

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Problem and theme

As a Christian worker, I involved myself for several years in church ministry, the mission field in Canada, and teaching at university level. During this time I have experienced that the more I concern myself with ministry, the more I find the need to do research on preaching in the interaction between church and culture. The reason for my interest in this issue is based on my conviction that all church-related work, especially preaching, should be done in the knowledge and understanding of church culture.

I have been involved in planting a church among the Korean congregation in Regina, Canada. This church was planted in 1995 and my work as a part-time missionary was accomplished in 1996 after two years of preparatory work and one year of ministering in that newborn church. The three years I had spent for planting the church in Canada were the hardest years of my life, not only because church planting in itself was hard work, but also because I was unaware of the culture that surrounded the church and its members, who were mostly Koreans living in Canada. Half of those members were adults who came to Canada between the 1960's and 1970's. Even though they were living in the late 20th century, their thoughts and ideas seemed to have remained somewhere between the 1960's and 1970's. The other half of them, formed part of the second generation of the adult members who came to Canada recently to study, and they were already following the postmodern thoughts and trends. There was thus conflict between the two groups. This complicated situation

challenged me to create harmony by using my preaching to hit the target between the two different groups of people in the church.

Measuring myself against the criteria for a good preacher, as set out by L Tisdale (1997:xi), I can conclude now that I was not a good preacher at that time. The reason for this is that “good preaching not only requires its practitioners to become skilled biblical exegetes, but also requires them to become adepts in order to exegete local congregations and their contexts, so that they can proclaim the gospel in relevant and transforming ways for particular communities of faith.”

With regard to the Korean church¹, the same problem is unfortunately currently happening. The Korean church, which had been famous for her rapid growth, is beginning to see the downward trend of her growth. Recent government statistics indicate the church growth rate as follows (Ro 1995:350): 1989: 9.0%; 1990: 5.8%; 1991: 3.9%; 1992: 0.6%; 1993: -4.0%.

This shocking data led to an investigation for reasons why the explosive church growth suddenly turned to a downward slide. According to C D Kwak² (1999:3), the Korean church has been losing her credibility to society for a number of reasons. These reasons have the following common consensus: “excessive competition and conflict among neighboring churches for increasing membership; secularization, in which the church has been flattered by modernism and has attempted to pander to human being’s need; negative images of Christianity as immature and hypocritical; group egoism like denominationalism, disunity, separatism; and the church’s silence on social problems.”

¹ This study limits its scope to the Korean Protestant church. The Korean church here means, therefore, the Protestant church as a whole in Korea and Korean refers to South Korea.

² In this thesis the names of Koreans are written with the first names followed by the family names. For example, if the first name is Chang Dae and the family name is Kwak, the name is written as Chang Dae Kwak or C D Kwak.

In my opinion however, there is more to it than that. Although many reputable studies concerning this crisis have recently been carried out, they have tended to be insufficient and stereotypical because most of them have studied quantitative church growth and decline without the full understanding and challenge of the interaction between church and culture. I believe the problem lies in the interaction between church and culture.

Similar to my experience in the newborn church in Canada, the Korean church also has different groups of people whom behave differently, believe differently, and belong to different subcultures. There is a serious difference especially between the old generation and the new generation. The new generation acts in the postmodern world of today and is the main character of the future Korean church. This great problem can be observed in almost all the churches in Korea. It is not just the problem of generation conflict, but the problem of multi-targets or multi-subcultures in a congregation.

D Buttrick (1994:54) introduces one of his students who complained that he served four different congregations that were all wrapped up in one:

“There were the 1950’s Christians who couldn’t understand why the church wasn’t expanding; they wanted more members and bigger buildings. Then there were the 1960’s Christians who kept talking about getting involved. They were followed by 1970’s Christians, many of whom were still keeping faith-journey diaries. Mostly, he was stuck with 1980’s Christians who, filled with nostalgia, wanted to turn back to old-time religion. I have four congregations!”

This student is not alone. Buttrick (ibid) rightly argues that churches in the 21st century are still haunted by cultural styles from the past. Nevertheless, we never preach the gospel to empty heads – the gospel addresses all sorts of well-formed culture faiths in any congregation. The following question arises from the problem of preaching in the interaction between church and culture: How

does the preacher hit the multi-targets and deal with the multi-subcultures in a congregation? It is more difficult if there is no conversion purposed preaching. The Korean church cannot deny the fact that there are not many converted new members in her church today: Most of the members are church people who move from one church to another. At this stage of the thesis, I am not quite sure whether this happens because churches and pastors do not preach to convert.

What I am sure of, however, is that there is the problem that many preachers in the Korean church today theologically assume that their congregations are Christians. In relation to this, Lloyd-Jones (1998:146) warns that such tendency is dangerous because preachers will then tend to preach to them in a manner suited to Christian believers, and their messages will be instructional without any evangelistic element. As a result, there will be no conversion. I also believe for sure that this problem is due to preaching. If preaching has lost (or at least weakened) the vocation of conversion, it happened not accidentally but purposely to have a taste for people and not for God. This is done in the name of church growth.

This is not far from the reason why the Korean church is declining. Does the present preaching theory of the Korean church have the solution to this? We also have to ask: Does the present ecclesiology of the Korean church (in which there is too much concentration on church growth without careful interaction with her society and culture) have the answer to this?

No church can survive if preaching cannot hit the right targets to convert people. Without conversion, preaching means nothing and the church has no reason to exist. The Korean church is currently struggling very hard to deal with these problems. The lack of knowledge of her surrounded culture both inside church and outside increases the problem. Since these problems are not on the surface, but remain deep inside, we have to rethink the present ecclesiology and preaching theory that the Korean church holds in the interaction between church and culture.

1.1.2 Purpose and delimitation

The first purpose of this study is to investigate the reasons behind church decline in terms of preaching in the interaction between church and culture in Korea. The aim is to discover the roots of the existing problems that makes our practice problematic, makes our preaching miss the target, and makes our church misunderstand the culture around it. As mentioned before, previous refutable research studies have been done before, but these have tended to be insufficient, stereotypical and without a clear understanding of the interaction between church and culture. In this study, I will examine the present ecclesiology and preaching theory of the Korean church and how these relate with the problem of the Korean church.

