputable high school that offered a good education. My parents held high expectations for me while I attended high school, so that they controlled much of my life with regards to my study. During this period, I really enjoyed a good relationship with God and loved Jesus very much. I wanted to know far more about Jesus and I wanted to worship him as often as possible. But my parents thought that a waste of time and they prohibited me from going to church.

Until then, I had been really obedient and a good daughter in my family. I had followed all my parents' directions without any difficulties. They were always proud of me. Unfortunately, I was really enthusiastic about Christianity, which was not just a religion that could make me feel comfortable and good, but rather, encompassed my entire life. I could not reject my faith merely because of the demands of my parents and my studies. Thus, I began to resist the demands of my parents and tried to explain my faith. My parents were shocked by my unexpected behaviour and they seemed to think that the church had spoiled the daughter of which they were proud.

Around that time, the company which my father owned experienced major difficulties. I could not understand the entire situation but some bad things happened in his business and in my family. In particular, my mother believed that those negative events that occurred in our family were the result of the existence of different religions in one family. She often said that to practise different religions in one family was harmful; therefore, I should stop attending church. In fact, she was not Buddhist at the time but nevertheless seemed to think that Christianity was a

different religion and not suitable for our family. She attributed all the difficulties in our family to Christianity.

My parents imposed strict supervision. They physically prevented me from going to church, and applied intellectual and emotional pressure on me to give up my Christian faith. They sometimes prohibited me from going out anywhere on a Sunday. If they discovered any clue that I had attended a church service, I was punished for going. My parents also forced me to attend ancestral rites. I could not own a Bible or have it in my room nor could I go to church for worship. There was nobody to support or understand me in my home, not even in my church. I had to keep my faith to myself. The pain of this situation has remained inside me as an emotional wound in my faith life.

1.3.3   'You cannot understand me.'

Sometimes I pretended to go to the library in order to attend worship at the church and read the Bible at school. It was quite difficult and painful to cheat my family.

One day, my church planned to conduct field worship in the park and the pastor asked church members to take a lunch box for the special day. What an impossible task for me! I was hiding from my parents the fact that I attended church, thus, to ask for a lunch box for Sunday might be a very doubtful proposition. Hence, I could not attend the special worship day and was really disappointed. On the Sunday, I just played with my friends. However, my friends in the church misunderstood me. They simply thought that my absence was intentional so that I could play with my other

friends. Actually, I could not explain the reason for this absence to my friends at the church because I thought that most friends in a Christian family could not understand my situation and nor would they want to take my story seriously.

At the age of 19 years old, I could enjoy some freedom of religion because I was a university student. My parents consented to my following a different religion but they still did not allow extra activities in the church such as Bible study and outreach. In fact, they only allowed me to participate in one social activity. They always kept an eye on me and worried about me lest I became a religious fanatic. They believed that the church is needed only for basic social activity. Thus, my church activities were rather limited. In spite of their attitude regarding the church, I was really happy about the limited freedom allowed.

In the church, a friend (23 years old.) with a similar religious background in her family also experienced difficulty maintaining her faith. She was always required to adhere to strict return times when she attended church on Sundays. Sometimes, we noticed that her parents tried to take their daughter home from the church, even during the worship time. They were really upset about their daughter who wanted to be at church for the service. The parents held a really negative attitude towards the church and Christianity. Most of her friends at the church worried about her and felt pity for her. The girl was really embarrassed about the behaviour of her parents, and did not want to comment about the incident at all. Most church friends also felt uncomfortable about her parents, and only mentioned them, out of necessity, with regards to evangelistic work for the non-Christian family.

Similarly, I also could not talk about my difficulties with my parents. Sometimes I could not participate in the worship nor attend the Bible study. Sometimes, I could not attend the outreach or some of the camps organised by the church. Whenever I missed those activities of the church, I could not explain the reason for my absence to the people of the church. In fact, I tried, but most people of the church seemed to have a poor understanding of my specific faith background and thought that I was just pious. Moreover, they generally tried to emphasise my duty to spread the gospel to non-Christian family members. I really did not like that kind of approach for my specific faith situation. I just wanted to share my pain.

1.3.4 The purpose of sharing my story

My story is similar to those young believers interviewed in the current undertaking. I also have non-Christian family members and have endured similar experiences of struggling with family members because of Christianity. I have sometimes shared my stories with the young adults in our research conversations. In doing so, the co-researchers were able to feel some kind of fellowship with me. This helped them to talk about their own stories more actively. I think that the sharing of my story could offer a safe environment in which co-researchers can tell theirs.

Müller, Van Deventer and Human (2001:78) insist: "…the narrative researcher has subjective integrity in mind and strives for participatory interaction". Narrative research does not constitute analysing or generating the subject matter but rather, listening to the stories of these subjects and encouraging them to be heard. In narrative research work, the researcher should therefore be a passionate participant in

order to collaborate with the co-researchers. Through remembering and telling my story, I can better understand the context of this research as well as retain my curiosity during the current study.

Moreover, my story could offer a basic source for the understanding of the stories of my co-researchers and the context of the present research. I will describe the context in detail before relating the subjective stories. Before so doing, I hope that my story will stimulate some measure of curiosity regarding this context as well as provide a basic source for the reader in order to understand the context.

Additionally, I am aware of some difficulties that may occur during my research as a result of sharing my story, mostly connected with the relationship between researcher and co-researchers. Thus, I would like to refer to these difficulties in terms of the relationship between researcher and co-researchers in the next section.

1.4   THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CONTEXT AND ME

As mentioned above, the researcher should be an enthusiastic participant in order to collaborate with the co-researchers, the relationship with whom is important. The researcher may influence the unfolding story simply by his or her existence and by listening to the story. Thus, the relationship that develops during the interview situation should be borne in mind (Gilbert 2002:229).

Nevertheless, to judge the stories of the participants on the basis of my personal experience and to have any intention to analyse the stories and/or to generate any

theory as an expert in conducting this research would inhibit or distort our quest to understand our stories more fully and to open up possibilities for the future. "To allow the stories of people and communities to be fully told, the researcher that works from a narrative perspective has to be in a 'not–knowing' position" (Müller *et al.* 2001:81). The 'not-knowing' position implies the attitude that we can accept and understand the stories of people without any judgement or prior intentions. Sometimes my similar experience within the context might lead me to judge people's stories and/or interfere in theirs with certain intentions by which I could lead our stories according to my way of thinking concerning the present research. Thus, by adopting a 'not-knowing' position, I could maintain my position in the research conversation, while even writing up the study; hence, already, I am not a knower but a prepared participant who is curious to listen to the stories of the co-researchers.

At the beginning of our research conversations, the participants expressed great concern about my story and thus felt satisfied to tell theirs. In such a situation, to ascribe the same value to the stories told by the researcher and the co-researchers is important. In order to prevent a hierarchical position during our conversations, I did not tell mine in advance. Because of my position as a researcher in these conversations, my story could have influenced those of the co-researchers, which would not yet have been told. Furthermore, they might prejudge their stories, be selective and/or think about our stories according to my way of thinking, through listening to mine in advance. Thus, I, tried to reflect on the stories of the co-researchers without any judgement based on my own experience and then to tell my story only to provide a voice in the research conversation as one of the participants.

Moreover, this undertaking is not an objective study that has to be analysed and/or generated by me. I will draw on stories that were told in research conversation by co-researchers and myself and reflect on those at an interdisciplinary level in order to reconstruct them so as to discover their alternative meanings. I will also discuss those alternative findings with the co-researchers, and once again reflect in order to determine future possibilities. I will maintain my position while conducting this research, not as an observer or analyst, but as an enthusiastic participant who collaborates with the stories of the co-researchers and context.

1.5   RESEARCH GAP WITHIN EXISTENT RESEARCH

In our present church life, the stories of these young adult Christians have not been taken seriously. The church tends to concentrate on our individual faith lives, encouraging the Christian family to live their faith more fruitfully and be enriched. Therefore, the voices of the young believers with a non-Christian family may be marginalised in our present church life as well as in their faith life.

In this situation, it was somewhat difficult to find existing studies related to the intended research context. I did come across certain comments on a number of websites and several religious books for Christians with non-Christian family members. Usually they focus on spreading the gospel to non-Christian family members and a non-Christian neighbourhood. One can find a few suggestions for being a good model as a Christian in a non-Christian family on several Christian websites and books. Furthermore, these sources suggest some practical guidelines to engage non-Christian family members in the Christian faith life. For instance, one of

those websites, 'Hanulsungyohye' at <http://café.daum.net/forheaven2000>, offers some advice for people with a non-Christian family and organises prayer meetings for the salvation of non-Christian family members. Kim (2004) attempts to relate the painful stories of those with non-Christian family members, but his book focuses on encouraging Christian readers to spread the gospel to their non-Christian family members. Most of these kinds of sources focus on offering guidelines regarding some practical techniques to live together with, and to spread the gospel to, non-Christian family members.

I also found a few research works covering a similar subject to that of mine. In her D. Min thesis, Lee (1998) attempts to improve self-confidence amongst Christian wives and to encourage the mission of communicating the gospel to their non-Christian husbands through Bible study. Eun (2001) analyses the report of the Korean Gallup (1997) in order to explain the religious homogeneity between parents and adult children. He insists that although the religious homogeneity of the parents in a family is quite high, that between the parents and adult children is weak (Eun 2001:161). This indicates the possibility of difficulties in the relationship between parents and their adult children as a result of the different religion which the latter may follow. Moon (2002:83, 84) studied family troubles and modes of cultural adaptation in the family relations of people who convert to Christianity. She conducted a case study with a particular focus on parents and married children. She insisted that the religious tensions among the family members are affected by the Confucian, patriarchal family system of Korea. Thus, when a wife or a married son converts to Christianity, the possibilities of greater tensions can occur in the family.

The above studies take the very first step in researching religious difficulties and/or tensions within the family in the specific background of Korea. Thus many more possibilities for further research exist. In the present study, I would like to focus particularly on religious difficulties between parents and unmarried adult children by using the narrative approach. I will also concentrate on their church life stories in which they feel marginalised because of their specific faith background. In the said research, I do not have any intention to encourage Christians to spread the gospel to their non-Christian family members but I shall attempt to concentrate on their own faith life stories in which they have experienced difficulties in their home and in their church every day because of Christianity.

1.6   UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

1.6.1   Multi-religious Society

Korea exhibits unique religious characteristics in comparison with other countries. One of the most noteworthy such characteristic is that a number of religions coexist. If asked to define the major religion of Korea, nobody can answer confidently. Shamanism, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism have influenced the philosophy of Korean society since ancient times, and continue to do so even today. Christianity was also introduced into Korea at the end of the 19th century, owing to the government's open-door policy towards foreign cultures (Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1989:127). As a result, several new religions also coexist with those that are ancient.

In the multi-religious situation of Korea, no one religion takes precedence over another (C S Kim 2002:154). Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity have all influenced Korean culture similarly. According to the '2005 Population and Housing Census Report', 53.1% of the population follow some form of religion in Korea. Within the religious population, the result of the report indicates that 43% follow Buddhism, 34.5%, Christianity, 20.6% Catholic, 0.4% Confucianism, 0.5% Won-Buddhism and 0.1% other forms of religion (Korean National Statistical Office 2005). A common guess would be that Confucianism and/or Buddhism are the dominant religions of Korea, but Christianity, Catholicism and other religions have influenced Korean society to a considerable degree.

Furthermore, 46.5% of the population present themselves as being irreligious (Korean National Statistical Office 2005). When we understand the religious structures and influence within this society, the irreligious people should also be considered, since they have also made a meaningful contribution to Korea.

In the light of this background, it can be said that both the coexistence of religious harmony and of discord among the various religions are evident in Korean society. A number of religions coexist without any restrictions laid down by the government; people can choose any religion for themselves; and religious organizations compete and develop without restraint. These facts suggest religious harmony in Korean society. On the other hand, an uneasy tension exists among the religions. For instance, the Korean government is extremely careful to respect any religious propensity. The birthdays of Jesus and Buddha are both public holidays in the Korean calendar and the government organises religious performances on these days. Certain Korean

politicians attempt to utilise any religious propensity for political gain. Within these religious activities, much can be gained, and likewise, much can be lost. They may enjoy political benefits, but may face major protestations from other religions and those who are irreligious. Thus, the Korean government makes every endeavour to maintain religious neutrality. In the light of the aforesaid, religious discord within the Korean society is possible and indeed evident.

1.6.2   Folk religions of Korea

Shamanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, the folk religions, have influenced Korean cultural traditions, philosophy and spirituality since ancient times. Over many years, these religions have developed individually and influenced each other. C S Kim (2002:156) points out that one of the characteristics of Korean spirituality is the harmony between various forms of belief. He provides an example of the tradition of harmony between Buddhism and shamanism. For instance, we normally find shamans employing the Buddhist emblem (卍) in their temples. To distinguish between these religious traditions completely in Korean society is rather difficult. For many years, these religions have influenced and considered each other in Korean culture. Therefore, in order to understand the religious background of Korea it is necessary to first understand the characteristics of those Korean folk religions and their influences upon Korean cultural traditions, philosophy and spirituality.

In this chapter, I do not wish to discuss the origin and history of such religions. In order to better understand the Korean religious background, I would rather concentrate on the characteristics of Korean folk religion in comparison to those of

other countries and their influences upon modern Korean cultural traditions and philosophy.

1.6.2.1 Korean Shamanism (*Musok*)

Shamanism refers to a traditional belief and practice concerned with communication with the spiritual world. It includes admiring aspects of nature such as the heavens, animals, rivers, rain and so on. This shamanistic belief can be summarised in terms of three principal religious concerns that comprise the offering of prayers for the prosperity of the land, the curing of disease, and the propitiation of and the sending-off of the soul of the deceased to the next world. Until recently, these functions were performed by the shaman and have remained as diagnostic characteristics of the Korean religious experience (Grayson 2002:21). This shamanic belief and its traditions have altered and developed uniquely in Korea, being known as *Musok*.

The representative practitioners of *Musok* are shamans, of whom there are two kinds in Korea, female shamans called *mudang*, and male shamans called *paksu* (Grayson 2002:218). The female shaman, *mudang*, plays a major role in the shamanic practice, *gut*, when shamans try to communicate with the spiritual world in order to solve the abovementioned three principal concerns of the shamanic belief.

Musok is one of the most wide-spread religions in Korea even to the present day. One typical example of the performance of *Musok*, which is practised by modern Korean society, is that of *Whangsŭ-Megi* for the prevention of fire and water disasters during the forthcoming year in the month of January, the new beginning of the spring season.

The name of the shamanic performance varies from province to province. In some places it is called *Pudakguli*, which means 'to throw away' (Lee 1973:272). This kind of seasonal shamanic performance has been practised since antiquity.

In ancient times, *Musok* was one of the methods which could strengthen solidarity and loyalty: thus *Musok* belief and performance was usually practised by rural communities. In modern society, *Musok* has become an individual practice to provide answers to the general problems of life (Lee 2006: 8). People visit shamans to seek answers for the unsolved problems in their lives, to be given a propitious date for a wedding, for relocating, and even for giving birth. Occasionally, the religious performance of *gut* is practised in order to supplicate the deity for tranquillity and happiness in an individual's life, his/her family and the nation. In this manner, Korean *Musok* has been weakened and has disappeared in certain regions, but the traditions have successfully been retained in modern society (Lee 2006:10). Nowadays, therefore, *Musok* tends to be regarded as one of the cultural traditions of Korea rather than a religion. People believe that the shamanic performance and the practice of the shaman should be retained and carried over to the next generations as a unique cultural inheritance.

1.6.2.2 Confucianism

Most of all, Confucianism has been regarded as a principal foundation of East Asian peoples as regards moral and social values. There have been many opinions which explain Confucianism as a religion or philosophy. In the modern society of Korea, Confucianism has played an important role as a social philosophy rather than a

religion. People rarely represent their religion as Confucian and Confucianism is not listed as an item in the general religious census of Korea (Eun 2001:131). In spite of this fact, it is pivotal to understand Confucianism in order to comprehend the relationships among people, the moral values, and philosophy of modern Korean society.

Park (1992:175) generally defines Confucianism as "… a Chinese way of thought which teaches that one should be loyal to one's family, friends, and rulers, and treat others as one would like to be treated". Confucianism focuses on shaping the moral system, the way of life, social relations between husband and wife, father and son, elder and younger, king and subject. Within these social relationships, previous positions always take priority over later ones and possess a respectable moral value. Confucianism formed the foundational system of philosophy in the *Chosŏn* dynasty (1392-1920) and was responsible for its prosperity. Confucianism constituted an important political philosophy of this dynasty in its rule over the country and people. Through this philosophy, the *Chosŏn* dynasty developed royal authority and adopted Confucianism as a basic philosophy so as to maintain public order among the populace.

In modern Korean society, Confucian tradition continues to influence family relationships, political attitudes, approaches to problem-solving and many other aspects of Korean life (Yi & Douglas 1967:43). Its influence is quite widespread, while it is difficult to accurately detect its peculiar characteristics in Korean life. Park (1992:181) mentions that "The most important observance under the strong influence of Confucianism has been ancestor-memorial services …" in modern Korean society.

This is known as *chesa* in Korea, whether the ancestral rites are performed in the traditional or modern fashion, to welcome the spirits, share prepared food offerings, escort away the spirits at the conclusion of the rites, and/or for those present to consume the food (Grayson 2002:181). It is not simply a memorial service with regard to the ancestors but communication with them as well as an expression of respect towards them at the same time. Some elements of Confucianism are observed as a religion in which people try to communicate with the spiritual world in order to supplicate the spirits for the well-being of the family within *chesa*, but currently, the ceremony of *chesa* is considered more of a necessary moral value.

1.6.2.3 Buddhism

Buddhism was introduced into China from India during the first century A.D. and to Korea officially via China in A.D. 372. It became the state religion between 550 and 664 A.D., and represented the height of prosperity in that the Buddhist monks periodically dominated the rulers. Kings, princes and princesses often became bonzes and a number of temples and statues were built during that period (Conze 1980: 94).

The main teachings of Buddhism concern reincarnation and *karma*. The concept of rebirth is that all unenlightened beings are reincarnated whether they want to be or not. A person can even be reincarnated as an animal, ghost, and another person in a different relationship in the next life. For instance, a person may dislike someone in the present life, but may enjoy a very close relationship with his/her previous enemy, such as becoming the son of this enemy in the reincarnated life. After all, reincarnation emphasises loving-kindness towards all beings (Harvey 1990:38). At

the same time, Buddhism focuses on the present life, which might be different in the next.

The Buddhist teaching of reincarnation is based on *karma*. Park (1992:174) explains that each person must carry his/her own burden of sin and must go alone to the retribution for sin in the concept of *karma.* In particular, the teaching of *karma* was accepted by the royal houses in order to attain a privileged position for the aristocracy (Park 1992:174). Therefore, before the *Chosŏn* dynasty, Buddhism was encouraged as a major political philosophy which could provide a firm support to the social structure. Within these teachings, the goal of Buddhism was to attain a high standard of morality and find one's real ego, which is close to the image of Buddha. In order to overcome the above limitations, the human being needs to be fully enlightened, like Buddha. He knew all that was required to attain final peace, in which he could be an infallible guide regarding spiritual matters (Conze 1980:25). For the purpose of training for the discovery of the real ego (enlightenment), Buddhist temples tended to be built in the mountains, separate from the villages.

Park (1992:173) notes: "In its process of assimilation into traditional religious thought, Buddhist beliefs at the grass-root level were integrated with shamanic beliefs, and ancient folk beliefs were maintained alongside the Buddhist rituals". For instance, references to monks and Buddhist temples commonly occur in ancient literature and folk tales, where monks are frequently viewed as a prophet and/or fortune teller. This example illustrates the shamanic influence upon Buddhism.

In modern Korean society, Buddhism, which is concerned with freedom from the

trammels of ordinary life, seeks the real ego, by means of vigorous participation in political and social activities, and is one of the larger religions of Korea. A number of Buddhist temples have moved from the mountains into urban areas, where schools and hospitals have been founded on Buddhist principles, and new Buddhist social and economic organisations have arisen. Tedesco (2002:135) mentions that "Most progressive Korean Buddhist social leaders view their activities as a re-empowerment or revitalization of their ancient national Buddhist heritage …". Because of conversion to Christianity, including Catholicism, in modern society, the influence of Buddhism has been weakened. In this sense, the altered activities of Buddhism can be understood as a response to a need in the modern religious situation of Korean society.

1.6.3 Christianity in Korea

Since Christianity was introduced to Korea in 1882, Christianity (especially the Protestant Church) has experienced enormous growth, along with modernisation in Korea (A E Kim 2002:301, Grayson 2002:155). When Christianity arrived in Korea, it stimulated and enriched social modernisation. With regards to education, the foreign missionaries established and operated schools at all levels, from kindergarten to college. Protestant Christianity informed several key values for political modernisation, such as freedom, human rights, democracy, and equality (A E Kim 2002:301).

Grayson (2002:164) highlights the remarkable 'church growth' of Korea in the 1960s. From this point until the end of the century, more than one quarter of the national

population became Protestant. There are many church buildings all over Korea. Most foreigners are astonished by the numerous red cross signs (which represent church buildings) in every village. With the rapid increase of Christianity, it has formed unique characteristics which have been influenced by Korean folk religion. The tradition of the early morning prayer service commonly practised in Korean protestant churches, the minister is seen as a charismatic figure in conservative circles, the extensive content of the preaching that is centred on belief in *kibok*, a wish for blessings in life, are peculiar characteristics of Korean Christianity (Grayson 2002:165). These unique traditions of Korean Christianity have been influenced by folk religions such as shamanism and Confucianism. Grayson (2002:165) explains these traditions as being problematic for adequate Christian nurture and for education, caused by the rapid growth of Christianity in Korea. In spite of some negative aspects, these traditions have contributed to achieving incomparable, passionate faith and explosive growth in a short period of time.

Currently, Christianity plays a major role socially and politically, while at the same time tension exists within Korean society. Moon (2002:1) explains that Korean Christianity has experienced tension in the relationship with unspecified people, who have publicly adopted Korean culture together with the irreligious members of modern society. Christianity is frequently described as being a violent, exclusive religion that opposes Korean traditional religions and culture. In this sense, Christianity faces new difficulties with non-Christian Korean people who regard Christianity as an imported alien religion in modern society.

1.6.4   Unique characteristics of the Korean family

In modern Korean society, the structure of the family has become nuclear, yet the concept of the extended family is still retained. For instance, the vertical relationship within the family and the focus on the harmony of the whole family rather than individual personality, are characteristics that still remain in the modern nuclear family in Korea. In the present section, I would like to discuss several unique characteristics of the Korean family compared with those of the Western family.

The most remarkable characteristic of the former is the emphasis on the family as a whole. The concept of the 'family' differs between Western and Korean societies. In Western society, the family is generally regarded as a basic social unit comprising one or two parents and their children, and individuals possess the reasonable right to pursue their own happiness, whereas Korean society emphasises the family as an entity or organic community. Each member of the family is obliged to contribute to the future prosperity of his or her own family (Kim 2001:140). Therefore, the individual personality of the family members tends to be ignored for the sake of the community of the family.

The above concept of the family as an organic community can be linked with the unique family relationship witnessed in Korea. In order to establish order within the family, it is important to seek prosperity for the family community. The relationship among the family members tends to be vertical. The nature of this vertical relationship is patriarchal thus emphasising the power of the family head which is normally bestowed upon the eldest man in the family. In the modern society of Korea,

this vertical relationship has been weakened by the influence of individualism and democracy. Nevertheless, the tendency of family members to respect and obey the family head and the older members is evidence of the moral values that are retained in the family.

Moreover, Koreans usually experience a very short period, if any, of independent living in their life cycle. Usually, people live with their parents prior to marriage (Shin 2001:136). Therefore, adults continue to live under the powerful influence of their parents.

The above characteristics of the Korean family have emerged in modern Korean society as a unique form of Korean familism.

1.7 SUMMARY

One of the religious characteristics of Korea is that a number of religions coexist, such as Shamanism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and several new religions. Against this multireligious background, both religious harmony and discord among various religions coexist in Korean society. Many religions live side by side without any restrictions being imposed by the government; people can choose any religion for themselves; and religious organisations compete and develop without restraint. These facts indicate the religious harmony of Korean society. On the other hand, an uneasy tension can be detected among the various religions.

Within the family, religious harmony and discord may also occur. Normally, when a

person chooses a religion, s/he tends to consider the family religion and/or its effect on the family members, known as the religious identity of the family. In this sense, religious homogeneity within the Korean family can be preserved. Therefore, to adhere to a religion different from that of one's own family will cause serious difficulties and/or conflict within the family.

In the present study, I would like to listen to the stories of young adults who are in conflict with their parents and their brothers and sisters and wish to maintain their Christian faith in this respect. These young adults are unmarried people; thus, they have not yet become independent. Furthermore, I would also like to concentrate on the church life stories of young adult Christians with a non-Christian family. Because of their specific faith background, sometimes they feel as though they are being marginalised from other Christians in the church.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH POSITIONING AND PRACTICAL EXECUTION

2.1   RESEARCH POSITIONING WITHIN EPISTEMOLOGY

The epistemological position of the present research adopts a narrative perspective which is based on social constructionism. Moreover, as a practical theologian I adopt a post-foundationalist practical theology which has been developed from post-foundationalism for more effective collaboration within the interdisciplinary conversation which is carried out between the various social science disciplines and theological reflection from a narrative perspective.

2.1.1   Narrative perspective

"A narrative is an account of events occurring over time. It is irreducibly durative". (Bruner 1991:6) Within their ongoing life, people experience various events and interpret these in different ways. Scholars who work within the narrative perspective are interested in the experienced narratives of people and attempt to study these experienced and represented narratives of people in the interdisciplinary field. "Using the narrative metaphor leads us to think about people's lives as stories and to work with them to experience their life stories in ways that are meaningful and fulfilling". (Freedman & Combs 1996: 1) In the narrative perspective, every life story of each person is taken seriously.

The narrative perspective should be understood in terms of the social constructionist

paragraph. The major debate of social science in the earlier part of the 20th century concerned the issue of 'reality'. The modernists of that period argued that "… reality is knowable - its elements and workings can be accurately and replicably discovered, described and used by human beings" (Freedman & Combs 1996:20). They identified knowledge as an objective which can be achieved within various scientific activities; thus, the individual's knowledge could be externally situated in the material world separated from ourselves. Those holding a modernist world view believe that it is possible to discover 'objective' fact which can be generated by applicable theories and that they can approach closer to an accurate understanding of the real universe through these theories (Freedman & Combs 1996:20). Therefore, modernists made efforts "… to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art, according to their inner logic" (Habermas 1981:9) for the enrichment of everyday life; as a result they regarded the natural sciences as central. (Hermans, Immink, de Jong & Van der Lans 2001:3).

'Science' emerged triumphantly as a superior form of rational thinking in the modernist world view, which caused a marginalisation of mental or spiritual life such as religious experiences as a privatised form of subjective thought (Van Huyssteen 1999:17). Reacting to this situation, postmodernists attempt to communicate with various disciplines such as science, morality, religion, and art. As suggested, social constructionism is one of the approaches in social science which have developed from a postmodernist perspective.

The ability of human beings to make absolute rules, create general systems and precise theories which are intended to measure and describe the universe and even

human beings' lives is limited. Hence, social constructionists try to concentrate on a meaning that is interpreted from experiences (Freedman and Combs 1996:21, 22), by which people mould their realities which are never fixed and/or generated, and can change and develop through the process of reinterpreting.

One of the important features of social constructionism is that "… much attention is given to the influence of the scientific dialogues on the possible meanings. The meaning of words does not exist outside of the conversations in which it functions" (Ganzevoort 2006:2). Social constructionists consequently focus on finding different meanings and effects within the interpreting of experienced stories. This work – finding meanings and effects – can open up space to think about other possibilities for a better future and for new realities for the people whose stories are investigated.

Moreover, to discover the meanings and effects of people's interpreted stories, the latter should be considered within the larger social context. Müller (1999:46) explains social constructionism as follows: "… there is no such thing as an individual story. The story of the self cannot be told without the stories of the selves of the rest. Everyone's own story has a boundary, but is also explained by the larger story within which it functions." Our life stories cannot be explained as themselves alone. The stories are formed and developed in various interactions and influences within a broader social context. Thinking about these broader social influences on our lives can offer us a deeper understanding of the problem(s) we are facing, and we can concentrate not just on these but also on the meanings and effects of these problem(s) in our lives.

