FROM ETHICAL BANKRUPTCY TO ETHICAL CREDIBILITY:
H. RICHARD NIEBUHR, STANLEY HAUERWAS,
AND THE KOREAN CHURCH

BY

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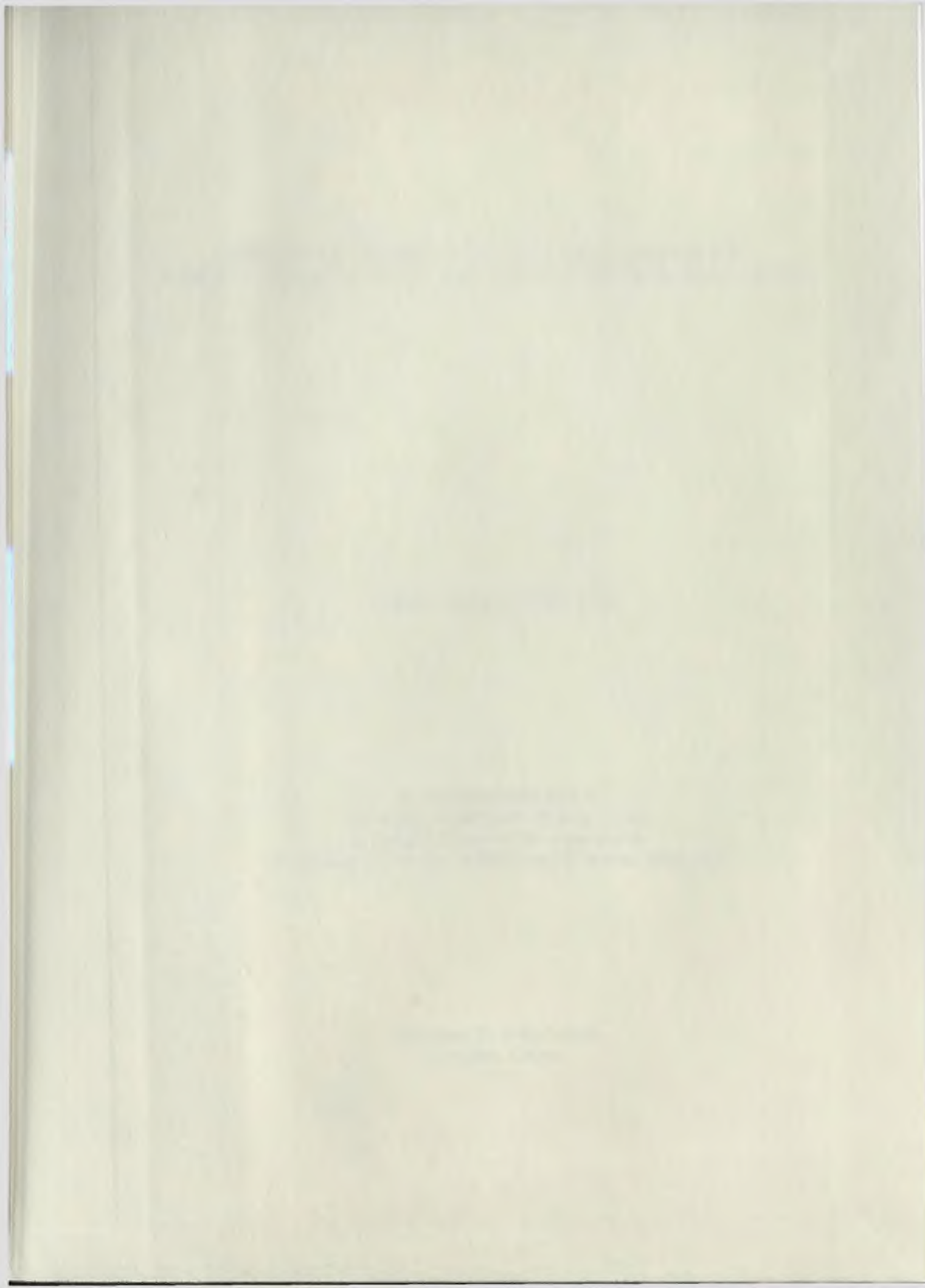FROM ETHICAL BANKRUPTCY TO ETHICAL CREDIBILITY:
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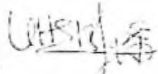
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ABSTRACT

"From Ethical Bankruptcy to Ethical Credibility: H. Richard Niebuhr, Stanley Hauerwas, and the Korean Church"

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This dissertation provides a theological and sociological examination of the moral crisis of the Korean church based on ethical paradigms from Stanley Hauerwas and H. Richard Niebuhr. The dissertation also explains and critically analyzes the ethical problems of the Korean church and the assimilation of narratives and unethical practices from Korean society into the Korean church. Besides analyzing the influence that this assimilation has had on the moral formation of the Korean church, the study also suggests theological resources for correcting this problem. The thesis of the dissertation is that an ethical framework based on the work of Stanley Hauerwas and H. Richard Niebuhr not only explains the assimilation of cultural and ecclesial narratives that has led to the moral crisis of the Korean church but also offers an effective approach for forming the character of the church in positive ways. The dissertation emphasizes the necessity of finding new narratives for the Korean church and Korean society. It shows how Hauerwas's approach and Niebuhr's ethical categories can benefit a community like the Korean church, which has experienced a moral crisis of corruption and a lack of public trust over the past several decades.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My academic journey for this dissertation began with my experience of the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea in 2009. Before I decided to study ethics specifically, many people had encouraged me to study ethics. Then, not long after the time of the Sammul Church Afghanistan prisoner in 2007, I attended a conference as a seminary student. There I met the Secretary-General of the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea. In addition, several ties and coincidences made it possible to work as a staff member within the organization. Then, in 2010, I came to study abroad in North America to work on Christian ethics. After hearing a colloquium seminar at McMaster Divinity College entitled "The Doctoral Thesis Subject as Serendipity," I began to ponder what I was looking for in my life's journey. Over the course of ten years, I landed on this current doctoral theme on ethics in church history. I believe all the events of my life have led me to this theme, and so the subject of my doctoral dissertation has become my fortunate and serendipitous focus in my theological education program. At the time when I first heard of the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, I could never have imagined that I would write a doctoral dissertation examining issues related to the social trust of the Korean church in the country. The best surveys of social trust in the church were conducted by this same movement, and the organization has been a voice for positive ethical change in the Korean church. I am honored to follow in their footsteps and call the church in my home country to live according to the biblical narrative we share as a community of Christians.

Soli Deo Gloria. Amen.

CONTENTS

TABLES AND FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of five sections. The first section presents the thesis statement of

this dissertation and shows the need for the dissertation. The second section defines key

terms (e.g., narrative approach and character ethics, social trust and social capital,

assimilation of narrative, and Post-Christendom). The third section reviews previous

scholarship regarding three relevant areas (i.e., the ethical issues of the Korean church,

Stanley Hauerwas and H. Richard Niebuhr, and Post-Christendom studies). The fourth

section explains the methodology and limitations of the study. The fifth section outlines

the structure of the dissertation.

A. Necessity of the Dissertation

Thesis Statement

An ethical framework based on the work of Stanley Hauerwas and H. Richard Niebuhr

not only explains the assimilation of cultural and ecclesial narratives that has led to the

moral crisis of the Korean church but also offers an effective approach for forming the

character of the church in positive ways.

Necessity of the Dissertation

The current corruption in South Korea requires a theological reconsideration of the

fundamental ethical orientation of the church in society. My dissertation addresses this

problem by advancing the theological vision of Stanley Hauerwas and H. Richard

Niebuhr. This vision holds potential to transform the ethical paradigm of the Korean

church. Toward this end, the study considers the moral crises that have occurred in the

Korean church over the past few decades.[1] Moreover, it will articulate how the

narratives of Korean society and of the Korean church since the 1960s have been

assimilated in ways that put them at the root of many ethical problems in both Korean

social and church contexts. Finally, it constructs an ethical paradigm based on the ethics

of Hauerwas and Niebuhr and demonstrates that the paradigm can serve as an

overarching framework for reimagining the narratives between the Korean church and

Korean society. More specifically, my study employs a narrative analysis of the impact

of a culture on a church, applying character ethics as developed by Hauerwas and

Niebuhr in order to highlight how the master narrative in Korean society has influenced

the narrative of the Korean church. Using this methodology, I analyze the ethical

problems of the Korean church and make constructive suggestions.

The problems of the Korean church can be categorized as both a qualitative

crisis and a quantitative crisis. First, the qualitative crisis is that the social trust of

Korean churches is very low compared to other major religions in Korea. People trust

other religious communities more. Second, in quantitative terms, church growth began

to stagnate in the 1990s after the explosive growth of Korean churches leveled out. In

the future, the number of members of Korean churches is likely to decrease. In this

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[1] In this dissertation, although "the Korean church" means Protestant churches in South Korea, I will later discuss the distinctions between the Catholic Church and the Korean church in the country. "The Korean church" is a general term for all Protestant churches in the country, regardless of whether they are part of Presbyterian, Methodist, Holiness, Baptist, or Pentecostal denominations. Korean society regards the Korean church as one group.

context, researchers dealing with the problems of the Korean church point out that it is actually a dual crisis.

Until the end of the 1980s, the Korean church enjoyed a favorable reputation in society and a growing number of professing Christians and church communities. Public opinion surveys showed that Koreans of all faiths thought highly of the church as an institution, and church membership grew at a rapid pace, especially in the 30-year period from 1960 to 1990.[2] The explosive growth of the Korean church at that time coincided with high economic growth for Korean society as a whole. However, both the Korean church's reputation and its growth stagnated after 1990. Even though identifying the causes for this stagnation in church growth is not easy, it did coincide with a weakening Korean economy. About this time, the church became embroiled in a long series of public scandals involving the ethical failures of pastors and elders at many different mega-churches. They were accused of "corruption, extravagance, nepotism, and hypocrisy."[3] Not only have these scandals persisted into the twenty-first century, but the corruption also extends to prominent laypeople—so much so that, since 2000, the most important issues for Korean churches are ethical issues.[4] Sung-min Chun, a professor of worldview and biblical studies and the president at Vancouver Institute for Evangelical Worldview (VIEW), rightly observes that the scope of the ethical problems in the Korean church are not confined to a few pastors and elders. He states, "[t]he cases

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[2] The ratio of Christians to the total population of Korea increased from 2.5 percent in 1960 to 19.7 percent in 1995 and increased by 17.2 percent of the population in 35 years. The Christian population grew almost exponentially from 623,072 in 1960 to 8,760,336 in 1995. In 2005, however, the ratio of Christians was 18.3 percent, down from its peak of 19.7 percent, and the number of Christians was 8,616,438, down by 143,898 people. See Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 274.

[3] Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 284.

[4] Kim, "After Its Rapid Growth," 32–36.

of the senior pastors' moral failures mentioned above are not unfortunate exceptions. They are symptomatic of the unhealthy mentality permeating the Korean church."[5] At this point, Chun points out that the ethical issues of Korean churches are not moral deviations limited to a few individual churches. He makes it clear that the issues are a matter of mentality prevalent in the Korean church across the country.

The unhealthy mentality that prevails in the Korean church has not only caused problems within the church but has also provoked hostile reactions to the church from non-Christian society. This hostile reaction has resulted in a decline in social trust. In this regard, Sebastian Kim, an editor of *International Journal of Public Theology*, compares the ethical problems within the Korean church to the 2008 economic crisis and credit crunch of the United States. He argues that "Protestant churches in South Korea were experiencing a different kind of 'credit crunch' among the general public."[6] In his view, it is obvious that the Korean Protestant church has lost the trust and respect of the Korean people. He argues that "the contemporary Protestant church is facing a crisis in public life" as shown in the 2008 survey that "demonstrates a 'credit crunch' for the Korean Protestant Churches in the form of a serious problem of trust among the general public."[7]

Based on a survey that the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea conducted in 2008 to analyze the amount of social trust he Protestant church had, only 18 percent of

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[5] Chun, "Ethical Reading of the Story," 119–20.

[6] Kim, "Editorial," 131. Sebastian C. H. Kim is Assistant Professor for the Korean Studies Center and Professor of Theology and Public Life at Fuller Theological Seminary. He and his wife wrote a book about the history of Korean Christianity.

[7] Kim, "Editorial," 131.

Koreans viewed Protestant Christians as trustworthy and credible.[8] This is only half as many Koreans as those who rate Buddhism and the Roman Catholic Church as trustworthy.[9] The low score is related to the unethical behavior of leading Christians in Korean society.[10] The highly publicized scandals revealed serious ethical problems within the Korean church and turned the church into a target for criticism and mockery.

