

**PREACHING FOR THE UPBUILDING OF THE CHURCH
IN TRANSITION**

by

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Declaration

I the undersigned hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

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SUMMARY

Preaching for the upbuilding of the church in transition

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The aim of this study is to develop a homiletic theory for the upbuilding of the church in transition.

This dissertation investigates the validity of the hypothesis that in order to build up the church in a transition, the theory and practice of preaching must achieve a dynamic relationship with a faithful and relevant ecclesiology. At the same time, the theory and practice of preaching in the Korean church, where these are linked with a dominant accommodated ecclesiology can not form a faithful and relevant ecclesiology.

To test these two hypotheses, this study defines the methodology use in practical theology to develop a homiletic theory (Chapter 1).

The research develops a homiletic theory from a hermeneutic-communicative perspective, which bears a dynamic relationship to a faithful and relevant ecclesiology. Firstly, this study identifies a faithful and relevant ecclesiology from a missional perspective. Secondly, Ricoeur's model of collective narrative identity is articulated.

From these two understandings, a homiletic theory as a hermeneutic-communicative act is developed. The homiletic theory for forming a faithful and relevant ecclesiology is composed through preaching as an act of translation, an act of exchange, and an act of forgiveness (Chapter 2).

The next aspect of this study is an empirical study. It links the question of the connection of a contemporary homiletic theory of the Korean church with an ecclesiology. The object is to try to explain a preaching praxis that relates to ecclesiology. In this study it is found that the praxis of preaching is closely related to an accommodated ecclesiology (Chapter 3).

This section develops a hermeneutical interaction between the results of the empirical research and those of the literature study. This chapter reflects the interplay of information from the empirical research and information from the literature study. It produces new or modified ideas for a relevant theory of practice that guide and direct preaching praxis. This is a regulative activity that aims to change the current praxis (Chapter 4).

Keywords

Ecclesiology, Church, Modernisation, Community, Identity, Preaching,

Hermeneutic, Dialogical, Narrative, Korean, Sermon, Homiletic

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ABBREVIATIONS

GOCN: Gospel and Our Culture Network

KHC: Korean Holiness Church

KMC: Korean Methodist Church

KNCC: Korean National Christian Council

NAE: National Association of Evangelicals

PCKH: Presbyterian Church in Korea (Hapdong)

PCKK: Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koshin)

PCKT: Presbyterian Church in Korea (Tonghap)

PCROK: Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (Kijang)

WCC: World Council of Churches

PREACHING FOR THE UPBUILDING OF THE CHURCH IN TRANSITION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

The Korean church has grown rapidly since it was founded in the 1880s. After the mid 1980s, however, just after the Korean Protestant church celebrated its centennial year in 1984, it suffered a decline or stagnation in membership. The Korean church has tried to overcome these crises as regards its membership through several changes in church ministries. It has introduced seeker services, music services, drama, cell churches, G-12 seminars, etc.

These functional approaches cannot, however, solve the deeper problem of the ecclesiology of the Korean church. While several reasons have been identified, one of the main reasons for the decline has been the distortion of ecclesiology from a faithful and relevant one (Gwak 2000). The Korean Protestant church has failed to articulate her identity according to a biblical and a Reformed tradition during the transition from modernity to postmodernity. The first requirement for the Korean church at this time is to develop a biblical and relevant ecclesiology for church ministries.

In the New Testament we are told that the church was created by the apostles' preaching and the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). Reformers such as John Calvin and Martin Luther have stated that the two marks of the church that distinguish a true church from a false church are preaching and sacraments (Van Gelder 2000a:142). They restored the centrality of the Word of God to the life of congregations. Calvin (1960:1023) defined the church as follows: "Whenever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists."

One of the important Protestant confessions, the Belgic Confession, also describes the marks of the True Church as follows: Article 29, The Marks of the True Church, states that the true church “engages in the pure preaching of the gospel; it makes use of the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them; it practises church discipline for correcting faults”. This is followed by a summary statement: “In short, [the true church] governs itself according to the pure Word of God...” (Van Gelder 2000a:143). The church’s life is to be governed by the Word. Preaching is an indispensable ministry for the life and mission of the church.

Leander Keck (1993:99) describes the importance of preaching in the life of the church as follows: “the self-communication of God is communicated in the gospel. Since the church lives by the gospel, communication is at the heart of its life. Consequently, the renewal of the mainline churches will manifest itself in the renewal of their communication.”

However, Richard Lischer and William Willimon (1995:15; cf Lischer 1992:76-77) point out the problem of a contemporary homiletic trend by mentioning that “homiletics is often tempted to follow its own interests rather than the needs of the church. The church’s life and needs should govern the kind of scholarship that goes on in homiletics.” Charles L Campbell (1997:121) also states that in America the mainline church has itself been in decline during the period in which narrative preaching has thrived. Even though preaching must necessarily have a close relationship with the church, there is no room for the church (Campbell 1997:230). As Justin Martyr says, “preaching once belonged to the church” (Lischer 1992:76). But its recovery is not an easy task. Homiletic theory and praxis need to be related to the life of the church.

Therefore, the problem of this study is how preaching could serve to build up a church in transition. What is a faithful and relevant ecclesiology of the Korean church in a transition? What homiletic theory can we postulate for building up the church during this transition? What would the hermeneutic-communicative characteristics of a homiletic theory be for the formation of the identity of the church as a community in transition?

1.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to develop a homiletic theory for praxis that will help preachers to proclaim the gospel message meaningfully in the declining situation of the Korean church in order for the church to articulate her identity and mission in the Korean context. As preaching is a hermeneutic-communicative act, a homiletic theory has two aspects – hermeneutic and communicative aspect. Therefore this study has two objectives. First objective is to develop a homiletic hermeneutic for articulating the identity of the church. Second is to consider a communicative style, sermon form, and language for the upbuilding of the church.

1.3 HYPOTHESES

The hypothesis with which this study deals is that preaching as a hermeneutic-communicative act has to do with a biblical and contextual ecclesiology that can serve to build up the church during its transition. The goal of preaching is the formation and transformation of the identity of the church. However, the assumption is that contemporary homiletic theory and praxis of the churches in Korea which have linked an accommodated ecclesiology to contemporary culture can bring growth to the church.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The term “methodology” means the scientific study of methods or procedures undertaken in the cause of research (Van Wyk 1995:85). Without a sound and clear methodology, according to Johannes Van der Ven (1999:323), “Practical theology cannot fulfil its task: reflecting on the people’s praxis from the view point of God’s revelatory praxis in a way that is as scientific as possible.”

In developing a homiletic theory for praxis for preachers who are struggling to build up the church which is passing through a period of transition through their preaching, a

practical theological methodology could prove most useful. It should be remembered that homiletics is a subdiscipline of practical theology.

Therefore, before developing a homiletic theory by means of a practical theological method, we should start with an explanation of a practical theological methodology. In order to identify a practical theological methodology for this study, in this section, I supply a historical overview of practical theology, including a definition and a description of the methodology and models of practical theology. This is followed by the application of a methodology of practical theology to this study.

1.4.1 Practical theology and homiletics

In order to develop a homiletic theory as a hermeneutic-communicative action theory, it is necessary to start from an understanding of the relationship between practical theology and homiletics.

T Hoekstra (in Schuringa 1995:20) defines homiletics as a “practical theological discipline which has for its object the ministry of the Word, especially in the gathered congregation of Christ.” Homiletics is a subdiscipline of practical theology. Homiletics has a place in the field of practical theology and is concerned with the coming of God to men through the preached Word (Schuringa 1995:20). Recently our understanding of practical theology has changed from one of a clerical-pastoral theology to a church-oriented practical theology (Farley 1983; Fowler 1999). In this interpretation, homiletics should no longer be seen as the pastor’s technique but the church’s praxis for communicating the Gospel. A homiletic theory for praxis needs to be developed within practical theology.

1.4.2 Practical theology

To identify a methodology for this study, it would be helpful to discuss what practical theology is and what its methodology should be.

1.4.2.1 A brief history of the understanding of practical theology

For the past two decades, there has been a quiet but radical revolution in the self-understanding and work of practical theology (Fowler 1999:75; Schuringa 2000:153; Browning 1988:83; Dingemans 1996a:83). This revolution centres around the recovery and re-emergence of practical theology as a discipline. According to James W Fowler (1999:75), practical theology has been regarded as one of the applied disciplines, while biblical studies, church history, systematic theology and ethics are considered to be the classical disciplines.

The assumption was that the creative work in theology went on in the fields of biblical studies, historical studies and, most especially, systematic theology. Ethics, because it touched on practical and political aspects, occupied a somewhat ambiguous position. Unconsciously, theological faculties absorbed the positive bias toward what might be called pure reason, namely scholarship that proceeded in accordance with the canons of pure research in the sciences. In theological education the results of scholarly inquiry and constructive interpretation in the so-called classical disciplines of theology would be appropriated and applied in the work of church leadership and pastoral practices (Fowler 1999:75-76). Practical theology was relegated to the position of a step-child discipline or derivative and second-hand field in theological studies. In this perspective pastors and educators were encouraged to think of themselves as consumers and transmitters of theology, but not as producers. And the laity were viewed as passive recipients of this second-hand theology transmitted by pastors and educators. Fowler (1999:75) argues that this stems from an unfortunate understanding of the relation between theory and practice.

By the early 1980s, however, some new perspectives on the nature and work of theology had begun to take shape. Edward Farley (1983:21-41), a systematic theologian, formulated these new understandings in a way that had a broad influence. He identified four major phases in the evolution of theology as a central activity and concern of the church, and later, the university. The impact of his analysis was to shake

up the routinised assumptions about “pure” and “applied” theology. Farley classifies the four phases in theology’s evolution as follows:

The first phase began with the New Testament church and continued until the 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 (1983:23) calls this approach theology as *habitus* – theology as knowledge of God pursued through the disciplines of prayer, study, liturgical participation, and the practices of discipleship. Theology as *habitus* refers to “an actual, individual cognition of God and things related to God” (Farley 1983:31). The goal of theology *habitus* was the formation of people and communities in accordance with the revealed knowledge of God.

The second phase in theology’s evolution began to emerge from the second to the fourth centuries in the intellectual responses of the church to the challenges of heresies within and 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 (1983:23-24) calls this phase ‘Theology Science’. He sees it at its height in the great *Summas Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas, with its rational reconciliation of the recovered philosophy of Aristotle with Augustinian theology. In this era theology emerged as the dominant ordering framework for grounding all human knowledge in the West. Theology was, indeed, “the queen of the sciences”. ‘Theology Science’ provided the intellectual energy and thrust for the founding of the great medieval universities. It persisted – at least in Roman Catholicism – until well beyond the Counter-Reformation.

The next great wave of change in theology, as Farley (1983:23) says, accompanied the impact of the Renaissance and the Reformation, with their respective returns to classical and biblical antiquity. The fresh retrieval of humanistic traditions, unshackled from theological control, gave fresh impetus to scholarly study. The translations of the Latin and Greek texts of the New Testament into vernacular languages opened the way for the fresh illuminations and intense controversies of the Reformation.

Coupled with the dawning of the age of scientific inquiry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these movements gave rise to the modern research university, with its movement towards the transformation of education for the classical professions into the work of specialised disciplines of research. No longer “queen of the sciences”, theology had to struggle to maintain a presence in the new universities. By forming alliances with the emerging “scientific” disciplines of history, philosophy, philology, and rationally grounded ethics, various departments of specialised theological study began to form. Theology Science became theological sciences (Farley 1983:24).

A unity and working relationship between these disciplinary specialities in theology was maintained by their contributions to the professional grounding of university-educated pastors and priests. Schleiermacher’s famous proposal for the role of practical theology as the place where the theological disciplines meet to inform the work of ecclesial science provided one such influential rationale for the continuing presence of theological faculties in the now secularising universities (Farley 1983:24).

As specialisation continued, professional guilds of scholars in the various theological disciplines have generated both confidence and ever-increasing rigor in their work. This has inevitably led to diminished conversation and collaboration between the disciplines, and often to a growing distancing of the work of theological scholars from that of the ministries of the churches.

The fourth phase in the evolution of the work of theology is identified by Farley as systematic or dogmatic theology. Now separated from history of Christian thought, from ethics, and often from Biblical studies, systematic theology has itself become a specialised discipline. In academic circles it has increasingly given attention to issues of methodology and concerns about the legitimisation of its work as a discipline. In the latter third of the twentieth century academic systematic theology has on the whole become increasingly remote from the practices of Christian faith in the churches and in our societies (Farley 1983:29).

The emerging new field of practical theology has directly challenged this state of affairs. It has forcefully reasserted the claim that theology, in any “classical” era, was an eminently practical theology. Theology in any of these now “classical” eras had the character rather of theology *habitus* than of the theological sciences. It was concerned with the shaping or re-shaping of the practices of the church so that they reflected faithfulness to Christ and formed congregations of folk through whom Christ could make his appeal in the world (Browning 1988:83).

1.4.2.2 Definition and characteristics of practical theology

According to Schuringa (2000:156), for practical theology to find its own place, it should be approached from the perspective of “praxis.” At the heart of practical theology’s self-understanding and effort to communicate its work lies the concept of “praxis”, which is found in the theology and philosophy of the ancient concept of praxis (Fowler 1999:78; Schuringa 2000:156-157).

It is important to explain the term “praxis” right at the start. Fowler (1999:80) explains the meaning of the praxis in practical theology. First, praxis is not identical with practice. The English word practice, according to Groome (1980:152), is not an adequate translation of praxis, especially when practice is used in the usual sense of “putting theory into practice.” Praxis is purposeful, intentional, and reflectively chosen ethical action (Groome 1980:152). Groome speaks of the importance of offsetting the dichotomy between theory and practice so prevalent in our Western mindset. To understand praxis requires a shift in consciousness away from dichotomising theory and practice, toward seeing them as twin moments of the same activity that are united dialectically. Instead of theory leading to practice, theory becomes or is seen as the reflective moment in praxis, and articulated theory arises from that praxis to yield to further praxis.

Secondly, praxis has two connotations that derive, respectively, from its Aristotelian heritage, on the one hand, and its Marxist heritage, on the other. For Aristotle, praxis was the ongoing integration of action and reflection through which the political process

maintained and adapted the practices of the city-state necessary for it to flourish (Groome 1980:14). Praxis is an activity of the total person – head, heart, and lifestyle. For Marx, on the other hand praxis came to connote intentional action strategically aimed at the overthrow of the present patterns of economic and political domination and their replacement by the classless society. For Marx praxis meant the self-initiated and self-creating activity of human beings that is intentionally and reflectively carried out and transforms social reality in the direction of human emancipation (Groome 1980:167). To Marx, therefore, people know the world through a critical, reflective activity that transforms the world. In consequence, knowledge is not knowledge unless it is put into practice, and it is only in being reconstructed that the world is apprehended or known. For Marx theory is the articulation of the consciousness that arises from such human praxis, and it must return to inform further praxis. Therein lies the dialectical unity. It is in being actualised that theory is transcended, and further theory arises from its own actualisation for the sake of further praxis, and so on, in an ongoing process.

This dual heritage of the term praxis underlines the claim that practical theology has a stake in maintaining the viability of the practices of the churches and their missions. At the same time, it engages in ongoing critical and constructive efforts at transformation, with the object of achieving greater faithfulness and effectiveness of the churches in the societies in which they offer their witness (Fowler 1999:80).

Practical theology, according to Heitink (1999a), has praxis for its *locus theologicus*, in contrast to exegetical theology, historical theology, and systematic theology. Practical theology is praxis theology concerned with the theology of praxis. The work of Fieret (1986:5-12) provides a starting point. He defines the praxis of practical theology as every praxes through which God in his Word comes to humanity in today's world. Though, strictly speaking, every praxis through which God comes to man in his Word today is of interest to practical theology, it is especially the praxes of the church that occupy a central position, owing to the current focus of seminaries on official ministerial training (Schuringa 2000:157).

Firet (1987:34) refines his definition of practical theology as “the theological theory concerning systems of activities which serve the intermediation of the coming of God to people in his word.” On the basis of this interpretation, practical theology has two characteristics. Firstly, practical theology is defined as a theological discipline that has for its object of study every praxis through which God comes to people today in his Word, especially the praxes of the church. Secondly, practical theology is an action science (Zerfass 1974; Heyns & Pieterse 1990; Browning 1991; Van der Ven 1993; Heitink 1999a; Pieterse 2001a). Finally, Gerben Heitink (1999a:6) defines practical theology as a theory of action that is the empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society. Practical theology could be defined as the study of communicative acts in the service of the gospel within the context of modern society (Pieterse 2001a:8; Heitink 1999a:154). Malan Nel (1999) notes that the communicative acts should be in the service of the gospel and the realised and still-to-be-realised kingdom of God in modern society.

Practical theology as a theological discipline

Mette, according to Heitink (1999a:104), states that practical theology must be conceived of as a theological theory of action within a theology that is understood as a practice-oriented science. This understanding assigns practical theology its own place within theology as a whole: practical theology is a theological discipline.

According to Pieterse, any definition of practical theology must take cognisance of the hermeneutical and communicative nature of theology. Traditionally, theology has been considered to be the knowledge of God. Hence God was the direct object of theology. Theologians compiled lists of God’s attributes on the basis of the direct observation of God. However, this understanding has changed; one cannot study God as the direct object of theology (Pieterse 2001a:10).

The object of theology, in the reformed tradition, is said to be God’s revelation in Jesus Christ (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:4). WD Jonker (in Heyns & Pieterse 1990:4) explains this more precisely when he says that theology is concerned with God’s revelation in

Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit as attested in Scripture and as understood and made meaningful in people's lives through the word and Spirit of God. According to him, God's word is authoritatively attested in Scripture and it is the word that is the subject matter of theology, a point which he reiterates forcefully: the whole of theology is concerned with only one thing, namely the word of God. Clearly, then, the word of God plays a cardinal role in the reformed view of the objective of theology.

Because God cannot be objectivised and captured in human concepts, God cannot be the object of theology. God is far more and far greater than our thinking about the divine. It would be presumptuous to think that the human mind can encapsulate God. So the object of theological study is human faith in God and human religious statements about God. Theology is concerned with both God and humanity. Theology is a variegated science. It studies the Bible, analyses the religious statements of churches and individuals, discusses the church's witness, traces its history and evaluates the religious praxis of congregations.

This opens the door to a hermeneutical approach to theology in its entirety (Heitink 1999a:111). The object of Christian theology, of theology as the science of divinity, is therefore the Christian faith, which is known through its sources, through its tradition, and in its past and present manifestation of belief. This means that the distinction between theology as profession and theology as *habitus* is not clearly defined.

In this conception, there is no clear differentiation between biblical, systematic, historical, and practical theology. They are no longer placed beside each other as separate disciplines but are hermeneutically tied together (Pieterse 2001a:8). After all, hermeneutics is a matter of "saying," "explaining," "translating", of "knowing," "interpreting," and "acting" (Heitink 1999a:111). Heitink (1999a:111-112) states that this hermeneutic approach serves to correct the objectifying, encyclopaedic approach. It creates the necessary unity in the theological enterprise as a whole and assigns practical theology, in its attempt to bring people to fuller understanding, its own place. This fits in with the description of the object of practical theology in the definition: the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society.

According to Heitink (1999a:108), Martin Luther saw the object of theology in the relationship between humanity and God. John Calvin, in his Institutes (1559) also argued that our knowledge of God and our knowledge of ourselves are intimately connected. This unity between revelation and experience has contributed to the view of theology as a practical discipline.

The object of theology is the human experience of God and faith in God in the past (revelation in the Scriptures) and in the history of the Christian church, as well as contemporary experience and faith (Pieterse 1998a:182). The direct object of theology is Christian faith. God is thus an indirect object of study. Theology studies the faith of people in God, and their religious experience and religious praxis. Theology works through a hermeneutical approach, and also through practical theology.

The hermeneutic perspective is important in practical theology. Along with Furet, Heitink (1999a:111) emphasises the unity of the hermeneutic and the *agogic* moment in practical theology: “the word has the power to clarify, by which understanding arises; and the power to influence, by which change occurs.” In accordance with the views of Van der Ven, Heitink (:111) views the praxis of practical theology as a hermeneutical-communicative praxis. This introduces a theory of action to practical theology.

Practical theology as a theory of action

A contemporary consensus view of practical theology is that it is an action science (Furet 1986; Heyns & Pieterse 1990; Browning 1991; Van der Ven 1993; Heitink 1999). According to Heitink (1999a:126), theories of action are both theories of action that attempt to describe and explain social and human reality and theories of action that attempt to influence and change that reality.

Writing from this perspective Heitink (1999a:126) describes action as follows: “To act is to pursue a goal, to work toward an intentional and active realization of certain plans, by utilizing specific means in a given situation.” Therefore, practical theology is an empirical theory of action. This means that the empirical character of practical theology

must always be understood in relation to its fundamental hermeneutical character (Heitink 1999a:127).

Practical theological theory cannot be content with an analysis and interpretation of praxis, but must also deal with the consequences of actions. To Heitink (1999a:128), practical theology as a theory of action aims to describe and interpret all religious phenomena, but concentrates on mediative action: the praxis of the “mediative of salvation”. This explains the initial emphasis on the activities of the church and the ministry. Actions are performed by all Christians in every sphere. These acts are communicated not just in language but also in deeds. They are intentional acts aimed at intervening in a situation with a view to transforming it. The transformation happens in accordance with the values of God’s Kingdom in the lives of individuals, in the church and in society. It happens through the proclamation of the gospel and through deeds performed in accordance with the gospel.

Heitink explains the meaning of action in practical theology as a theological theory of action. In discussing the concept of a theory of action, Firet (in Heitink 1999a:130) states: “Practical theology does not deal with human action in general, neither with the action of the believer nor the person who acts in the service of God, but specially with action that has to do with the actualisation and the maintenance of the relationship between God and humanity, and humanity and God.” To Firet and also J.A van der Ven, action is mediative (Heitink 1999a:130).

Heitink (1999a:131-132) explains it as the mediation between the Christian faith (praxis 1) and modern society (praxis 2). Praxis 1 indicates that the unique object of practical theology is related to intentional, more specially, intermediary or meditative, actions, with a view to changing a given situation through agogics (Heitink 1999a:8). Praxis 2 emphasises the context, where these actions take place, as a dynamic context in which men and women in society interact, whether or not their actions are religiously motivated while pursuing various goals (Heitink 1999a:8). Praxis 1 and praxis 2 constantly interrelate. This interconnectedness must be adequately stressed when developing a theory.

As a theory of action, practical theology, especially in the view of Heitink (1999a), has been influenced by the theories of Jürgen Habermas and Paul Ricoeur. Habermas develops the paradigm of communicative action and safeguards the critical perspective, while Ricoeur offers a model of interpretation and the basic outlines for a methodology that – through verbs such as “understanding” and “explaining” – links the hermeneutical (the perspective of the human sciences) with the empirical (the perspective of the social sciences). The two verbs represent an important element in the unique character of practical theology: the strategic perspective, encapsulated in another verb: change.

Hendrik Pieterse (1998a:179-182) sums up three characteristics of practical theology as follows:

Firstly, practical theology is a contextual theology. In contrast to other theological disciplines, practical theology does not aim at timeless, universal or comprehensive interpretations of Christian tradition.

Secondly, practical theology is inductive. Practical theology studies “popular religion” by means of empirical research. It stresses the importance of these experiences, the religious interpretation of these experiences and theological reflection in the light of the message of the Bible and theological tradition.

Thirdly, practical theology is a critical theology. At the heart of the concept of practical theology is the theory-praxis relationship. Critically, the relation between theory and praxis is one of bipolar tension, a relationship that should be neither totally separate nor totally identical.

Different approaches to practical theology

There are different approaches, depending on the relationship between theory and praxis. Heitink (1999a:171-176) distinguishes those that ran through history as follows: the normative-deductive approach; the hermeneutical-mediative approach; the

empirical-analytical approach; the political-critical approach and the pastoral-theological approach.

The normative-deductive approach (traditional approach)

This approach is primarily interested in the practice of ministers in an ecclesiastical context. Action is based on a normative theological theory. In this model the social sciences function as *ancilla theologiae*. This approach is found in orthodox theological practice, applying biblical passages directly to contemporary questions. The only possible form of mediation is the proclamation. Representatives of this approach are E Thurneysen and R Bohren. The limitation of this approach is that it does not provide a hermeneutical and empirical reflection on the relationship between theory and praxis (Heitink 1999b:137).

The hermeneutical-mediative approach

This approach focuses on a hermeneutical orientation in practical theology with the aim of mediation. J Furet developed this approach in the 1960s. He emphasised that the heart of pastoral and ecclesiastical practice is not the activity of human beings but that of God who, with the official ministry as his intermediary, comes to people in his Word. Official and ecclesiastical patterns of action must be examined from the point of view of effectiveness and legitimacy. The aim of this examination is to improve human action in the service of the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Heitink 1999b:137).

The search in practical theology is directed at integrating hermeneutical, empirical and strategic perspectives in a theory of action in fields such as preaching, pastoral care, church development and social action. Practical theologians combine quantitative and qualitative methods of research, but they prefer qualitative methods. The strength of this approach is the emphasis on theological reflection and its direct relevance for the practice of congregations and their ministers (Heitink 1999b:137). GDJ Dingemans, R Bons-Storm, AK Ploeger, J Furet, G Heitink in the Netherlands, W Greive, R Zerfass and M Josuttis in Germany are the representatives of this paradigm.

The empirical-analytical approach

JA van der Ven developed this approach (cf. Van der Ven 1993). He is a professor at the Catholic University of Nijmegen, and has extensively documented his studies, usually described as “empirical theology”, which are based on his research of many years. This approach, like the hermeneutical-mediative approach, emphasises a hermeneutical perspective and includes an empirical aspect (Heitink 1999b:138). But according to Van der Ven, both aspects are important to an empirical approach for validating theological knowledge and falsifying wrong insights about the empirical relevance of theological concepts (1999b:139). He strongly acknowledges the potential of social scientific research. This is expressed by the term “intradisciplinary” (Heitink 1999a:173). It means that theologians must be fully conversant with social scientific methodology and must utilise this in dealing with theological problems (1999a:173-174). Inductive and deductive approaches are combined, as are quantitative and qualitative methods. But to gain valid knowledge, this approach prefers quantitative analyses based on questionnaires that produce a representative view of a chosen population.

The strength of this model lies in its attempt to make theological concepts operational, and in the empirical methodology used, which confers high academic status. Moreover, it seeks to link in an open manner quantitative and qualitative research, and the perspective of a spectator with that of a participant (Heitink 1999a:174).

The political-critical approach

According to Heitink (1999b:139), this approach can be divided into two different orientations. The first is connected with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and takes cognisance of the position of Gert Otto in Germany, who defines practical theology as “kritische Theorie religiös vermittelter Praxis in der Gesellschaft” (in Heitink 1999b:139). From this Neo-Marxist perspective, economic interests dominate human knowledge and beliefs. The hermeneutics of suspicion is considered to offer the best guarantee of reaching the truth.

The second perspective deals with the action-reflection model of liberation theology. From this perspective, the concept of the “church of the poor” plays an important role. The emancipatory interest of knowledge offers a central place to the poor as the subject of theologising, expressing their experience and suffering. Listening to their experiences and reflecting on them from the perspective of Christian belief in an attempt to liberate them from oppression opens up an approach to theology that is quite different from academic theology. This approach prefers doing empirical research from the perspective of the actor, concretised in methods of action research (Heitink 1999b:139).

Heitink (1999a:175) says that “the strength of this current is its engagement and involvement with those whom the gospel addresses emphatically: the poor and the persecuted. This bias may, however, lead to one-sidedness, since the preference for one perspective excludes other points of view.”

The pastoral-theological approach

This approach is in part a continuation of the old pastoral theology and also of the mainstream American *habitus* tradition, which is quite different from the European encyclopaedic way of theologising (Heitink 1999a:176). It shares an orientation towards the praxis of the church, in particular from the vantage point of the professional activities of the pastor. Pastoral theology serves the education and training of ministers in this approach. Dewey’s pragmatism forms the educational base of this approach (Heitink 1999b:139).

Seward Hiltner pioneered this approach to theology at the academic level. His point of departure – the role of pastor – leads him to give psychology a central place in his thinking, as far as the social sciences are concerned (Heitink 1999a:176). In the Netherlands H Faber, E van der Schoot, W Zijlstra, H Andriessen and PWM Claessens are among the leading proponents. In Germany, D Stollberg, R Riess, HC Piper and H van der Geest have contributed to the development of the theoretical basis. While in North America the movement is strongly pragmatic, the emphasis in Europe is mainly on theological reflection (Heitink 1999a:176).

Heitink (1999a:177) evaluates this approach as follows:

The significance of this stream lies most of all in its contribution to competent and communicative action and in “doing” theology in an experience-oriented manner. Its limitation is in the clinical setting of a psychological model and in the lack of involvement with the needs of society (Höfte 1990:78ff.). Moreover, professionalization is a product with side effects.

In conclusion: These approaches are not mutually exclusive but can be seen as complementary. They are related to different theological and methodological positions (Heitink 1999b:136).

1.4.2.3 A methodology of practical theology

The structure of practical theology

Practical theology is defined as a theological theory of action (Heitink 1999a). It has two perspectives: a theological discipline and a theory of action. These two aspects of practical theology are important in developing a theological theory of action as the core of a practical-theological theory (Heitink 1999a:148).

Practical theological research is hermeneutical by nature, but empirical by design (Pieterse 1998a:190; Heitink 1999c: 266). It is hermeneutical by nature because the research is directed to a process of understanding: i.e. the understanding of the meaning 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 empirical research but interpreted by theological theories (Heitink 1999c:266).

The theory-praxis relationship

The starting point of methodology is to arrive at the correct relationship between theory and praxis. According to Heitink (1999a:149), the important character of a theory of action may be discerned in the dialectic relation between theory and praxis.

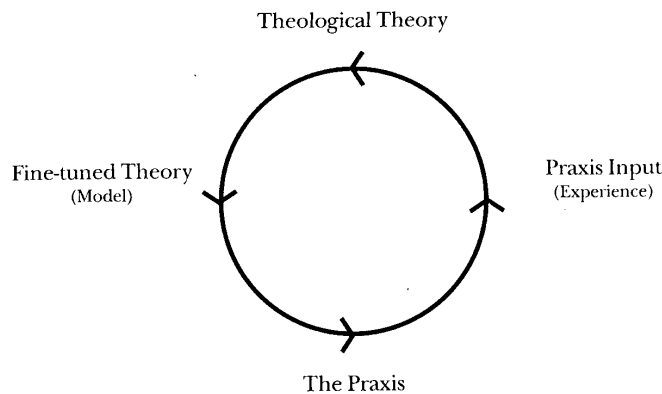
Heitink (1999a:151) defines praxis as “the actions of individuals and groups in society, within and outside the church, who are willing to be inspired in their private and public lives by the Christian tradition, and who want to focus on the salvation of humankind and the world”. Theory is defined as “a comprehensive hermeneutical-theological statement that relates the Christian tradition to experience, to the life and actions of modern humans” (Heitink 1999a:151).

This study accepts the thesis that theory and praxis are in a bipolar tension and are therefore open on both sides to a critical interaction (Heitink 1999a:151). This bipolar relation implies that the relationship between theory and praxis is dialectical, indicating that it needs to be approached hermeneutically. The results of inductive (empirical) research on the praxis of religious communicative actions can be critical to (theological) theory and, vice versa, theory can be critical to the contextual praxis of religious communicative actions. This bipolar structure implies that empirical research on the context leads to new interpretations of the Christian tradition. But this reinterpretation of the tradition (text) in turn sheds a new light on the concrete contemporary situation (Heitink 1999a:149ff; Pieterse 1998a:190). In this approach there is an ongoing critical interaction between theory and praxis evoked by theological empirical research and theological interpretation of the research. New understandings are reached and our theories and praxis modified through critical correlative hermeneutics (Pieterse 1998a:190-91).

Theory and praxis necessarily interact continuously. Praxis is directed from, or interpreted on the basis of, a specific theory (Heitink 1999a:148). Therefore, a theory of action is developed in the dialectic relation between theory and praxis.

Theological theory requires the verification/correction of praxis and praxis depends on critical theory. Theological theory and praxis can inform and correct one another in a

reciprocal manner. This continuous process, which avoids the pitfalls of either pragmatism or traditionalism, illustrates why an appropriate term for the way practical theology works is “praxis-oriented theory”. Henry D. Schuringa (2000:160) explains the process in the following diagram.



The Reflective and Praxis Moments of the Praxis (Schuringa 1995:19)

The praxis also entails the functioning of the church and congregation, of all believers in the church and in society.

Heitink (1999a:151-153), following N Greimacher, elaborates on the relation between theory and praxis as follows: firstly, there is no pure theory of praxis. Theory is always subject to the impact of history and is conditioned by society. Secondly, though at times one is unaware of it, praxis is always based on an underlying theory. Praxis is always, at least in part, determined by theory. Failing to recognise this leads to an ideological praxis. Thirdly, the primacy of theory over praxis, long defended by practical theology, must be rejected. Fourthly, likewise, one must reject a primacy of praxis over theory – a view of Marxist elements, supported by some social scientists, and at times either consciously or unconsciously accepted by church leaders. Such a view would eventually result in the confirmation of the status quo in the church. Fifthly, the relation between theological theory and ecclesiastical praxis is determined neither by a complete separation nor by an identification of the two, but by a bipolar tension-filled combination. The shift from theory to praxis, and vice versa, is a qualitative shift. Theory is in constant need of verification or falsification through praxis, while praxis

must constantly be transcended by theory. Theory in the context of practical theology must always be critical theory.

This thesis shows practical theology as a fully operational discipline. Theory must constantly be tested in praxis. This requires empirically oriented practical theological research. At the same time, praxis must be constantly subjected to critical review from theory. This demands an ongoing development of hermeneutical theory.

Therefore, bipolarity is not a correlation of question and answer, but creates a tension-filled, critical relation. Schuringa (1995:18-19) explains the relation between theory and praxis as follows: The priority of theological theory forming is based not only on an intrinsic value of reflecting upon God, but is also founded on the priority of the existence of God and his self-revelation with respect to created reality. In other words, it is more than a mere logical priority. It is a “*theo*-logical” priority of theology over praxis. All theological theory formation occurs in the praxis and with a view to the praxis. The two can never be separated. The road between theological theory and praxis is not a one-way street in either direction, neither is it strictly inductive nor deductive; both exist as part of the praxis in a dialectical tension through a bipolar tension-unity.

Conceived like this, practical theological theory is a hermeneutical-communicative praxis. Heitink (1999a:153-154) explains this as follows:

Practical theology starts from the situation, the praxis. An experienced people have (praxis) becomes the object of reflection on the basic theological statements (theory). This theory, which itself is the result of the thinking and actions of the past, and reflects the distribution of power of the past, apparently fails to convince people in their contemporary praxis. Many ask critical questions: Did the people of the past arrive at an adequate understanding of certain biblical texts, in the light of their times? This leads to a rereading of Scripture, and subsequently to a revision of the theory. A new theoretical insight then asks critical questions with regard to the existing praxis. Why do things happen as they do? These and other questions lead to a re-examination of praxis. Which factors are determinative for the current situation? Why do people think and act as they do? Is there any alternative? This leads to further questions about the theory and any subsequent answers also have their impact on praxis. People recognize their situation and learn to view this with new eyes, in the light of a “fresh” theory. It prompts them to initiate and change things, which leads to a renewal of praxis. This, in turn, prompts further questions to the theory, leading to a circular process. This is often set in motion through

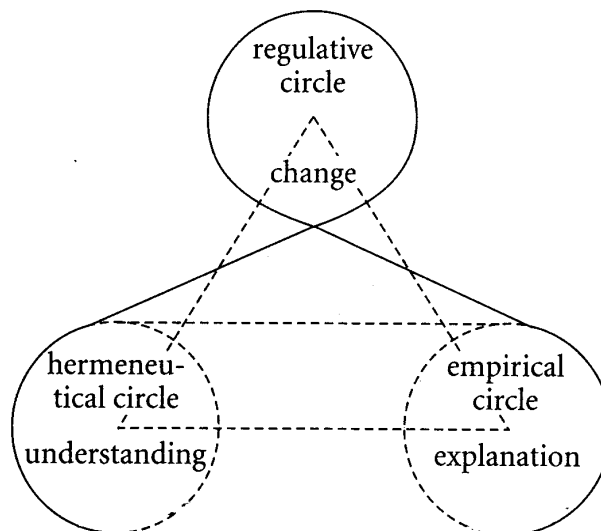
mediative action, through education, group discussions, dialogue, or through participation in an action group that stimulates this process.

Therefore, the heart of the concept of practical theology is the theory-praxis relationship. We deem the relationship of theory and praxis to be one of bipolar tension, that is, a relationship that should be neither totally separate nor identical (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:31).