Müller (1999:46) mentioned that "… we build our realities in a social constructionistic manner, and open the way for the narrative approach". Our life stories are never narrated alone nor are they fixed in the specific individual context. Through telling and retelling our stories, we can discover a broader context which exerts various influences upon our life stories, and we can locate the method to recognize it in the narrative approach. A distinguishing character of narrative work is that we try to make visible the discourses which are supporting problematic life stories and the discourses which are usually invisible (Freedman & Combs 2002:107). When our stories are perceived in the light of broader social contexts which influence the stories in diverse ways, the invisible discourses can be revealed, which may offer an opportunity to deconstruct and reconstruct stories. Through such deconstruction and reconstruction, the narrative approach seeks to identify the preferred story that satisfies people more fully in their lives. Within this narrative paradigm that is based on social constructionism, we can always cherish a hope for the future through the never-ending reinterpreting of our life experiences. I find this constantly active process of the narrative approach quite interesting. In this present study, I concentrate on the meanings that young adult Christians accorded to their stories and effects of their interpretations in a broader social context and I attempt to discover discourses that positively influence the stories of young adult believers with non-Christian family members through the process of telling and retelling those stories. I hope that, in the light of their discourses which are supporting their present stories, they can locate the marginalised discourses – "… stories that exist, but are not widely circulated or powerfully endorsed …" (Freedman & Combs 2002:14) – for narrating more satisfying stories in their lives.

2.1.2   My theology

I studied social science during my B.A, and began studying theology five years after finishing the degree. In the meantime, as a Christian who has been influenced by Korean protestant theology and by the social scientific way of thinking at the same time, I tended to separate those two paradigms. Even though I live in the postmodernist world, it seemed to be an ambiguous act, or a difficult one, to adopt religious reflections/interpretations which are experienced in the presence of God within the social scientific context.

In fact my academic study of theology started in South Africa with my MPhil, and I have been studying the narrative approach in the theology faculty since my MA, but it was still difficult for me to include religious experience and/or theological hermeneutics within the collaborative work of doing narrative. Among colleagues who have studied the narrative approach with me, an issue which frequently emerged was the isolation of theology (more precisely, theological reflection and Christian beliefs) within the narrative paradigm. For us as theologians, to discover our theological identity in our collaboration with various scientific disciplines was difficult, yet, as one who works within the narrative perspective and theology at the same time, it was necessary for me to seek this identity, particularly since the present PhD thesis is focused on the faith life of young adults. Thus, to explain the rational interaction between science and theology is imperative. Moreover, I could not establish a rational theoretical foundation for an adequate interaction between theology and social science. For the work towards my PhD thesis, Prof. Müller, my supervisor, suggested adopting postfoundationalism, a paradigm which allows me to

feel comfortable in the interaction between theology and science. Thus, for the present study I would like to base my epistemological positioning on the postfoundationalism which is outlined by Van Huyssteen. Also, in terms of the practical theology paradigm, I intend to adopt the postfoundationalist practical theology which is discussed by J C Müller.

2.1.3   An adequate interaction between science and theology

Van Huyssteen (1998a:5) points out that to enter the complex and multifaceted dialogue between theology and the sciences is often daunting or confusing. He attempts to explain the difficult dialogue with postmodern attitudes as follows: "Postmodernity challenges us to deal with the fact that we have clearly been robbed of general, universal, or abstract ways to talk about the relationship between religion and science today" (Van Huyssteen 1998a:2). In fact, for Christians, people have found their significance through the story of God's creation, salvation, and especially of God's action in the world, which has always provided cosmic and absolute truth (Van Huyssteen 1998a:2). These are diametrically opposed to the postmodernist's request for an interaction between theology and the sciences. Rae, Regan and Stenhouse (1994:141) aver that scientists seem to believe science on account of its empirical base. They (Rae *et al*. 1994:141) explain this scientists' overconfidence in science: "… I think that they believe in science because it articulates aspects of a conceptual web of such richness that it overpowers all resistance. They, like St Paul in Romans 8, 'are persuaded'".

In the world in which we live, there exist many ambiguities which cannot be

explained and/or described in any scientific way, such as privatized and specialized individual beliefs, faith and/or supernatural experiences of the human being that coexist simultaneously with aspects that can be articulated. Without affording consideration to both of these aspects in their worlds, scientists will not be easily satisfied within their own paradigms.

Conversely, currently theological reflection seems to be firmly involved in postmodernist radical pluralism. However, paradoxically, theological reflection still seems to fall into the kind of modernist dilemma in which religious faith as a privatized form of subjective experience and opinion tends to be distinguished from scientific rationality (Van Huyssteen 1998a: 10). These contradictory and discordant attitudes of theology and the sciences lead people who would like to work with an approach recognizing the sufficient and adequate interdisciplinary connection between them into a confusing and confrontational setting.

Foundationalists tend to isolate theology from interaction between science and theology. Erickson (2001: 20) interprets the definition of foundationalism as "… the knowing process, [in which] there are certain unshakeable starting points that are not justified by any other propositions". He also refers to another element of foundationalism, which "… serve[s] as justification for other beliefs which are therefore mediately justified" (Erickson 2001:20). The foundationalism of modernists indeed focuses on invariable and warranted beliefs. The foundationalist perspective could bring about the attentive development of theology, but because of this self-confidence or lack of doubt of modernists, they could "… eliminate any possibility of discovering a meaningful epistemological link between theology and

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the other sciences" (Van Huyssteen 1999: 62).

In summary, nonfoundationalism presents a strong reaction against the modernist's supreme conviction with regards to knowledge and it highlights the fact that every historical context, and every cultural or social group, "… every social or human activity could in principle function as a framework for human rationality" (Van Huyssteen 1999:63). Utilizing the reflective notion of nonfoundationalism, postmodernism can make remarkable epistemological progress. Postmodernism that is "… moving beyond the modernist dilemma of opposing objective science to radically subjective religion seems to create acceptable context for theological reflection" (Van Huyssteen 1999:68) within nonfoundationalism. Of course nonfoundationalism could offer space for theological reflections but it tends to think theologically only for confessional purposes; thus the value and/or influences of theology tend to be reduced and/or ignored (Van Huyssteen 1999:68).

Within these notions of foundationalism and nonfoundationalism, to discover an adequate meeting point between science and theology seems to be difficult. In the light of the above difficulties experienced when foundationalism and nonfoundationalism attempt to create a rational space for science and theology, postfoundationalism is proposed as one type of attempt in this regard.

2.1.4   Postfoundationalism

Van Huyssteen suggests postfoundationalism as a safe space for rational interdisciplinary work between theology and science. He especially focuses on the

request to talk meaningfully about God, and about God's action in the world through the safe arena in which theology and science can engage in true interdisciplinary reflection (Van Huyssteen 1998a:7). Thus, a major aim of the interdisciplinary reflection on postfoundationalism is to open up the possibility in which people's religious reflections can be placed on an equal level with the interaction with the sciences.

Van Huyssteen (1998a:16, 17) notes that the postmodernist's limitation of excessive over-credulity about science is just one of many ways of knowing the world. Therefore, in the postmodern philosophy of science, postmodernists should trust the local context of practice and recognize the way that tradition shapes the daily activity of the scientists in the workplace for the purposes of performing reliable interdisciplinary work between theology and science. Also, in doing theology, theologians should reconstruct theological reflection as a mode of cognition with a legitimate interdisciplinary location (Van Huyssteen 1997:12). When we relate our religious world through the mediation of interpreted experience, we can create a context for our religious awareness (Van Huyssteen 1997:21). Through this mediated structure, theological disciplines can be revealed as a form of the interpretation of experiences in their context and can make use of the possibility of interacting with science, for the purposes of true interdisciplinary work.

Van Huyssteen (1998b:219) explains the epistemological criteria within postfoundationalism:

If we relate to the past and to our traditions through interpreted

experiences, and if we accept the fact the continuity of tradition can no longer be a foundationalist premise from which we can deduce other truths, then we have arrived in the pluralist world where many interpretations of the same tradition are alive and well.

Both of them, science and theology, are closely related to the context in which we live. Within the process of the continually constructed traditions of the context, our interpretations of scientific and theological experiences may have made increasing use of rational reflections. Therefore, specific theories, absolute commitment, and natural science can be regarded as situated on the same level as legitimate interdisciplinary work when we recognise our world in terms of our interpreted experiences. Van Huyssteen (1998a:29) also insists that "Our ability to make rational judgments and share them with various and different epistemic communities …" enables us to have a meaningful interdisciplinary communication between science and theology within the paradigm of interpreted experiences. When we accept our critical and problem-solving ability, we can trust that the active and continual interdisciplinary work of a collective process can lead us to rational reflections with which we can be satisfied. The above propositions of postfoundationalism do not compel theology to share the same assumptions with various social disciplines, but can help us to uncover a way in which "we can talk with one another and criticize our traditions while standing in the pluralist world"' (Van Huyssteen 1998a:29).

2.1.5   Postfoundationalist practical theology

Particularly, "Practical theology happens whenever and wherever there is a reflection

on practice, from the perspective of the experience of the presence of God." (Müller 2005:2) We cannot detach any reflections on religious experience from doing practical theology. Christians usually reflect on their religious experiences and beliefs within the presence of God, and through such reflection they construct their religious identity. Also, the moulding of religious identity through reflection has happened in the practical context and theoretical context. Therefore, "… the primary subject matter of practical theology is some form of Christian praxis in the contemporary world" (LeRon Shults 2006:328). From their understanding of Christian praxis, practical theologians attempt to interpret it and to construct a theological framework for the purpose of providing practical models and guidelines for future conduct and reform (LeRon Shults 2006:328). Because the process which is seeking more rational understandings of Christian praxis in order to devise such models and guidelines is endless, it is always open to the future, which continually stimulates further studies.

Within our present postmodern world, interdisciplinary research has been challenged by social scientists and practical theologians. However, the most important task for researchers to function adequately at the interdisciplinary level is for them to explore how they can offer rational reasons for so doing: this can be done fairly successfully in the relationship between science and theology. On the part of the scientists, do they really advance sufficient reasons for satisfactory interdisciplinary work which includes the theological disciplines? On the part of the practical theologians, do they really want to collaborate with various disciplines, including social science, by adequate interdisciplinary means to gain a deeper understanding about Christian praxis, not merely by borrowing some scientific disciplines to explain it? Van

Huyssteen (1998b:213) has described the appropriate attitude of theologians as follows: "As theologians, we need to avoid the arrogance of prescribing overarching, basic rules for interdisciplinary dialogue". Theologians need to offer rational reasons why their approaches are more adequate than others (LeRon Shults 2006:338). LeRon Shults (2006:341) argues that the transversal approach to interdisciplinary work in van Huyssteen's model may furnish more satisfactory reasons to scientists and theologians. Van Huyssteen suggests that a new space for adequate communication between science and theology be created. He (van Huyssteen 1998a:7) insists that when we relate our world through interpreted experience, we can operate according to the values of both theological reflections and scientific reflections. In the new space of the world of interpreted experience, we can discover rational reasons for adequate transversal interdisciplinary work between science and theology.

During the last century practical theology struggled to gain equal status with scientific disciplines and with the other theological disciplines as well, rather than focusing on practical theological reflection. In this process, unfortunately, the contact with the informal forms of practical theological reflection became weakened (Müller 2005:2). In practical theology, which is always connected with 'the moment of praxis (always local, embodied, and situated)' (Müller 2005:2), theoretical context and practical context should be situated on an equal level. Furthermore, these disciplines of practical theology should interact sufficiently with scientific disciplines to arrive at meaningful interpretations/reflections. To adopt postfoundationalism while undertaking practical theology can contribute to the work of discovering meaning. I think that to concentrate on the deconstructing and reconstructing of the context on

the interdisciplinary level should be the major aim of doing a practical theology based on postfoundationalism. Thus, I will focus on the deconstructing and reconstructing process in 'the moment of praxis', which is never fixed or general, as regards my interaction with theological reflections/interpretations, various scientific disciplines and scientific reflections.

2.1.6 Postfoundationalist practical theology and narrative approach

Müller (2005:7) observes that: "The idea of socially constructed interpretations and meaning of the social constructionism is clearly part of the postfoundationalist approach." Religious experiences and theological reflections on these are also a part of our life which can be interpreted in the light of the narrative approach. However we, as narrative researchers, need to offer rational reasons as to how we can interpret those theological reflections within the narrative paradigm. As Van Huyssteen (1997:183) points out, narrativists need to operate "… in terms of the internal rules and procedures of the Bible's own language games, not in terms of imported philosophical theories or social scientific laws" for the purpose of offering adequate Christian reflections. "The biblical narratives are already interpretations and already seen through the eyes of faith" (van Huyssteen 1997:185). The biblical narratives can be reflected in our present daily faith life and in our future life. Moreover, religious reflections cannot be interpreted in terms of any social science disciplines. They should be interpreted in the light of the biblical narratives in order to achieve a more adequate understanding of such reflections. Therefore, for more rational and integrated collaboration between religious reflections and other scientific disciplines within narrative approaches, to adopt postfoundationalism will be to offer a more

satisfactory space for such cooperation. Müller (2005:8) describes the value of adopting postfoundationalism in terms of the narrative approach as follows:

> Postfoundationalist practical theology includes the ideas of social constructionism and the narrative approach, but provides us with the apparatus to better position ourselves within a theological world. It also helps us to better position ourselves against the relativistic tendencies in some approaches within social constructionism and the narrative approach.

2.2   RESEARCH POSITIONING WITHIN METHODOLOGY

Within an epistemological positioning which combines a social constructionistic narrative approach and postfoundationalist practical theology, I would like to adopt the seven movements developed by Müller as a narrative research structure.

2.2.1   Narrative research

Usually narrative research is explained under the umbrella of qualitative research, but narrative research should be distinguished from traditional approaches to qualitative research. As Müller and Schoeman (2004:7) observe, the aim of qualitative research is to describe and understand the context. In the qualitative analysis of interviews with participants (narratives), the qualitative researcher tends to fracture the text in the service of interpreting and generalizing it by discussing bits and pieces (Riessman 1993:3). Unlike the character of qualitative research, the

narrative researcher focuses on the process in order to be truthful in doing research. (Müller & Schoeman 2004:8) In the paradigm of social constructionism, the possibility of absolute truth is denied. We work with possibilities. Thus, for the narrative researcher, "… the aim of research is not to bring about change, but to listen to the stories and to be drawn into those stories" (Müller *et al.* 2001:77).

Another important characteristic of narrative work is evident where the researcher focuses on seeking marginalised and unheard stories; by allowing these stories to be heard, the people who are telling them can be empowered to understand and give meaning to their situation (Müller & Schoeman 2004:8). Through the empowering process, people interpret and reinterpret their stories actively, to uncover the preferred story which more fully satisfies their life. Narrative research work is never concluded and generated by specific theory. It is always open to reinterpretations and reconstruction; thus, open-ended narrative research may act as another starting place for further research.

In the present research, I have drawn on the life stories of my co-researchers by representing and interpreting those stories within an interdisciplinary framework in order to attain a deeper understanding of the narratives of the co-researchers which is an ongoing process of telling and retelling. This writing of the present study also constitutes a further continued reconstructing process of the life stories of these co-researchers.

2.2.1.1 The relationship between researcher and co-researcher

Within the narrative perspective all stories are taken seriously and regarded as important. There is no single general, powerful, or correct story in the narrative context. Thus, the stories of researcher and participant are treated as of equal value. Müller *et al.* (2001:77) comment that: "… our research must not in the first instance serve our objectives as researchers, but must be of value for those being researched". This is the reason why one terms the researcher and participants the researcher and the co-researchers. In their collaboration, stories in the context are reinterpreted.

2.2.1.2 The role of researcher

In conducting interviews from a narrative perspective, the researcher listens to her or his co-researcher's stories with a willingness to consider ways of thinking that would be different from the researcher's own (Gilbert 2002:229). As a narrative researcher, it is important to have an open attitude toward listening to the stories of the co-researcher. Such an attitude may be possible when the researcher listens with enthusiasm. The process of telling and retelling might otherwise be quite long and tedious. Additionally, the researcher should not exhibit any judgement and/or prejudice in analysing and/or evaluating the stories of the co-researcher. To listen to and to understand the story in terms of the latter's way of thinking enables us to understand their narratives more fully. In the present research, I should also maintain a patient attitude to listen to my co-researchers' narratives deeply. In order to maintain this position as a narrative researcher, I should really enjoy listening to the stories of the co-researchers. I expect that this joyful and patient attitude will lead me

to a meaningful interaction with their stories.

"In the narrative approach, we look for a deeper meaning; it is not about what is said but how and why it is said" (Gilbert 2002:229). Thus, the researcher tries, in seeking meanings, to concentrate on the interpretation of the co-researcher. To attain a deeper understanding of the narratives of the co-researchers means to discover meanings and effects of those narratives. The researcher attempts to seek these factors through concentrating on the co-researcher's interpretation.

2.2.2   Seven movements

For the present research, I am going to follow the guidelines proposed by Müller. I here provide a brief description followed by these guidelines (Müller 2005:9-12).

1)   A specific context is described

The context/action/field/habitués of 'now' (the present) are described in this stage. 'Action' concerns the 'now' of the story. During the first stage of narrative research, the 'now' of the story should be taken seriously. Our time is never fixed and closed. We are forming our life stories continually within many possibilities. In this phase, the present context should be described in detail. If we can bring light into the 'now' of our life story, it may be possible to discover discourses/traditions that influence the present interpretations/reflections.

2) In-context experiences are listened to and described

Within this phase, the stories of co-researchers listened to during the empirical research are described in order to gain an understanding of the effect of the in-context experiences on the narrative approach.

3) Interpretations of experiences are made, described and developed in collaboration with 'co-researchers'

The researcher in this phase does not seek data, but focuses on the meanings/interpretations offered by the co-researchers so as to develop the story sufficiently.

4) A description of experiences as continually informed by traditions of interpretation

The specific discourses/traditions that inform perceptions and behaviour should be described during this stage. The researcher must identify these discourses/traditions and try to gain some understanding of how current behaviour is influenced by these discourses, through looking at the various social contexts which can influence the formation of discourses.

5) A reflection on religious and spiritual aspects, especially on God's presence, as it is understood and experienced in a specific situation

The co-researchers' religious/ spiritual experiences and/or understandings, in the presence of God, can be integrated into the social constructionist process. This stage is not compulsory, but should offer a valuable contribution in order for one really to hear and to acquire deeper understandings of the co-researchers' interpretations of their events.

6) A description of experience, thickened through interdisciplinary investigation

In this phase, interdisciplinary work should be undertaken. The researcher should listen carefully to the various disciplines, understandings, and reflections and attempt to integrate them all into one. Theological disciplines can also be integrated with other disciplines.

7) The development of alternative interpretations, that point beyond the local community

In this stage, a new story of understanding that points beyond the local community will be emerged and be described. If applicable, the researcher can invite all the co-researchers to engage in the creation of new meaning.

2.2.3   Research outline

Chapter 1:   RESEARCH ORIENTATION

Within this chapter, I will describe the problems to be studied, my curiosity regarding the problems, the research gap, and some sources for understanding the context.

Chapter 2:   RESEARCH POSITIONING AND PRACTICAL EXECUTION

Here the epistemology, methodology, and practical execution of this study will be considered.

Chapter 3:   STORIES OF YOUNG ADULT CHRISTIANS

The specific context of this study will be discussed. Interpretations and descriptions of the context will be developed in collaboration with the co-researchers. Discourses which may influence their interpretations/reflections will be identified and described.

Chapter 4:   RETELLING THE STORY OF THE YOUNG ADULTS

The specific traditions in certain communities and in faith based organisations, which inform interpretations and behaviour, will be identified through interdisciplinary collaboration. Religious and spiritual understandings of the context also operate together within this level. The alternative interpretations, which point beyond the local community, will be developed and identified in this chapter as well.

Chapter 5:   EMPOWERING AND DREAMING THE FUTURE

The reflections of the co-researchers on their alternative interpretations will be discussed in this chapter. Some possibilities and spaces for the future, which were created from the alternative interpretations, will be suggested as well.

Chapter 6:   CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH

The present research process will be reflected on critically and some suggestions for further research will be presented.

2.2.4   The aims of the research

These encompass:

1) listening to and recording the stories of young adult Christians with non-Christian family members in the Republic of Korea, using a narrative approach.

2) listening to the stories of young adults who are in conflict with their parents as regards keeping their Christian faith (focusing on unmarried young people who have not yet become independent from their parents).

3) listening to the church life stories of young adult Christians with a non-Christian family. Because of their specific faith background, sometimes they feel marginalised by other Christians in the church.

4) finding alternative stories and meanings through listening to the Christian life narratives of such adults by means of a narrative approach and interdisciplinary research, in order to assist in opening up some possibilities for the future in which these people can become more completely satisfied with their life.

2.3   PRACTICAL EXECUTION OF THE RESEARCH

2.3.1   Why did I choose young adult Christians?

I have met so many people who are struggling with their family because of the Christian faith. They are in conflict with their parents, husband, and relatives in keeping their beliefs. In this research I am concerned especially about young adult Christians with non-Christian family members. The young Christians whom I have chosen are over 18 years of age and unmarried.

Cigoli (2006:158) refers to 'young adulthood', that is, the ages between 18 and before 30, as a transitional epoch in which the young person moves from the totally marginalised state of adolescence to the fully acknowledged social status of adulthood. He especially focuses on the period of becoming an adult that is called 'the transition to adulthood' (Cigoli 2006:158). Arnett (2000:469) also defines the period between 18 and 25 years as an 'emerging adulthood', which is distinguished from adolescence or young adulthood. In postmodern society, the phase that represents the entry into adult roles has been postponed. Gradually, the ages of marriage and the economic independence of people have been delayed and the period of education has been extended in industrialised countries (Arnett 2000:469, 478).

Thus, the phase during which a person is not adolescent any longer, but is not yet adult, has become longer. Therefore, the importance of the emerging adulthood period in a person's life cycle has recently increased. The young adults who are co-researchers in the present study are in this phase, between 20 and 26 years old, unmarried, and still dependent upon their parents economically. All of them are university students and live with their parents. In fact, they are not adults because of their physical, emotional, and economical dependence even though they have, physically, grown up fully.

Regarding the distinctive subject of emerging adulthood, Arnett (2000:471) observes that "Emerging adults do not see themselves as adolescents, but many of them also do not see themselves entirely as adults". People also do not regard emerging adults as adolescents any longer. Thus, emerging adults are asked to carry more responsibilities and obligations as adults but they cannot be guaranteed the freedom and independence of fully grown adults. They are in an ambivalent situation which is evident in their society and family as well. From this background, I expected that when the young adults convert to Christianity, since this is different from their family's religious identity, they might exhibit many different relationships with their parents and siblings in their family compared with the family relationships[6] of their childhood and adolescence. As Arnett (2000:469) comments, most people who are emerging adults face the major tasks of determining possible life directions in love, work, and worldviews for the purpose of entering adulthood. In regard to their worldview, they are attempting to choose their own beliefs and/or a religion as a

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[6] I defined the family relationships within the household in terms of people who live together in a house.

worldview during this phase. Nevertheless, as I mentioned in chapter 1, the Korean family still tends to keep its religious homogeneity within the family. Because of these disconnected expectations, misunderstandings and conflict in the family could possibly occur. I would therefore like to listen to those stories of emerging adults who are in the transitional phase in their life cycle and are also experiencing difficulties in their family because of their conversion to Christian faith where this is different from their family's religious identity.

2.3.2   Selecting of co-researchers

I needed to define certain boundaries with respect to selecting co-researchers for this study. I, thus, chose young adult Christians, who are over eighteen years old, not married, and still live with their parents. Regarding their family's religious background, there were several possibilities: people who are the only Christian in their family, with non-Christian parents, who have at least one non-Christian mother or father, and so on. In order to define some kind of boundary for selecting co-researchers in detail, I decided that I wanted to listen to the voices of young adult Christians coming from various religious backgrounds in their family.

I held one preliminary interview with eight young adult Christians before beginning the research interviews. Of these, six persons who participated in the preliminary interview had various religious backgrounds in their family, while two came from a Christian family. I intended to discuss the influences of family members' religion upon the faith life of young adult Christians in this session. During the interview, we ascertained that when a lonely Christian has at least one Christian parent, mother or

father, they are able to receive some support from that Christian family member, in order to retain their faith to some extent in the family and in the church as well. This support would be advantageous for their faith life, and would lessen the problems that they face[7]. Participants in the preliminary interview also arrived at the conclusion that the influence of one or two Christian siblings is too weak to support the lonely Christian family member in the family and in the church. For this reason, we agreed that it was more appropriate to select only those with non-Christian parents in their household for the present study. Furthermore, we agreed to allow people with Christian siblings to be co-researchers.

After discussing several possibilities for selecting co-researchers in the preliminary interview, I selected four co-researchers from Pungsunghan Presbyterian church in Korea for the present investigation. They are 20, 24, 25 and 26 years old, not married, still live with their parents, and are cell-leaders of the church. All of their parents are non-Christian while two of them have one Christian sibling in their household. Those young adult Christians consisted of one male and three females. I hope that these criteria will enable us to listen more effectively to the stories that will be told.

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[7] Some people with no Christian family member in their household disagreed about selecting young believers who have at least one Christian father or mother for this research interview. Participants in the interview narrated various influences from a Christian mother or father upon individual faith life and church life as well. I will discuss these influences in detail in chapter 3.

2.3.3   Research methods

2.3.3.1 Interviews

Narrative researchers work with stories in which people interpret their experiences of lives and accord meanings to these in their own way of thinking. To listen to those stories, the narrative interview has been selected as a major method for doing narrative research (Greenhalgh, Russell & Swinglehurst 2005:444). The major purpose of the narrative interview is to perceive the lives of the co-researchers through their own eyes. Within the interview, one can come closer to understanding the meanings that people accord to specialised events of their lives (Ely 1991:58). When the researcher is closer to such understandings, she or he can capture those stories in the interview as data and interpret them appropriately (Greenhalgh *et al.* 2005:444).

The research interviews in this study took place between January 2006 and August 2007. They were carried out once a week with the four young adult Christians described. In the initial phase of the research interviews for this study, the individual interviews were conducted mainly to listen to their interpretations of the present faith life stories and to the meanings they gave to the latter.

In the individual interview, I tried to understand the stories of the co-researchers fully and the meanings within those stories, from their way of thinking. For this understanding, open-ended questioning was commonly used. Ely (1991:66) suggests some examples for asking questions in open ways, as follows:

What did you mean by.....?

You said you liked watching the joggers. Tell me a bit more about that,

please.

You told me you love tennis. Why is that so?

The open-ended question does not confine co-researchers' interpretations within any structured way of thinking. Using this kind of question, the researcher minimises interrupting the narrative of the co-researchers, and focuses on the responses of co-researchers in order to open up the possibilities of reinterpreting the specific event. Riessman (1993:34) notes that the open-ended question assists co-researchers to arrive at interpretations of their experiences together with the researcher, by telling a story that often links with different points in the interview.

I also requested feedback from the participants with respect to my description of the stories as narrated by them. I hope that this feedback enabled both the participants and me to understand the stories more fully and to participate more actively in the present research.

2.3.3.2 Web-activity

In order to assist in developing the story that was narrated in the first stage of the individual interview, I created an internet homepage. I used it in order to listen to the different voices of co-researchers more effectively so as to develop the narrative of the context. The web-activity was carried out between July 2006 and June 2007.

In terms of this activity, I would like to collaborate with various voices for the purposes of more effective developing of narratives. Of course, the stories of the co-researchers were represented on the website, and some literature and other people's stories that were connected with our research topic were also included on it. Theses sources could be read by the co-researchers on the website and could provide a voice that might collaborate with the stories of the co-researchers. Furthermore, in order to add various voices to the stories of the co-researchers for the purpose of more effective collaboration in the web-activity, I also aimed to include a number of people whose family backgrounds are different from those of the co-researchers, to include various voices in our story developing process as 'different voice givers'. I hope that they will offer unique interpretations which stem from different viewpoints to those of the co-researchers' stories, so that I and the co-researchers are able to work with more various voices.

We (the co-researchers and I) discussed the selection of people who could add different voices to our stories; we thus agreed to select three 'different voice givers'. Two of them belonged to pastors with Christian family members while one was that of a young adult Christian, also with Christian family members. The co-researchers wanted to ensure a sense of security so that they could tell their stories, free from any kind of intervention[8]. Therefore, we determined that only the researcher, the co-

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[8] Co-researchers urgently requested this kind of security. They were quite sensitive to allowing people within our research boundary. They wanted to tell their stories to confidantes who understood their stories fully without any judgement or evaluation. The co-researchers seemed to think that most others insufficiently understood them. I attempted to discuss this issue with co-researchers in the interview session, and will represent it in chapter 3, 4.

researchers and the selected three 'voice-givers' could enter, read our stories and reflect on these on the homepage.

On this website, all of the participants (researcher, co-researchers and 'the different voice-givers') were able to tell and interpret their own stories, reflect on those of the other participants and ask questions in order to understand the stories more fully. Also, various interdisciplinary sources requested by the co-researchers for a deeper understanding of the context represented on the web-homepage were provided. I expected that the activity on the web-homepage would provide an exciting space for all of us to listen to the voices of each other and to reflect on the different voices more easily and fully. Through these activities, discourses/traditions might be revealed which could act as a starting point to tell alternative stories that could open up space for the future.