The second purpose of this thesis is to interpret preaching in the interaction between church and culture biblically, historically and theologically, in order to understand the normative Christian perceptions and practices of preaching. For this purpose, classic sources (such as biblical texts, church history, including some sayings of classical church figures) and the writings of contemporary Christian thinkers are used.

The third purpose of this thesis is to attempt a critical synthesis and comparative integration between understanding preaching in the specific situation in Korea and understanding preaching in the Christian normative sources.

The fourth purpose is to propose developmental strategies for the Korean church as “a metaphor of God’s love” (Browning 1991:279).

Many people today are questioning the role of preaching. I believe, however that preaching has the responsibility to convert people. To convert people should therefore be the aim of preaching. I also strongly sense that the church has a responsibility towards the society that is mediated by culture. This thesis

starts from the above confession to help the church, especially the Korean church, to understand her responsibility towards people and the society mediated by culture and to encourage her to correct ecclesiology and preaching theory.

This study's scope is limited to the Korean Protestant church. It is done from my own theological standpoint that comes from the Korean evangelical theological perspective.

1.1.3 Methodology and structure

To achieve the purposes of this study, two kinds of methods are employed: (1) an analysis of preaching in the interaction between church and culture both in Korea and in the normative Christian sources and (2) qualitative interviewing as an empirical interpretation. For the first part, the model advocated by Don S Browning in his book, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, is adopted. This model is studied through four categories of general research questions. These categories can be explained as follows: *Interaction* is a descriptive practical theology (Browning 1991:48) for understanding preaching in the interaction between church and culture in Korea. *Interpretation* is a historical practical theology (:49) for interpreting preaching in the interaction between church and culture from the normative Christian classic sources. *Integration* is a systematic practical theology (:51) for fusing horizons between understanding the implicit in contemporary practices of preaching and the interpretation implied in the practices of preaching in the normative Christian sources. *Insight* is a strategic practical theology for a return to contextual experience, so that guidelines and specific plans that have been developed can be tested for their relevance in real life (:58; Poling & Miller 1985:93). For the second part, qualitative interviewing, a model based on the findings of Herbert J Rubin & Irene S Rubin (1995), is used in order to give reference to the first work.

This thesis is structured in five chapters. Chapter 1 points out clearly introductory matters for this study, including the problem and theme discussion, purpose and limits, and methodology and structure. There is the weakness of practical theology and the lack of its methodology in the ministry and theology of the Korean church. It resulted from the lack of critical theological reflection in employing the Western theology such as preaching theory, ecclesiology and church growth theory. For example, the American ecclesiological models that came into the Korean church without serious theological consideration seemed to suit the Korean culture and society for a certain time, but eventually proved to be inadequate because of its own flaws and some cultural and social change in Korea (Kwak 2000:5). With regard to this, Chapter 1 will attempt to give a practical theological overview for the church in general (with particular focus on the Korean church).

In the search for a root problem(s) of church decline in Korea, the following has to be borne in mind: “all our practices have theories behind and within them” (Browning 1991:6) and “a problem cannot be solved with the same type of thinking that created it” (Einstein in U Y Kim 1999:1). In line with this, Chapter 2 will examine the present ecclesiologies and preaching theories of the Korean church led by the historical, socio-cultural and theological overview of the interaction between church and culture in Korea.

In Chapter 2 and onwards, I will therefore argue that there is dynamic interaction between church and culture: If culture undergoes crisis, church will undergo crisis, because the church accommodates her host culture. Concurrently, if the church is in crisis, culture will also be in crisis, because the church has a responsibility towards her culture (Kreider 1995:91). Chapter 2 will also attempt to examine the decline of church growth in Korea in relation with the problem of preaching in the interaction between church and culture. This view suggests that preaching is the most powerful agent between the church and culture and that its main task is conversion as a transforming power. The

power of conversion causes not only change to an individual, but also to a community, and possibly to a culture as well.

After examining the context of preaching in the Korean church, interpretations of classic sources will be discussed (Chapter 3). For Christians, the texts that guide and direct normative Christian perceptions and practices are found in the Bible, church history and in the views of contemporary Christian thinkers (Browning 1991:49). This argument will be addressed to give this study a normative Christian perception. Three practices of preaching are presented, namely the biblical, historical and theological practice in the interaction between the church and culture.

Following the results of Chapter 2 and 3, Chapter 4 will attempt an integrative comparison between the understanding implicit in the contemporary practices of preaching and the interpretation implied in its practices of the Christian normative sources. This will be followed by a proposal of a development of strategies to be tested in the actual preaching context of the Korean church.

The concluding chapter will review the study and offer some recommendations for further study.

1.2 Practical theological overview

This study favors the term “practical theology.” Practical theology in this study is not used to convey an applied theology that aims merely to effectively utilize theories constructed by theoretical theologies such as philosophical, systematic or historical theology. Instead, the concept is viewed here to represent an activity in which theory and praxis are hermeneutically interrelated and where church and society are contextually interrelated.

This section (1.2) will first begin with a historical overview of practical theology and determine its nature, characteristics and methodologies. Thereafter practical theology in Korea will be examined in the light of a practical theology.

1.2.1 Historical overview of practical theology

James W Fowler (1999:75) describes the contemporary movement of practical theology as “a quiet but deep-going revolution”:

For the last two decades, we have been involved in a quiet but deep-going revolution in the self-understanding and work of practical theology. This is leading to changes in theological education and in the role of theology in the churches and societies from which the members of this conference come. This revolution centers in the recovery and re-emergence of practical theology as a discipline.³

I agree with C D Kwak (2000:84), who states: “The revolution in practical theology, which Fowler referred to, must be deeply involved in the history of theology as a whole.” In this sense, it is useful to examine the evolution of theology in order to trace the historical change of practical theology.

Edward Farley, a systematic theologian, identifies four major phases in the evolution of theology as the central activity and concerns of the church, and later, the university. According to Fowler (1999:76), Farley’s examination had shaken up our assumptions about “pure” and “applied” theology. The four phases in theology’s evolution that Farley identifies, can briefly be outlined as follows:

The first phase began with the New Testament church and continued until the

³ This was originally presented at the conference of the International Academy of Practical

early Middle Ages. In this era, theology involved personal and existential inquiry into the mysteries of divine revelation, undertaken for the sake of helping the Christian community live toward truth. Farley (1983a:31) calls this approach *theology habitus* - theology as knowledge of God pursued through the disciplines of prayer, study, liturgical participation, and the practices of discipleship. *Theology habitus* aimed toward the formation of persons and communities in accordance with the revealed knowledge of God.