Three aspects of the methodology of practical theology

Practical theology is a hermeneutic-communicative praxis. The methodology of practical theology has three aspects: understanding, explanation, and change. Ricoeur regards “understanding” and “explanation” as the two foci of the hermeneutical circle. Both are of great importance for the methodology of practical theology. The third concept, “change”, is inherent in any form of action. An action is always an intervention in reality that leaves its mark. Change is the direct objective of practical theology, mediative action, and strategy for transformation (Heitink 1999a:163; Pieterse 2001a:8).

Heitink (1999a:165) explains his methodology with reference to the following figure.



A methodology of practical theology: Heitink's model, 1999a:165

It shows three circles: the hermeneutical circle, as the interpretation that is typical of human sciences; the empirical circle, as the testing circle that is typical of natural sciences; and the regulative circle, which is typical of the methodology in practical thinking (Heitink 1999a:165). Heitink (1999a:165) explains this figure. In the human sciences, according to Ricoeur, the first two become part of an ellipse with understanding and explanation as its foci. The unique aspect in practical theology as a discipline of mediative action is the interconnectedness of these three circles in a distinct circuitous system or “circuit” of theory formation.

The three circles correspond to the distinctive goals of the discipline: the interpretation of human action in the light of the Christian tradition (the hermeneutical perspective), the analysis of human action with regard to its factuality and potentiality (the empirical perspective), and the development of action models and action strategies for the various domains of action (the strategic perspective) (Heitink 1999a:165). These three lines converge into one single theory in the integrative approach (Heitink 1999a:103).

Hermeneutical perspective

Practical theology, according to Pieterse (1998a:183), is studied within the modern framework of critical-correlational hermeneutics. Practical theological theory of interpretation rests on the mediation between tradition and experience. The hermeneutical question is how divine reality and human reality can be connected at the experiential level (Heitink 1999a: 193). That is, its main task is to ensure that the words of Scripture, which were a great source of strength to people in the past, can be experienced in today’s context as comforting and liberating and serve as a source of inspiration for action (Heitink 1999a:193).

The presupposition underlying hermeneutical insights is that interpretive interaction and the process of the hermeneutical circle pertain not only to written texts but also to human actions that can be interpreted in the same way as texts (Pieterse 1998a:183). This structure of hermeneutics has a circular character, and is usually referred to as the “hermeneutical circle” (Heitink 1999a:163).

Three phases of the hermeneutical process as identified by Ricoeur are applied in theological research within the frame of reference of critical-correlational hermeneutics. The first phase is marked by participatory understanding of the text and context concerned, and here personal engagement is necessary. The hermeneutical approach that is characteristic of the human sciences is often referred to by the German word *verstehen* (to understand). The second phase is characterised by the explication of the text and context, and in this phase distancing is necessary. This empirical approach, characteristic of the natural sciences, is often referred to by the word *erklären* (to explain) (Heitink 1999a:144). The third phase is again marked by participatory understanding, but here the results of the scientific analysis of the second phases are taken into account – thus leading to objectification (Pieterse 1994:79). The dialectic of understanding and explication can be seen as a dual movement: a movement from understanding towards explication, and from explication towards understanding (Heitink 1999a:144).

The praxis which practical theology studies has its place within the framework of the coming Kingdom of God. This praxis has the purpose of communicating the liberation which God has initiated and of involving people in this liberating praxis. Heitink (1999a:198-9) classifies some hermeneutical patterns of interpretation – the theme of the kingdom of God, the covenant, the church as the body of Christ, the exodus model. These patterns are indispensable if one is to interpret the current situation in the light of Scripture, and to bridge the gap between the text and the reader (1999a:200).

Strategic perspective

Practical theology has to do with apprehending and getting to know God, appropriating the biblical message and the concomitant religious actions. Apprehending is essentially a communication process. The field of practical theology is to convey the faith, and the actions that mediate it, or to put it differently, to communicate faith through these mediatory actions.

According to Heitink (1999a:202), practical theology as “the theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society” inevitably aims at change, through a process of management and steering. Practical theology as an action science, which as a normative discipline regards this area of mediation and change as its object, combines in itself a hermeneutical interest (to arrive at understanding) with a strategic interest (to facilitate change) (Heitink 1999a:202). This change, according to Heitink (1999a:202-12), focuses on the guidance and change of individuals and on change with regard to social constructs and institutions. The Christian faith works from the presupposition that people can indeed be changed and that our society can be renewed from the eschatological perspective of God’s kingdom.

Empirical perspective

Practical theology has to work deductively in reflecting on the theological basis of its theories. It also has to work deductively to investigate contemporary hermeneutic-communicative praxis in the service of the gospel in church and society. However, the inductive approach is becoming a major operation in this perspective, which is oriented in the paradigm of communicative acts in the service of the gospel.

The empirical analyses of contemporary Christian religious praxis could become an important source for critical and informative knowledge for our practical theological theories as well as a theology of reconstruction (Pieterse & Dreyer 1995:35). Pieterse and Dreyer (1995:35) mention two aspects regarding empirical research, namely the framework within which practical theological empirical research is undertaken and a more detailed conceptualisation of the object of study. They argue that practical theology can contribute empirical knowledge to a theology of reconstruction (1995:34).

The object of practical theology, specifically Christian religious praxis, determines the focus and the boundaries of empirical research in practical theology. Empirical research plays an important, but not a dominant, part in the process of practical theological theorising. Empirical research should be conducted within a theological conceptual framework and the research results must always be interpreted in the light of the

Christian theological tradition (Pieterse & Dreyer 1995:34). If practical theological research is to contribute to a theology of reconstruction, and through this to social transformation, the research must be undertaken within a critical hermeneutical framework. Following Habermas, this framework can be regarded as the result of the combination of empirical, hermeneutical and critical perspectives (1995:36).

In conclusion: Ziebertz (in Pieterse & Dreyer 1995:36) points out the following regarding these three perspectives:

Hermeneutics without a critical perspective can become an ideology; hermeneutics without an empirical perspective may lose touch with reality; the empirical perspective without the hermeneutical perspective can lead to a positivistic understanding of empirical research; the empirical perspective without a critical perspective can lead to an uncritical use, or the misuse, of empirical research results.

Therefore a critical hermeneutical framework could help to reduce the risk of research becoming irrelevant or merely ideological. A critical hermeneutical framework for research has important implications for the methodology of empirical research. It influences the basic epistemological assumptions, the methods of empirical research, the aims of research, the interpretation of the “data,” the application of the “knowledge” that was constructed, etc (Pieterse & Dreyer 1995:36).

1.4.2.4 Three domains of action of practical theology

Practical theology has different fields of action. Heitink (1999b:140) classifies the various subdisciplines into three domains: “human being and religious experience”, “church life and belief”, and “religion and society”. The first domain is anthropological in nature, the second, ecclesiological, and the third, diaconological.

Anthropological Domain

The first domain deals with people as individuals: their way of thinking, believing and self-experience (Heitink 1999a:259-291). Heitink (1999a:269-272; 1999b:140) distinguishes three anthropological fields: poimenics (pastoral care), religious education and spirituality. Heitink (1999a:252) argues that these subdisciplines are supported by a practical-theological anthropology.

Ecclesiological Domain

The second domain concerns social structures, especially the community of the church (Heitink 1999a:274-291). The different aspects of church life are examined. Heitink (1999a:252) argues that these theoretical-theological foundations can be found in a practical-theological ecclesiology, which he develops along the lines of the Koinonia concept. According to Heitink (1999a:285-291; 1999b:140), the ecclesiological field has four fields of action: church development, liturgics, homiletics and catechetics.

Diaconological Domain

The third domain deals with public forms of Christianity and the service of Christians in alleviating social and political problems (Heitink 1999a:292-309). The diaconia of the churches in society deals with this domain, namely the social presence of the actions of the church, its social welfare work (Heitink 1999b:142). The diaconological field consists of three fields of action: mission, diaconate and the involvement of lay people (Heitink 1999a:304-308). According to Heitink (1999a:252), practical-theological diaconology has to do with these subdisciplines.

1.5 METHOD: PROCESS OF RESEARCH

The term “method” refers to the means or procedure by which certain aims and objectives are attained (Van Wyk 1995:85). According to Pieterse (2001a:14-15), in practical theology it is possible to approach research on a specific problem from various angles. He (2001a:14-15) explains several approaches.

Firstly, the existing practical-theological theory about that particular praxis will be examined and analysed conceptually. Then these concepts can be operationalised in a questionnaire, whereupon a survey is carried out and the results analysed statistically. The findings are critically compared with the existing theory of hermeneutic perspective. This could lead to a new practical-theological theory for that specific praxis which would improve the praxis in that particular context.

Secondly, another method is to start with tentative interviews with people working in the specific problem area. From these interviews, it will be possible to compile a semi-structured schedule of questions, which could be used for successive rounds of interviews, until no further information is forthcoming from these sources. From the information obtained, the reality of the situation in that problem area can be identified. These results can then be reflected in theological terms and a theological theory for praxis developed, which might improve the communicative acts in the service of the gospel in that area (preaching, pastoral care, liturgics, youth ministry or measures to deal with some social problem).

This study follows a practical theological methodology – a hermeneutical-mediative approach – suggested by Heitink (1999a) for developing a homiletic theory for the upbuilding of the church. These processes include understanding, explanation, and strategy.

1.5.1 The interpretative perspective

In this phase, this study develops a homiletic theory for building up the church in a transition from a hermeneutic-communicative perspective. The emphasis will be on the development of a homiletic theory from an interpretation of a faithful and relevant identity and its mission for the church and the interpolation of Ricoeur's model of narrative identity into a hermeneutic-communicative framework of homiletic theory. Through this close relationship, in a transition, a homiletic theory for building up the church will be developed (chapter 2).

1.5.2 The explanatory perspective

In this phase, a hypothesis of this study will be explained through empirical research. In order to identify the relationship between a contemporary ecclesiology of the church in Korea and homiletic theories and praxis for church growth, a contemporary ecclesiology of the church in Korea will be described and interpreted. In the course of this analysis of the ecclesiology of the Korean church, some characteristics of this ecclesiology will be identified. This will be followed by an exploration of the relationship between preaching and a contemporary ecclesiology by sermon analysis and homiletic literature on the subject of Korean preaching (chapter 3).

1.5.3 The strategic perspective

Finally, this study will look for a hermeneutic-communicative interaction between the results of the empirical research and the literature study. The result will be new or modified ideas for a faithful and relevant homiletic theory of practice for the upbuilding of the church in Korea. This is a regulative activity that aims to change the current praxis of preaching (chapter 4).

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Ecclesiology: Ecclesiology is a theological theory of the church. It is the theological expression of the Church's image and varies, consciously, with the varying forms of the real ecclesia (Küng 1968:6). It is expressed in the future-oriented description and explication of the church from the perspective of the gospel. The vision and mission of the church, as well as its tasks and goals, lie within this perspective. Ecclesiology is concerned both about the future of the church and about of the church of the future (Van der Ven 1996:x).

Church growth: Church growth is a movement and has to do with the phenomenon of growing and declining churches under different circumstances and in different cultures. It concerns case studies of churches and congregations involving the social sciences and

aims to study trends in relation to the interaction of social forces that lead to the formation of congregations. The deepest purpose of this movement is to draw men and women who have no relationship with Jesus Christ into a relationship with him, as well as to transform them into responsible church members.

In church growth, sociology and anthropology play a very important role in a pragmatic and functional view of the church. Insights derived from sociology and other disciplines are employed in theology and made to serve the ideals of church growth (Carstens 1997:31-32).

The upbuilding of the church: This is a ministry in which the church constantly reflects on its nature and purpose on the basis of the Bible (Nel 2002). According to Nel (2002), it is a ministry of reformation. It is an act of the triune God who builds up his congregation through his Word, the special offices and the office of the believer who becomes a symbol of his kingdom in the world. Therefore the Word and consequently also the sermon occupy a central place in these events. The theological moment of the upbuilding of the church lies in the fact that attention is devoted to the acts of the triune God. In addition it also has a practical side as the structures of ministry must continually be evaluated and adjusted with a view to the effective functioning of the congregation (Carstens 1997:31-32).

Ecclesial: The choice of the term ecclesial is intended to provoke an image that moves beyond a static, provincial, and bureaucratic image of the church to the New Testament *ekklesia*, which designates a community of people “called forth” (the literal meaning of the Greek) by God to participate in the new creation that has become a historical reality and human possibility in Jesus Christ (Guder et al 1998:153).

CHAPTER 2

A HOMILETIC THEORY FOR THE UPBUILDING OF THE CHURCH

A hypothesis of this study is that a homiletic theory has to do with a faithful and relevant ecclesiology for the upbuilding of the church. In other words, this study develops a homiletic theory which is connected with such an ecclesiology during a period of transition. This homiletic theory will be developed from the hermeneutic-communicative perspective of a homiletic theory for the formation and transformation of the identity of the church in the service of the Gospel in the congregation and in society (Pieterse 2001a:15). These processes of developing a homiletic theory consist of two steps. From a reformed theological perspective, firstly, a faithful and relevant ecclesiology in a period of transition will be identified. Secondly, a homiletic theory for the upbuilding of the church will be developed from the point of view of its identified ecclesiology.

2.1 THE CONTEXT OF THE CHURCH

In this section the context of the church will be understood hermeneutically. As we ponder the church's response to the context of the church, we have to try to discern how, as faith community, we have ourselves been shaped by modernity, how we have allowed our grasp of the gospel to be distorted (cf. Newbigin 1986; West 1999:65-71).

In identifying the characteristics of the context of the church and its influence on the church, it is first necessary to consider what term to use to describe the context of the church. With regard to this, Cas JA Vos (1996:vol.2:236) prefers the term "modernism" to describe the present phase of the church's existence to the term "postmodernism". Although the church is in a period of transition from modernity to postmodernity, however, there is very little clear division between modernism and postmodernism (Vos 1996:vol.2:234ff). Vos (1996:vol2:236) says that "We live in an age that cannot name

itself”. These different cultural changes cannot be so easily divided into time phases. They coexist in the situation of the church. However, these cultural frames are understood as the interpretation people give to the world, in words and artefacts.

The church is in the modernising process of society. According to Heitink (1999a:35), modernising is “a general term to describe the processes of change that have occurred in society in the last few centuries, with modernity as its end product.” Modernisation, as Cas JA Vos (1996:vol.1:234) mentions, is the objective reality that can be researched, understood, and explained by the way of human reason. What modernisation is and its influence on the church will be explained.

2.1.1 Modernisation

Modernisation is “the development in society that is characterised by the attempt to solve problems from the perspective of rationality” (Van der Ven 1996:5-6). Modernity is the name for the promise of rational, science-based progress as a human historical project linked to capitalist and socialist economic engines, with a claim on democracy as the polity of choice, with the nation-state as the primary form of political sovereignty, and with the bourgeoisie as modernity’s most prominent inventor as well as its vanguard and heart (Rasmussen 1993:26-27). Modernity has been characterised by such features as the dominance of rationality and reason, the development of the autonomous self, the distinction between public and private, fact and value, and the notion of the social contract as the basis for community (Newbiggin 1986; Bosch 1991:262-267; Guder et al 1998:18-36; Bellah 1991; Middleton & Walsh 1995:9-27).

The effects of modernity, according to Rasmussen (1993:26-29), are as follows: 1) The secularising of society and the empowering of humanity would leave us all as the unbounded rulers of ourselves and the earth. 2) Religion, the ancient integrator that underpinned a society’s morality, was no longer organisationally necessary for a human social order and could take its proper, more restricted place as voluntary personal choice and practice. 3) Capitalist economics would offer freedom from scarcity need. 4)

Democracy would release us from authoritarianism. 5) Science-based progress would save us from the terror of change and the paralysing fear of the unknown.

2.1.1.1 Rationalisation

Modernisation is accompanied by a rationalisation of society (Heitink 1999a:38). Rationalisation leads to a functional mode of thinking, which sees human beings first and foremost in the role they play and the position they occupy (Heitink 1999a:38).

By the end of the 14th century, a new movement, the Renaissance (c.1350-1600), was beginning to take shape in Italy. It was a rebirth of learning because it ignited a new interest in knowledge and particularly in the heritage of ancient Greek civilisation (Hunter 1992:26). The period, commonly known as the *Enlightenment* or the *Age of Reason*, covers the 17th and 18th centuries. It demarcates the modern age from the Middle Ages. Modernists sought to construct a society guided not by superstitious belief but by a universally valid rationality. With his famous “Cogito, ergo sum,” René Descartes (1955:106) argued that simply because our perceptions can – and often are – mistaken, certainty exists only in the mind. Descartes (1955:106) therefore placed his confidence in the rational consciousness of our own existence from which the indisputable “first truths” of philosophy might first be deduced through rigorous and logical introspection and then applied to make sense of our perceptions of the external world.

In contrast, the empiricism of John Locke (in Lose 2000:12) asserted that all of our rational ideas originally stem from our sensory experience. Therefore, only a method of empirical observation and verification could establish a reliable foundation for all knowledge. While apparently starting at opposite ends of the philosophical spectrum, however, both rationalists and empiricists held fast to the conviction that some indubitable “first truths” or “universal foundations” could be discovered upon which to ground all knowledge (Lose 2000:12).

The intellectual breach initiated by the Enlightenment was primarily a shift from understanding knowledge as logical and consistent belief to positing it as verifiable fact (Lose 2000:24). In both the rationality of Descartes and the empiricism of Locke, such a view of logical consistency is rejected in favour of the ideal of critical verifiability. Knowledge – to be accepted as knowledge – is not simply displayed, but proved. Hence, by submitting truth claims to either the rigorous doubt of rational introspection or the strict examination of empirical observation, one gains knowledge through a critical process of observation, experimentation and verification. The emphasis on coherence is not, of course, entirely neglected by the modernists, but it is not sufficient on its own. Knowledge is not only coherent belief, it is verifiable fact; it is no longer simply mediated by others, but is immediate to our rational and sensory perception; it is not so much an account of the past, as one of the present, and therefore is not the province of tradition, but instead that of expertise. Knowledge, in short, is that which can be proven here and now through the exercise of critical human reason (Lose 2000:25).

Another important aspect of rationalism is its search for absolute and objective truths. Descartes's *Cogito ergo sum* set a process in motion that created an "objective" world (Van Wyk 2000:86-87). Modernistic scientists saw themselves as researchers who produced exact and unambiguous knowledge, and established absolute truths. The absolute abstraction and reduction of human nature is an example of this kind of reasoning and an important characteristic of modernism.

Modernity would come to be animated by a resolute and optimistic desire to discover, study, describe, and ultimately harness the universal laws of the created order. Enlightenment thinkers, like their earlier Greek and Roman counterparts, believed that reality possessed a certain structure or order that was knowable by the human mind (Kuehn 1996:311). Thus, they endorsed the correspondence theory of knowledge (Brown 1990:173). The Enlightenment project upheld the certainty of knowledge. It regarded the world as an ordered realm with discernible natural laws to govern it. This belief galvanised the inquirers to search for means in order to demonstrate the truthfulness of their scientific, political, philosophical, and religious positions (Haykin 1996:52). The commitment to the certainty of knowledge inevitably led to the search for

a historical universality. This is truth which applies “to every people, everywhere, at every time, and in every culture” (Carson 1997:2).

Wedded to the idea of certainty was the belief in the objectivity of knowledge (Runia 1998:548). The assumption that knowledge was objective spawned the notion that the inquirer was a neutral observer (Carson 1997:2). The possibility of the subjectivity of the inquirer attracted scant interest. Consequently, science and the scientific methodology inevitably enjoyed an unassailable position as the final determiner of truth (Runia 1994:303).

The reassessment of knowledge – and therefore of truth – as that which can be verified through reason promotes a similar movement from the metaphysical and theological speculation that dominated the scholastic academy to an emphasis on mathematics and the emerging natural and (later) social sciences that would become the hallmark of the modern university. In his critique of modernity, Michel Foucault identifies three central assumptions about knowledge that characterised the period. While each contributed to the great technological strides of the era, each has also come under intense scrutiny during the postmodern period. These beliefs are that 1) an objective body of knowledge exists that can be discovered; 2) such knowledge is not only attainable but also value-free; and 3) the pursuit of knowledge benefits all people (Grenz 1996:131; Allen 1989:5).

With regard to theology, before the Enlightenment, men accepted divine revelation as the final arbiter of truth. While retaining the overarching belief in God that shaped the Christian world of medieval Europe, modernists nevertheless suspected that grounding one’s understanding of the workings of the creation on theological speculation about the nature of the Creator was entirely inadequate, and therefore they freely called into question the metaphysical convictions of the previous ages.

Vanhoozer (1998:6) argues that Descartes decentred God and divine revelation by making the knowing subject and reason out to be the source of truth. Now the role of reason was to understand that truth (cf Grenz 1997:17). Grenz (1997:150) asserts: “The

way Christians think about God, themselves and their world was permanently and irretrievably altered by an era in Western intellectual history commonly known as the Enlightenment.”

With Descartes’ unaided human reason, there was a seismic epistemological shift. Carson (1997:2) evaluates this as follows:

Now epistemology is not based on the assumption of a God who is omniscient such that our human knowledge is invariably some subset of His exhaustive knowledge. Rather, knowledge is being built on what is judged independent, self-evident truth, an independent axiom that does not need God.

The Enlightenment replaced God and revelation on the centre stage with human reason. Spykman (1992:26) fittingly describes the usurpation of human reason over revelation: “Question marks were placed on God’s side and exclamation marks on man’s side. Increasingly the centre of gravity...drifted from God to man.”

Rationalism, according to Van Wyk (2000:83), determined the nature of theology and its reductionistic approach to truth. The Enlightenment was built on the epistemological assumption that the modern mind can obtain certain and absolute knowledge. After Decartes’ knowledge was regarded as a separate and isolated notion, removed from the experiences and wisdom of life, truth became more and more defined with concepts, and revelation and faith were explained by the way of propositions (Van Wyk 2000:83). Whereas truth was at first separated from history, it later became, for the modern mind, that which “passed the test of scientific verification or was guaranteed by solid historical documentation.” In terms of the presuppositions of this approach, truth is found only by scientific and historical research, and it cannot be found by faith.

With regard to the practice of the church, for example, according to Gibbs and Coffey (2001:27), evangelicalism arose within that context, which meant that it had to confront the challenges of humanism and rationalism. In so doing it was itself influenced, more than it realised, by the modernism it combated. In response to the questionable assumptions and reductionist explanations of Darwinian evolutionists and Freudian psychologists, Christian apologists had to employ the tools of their opponents in order

to engage in meaningful debate. In so doing they became unwittingly subverted by the assumptions they made in debating with their opponents. Christian apologists argued for the reliability of biblical texts based on their consistency and accuracy defined in terms of modern “scientific” criteria.

In rationalism there was no place for revelation; such was the confidence in self-evident, universal truths available to all through unaided reason. There was little place for the “mystery” of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For it was beyond the powers of human reason to reconcile a holy God with sinful humankind.

2.1.1.2 Secularisation

Van der Ven (1996:153) refers to secularisation from the angle of the development that society as a whole is undergoing, namely, that of modernisation, not just from the viewpoint of the church. However this study limits secularisation with regard to theology and the church. Secularisation, according to Vos (1996:vol.1:239), is a changing relationship between religion and society. There is a breakdown in spirituality as well as a factor that imposes limitations on the impact of religion. In this society faith is diminishing and growing weaker.

Vos (1996:vol.1:239) sees secularisation adapting to religion, and as religion adapts to its social context, its worldview changes. The natural, societal, and personal reality is becoming increasingly demystified. To put it semiotically, it means less and less interpretation of the world in terms of religious signs. Theologically it means there are fewer and fewer traces of God. Natural reality appears to be under the ever-increasing control of the laws of nature in a natural-scientific sense. Societal reality is becoming increasingly subject to sociological patterns and regularities. Increasingly, personal reality is being described and predicted according to psychic factors and mechanisms. Natural, societal, and personal reality is being increasingly desubjectivised, objectivised, and de-deified. The total worldview is being more and more rationalised (Van der Ven 1996:154).

Through secularisation, society has become autonomous. One of the products of this is privatisation. Enlightenment has brought the church from public to private spheres. The religious issue is now the private matter. The separation of life into public and private spheres and its compartmentalisation into specialised areas resulted in the marginalisation of religious faith from society and its reduction to a privatised matter for like-minded individuals to pursue without imposing their views on the public sphere (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:27-28). Religious faith becomes relativised, helpful as a resource for coping with the crises of life, but having no legitimacy in claiming public truth. James Hunter describes the resulting crisis in the following terms: “What was ‘known’ with a taken-for-granted certitude becomes, at best, a ‘belief’. Further along in this process it becomes a ‘religious opinion’ or a ‘feeling’.... The emphasis shifts from a concern with the proclamation of an objective and universal truth to a concern with the subjective applicability of truth” (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:27-28).

As Witten (1993:19) points out, “privatization refers to the shrinking sphere of plausibility of religion in the modern world,” and to the corresponding limitations on religious language as a medium for public conversation about morality, law, economics, and other topics once discussed in religious terms (Witten 1993:19), “Religious topics of relevance are those that treat the inner workings of the self as the focus of in-depth analysis, frequently conducted through the secular language of psychology (Witten 1993:20).”

As religion is increasingly privatised, even faith communities have difficulty sustaining public conversation and corporate identity. Those who identify themselves with a particular religion may “decide not to accept the creeds or doctrines of their church as a ‘package deal.’ Instead, they may exercise their freedom to pick and choose among church teachings, professing and following some and denying the importance or the relevance of others” (Witten 1993:21).

Pieterse (2000:6) notes that “the process of modernity... in societies throughout the world causes a tendency in which the church begins to resemble the changed society”. The church is mostly rather a mirror of society than a window on another reality with

the values of the Gospel. Thus the church reflects the values, but does not inculcate the values and norms of society. Pieterse argues that when there is an interwovenness between church and society, they become “more alike and prophetic possibilities naturally dwindle”. The opportunities diminish as the world moves into modernity. The effect is that “modernisation automatically brings secularisation into the church.” Pieterse (2000) argues that the church lose its prophetic role in the society.

2.1.1.3 Pluralisation

According to Vos (1996:vol.2:236), owing to individualisation, people interpret themselves more as individuals than as members of a group, and this is more valid than it was in previous generations. This implies a greater independence from family, society and the societal roles of the individual. This change sees a rise of in pluralism, in the social, psychological and spiritual contexts. Diversity and variety is the order of the day in terms of cultural customs and viewpoints. There is therefore a greater fragmentation of personal values and identity. This is casual to relativism in all spheres of human activity and militates against any domination, also domination in the spiritual realm. Secularisation brings with it pluralisation and marginalisation (Van der Ven 1996:157).

Modern society is being characterised more and more by the independence of the economic, political, and cultural dimensions from each other. This also applies to the societal institutions within these dimensions, which become independent organisations that strive to achieve their own goals, work according to their own laws, mechanisms, and procedures, and aim at increasing their own effectiveness and efficiency. In short, society is branching off into more and more autonomous institutions (Van der Ven 1996:16).

This institutional differentiation is of great importance to the church. In the agrarian, preurban, premodern period, the church was the centre of society and carried it. In modern society this is no longer the case. The church can no longer maintain its position as an overall institution. The other institutions have become autonomous and have emancipated themselves from the church. It has become merely one institution among

many. The church has been marginalised in the course of the modernising society (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:216-217).

2.1.2 Conclusion

As some characteristics of the context of the church have been discussed, these thoughts have influenced the identity of the church.

When we consider the influences on the church, from traditional influences to those of the self-assured modern world, then those of the fragmented and fragile world of postmodernity, the church is merely one segment in that fragmented world, which is characterised by polarisation and conflict with each segment fighting for its right of self-determination.

During this period of social transition the church has been displaced from the prior social role it played in culture and society and has lost its once privileged and influential position (cf Brueggemann 1997:24-37). The church cannot assume a privileged position (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:216-217). It finds itself marginalised in a pluralistic world.

However, this situation is not only negative, but also positive for articulating a faithful and relevant identity and mission for the church. In the next section, in which an ecclesiology is outlined which reflects a faithful and relevant identity and mission for the church, a homiletic theory will be developed.

2.2 ARTICULATING A FAITHFUL AND RELEVANT ECCLESIOLOGY IN TRANSITION

2.2.1 Defining an ecclesiology from a missional perspective

In the previous section, the churches in transition were shown to have been dislodged from their prior social role of chaplain to society and to have lost their once-privileged

position of influence. At the same time, the churches have become so acclimatised to the dominant culture and way of life that they are now domesticated. These changes have brought about a crisis of identity for the church.

The church has lost its dominant position in culture and is now at the margins where it struggles with identity. In discussing engaging with culture, Roxburgh (1997:23) cites the model of “liminality” which was developed by an anthropologist, Victor Turner. The church in contemporary culture is at a point of liminality. According to Turner (cf Roxburgh 1997:23), “Liminality is a term that describes the transition process accompanying a change of state or social position.” Liminality is a condition of transition from one position or role in culture to another. In the model, Roxburgh explains the process of cultural and social marginalisation and re-entry. According to Roxburgh (1997:23-49), Turner describes three phases of transition in any rites of passage process: *separation*, the *liminal phase*, and *reaggregation*.

The three phases of separation, the *liminal* (marginal) phase, and reaggregation describe how a group is transformed in its outward relationships to other groups and institutions, and, equally important, in its own inner life (Roxburgh 1997:27). In the separation phase, the subjects going through the rite of passage are detached from their established, embedded roles. The initiates have had a socially determined and shaped role that has been essential to their sense of place and purpose (Roxburgh 1997:28). As this change occurs, the initiate moves into the second, *liminal*, phase. This is the place of marginalisation, or disestablishment. In the *liminal* stage, the group, or individual, is now outside the normative roles and relationships that characterised and gave meaning to their identity. The final phase in the rites of passage is reintegration into the social group as a new person with a fresh identity. This kind of reintegration is possible only after the *liminal* phase has been accepted as a marginal experience that leads to a new, transformative relationship with the social structures of the culture (Roxburgh 1997:27-29).

This study develops the identity of the church in transition and goes on to describe the mission of the church from the perspective of The Gospel and Our Culture Network

(GOCN). The Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) is a fast-growing and significant movement in North America, made up of theological educators, pastors, denominational administrators, and local congregational leaders from a variety of confessional traditions devoted to the task of fostering a missionary encounter with North American culture. The work of GOCN has been done in three areas. The first area is cultural analysis: What are the religious foundations and societal practices of North American culture (cf Hunsbarger & Van Gelder 1996)? The second is theological reflection: What is the Gospel to which the church is called to bear witness (cf Van Gelder 1999)? The third is ecclesiological discussion: What kind of church is needed to present a faithful and relevant witness of the Gospel to North American culture (cf Guder et al 1998)? The GOCN can be understood as a movement that is attempting to revision ecclesiology in the context of this new situation.

With regard to the third discussion, GOCN published a book entitled *Missional church* in 1998. The Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) understands that contemporary thinking about the church as well as its current structures have been shaped by Christendom or the *corpus Christianum* (Guder et al 1998). The church of Christendom was moulded by changes that took place in the fourth century, when Constantine became a Christian and legalised the Christian faith (Goheen 2002:482). In 392 Theodosius made Christianity the religion of the empire. The church, as a result, moved from a marginal position to a dominant institution in society; from being socially, politically, and intellectually inferior to being in a position of power and superiority; from being economically weak and poor to being in a position of immense wealth; from being an oppressed minority to being the oppressive majority; from being a *religio illicita* to becoming the only religion of the empire; from being resident aliens in a pagan environment to being an established church in a professedly Christian state (Shenk 1995).

This could not help but have a dramatic impact on the church's structures and self-understanding. Under the Christendom *symphonia* of church and state, the church lost its sense of being a distinct community embodying an alternative story. The prophetic-critical dimension of the church's relation to its culture diminished. The church became

part of the constellation of powers within the Christian state. It took place alongside the political, economic, military, social, and intellectual powers within the empire (Goheen 2002:482).

The authors of *Missional church* (within the North American scene) who discuss ecclesiology from a missional standpoint deem that the Christendom legacy continues to the present in the Western church (Hauerwas & Willimon 1989; Hall 1997; Shenk 1991; 1993; 1995; 1999:118-128; Hunsberger 1996). The Christendom that is present in North America is not “official” but “functional”:

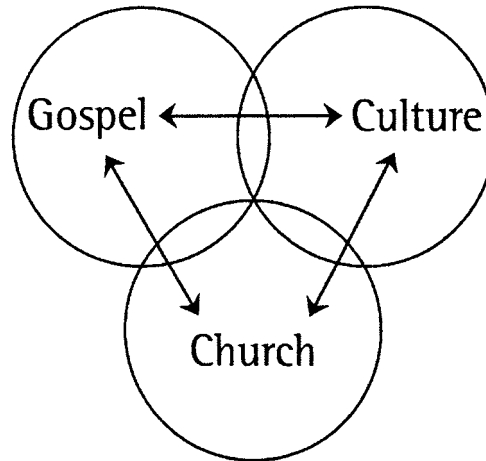
“Christendom” also describes the functional reality of what took place specifically in the North American setting. Various churches contributed to the formation of a dominant culture that bore the deep imprint of Christian values, language, and expectations regarding moral behaviours. Other terms like “Christian culture” or “churched culture” might be used to describe this Christian influence on the shape of the broader culture (Guder et al 1998:48).

According to the authors of *Missional church*, however, Christendom has crippled the church in two respects (Guder et al 1998). On the one hand, the churches of North America have been dislocated from their prior social role of chaplain to the culture and society and have lost their once privileged positions of influence. Religious life in general and the churches in particular have increasingly been relegated to the private sphere of life. Too readily, the churches have accepted this as their proper place (Newbigin 1986).

At the same time, the churches have become so acclimatised to the American way of life that they are now domesticated, and it is no longer obvious what justifies their existence as particular communities. The religious loyalties that churches seem to claim and the social functions that they actually perform are at odds with each other. Discipleship has been absorbed into citizenship (Hauerwas & Willimon 1989).

In this situation, forming the faithful and relevant ecclesiology of the church does not mean going back to Christendom. The church has to find a faithful and relevant identity for itself in a new situation. Therefore, in developing a relevant identity and mission for

the church in a transitional context, Lesslie Newbigin (1995:165-172; cf. Gibbs & Coffey 2001:214) argues that the church has to reflect the dynamic interplay of Gospel, church and culture, as illustrated in the following diagram.



The Missional Model (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:214)

During the hegemony of Christendom, as discussed previously, there was a church-based culture. There was little dissonance between the church and the culture. Wilbert Shenk (1995:34) argues that the established church “surrendered the vital critical relationship to its culture that is indispensable to a sense of mission.” However, in the post-Christendom period, this honeymoon is over. The church has been marginalised. The dominant “plausibility structure” between church and culture has collapsed. The gap between church and culture is widening. Now there are three poles: Gospel, Church and Culture (Wyatt 1999:157).

The identity and mission of the church in a period of transition, therefore, is to be articulated with reference to a “three-cornered pattern of relationships” between Gospel, church, and culture. The point to grasp is that the church does not simply range itself with the Gospel in its missionary approach to culture. Rather, such a Gospel-culture encounter always unfolds for the Christian community as a twofold dialogue: the dialogue the Gospel of God has with us within our culture, and the dialogue we then have representing the Gospel among the others who share our culture. In other words,

the Gospel incites conversation with both the culture and the church simultaneously. It confronts the culture about its godlessness, while it confronts the church about its worldliness (Wyatt 1999:159-160).

As preachers, we stand with the church, which means that the gospel's confrontation with the church's worldliness also implicates us. We relate to culture as former lovers, who having returned to our spouse, nevertheless carry inside us an intimate awareness of the hurts, hopes, lures, and lies of our former relationship with this culture. We know that we have not yet completely broken free of its hold on us. Our spouse's unfathomable love enables us to honestly face and explore these parts of ourselves. Out of the intense dialogue between culture and gospel within ourselves, there grows a compassion that animates the missionary conversation as a dialogue, not merely a monologue. This double conversation of the Gospel with both the culture and the church forms the heart of our being "in" but not "of" the world (John 15:19).

2.2.2 The identity of the church as a missional community

David Bosch (1991:368-389) has observed a shift in the perception of church and mission in recent years. The significant world missionary conferences of the twentieth century have influenced Protestants, both ecumenical and evangelical. The resulting shift in ecclesiology has encouraged the Western church to break out of its Christendom isolation, to recognise the missional reality in the local church as well as in the world, and to bring renewal to the body of Christ.