2.3.3.3 Literature study

I studied the relevant literature in order to gain more understandings of the context so that I might more actively participate in the present research and could understand co-researchers' interpretations of their experiences more fully.

Moreover, the reading of specialist literature assisted me in identifying some of the possible discourses operating in the lives of the young adult believers with a non-Christian family. Thus, the participants and I could consider possible discourses. After identifying the discourse in the context, the researcher would try to gain some understanding of how present behaviour is influenced by the discourse through

listening to the story-telling of the co-researcher and to the literature, the art, the culture of a certain context, religious understandings, and experiences of the presence of God (Müller 2005: 10, 11). These understandings of the discourse may develop alternative interpretations of experiences.

2.3.3.4 Recording

So as to retain the data of the interview, I recorded our conversations, and kept the information in my personal computer as an MP3 file. A number of researchers commonly use an audio recording for their interviews because it is an easier and cheaper process than video recording (Ely 1991:82). In fact, video offers greater advantages than audio. It can convey the atmosphere of the interview, and the gesture, facial expressions, tone of voices, and activity of the interviewee (Ely 1991:82). But, I have found that audio taping may have less impact on the interview environment than video taping. For both of these techniques, audio and video, it is compulsory that the researcher gain consent from participants (Marshall & Rossman 1999:148). Basing the technique on the consent of participants, one can start recording, but it is difficult for the participant to relax and to be unaware of the recording. Audio taping may reduce those influences in the interview because of its lesser intrusiveness than video. After several minutes from the beginning of the interview session, participants seemed to become unaware of the audio recorder and relaxed in order to tell their stories. Of course, if the participant asked me to turn off the recorder for a while, I did so.

The recording process provided me with some advantages with regards to the present

research. Firstly, it helped me to plan for the following interview. After finishing each of the interview sessions, I replayed the recording, which gave me further direction and enabled me to compose further questions for the next interview. Secondly, the recordings rendered the transcribing for the current undertaking easier, while also helping to recall the experience of the interview, expand on the details, and often providing a fresh perspective on the context (Ely 1991:82).

2.3.3.5 Transcribing

Transcription can be understood as the "… graphic representation of selected aspects of the behaviour of individuals engaged in a conversation" (Flick, von Kardoff & Steinke 2004:248). The researcher can represent a more accurate record of the interview through transcription than using memory alone (Fraser 2004:187). The most important issue with regards to transcribing is the manner in which it allows one to draw closer to actual stories in the practical field of the interview. However, in order to represent conversations of the interview for narrative analysis more accurately, understanding the languages of co-researchers in the interview should precede transcribing the interview. When we tell the stories of our experiences, we usually use language to explain, interpret, give and develop meanings (Müller 1999: 7). Moreover, the words used in the interview can convey different and/or various meanings in different cultures (Temple & Edward 2002:5). Thus for a closer understanding of the co-researcher's languages, the understanding of their culture should also be considered. I enjoy an advantage in this regard, because I come from the same cultural environment and speak the same language, Korean, as a first language, with the co-researchers in this study. This has helped me to understand and

interpret the conversations of the interview more fully.

The present study was conducted in Korean. I first transcribed these conversations in Korean from the data of the audio recordings. Riessman (1993:56) advises that when transcribing for the purposes of further interpretation of the conversations and narrative analysis, one should "… begin with a rough transcription, a first draft of the entire interview that gets the words and other striking features of the conversation on paper, then go back and retranscribe selected portions for detailed analysis". The process of retranscription in the text could allow some space to analyse interruptions, pauses, and other spoken features of discourse within the practical interview field (Riessman 1993:57). I further retranscribe from the first rough transcription in Korean in order to analyse those conversations more effectively, and then selected certain portions from the retranscription for presentation in the current thesis. I translated the selected portions of the said transcriptions of the interviews into English.

2.3.3.6 Interdisciplinary work

Through the process of developing the stories of the co-researchers, discourses/traditions of interpretations in this context might become evident. I investigated these visible discourses/traditions of interpretations further at an interdisciplinary level. The investigation could include reading literature, conducting interviews with professionals relating to a specific context, interviews with relevant people and so on. Müller (2005:11) comments that "… the interdisciplinary movement is part and parcel of practical theology. It includes the conversation with

other theological disciplines and with other relevant disciplines". In postfoundationalist practical theology, the theological reflection can be integrated with various scientific disciplines as a cognitive scientific form. Therefore, as a researcher, I should endeavour to be enthusiastic with regards to both the theological reflections and other scientific disciplines.

Van Huyssteen (1999:264) insisted that:

> … first, we should be able to enter the pluralist, interdisciplinary conversation between disciplines and research traditions with our full personal convictions intact, while at the same time reaching beyond the strict boundaries of our own intellectual context; second, we should indeed be able to justify our choices for or against a specific research tradition in interdisciplinary conversation.

As an expert in my field, I should possess the conviction to decide which interpreted traditions need to be studied in interdisciplinary work. If I carefully concentrate on the conversations of the co-researchers and their interpretations of their experiences, I will probably unearth socially informed traditions which need to be studied further.

2.3.3.7 Theological reflection

The clues to guide theological reflection could comprise comments by the participants with respect to how the young adult Christians understand their narratives in the presence of God and how they mould their relationship with God in

their faith life. To judge the religious reflections of the participants on the basis of my personal experience, or to force them to express the presence of God in their narratives, would inhibit or distort our quest to understand our stories more fully and to open up future possibilities. Thus, I will try to listen to the co-researchers' religious reflections and experiences in the presence of God and accord them the same value as other narratives, including my theological reflections.

It is quite possible that these co-researchers may be influenced by my own positive or negative experiences of the presence of God, as could be explained against a background of social constructionism. Müller (2005:11) insisted, "The researchers' own understanding of God's presence in a certain situation is also a valuable contribution they have to make". I am also one of the participants who, together, are constructing our story in the present research. In this process, we might be influenced by each other to create preferred stories for the future.

2.4   Ethical considerations for the present research

Narrative researchers work with people and their storied experiences and seek to understand and identify meanings of the stories. Working with people is the major feature of conducting narrative research. Therefore, the possible disadvantages for people (participants in the research work) should be seriously considered during the very first stage of conducting narrative research. For the sake of ethics, I would like to state several ethical principles that I considered for this study.

Smythe and Murray (2000:312) indicate that the traditional ethical principles of

qualitative research are insufficient for narrative research. For this reason they recommend several ethical principles regarding the practice of narrative research. I also took account of these with respect to the current study, and would like to present them below.

2.4.1   Recruiting

"Participants in narrative research are asked to share more personal and identity-laden data than traditional research, thus can incur particular kinds of risks" (Smythe & Murray 2000:329). This risk may be affected by the discretion of the researcher when selecting participants (Smythe & Murray 2000:329). In order to avoid this kind of risk, I organised a preliminary interview to discuss the intended research theme and, together, narrow the boundaries for selecting participants. Within this interview, people could achieve an understanding of some of the characteristics of narrative research and become aware of the detail of the research problems. Furthermore, we (I and the participants in the preliminary interview) could identify detailed criteria with regards to selecting the co-researchers of the present study. This process enabled those preliminary participants to consider this research undertaking as a collaborative study.

Moreover, Smythe and Murray (2000:329) draw attention to the participants' ability to understand the concepts of the narrative perspective as a factor when recruiting participants. In terms of this consideration, Gottlieb and Lasser (2001:192) advise that: "Postmodern approaches focus on inequalities in our culture and teach us that no one's voice should be privileged over that of another". When we consider the

capacity of participants in this regard, certain voices might possess the possibility of wielding greater power over other voices, but for more effective narrative research work, participants need to be aware of the narrative intentions and characteristics. In order to avoid the abovementioned problems, I did not consider the ability of participants to understand the narrative perspective when recruiting for my narrative research interviews. Nevertheless, sometimes co-researchers who do not understand the characteristics of narrative conversations, experience a sense of hierarchy in their relationship and this feeling might have affected our research conversations. (During the first stage of these conversations, on occasions, the co-researchers waited for answers or solutions from me, as an expert and leader.) So as to minimise this sense of hierarchy, I did not provide any answers or solutions during our research conversations. I explained certain features and expectations of narrative research during the contact sessions, reflected on the previous session(s) and requested the co-researchers to re-reflect on my reflections at the beginning of each session. This activity should have assisted them to understand some of the characteristics of narrative conversations and the meaning of co-researching in the context of narrative research. Once the hierarchy has been flattened, this could facilitate active and spontaneous participation in the present research.

2.4.2   Obtaining Consent

In terms of the open-ended, unpredictable character of narrative inquiry, and the depth of self-disclosure, the researcher should continually obtain the consent of the participants (Smythe & Murray 2000:330). The authors mentioned suggest some practical methods for obtaining the consent of participants: "When individuals are

invited to participate in narrative research, do researchers clearly say, 'I want you to tell me your story so that I can interpret it and retell it from my perspective'" (Smythe & Murray 2000:330). This comment is included in order to inform participants of the open-ended and ongoing nature of narrative research work. I will also continually bear in mind the need for the consent of participants throughout the process of the research interviews and the presentation of the research with regards to the current thesis. With respect to the consent of the participants, I applied the format of verbal convictions in order to examine their consent in terms of the depth of self-disclosure stories throughout the process of the research interview, as well as conducting informal conversations to disclose and discuss the multifarious effects of narrative work.

2.4.3   Interviewing

Within the interview, in order to avoid any potential harm to participants when telling individual stories in depth, when participants paused or hesitated to tell their stories I waited for them until they were prepared to share their own stories without any judgement and/or oppression.

Moreover, participants in this study requested strict confidentiality during the research interview. They did not want to allow the inclusion of any person who had not received the permission of all the participants in the individual interviews and web-activity. Thus I gave serious consideration to the confidentiality that they requested and if somebody's participation was needed I endeavoured to obtain agreement from all the participants.

2.4.4 Analysing the data

As I mentioned earlier, transcribing the interview data accurately is important for analysing the information in order to represent it and to reinterpret it at the interdisciplinary level. Smythe and Murray (2000:332) suggest consulting with participants in order to ensure that their transcripts accurately reflect what they say and to obtain a more accurate analysis of the data. In the individual interviews of the present study, in order to ensure the accuracy of my first transcription, which was in Korean, I suggested to the participants that they read it, but they did not want to do so. However, in the web-activity they would freely have had the opportunity to verify their story telling at any time. Participants in the web-activity were encouraged to read both their own and the stories of the other participants in order to reflect on these as well as to develop their own.

2.4.5 Writing the Report

In writing any thesis, the researcher(s) should bear in mind the impact of their interpretations on participants. The relationship between the researcher and co-researchers does not end with the completion of the practical interview (Smythe & Murray 2000:332). Participants in the interview and even the readers of the written research report might be affected by deconstructing and reconstructing their stories continually according to the interpretations of the researcher because of the nature of the ongoing narrative research work. In order to include in the research report the possible impact of the interpretations of the researcher on the participants, I

requested the participants to reflect on my alternative interpretations during the very last phase of writing this thesis. I expected that this consistent process would demonstrate to us (I, the co-researchers, and even the readers of this study) that no one possesses a privileged interpretation of any narrative (Smythe & Murray 2000:332).

Furthermore, I employ fictitious names for the narrators of the stories of the participants to protect their privacy. Because of the depth of the interview employing the narrative approach, some readers may recognise who the participants are although I do employ pseudonyms. Furthermore, I obtained permission from participants to write down their stories, but only for the purposes of my PhD thesis.

2.5   SUMMARY

I have positioned myself within the social constructionist narrative perspective and postfoundationalist practical theology for the purposes of the present research. A narrative paradigm in this respect enables us to listen to the co-researchers' faith life stories more fully from their viewpoint on these and to deconstruct and reconstruct those stories for a more satisfying life in the future through collaboration with the co-researchers and various disciplines in the context. For collaboration within the field of narrative research, various disciplines and theological reflections can also be integrated to discover alternative interpretations of the co-researchers' stories against the backdrop of postfoundationalist practical theology. I intend to adopt the seven movements developed by Müller (2005:9-12) as a narrative research structure for the present research.

In terms of the present research, I focus especially on young adult Christians with non-Christian family members. These young adult Christians are over 18 years old, unmarried and still dependent upon their parents. All of them are in the period of 'emerging adulthood' in which they have already grown up physically but are still under the influence of their parents emotionally and financially. In this difficult situation, the co-researchers are struggling with their non-Christian family to keep their Christian faith life. To listen to their stories, I undertook individual interviews, group interviews and a web-activity.

CHAPTER 3

STORIES OF YOUNG ADULT CHRISTIANS

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Within this chapter, the interpreted experiences of young adult Christians with non-Christian family members will be described and developed. For a more effective representation of these works, I will subdivide the present chapter into two sections, entitled 'Let's start telling the story!' and 'Giving voice!'.

In the first part of 'Let's start telling the story!', the interpreted experiences of the co-researchers in the specific context will be described. Within narrative research, the stories of people's experiences comprise the action to be researched. Müller *et al.* (2001:79) suggest representing the story of the action in the very first step of narrative research and add that the narrative researcher focuses on the stories that are told about the action, and not the acts or actions within this phase.

The action includes something more than merely problematic stories of the co-researchers. To focus on the story of the action in the very first step of the research enables people to shift their concern regarding the problematic stories to the larger frame of the story with respect to that which is currently happening. The shifting of our concern can help us to perceive the problem differently and can open a space for seeking possibilities to create more satisfying stories in the future.

The next phase of 'Giving voice!' allows for the development of the research plot by

attending to the interpreted experiences of the co-researchers. Müller *et al.* (2001:84) introduced 'the metaphor of the Polaroid', used by Lamott (1995:39), to interpret the story developing within a narrative research work. After taking the picture with the Polaroid camera at a specific time, we need to wait for a while to obtain a clear photograph from the film. At first, we cannot fully see the picture on the film, but as time passes, it becomes clear. We need to wait patiently, with a sense of curiosity, while the beautiful photo emerges. Once the specific experiences are interpreted by the co-researchers, the researcher should wait until a clear picture develops. After waiting, the researcher can recognize how and why co-researchers gave their interpretations to their events.

3.2   LET'S START TELLING THE STORY!

The story of the action is about the NOW of the story. (Müller *et al.* 2001:79) Müller *et al.* (20001:80) explains this as follows:

> The now is never fixed and it never acts as a given or even as a curse. In the narrative approach the now is action, and therefore dynamic in nature. To take the action seriously and to have it told is to open up a possibility, to create a new now for tomorrow.

People live in the now which can alter during the passage of time. Nobody can predict the future, thus, the now can always include possibilities for change.

When the individual person gives interpretations to experiences of the now, he/she forms his/her identity from these interpretations. The personal identities are

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continually been constructed and revised (Moen 2006:5). Bruner (1991:6) avers that interpretation on the particular happenings of people is "… their vehicle rather than their destination". The vehicle can reveal the taste or inclination of the person in it while the person can alter the vehicle in order to reach his/her final destination if necessary.

In the beginning of any research, the researcher needs to seriously focus on the co-researcher's interpretations of their experiences in order to understand what is happening. After gaining an understanding, the researcher and co-researchers can recognise how the interpretations of the now of the story are connected with the past and the traditions. This process will open space to interpret the experiences of the co-researchers differently for the development of more satisfying stories of the future.

In order to focus on the now of the story, the researcher needs to attend to the co-researchers' interpretations carefully. Müller *et al.* (2001:86) suggest that the attitude of the researcher in this stage should be like the assistance of someone who is writing an autobiography. To more effectively assist the co-researchers, the researcher needs to have compassion for the co-researchers and their perspectives. Co-researchers are not objects to be researched, but active participants (Müller *et al.* 2001:86). Co-researchers are professional in their lives, thus we can gain a deeper and clearer understanding of interpreted experiences from their way of creating their own order so as to offer interpretations with regards to the events that happen to them. Therefore, the researcher should respect the co-researchers' manner of constructing meaning and analyze how this is accomplished (Riessman 1993:4).

Within the present chapter, co-researchers' interpreted experiences will be described from their point of view. To start telling the stories, I asked my co-researchers about the difficulties they experienced as a person with non-Christian family members. In their describing these difficulties, I prompted them to tell the stories connected with the problematic ones. I expect that the connected stories will lead to a deeper understanding of the problematic stories. The telling of the stories took place mainly in individual interviews while a few group sessions were conducted in which we listened to and reflected on the stories of each other.

After the description of the now of the story, I will try to describe the story of the background of the co-researchers. "The action in the now is played within a background that must be pictured, but this background is alive with associations and connotations of the past" (Müller *et al*. 2001:83). The story of the background not only concerns information about the co-researchers but also the story of the past. In order to understand the story of the now, we should revisit the rooms of the background that are connected with the past as well as the influence of the story of the past on that of the now. Furthermore, the description of the story of the background can form a starting point for the developing story. In the connection between the story of the now and that of the past, we could begin to recognise influences upon the problematic stories and this might stimulate the development process of the story.

In a few of the group sessions conducted between the individual interviews in order to reflect on each other's stories, we also discussed how we could reflect more effectively on these stories in a manner that would lead to a more active story

development. All of us (the co-researchers and I) agreed to create a secure website on which co-researchers would write their stories, reflect on the stories of the others, and also pose questions to all the members in order to gain a more in depth understanding. In the web-activity, I suggested that they begin by telling their religious history, such as 'when and how did you become a Christian?' My intention was that co-researchers should shift their concern from the problematic stories so as to broaden their life stories through answering this question. I hoped that co-researchers could have opportunities to see their problematic stories differently by thinking through the story of the past which could be connected with the problematic stories. In fact, by telling the story of the past, co-researchers were encouraged to develop their stories spontaneously, and so many stories of each co-researcher could be listened to.

In order to represent co-researchers' stories in the present thesis, I will employ the pseudonyms they used as an ID on the website for the sake of their privacy.

The interviews and web narratives have been translated literally from Korean and, in order to preserve the colloquial flavour, only light editing of the English has been undertaken.

3.2.1   Story teller 1 (Happy)

3.2.1.1 The story of Happy (H)

R[9]: Can you tell me about your difficulties as a person who has non-Christian family members?

H[10]: Well… Everything is difficult for me. To go to the church as such is difficult.

R: Can you explain a bit more about the difficulty?

H: There is an old saying, 家和萬事成[11]. Before going [to] the church, I usually have some troubles with my father, thus, I cannot be comfortable in the church.

R: What makes you uncomfortable in the church?

H: Because of the trouble with father at home, the uncomfortable feeling influences me even in the church. I usually try to overcome the uncomfortable feeling in the church, but it is difficult. The trouble with my father can be expected when I return home. Thus, if the time to come back home is delayed by the church, it is a great strain on me.

R: Have you tried to tell about your difficulties at home to any member of the church?

H: Yes, I have but I am not happy with it. Sometimes, I need some help but it is quite a difficult problem to share easily. Most people seem to lack understanding about this kind of difficulty. Moreover, I do not want to be treated like a pitiful person because of my specific background.

R: For what reasons do you have trouble with your father?

H: The main issue of the trouble with him is about my attending the church. My sister sometimes goes to the church, but not often, thus she does not experience

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[9] I will refer to 'R" instead of 'researcher' for the sake of convenience in the presentation of the interview.

[10] I will use only the initial of the co-researcher's fictitious name for the sake of convenience in the presentation of the interview.

[11] 'Ga-Hwa-Man-Sa-Sung': When one's home is happy, all goes well.

major trouble with her father and brother. In contrast, my father and elder brother think that I attend the church too often.

R: Can you tell me how your father prevents your attending the church?

H: Do you know the most effective threat of parents for their children who are still students? It is money. Father does not give enough money to me because of attending the church, thus sometimes I do not have travelling expenses to go to the church. This is a sensitive, but materialistic problem for me. Actually, I have had some experiences when I could not go to the church because of the money. One day, I went to the church on foot from my house. It took about two hours. On the way, I felt huge sadness and depression. Why do I have this difficult situation to have faith? Why only me? Why does my father not trust me? Why does my father treat me like this? These kinds of questions make me much more depressed.

I also have so many troubles because of father's indirect oppressions. For instance, in the cases of not receiving a good school report and being absent from a family meeting (eating out with family or visiting relative's house…). I think this is not connected with my attending the church, but my father always blames me in these cases and ascribes all the basic factors to the church.

R: When your father blames you, what does he say?

H: He usually worries about my becoming a religiously fanatical person. He thinks that to go to the church too often can spoil people negatively.

R: From where does the negative thinking of your father come?

H: I think that father sometimes heard about negative aspects from relatives, and

saw some bad news, which is connected with Christians, in the public media.

R: Why do your relatives tell the negative aspects of Christianity to your father?

H: They also do not like my faith as a Christian, thus in the family meeting where I am absent they usually express displeasure and start blaming Christianity.

R: What is the attitude of other family members to your Christian faith?

B: My younger sister sometimes goes to the church. I am not sure if she has a close relationship with God, but she seems to be seen as not serious about Christian faith. When I am in trouble with father, she just keeps silence. My elder brother also has no religion, like father, thus he represents his discontent about my Christian faith badly. From time to time, he slaps me to interrupt my faith life.

R: What does your brother say about your faith life?

B: He also has the same reasons as father. I think that he exerts his authority as an elder brother. He had attended church but he gave up going there very soon. He sometimes tells me, 'I know how you feel these days. I also had gone to the church, but gave up going there for the sake of our family. I think that you also can do something for the peace of our family.'

R: How do you feel about your elder brother's words?

B: I do not agree with his opinion. I cannot give up my faith and I think that this is my way to love the family. I think that if I love my family sincerely I should pray for them and evangelise them. I would like to enjoy happiness and goodness in the presence of God with my family.

3.2.1.2 Happy's story of the past

Happy is twenty-six years old, male, unmarried, a university student, and still dependent on his father. He has a father, elder brother, and younger sister. His father and elder brother practise no religion while his younger sister is a Christian. His mother passed away while he was in high school; she too did not allow him to hold the Christian faith. At the present time, Happy is a cell leader and worship leader in the church.

I translated his document in which he described his religious history on the website and summarise it in order to represent it here.

> I started attending the church when I was about fifteen years old. One of my friends suggested going to the church, and I just followed the friend to be with him. I enjoyed his company, thus in the beginning I attended for the simple reason of 'being with a friend!'. At that time, the church was the place for meeting people, like a general social group. I just enjoyed playing basketball and soccer after worship time, and the activity is the main reason for attending the church. Also, my parents did not interrupt my church activity, but sometimes my mother complained about my absence on Sundays.

> In the relationship with friends of the church and in my attendance of worship services and bible study groups, I became aware of the reality of God and gradually began to accept God as my lord. Meanwhile, I recognised my divided life between the church and the family. When I am

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in the church, I am just a normal Christian in the company of God, but at home I was just a scared person who is afraid of speaking about God. It was just like living in two worlds and this made me feel guilty. To overcome this divide in my life, I tried to continue my faith life in the home as well. I started to pray, to read the bible, to listen to the worship songs, and to have some time with God, even at home. This changed attitude made other family members feel uncomfortable. They sometimes complained about that and criticised my behaviour. On those occasions, I was easily dispirited.

When I was eighteen years old, my mother passed away suddenly. I felt disordered and had doubts in this difficult situation. 'Why does this thing happen to me?' 'What can I do now?'… Moreover, to add to this difficult incident, we moved house to a place far from the church I attended. It took about one hour by the bus. In all these difficult situations, I seemed to feel as though I became far from my God. The feeling made me more painful. Within the painful times, God accompanied and consoled me. One day, God provided the transit fare for me who had no money for going to the church. On the long way to and from the church, God was my friend who encouraged me and I felt that His love was warmer than my mother's. These wonderful experiences with God in the painful times did not allow me to go far from God, and until now it has been the prime motivator for me to be with God joyfully.

3.2.1.3 Reflection on the journey with Happy

Happy is seriously struggling with his family because of his Christian faith. He feels that he cannot enjoy his natural rights that he could possess as a member of the family. For instance, he is treated like a sinner in his family because he does not follow his father's direction prohibiting him from going to church. As I explained in chapter 1, the unique feature of the Korean family is affected by Confucianism. The Korean family places a high value on the harmony within the family and on obedience to the family head (mainly the father). Therefore, to maintain one's individual religion, which is definitely different from that of the other family members and is prohibited by the head of the family, can destroy the harmony within it. This can pose a serious problem for all the family members. His family members seem to think that he is the cause of the family trouble because of disobeying his father's instruction not to attend the church. They easily criticise Happy's attendance at church, interrupt his religious life and treat him badly at home. This exacerbates Happy's difficulties. During his telling the stories, I could sometimes see tears on his cheeks and hear his voice shaking; I could feel the depth of his sorrow.

Happy experiences some difficulties in the church as well. He seems to think that the church members cannot adequately understand his difficult situation at home, thus he hesitates to share his problem and ask for help from the church members. Actually, he was the most sensitive person among the participants in our web-activity. He seemed to feel uncomfortable when speaking of his family difficulties with other people at this stage. Through the continued story-developing conversations, I could recognise the reasons for his feeling of discomfort when telling his painful stories to other people.

Moreover, he perfectly expressed the conflict between two distinctly different worlds, the church and the family; the Christian and anti-Christian worlds. He explained that living in the two worlds made him more depressed and sorrowful. The remaining three co-researchers also spoke about the same problems and agreed with his perception of the dissension between two worlds. I suggest that because of the contrast of two worlds, they could recognise their uncomfortable and painful environments more easily than other Christians who have Christian family members.

3.2.2 Story teller 2 (Agape)

3.2.2.1 The story of Agape (A)

R: What is your concern these days as a person who has a non-Christian family?

A: These days, my parents' opposition against my Christian faith has been reduced, but they still complain about my going to the church. They look like people who live in a different world from me, thus I feel isolation in the family. Moreover, my thinking that 'there is nobody who can understand me' makes me feel lonely.

R: Can you tell me in detail about your parent's attitude to you?

A: Not only my parents but also my two sisters have already made a decision about me as 'The Church Girl'. They usually call me that when I am in trouble with my mother because of attending the church. For them I am a really strange and hardly understandable child and belong to the church, not the family. They even do not want to have general conversations with me.

R: How do you feel in the situation of your family?

A: I feel injustice and thanksgiving at the same time. Because of my family's attitude to me, I feel injustice and depression but I cannot ask for some help from anybody. On the contrary, when I recognise God's great plan for me, I can give thanks to my Lord.

R: Have you tried to overcome those difficulties in your family?

A: Yes, I have. For instance, I think that to complain about their unfair attitude to me and/or to create another difficulty with them may be another reason to blame Christianity. Also, I think that God does not want that kind of trouble with my family members. Thus, I am trying to be a good model as the one Christian in the family. I am trying not to complain about anything at home, to be a good daughter, to do the best in everything and follow my parents' instruction nicely except for going to the church, and so on.

R: Where did you get those ideas?

A: I heard some sermons from the church and several testimonies which are connected with my difficulties.

R: Can you tell me the content that you heard?

A: For the duty of the Christian regarding the non-Christian, the Christian should do well by showing a good model to the non-Christian. Some Christians witnessed to their experiences: such as when they have endured all difficulties for Jesus, finally all their family members are suddenly converted. I also heard that when somebody refuses to attend the ancestral rites and declares God's lordship loudly in front of their family, there was an amazing miracle in which all the family members met God and they turned to Christianity. Thus, sometimes I felt that I also should act somewhat bravely to make big changes

in my family.

R: What is your brave action for your family? Not complaining about anything and being a good girl for your parents? Or doing some kind of brave actions to persuade your family members to be a Christian?

A: Both of them. I usually obey my parent's directions and try to be a good daughter, but about my faith as a Christian I do not make any compromise.

R: Have you really acted like that, bravely?

A: Yes, I have (smiling). I have tried to express my faith and my love for God in very unsuitable situations to act bravely.

R: Did it work on your family?

A: No. it did not work. My parents regarded me as a mad girl (smiling again).

R: Why are you smiling?

A: I think that I was too young to think and to act rationally. I was under the influence of a passing emotion.

R: Do you want to act bravely again?

A: No, I do not want.

R: So, what do you do as regards keeping your faith as a Christian at home these days?

A: I am trying to act more nicely than the usual girl who is my age, but do not make any compromise about my parent's instructions to interrupt the attending of the church and keeping my Christian faith life.

R: How successful was your effort to do everything nicely and to try being a good daughter? Did it work?

A: At first it seemed to be effective, but with the lapse of time it has gradually become difficult to be patient.

R: Can you tell me a bit more about your difficulties?

A: My parents' asking about me has been getting more demanding. They want many more things from me than from my sisters. It is becoming a big burden for me.

R: Do you still think that your efforts to act like a nice daughter are still effective for you and your parents?

A: No. These days, I feel I should act differently. I think that I am already an adult, but I am still dependent upon my parents financially. Though I am a different person from previously, my parents still treat me and interrupt my faith life just the same as before. I think that this is the result of my unconditional endurance.

R: How do your parents interrupt your faith life in spite of your efforts to be a good daughter until now?