The second phase in theology's evolution began to emerge in the second to the fourth centuries as intellectual responses of the church to the challenges of 1) heresies within and of 2) competitive intellectual ideologies from without. The joining of Christian doctrine with the philosophical perspectives of neo-Platonism in the work of Augustine provides a powerful example (Farley 1983a:31). Farley calls this phase *Theology Science*. He regards its height in the great *Summas* of Thomas Aquinas, with the rational reconciliation of the recovered philosophy of Aristotle with Augustinian theology (Fowler 1999:77). In this era, theology emerged as the dominant ordering framework for grounding all human knowledge in the West.

The third phase lasted from the rise of the medieval universities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to the era of Enlightenment. During this period, there was a subtle shift in the emphasis of theology: from knowledge of God to knowledge about God. Farley (1983b:25) calls this shift "a fundamental equivocation in the genre of theology" which resulted in "the modern narrowing of theology."

In the fourth phase, from the Enlightenment up to the present time, Farley (1983a:39-44) explains that the unifying rubric of *theologia* disappears. Theology as discipline disintegrates into many separated and self-sufficient academic disciplines. The theological-encyclopedia movement deepened the

Theology in 1995.

loss of both theology as *habitus* and theology as a unified discipline. This movement emerged in early nineteenth-century Germany and in later nineteenth-century America, and produced the fourfold pattern of the theological curriculum, namely: Biblical studies, church history, systematic theology, and practical theology, which is still found today in nearly every seminary prospectus in the world (Kwak 2000:85).

Fowler argues that it has not been too long since practical theology was regarded as a basement operation in most divinity schools and theological seminaries (not just in the States where he lives, but also in Europe).⁴ Furthermore, the more academically prestigious the school of theology, the greater the status difference between the so called classical disciplines of biblical studies, church history, and systematic theology, on the one hand, and the so called *applied* disciplines, on the other. Indeed, the university study of theological disciplines had little place for practical theology. Most often the actual work of preparation of pastors for church leadership was completed in more practically oriented seminars (Fowler 1999:75).⁵

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) exercised a major influence on practical theology. Farley (1983b:25-26) compliments Schleiermacher's contribution under the influence of the "theological encyclopedia movement" in his time as follows:

It proposes a way of conceiving theological study that justifies its presence in a modern university, retains the independence of fields of scholarship, and founds it in the church and ministry.

⁴ It is not different in Korea.

⁵ Most of seminaries and universities in Korea do not have a well-organized curriculum in practical theology, while they do have it in other disciplines such as Biblical studies, church history, and systematic theology. As a result, (as Fowler points out) many pastors or theological students are wandering from seminar to seminar in order to be equipped. The irony is that while the Korean church has been experiencing church decline for last 15 years since mid of 1980's (according to J K Park & S H Myung - 2000:57), there has been more than 600 seminars every year. We call it *seminar syndrome*.

I, however, have to argue that Schleiermacher failed to offer a fundamental solution to the disunity of theological disciplines and to the narrowing of the nature of theology (Farley 1983b:25-26; cf Kwak 2000:86). The narrowing of theology also brought about the “alienation of theology and practice,” initiated by the narrowed understanding of practice, which Schleiermacher did not discard (:29-30). According to Farley (:30), three dimensions of practice are especially prominent and correspond to the renewal of theology. They are: the personal existential, the social political, and the ecclesiastical. The aim of theology is articulated through these dimensions. However, the problem in theological education, from the time of Schleiermacher until now, is that the ecclesiastical dimension of practice or the clerical paradigm has so dominated theology, that it has excluded the other two dimensions (:31).

The limitation of Schleiermacher’s understanding of practice was also exposed by his understanding of practical theology, which was closely related to the narrowing of theology. He divided theology into the following three fields: philosophical theology, as being the root of the theological tree; historical theology, the stem or body of the tree; and practical theology, the crown of the theological tree (Dingemans 1996:82). This division of theology indicates an order of theologizing: the best way to theologize is to start with philosophical theology, to proceed via historical theology, and to end by applying theories to practical theology.

According to J E Burkhart (1983:55), Schleiermacher argues that theoretical theologies (philosophical and historical theologies) cannot become theological until they are applied to practical theology. However, in reverse, his argument implies that if philosophical and historical theologies could provide sufficient and valid theories for church ministry, then practical theology did not have to elaborate its own theories but could effectively utilize the theories constructed by theoretical theologies. This shows that he limited himself from enlarging the horizon of practical theology widely and failed to understand that practice influences theory. As a result, he presumed that practical theology does not

affect philosophical or historical theology but seems to be a kind of *applied* theology.

By running counter to the situation in which both theology and practical theology were increasingly being narrowed, a revolution has occurred in theology and among theologians on an international scale for the past three decades (Kwak 2000:88). Naming this revolution “the practical theology movement,” Don Browning (1988:83; cf 1999:53) characterizes some features of the movement as follows:

The movement has attempted to go beyond, while still including, what Edward Farley has called “the clerical paradigm.” Whereas the older practical theology was seen primarily as theological reflection on the practices of the ordained minister, the newer movement ... sees practical theology as primarily reflection on the church’s practice in the world. The movement to varying degrees also strongly emphasized beginning theological reflection with descriptions of contemporary practices and the situations of these practices, correlates these descriptions of practices and situations with normative Christian sources, tries to be critical in its practical reflection, and sees theological ethics as a core component to the larger practical enterprise.⁶

Dingemans (1996:83), a Dutch practical theologian, writes that an important shift took place with regard to the inner direction of practical theological study:

Whereas formerly, practical theologians had first studied the Bible and the doctrine of the church in order to apply the results of their findings to the practice of the church, more recently, under the influence of social studies

⁶ This new efforts to redefine practical theology can be found in Germany, Holland, England, Canada, and Latin America, as well as in the United States. In the United States, two volumes of essays plus several books dealing explicitly with the re-conceptualization of practical theology by Browning, Fowler, Gerkin, Groome, Schreiter, Winquist, Miller and Polling, and McCann and Strain all point to the breadth and vigor of this renewed interest in practical theology (cf

they have changed their approach: in recent decades practical theologians worldwide have agreed on starting their investigations in practice itself. Practical theology has become description of and reflection on the “self understanding of a particular religious tradition.” This approach moves from practice to theory, then back to practice.