Several aspects highlight Bosch's development of church and mission. First is the emphasis on the missionary nature of the church. Mission no longer is a "fringe" activity of special groups and people in the church. Mission is defined as follows:

Mission is the creating, reconciling and transforming action of God, flowing from the community of love found in the Trinity, made known to all humanity in the person of Jesus, and entrusted to the faithful action and witness of the people of God who, in the power of the Spirit, are sign, foretaste and instrument of the reign of God. (Quoted in MISSIO 2000:21)

Mission is the very essence of what the church is about. The church is sent into the world by a missionary God. Moreover, the local church is “the primary agent of mission” both “in its own environment and further afield” (Bosch 1991:380-381).

A second emphasis, according to Bosch, is a new relationship between the church and the world. Rather than setting church and world in direct conflict, Bosch shows how many now see the two more in solidarity. Bosch suggests a coexistence that sees mission as “church-with-others.” Therefore, the church truly can be salt, light, and a servant to the world. “Just as one could not speak of the church without speaking of its mission, it was impossible to think of the church without thinking, in the same breath, of the world to which it is sent”(Bosch 1991:377).

Bosch submits, third, that in the new paradigm a tension exists between two views of the church. One view sees the church owning the exclusive realm of salvation. The other views the church as a sign of God’s interaction with the world. Bosch (1991:381-389) suggests that the two views need not mutually exclusive. Rather, he advances a perception of the church with a dual focus held in “creative tension.” The church’s gathering together in worship and prayer sustains its involvement in the world. According to Bosch (1991:377-378), the church is both separate from the world and sent into the world. Therefore, from this understanding of mission and the church, the faithful and relevant ecclesiology of the church will be developed.

1. The church is to be a missional community. A contemporary notion of the church has been understood in the terms dictated by a functional Christendom (Guder et al 1998:79). However, Guder et al (1998:79-80), following David Bosch’s mention given in the lecture at Western Theological Seminary in April of 1991, point out the following problem with this conception:

The churches shaped by the Reformation were left with a view of the church that was not directly intended by the Reformers, but nevertheless resulted from the way that they spoke about the church. Those churches came to conceive the church as “a place where certain things happen.” The Reformers emphasized as the “marks of the true church” that such *a church exists* [italics mine] wherever the gospel is rightly preached, the sacraments rightly administered, and (they sometimes added) church discipline exercised. In their time, these emphases may have been

profoundly missional since they asserted the authority of the Bible for the church's life and proclamation as well as the importance of making that proclamation accessible to all people. But over time, these "marks" narrowed the church's definition of itself toward a "place where" idea.

In the functional understanding of Christendom, the conception of the church as a "place" pays little attention to the church as a communal entity or presence, and even less does it emphasise the community's role as the bearer of missional responsibility throughout the world, both near and far away (Guder et al 1998:84). This understanding of the church as "a place where" brings with it the expectation that the church will be a vendor of religious services and goods.

David Bosch (1991:380-381) emphasises the missionary nature of the church. He defines the church from a missional perspective, as a "body of people" sent on a mission. The church is understood to play a central role in God's mission, that is, the *Missio Dei* framework (Bosch 1991:10). The church is sent into the world by a missionary God. Lesslie Newbigin (1953) also understands the nature of the church from a mission perspective in *The household of God*. Similarly Guder et al (1998:77) describe the church as the "people of God" who are called and sent to represent the reign of God. Unlike the "functional" notion of the church as an entity located in a facility or in an institutional organisation and its activities, the church is being reconceived as a community, a gathered people, brought together by a common calling and vocation to be a sent people (Bosch 1991:8-10; Guder et al 1998:81).

As David Bosch (1991) hinted after San Antonio, and affirmed in *Transforming Mission*, a recovery of the church as *community* is central to being a missional church in transitional situation, not just because a church which seeks to be truly communitarian will be able to bear a more authentic witness in modernisation, but also because a communitarian ecclesiology is closer to our origins in the Trinitarian community of our missionary God.

Therefore, as Bosch (1991:368) wrote, the church-with-others, the incarnational community of faith, is the starting point for mission in our time. As Bosch says later, "...it is the *community* that the primary bearer of mission" (:472). In common Christian

use the word “community” can range from the “two or three” gathered in Christ’s name to the whole *oikumene*, and even as a synonym for the solidarity of Christians with the poor and oppressed, people of other faiths, those in new religious movements, and so on (cf Bosch 1989:137). Christian understandings of “community” need to be rooted in the New Testament word *koinonia* and its cognates. For Paul, the main user of the word, *koinonia* “refers strictly to the relation of faith to Christ” (cf 1 Cor 1:9, 1 Cor 10:16, 2 Cor 13:13, Gal 2:9, Phil 1:5, Philem 6 (Schattenmann 1975:643). *Koinonia* (community) is the result of God’s saving, liberating mission in Christ, as humanity’s relationship with God is restored, making possible restored relationships with others and with the created order. “The New Testament concept of *koinonia* defines the Christian church as all those who have Jesus Christ and his mission in common” (Guder et al 1998:233). *Koinonia* is made real as the Spirit forms and transforms those who follow Christ in God’s mission. The theological foundation and framework of Christian community is Trinitarian. And that means that our sense of Christian community, and therefore our ecclesiology, has to be rooted in relational terms, rather than in the hierarchical or bureaucratic conceptions which have dominated Christian theology for two millennia (Gunton 1989:48-54).

With this understanding of the nature of the church, mission shifts from naming a function of the church to describing its essential nature (Guder et al 1998). This has direct implications for all aspects of the church’s ministry. It changes the conception of both missiology and ecclesiology. Behind the change of conception of the church from a place to a people, there is a shift in the understanding of the mission of the church from an *ecclesiocentric* (church-centred) view of mission to a *theocentric* (God-centred) one (Guder et al 1998:81).

In the church-centred paradigm, mission was considered to be activities initiated by the church with an aim of extending the church or planting it in new places. The church sent out missions and defined their character. The expansion of the church into new areas was thought to be its guiding goal (Guder et al 1998:81). However, in the theocentric paradigm, mission stressed the mission of God as the foundation for the mission of the church. The church was redefined as the community spawned by the mission of God

and gathered up into that mission. The church was beginning to understand that wherever it may find itself it is a community sent by God. The church's essence is missional, for its calling and sending by God shapes its identity.

This theocentric mission theology produced two theological interpretations of mission (Guder et al 1998:82). First, Newbigin (1964:77) argues that “missionary practice must be grounded in the person and work of Christ, seeded by “trust in the reality and power of the Holy Spirit” and rooted in a practical faith that discerns “God’s fatherly rule in the events of secular history,... in the revolutionary changes which are everywhere taking place in the life of the church.”

In this understanding of the church from a missional perspective, “mission” is not something the church does, a part of its total program, but the essence of the church, its identity (Bosch 1991: 373-374; Guder et al 1998:82). The church does not *do* mission, it *is* mission (Guder et al 1998:5). Michael McCoy (2001:4) mentions that “It reminds us that in all our talk about missional community, we must avoid the trap of thinking that the church *generates* mission: it is God’s mission which defines the church.” The *missio Dei* flows from one community – the Trinity – to another – the people of God. It is a mission which, originating in the relatedness of the Godhead, reaches out to create and restore relationships with and within all creation. By its very calling and nature, it exists as God’s “sent” people. Its worship, its proclamation, its life as a distinctive community, and its concrete demonstration of God’s love in acts of prophetic and sacrificial service are all witness to the good news whose sign and foretaste it is to be (Bosch 1991:373).

Second, the theocentric approach rediscovered the four characteristics of the church mentioned in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (AD381) (Guder et al 1998:83). This creed affirms belief in “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” The last-mentioned distinctive feature of the church, “apostolic,” asserts the church’s missional vocation. The church is apostolic not just because it represents the apostles’ teaching, but because it re-presents Christ (Scudieri 1995:28).

In relation to these four attributes of the church, Charles van Engen (1991:66ff) has suggested that the Nicene marks be read as “adverbs” rather than “adjectives” in order to capture the dynamic character of the identity of the church. Rather than static concepts defining the nature of the church, he proposes that the church’s ministry is “unifying”, “sanctifying”, “reconciling”, and “proclaiming”. This constructive suggestion provides a way of doing an ecclesiology because it focuses on the dynamic work of God’s Spirit in and through the church, rather than dwelling on abstract concepts defining the church (Guder et al 1998:255).

But Guder et al (1998:255) go one-step further. In order to capture the fundamental character of the church’s identity, the Nicene marks should be also read and understood in reverse order. “The church is called and sent to be apostolic, catholic, holy, and one – or, with van Engen, to be proclaiming, reconciling, sanctifying, and unifying (1998:255).”

The apostolicity of the church: the church as the proclaiming community

The concept “apostolicity” has been understood in terms of faithfulness to the apostolic tradition (Guder et al 1998:255). The church is apostolic in that it is based on the teaching and preaching of the apostles, and carries forward their legacy. Heyns (1980:114) describes apostolicity as follows:

Apostolicity is simply not on the same level as the Church’s unity, holiness, or catholicity, neither is it of the same nature. Those three attributes pertain so universally and permanently to saving history that they do more than characterize the Church as long as it exists; they are also of the essence of the Kingdom, and will remain so after the institutionalised Church has long since disappeared from the scene. Apostolicity is not an eschatological attribute in this sense, but rather the historical method by which the Church realizes those three attributes.

There is important truth in all of these emphases. CJ Wethmar (1999:79) says that “in the apostolicity implies that the one, holy and catholic church is based on the original witness to Jesus Christ”. What the apostles did, that is, their life and work as witnesses to God’s good news in Jesus Christ the Lord, defines and shapes the very nature of the

church. The apostolicity of the church is expressed by its witness to the Gospel, its obedience to the mandate to go out as Christ's ambassador (Guder et al 1998:255-256).

Faithfulness to the apostolic authority of the church is not, then, merely a matter of subscription to doctrinal tenets. It is a matter of commitment to and practice of the apostles' mission, which comprises both the apostolic message and the apostolic incarnation of the Gospel in community (Guder et al 1998:256). As the church continues to submit to the work of God's Spirit through the authoritative and normative biblical Word, it is empowered to continue the apostolic ministry.

In regard to the structure of the church, the fundamental criterion of apostolicity defines and shapes both the community of faith and the structures of connectedness (Guder et al 1998:256). The church is apostolic in that she continues the apostolic ministry. The church does so as an organic body, in complementary interdependence. The catholicity, holiness, and unity of the church are rooted in and formed by its apostolicity. These marks express the identity of the church; they describe what the community does and how it does it (Guder et al 1998:256).

The catholicity of the church: the church as the reconciling and reconciled community

The catholicity of the church is demonstrated in all the ways in which the church at every level witnesses to the one Gospel that draws all people unto Christ. "Catholicity" should be understood in its original Greek sense: *kata holon*, "according to the whole, or appropriate to the whole" (Küng 1968:296-297). The World Council's Fourth Assembly at Uppsala (1968) defined this catholicity as "the quality by which the church expresses the fullness, the integrity, and the totality of life in Christ" (Guder et al 1998:257).

The church is catholic when its way of serving Christ is appropriate to the Gospel while modestly recognising that this is not the only way to be a Christian community (Guder et al 1998:257). Its way of being Christian contributes to the reconciling of the entire church by focusing on the centre of the Gospel: the person and work of Christ, the hope

of the Gospel, the promised inbreaking of God's rule already begun in the apostolic ministry.

The structures of connectedness have a distinctive set of responsibilities with regard to catholicity. Even as they represent their traditions and constituencies in many forms of interaction with each other, they must demonstrate in the way that they cooperate, listen, decide, and even disagree that the one Gospel is authoritative over them all. They must keep their focus on the underlying apostolicity that shapes the authentic church everywhere. And they must find ways to relate to each other that are appropriate to the wholeness of the Gospel (Guder et al 1998:257; Wethmar 1999:78).

As regards an ecclesial homiletic hermeneutic, catholicity is important in discerning the message of the Bible beyond the reduction to individualism and socialism (Guder 2000; Eslinger 1996).

The holiness of the church: the church as the sanctifying community

The holiness of the church is expressed by the way a particular community understands itself and functions as a community set apart for God's mission (Guder et al 1998:258-259). Since that mission is apostolic and entails the demonstration of the inbreaking gracious rule of God, the impact of the community's witness is sanctifying (Guder et al 1998:259). That means that God's Spirit (the Sanctifier) works through the community's witness to heal the broken creation, to extend the salvation that Jesus accomplished on the cross. Thus the church carries out its mission by making holy through its witness. This holiness is demonstrated in the ways in which it practices forgiveness, fosters healing and reconciliation, makes peace, loves righteousness, and walks in Jesus' footsteps in all that it does with all who are "the least of these who are members of my family" (cf Matt 25:40). The community sanctifies, by God's empowering Spirit, when it serves God and God's children as the continuing incarnation of Christ's love and invites others to join in this calling. In particular, its holiness must be translated into concrete service to those who are poor, discriminated against, and subject to injustice. The sanctifying community's confident anticipation of the *eschaton*

turns its piety into a joyful foretaste and harbinger of the reign for whose coming it prays daily (Guder et al 1998:258-269).

In short, the holiness of the church happens in and through the ecclesial practices. The community makes holy as it lives out the Gospel in all its organisational processes, both internally and externally. With such an emphasis, the particular mission community is liberated to focus less on its holiness as a concern for its own inward spiritual state and more on its impact as a sanctifying presence where it is sent.

The same emphasis needs to characterise the structures of the church. At these levels, the holiness of the church should be demonstrated by the way those who uphold the church structures go about their business. Their decision-making processes, administrative policies, financial practices and personnel structures are all opportunities to incarnate the Gospel. What the world needs to experience is institutions whose decisions and actions are shaped by God's love revealed in Christ. For the sake of its mission, the church must risk being genuinely alternative in our culture. This alternativeness does not mean a withdrawal of the church from society, but rather an intentional demonstration in the actions of our connecting structures of this basic fact: Christ is our Lord, and we are his witnesses and the first fruits of his inbreaking rule.

Regarding a homiletic hermeneutic, the holiness is a guide to discerning the message of the text to form the identity of the church. The church is not of the world, but in the world. The church is an alternative community and also a parallel community.

The unity of the church: the church as the unifying community

The apostolicity of the church, expressed in its catholicity and holiness, must result in its unity. The emergence of the contemporary ecumenical movement out of the worldwide missionary expansion of the seventeenth to early twentieth centuries is an intriguing demonstration of that fact. Where the missional vocation of the church is taken seriously, where the Gospel mandate to be reconciled and reconciling, to be "holy even as I am holy" (Lev 19:2; 20:26; 1 Pet 1:16), shapes the church, then its visible and

tangible unity must follow. This unifying witness is to be understood in the light of the New Testament's radical message of God's healing work that overcomes all human boundaries of discrimination and injustice, especially with regard to the poor. Divisions may arise because Christians disagree among themselves, as they have done since the first century. They may arise because of the cultural setting in which the church is functioning. The tension between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the early church is a first example of this cause. However disunity comes about, the Gospel addresses it and the rule of Christ overcomes it (Guder et al 1998:260).

The catholicity and the unity of the church are two sides of the same apostolic truth, because Christ reconciles us and we therefore are made one in Christ. In the particular community, this truth will mean that we need openly to confront everything that divides us, finding the ways we are "conformed to this world" (Rom 12:2). The ministries of preaching and teaching are to equip the community to recognise and affirm as Christians those brothers and sisters with whom we disagree, because Christ has taken down the walls of division (Eph 2:11ff). The church has to practise unifying mission through seeking forgiveness for all the ways in which people discriminate within the community. An ecclesial life is unifying when the church follows Paul's detailed instructions in Romans 14 and people cease judging one another and causing each other to stumble, and instead seek to "please our neighbour for the good purpose of building up the neighbour" (Rom 15:2). Unifying practice confesses our racism, our sexism, our classism, and it experiences the healing work of the Lord who comes to those who know that they need a doctor. Unifying practice deals with our dissension by learning how to disagree in a Christian manner. This is an important part of the apostolic instruction preserved in the New Testament.

The connecting structures of the church, for their parts, should express and implement the mutual interdependence of all the parts of Christ's body. They should do this both in relation to the particular communities that make up their constituencies (e.g. the congregations of a denomination) and in relation to other structures. They should foster dialogue, enable contacts, provide resources to their communities, and encourage the public witness to the Lord who is the Prince of Peace and who breaks down the walls of

separation. This witness will move from the oneness of the community in Christ to the unifying power of the Gospel as God's claim on the world. The practice of unity and unifying ministry are ethical expressions of the radical newness of the life made possible by birth from above (John 3:3-8).

This functions in a concrete manner as communities practise accountability towards each other and submit to each other's guidance and admonition. Evangelical unity rejects the idea that any particular community is independent of all other communities. Dependence, connectedness, mutual love, shared responsibility as well as submission to one another are the marks of the structures of connectedness that practice unity as apostolic witness. The biblical purpose of visible unity is to manifest the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". This witness manifests to the world that there is "one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:4-6).

This call to unity must be effected in new and altered structures. The church's oneness must carry out and demonstrate its mission. Unity is witness. To seek unity for the sake of faithful witness will reveal more options for the structures of the church than the organisational approaches that currently dominate our ecumenical efforts.

2. The church is to be an alternative community. In this "three-polar" situation, the church has to move beyond accommodation and isolation. With regard to the faithful and relevant characteristic of community in transition, Douglas John Hall (1996:198-213) argues that the church must disengage from the culture in order to re-engage with a fresh voice. The developing process of a faithful and relevant ecclesiology of the church in a period of transition can be described as a disengagement-reengagement process. Walter Brueggemann (1997:80) explains that the disengagement is not an end in itself but a strategic matter for the sake of refocusing and redeciding about its identity and mission.

In the context of failed Christendom where the church has become excessively accommodationist, emphasis must be placed on disengagement. But such sequencing of “disengagement/reengagement” is somewhat programmatic and theoretical, for in the real church on the ground, these two strategies are worked at simultaneously. Through the process of liminality, the church needs to re-enter as a missionary presence with an apostolic stance, living adventurously as a subversive movement, realising afresh its total reliance on the Lord. The church is both separate from the world and sent into the world.

To understand this situation, it is important to reconsider the relationship between the church and culture. Traditionally the relation between the church and culture is understood according to a framework supplied by H Richard Niebuhr in *Christ and Culture* (1951). Niebuhr outlines five possible relationships between Christ and culture: “Christ against culture”, “the Christ of culture”, “Christ above culture”, “Christ and culture in paradox,” and, his favourite, “Christ the transformer of culture”.

However, Rodney Clapp (1996) and the authors of *Missional church* (Guder et al 1998:115-116) point out that Niebuhr’s analysis is inadequate for the church to find its way among the cultures surrounding it due to the following several reasons:

First, “Christ” and “culture” are not parallel concepts. “Christ” from Greek, or, “Messiah” from Hebrew, usually refers to the church’s title for the specific person Jesus of Nazareth and his continuing relationship with the church. By contrast, “culture” is a very general term. It involves an ongoing aspect of human society in every time and place. Moreover, the use of the singular term *culture* does not recognise the multiplicity and diversity of cultures that commonly exist in any one space and time.

Second, Niebuhr’s analysis has no real place for the church. His primary actor is the individual Christian, who must make choices concerning Christ and culture. By implication, the church is simply a collection of individual Christians. The church as a social reality, a community that affirms or dissents from culture based on its following Jesus Christ, is lost when the primary categories are “Christ” and “culture”. The “Christ

transforming culture” model, in particular, does allow for both affirmation and dissent. It assumes, however, that the real arena of God’s action is in the surrounding culture, not in and through the church. All but one of Niebuhr’s options take for granted a Christendom or Constantinian model of the church.... Not only the “Christ of culture” option but also most of the others assume that Christians have a common identity with the surrounding culture, so that church and culture mutually support each other; if there are problems in the culture, Christians are responsible for putting them right. Moreover, responsibility is always defined in terms of service to the culture, rather than in terms of Christians’ covenant responsibility to God in the context of the church.

Finally, Niebuhr claims that the only non-Christendom model, “Christ against culture,” is flawed because in it Christians are said to withdraw from the world, to reject any responsibility for it, and to be no longer “in the world” (Guder et al 1998:116). This model, however, is a straw figure set up to be knocked down easily. The possibility of living human beings not being “in the world” or withdrawing completely from “the culture” does not exist. Even those churches that have dissented from many aspects of the dominant culture still participate in it in many ways – through sharing its language, through involvement in its economic system, through social interaction of various kinds.

Niebuhr further criticises this model of Christian life by calling it inconsistent wherever it does participate in the dominant culture. Yet Niebuhr ignores the possibility that the most transforming activity of the church in relation to the culture might not be to try to wield power in the dominant culture, but instead to demonstrate by the church’s own life together the renewing and healing power of God’s new community (Guder et al 1998:116). Clapp (1996:59) argues that Niebuhr’s understanding failed to appreciate the fact that the church does not stand above culture. Niebuhr’s work was the creation of a time when few Christians could conceive of the church as itself being a culture (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:213).

In the movement of disengagement for reengagement, David Bosch (1993:98-95) proposes an anabaptist model in a contemporary situation. He (1993:89-95) distinguishes five traditions in the relationship of the church to civil authorities:

Constantinian, pietist, reformist, liberationist, and anabaptist. He dismisses the first two – Constantinian and pietist – as otherworldly. He sees the other three as “world-formative” and “much closer to each other than may appear at first glance” (Bosch 1993:94). The scope of these categories can be broadened to assess the relationship of the Gospel and church, not only to civil authorities, but to the culture as a whole.

In this scheme, it is the Anabaptist tradition – which Bosch calls elsewhere the alternative community and countercultural model (Bosch 1982) – that has been gaining ground and has begun to function as the dominant model in the contemporary context. According to Bosch, the Anabaptist model emphasises that “the primary task of the church is simply to *be* the church, the *true* community of committed believers which, by its very existence and example, becomes a challenge to society and the state” (Bosch 1993:92).

There, according to Goheen (2002:483), are two important features that characterise this model. First, it emphasises the *communal* dimensions of the missionary witness of the church. There is a reaction against reducing mission to the calling of individuals in culture, which is characteristic of the reformist model. It stands against a neglect of the church as a community that embodies the life of the kingdom together. Second, the *critical* side of the church’s relationship with its culture dominates: “The church is understood to be an implicit or latent *critical factor* in society.... The church is critical of the status quo, indeed *very* critical of it” (Bosch 1993:92). These two factors are combined in the designation “alternative community.” Bosch summarises:

The church simply exists in society in such way that people should become aware of the transitoriness, relativity, and fundamental inadequacy of all political programs and solutions. The believing community is a kind of antibody in society, in that it lives a life of radical discipleship as an “alternative community”(1993:92).

These two important features have been developed in critical reaction to the impact of Christendom on the shape of the church: under the Christendom *symphonia*, the church lost its sense of being a distinct community embodying an alternative story. Both the communal and critical dimensions of the church’s mission were eclipsed by its established position within culture.

The authors of *Missional Church* adopt the centring metaphor of an alternative or contrast community (Guder et al 1998:9-10). Goheen (2002:484) refers to it as follows: “The thrust of the gospel exposition in this book is to define a missionary people whose witness will prophetically challenge precisely those dominant [idolatrous] patterns [of culture] as the church accepts its vocation to be an alternative community.” With this fundamental ecclesial designation, the authors of *Missional Church* want to highlight the need for a church that embodies the communal and critical dimensions of the Christian mission, over against the individualism and accommodation of Christendom.

However, according to Michael W Goheen (2002:484-488), due to the emphasis on the communal dimension of the church’s mission, the calling of individual Christians in the world is neglected. On this point, a contrast between *Missional Church* and Lesslie Newbigin is instructive. On the one hand, Newbigin stresses the communal expression of the church’s mission: “The most important contribution which the Church can make to a new social order is to itself a new social order” (Newbigin 1991:81). On the other hand, the calling of individual believers in culture is equally emphasised: the church “must equip its members for active and informed participation in the public life of society in such a way that the Christian faith shapes that participation” (Newbigin 1991:85). In fact, for Newbigin the mission of individual believers in the world of culture is the primary place where the church’s missionary engagement takes place.

I do not believe that the role of the Church in a secular society is primarily exercised in the corporate action of the churches as organized bodies in the political or cultural fields.... On the contrary, I believe that it is [exercised] through the action of Christian lay people, playing their roles as citizens, workers, managers, legislators. (Newbigin 1977:127).

According to Herman Ridderbos (1975:328-330), the New Testament understanding of the church supports Newbigin’s emphasis. The word *ecclesia* is used in three different ways. The first refers to the new people of God in the totality of their lives as the reconstitution of humankind in Jesus Christ. As such, the “church” is expressed in the totality of the life of its members and not only as they gather for worship and fellowship. The second use of the word refers to local, identifiable congregations. These congregations are organised as communities and are recognisable as a human

community in a certain place. The third use of “church” points to a community gathered for certain “religious” activities – worship, prayer, sacraments, and so forth.

Therefore, there is a need for a continuous struggle with communal patterns of ecclesial life that will enable the church corporately to be a preview of the Kingdom. However, this should not be done at the expense of the mission of God’s people in their various and scattered callings.

2.2.3 The mission of the church as the representation of the reign of God

If we are to understand the church from the perspective of mission, this also means that the church and mission should be understood from the perspective of the reign of God (Bosch 1991:31-35; Küng 1968:41-104; Ridderbos 1962:334-396; Van Gelder 2000a:74-100). The missional identity is connected with God’s mission. God’s mission is described under the reign of God. Therefore the mission of the church also needs to be understood in terms of the mission of God and the reign of God. Van Gelder (2000a:74) argues that an understanding of the church must start with an understanding of the kingdom of God.

As the church is defined from a missional perspective, in order to identify some characteristic of mission of the church in a transitional situation, the church’s mission has to be understood from the perspective of the reign of God. In order to do so, firstly it is necessary to understand what the reign of God means, after which the mission of the church according to the understanding of the reign of God will become clear.

The meaning of the reign of God

Guder et al (1998:93) point out some problems of the understanding of the Kingdom of God as the image of “building” and “extending”. They explain that the images of “building” or “extending” arise from the combined effects of a Christendom heritage of

power and privilege, the Enlightenment's confidence in reason and social progress, and modern culture's dependence on managing life with pragmatic technique.

Firstly, the church's role as "building" the reign of God may also use words like "establish," "fashion," or "bring about." The reign of God in this view is perceived as a *social project*. The church is sent out by God to achieve that project, to create it. This view tends to place the reign out there somewhere, where we go to construct it as its architects, contractors, carpenters, or day labourers (Guder et al 1998:93).

Secondly, the church is sent to "extend" the reign of God – that is – "spread," "grow," or "expand" the reign of God. This treats the church's mission as a *sales project*. The church attempts to provide an expanded place where the reign of God may reside. Functionally, the church becomes the CEOs, promoters, or sales force for the reign of God (Guder et al 1998:93).

However, according to Guder et al (1998:93), the verbs *to build* and *to extend* are not found in the New Testament's grammar for the reign of God. The announcement of God's reign nowhere includes an invitation to go out and build it, nor to extend it. These are not New Testament ways of speaking about the reign of God.

Guder et al (1998:93-97) argue the reign of God from the words *receive* and *enter* in the New Testament (Guder et al 1998:94). At times they are intertwined in the text. "Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a child will never enter it" (Luke 18:17). In that same context Jesus notes how hard it is for those who have riches to *enter* the reign of God (vv. 24-25), and he assures the disciples that there is no-one who has left mother or father, houses or land, for the Gospel's sake, who will not *receive* one hundredfold (vv. 29-30). These two verbs represent dominant image clusters that are embedded throughout the New Testament in the discussion of the relationship between the people of God and the reign of God.

If we understand the reign of God in terms of the image *receive* and *enter*, these two images indicate the appropriate way for a community to live when it has been captured

by the presence of God's reign. For example, the reign of God is, first of all, a *gift* one receives (Guder et al 1998:95). The reign of God is something taken to oneself. It is a gift of God's making, freely given. It calls for the simple, trusting act of receiving. Second, according to Guder et al (1998:95), in addition to being a gift, the reign of God is equally a *realm* one enters. Here the imagery is quite different, for the reign of God is cast as a domain into which one moves. It meets everyone with God's welcome and Jesus' invitation. The reign of God is a realm – a space, an arena, a zone – that may be inhabited. Hence the biblical grammar for this reign uses the spatial preposition "in". In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declares that some "will be called least in the kingdom of heaven" and others "called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:19). Likewise, Colossians 1:13 tells us that Jesus "has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son."

If we take seriously these two images of the reign of God as *a gift* one receives and *a realm* one enters this curbs our cultural instinct to think of the reign of God as something we achieve or enlarge. The biblical images of gift and realm are not without their own dangers, certainly. The former can lead to the presumptuous claim of owning the reign of God, and the latter to the prideful assertion of knowing ourselves to be "in" it.

The reign of God as God's gift and realm are its most striking and critical features. Biblical language about the reign of God also embraces the eschatological tension of God's reign being a present fact and an anticipated future. It suggests the need as well for decisive action now. The call to receive warns against the consequence of rejecting the gift. The invitation to enter casts a shadow on hesitation at the door.

Inherent within the two biblical images of gift and realm are the further issues of repentance and faith. Receiving and entering are actions that mark a turning from other hopes and loyalties that we may accumulate to a singular hope in the one true God. They mark a turning in faith from sinful rejections of God's rule as well as carefree disdain for God's mercy and care. Receiving and entering the reign of God are the ways we "turn to God from idols" (1 Thess 1:9). This movement indicates that we are

involved in an ongoing dynamic relationship with the divine reign and that we must distinguish between the reign of God and its responsive community, between God's reign and the church.

It is in these findings that any biblically rooted and contextually relevant sense of the calling of the church in the contemporary context must begin. Here is a far more dynamic sense of the church's identity and its mission in the world. This sense stands in bold contrast to the merely functional or activist notions of building or extending that have so prepossessed the church. At this point of beginning one finds a more humble starting point for mission. It leads to the fresh insight that the first mission is always the internal mission: the church evangelised by the Holy Spirit again and again in the echoing word of Jesus inviting us to receive the reign of God and to enter it.

Lesslie Newbigin (1995) asserts that the mission of the church starts with the Bible story indwelling or inhabiting individual and gathered lives, to such an extent that the Gospel becomes plausible through others seeing how the church practises the truth. From that base, the church speaks of and persuades others about Jesus Christ. In sociological terms, Christians have to have a plausibility structure that is based on the Lordship of Christ from which to proselytise.

Here there is also a more dynamic image for every Christian's personal calling and discipleship. Daily life becomes a discipline of asking how one may move more squarely into the realm of God's reign and how one may welcome and receive it into the fabric of one's life this day more than ever before. Here as well one can find a more focused way of living together as the community of Christ. This point is especially crucial for churches that have suffered the loss of focus, the loss of a sense of what lies at the centre, the loss of their soul.

Here, moreover, is a far more welcoming framework for evangelism. Evangelism would move from an act of recruiting or co-opting those outside the church to an invitation of companionship. The church would witness that its members, like others, hunger for the hope that there is a God who reigns in love and intends the good of the whole earth. The

community of the church would testify that they have heard the announcement that such a reign is coming, and indeed is already breaking upon the world. They would confirm that they have heard the open welcome and received it daily, and they would invite others to join them as those to whom God's welcome has also been extended. To those invited, the church would offer itself to assist their entrance into the reign of God and to travel with them as co-pilgrims. Here lies a path for the renewal of the heart of the church and its evangelism.

The relationship between the church and the reign of God

In this section, what the mission of the church is will be discussed. In order to understand the mission of the church, it is necessary to consider the relationship between the church and the reign of God.

There are two kinds of the understanding of the relationship between the church and the reign of God (Guder et al 1998:98-100). Firstly, the church must not be equated with the reign of God (Bosch 1991:377). The church as a messianic community is both spawned by the reign of God and directed toward it. This is a different relationship from the one that at times has dominated the church's thinking. The church has often presumed that the reign of God is within the church. The two have been regarded as synonyms. In this view, the church totally encompasses the divine reign. Therefore church extension or church growth is the equivalent of kingdom extension or kingdom growth, and the reign of God is coterminous with the people who embrace it through faith and gather together as the church. This view leads easily to the affirmation that there is no salvation outside the church. The church then sees itself as the fortress and guardian of salvation, perhaps even its author and benefactor, rather than its grateful recipient and guest. The biblical portrait of the divine reign and church does not allow such conclusions. The church always stands in a position of dependence on and humble service to the divine reign (Ridderbos 1962:354)

Secondly, the reign of God must not be divorced from the church (Guder et al 1998:99). The church is constituted by those who are entering and receiving the reign of God. It is

where the children of the reign corporately manifest the presence and characteristic features of God's reign. The divine reign expresses itself in a unique, though not exhaustive or exclusive, fashion in the church.

However, sometimes these two have led to views that ultimately divorced them in some ecumenical circles during the 1950s and 1960s (Guder et al 1998:99). The vision of the church and its mission was most forcefully expressed by the report of a World Council of Churches' study program entitled "The Church for Other" (1967). Lesslie Newbigin has summarised the thrust of that document:

"Thinking about the Church should always begin by defining it as part of the world"(17). It is the world, not the Church, which "writes the agenda"(20-23), and the Church is not to be concerned about increasing its own membership (19). "Participation in God's mission is entering into partnership with God in history, because our knowledge of God in Christ compels us to affirm that God is working out his purpose in the midst of the world and its historical processes"(14). So "What else can the Churches do than recognize and proclaim what God is doing in the world" – in the emancipation of coloured races, the humanization of industrial relations, and so on?"

What is missing in this view is the church's reason for being a particular community, both distinct from the divine reign and yet spawned by it as its intended fruit and servant (Guder et al 1989:100).

Beyond these two perceptions, Newbigin (1980:19) has affirmed a perspective that seeks to maintain the distinction between God's reign and the church without breaking their connection:

The ... danger to be avoided is the separation of the Kingdom from the church. It is clear that they cannot and must not be confused, certainly not identified. But they must also not be separated. From the beginning the announcement of the Kingdom led to a summons to follow and so to the formation of a community. It is the community which has begun to taste (even only in foretaste) the reality of the Kingdom which can alone provide the hermeneutic of the message.

Therefore, to understand the relationship between the church and the reign of God, it is necessary to consider a way to capture the biblical sense of the church's calling and vocation: the church *represents* the reign of God (Guder et al 1998:100). This is another

way of rendering the fundamental New Testament notion of witness, but promises a fresh and holistic approach to viewing the whole life of the church in missional terms. The word *represent* can carry two different senses, a passive one and an active one. Passively, the meaning indicates that one thing stands for another. In contrast, the active meaning of *represent* indicates the way a person may be given authority to act on another's behalf or to care for another's interests. Both the passive and the active meanings of "represent" are intended when it is said of the church that it represents the reign of God, and each adds particular force to the missional calling of the church.

Guder et al (1998:100-102) explain the meaning of *represent* as follows: Firstly, the church represents the divine reign as its *sign and foretaste*. Themes woven into the fabric of the book of Ephesians illustrate this intended meaning. When the author speaks of the breaking down of the barriers between Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:11ff.) that has resulted from the expansion of the Gospel mission to the Gentile world, he states that this profound social change within the small community of Christians represents God's purpose for the world: "that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace" (Eph 2:15).

The emerging multicultural church here is a foretaste of God's redeeming purpose for the world, which is the mystery now revealed: "that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph 3:6). This point is even more explicit when the church is described as the sign of God's wisdom for the cosmos: "so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:10). As a sign represents something else and as a foretaste represents something yet to come, the church points away from itself to what God is going to complete. In this sense, the divine reign's otherness is guarded. The church must affirm that it is not identical with God's reign.

Secondly, the church also represents the divine reign as its *agent and instrument*. Here it represents that reign in an active sense. The church bears the divine reign's authority (the authority of the "keys," Matt 16:19; and the authority of "forgiveness," as indicated

in John 20:19-23). It engages in the divine reign's action (living in terms of the lordship of Jesus over all creation). For this reason, Paul may address Christians as "co-workers for the kingdom of God" (Col 4:11) and consider them to be "suffering" for the reign of God (2 Thess 1:5). The church is representative in the sense of an embassy ("ambassadors for Christ," 2 Cor 5:20) of the divine reign. By its very existence, then, the church brings what is hidden into view as a sign and into experience as a foretaste. At the same time, it also represents to the world the divine reign's character, claims, demands, and gracious gifts as its agent and instrument.

Representing the reign of God as its community

The next point is to consider how the reign of God should be represented. How does a community of people represent the reign of God in the world? Guder et al (1998:102) point out that in Jesus' way of carrying out God's mission, "the church is to represent God's reign as its community, its servant, and its messenger." Guder (1985) talks about "being the witness, doing the witness, and saying the witness". This means the church's mission around the truth (message), the life (community), and the way (servant). The mission of the church is to represent the reign of God as its community, servant, and messenger.

In a free world where the focus is on the autonomous and decentred self, and with a gospel of reconciliation in Christ, the churches must revive their commitment to what it means to be communities of the reign of God. Churches are called to be bodies of people sent on a mission rather than a voluntary association of individuals in the contemporary culture. The church is to be a communal body of Christ's followers, mutually committed and responsible to one another and to the mission Jesus sent us upon at his resurrection.