A: They still use my faith as a weapon to threaten me. If they find anything bad in my attitude at home, they still threaten to refuse permission to attend the church.

3.2.2.2 Agape's story of the past

Agape is a twenty-five year old woman. She has a mother, father, and two older sisters all of whom are not Christian and do not follow any religion, but her father tends to have a Buddhist propensity because most of his relatives are Buddhist. He also grew up under that influence. Agape is a cell group leader in her church, and is studying theology at present.

Below is the summary of Agape's story of her past.

I remember that I started going to the church when I was about ten years old. One of my closest friends was a Christian. I went to the church at her invitation. During that time, I was not a good student. I enjoyed playing with friends much more than studying. Strangely, I woke up early in the morning, thus I could attend Sunday services in the church. My mother was pleased about my change because she thought the church was making her daughter more diligent.

My early teenager years were not normal. I enjoyed being with friends much more, and loitered outside with these friends. Moreover, the relationship between my mother and father was bad. They fought with each other often, sometimes my mother left home because of the trouble with my father. The environment of my family made me more and more depressed and unstable. I remember that I sometimes sobbed in bed before going to sleep. I still attended the church, but it did not affect my life. The church was just a place to be with friends.

In those days, I met with Jesus and was born again through the acceptance of Ephesians 2:8~9 in a small bible group. From that time on, I was no longer just a spectator during the worship time. The relationship with God was extremely important for me. I did not want to lose it, thus I held onto God desperately. I started to be an enthusiastic follower of God. Unfortunately, my parents still fought badly and it made our family

insecure. When I was at home, it was like war, thus I began to enjoy being at the church and felt some kind of security at the church. I thought that the church is the place in which God stayed longer and more often than in my home. For this reason, I spent more and more times at the church. I guess that my dichotomous thinking that divides my life as the church and the home comes from that time.

With my changed attitude about the church, my parents began to interrupt my faith life. I was not comfortable at home. Especially, my mother seriously criticised me. Whenever she saw me, she constantly shouted and criticised me and the church such as; 'If you love being in the church, just go out from my house!', 'Does your church feed and clothe you?', 'Does your church teach you to disobey your parents?' All those words hurt me very much, but I could not give up my faith and love for God.

3.2.2.3 Reflection on the journey with Agape

Agape told about the difficulties mainly connected with her family. She feels some kind of isolation at home, and she pointed to the reason being the different world views of her and the other family members. This is similar to Happy's story.

She also commented about her response in overcoming the isolation within her family. She tried to be a good daughter so as to recompense them for her having her own faith, which causes much trouble in the family, and sometimes she tried to act bravely to express her faith to her family.

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In particular, she told an interesting story of how she listened to the successful and special witnessing of some other Christians through the sermon or tape recorder. She envied their successful stories; thus, she also tried to act like them. Through this story, I could perceive her willingness to share good things as a Christian with her family and love for her family. Her interpretation of the story is that it was brave but childish behaviour. When she looks back at herself during the time that she focused on the relationship with God too much, she feels that she misunderstood what good faith is about. She thought that when she heard words such as 'mad about God' from her family, when she proclaimed God's presence at any time, in any place, and when she endured all the difficulties in the family without any complaining, such behaviour could represent great faith in God. Currently, she thinks about equilibrium between love for God and care for the family.

She also worried about her unfamiliar feelings with respect to maintaining her faith life which can be done at home privately, such as reading bible, singing a hymn, thinking about private events from a Christian perspective, getting advice for private problems, and so on. Because of these concerns, she is also concerned about her marital life in the future. She said that she really wants to have a beautiful Christian family, but it seems to be difficult because of her ignorance about how to act as a Christian at home and how to teach the children as a Christian mother. I think that she lacks the knowledge of how and what she can do for her individual faith life at home. Generally, in the Christian family, children can learn about faith from their parents in a natural manner, but in the case of Agape, to find examples may be difficult. Therefore, I suggest that she may tend to focus on the sermon and other

open Christian sources more than other Christians with Christian family members.

3.2.3 Story teller 3 (Green Temptation)

3.2.3.1 The story of Green Temptation (G)

R: Have you experienced any difficulties in your faith life in respect of your non-Christian family?

G: Not so much. These days my mother is starting to permit my individual faith life as a Christian. She does not interrupt going to the church. Nevertheless I feel envy of other Christians who have Christian family.

R: About what do you feel envy?

G: I also want to have a service time at home with family, to enjoy faith life with my brother, and to share all the goodness in the presence of God with them but those are impossible at the moment. Because of these reasons sometimes I am disappointed.

R: If your family turn to Christianity, how would you feel?

G: I think that everything will be good.

R: Can you tell me in detail about the good thing?

G: Um… Especially, when my faith is weakened my parents can support me as a Christian.

R: What does weakened faith mean?

G: Sometimes when I feel some difficulties in my life such as worries about the future, but at times I forget to pray for it. At that time, if my parents were Christian they could pray for me and advise me in a Christian perspective. I

think that my faith could be stronger through those supports from Christian parents.

R: Have you tried to evangelise your family?

G: Yes, I have. But they have not accepted Christianity. It makes me sad. I really want to share all the goodness and great love of God with my family.

3.2.3.2   Green Temptation's story of the past

Green temptation is a twenty year old female university student. She has a mother, father, and younger brother. Her father and younger brother do not follow any religion while her mother is a Buddhist. Her mother sometimes goes to the Buddhist temple and from there she receives some directions for the sake of her family but is not such an enthusiastic follower.

I summarise her story of the past below.

I cannot remember when I started attending the church. It would be from about ten years old. My mother sent me to the church and there I enjoyed playing with friends and eating food and receiving the Christmas presents the church supplied. Recently my mother said that she sent me to the church with some offerings. I think that she thought that Christianity is a religion for people in need of good influence. Thus, she sent me to the church even though she is not a Christian.

At that time, I just attended the church to play with friends and my faith

was not serious. When we moved to a home far away I stopped attending the church. In my fifteenth year, I accidentally damaged a friend's diary. I was really sorry about that and expected her to get angry. Strangely, she did not become angry and suggested that if I go to church with her, she would forgive my mistake. Thus, I went to the church with her on Sunday without any hesitation, and miraculously she led me to a church about which I was curious. When I sometimes passed by the church, I could hear some laughing sounds, a pretty song being sung, and happy talking. After all, I had attended the church for a longer time than the friend who led me to there.

In the church, I studied the Bible and understood the reality of God much more. Previously I thought that God was far away from me, but realised that God is always with me and in me. I was also aware of God's love for me and the answers to all my prayer. During that time, my family experienced some financial difficulties and I learnt to lean on God much more. From that time my mother started to interfere in my faith life. When I returned home late from church, mother treated me badly. She usually did not comment about my late homecoming, but she always expressed displeasure, only on Sundays. I really felt sore about my mother's changed attitude towards the church, but I did not want to stop going to church. I experienced difficulties between my mother and the church.

3.2.3.3 Reflection on the journey with Green Temptation

Green Temptation also experienced problems with her parents because of her Christian faith. Because of those difficult memories, she could easily demonstrate sympathy with other co-researchers. At present, her parents are beginning to allow her to follow an individual faith life as a Christian, but she is struggling with her willingness to evangelise her family. She wants to enjoy and share the goodness of the presence of God, but her family do not yet accept Christianity. Because of their different worldviews and different matters of interest, she feels some kind of isolation at home and realises the requirement to transmit the gospel to her family.

In the church, she expressed some envy towards Christian friends with Christian parents in the same church. When she sees the parents praying for their children in the church, she feels depressed. She wants to experience interest and love from her parents and feels sure that this could help her to establish her faith more fruitfully.

3.2.4   Story teller 4 (Blue Bell)

3.2.4.1 The story of Blue Bell (B)

R: Can you tell me about your difficulties as a Christian who have non-Christian family?

B: I do not have such big troubles with my parents because of the Christian faith. I have small troubles with my family.

R: What makes you feel that you have small difficulties with your family?

B: From other co-researchers' stories. I think that my trouble with my parents is not serious compared with theirs. When I was in high school, I sometimes

returned home late because of spending some time in the church. At that time, my father was upset about my late home coming from the church, thus he blamed me and the church, but that was all. He did not repeatedly interrupt my faith life.

R: Can you tell me more about your less serious troubles with your parent?

B: I am preparing to get a job. Sometimes, my father pushes me to study instead of going to the church. Father thinks that to go to the church is wasting time. My mother also express displeasure when I cannot be with the family over the weekend because of going to the church.

R: How do you feel about the negative attitude of your parents?

B: In fact, I am not seriously concerned about my parent's objections to my Christian faith. They are not Christian, thus they cannot understand me. However, when my sister takes part with my parents and blames me together with them, I am huffy about her strange behaviour. I cannot understand how she can do like that. She is also a Christian.

R: How does your family's attitude affect on your faith life?

B: These days, my father is quite sensitive about my study. He sometimes persuades me dexterously. He said that 'I do not want to interrupt your faith. After getting the job, you can go to the church again; thus you should do your best in your studies now.' Because of his persuasion, sometimes my determination is shaken.

R: What are you determined about?

B: Faith life such as attending the Bible study group, other activity groups in the church and some more worship time which makes my faith life more fruitful.

R: How do you know your determination for the faith life is shaken by your

father?

B: In fact, I tried to reduce attending those activities in the church, but I realised it was not a good decision for my faith. I think that if my parent were a Christian, I would not need to be in the confusion.

R: You said that your father focuses on your study much more these days, and you feel that he seems to persuade you about something dexterously. What does the word 'dexterously' mean? Do you think that your father has any intentions?

B: Yes, I think so. He seems to try to persuade me to interrupt my faith life and/or to make me stop attending church.

R: How did you recognise your father's intentions?

B: I sometimes feel that his words may be right after a conversation with my father. Thus, occasionally I sometimes do not attend the worship time or bible meeting because I have more time to study, but I could realise that it is not effective for my study. Even though I can gain some more time for study from absence from church, I usually waste my time with something else. Therefore, I can see that the reason for lacking study time is not spending time in the church but managing my time.

R: Have you told your father this?

B: Yes, I have, but he did not agree about it. He still complains about my Christian faith.

3.2.4.2 Blue Bell's story of the past

Blue Bell is a twenty-four year old female with a mother, father, two younger sisters,

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and one younger brother. Her siblings attend the church at present, while her mother and father attended the church for a while, but do not attend any longer.

I summarise her written story of her past below.

> My mother accompanied her mother to church before her marriage. She said that she was enthusiastic about attending church at that time. After my mother's marriage with my father, they continued to attend church for a while, but they suddenly stopped going there because of some disappointment in the church. They did not tell me about the problem in the church in detail, but they seemed very disappointed about the church. Anyway, they do not attend any church and do not follow any religion at the moment.

> Sometimes the ancestral rites have been conducted in my home, and my mother usually bows down and invokes the ancestors' blessings in front of the table on which the food for the ancestors is set. Whenever I see the scene, I am afraid about the life that has parted me from God. Actually, I started going to the church with my mother when I was young. Sometimes I can remember that I sang a hymn sitting alongside my mother in the church. After my mother ceased attending the church, I continued until now. In the beginning of my faith life, I enjoyed listening to the sermons which have so many interesting stories about Jesus, in the Sunday-school. For me, God was a strong and faithful helper.

3.2.4.3 Reflection on the journey with Blue Bell

Blue Bell responded that she does not experience serious difficulties with her family with regards to maintaining her Christian faith. It seems to me that her parents display a more liberative attitude towards their children.

Blue Bell interpreted certain difficulties about maintaining her faith life as a person with non-Christian family members. She feels that her faith might be more easily weakened than that of other Christians because of her parent's interference in her faith life. Her parents allow her much more freedom with respect to her Christian faith life than the parents of the other co-researchers, but Blue Bell feels that her non-Christian parents are shaking her faith. She wants to be spiritually supported by her parents, like those of the other Christians with Christian parents. She mentioned that if her parents prayed for her and supported her spiritually, her faith in God might be better than it is now.

3.3 GIVING VOICE AND EMERGING TRADITIONS OF INTERPRETATION

From the experiences interpreted by the said co-researchers, the story of the now can emerge. For the next stage, the researcher will develop this 'now' of the stories in collaboration with the co-researchers in order to gain a deeper understanding of the interpretations that the latter have given to their experiences. For effective

collaboration with them, the researcher needs to be interested in their interpretations from their perspectives (Müller 2005:10). Actually, the present stage entails giving a voice to the co-researchers to tell their stories more fully.

Bruner (1991:6, 7) points out two features of narrative, 'Particularity' and 'Intentional state entailment'. He explains that people give interpretations to the particular events that occur to them so as to represent their intentional states, which are engaged with their beliefs, will, values, and so on. Thus, when the researcher focuses on the meanings and effects of the co-researchers' interpretations, their intentional states can emerge. Van Huyssteen (1998a:7) also refers to the intended states as tradition(s) which support the interpretations that people accord to events. He comments that "… we relate to our worlds through interpreted experience. As such we have no standing ground, no place for evaluating, judging and enquiring, apart from that which is provided by the context of some specific tradition(s)". Therefore, when the researcher focuses on the interpretations by the co-researchers and the meanings and effects of those interpretations, the story of the action will gain thicker understandings in which we can recognise traditions that influence the current interpretations of the last-mentioned.

Moreover, the intentional states (traditions of interpretation) cannot fully predict any acts of people in the future, but can show us how they interpret the events that happen. Bruner (1991:7) avers that: "… the intentional states in narrative never fully determine the course of events, since a character with particular intentional states might end up doing practically anything". The now of the story has a deep connection with the past and gives effect to the future of the story at the same time.

Thus, we can to some degree expect the future of the story through the story of the now and the past within the presumption that the person holds the same tradition(s) of interpretation. However, the tradition(s) of interpretation is never fixed. It always holds the possibility of being altered by the time and context. Therefore, if we can discover a certain space to interpret the story of the now differently, our stories could possess potential possibilities to be changed for the future.

Müller *et al.* (2001:86) remark that the contribution of the researcher in the story developing process is "… to reflect, facilitate and wait until the plot emerges. It is more than just to be a scribe. It is like being the assistant for someone who is writing an autobiography." The researcher attempts to reflect on the interpretations of the co-researchers in order to find meanings and effects and to attempt to collect those findings for a broader understanding of the story of the action. Hence, I have attempted to compile the different meanings and effects of the co-researchers' interpretations through collaboration with them and to wait for the emerging plot. Thereafter, I expect that I and the co-researchers can recognise tradition(s) which influence the current interpretations of the latter regarding their experiences. Once the tradition(s) of interpretation is/are identified within the story developing process, co-researchers can recognise their problematic stories from a different angle which may lead them to opportunities to reinterpret their event with the aim of developing their preferred story of the future.

In order to develop the interpreted experiences, we mainly carried out conversations on the website – which I created for the more effective collaboration with and among

the co-researchers[12]. We also conducted several individual as well as group interview sessions simultaneously with the web-activity in order to stimulate the active participation of the co-researchers in the web-activity and allow reflection on our progress.

The traditions of interpretation that were developed from the collaboration with the co-researchers are as follows;

1) 'The church does not understand me!'

2) 'Salvation of the family is my mission!'

3) 'We live in two worlds!'

4) To have non-Christian family means to have many disadvantages for my faith life.

I will describe the identified traditions of interpretation that emerged first and then relate how the tradition was developed from collaboration with the co-researchers.

3.3.1 'The church does not understand me!'

During collaboration with the co-researchers, a tradition of interpretation that frequently emerged was that people with Christian family members lack an understanding of those with non-Christian family members. This tradition of interpretation emerged mainly with respect to Happy and Agape. They felt that the

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[12] See p. 51, 52 for more information about the web-activity.

lack of understanding towards them sometimes causes people to discriminate between the two groups.

I will represent the stories of Happy (H) and Bluebell (B) here in order to demonstrate how the tradition developed.

Happy's story

R: Have you ever told and/or been counselled about your difficulties in your family with other church members?

H: Yes, I have. It was not for help but for comforting my mind.

R: What is the meaning of your saying just for comforting your mind?

H: Most people show a very general response to my difficult situation. Such as "if you can overcome this difficult time, your family will be saved," "do not worry about it too much. God loves you, thus he will help you….". In fact, I know and also agree with their saying. It is really good words, but I already know it. I do not need that kind of advice. I need a person who can comfort me.

R: Do you think that the people respond to you by giving advice?

H: Yes. Even though they tried to support me, it cannot help me practically. Those words are too general and it means that they just respond generally without special attention to me.

R: Can you find any reason why the people react too generally about your situation?

H: They may not understand my situation properly and some people know that they cannot give any practical help to change my situation, thus they just

respond too generally about my asking.

R: Do you have any evidence of that?

H: Even though they know my difficult situation, they often misunderstand me. For instance, when I am absent from the worship time or group meetings of the church because of the conflict in the family, the church members tend to think that I am making excuses for myself.

R: How did you know that the church members think like that?

H: They easily say that "your faith is weakened these days!", "you should overcome your difficulties and focus on your faith life much more. Then, God will save your family as well." These sayings do not help me but rather hurt me. They do not understand how I feel deep pain about my family and how really this is a big burden in my faith life. Sometimes, I need to focus on the family rather than the church. That's all. It does not represent weakness of my faith. I think that everyone sometimes acts like me, even if they have Christian family. When they have special events or some problems in their family, they also might be absent from the church activities. In this case, nobody thinks that they are excusing themselves.

Happy commented that he often faces a lack of understanding by church members with regards to his special family background which can cause discriminatory treatment within the church context. His interpretation was that church members tend to focus much more on people with Christian parents.

Bluebell's story

R: You said that your father, especially, does not like your Christian faith. Can you tell me more about it?

B: My father usually says that to have Christian faith is meaningless. He thinks that to have a religion is fine, but to spend time for it is a meaningless waste.

R: How do you feel about your father's opinion?

B: When my father speaks like that, I have no response. If I respond to explore it, my father may think that I am a mad girl.

R: Have you ever tried to explore your faith?

B: Yes, I have. When I was in high school, I started to give a tithe to God. One day, my father found out and he was really upset about it and blamed the church. He blamed the church just like normal people who are anti-Christian. I tried to explain the meanings of tithe and God, but he did not agree with it.

R: How did you feel in this situation with your father?

B: I sometimes have similar troubles with my father these days as well. In the difficulties, I cannot find any answer as to how I can act and explain about God and my faith. I am in confusion and depressed.

R: Have you ever tried to get some help for the confusion and depression from any Christians in the church?

B: Yes, I have talked about this trouble with my father to other group leaders or friends several times, but I felt that they cannot understand my situation fully and my speaking is heard as being something like making excuses. I did not want to be shown as a weak person, thus, I do not speak of my troubles with my father any more.

R: Have you ever heard that you are making excuses or that you are a weak person from the church members?

B: No. I just felt it from their face and/or not good atmosphere when I talk about the trouble.

R: How do you recognise the church members' thinking from their face or the atmosphere?

B: I can just feel it. There is no sign of it practically, but I can feel it. In other words, I may want to be seen like a strong person who can manage all difficulties herself.

Bluebell also mentioned the lack of understanding of the church members concerning her specific family background; thus, she tends to avoid sharing her difficulties, even though she needs some help to receive some ideas and/or support regarding the difficulties with her father. Her interpretation was also that she could be viewed as a weak person who makes excuses when she speaks about her difficulties in the family.

Agape referred to discriminatory treatment among church members. This is the same opinion as that of Happy. For instance, a person who has Christian parents may enjoy special attention from the ministers of the church and can easily hold a major position (cell leaders, worship leaders, and so on) in the church. Agape said that "I have limitations to manage my time freely for a position in the church compared with other members, but it does not mean that I do not have the ability to take it [the position]. If church members consider my uneasy situation and if they have a deep understanding of me, I could fill the position beautifully."

Because of the lack of understanding of the church members and the discrimination within the church, the co-researchers seem to feel isolation and be easily depressed.

They also tend to repress speaking about their uneasy family background with other church members, which is likewise connected to their rejection of including other members who do have Christian relatives in our web-activity. In particular, Happy expressed a strong rejection in this regard. He said that the people who have Christian family members cannot fully understand the family background and pain of the co-researchers with respect to this, thus, it might disturb our feeling of security in conducting the conversations.

As the process of story developing progressed, co-researchers began to express their difficulties concerning their families to other church members. At the beginning of the research interview, they commonly said that they rarely speak of their difficult situations with other church members; however, they have evidenced some changes in this respect. Co-researchers sometimes expressed their difficult emotions, with regards to their families, to one other in the church[13]. They even discussed their difficulties with the family at a small group meeting as one of the topics. Agape (A) told me about her experience of the discussion within the small group meeting.

R: Can you tell me about your experience in the small group meeting?

A: Yes, I can. We told about our general personal faith life, and one co-researcher started to tell about our research work. Form this point onwards the topic about problems of faith with regards to non-Christian family emerged for discussion.

R: What was the main concern in the discussion?

A: We mainly compared the positive and negative aspects of having Christian

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[13] The co-researchers are attending the same church. See p. 49.

family and having non-Christian family.

R: What was the reason for comparing these?

A: We, the co-researchers, started explaining our research work with you. Actually, we really feel proud and comfortable with this research. It gives us a really good time to think and to tell about our difficulties. In the discussion time, we tried to describe our troubles with our non-Christian family, and other members also stated their difficulties within their Christian family.

R: What was their story?

A: Well, it was just general things that they usually say.

R: What is the general talk about them?

A: Um… it is too general. They usually say that they also have difficulties with their Christian family members. For instance, their parents exert high pressure on them to attend the church. Sometimes they do not want to attend the church and the high pressure sometimes disturbs their faith life. Something likes that…

R: I think that you seem to be uncomfortable with their opinion. Don't you agree with them?

A: Yes, I agree with them. But, I think that they are just complaining about their parents even though they have a really good background for their faith. They said that "I understand your situation and your difficulties, but…." again and again in every interpretation of our difficulties. I think that they really do not understand our difficulties.

R: What is your clue which indicates that they really do not understand people with non-Christian family members?

A: They did not try to understand us. They just focused on their difficulties. If

they really understood us, they might focus on our stories much more so as to gain a deeper understanding about our situation, but they did not.

R: How was your feeling concerning their reactions? Were you disappointed?

A: No, I was not disappointed. It was just a general response as usual. I have seen the response often. I know that people usually focus on their problems much more. But we tried to share our painful story with them. If they really understand us, they should focus on our stories much more. They seemed to think that our difficulties are just the same as theirs.

R: Do you think that your stories are more painful than theirs?

A: Yes, I think so.

R: Why are your stories more painful than theirs?

A: Their difficulties with their Christian family are not about losing faith, but ours are about losing faith and retaining it. If we cannot overcome these difficulties, we could lose our faith in God.

Agape thought that people with non-Christian family members face a more difficult situation with their parents than those with Christian family members. She heard about the negative aspects of having Christian relatives, but she thought that this was merely a complaint because such believers lack an understanding of living with a non-Christian family.

3.3.2   'Salvation of the family is my mission!'

The four co-researchers share a common interpretation with regards to this tradition of interpretation. They think that the most valuable expression of their faith for their

family is to evangelise their family members. This tradition of interpretation is connected with the co-researchers' unconditional self-sacrifice in their family. For the sake of their important mission in the family to spread the gospel, they try to endure all the pain caused by their family members because of their Christian faith.

Here are the stories of Agape (A) and Green Temptation (G).

Agape's story

R: Can you tell me about your painful story with your family?

A: I usually feel lonely at home in trying to keep my faith life. The most painful thing is the severance from the family. My family made a decision about me as "the church girl" and they just cut off conversation with me.

R: Have you ever tried to find any solutions to solve this problem with your family?

A: Yes, I have. I really have considered it seriously. I tried to find any answer that might give a solution for my lonely faith life at home by reading the Bible and religious books, listening to sermons, praying to God, and so on.

R: What solution have you found?

A: I have discovered my mission to evangelise my family from the Bible and sermons of the pastor.

R: Can you tell me in detail what you have learnt from it?

A: I have recognised that God wants the salvation of my family through me and this can offer the solution to all these troubles with my family. Moreover, I want to share all the good things that I have in the presence of God with my

family.

R: What do you do for the salvation of your family?

A: I am trying to endure my parents' unfair treatment of me without any complaint. I am also trying to be a good model as a Christian. I hope that my family can feel my changes and God's love through me. Once they feel it, I am sure they can accept God as the lord of their life.

R: Does it help?

A: (smiling) I feel that it becomes more difficult to endure everything with time. Actually, I do not endure all the unfair treatment from my parents these days. Time has changed and I am already an adult. Nevertheless, my parents still use my unconditional endurance to interrupt my life and my Christian faith. I think that their attitude towards me should change as well, so as to respect my identity as an individual person.

Agape interpreted her situation as follows: that to evangelise her family is her mission from God; thus, she needs to endure the unfair treatment of her family and be a model as a Christian. In fact, she has endured much unfair treatment. Because of her Christian faith, her parents frequently ignore her needs and refuse to communicate, which can occur between parents and children. Agape has also not expressed her uncomfortable feelings concerning their unfair treatment but endures it in order to utilise this as an opportunity to maintain her faith and spread the gospel to her family. I suspect that her unconditional endurance without proper communication with her family to express her needs and opinions could cause an uneasy relationship with them which could disrupt a deeper understanding of each other.

Agape also experiences this negative aspect of her unconditional endurance these days, but she still thinks that the salvation of her family is an important task for her.

Green Temptation's story

R: Why don't your parents allow your Christian faith? Have you ever heard the reasons from your parents?

G: They usually complain about my late homecoming, and spending too much time at the church. They think that I focus on the church much more than on our family.

R: Do you really think that the church is more important than your family?

G: No. I do not. I just put the same value on both of them, the church and my family. I think that I am acting and managing my time just like any normal person, but my parents do not agree. They seem to make this a pretext to interrupt my life.

R: Why do your parents try to interrupt your life by wilfully referring to your Christian faith?

G: I think that it is Satan's temptation to disturb my faith.

R: Where did you get the idea?

G: When I was in trouble with my parents for my Christian faith, a person whom I knew personally in the church advised me, "Do not fall into Satan's temptation!"

R: Did you agree with the person's advice?

G: Yes, I did. I did not say anything about my difficulties to him, but he suddenly said it to me. Thus, I realised that now is the time to overcome Satan's

temptation. Because of the advice, I could overcome the trouble that I was facing with my mother. After that time, I decided simply to think about the troubles with my parents. I made the decision that "I can follow God's word and can show a good attitude to my family at the same time!", "when my family accept God as their lord, my troubles at home will be solved.", "I want to share advantages which can be gained in obeying God, thus, make an effort to evangelise my family." And so on.

Green Temptation believes that the salvation of her family is needed to overcome her difficulties with them. She interpreted the troubles with her family as a temptation in that Satan attempts to shake her Christian faith.

Happy reflected on the story of Green Temptation on the website.

> I also thought that a non-Christian family is a big wall which I should overcome. I sometimes saw people who throw away their Christian faith because of the troubles with their non-Christian family. When I saw them, I realised that to keep my Christian faith is really tough. I did not want to be like those who could not overcome their difficulties. In the beginning of my faith life, I was just busy with my faith, but I became seriously considerate towards my family over time. I sometimes felt that the family looked like Satan, like that of Green Temptation. For me, the family was really a big mission to overcome so as to keep my Christian faith. These days, I also find it difficult to evangelise my family, but I think it is a really important mission in my

life.

Happy also described his life at home as he appears to be a sinner. His rights as one of the family members can easily be ignored. Even though he may have something to ask his parents and may want to complain about something at home, he must suppress his needs because of his Christian faith. He also experienced being slapped by his father and brother as an expression of their disappointment. He said that his father and brother thought that he disobeyed his father because of his Christian faith and that this is destroying the peace of the family. I wondered how he still endures the unfair treatment of his family. Happy answered my questions by saying that "I trust God's endless love, thus I cannot cut off my relationship with God because of the troubles with my family. Furthermore, if I give up my Christian faith, I am afraid that my family could lose the opportunity to be saved." Actually, he placed more value on the salvation of his family than his own suffering.

The co-researchers experience an uneasy tension with their non-Christian family members because they practice a different religion to that of their family and/or disobey their parents who are trying to undermine their children's faith life. In the uneasy tension within their family, the co-researchers tend to choose the solution that they should endure all the pain caused from the tension in order to evangelise their family. Most of the co-researchers also believe that God's plan is to save their family through them. Therefore, they carry the responsibility to endure all this pain without any complaint and to be model disciples of Jesus. The co-researchers expect that their family members will recognise God's love and the advantages of that love through their behaviour and/or changed attitude in their lives.

3.3.3 'We live in two worlds!'

In the collaboration with the co-researchers, they often compare two worlds in terms of the Christian and non-Christian worlds. These two worlds can be identified as the two contexts in which they live, the church and the family. In each, the co-researchers feel opposite emotions and confusions which connect with each other.

This tradition of interpretation emerged mainly from the stories of Happy (H) and Agape (A).