According to Kwak (2000:88), this practical theology movement has affected the so called revisionist or constructive theologians, such as Peter C Hodgson⁷, Douglas John Hall⁸, and David Tracy⁹. They no longer view practical theology as a sort of applied discipline. Rather, they appreciate the practical features of theology. They avoid the traditional fourfold division of theology, and prefer to seek a comprehensive understanding of theology.

In conclusion, the understanding of theology by revisionist theologians, as well as by the contemporary practical theologians of the already discussed practical theology movement, can be summarized by James Whyte’s words:

“... Practical theology takes its place as a critical theological discipline. It is the theology of practice. The systematic theologian asks critical questions about the way faith expresses itself in language; the practical theologian asks critical questions about the way faith expresses itself in practice, and about the relation between the practice and the language. Since the church’s life and action is related not only to its own self

Browning 1999:53).

⁷ P C Hodgson (1994:10) defines theology as follows: “Theology, as a practice of the Christian community, is a constructive activity that requires critical interpretation and practical appropriations of faith’s language about God in the context of contemporary cultural challenges and their theological implication.” His definition shows that theology employs two closely and constructively related ways of thinking: critical reflection and practical application.

⁸ D J Hall (1993:32-39) emphasizes the integration of the three dimensions in theological thinking: the historical, critical, and constructive dimensions should be exposed in creative tension with one another.

⁹ D Tracy (1983:62) defines theology as “the discipline that articulates mutually critical correlations between the meaning and truth of an interpretation of the Christian faith and the meaning and truth of an interpretation of the contemporary situation.” I value in this thesis his *mutual respect* between the two interpretations. However, as Fowler (1999:303) stresses, I think it should be done *under theological control*. I will discuss it further later in 1.2.3.2.

understanding and comprehension of its faith, but also to the changing society in which it functions, practical theology is triadic, concerned with the interrelationships of faith, practice and social reality, and is aware that the lines of force flow in both directions.”¹⁰

1.2.2 The nature and characteristics of practical theology

In view of my discussion of a historical overview of theology and practical theology, I clearly sense that all theology is “practical theology.” It means that the distinction between practical theology and theology as a whole disappears. Duncan B Forrester (1999:16) explains it this way: Practical theology as a distinct theological discipline is comparatively young, but the idea that theology as such is a practical science, has been there from the beginnings of Christian theological reflection. Wilhelm Grab (1999) understands this discussion by using the terms “integration” and “identification.” In brief, practical theology as a discipline within theology cannot be understood without setting it within the nature and function of theology as a whole.

It will be useful to summarize some of the marks that distinguish the emerging new directions in practical theology from other approaches:

1.2.2.1 Praxis-theory-praxis

A theologian as recent as Karl Barth (1936:47-70) saw theology as the systematic interpretation of God’s self-disclosure to the Christian church. According to Browning (1991:5-7), there was no role for human understanding, action, or practice in the construal of God’s self-disclosure in Barth’s view of theology. In this view, theology is practical only by applying God’s revelation as

¹⁰ James Whyte. “Practical theology in Alistair Campbell.” *A dictionary of pastoral care* (London: SPCK, 1987); Paul Ballard. “Practical theology as the theology of practice” in Friedrich Schweitzer and Johannes A van der Ven (eds). *Practical theology-international perspectives*

directly and purely as possible to the concrete situations of life. The theologian moves from revelation to the human, from theory to practice, and from revealed knowledge to application. This is a classical expression of the *theory-to-practice* model of theology. Such a model dominated most of the theological education in both Europe and North America in the middle decades of the twentieth century (Farley 1983a: 159-61)

Fowler (1995:1-11), however, claims that the practical theological method has its starting place from some context or contexts of praxis. It arises in reflection out of the context of ongoing practices in which communities of faith engage. Browning (1991:5-6) agrees with Fowler by stating the following: “theology can be practical if we bring practical concerns to it from the beginning. We come to the theological task with questions shaped by the secular and religious practices in which we are implicated.”

Practical theology starts from practices, goes to theory and returns to practices. Its aim is not the formation of theoretical understandings or principles. Instead, it aims at the modification toward greater faithfulness and adequacy of the practices with which it begins (cf Browning 1991:5-7; Fowler 1995:1-11; G Heitink 1999:267-8).

1.2.2.2 Empirical orientation

Of all the theological disciplines, practical theology is the most clearly and necessarily linked to a particular historical and geographical context (Ballard 1999:141). Present day practical theologians, therefore, are largely agreed that their discipline is empirically oriented (Pieterse 1993; Heitink 1993; Van der Ven 1993). The notion empirical does not stand in opposition to the notion hermeneutic. They are in line with each other. Practical theological research of the relation between text and context is hermeneutical by nature, but empirical

(Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999).

by design (Heitink 1999:266):

It is hermeneutical by nature, because the research is directly to a process of understanding: the understanding of the significance of the Christian tradition in the context of modern society. It requires an empirical design because practical theological research chooses its starting point in the actual situation of church and society. This situation has to be understood as a situation of action that has to be explained by means of empirical research and has to be interpreted by means of theological theories.

Practical theologizing stays close to reality, not up in the air. This in itself can be considered “empirical.” Heyns and Pieterse (1990:69) assert that communicative actions in our time can only be studied by means of empirical methodology. It sounds very narrow. We, however, have to understand that in practical theology the term “empirical” is interpreted very broadly. A wide range of scientific methods can be used to fathom concrete praxis, such as historical, philosophical and literary methods. Academic work requires sound scientific methods to research a chosen theme in praxis. Solid empirical methods include both qualitative methods like interviews and case studies, and quantitative methods like the use of questionnaires and statistical processing of the result (Pieterse 2001:14; see Van der Ven 1993; 1998:52-58). Qualitative and quantitative methods, therefore, are not opposites but complement each other (Van der Ven 1998:58-60).

1.2.2.3 Interdisciplinary approach

By its very nature, practical theology has an interdisciplinary approach. This means it engages in academic discussion with social sciences like sociology, psychology and communication studies. Besides this, practical theologians will consult any other science and learn from it, depending on the nature of their research topics or problems. They also have close relations and debates with other theological disciplines such as the biblical studies, church history and

systematic theology, without which they cannot do practical theology – even though it is an independent discipline with its own field of study and research methods (Pieterse 2001:14).