It is necessary to consider the primary mission of the church to be a community. The church's mission has to repattern Jesus' mission. Jesus' mission was to embody the reign of God by living under its authority (Guder et al 1998:103). The church shares this calling with Jesus. In the church's case, though, its vocation is corporate, not individual.

Jesus, the one who represented Israel, is now represented by the new Israel, the church. Like Jesus, the church is to embody the reign of God by living under its authority. We live as the covenant community, a distinctive community created by God's reign to show forth its tangible character in human, social form.

Guder et al (1998:103-104) suggest two reasons why the church should be a missional community. Firstly, before the church is called to do or say anything, it is called and sent to be the unique community of those who live under the reign of God. The church displays the first fruits of the forgiven and forgiving people of God who are brought together across the rubble of dividing walls that have crumbled under the weight of the cross. It is the harbinger of the new humanity that lives in genuine community, a form of companionship and wholeness that humanity craves.

What the church identifies as true about itself because of Christ, it also knows to be far from true about itself in its present experience. Yet it is precisely this affirmation made by Christ concerning who the church is, that moves it to actualise in practice what it believes to be true (Küng 1968:59-65). Believing itself to be one in the "unity of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3), the church knows God has sent it into the pursuit of the "unity of the faith" (Eph 4:13).

Secondly, God delights in having a people who are one in love, and God's people enjoy the freedom of being that particular people. But there is another reason for this mission of being the community of the reign of God. "You are the light of the world," Jesus said (Matt. 5:14). We are a noticed and watched people. The genuineness of our identification as the disciples of Jesus is observed only in our love for each other (John 13:35). Jesus seeks our oneness with one another "so that the world may believe" that he indeed has been sent by his Father (John 17:21). The church's love and unity holds ultimate significance for the world as the visible basis of the Gospel's power and legitimacy. In fact, the church is itself the promise of the Gospel. The universal invitation to believe the Gospel includes the invitation to enter the reign-of-God-produced community of the new humanity. Just as Jesus exhibited his union with his Father in obedient submission to God's rule and could therefore say, "Whoever has seen

me has seen the Father” (John 14:9), so too God has designed it so that when people have seen God’s “peculiar” people, they have in a real sense caught a glimpse of God. “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (20:21).

Representing the reign of God as its servant

In a secular world of privatised religious faith and with a gospel of Christ’s reign over all things, the churches must discover what it means to faithfully represent the reign of God in their society (Guder et al 1998:104). Because we live in a plural world that no longer gives us a privileged place and automatic powers, we have the choice whether to confine our business to the private sphere and treat worship as a chosen means of spending our leisure or to find new patterns for demonstrating faith through public deeds. The calling to seek first the reign of God and God’s justice means orienting our public deeds away from imposing our moral will on the social fabric and towards providing tangible experience of the reign of God that intrudes as an alternative to the public principles and loyalties.

Jesus’ mission is to exhibit the signs of the presence of the reign of God by exercising its authority over broken lives, domination, oppression, and alienation (Guder et al 1998:104). Jesus demonstrated his authority over disease and nature, over people and their social structures, and over spirit forces that bind and distort. This authority was derived from being “under authority” (Guder et al 1998:104). His authority sprang from his own faithful trust and loyalty, his living under authority.

Jesus’ healing, exorcisms, calming of storms, feeding of the multitudes, and raising the dead to life were all signs. These signs revealed that in Jesus’ life under the authority of God the reign of God was at hand. The deeds themselves were simply doing what ought to be done under God’s reign. They also point to what God intends the world to be like when God’s reign comes. They represent what God fully intends to bring about at the world’s consummation, when all that creation was envisioned and imagined to be is finally made true. Jesus’ actions show forth the horizon of the coming world of shalom – peace, justice and joy in the Holy Spirit (Guder et al 1998:105).

Therefore, the church shares that horizon, and with it the impulse to respond to the whole range of need in humanity and in the creation. Thus the church represents the reign of God by its deeds as the servant to God's passion for the life of the world. Like Jesus, it exhibits by numerous signs the reign of God, thereby exercising its authority.

Representing the reign of God as its messenger

The church's being and doing are irretrievably tied to its proclaiming (cf Guder 1985; 2000). Proclamation is inevitable if our being and doing signify anything at all about the presence of God's reign. If in our being the church, the world sees God's reign, and by our doing justice, the world tastes its gracious effect, then the call to all on the earth to receive and acknowledge that reign must necessarily be expressed.

Guder et al (1998:106) propose that the mission of the church is to be a messenger of God can be expressed as follows: "in a plural world of relativised perspectives and loyalties, and with a gospel of the knowledge of God through the incarnate Christ, the churches must learn to speak, in post-Christendom accents, as confident yet humble messengers of the reign of God". A postmodern world is a wildly exciting arena for learning to speak boldly, often, and in fresh ways. The church speaks out boldly, but with the aim of recruiting members into an organisation through an individualised version of the Gospel, easily understood by an equally individualistic culture. It speaks boldly and in such a way that the signs of the reign of God in the Scriptures, in the world's history, and in the present may be clearly seen. It speaks so that the signposts to the reign of God evidenced in the church's own deeds will not be misunderstood.

In a fractured and disoriented society, to communicate the Gospel the church needs to be transformed by the message it seeks to communicate and needs to be built up as an authentic community of faith. Rodney Clapp (1996:188) says that "Christianity is not an ideology to be recovered or a philosophical system to be remembered. Christians are called to live the story, not restate it in the form of universalised propositions." Gibbs and Coffey (2001:189) suggest different communication strategies. They suggest the

church needs the strength of community to reinforce its message. The community of faith need to be “meaning-makers”.

Pieterse (2000:6) maintains that the church should be a window to another reality through the transformational power of the Gospel rather than simply be a mirror of society. The question is, how can the church speak prophetically to society, and achieve a sense of dignity and self-worth and stability? Pieterse (2001a:3) is of the opinion that in this world of suffering and poverty people can still achieve a “good life”, but then preaching must be “meaningful in their situation”, and help the poor to achieve a “vision, through their faith in God”, of a liberating way out of their wretched situation.

In order to accomplish the above, Pieterse (2001a:6) feels that preaching has to account for three things: firstly, to encourage people to decide for themselves, given that they are mature enough to do that; secondly, to account for the covenant relationship; and thirdly, to account for community with the values of “reconciliation, faith, love, justice, freedom, peace and hope”.

In sum: these three are distinguishable, yet inseparable. Synergy, not competition for primacy, should exist among these three facets of the mission of the church. To quote Newbiggin (1997:229), if the local congregation is not perceived in its own neighbourhood as the place from which good news is transformed into good actions, the programs for social and political action launched by the national agencies are apt to lose their internal relation to the good news and come to be seen as part of a moral crusade rather than part of the Gospel. The local congregation is the place where the proper relation is most easily and naturally preserved.

2.2.4 Conclusion

In order to develop a faithful and relevant identity and mission for the church in transition, firstly I have suggested an interpretation of the context of the church. In this situation, the identity of the church has to be articulated from the relationship with the world. As Bosch’s work suggests, this is a reminder of a new relationship between the

church and the world that began to be understood in the twentieth century. Church and world are seen more in solidarity than in hostility. Bosch delineates six implications of this view: (1) The church is not the only goal of mission. (2) The church is a sign of the Kingdom, not the Kingdom itself. There is a convergence in evangelizing people and proclaiming God's reign. (4) The church is a "community of the Holy Spirit." (5) The church that is not involved in the world is heretical. (6) The church bears the good news as a privilege (Bosch 1991:377-378). Creatively, the church is both a theological and a sociological construct. It glorifies God and reaches out to people in "an inseparable union of the divine and the dusty" (1991:389). So we see that retreating into a Christian ghetto is not the answer. Embracing the society so tightly that no differentiation can be made between the reigning culture and Christianity is fruitless. The only adequate answer lies in being fully participate in the world, but resting firmly in the Christian tradition. It is so preposterously easy, and so maddeningly difficult, as being in the world but not of it (John 17:14, 16).

According to Bosch (1991:472), the church-with-others, the incarnational community of faith, is the starting point of mission in our time. It is the community that is the primary bearer of mission. The church's vocation to represent the reign of God as sign, foretaste and instrument. The church's calling is to live in the world as an apostle of God's reign, being an alternative community whose inner, communal life of the church matters for mission. This inner life is cultivated by ecclesial practices such as baptism, eucharist, reconciliation, discernment and hospitality, each of them expressing the reality of God's reign and shaping the character of the community's members. The church is a missional community. Its characteristics are identified as an alternative community, its missions being "community", "servant" and "messenger."

From this articulation of the ecclesiology, in the following sections, I discuss the formation of the identity of the church as a community of faith and the homiletic implications of this.

2.3 RICOEUR’S MODEL FOR THE FORMATION OF THE IDENTITY OF THE COMMUNITY

In this section, ideas on the formation of the community will be explored. Paul Ricoeur suggests a way in which the community could be formed – the characteristics of the identity of the individual and the community and the process of the community’s identity. Firstly, the characteristic of identity and the process of the formation of the identity, that is, a personal and community identity, will be explained through Ricoeur’s understanding of the identity. Secondly, Ricoeur’s three models will be discussed.

2.3.1 The characteristics of the identity of individual and community

Paul Ricoeur, in his book *Oneself as another* (1992), distinguishes the identity of the individual in terms of three aspects: I/me, ipse/idem and self/other. According to him, firstly the individual’s identity is based on a dialectical tension between what other people think of “me” and what I think of “myself” in the interior dialogue I conduct with myself. This is the “I/me” aspect.

Secondly, the individual identity includes a dialectic tension between *ipse* and *idem*. The Latin term *ipse* means *selfhood* (Ricoeur 1992:115-116). This means that the identity of the individual accommodates *change over time*. The other word *idem* means *sameness* or *permanence in time*. According to Van der Ven, Dreyer and Pieterse (2002:104), “I am determined by sameness, but at same time I overcome it in my selfhood. It is in this transcending that I actualize my *ipse*, which reveals itself in newness, originality, creativity.”

The third aspect is a dialectic tension between *self/other*. The individual’s identity depends on the extent to which the person is able, not to passively tolerate, but to actively recognise and accept the radical otherness of the other with whom he or she lives, cooperates and meets. In the recognition and acceptance of the other as other, individuals become aware of their own otherness: then they accept themselves as

another. In a sense the alterity of the other is mirrored in one's own alterity, which leads to the alterity of both alter egos.

The identity of the community can be applied and explained by this understanding of the three aspects of the individual's identity (Van der Ven et al 2002:105-106). From the *I/me* perspective, in the community, a *we/us* perspective, communities conduct an internal dialogue on whether the kind of community other communities say they are fits their own self-image, their own understanding of themselves. That is to say, the "we" in communities speak to the "us" (Van der Ven et al 2002:105).

Secondly, there is the *ipse/idem* perspective. In this perspective, communities are concerned with commemorating the core events in their past, from which they can then trace a communal line to the present so that they can believe they are still the same (Van der Ven 2002:105). But this sameness in itself cannot be the cornerstone of the community's future identity, because that would make it cling to the past, preventing further growth and development, which would lead to conservatism and possibly fundamentalism, even if the fundamentalism is of a narrative nature.

Thirdly, from the self/other-perspective communities are dynamic, vital and vibrant, when they are aware of their own identity and at the same time recognise the unique, inalienable, irreducible otherness of other communities, including their worth, value, richness and fecundity. "Only then the community's own otherness – its enigma or even mystery – comes to the fore: one's own community as just one *other* community. Or, to put it paradoxically, communal identity derives from communal alterity" (Van der Ven et al 2002:106).

A community's identity which is understood as a network of individuals and groups is a communicative identity. This is considered in the three directions: inward (*we/us*); outward (*self/other*); and in time (*ipse/idem*). In particular, the formation of the identity of the community can be described from the two perspectives of the identity: temporal and relational perspectives (Dreyer 2000:21-52). In the following section, I deal with

the way in which the identity of the community can be explained and formed in the dialectic tension between temporal and relational perspectives.

2.3.2 Two dimensions of the identity of the community

2.3.2.1 Temporal dimension of the identity of the community

The characteristics of individual and community identity have been explained. Now the two dimensions of the formation of the identity of the community are discussed. Ricoeur (1992:115-116) distinguishes the two dimensions of identity: *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity. *Idem*-identity (Latin *idem*) means *sameness* or some *permanence in time*. *Iipse*-identity (Latin *ipse*) as selfhood means “no assertion concerning some unchanging core of the personality”. In contrast to *idem*-identity, it accommodates *change over time*.

Dreyer (2000:27) remarks that “this tension between identity as sameness (*idem*-identity) and identity as selfhood (*ipse*-identity) plays a central role in Ricoeur’s thoughts on personhood and forms the background to his introduction of the term narrative identity.”

Ricoeur tries to bring the tension between these two models of identity together in a creative way through his typical dialectical style (Dreyer 2000:27). The confrontation between *idem*-identity (*character*) and *ipse*-identity (*keeping one’s word*), according to Ricoeur (1992), centres around the question of “permanence in time.”

From this temporal perspective of identity, according to Dreyer (2000:28), the distinction between *idem*-identity (with *character* as the paradigm) and *ipse*-identity (with *keeping of one’s word* or *promise* as the paradigm) reflects a basic tension between stability and change. In other words, personal identity, from a temporal perspective, always reflects this tension between self-sameness (*character*) and self-constancy (*promise*). Van den Hengel (1994:467) refers to this as Ricoeur’s theory of the internal dialectic of the human being. In the narrative there is an interaction of a self that, on the one hand, maintains an identity of constancy (a self that remains the same,

hence “sameness”), with a self that, on the other hand, projects itself into the future and commits itself to change and transformation (a self that is not yet but becomes in the “kept word”, which Ricoeur calls “ipseity”).

The dialectical relationship between *idem*- and *ipse*-identity, between *character* and *keeping one’s promises*, describes a fundamental tension or dialectic implied by the temporal dimension of narrative identity, in other words, the tension between *stability* and *change*, or, in the words of Ricoeur, between *sedimentation* and *innovation*.

Ricoeur (1992:118-119) solves this tension between stability and change, between identity as self-sameness and identity as self-constancy, by resorting to a narrative theory. Ricoeur explains that the notion of *mimesis* in narrative theory provides a way to mediate these tensions (Dreyer 2000:29). Ricoeur, drawing on Aristotle’s idea of a narrative as an imitation of action (*mimesis praxeos*), introduces a tripartite model of *mimesis* (cf Joy 1997:xxix). *Mimesis*₁ (narrative prefiguration) refers to human action in its unthematized or unreflective manner; *mimesis*₂ (narrative configuration) refers to the organisation of action in a meaningful form by means of a plot, and *mimesis*₃ (narrative refiguration) refers to the effects of reading or reception of a narrative by means of which the reader can change his or her ideas and actions. Ricoeur pays special attention to the mediating role of configuration (*mimesis*₂) (Dreyer 2000:29).

Narrative configuration (*mimesis*₂) refers to the dynamic of emplotment. *Emplotment of action* is important because it provides a synthesis of multiple events or incidents (Dreyer 2000:29). Furthermore, a plot provides a synthesis of the heterogeneous not only by combining multiple events but also by unifying widely divergent and even opposing events. The result is a single story that “turns the plot into a unity which one could call both concordant and discordant” (Dreyer 2000:29). This story is not just a collection of events, but a narrative which has a plot. It is this power of unification of a narrative that helps us to see how it is possible to integrate diversity, variability, discontinuity, and instability with sameness and stability (Ricoeur 1992:140). Ricoeur (1991:77) concludes: “It is primarily in the plot therefore that we must search for the mediation between permanence and change....”

In considering the relation between narrative and identity, with reference to Hannah Arendt, Ricoeur (1988:246) maintains that to state the identity of an individual is to answer the question: “Who did this?” and to answer the question “Who?” is to tell the story of a life. The unity of a life is the unity of a told story, says Ricoeur (in Reagan 1996:112). Stories give unity, “not unity of substance but narrative wholeness” (Ricoeur 1986:132).

This relation between narrative and identity also applies to communities. Ricoeur (1996:7) explicitly refers to this connection between narrative and collective identity when he writes that the “identity of a group, culture, people, or nation, is not that of an immutable substance, nor that of a fixed structure, but that rather, of a recounted story”. Narrative is the power of unification, the power to synthesise the heterogeneous, to turn multiple events into a “plot”, and to establish a concordance from a discordance. It provides the resources, the “privileged mediation” (cf Ricoeur 1991:188), to establish the coherence, the “identity” of a group.

The dialectical tension between permanence and change can be solved through the emplotment, because a plot integrates variability with sameness. According to Dreyer (2000:30), the identity of a congregation is not a given, but an achievement, a narrative accomplishment. In other words, it is in the telling of stories, and in the listening to the other’s stories, that a congregation’s “story,” its identity, is shaped.

Therefore, this narrative identity of a congregation or collectivity is never a finished product. The “story” of a congregation always has to be recounted. To recount is, however, not the same as to repeat or to reproduce. This brings a congregation back to the tension between stability and change, between sedimentation and innovation. This tension between the two poles of sedimentation (tradition) and innovation is of particular relevance when it comes to collective identities. Ricoeur (1996:8) says if the values, norms, heroes, etc, that is the acquired identifications of a collectivity, are not constantly renewed and reinterpreted, a tradition becomes rigid and dead. Innovation requires a rereading and reappraisal of the transmitted tradition, especially with a view to past promises which have not been kept (Ricoeur 1996:8).

This tension between stability and change, between tradition and innovation, which is inherent in the “story” that expresses a congregation’s identity, connects past and future through the present. The recounting of a congregation’s story always takes place in the present, but involves the past and the future. On the one hand the story relates to the past – to which Ricoeur (1992:161) refers, with reference to R Koselleck, as “the space of experiences” – through the collective memory of the congregation. Narratives are rooted in memory, says Ricoeur (1997:xli). It is therefore important to take the role of memory, and its counterpart forgetting, into account. One of the most important ways for a congregation to take the past into account is through commemoration. Commemoration is an expression of collective memory. But in the continuous struggle to derive a configuration from the heterogeneous elements of a congregation’s “story”, there is not only a movement from the present to the past through memory, but also from the present to the future through imagination. In a congregation’s story the members of the collective recognise the unfulfilled moments of the past and also anticipate what they will be in future. Narratives are not only rooted in memory, they are also rooted in imagination, writes Ricoeur (1997:xlii). Through imagination, narratives provide opportunities to articulate “imaginative variations”. In taking part in the composition of a congregation’s story, we conduct “a thought experiment by means of which we try to inhabit worlds foreign to us” (Ricoeur 1988:249). In the dialectic between memory and imagination “the space of experiences” and “horizon of expectation” are connected (Ricoeur 1992:161).

The temporal dimension of narrative identity stresses the importance of maintaining a healthy relationship between stability and change, between sedimentation and innovation. Ricoeur’s view on the social imagination, and more specifically the dialectic between ideology and Utopia, presents us with further insight into this dialectical tension. The main function of ideology is that of conservation. In the words of Ricoeur (1986:318), “...ideology has one fundamental function: to pattern, to consolidate, to provide order to the course of action”. This can, however, become pathological, and then ideology can distort matters (Ricoeur 1986:323). The main function of utopia, on the other hand, is that of critiquing established systems of power and of rethinking alternative ways of living. The pathology of utopia, however, is a flight from reality,

from the imperfections and challenges of praxis, that is, escapism. Ricoeur (1986:322) adds that the pathology of utopia conceals under this escapism and futurism “the nostalgia for some paradise lost”. The interplay of ideology and utopia is such that ideology needs the critical and subversive function of utopia in order to prevent it from developing its pathology of distortion, and utopia needs the integrative and conserving function of ideology to prevent it from developing its pathology of escapism. When this is applied to the narrative identity of a group, one can say that if a group’s dominant narrative lacks innovation, it becomes an ideology in the negative sense of the word, namely it distorts and subjects. On the other hand, if a group’s dominant narrative lacks stability as provided by the integrative power of ideology, the danger is that it will develop the pathology of utopia, namely an escape from the task at hand.

An important feature of the temporal dimension of collective narrative identity is the never-ending tension between stability and change, between the *idem*- and *ipse*-identity of the congregation, between sedimentation (tradition) and innovation. There is no final story, no master plot to express a congregation or collective’s identity.

The identity of a congregation is not something static, and has to be recounted continuously. The notion of discordant concordance helps the church to understand how diversity, variability, discontinuity and instability within a congregation can be integrated. It helps the church to understand how it is possible to make some kind of synthesis, to recover (rather than impose from without) a plot from the many stories in which congregations are entangled (cf Ricoeur 1986:130). This perspective provides insight into the struggle to compose a group’s “life story” from the diverse actions and events that characterise the congregation’s life, the outcome of which can at best be regarded as an unstable equilibrium.

2.3.2.2 Relational dimension of the identity of the community

The second aspect of the narrative identity, according to Ricoeur (1992:115-116), is its relational dimension. A narrative identity is not only a temporal, but also a relational identity. The relational dimension of the identity has another important dialectic,

namely that of the “self” and the “other-than-self”. It means that personal identity is always constituted in relation to others. Ricoeur (1992:116) also relates this tension to the distinction between *idem*- (with character as its paradigm) and *ipse*-identity (with keeping a promise as the paradigm). This is most apparent in terms of *ipse*-identity. The keeping of one’s word, of holding to your promise, always implies an “other” towards which the promise is made. Personhood in the sense of *ipse*-identity implies a responsibility towards others.

However, the tension between the “self” and the “other-than-self” is not restricted to the pole of *ipse*-identity. The “other” is also important in terms of *idem*-identity. On a biological level, the “other” is reflected in the genetic code of a person, and on a psychological level the “other” is always present in terms of our acquired habits, values, and identifications. In the words of Hughes (1999:56): “If we look again at the two models of personal identity, we see that selfhood involves a dialectic of self and other-than-self not only in the internalised values and acquired habits and identifications of one’s character, but also in the response to the other and responsibility for the other at the heart of promising.” Therefore the tension between the self and the other-than-self is thus implied by the two poles of identity as sameness and identity as selfhood.

Ricoeur (1992:146-148) again explains the mediation of this dialectic of self and the other-than-self by a narrative theory – the notion of *emplotment*. This time, however, it is not *the emplotment of action* as in the case of the temporal dimension, but *the emplotment of character*. Ricoeur refers here to the necessary correlation between plot and character. Telling a story is not only relating the actions, but also saying who did what and how. In a narrative people identify the different roles characters play. But more than this, people get to know the identity of the characters: “The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character” (Ricoeur 1992:147-148). In the story told people know the characters as heroes or as villains, as characters loved and respected or not, says Ricoeur. The different characters’ actions influence and shape each other, that is not only their habits and values, but also the promises made and kept or not kept.

What are the implications of this aspect of narrative theory for personal identity? The relational dimension is quite apparent in the construction of personal identity. The church not only constructs her stories from memory, but also from the stories she is being told. For example, this is most pronounced in the stories regarding our conception, birth and childhood which are not even part of our own memories – they belong to the stories of significant others who tell stories about us – and the stories regarding our deaths, which will belong to those who survive us (cf. Hughes 1999), but it is also true throughout life. The relational nature of narrative identity is also implied by the fact that our life stories are composed not only on the basis of our own stories, but also on the stories that others tell about us. The stories of our lives are never told in isolation. Personal identity always involves others. Like characters in a narrative we are “entangled in stories.”

Collective narrative identities do not escape this tension between self and other-than-self. Although there is no strict transference of the dialectic of sameness and selfhood (the *idem*- and *ipse*-identity of personal identity) to the collective level, one can also make use of the concepts character and keeping one’s word (self-constancy). Ricoeur (1992:121-124) argues that the identity of a community is made up of the acquired identifications with the values, norms, ideals, models and heroes in which the person or the community recognises itself. This pole of collective identity is also a reflection of the historical and geographical situatedness of a group. This aspect refers to the *idem*-identity, the character of a collective identity. As mentioned above, a group’s character is the result of the narrative interaction, the telling of stories, and in the listening to the others, stories within a collectivity in a specific context. It is, however, not restricted to this aspect. The story of a group is also shaped by the stories that other groups or collectivities tell about them. The relational dimension of collective narrative identity thus recognises that every group’s story is “entangled in stories” of other groups. Collective identities are not shaped in isolation.

This entanglement in stories of other groups is, however, more than influencing and being influenced by other groups in terms of the *idem*-identity (the “character”) of a group (Dreyer 2000:35-36). The relational dimension of collective narrative identity

highlights the importance of the other with regard to the *ipse*-identity (of keeping one's promises) of a collectivity. The collective identity of a collectivity or group also implies responsibility towards the others. A group's dominant story, its collective identity, is never ethically neutral. This is, for example, clearly visible regarding membership issues. The identity of a group always implies that some will belong and others not; some are embraced and others are excluded (cf Volf 1996). The relational dimension of narrative identity reminds us that a group's identity has ethical implications. In the words of Ricoeur, a group's identity implies certain promises towards others.

The challenge implied by the relational dimension of narrative identity is to mediate the tension between the self and the other-than-self in the continuous process of reconstructing a group's identity, and to recognise the inherent ethical nature of narrative identity.

2.3.3 Three models of the formation of the identity of community

In the previous sections, two dimensions of narrative identity were discussed. The formation and transformation of the identity should include attention to the dialectic between the temporal and the relational dimensions of narrative identity. Dreyer (2000:36) explains this, "A major stimulus in the direction of innovation and of changing the dominant "story" of a collectivity, which is a key issue in the temporal dimension, comes from the relational dimension of narrative identity." Ricoeur (1996:8) claims that innovation requires a recounting of the transmitted tradition creatively, with a view to past promises that have not been kept. The dialectic of stability and change of the temporal dimension is connected to the dialectics of the self and the other-than-self of the relational dimension (Dreyer 2000:36). Therefore a recounting of the narratives of a congregation must be done from the perspective of a dialectic tension between a temporal aspect and a relational one.

In regard to this dialectical relation between the temporal and the relational dimensions of the identity, Ricoeur (1996), in *Reflections on a new ethos for Europe*, provides three models of integration of identity and alterity in a contemporary pluralistic context.

2.3.3.1 The model of translation

The first model is called *the model of translation* (Ricoeur 1996:4-5). Ricoeur (1996:4) maintains that a plurality of languages calls for translation. Translation of meaning from one language to another is, however, only possible if we take the other language seriously. The possibility of translating is postulated more fundamentally as the *a priori* of communication. In the words of Ricoeur (1996:5), it “is really a matter of living with the other in order to take that other to one’s home as a guest.” This spirit of translation, this “translation ethos,” could be extended to the relationship between different collective identities. The first model thus stresses the importance of respect for the other and for differences (Dreyer 2000:37).

2.3.3.2 The model of exchange

The second model, which builds on the first one, is *the model of the exchange of memories* (Ricoeur 1996:5-9). Translation (Dreyer 2000:37) presupposes sensitivity for differences between one’s own and others and the ability to change perspectives. Ricoeur (1996:5) says the first difference which calls for transference and hospitality is a difference of memory. This difference of memory is an expression of the different customs, rules, norms, beliefs and convictions which constitute the collective identities of the different cultures. This model implies a willingness to go beyond an attitude of hospitality and to take responsibility “in imagination and in sympathy, for the story of the other, through the life narratives which concern that other” (Ricoeur 1996:6-7). It thus implies an ethical position, a new ethos.

The exchange of memories through narrative is no easy task – it requires genuine labour. Participants have to abandon their arrogant positions that their own culture or group is in some way superior to that of the other. They also require the openness and flexibility to let their identities be questioned, and the willingness to revise their own narratives. Ricoeur (1996:7) says this model implies an effort of *plural reading*, and even of *crossed reading* in a spirit of respect for the other. In this process of reappraisal of narratives and in listening to the narratives (memories) of the other, people realise the

entanglement of their stories. But more than this, they also become aware of past promises that have not been kept. The past thus forms a kind of debt, “a cemetery of promises which have not been kept” (Ricoeur 1996:8-9), which forms part of their collective memories. A major benefit of the exchange of memories is, according to Ricoeur (1996:8), the liberation of this debt, this unfulfilled future of the past.

2.3.3.3 The model of forgiveness

Finally, these two bring us to the third model, that is, *the model of forgiveness*, as the one on the highest level of “spiritual density” (Ricoeur 1996:9-12). According to Ricoeur (1996:9), forgiveness is a specific form of revision of the past and through it, of narrative identities. Moreover, it is a mutual revision of the past. The most precious result of forgiveness is that it liberates one of the debt due to past promises that have not been kept. Dreyer (2000:38) points out some differences from the previous one. Firstly, we do not only exchange memories, but we do it from a specific perspective, namely the perspective of suffering - our own suffering, but also the suffering inflicted on others. Secondly, we do not start from the perspective of our own suffering, but we “proceed from the suffering of others; imagining the suffering of others before re-examining one’s own” (Ricoeur 1996:9). Thirdly, this model goes further than the model of memory exchange in that it not only demands imagination and sympathy for the suffering of others, but the willingness to forgive and thus to “shatter the debt”.

Ricoeur (1996:11) warns, however, against two pitfalls regarding forgiveness. The first pitfall is that we confuse forgiveness and forgetting. Forgiveness requires the exchange of the painful memories of the past. In the words of Ricoeur (1996:11): “...the work of forgiveness must be grafted on to the work of memory in the language of narration.” The second pitfall to be avoided is to demand an immediate response to a request for forgiveness. Ricoeur reminds us that forgiveness requires enduring patience. Real forgiveness takes time and cannot be “forced” in any way.

2.3.4 Conclusion

The characteristics of the identity of individuals and community and the process of the formation of the identity have been discussed. Firstly, from a narrative perspective the temporal dimension of collective identity, with its ever-present tension between stability and change, between sedimentation and innovation, is intimately related to the relational dimension of this identity. Secondly, the relational dimension provides the major stimulus for the continuous process of revising our collective identities. The challenge is not only to recount, that is to allow for innovation and change of tradition, but also to recount differently through a process of memory exchanges in which allowance is made for crossed and plural readings in order to recognise the other as another in the story or stories that the congregation tell about themselves. Thirdly, the three models of the integration of identity and alterity provide us with ways to concretise this intimate relation between the temporal and the relational dimensions of collective narrative identity.

Ricoeur (1996) proposes three models for the integration of identity and alterity on a collective level. Firstly, the model of translation. This implies that congregations must show respect for the other, for the stories of other churches and congregations. Secondly, the model of the exchange of memories. Congregations face the challenge to exchange memories, to allow for crossed reading and for plural reading. Thirdly, the model of forgiveness. According to Ricoeur, forgiveness is a specific form of revision of the past of our narrative identities. This must be done from the perspective of the other, from the suffering of the other. In the next sections, this concept will be developed according to three models of Ricoeur.

2.4 HOMILETIC IMPLICATIONS OF RICOEUR'S MODEL FOR THE UPBUILDING OF THE CHURCH

In the previous section, I discussed Ricoeur's narrative theory for the formation of the identity of the community. Ricoeur (1996:3-13) suggests three models for forming the collective narrative identity. In this section, a homiletic theory will be developed by considering a faithful and relevant ecclesiology as discussed in section 2.2 and

Ricoeur's model for the formation of the collective identity in section 2.3 in order to build up the church.

2.4.1 Preaching as an act of translation

In a modernising society the church faces a complex diversity of views, life styles, idioms, values and norms among different generations – children, youth, adults, aged people. “Pluralism” refers to the aforementioned diversity of life styles, views, jargon, values and norms found in a differentiated community (Pieterse 1987:123). Naturally this pluralism is manifested in the church as well – in the same denomination and even within the same congregation. Furthermore, the church has been influenced by modernistic individualism.

In a pluralist society – and therefore in a pluralist congregation – the vision and the mode of belief of the preacher may not necessarily be the same as one's personal experiences (Dingemans 1996b:40). Diversity and variety is the order of the day in terms of cultural customs and viewpoints. There is a great fragmentation of personal values and identities (Vos 1996:vol2:236). In this context of the church the congregation is an aggregate of religious consumers, just another voluntaristic association (Van Seters 1991:269). A way of communication for communicating the identities of both individuals and communities in an individualised and pluralised congregation will be discussed.

From Ricoeur's proposal (1996:5), for the formation of the identity of the church as the community of faith, that is, for the formation of the church as the body of Christ, especially in pluralist and individualist context, firstly preaching should be an act of translation. “To translate,” as Ricoeur states, means to consider the possibility of the communication of identity for the formation of the community's identity in the transitional situation. In the words of Ricoeur (1996:5), it “is really a matter of living with other in order to take that other to one's home as a guest.” This spirit of translation, the “translation ethos,” or the “communicative ethos” must be a factor in any exchange of identities.

2.4.1.1 The characteristics of authoritarian communication

The traditional communication style in preaching is understood as a linear scheme in the relationship between preaching and listeners. According to Myron R Chartier (1981:24-25), this sender-receiver construct is characterised by one-way, or monological, or authoritative communication. According to Dingemans (1996b:41), in this model the relation between the Word of God and listeners is totally mediated by the preacher and his or her theological knowledge, personality, and faith. The preacher is the authoritative representative and interpreter of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The preacher preaches on behalf of God and the listener listens and has to obey the Word of God.

Craddock (1990:8) identifies the problem of the monological approach that treats listeners like vessels into which information is to be poured. He (Craddock 1990:8) explains that

[S]ermons which begin with conclusions and general truths arrived at by the minister in the privacy of a study tend to oppress and treat as less than fully faithful and capable a listening congregation. Today, this is often called the banking method of communicating; that is, the speaker simply makes deposits of information in the mind of the listener.

Pieterse (1995:62-64) describes some characteristics of this kind of communication as follows: “behaviour a product of factors playing on its organization” rather than “gives meaning to message and acts thereon”; “defending the other against humiliation and destruction” rather than “seeing the other as potential convert to own idea”; “receiver” rather than “active participant”; “not sharing the correct views” rather than “co-believer”.

Dingemans (1996b:40) also points out a problem of this communication style during a period of transition in the following statement: “In a pluralist society – and therefore in a pluralist congregation – the vision and the way of believing of the preacher is not necessarily the same as my personal experiences.” Jolyon P Mitchell (1999:32) describes the problems as follows: “For many listeners the single voice attempting to speak authoritatively from the pulpit has lost much of its power. The result is that in our

transformed preaching situation, the sermon delivered as a closed monologue will probably fail to connect with listeners.”

Therefore, an authoritative communication such as a monologue fails to allow space to translate or communicate the identities of individuals. Walter Brueggemann (1995:313) argues that “‘Ours is a changed preaching situation.’ where ‘the old modes of church absolutes are no longer trusted’”.

In preaching, “space” is needed for communication to form the collective identity or communal identity. With regard this, Pieterse (1995) outlines dialogue communication. Beverly Zink-Sawyer (1997:342) refers to the trends of the New Homiletic as a “move toward the listeners”. A major recent development in homiletics has been the realisation of the importance of good communication between congregation and preacher in preaching (Pieterse 2001a:85). The congregation are not just recipients but actual participants in the sermon. They may speak out before, during and after the service by asking questions and commenting on the sermon in an attempt to reach, along with the preacher, a better understanding of the message of the text for their specific situation. Recently in these trends, McClure suggests a “collaborative” style of preaching in *The roundtable pulpit: where leadership and preaching meet* (1996); Rose proposes “conversational” preaching in *Sharing the Word: preaching in the roundtable church* (1997). Pieterse (2001a:86) argues that “The key concept in this theory is dialogue between preacher and congregation, and between congregation and preacher.” Furthermore, there has to be room for exchanging individual’s identities in the congregation, not just a space between preacher and congregation.

2.4.1.2 The characteristics of dialogue communication

In a fragmented and individualised context and in a pluralist society and a pluralist congregation, to communicate the identities of individuals for the formation of the community’s identity, a dialogic approach to communication in preaching is needed.

Dialogue communication theory is rooted in philosophy. Ever since Socrates major thinkers such as St Augustine, Kierkegaard, Buber, Jasperse, Gadamer and Habermas have reflected on relations between people and their dealings with one another (Pieterse 1995:57). According to Pieterse (1995:57), the fundamental tenet in the thinking on dialogic association between people is that their communication is interpersonal; it occurs in freedom and on an equal footing; it gives rise to mutual understanding through the exchange, communication and interpretation of ideas and messages or the gospel; and it is existential communication. Existential communication implies that through interpretation and acceptance of the gospel we find salvation, meaning and our human destiny. It also implies that when we convey this to others, we offer our whole existence as a guarantee. Finally it implies that we live by this message – that we cannot and do not want to live otherwise.

