

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Theme and Motivation

The point of departure of this thesis is the need for “public dialogue” between church and others, or Christians and non-Christians. This theme, public dialogue as a faith-praxis, has been my main concern in the 16 years that I have served as a Christian education leader in various Korean churches. During the period, I was confronted with several problems and questions in the field of Christian education. These are a matter of “binary opposition” or “dichotomy,” that is, the separation of faith and praxis, knowing and doing, private sphere and public sphere, text and context and so on. As far as time is concerned, many people are Christians on Sunday, but non-Christians during the week. In the aspect of space, they are Christians in the church, but non-Christians at home, at school and in society. Many Christians fail to develop an image of God in themselves or to make “a creative, dialogic event” in or with the world. For them, God’s Word no longer seems to be activated as the “living” book. There is no doubt in my mind that these problems are not caused by the Scriptures.

“Knowledge” in Christianity cannot be separated from “doing” from a Christian perspective. The Hebrew verb *yada*, “to know,” means to encounter, to experience, to relate to and to share in an intimate way. In short, to “know” is to “do” in the Old Testament. This is clearly in accordance with the New Testament which teaches that “faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (cf. James 2:17 in the Scripture; Wilson 1989:185,288).

I began to realize that the source of the trouble lay in the attitude of Christian educators and leaders of the Korean church who had overlooked the integrative methodology with regards to the relationships of know-act, worship-work, and private-public. They were indeed only concerned with cramming knowledge of the Bible into Christians within the

church buildings, sticking to a “schooling-instructional paradigm” (Westerhoff III 1976:6). As a result, the Korean Christians and churches had no time to look outside the wall of the church. Facing the crisis of the binary opposition of faith-praxis, I attempted a paradigm shift within Christian education, by laying special emphasis on an “experiential teaching-learning way.” The experiential learning which I carried out as a method for the integration of faith and praxis was grounded in the conviction that the Truth is not what is thought, but what is “experienced.” As Heschel (1955:283) claims, faith requires “a leap of action” rather than “a leap of thought.”

On the basis of such “experiential learning,” I planned Christian education programs for children and teenagers and, at the same time, I put them into practice in some Korean churches over a period of several years. I also brought an awareness of the necessity of the experiential teaching-learning way and practical methods of those programs to teachers and leaders of Korean churches. In 1999, I had an opportunity to write one section of a textbook for *The Summer Bible School*, which is held for four days every summer vacation in Korea, using the experiential method.

However, the experiential learning programs were simply a first step towards faith-praxis. An expanded second step was needed as this first step had limitations in some respects. The experience programs were confined to the method of “teaching the Bible,” even though they helped provoke learners’ active interest and participation in the learning activities. These programs, moreover, had another limitation regarding place and time, in that they were planned only for Churches/Christians and used only on Sundays. In the process of the programs, I encountered a central problem. The root of a binary opposition of faith-praxis lies in an individual-church orientation and the exclusive attitude of the Korean church. In a closed home that has no relationship with its neighbors, it is not easy for children to grow into relational beings with the other so-called “being-in-the-world.” That is also true of the church. As long as the church remains within the wall without public dialogue with the others, Christians cannot grow into the integrated Christians of faith and praxis even though Christian educators

mobilize the right methodology.

This realization and reflection aroused my interest in “public dialogue” between the church and the other (society / non-Christian) outside the wall, which is the central theme of this research.

1.2 Problem and Purpose

As Stephan Carter (1994) argues, modern times are characterized by the “culture of disbelief” in which God is pushed from public discourse into private parts of our lives. In the name of sacred-secular dichotomy, the church has isolated itself from society, and lost the power of influence on society or non-Christians (Osmer 1990:16-20, 21). As Peter Berger (1969:113) contends, contemporary religion became “a matter of the choice or preference of the individual.” This is the context of Christian education. In other words, the field of Christian education today is the world of fear and anxiety, and the ghettoized church “behind the wall” (Brueggemann 1989:3-34)¹ without any relationship with the world. We are indeed puzzled about how religion and Christian education will address the future.