The other theological disciplines in their turn need inputs from practical theology to do their theology properly. In addition, philosophy and philosophical thought is essential for clear conceptualization and theoretical insight in our field. Philosophers like H G Gadamer, J Habermas Paul Ricoeur are very influential in practical theology. Action theories, theories of metaphor, societal theories and the like are all rooted in philosophy on a meta-theoretical basis. In its contacts and communication with other disciplines, practical theology is continually reflecting on its own methodology as well (Pieterse 2001:14).

1.2.2.4 Integration and identification

Wilhelm Grab, a German theologian, argues that practical theology finds itself at this point in a process of reviewing and recognizing its topics and fields of study. According to him, the discussion of its identity as a field of study and a science has intensified. In addition, practical theology today has again turned to the question about its own identity as an independent and separate discipline within theology as a unified science (Grab 1999:177).

The history of practical theology as a discipline, separated from other theological disciplines, is explained from its beginnings with Schleiermacher up to our own time. Beginning with the late 1960's, the development of theory in the practical theology has been characterized by an increasing specialization in different fields of praxis. A first attempt to reformulate the theoretical foundation of practical theology in the post-dialectical era was already undertaken in the late 1960's and early 1970's (Grab 1999:178). Growing awareness of the world of everyday life, in which the Christian religion is rooted both in and outside of the church, led to a discussion about the theoretical foundation of practical theology in the context of the social sciences. A number of authors such as H D

Bastian, G Krause, H Schroer, R Zerfab and K F Daiber began to explain the “new” practical theology as a “Handlungswissenschaft” (theory of action).¹¹

It is obvious that the concept of the “Handlungswissenschaft” belongs to the socio-technological context. It must be noted, according to Grab (1999:179), however, that in regard to its adoption by practical theology, no critical reflection of this relationship occurred. That is why there was in the 1970’s a second attempt to redefine practical theology as a *critical* theory of action – as opposed to a merely technological, empirical functional theory of action (:181). Nevertheless, from these attempts one can see that the tendency of practical theology as “Handlungswissenschaft” was still dominating. This theology can particularly be regarded as a direct task-oriented theory to stimulate the church in the practical fulfillment of its tasks of preaching, education and pastoral care.

While the practice-orientated sectors of practical theology were becoming more specialized, the theoretical discussion in the 1980’s turned towards a new definition of the concept of practical theology as a whole. It maintains, according to Paul Ballard (1999:142):

There is no sharp distinction between practical theology and theology in general. All theology is in the service of the community of faith, and, therefore, all theology is essentially practical. Indeed practical theology takes its primary mandate from this fact. Practical theology, as a special activity, explicitly carries responsibility for the mandate that is given to all; and, at the same time, works definitely at the point of practice, while other theological disciplines may properly see themselves acting more indirectly on the basic theological agenda.

Ballard gives a well-condensed summary on this: Practical theology as a discipline within theology cannot be understood without setting it within the

¹¹ They are all German practical theologians because Grab limits his article to the German

nature and function of theology as a whole (:141). Pieterse (2001:86) clearly distinguishes this emerging new direction in practical theology from other and old approaches. Therefore, I believe practical theology includes (but it not limited to) reflective work in the functional areas of ecclesial practices.

1.2.2.5 Language behind the wall and language on the wall

Walter Brueggemann, an Old Testament theologian, excellently observed 2 Kings 18 and 19 regarding the story of when Jerusalem was surrounded by Assyrian troops sent by King Sennacherib while Israel was under the reign of Hezekiah. In this story two languages are observed between Hezekiah's men and the Rabshakeh, Sennacherib's ambassador. The one language is Aramaic, the language of international diplomacy, that Hezekiah's men wished the Rabshakeh to use when they conversed with him, so that their people on the wall would not hear him. The other language was Hebrew and was used by Rabshakeh.

Brueggemann (1989:1-34) has used this story as the basis to offer a powerful set of observations on the formation in faith that is required "behind the wall". This is for people of faith to offer their witness and to challenge the values and assumptions of secular societies "on the wall." In other words, if the churches want to offer their witness and guidance "beyond" the wall in a credible and relevant way, they have to relate Christian normative judgments and visions in language that is intelligible and that has bite for those who have no Christian background or commitments.

Fowler (1999:88) borrows concepts from Brueggemann and asserts that practical theology of this sort works in two languages: the languages of prayer, praise and proclamation "behind the wall," and the languages of public discourse "on the wall."

speaking countries or German-speaking sphere.

I agree with both Brueggemann and Fowler's argument that practical theology is rooted in praxis and is contextual, local, and close to experience. There is no doubt that this new practical theology links the study and strengthens the practices of ministry to the larger tasks of forming and guiding faithfulness in communities of faith.

1.2.2.6 Human partnership with God's praxis

James Fowler (1999:88-90) assumes that in the religiously pluralistic context in which we work, people exhibit high levels of spiritual hunger and ethical anomie. Therefore, we are to develop new forms of apologetic theological communication and formation addressed to those who are drawn to spirituality and to ethical awakening. In other words, we need to knit together cosmology and compelling metaphors for *God's praxis* in human society and culture.

At the same time, Fowler (:90) stresses more urgently that members of Christian communities must have support and metaphorical clarity for understanding how their vocations and faithfulness can be *part of God's praxis*.¹² He knows how we, as a result of these factors, find and formulate ways of offering the witness of Biblical faith on God's involvement in the processes of nature and history. Fowler however argues that we cannot afford to build theological approaches around a commitment to praxis without finding theological ways to help communities of faith correlate their own efforts at faithfulness with the ways God's spirit is present and active in our world (:89).

Fowler's argument challenges the need for intelligible and convictional metaphors to depict *God's praxis* in our time and in our society, and for equally compelling and co-related metaphors for patterns of *human partnership with God's praxis*:

¹² He calls it human partnership with God's praxis (1999:88).

I am calling for a theology, which arises out of, and returns to the local, the concrete and the contextual situations in which we work. It should make a serious effort, through intercourse with the Bible and with the works of others from different contexts and settings, to avoid ideological captivity and entrapment in abstractions. At the same time, it should endeavor to offer a relevant and powerful depiction that will enable us to see the subtle depths and awesome patterns of God's suffering presence and providential power in preserving, healing and redeeming God's beloved creation. Through such a practical theological witness we and those whom we teach, may be moved, empowered and guided in making ourselves more fully a part of God's work in our time and in our places (Fowler 1999:90).