Pieterse (1995:58-59) advances several reasons for the need for a dialogic approach in preaching. First, “Revelation occurred in a dialogic situation.” According to Pieterse, the acts and words in which God disclosed himself in the Old Testament always occurred in dialogue with people. God’s conduct in calling Moses may be seen as “a consistent characteristic of the self-disclosure of God: revelation is dialogical” (Swank 1981:28). God’s acts were never unilateral. He included human beings as his dialogue partners and allies in his movement in history. Jesus’ ministry in which he disclosed God’s will to us was pre-eminently dialogical. He used a dialogic style, welcoming questions and discussion. His dealings with people were inviting rather than coercive. His teaching and invitation could even be turned down (Mt 19:16-22). Hence our dealings with the Word should be a dialogue with the biblical texts.

According to Pieterse (1995:56), a dialogical communication is conceived of as dynamic interaction in which free, independent participants have both space and freedom to communicate on an equal footing. Dialogue is a spiral communication form, that is, a continuous and ever-evolving constitution and exchange of meaning between “participants” (Jansen & Steinberg 1991:13). Pieterse (1992:53) defines the term “dialogue” as the nature of communication, rather than in a narrow sense, namely as a simultaneous event for all participants, a process which assumes a spiral form.

Therefore it is a dialogical communication theory that stimulates interpersonal communication between people who desire to share their identities and form a community of faith (Pieterse 1995).

Second, “The congregation as a communication situation is a dialogic church.” Plurality in church and society is a crucial phenomenon confronting modern congregations. It leads to conflict and poses the very real problem of deciding which of the differing interpretations offered by a group is an accurate application of Scripture. The solution consistently presented by practical theology today is communication in the sense of dialogue (Van der Ven 1993). Dingemans (1996b:42) refers to a dialogue church in which various interpretations of the gospel are placed in direct communication in a concrete situation – hence a congregation in communicative coexistence. In our modern situation such dialogue is vitally important. Dingemans (1996b:42) explains dialogue in a congregation as follows:

All members in the congregation live in a circle of communication and have the vocation to assist and help their fellow members. Also the preacher, as one of the members of the congregation, is called to the special task of helping his or her fellow members to deepen their communication with God. The pastor in this scheme, therefore, is not put between God and congregation, but she or he is a member of the congregation and – at the same time – is called to stand next to the people as a helpful assistant. Since every member – not only the preacher – can become a representative of Christ for his or her fellow members, the preacher has the task to use his or her knowledge, ability, and tools to help the congregation in a particular way of pastoral communication to understand the gospel, to find their way in the Christian tradition, and to discover a personal and congregational style of life. The congregation as a whole and the individual members finally are characterised in this scheme as instruments or mediators between God and society.

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is the subject of communication on Scripture in the congregation, but in this communication the Spirit creates space for people to find clarity through dialogue and effort. The Spirit creates space for theonomic reciprocity (Bohren 1980:76). He introduces us to truth as corporate unity in Christ. In our dialogue, our groping for truth, he directs us on the right course until the light dawns. In salvific communication the Spirit creates a freedom in which he is the subject of the communication but also puts people to work. He makes us partners in his work, in

which we are given a say. In this Spirit-guided dialogic situation space for change is created.

Third, “Dialogue is the fundamental attitude of a Christian.” One of the most basic insights of theological anthropology is that people exist in relationships – with God, with one another and with nature (Berkhof 1979:476-484). Through the Spirit’s recreative work church members are new people in Christ. But this new humanity must always be viewed in their relationships in which they are moulded and shaped in the congregation. Consequently we should not regard members of a congregation merely as individuals in the religious community, but above all as humans in relationships.

In these relationships people are engaged in dialogue, in communication with God and one another. Thus dialogue is the fundamental attitude of Christians (Pieterse 1995:59). Nowhere is this more evident than in prayer. The basic of prayer is the relationship between God and human beings, mediated by the Spirit. The Spirit intercedes for us with the Father because of our inability to pray (Rm 8:26). The Spirit mediates between God and humans, creating the basis that makes prayer possible.

As Dingemans (in Pieterse 1995:59) puts it, prayer is at once hearing and responding: a dialogue between the strange, nearby God and human beings, breathed on by the Spirit. Dialogue is the fundamental attitude of Christians, for it is the essence of prayer. Bohren (1980:65) rightly avers that the Spirit alone can overcome our speechlessness. Through the Spirit’s work in our lives and through prayer we are trained in dialogue.

Pieterse (1995:60-70) explains the characteristics of dialogue communication, comparing it with the authoritarian communication style according to five subordinate dimension, namely (a) the conception of the other partner, (b) the communicated situation, (c) the goal of communication, (d) the form of communication, and (e) the contents of communication.

Dialogical	Authoritarian
a. Conception of the other/partner in communication	

Gives meaning to message and acts thereon	Behaviour a product of factors playing on its organization
Defending the other against humiliation and destruction	Seeing the other as potential convert to own idea
Active participant	Receiver
Co-believer	Not sharing the correct views
b. Communication situation	
Domination free	Dominant (Speaker)
Pastoral	Non-pastoral
Gospel-oriented communication	Manipulating communication
Involved in religious gathering	Outsider
c. Goal of communication	
Building relationship people/God	No relationship building
Allowing own convictions	Persuasion
Striving for mutual understanding	Communicate own understanding only
Liberation	Non-liberating
d. Form of communication	
Dialogical sermon	Monological sermon
Interchange of roles	Seeing only own position
Open-ended	Prescriptive
Preaching as a step in the process	Communication of Only Truth
e. Contents of communication	
Centrality of love/compassion	Judgemental to listeners
Good news from God	Moralism
Biblical message open to communal interpretation	Biblical message rigidly according to preacher's interpretation
Message of liberation from God	Putting new burdens on the listeners

Pieterse's table of dialogical and authoritarian styles

In the category of the conception of partners in communication, Pieterse (1995:62) adopts the anthropological approach in a dialogical theory of communication within a Christian-theological context.

Humankind was created by God. This biblically based religious statement indicates the basic human relatedness to God. Christians are seen as children of God, their Father, and as brothers and sisters to each other in the faith. A human being is created a unique person, an "I", with freedom and the ability to take decisions, thus determining his or her own destiny. Consequently each person is a fully responsible creature, accountable for her or his own choices. Human beings are created in the image of God and are therefore responsible for creation as God's representatives on earth; are oriented towards God and destined to fellowship with God and with one another. We are always involved in relationships – with God, with one another and with nature – and this gives meaning to our lives. In order to actualise themselves, people need relationships conducive to dialogue, mutual understanding and fellowship. Because the individual is involved in so many

complex relationships, we must adopt a total or holistic view of humankind. They are not just spiritual or just biological beings – we must see them holistically. Human life is fraught with pain, suffering, imperfection, conflict, oppression and violence. Nevertheless Christians live in hope, the most hopeful message being the gospel of liberation in Jesus Christ. Through faith in Christ both the individual and society can be mobilized to restore the human condition in harmony with the recreation in Christ. The recreated faithful person finds a new humanity, wrought in the image of Jesus Christ (Pieterse 1995:62).

With regard to “translation of identities,” from this anthropological understanding, the human being is understood as a being that “engages in social interaction with itself by making indications to itself and responding to such interactions (Pieterse 1995:62). The human being is seen as an organism that has to deal with what it notes. It makes an object of what it notes, gives it a meaning, and uses the meaning as the basis for directing its action” (Blumer 1969:14). Therefore it is open to dialogue and a process of understanding in order to come to an understanding with other people. According to Pieterse (1995:63), the individual has to make personal existential decisions and live authentically on her or his own responsibility. This is possible through communication with God and other people. In this communicator and recipient are on equal terms. The recipient is the turning point in becoming the communicator in the exchange of messages and ideas and vice versa, instead of being the receiver, the end destination of the communication. There is an interactive process going on in the mind of the individual and with others in a dialogical communication. Furthermore, in the dialogical approach, the communication partner is seen as “one of us,” as a brother or sister, even if he or she does not share the views of the preacher. In this sphere of freedom and openness communication is a dialogical process that moves in the direction of mutual understanding. Therefore, the other or partner needs to be understood from an anthropological perspective. There is a possibility of dialogue for translating identities.

In the second category, the “Communication situation,” Pieterse (1995:63) emphasises, on the basis of Habermas’ concept of the ideal speech situation, “free people communicating authentically without any domination whatsoever.” Although the ideal is never realised, we long to achieve it whenever we communicate, in this case in the mode of dialogical preaching. According to Pieterse (1995:64), the ideal speech situation is characterised formally by the symmetrical distribution of chances to assume

dialogue roles, that is to select and employ speech acts. Through dialogue on equal footing or interaction, mutual understanding can result in joint action. The action or praxis in itself constitutes a communicative event designed to bring the community closer to the ideal situation.

Practical theologians such as Rolf Zerfass and Helmut Peukert, according to Pieterse (1995:64), reinterpreted Habermas's concept of non-authoritarian communication in an ideal speech situation in terms of the theological concept of the kingdom of God or the reign of God (cf Pieterse 1990:238). This ideal functions within the Christian religious community, where people can communicate according to the criteria of the kingdom of God (*basileia*). In this way faith is communicated so that the kingdom may come in the lives of the congregation and in the community as a whole. Communication according to the criteria of the Kingdom – the ideal state of peace, love, justice, freedom and salvation – provides a framework for the theory of dialogical communication on which we can model the praxis of gospel-oriented communicative acts.

In regard to the third category – “the goal of communication,” Pieterse (1995:65-67) mentions the goal of dialogic communication. First, a dialogic is “to facilitate encounters between people and between people and God and to sustain these developing relationships by the ongoing dialogical and interpretative process that [takes place] in the community life of the community of faith” (Pieterse 1995:66). The second dimension is “allowing own convictions” with its contrast “persuasion” (Pieterse 1995:66). Communication along the lines of the criteria of the kingdom of God presupposes the unconditional freedom of the participants. In the realm of the gospel there can be no coercion. All people must be free to make their own decisions, for which they are responsible. This means that every person should recognise and respect another's freedom of standpoint and views – all communicating as free subjects in solidarity. The third dimension is “striving for mutual understanding” with its contrast “communicate own understanding only” (Pieterse 1995:66). When people are allowed to have their own convictions in a dialogue which is free and takes place on an equal footing one can strive to move by means of the process of interpretation to mutual understanding through dialogue. It is important to note that mutual understanding or

consensus in Habermas' book is achieved by means of dialogue – in the sense of real communication between subjects. The goal is mutual understanding, but it is reached as a product of the whole community of faith that is engaged in the process.

It is important to consider the relationship between the church and dialogue communication in preaching. According to Pieterse, communication refers to a close relationship with an ecclesiology, in the following terms: “In keeping with the concepts of interpersonal communication as a dynamic process and of the church (in which sermons are preached) as the body of Christ (where symmetrical communication should occur), I therefore opt for a dialogical theory of communication” (Pieterse 1992:52-53). A communicative style in preaching has to reflect on the character of the community. In other words, it has to be developed according to the structure and function of the community. Fred Craddock (1985:84-98) has drawn attention to the distinction between “speaking to an audience” and “preaching to a congregation”. The latter assumes and builds on an ecclesial relationship. It is necessary to reflect on the relationship between the communication style and the structure of the church.

Therefore, in addition to aggregating individuals to the identity of the community of faith, a dialogical style of communication in preaching creates a space in which to communicate the identities of individuals for the formation of the community of faith.

2.4.2 Preaching as an act of exchange

Ricoeur (1996:5-6) says that the identities of individuals need to be exchanged to allow the formation of a collective identity, because the identity of the individual cannot be identified without the alterity. This process is intended to form a communal identity through the exchange of individual identities in the church. Through these processes the church articulates a relevant and faithful community identity.

The exchange of memories is understood to mean the remembering and sharing of memories. In this section the process of forming an identity by remembering and sharing memories will be discussed. In order to exchange memories, firstly, the church

has to remember its identity, then this identity should be recounted in a fresh way. This process is a hermeneutic and communicative one.

2.4.2.1 Remembering memories of individuals and communities

Remembering identity from a temporal dimension

The act of remembering is an actualisation of memory (Stroup 1981). This process should be carried out in the two aspects of the identity – from a temporal and a relational perspective. The notion of a narrative identity implies a dialectic that is always present when identity is at stake, namely the dialectic between the temporal and the relational. Firstly, from a temporal dimension, the individual's identity and the congregational identity need to be discerned continually between memory and vision. Secondly, in the relational dimension, the individual's identity must be articulated in the community and a congregational identity must be discerned with the others – the marginal, the outsiders from their perspective.

The actualisation of memory from a temporal dimension

Congregational identity or the identity of the church is not a fixed substance (Dreyer 2000:40). From the temporal dimension, narrative identity embraces the tension between stability and change, or sedimentation and innovation. Therefore an individual's identity and a congregational identity have to be recounted continuously. This recounting takes place in the present, but always involves both past (the space of experience) and future (the horizon of expectation). According to BC Birch (1988:23), "a congregation is formed around the qualities of memory and vision."

Remembering is a hermeneutic act (Brueggemann 1988:135). Remembering in the biblical sense is neither simply a third-person repetition of the old story nor just a psychological or intellectual recall of the past historical event. Remembering brings the past into a new context removed in time and space from that which is remembered. Remembering the past in a new or contemporary context serves the continuity of the

history of a people, because it bridges the gap between differences of time and context. According to Allen Verhey (2002:13), an act of remembering is not an intellectual exercise but rather a participation in ecclesial practices – especially reading the Bible – that permit Christians to be reminded of Jesus so that they can act analogously.

Remembering is related not only to the continuation between the past and the present, but also to the creative vision of the future. Therefore remembering teaches the language of hope (Bohren 1980:163). Bruce C Birch argues that “memory” and “vision” provide a very significant clue in this matter (Birch 1988:20-42). In his understanding, memory and vision are related to the identity and mission of the congregation as a people of God.

Remembering is primarily oriented to the memory of “what God has done and how faithful response has been made to God’s action”. This remembering actualises reality in the present. At the same time it leads the present to the vision which “is oriented to the activities of anticipating what God is yet doing in the world” (Birch 1988:23). It is very important to understand that it is not a vague hope or vision, or merely an anticipation of what God will do some time in the future, but a hope with a challenge to a faithful response and mission in the present. Out of remembering comes the vision of what God’s people is called to be (Birch 1988:24). Vision is also oriented to the activities of aligning congregational life to serve the actions envisaged in God’s grace (Birch 1988:23).

Birch (1988:23) mentions that the community of faith stands with one foot rooted in a historical tradition from which it draws its identity as God’s covenant people. Its other foot is firmly planted in a future, God’s future, towards which it lives in anticipation of the fulfilment of God’s desire for love, justice, and wholeness (Birch 1988:23). As Birch (1988:25) rightly claims, memory of what God has done and vision, provided by the memory, of what God yet will do enables hope in the present.

To actualise the past is to bring its redemptive power and significance to bear on the present situation (Stroup 1981:167). A congregation has to draw on their memories of

the past, because narratives are rooted in memory. The activity of remembering our past as the church becomes a source of power for the present and for the future (Birch 1988:21). Brueggemann (1987) explores this point by examining the various cases throughout the Old Testament. According to him, at the core of the life of God's people is memory of what God has done. Memory enables the community of faith to hope regardless of their present situation. Thus he claims that hope belongs centrally and decisively to biblical faith. Through the remembering, the past story becomes the ground of hope of God's people for the future. The hope becomes the reason of the faithful response of God's people in the present. With this hope, God's people are released into the uncertain future firmly rooted in its identity" (Brueggemann 1987:50).

Recounting the narrative identity has to be done with an eye to the future. According to Dreyer (2000:40), in composing a congregational identity, there is not only a movement from the present to the past through memory, but also from the present to the future through imagination. The recounting of the story of a congregation has to create visions of what they hope to be in future. The recounting of a congregation's story has to provide opportunities to articulate "imaginative variations."

However, in recounting a congregational identity, a critical balance is needed between tradition and utopia. A critical attitude is needed towards the tradition and those who would like to control the collective memory (Dreyer 2000:41). Recounting does not take place in a vacuum, and always brings power issues to the fore. The main challenge in this regard is to mediate the tension between tradition and innovation. Otherwise, there is a danger of repeating the past (ideology). The other danger is a forgetting or ignoring the tradition, staying instead in utopia (Dreyer 2000:41).

In remembering the past or memory, it is also necessary to consider both the great tradition and the little tradition (Carroll et al 1986:26). Both of them form its present identity. The great tradition is a specific interpretation of the memory of Jesus Christ (Dreyer 2000:40). The little tradition is a re-interpretation of the grand tradition within a specific context. This includes the founding events of that particular congregation, the

memories of the different pastors and other leaders, its building projects, and its specific rituals, symbols, beliefs, practices, structures, etc (Carroll et al 1986:21-46).

This actualisation, in terms of Ricoeur, as it has been discussed, is a process of emplotment (Dreyer 2000:29). The dialectic tension between permanence and change can be resolved through this emplotment. The plot provides a synthesis of heterogeneous elements, not only by combining multiple events, but also by unifying widely divergent and even opposing events.

According to Stroup (1981:131), personal identity is the interpretation of personal history by means of the exercise of memory. Not only does the community provide an individual with a tradition and with symbols and categories for interpreting personal history, but the community also listens to how the individual uses the tradition to construct personal identity and it observes how the tradition is lived and enacted. The community with its collective memory serves as a check on every individual's interpretation and appropriation of the tradition and even though the community may not have immediate access to a person's past it can call into question how the tradition is used to interpret personal history and how it coheres with present projects, policies, and forms of behaviour. Remembering is a key activity of the people of God in keeping their identity as God's people.

Commemorating identity from a relational dimension

Personal identity is formed by the narrative interaction in a congregation. The congregational identity is also shaped by others, that is, by other groups, in a specific context.

The traditional homiletic approach to hermeneutic does not have a space for the sharing of the individual identities and communities. Walter Brueggemann (1990:239) has described it as a kind of "triangling" of text, pastor, and congregation in which the "standard practice is for the pastor to triangle with the text against the congregation, that is, to make an alliance so that the voice of the pastor and what is left of the voice of the

text gang up on the congregation and sound alike. In this model, it is difficult to have a space for reading the text together and sharing the individuals' identities in a congregation.

A community is a group of people who have come to share a common past, who understand particular events in the past to be of decisive importance for interpreting the present, who anticipate the future by means of a shared hope, and who express their identity by means of a common narrative (Stroup 1981:133). Therefore, to form a communal identity by exchanging the individual's identity, a commemoration or plural reading is required. McClure (1995) explains the need of plural reading of the Bible in a communal context. One of the Reformation's principles, according to McClure, is that all members of the community have an interpretative and proclamatory vocation (McClure 1995:22). In the community as the body of Christ, the relationship between the preacher and a congregation is not a hierarchical relationship but an equal, communal one because of the general priesthood of all believers. In this relationship, preaching is not only just the preacher's responsibility, but also a congregation's work (McClure 1995).

To McClure, a homiletic interpretation must be a collaborative act. McClure (1995:23) explains collaboration as follows:

Collaboration is not the same as consultation. It is not using the insights of others to shore up the preacher's homiletical messages. Collaboration means that others may, indeed, have something to teach the preacher, since there is no way that the preacher can sit where they sit. Another person's reading of the gospel may transform the preacher's interpretation entirely. When preachers have interacted with these interpretations, they may find themselves in the pulpit on Sunday morning proclaiming a very different Word than they otherwise could have expected.

The Word of God, therefore, is a communal Word when it is discerned, not from the centre of the community by professional preachers, but from the centre of the community by a collaboration of everyday preachers who are developing as maturing Christian disciples. The Word can then be proclaimed from the centre of the community by a preacher whose primary goal is to influence these everyday preachers towards

more and more interpretive and proclamatory faithfulness (McClure 1995:23). In communal reading, WD Jonker (1995:363) points out the role of the Holy Spirit. The church has always believed that the Holy Spirit alone can open our eyes and enable us to understand the Bible properly. The congregation is the community in which the Spirit works and lives. Therefore it is the proper locus for the interpretation of the Bible.

Calvin, according to Rossouw (1982:179-180), subscribed to the idea that the interpretation of the Bible as the Word of God can never be a private matter. Rather, the church, as the historical community of present and past believers, forms the hermeneutical continuum in which the interpretation of Scripture should be carried out. Fowler and Jones (1991) argue that people can only become “wise readers” of the Bible if they form part of a living community of disciples and have acquired the formation and transformation of character appropriate to disciples of Jesus. True understanding of the Scripture is part of the kind of life within the fellowship of believers. Stroup (1981:142) argues that the Bible is the church’s book and one might approach the text asking what it means to interpret the text in the context of the community that uses it to understand and interpret reality.

To be a true participant in a community, according to Stroup (1981:133), is to share in that community’s narratives, to recite the same stories as the other members of the community, and to allow one’s identity to be shared by them. The community’s common narrative is the glue that binds its members together. George W Stroup (1981:133-134) distinguishes between those persons who participate casually in a community’s life and those whose personal identities have been shaped by the community’s stories, symbols, and rituals. An individual is a member of a community only when he or she re-remembers with the other members, only when the community’s common narrative and the past it preserves are appropriated and extended into the future, both the future of the community and that of individual (Stroup 1981:133).

McClure (1995:21) argues that “all members of a community, from the centre to the margins, must be allowed to participate in the interpretation of the community’s mission and in decision-making. In order for this to occur, preachers must give the congregation

a role in the *discernment* of the Word to be preached.” If the church is to claim its own identity as a community of the Word, preachers must engage in the kind of actual, critical collaboration that brings the reality of the community’s life to bear in biblical interpretation (McClure 1995:23). Pieterse gives a concrete example of this round table conversation (cf Pieterse 2001a:86).

During the preparation of a sermon, preachers need to glean ideas and contributions about the meaning of the text from the members of the congregation. That is part of the first phase of the hermeneutic circle. They need to read a text from the Bible together. Pieterse (2001a:87) provides some suggestions for this ritual. Preachers ask the members the following questions: What feelings does it evoke for them? How have they experienced that text in the past? How was it explained to them? What comfort, hope, inspiration or negative feelings does it give them? This dialogue will give the preacher an idea of the effect that the text will have in the sermon and how to slant its message.

The identity and mission of the church cannot be separated from the lot of others outside the church. The preacher and congregation have to interpret the message of the text *from* and *for* the marginal, suffering outsiders, because the church does not exist for its own sake but for the sake of serving the world (Pieterse 2001a:22).

This formation of the identity of the church takes place in the interaction in and outside the church. In the church, individuals allow the exchange of their personal identities to be incorporated into the identity of the community. Also, the identity of the church needs to be formed according to the relation with the others. In order to do this, the others also need to be invited to the hermeneutic activity. This process, according to Ricoeur (1992:146-148), is the process of *emplotment*, that is, not only the *emplotment* of action, but also the *emplotment* of character. With regard this, the church needs to consider its existence and ministries for others. This brings ethical responsibility in its train.

2.4.2.2 An ecclesial homiletic hermeneutic

Walter Brueggemann (1988:135) describes a homiletic interpretation as a remembering act in the following words: “[I]nterpretation as the community’s act of recalling the old treasured memory in the context of the new situation”. As Thomas Long (1989a:84) argues that one of the aims of homiletic hermeneutic is to identify the identity of the church, this section will develop a homiletic hermeneutic for the identity of the church.

The definition of homiletic hermeneutics

From a homiletic perspective, hermeneutics as the process of understanding has to do with interpreting a text and then applying the interpretation of it in a way that is relevant to the congregation’s situation. To achieve this in the hermeneutic process, according to Pieterse (2001a:19), preachers should constantly transpose themselves from the world of the congregation to the world of the text, and then back to the present-day world of the congregation. In their hermeneutic capacity preachers are messengers who continually move between text and context, until the two worlds merge and the message of the text becomes apparent in the context of the congregation. Therefore, to draw the message from the text in homiletic hermeneutics means to exegete the two worlds – the world of the text and the world of the congregation.

Pieterse (2001a:72) defines a homiletic hermeneutic is “a matter of interpretation and translation”. A homiletic hermeneutic consists of two steps – that is, *interpret* the main content and message of the text and *translate* it into the real-life situation or context of the congregation for the purpose of the sermon (Pieterse 2001a:72). Pieterse (2001a:73) refers to translation as more than just an application; it is a “creative response” to understanding through interpretation. In theology hermeneutics indicates theoretical reflection on how to interpret the meaning of a text, a passage or the entire content of the Bible and, having interpreted it, to consider how to translate that message into the congregation’s context for the purpose of preaching (Pieterse 2001a:72). It is a process of reflection, or as BA Müller (2002:208) calls it, a “hermeneutic of prayer” in which the text is read with closed eyes (in prayer).

In a homiletic hermeneutic, understanding is a matter of exegesis, culminating in the design of the meaning of the text – which entails understanding the present situation. Translation goes further, implying the preacher's bold action in the context of the congregation as a creative response to the meaning of the text – hence an interpretive design that we call translation (Pieterse 2001a:91). In order to understand this process, it is necessary to explain the process of understanding, that is, hermeneutics.

In theology, a hermeneutic process is a process of understanding (Pieterse 2001a:17). Gadamer distinguishes hermeneutics as three processes of interpretation. These are *subtilitas intelligendi*, which means interpretation in the sense of understanding; *subtilitas explicandi*, which means exposition; and *subtilitas applicandi*, meaning application (Gadamer 1975:290-291). These three elements constitute the overall concept of understanding, which is what hermeneutics is about. Ricoeur also identifies three elements, which he calls *understanding*, *explanation* and *application* or *appropriation* (Ricoeur 1976:91-94; 1981a:182-197). Ricoeur calls the integrated process of the three elements *interpretation*, while Gadamer calls it *understanding*.

Gadamer (1975) points out that understanding or interpretation of an ancient text depends on the reader's context. This implies that meaning changes. The reader and the text together constitute the hermeneutic process which functions like a circle between historical contexts. Consequently meaning is never complete, for it is never a fixed object, but a process in which the historical context of every new reader is a factor. Every historical context constitutes its own horizon of understanding (Pieterse 2001a:75).

Meaning and the reader's understanding of the text link the text to readers with their own historical horizons of understanding, in such a way that the horizons start merging and understanding becomes possible. Therefore, the readers are part of the historical process of understanding (Pieterse 2001a:75). The next generation will establish their own historical horizon of understanding and, in their context, will interpret it somewhat differently. As a result, the contemporary readers are part of a tradition of interpretation of the biblical texts.

In Gadamer, any understanding or interpretation is in itself application (Pieterse 2001a:76). The search for the meaning of the text is geared to application (Gadamer 1975:311). Application must be directed to a specific context in the present. It must also move the reader to action. This application has an ethical dimension. To Gadamer, application is part of the process of understanding from the very outset. However, according to Pieterse (2001a:76-77), in Gadamer, application is part of the process of finding the meaning of the text rather than a fourth step towards translating the meaning of the text, as a creative response to that meaning, into a topical, contextual sermon. Translation, therefore, has to remain part of the hermeneutic process.

Ricoeur, according to Pieterse (2001a:77), took up where Gadamer left off, developing his ideas and producing fresh insights. Ricoeur's concern is for human freedom and human nature. To be a free, authentic human being in a world in which people are exposed to finitude and evil, people need to draw on the philosophical ideas derived from human experience. These ideas are to be found in symbols, myths, stories and metaphors relating to evil and the struggle against evil. Ricoeur tries to reconstruct the way the elementary ideas in these stories turned into texts. To determine this, his starting point was language and linguistic theory.

Ricoeur (1976:12-15) distinguishes between spoken and written language. Spoken language or speech acts occurs in the present. Speakers' linguistic communication refers the reality around them. That reality is made up of past experience, tradition, faith, culture, worldview, social, political and economic circumstances, and so on. Reality influences the content and type of the speech act, which also refers to extra-linguistic reality (Pieterse 2001a:77). When a speaker speaks, he or she is giving verbal expression to an intention. Writing is a fixation of a speech act. Hence language utterances are subject to change (Ricoeur 1976:12-15).

Therefore, according to Ricoeur, there is a transition from the speaker's original intention, which is expressed in spoken language in terms of that person's experience and the linguistic system. Via the linguistic system the content (locutionary act) is encoded in a modality (illocutionary act) and an effect (perlocutionary act). The speech

act is directed to somebody on the assumption that intersubjective communication (an interlocutionary act) is occurring between two people. The dialogue partner does not reconstruct the speaker's intention but simply decodes the verbal meaning, hence there is a difference between the speaker's intention and the meaning of the utterance (Ricoeur 1976:16-19). Mutual understanding is effected through syntax and the context or dialogue situation, which are accessible to both parties in the course of the speech act.

Recording spoken language entails a further change, hence a second phase in a language utterance (Ricoeur 1976:25-36). By recording spoken language in a text the speech act is divorced from its context. Only the content (locutionary act) of the speech act is preserved fairly well. Hence a gap is created between the speech act and the written record of it in a text. From this gap it is necessary for readers in a new context to attach meaning to the text. The text is divorced from the writer's intention and the context in which it originated.

Ricoeur analysed the transition or change from spoken language to written language and the further transition to the interpretation of the text (Ricoeur 1984:76-77). According to him, human reality has narrative features. It is a reality characterised by action, which presents narrative material and is recounted. Through these three stages related dialectically, the "world of the text" will be disclosed.

Every text is preceded by *prefiguration*. It is *understanding* phase. A story in a text derives from reality in which action occurs that provides narrative material. This reality has a narrative structure with symbolic value and it is this surrounding world that provides the material for the narrative. It constitutes the prefiguration of the narrative (Mimesis₁).

The second is *configuration*, that is the material provided by the world of action for the creation of a text. It is *explanation*. Hence a text is created through configuration, which is the work of an author. It is a story with a plot comprising successive events (Mimesis₂).

The third is *refiguration*, which occurs through the reading of the story. It is *appropriation*. People perform a reading act and shape their own story through the reading of the text. The story that derives from a world of action in the past returns to the world of action – the world of the reader. The reader may experience the story in the text as an appeal and create a new story from the original one (Mimesis₃).

Ricoeur (1981a:184-193) argues that reading is aimed at application or appropriation. Interpretation means that when readers read a text there is the possibility that they will apply it to their new situation. Appropriation of the text is in fact a condition for discovering its meaning. Unless it is applied to the reader's own situation, the text has no meaning for that particular person. According to Pieterse (2001a:79), "Applying a text to one's own circumstances does not mean 'adapting' it. On the contrary, application means letting go, as readers open themselves to the world presented by the text." When this happens, two worlds confront each other – the world of the text and that of the reader. Understanding happens when readers receive the other, foreign "self" of the text from its world which is presented to them. Application entails receiving and appropriating this new "self" or property of the text, which makes you perceive your situation afresh, moves you to action, or makes you construct a new story in your own context from the story presented in the context of the text.

The process of understanding has been discussed from the perspective of Gadamer's and Ricoeur's hermeneutics. Homiletically, in order to preach the biblical text for a congregation's specific context, it is necessary to follow the two steps – interpretation and application. Gadamer and Ricoeur argue, however, that in order to reach the culmination of the hermeneutic process (the sermon), that is, application, the biblical text must be interpreted existentially, so that the application will have a transforming effect on the congregation's lives. Therefore, the process of interpreting a biblical text begins with the existential situation of the preacher and the congregation (Pieterse 1988:79-82).

On the basis of this understanding of the meaning of the terms "understanding" and "translation", it can be said that because the purpose of a homiletic hermeneutic is to

find the identity of the church, a homiletic hermeneutic moves from the world of the congregation to the world of the text, and then back to the contemporary world of the congregation, until the two worlds merge and the text reveals a new world. In other words, the message of the text becomes apparent in the context of the congregation; or to express it differently, the message of the text becomes apparent when a congregation understands who they are and what they ought to be, in the context of the church (Pieterse 2001a:19).

Now in order to connect the world of the text and the world of the congregation it is necessary for preachers to understand two worlds – the world of the congregation and the world of the text. Some homileticians, according to Long (1989a:79), advise that “exegeting the text” should be followed by “exegeting the congregation.” But Long (1989a:79) argues that “[s]uch notions are ultimately misleading.” According to Long (1989a:79), the congregation has been present throughout the exegesis, and the preacher goes to the biblical text *from* the congregation and *with* the congregation. In the following parts, this study will discuss the interpretation of the world of a biblical text and the world of a congregation.

Exegeting the world of the congregation

Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (1997:56-90), writing on homiletics, suggests a way of exegeting the congregation in *Preaching as local theology and folk art*. In another contribution to the field of congregational study, Jackson Carroll et al, in *Handbook for congregational studies* (1986) provide the same framework for understanding the identity of the congregation. More recently, Nancy T Ammerman et al, in *Studying congregations: a new handbook* (1998), offer a further suggestion.

According to Tisdale (1997:56-90), to understand the world of the congregation, especially the identity of the congregation, the preacher needs to seek to interpret the deep symbols that reflect and shape the congregation’s cultural world. These symbols are often complex, and they can appear in multiple modes – verbal, nonverbal, spoken, written, audible, visual, tactile. The preacher should analyse how the congregation’s

cultural world is revealed through seven cultural materials: stories and interviews, archives, demographics, architecture and the visual arts, rituals, events and activities, people. From these identifying and appropriately symbolic “texts”, the preacher interprets the world view, values and ethos of the congregation. Especially the preacher understands the congregation’s views of God, humankind, nature (creation), the church, mission, and how these themes are interrelated.

Seven Symbols for congregational exegesis

First, Tisdale classifies seven categories of these symbols that reflect and shape the congregation’s cultural world.

Stories. The stories that the congregation tells about its own life reveal much about its identity (Hopewell 1987). The pastor hears these stories both in the course of everyday ministry as well as by deliberately striving to find them. A pastor can usually identify several persons within the congregation who can tell story after story. The pastor needs to listen to a variety of voices in order to discover the stories that most often find expression. The pastor also needs to pay attention to stories that appear to be significant but that are told only by one or two people. The following categories are among those that can help pastors catalogue the stories and develop a systematic picture of congregational life (Tisdale 1997:69-70).

- What are the important theological ideas in the stories? Why are these ideas important? How do they impact on congregational life?

- Which events seem to be turning points for the congregation? Why? How do these events affect the congregation?

- What values seem most motivating for the community?

- What behaviours are most respected, or are looked upon with suspicion?

- Who are the heroes, heroines, and villains of community life and what makes them so?

- What are the silences – the stories about which everyone knows but about which people say nothing? Why are they silent?
- Do some stories or images recur? What makes it important to retell them?
- What seem to be the dreams and hopes that are common to most of the congregation?

Using such data, the pastor can plot the story of the community like the plot of a novel.

Interviews. The preacher can also engage in structured interviews with individuals and groups – the board of directors, the choirs, support groups and small groups. In addition to questions such as ones used to analyse congregational stories above, the following are examples of questions that can help structure interview sessions.

- What is happening in the church today?
- What changes have you noticed in the congregation in the past?
- Which changes have pleased you? Which have displeased you?
- What holds this congregation together?
- What has the most potential to cause this congregation to fall apart?
- What makes your congregation different from other nearby congregations?
- What kinds of programs are empowering and frustrating in this congregation?
- What are the qualities of members that win the community's respect?
- What qualities embarrass the community?

The preacher listens to both the obvious and the latent dimensions of meaning in the responses. A pastor who is experienced in counselling listening especially to the stories of those who are marginalised in the congregation.

Archival materials. Archival materials include official church histories, minutes of official meetings, publications (eg, yearbooks, church directories, worship bulletins, the church newsletter, materials printed for stewardship campaigns), financial records, letters, pictures, audio and videocassette recordings. They are something of the memory of congregational life (Tisdale 1997:69). Some materials will be found in official files, while others are in the hands of individual members. The preacher can interpret such materials using categories like the ones listed for stories and interviews. These things can feed directly into a sermon when a preacher quotes from a source or describes a frayed picture from an earlier era. According to Tisdale (1997:70), these materials can give the pastor significant insight into the continuities and discontinuities in congregational identity as it has been formed and re-formed through the years.

Demographic composition. The study of a congregation's demographic composition tells the pastor who is present (and who is not) and ties the congregation's story into the stories of similar and dissimilar groups. With the help of survey forms distributed to the congregation, a membership directory, and in consultation with members who know about such things, the preacher can quickly determine the composition of the congregation according to age, race, ethnicity, gender, household composition, education, social class, economic situation, political philosophy, sexual orientation, roles in the larger community. These data often reveal, indirectly, the concerns of the community (Tisdale 1997:71-72).

Architecture and visual arts. Architecture and the visual arts can tell much about a congregation. The location and condition of the church building and grounds, the design of the building, and its décor often signal much about the character of a Christian community. What understandings of Christian faith, community, and mission are represented in the architecture of the building and the art pieces in it? A church building both reflects and creates congregational ethos. The preacher needs to ask to the question of the degree to which the building and its aesthetic environment coincide with congregational life (Tisdale 1997:71-72).