There are at least two appealing solutions for solving the problems of the Korean church. Niebuhr's contribution emphasizes the public responsibility of the church.[11] In other words, this perspective analyzes the problems of the Korean church from the perspective of public theology and suggests the Korean church's responsibility for society based on public theology as a solution. Hauerwas's contribution focuses on increasing the church's ability to live ethical lifestyles as a religious community.[12] This solution finds a grounding in character ethics. In other words, the church can solve its ethical problems when it becomes a more virtuous church in its moral character. Many scholars who discuss the ethical issues of the Korean church suggest that Hauerwas's

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[8] Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2008 Social Trust*, 13. The Christian Ethics Movement of Korea was established in 1987 as a non-governmental organization by 38 Christian leaders of South Korea. Its mission is to aid Christians and churches in being honest Christians and trusted churches who live ethical lives worthy of the gospel. It is also focused on creating a society that is just and peaceful. For 31 years, this organization has contributed to many policies and movements to promote living an ethical life of integrity. See https://cemk.org/about-us/.

[9] Specifically, 35.2 percent of the population trust Catholics, 31.1 percent trust Buddhists, and only 18 percent trust Protestants. See Kim, "Editorial," 131.

[10] Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2008 Social Trust*, 16.

[11] See Chang, *Korean Christianity in Post-Christendom*; Cho, "Christian Education for Public Society"; Jang, *Public Practical Theology*; Kim, "Perichoresis Christian Education Model"; Kim, *Growth Narratives*; Lee, *A Paradigm Shift*; Lee et al., *Public Theology and Public Church*; Yang, "A Study"; Yang, *Reformed Social Ethics*; Yim, "A Reflection on the Task"; Yim et al., *Public Theology*; Yim, *Public Theology for Korean Church and Society*.

[12] Cho, "Christian Ethical Implications"; Chung, *Being Church*; Kim, "A Critical Study"; Kim, "Public Homiletical Theology"; Lee, "Public Homiletical Theology"; Moon, "A Study on Ethical Responsibility"; Moon, *To Reform Ethics of the Church*.

ecclesiology and character ethics would be such an alternative approach to solving these problems.[13] The ethics of character outlined by Hauerwas posits that a community's narrative determines the moral character of individuals in that community. This provides a theoretical basis for analyzing the ethical problems of the Korean church using a narrative approach. Because Korean churches tend to be compliant with the state and assimilated into the state's policies, an alternative to merely public-facing solutions is an attractive proposal. Change must come from within.

Using the work of Hauerwas, however, is not enough to address the corruption in the Korean church. This is because a prior step is missing: the analysis of how the Korean church has assimilated and adapted to Korean society. Historically, the church has rarely grown in Asia or Korea into a major religious institution, and its rapid growth for three decades in Korea may only have been possible under a functional Christendom. The ways that the church changed its identity due to its close ties with the government has long been the subject of debate. Nevertheless, most voices would acknowledge that, in the process of supporting the state's policies, some important values of the church were distorted or altered. If the narrative of the church community is too closely diluted

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[13] There are scholars who follow the approach of Hauerwas in Korea, including Si-young Moon, Hyun-soo Kim, Dong-kyu Choi, and Dong-ug Yang. See Choi, "The Missional Church as a Community of Character"; Kim, "A Critical Reading of Stanley Hauerwas's Ecclesial Ethic"; Kim, "Toward just Peace"; Moon, "A Study on Ethical Responsibility for Post-modern Moral Crisis"; Moon, "A Study on Ethical Responsibility for Post-modern Moral Crisis"; Moon, "A Study on Ethical Responsibility for Post-modern Moral Crisis"; Moon, "Church as the Base of Public Theology and Ecclesial Ethics"; Moon, "Haueowoseuui Yunlieseo Bog-Eumgwa Gyohoe [the Gospel and the Church in the Ethics of Hauerwas]"; Moon, "Haueowoseuui Yunlieseo Bog-Eumgwa Gyohoe [the Gospel and the Church in the Ethics of Hauerwas]"; Moon, "Preaching Ethics and Ethical Preaching"; Moon, "Preaching Ethics and Ethical Preaching"; Moon, "Hauerwas on 'Being Church,' 'Discipleship,' and 'Social Spirituality'"; Moon, "Hauerwas on Being Church"; Moon, "Moral Sanctions, Being-Church, and Reading Hauerwas"; Moon, *To Reform Ethics of the Church*; Moon, *To Reform Ethics of the Church*; Moon, "Sociological Implications of the Roman Catholic Conversion Boom in Korea"; Yang, "A Study for Assuring Homiletical Public Spirituality of Korean Church."

by the cultural narrative of Korean society, the virtue of the church is no longer

distinctive or robust, because it is not being shaped by a distinctively Christian narrative.

In addition, then, H. Richard Niebuhr's ethical paradigm, which will be described later,

can aid in analyzing how the Korean church's ethical issues are linked to those in the

broader society.

With this in mind, the current study uses Hauerwas and Niebuhr's ethical

paradigms to examine the assimilation of narratives that negatively shaped the character

of the Korean church and then to suggest positive solutions to these ethical failings.

According to Hauerwas, the narrative of a community forms and determines the

personal character of that community. Also, from the perspective of H. Richard Niebuhr,

the Korean church's ethical issues show that the master narrative of Korean society has

affected the narrative of the Korean church to the point that the narrative of the Korean

church conforms to and assimilates the narrative of Korean society. Glen Stassen and

David Gushee provide an important suggestion for balancing both narrative analysis and

social analysis:

> Character ethicists emphasize narrative and interpret a society in terms of its
> master narrative. If they do that without critical study of social science, they may
> foster an idealistic interpretation that neglects power structures, economic
> arrangements and global forces: a society's master narrative often conceals its
> power relationships.[14]

Following the framework of Hauerwas, this dissertation will argue that it is necessary to

understand the reality of the narrative that caused the moral crisis facing the Korean

church today. The social conditions of Korean society are related to the narrative of the

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[14] Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 76.

Korean church, and this problematic relationship between the ecclesial and political narratives must be explored carefully. As Hauerwas argues in *Vision and Virtue*, "[n]o ethic is formulated in isolation from the social conditions of its time. The contemporary emphasis in Christian ethics on the dynamics and self-creating nature of [hu]man[s] is a reflection of the kind of society in which we live."[15] Therefore, this dissertation will examine the historical process of how the narrative of Korean society has been assimilated into the narrative of the Korean church, not only by using the narrative approach of Hauerwas as a way of forming virtues sufficient to live as faithful witnesses for God but also by examining the result of this assimilation (via Niebuhr), including its negative side effects. Only then can a plausible solution to the ethical compromises in the Korean (Protestant) church be ventured.

The ethical paradigm of H. Richard Niebuhr provides a complementary way to analyze the moral crisis of the Korean church. In *Christ and Culture*, Niebuhr provides five ethical postures for the relationship between Christ (and his followers) and culture.[16] Since the 1960s, the church growth narrative of the Korean church has been influenced by the economic growth narrative of Korean society, so one of the postures Niebuhr mentions, *Christ of Culture* (the *assimilation approach*), will be used to examine and explain critical issues in the contemporary Korean church. While the Korean church has often presumed that it holds a *Christ against Culture* stance or a *Christ the Transformer of Culture* stance, this dissertation will argue that *Christ of*

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[15] Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue*, 48.
[16] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 83–88.

Culture (assimilation) is a more accurate label, not the least because an excessive

reliance on the "growth narrative" can be observed in both the church and society.

This dissertation also underscores Hauerwas's emphasis that the church should

be faithful to its identity rather than buying into "Constantinian" accommodation, to

use an example from church history. In his view, when the church seeks the power and

popularity afforded by Constantinian accommodation, it is either tied to government

policy or regards itself as the auxiliary means of improving society from a position of

influence—a modern version of Emperor Constantine.[17] If the church is tied into

secular politics or assimilated too much into the halls of power, it might compromise its

identity as a biblical faith community and become merely a religious cultural

phenomenon and a tool of the state. This aspect of identity is taken up as a key

dimension of this study.

Furthermore, this dissertation also embraces Hauerwas's clarification of the

identity of the church by showing that the story of Jesus in the Gospels is a story

modelling ethical virtues for Christian communities.[18] According to Hauerwas, these

virtues cannot be separated from the story of Jesus himself, and therefore that story sets

the church apart from the world even in terms of how virtues or character traits are

envisioned. In this sense, Christian virtues are explicitly different from the general

virtues of non-Christians.

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[17] Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child*, 160.

[18] Hauerwas (*A Community of Character*, 51) notes "how the story of Jesus as a social ethic is often dismissed by those who are impressed by the fact that the Gospels do not give us the 'historical Jesus' but only Jesus as the early Christians understood him." Nevertheless, the narratives about Jesus are relevant for character formation.

Finally, the dissertation attempts a sociological analysis of the master narrative of South Korean society. According to Hauerwas, many churches in the United States were assimilated to the liberal politics in American society over the years. Applying his argument to the situation of the Korean church, this dissertation maintains that the Korean church has been assimilated to the master narrative of Korean society. In order to explain the ethical crisis of the Korean church from a narrative perspective, critically analyzing the master narrative of Korean society is necessary. Niebuhr's theory of cultural assimilation and Hauerwas's narrative approach are effective theories in tandem for analyzing and suggesting solutions to the ethical problems of the Korean church.

B. Definition of Key Terms

The Korean Church, Mega-Church, Large Church

In this dissertation, "the Korean church" refers only to Protestant churches in South Korea and does not include the Korean Roman Catholic Church. In South Korea, "Christianity" generally refers to Protestant churches, whereas the Roman Catholic Church is called the Catholic Church. Therefore, in the South Korean survey of Protestant churches in Korea, the Korean church mostly means the Protestant Church, regardless of denomination. Opinion polls tend to be less reliable when they overlook this point and group Protestants and Catholics together when considering Christianity. Donald N. Clark explains why the two Christian traditions should not be lumped together indiscriminately:

> This breaks down to about 2.5 million Catholics and 8.5 million Protestants of all denominations [in South Korea]. The combined figure of about 11 million is for Western consumption: it should be noted that Koreans normally put greater distance between Protestantism (*kidokkyo*) and Catholicism (*ch'ŏnjukyo*) than do

Westerns. Thus, using single term "Christian" to include both would be taken by many Koreans as strange.[19]

Protestant should be translated as *gaesinkyo* in Korean, since that literally means "Protestant," but *kidokkyo* is more popular among Koreans as a label. In this dissertation, although "the Korean church" means Protestant churches in South Korea, I will clarify and discuss the distinctions between the Catholic Church and the Korean church in the country. Complicating this dichotomy further, the Korean church is a general term for all Protestant churches in Korea regardless of whether they are part of Presbyterian, Methodist, Holiness, Baptist, or Pentecostal denominations. Fairly or not, Korean society regards the Korean church as a single group.

At the level of specific churches or congregations, some quick definitions will be useful: Young-gi Hong, in his doctoral study of Korean Mega-churches, "Dynamism and Dilemma: The Nature of Charismatic Pastoral Leadership in the Korean Mega-churches," provides some definitions of mega-church, large church, and small/middle-sized church. He says, "the mega-church designation includes churches with more than 10,000 adult attending members; the large church refers to those with more than 1,000 adult attending members; and the small/middle-sized church, those with less than 1,000 adult attending members, each Sunday, in the cultural context of the Korean Church."[20] I use these definitions throughout.

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[19] Clark, "History and Religions in Modern Korea," 169.
[20] Hong, "Dynamism and Dilemma," 3.

Narrative

The term "narrative" or "story" used in this dissertation refers to the important accounts of events preserved by a community that shapes its communal values and virtues. Hauerwas claims that a church community's narrative actually forms the character of the individuals in the community. According to him, the story of a community determines one's character. "[I]t is certainly true that we need to be trained to acquire certain habits," he wrote. "But it is equally important to be introduced to stories that provide a way to locate ourselves in relation to others, our society, and the universe. Stories capable of doing that may be thought of as adventures, for there can be no self devoid of adventure."[21] In other words, the character of the individuals in a community is influenced by the story of that community. Hauerwas focuses on biblical narratives and their relationship to the church, rather than on the narratives used by other communities within a society. Hauerwas explains this more fully:

> We are "storied people" because the God that sustains us is a "storied God," whom we come to know only by having our character formed appropriate to God's character. The formation of such character is not an isolated event but requires the existence of a corresponding society—a "storied society."[22]

In another classic work of modern virtue ethics, Alasdair MacIntyre provides the basic theoretical principle regarding the relationship between narrative and community. He elaborates on this relationship in his book, *After Virtue*:

> The narrative therefore in which human life is embodied has a form in which the subject—which may be one or more individual persons, or, for example, the people of Israel, or the citizens of Rome—is set a task in the completion of

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[21] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 148.
[22] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 81.

which lies their peculiar appropriation of the human good; the way towards the completion of that task is barred by a variety of inward and outward evils.[23]

Thus, the character of the individuals in a community is also related to the common good of the community. The narrative of a society here refers to the master narrative that has the greatest impact on that society. Both the people of Israel and the citizens of Rome had a narrative that emphasized the virtues of the greatest importance in their own community. This may be true in all societies. When I use "narrative" in this dissertation, therefore, it is usually the master narrative of one group or another as explained by Hauerwas and MacIntyre.