1.2.3 Methodology of practical theology

The issue of the methodology in practical theology has been at stake. I agree with van der Ven (1994:29), a Netherlandic theologian and research fellow at the department of practical theology of the University of South Africa, when he says: "Some argue that practical theology has no methodology at all, and even should not have one... Others say that methodology is not to be considered as the alpha and omega of practical theology, but at least as a necessary condition for it. Without a sound and clear methodology, practical theology cannot fulfill its task."

The first concept refers to practical theology from the tradition-based perspective of theology as "sapientia." The second refers to practical theology from the tradition-oriented viewpoint of theology as "scientia."¹³ This research is based on the second view, the "scientia" perspective. Like van der Ven (1994:29) and S H Kim (1999:23-4), I define methodology as a frame of

¹³ Van der Ven, "Empirical methodology in practical theology: Why and how?" *Practical theology*

reference that one could look through, understand, and assess specific praxis or context. Then I have to ask which methodology is relevant for practical theology. There have been various attempts to develop meta-theoretical models to describe and shape the relationship between practical theology and the social sciences. Friedrich Schweitzer (1999:311-313) is excellent in giving us a brief historical outline of these developments in four models from the critical and constructive perspective. I will discuss three of the models below (the fourth one can be reduced to the second or third model).

1.2.3.1 A brief historical outline of the relationship between practical theology and the social sciences:

a. The first model is the model of *ancilla* that considers the social sciences as “ancillary sciences” of theology. A famous example of this model is presented by Eduard Thurneysen’s understanding of the role of psychology in religious education and pastoral care. According to Schweitzer (1999:311), psychology is with regard to anthropology, harshly refused as irrelevant to all questions of faith. With regard to the methods, however, psychological models and insights are to be drawn upon.

This model has rightly been criticized for its theological absolutism and isolationism (cf S H Kim 1999:29-33; Schweitzer 1999:311). Because of this it does not do justice to insights from non-theological sources. Schweitzer (ibid) also points out that the model’s distinction between questions of anthropology and methods of instruction or care has been accused of being artificial and inadequate because it overlooks the actual interdependence of anthropological and methodological assumptions.

I agree with the above critique that Schweitzer and others like S H Kim make. However, it would seem realistic to assume, and therefore to acknowledge,

in S.A. 9(1) 1994:29-44.

that the social sciences will, in part, continue to play an ancillary role in theology, just like all sciences may contribute ideas and methods to other fields of study, without ever becoming more than a subordinate source of ideas for them (cf Schweitzer 1999:311-2).

- b. The second model is the *social scientific critique* of assumptions, methods and procedures that may be found in practical theology, church and religion. Good examples of this are Sigmund Freud's psychology of religion or the critical sociological analysis of the social reality of church and religion (: 312). In other words, psychological and sociological methods are used to investigate the personal and social processes that are addressed by practical theology.

This is the first phase of two phase model Kart Rahner and others described in 1964: In the first phase, the theologian works together with the social scientist in order to get enough relevant, reliable and valid empirical information with regard to the topic concerned (Van der Ven 1996:33).

In the 1960's and early 1970's, this kind of critical social scientific approach was widely appreciated as a necessary contribution to practical theology (for example, Vierzig and Lammermann in Germany and William James and Carl Rogers in the United States). We understand that this appreciation emerged because it was considered a legitimate expression of the theological interest in liberation. It could not ignore church or religion as social realities, even though it was not based on theological assumptions.

This approach massively challenged churches and theology. There were many questions and arguments on methodology. The questions were interestingly enough, not related to content, which was more important for ministry and pastoral counseling between the two different disciplines of, theology and psychology, using different methodologies and traditions.

It can be concluded that this approach lacked a theological reflection on those empirical research methods and results from a theological point of view.

- c. The third model can be called *intentional cooperation* between practical theology and the social sciences. It is much more positive and constructive in using other disciplines' methods and results than the above two models are. Moreover, it is often stressed (although Schweitzer does not agree with this), that practical theology and the social sciences are to be considered equal partners (Schweitzer 1999:312-3).

In a general epistemological sense, Van der Ven (1996:34) calls it intra-disciplinarity. He determines that it refers to the borrowing of concepts, methods and techniques of one science from another and the integration of these elements into the other science. He argues that such intra-disciplinary processes occur in all scientific fields¹⁴ and that the history of theology is an example of intra-disciplinary borrowing, adaptation and integration.¹⁵

Nevertheless, as Van der Ven (1999:328) points out, the critical questions about the legitimacy of this kind of intra-disciplinary innovation or intentional cooperation are omnipresent. We have to carefully consider significant questions, such as: Is theology putting its identity at risk by such a venture?

¹⁴ For example the following: biology and chemistry (biochemistry), physiology and psychology (psysiological psychology), linguistics and sociology (sociolinguistics), history and psychology (psychohistory), the linguistic sciences and philosophy (philosophy of language), and so on (see Van der Ven 1996:34; 1999:327).

¹⁵ For example, the moral theology of Thomas Aquinas is unthinkable without Aristotelian ethics; the Tubingen school of the first half of the 19th century could not have existed in the absence of philosophical idealism; Tillich's systematic theology is inconceivable without depth psychology and existential philosophy; Rahner's fundamental theology would be impossible without Hegel, and Metz's political theology incomprehensible without the Frankfurt school (See Van der Ven 1996:34; 1999:327-8). Regarding this, Schweitzer (1999:312) divides what Van der Ven explains as a model into various sub-models: for example, correlational models which often are related to the theology of Paul Tillich and that for the most part are to mediate between theology and psychology (cf Muller-Pozzi 1975; Klessmann 1980; Werbick 1983) and models of converging social, ethical and political options for example for peace, liberation and ecology (Nipkow 1975; Mette 1990). Here the main reference is to sociology and especially to the Critical theory of the Frankfurt School.

Will theology remain theology?

In reviewing these three models, and some sub-models, it becomes clear that all three have been developed within the context of overcoming the theological isolationism towards the social sciences. All three models are concerned with making sure that practical theology will not lose contact with the social sciences or contemporary culture (Schweitzer 1999:313).