Rituals. “Ritual,” according to Carroll and Hopewell (Carroll et al 1986:37), “is repetitive action that has more than utilitarian significance. It is a form of nondiscursive, gestural language through which a group acts out meanings and relationships that are of enduring significance to its life.” Rituals then not only provide sources for discovering what congregational identity is; they also provide opportunities to probe and explore what it is becoming (Tisdale 1997:73). Some of congregation’s rituals take place in worship, but many occur in other settings. Stewart Guthrie (in Tisdale 1997:72-75) distinguishes between *calendrical rites* – rituals which have some regular performance schedule according to calendar, and *critical rites* – rituals which are only performed occasionally.

Events and Activities. Useful indices of a community’s values are often provided by the resources that a Christian community puts into events and activities. Here are some questions by which to reflect on what a preacher can learn from this aspect of the congregational world.

- What activities are most intensively supported and most neglected?
- In which events does the congregation take the most (and have the least) pride? Are some happenings controversial? If so, what are the dynamics of the controversy?
- Do recently added activities point to future directions in which the congregation is moving? Do events that are receiving less support or are being dropped indicate changes in the community’s climate?
- Can a preacher sense incongruity between what a community says is really important and the actual investment of its personnel and other resources?

The preacher must ask whether a church’s life is an adequate witness to the Gospel.

People. Finally, people themselves can be valuable culture texts, worthy of thick description. People are presumed in all lines of analysis. However, Tisdale suggests that the preacher pay particular attention to people whom the congregation regards as sages and those on the margins of the community. Sages are persons to whom the congregation listens because they represent the best of the community’s self-perception.

Discovering why the marginalised are on the edges of the community can often help a preacher discern the social boundary lines of the community. A community's boundaries for differentiating between "us" and "them" needs to be evaluated in the light of God's love and God's will for justice.

Components of congregational identity: Worldview, values, and ethos

Second, from "identifying and collecting appropriate symbolic texts of a congregation", the worldview, values, and ethos of congregation are identified.

Tisdale (1997:79-89) suggests components of cultural identity of the congregation according to categories such as "worldview," "values," and "ethos." *Worldview* refers to a people's picture of the way things in sheer actuality are – what they perceive to be "really real". *Values* reflect a people's interest and preferences within that world – that is, what they deem to be desirable and valuable. *Ethos* refers to "the tone, character and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood;...the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects"(Tisdale 1997:77).

Tisdale (1997:80-84) subdivides the worldview of the congregation as the view of God, the view of humanity, the view of nature, the view of time, the view of the church, the view of Christian mission, and interrelationships among the above concerns for interpreting congregational worldview and values.

1. View of God (Theology, Christology, Pneumatology)

- Is God perceived by this congregation to be primarily transcendent or primarily imminent? (What is the congregation's favourite hymn: "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise?" or "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"?)

- Is God most likely to be thought of: as judge and giver of law who exacts high standards for righteous behaviour and exhibits wrath toward those who fall short? as a merciful and forgiving parent who is quick to understand and forgive foolish ways? or as one in whom both justice and mercy co-exist?

- Is God perceived to regularly intervene directly into human affairs through the working of miracles? Or does God work primarily through natural processes? (How are prayers of intercession phrased in congregational life?)

- Is any one person of the Trinity valued more highly than another? Is any one person of the Trinity consistently devalued in congregational life?

- What metaphors for God (Holy One, Judge, Shepherd, Father, Rock, Mother Eagle), for Christ (Bread of Life, Light of the World, Son of God, Friend of the Poor, Saviour, Suffering Servant), and for the Holy Spirit (Wind, Fire, Healer, Empowerer, Gift-giver) are most prevalent in congregational life, and what do they indicate about the congregation's understanding of God?

2. View of Humanity (Theological Anthropology)

- What is the predominant view of human beings? (Are people primarily considered to be "sinners without hope save in God's sovereign redemption through Jesus Christ," to be "children of God, created in God's image, loved and recreated through Jesus Christ," or to be "fallible yet perfectible through the inner workings of the Holy Spirit?")

- How does this congregation see itself in relation to the rest of society? (Does it view itself as being primarily powerful or powerless? As being a potential change agent, or as being a victim of circumstances with little power to effect change?)

- What does this congregation value in human nature: being (where the worth of an individual is bound up with his/her existence as a child of God), doing (where the worth of an individual is closely tied to his/her achievements), or being-in-becoming (where primary value is placed upon the individual's personal and spiritual growth)?

3. View of Nature (Theology of Creation)

- What is the congregation's understanding of creation and the place of human beings within it? Is the congregation's basic stance toward nature one of:

a. Harmony with nature (as in many farming communities where people live close to the land and recognise their absolute dependence upon the cycles of seasons, rain, and sunshine for their daily sustenance);

b. Mastery over nature (as in many urban and suburban contexts in which a major concern is whether nature—that is, rain or sleet, heat or cold—is going to interfere with human plans and activities for the weekend); or

c. Subjugation to nature (as in areas regularly visited by life-destroying natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, or floods)?

- How would this congregation describe the manner in which human beings ought to live in relation to nature? (What interpretation of the meaning of human “dominion” in relation to creation is reflected in the signs and symbols of congregational life?)

4. View of Time (Eschatology)

- Is time primarily viewed as a qualitative commodity to be managed, used expediently and not wasted (so that worship or committee meetings must begin and end according to the clock, and proceed with as much efficiency as possible), as an obstacle to be endured or overcome on the path to a fuller existence (as in “doing time” in the prison), or as a relational entity (so that worship or a meeting begins when the whole community has gathered and proceeds until the community has a corporate sense that it is time to close)?

- Is the congregation primarily oriented to the past (reliving and longing for the “glory days” of long ago); the present (living in such a day-to-day survival mode that it gives little thought either to the past or the future), or the future (with plans and dreams and visions of what it would like to be and do)?

- What is the character of congregational “hope” and how is it related to biblical images of hope (such as “eternal life,” “parousia,” or “resurrection”)?

5. View of the church (Ecclesiology)

- What metaphors for the church predominate in congregational life? (Is the church primarily conceived as being an “institution of salvation,” “intimate community of the Spirit,” “sacrament of salvation,” “herald of good news,” or “servant of the servant Lord”?)

- Is the church understood by members of the congregation to be primarily a “hospital for sinners” (where people are welcomed, whatever their life situation, and few restrictions are placed on church membership) or a “holy community of saints” (in which certain ethical standards of lifestyle are required for faithful church membership)?

- How inclusive is the congregation—in its leadership, worship, and programming—of those who are frequently marginalised in the larger society (children, the elderly, women, persons with physical and mental disabilities, gay and lesbian persons, persons of diverse racial and ethnic identities)?

6. View of Christian Mission (Evangelism, Missiology, Social Ethics)

- If you were going to locate the congregation's own understanding of itself in relation to the larger culture, how would you characterise it? (Using H Richard Niebuhr's categories in *Christ and Culture*, would this church's stance toward culture be characterised as "against," "above," "of," "in paradox," or "transforming"?)

- Would the congregation's mission orientation best be characterised as:

a. activist (with strong emphasis on the congregation's own corporate address of social, political, and economic issues),

b. civic (encouraging church groups to study public issues and encouraging individuals to become involved, while avoiding corporate stands as a church body),

c. evangelistic (with primary emphasis upon the call of individuals to salvation and eternal life), or

d. sanctuary (providing a place in which its participants can withdraw from the trials of societal life and find a safe haven)?

- Would the congregation's own self-image for social ministry best be described as:

a. survivor church (reactive to the crises of an overwhelming world);

b. crusader church (proactive in seeking out issues and championing causes);

c. pillar church (anchored in its community and taking responsibility for the community's well-being);

d. pilgrim church (caring for immigrants with ethnic, national, or racial roots), or

e. servant church (caring for and supporting individuals in need)?

7. Interrelationships among the Above Concerns (Cosmology, Soteriology, Doctrine of Revelation)

- What overarching view does the congregation have of the cosmos, God's relationship to it, and their place within it?

Second, Tisdale also provides some categories for interpreting congregational ethos.

Crisis and integration: In a loss or dislocation, what is the characteristic response and reintegration that is sought?

Proficiency: What is the characteristic skill, the chosen manner of doing things, the reliable pattern of behaviour?

Mood: What is the characteristic temperament, the emotional atmosphere?

Hope: What end is characteristically expected and sought?

Therefore through the interpretation of the congregation's worldview, values and ethos, the preacher can understand the contemporary identity of the congregation.

Exegeting the world of the text

As Long (1989a:79) states, exegesis involves a conversation between the biblical text and the whole community of faith. Exegesis is a work of the church enacted through the preacher as its chosen representative.

A brief exegetical method for preaching

The following is an outline and discussion of a brief exegetical method of preaching that preachers should take note of (Long 1989a:61).

1. Getting the text in view

- A. Select the text
- B. Reconsider where the text begins and ends
- C. Establish a reliable translation of the text

2. Getting introduced to the text

D. Read the text for a basic understanding

E. Place the text in its larger context

3. Attending to the text

F. Listen attentively to the text

4. Testing what is heard in the text.

G. Explore the text historically

H. Explore the literary character of the text

I. Explore the text theologically

J. Check the text in the commentaries

5. Moving toward the sermon.

K. State the claim of the text upon the hearers (including the preacher).

A few comments on this method as a procedure for sermon preparation are necessary with regard to the identity of the church.

1. First, the exegete needs “to select the text.” Apart from the church’s year plan for preaching (the lectionary) which has the inherent limitation that many texts “and even entire books of the Bible are omitted” (Long 1989a:63), there are other methods. One is the personal choice of the preacher. Since the limitation here is that this method may become “hobby horse” preaching, however, the church lectionary is therefore recommended by Long as the more effective (Long 1989a:63-64). The selection of the text is very important in defining and developing the identity and mission of the church. the identity of the church is expressed in the four characteristics of the church – “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” The function of the church is reflected in *Kerugma* (*kerugma, marturia, didache*), *Leitourgia*, *Koinonia* (*koinonia, paraklesis*),

and *Diakonia* (Nel 2000:81). With regard this CW Burger (1999:138) argues that “these four ministries to be primary restorative or healing system of the congregation.”

2. Second, the exegete also needs “to get introduced to the text.” This is where Craddock (1985:123) asks the question “What is the text *doing*?” to determine the direction to take in preparation. This also means to put the text into its “larger context” (Long 1989a:65). This means using reliable Bible encyclopaedias and dictionaries to research the background to the text.

3. Third, another task for the exegete is “to attend closely to the text.” One needs to ask the “right questions” and give the “right responses” as preachers of the text. This, of course, means to “listen attentively to the text,” as Long has it (1989a:66). If the “text is narrative,” says Long (1989a:68), the preacher has to “stand in the shoes of each of the characters and experience the story from these varied perspectives.” In other words, the micro and macro structures (Pieterse 1987:115) are analysed. “The pericope is divided into smaller units by applying grammatical, stylistic and substantive criteria, and the interrelationship of these units is determined.”

4. Lastly the exegete needs “to test what is heard in the text.” Vos (1996:vol.2:4ff) describes the more technical analysis of methods to be discussed here, as we keep in mind the approach Long (1989a:60) is taking, in providing a “preacher’s exegesis” mentioned at the outset. However the text still needs to be interpreted by the exegete according to one or a combination of the following methods of interpretation.

Firstly, the historical-critical method. This method requires that the text be interpreted from the historical angle, as texts arose not in a timeless vacuum, but in time.

Secondly, the literary approach looks at the text as a literary phenomenon, as compared for example with the text-immanent exegesis that looks less at the history of the text than at the construction and connections within the text. Among the subdisciplines of these approaches is the canonical approach that looks at the text within its relation to the whole canon of scripture. Then there is discourse analysis, which looks more closely at

the textual structure that the text is based on syntactically. In this method meaning is in the text itself not in its history. Then there is the literary text analysis that again approaches the text in a narrative and textual analysis. The text is analysed as a narrative or story in itself. The key to this approach is the “implicit reader,” the universal and “ideal” reader, created by the narrator, and he participates in giving the text meaning.

Thirdly, sociological exegesis has to do with what Vos (1996:vol.2:14) calls the text of life, as in the question “Who am I?” This text of life is applied in religious, socio-cultural, political and economic contexts. Even answers from other disciplines are included, such as philosophy and psychology. This approach makes one aware that one is bound by time and space (Vos 1996: vol.2:21).

Meaning is conveyed by the text (Vos 1996:vol.2:14) therefore it is not only the text that needs exegesis, but also what Vos calls the context of understanding, and therefore also the role of the readers. There are at least two categories of readers, namely the real reader and the implied reader. This implies *inter alia* sociological exegesis.

Sociological exegesis in terms of meaning as discussed above has to take cognisance of the presuppositions (Vos 1966: vol.2:19) that Bible documents and traditions are both the channels and the products of social interaction and at the intersection of channel and product stands the exegete and his interpretation. Therefore sociological exegesis of a biblical text should attempt to describe and interpret the social relations referred to by the text, implicitly or explicitly. Since biblical texts are socially, historically and religiously established in an interchange with one another, the exegete needs to probe these connections in an attempt to discover and reveal the dialectical interaction and relationship between theory and practice in their theological and social experience. The exegete needs to keep in mind the fact that the social factors that determine a biblical text are often more implicit than explicit.

Therefore, social exegesis has to use analytical and comparative methods to come to conclusions. The sociological approach shows us we are time and space bound, thus our view of the world is through our own theological traditions, social reality and political

predilections and prejudices. This reality makes one sensitive to the social and religious factors that contributed to the biblical text. The exegete also submits to the process of exegesis. In the exegesis process, the text, the speaker and the audience interrelate and interact with one another as discussed above and with their own worldview and experience of reality. This brings into perspective the world of the exegete in terms of his convictions as well as the methods he or she chooses for the task.

Finally the preacher has to explore the text theologically. With regard to form the identity of the church, the text needs to be interpreted from the perspective of the church.

With regard to this, firstly, Charles Campbell (1997:250-254) suggests that a figural interpretation is a means of forming an alternative community in preaching.

Following Frei's argument in *The eclipse of biblical narrative*, Campbell (1997:250-251) refers to two functions of typological interpretation within the church. First, figural interpretation has served to unify the Scriptures by highlighting the patterns that connect the various events, people, and instructions into a single story. Typology is a way of interpreting Scripture as a unified narrative, rather than merely as a collection of discrete, isolated vignettes. Second, figural interpretation serves not only to unify the biblical narrative, but also to incorporate the contemporary world, particularly the contemporary people of God, into that story; it is not just a way of reading Scripture, but a way of reading life. Through typological interpretation, the world of the contemporary people of God is seen and described in terms of the patterns and connections discerned in the biblical narrative. Campbell (1997:252) cites the following example of the two functions of typological interpretation:

A good example is the Exodus event, which serves as a narrative pattern both for connecting various key events in the biblical story and for incorporating the people of God into that ongoing story. The Exodus provides the pattern for describing the Israelites' entry into the promised land and then their return from exile. The gospels then locate the coming of Jesus within this same story and interpret his death and resurrection as a continuation and fulfilment of this story, a pattern that continues in the liturgical actions of baptism and Eucharist. All of these typological

moves serve not only to unify Scripture, but also to incorporate the people of God (at many times and places) into God's ongoing story.

Justo and Catherine Gonzalez (1994:100ff) argue that typology is fundamentally a Christological and ecclesial form of interpretation. That is, the movement is from events in the story of Israel through Jesus as the centre and "archetype" of the story to the church as the ongoing bearer of the story.

Justo and Catherine Gonzalez (1994:113) provide another example in which an integral connection is made between preaching and baptism.

The fact that preaching is addressed to a baptized congregation should make a difference in the Biblical interpretation and the preaching. Scripture is a word already addressed to God's people – even the history of a dialogue between God and God's people. The congregation is not there to choose whether to be part of this people – they already are. Baptism is the sign of that inclusion. Therefore the word is for them. The preacher needs to make clear the connection of that ancient word to this present People of God. Typology assumes the continuity of the People of God, and therefore the word to that ancient people can readily be applied to the congregation now gathered.

Campbell (1997) and Gonzalez (1994) prove that preaching is appropriately linked with the typological incorporation of people through baptism into a distinctive community with a distinctive story. The function of typological preaching is not only primarily to connect individuals with the individual characters in different biblical stories, but also to move the story of Israel through Jesus Christ to the church.

Gonzalez (1994:103-104) argues that typology in its full form thrived while the church was a persecuted, or at best tolerated, minority, but faded away during the Constantinian era, when interpretation tended to accommodate the Bible to the dominant culture and empire. Typological interpretation was simply too particularistic, too radical for the Constantinian age; it functioned too much to "build up" a peculiar people, a "contrast-society," according to a different and distinctive story. Figural interpretation gives the church a distinctive story – a peculiar memory, identity, and hope – in the midst of the dominant, oppressive culture. As Brueggemann describes the situation of the church as

“exile,” to build up the church as an alternative community, typological interpretation is a means to do this.

Figural interpretation is not only a means of incorporating the church into the “storied world of the bible,” but a way in which the church can be “built up” to carry that story forward as a distinctive people. Figural interpretation is not a hermeneutical technique or method that can be taught in the abstract apart from the practices of the Christian community. Rather, figural interpretation is an act of the imagination, an act of seeing narrative patterns and connections between events, people, and institutions that are temporally separated.

Secondly, a faithful and relevant ecclesiology has to guide the process of interpretation as a hermeneutic key. The identified identity and mission in the previous section must be the purpose of the hermeneutic and the sermon. The attributes for identifying the true church of Christ should be endorsed in the church’s unity, sanctity, catholicity and Christianity (Pieterse 2001a:112). The identity and mission of the church are especially important in considering the function of the church – *leitourgia* (worship), *marturia* (mission), *kerugma* (preaching), *koinonia* (fellowship), pastoral care (*paraklesis*), and *diakonia* (service). According to Firet (1986:82ff), the functions of the church are interwoven. Although *kerugma* is the central mode of preaching, it does not follow that preaching contains no *diache* and *paraklesis* (Nel 2000:83). Gwak (2000:183) says that such identity formation is strengthened through a dynamic and balanced relationship between the functions of the church, such as *leitourgia*, *kerugma*, *koinonia*, and *diakonia*. This means that the identity of the church is closely connected with its mission. BA Müller (1992:9) refers these four characteristics will guide the church have creative tension between “to merge” and “to collide” with the world.

A guideline for finding the meaning of the text

Long (1989a:77) states, “Good exegesis” will point the way the text is leading us. But there is an added element, as critical as the others, and the preacher still has to decide what the text is saying to our congregation on this occasion. BA Müller (1991:132-136)

offers some guidelines for finding the meaning of the text for the church. With all these different exegetical tools and methods, according to Müller (1991:132), the exegetical task is to “find the inherent *theo-logical* movement” (that is, the logic of the God-on-the-move in the world of text) itself. According to Paul S Wilson (1999:40; cf. Campbell 1997:10-12), “one problem with biblical theology was that it considered the Bible as a theological interpretation of God’s action, not as a record of God’s actual acts themselves.” This *inherent* movement or plot is expressed in terms of structure (shape, genre) of a field of concern (focus), but also in terms of function (the theological intention) of the text. Preachers should therefore beware of merely probing the superficial level of the grammatical or historical meaning of the text. What is really required is what Achtemeier (1980) call the *creative* and *innovative* meaning, which will be revealed only when the depth perspective of the text is uncovered: the dynamic ongoing movement of the text which takes hold of the preacher himself. This is a dialogical process in which the textual meaning is re-played in confrontation with the present context. Only in this way can the new-ness (ie the “news”) of the text be brought to the fore.

The hermeneutical strategy becomes very important in this homiletic approach. The ongoing movement of the text must be sustained by a *hermeneutic sensitivity* to the contextual questions and the listener’s response. The problem with preaching is not that it is heretical (proclaiming false *truths*), but that it is so often boringly irrelevant, giving good answers to false questions, questions not being asked outside the preacher’s study. This hermeneutic sensitivity gives answers to questions on three different levels:

What must be discovered?

The openness to the text calls for an openness to God, an openness to what this God-on-the-move in the text is doing in this world; an openness to obedience to the call of this God to his pilgrim (often lagging behind!) people in the movement of his Spirit; an openness to the context: the causes *and* realities of fear, poverty, oppression, jealousy, self-centeredness; discerning the false “gods,” the prevailing myths and stories of the

congregation, of the church in general, the dominant culture, powers of good and evil, the questions people are asking, are afraid to ask (Müller 1991:133).

Who/What are the agents of transformation/confrontation in the context?

Are there any new perspectives, any alternative ways of looking at or uprooting the realities of the *status quo*? What are emerging images and dreams in which insurmountable walls can be “dreamt” down? What new values are required? The answers to these questions construct the homiletic point of view, the perspective that is of paramount importance in developing the plot (Müller 1991:133).

What is the new experience to be shared?

So what? Where does this all lead to? Is there “homework” to be done before the next sermon? Is there a new lifestyle that emerges out of the presentation? What can be shared as good news, as commitment, as vision in solidarity with others in their hopes and fears? What can be celebrated in a new way (Müller 1991:133)?

Finding the liturgical and homiletic plot

The final product to be “delivered” to the congregation must have a shape: a shape determined, as we pointed out by the theo-logic of movement: moving from the exegetical basis and hermeneutical focus to the homiletical function. The latter can be best expressed in terms of a vision, a story, a commitment and a task (Müller 1991:133).

Following Müller’s ecclesial hermeneutic (1992:8), the process of a homiletic hermeneutic may be summarised as follows:

First, to find, within the text, the movement of God, of the initiating praxis of God. It is a hermeneutical endeavour to trace the footsteps of God – footsteps towards a community of faith to follow in order to re-align the identity and the praxis of the church.

Second, to find expressions of the self-understanding of the church by the ecumenic confession of the Apostolicum in the text. Finding the expression of the text in terms of the four modes of identity expressed in the Apostolicum must allow this to merge or to collide with the challenges of this identity in the present social order.

Third, to guide and assist the congregation hermeneutically towards recognising, appropriating and actualising the biblical vision of God in the midst of His people (the *visio Dei, coram Deo*) and the commission (*missio Dei*) connected with their identity.

Fourth, to open the way towards a dynamic transformation and refiguration in which streams of new contextual understanding merge into the stream of the text as its source.

Conclusion: an ecclesial homiletic hermeneutic

Taking all the material discussed above into account, this study develops a hermeneutical circle in four steps for the formation of the identity of the church. Pieterse's hermeneutic circle (2001a:80) has been followed here.

The first step is to analyse the contemporary ecclesiology of the church in transition.

This can be done by using the methods of the social sciences. CD Gwak (2000) has researched this aspect of contemporary ecclesiology in Korea in his dissertation *Ecclesiology and membership trends in the South Korean Churches*. The description and interpretation of dominant contemporary ecclesiology in Korea, according to Gwak, are influenced by America's church marketing theory. This study covers this topic in chapter 3. This study also proposes the exegeting of the congregation.

The second step is to evaluate contemporary ecclesiology critically, with what is termed "ideological suspicion", on the basis of a faithful and relevant ecclesiology.

This includes the religious, ecclesiastical and theological aspects. It appears that prevailing ecclesiology is also dominated by the values of the secularised culture and

society. The preacher and church are usually accustomed to the contemporary dominant ecclesiology, so it is difficult to evaluate it as part of a faithful and relevant ecclesiology. Nonetheless, this is necessary if the church wants to interpret the biblical message from the perspective of a relevant ecclesiology.

The third step is to approach the biblical texts exegetically in terms of the dominant ecclesiological perspective (Gadamer's prejudices).

That means examining conventional exegesis with exegetical suspicion: the suspicion that the dominant interpretation of the Bible has excluded certain important insights into the biblical text which challenge the dominant ecclesiology.

The fourth step is to interpret the message anew in terms of an ecclesiology that is faithful and relevant to biblical interpretation (cf Pieterse 2001a:80).

This leads to the discovery of themes of an ecclesiology in the Bible which were overlooked in a dominant interpretation of the ecclesiology. The text, as Ricoeur states, descends on the congregation, opening up new worlds that influence and transform the congregation's thinking through the "self" of the text. This makes it possible to preach a faithful and relevant message which forms and transforms the identity of the church.

2.4.2.3 Sharing memories through narrative preaching

In order to form a community's identity, preaching has to be not only an act of remembering but also an act of sharing among the story-telling community. In the previous section, we said that in order to form the identity of community, there must be remembrance *by* a community and *for* a community. Also the remembering must be connected with the sharing of the identity – the identities of individuals and communities as well.

The identity of the community, according to Van der Ven et al (2002:108), is a communicative identity. The identity of the community is formed by sharing the

identities of the individuals that make up that community. At the same time the identity of the community also has to be shared with others. The identity of the church needs to be remembered and exchanged in the story-telling community and with others through the story-telling community. The sharing act also takes place in the communal reading, in the sermon delivery, and during the exchange of the experienced word in the lives of the members of the congregation.

Therefore, in order to share the identities of individuals and communities, before and after preaching, the sermonic text and the preached word need to be shared. In this act, preaching is not just the speech of the preacher in worship, but an act of the whole congregation. These processes shape a community's identity for recovering its credibility.

The form of the sermon for the formation of the identity of the church

Pieterse (1995:56) says that “preaching is essentially dialogue in character, even though its outward form may be a monologue.” Therefore by considering the sermon as a dialogue, the form and the language of the sermon for the formation of the identity of the church will be discussed.

The function and the structure of the sermon form

The form of the sermon follows a rhetorical strategy designed to encourage the congregation to *do* something (Long 1989a). In this section, the role of the narrative and narrative preaching in exchanging and forming the identity of the church will be discussed. As Long says, sermon form continually gives shape and energy to the sermon and eventually becomes itself a vital force in determining how a sermon constructs meaning. Long (1989a:93) maintains that “Instead of thinking of sermon form and content as separate realities, it is far more accurate to speak of the form *of* the content.” Form is an essential part of a sermon's content and can itself support or undermine the communication of the gospel (Long 1989a:93).

Cas JA Vos (1999:130) says that in dealing with a sermon form, the preacher should consider the “empirical element” and the “concretisation of theological pronouncements.” The sermon should have a concrete communicative form (Vos 1999:131). The preacher has also to consider the structure and the movement of the sermon form (Buttrick 1987b:147). According to Vos (1999:131), the introduction, the development and the conclusion have to be created by considering the movement and the communicative function (Buttrick 1987b:131). The sermonic function is to bring about an encounter between God and the people of God.

The “introduction” is an invitation to the listener to undertake a homiletic journey (Vos 1996:vol.2:256-260). To achieve this, the introductory passage to the sermon must attract and retain the listener’s attention. The “development” of the sermon, according to Vos (1999:131), must be a dynamic development rather than a static enumeration of points. David Buttrick (1987b:147; 1987a:23-69) explains his theory of sermon form by using the image of camera angle in the film. A static point sermon relies on fixed points. The camera is mounted at a fixed point. The actor or actress plays his or her part from this fixed perspective. On the contrary, the dynamically developing sermon is presented to the congregation from various angles and perspectives as a living event. Cameras are placed on static or mobile dollies or moving vehicles in order to record scenes from different and various angles and perspectives (Buttrick 1994b:88).

Buttrick (1987a:23-79) uses the concept “move” to explain the movement of the sermon, its variations in perspective and its development. Like film, the Bible story is not static, it moves in story form, episode for episode, or like the give and take of a live conversation, from one perspective to another (Buttrick 1994a:83; cf. Müller 1991:132-133). According to Vos (1999:131), these movements in the sermon are not random; it is by no means a disjointed form of words. Therefore the “series of moves” must be connected by a “logical movement” (Buttrick 1987a:24; 291-292). The “movement” cannot be produced by a succession of points. The design of a “move” depends on interaction between (1) theological insights, (2) an eye for contrast and amplifications, and (3) the actuality of lived experience (Buttrick 1987a:33).

In order to make these movements possible, according to Vos (1999:132), the structure of sermon must be given a “plot.” A plot is a homiletic and theological strategy which accompanies the listener on his/her journey (Vos 1999:132; Pieterse 2001:111). Although the preacher need not follow the sequence of the text *per se*, according to Buttrick, the movement in the sermon amounts to “replotting the plot” by considering the context of the congregation.

Finally, the function of the “conclusion” to the sermon is to draw the events of the sermon to a climax. It is a rounding off and completion. The conclusion to the sermon conveys to the congregation that a natural saturation point has been reached.

There are various forms that the message of a sermon can take. The form in which the sermon is couched is also important for the communication of the message (Pieterse 2001a:25). The achievement of this aim requires the preacher to be able to distinguish between the kinds of sermons and to apply this knowledge (Vos 1999:132).

Vos (1996:vol.2:171-212) distinguishes four kinds of sermons, namely the homily, the narrative, the text-thematic and the thematic sermon forms. First, the homily is a verse-by-verse exposition of a pericope in the Bible. The exposition is given and the application is left to the listeners. As a rule the exposition leads to a discussion of each verse, in the course of which listeners apply the meaning to their own situations (Pieterse 2001a:25). Second, the narrative sermons communicate very differently and assume many different forms (Pieterse 2001a:25). As a rule, listeners to a narrative sermon are drawn into the story and, through identification with the characters and the flow of the narrative, recognise themselves and reach a point where they have to make personal choices (Pieterse 2001a:25). Third, the text-thematic sermon communicates by way of argument and explanation (Pieterse 2001a:25). The message of the text is usually formulated in a sermon theme which is conveyed with an introduction, a body and a conclusion. The theme is explained and presented persuasively (with argumentation), with explanations and illustrations (exposition and application). However, according to Vos (1999:132), there is no such thing as a pure sermon form. Most sermons are mixtures of various forms. Nevertheless, the preacher must be able to

distinguish between the characteristics and functions of the sermon forms to use them effectively.

Narrative preaching for the formation of the identity of a faith community

Charles L. Campbell, in *Preaching Jesus: new directions for homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology* (1997), evaluates contemporary narrative preaching from the perspective of its theological implications. Although this study does not agree with all of his arguments, his evaluation is valuable in using narrative preaching more carefully. One of the points Campbell (1997:144) makes is that “The problem is that up until now narrative homiletics has provided no resources for thinking carefully about the ways preaching contributes to the upbuilding of the church – the formation of the people of God – beyond the individual hearer.” In this section, a way of upbuilding the church through narrative preaching will be discussed by considering the characteristics of narrative preaching and Campbell’s evaluation.

1. One of characteristics of narrative preaching is the function of identification. Narrative preaching draws listeners into the story and through identification with the characters and the flow of the narrative, they recognise themselves and reach a point where they have to make a personal choice (Pieterse 1987:163-184; 2001a:25).

Thomas Long (1980:16) argues that a part of the preacher’s task is to shape the identities of believers. In fact, the function of preaching is this “identity-shaping function of biblical texts as presented in sermons”, so as to effect change in accordance with the appeal made by a biblical text. Narrative preaching achieves such identity-shaping through a process of identification. It is pre-eminently capable of conveying a truth, or of presenting the hearer with a choice of action, already portrayed in the story through the action of the characters (Pieterse 1987:169).

Stories “create a world” and invite the listeners to enter into that world and participate in it (Long 1989a:39). The story or narrative evokes experience, something happens. People in the text come alive to the listener with all their stresses, sorrows, joys and

wonderment. Even though the narrator makes no direct appeal, the listener of his own accord chooses to side with some character or characters, sharing their indignation, their viewpoints and solutions. Therefore, a good story or narrative is so designed that it invites the hearer to identify with one or more characters: “Biblical stories, narratives, communicate their truth to us in powerful ways because we see ourselves in the stories Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, etc., or because the hearer is led to identify himself with the wise or the foolish builder, with the wise or the foolish virgins” (Pieterse 1987:169). Identification with one or more characters shapes the identities of individuals and the identity of community (Pieterse 1987:169).

In order to bring about identification through narrative preaching, the preacher considers how to connect between two worlds – the world of the Bible and the world of the congregation (cf Pieterse 1987:166). One of criticisms of Campbell’s writings relates to its contemporary anthropological and individualistic trend in contemporary narrative preaching (Campbell 1997:122ff; cf Long 1989a:41). According to Campbell (1997:117ff), contemporary narrative preaching translates the world of the text into the world of human or cultural experience. Long (1998a:41) explains the dangers of this as follows:

The storytelling preacher, on the other hand, recounts both God’s story and our stories, seeking to weave our stories, the narratives of contemporary life, into the framework of God’s story. The result can be a powerful interplay between the Bible and life, but we must admit that it can also produce simply a confusion of stories. People have many ways of narrating the story of their lives. They can tell the “Christian story” of their lives, but they can also relate their family story, their national story, their vocational story, the story of their psychosocial growth, and so on. Ideally, the Christian story serves as the normative center of this narrative universe, critically informing all lesser stories. The danger, of course, is that this process gets reversed and the lesser story erodes or replaces the gospel story.

Therefore, the world absorbs the Bible, rather than Scripture absorbs the world (cf Campbell 1997). However narrative preaching has to describe an alternative world through the world of text. Thus the world of congregation has to be incorporated into the world of text (Brueggemann 1988; Müller 1992:9).

As an alternative to such an anthropologically-driven approach to preaching, Campbell (1997:193) proposes to reclaim Hans Frei's distinctive understanding of biblical narrative as follows: "narrative is important because it is the vehicle through which the Gospels render the identity of Jesus on Nazareth, who has been raised from the dead and seeks today to form a people to follow his way". This understanding guards against the devotion of the sermon into an anthropological flight from plight to solution, as "the story of Jesus, not the particulars of human experience, is the fundamental reality and starting point" (Campbell 1997:221-231).

Therefore, to avoid the collapse of the biblical narrative into contemporary personal experience, firstly, the link is to be between "the Story of God" and "the story of the congregation", rather than between "the Story of God" and "the story of the individual." The identity of the church is formed by the encounter between the story of God and the story of the church. In order to bring about an encounter between God and His people, the Story of God must be the main theme (or content) and movement (or plot) of the sermon.

With regard this, the preacher must understand the characteristic of the two stories – the Story of the Bible (or the Story of God) and the story of a congregation. On the one hand, the world of the text is to be understood as the Story of God.

In order to form the identity of the church, the movement of God is a key component of both the content of the sermon and the plot of the sermon. BA Müller (1991:132) refers to this as follows:

The exegetical task will still be to use the different exegetical tools and methods to find the inherent *theo-logical* movement (that is, the logic of the God-on-the-move in the "world" of the text) itself. This *inherent* movement or plot is expressed in terms of structure (shape, genre) of a field of concern (focus), but also in terms of function (the theological intention) of the text.

The biblical texts depict the world within which Christian identity is to be sought. The account of God's actions from creation through the election and history of Israel and culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ provides the essential

clues to the identity of the Christian community and of the God who brought it into being.

The church's identity is derived from Jesus' identity and is enacted publicly in the world as Jesus' was (Campbell 1997:226). Frei (1975:159-160), therefore, in *Identity of Jesus Christ: the hermeneutical bases of dogmatic theology*, advocates a movement from the narratively rendered identity of Jesus to the church, which is the embodiment of and witness to Jesus' indirect presence in and for the world. The church, as the embodiment of the indirect presence of Jesus Christ in and for the world, becomes a central character in the ongoing story of Jesus. Therefore, grammatically, God in Jesus Christ is not simply the predicate of individual human experience or needs, but is an active subject building up a people to embody and witness to Jesus' presence in and for the world (Campbell 1997:227).

On the other hand, plot should be reconsidered. Contemporary narrative preaching has emphasised the plot as the form of sermon (Campbell 1997:167ff). The proponents of this view are partially right. Plot is essential for contemporary preaching. Even more important than plot, however, sermons should be about character – the character and nature of God. As Charles L Campbell (1997:173) says, "It is the central character [of Jesus Christ] rendered by the gospel narratives, not narrative plot in general, that is at the heart of preaching shaped by the biblical story." Sermons can be an event or encounter with God, not just information or abstraction about God (Wilson 1999:41).

In narrative preaching, the plot of the listeners and of the congregation must be brought into contact with the plot of the cadre of the covenant (Carstens 1997:43). It is this plot that draws the listeners and the congregation into the Story of God. Ultimately the plot of the Biblical covenant must determine the plot of the listeners and the congregation. This becomes possible when the listeners and the congregation with her own plot are able to identify with the characters of the biblical story of the covenant and the character of the community of covenant (Carstens 1997:43).

This study, secondly, emphasises the “world of the congregation”, forging a link between “the world of the Bible” and “the world of the congregation.” If a preacher's concern is a link between “the world of the Bible” and “the world of individuals,” this result of this preaching, as criticised by Campbell (1997:117-145), will be an individual, experiential event. This kind of sermon forms “the aggregate of individuals” rather than “the body of Christ” (cf Van Seters 1991:269; Craddock 1985:84-98).