Public Theology and Publicness

In the 1974 article titled "Reinhold Niebuhr: Public Theology and the American Experience," Martin Marty coined the phrase "public theology" when he evaluated Reinhold Niebuhr as a "public theologian."[24] It was the first time the term "public theology" had appeared in an academic work. At this point, public theology was regarded as a kind of civil religion. According to Max L. Stackhouse, "public theology is an argument regarding the way things are and ought to be, one decisive for public discourse and necessary to the guidance of individual souls, societies, and, indeed, the community of nations."[25] Richard Mouw defines public theology as "an identifiable theological subdiscipline which addresses an agenda that overlaps . . . with some other rubrics . . . such as 'Christian social ethics,' 'political theology,' and 'church and

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[23] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 124.
[24] Marty, "Reinhold Niebuhr," 166.
[25] Stackhouse, "Public Theology and Ethical Judgment," 165.

society.'"[26] It is discourse about how people ought to live within society and the broader world.

With such an important mandate, public theology must be based on solid theological foundations. In *Public Theology and Political Economy*, Stackhouse suggests theological themes for public theology such as creation, stewardship, natural law, the Church, and the Trinity. Since public theology is interested in all areas of creation, it involves a theology of creation and speaks to all areas of the created world, not just to the church. In addition, stewardship is required for public theology. Stackhouse describes "stewardship" as connecting the Word to the world.[27] Natural law is also a theological theme addressed in public theology in order to promote a virtuous ethos in a given society. Natural law is a foundation for civil laws under the natural law for moral order in the universe instituted by God. The Church and the Holy Trinity are regarded as theological themes for public theology too. The Church (as a worldwide institution) provides common experience and stories through service, sermons, teaching, and fellowship. In addition, the relationality of God within the Trinity helps Christians understand how to unite with others in a pluralistic society. In order to solve the ethical problems and crises of the Korean church, public theology, where scholars emphasize public or social responsibility, has been a potential solution that Korean Christian scholars have discussed. In this dissertation, a form of public theology will be used to observe, interpret, and analyze the interactions the Korean church has with public society.

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[26] Mouw, *The Challenges of Cultural Discipleship*, 2.

[27] Stackhouse, *Shaping Public Theology*, 247.

Christendom, Post-Christendom, and Functional Christendom

Even though definitions vary, "Christendom" essentially means a Christian state, a state

in which the church and the government are integrated at an official level. Mainstream

Protestant churches have been complicit in this kind of Christendom even after the

Protestant Reformation. Paul Doerksen explains Christendom as "the arrangement

whereby church and secular authority work in close relation to govern Western

society."[28] Then he argues that the arrangement, however, has been deconstructed so

that most contemporary Western societies have entered "the current post-Christendom

era."[29] Stuart Murray also provides markers of Christendom:

> Christendom was a geographical region in which almost everyone was at least
> nominally Christian.
> Christendom was a historical era resulting from the fourth-century conversion of
> Constantine and lasting into the late twentieth century.
> Christendom was a civilization decisively shaped by the story, language,
> symbols, and rhythms of Christianity.
> Christendom was a political arrangement in which church and state provided
> mutual, if often uneasy, support and legitimation.
> Christendom was an ideology, a mindset, a way of thinking about God's activity
> in the world.[30]

For over 500 years, the Anabaptists are one group of Protestants that have resisted the

system of Christendom. John Howard Yoder a representative figures among Anabaptists

today. In *The Politics of Jesus*, he argues that Jesus was politically relevant and non-

violently threatening.[31] Since he was relevant, he was crucified by the political system at

that time. Since Christendom accepts political systems that use violence, Anabaptists

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[28] Doerksen, "Post-Christendom Virtue Ethics," 6.
[29] Doerksen, "Post-Christendom Virtue Ethics," 6.
[30] Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist*, 73.
[31] Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 15–19.

argue that Christians should be separate from those systems of violence and model a peaceful way of life. According to this stance, political involvement and participation in sinful practices of one's culture are discouraged.

Arguably, the churches in both the United States and Canada have developed a type of functional Christendom in the form of a churched culture. In *Missional Church*, "a functional Christendom" is described as follows: "Although a Constantinian legal establishment of the church in America was only temporary in some colonies, the formal separation of church and state in the U.S. Constitution at the end of the colonial period still allowed what can only be described as a functional Christendom."[32] This dissertation argues that South Korea also operated as a functional Christendom during the explosive growth period of the Korean church. Hauerwas's narrative critique of North American Christendom churches serves as a useful resource for considering the effects of Christendom on the Korean church.

The Christian Ethics Movement of Korea

The survey of the social trust of the Korean church used in this dissertation was commissioned by the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea and measured by public opinion agencies. At this point, I would like to introduce the purpose of the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea and its historical context. The Christian Ethics Movement of Korea was founded in 1987 by an Evangelical group of Christians in South Korea. From 1962 to 1987, Korea was governed by military dictatorships. At that time, the tyranny and human rights abuses were pervasive. Most Korean churches were conservative and

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[32] Van Gelder, "Missional Challenge," 49.

silent on social injustice issues, emphasizing the separation of state and church, personal evangelism, and anti-communism.[33]

Bong-ho Son founded the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea in an effort to produce moderate social reform. Beginning with the Yushin Constitution, which made President Park Chung-Hee's permanent power possible, Son wrote prolifically about the need for Christians to become actively involved in Korean politics and the democracy movement. His articles continue to appear in newspapers and journals today.[34] He studied at the Free University in Netherlands, where he was introduced not only to Abraham Kuyper, but also to Bob Goudzwaard and Herman Dooyeweerd.[35] Son describes the church's social participation with the term "prophetic pessimism." According to this view, if the church proclaims God's justice and God's love for the world, the world will not change, just as God predicts in Scripture. The prophets of Israel knew that Israel would not repent even if they proclaimed God's warnings and blessings for Israel. They were pessimistic about the results of their ministry, but they needed to proclaim God's message nevertheless. This is prophetic pessimism. In this sense, Son argues that the church should proclaim God's justice to the world with prophetic pessimism. The church must play the role of salt and light in the world as an exemplary institution embodying the will of God, regardless of the unpopularity or consequences that result. Son founded The Christian Ethics Movement of Korea for this purpose. The organization describes its purpose this way:

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[33] Kim, *Christian Ethics for Cultural Formation*, 83.

[34] Son, "The Problem of Christian Social Ethics," 85; Son, "Mission and the Social Justice"; Son, "The Power and Egoism of the Modern State"; Son and Raj, "Can the Evangelist Ignore Socio-Political Issues"; Son, "Uniqueness of Christ and Social Justice"; Son, "Evangelism and the Poor."

[35] Jeong, "Interview with Bong-ho Son," 20.

[Conservative Korean] Christians realized that they would not have any right to criticize the moral corruption of the society if they did not show a good ethical example. Christians needed to find ways to support social reform without compromising morality. The Christian Ethics Movement of Korea was founded upon this need.

The Movement considers reform a duty to be held by none more than Christians. The heart of the Christian view of man is that humans, created in His form and serving the noble God, also retain the humanity to be responsible for others; it is upon this belief that the Christian view of humanity differs from those of other religions and ideological concepts. It is because of this view that we as Christians cannot divert the individual's blame towards their organizations, however theoretically logical the argument may be.

Nevertheless this movement does not dismiss the most fundamental doctrine of the Protestants, "salvation through faith." The emphasis on ethical living does not mean that morality could be the grounds for salvation, for it cannot; nor can the moral doer expect compensation. The movement merely underscores that an ethical life is a natural duty of those who hold a faith in God as well as an outward expression of faith. Therefore, even after leading an upright life, practicing the love Bible exhorts, and moralizing the society and church, before our Lord we ought to be able to say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty. (Luke 17:10)"[36]

Son leads the ethics movement in South Korea based on Abraham Kuyper's idea of sphere sovereignty and Richard Niebuhr's paradigm of Christ-the-Transformer-of-Culture. The survey of the level of social trust in the Korean church was commissioned by this very organization, and it paves the way for future research on ethics and Christianity in South Korea.

Social Trust and Social Capital

The ideas of social capital and social trust have been "one of the most salient research topics of the twenty-first century."[37] In this dissertation, the concept of social capital presented by Robert D. Putnam, a professor of political science at Harvard University,

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[36] See "Introduction to the Christian Ethics Movement" (http://cemk.org/).

[37] Henderson, "Judgmental God Image," 1.

will be used to analyze the social trust of the Korean church. Physical capital and human

capital are material resources that increase productivity.[38] According to Putnam, *social*

capital concerns relationships and collective solidarity as a moral resource that increases

civic virtue as the capital grows:

> Social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the
> norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense
> social capital is closely related to what some have called "civic virtue." The
> difference is that "social capital" calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is
> most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations.
> A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in
> social capital.[39]

According to Putnam, the trust that a group receives from society, that is, trust as social

capital, usually correlates with quantitative growth for that group. In other words,

Putnam defines social capital and human capital as a mutually reinforcing characteristic

of social organizations. Cooperation engenders more cooperation. In terms of trust,

Francis Fukuyama describes the relationship between trust and social capital as follows:

> Trust is the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and
> cooperative behavior, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other
> members of that community. Those norms can be about deep "value" questions
> like the nature of God or justice, but they also encompass secular norms like
> professional standards and codes of behavior. That is, we trust a doctor not to do
> us deliberate injury because we expect him or her to live by the Hippocratic oath
> and the standards of the medical profession.[40]

As Fukuyama explains, social trust is a large component of the social capital of

individuals or organizations. Putnam argues that living in a community with

considerable social capital is much easier than living in a community with low social

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[38] Putnam, "Social Capital and Public Affairs," 6–7.

[39] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 19.

[40] Fukuyama, *Trust*, 25.

capital. The richer in social capital a society is, the more blessed it is in its status. Social capital accumulates, Putnam argues, when communities have networks of civic engagement that promote the collective well-being. The higher the social trust in others, the more that social capital and social interaction will increase.

In this dissertation, social trust as a concept is used to quantify, evaluate, and analyze the public recognition of the Korean church in the public sphere. In order to analyze how much the ethical failure of Korean churches has lowered social trust in Korean society, this dissertation will use polling data conducted by agencies commissioned by the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea.

C. The Current Moral Crisis in the Korean Church

Following the 2007 Afghan Hostage Crisis, it became a priority within the Korean church to investigate the public's opinion of the church as an institution and Christians more generally.[41] Nonetheless, the groundbreaking 2008 survey sparked controversy and raised critical voices among theologians and church leaders.[42] Ever since that survey showed a high level of public awareness of ethical problems within the Korean church,

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[41] It is important to understand the context of the survey cited by Kim, which was designed to measure the popular social trust of the major religions in South Korea. The survey was conducted in October 2008 by the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea along with other Christian institutions. A year earlier, the social distrust against the Korean church was made evident in the public reaction to a hostage crisis in Afghanistan, when 23 South Korean missionaries were captured and held prisoner by members of the Taliban. During this incident, the Korean public was extremely critical of the missionaries and hostile rather than sympathetic, even holding demonstrations outside the church that had sponsored the missionaries. The reaction surprised Korean Christians and showed them how much their "social capital" (and particularly social trust) had declined.

[42] The survey was conducted annually from 2008 through 2010 and then in 2013 and 2017. As a result, the surveys about social trust of the Korean church were conducted five times in total. See Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2008 Social Trust*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2009 Social Trust*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2010 Social Trust*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2013 Social Trust*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2017 Social Trust*.

researchers have been looking into the causes of the ethical crisis in the Korean church and possible responses to it.