Happy's story

R: You said that you should consider both the church and the family; thus you sometimes experience difficulties between the two fields. Can you explain a little bit more about your difficulties between the two fields?

H: I have something to do in both fields, as a son and as a member of the church. For instance, when I need to make a decision to take a role in the church, I need more time than other members. I cannot spend too much time in the church because I should consider my family at the same time. If I spend too much time at the church, I might be a major problem to my family again and it is going to disturb my faith life seriously. On the other side, I also do something more at the church. Unfortunately, most of the church members do

not understand this, and they just ask me to make the decision quickly. If I hesitate to make the decision for a while or if I try to explain about my situation at home to refuse the role, the church members tend to think that my faith is weak and/or I am not interested in taking the role.

R: How do you feel in the situation?

H: When I try to consider both at the same time, the church and the family, I tend to be marginalised in the two worlds. I seem to live in two perfectly different worlds.

R: What is the meaning of being marginalised in the two worlds?

H: At home, I hold a different worldview from my family. I sometimes want to share great love from and thanks to God with my family, but it is impossible. If I do that, they would think that I am mad. (smiling) On my family's side, I am really unacceptable and a strange person. At the same time, in the church I am also something different from other Christians. Most Christians attend the church with their family. It makes me experience some kind of isolation in the church.

Happy believes that he has a different worldview from that of his family, such as a Christian worldview as opposed to a non-Christian one and added that the large difference between the two worlds causes him to feel his difficult situation more intensely. Happy also experiences isolation in the church and at home. In the church, he feels that other people tend to misunderstand him, with his specific family background. At home, his family tend to treat him as a strange person who does not fit in with the family. He is a Christian while also living in a completely non-Christian context at the same time. In such an ambivalent position, he seems to

experience complicated emotions.

Agape's story

On the website she reflected on Happy's story above. I read her reflection there and asked her some questions in the individual interview with her.

A: I really sympathise with Happy's story. I also experience some difficulties between those two worlds. In my case, it made me really happy to know God and to be in his presence. This is one of the major reasons that I enjoy staying in the church much more than at home. I thought that I could feel God's presence much more in the church. On the other hand, my parents were experiencing a negative relationship at that time. There were always big conflicts between my parents at home and it caused me to feel uncomfortable to be with my family. Actually, these two worlds made me to experience opposite emotions at the same time and the opposite emotions caused me to focus on the church life much more. These days, I realised that I focused on the church life too much, thus, I am trying to strike a proper balance between the church life and the family life.

R: Can you tell me in detail how you feel about the two worlds these days?

A: I still feel uncomfortable in the two worlds. Even after experiencing difficulties with my family, I should smile in the church. Of course, I do not mean that I pretend to be happy in the church. I am really happy in the church and in God's presence but I am still struggling in my mind with the pain from

the trouble with my family even though I am in the church. This contrast of feelings makes me sad.

R: The struggling in your mind makes you sad. You interpreted that being in the two worlds makes you uncomfortable. Does the uncomfortable feeling come from your sadness?

A: Um… Actually not. The uncomfortable feeling comes from my worrying.

R: What do you worry about?

A: When I am in the church, I am worried about what time the worship or group meetings will finish. If the finishing time is delayed in she church, my time of homecoming also is delayed. In the situation, I am worried about having trouble with my parents again because of arriving home late. Sometimes, I also worry about my parents while in the church. There is the possibility that my parents may call the pastor to complain about or blame the church. They also may come to the church only to very rudely fetch me from the church to go home.

R: Have your parents ever acted like that?

A: Yes, they have. One day, my father was really upset about my Christian faith and he suddenly made a call to the pastor of my church to blame me and the church. I was really embarrassed about my father's behaviour.

R: Did your pastor mention the event to you?

A: No, he did not mention it to me at all. When I apologised about the incident to my pastor, he said that it was fine and that he was worried about me. But, I really worry that this might happen again.

Agape feels sadness, caught between the two worlds. She experiences opposite

feelings in them. Her interpretation was that the major differences between her feelings within the two worlds cause her to be easily depressed and to focus much more on her church life. In the church, she feels peace and joy in God's presence, but experiences a sense of instability and discomfort because of her parents' conflicts and her family's unpleasant attitude towards her which stems from her Christian faith. Therefore, she tends to think that she can maintain her faith life through attending the worship and spending much more time in the church. This has caused even greater difficulties with her parents. These days, she is trying to strike a balance between the church and the family, but believes that it is difficult to manage two utterly different worlds at the same time.

Happy and Agape described the serious contrast between the two worlds. They remarked that they tend to be depressed and experience confusion easily because of the contrasting feelings. Green Temptation and Bluebell also mentioned this difficulty.

3.3.4 To have non-Christian family means to have many disadvantages for my faith life.

This tradition of interpretation frequently emerged within the interviews. In fact, this can be connected to each of the above traditions of interpretation such as the discrimination in the church that stems from the lack of understanding about their non-Christian family background, unconditional endurance of the discomfort at home in order to evangelise their family and the confusion and sadness that they feel in the two worlds. When I begin to focus on these disadvantages which the co-

researchers interpreted as effects of the above traditions, many more disadvantages emerged, which stimulated discussion. Therefore, I needed to identify this tradition of interpretation separately.

I present the stories of Agape (A) and Happy (H) which were told on the website.

Agape's story

R: How does your non-Christian family background affect your faith life?

A: I do not have any person who can give practical advice about my faith life at home. Therefore, I usually use more trial and error in my faith life than people with a Christian family. I have heard that in the Christian family, the family member's pray, support each other and give advice in God's way. If I could have a Christian family such as them, my parents could pray for me and guide me in God's way to help with my difficulties. At home, I look like a normal person, who is not a Christian. Sometimes I find myself acting, speaking and thinking like a non-Christian, but there is nobody who can touch my private life at home. Therefore, I need to be sensitive about God for myself much more than other Christians in order to keep my faith. Of course, God always watches me and guides me, but I need someone who can support me to keep the faith more fruitfully nearby me.

To help the other co-researchers' understanding, I will use a metaphor.
When we walk on a snow-covered road, it is easier to step on the footprint of someone. If there is no such footprint, we could fall into the thick snow and/or

our shoes and shocks could become wet while we do not recognise the depth of the snow. For me, I look as if I walk in the perfectly white snow on which there is no footprint I can follow.

Agape interpreted her difficulties with non-Christian family members as follows: She pointed out that she does not know of a practical means by which to continue her private faith life, such as how to prey, how to behave and how to think about her difficulties. She thought that if she had Christian parents they could guide her to live a fruitful faith life at home. She could learn about maintaining her faith in the church, but she thought that it is not enough to continue her faith life at home.

Happy concurred with Agape's story. He mentioned that he too does not know how to behave and respond with regards to so many practical issues in his private life. He admitted that his knowledge about enjoying faith life is very limited; thus sometimes he cannot be sure about his faith life, as to whether he is doing well or not.

As I mentioned in chapter 1, Korea is a multi-religious society in which there is sensitive competition between the various religions. Therefore, the Korean government endeavours to maintain neutrality between them. Of course, Koreans enjoy the freedom to choose their religion, but conversely this means that nobody can force people to follow a specific religion. To support a specific religion and to express the principles thereof in public is considered as transgressing our common ethics in this society. This is the reason why Korean people can hardly discover any role models for their faith life and why co-researchers are concerned about the limited knowledge in their private faith life. Happy said that he is sometimes worried

about his future marital life. He really wants to have a beautiful Christian family in the future, but he sometimes cannot be sure whether he can lead his family members well in God's way, because he does not have any experience of Christian family life.

Here is another story told by Happy.

Happy's story

> I also think that our faith life can be affected by our non-Christian parents. Even though a person has a really good level of faith, he sometimes cannot attend the worship and keeping his faith life can be disturbed because of his parents. I think that those who have Christian parents have really good advantages for their faith life. Of course, this may be my prejudice about people who have Christian parents, but I think that people who are in the very beginning of their faith can be very much affected by their parents regarding their faith life.

Happy also inferred that to have Christian parents would provide more advantages for maintaining his faith life than having non-Christian parents. Green Temptation expressed envy toward people with Christian parents. I now describe Green Temptation's story on the website.

Green Temptation's story

> I had a vague fantasy about a Christian family. I also had some kind of

misunderstanding about my non-Christian parents. I sometimes complained that if my parents were Christians, my faith life would be different from now, all my difficult problems come from my non-Christian parents, I am the only person who can pray for the whole family…it makes me to too tired, it is too much, and so on.

One day, I saw a scene on the television in which the parents were praying for their children. I envied it greatly. I also heard that parents' praying for their children can cause their children to be blessed. I really wanted to have Christian parents who can pray for me. Actually if I had Christian parents, our family could pray together for each other and for difficult family problems and we could overcome our difficult problems more easily.

Green Temptation particularly focused on Christian parents praying for their children. She thought that not having Christian parents to do likewise is a major disadvantage for her. When she wrote this story on the web, the other co-researchers were sensitive about it and started to discuss this issue. Agape and Happy mentioned similar stories to that of Green Temptation, but Bluebell disagreed. I will present Bluebell's reflection in this regard below.

Bluebell's reflection

When I read the other co-researcher's stories, I find some parts difficult to understand. It is as though, if we have Christian parents praying for

their children, we can be much more blessed. I think that this is the same complaint as saying, "if my parents have enough money to offer me more good quality educational environments, I could succeed to enter a better university than the present university that I am attending." Of course, the praying of parents is important, but it is not necessary for our blessing. I think that one's relationship with God is more important.

After about two months of writing this reflection, Green Temptation showed some changes in her opinion and wrote about this change on the web.

It is a long time since I visited here.

These days, I have thought about my faith life. I think that I did not experience big difficulties with my non-Christian family because my faith life was not enthusiastic. Recently, I have also experienced some difficulties with my family related to my faith life.

I said that to have non-Christian family did not previously affect my faith life. But I want to change my opinion now. The change came from observing my younger brother's faith life. He just started attending the church recently. I led him to the church. He usually asks me to wake him on the Sunday morning, but my effort to awake him does not work and he usually rises too late to attend the worship. When my brother wants to sleep some more, my parents ask me to leave him to have more rest. I think that if my parents were Christian, they would try to awake him

with me.

I think that to keep my faith is not under my control, but under God's control. God responds to the parents who are praying for their children. Moreover, if a person can pick up a good religious habit from their parents, it could help his/her faith life more fruitfully.

Bluebell changed her mind after two months to agree with the other co-researchers' opinion because of her experience with her younger brother. She also agreed that certain disadvantages can exist for those with a non-Christian family. Within this tradition of interpretation, the co-researchers are depressed and feel powerless.

3.4   SUMMARY

Within this chapter, the problematic stories of the co-researchers emerged. They are struggling with their non-Christian family members in their quest to retain their Christian faith. The co-researchers also experience isolation in their relationships with other church members and their family members. They also display a strong willingness to share with their family every good thing which they obtain from their Christian faith, but their families do not accept this.

From the developing of co-researchers' problematic stories, by means of giving voice to the co-researchers to narrate the meanings and effects connected with these, I could identify four traditions of interpretation of the co-researchers.

1) 'The church does not understand me!'

2) 'Salvation of the family is my mission!'

3) 'We live in two worlds!'

4) To have a non-Christian family means to experience many disadvantages for my faith life.

CHAPTER 4

RETELLING THE STORY OF THE YOUNG ADULTS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In chapter 3, the interpreted experiences of the co-researchers emerged and were developed by collaboration between the researcher and the co-researchers. Moreover, traditions that support the present interpretations of the co-researchers regarding their events were developed and identified.

Moen (2006:4) avers that: "As individuals are telling their stories, they are not isolated and independent of their context". People's stories cannot be separated from the social and cultural context. They are always connected with and influenced by the latter. Therefore, the narrative researcher needs to be aware of how the contexts of the co-researchers influence their interpretations. Müller (2005:10) mentions that the role of the researcher is "… to identify discourses and try to gain some understanding of how current behaviour is influenced by these discourses". The traditions of interpretation within the present research were identified in chapter 3 by focusing on and developing specific interpretations of the co-researchers. Within chapter 3, I have tried to describe how the latter accorded the interpretations to their events and became aware of the traditions supporting their current interpretations. In the present chapter, I will attempt to gain a deeper understanding of their current behaviour, influenced by the identified traditions of interpretation. This understanding can be obtained through listening to co-researchers' narratives as well as to the various social and cultural environments such as the literature, the art, and the culture of a

certain context (Müller 2005:10).

Moreover, the theological reflections of the co-researchers are also considered so as to gain an understanding of the influence of tradition of interpretation on their behaviour. Müller (2005:11) explains that the co-researchers' reflections on the religious and spiritual aspects are not "… a forced effort by the researchers to bring God into the present situation". I, as a researcher, cannot force the co-researchers to think about religious aspects of their narratives, but if they attempt to reflect on their experiences in the presence of God, I also cannot ignore their religious reflections. In the postfoundationalist approach, Van Huyssteen (1997:20) remarks that "… we relate to our world epistemically only through the mediation of interpreted experience …". Religious reflections can also offer a context in which we can become aware of the deeper meaning of the co-researchers' current behaviour. Therefore, the researcher needs to make an effort to listen to and gain a deeper understanding of the co-researchers' religious understandings and experiences within God's presence (Müller 2005:10).

After acquiring an understanding of how the co-researchers' current behaviour is influenced by traditions of interpretation, their constructed interpretations will be deconstructed and reconstructed within the interdisciplinary framework. Through this process the co-researchers can make rational judgments with regards to finding alternative interpretations that can be integrated with their various experiences. Van Huyssteen (1997:15) comments on the meaning of 'alternative'; that it is "… the sense not of competing or conflicting interpretations of experience, but of complementary interpretations of the manifold dimensions of our experience".

Newly emerged alternative interpretations of the co-researchers' events are different from the previous interpretations. The alternative interpretations may satisfy the co-researchers while also satisfying various dimensions of their experiences. At the end of this chapter, the alternative interpretations will be identified.

4.2   THE INFLUENCES OF TRADITIONS OF INTERPRETATION UPON THE CO-RESEARCHERS

Marshall and Rossman (1999:157) aver that "Alternative explanations always exist; the researcher must search for, identify, and describe them, and then demonstrate how the explanation offered is the most plausible of all". From the traditions of interpretation that emerged and were identified, I and the co-researchers discussed how the former influenced their behaviour. This process was practised mainly through the web-activity. I encouraged the co-researchers to reflect on each tradition of interpretation and these reflections of 'different voice givers'[14] were also represented on the website. I expected that 'the different voice givers' could offer various interpretations from different angles.

Moreover, I also placed some easy-to-understand social and cultural disciplines and theological reflections, relative to the traditions of interpretation, on the website for the co-researchers to be 'heard'. Through their reading in these various disciplines, I hoped that the co-researchers might gain a deeper understanding of the traditions of interpretation and might be able to more easily recognise influences of the traditions interpretation. I will represent these works here and attempt to describe the

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[14] See, p. 55, 56.

influences of the traditions of interpretation upon the current behaviour of the co-researchers in order to gain a deeper understanding thereof. I will also bring the understanding of the traditions of interpretation into the present interdisciplinary work in order to deconstruct these. Within the interdisciplinary level, various social and cultural disciplines, interviews with relevant colleagues, and theological disciplines will be considered in order to find "… a new story of understanding that points beyond the local community" (Müller 2005:11).

The traditions of interpretation which were emerged in chapter 3 were as follows;

1) 'The church does not understand me!'

2) 'Salvation of the family is my mission!'

3) 'We live in two worlds!'

4) To have non-Christian family means to have many disadvantages for my faith life.

4.2.1　'The church does not understand me!'

This tradition of interpretation can be connected with several emotions and behaviours of the co-researchers. One of the emotions that frequently emerged from the latter within this tradition of interpretation was the feeling of some kind of discrimination by the other church members who have Christian family[15]. The co-researchers interpreted their feelings of discrimination within the church in detail.

Happy: I feel the discriminative behaviour of the church members from very trifling

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[15]

events. The church usually consists of family groups as a smaller unit. They mostly act as a family group and take care of each other even in the church. When I sometimes come late to the dining room of the church for the lunch on a Sunday, some of my friends who have Christian parents in the church can have lunch first because of their parents' help there. Moreover, if a person whose parents are a deacon or presbyter is absent from the worship time or some specific events, most church members express great concern about it. But in my case, they just think that they cannot do anything for me. They do not want to think about me seriously.

Happy remembered the very details concerning the feeling of being discriminated against in the church, which demonstrates that he is quite sensitive about the people who seem to lack understanding of his specific family background. For this reason, he was easily disappointed about people thus constructing the tradition rigidly.

Agape also mentioned a similar story.

A: I also feel the discriminative attitude of the church members in the church. When I look at the composition of the church, most of the cell leaders and ministry programme leaders are people who have Christian family. I think that the church members do not trust us who have non-Christian family. I know we sometimes cannot attend church and sometimes give up our responsibility because of the difficulties with non-Christian parents. But I think that the other members who have Christian family sometimes do the same things but for different reasons. They may be not enthusiastic about God or may depend on

their Christian parents too much. All of us have the same problem caused by different reasons. That is all. I do not want to be treated differently from other church members who have Christian family.

Agape is enthusiastic about God, and her work in the church includes leading a bible study group, being part of the worship team, leading a cell group, and so on. She says that while involved in these church activities, she sometimes feels the church members discriminating against her. She interpreted this feeling in terms of experiencing different responses from people who cannot carry out their work in the church. She argued that people sometimes cannot carry out their responsibilities in the church and they also advance different reasons for inadequate work. She might also have various reasons to do so other than her specific non-Christian family background. But she feels that the church members focus more on reasons that originate in a non-Christian family background. She agreed that this discrimination stems from the lack of understanding of the church members with regards to her specific non-Christian family background.

A: These days, I am trying to keep the balance between the faith life and the family. Sometimes people misunderstand this.

R: How do they misunderstand your efforts? Have they mentioned it to you?

A: Well…I have heard that 'when you experienced big trouble with your non-Christian family, you had an enthusiastic faith, but these days you seem to be changed...' from one of the church members.

R: How was your feeling when you heard the comment?

A: I felt not good. I thought that 'thus, should I always be in trouble? What is his

bias about me?' I think that he was too impatient.

R: Can you think about the reason why he is impatient about you?

A: I think that he has a limited understanding of me. Of course, sometimes I could meet a few people who try to understand my specific religious background, but I think that generally people do not have enough understanding of people, like me.

R: Have you ever tried to express your difficult situation to other people?

A: Um….   I rarely tell people of my difficulties in my family.

R: Is it also connected with your general thinking about people?

A: Yes, it is.

This tradition of interpretation also influenced the co-researchers' behaviour in that they avoid sharing their difficulties with other church members and their minister[16]. This influence was sharply demonstrated when I tried to include some people in our web-activity[17]. In the group meeting session, I suggested a plan to include some more people who have Christian family in order to give different voices to our research. I explained my intentions and all of the co-researchers agreed. A few days later, though, some co-researchers contacted me individually, and expressed discomfort with regards to my plan to include additional people in our research work. As a result of co-rejection by some researchers, I could include only a very limited number of persons who were accepted by all of the co-researchers as the different voice givers. We discussed this rejection by some co-researchers within the individual interview sessions which were carried out during the middle period of the

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[16] See, p. 98, 99
[17] See, p. 99

research process.

R: Why did you feel uncomfortable about including some more people in our research work?

A: I needed people who can sympathise with us and can talk with us frankly.

R: Do you think that people do not talk frankly?

A: Normally, people pretend to understand us very well. I do not like the attitude of people. I was worried that they may act like this on the web-site.

Happy also rejected the inclusion of additional people in the web-activity.

R: Can you explain the reason why you rejected including other people in our web-activity?

H: I expected that so many stories about me and my family on the web-site would be written and discussed. If somebody who has very limited understanding of our specific background reads those stories, they could misunderstand me and my family. They also could say such things as 'if I am in your situation, I can do…..' I think that this kind of saying is meaningless and hurts me. They do not know anything about my pain that comes from my non-Christian family.

R: Have you ever heard the same kind of comment from people?

H: Yes, I have. 'Your father should not treat you like that… I cannot understand your elder brother. Why does he act like that to you?'; these sayings hurt me very much.

R: Why do the comments hurt you?

H: I know that my family members are acting very rudely and irrationally towards

me because of my Christian faith, but I love them. They are my family. I can understand their emotions about me when I look at myself from my family's angle. I do not like the judgement being made about my family without enough understanding from them.

Agape and Happy did not trust people to share stories with sufficient understanding regarding the specific religious background of the co-researchers. Their reaction appears to stem from negative experiences with people who have Christian family. Happy also expressed concern about people's judgment of his family members which also stems from a lack of understanding.

In developing the above experiences which are based on the tradition of interpretation that people who have Christian family cannot understand the co-researchers' specific family background, the co-researchers realised that they also have not tried to express their difficulties to other church members and/or ministers in their church; thus, the latter may lack understanding concerning these difficulties. After the emergence of this thinking, the co-researchers began to tell their own stories about their relationships with non-Christian family members. I believe that this is an important conversion resulting from our research process. In the beginning of the interview, the co-researchers spent most of the time complaining about other people who have Christian family and who lack understanding of the difficulties of the former. They seemed to feel that they are victims and powerless within their relationships with other people. However, when the co-researchers realised that they too have not attempted to explain and share their painful stories with people, they began to focus on telling their stories about their relationships with their non-

Christian family members. This conversion could offer the opportunity for the co-researchers to construct and deconstruct their stories of difficulty.

4.2.2 'Salvation of the family is my mission!'

This interpretation was common to all the co-researchers who frequently understood the salvation of their family as a responsibility given to them by God. This tradition f interpretation was expressed by the co-researchers' unconditional self-sacrifice for their non-Christian family. Agape's interview reflects this matter:

A: My mother and father always showed a heartless attitude towards me. When I was in high school, I still needed concern and care from my parents, but I could not ask for anything from them. For instance, when I wanted to ask my father to take me to school by car I could not ask him because I was afraid of his scolding regarding my faith life. He might blame me, 'if you did not go to the church in the early morning, you would not be tired now and can take the bus.' My mother always complained about my Christian faith and the church. My sisters also treat me as a psychopath and do not talk with me.

R: How were your emotions in the uneasy tension with your family members because of your Christian faith?

A: I had two opposite emotions such as 'injustices' and 'thanksgiving'. 'Injustice' about my uneasy tension with my family, nevertheless I gave 'thanksgiving' to God. I thought that God allows this difficult situation because he has a great plan for me.

In this interview I wondered why Agape's family members treat her so badly because of her Christian faith. Thus, Agape and I discussed this. Before Agape accepted the Christian faith, her parents held high expectations for her. She was an exemplary student. Her school report maintained high levels while she was also an obedient student and daughter. Agape remembered this time as a happy phase of her life in her family. However, when she reached the age of puberty her parents' relationship became poor. They often clashed seriously with each other and her mother sometimes ran away from home. All these unstable relationships led to Agape's deviation from having been an exemplary student.

Agape remarked that she was able to feel comfortable in the church at the time and her faith influenced her to make positive changes in her life. She started studying again and her emotions became stable even though her parents still fought heavily. Agape interpreted this as follows: that her parents tended to view her as a sinner who was causing all the conflicts within the family. She thinks that they seemed to ascribe their faults to her and her Christian faith. Nevertheless, Agape has endured the unfair and negative attitudes of her parents and sisters towards her. She mentioned that it is her goal to show them a good model as a Christian. She believes that this could represent an opportunity during which her family might think about Christianity positively.

Happy also mentioned similar reasons to Agape regarding an unconditional endurance. He construed this as meaning that God wants to save his family through him; thus, he needs to overcome his suffering for the sake of the salvation of his family.

H: In my case, I could realise many more things that God gave to me within the difficult tension with my family. If I give up my Christian faith because of the suffering caused by my family, it means that my trust in God can also be a meaningless thing. I trust that God's love for me will always continue even when I am in a serious and difficult situation anywhere. Therefore, I should trust God's love and his power in the sufferings and it can help me to overcome the troubles.

R: How can you be sure about God's love?

H: When I worship him, when I listen to his words in the sermon, and when I praise him, I receive the conviction of God's love. I am sure that the troubles with my family will be solved by keeping my faith.

From the interpretation of Happy and Agape, it seems clear that their faith in God and their conviction with regards to God's plan to save their family is their source of motivation to endure the sufferings caused by their difficulties with non-Christian relatives.

Green Temptation thought differently about the salvation of her family.

R: Have you ever heard that you have a responsibility to try to spread the Gospel to your non-Christian family?

G: Yes, I have.

R: Do you agree with the saying?

G: Yes, I do. I also think that I should lead my family to God.

R: Why should you lead them to God?

G: I think that the most difficult people to evangelise are one's own family. My family knows me well, even the bad aspects of me. When I was younger, I thought that if I cannot evangelise other people, I also cannot spread the gospel to my family. These days, my thinking has changed. Nowadays, I think that if I have a passion for the evangelisation of people, I can also find an opportunity to spread the gospel to my family.

R: What made your thinking change?

G: I just gradually realised it through my faith life. I think that God caused me to change.

R: How does your changed thinking influence your attitude towards your family?

G: In previous days, I was too sensitive about my non-Christian family who disturb my faith life, and complained about my non-Christian family background. On the other hand, these days I am trying to understand my non-Christian family from their viewpoint. Thereupon, my family also has shown a tolerant attitude towards Christianity.

In the interviews with the above three co-researchers, I suggest that the co-researchers' strong faith in God has influenced them to endure their difficult situations in the family. Conversely, their difficulties with non-Christian family, the difficult relationship with them, and their conviction regarding the salvation of their family have functioned as a motivating power to strengthen their faith. From the interactions, it appeared that the co-researchers were still powerless in their family situations.

Green Temptation has displayed a different attitude to Happy and Agape concerning the issue of the salvation of non-Christian relatives. She did not consider her family's salvation seriously, but she mentioned that God had changed her thinking concerning the issue. Even though Green Temptation does not act like Happy and Agape who are enduring 'suffering' unconditionally in their families, she also agreed that God wants to save her non-Christian family.

On the website, they have shared with each other their stories with regards to the responsibility for their own family's salvation and their unconditional endurance for this purpose. Blue Bell read those stories of the other co-researchers, and mentioned the issue in the individual interview session.

R: When did you feel that you should carry the gospel to your family?

A: I do not have a friendly relationship with my parents. My parents rarely interrupt my life and we do not have enough communication. Thus, I did not think about the salvation of my parents seriously. In this year, my family has experienced some difficult problems, and in the difficult situation I felt that spreading the gospel to my family would be needed. If they know about God, like me, they may overcome the difficulties more easily. Moreover, after reading the other co-researchers' stories on the web-site I have had more confidence about this.

R: Does your changed thinking influence your behaviour towards your family?

G: In the evangelisation programme of the church, I selected my parents as the people to whom I want to spread the gospel. These days, I am praying for their salvation.

R: Are you satisfied with your changed thinking and attitude towards your parents' salvation?

G: Well…. I think that it is needed and I should think about my parents' salvation. But, it is difficult.

R: What is difficult for you?

G: After I felt the necessity about the salvation of the family, the difficulties with my parents were becoming more serious. (smiling)

R: How does the trouble become serious?

G: My parents do not interrupt my faith life directly, but they ask me to do something only on Sundays. For instance, they usually ask me to take care of my younger brother [10 years old] on Sundays. Therefore, I need come to home earlier from church for my younger brother. If I come home late, my parents become angry with me.

R: What do you think is the reason why your parents' interrupting your faith life is getting serious?

G: I think that Satan seems to try to shake my decision to spread the gospel to my parents.

Blue Bell's thinking about the salvation of her family was stimulated by the other co-researchers' stories. She also tried to spread the gospel to her parents and her difficulties in the relationship with parents were becoming severe. She thought that these two changes were connected with each other; thus, she also needed to be patient during these difficulties, for the purposes of the salvation of her parents.

The research interviews for the present thesis have been carried out over a period of

about one and half years. During the time between the interviews, the interpretations of Agape and Happy on this specific issue had changed by the end of the interview period.

4.2.3 'We live in two worlds!'

The co-researchers often tell their stories within the contrast of the two worlds which were represented by the non-Christian family and the church. In comparing the characteristics of these two worlds, the co-researchers tended to feel pains in their difficult situations easily[18]. Happy expressed this response:

H: In the church, I feel happy in the presence of God, but when I come back home, I meet a perfectly different world. Talking about good things inside of me to other people can help me to identify these easily and to remember them longer. Therefore, I really need to share my happiness and blessings from God which were given in the church with somebody in my home. But…it is impossible. If I could share those things with my family, my faith life would be more fruitful. However, even I cannot pray, read the Bible, and praise God with a voice in my house. It causes me to have a passive mind with regards to expressing my faith to my family.

Happy felt that he lives in two completely different worlds. Happy interpreted this in the sense that he tends to be passive with respect to expressing his faith and his religious experiences naturally at home. Of course, if he expresses his experiences in

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[18] See, p. 111, 112.

the presence of God he may again encounter conflict with his family; thus, he might worry about it. However, in the above interpretation, Happy expressed regret that he could not share positive emotions and blessings with his family because of their different world views.