In order to form the community of faith through narrative preaching, the preacher has to connect “the world of the text” (or the Story of God) with “the world of the congregation” (or the story of the congregation) (cf. Pieterse 1987:166; Campbell 1997:147-165). The Story of God intersects the story of the congregation, and when that happens there is both a communication event and an existential happening in which the story of the living God illuminates the story of congregation, forming their communal identities (Campbell 1997:147-165).

A preacher also considers the relationship between the community and the individual. The individual needs to be understood in the community of faith. Campbell (1997:222) says that:

My account operates from a fundamentally different assumption: the community is logically prior to the individual, and the individual exists only within the context of relationships and roles played in a particular community. This understanding of preaching does not ignore the individual, but rather views the individual within the context of faithful disciples in a truthful community.

Therefore to form the identity of a community, narrative preaching has to be created by connecting the world of a text and the world of a congregation. The world of the congregation is to be understood as not the world of individuals but the world of the community. Stories may shape communal identity, but ultimately the cohesiveness of the community requires the interpretation of the communal story (Van Seters 1997:34). This brings the identification between “the people of God in the text” and “the present community of faith”.

In order to connect the world of text and the world of community, first of all, the world of individuals needs to be formed into the world of community. To do this, the Bible must be read in a communal setting. Ricoeur (1996:7) refers to this connection between narrative and community identity when he writes that the “identity of a group, culture, people, or nation, is not that of a fixed structure, but that, rather, of a recounted story.” “We live in a world of stories. Our lives are shaped by stories and moulded by stories” (Williams 1986:33). Within the story of a human being with its beginning, middle and end, movement now occurs. Influences exerted by other human beings, circumstances and various contingencies work together on the plot of his life-story. And it is this story that is read by others as the person’s story. Ricoeur explains that narrative configuration refers to the dynamic of emplotment (Dreyer 2000:29). Emplotment of action provides a synthesis of the multiple events or incidents. The plot has the power to make a single story out of the multiple incidents, or if you like, the power of transforming the manifold happenings into a story (Ricoeur 1986:122). Furthermore, a plot not only ties multiple events together, but unifies widely divergent and even opposing events. It provides a synthesis of the heterogeneous. This result is a single story that “turns the plot into a unity which one could call both concordant and discordant”(Ricoeur 1986:123). Therefore, for the formation of the identity of the community, narrative preaching should concern the link between the story of the Bible and the story of the community through the emplotment of events and accidents of individuals and communities.

2. Narrative preaching communicates its message indirectly, functioning in such a way that at a given point the listeners recognise themselves, although no direct appeal, exhortation or demand is made on them (Pieterse 1987:169).

The functioning of the story allows for both distance and involvement (Pieterse 1987:169). Pieterse (1987:69) gives the following example of this:

The distant churchgoer, a common in urban congregations today, is encountered as he is – at a distance. No demands are made on him, but the narrative intrigues and involves him in such a way that he is presented with a choice, and the tension is not defused until he has chosen. The story does not let go of the listener but continues to haunt him for a long time.

This is because the story permits the listener to make his own decisions, to determine his response to it in his own time and in his own way. In this sense the narrative is open-ended (Pieterse 1987:169).

Craddock suggests that inductive preaching allows the listeners to draw their own conclusions (Craddock 1979:67). Although stories form communal identity, the focus of inductive preaching has been on the experience of the individual (Campbell 1997:140). Such preaching treats the listeners as a “collection of individuals” who participate in the same events (Thompson 2001:14).

However, in the postmodern context, Campbell (1997:128) argues that “Craddock’s indirect method may not be at all what the church needs right now.” Thompson (2001:9) also states: “Inductive preaching functions best in a Christian culture in which listeners are well informed of the Christian heritage.” In the contemporary situation – in a non-Christian culture – a listener shaped only by open-ended narrative preaching will have no grasp of the reflective dimensions of faith (Thompson 2001:12). Because faith seeks understanding, the sermon has always been the occasion for deeper instruction in the faith. In order to achieve this, there is to be a space to share the experienced Word of God with each other. Stories have to do with human experience. The listener identifies, recognises himself/herself and has an existential encounter with the experience of another person which he shares (Pieterse 1987:170). This sharing accompanies the discipleship of community (1987:170).

Finally this act of sharing brings about the formation of communal identities. Therefore, BA Müller (2002:209) points out that, because the value of a narrative approach lies in stories of the identity of being believers, of being a church and stories as the implied, packaged, dynamic visions of faith, retelling the stories must, once more, become the core of our preaching praxis. In this regard Müller (2002:209-210) mentions that narrative preaching should be the retelling of alternative stories: loaded with alternative paradigms and alternative visions of alternative worlds. In this way, a new community of memories and expectations is established; dreams arise of God’s new world in which justice reigns – a new world that, upon the sermon’s invitation, allows the past and the

future to flourish in the present. Through the merging of these two worlds, the identity of the church is to be re-aligned, or rearticulated.

Several forms of narrative preaching

Up to now, I have discussed the function of form and several sermon forms. With regard to forming the identity of the church, contemporary narrative preaching has been evaluated from the point of view of Campbell's criticisms and those of others (cf. Campbell 1997; Thompson 2001; Lose 2000). By considering these evaluations, the preacher moves from text to sermon, using various narrative sermon forms in order to form the communal consciousness of the community of faith.

Narrative sermons communicate very differently and assume many different forms. John McClure (1991:24-28), in his article *Narrative and preaching: sorting It out*, lists four types of "narrative preaching".

1. The first type of narrative preaching occurs when the narrative aspects of the biblical text are related in some way to the sermon. In other words, narrative preaching includes sermons in which the form of the sermon is intentionally shaped by the form of a narrative text.

With regard this, several homileticians provide theories of narrative preaching: Thomas G Long (1989b:66-86; cf. 1994:1-22), in *Preaching and the literary forms of the Bible* (1989b), suggests ways in which the preacher could compose a sermon by considering the characteristics of the narratives in the Bible. Sidney Greidanus (1988:188-227), in *The modern preacher and the ancient text: interpreting and preaching biblical literature* (1989), also guides preachers in the direction of creating narrative sermons according to the biblical narrative.

According to Long, narratives offer the preacher raw material from which to craft a sermon: characters, conflict, and actions and words that can be interpreted. But to preach a narrative text faithfully, the specific literary characteristics of the narrative text

must be considered. To discern these characteristics, according Long (1989b:66-86), two questions are asked: 1) What is the rhetorical function of this narrative? 2) What literary devices does this genre employ to achieve its rhetorical effect?

First, *what is the rhetorical function of this narrative?* (Long 1989b:74) Long says that a story impacts on a listener in one of two ways. On the one hand, it encourages the listener to identify with one of the characters in the story (Long 1989b:74-75). Therefore, choosing which character to highlight is a first step in preaching a narrative text. On the other hand, a story impacts on the reader by making claims on how we live our lives (Long 1989b:76-77). Long (1989b:76) writes, “We each have stories by which we define our identity and shape our life. Each new story is placed alongside the old stories for comparison. Sometimes the new story confirms our worldview, but on other occasions it challenges that world – and we must choose in which world we will live.”

Second, *What literary devices does this genre employ to achieve its rhetorical effect?* (Long 1989b:77-82) According to Long, in any text that employs narrative, certain “dynamics” or “devices” must be considered. Long suggests these narrative characteristics. 1) *Narrative techniques*: notice who is telling the story. “In general,” writes Long (1989b:77-79), “biblical narrators are both in the background and omniscient... [Therefore] the question becomes, When is the reader informed”? 2) *Character development*: What changes do the characters experience? What roles do they play in the story? (1989b:79) 3) *Plot designs*: Each story usually has a plot comprised of a beginning, a middle, and an end. How do these three parts interact? What is emphasised and what is left out? (1989b:80) 4) *Word choice*: Are certain words unique or unusual? Do they carry particular meaning within the entire canon of scripture? (1989b:81) 5) *Location*: Where is the narrative taking place? Is this important to the story? (1989b:81) 6) *Parallel stories*: Long writes, “Biblical stories are sometimes designed to remind us of other narratives (1989b:81).” To what other narratives does this text point? 7) *Placement of the story*: What role does this specific passage play in relation to the narrative flow of the entire book? (1989b:82)

2. A second type, suggests McClure (1991:24-28), comes from sermons that follow the structure of a short story or movie. Edmund Steimle (1980:171) observes that, “Every sermon should have something of the dramatic form of a play or short story: tightly knit, one part leading into and dependent upon the next, with some possibility of suspense and surprise in the development.” Eugene Lowry (1980), in *The homiletical plot: the sermon as narrative art form* (Lowry 1980; 2001, Expanded ed.), has developed Steimle’s proposal into the “homiletic plot.”

Lowry’s model includes five steps:

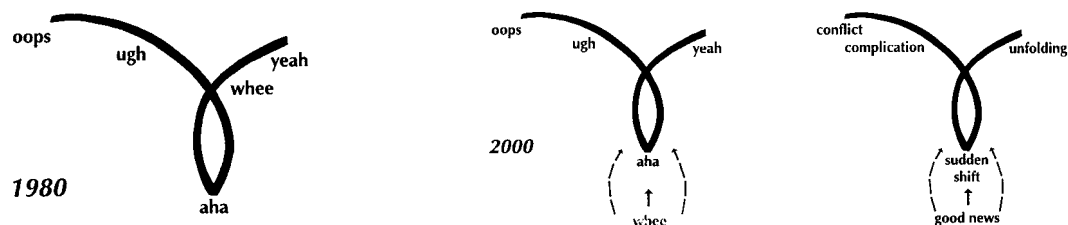
1) *Oops!: Upsetting the equilibrium*: The first task of a preacher is to present a problem, an idea, that raises questions or conflict (Lowry 1980: 28-35). Lowry (1980:29) calls this the “itch,” “the human predicament,” that seeks to hold a congregation’s attention. The problem is the focus of the sermon. It could be a question or difficulty that arises in connection with the Bible, or with some aspect of Christian practice, or as part of a situation where the congregation needs to feel the itch.

2) *Ugh!: Analysing the discrepancy or the plot thickens*: The preacher explores the complication. Lowry (1980:38) believes “the greatest weakness of the average sermon is the weakness of diagnosis”. This phase of the sermon needs to be analytical. The preacher helps the congregation think critically about the manifestations and causes of the situation that upsets the equilibrium of the congregation. What is wrong? Why is it wrong? The community goes “Ugh” as the reasons for the problem come into focus. This part of the sermon elaborates on the issues and tensions raised in the beginning of the sermon and the way they relate to our lives (Lowry 1980: 36-46).

3) *Aha!: Disclosing the clue to resolution*: At this point, the preacher offers a solution based on the gospel that ideally comes as a surprise or “reversal” (Lowry 1980:47-61). With regard to the identity, Lowry (:54-56) explains that the purpose of these developments in the plot of sermon is to aid the process of self-discovery or the discovery of self-identity.

4) *Whee!:* *Experiencing the gospel:* The preacher now expands on the clue to the resolution and applies it to the situation of the congregation (Lowry 1980: 62-66). At its best, this part of the sermon contains an imaginative experience of the resolution to the tension through the gospel. Lowry (1980:65) writes, “Seldom in preparing a sermon have I had difficulty in discerning what the gospel had to say about the issue at hand... the problem [was usually] that I had not probed deeply enough in my diagnosis.”

Recently, Lowry (2001), in *The homiletical plot, expanded edition: the sermon as narrative art form* (2001), changes his “homiletical plot” from five steps to four steps.



Lowry's homiletic plot

Lowry (2001:119) explains this as follows:

What is crucial to note here is that although it is generally the case that disclosing the clue to resolution (stage 3) happens immediately prior to experiencing the good news (stage 4), there are times when the good news prompts the reversal or is simultaneous with it. In a sermonic plot, both biblical text and/or the sermonic aim help determine the relation of stages 3 and 4.

5) *Yeah!:* *Anticipating the consequences:* This phase of the sermon is an unfolding (Lowry 1980: 67-73). The preacher anticipates how the discovery of the sermon will affect the future. Community, empowered by the gospel, asks, “Yeah, what next? The congregation wants to know how the resolution of the tension will affect the future of the congregational life and their life in the wider world. What can the church anticipate from God? What does the church need to do to live into the resolution? Each sermon, then, is an event that develops through time. Ronald Allen (1998:94) remarks that the

strength of Lowry' method is that it "encourages a church to name and analyse a disequilibrium that has taken place in the community".

Lowry, in *How to Preach a Parable*, moves from a theoretical to practical model of narrative preaching and offers four templates to place over a text. Lowry (1989:31) writes, "Choosing from the several options of sermonic design is not the first step in the formation of a narrative sermon – it is the central task." Lowry's four options include:

1) *Running the Story*: In this model both the text and the shape of the sermon are interwoven. "The preacher will highlight," writes Lowry (1989:38), "elaborate, amplify, and creatively en flesh certain portions while moving through the text."

2) *Delaying the story*: In certain sermons, a preacher might delay the story, in particular if it offers a resolution to issues or conflicts raised in the sermon. "Sometimes," writes Lowry (1989:38-39), "there are pastoral reasons to begin a sermon with a current congregational concern, then turn to the text for resolution."

3) *Suspending the story*: Sometimes a helpful approach is to begin with the text but then step out of the narrative flow to address a particular concern. Lowry (1989:39-40) explains that, "It may be that the preacher will move to a contemporary situation in order to 'find a way out' of issues the text raises. The preacher then returns to the text and concludes the sermon."

4) *Alternating the story*: The final approach divides the narrative portion of the text into "seductions, episodes, or vignettes, with other kinds of material filling in around the biblical story (Lowry 1989:39-40)."

The model we choose is determined by the focus of the text and whether this issue is best explored and resolved "in the text, or before it, or after it, or outside it (Lowry 1989:39-40)." "Once the sermonic intention is clear," writes Lowry, the hard work is done and "other kinds of preparation steps fall into place (Lowry :39-40)."

3. A third classification for narrative preaching, notes McClure (1991), is when “preachers are told to use their imagination and learn to think metaphorically in order to name grace in human experience.” In this model the sermon is shaped not only by the genre of story, but by the preacher’s imagination. Fred Craddock (1985:162) maintains that inductive preaching and the work of the imagination are more effective in communicating the gospel than a deductive model based on argument.

In 1971, Craddock proposed a new direction to preaching. At the time most preaching was “deductive,” focusing on a proposition later developed into three points. Craddock (1979:60) observed, however, that people don’t live deductively. He (1979:60) commented that “Everyone lives inductively.... No farmer deals with the problem of calfdom, only with the calf.” Craddock saw there might be room for a style of preaching that involved the listeners’ imagination. He called this style “inductive.” Simply stated, writes Craddock (1979:54), “deductive movement is from the general truth to the particular application or experience while inductive is the reverse.” In an inductive sermon, “thought moves from the participants of experience that have a familiar ring in the listener’s ear to general truth or conclusion (1979:54).” In other words, the congregation is invited to “retrace” the journey the pastor has taken in crafting the sermon with the intention to “see if [the congregation] comes to that same conclusion”(1979:54).

Craddock suggests the following method of inductive preaching: 1) Cultivate the ability to notice and re-create “concrete experiences.” 2) Structure the sermon like a “good story or a good joke” and build anticipation. Craddock (1979:63) remarks that, “The period between the father’s announcement of a family trip and the trip itself may be the children’s greatest happiness.” 3) Allow the listener to complete the sermon. The preacher does not “throw the ball and catch it himself.” As a model, Craddock points to Jesus and the fact that “Jesus’ preaching depended not simply on the revelatory power of his parables but also upon the perceptive power of those who attended to them” (1979:65).

4. McClure's final category stresses the potential for narrative to shape a church's theological worldview – in other words, sermons that refer to “faith-stories that are generated in a congregational context” (McClure 1991:24-28). Edmund Steimle (1980), in his book *Preaching the story*, writes of such a style where a sermon is defined by the intersection between the world of the preacher, the congregation, and the biblical text (Steimle 1980:41).

According to Steimle (1980), good preaching pays attention to the intersection of three stories: the stories of the text, the preacher, and the congregation. The preacher's challenge was to “interpret the biblical story so that light is shed on all three stories” (Steimle 1980:41). He offers five steps, in his essay, “The Fabric of the Sermon,” 1) Pay attention to and highlight the secular, “so that what is heard on Sunday morning will also make some sense on Sunday afternoon, to say nothing of Monday morning” (Steimle 1980:166-167). 2) Ask questions the congregation is already asking. 3) Craft a sermon that takes the form of a “story told, as a whole and in its parts” (:171). 4) Be inductive, Steimle agree with Craddock that a sermon should be “low-keyed, which leaves the issue in the air rather than pushing a person into a corner” (:173). 5) And be “lean and spare” with your language. “From the great stories of the Old Testament, Abraham, Jacob, Jonah, to the parables of Jesus...the fabric is that of stories told crisply, sometimes roughhewn, always quickly and surely to the point”(:173).

For Steimle, a narrative sermon is grounded in stories that shape a congregation: stories from the Bible, from church members, from the preacher. A preacher is above all a good conversation partner, listening for stories both fit and appropriate.

Although several narrative forms are described, as Vos (1999:132) mentions, there is no pure narrative form in the different forms described above. However, by understanding these different forms and functions of narrative preaching, the preacher can create sermons for forming and transforming the identity of the church.

Metaphor for the formation of the identity of the church

Cas JA Vos (2004:1) argues that “liturgical language functions as metaphorical language while contributing to spiritual formation and that this spiritual forming is reflected in the public domain”. Thus sermonic language as liturgical language is to be metaphorical for impacting the formation of the community of faith.

In order to transmit the message, according to Vos (1999:134), the sermon has to come up with metaphors that are alive in the minds of the listeners. Metaphor is figurative language that describes full reality and invites us into the described world and makes it our experience (Vos 1996:vol.1:37). Metaphor has two referential functions: the function of describing the world as it is portrayed within the text and the function of provoking the listeners to redescribe their own worlds from the standpoint of the description in the text. Ricoeur (1973:111) rightly claims that the most important quality of metaphor is that it can change our way of looking at our world.

Particular figures of speech such as metaphor, similes and representation permeate people’s everyday lives and are not confined to language, but are mechanisms which have their foundation in human thinking and structure, in both their physical and linguistic “actions” (Vos 1999:133; 2004:1-13). Because communication is based on the same conceptual system which we use when we think and act, language is an important source of evidence on how that system functions (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:3). Also, our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:3; Vos 2004:7). Therefore, Vos (1999:134) argues that the preacher should note that the various figures of speech function at both the linguistic and the cognitive levels.

The cognitive function of metaphor, according to Vos (1999:134), is emphasised within cognitive semantics. One of the effects of this cognitive function of metaphor is that new information is gleaned and interpreted from existing knowledge (Carstens 1993:92). This process has given rise to the insight that metaphor not only has a pragmatic-ontological origin but also assists people to order new experiences of reality and place them in perspective (Carstens 1993:91). This has resulted in the revelation

that metaphors are not confined to linguistic transactions but also create new possibilities and prospects on the level of thought and action.

According to Vos (2004:8), metaphor is considered as a network. When we refer to metaphorical language, we are referring not only to a function of words but also to the total context within words (phrases) are used. By “context” we understand not only the literary aspects (ie macro structure, discourse, narrative etc), but also other co-“texts” such as the nominated subject (ie the writer or reader/listener), including his or her sociohistorical background and literary competence. The preacher should never lose sight of the fact that numerous metaphors are not confined to a single closed context but may be spread over the whole text.

Robert Kysar, in his book *Stumbling in the light: New Testament images for a changing church* (1999), mentions the role of metaphor with regard to the identity of the congregation. He suggests how to conceive and articulate an understanding of corporate identity with metaphors, which he calls “the method of metaphor” (Kysar 1999:27).

In order to conceive and articulate its new identity, it is necessary, first of all, to describe the metaphor – what it is and how it works – in relations with self-understanding or identity. Then the role of metaphor in self-understanding for creating its relevant and faithful image will be discussed.

Firstly, the church expresses its self-understanding in a metaphorical language (Kysar 1999:28). Kysar (1999:28) calls it “metaphorical self-expression.” Generally the language conceives not only our thinking but also our lives. In describing identity, metaphorical language is a better than descriptive language. When we try, for example, to imagine who we are, we have no other recourse than to think of ourselves in relationship with other realities, often ones that are alien to ordinary descriptions of personhood. Self-understanding employs such a comparison in conception as well as in articulation. Our minds produce pictures of ourselves; that is the only way we have of imagining ourselves as entities. Furthermore, we are likely to conceive those mental

pictures with language. We think as well as speak in words. Our verbal expressions are then only the effort to share those imaginative pictures with others.

1. What is the metaphor?

I shall now discuss the definition and role of the metaphor, and then, the different kinds of metaphor.

A metaphor juxtaposes two things – most often attributing an unusual quality to some common quality (cf Vos 2004:6). Metaphor places some feature (the “vehicle”) in a relationship with another reality (the “tenor”) (Kysar 1999:29). For instance, someone says “Jonesville Church is a recycling centre”. The congregation know what a recycling centre is. But describing the congregation as a recycling centre may surprise them, since they do not usually think of the church as dealing with trash. Attributing the characteristics of a recycling centre to a congregation provokes them to think about how a church could have such characteristics. Usually the subject or tenor (Jonesville Church) is an ordinary one and the predicate or vehicle (a recycling centre) one that is not commonly used of the subject. Therefore a metaphor is defined as assigning an odd characteristic to something in a way that violates the ordinary language of a particular community.

Kysar (1999:30) states that metaphors have at least three different shapes. First, some metaphors are not true metaphors in the sense that they simply ask people to substitute ordinary language for the unusual words or phrases. Sometimes metaphorical comparison is easily translated back into ordinary language; that is, the congregation may substitute a proposition for the metaphorical language and thereby capture its meaning. Second, in another kind of metaphor one thing is compared with another by the inclusion of the words “like” or “as”. For example, Jesus is frequently reported as saying, “the kingdom of heaven is like...” (eg, Matt 13:44, 45, and 47). What follows the “like” is every bit as stimulating as it would be had Jesus not used the comparative word “like”, but Jesus tips off his listeners to be ready for the metaphor that follows. In doing so, he diminishes the surprise of associating something with God’s role. Third,

some metaphors are direct and immediate in their creation of an extraordinary relationship in words and phrases. Pure metaphor avails itself of the element of surprise, especially when it is found in a generally non-poetic kind of work, and surprise is one of the ways metaphor works (Kysar 1999:31).

On the one hand, a metaphor is a creative and momentary event – an expression that happens and has its effect immediately (Kysar 1999:31). On the other hand, true metaphors have richness in meaning that sustains them in the congregation's consciousness. They evoke a whole array of possible meanings and often stimulate a wider range of other metaphors. Because of this implicit power in some metaphors, many distinguish still another category of metaphors: root metaphors. Christian life and faith entails a number of such root metaphors, such as the expression "God's people." Using the metaphor of possession, it pictures a peculiar relationship of a certain human group with their Creator (eg, Ex 3:7 and 1 Pet 2:9-10). That metaphor spawned still others, most especially the expressions in which God is referred to as a parent and the community of faith as God's children (eg, 1 John 3:2).

2. How does metaphor work?

Next, how metaphor connects two realities will be discussed (Vos 2004:6). Metaphors create tension in order to allow us to appreciate the impact, newness and freshness of metaphors (Vos 2004:5). A metaphor helps us to begin to understand the unknown in terms of the known. Kysar (1999:31-33) refers to several ways in which metaphors do this. Firstly, a metaphor works by violating literal meaning (Kysar 1999:31). Secondly, metaphor functions through the friction or tension it creates by means of the relationship between (or among) the terms. The friction begins with the strain created by the literal and metaphorical meanings. For example, Trees clapping their hands: We imagine it literally and then metaphorically. The tension tightens as we consider the sense in which the relationship is true and false at the same time. Trees cannot clap; but maybe nature rejoices – this creates another metaphor to help us understand the first. As a result of this quality, metaphors tend to create a view of reality that is tensive, that is, that has a both/ and quality about it. Thirdly, through this tension, metaphors create new meaning.

Fourthly, a metaphor's meaning is found, therefore, in something more fundamental. The provocative relationship articulates some fundamental experience and thereby opens a worldview. The meaning of religious metaphor especially is found in the peculiar vision of reality it suggests. That vision is essentially a matter of how we understand ourselves, our experience, and the whole realm of reality in which we find ourselves. Finally, metaphor works with the plastic quality of language to fire imagination. Metaphors arise from and appeal to the human capacity to visualise new possibilities. Only if we can imagine the possibility of a new and different world can these strange metaphorical associations mean anything to us.

Metaphor are sparks ignited by imagination (Vos 2004:1). Imagination is something other than fantasy. Fantasy is an escape from reality, whereas imagination expands and enriches reality (Riebert 1990:58-59). According to Vos (2004:10), the liturgy leaves space for imagination. In this space our relationship with God, our neighbour and the world can be creatively explored and deepened. This imagination brings people into contact with the kingdom of God where we find not solely peace but also discord, conflict and pain. Imagination makes it possible for us to encounter and experience God in his different "guises" under different circumstances. A theology of imagination sees the Invisible, even if God's footprints cannot always be seen in the dusty paths of life (Vos 2004:10). Imagination also makes room for various images of other people. People appear in their vulnerability, fragility, their hunger for power and fame, their vindictiveness and vengefulness, their charity, gentleness, goodness, affection and courtesy. Imagination also feeds ethical actions (Vos 2004:11). It enables people to seek and discover new ways of making their interaction with other human beings meaningful and happy.

The imaginative impulses in the liturgy can grow into an imaginative life within the community. That means that the faith-community enters the public domain by concentrating on moral integrity and offering this as a contribution to public life (Vos 2004:11). But this contribution cannot take the form of demands. The faith-community must approach the world at large with openness and respect. Society must be convinced and persuaded that certain values make sense and give meaning to life. People must take

responsibility for a more moral society by giving more thorough and concrete consideration to the consequence of their actions (Vos 2004:11).

3. Metaphor and self-understanding

Root metaphors create relationships among other metaphors. Such metaphors give birth to new understandings of the world and the congregation's understanding of themselves. Root metaphors play a key role in shaping self-understanding. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980:5) discovered that certain metaphors function as sources for much ordinary speech. They explained that rich and encompassing metaphors provide the framework within which we conceive and interpret all our experience.

For example, when it is said, "We are children of God" this metaphor suggests a peculiar relationship between humans and the Ultimate Reality. In this way, metaphor can create and express human self-understanding. Self-identity is constructed out of attributing some quality to our person – a quality that may or may not be literally appropriate either to humans or to the whole of reality.

Lakoff and Johnson's conclusions about self-understanding are helpful:

Understanding of ourselves is not unlike other forms of understanding – it comes out of our constant interactions with our physical, cultural and interpersonal environment... Just as we seek out metaphors to highlight and make coherent what we have in common with someone else, so we seek out personal metaphors to highlight and make coherent our own past, our present activities, and our dreams, hopes, and goals as well. A large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of our lives (1980:232-233).

Ricoeur (1995:151-152) also states that "a metaphor may be seen as a model for changing our way of looking at things, of perceiving the world". Like poetic language it reveals "the deep structures of realities to which we are related..." and creates "new possibilities of redescribing the world. Consequently, metaphor does not "prompt learning, it causes it." Therefore metaphors for self-identity allow people to see themselves in new ways – to grasp their own selves with clarity. Corporate self-

understanding, like personal identity, is no less metaphorical. A root metaphor arises in a community and by it the community comes to conceive itself and its function. The basic metaphor is intrinsic to Christian faith and the root metaphor of the church is part of that larger system of meaning of Christian faith (Kysar 1999:35).

Up to now with the relation to the self-understanding, the characteristic of metaphors and their roles has been discussed. It has been argued that metaphor – specially “root metaphor”, is a useful means to conceive and articulate the church’s self-understanding in a period of transition.

Church self-understanding and change

According to Dulles (1987:17-18), the church cannot be fully explained in propositional, deductive concepts. This leads to the metaphoric understanding of the church. Paul Minear (1960) classified more than ninety-six images of the church in *Images of the Church in the New Testament*. Dulles (1987:22) emphasises that “Images are immensely important for the life of the Church – for its preaching, its liturgy, and its general *esprit de corps*.”

In order to create some images of the church’s self-understanding in a period of transition by using metaphor, it is necessary to consider the relationship between image and metaphor. The word “image” means simply a mental picture evoked by language. Images are the imaginative visions excited by the encounter with language, through reading, hearing, or even seeing. In a sense images are abbreviations of metaphors (Kysar 1999:36). An image is the “emerging meaning” resulting from metaphor (Kysar 1999:36). Images of the church are those mental pictures that arise from and represent metaphorical language about the community of Christian faith.

Kysar (1999:36) scrutinises some popular images of the church’s self-understanding in the light of the reality of change. He argues that most of the current metaphors and their images of the church do not accommodate change either in the church itself or in its cultural setting. Kysar (1999:37) provides two kinds of metaphors. The first are clusters

of metaphors that in themselves clearly exclude and even oppose the reality of change (1999:37-38). The second category are some metaphors that might profitably account for change in culture and the church but which have been confined in their reference so as to exclude change (1999:38-40).

From these investigations, Kysar (1999:41) points out an important thing. Metaphors change as their cultural reference changes. Metaphorical language draws a characteristic from one realm of experience to set it in dialogue with another reality. When that characteristic undergoes change as part of culture, the metaphor too changes. When cultural changes influence metaphors, therefore, they need to be adapted according to the contemporary situation and understanding (Vos 1999).

To develop a new image with metaphor

Now how can the church develop a relevant and faithful image in a period of transition with the aid of metaphor? Kysar (1999:41) says that the problem does not lie in rehabilitating current images of the church or appropriating fresh ones. The situation of the church calls for new corporate self-understanding. Metaphor is the language with which we conceive and articulate corporate as well as personal self-understanding. Kysar (1999:41-42) suggests two steps in articulating a new self-understanding. One feature of metaphorical language is peculiarly important in this process: Metaphors are inherently filled with tension (Kysar 1999:41). The tension resides initially in the relationship created by juxtaposing two terms or phrases. The interpretation of metaphorical language also involves tension: first in the opposition of literal and metaphorical meanings and second in the ambiguity created by the exchange between the entities. The ambiguity leaves us searching for the meaning of a metaphorical relationship. In several ways the tension within metaphor and its interpretation parallels the tension inherent in change and the church.

Firstly, the church must live within a polarity between changing with culture and resisting change for the sake of its tradition (Kysar 1999:42). Tradition and cultural adaptation exert pressure in opposite directions. Metaphorical language gains its power

through the strain between the “is” and the “is not” of the juxtaposing of words and phrases. The images of the church’s identity therefore need to capitalise on both the “is” and the “is not” character of true metaphors. Metaphors of the church in change are capable of simultaneously emphasising both the transitional character of the community of faith and its continuity with its heritage (Kysar 1999:42).

Another benefit of metaphorical images for the church has to do with a similar tension within Christians themselves: the sense in which we are both in the world but not of the world (1 John 4:4-6) (Kysar 1999:42). The historical location of the church is in a specific cultural environment. However the ultimate origin and destination is from another realm, and the church seeks the influence of that transcendent realm on who the church is. Again the tension between the two might be captured in the tension between the two components of metaphor. Therefore the church has to construct metaphors that recognise the reality of life in a culture and at the same time claim roots that are beyond that culture (Kysar 1999:42).

Finally, most important of all, the tension inherent in metaphor creates a view of reality that is itself filled with tension (Kysar 1999:42). Metaphor sustains the tensive quality of existence we all know and experience. Just as there is an intrinsic “back pressure” in the metaphorical relationship, there is a similar pressure in reality itself. For example, the church declares that Christ was both truly human and at the same time truly divine (the Athanasian Creed). Metaphor is the linguistic equivalent of a paradoxical comprehension of reality and thus is the nature of the language of faith.

Translation of the biblical metaphor into a contemporary metaphor

In describing the identity of the church, the local church does not simply parrot biblical language. To do so denies its own cultural identity and isolates the local church from its culture as a sect (Kysar 1999:43). The metaphor of the Bible was created from the culture of that time. This metaphor has to be explained by using a contemporary metaphor in which the socio-cultural context of the present is expressed (Vos 1999:134).

If a preacher wants to use a contemporary metaphor to improve the way a metaphor from the primal text communicates, he/she has to establish the points of contact between the two metaphors (Vos 1999:135). The preacher, as Vos says, must ensure that the two metaphors do not clash and are not mutually exclusive (Vos 1999:135). In order to do this, the preacher must always be aware of the nature and function of metaphors at the linguistic and conceptual level (Vos 1999:135).

Translations of those pictures that the earliest groups of God's people fashioned for themselves remain the first and primary resource for images of our corporate identity. Those biblical images can be re-expressed in language that captures contemporary experience as well as elucidates churchly identity. Biblical language provokes contemporary images, in much the same way as poetic metaphor stimulates other metaphorical language. The richness of the biblical images of the church stirs new and contemporary images for our self-understanding (Kysar 1999:43).

Kysar (1999:43) proposes translations of three New Testament metaphors for the church's self-understanding: "on the way (Kysar 1999:45-66)," "home and homing (Kysar 1999:65-85)" and "stumbling in the light (Kysar 1999:87-112)." With these images, he constructs a single metaphorical sentence for who we are as a church: "The church is a community of faith on the way home, stumbling in the light." Therefore, both in its three component parts and as a whole, the impact of the biblical language points toward a new corporate self-identity that includes and takes change seriously. Furthermore, this self-identity employs the method of metaphor, has the tensional quality of such language, and at the same times is grounded in the biblical witness.

2.4.3 Preaching as an act of forgiveness

Preaching as an act of translation and preaching as an act of exchange of memories can culminate in an act of forgiveness. According to Dreyer (2000:38), forgiveness, realised through the integration of identity and alterity, is the one on the highest level of "spiritual density." Ricoeur (1996:9) refers to the model of forgiveness – resulting from the model of translation and exchange. From these two models, there is a double link to

the preceding discussion. On the one hand, the role of the story in the constitution of narrative identity has indicated the revision of the past, a revision which is effected by recounting the past in a different way. Forgiveness, Ricoeur (1996:9) argues, is a specific form of the revision of the past and, through it, of the specific narrative identities. On the other hand, the entanglement of life stories gives rise to a revision which is neither solitary nor introspective of its own past, but rather a mutual revision as the most valuable fruit of the exchange of memories. Therefore, forgiveness is a specific form of that mutual revision, the most precious result of which is liberation from promises of the past which have not been kept.

Bound up in the mutual revision, is an ethical issue. Dreyer (2000:38) explains it as follows:

Firstly, we do not only exchange memories, but we do it from a specific perspective, namely the perspective of suffering – our own suffering, but also the suffering inflicted on others. Secondly, we do not start from the perspective of our own suffering, but we “proceed from the suffering of others; imaging the suffering of others before re-examining ones’ own”.... Thirdly, this model goes further than the model of memory exchange in that it not only demands imagination and sympathy for the suffering of others, but the willingness to forgive and thus to “shatter the debt”.

Dreyer (2000:46) concludes that the individuals and the community of faith have to recount their stories in such a way that they start, not with their own suffering, but with the suffering of others.

This mutual revision can be considered in the two dimensions. In the community, the identity of individuals needs to be revised together with the identity of others to bring about a communal identity. As regards the world as well, forgiveness of other communities in the world can be brought about by revising the identity of the church and presenting the other community or the world with the faithful and relevant identity of the church.

Through this mutual revision of the individuals and the communities, the identity of the church will be formed and transformed. In this section, therefore, some characteristics

of preaching for bringing about the revision of identity and forgiveness will be considered. Especially, the church has primarily to be built up as the community of faith, to be servant and messenger, in order to restore its credibility.

2.4.3.1 Preaching as an act of being a Community

If preaching is to be an act of forgiveness, it has to be an act of upbuilding the church (Campbell 1997:222). The upbuilding of the church, according to Malan Nel (1990:1), is “the understanding of the nature, purpose and functioning of the local church.” Nel (2002a:1) defines the concept “building up the local church” as a ministry of reformation. Building up the local church is leading a congregation to understanding and finding its identity (Nel 2002a:6). The “building” metaphor in the Bible constantly recurs in the context of the covenant between God and his covenant people. It mostly describes how God is busy building and re-building his people (Campbell 1997).

If preaching is to be an act of being community through the forgiveness, some characteristic of preaching will be identified.

Firstly, the primary purpose of preaching is to be the formation of the community. Campbell (1997:222), with regard to the purpose of preaching, states that contemporary narrative preaching focuses on individual experiential events, in which the primary function is the eventful transformation of individuals, and still operates within a basically modern framework. However, in order for preaching to be an act of the formation of the community, it is important to consider that the community logically precedes the individual, and the individual exists only within the context of relationships and roles played in a particular community. This understanding of preaching does not ignore the individual, but rather views the individual within the context of a faithful community (Buttrick 1995:155). Therefore, the revision of the identities of individuals through preaching is possible in the communal context, and preaching can make possible the right relationship between individuals and the community for the formation of the communal identity.