The reasons for the low social trust in the Korean church are presented in various ways. Among the Korean Christian scholars who claim that an emphasis on congregational growth is to blame, Bong-ho Son—again, the founder of the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea—suggests that the main reason why Korean churches lack public trust is because they pursue membership growth as their top priority.[43] In his view, the Korean church has made membership growth into an idol, and, in the process, has tended to ignore important Christian moral values.[44] For example, to spur growth, some Korean churches preach prosperity theology and administer "Faith Seeking Blessings" (in Korean, *Gibok Sinang*), which are regarded as forms of Korean spirituality.[45] In Son's perspective, some Protestant churches justify the adoption of immoral practices by pointing to the subsequent growth in congregational membership. In other words, within the Korean church, growth may trump morality, the ends justifying the means. The Korean news media provides strong evidence that this view is an accurate assessment. It has reported instance after instance when the senior pastor of a growing mega-church is forgiven of moral misconduct by the congregation and given

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[43] Son, "Ethics of the Korean Church and the Hereditary Succession," 32–34.

[44] Son argues that the Korean church stopped its social criticisms in exchange for political favoritism. The church grew rapidly from the 1960s through the 1990s under the support of South Korea's military dictatorship. During this time, the church became silent about political and social issues, whereas in the past the church would have taken very public stands about injustices. Perhaps the more the Korean church ignores social injustice in society, the more easily the church can remain silent about its own ethical issues. See Son and Sunder Raj, "Can the Evangelist Ignore Socio-Political Issues," 15–19.

[45] Yong-gi Cho and Yoido Full-Gospel Church, the world's largest church, was the first to spread the ideology of "faith-seeking-blessings" to Korean churches, even those that were not Pentecostal like it was. The *Faith Seeking Blessings* movement has become widespread since the 1960s. See Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 217.

only a nominal punishment by the denomination.[46] An emphasis on numerical growth and material blessings, theologians argue, has subverted moral instruction within the Korean church and misled its members.

An upside to the trust crisis facing the Korean church is that it has sparked a growing interest in public theology, which emphasizes social responsibilities. The importance of public responsibility has long been recognized among Korean Christian scholars, especially regarding Christian ethics and Christian education. Hak Joon Lee, the Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary, calls on the Korean church to make a paradigm shift that prioritizes biblical principles over membership statistics. Specifically, he encourages the Korean church to communicate biblical truths to both internal and external audiences and to seek spiritual blessings rather than material ones.[47] Moreover, he argues that the traditional paradigm of Korean church, which has remained relatively static since the Great Revival of Korea in 1907, is not well suited to today's context.[48] Likewise, Sung-bihn Yim, Professor of Christianity and Culture and President of Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary in South Korea, suggests that the Korean church can solve its lack of social trust by encouraging Christians to remain faithful to their identities and faithfully communicating with the public.[49]

A new emphasis on Christian public responsibility can be seen in changing opinions about Christian education and preaching in particular. Yongsoon Cho argues

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[46] Chun, "Ethical Reading of the Story," 119.

[47] Lee, *A Paradigm Shift*, 120–24.

[48] Lee, *A Paradigm Shift*, 39.

[49] Yim, *Public Theology for Korean Church and Society*, 136–41.

that the Korean church has failed to recognize its social responsibilities within contemporary Korean society due to a lack of interpretations of key social issues from a theological perspective. As a result, he argues, the church has been criticized by the Korean public. To solve this problem, he suggests that the church's instructional methods should be "reformed through dialogue with society and through the church reminding itself of its social responsibilities" by embracing educational theories that are in keeping with public theology.[50] Hai Sun Lee argues that sermons emphasizing the public responsibility of the Korean church can also contribute to ameliorating the ethical problems in the Korean churches.[51]

Renewed emphasis on Christian public responsibility may help the church to some degree, but it does not address the root of this crisis. The specific dynamics at work in the current ethical crisis should be examined. The first element to examine is the pervasiveness of these ethical issues. The Korean church has distorted its ethical values over a long period of time, and these distortions have become embedded at every level within the church, making it difficult, if not impossible, to reverse them merely through a change in emphasis. If the answer from public theology is a simplistic "We must do better," that will not change anything. The extent to which such issues are rooted in the past and present practices of the Korean church needs to be acknowledged. Otherwise the theological solutions will only amount to painting over a crack in the foundation of a house or painting over rust on the wheel axels of a car.

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[50] See Cho, "Christian Education for Public Society," 1–2.
[51] Lee, "The Study on the Problems of the Current Korean Churches," 1–18.

Secondly, it is essential to understand the relationship between the Korean

church and Korean society in terms of social and historical perspectives. Since the

1960s, economic growth and development have been national priorities. These cultural

values have significantly influenced the priorities and practices of the Korean church as

well. There is a reciprocal relationship between the practices of the church and the

practices of the world. The evaluation and exposure of such links is a key dimension of

this dissertation.

The moral crisis of the Korean church can be understood as its lack of capacity

to live collectively in ways that are consonant with biblical ideals for the church. The

self-assessment of the Korean church beginning with the Afghan hostage crisis brought

this to the forefront; it was a wake-up call. Therefore, the Korean church has begun to

pay attention to virtue ethics as a potential remedy for its ethical problems. As

mentioned above, studies have been conducted to find the root of causes of and

solutions for the ethical failures of Korean churches and the resulting bankruptcy of trust

by the Korean public. The need for Christians to be virtuous and capable of living lives

that are consistent with the ethical mandate of Christian Scripture is a stronger than ever

before, making virtue ethics of interest to Korean Christians who want to find

theological solutions to these ethical crises.

Stanley Hauerwas in particular has received attention from Korean Christians

because his ecclesial ethics apply so well to the current situation in Korea.[52] Hauerwas

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[52] His books have been translated into Korean, and I can attest that they are popular among
Christians. See Cho, "Christian Ethical Implications"; Kim, "A Critical Study"; Moon, "A Study on
Ethical Responsibility"; Park, "A Christian Perspective on Violence"; Park, "Ethical Preaching"; Yang,
"A Study."

was born in Texas in 1940 and grew up as a Southern Methodist. As a Christian scholar, his primary area of research concerns Christian ethics.[53] His ethics of character is one of the most influential theological frameworks for ethics within contemporary virtue ethics and New Testament studies. His work has been applied to various situations within Asian, Nordic, and African churches.[54] Therefore, his ethics of character can serve as one of the critical frameworks demonstrating how theological virtue ethics might influence contemporary theology in fresh ways.

As Atsuyoshi Fujiwara observes, the theology of Hauerwas contains three important themes: "narrative, character, and community."[55] For Hauerwas, the formation of character depends on a narrative that shapes the moral vision of the members of a particular community. Character and "moral notions," he claims, "only take on meaning in a narrative."[56] Therefore, it is not difficult to see why Hauerwas is probably the "most significant and influential exponent of narrative among contemporary Christian ethicists."[57]

Moreover, for Hauerwas, the church is a community of character, one that connects the sanctification of the congregation with the virtues modeled in the New Testament. By doing this, the church can witness the true life of Jesus Christ enacted in their lives in the congregation, so much so that the church might be regarded as an

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[53] Fujiwara, *Theology of Culture in a Japanese Context*, 62.

[54] Bafinamene, Fujiwara, Moon, Park, and Tolonen all suggest that the ethical paradigm Hauerwas discusses is relevant to contexts of the church in their own country. See Bafinamene, "Church and Moral Formation in an African Context"; Fujiwara, *Theology of Culture in a Japanese Context*; Moon, *To Reform Ethics of the Church*; Park, "A Christian Perspective on Violence"; Tolonen, *Witness Is Presence*.

[55] Fujiwara, *Theology of Culture in a Japanese Context*, 64.

[56] Hauerwas and Burrell, "From System to Story," 15.

[57] Nelson, *Narrative and Morality*, 109.

alternative community in the world. Hauerwas does not underestimate the importance of actions and decisions in Christian ethics, but "from the perspective of virtue, in a certain sense decisions are morally secondary."[58] What the church as a whole is becoming is more important than what specific decisions some of them make.

Hauerwas contributed to virtue ethics the idea that biblical virtue ethics can be applied in the realm of social ethics. Even though he does not identify his ecclesial ethics as a kind of public theology, his ethics of character shows how a Christian community should seek a social responsibility for the church by becoming a unique, virtuous community based on the narrative of Jesus Christ preserved in Scripture. According to Hauerwas, the church may lose its identity when it emphasizes engagement in social and public issues to the neglect of its own formative narrative centered on Christ. If the distinction between the church and the world disappears, it proves dangerous for both. Therefore, Hauerwas's ethics of character helps to mitigate the risk of compromised identity by focusing on the storied identity of the church.

Hauerwas argues that both the institutional church and individual Christians should be faithful to their identities. According to him, Christian social responsibility is to be a community that is faithful to the story of God in the Scriptures. The church is a community to be examined by the story and to examine how its members live according to the story. He also argues that when the church becomes a community of character, the church will become an alternative social paradigm and will fulfill its social

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[58] Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life*, 83–89.

responsibilities, thereby increasing public confidence—exactly what the Korean church and its members hope to achieve.

Si-young Moon argues that not only does Hauerwas offer ecclesial ethics can assist in restoring the identity of the Korean church, but also that his ecclesial ethics can assist the church in building public virtues that will benefit Christian participation in the public sphere.[59] The Korean church can thereby become a community of character. Ethical integrity is a relevant issue for the Korean church, of course, since it is looking to change its status and social trust in society. Both those inside and outside of the church expect ethical character from the church, and this can only become a reality if communities of faith reflect on the viewpoints and shortcomings that have led to the crisis.[60]

This dissertation seeks to address the ethical problems of the Korean church that come from a lack of faithfulness to the identity of the church, which has a social responsibility to be "the salt" and "the light of the world."[61] If a community's narrative shapes its identity, the Korean church should consider a change in narrative as a relevant means to changing its character. The dimensions of such a change are the focus of this dissertation.

Since the 1960s, the Korean church's explosive growth has been closely linked to South Korea's explosive economic growth.[62] Compared to Korean Buddhism and the Korean Roman Catholic church, the Korean church has more actively embraced the

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[59] Moon, *To Reform Ethics of the Church*, 155.
[60] Moon, *To Reform Ethics of the Church*, 155–60.
[61] Matthew 5:13–16 NIV.
[62] Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 215–16.

spirit of the South Korean government, which prioritized economic growth and military defense above all else in the decades following the Korean War. Over time, a mutual cooperation developed between the Korean church and the South Korean government which contributed to the growth that both parties experienced.[63] Inevitably, though, the South Korean national narrative permeated the Korean church's narrative, which adapted the prioritization on growth from an economic context to a membership context. Prioritizing growth may have been enough to initiate a moral crisis within the Korean church, but the national narrative affected the church's narrative in other ways too. Notably, the amazing development of the South Korean economy, sometimes referred to as "the Miracle on the Han River," has downplayed human rights and created side effects that persist in Korean society.[64] South Korean authorities routinely violate civil rights when doing so might result in an economic benefit, such as displacing low-income residents when a developer wants to construct a new office building or apartment complex. By assimilating the national narrative, the Korean church assimilated these aspects as well, despite the way these materialistic values undermine a proper understanding of the social responsibilities the church has.

Additionally, this dissertation seeks to expand the theological frameworks that build upon Stanley Hauerwas and H. Richard Niebuhr's scholarship. First, this dissertation will show how the narrative approach developed by Hauerwas can be a helpful method to delve into the relationship between narratives and moral crisis not only in the church but also in society. Second, the historical and cultural investigation in

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[63] Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 214–17.

[64] The "miracle on the Han" made South Korea one of the world's largest economies within a few decades. See Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 215.

this dissertation will show that an ethical paradigm based on the paradigms of Hauerwas and Niebuhr can be used as a relevant approach for studying the ethical practices of the Korean church. Third, this dissertation will offer guidance for the reformation of the Korean church as new narratives and fresh moral vision are considered.

D. Research Methodology

This dissertation contributes to the field of practical theology. John Swinton and Harriet Mowat provide a useful definition of practical theology: "Practical theology is critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God's redemptive practices in, to, and for the world."[65] According to this definition, practical theology is focused not only on practices but also on situations in the world and the correlation between the two. Accordingly, this dissertation uses a correlational method. It correlates theological reflection with the historical and current situation of the church in Korea. According to Elaine Graham, Heather Walton, and Frances Ward, the correlational method is about public engagement:

> The correlative method is one that emphasizes the importance of theology's engagement with contemporary culture, be that philosophical, aesthetic, political or scientific. This approach to theological reflection regards the evolution of Christian thought and practice as necessarily taking place in *public*: the Christian tradition should be prepared to engage in an open exchange of ideas and debate with different cultural disciplines, values, images and world-views.[66]

This being said, a method of correlation in my research is appropriate for articulating ways that Christianity and contemporary culture interact in Korea. More specifically, the

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[65] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 6.
[66] Graham et al., *Theological Reflection*, 138.

framework here will be *a revised model of mutual critical correlation* that Swinton and Mowat introduce as a viable research method within practical theology.[67] In practical theology, mutual critical correlation can be used to bring "situations into dialectical conversation with insights from the Christian tradition and perspectives drawn from other sources of knowledge (primarily the social sciences)."[68] Don S. Browning also suggests a revised model for accomplishing this correlative work. He explains, "a revised correlational program in theology attempts to correlate critically both the questions and answers about human existence derived from an interpretation of the central Christian witness with the questions and answer implicit in various interpretations of ordinary human experience."[69] According to Browning, a revised correlational approach seeks to find a variety of relations between Christianity and contemporary culture in praxis. Therefore, it would be appropriate for articulating the assimilation of Korean narratives in this dissertation, since master narratives are related to fundamental questions about human existence.