It has to be pointed out that in spite of these meta-theoretical pleas for partnership, actual cooperation with the social sciences, as Schweitzer identifies it in a German situation (ibid). The reason for this is examined in the next section. The way to manage the tension between the demand for partnership with the social sciences and the demand for preserving identity of practical theology will also be discussed.

1.2.3.2 Critical and constructive perspective of the partnership between practical theology and the social sciences

While the social sciences contribute methodologically and materially to the work of practical theology, cautions can however be anticipated momentarily here:

According to James Fowler (1999:301), there is firstly a danger to allow the language and concepts of the social sciences to flow over into all kinds and realms of discourse in unexamined and uncritical ways. Secondly, Fowler (ibid) warns that the lines between theology and social scientific perspectives are further put at risk because the theory claims to be not only empirically descriptive, but also, in a strictly formal sense, normative as well. If this claim is correct, we have to face the potential of a serious dimming of the lines between theological and social scientific perspectives.

Thirdly, Friedrich Schweitzer (1999:307-14) points out that practical theology's partnership with the social sciences has worked against the unity between

practical theological sub-disciplines. There has been a strong impulse towards specialization and differentiation within practical theology. Schweitzer (:319) explains fourthly, that this is not simply for the reason that there was cooperation with the social sciences, but rather because of a unilateral,¹⁶ single track,¹⁷ application-oriented use of social scientific methods and results by individual sub-disciplines of practical theology.¹⁸

In accordance with Schweitzer (1999:319), it can be concluded that the main constructive criticism of this section is to create a different use of social scientific methods and results. The results should be more analytical and include more than one social scientific approach. It should definitely refer to practical theology as a whole and not just to an individual sub-discipline as its frame of reference.

Fowler's (1999:303) decision on how to manage the tension between the demand for partnership with the social sciences, and the demand for preserving identity of practical theology, is accepted. Interpretations of present situations and challenges, and interpretations of the Christian scriptures and tradition, should be constructive and critical. There should be a determined intent to keep the methods and perspectives from the social sciences *under theological control*.

¹⁶ Schweitzer (1999:314) uses this term *unilateral* to figure out the relationship between practical theology and the social sciences. What he means by the term is that in this relationship practical theology is exclusively on the receiving end and the social sciences are exclusively on the giving end. Methods and results of the social sciences are taken up and used by practical theology while there is no corresponding attention to practical theology on the part of the social sciences.

¹⁷ The term *single track* is to convey that only one route or only one social scientific approach is singled out for being used in practical theology. Sociological functionalism or systems theory, the Critical theory of the Frankfurt School, psychoanalysis or structural developmental stage theories of various types are the examples for this.

¹⁸ Schweitzer (1999:314-5) criticizes here *immediate application orientation* in using social scientific methods and results and stresses the importance of more analytic orientation based

1.2.4 Practical theology in Korea

Since this study is based on the church (theology)'s relationship with its culture, the reality of practical theology observed in the relationship between the Korean church and Korean culture will be clearly revealed (as critically described by practical theologians in Korea).

1.2.4.1 Contextual crisis

Those who enjoyed the miracle of church growth in Korea may be disturbed by the report that the Korean church is sinking and in deep trouble. Theologians and sociologists of religion in Korea perceive it as a prevailing and deep-rooted crisis in the Korean church today. J K Un (1999b:427) analyzes that this is not a crisis of decline of membership, programs, or volunteer leaders, but a crisis of the desperate loss of context as a result from the increased dichotomization of church and the world. He calls it a “contextual crisis” that confronts the church and practical theology in Korea.

J K Un (1999b:427-9) argues that three major historical phenomena contributed to the formation of this crisis: *the collapse of the communist empire* that caused the Korean church to lose the target of her spiritual war, *the decline of the Christendom of the West* that caused the Korean church to lose her spiritual and theological basis, and *the rise of technocracy* that instigated the Korean church to seek the Church Growth Syndrome in the economic growth period and to increasingly move in the direction of consumer orientation of the Gospel.

For this study, the term “dichotomization” is preferred instead of “contextual crisis.” To avoid misunderstanding, I would like to mention that my argument is not that J K Un is wrong, or that the term “contextual crisis” should be avoided. I advocate the use of the term “dichotomization” rather, because it is more

on the concerning specific situation to which the methods and results may apply.

accurate and inclusive to represent the crisis. It explains not only what happened on the surface, but also makes clear what is behind the underlying stories in the Korean church today.

1.2.4.2 Dichotomization of church and the world

The Korean society has radically changed since the economic development in the 1970's. This change created the possibility of a modern, open, democratic, and pluralistic society (Son 2002:9). J K Un (1999b:427-9) considers these changes in light of a series of historical phenomena such as the collapse of the communist empire, the decline of the Christendom of the West, and the rise of technocracy. In this process of transformation, Koreans have experienced the fading of past traditions and the emergence of new possibilities in the realm of social structure, the value system, political awareness and religious consciousness. We cannot simply say these phenomena are problems; they should rather be seen as possibilities and challenges.

The problem is however, the fact that the Korean church has found her identity in crisis. Today many theologians and religious socialists agree that the irrelevance of the church's presence and style in society is the main reason behind the all phenomena described above (W G Yi 1987:13; Y S Park 1987:354-58; B S Kim 1989:328; S S Kwon 1997:379-81; 1998:65-74; J K Un 1999a:299-232; S H Myung & J G Park 2000:58; C M Son 2002:9). Son (2002:9) argues that all these diagnoses offer one primary message: Despite its growth, the Korean church has lost touch with the ordinary people, society, and perhaps with history at large.

Accordingly, J K Un (1999b:427) points out that all these are not crises of decline of membership or programs, but crises of the loss of context as a result of the increased dichotomy between the church and the world. The church therefore is no longer attractive to people, especially those who were economically, socially and spiritually deprived in Korea. This raises the question

of whether it is possible for the Korean church to transform the Korean society by itself.