In this view, the religious crisis seems to be closely connected with the loss of interaction between the two worlds of church and society. In short, the loss of any interaction means the loss of “public dialogue” between the two worlds. Indeed, the loss of dialogic interaction is not only the crisis of religion, but also the crisis of Christian education. Even in the context of teaching-learning, the phenomenon of the loss of dialogue has presented itself, by the following of one-way communication on the basis of a schooling-instructional pattern. The church has lost the power of dialogue with the other, and cannot exert an effect on society/non-Christians. Furthermore, even

¹ Using the terms “on the wall” and “behind the wall” of the faith community, Walter Brueggemann (1989:5-6) suggests that “Christian education must be bilingual”—“communal language” behind the wall and “public language” on the wall. In this thesis I prefer to use “outside the wall” instead of “on the wall.”

in a Christian community the lack of two-way dialogue has already occurred between Christians, leaders and believers, text and context, and learners and context.

Therefore, public dialogue between church and society, Christians and non-Christians, is an increasingly serious problem that the church will have to solve. The theme of this thesis, “public dialogue” is an attempt to overcome the crisis of the present church and Christian education.

Theologian Douglas Hall (1991) argues that there are three options in responding to anxiety about the future—*Denial, Despair, and Hope*. Considering them in the light of the dialogic relationship between the church and the other, on the one hand the Korean church has chosen *denial*, closing her eyes to the future and secluding herself from society and reality. On the other hand, the Korean church has shown the attitude of *despair*, giving up dialogic praxis with society, reality and the future. In my opinion, the central cause of this despair had its root in the fact that the Korean church did not know how to dialogue with the other. What the church needs is the third option of *hope* that empowers action. Hope cannot proceed in a vacuum without pain. Rather, as Jack Seymour (1997:16) states, “hope is only possible if we face pain directly.”

The church exists not for herself alone but to link the two worlds of church and society to each other. The dialogic relationship of church and society may be understood as the request for the Great Commission of Jesus: “<Go> into <all> the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ... and teaching them” (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19-20). The “Go to All” is the reason for the existence of the church in this world. Here is the hope of the church. “Public dialogue” is to comply with the great commission of “go to all.”

To execute the great commission of “go-to-all” three actions are necessary: (1) to go outside the wall of the church, (2) to dialogue with the “all”, (3) to make disciples, baptize, and teach the all. How will the church dialogue with the other? In view of these

three actions, the public dialogue that is the theme of this thesis will be researched with three main purposes—(1) to prepare a place for public dialogue, (2) to formulate a new communicative pattern for public dialogue, and (3) to explore a medium for public dialogue.

The first purpose of this thesis is to find a “place or field” for public dialogue between church and others. This is a reply to the action of “going beyond the wall of the church,” according to the “go-to-all” commission. The field/place of Christian dialogue and Christian education has been studied focusing on the four fields of family, church, school and society. Nowadays there have been new attempts to include cyberspace and a global community in the field of Christian education, raising the problem of limited field understanding in arguments. The above fields for dialogue or Christian education, however, have been researched separately. This thesis will not be confined to any field among the field categories. Rather, it poses a question: “what is an alternative field in which the above fields can encounter each other?” Each field needs to open its own door and come out from behind the wall. Therefore, it is imperative to prepare an alternative expanded field, that is, *han-madang* (*han* means “one”, *madang* means “open place” such as street, park, public square) for them to gather into one place for public dialogue with each other.

The second purpose of this thesis is to formulate a “new communicative pattern” for public dialogue between church and others. The great commission of the church can be understood fundamentally as a communicative action, because the actions of “go-to-all” and “making disciples, baptizing, and teaching them” are possible through “communication / dialogue” with them. The problem here is what kind of dialogue it is. Jack Seymour (1997:9) indicates: “when we (the church and its leaders) talk about faith, it sounds artificial or forced. ... And, yet, it’s the dominant element in so many of our lives.” It is necessary, therefore, to reflect critically on whether the church takes a one-way dogmatic pattern of communication that makes genuine dialogue impossible, and to find an alternative pattern of communication that enables the church to dialogue with

the other effectively.

The third purpose of this thesis is to explore a “mediating medium” for public dialogue between church and society. As a cultural mediating medium I will take advantage of *Madanggŭk* (literally meaning: “theatre in an open space” in Korea) that was derived creatively from a Korean traditional mask dance, *t'alch'um*. Strictly speaking, this thesis will converge in the “communicability” of madanggŭk rather than a mode of madanggŭk itself. *Madanggŭk* is a compound noun: *madang* (open place) + *gŭk* (theatre). It presents three angles, which are related to the above three purposes of this thesis: (1) the first angle of madanggŭk is a concept of “field or place”; (2) the second angle is a mode of “drama or theatre”; (3) the third angle is “communicability” peculiar to the madanggŭk. In this view, the madanggŭk that has three angles is a cultural method with the possibility of contributing to the fulfillment of the three purposes mentioned above—(1) to find a “place / field” for public dialogue, (2) to formulate a “communicative pattern” for public dialogue, and (3) to explore a “mediating medium” for public dialogue between church and others.