My revised model of mutual correlation is composed of 4 stages, methodologically. Stage 1 is *current praxis*, stage 2 is *theological reflection*, stage 3 is *cultural/contextual analysis*, and stage 4 is *formulating revised forms of practice*.[70] In stage 1, *current praxis*, this dissertation deals with the current praxis generally characteristic of the Korean church. It explores the literature that describes the current situation of the Korean church. The serious ethical problems of the Korean church are

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[67] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 83–89.

[68] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 73.

[69] Browning, "Formation and Reflection," 80.

[70] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 89–92.

analyzed by using the surveys on social trust conducted by The Christian Ethics Movement of Korea from 2008 to 2017. In addition, I will refer to the changes of population for each religion in the country and the growth and stagnation of the Korean church based on the data from 1985, 1995, 2005, and 2015 from the Korean Religious Census. It shows the change in population of each major religion in South Korea during this 30-year period.

In stage 2, *theological reflection*, this dissertation will employ theological reflection to deepen the impact of the research. This stage will involve the critical examination of H. Richard Niebuhr's ethical paradigm on the relationship between Christ and culture and reflect on how the shifting priorities of the church have changed the relationship between the church and the culture. The narrative of economic growth has been assimilated into the Korean church's narrative, and the church changed because of this.

Moreover, in its treatment of stage 2, this dissertation will employ an approach using Hauerwas's ethics of character and Niebuhr's ethical paradigms. This dissertation not only uses Hauerwas's ethics of character to cultivate the virtues of the Korean church and analyze the narrative that formed the problematic moral character of the Korean church, but the study also explains Niebuhr's ethical paradigm to account for the assimilation of the secular and ecclesial narratives and emphasize the social responsibility of the Korean church.

Not surprisingly, Christian virtue ethicists have a great interest in cultivating character and moral vision. This is due to a moral focus on "being" (identity, character) rather than duties or the moral "act" of deontological ethical systems. People are

transformed in community as their character is cultivated. According to Hauerwas, the church must be a community of character or a school of virtue. Above all, the church is a community of Jesus's narrative, and therefore the community is ideally a training ground in virtue, in becoming faithful Christians living out that transformative narrative.

In the ecclesial ethics of Hauerwas, the church has a distinctive way of embodying social ethics.[71] "With virtues sufficient to witness to God's truth in the world," he says, the church can be an alternative community in the world.[72] Due to this difference, the church can fully serve the world as a heavenly institution even though the church exists on the earth and is, of course, not disconnected from the earth. He stresses not what the church is but what the church ought to be, underscoring ecclesial ethics rather than ecclesiology.

Niebuhr also provides theological reflections useful for understanding how the narrative of the Korean church has been assimilated by the narrative of Korean society. In other words, the Christ of culture position can explain how the Korean church has accepted the master narrative of the Korean society. In addition, Niebuhr's emphasis on the social responsibility of the church in the Christ-of-transforming-culture position provides a constructive proposal for the Korean church to restore its social trust in Korean society.

Stage 3 is *cultural/contextual analysis*. This dissertation analyzes the social, political, and historical contexts of the period in order to clarify the narrative of Korean society and the narrative of Korean churches since the 1960s. To this end, it interprets

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[71] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 10.
[72] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 3.

the situations of the Korean church and Korean society during these decades. Essentially, it is the Korean church's moral failure that constitutes the research problem of the dissertation.[73] Historical sources for this stage of the research include published works by the Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea, Korean sociologists, studies of Korean mega-churches, data from Korea Statistics, and the surveys of social trust already mentioned.[74] This data is analyzed for what it reveals of the social, historical, and theological trends leading to the current situation in the Korean church. Using this data, this dissertation examines the impact of Korea's nationalistic narrative—economic growth at the expense of moral value—on the Korean church's own growth narrative. Without understanding the historical, social, and political contexts in which Korean society and the (Protestant) church embraced the narrative of growth as top priority, one cannot discern the effects and possible solutions to the moral crisis in the church. Due to limitations in scope, this study will not cover all the narratives of Korean society retold since 1960 or all the narratives that have been formative for the Korean church. Likewise, my research will not discuss other potential causes of the ethical problems in the Korean church. The scope is limited to the changes in the master narrative that has shaped community identity the most, and I will show how this narrative is still relevantly related to the ethical problems of the Korean church today.

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[73] As Swinton and Mowat (*Practical Theology*, 15) state, "Situations are complex, multi-faceted entities which need to be examined with care, rigour, and discernment. . . Situations have cultures and histories, they occur within particular contexts which often have their own traditions and expectations and they contain specific forms of practice that again themselves contain history, tradition, theology and social experiences and expectations."

[74] See Lee, *The Crisis and Hope*; Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, eds., *Christianity in Korea since 1945.*

Finally, when addressing stage 4, *formulating revised forms of practice*, this dissertation will seek to do just that: formulate revised forms of practice. I will apply Hauerwas's narrative approach and ethics of character to the context of the Korean church not simply to investigate the cause of the moral crisis in the Korean church but also to find a theological approach to formulate virtues for the Korean church. Of necessity, this requires contextualizing Hauerwas's ethics of character for the situation of the Korean church. Moral formation for the Korean church, which is losing trust in the public sphere, has many dimensions. A character ethics approach applies not only to promoting public responsibility for the church but also for encouraging faithfulness to the identity of the Korean church as it should be—storied in a distinct manner, not assimilated in an alliance between church and state. The renewal of the church's identity and its core mission as a moral community that shapes the character of its members is at the heart of this dissertation.

E. Structure of the Dissertation

Out of the six chapters in this study, chapter 1 is an introduction to the necessity of this research, a definition of key terms, an overview of the current moral crisis in the Korean church, and an explanation of my methodology.

Chapter 2 examines the situation of the Korean church and interprets the data concerning just how bad the moral crisis has been. I will describe the current ethical problems of the Korean church based on surveys of the social trust of the Korean Churches from 2008 to 2017 conducted by the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea. Beyond the statistics, I will review scholarly literature to interpret the ethical problems

sociologically, theologically, and historically. This will outline the general but complex situation of the Korean church in its cultural setting.

Chapter 3 engages with the ethical paradigms of Stanley Hauerwas and H. Richard Niebuhr. Essentially, the dissertation here covers the current discussions about virtue ethics based on the works of moral philosophers and moral theologians. It will critically analyze Stanley Hauerwas's narrative approach and his ethics of character. Through this, it will show that his approach could be one of the most relevant solutions for changing a church or community which has experienced moral failure. Moreover, the chapter also examines H. Richard Niebuhr's ethical paradigms and articulates the contribution of his insights in building an alternate interpretive framework for this dissertation. It will show Niebuhr's contribution to categorizing the relationship between Christ (or Christians) and culture and will analyze how to assess the assimilation of narratives between the Korean church and Korean society. It will also analyze Hauerwas's narrative ethics to identify Hauerwas's position according to Niebuhr's paradigm.

Chapter 4 will focus on the assimilation of narratives and ethical practices within Korean society and the church. It will describe how the dominant narrative in the Korean church has been one of membership growth, despite the negative effects on ethical practices. Likewise, the chapter details the socio-economic context of Korean society and how this set the stage for the growth narrative ever since the 1960s. I will analyze how the narrative of the prioritization on economic growth has been formulated, for it was not always uniformly formulated. Similarly, I will also analyze the side effects of this narrative on the ethical problems of Korean society in general, since the church is

not unique in its moral failures. Lastly, chapter 4 will investigate how the two narratives have been assimilated through interaction between the two parties. According to Niebuhr's paradigm, I will argue that the Korean church's position is the *assimilation* type of relationship between church and culture. As such, the identity of the Korean church has been distorted. Critical analysis of the growth narrative in society and then in the Korean church reveals their similarities and how the religious assimilation of this narrative changed the identity and priorities of the Korean church.

Chapter 5 will articulate a way forward. The Korean church can transform the narrative and thus its ethical practices. I will therefore construct a proposal for the moral formation of the Korean church based the work of Hauerwas and Niebuhr. In order to avoid being simplistic, the proposal will take into account the historical, social, political, and religious contexts of the Korean church. The aim here is an ethics of character which will help the Korean church be faithful to its identity and fulfill its social responsibility of virtue in the public sphere.

Chapter 6 will draw conclusions based on the previous chapters. It will emphasize how crucial it is to find new narratives for the Korean church and Korean society. If these communities do not adopt new narratives, history will repeat itself. My conclusion will also demonstrate that Hauerwas's approach can be fruitful for a community like the Korean church which has experienced moral crisis. Moral crisis may be one chapter of the story, a chapter with which I am quite familiar as a Korean, but the failures need not be the *last* chapter of the story.

CHAPTER 2: THE ETHICAL ISSUES OF THE KOREAN CHURCH

This chapter will explain and critically analyze the ethical problems of the Korean church. There have actually been several kinds of ethical problems prevalent in the Korean church for the past few decades: hereditary succession issues, financial embezzlement, sexual crimes, academic forgery and plagiarism, and callous remarks from church leaders.[1] Some of these became public scandals covered in the media, and my research will examine the public response to such scandals. Second, this chapter will critically analyze the social trust of the Korean Church as it has changed in the years from 2008 to 2017 specifically. Third, the chapter will use data such as the "General Survey of the Religious Population of South Korea" by Statistics Korea, a survey on the Religious Consciousness of Koreans conducted by *Gallup Korea*, and a survey conducted by the Korean Association of Church Communication. These surveys allow scholars to gain a window into the social perceptions of the Korean church and the growth of Korean churches. Fourth, this chapter will introduce arguments in scholarship about how the trends might best be analyzed before suggesting my own interpretation of the data.

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[1] Kim, "The Korean Protestant Church after Its Rapid Growth," 31.

A. Ethical Issues of the Korean Church

The ethical issues of Korean churches appeared in the mainstream media in the latter half of 1990 and have been handled by the media in earnest since 2000. This coincides with the decade when the church's growth slowed down. One interpretation of this timing is that the problems of the Korean church were obscured by the explosive growth in membership, and only later when that growth slowed did the corruption begin to surface and receive attention from the media. The ethical failings of the Korean church covered by the media include hereditary succession issues, financial embezzlement, sexual crimes, the privatization of churches, and the callous remarks of church leaders.[2]

Hereditary Succession of the Senior Pastorate

First, the most representative ethical problem of the Korean church in public perception may be the issue of hereditary succession of the senior pastorate, especially at mega-churches. One writer calls the issue "the most typical example of the ethical depravity of the Korean church."[3] Reports on this issue first focused on the hereditary succession of leaders at Korea's mega-churches (i.e., churches with more than 10,000 adults). Senior pastors at some of Korea's largest churches handed over church control to their sons. Sung-min Chun, professor at Vancouver Institute for Evangelical Worldview (VIEW), correctly points out that this is a long-standing issue, and one which gives too much power to senior pastors.[4] Not all pastoral succession is subject to equal social criticism;

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[2] Kim, "The Korean Protestant Church after Its Rapid Growth," 31.

[3] Son, "Ethics of the Korean Church and the Hereditary Succession," 34.