A: When I look back, the most serious time with my parents, I was always in tension between the church and the home. When I attend the service of the church, I cannot be sure whether I can attend this service again or not. This tension in the church made me focus on God much more than the family. At home, I was… a 'mad' person….. (She kept silence for a while.) In the time, I seemed to live in the completely different world alone. I could not find any common denominator with my family. What I was the most afraid of was that my parents never smiled at me. When my father found me reading the Bible in the room, he threw the Bible away and was really angry with me. When I try to attend the early morning service of the church, my mother blocks the gate to prevent me from going to church. They always watched me. I was really afraid of my parents' behaviour to me. Thus, my other problems such as the stresses from the study and friends were beyond my concern. Only keeping the faith was my main mission.

In contrast to the two worlds, the church and the family, Agape felt loneliness and focused on her faith life much more, in order to overcome the stress stemming from the tension with her parents.

Happy and Agape's common influence, from the tradition of interpretation that they

live in the two worlds, was to separate themselves from the family and the church. Of course, their family acted negatively with regard to Happy and Agape's Christian faith. However, within the perspective that they live in two different worlds, at home, they merely hid their faith and way of thinking and did not attempt to communicate with their family in order to narrow the gap. Moreover, in the church, the co-researchers tended to think of themselves as being powerless because of the specific non-Christian family background

4.2.4 To have a non-Christian family means to have many disadvantages for my faith life

This tradition of interpretation emerged from the various interpretations of the co-researchers in the light of the other traditions of interpretation considered above. In the interview with the co-researchers, they tended to think of their life in a bisected world[19]. In this manner of thinking, the co-researchers complained of so many disadvantages as a person with non-Christian family. Thus, I suggested comparing the advantages and the disadvantages of a Christian family with those of a non-Christian family on the web-site. In the discussion regarding these comparisons, the co-researchers still tended to talk about the disadvantages of a non-Christian family and the advantages of a Christian family. The co-researchers did not want to focus on the opposite: they seemed to feel powerless within their relationship with people with a Christian family.

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[19] I identified this way of thinking as a tradition, 'we live in two worlds!'

Vision[20] (V), who is one of 'the different voice givers[21]', wrote a story after he had read the co-researchers' stories of disadvantages of people with a non-Christian family.

V: After reading the above stories, I realised that people with a Christian family can have more advantages than people with a non-Christian family. I could also realise that people with non-Christian family can be hurt by these. I feel sorry about this. Nevertheless, have you ever thought through these problems in reverse? For instance, people with Christian family must attend all the worship time and church meetings by force of their Christian parents. They cannot have enough opportunity to think about their own autonomous faith life; as a result they sometimes fall into temptation easily.

Vision attempted to convert the stream of thinking where the co-researchers focus on the disadvantages of people with non-Christian family by representing the disadvantages of people with a Christian family. Unfortunately, nobody responded to Vision's suggestion. I also tried to ask about the disadvantages of people with Christian family.

R: Have you ever experienced negative feelings from a Christian family?

A: When I was young, everything within the Christian family looked good without any reason. With the passing of time, a blind faith, such as the unconditional pressures to make their children attend church and/or to have

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[20] Vision is a pastor of the Presbyterian Church.
[21] See, p. 55, 56.

Christian faith, does not look good these days, but I am still envious.

Agape mentioned some negative features of people with Christian family, but she considered that she is still envious of them, even though she thought that a Christian family had influenced their faith life negatively.

Happy also expressed the emotion of envy towards people with Christian families.

H: While I wrote my previous story, I remembered a story. Even though we are talking about having Christian family and having non-Christian family with the same values, I still think that having non-Christian family gives me more disadvantages than having Christian family. I have been envious of the people who have Christian family from the beginning of my faith life. I have wanted to get the help of Christian parents in my faith life. To listen to the Christian history, the newest Christian news and the church's news and to get advices from a Christian perspective, from Christian parents, these things have been my strong desire. Somebody who has Christian family would say that these things are not important or they also have difficulties in their family life, but I think that they are complaining of their blessings.

Happy commented that people with Christian family complain about their blessings. In this section I have concentrated on the co-researchers' 'emotions of envy' and their comment about people with Christian family that 'they are complaining of their blessings'.

4.3 RETELLING THE STORY OF YOUNG ADULT CHRISTIANS WITH NON-CHRISTIAN FAMILY

In the early interview sessions the co-researchers frequently spoke of their difficulties that stemmed from the lack of understanding by other Christians (with Christian families) as regards the co-researchers' non-Christian family background in particular. The co-researchers also tended to focus on their painful stories concerning the relationships with their non-Christian family members. Thus, most of the traditions of interpretation discovered through the story developing process tend to support the co-researchers' negative and powerless emotions concerning their faith life.

After identifying the traditions supporting the co-researchers' interpretations of the problems in their faith life, I tried to stimulate discussion regarding the influences of these difficulties on their painful interpretations. While speaking about these influences, the co-researchers began to focus on telling stories about the relationship with their non-Christian family members and their own faith life.[22] They attempted to understand their non-Christian family members and to search for other interpretations that could reveal the value of their faith life.

In retelling the stories of young adult believers with non-Christian family members, I will represent their newly emerged stories in terms of their interaction at the

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[22] See, p 126.

interdisciplinary level.

4.3.1 Deconstructing of the co-researchers' stories

In discussing the influences of the traditions of interpretation that 'The church does not understand me!' and 'To have non-Christian family means to have many disadvantages for my faith life', the co-researchers began to realise that they too had not attempted to express and/or to adequately share with other Christians their own difficulties, concerning non-Christian family members, with regard to their faith life. The co-researchers tended to prejudge and/or presume to understand other Christians' thinking about those who have non-Christian family members in terms of the few clues that emerged during their interaction with other Christians who do have Christian family members. I asked whether the co-researchers have had any opportunity to express and/or share their own difficulties (with non-Christian family members) with other Christians who have non-Christian or even Christian family members.

R: Have you ever expressed and/or shared your difficulties with your non-Christian family members with anybody in the church?

H: Yes, I have. I expressed my difficulties in order to explain the reasons why I cannot attend the church meetings or why I cannot take responsibilities regarding work in the church.

R: What was the response of the person who listened to your difficulties?

H: They said that they can understand my difficulties….but…. (Happy remained silent for a long time at this point).

R: What are you thinking about?

H: I am thinking about their responses. I cannot remember exactly how they responded to my sharing.

R: If you cannot remember their responses, how can you know that they cannot understand your non-Christian family background sufficiently?

H: I can only remember that they did not show serious interest in my difficulties.

R: How did you know that they do not show serious interest about your difficulties?

H: They usually said that 'I can understand your pains in the non-Christian family, but God will help you to overcome those difficulties'. That was all.

R: Was it not enough for you?

H: No, it is not enough.

R: What response did you want from other Christians with Christian family?

H: Of course, I know that God is helping me and will give me the power to overcome my difficulties with my non-Christian family members but I did not want to listen to the advice. I think that to give advice that is too general, without any effort to know how we feel and how we think in the non-Christian family, means they are not concerned about our difficulties. To give general advice is just an attempt to bypass the uneasy conversation with me. I do not need a serious answer that can solve my problem. I know that my difficulties have no definite solutions. I just want someone who can listen to my painful stories and can feel sympathy with my sufferings.

R: Yes, I see. You mean that you just want to share your stories with somebody. Is that right?

H: Yes, I do.

R: Do you think that to have someone who can share your stories can help you to feel more comfortable within the difficult situation with non-Christian family?

H: Yes, I think so.

R: Have you ever tried to find someone who can share your painful stories?

H: No, I have not.

R: Why have you not tried to find someone?

H: Well….. I just guess that other Christians cannot understand my difficult situation with non-Christian family members.

Happy wanted someone who could share his difficulties stemming from his non-Christian families, but he did not attempt to find such a person through expressing and/or sharing his painful stories. Actually, he has tried to explain his difficult family background to other Christians a few times, but he was soon disappointed and gave up sharing his stories with other Christians who do have Christian families. He presumed that other Christians do not evidence sufficient understanding regarding his specific non-Christian family background because of their responses when sharing his stories. In response to my question regarding how he can be sure about the lack of understanding showed by other Christians who have Christian families, Happy could not express an adequate answer to support his assumption about other Christians. Finally, Happy realised that he really needs someone who could share his painful stories and feel sympathy with him, but he too quickly gave up finding such a person. Thus, Happy started to feel the necessity to share and express his painful stories with other Christians who do have Christian families.

The other co-researchers also hold similar prejudices with regards to other Christians

with Christian family. Agape, Blue Bell and Green Temptation have not shared their painful stories, not even with Christians who do not have Christian family members. I asked about the reason.

R: Why did you not share your difficulties with Christians with non-Christian family members? I think that if you share your specific stories with them, you could get really good support from those who could share their painful stories and feel sympathy with you very well.

A: Well, I do not know. When I see those who have non-Christian family members, I feel sympathy with their difficult situation easily. I think it is enough.

R: Enough what? Can you explain it in detail?

A: Enough to feel and to know their difficulties with their non-Christian family.

R: How can you know their feelings and difficulties without talking with each other?

A: We have similar family background, thus I think that they also have similar difficulties with me.

R: Can you be sure of that?

A: Yes, I can.

The co-researchers rarely narrate their painful stories to other believers with Christian family members or those with non-Christian family members, but when this point emerged, the co-researchers began to feel that they tend to complain about the lack of understanding showed by other Christians without sufficiently sharing and expressing their own specific stories. The co-researchers also began to realise

that they need to share their painful stories with other believers who have non-Christian family members in order to help them effectively.

In the web-activity, I asked the co-researchers what they wanted to share with other Christians, both with Christian and non-Christian families. From this question, the co-researchers began with a focus on their difficult relationships with non-Christian family members.

The co-researchers experience a particular relationship with their non-Christian family members because of their Christian faith which results in an uneasy tension owing to religious conflict. In order to understand this tension between the co-researchers and their non-Christian family members, the cultural and religious background of the Korean family and society needs to be considered first.

4.3.1.1 Christianity within Korean society

As I mentioned in chapter 1, Korea embodies a unique multi-religious society. Various religions coexist in Korean society and religious harmony and uneasy tensions simultaneously exist among those religions. Kim (2002:154) mentions the positive social influence of religious pluralism since "Korean society displays a dynamism that has enabled the adoption of various religious cultures, both Eastern and Western". He also insists that Korean people can live in harmony within these multireligious cultures with regard to their individual lives as well as the larger social context (Kim 2002:170). Of course, Korean people have the advantage of choosing their own religions freely and of adopting any religious cultures for their individual

faith life, but this is quite a narrow viewpoint which does not take into account the social and cultural background of Korea.

C S Kim (2002:156) refers to the spirituality of Koreans as a harmony of various forms of belief. Over time, Korean spirituality has developed a harmony with a mixture of various religions such as Buddhism, Shamanism, Taoism and Confucianism. In the harmonisation of the various religions, Korean people have created a unique spirituality which is open to various forms of belief. According to a report of the Government Information Agency (1996:97), 75.3% of Korean people have shown a receptive attitude towards various religions: this proportion responded that all the religions have their own truth and they can accept that. However, only 14.9% of Korean people responded that there is only one religion which embodies the truth. From this statistical result, the Government Information Agency (1996:98) deduces that there is a low possibility that social conflict might occur as a result of exclusive religious conflict. However, we need to focus on the 14.9% of Korean people who believe that only one religion possesses the truth. Their belief is quite strong and opposes the opinion of the other 75.3% Korean people who indicate a receptive attitude regarding the various religions. The proportion of 14.9% is small, but their strong belief holds the possibility of provoking the antipathy of the larger portion of the Korean people. Therefore, we cannot simply say that there is a low possibility of religious conflict in Korean society.

Even though Korean society displays a generous attitude and makes an effort towards the harmonisation of and equilibrium among the various religions, Christianity has been considered a unique religion which does not harmonise with other religions.

The major doctrine of Christianity is that only God is the truth which can save his people; thus, Christianity does not agree with any other religions which insist they also hold the truth to save the people. The unique doctrine of Christianity which is quite different from the common religious attitudes of Korean society can be easily found in the Bible.

> "For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens" (1 Ch. 16:26 New International Version). "Declare what is to be, present it- let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the Lord? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Saviour, there is none but me" (Isa. 45:21). "You shall have no gods before me" (Ex. 20:3).

Christianity accepts only one God as the Lord. Because of the strong doctrine of Christianity which does not want to harmonise with other religions, Korean society tends to view it negatively.

Moreover, Korean people tend to consider Christianity as a religion which originated from a foreign culture. Korean people place a high value on the preservation of their own culture. According to the report of the Government Information Agency (1996:163), 96.8% of Korean people think that the traditional Korean culture should be preserved even within the current trend towards globalisation. This report indicates the strong desire of Koreans to maintain their own traditional cultural inheritance. Therefore, Christianity, which was newly imported from western culture, is extraneous and hardly acceptable within Korean society.

In terms of the influences of the general attitude of Korean society upon Christianity as mentioned above, an uneasy tension and conflict exists between Christians and non-Christians, including the irreligious people in Korean society. I could identify these tensions in the interviews with the co-researchers.

H: My father sometimes talks with relatives about the negative aspects of Christianity.

R: How do they talk about the negative things of Christianity?

H: Christians ignore the power of the parents. Christians know that God is their real father. Christians only focus on the church not on the family. Something likes that…

R: Do you agree with their opinion about Christians?

H: I can agree with some of their opinions, but not all. God is everything for Christians, but we also place a high value on our own family in order to obey God's will. If a Christian is a really good follower of God, he/she can also take care of his/her family very well. People just ignore this point and focus on the few mistakes which some Christians have made.

The religious tension and conflict within Korean society is not related to religious conflict among the different religions but concerns tension/conflict within the relationship between Christians and non-Christians who hold negative views regarding Christianity. Within this Korean social situation, the co-researchers sometimes mention the negative social view towards Christianity.

R: Why don't your parents allow your Christian faith? Have you ever heard the reasons from your parents?

G: They usually complain about my late homecoming, and spending too much time at the church. They think that I focus on the church much more than on our family.

R: Do you really think that the church is more important than your family?

G: No. I do not. I just place the same values on both of them, the church and my family. I think that I am acting and managing my time just like a normal person, but my parents do not agree. They seem to make it a pretext for interrupting my life.

Green Temptation mentioned that she acts and manages her life and the relationship with her family just like a normal person. But her parents complain about her faith life, which appears to focus on her own life and relationship with her family, more or less in the same way as they complain about her church life. In other words, the general social opinion in Korea is that Christians usually set much more importance on the church than their individual lives and their relationships with their families. Therefore, Green Temptation mentioned that she is making an effort to focus on her own life and accept both her faith life and her family so as to prevent a misunderstanding regarding the former. Thus, she expressed the effort as trying to live like a 'normal' person. In her words, 'a normal person' points to general people who have negative views about Christianity. Blue Bell also mentioned 'a normal person'.

R: Have you ever tried to explore your faith?

B: Yes, I have. When I was in high school, I started to give tithes to God. One day, my father found out it and he was really upset about it and blamed the church. He blamed the church just like normal people who are anti-Christianity. I tried to explain the meaning of tithing and God, but he did not agree with it.

Blue Bell mentioned that her father blamed the church just like a 'normal person' who is anti-Christianity. Green Temptation and Blue Bell who both mention 'a normal person' demonstrate how the negative view of Korean society affects their faith life and tension with their parents.

The negative views of Christianity within Korean society in daily life are not very overt, but the unique, exclusive doctrine of Christians and their passion for God is sometimes criticised by the public when the negative issues concerning Christianity emerge. While I was writing the present thesis, a major issue in Korean society occurred regarding Christianity when 23 Christians who had travelled to Afghanistan for the purposes of outreach were kidnapped by armed Taliban on October 2007, and finally two men, including a pastor, were killed by them. The rest of the Christians were set free in the end, but the news brought about a bitter criticism of Christianity within Korean society. I do not have any intention of simply supporting the Christians' situation nor of judging the bitter criticism of Korean society regarding Christianity. I also do not intend to evaluate the condition of Korean missionary work. I merely wish to illustrate how Korean society responds to and evaluates Christianity.

The general public opinion concentrated on the fact that these Christians had travelled to Afghanistan in order to carry out missionary work in spite of the Korean

government issuing a warning of danger with regard to visiting the country. The public hardly showed sympathy for the captured people who were also Korean, even in the case of the two murdered by the Taleban. Blaming Christianity and evaluating their missionary work negatively emerged from this event as a major social issue.

I translated the report of Kum (2007: para. 1-4) on this issue as follows:

> When the released people from the Taleban were exhibited at the port of entry, a man who is in his twenties was captured by the police. He had planned to throw eggs at the survivors. …. The event shows the cold eyes of Korean people about the Taleban event.

> The nature of the event in Afghanistan was that since the 'armed Taleban kidnapped guiltless civilians and murdered some of them', the Taleban should be judged and blamed.

> Nevertheless, there was not only a blaming of the Taleban but also of Christianity and the church in our society, for the above reasons. The community of Christians was criticised for sending people to Afghanistan to carry out service even though the government had given notice that it was dangerous to travel in the area.

From this event in Afghanistan, fierce debate emerged in Korean society. In particular, under each of the news articles regarding the said event, a number of people posted negative commentary on the Internet blaming Christianity.

Furthermore, a major argument developed concerning the mission work of the church, as to the purpose of the people who visited Afghanistan: for service or spreading the gospel? Most of the people in Korea wanted to know the exact purpose of the visit to Afghanistan. According to the report of the Government Information Agency (2006:131), 66.2% of people think that a religious philosophy does not hold a dominant position in comparison with other philosophies or ethics. For a number of Korean people, a religious philosophy is merely one of many philosophies and systems of ethics in the world. Therefore, to determine whether the purpose was 'for service or for spreading the gospel' was an important issue in order to judge the people who had visited Afghanistan. The public opinion held that if the purpose is only that of service, the behaviour of the people who visited Afghanistan could be accepted and their mistakes forgiven, but if there was any intention to spread the gospel under cover of the service rendered, their mistakes could not be accepted and therefore they should be blamed. Because these Christians had visited Afghanistan for their own benefit, they should take responsibility for the unfortunate incident.

The Afghanistan event represents the position of Christianity within Korean society. Even though Korean people enjoy the right to choose their own religion freely and there is major growth in the church in Korea, Korean society does not exhibit any positive attitudes towards Christianity. Moreover, such an attitude in Korean society influences the negative evaluation of the co-researchers' parents regarding the Christian faith of their children.

4.3.1.2 Dual attitude of Korean society towards religion

Korean people are not forced to choose a certain religion and government guarantees freedom of religion, even though some negative attitudes regarding Christianity exist in Korean society. Christians can erect a church anywhere and conduct services anytime. Nevertheless, Korean people tend to enforce the same religion within one family. Eun (2001:163) explains this unique tendency of the Korean family as 'religious homogeneity'[23]. Therefore, we can say that Korean society adopts a dual attitude concerning religion. Even though people may have the freedom to choose a religion for their individual life, they still experience limitations when their family follows a different religion from that of the individual's choice. Of course, most families preserve religious homogeneity, but we need to focus on the few who practise different religions from that of their family. Although it is common for people to follow the same religion as that of their family, those who adhere to a different religion might be easily marginalised and isolated. It does not matter whether they are Christian, Buddhist or irreligious, a major concern and stress would exist within their family because of the difference in religion.

Eun (2001:163) avers that there is strong religious homogeneity within the Korean family; thus, there is a low possibility of religious conflict because of the different religions within one family. Christianity in Korea has a short history of about 120 years during which it has grown rapidly, both quantitatively and qualitatively. However, even though no exact statistical reports are available as yet because of the short Christian history, we can easily expect that there will only be a small number of families who inherit the Christian faith from generation to generation as well as a rapid growth in Korea. This means that great numbers of people convert to

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[23] See, p. 1, 2.

Christianity in the middle of their life. Some people who convert to Christianity will practise the same religion as their family, while others may not. If the enormous growth of Christianity in Korea continues into the future, more people will need to face the tension within their relatives because of the different religions. Therefore, we cannot ignore the religious tension/conflict within the family and consequently we need to focus on their difficulties in the non-Christian family.

4.3.1.3 Confucian family

In terms of the dual attitudes found in Korean society concerning religion, attempts to maintain religious homogeneity within the family can be explained by the Confucian characteristics within the Korean family. Moreover, the oppression and sanction exercised by the co-researchers' parents on their children who follow different religions to them can be explained.

In the individual interview session, Happy mentioned the Confucian influence of his father and brother's behaviour towards him.

R: What is the main reason your non-Christian family reject your Christian faith?

H: They usually say that Christianity is too aggressive and causes one to neglect one's own family. Therefore, the time of my homecoming is too late and I place priority not on my parents' word but on God's word.

R: What is your opinion about this? Do you agree with it?

H: No, I do not. I think that it comes from Confucian thinking. My father usually says that 'gods can exist, but father has the same position with other gods.

Therefore, you should do the same thing to me that you do to your god. You are attending the church very well, but you are not doing well at home. Do your best like you do in the church! When our family has sacrificial rites, you do not bow down in front of our ancestors. Thus, I am embarrassed very much because of your rude behaviour'.

In another interview session, I asked about Happy's brother.

R: The previous time you said that your elder brother even slaps you to make you to stop going to the church. Can you explain his behaviour towards you?

H: He has the same reason as my father as I mentioned previously. He is in the same situation as my father. He places higher value on the family than other groups such as the church. Therefore, he seems to feel that to attend the church too many times can cause neglect of one's own family and thus ignore one's father's authority.

Green Temptation also told a similar story to that of Happy.

R: Have you ever heard from your parents the reason they do not agree with your Christian faith?

G: Yes, sometimes they do complain about my Christian faith.

R: What was the reason?

G: First of all, my parents are really uncomfortable with my late homecoming. They think that this is the result of neglecting self-management. Secondly, they usually complain about spending insufficient time with my family. They seem

to think that I place more value on attending church than being with the family.

Other co-researchers, Agape and Blue Bell, also mentioned similar reasons which they heard from their parents. To sum up their interpreted stories with regards to the reason of their parents' objections to the co-researchers' Christian faith: a late homecoming that seems to neglect the co-researchers' own private life as well as their placing greater value on the church than their own family cause their parents, especially their fathers, to feel that their own power as a patriarch in the family is being ignored.

In Korea patriarchy and Confucianism go hand in hand. "Confucianism came to Korea with the advent of Chinese writing: it became firmly planted in Korea when Korean scholars became proficient in this literature" (Lew 1970:30). The Chinese literature includes Confucian philosophy which has influenced Korean social and political doctrine in terms of the basic ethics and philosophy adopted by Korean scholars who held high positions in Korean society. Thus, this influence has resulted in Confucianism being regarded as both a religion and a major philosophy within Korean circles. In the modern Korean society, the religious function of Confucianism has been weakened but its ethics and philosophy continues to influence Korean society broadly as a basic philosophy. In particular, the Confucian doctrines of 'Jang-yu-yu-sŏ' (長幼有序[24]) and 'Hyo' (孝[25]) have given room for the strengthening of patriarchal rights[26] (Shin 1998:131). Kim (1991:98) points to one of the unique

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[24] 長幼有序: One of the moral rules given to the Five Human Relations. There is a hierarchical order between the younger and the elder.
[25] 孝: Filial piety.
[26] The patriarchal right means that "⋯ a patriarch has the absolute power to control

characteristics of the Korean family as being 'the paternal family', in other words that the surname, heritage of and responsibility for the family are inherited through the paternal line by descent (Kim 1991:98). Therefore, a father who has inherited all the rights of his family as a patriarch can wield strong power and responsibility with regards to his own family. If there is no father in the family, the first son can assume the said power and responsibility.

The patriarchal right that is one of the characteristics of the Korean family system is strengthened by Confucian traditions that focus on the order of generations and on the respect for the elderly person. In addition, the patriarchal right is the major principle adhered to in the Korean family system, even in the present day. From the background of the unique Korean character of the paternal family, we can understand the parents of the co-researchers' attitude to their children. Even though the co-researchers are already adults, they still fall under the influence of their parents, especially the authority of their father. Nevertheless, when their children adopt the Christian faith which is a different religion from theirs, the parents might feel that their power over these children is threatened.

Moreover, adopting the Christian faith which is hardly congruent with other religions and places a universal value on obedience to God's word can present a major dilemma for the parents. I argue that the effort of the parents to maintain religious homogeneity within their family can also be understood in terms of the influence of the Confucian patriarchal rights. For different religions to co-exist within the family, the implication is that different sets of values and behaviour patterns among the

his own family" (Shin 1998:131).

family members will exist. Especially, when the wife and children adhere to a different religion to that of the patriarch, the man who carries the responsibility to maintain harmony for the sake of a well controlled family, as its patriarch, might find this difficult.

Furthermore, with the increase in the numbers of nuclear families in modern Korean society the relationship between the parents and the children has intensified. Within this intense relationship, the parents tend to think of their children as the other self who can realise their own desires. This thought pattern of the parents regarding their children has caused over-expectations and strict control over their children (Kim, 1991:113). The patriarchal right, the intense relationship between the parents, and the children within the modern nuclear family, have provided a reasonable foundation for the aforementioned over-expectations and the strict control over their children. As presented in the story of Green Temptation above, her parents frequently worried and complained about her late homecoming. Green Temptation interpreted this as denoting that her parents were concerned about her self-management. Agape and Blue Bell also interpreted their situation similarly. Green Temptation and Blue Bell are students while Green Temptation is preparing for an examination for the purposes of employment; thus, the co-researchers' situations suggest a reason why their parents are deeply concerned for the studies of their children. Hence the parents complained that they spent too much time in church. Agape and Blue Bell expressed discontent regarding this negative attitude of their parents. They felt that their parents' sensitive response regarding their studies was just a pretext for disrupting their Christian faith life. They thought that besides spending time in church, they also spend their time meeting with friends, watching television, shopping and so on, but

their parents usually only complain about their spending time in church. They mentioned that this is just one of the ways in which parents express their objections to their children's Christian faith life.

4.3.1.4 Korean Familism

I discussed Korean familism and its influences upon Korean society in chapter 1. One of the unique Korean family characteristics that can be identified in terms of 'Korean familism' is that it places greater value on the family than on the individual. Cho (1985: 83) refers to the concept of 'Korean familism' as "… the basic element of the society [which] is the family not [the] individual, and the family always has preference over any other social group …". Shin (1998:128) insists that the Korean familism has been influenced by Confucian traditions that place an emphasis on patrilineage, respect of elders, filial piety, ancestral worship, and the continuity of the patrineal family. According to the interpretation of Shin (1998:128) with regards to the Confucian influences on Korean familism, D C Kim (2002:111) adds the influence of the egoistic competition between the nuclear families in modern Korean society. With the industrial development of modern society, the inclination to Korean familism has emerged more strongly. In the modern industrial capitalist society, the family is important as a basic unit within a situation of social competition. Therefore, in order to gain greater benefits within such competition, the family needs to focus on developing its own values as well as attempting to protect its basic social boundaries.

Within the influences of this type of familism, to believe in the Christian faith which

is different from the family's traditional religion and places greater value on God and the church means that the behaviour may damage the relationship of a firmly united family group.

4.3.2   An alternative story of 'keeping the faith'

It has been demonstrated that the Confucian philosophy, patriarchal family system and Korean familism within the modern Korean nuclear family, especially the broad social antipathy towards Christianity, all influence the co-researchers' Christian faith life to the extent that these cause difficult tension/conflict in the relationship with their non-Christian family. The difficulties the co-researchers face with regards to their Christian faith are more complicated since these are connected with various social and philosophical issues in Korea and are greater than I had expected at the beginning of the present research. In terms of the complicated difficulties of the co-researchers, Happy interpreted his difficulties of the faith life as the problem of 'Keeping Faith':

H: These days, our painful stories are shared and discussed in the small meetings and the Bible training groups of the church. Within the time, people usually say that they can understand our difficulties, but I have found that they only know the painful stories superficially. If I did not attend this research interview, I would still ignore their lack of understanding and remain silent. But, now, I can try to tell my stories to other Christians without any pretext.

R: What was the other Christians' understanding of your painful stories?

H: They tend to understand our difficulties as those that we can address through

our faith life such as temptations to weaken our faith. Thus, they seem to think that our difficulties with non-Christian family can be overcome through focusing on the Bible and the prayer. But, for us the difficulties are a really important problem which is about losing or keeping our Christian faith. The difficulty with our non-Christian family is not some part of our faith life but our whole faith life.

R: How do other Christians talk about your difficulties with your non-Christian family?

H: They usually view the problem in terms of the level of maturity of one's faith. People whose faith is weak cannot overcome the problem with non-Christian family and people whose faith is mature can ….. They generally encourage me by saying that 'your faith is mature, thus you can overcome the problem with your non-Christian family'.