1.2.4.3 Dichotomization of church and church

Having experienced Korean society's transition from an agricultural society to an industrial society; and from a traditional consciousness to a new consciousness, the Korean church has dichotomized into two groups: The conservative, representing an orthodox theology (Yesung, Yekam and Yejang) and the liberal/progressive, representing a liberal theology (Kisung, Kikam and Kijang).¹⁹ Almost two thirds of the total number of Christians in Korea belongs to the Presbyterian churches, and most of the Presbyterian churches are conservative in outlook.²⁰

Son (2002:15) defines the trend of practical theology with reference to the conservative and liberal churches. Before considering anything else, one has to remember that the Korean church was divided into denominations by means of their biblical perspectives. "Scripture" was the norm most often appealed to by both conservative and liberal sides for laying down operational guidelines. The analysis of the trend of practical theology will be limited to the Presbyterian churches that cover two thirds of the total number of Christians in Korea:

1.2.4.3.1 The confessional approach

The group of conservative churches undoubtedly followed the theological line of Hyung Nyong Park²¹ and Yun Sun Park.²² These two heads of conservative

¹⁹ These represent the names of the denominations in Korea: every name that has "Ye" in it, usually refers to its conservative characteristic while every "Ki" refers to its liberal side. "Sung," "Kam" and "Jang" refer to the Sungkyul church (Holiness church), Methodist church, and Presbyterian church of Korea in sequence.

²⁰ See Kwon 1998:15; Son 2002:15.

²¹ H N Park as a systematic theologian wrote a seven volume series that was based on Louis Berkhof's work according to the Calvinistic and Reformed theological tradition. According to Jong Sung Rhee, he followed the tradition of Alexander, Hodge, Warfield, and Machen and consequently was fascinated with a Calvinistic orthodox theology with highly doctrinal and

churches are still characterized as mainline protestant in thought. Their theological character can be defined by their the use of scriptural norm that is largely applied deductively to various contexts. In the scriptural norm, practical theology applies God's word to the church in the world. Methodologically speaking, this deductive approach is applied by the principle of the scriptural norm. It cannot be denied that the line of conservative churches in Korea still uses a confessional approach (Son 2002:15-6).

1.2.4.3.2 The contextual approach

Contrary to H N Park, Jae Joon Kim²³ was a representative of theological liberalism. After J J Kim and Chang Keun Song contributed theological articles to the *Theological Review* (Sinhakjinam) of the Pyongyang Seminary in the early 1930's, the theological conflict in the Korean church was visible. H N Park, who had deliberately observed the theological activities of liberals for a long time, concluded that the liberals not only rejected the five fundamental doctrines of Christianity, but also emphasized, particularly, higher criticism and the fallibility of the Bible (H N Park 1964:32; H M Yim 1996:46-7). These two theologians' acute theological confrontation led continuous theological controversies for years among many theologians on both sides. As a result, the Korean Presbyterian church divided into two different camps in 1953.

Son (2002:17) argues that J J Kim actively promoted social participation, while H N Park and the conservative church developed faith in personal salvation and the future life after death. Some schools (Hanshin and Kamshin) that followed

speculative characteristics. Because he studied apologetics instead of exegetical theology, he concentrated in defending and supporting rather than on reinterpreting Calvinistic orthodoxy. And with the same reason he condemned liberal theology not as a different option but as a heresy (cf Hee Mo Yim 1996:38-40; Son 2002:16).

²² Y S Park wrote a commentary on the 66 books of the Bible. He is well known for his Calvinistic interpretation of the Bible (see Son 2002:16).

²³ He was one of well known liberal leaders such as Young Joo Kim, Joon Bae Kim, Pil Soon Chun, Pil Keun Chai, Kwan Sik Kim, and Chang Kyun Song. He studied at Princeton and Western Theological Seminary from 1929 to 1932 and formed his theological view while he was in Japan where theological liberalism was already prevalent (cf H M Yim 1996:46-7; Son

Kim's thought have been rapidly developing their thought on social issues. As mentioned earlier in this section, the Korean church was divided into denominations by means of their biblical perspectives (as we see from the example above). According to a directory of the churches in Korea, the number of Protestant denominations in Korea in 1993 was 165. Among them, 130 were Presbyterian denominations and 35 were other.²⁴

1.2.4.4 Dichotomization of human praxis and God's praxis

Sung Choon Oh (1999:47), influenced by Seward Hiltner, defines that practical theology considers the delivering of faith. This entails caring for people with the power of faith, and organizing the church with faith to encourage works of faith as its study object. Accordingly, the main theme of practical theology therefore depends how we understand faith. From this insight, offered by Oh (ibid), I have to argue that the Korean church has been confusing this faith with human praxis. They have lost the faith as God's initiative and God's praxis, and are talking another faith with human effort and human praxis.

As a result of this dichotomy between human praxis and God's praxis, practical theology in Korea has concentrated not on what God is doing, but on what we as human beings are doing. Practical theology in Korea needs to make "the fusion of horizon" between the vision of God's praxis and the vision of humans that God works through. In other words, as Fowler suggests (1999:88-9), we as practical theologians have to seek to develop co-related metaphors for the patterns of human's partnership with God's praxis.

2002:16-7).

²⁴ 1994 Hankuk Kyohoe Chusorok: Directory of the churches in Korea 1994, Seoul 1993). See also The National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK), Kidokkyo Yeonkam 1990 (The Yearbook of Churches in Korea 1990), Seoul 1991, 540-43. This book states that there were 60 Presbyterian denominations with 7.2 million members, 3 Methodist denominations with 2.2 million members, 3 denominations of the Holiness church with 1.0 million members, 5 Baptist denominations with 0.7 million members, 8 Pentecostal denominations with 1.5 million members, and 9 other denominations with 400,000 members.

1.2.4.5 Trichotomization of practical theology

Looking back over 100 years of the Korean church, S C Oh (1999:57-9) found as main factor, the great awakening movement, which started from Pyongyang in 1907, proceeded throughout the Christian history in Korea. This movement became a strong character and merit of Korean church growth. It placed communicating or delivering ministry (preaching and teaching) in the center and withdrew other ministries such as caring and organizing. I am not pleased with such a trichotomized division, claimed by S Hiltner and activated in an unhealthy and problematic manner in the Korean church today. I have to challenge the Korean church to integrate these three ministries with one another in creative tension.

1.3 Conclusion and remarks for the next chapter

In this chapter, I have proposed how to undertake this thesis (Introduction 1.1). I have also attempted to describe practical theology in general through determining its history, nature, characteristics, methodology, and practical theology situated in Korea (1.2).

The findings of Chapter 1 (understanding of practical theology, especially in Korea) will be applied to the study of preaching in the interaction between church and culture in Korea in Chapter 2. The first movement of Browning's (1991:47-8) four phased methodologies (Descriptive practical theology) will be used.