[4] Chun, "An Ethical Reading of the Story of Gideon-Abimelech for the Korean Church," 118. Chun claims that "the prerogatives of senior pastors in the Korean church . . . [are] best seen in another ethically objectionable practice, namely hereditary succession of the senior pastorate. This has been an issue for more than ten years."

hereditary pastoral succession in mega-churches receives the greatest criticism by

people in society. Social criticism of the practice is related to the negative perception of

mega-churches as businesses, for one thing. Yong-shin Park, a sociology professor

emeritus at Yonsei University, explains this dynamic as follows:

> As the mega-churches continue to grow, they begin to promote a "growth
> movement" that enables them to acquire corporate advertising and management
> skills through amalgamating religious and business interests into a new theology
> of growth. In almost every symposium, seminar, or conference for the clergy, the
> sessions dealing with "church growth" that successful mega-church pastors
> preside over are always the most popular and sought-after sessions. There is a
> great affinity between church growth and business expansion in terms of
> organizational plans, management, and leadership models. To a large extent,
> mega-churches are an organized business company with a cross steeple, and the
> pastor an owner or CEO in a gown, depending on the relationship the pastor has
> with the church he serves.[5]

In this light, the hereditary system is vulnerable to the "criticism of privatizing church

property accumulated from the donations of Christians."[6] Only a few leaders become

wealthier at the expense of the collective groups of Christians who give money.

Hereditary succession reminds the South Korean public of not only of its

country's corporations (i.e., family-run conglomerates) but also its dictatorships. Young-

han Kim, professor emeritus at Soongsil University and the founder of *Academia

Christiana*, argues this connection and the derision that it has caused: "When the Korean

public saw that senior pastors of mega-churches made hereditary succession of their

pastorate to their sons, they thought of it in relation to the conglomerates in South Korea

and dictatorship of Kim Il-Sung in North Korea. The Korean public began to make fun

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[5] Park, "Heredity in Korean Churches," 3.
[6] Son, "Ethics of the Korean Church and the Hereditary Succession," 34.

of the Korean church."[7] Despite denominational rules that forbid hereditary succession, senior pastors at mega-churches were able to hand over their leadership roles to their sons. Myungsung Church, the world's largest Presbyterian church, is one of the most significant cases in point. *The Korea Herald* explicitly points out about this issue, saying,

> The hereditary handover of pulpit places from father to son, incessantly practiced in larger churches, is the top cause of humiliation we have in the face of nonbelievers. Myungsung Church in eastern Seoul, the largest in Korea's Presbyterian denomination with a registered congregation of 100,000, has just completed the process of "HSC" or hereditary succession of church as critics have termed it, from father Rev. Kim Sam-hwan to son Kim Ha-na.[8]

According to a survey of the *Church Reform Movement*, Korean society perceived the word heredity succession—"nepotism," in some academic contexts—as related to North Korea (42.8 percent), large corporations (29.1 percent) and mega-churches (21.6 percent).[9] In addition, Korean society was 61.6 percent in opposition to the practice of hereditary succession. The news coverage had shifted public opinion to the point where the Korean church was seen as the third-worst perpetrator of this self-serving practice.

Some scholars claim that hereditary succession continues as a result of the Korean church's lack of awareness or concern for the unfavorable publicity. Jaeyoung Jeong points out that hereditary succession hand-offs have been an issue for more than 20 years.[10] He also notes that since 1997, when this type of succession first occurred in a mega-church, hereditary succession has been omnidirectional, not only in mega-

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[7] Kim, "The Reformation of the Korean Church," 81.

[8] Kim, "Hereditary Succession." The English translation is by the Korean journalist.

[9] Church Reform Movement, *Being Church.*, 4-44.

[10] Jeong, "From Private Faith to Public Faith," 354.

churches but also in small churches and medium-sized churches. According to him, the number of churches in Korea is estimated to be around 60,000, while the number of pastors is well over 100,000. He suggests that pastors in the country are in intense competition because the supply of pastors is much higher than the demands for leaders in the churches. From this perspective, hereditary succession hinders fair competition among pastors and provides exclusive benefits to the pastor's son(s). "Hereditary succession, from a sociological point of view," Jeong explains, "is what happens because most of the charismatic leadership of the founding pastors is not reasonably supported by the system of the church." Jeong calls this "the charisma's daily routine."[11]

While mega-churches are not the only churches with this problem, the rise of the mega-churches is still symptomatic of some of the problems in the Korean church overall. As Jeong argues, these large churches are a social phenomenon that emerged with the modernization and economic development of Korea.[12] Not surprisingly, the church buildings are located in the richest neighborhoods in Korea. All the buildings are worth tens of millions of dollars, so it could be argued that Korean mega-churches are largely related to the accumulation of capital in the country. The capital must accumulate from somewhere, and inevitably the influence of wealthy families who have made the largest capital contributions to mega-churches tends to be the influence that keeps the wealth and power concentrated in the fewest hands. In many cases, the wealthy families are the ones that support hereditary succession in their churches,

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[11] Jeong, "From Private Faith to Public Faith," 356.

[12] Jeong, "From Private Faith to Public Faith," 357.

because this usually ensures that their money is spent in ways in keeping with how the previous pastor would spend the funds.

As discussed above, hereditary succession within church leadership does not simply mean that the son of the current senior pastor becomes the next senior pastor at the church. The practice has negative results: it lowers the social trust of the Korean church and makes the public perceive Protestant Christianity as a kind of business or possession.

Financial Embezzlement

The social trust of the Korean church has dropped further due to other ethical failings, including embezzlement and breaches of trust. Major news outlets reported these events as headline news. For example, Yong-gi Cho, the founder of Yoido Full Gospel Church, known as the world's largest church, was sentenced by a court to two and a half years in prison and suspended for four years due to embezzling 1.2 million dollars, a verdict later confirmed by the Supreme Court of Korea.[13] Hye-won Kwak, a Korean systematic theologian, observes the hypocrisy of such actions by Christians: "Although the Korean church proclaims holy spirituality with its mouth, it is openly recognized by the Korean public that the Korean church is in fact seeking worldly values such as money, power, and honor in the same way as the world. It is argued that there is undoubtedly certain [evidence] for the responsibility of the church leaders for the loss of spirituality in the Korean church."[14]

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[13] Moon, "Founder of World's Largest Megachurch Convicted of Embezzling $12 Million"; Moon, "Rev. Cho Yong-Ki Is Convicted of Breach of Trust of $1 Million."

[14] Kwak, "Korean Society's Recognition of the Korean Church," 176–77.

Several more senior pastors of mega-churches have also been convicted of embezzlement or misuse of church funds.[15] As such, the lack of financial transparency and accountability is now one of the top ethical problems in the Korean church.[16] The practice of senior pastors arbitrarily financing their lifestyle from the church budget has devolved into outright criminal actions. Such actions are scandals to the Korean public, sending the message that the Korean church is obsessed with material benefits rather than serving others.

Such embezzlement serves as evidence that the Korean church has become a religion of "mammonism" that prioritizes material blessings.[17] Deukhoon Park makes this connection, arguing that the prevailing capitalism in Korean churches is destroying them through "mammon worship." Here, "mammon" is not "faithfulness in dealing with earthly possessions" but a "master" replacing God.[18] Park insists that purging the materialistic greed from the Korean church can make the Korean church ethically healthy.[19] According to him, the power and influence of mammonism can be seen in the Korean church more than any other institution in the country. During the period of national modernization and economic growth, the Korean church experienced explosive growth and embraced mammonism, extreme capitalism, in the Korean church. As a result, some leaders of the Korean church pursued money to the point of committing

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[15] See "A Pastor Sentenced to Four Years in Prison for Embezzling Church Finances 2.8 Million Dollars."

[16] Kim, "The Reformation of the Korean Church," 95.

[17] See Kwak, "Korean Society's Recognition of the Korean Church," 176–77. Kwak studied under a Korean theologian who studied sociology and theology and received a doctoral degree in systematic theology from Professor J. Moltmann at the University of Tübingen, Germany.

[18] Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, 684.

[19] Park, "Stopping the Mammon Worship in the Church," 154.

crimes.[20] In this, the Korean church exposed its greed for material wealth to a watching

world. Hye-won Kwak evaluates this greed as follows:

> Indeed, the Korean church has established a strong social and economic force, as some of them are called "church Jaebols" (churches as family-controlled industrial conglomerates in South Korea). Not only did the Korean church pursue blessings, successes, growth, and goals, but it also had a pastoral principle that valued economic values. . . . In these circumstances, the physical indicators of the church's physical resources (budget), human resources (members), and institutional resources (chapel buildings and associated buildings) became the measure of pastoral success. In the context of the Korean church, where the successful people in the world are treated specially in the church, the social and economic status of the members and their financial contributions have become an important criterion for evaluating church members.[21]

In this context, *chaebol* means "a family-controlled industrial conglomerate in South

Korea."[22] Hye-won Kwak points out that, historically, the Korean church has changed

from a church representing the poor and underprivileged to a religion of mammonism.

As the Korean church became a religion that pursued growth and blessings, the Korean

public became disgusted with the church. Several surveys all indicate that the public

recognizes views the secularization of the Korean church in an unfavorable light.

Essentially, the public recognizes that the church, which claims to be pursuing spiritual

values and holiness, is actually pursuing secular values such as money, power, and

honor. It is indisputable that Korean church leaders have the greatest responsibility in

this regard, for they receive the majority of these things.

Another area where the church has received unfavorable media coverage is the

publicity surrounding some of its internal disputes. Perhaps the most infamous of these

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[20] Park, "Stopping the Mammon Worship in the Church," 155.

[21] Kwak, "Korean Society's Recognition of the Korean Church," 175.

[22] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "Chaebol."

was a physical altercation between two pastors and their supporters. One of the pastors had been appointed to replace the other at a large church. A fight broke out inside the church, police officers were called in to restore the peace, and eventually the dispute was resolved through mediation. Events like these made it possible for the church to be perceived not as a place where God is worshipped but as a place where hypocrites battle for wealth and power.

Academic Forgery and Plagiarism

Academic forgery and plagiarism also stain the reputations of many pastors in the Korean church. In one case widely reported in Korean media, a senior pastor at a mega-church was discovered to have plagiarized his ThM, PhD, and DMin dissertations.[23] In other instances, many pastors bought doctoral degrees or forged their diplomas. Korean media found that academic dishonesty was rife in the church; pastors of many denominations in South Korea had faked academic credentials to further their religious careers. Educational forgery and plagiarism issues are not separate from the ethical issues mentioned earlier. Many pastors commit educational forgery in order to invent an education pedigree that matches those of most senior pastors of mega-churches. In other words, these academic forgeries and compromises show that worldly values have been affecting the Korean church.

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[23] The current senior pastor at this mega-church, which otherwise has received mostly positive reviews from Christians and society, has also been accused of plagiarism and then admitted to it. See Chun, "An Ethical Reading of the Story of Gideon-Abimelech for the Korean Church," 118.

Sexual Crimes and Misconduct

In recent years, the sexual crimes of Korean church leaders have been widely publicized by the media and resulted in a major impact on Korean society.[24] Sexual crimes committed by Korean church pastors are frequently items in the news, unfortunately.[25] In addition to personal ethical failures such as adultery, Korean ministers have committed crimes such as sexual harassment and sexual assault. Whereas society defines sexual violence as a sexual offense rather than simple violence, the Korean church regards it as "misconduct," and the guilty pastor usually remains a part of the clergy. More disturbingly, victims of sexual violence receive less protection in the church than they do in secular courts. The perpetrators among the leaders are not punished, but the victims of sexual violence are often persecuted because they sometimes keep their stories concealed for a long time or—if they do come forward quickly—are labeled as spiteful people who want to attack the clergy for no good reason.

In one instance, a pastor resigned when it was reported that he repeatedly molested women in his church. The church was large, and the pastor's contribution to the growth of the church was significant. The case was reported by major TV stations and newspapers, and despite the large number of victims and the severity of the accusations, the pastor (the perpetrator) did not publicly apologize. Instead, he was

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[24] Baek, "Sexual Misconduct of Clergy," 271.

[25] For example, a Korean pastor in the Philippines was charged with sexual assault of children, a former senior pastor, Rev. Chun of Samil Church, who had a great influence on young generations, was charged with multiple sexual abuse cases, another with the rape of a young man in the missionary group *Riseup Korea*, and another pastor—known as the godfather of migrant workers—with sexual misconduct. See "An Indulgence to a Minister of Sexual Violence."

moved to a different church and given the equivalent of more than a million dollars in retirement allowance. In other cases, pastors in youth ministry have been caught committing sex crimes against the children in their care. In fact, a government investigation found a higher percentage of sex offenders employed within the church than in any other private or public field, and a public hearing was held at the National Assembly to address this alarming statistic.