R: How do you feel about the general response of other Christians?

H: Those who have Christian family seem to have an advantage over me with a non-Christian family. That kind of attitude does not help to overcome my faith problem.

In the position of the co-researchers' experience of difficulties with their non-Christian family, to believe in the Christian faith which is a different religion from that of their family means to be in opposition to the patriarch's authority and ruling, contrary to their parents' expectations, and to face social prejudice regarding Christianity. Within these complicated situations, the co-researchers are struggling with maintaining their Christian faith.

4.4   RETELLING THE STORY OF 'SUFFERINGS'

During the interview sessions in the present study, the co-researchers usually shared their painful stories with respect to their non-Christian family. These concerned their sufferings stemming from maintaining their Christian faith life and efforts to evangelise their non-Christian family. The co-researchers experienced suffering because as Christians they oppose the family's religious identity. While listening to the stories about the suffering of the co-researchers, I wondered whether God really wants his children to suffer in life. The interpretations of some of the co-researchers with regards to this question suggest that God allowed the suffering to strengthen them and to cause their non-Christian family members to become Christians as well. On the other hand, other co-researchers interpreted this as Satan causing the sufferings as a temptation in order to destroy their love for God, and added that their non-Christian families are used by Satan as a means to do so.

Whatever the interpretations of the co-researchers regarding their sufferings within the context of non-Christian family, they tend to respond to the sufferings with unconditional endurance. Within the difficult relationship with non-Christian family members, the co-researchers chose to merely remain silent and continue to endure the suffering in order to prevent even greater difficulties with their non-Christian family members and also to embody a good Christian model for the evangelisation of their non-Christian family members. Most of the co-researchers did not consider any other options to overcome the suffering.

I asked about their general response to the sufferings with their non-Christian

families.

R: What makes you endure all the suffering with your non-Christian family members?

A: At first, I could not endure the unfair and wrong attitude of my family towards me. But after I realised God's love and plan for me, I tried to endure all the suffering within my family.

R: When did you realise God's love and plan for you?

A: When I accepted God as my only one Lord in my life.

R: Actually, did God let you know that you should endure the suffering that stems from the difficult relationship with your non-Christian families?

A: No. God made me realise his love and the power with which I could endure the suffering.

R: Um…I see now. So, can you be sure that God really wants you to sacrifice within the difficult relationship with your non-Christian families?

A: Well…… I did not think about it. I do not know.

R: Can you tell me where you get the idea of unconditional endurance of the suffering?

A: Um…… I think I have got the idea from some sermons in the services and some religious books.

R: How did they offer advice for your suffering?

A: In order to evangelise my family I should be a good Christian model in the house. I thought that if my family also held a Christian faith all the troubles would disappear. Thus, I tried to understand their negative attitude towards me and to be a good daughter and a good sister by an obedient and gentle attitude

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towards my family.

R: Was it effective?

A: Well…I am not sure about it. Actually, I did my best, but….(she kept silence for a long time).

R: What do you think?

A: I am thinking about whether my efforts were really effective or not.

R: Now, do you find the answer?

A: Not exactly. I think that my efforts seemed to be not quite effective. Even though I was trying to be a good daughter, my parents usually disrupted my faith life much more. They seemed to use my efforts as a weakness in the sense that I could not resist their unfair attitude.

R: Have you ever explained your intention regarding the endurance?

A: No, I have not.

The other co-researchers have indicated a similar response to their suffering, although most of them are not sure of the effectiveness of their responses to their suffering. Even though the co-researchers have done their best in this regard, they still feel powerless and marginalised within their family.

4.4.1 Deconstructing the story of 'suffering'

Their faith in God and the conviction of God's love and plan amongst the co-researchers is the motivating power for them to endure the suffering within their non-

Christian family[27]. However, the co-researchers merely maintain silence in their family relationship without any effort to solve the unfair and negative attitudes of their non-Christian family members while they endeavour to endure the suffering. Agape and Happy began to alter their opinions towards their suffering during the latter half of the research interview process.

A: With the passing of time, being unconditionally patient in the conflict with my non-Christian families has become more difficult. Thus, these days I sometimes complain and resist the unfair and rude attitude towards me. Some could say that my faith has weakened and my prayer is not enough, but….it is not.

R: What has caused you to change these days?

A: I am already an adult. I think that my parents should accept my physical and emotional changes and respect them, but they still show the same attitude towards me and still disrupt my faith life. It makes me harder.

Agape complained that she is in the transition period of adulthood; thus, she desires a changed relationship with her parents, but they continue with the same attitude towards her faith life. I suggest that Agape's response, to maintain silence, and her unconditional patience to overcome her suffering within her non-Christian families could be causing this lack of communication. Agape did not attempt to overcome the conflict with her non-Christian parents with sufficient conversation or interaction in the relationship with them, in order for all the relatives to gain a deeper understanding of each other. She tried to overcome the difficult situation by

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[27] See, p. 128, 129.

remaining silent and enduring the uncomfortable situation.

4.4.2 Emerging adulthood and the family relationship

Arnett (2000:469) focuses on people between the ages of 18-25 and identifies this period as an 'emerging adulthood'. This period has been extended in modern industrial society and is considered an important one during which to prepare for adulthood.[28].

As I already mentioned in chapter 1, Korean people usually live with their parents before marriage. Generally, the young adults may live independently for a very short period or none at all prior to their own marriage even though they are economically independent. Moreover, owing to the influence of the Confucian patriarchal family interference in the life of the young adult might occur more frequently.

The co-researchers are in the period of emerging adulthood and face conflict/tension in the relationship with their non-Christian families. They also desire to live independently from their parents physically and emotionally, but they are nevertheless still under the strong influence of their parents. This fact may present a major stress for the adult believers.

On the other hand, the co-researchers also feel intimate and secure within the family relationship. We know that usually the family relationship is the most intimate and comfortable relationship among the other social relationships in which people

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[28] See, p. 49, 50.

connects with each other. However, if there is conflict/tension within such a relationship, people may be seriously affected.

A: When I think back to the most difficult period with my parents, I think that I was in deep sorrow. My study gradually became more difficult at school, yet I could not get any emotional support from my family. At the time, I was really envious of other Christian friends who have Christian families, because they can get good support from their Christian parents. When I opened the gate of my house, I could feel the coolness of my family immediately. I really wanted to have Christian parents who could pray for me and support me. I cried so many times while experiencing sorrow I was really lonely.

H: I could not understand their rejection of my Christian faith. I did not cause any trouble in the family and I am rather a good son and a good sibling: the only reason is that my Christian faith brought such major trouble and disconnection in the family relationship.

The co-researchers interpreted their painful relationships with their non-Christian parents as follows. They felt that they experience difficulties with their family because of their Christian faith, and that their family therefore display negative attitudes towards them, which causes them to feel sorrow in their family relationships. The co-researchers desired a family relationship in which they could feel comfortable and secure. However, the parents of the co-researchers expressed uncomfortable emotions regarding their children who believe in a different religion to theirs and who do not follow their parents' expectations that they will throw away their

Christian faith.

Kim (2001:144) refers to Confucian filial piety as obedience and respect for the parents' will. Even though the children do not agree with their parents' will, to obey is the duty of the children. Obedience to and respect for the parents constitutes the fundamental ethics of Korean family relationships. These ethics of filial piety tend to focus on only the duty of children towards their parents. The parents' request is lopsided when obedience and respect to their children is required even though the former's will is wrong. The demand for absolute obedience in filial piety can be found frequently in the traditional fables. An example of the traditional Korean tale is the story of Simchung, who was a girl who lived with her old and blind father. One of the monks advised her that if she gave an offering of three hundred bags of rice to Buddha, her father would be able to open his eyes. Unfortunately, she was really poor; thus, there was no way to cure her father's sight nor even to live. One day, Simchung was asked to become a human sacrifice in order to calm the rough seas for a merchant. As compensation for her sacrifice, people promised to donate three hundred bags of rice, exactly the same amount as the offering to Buddha. Finally, Simchung made a decision to be that human sacrifice and threw herself into the sea. Most of the people were impressed by this and Simchung's great filial piety. Kim (2001:145) evaluates this tale as an example of expecting the excessive filial piety of the children to be admired. Therefore, within the relationship between the parents and the children the lopsided duty of such piety is forced on the children and when this duty is not carried out the relationship will be placed in jeopardy.

Furthermore, within the rapidly changing modern society, this lopsided duty of

obedience to and respect for the parents within the Korean family relationship may pose problems between the children and their parents. In spite of the betterment of the woman's social and family position and the children's acceptance of this new-generation value, men in the family still retain the conservative traditional family ethos. (Cho & Oh 2001: 280) The present generation of children is changing rapidly along with the more modern society. The children want more freedom and wish to form their own identity. Nevertheless, the parents tend to hold traditional family ethics in order to control their own family. This generation gap can cause family conflict / tension.

4.4.3   To be an adult!

The co-researchers still live with their parents physically, remain under their influence emotionally, and continue to depend on their parents economically. Nevertheless, the former want to be 'adults' who can enjoy freedom as regards their chosen faith life. Arnett (2000: 477) distinguishes the concept of emerging adulthood from that of young adulthood:

> The young people who are in the emerging adulthood see themselves as gradually making their way into adulthood…… They are still in the process of obtaining education and training for a long-term adult occupation, whereas the majority of people in their thirties have settled into a more stable occupational path.

The young people who are emerging into adulthood are in a period during which they

need to prepare to live as independent 'adults' physically, emotionally and financially. However, the young people cannot be identified as being adults as well, because they are not independent of their parents in these realms. In particular, the co-researchers felt that economic independence is the most important aspect of being an 'adult' with her/his own religious freedom.

B: It is difficult to insist on independent religion in my family, because I cannot stand on my own feet economically and emotionally. I think that the economic independence is more important.

R: If you can stand on your own feet financially, are you expecting that your parents' disruption of your faith life could be diminished?

B: Yes, I think so. I regret my economic dependence, thus, I cannot insist on my individual faith life strongly.

R: Do you have any story to confirm your idea?

B: For instance, while I was preparing for the examination for employment, I worked at a part-time job. One day I stopped the part-time job in order to study more intensively instead. After a while, my father's harassment regarding my attending church became more serious.

A: These days, my faith life in the family is becoming more comfortable.

R: What makes your faith life in the family more comfortable?

A: I have a part-time job at the moment, thus, I can be financially independent from my parents. I think that the economic independence influences my parents to reduce their disruption of my faith life. (She was smiling.)

H: These days, I am making my own income from my job. It enables me to have economic independence and to spend less time with my family. As the result, the stress that comes from the harassment from my father because of my religion has lessened.

While I was conducting the present interviews, some of the co-researchers obtained part-time employment. From their experience of partial economic independence, they seemed to feel that this positively influenced their family difficulties to some extent.

Arnett (2000:472) explains that in the process of reaching for adulthood, young people need to establish a stable residence, finish school, settle into a career, and marry. Economic independence alone is not an essential condition of becoming an adult. When the co-researchers achieve stable independence emotionally, economically, and physically, they can be considered as being 'adult'. Moreover, I believe that to reach adulthood, the co-researchers need to attempt to deal with the difficult relationship with their family members by facing it rather than avoiding the problem in order to make their family life more comfortable,

4.4.4 Family conflict

Within family life, conflict and difficulties among family members inevitably occur. (Garland 1999: 148) Therefore, family conflict is basically a normal and omnipresent event in normal family life. Kim (1993:39) mentions, with acute insight, that to solve

family conflict means the termination of the family structure. For this reason, she (Kim 1993:39) insists that we need rather to focus on conflict management than a solution to the conflict.

Kim (1993:113) reports in her research into family-conflict-management methods, that when the children reach the age of university students, the parent-child relationship experiences the greatest family conflict. Kim (1993:113) also mentions that the family conflict, which emerges in the parent-child relationship, strongly stems from a relatively higher authority. To obey and respect the higher authority within the family relationship stems from traditional family ethics, but for the young adult children who have adopted new modern family values, this authority cannot be easily accepted. Thus, greater potential for family conflict exists in a family with young adult children who are in the emerging adulthood period.

Furthermore, an interesting result emerges from Kim's research. When conflict is present in the parent-child relationship, different response methods are utilised to manage this according to the origins of the conflict. When the origin of the conflict relates to resources, especially money for personal expenses and living expenses, 39.7% of respondents use the method of mutual agreement while 32.1% utilise the method of obedience to resolve the family conflict in the parent-child relationship. In contrast with this result, when they hold opposing opinions in the parent-child relationship 52.7% people use the method of evasion while 18.2% people employ the method of obedience for dealing with the family conflict (Kim 1993:119-121). With regards to conflict about resources, the fact that a high percentage of people use the method of the mutual agreement is remarkable. It indicates that Korean family

relationships are gradually evolving from traditional obedience in the parent-child relationship. Nevertheless, in terms of conflict with regards to the opposing opinions in the family, most people still prefer the method of evasion in this conflict. The co-researchers of the present study also mostly use the same method in an attempt to resolve their conflict with their non-Christian parents.

Kim (1991: 183) insists that when the family members are able to express their own understanding, concern, respect, and thanks in a frank manner, the family relationship can be more meaningful and intimate. Within the family conflict, if the family members can express their own opinion, emotions, and expectations the family can reduce the conflict and manage it more effectively. However, the co-researchers in the present research usually do not express their own opinions and emotions during the conflict with their non-Christian family. They keep silent and try to endure the pain caused by the conflict. Moreover, most of the co-researchers are fatalistic in considering the pain stemming from the family conflict. Hence such reflections can result in negative effects on their faith life.

H: Sometimes, people asked 'why are your family members still non-Christians since you have been a Christian for a long time?'   In the early stages of my faith life, I thought that I was really sinful; thus, God gave me this suffering to train me to be a more mature disciple of God.

A: When I think back, the suffering caused by the difficult relationship with non-Christian family has made my faith life stronger. Sometimes I think that God may know the necessity of the suffering for my insufficient faith, thus, he

permits it.

G: I think that God gave me the non-Christian family in order to evangelise them.

Such fatalism about these sufferings induces a sense of guilt regarding their insufficient and weak faith.

4.4.5   'Sufferings'

The response of the co-researchers with regards to the suffering stemming from the difficult relationships with non-Christian families, maintaining silence and their unconditional endurance raises two questions for me regarding this suffering. The first is, 'Does God really want the co-researchers to suffer?' The co-researchers' struggle within their non-Christian families seemed to be really painful to endure. I felt that they are abused by their parents because of their Christian faith that differs from the latter's religion. 'Does God really want a painful life for his/her children?' The second question asked, 'Did God really give the suffering to the co-researchers in order to develop their weak faith?' or 'Do God really permit Satan to test the co-researchers' faith?' The co-researchers frequently interpreted their sufferings in the research interview sessions in this manner. But, when I listened to their interpretations I felt that God is too cruel and unfair to us. Some people have non-Christian families; thus, they are experiencing difficulties in various forms. However, some people have Christian relatives and they can continue their faith life happily. I cannot identify any reasonable grounds for God's choosing the people who are

supposed to endure suffering in their faith life.

Dreyer and van der Ven (2002:3) mention the most direct and simple answer that most religious people offer: "My suffering is a divine destiny. God has decided to have me suffer this pain or that loss." These are typical reflections when people suffer. But these interpretations cause new problems. 'Is it really God's intention for me to suffer? Is it right and fair? What is the reason to choose me to suffer?' (Dreyer & van der Ven 2002:3). The traditional interpretation of these questions is that "… suffering has been associated with the concept of justice" (Van Hooft 1998: 13). God created the world by an order in which each creature fulfils the Creator's will (Anderson 1994:30). Therefore, the suffering in our life is "… the result either from a human violation of the supernatural order or a divine response to such a violation" (Van Hooft 1998:13). Therefore, sufferings can be understood as punishment for sin. This view can cause further problems, such as 'is God really cruel? Is the punishment fair?'

In spite of the above questions regarding suffering, the most frequently agreed issue in this respect is that we cannot completely eliminate suffering from our life. Thus, the current view of it is that that we sometimes face incomprehensible and unavoidable suffering; however, we should accept it as a part of our life or see it as a good thing in some way (Van Hooft 1998:13). Yet another problem regarding the current view of suffering is to accuse God of not being powerful or loving enough to prevent all the suffering in the lives of human beings and their world (Dreyer & van der Ven 2002:4). God created our entire world and rules over it. God can also control all creation which is evident in his/her creation of the world. There is no part which

God's power cannot reach. Dreyer & van der Ven (2002:9) refer to the fact that "God's calling activity is directed towards 'enjoyment' of the Kingdom of God though He "calls" and "draws" history by the strength of his promises and prescriptions." The nature of God's intention for his/her creations was that they should enjoy the Kingdom of God, which God promised and maintains even to the present day. In doing so, how can God permit the incomprehensive and uncontrollable pain of the human beings who love him/her? To this question, modern theology answers as follows: "… God is not the final Organiser and Stage manager of nature and history but the One who calls the world to his/her aims" (Dreyer & van der Ven 2002:9). We have the responsibility to respond to God's calling to enjoy this world in which we live. Within the suffering in our life, therefore, we should focus on, not the judgement of the suffering, but the fulfilment of God's purpose in the calling.

4.4.6   Alternative story of 'Hatch out!'

In the suffering that stems from their difficult relationship with non-Christian family members, the co-researchers generally responded to these difficulties with unconditional endurance which has caused them to feel victimised and powerless. The original purpose of this unconditional endurance was their sense of responsibility to evangelise their non-Christian family members. However, by the end of the research project some of the co-researchers displayed an altered attitude in this regard.

A: These days, I feel that to endure all the difficulties one-sidedly and just to wait

for changes in my parents is not the right solution for my suffering because of the deep valley in the relationship with my parents. Previously, I have heard that when I love my non-Christian parents and show them my unconditional endurance, they will be evangelised at last. But I think that it is not right.

R: Why do you think that the solution that you heard of in the past is not right?

A: In the past and in the present, I still find myself incapable to withstand the confusion and cannot solve any problems within my non-Christian family. I do not like it. When I began my faith life, the salvation of my non-Christian family was the only purpose in my faith life. I have heard and learned it. But, with the passing of time, I can still agree that to evangelise my non-Christian family is an important mission to me; however, I feel that I cannot consider that to be true for myself now. To say so again, the timing of the salvation of my non-Christian family cannot be accelerated or delayed because of my efforts.

R: So, do you think that you do not need to make any effort for the salvation of your non-Christian family?

A: No. I think that I can still make my best effort.

R: What kind of effort is needed for the salvation of your non-Christian family?

A: Um…. The continued effort to change my family…

R: Can you explain about the continued changing of your family in detail?

A: Previously, I thought that salvation is the most important mission in my life, but these days I think that the other parts of my life are also important. I cannot throw it away. I should live these parts of my life together. Therefore, I need to focus on the salvation of my non-Christian family and my life as a student, as a daughter, and as a human being at the same time.

R: If you could give any advice for other young adult Christians who have non-Christian families, what would you say to them?

A: The idea that we, Christians, should make sacrifices for the sake of our non-Christian family's salvation would be a big burden that may disturb our faith life and other life again. I think that it is a better idea not to take too much responsibility for our non-Christian family except to pray for them. If we, Christians who have non-Christian families, focus too much on our sacrifice for them, there might be important misunderstandings after they have been evangelised. We could turn the glory and thanks to ourselves because of our suffering and sacrifice for non-Christian families. We cannot bring about their salvation in Jesus. Only God can do it. Only God can make the plan and manage their salvation.

Agape's concept regarding the salvation of her non-Christian family has evolved. She accepted that the salvation of her non-Christian family is not her responsibility but is under God's plan and power. She said that she can only make the effort to pray for her non-Christian family and needs to create a balance between her faith life and the other parts of her life.

Happy also told of his changed attitude with regards to his non-Christian family.

H: These days, I feel more comfortable with my non-Christian family.

R: What makes you more comfortable with your non-Christian family?

H: The conviction of God's intention and promise that God always leads me to the right road and will protect me. It makes me more comfortable these days.

R: Did you not trust God's plan and intention for you previously?

H: I think I did not seriously have the conviction previously, especially concerning my non-Christian family. Thus, I tried to make an effort to evangelise them myself. These days, I am still sometimes impatient with my non-Christian family, but the conviction about God soon makes me comfortable.

R: How did you get the conviction about God's plan and good intention?

H: These days, I can observe the changed attitude of my non-Christian family towards my Christian faith life. I sometimes have the opportunity to introduce the Gospel to my family. Previously, I could not do it nor could I even read the Bible at home. These days, my family still have a negative attitude towards my Christian faith, but I can feel they are changing now.

R: Do you think that the changed attitude of your non-Christian family is according to the plan God made?

H: Yes, I think so. Actually, I think that our family is in the process of the plan God made for our family. I love reading the story of Joseph in the Bible. When he experienced abundance in all aspects of his life, his family changed. I think that if I can also be abundant in my life, my family will change and will become Christians as well.

R: What efforts are you making for this abundant life?

H: I know that I cannot be supported in my faith life like other Christians because of having non-Christian family. I cannot control it, but I can endeavour to have a deeper faith life than other Christians. I am also making an effort in the other aspects of my life such as study and work.

Happy also felt the necessity to focus on his own faith life as well as the other aspects of his life even though his background, a non-Christian family, cannot be changed. By trusting God's plan and good intentions for him, he could feel satisfied in his present life. Dreyer & van der Ven (2002:43, 44) contend that our attitude towards suffering in the pastoral care context should be as follows:

> Our task is not to discern whether or not evil has an ontological origin. We need to accept the reality of tragic events, of chaotic experiences, of injustice, violence and crime. The assumption will be that our challenge is not to explain the link between suffering and evil. Rather our challenge in pastoral care is a hermeneutical one: the task to interpret and understand, to strengthen the courage to be, and to foster growth and hope.

To identify suffering as an evil temptation or as God's plan and to make a decision to merely endure all the pain is not our task regarding the fulfilled life that God really wants for us. We need to understand our suffering and to accept it as a part of our life. By understanding and accepting suffering we should encourage ourselves to grow and to nurture hope for the future. For so doing, we need to create a balance between the "… resignation to things that are inevitable; resistance against injustice and looking for solutions to solvable problems and, in all things: striving for, and directing ourselves towards the great vision of justice, peace and enjoyment" (Dreyer & van der Ven 2002:14, 15).

In unchangeable suffering such as having a non-Christian family who exhibit negative attitudes to Christianity, it is possible for us to easily forget God's original

intention for human beings in the creation. Of course, the co-researchers cannot dispose of their non-Christian family nor escape from the conflict with them, but they need to focus on God's intention for their life, peace and enjoyment. To give up finding solutions to the suffering too soon, by evasion or remaining silent, and to accept a painful life as God's plan will not result in peace and enjoyment. It appears that this situation is like being placed in an eggshell in which the co-researchers can forget the outside world's troubles and their own responsibilities as progressive beings. However, the eggshell is too small for them now. They cannot move actively and freely inside it, but they are still growing towards 'adulthood'. Now is the time to hatch the egg and come out to meet with the bigger world in which God has prepared a peaceful and enjoyable life for them. To accept suffering as a part of their life, to try to understand it much more in terms of seeking solutions and to make consistent efforts for a peaceful and enjoyable life might help to hatch the eggs and to connect with the outside world.

4.4.7 Alternative story of 'We are not powerless!'

During the research interviews, the co-researchers frequently spoke of the many advantages of other Christians who have Christian families, comparing them with their own disadvantages. The co-researchers seemed to feel envious towards other Christians with such relatives. Happy expressed his envy as: 'they are complaining of their blessings' when reflecting on the other Christians' interpretations in which they were also experiencing difficulties with their Christian family.[29] His interpretation indicates how he feels powerless in the relationship with other Christians who have

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[29] See, p. 136.

Christian family.

Towards the end of the research interview sessions, Blue Bell reflected one of the traditions given by other co-researchers in the discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of non-Christian family members. The tradition emanates from the discussion concerning 'people who have non-Christian family usually have a weak faith and easily give up their faith life'.

B: I do not agree with what was said. Of course, I think that I sometimes become weak in keeping my faith because of my non-Christian family, but when I think about the leaders in the church the weak faith is not connected with having non-Christian family. Most of the church leaders whom I always respect are persons with non-Christian family. The non-Christian family background can influence the individual faith life somewhat, but it is not the major reason for a weak faith. I think that the non-Christian family background can be a good stimulation for growth.

Blue Bell interpreted the non-Christian family background as stimulating growth within the faith life. She said that before the present research interview, she had not realised that the church leaders whom she respects as being good models for the faith life also have a non-Christian family background[30]. Thus, when she read their stories on the web-activity she was really astonished to discover this. After Blue Bell's opinion emerged in the web-activity, I tried to focus on the stories about the church activities of the co-researchers.

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[30] The church leaders are two of the co-researchers in the present research.

A: I sometimes feel lonely within my specific family background, but I am sure that it is some kind of specific training course that can strengthen me. Even though I am still young, in the position of a church leader I can have an ardent mind towards my group members who have a similar family background to me.

R: Can you tell me in detail how your attitude for the group members differs from other church leaders who have Christian family?

A: The most important difference is that I can sympathise with their painful non-Christian family background easily and sincerely. I think that it is really important for people like me. To understand the painful stories and sincerely sympathise can comfort people who are experiencing difficulties with their non-Christian family. I am also trying to understand their difficulties even though these seem to be really tiny things.

When Agape is in the position of a church leader, who can take care of other people, she is no longer a powerless person. She can influence other people and can offer help because of her unique experience within the context of a non-Christian family background.

4.5   SUMMARY

In chapter 4, I presented the manner in which the identified traditions of interpretation that emerged in chapter 3 influenced the co-researchers' behaviour and thinking, through listening to the co-researchers' narratives as well as their various social and cultural contexts and theological reflections. Moreover, through the

process of deconstruction and reconstruction, the traditions of interpretation that emerged within the interdisciplinary conversations in order to find alternative interpretations are different from the present ones and offer themes which satisfy the various dimensions of the experiences of the co-researchers.

The alternative interpretations that emerged through the work of deconstruction and reconstruction can be summarised in two stories, 'Keeping the faith' and 'Hatch out!'. The painful stories about the suffering that the co-researchers are experiencing with their non-Christian families are not merely a part of our faith life but represent the efforts of the co-researchers to guard their faith against social prejudice towards Christianity and against the authority that stems from the Confucian family system. Within the seriously painful stories, the co-researchers usually respond by remaining silent and with unconditional endurance. Now is the time to hatch the eggs in which the co-researchers feel powerless by understanding their difficulties with greater depth, accepting them as a part of their faith life, and attempting to find solutions which can render their life consistently happy and enjoyable.

CHAPTER 5

EMPOWERING AND DREAMING THE FUTURE

5.1   INTRODUCTION

In this study it has been argued that people accord interpretations to experiences in their life which are influenced by various traditions of interpretation. Through integration with various disciplines which can support traditions of interpretation in terms of various viewpoints, they can deconstruct their interpretations and reinterpret them. Lucia, Nolas and de Zeeuw (2008:14) consider that through a re-organisation of experience, people become more than what they know. Within the process of deconstructing and reinterpreting their life experiences, they will gain deeper understandings as to how they interpret their life stories and may open up the possibility of discovering alternative interpretations that may be different from the first.

In the previous chapter, the influences of certain traditions of interpretation upon the co-researchers were discussed and alternative interpretations have emerged through an interdisciplinary framework. According to Müller (2005:11), a newly emerged understanding of a narrative is different from generalisation. "It is rather a case of doing contextual research with such integrity that it will have possibilities for broader application." (Müller 2005:11). The newly emerged alternative interpretations stemming from the interaction with various disciplines may offer the potential to understand the stories of the co-researchers more broadly and differently. However, these are not generally applicable and/or fixed interpretations for all the

cases of the life stories. Within the social constructionist paradigm, the alternative interpretations may also display possibilities of being deconstructed and reconstructed for the purposes of a continually better understanding. Therefore, the alternative interpretations may represent another starting point to be deconstructed again. The narrative approach to life stories never ends. It is a continual process to assign meanings and to create better possibilities for the future.

In this chapter, the reflections of the co-researchers upon the alternative interpretations which emerged will be presented. The reflections are not intended to evaluate these other interpretations but to open up possibilities for the preferred future. After the reflections on the alternative interpretations, the reflections upon the whole research process between my co-researchers and I, shall be discussed as well.

5.2   REFLECTIONS OF THE CO-RESEARCHERS ON THE ALTERNATIVE FINDINGS

Four months after the last session of the present research interview, I had the privilege of meeting with the co-researchers again. Here we shared the alternative findings and reflected on them together. The alternative interpretations that we shared as follows;

1) Keeping the faith

2) Hatch out!

3) We are not powerless!

I will represent the reflections of the co-researchers upon each of the alternative interpretations.