However, an approach to madanggŭk for public dialogue is not an application that intends to establish it in the public dialogue. Rather, this research prefers a critical reflection approach. Therefore, a critical analysis of madaggŭk itself as well as the present society and church and the patterns of the Korean church’s public dialogue is presented first (the methodology of this thesis will be mentioned below in detail). Moreover, the above three areas of research—where (place), how (dialogic pattern), by what (means) for public dialogue—will be covered not separately but in synthesis.

The fourth purpose of this thesis is to propose an alternative model of public dialogue through madang-theatre, which will contribute to a change in the relationship between the church and the other, to the transformation of communicative pattern in a faith community and to the reconstruction of a dialogic paradigm of Christian education. For this purpose, I will attempt to produce “the whole procedure of public dialogue through

madang-theatre.” I will propose a plan for “the stages for dialogic praxis” which will be useful to the transformation of the church from a one-way dogmatic community to a dialogic community. These strategies will be designed to reconstruct not only a faith community but also Christian education, not only the relationships between church and society but also between Christians themselves.

1.3 Methodology

In order to achieve the abovementioned purposes, two kinds of methodology, grounded particularly in Don Browning and Thomas Groome, are adopted: (1) *practical theology* on the basis of a *practice-theory-practice model*, and (2) a *critical reflection approach*. Public dialogue through madang-theatre, the theme of this study, is a “practical” attempt to shape a balanced faith-praxis Christian and community. Therefore, even in its research method this study will be situated in a perspective of practical theology.

Christian education is not “*applied theology*” but “practical theology.” Schleiermacher (1966) classified theology into three types: philosophical theology, historical theology and practical theology. Although he regarded practical theology as the crown of the three, it is in fact nothing other than applied theology that conveys theories of philosophical and historical theology to believers. This means that practical theology was restricted within a theory-to-practice, or *text-to-application* model (cf. Farley 1987; Browning 1991). The tendency of understanding practical theology as applied theology based on a theory-to-practice model was dominant all over the theological world of South Korea as well as Western Europe and America.

From the 1970s, however, the hierarchical structure of theology began to be modified. One of the most noteworthy attempts was David Tracy’s (1981) study, which was renowned for proposing a *revised correlational approach*. Dividing theology into fundamental theology, systematic theology and practical theology, he claimed that all three theologies headed toward “praxis” “in correlation” with one another, instead of

securing their superiority. This was an endeavour to overcome the theory-practice dichotomy. In this way, “praxis” became the centre of theological interest. Peter Hodgson (1994) reconstructed systematic theology as *constructive theology*, and tried to accept and deal with postmodern problems and subjects such as liberation, ecology and inter-religions’ dialogue in a constructive theology.

Don Browning made the best use of such a theological paradigm in his practical theological study, following Tracy’s critical correlational method (cf. Browning 1983; 1989). His efforts produced his representative book *Fundamental Practical Theology* (1991). For him, the term *fundamental* implies that every theology pursues praxis, by taking on a practical theological character; this was also Tracy’s advocacy.

Firstly, Browning’s practical theological method is adopted as a method for this research. His method is developed under four categories (Browning 1991): (1) a descriptive theology, (2) a historical theology, (3) a systematic theology, and (4) a strategic or fully practical theology. These categories are a practical theological method on the grounds of the context—text—context, i.e. practice—theory—practice model. This thesis starts from context (practice), moves to theory (text) and returns to context (practice), which is clearly different from an “application” methodology that starts from text in order to reach context.

Secondly, when developing this thesis according to the four categories, critical reflection is adopted as a central approach. In fact, a “critical approach” in practical theology has been a matter of significant concern to some practical theologians. And critical reflection may be considered as an approach of dialogic interpretation between context and text, practice and theory. James Fowler (1983:154) defines practical theology as “critical and constructive reflection on the praxis of the Christian community’s life and work in its various dimensions.” In other words, a practical theology requires critical reflection on the church’s task of practicing public dialogue between church-society, and between Christians. The critical reflection is fully realized

concretely in Thomas Groome's (1981; 1991) "shared praxis" approach. Groome understands his educational approach as a "dialectical conversation" between, on the one hand, participants' present praxis and their stories and, on the other hand, the Christian Story and participants' stories. At the same time, he suggests the hermeneutical conversation between praxis and theory, context and text to be enacted through critical reflection. According to the critical reflection approach, it is necessary to critique the Christian Story in the light of participants' stories and to critique participants' stories in the light of the Christian Story (Groome 1981:217).