Kwang-hun Baek argues that pastoral sexual misconduct leads to devastating repercussions, spiritually and otherwise. According to him, sexual misconduct is above all a serious betrayal of the call of God for the pastor to protect their flock. It also undermines the ministry of all pastors. Their sexual deviance not only seriously damages themselves and their families, but it also hurts the churches where they serve and ultimately undermines the social trust of the Korean church. According to Baek, pastoral sexual misconduct is inherently a matter of abuse of power. In other words, pastoral sexual misconduct is much more an issue of abuse of power than of unbearable lust.[26] For church members, the pastor is a symbol of religious authority regarding religious truth, the meaning of life, and the way of following Jesus. This role gives the pastor tremendous influence in the church community, affording the pastor a high degree of trust from the members of the church. Such trust, sadly, is sometimes leveraged to perpetrate sexual misconduct.[27] Nowhere is this more likely to happen than in the Korean mega-churches, because power is concentrated with the senior pastor, and he has very little accountability to others. The same can happen in smaller churches, too, of

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[26] Baek, "Sexual Misconduct of Clergy," 283.
[27] Baek, "Sexual Misconduct of Clergy," 283–84.

course. Therefore, the sexual misconduct of pastors is another undeniable ethical problem within the Korean church.[28]

Callous Remarks by Church Leaders

One final but significant ethical failing that should be mentioned is the callous remarks made by some church leaders after tragedies. The heartless comments drew a lot of anger and criticism when they were reported in the media. One of the most serious cases occurred after the Sewol ferry disaster, a national tragedy that took the lives of 304 passengers and crew members.[29] The sinking of the ferry, which occurred on April 16, 2014, was broadcast live on all television channels in South Korea. Understandably, the public mood was one of deep sorrow for the victims of the disaster. However, in the aftermath, some pastors made heartless remarks about those who died. The pastor of a mega-church (who had recently been appointed by hereditary succession, against denominational rules) preached the following words a few months after the disaster:

> God did not sink the Sewol ferry for no reason. As the nation is about to sink, God should not do so, so he gave the people a chance by sinking these young students, these beautiful children. . . . I think the whole country should reflect on itself, mourn, shed tears and create new momentum, thinking it is our fault, instead of asking someone to take responsibility. I hope that our country will have a dream of becoming an advanced country, and create another opportunity with the sinking of the ferry Sewol which crashed, sank and went missing.[30]

Dong-Chun Lee observes that this sermon is the equivalent of saying that the Sewol ferry tragedy was God's will, and that Christians should not mourn its fate, because God

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[28] Baek, "Sexual Misconduct of Clergy," 271–72.

[29] Lee and Choe, "Students Among Hundreds Missing After South Korean Ferry Sinks."

[30] Cited in Jeong, "God Sank the Sewol Ferry?"

was mercifully warning the country of their national "sinking." The public interpreted

this statement to mean the Korean church had a cold attitude toward the suffering of

others, dismissing it with the words "God's will."[31]

Another pastor, GwangJag Cho, vice president of *The Christian Council of*

Korea, mocked students who died in the Sewol disaster, saying "children from poor

families should go on a school trip to Bulguksa [the most famous Korean Buddhist

temple] in Gyeongju, and I don't know why this happened while they were on a boat to

Jeju Island."[32] Five weeks after the disaster, Pastor Gwang-hoon Jeon, the president of

the same Christian Council of Korea, ridiculed the families of the victims during a

sermon at the church where he served as a senior pastor:

> No, there's no one who'd like the Sewol accident to happen. Only leftists and
> pro-North Koreans like the Sewol ferry disaster. They're just jumping up and
> down the street for a memorial service. Why? Because they have materials to use
> [for their purposes]. The memorial service should be given to the deceased who
> died of grief inside the house. Who told them to go on a rampage at
> Gwanghwamun intersection? Ask the dead young students once, 'Did they tell
> you to do that?' I mean, this shows the level of people in our country.[33]

Remarks like these received heavy media coverage and intense criticism from news

commentators. In essence, these pastors were saying that the families of the victims

should not blame the government for the disaster but should instead support the

government for the sake of national development and unity. The public, however,

interpreted these remarks as an indication that the church prioritized political interests

over the suffering of the victims and their families.

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[31] Lee, "Pain of Others," 237.

[32] Cited in Kang, "God Sank the Sewol Ferry?"

[33] Cited in Kang, "God Sank the Sewol Ferry?"

Although the publicity for the Korean church so far has been predominantly negative, it is at least promising to see the media and society take a serious interest in the church's position on social issues.[34] Only recently have sermons given by church elders turned into national controversies. Dong-chun Kim says this is because the Korean church has changed its social status in Korea in recent decades. The Korean church is no longer a minority in society but rather a mainstream group and an influential voice.

This also means that there is a social atmosphere that calls for the Korean church to contribute publicly to society and to fulfill social responsibilities as a social leader. So far, however, the Korean church has fallen short of these expectations. Instead, it is seen as a group that seeks private, materialistic interests instead of the common good, proclaiming a brand of prosperity theology to benefit its own leaders and members. The fact that the Korean church has become an uncaring and selfish religious tradition is not consistent with public expectations that it should contribute to the public good by serving as the light and salt of the world. This discrepancy, Kim says, can prompt the church to turn back to its original identity. The publicity given to the Korean church is also society's indication that the church is still an important community to the wider population. Kim argues that the tension between the church and the public stems from the church's lack of religious rationality and validity, given its corruption.[35]

Many leaders of the Korean church interpreted the Sewol ferry disaster as God's will or God's plan to warn Korean society. It was completely inappropriate as a public

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[34] Kim, "Why the Religious Language of the Korean Church Conflicts with Publicity?" 80.
[35] Kim, "Why the Religious Language of the Korean Church Conflicts with Publicity?" 93–96.

statement, however, because it was insensitive to the families of the victims. When church leaders do not realize how negative the public reaction, this only further alienates people from the church.

As mentioned above, the ethical problems of the Korean church are not limited to the church communities alone. They are public issues in South Korea. This dissertation does not claim that a hostile media deliberately publicized the problems to embarrass the Korean church, as if these kinds of ethical failings were not happening elsewhere. It merely reveals the fact that the ethical corruption of Korean churches is being scrutinized in public discourse, and this is having a detrimental effect on public opinion of the church.

B. The Survey on the Social Trust of the Korean Church

The social trust that a religious institution receives from the society to which it belongs is highly related to its morality. Therefore, although it is not easy to quantify whether the Korean church has more ethical problems than other major religious traditions in the country, the relative levels of social trust among major religions might suggest their relative levels of morality as well.

Technically, Korean media regularly reports surveys and studies about the social trust of public institutions such as local and national governments, the judiciary, the police, and the military in addition to Korea's major religious institutions. To keep the data relevant, my research is limited to the social trust of religious institutions alone, and the Korean church has more detailed surveys associated with it than some institutions.

Korean media began reporting about the ethical issues of the Korean church even back in the 1990s, the same period when the church's once-rapid growth stagnated.

Since 2000, the national newspapers and televised news programs have reported on these issues with greater frequency than they have reported on issues within Buddhist organizations or the Korean Catholic Church. In other words, the public was more likely to perceive the Korean (Protestant) church negatively because of the media coverage given to its ethical scandals.

The extent of the public's change of opinion about the Korean church was made evident in the reaction to the 2007 hostage crisis in Afghanistan, when 23 South Korean missionaries were captured and held prisoner by members of the Taliban. Even though the hostages were imprisoned for more than 40 days, and two of them were executed by the Taliban, Korean society criticized not only the terrorists but also the Korean church, expressing hostility rather than sympathy, and holding demonstrations outside the church that sponsored the missionaries.

This reaction showed the Korean church how badly its social trust had eroded. It also clarified the need to measure the level of the social capital of the Korean church. Following the hostage crisis, the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea commissioned a polling agency, *Hangil Global Research*, to investigate this level of social trust. The survey was conducted five times, in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2013, and 2017.[36] The Christian Ethics Movement explains this survey as follows: "It measures the social trust of the Korean church and gathers basic data for establishing the integrity of the Korean church

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[36] See Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2008 Social Trust of the Korean Church*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2009 Social Trust of the Korean Church*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2010 Social Trust of the Korean Church*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2013 Social Trust of the Korean Church*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2017 Social Trust of the Korean Church*.

and developing the church."[37] Because of how thorough the surveys are, the results will be used for the following analysis.

Social Trust of the Korean Church

The surveys on the social trust of the Korean church conducted from 2008 to 2017 measured how much Korean society trusts the church. In other words, these surveys aimed to determine the social trust or social capital accumulated by the church from the public. Trust is a prime component of social capital. By measuring the social trust of an organization, you can measure its social capital. The measurements are helpful in determining whether the ethical problems of the Korean church are related to the social trust of the Korean church, even though the surveys cannot conclusively prove that one is the cause of the other. Before examining the social trust of the Korean church, I should point out that Korean society generally has a low level of social trust in public institutions. Because Korea's overall social trust is low, institutions and individuals with relatively lower social trust gather even more distrust from the public. It can be a vicious circle, so it will not be surprising to learn that less than half of the population trusts the Korean church, for example.

The five surveys commissioned by the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea asked the same set of questions each time so that the responses could be compared and used to show trends over time. The first question asked was, "How much do you trust the Korean church?" Five choices were provided for this question: "I do not trust at all; I

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[37] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 19.

do not trust; I neither trust nor distrust; I trust; I trust strongly." The survey also asked

people, "What religion is your most reliable religion among religions in South Korea?"[38]

Absolute Social Trust of the Korean Church

From 2008 to 2017, the Korean church had the social trust of around 20 percent of the

Korean population, with a minimum score of 17.6 percent in 2010 and a maximum score

of 20.2 percent in 2017. Meanwhile, about twice as many survey participants indicated

that they do *not* trust the Korean church. The "don't trust" responses had a minimum

score of 33.5 percent (2009) and a maximum score of 51.2 percent (2017). Given that

participants had the option of selecting a neutral response if they did not specifically

trust or distrust the Korean church, these results indicate that the Korean population

judges the Korean church to have a very low level of trust. The absolute social trust of

the Korean church—"absolute" meaning without comparing the religious tradition to

any others—was evaluated based on a simple question: "Do you trust the Korean

church?" Here are the results on the table and figure below:

Year	Trust	Neutral	Don't trust	Social Trust on a 1–5 Scale
2008	18.4	33.3	48.3	2.55
2009	19.1	47.4	33.5	2.82
2010	17.6	33.8	48.4	2.58
2013	19.4	36	44.6	2.62
2017	20.2	28.6	51.2	2.55

Table 1. Absolute social trust of the Korean church

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[38] Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2008 Social Trust*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2009 Social Trust*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2010 Social Trust*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2013 Social Trust*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2017 Social Trust*.
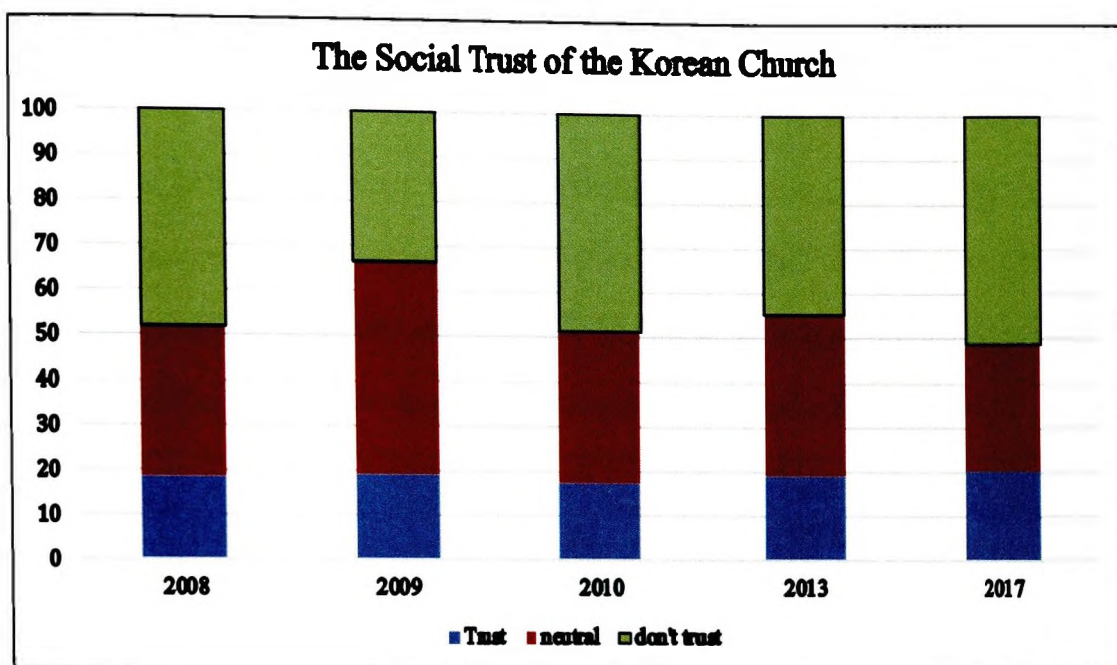
Figure 1. Illustrating the absolute social trust of the Korean church

Furthermore, the survey found that social trust is particularly low among younger

generations, suggesting that this perception of distrust could persist for decades. The

survey also found particularly low levels of trust among the percentage of the population

that does not have membership in the Korean church. In other words, the scores would

have been much lower if it were not for church members rating their own institution as

trustworthy.