5.2.1 Keeping the faith

Within the present research interview sessions, the co-researchers frequently pointed out the effect of the lack of understanding, of believers with Christian family, upon those who have non-Christian relatives. The co-researchers felt their non-Christian family background to be a major disadvantage in their faith life; thus, they were depressed and easily felt powerless in the relationship with other believers who have Christian family. Moreover, in comparing the two worlds, Christian (the church) and non-Christian (the non-believing family of the co-researchers) the co-researchers tended to be very sensitive in feeling their painful faith life.

While discussing the meanings and influences of the above traditions of interpretation, the co-researchers realised that they also lack understanding concerning their own non-Christian family. The former began to think about their own family relationships with these relatives. To understand how the latter feel about having a different religion in the family and why they badly affect the co-researchers' Christian faith helped the co-researchers to think differently about their relationships with their non-Christian family and to deal with their faith life more seriously. The co-researchers identified their painful faith life with their non-Christian family as 'keeping faith', which means that their struggling faith life is not just concerned with difficulties but with keeping or losing faith in the painful and problematic relationships with their non-Christian family. In the unique Korean Confucian patriarchal family system, to practise a different religion in the family means to resist the power and right of the father who is the patriarch of the family. At the same time,

the co-researchers are facing the social prejudice against Christianity which influences the attitude of the co-researchers' non-Christian family.

Mainly Agape (A) and Happy (H) expressed the above alternative interpretations. All of the co-researchers reflected on the above alternative findings together.

A: When I was in the most difficult tension with my family, my efforts to keep my faith were a really serious and important problem for me. I thought that to keep my faith in the difficulties with my non-Christian family is the most important mission in my life. However, after interpretation of it and sharing it in the research interview sessions I have found that people's levels of feelings about their painful life stories are different. Within similar circumstances but with a different personality, the level of the feelings of people can be different. For instance, within the non-Christian family I felt the pain that came from the conflict with my family quite deeply, but some of the co-researchers in this interview seemed to ignore and/or to not care seriously about the conflict with their non-Christian family.

H: Yes, I agree with this. I also have found it in the interviews with other co-researchers as well. Other co-researchers' attitude to their difficult relationship with their non-Christian family helped me to think back on my relationship with my non-Christian family. I think that I focused on negative responses of my non-Christian family to my Christian faith too much; thus, to keep my faith in the difficulties was my major concern. Of course, keeping my faith is really important but after then? How can I keep faith in a difficult situation? I did not

think about the question.

A: I think that we need to focus on the way of keeping our faith more deeply instead of focusing on the pain of keeping faith.

Agape and Happy reflected that they have focused on the pain of retaining their faith much more than on the way to maintain their faith within those hurtful difficulties with their non-Christian relatives. They transferred the value of the painful stories with their non-Christian family onto the stories of keeping faith, which, it seems, were not actually for the purposes of expressing their painful stories but for placing value on their 'efforts at keeping the faith'. When they focused on the painful stories with their non-Christian relatives, they were powerless people and victims in their family relationship and in the relationship with other Christians who have believing family, but when they valued their stories of keeping faith, they became active people who are making efforts to retain their faith in the difficulties with non-Christian family and in terms of the socially negative prejudice towards Christianity. For this reason the co-researchers do not need to concentrate on the pain in the relationship with their non-Christian family and on the responses of other Christians who have believing family any longer; rather, they need to focus on making efforts to overcome the difficulties with non-Christian relatives as regards retaining their faith.

Through Agape and Happy's story of keeping faith, Blue Bell (B) and Green Temptation (G) reflected on their faith life.

B: In the previous days, I was not serious about troubles with my non-Christian

family. I knew that they did not like my Christian faith and sometimes there were some conflicts in the relationship between me and my parents because of my Christian faith. But I did not concern myself about it seriously. Sometimes the conflicts with my non-Christian parents bothered my faith life, but I did not care about it. I just ignored the influences of the conflicts with my parents on my faith life. Through reading and hearing other co-researchers' stories, I could think about my faith life within a non-Christian family again. I think that I need to be sensitive about my faith life. When I ignore the influences of my non-Christian parents on my faith, my faith would be weakened or be lost unconsciously. In fact, sometimes it happened to me. Sometimes, I become too lazy to attend the service, Bible study group, or prayer meetings in the church. There is nobody to support my keeping faith in my family.

G: Through other co-researchers' stories I realised that I am not a special case and there are people who have more serious difficulties with their non–Christian family than me. Especially the stories of Agape and Happy: I thought that they had a really respectable faith but did not know that they have difficulties with their non-Christian family. Their amazing stories helped me to look back on my faith life and to think about my relationship with my non-Christian family again. I also agree with Agape, people can feel their pain differently and I am also not quite serious about conflicts with my non-Christian family. Nevertheless, the stories of Agape and Happy stimulated me to focus on the faith life and the family life much more. In fact, I was indifferent to my family's emotions about my different religion. I was just busy with my painful emotion.

Blue Bell and Green Temptation were also able to consider their difficulties in a non-Christian family differently through Agape and Happy's alternative interpretation of 'keeping the faith'. They could perceive their problematic stories within a broader framework.

Additionally, Green Temptation mentioned the insufficient understandings of other believers who have Christian relatives.

G: I think that other Christians who have Christian family also have difficulties in their faith life with Christian family. People tend to feel their own pain as more important and bigger than [that of] other people; thus, we usually focus on our own problems much more and hardly listen to other people's painful stories. If we have more opportunities to share our stories and to listen to other Christians' stories such as this opportunity that we have had for the research, we could understand each other much more and could make the gap smaller between ourselves and other Christians who have Christian family.

Green Temptation pointed out the reason for the inadequate understanding offered by other Christians who have Christian family: the result of the lack of conversation with each other. The other co-researchers also agree with Green Temptation's opinion and hoped for opportunities to discuss their situations with other believers who have Christian relatives. This attitude of the co-researchers to the latter was quite different from the attitude that the co-researchers had shown in the previous interview sessions. The co-researchers were no longer powerless in the relationship with other Christians

who have believing relatives. They tried to make efforts to improve their relationship with other Christians for themselves instead of complaining about their disadvantages and/or envying other believers' advantages stemming from a Christian family.

5.2.2 Hatch out!

The idea held in common by the co-researchers was that the salvation of their non-Christian family is their mission from God; thus, they tried to endure all the sufferings which arise from conflicts with their family. The co-researchers generally choose the method of keeping silence and unconditional endurance in the difficult relationship with their non-Christian family. However, this method appeared to make the co-researchers' faith life more difficult. The co-researchers still did not feel comfortable in the relationship with their family and experienced the major burden of evangelising their non-Christian family.

As explained, in the Korean culture, the young adults generally live with their parents before their marriage, and thus are still under the strong influence of their parents. However, the co-researchers are in the period of emerging adulthood in which they need to prepare to be an adult emotionally, physically, and economically. Even though under the influence of their parents, the co-researchers who are preparing for full adulthood need to alter their relationship with their parents to maintain their own faith life.

B: I think that my family relationship is as important as my faith life. Usually, the

parent-child relationship of people with non-Christian parents seemed to be more difficult than the parent-child relationship of people with Christian parents. In fact I had an uncomfortable relationship with my parents because of our different faith and troubles in another part of life as well, but tended to put all causes of the conflicts down to having different religion. These days, I have stayed in the house much more than the previous time because of studying to get a job. With the time in the house, I could have spent some more time with my parents and could have understood them better. I think that I just tried to escape from the difficult relationship with my parents without any efforts to deal with it; thus, the relationship seems to have been more serious. I think that, sometimes, the conflict could create a more familiar relationship with my parents.

A: I thought that only I have this specific difficult relationship with my non-Christian parents and only I live with such a big burden. However, through this research interview I could realise that some Christians also have similar problems with their non-Christian family. It helped me very much not to feel isolation. Therefore, I think that if we can share our own difficulties with each other without any prejudice such as in the present interviews we can reduce misunderstandings and hurtful emotions in the relationship with people. While I do present research interviews, to tell my stories and to listen to other co-researchers' stories gave me really major help in itself. I also would like to do this for my non-Christian family. Within the relationship with my family, I would like to have an open mind toward them, to listen to their stories and to gain deeper understandings even though I have a different way of thinking and

a different religion. Sometimes I feel that my attitude toward my family is too narrow, such as if they were other non-Christian people. I think that God really wants to have a beautiful family relationship in harmony; thus, to consider how I can create harmony with my family from now on will be the important task that I have.

H: I also tended to be blunt in the relationship with my family. The uncomfortable relationship with my family makes it worse. I would like to change my attitude toward my family. In fact, I tend to lay the burden of my non-Christian family on my younger sister because she is also a Christian. I expected her instead of me to create intimate relationships with other family members and I was careless about my younger sister's difficulties in the relationship with other non-Christian family.

The co-researchers agreed with the necessity to alter their relationship with their non-Christian family. From just enduring sufferings within the difficult relationship with their non-believing relatives, their sense of value altered to one of making active efforts for a better family relationship.

5.2.3   We are not powerless!

In the relationship with other believers who have Christian family in the church, the co-researchers seemed to feel powerless because of their unique family background, that of a non-Christian family. The co-researchers tended to hesitate to share their difficulties with other Christians and to feel envy of other Christians who do have

believing relatives.

Within the web-activity, the co-researchers could read each other's stories and could reflect on these. Through the activity, some of the co-researchers began to value their non-Christian family background as the stimulation for their growth within their faith life. They thought that sharing their painful stories with non-Christian family could also be helpful for other Christians who have similar problems with their non-Christian family.

H: I did not want to share my painful stories in the beginning of these interview sessions. Actually, I thought that there was no ultimate solution for the conflicts with my non-Christian family. Moreover, I did not want to remember the painful times with my family again through telling the stories in the interview times. However, after the interviews I could realise that I have been just too busy to ignore the difficulties without any efforts to deal with them. I also realised my weakness in the relationship with my family and felt the necessity to overcome it. Generally, I did not like to share stories of my weakness with other people but now I can share my stories out of this interview time as well. I would like to help other Christians who are in similar conflict with their non-Christian family to keep their faith life happier by sharing my painful stories.

Happy was not powerless after all, when he realised that he could influence other Christians who have similar difficulties with their non-Christian relatives. He dreamed of a better future in which he might help other Christians who are struggling

with keeping faith in a non-Christian family by telling his story.

G: I was not concerned about other Christians who have difficulties with their non-Christian family, like me in previous times. I thought that sharing my problems is meaningless and may make me weaker. However, reading and listening to other co-researchers' stories in these research interview sessions have influenced me to look back at my faith life again and changed my mind to have courage to share my painful stories with other Christians. I am leading a small Bible group that consists of several teenagers. There are also some teenagers who have non-Christian family in their household. I realised that they are also struggling with their non-Christian family to keep their faith and need some attention like me. I think that a small interest in their difficulties will be a great help for them and I want to be a person who can stand in the same position by sharing similar stories.

Green Temptation also discovered her value as a person who is able to influence other people who experience similar difficulties with their non-Christian family by attending to their painful stories and sharing her stories.

5.3   EMPOWERING

Rappaport (1995:796) remarks that the practice of a narrative approach leads us "… to listen to, amplify, and give value to the stories of the people we serve to discover their own stories, create new ones, and develop settings that make such activities possible …". By attending to the co-researchers' stories, the researcher may guide the co-researchers to accord value to their stories of powerlessness. Once the stories have

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meaning in the co-researcher's life, they can be reinterpreted and new meanings can be developed which may contain possibilities for the future. Müller and Schoeman (2004:8) explain the process of giving meanings and developing new meanings as the 'intervention' within the narrative research process. They describe the relationship between narrative research and intervention as follows: "Intervention is not only intended, but is an integral part of the research process" (Müller & Schoeman 2004:8). Within the narrative research process, the researcher focuses on uncovering new meanings from the structured discourses in the co-researchers' stories. The aim of the intervention is 'to empower the powerless' (Müller & Schoeman 2004:8) through the narrative research process.

Throughout the research journey with the co-researchers, I could sense that they feel powerless within their specific family background: a non-Christian family. They felt like victims themselves, both in the relationships with their non-Christian family and with other Christians who have believing relatives. Therefore, I have focused on giving value to the co-researchers' stories of marginalisation by attending and listening to their stories in the research interviews. Through the process of telling and retelling the stories, the co-researchers could be empowered and may develop new meanings for their stories which might offer hope for the future. When the co-researchers can find, create or develop this new meaning which could support their personal life in a positive fashion, the goals of empowerment may be enhanced. (Rappaport 1995:796)

The following reflections by the co-researchers on the present research process should demonstrate the influence of such empowerment within the narrative research

paradigm.

A: I could feel that somebody wants to listen to my stories and focus on them in the present research interview sessions. The attitude in which people are willing to listen to my stories without any judgement is really important to make me to tell my stories without any hesitation. When I tell about my difficult stories in my life with other people, I usually have an uncomfortable feeling about the listener. I often worry that 'when I tell this story, how will he/she think about me?', 'he/she may try to teach me and give some directions for the problems', and 'he/she may form a clear definition with one word about my complex emotions and problems.' However, I did not encounter any of the above uncomfortable attitudes within these interview times; thus, I could tell my stories comfortably and could tell them fully. It is quite hard to find someone who will concentrate only on my stories and can focus on listening to them. Amazingly, after telling my painful stories in the present interviews, I could realise that the painful stories do not exist as a problem in my life any more. I do not know what is going on. When I just hid the difficult stories in my mind, it was a really painful part in my life; thus, I could not face the stories at all. Nevertheless, after having courage to tell those stories and after telling the painful stories, I could recognise them as a part of my life and could interpret this as a thankful story which enabled me to become stronger.

By attending to Agape's stories, she became empowered to tell them. She remarked that the listeners' passionate attitude in listening to her stories without any judgement helped her to narrate these more fully. This is connected with the narrative

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researcher's role as an enthusiastic listener in the narrative research interview. The comforting atmosphere of the interview empowered her to tell her stories fully and after interpreting her painful stories, she could discover possibilities for finding new meanings in them.

Agape also reflected on the process of interpreting and reinterpreting the stories to find new meanings.

A: In the interview, I was consistently encouraged to tell my stories. While telling my stories, I could find myself; who was telling the same stories again and again. I thought that my sufferings are really deep and unlimitedly big, but I could realise the size of the sufferings. The sufferings were limited and smaller than I felt. From this time, the pain with my non-Christian family did not have important meaning in my life any more. It became just one of the stories in the past.

Agape gave a new meaning to her painful stories with non-Christian family. Using this she is able to reinterpret her stories, which could lead her to a more satisfied future. This is the goal of empowerment in the present narrative research.

Happy also mentioned the influence of the empowerment in the narrative research process.

H: When I told the stories that are connected with my non-Christian family to other people, I tended to choose words and/or events for telling these to

prevent unexpected negative prejudice towards my family. I did not try to hide the painful stories intentionally, but I could not tell my difficult stories comfortably to people. I was worried about so many things. However, I could tell my painful stories sincerely in the research interview sessions.

Happy was also empowered to tell his stories fully in the narrative interview sessions; consequently, his stories could be heard. If he were still to be powerless regarding his painful stories, his stories might lose the opportunity to gain new meanings which could lead him to have hope for the future.

Riessman (1993:18) comments that: "Events become meaningful because of their placement in a narrative". When the co-researchers interpreted their stories as a painful part of their life, their stories were distressing and meaningless, and it was difficult to dream the future, but when their stories were placed in an empowering position in their life by reinterpreting this with alternative findings, the narratives could take on meanings and offer hope for the future. In their dreaming of the future, the co-researchers may encounter the possibility of altering their difficult family relationships and influencing other Christians who are also struggling with their non-Christian family in order to retain their faith.

5.4   DREAMING THE FUTURE

Narrative research never ends with the conclusion of the research result. The last part of narrative research always offers possibilities to create new stories of the future. Müller *et al.* (2001:90) remark as follows concerning the end of the research process:

"Narrative research does not end with a conclusion, but with an open ending, which hopefully would stimulate a new story and new research". In our lives there are no true endings. Our life consists of a past, a present and a future that shift continually. In the continuum of time, we discover possibilities for a better future, which we expect to be different from the present. Hence, our future is never closed and we need not be fatalistic. Our lives hold the promise of hope for a newly opened future. In the same sense, the present narrative research stories also never conclude with regard to our future. They can represent another starting point for dreaming the future.

5.4.1 Dreaming the future of the co-researchers with new stories

Here are the new stories which emerged amongst the co-researchers at the end of the present research process.

G: In fact, I have met with more serious opposition from my father these days. I am sometimes depressed because of the difficulties, but I am sure that I can make progress in the relationship with my father like other co-researchers did. Other co-researchers' stories encouraged me to have hope for a better relationship with my non-Christian family. To spread the Gospel to our non-Christian family does not depend on my own efforts for it. Their salvation belongs to God; therefore, when I still keep my faith about God even though I have non-Christian family, I am sure that some day my family also will be saved. On the day, my family may feel regretful towards me. (All the co-researchers smiled.) I could not tell my difficulties to other people because it was too painful to do so, but now I can share the difficult times with my non-

Christian family comfortably in these interview times. In this way, I think that I also will be able to talk about the difficulties with my family after they have become Christian.

Green Temptation does not suggest any concrete solution to improve her difficult relationship with her non-Christian family. Nevertheless, she is dreaming a future in which she can be more satisfied with these problematic stories. Through telling her stories and listening to other co-researchers' narratives, Green Temptation is encouraged to nurture the hope for a better relationship with her non-Christian family.

Agape is also dreaming a future in which she can be powerful in the difficult problems with her non-Christian family.

A: I can tell my stories to other people who are experiencing similar difficulties in their non-Christian family these days. When I look back at my painful stories, it was a process of the training of God to make me stronger and a valuable part of my fruitful life. Through telling those stories of myself, I can encourage other Christians who have non-Christian family. Before beginning the research interview, I did not trust that other people could understand my painful situation sincerely and that just telling my stories could help to make me more comfortable. However, I could tell my stories about ambiguous emotions in detail and the painful stories became not an irremovable scar but a part of the stories in my life. These changes enabled me to think about the future. I do not want to be tied by structured thinking of the past. I want to make good progress for the future. I think that if I do not share and rethink my painful

stories, I am still under the negative influences of the stories.

Agape reflected that she could obtain the opportunity to reinterpret her painful stories through the research interview process by narrating them and this helped her to gain courage for dreaming a positive future even with these difficult narratives.

Happy also reflected on the research process.

H: I sometimes felt that my identity in the presence of God was not structured well. I did not know how I could deal with my difficulties with non-Christian family and with so many prejudices of Christians who have Christian family. I did not even try to find the way for it. I was confused about myself and my faith while I was struggling with conflicts with my non-Christian family. Sometimes, I thought that I was in these sufferings because of my weakness. However, I can say that God is giving me the opportunity to make bigger progress than other Christians. In the interview times, I could identify myself and my faith more clearly.

Happy reinterpreted the sufferings in the relationship with his non-Christian family as an 'opportunity'. Previously, the sufferings caused him to be depressed and to feel pain in his faith life, but he can reinterpret these in a positive manner which might provide certain possibilities for the future.

From the reflections of the co-researchers I could realise that the pain in their life stemmed from the lack of knowledge about their problematic stories. In their

inadequate understandings of the difficult conflicts with their non-Christian family, the co-researchers tended to experience their pain immediately and this prevented them from having hope for the future. When the co-researchers could identify and interpret their difficult stories, they were able to discover some space to reinterpret these for a more contented future.

The ending of narrative research is not always happy. It can be disappointing, but it is different from the beginning. (Müller *et al.* 2001:90) In this sense, we can hope that the endings described will stimulate a new story and new research (Müller 2003:15, 16). In our research work, we did not identify any powerful solution to make our stories better on the practical level. But the co-researchers and I agreed that our research work had surely stimulated our reinterpretation of the painful experiences with non-Christian family and would be inspiring for dreaming a future which might be better than the present. I hope that the new meanings and new interpretations will continue to be created continuously through this research work of telling and retelling, by writing this thesis and even by rereading this study. In a narrative perspective, our life story never ends and can never be closed. Our life story is open for the future.

5.4.2   Dreaming the future of the researcher with new stories

While carrying out the research interview and writing the present thesis, I have constantly been with the co-researchers in their journey. In so doing, I also could revisit my painful stories with my non-believing family. In remembering those difficult times, sometimes I could not stop crying and was unable to continue

recording the stories of the co-researchers. I have found that I also simply packed the painful stories away and put them in the cupboard with a special lock, as my co-researchers did.

Sometimes I shared my emotions and the stories of the co-researchers with my colleagues and friends in order to perceive our research work from various viewpoints during the writing of the present thesis. Of course, I shared those stories in our research work anonymously to preserve confidentiality. When one of my friends listened to my own painful emotions that arose from remembering my stories in attending to the co-researchers' difficult narratives, she asked me whether we could consult a professional person who could help us to be healed from the hurt.

However, in the narrative paradigm, there is no professional who can furnish the right directions to solve such problems. The researcher and the co-researchers collaborate to discover alternative interpretations that might lead us to our preferred future. Therefore, as the researcher and the co-researchers, we are all the professionals in our stories. Müller (1999:37) defines the task of the narrative researcher as a person who stands with the person or family 'on the rock in the middle of the stream'.

> Through facilitating the telling of the story of the past, and together with
> the person, to re-tell the story in a creative way, we are able to literally
> talk the rock behind us into an approachable position. Through
> continuously telling the story of the past and through re-interpretation,
> we help in changing the rocks from being stumbling-blocks, into

footholds. (Müller 1999:37)

The task of the researcher is only to listen to the stories of the co-researchers, to facilitate the story of the past, and to stimulate retelling these narratives. Through this process, the researcher and the co-researchers can together accord new meanings to the stories.

During the journey with the co-researchers I sometimes felt their hurt but I could dream for the future with the co-researchers at the end of the research process. Connelly and Clandinin (1990:10) point out a danger in narrative as comprising 'the Hollywood plot' where everything goes well in the end. The purpose of narrative research is not to reach a dramatic ending in which everyone can live happily ever after, since a researcher who is working in the narrative paradigm is trying to be 'truthful' as regards the various viewpoints regarding the same events. (Müller & Schoeman 2004:8) Throughout our life, the purpose of being truthful in the narrative research process is never ending. Our alternative interpretations in the present research cannot be preserved as an exemplary answer forever. The co-researchers and I just wish to make a point in the world: to express our stories and to empower ourselves by presenting our research work, which may also be deconstructed and reinterpreted in the future.

5.5   SUMMARY

In the narrative research interview sessions, the co-researchers were empowered to tell their stories. In so doing, they could discover some space to reinterpret these in

terms of new meanings which might lead them to their preferred future.

The co-researchers dreamed a powerful future regarding their non-Christian family background at the end of the research process. They reinterpreted their painful stories by new meanings in which they are able to dream for the future: to conduct an easier relationship with their non-Christian family and to maintain their faith life fruitfully. There is no structured practical solution in this dreaming of the future, but through the telling and retelling process in the light of the narrative paradigm the co-researchers have been encouraged to uncover some space for reinterpreting their painful stories.

CHAPTER 6

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH

6.1   INTRODUCTION

The narrative approach as a method for research has allowed me to think about and recognise my limitations and, at the same time, to discover unlimited possibilities. In the research interview sessions, I was only a small person, lacking ability to help someone else. I really was not an expert or a powerful person capable of enforcing change in other people's lives. I was just a participant who desired to listen to people's life stories and wished to approach those stories from a narrative perspective.

The co-researchers were apt to focus their concern on problematic stories and to judge their narratives on the basis of certain discourses/traditions of interpretation. These tendencies might lead them to close off and/or believe that their future is hopeless. Nevertheless, by participating in the narrative research process, the co-researchers could uncover possibilities for more satisfied lives. Events in one's life contain many different unheard stories. By giving a voice to an unheard narrative, people can reinterpret the event and accord new meanings in which they can dream another future. This is the part that I most enjoyed and valued during the work with the co-researchers.

In this chapter, I will furnish a number of critical reflections on the present research process to encourage a continually constructed research process in the future.

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6.2 CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON SELECTING THE CO-RESEARCHERS

I selected four co-researchers from the same church since I thought that they might feel more comfortable about telling their stories in the research interview sessions. They already knew each other, but were not aware of the non-Christian family background. For this reason, after they heard about each other's specific family background and difficulties they easily began to form a comfortable relationship with each other in the said sessions. They started to narrate their painful stories in a more relaxed fashion and reflected each other's stories actively.

The co-researchers also displayed a passionate desire to encourage each other to tell their painful stories. Even outside of the interview context, they shared their stories which had not been narrated before the research interview and tried to gain deeper understandings of them.

I suggest that using co-researchers from the same church context leads to the above advantages in conducting the research interview. However, if I were to select co-researchers from different church contexts, I expect that I might listen to more varied stories in their church life and the relationships with other church members.

6.3 CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE WEB-ACTIVITY

I created a website for the purposes of developing stories. On it, the co-researchers could read other co-researchers' stories, reflected on them and could pose a question

at any time. I also placed on it certain literature sources connected with their specific background and with the discourses that emerged for them, in order to help them achieve a more profound understanding of their painful stories and for the purposes of more effective story developing through collaborating with various disciplines. By means of these activities, the co-researchers could work with their stories more effectively. The co-researchers particularly mentioned the web-activity which caused them to feel secure to tell their stories freely and to listen to other co-researchers' stories more easily in the last session of the research interview.

In spite of the above positive aspects of the web-activity, it was difficult to encourage the co-researchers to join in it at the beginning. We had already held several individual interview sessions for the co-researchers to tell their stories by the time I created the website for the purposes of story developing. However, some co-researchers did not understand the process of narrative research well; thus, they were not interested in the process of story developing and did not participate actively in the web-activity at the beginning.

Moreover, some co-researchers experienced certain difficulties in writing their stories on the website. In fact, for the co-researchers, writing their own stories was different from telling them. I took the utmost care to secure our website very strongly, so that nobody could enter it or read our stories. Moreover, the co-researchers already enjoyed close enough relationships with each other to be able to tell their stories comfortably before starting the web-activity. Nevertheless, when the co-researchers wrote their stories on the website, the possibility existed that they re-read their previous stories even after reinterpreting those stories. Some co-researchers

seemed to be ashamed of the previous narratives, because they developed new interpretations of stories, with which they could feel better, during the retelling process. Viewing this problem positively, the feeling of shame may have stimulated the co-researchers to accord new meanings to it, but on the other hand, it may have hindered them from telling their stories more fully.

I discussed these problems with the co-researchers, and we decided to hold several individual interview sessions and group interview sessions during the web-activity process in order to understand the narrative research process much more fully and to encourage the relaxed telling and writing of stories. The attempt was aimed at fostering more active story developing through the web-activity. After experiencing these group and individual interview sessions with the web-activity, the co-researchers could understand the necessity of the process of story developing in the narrative approach, could tell their stories more actively and seemed to enjoy the collaboration work with other co-researchers' stories on the web-site.

6.4   CRITICAL REFLECTION ON 'THE DIFFERENT VOICE GIVERS'[31]

For the story developing process, I wanted to allow some more people, who could express different voices regarding our research work, to join. I attempted to select these 'different voice givers' from various contexts such as people with Christian relatives, who are adults, who are ministers and so on. But the co-researchers permitted only three persons to join in our web-activity.

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[31] See, p. 55, 56.

In the web-activity with the different voice givers, it was not easy to encourage them to read the co-researchers' stories, to reflect on them, and to tell their own stories actively. Our research work sometimes proceeded too slowly and we sometimes seemed to experience confusion in the process of developing the stories, but I did not interrupt the natural research stream by chasing or pressing the co-researchers. I wanted them to be able to reinterpret their stories and discover new meanings for them. However, for 'the different voice givers', to wait patiently during the long process of the co-researchers and reflect on it seemed to be difficult. Nevertheless, I could not force them to continue their role on the web-site because the implications might be that I was controlling the stream of the research process. I obtained the different voice givers' and the co-researchers' agreement for myself to join the different voice givers on the web-site, and sometimes carefully recalled their role to their mind. Eventually, one of the different voice givers resigned from his role.

However, the other two different voice givers travelled with us until the end of the research process. In particular, one of the different voice givers was a young believer with a Christian family. He told so many interesting stories and reflected on the co-researchers' stories from his different viewpoint. I did not introduce his stories in the present study, but his stories have influenced the co-researchers, to understand other Christians who have Christian family, much more fully.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

During the research process, I was surprised that so little literature was related to the present research context. Especially in the Korean context, I could find hardly any

studies concerning young believers who have non-Christian family. Korean Christianity has existed for about 120 years. In this short history, I would estimate that the proportion of families that transmits Christian faith from one generation to the next might be smaller than the proportion of families where all the members practise Christian faith. Nevertheless, research on the people who have different religions in their household has been marginalised until now. When further research is able to accord more attention to this problem, readers should gain a more profound understanding of believers with non-Christian relatives and many more programmes in the pastoral care context could be developed to help them. In the present study I perceive myself as merely drawing a point on hitherto untouched paper. When many more points can be drawn on the paper and they can be linked by further researchers, I hope that we will be able to see the beautiful picture on it.

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