Browning (1989:149) acknowledges the value of Groome's critical reflection approach as follows: "The possibility of critical reflection assumes that we can find a third perspective that constitutes a vantage point from which to test and evaluate both our own stories and the Christian story." The reason that this thesis follows a "critical approach" and "practical theological methodology" is expressed well in Browning's (1989:136) following statement.

If a revised correlational practical theology is to bridge the gap between citizenship and discipleship, it should be at the same time *critical*, *public*, and *centered in theological ethics*. By *critical* I mean that, although practical theology must begin with faith and discipleship as formed by a community of believers, it must go beyond an unreflective attitude and seek arguable reasons for supporting its practical action. It must be *public* in the sense that it should attempt to relate the Christian message not only to the inner life of the church but to the public world in all its pluralistic, secular, and rapidly changing character. To do this, of course, it must all the more respond to the challenge of expressing itself in both the evocative language of faith and the critical language of public discourse.

1.4 Structure

This thesis consists of seven chapters including the introduction (chapter 1) and

conclusion (chapter 7). Chapter 1 clearly defines the introductory matters: what do I want to research? (Theme), how did I come to this theme? (Motivation and Problem), what do I want to achieve with this research? (Purpose), which method do I adopt to achieve the purposes? (Methodology), how do I structure this thesis? (Structure) and finally, where am I going to erect my borders? (Delimitation)

Following a practical theological method and a critical approach, this thesis begins with an evocation of context. Chapter 2 engages in descriptive theology. It places the focus on description of the context of present society and the Korean church relating to the matter of public dialogue. It is concerned with the correlation between public dialogue and context, critically analyzing the internal and external crisis of the Korean church in relation to public dialogue between church and society.

Chapter 3 takes a historical theological approach. It examines how Korean Christianity has fulfilled public dialogue with the Korean nation and society in Korean history. In the process, I will explore the patterns of public dialogue that the Korean church has shown. Here, the advent of a new cultural pattern of public dialogue, *madanggŭk*, will be mentioned.

Chapter 4 takes, on the one hand, a historical theological, and on the other hand a constructive/systematic theological approach. It concentrates upon the “faith-praxis” of “cultural” public dialogue between church and others (society and non-Christians). In order to this, I will examine cultural faith-praxis in the two domains—the Korean theological world and the *madanggŭk* cultural movement. Here, I will explore and interpret the communicability of *madanggŭk*, introducing its communicative characteristics. In the process, the necessity and possibilities for a transformation to cultural public dialogue will be presented. However, this research will be done from a critical perspective; thus the limitations of *madanggŭk* will be revealed. This means that *madanggŭk* cannot be considered as an “application” model for the praxis of public dialogue. Rather, it requires “alteration” and “reconstruction” in order to become an

ideal mediating medium for public dialogue.

Chapter 5 is based on both a systematic theology and a strategic practical theology. In dialogue primarily with the dialogism of Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian literary theorist and philosopher, Chapter 5 will explore possibilities for a change to two-way dialogic communication, and ultimately attempt to create alternative models and principles for public dialogue.

Chapter 6 takes a strategic or fully practical theological approach. I attempt to offer practical strategies for constructing a faith-praxis community for public dialogue and effecting a paradigm shift to dialogic Christian education. Here, I will explain the whole procedure of public dialogue through madang-theatre. Only through the transformation and the rebuilding of a faith community and a Christian education paradigm, can the dialogic model and principles be successfully executed.

The concluding chapter will provide a summary of this study with its meanings, and offer some suggestions for further study.

1.5 Delimitation

The scope of this research is confined to the church and Korean Christianity.

Firstly, the analysis of the decline in the power of the Korean church in society (Chapter 2) will be discussed as well as how this concerns the present times. The exploration of the patterns of public dialogue of Korean Christianity (Chapter 3) will cover the period from the beginning of Korean Protestantism (the end of the nineteenth century) to the 1980s.

Secondly, a means of public dialogue between the church and the other is limited particularly to a performing art, *madanggŭk*.

Thirdly, this study on “public dialogue through madang-theatre” lays emphasis on “communicability” of *madanggŭk* rather than the “mode” itself, on the assumption that

ideal communication enables true public dialogue between the church and the other, and facilitates a dialogic faith-praxis community and dialogic Christian education in which public dialogue is possible.