Secondly, in order to build up the church, preaching should be understood from the perspective of covenant (Van Seters 1991:269; cf. Müller 1992, Vos 1996, Pieterse 2001a). Lucy Rose (1997), in *Sharing the Word: preaching in the roundtable church*, evaluates the purpose of preaching according to homiletic theories. According to Rose, traditional preaching focuses on instruction, as it defines preaching as persuasively presenting a truth so that the ideas in the preacher's mind are shaped in the minds of the congregation (Rose 1995:26; 1997). Kerygmatic preaching emphasises the individual's encounter with God, as it defines preaching as faithfully communicating the gospel so that God becomes the preacher and the sermon becomes a saving event. And transformational theory emphasises the individual's experience of transformation as it defines preaching as replicating a transforming experience of the text so that the congregation has the same experience of transformation. Finally Rose (1995:27) proposes a conversational preaching style, where the preacher and the congregation envisage themselves as exploring together the mystery of the Word for the lives of the worshippers, as well as the life of the congregation, the larger church, and the world. In her theory the purpose of preaching is to gather the community of faith around the Word where the central conversations of the church are refocused and fostered (Rose 1995:27). As Rose (1995:27) says that her proposal of conversational preaching is not an "instead of" but an "in addition to," the meaning of an "encounter" could be understood through the purpose of preaching in all these homiletic theories. The encounter between God and human beings is established through the covenantal relationship.

In the Reformed tradition, the purpose of preaching is to bring about an encounter between God and human beings (Pieterse 2001a:16; cf. Wilson 1995; Farris 1998). According to Pieterse (2001a), preaching as an encounter needs to be understood in the framework of a covenantal relationship. It is an event in which the congregation meets the living God (Wilson 1995:21).

Cas JA Vos (1996: vol.1:64-65) also takes the covenant as the theme for homiletic theory. According to Vos (1996:vol.1:117), the covenant provides a communicative framework for individual and social interaction within the congregation. Within this

framework God communicates with his people while both the individual and the Christian community can respond to God's Word. Because Christ is the head of the covenant and salvation and healing comes through Him alone, the Holy Spirit appeals to the people of the covenant to take up their position in Christ and to continue the struggle against sin. Rose (1995:27) says there are two communications: the divine-human conversation and the human-human conversation. On the one hand, there is the divine-human conversation between God and the community of faith. On the other hand, there is the human-human conversation. Through these communications, preaching is not only the transmission of truth, an encounter with God, or congregational transformation, but also "mutual edification" and mutual "orientation, clarification, encouragement, discrimination and direction-finding" through conversation around the Word in the community of faith (cf Rose 1997:98). However, in the covenantal understanding of preaching the purpose of preaching is not just conversation, but also an encounter through the conversation.

Through this encounter, the church articulates its identity. BA Müller (1992:7) states that "The identity of the Church to be proclaimed, and reclaimed theologically, is given as a *creatio verbi*, as *corpus Christi*, i.e. it is created by His covenanting action in history and is sustained by God's rule in Christ as the Head of Church and cosmos."

In the covenant perspective, the identity of the church is also connected with the relationship with the world. The church does not exist for herself, but for the world. How can the church as the body of Christ bear witness in the world? This core insight about the richness of a covenantal relation still leaves for the preacher and the congregation the demanding work of taking seriously the specific commands of this covenantal Other. Clearly the commands and guidance of the God of Israel and of the church are not vague and fuzzy, but quite concrete in the way they concern the specificities of life. Those bound to this God are summoned to act differently in every sphere of life. Indeed, obedience consists in bringing every zone of our existence under the will, purpose, and expectation of this covenantal partner (Brueggemann 1994:47-48).

Thirdly, preaching has to be understood as a *collaborative* act (McClure 1995; cf. Rose 1997). According to Long (1989a:47), preaching is “not merely a deed performed by an individual preacher but rather the faithful action of the whole church.” In order to form the communal identity, the individuals in a congregation have to participate the ministry of preaching actively.

Finally, in order to build up the church, preaching is to be understood as a *cooperative* ministry having a dynamic relationship with other ministries of the church. The church is built up through the functions of the church: *kerygma*, *leitourgia*, *koinonia* and *diakonia* (Vos 1996:vol.1:146-147). Ministries in a local church are a unity (Nel 2002a:9). Ministries are God coming to his church in a variety of ways (Nel 2000:77ff). In order to build up the local church as a community of faith, the ministries of the church have to be understood in conjunction with each other. Preaching needs pastoral care; pastoral care needs *koinonia* and *diache* and to be really effective and vice versa. It is like plaiting the ministries together into one whole and beautiful unity (Nel 2002a:12).

2.4.3.2 Preaching as an act of being a servant

In the previous section, I discussed the way the church can be built up as a community of faith through preaching as an act of forgiveness in the church. What is explored in this section is that, in order for the church as a community of faith to bring forgiveness into the world, preaching has to be an act of being a servant.

The model of forgiveness emphasises the importance of the ethical aspects of the church’s identity (Ricoeur 1996:9; Dreyer 2000:38). To bring about mutual forgiveness, with regard to the identity of the church, is to form the community of faith and restore the credibility of the church in the world. In the marginalised, secularised situation, specially the situation of the loss of credibility of the church, with regard to the relationship between the church and the world, if preaching is to an act of restoring the credibility of the church, preaching and the character of the church should be considered together (Pieterse 2001a:111).

Firstly, with regard to preaching as an act of being servant, this represents the church's most powerful witness as a community of faith in the world.

WD Jonker (1979:115) states that “the gospel comes to us through the normal process of communication. In this process the credibility of the communicator is of the utmost importance. In preaching the gospel we do not communicate objective truths in an abstract way, but testify to the saving power of the gospel in our own lives.” Jonker (1979:117) argues that “the credibility of the church is irrevocably linked with its faithfulness to its nature as the body of Christ and the herald of his Kingdom”. Word and deed should not be divorced but should be conveyed in an interrelated way by a community (Pieterse 2001a:112).

According to G Dekker (2002:181-182), the church in a modernising society needs to look at its organisation and its functioning in society. Max Webber (1976:268-275) distinguished two kinds of prophecy: ethical and exemplary prophecy. Ethical prophecy implies what the churches understand by prophecy: speak out prophetically, in other words critically, and tell the world what is good and just. Exemplary prophecy implies that the church does not focus on proclaiming its message to “outsiders” but – as an ecclesiastical community – actually lives life as it says life should be lived. It offers, or is, an example to the world (Dekker 2002:182). Dekker (2002:182) argues that the way of ethical prophecy is fraught with problems. In the situation of the contemporary church, exemplary prophecy is a better way to reach outsiders. Dekker (2002:182) maintains that “this is the best contribution the church can make to a more just society in our modern world”. The church could serve society best by recovering what it means to be a community of faith (Dawn 1995:133). According to Lohfink (1985), the most important and most irreplaceable service Christians can render society is quite simply that they truly be the church (Lischer 1993:115).

Secondly, if the church is a servant of the world and thereby restores its credibility, through this the world can be reconciled with God. For this to take place, preaching must be understood as an act of performance of the preached Word.

With regard to preaching, a hermeneutic activity of preaching is a “performance” act. Charles L Bartow (1997), in *God’s human speech: a practical theology of proclamation* (1997), understands preaching as an act of performance. Especially in postmodernism, with its permeating emphasis on relativity, Bartow draws on his extensive background in performance to interpret the Bible as God’s self-performance. Through the Bible, God defines Godself. Furthermore, God acts through the performance of Scripture in the Bible reading and preaching.

Nicholas Lash (1986) argues that the Christian interpretation of the Bible involves primarily the performance of scripture. If preaching is continually to form and transform the identity and mission of the church, a homiletic hermeneutic is an ongoing performance of this process of identity formation. Drawing on Lash’s work, Richard Lischer (1992:90-92; 1993:128-130) has recently argued that preachers need to take more seriously this performative character of interpretation. Like a Beethoven quartet or a Shakespearean play, scripture is a text for which the fundamental form of interpretation consists in its performance. The Christian community’s interpretation of scripture is similar to the interpretation of a play through the performance of a company of actors or the interpretation of a musical score through the performance of a group of musicians. As Lash (1986:42) writes,

The fundamental form of the *Christian* interpretation of scripture is the life, activity, and organization of the believing community. Secondly...Christian practice, as interpretive action, consists in the *performance* of texts which are construed as “rendering,” bearing witness to, one whose words and deeds, discourse and suffering, “rendered” the truth of God in human history. The performance of the New Testament enacts the conviction that these texts are most appropriately read as the story of Jesus, the story of everyone else, and the story of God.

According to Lash (1986:45), the primary poles in the interpretation of scripture are not finally written texts (for example, the biblical text at one pole and theological texts or sermonic texts at the other). Rather, the poles in biblical interpretation are fundamentally patterns of human action: on the one hand, “what was said and done and suffered, then, by Jesus and his disciples”, and on the other, “what is said and done and suffered, now, by those who seek to share his obedience and hope”. Within this framework, the most important interpretation of scripture takes place in the performance

of scripture by the Christian community. The interpretation of the scriptures is a full-time affair, involving their enactment as “the social existence of an entire human community” (Campbell 1994:18).

In the perspective of performance, the “hermeneutical gap” between then and now, as Lischer (1992) notes, is not a matter for reflection, but is daily overcome in the life of Christian communities. “Preaching is not... one person’s persuasive address. It is the ceaseless activity of the church....” (Lischer 1992:90).

Without the community’s performance of and participation in the Word, the chasm between the Book and the contemporary community is unbridgeable. The meaning of a text is disclosed in the community’s performance of the text in worship and in its witness in the world (Campbell 1994:19).

Such interpretation is not limited to the ways we seek to glean a message from the biblical text for the sermon. Rather, interpretation also includes the ways in which the church’s practice of preaching is itself an interpretative performance of scripture. Lash and Lischer take a broader view of the matter of biblical interpretation than preachers do. From this perspective the interpretive questions take a new form: How does the practice of preaching itself enact an interpretation of scripture? And what are the implications of this enactment for the way we preach?

The sermon, according to Bartow (1997:53ff), is a performance action that refigures the world of the preacher and that of the congregation. The performance emerges from the interaction of the preacher with the biblical text, the confessional tradition through which the preacher interprets the text, the congregation, and of course, the real presence of Christ. Bartow (:53ff) envisions the sermon as a dramatic narrative. The author does not mean that every sermon is a “story”, but that it has a beginning, middle, and end. It moves. It does something in the performative sense. By participating in the sermon, the congregation engages in an encounter that affects the community.

Rather than the futile attempt to correlate the biblical story with the dominant story which inevitably results in accommodating the Gospel to contemporary culture and experience, preaching, according to Campbell (1997:212), is a “performance of the

Scripture” that builds up the church to politically enact a “contrast society” in its life in and for the world. Preaching focuses not on narratives that correlate the Christian story with the human story, but on the unique identity of the character of Jesus of Nazareth. The repeated recital and reenactment of the story of Jesus in the church is not intended to address the experience and needs to individual hearers, not to form the communal consciousness of the community, but rather to form politically-enacted communities of “resident aliens” who “become characters in the ongoing story of Jesus” in a world that is fundamentally “disobedient to God” (Campbell 1997:231-232). Preaching for the world is to help the church as the body of Christ to be an example to the world. It is a performance, which implies living as an alternative community to show the love, justice, of God.

Charles L Campbell (1994:18ff) suggests that the proclamation of Jesus Christ is a concrete enactment of Jesus’ “third way,” which involves neither passivity nor violence, but is rather the way of active, non-violent engagement with the “powers” of the world. According him, Jesus, in his ministry, both witnesses to and embodies the reign of God in the world. The fulfilment of God’s coming reign is proclaimed and takes place in Jesus’ preaching, teaching, and mighty works. During the period of his ministry Jesus is an authoritative figure, actively challenging the powers with freedom and scope of movement. Moreover, during his ministry Jesus gathers together a community, a “contrast society”, whose life is shaped by the practice of non-violence. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus constitutes this people as a community of non-violent resistance to the powers.

However, in the course of his ministry Jesus’ preaching and deeds offend the powers of the world, which turn against him and seek to destroy him by violent means. The powers simply cannot sit by and allow such a challenge to their dominion to exist. Nevertheless, even as the religious and political authorities close in on him, Jesus explicitly refuses to respond to the powers in their own violent terms. Therefore Jesus is not affirming an unearthly, “spiritual” kingdom, but rather one that is “in the world, but not of it”.

Campbell (1994:20) concludes that as a form of discipleship empowered and shaped by this story of Jesus, faithful Christian preaching embodies a distinctive performance of the New Testament. The faithful proclamation of Jesus Christ is an enactment of Jesus' third way. As Jesus embodied the reign of God and challenged the powers of the world, but refused to resort to violence in that effort, so in proclaiming Jesus Christ the preacher is engaged in this same non-violent resistance to the powers. The preacher witnesses boldly; he or she challenges the powers of the world that oppose God's reign; she or he proclaims the reign of God in Jesus Christ and the freedom made possible by that reign. Christian preaching is not a form of passivity, but an active engagement with the powers.

In this kind of preaching the character of preaching and the church or the community of faith becomes important, for one cannot preach non-violently without developing the virtues, habits, and disciplines of non-violence in one's own life. No mere technique is adequate for such preaching. Rather, Jesus' third way invites preachers to discern the violence in their own lives and to participate in communities within which the skills of peaceableness are practised and learned (Campbell 1994:18-24).

Stanley Hauerwas (1983:150) states that some of the disciplines of peaceableness may be simple; they may seem almost trivial. Other disciplines may be more dramatic, including even the practices of those communities engaged in the tactics of non-violent political resistance.

As an enactment of Jesus' third way, preaching will also require certain virtues, particularly the virtue of patient hope. A people of hope can actively engage the powers of the world without losing patience when their efforts are not immediately effective. For our hope is born of the assurance that it is not simply our task to transform the world's violence into God's peace; that has already been done in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Hauerwas 1983:147). In that hope, those who proclaim Jesus Christ can follow his third way with patience and even with joy – the joy that comes with the assurance of God's redemption and the confidence that we are at least engaging in the right struggle.

Thirdly, preaching as the upbuilding of the church is to be understood as a *journey* (Nel 2002:12). If preaching is to be an act of upbuilding of the church, it is to be more than an event. Richard Lischer (1992:88) argues that the image of preaching as an *event* needs to turn into the image of a *journey*.

As attractive as the *event* is as a metaphor for God's action in the sermon, it does not deliver the moral and theological formation necessary for God's people in the world. The alternative image of *journey* or *pilgrimage* suggests that the sermon does not merely strike the conscience or create an existential experience, but that preaching, as opposed to individual sermons, forms a community of faith over time (Lischer 1992:88). This journey metaphor is linked with one of narrative. The journey is only possible for those whose existence is formed by the stories of Israel, Jesus and the Christian community (Greenwood 1996:37). To remember and be formed by both Israel's and Jesus' stories is to be nourished as a 'contrast model' of community, a servant community which takes time to care and nurture friendships, a faithful manifestation of the peaceable Kingdom in the world, a community of peace and truth in a world of mendacity and fear, a place of hospitality to the stranger, a place of unity in a divided world, a living alternative (Hauerwas 1981, 1988).

2.4.3.3 Preaching as an act of being a messenger

I have discussed the characteristic of preaching to facilitate the church's role as the community of faith and a servant. In this section I will consider the mode of communication by which the church as a messenger communicates the Gospel in the world. A mode of communication influences the formation of the identity of the church (Campbell 1997). The church speaks both for itself and to the relativistic and pluralist society in which it exists with its own distinctive language and convictions. Otherwise, the church is likely to fail to contribute significantly to public moral discourse and simultaneously become forgetful. Therefore this section will discuss how the church as an alternative community can communicate the Gospel in the world by considering the formation of the identity of the church.

The church in a period of transition, as was discussed in a previous section, is secularised and marginalised. In this situation, according to Douglas J Hall (1996:198), “the church needs to disengage from the dominant culture intentionally to reform its identity and to reengage with fresh voice”. However, as Hall (1996:198) mentioned, it is not as a once-for-all movement but as a continuous process. Therefore in this perspective, the way of communication is considered not only to form the identity of the church as an alternative community within the community, but also to communicate the Gospel in the world.

Testimony

In the relativistic and pluralistic culture, the proclamation of the Gospel is no longer a privileged claim (Brueggemann 1998b:22). With regard to the formation of the church’s identity, a mode of communication for the church in transition is through *testimony*. Walter Brueggemann (1998b:22-29), Ronald J Allen (2001:34-48) and Craig A Loscalzo (2000:11-28) suggest *testimony* as a mode of communication for the formation of the identity of the church in transition.

Thomas Long (1989a:42-43) articulates the meaning of the testimony as the image of the witness by following Paul Ricoeur: (1) the witness is not a volunteer, not just anyone who comes forward to give testimony, but only the one who is sent to testify. (2) The testimony of the witness is not about the global meaning of human experience but about God’s claim upon life. It is Yahweh who is witnessed to in the testimony. (3) The purpose of the testimony is proclamation to all peoples. It is on behalf of the people, for their belief and understanding, that the testimony is made. (4) The testimony is not merely one of words but rather demands a total engagement of speech and action. The whole life of the witness is bound up in the testimony.

Long (1989a:19-47) addresses the matter of homiletic purpose with various images of preacher – herald, pastor, storyteller, and witness. While Long finds each of these images helpful in some ways, he proposes another which he feels “is more suited than any of the others to disclose the true character of Christian preaching” (Long 1989a:41).

It is the image of the preacher as witness (:42). Appealing to passage such as Isaiah 43:8-13 and Acts 20:24, Long claims that the purpose of preaching is to bear witness to the saving grace of Jesus Christ and to the newness of life found in Christ (Long 1989a:42).

The witness image has several implications. First, it “emphasises the authority of the preacher in a new way” (Long 1989a:44). Rather than authority coming from experience or expertise, it comes out of “see and hearing.” The preacher and the congregation therefore must be a keen listener and discernor of God’s voice in the text. The second implication has to do with the way we understand the Scriptures. The image of witness understands the Scriptures to be records of the many encounters people of faith have had with a living God. It is on these encounters that the preacher focuses the sermon.

We go to scripture, then, not to glean a set of facts about God or the faith that can then be announced whenever and wherever, but to encounter a presence, to hear God’s voice speaking to us ever anew, calling us in the midst of the situations in which we find ourselves to be God’s faithful people (Long 1989a:45).

Long also believes that there is a communal nature to this understanding of scripture. The preacher approaches scripture not as an individual seeker but as one chosen by the community of believers to approach it with its many questions and needs. The third implication has to do with the style of preaching. Because witnessing, or testifying, necessarily involves telling what we have seen and heard, it will often take narrative form. It will not always be so, though, as the form of the message must be “governed by the truth to which they correspond. The shape of the witness’s sermon should fit the character of the testimony” (Long 1989a:46). The fourth implication acknowledges that “the witness is not a neutral observer” (Long 1989a:46). Each time we approach the scriptures for meaningful words for faithful living, we come back for another time. Rarely do we come to hear a message for the first time. Thus, our approach of the scripture is full of the baggage from previous trips, previous study, and the influence of other believers. We also come deeply enmeshed in our culture and worldview.

The location of the witness, in other words, is critical, and the preacher as witness is one who stands in and with a particular community of faith, deeply involved in the concrete struggles of that community to find meaning, to seek justice, and to be faithful to the gospel (Long 1989a:46).

The fifth implication of the image of the preacher as witness is that the setting of such preaching is the worship of the church (Long 1989a:46). Long points out that in our worship as we acknowledge the cosmic battle between the powers of the world and the redeeming power of God. The very act of worship itself is a bearing witness to God's power to save and to redeem, and it is a time when we recognise that "Christ is the one and true witness" (Long 1989a:46).

Testimony is a form of apology (Allen 2001:47). Brueggemann (1997:44; 1998b) explains that "*testimony*" is utterance by an alleged first-person witness who offers an account of experience that depends solely upon the trustworthiness of the witnesses, but that cannot appeal for verification either to agreed-upon metaphysics or to external historical data. According to Brueggemann (1998b:22), while the proclamation is an assumption of universal consensus, the testimony is a bid for assent. It refers to courtroom exercise in which the "truth of the matter" is deeply contested, and different witnesses are called upon to give accounts of "the truth of the matter" that turn out to be profoundly contradictory.

Firstly, testimony is a relevant communication style for forming the identity of the church. The notion of apologetics has often been employed in the church in the sense of justifying Christian faith to those who are outside the Christian community. For instance, early Christians justified their faith in the face of questions from other people in the Mediterranean world. Christians sometimes defended aspects of Christian faith against attacks posed by the scientific worldview spawned in the Enlightenment. Modern apologists seek to show that the Christian faith is harmonious with objective fact (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:27-28).

Apologetic motifs, however, often function as much to strengthen the faith of persons within a community as to defend the faith against outsiders (Allen 2001:47). Apologetics helps a community understand why it is possible to believe and act as it

does. Given the relativism and pluralism of the world of modernisation, why persons should remain or become Christian needs to be explained. According to Allen (2001:47), therefore, in the transitional context, testimony is one of the most effective forms of apology. Apologetic preaching helps strengthen Christian identity. The preacher as an apologist does not provide scientific proof of the truth of Christian claims. However, Charles L Blaisdell (in Allen 2001:46-47) notices that preachers can at least help congregations understand why it is not irrational to believe in God and to be a part of the Christian community. To say the same thing positively, a preacher can help a congregation understand why it makes sense to believe.

Secondly, in acts of testimony, the church invites other persons to consider their interpretations of the world. Rebecca Chopp (1997:197-198) speaks lyrically: “Testimony is not just confession of what something meant – that is, what it means to me – though it is that to a limited degree. In its fullest sense, the person who gives testimony articulates the truth of what she has heard, experienced, and endured.” Furthermore, “To bear witness, to testify, is to give an account through one’s life to that which both fills and moves beyond one’s life.”

Brueggemann (1998b:23) enlarges on this by saying that testimony is advocacy of a very odd truth, a truth that is off-centred and in deep tension with dominant, commonly accepted givens. It does not claim to be able to prove it. But this does not imply that the witness of the church is not true, rather it doesn’t need to prove its validity by some external means. With the loss of Christian consensus and theological hegemony, “the truth of the matter” is greatly contested, the truth about the reality and character of God and the consequent reality and character of the world.

Allen (2001:47) proposes the form of testimony as storytelling, especially as that story has interacted with others – others not only as human beings but also as biblical texts, Christian doctrines, or experiences in nature. Testimony can also take artistic forms of expression, such as music, painting, sculpture, dance, cinema, video, and various forms of writing (poems, short stories, novels, essays). Instead of delivering a monologue from the pulpit, a preacher might engage in a transgression in sermonic form by offering

testimony in a sermon through a series of slides projected in the sanctuary. Testimony can take other forms than words; it can be embodied in the full round of activities in “the everydayness of one’s life” (Chopp 1997:47).

Brueggemann (1998b:23) summarises the characteristics of testimony as follows: First, it is *fragile*, that is, it depends on the nerve of the preacher. Second, it is *local*, that is, it makes no sweeping, universal claim, but appeals to what is concretely known. Third, it is *persuasive*, that is, the rhetoric aims to win over the jury. Fourth, it is *contested*, that is, it dares to make utterances in the presence of other claims that may be more powerful and more credible. Fifth, it is *fragmented*, that is, it is only a piece of a narrative that brings with it a whole theory of reality that is implied but left unexpressed.

Overhearing

Walter Brueggemann (1997:79) suggests the mode of *overhearing* testimony. The church as an alternative community lives in the context of the surrounding culture, engaging with the culture, but not controlled by it. The faithful church examines those aspects of the culture that do not contradict the Gospel; it speaks the language of the surrounding cultures and of the gospel; it constantly tries to communicate the gospel in the surrounding cultures; and is cultivating and forming the culture of God’s new community, a culture not of the world (Guder et al 1998:114).

For this reason, the church is always bicultural, conversant with the language and customs of the surrounding culture and living toward the language and ethics of the Gospel (Guder et al 1998:114). One of the tasks of the church is to translate the gospel so that the surrounding culture can understand it, yet help those believers who have been in that culture move towards living according to the behaviours and communal identity of God’s missional people – in the language of the New Testament, God’s *ethnos* (cf. 1 Pet 2:9)(:114).

In order to achieve the objective described above, one mode of communication lies in *overhearing* with a view to the formation of the identity and mission of the church.

According to Brueggemann (1997:79), biblical preaching has proceeded on the assumption that the truth of biblical faith pertains to the “outsiders” even as much as the “insiders,” because the God who stands at the centre of the church’s narrative imagination is not primarily the lord of the church but the creator and governor of heaven and earth.

Therefore, Brueggemann (1997:79) argues an “*overhearing*,” that is, the theological claims made in the church by the church and for the church have to be overheard. It means that “the church itself is the primary addressee in this discourse, so that the canons of credibility operative in the church are the decisive ones”, that is, what is to be said must be tested first of all against the core memory of the church (1997:79). Brueggemann (1997:79) emphasises that such “overhearing” is not accidental. Rather, the church, at its most courageous and its most faithful, deliberately and intentionally makes its claims for the sake of the non-church public (1997:79). It is inconceivable that “church talk” should be casually overheard by the public at large, as though a casual “drive by” the church would make a difference. Rather, out of its own baptismal conversation, the churches of the Gospel celebrated in the baptismal community are echoed in the broader context in ways germane to public questions, public issues, and public possibilities (1997:80).

Walter Brueggemann (1991:41-45) cites a beautiful example of this kind of communication from the Bible – II Kings 18-19. In II Kings 18 and 19 we read the story of the time when Jerusalem, under the reign of Hezekiah, is surrounded by a huge host of Assyrian troops, sent there by King Sennacherib. The Assyrian forces have been plundering and sacking the cities of Judah. Jerusalem, the final prize, is now to be plucked. Hezekiah, 39 years old, and in the fourteenth year of his reign, is a pious and faithful king facing a terrible situation. He has already stripped the gold and silver off the altar and appointments of the temple and from the doors of the palace. His treasury is empty. There are no more material objects with which buy time against the Assyrians.

The Rabshakeh, Sennaacharib’s haughty ambassador, comes with his entourage to stand on the top of the wall that surrounds the beleaguered city. He is met by representatives

of Hezekiah, who ask him politely to converse with them in Aramaic, which is the language of international diplomacy. “Do not speak to us in Hebrew, within the hearing of those of our people who are on the wall.” The Rabshakeh responds with insult and threats: “Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the people sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and to drink their own urine?” Then, in a loud voice and in bad Hebrew, he shouts his demands, laced with seductive promises and dire threats: “Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: ‘Make your peace with me and come out to me; then every one of you will eat from you own vine and your own fig tree, and drink water from you own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive oil and honey, that you may live and not die’” (II Kings 18:26-27).

Hezekiah and his advisors gather in the palace. The king sends one of his officials to consult with the prophet Isaiah. Hezekiah, a man of prayer, recalls God's faithfulness in the past and places his desperate situation before the Lord. The message from Isaiah comes: He has heard a Word from the Lord. He tells Hezekiah to hold firm and to lay his case and the arrogant threats of Sennacherib before God. Hezekiah is given the assurance that a rumour will cause the Assyrian general to return to his own land, and that Sennacherib will die at the hand of one of his own sons. And as though miraculously, the Assyrian army is removed as a threat. The faith and righteousness of Hezekiah are vindicated.

Brueggemann (1991) has made this story the basis for offering a powerful set of observations about the kind of formation in faith that is required “behind the wall” for people of faith to offer their witness and to challenge the values and assumptions of secular societies “on the wall.”

To Brueggemann, if preaching is to help churches unmask the pretence of secular value structures and the seductive injustices of capitalist and market economies, communities of faith have to be grounded deeply in an alternate set of stories, and be equipped with an alternate set of virtues. Brueggemann (1991) says that if the churches are going to

offer their witness and guidance “beyond” the wall in credible and relevant ways, they must be capable of relating Christian normative judgments and visions in language that is intelligible and that has bite for those who have no Christian memory or commitments. Therefore, the church has to consider these two languages: the language “behind the wall” and the language for use “on the wall.”

Brueggemann (1991:43) argues that “people of faith in public life must be *bilingual*. They must have a more communal language for use behind the gate, in the community, and out of sight and range of the imperial negotiations.” Also they must have a public language for negotiation at the wall. He (1991:44) continually argues that “Christians should be nurtured to be bilingual, to know how to speak the language on the wall in the presence of the imperial negotiators, but also how to speak the language behind the wall in the community of faith, where a different set of assumptions, a different perception of the world, a different epistemology are at work”.

In regard this Lesslie Newbigin speaks of the need for Christian communities to be culturally bilingual (1989:55-65, cf Guder 2000:94). He refers here to the fundamental missionary task of Christian communities. As followers of Christ, they are being formed into distinctive communities speaking the language of faith rooted in and informed by Scripture. Therefore, they share with all Christian communities the cross-cultural commonality that is the presence and role of Jesus Christ. As they follow Christ, their language makes them, in many ways, distinctive within their communities. They are, as they learn Christ, more and more “strangers and aliens” (1 Peter), “resident aliens” and “colonies” (Hauerwas & Willimon 1992; 1994), and “contrast societies” (Lofink 1985).

Barrett (1998:120) explains this at greater length. The church as an alternative community has an alternative vocabulary. Christians share the languages of the cultures that surround them, and they speak with a distinctive vocabulary that expresses realities that they experience and are now able to identify through the agency of the Holy Spirit. This different vocabulary is not confined to technical theological terms employed by the church as a verbal shorthand for complex Christian experience. It also includes simple

words like sin, grace, and holiness, words reflecting equally complex realities but seldom used in everyday speech in the world.

However God's "sent people" certainly do not use this distinctive vocabulary in order to keep secrets from the world. This motive would be contrary to their mission in and to the reign of God. But distinctive words are needed to signal the new and different life Christians find themselves living in communion with God's holy nation and in allegiance to God's present and future reign. Such efforts try to express the Christian faith in the language of the surrounding society in order to communicate with those who do not believe. Yet such borrowed language is ultimately inadequate, first because the experience of the Spirit in the community of God's reign cannot be captured by any language; second, because the meanings behind the words that the church shares with its culture have forever been changed for those found, renewed, and now sent by the vision of the reign of God (Barrett 1998:120).

Therefore, as a means of forming the church as a community of faith in a secularised and marginalised world preaching is first of all *church talk* in order to help the church to remain separate from the world. Second, the church needs to re-engage in the world, because she is not of the world, but in the world. The church proclaims the lordship of God in the world, not just in private but also in public. To do this, *church talk* must be *public talk*, without ceasing to be *church talk* (Brueggemann 1997:80).

2.4.4 Conclusion

From an identified ecclesiology and Ricoeur's model, a homiletic theory has been developed for the upbuilding of the church in transition. First, in the secularised and pluralised context of the church, preaching is an act of translation with the object of forming the identity of the community. The translation is possible in a dialogic communication. This translation only can take place in a dialogic community. Second, in a dialogic community where memories are exchanged, preaching is an act of exchange of memories. The act of remembering is an ecclesial hermeneutic for the community and through the community. A relevant sermon form and language have

then been articulated. Finally, most importantly, preaching should be an act of forgiveness. Forgiveness is an appropriation of remembering. Through an act of forgiveness, the church is built up as the Community of faith, Servant, and Messenger.

2.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter is to develop a homiletic theory that stands in a dynamic relationship to an ecclesiology for forming and transforming the identity and mission of the church.

1. The hypothesis of this study is that preaching should maintain a dynamic relationship with ecclesiology for the upbuilding of the church. This relationship means that the preaching ministry needs to focus on the upbuilding of the church. At same time, the meaning of the upbuilding of the church should serve as a guide to the preaching ministry – regarding its goals, its homiletic hermeneutic, and its communication.

2. To prove this hypothesis, therefore, this study started to develop a faithful and relevant ecclesiology in a transition. In order to identify this ecclesiology, firstly the context of the church – that is, the characteristics of modernisation and their influence on the church – was described. The result of these influences has been that the church in transition has been secularised and marginalised.

Secondly, in such a transition, a faithful and relevant ecclesiology, the identity and mission of the church have been developed. What emerges from this discussion is that the church is to be a missionary community, which has missions: to be a community, to be a servant, to be a messenger.

3. In describing how the identity of the community could be formed, I have applied Ricoeur's narrative identity theory. According to Ricoeur, the identity has both a temporal and relational perspective. In order to articulate the identity of a community, these two perspectives should be considered together. Ricoeur provides three models for

forming the identity of a community – the model of translation, the model of the exchange of memories, and the model of forgiveness.

4. The identity and mission of the church that I have described could fruitfully serve as a guide to preaching for the upbuilding of the church in transition. The implication of a missional ecclesiology and Ricoeur's model of the identity of communication is that a homiletic theory would involve preaching as act of translation, preaching as act of exchange of memory, and preaching as an act of forgiveness.

4.1 Preaching as an act of translation means that in order to form the identity of the community of faith, the identities of individuals and communities need to be translated. For translation, the communication in preaching needs to be a dialogue. Through dialogue as the mode of communication the identities of individuals can be exchanged.

4.2. Preaching as an act of exchanging memories involves a process of remembering. Remembering is a hermeneutic act for the community and through the community.

4.3 Preaching as an act of forgiveness is a process of formation and transformation of the community of faith.

This study has developed a homiletic theory for the upbuilding of the church in transition. In the next chapter, this theory will be explained in the context of the church in Korea.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEMPORARY ECCLESIOLOGY AND HOMILETIC PRAXIS IN THE KOREAN CONTEXT

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

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

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

3.1 CONTEMPORARY ECCLESIOLOGY OF THE CHURCH IN KOREA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The missionaries provided many vital medical services, particularly for the poor and for women, and built many Western hospitals. The Methodist missionaries placed special emphasis on education. The Rev Henry Appenzeller opened the first school (BaeJaeHakDang) in 1886 to teach boys English. In the same year Mrs Scranton started the Ehwa Girl's School, which was developed into a college (1910) and, later, into one of the largest women's universities in the world. Presbyterian missionaries also soon established schools of their own. By 1910, there were some 800 Christian schools spread all over Korea and accommodating over 41,000 students, which was about twice the total enrolment in all Korean government schools. The missionaries also opened orphanages (Brown 1997:23) and actively participated in the translation of the Bible and other literary works into the Korean language (Kim, BS 1995:40-41).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Finally, all Koreans, including Christians, were compelled to worship *Kami* and *Amaterasu* at Japanese Shinto shrines. *Kami* designates a deity which the Japanese believe to be revealed in awesome natural phenomena, mythological figures, historical heroes, and the spirits of their ancestors. Shintoism, therefore, can be said to be a polytheistic religion (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies 1990:285). Among all the gods, *Amaterasu* was identified with the ancestor-deity of the imperial family of Japan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.1.2 Analysis and Interpretation of Ecclesiology of the Korean Church

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

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

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

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

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

3.1.2.1 Sociopolitical perspective

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.1.2.2 Religious perspective

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

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

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

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

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

Korean Shamanism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Korean Taoism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Korean Buddhism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Korean Neo-Confucianism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chundogyo and the New Korean Religions

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

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

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

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

Korean religious cultural influence on the Korean churches

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.1.2.3 Ecclesiastical Perspective

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

The Evangelistic Movement

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

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

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

The Ecumenical Movement

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

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

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

The Diakonia Movement

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

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

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

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

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

The Mission movement

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

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

The Church renewal movement

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

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

The characteristics of the ecclesiastic tradition of the Korean churches

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.1.3 Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2.1 Critical evaluation of the praxis of Korean preaching

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

3.2.1.1 An emphasis on a personal relationship with God

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2.1.3 An emphasis on the church-growth model of evangelism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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

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

CHAPTER 4

AN ADJUSTED THEORY FOR PRAXIS

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

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

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

4.1.1 Preaching and Ecclesiology

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

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

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

4.1.2 Three models for the formation of the community of faith

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

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

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

4.1.3.1 Preaching as an act of translation

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

4.1.3.2 Preaching as an act of exchange

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.1.3.3 Preaching as an act of forgiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.2 AN ADJUSTED THEORY FOR PRAXIS

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

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

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

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

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

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

However, many theologians have concluded that the basis for Fuller's theories is biblically and theologically weak. These critiques indicate that Fuller church growth theology is number-oriented, is driven by American pragmatism, and commits a serious error in that it clearly divides human beings into spiritual and socio-political dimensions (Gwak 2000:66). This homiletic theory connected with a dominant ecclesiology of the Korean church cannot form and transform a faithful and relevant ecclesiology.

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.2.2.2 The need of exchange of memory

The need for an ecclesial homiletic hermeneutic

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

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

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

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

The need of variety of sermon form and language

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

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

4.2.3 The need of preaching as an act of forgiveness

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.3 CONCLUSION

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

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