Relative Social Trust of the Korean Church

In order to measure the relative social trust of the Korean church compared to other

religious traditions, the survey asked participants this question: "What is the most

reliable religious institution?" The Korean church received the lowest score in every

survey but one, in 2009, when Korean Buddhism was rated the lowest. The Korean

Roman Catholic Church, by contrast, achieved the highest social trust in all five surveys.

Breaking down the scores further, the Korean church scored the highest social trust among Korean Protestant Christians but scored very low social trust among non-members of the Korean church. In contrast, the Korean Roman Catholic church has a relatively high social trust among both Catholics and non-Catholics. These results parallel the findings described above, in that the Korean church received high scores from its membership but low scores from the public outside the Korean church.

Year	Korean Church	Korean Roman Catholic Church	Korean Buddhism
2008	18 percent	35.2	31.1
2009	26.1	36.2	22
2010	20	41.4	33.5
2013	21.3	29.2	28
2017	18.9	32.9	21.3

Table 2. Relative social trust of Korean religions
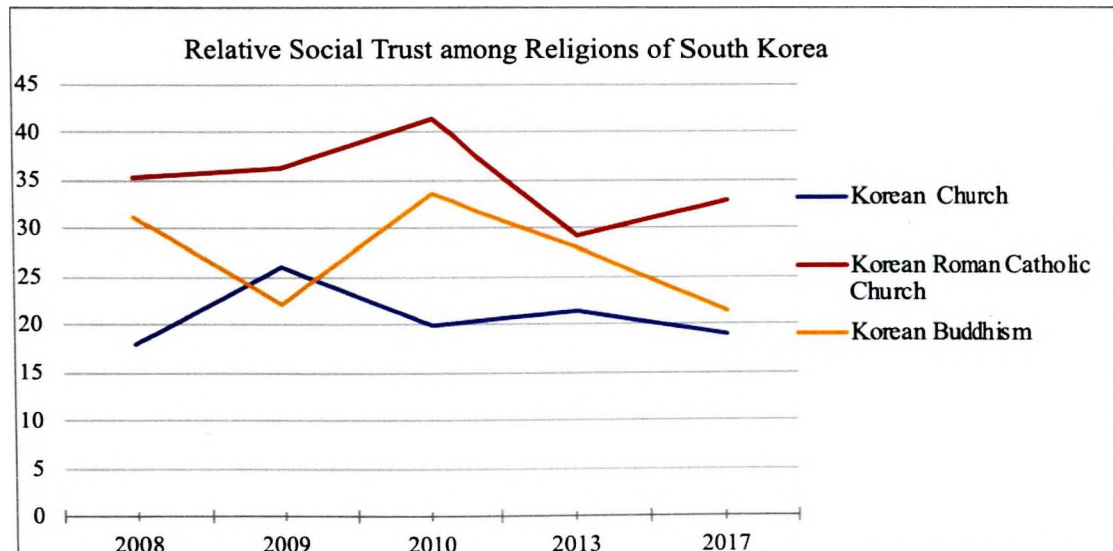
Figure 2. Illustrating relative social trust of Korean religions

Suggestions for Restoring the Social Trust of the Korean Church

The survey on the social trust of the Korean church asked respondents what the church should do to restore its social trust. The response receiving the most public support (26.1

percent) in the 2017 survey was a desire for the church to operate with greater fiscal integrity and transparency. The response with the second-highest level of public support (21.9 percent) was for the church to change its attitude toward other religions in South Korea. Next, at 17.2 percent, was for church *leaders* to live lives that are more consistent with Christian values, followed by the suggestion for church *members* to live lives that are more consistent with Christian values (14.5 percent).

The respondents also answered questions about the social actions they want to see from the Korean church. In 2017, 45.3 percent of the respondents chose "ethics and moral action campaigns" as activities that would help the church restore its social trust. Another 31.6 percent of the respondents chose service and disaster relief as activities that would restore social trust. The responses in the earliest survey (2008) revealed that the respondents valued a "change in hostile attitudes toward other religions" and "more volunteering in relief activities" as the most important ways the Korean church could improve its social trust. In the four subsequent surveys, however, the scores for "greater fiscal integrity and transparency" and "ethics and moral action" increased, and indeed, respondents in the 2017 survey considered these actions to be the most important activities the Korean church could undertake for improving its social trust.[39]

Other Surveys

The surveys conducted by the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea were not the only ones used to measure the public's level of trust toward the Korean church. In 2009, a weekly magazine known as the *Sisain* conducted a survey on the social trust in various

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[39] Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2017 Social Trust.*

professions in South Korea. According to the survey, social trust in Roman Catholic priests was the highest among religious careers, followed by Korean Buddhist monks and Korean church pastors, who received the lowest social trust score of all.

Moreover, there is another survey which shows the same general rankings of the religious institutions in South Korea.[40] That survey was conducted by the Buddhist Society Research Institute. Like other surveys, this one shows that the Korean Roman Catholic Church gained the highest social trust. The figures for the social trust of the three major religions were the Korean Roman Catholic Church (39.8 percent), Korean Buddhism (32.8 percent), and the Korean church (10.2 percent). Nearly two in three respondents (62.5 percent) answered that they do not trust the Korean church, while 22.8 percent of respondents answered that they do not trust the Korean Roman Catholic Church and 24.3 percent of respondents answered that they do not trust Korean Buddhism. The social trust scores of the three religions in terms of their clergy were similar to other surveys as well. Nearly half (51.3 percent) of respondents answered that they trust Korean Roman Catholic priests, while Korean Buddhist monks scored 38.7 percent, and pastors in the Korean church scored only 17.0 percent.

Across the board, the Korean church consistently scored lowest in social trust. These results show that the Korean church and its leaders have lower social trust as social capital than other religions do. The polling research by these other organizations corroborate the validity and usefulness of the survey on the social trust of the Korean

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[40] Korean Buddhism Societal Institute, "Report on the Results of the Survey on Public Opinion on Korean Society, Politics and Religion."

church conducted by the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, the primary source for understanding public perception on these issues and institutions.

Research on the Social Trust of the Korean Church

Won-gyu Lee suggests four reasons why the Korean church is receiving low social trust scores even though the church helps society through its social welfare programs, relief efforts, and financial support for those in need. First, he argues that anti-social behaviors (such as heartless comments) have more influence than social well-being on the social trust of a religious institution.[41] In the survey on the social trust of the Korean church, respondents were generally aware that the Korean church spends a lot of money on social welfare and relief. Nevertheless, they answered in the survey that they were judging the church for its many anti-social behaviors reported in the Korean media. In other words, Korean society is paying more attention to the anti-social behaviors and corruption than the charitable activities of the church. Second, the decentralized structure of the Korean church makes it more prone to these ethical breaches. Korean Buddhism and the Korean Roman Catholic Church exercise more centralized control over their clergy and dispatch specially-trained teams to discreetly handle internal issues. The Korean church, on the other hand, consists of many denominations without a central authority, making it more difficult to monitor and control the activities at individual churches with independent pastors. Incidentally, the open nature of the Korean church makes it more exposed to the public and the media, whereas the closed nature of Korean Buddhism and the Korean Catholic Church hides certain issues from

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[41] Lee, *The Crisis and Hope*, 238.

public view. In addition, the negative evaluation of the Korean church was also strong

because many people have a distaste for the aggressive evangelistic (proselytizing)

tactics of the Korean church.

The third reason Lee suggests for the low social trust of the Korean church is the

behaviors of its leaders. Since the leaders of the Korean church receive very low social

trust scores compared to other religious leaders, by association the Korean church is also

receiving low social trust scores from Korean society. As fare the leaders, so fares the

church—guilt by association. The final reason Lee suggests is the general perception

that the Korean church is focused more on worldly values than on spiritual ones.

Following Won-gyu Lee's interpretation, Won-beom Chung argues that the crisis

of social trust in the Korean church stems from "Constantinianism."[42] Echoing John

Howard Yoder, Chung argues that Constantinianism, where the church is no different

from the world, prevailed in the Korean church, causing a crisis in the social trust of the

Korean church. Regarding this Constantinianism as a phenomenon of identification or

convergence between church and society (state), Korean Christian sociologist Young-

shin Park evaluates the churches as follows:

> The desires and hopes of the Korean church and its members have been identical
> with all that the people outside the church hope to dream and obtain. In this
> respect, the Korean church is no different from the outside world. The Korean
> church and Korean society have the same symbolism, value orientation, and
> behavioral patterns. The inner world of the Korean church is indistinguishable
> from the world outside the Korean church at a deep level. The standard of
> success of the world and the standard of success of the Korean church have
> become one, and the blessings which the world seeks and the blessing which the
> Korean church seeks are the same. . . . Today's Korean church, where the gods of

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[42] Chung, *Being Church*, 25.

the world and God of the Korean church are not distinguished . . . has not established its true form in Korean society and has become like the world.[43]

Therefore, Chung argues that the way the Korean church must overcome the social trust crisis is to escape Constantinianism and restore its identity as a church. Specifically, the Korean church must change the theological paradigm from a "gospel" that emphasizes individual salvation to the gospel of God's kingdom, from atonement-centered theology to wholistic theology.[44] While atonement-centered theology focuses on salvation from sin, wholistic theology focuses on sanctification and holiness of the Christian life in community.

Atonement-centered theology has motivated aggressive evangelism by the Korean church, which the public frequently cites as a reason for the deterioration of its social trust.[45] In the period of Korean Christendom, very few citizens held a negative opinion of overseas missionary work. This is because the goals pursued by the church and society were not very different. Years later, however, the Korean public viewed the work of the Afghanistan mission team in 2007 as an aggressive method of evangelism. Although the missions team focused on providing medical services, the Korean public considered their mission to be aggressive proselytizing due to their Christian purpose. According to Kyung-kyu Shin, the main problem with "evangelism in the Korean church is that there are so many people who preach the gospel in an unreasonable way, ignoring the time, place and situation. Such aggressive evangelism can be seen every

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[43] Cited by Chung, *Being Church*, 26.

[44] Chung, *Being Church*, 37–45.

[45] Shin, "Aggressive Mission," 370.

day in many places in South Korea."[46] Examples of aggressive evangelism can be found in the train stations in major train cities, where Christians frequently confront travelers with signs such as "Jesus = Heaven, unbelief = hell." Such efforts to convert people to Christianity not only negatively impact the Korean public, reducing the social credibility of the Korean church, but also make it more difficult for Christianity to be accepted or tolerated in Korean society. Aggressive evangelism contributes to the church's low social credibility.

Another scholar returns to the issues of materialism and corrupt church leadership. Byung Oh Kang presents these two general reasons for the drop in the social trust of Korean churches.[47] First, he argues that materialism and a prioritization of church membership growth have undermined the social credibility of Korean churches. A mentality of "church-growth-first" has allowed or encouraged the use of immoral methods for the quantitative growth of the church. It is "exhibit A" in the case that materialism has infiltrated the church. Materialism shows up not only in terms of quantitative growth as a coveted measure of success but also in the way the church's budget and buildings are considered successful the larger they become.

Second, Kang argues that few Korean church leaders are respected by Korean society, leading to a decline in social credibility. In contrast, Cardinal Su-hwan Kim, a former Roman Catholic leader, was highly respected in Korean society. During Korea's military dictatorship, this Catholic leader resisted the tyranny of the military government and protected the socially underprivileged. Father Tae-seok Lee, another former Roman

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[46] Shin, "Aggressive Mission," 377.
[47] Kang, "Fall of Social Trust," 73.

Catholic leader, is also celebrated in Korean society as a role model of social service. Nicknamed the "Schweitzer of Sudan," Lee served as an educator and physician in the village of Tonj in the Warap province of South Sudan. And while the Korean church has leaders comparable to Kim and Lee within its ranks, they are highly regarded only by those within the church. Outside the church, their reputations are tainted by the media coverage of ethical and criminal issues, depriving them of the public respect they otherwise deserve. It is like the joke, "Ninety-nine percent of lawyers give the rest a bad name!"

Again, it is not only the leaders who are to blame. Sung-bihn Yim argues that the cause of the public's negative view of Korean churches is that even church members are not faithful to their Christian identities. In other words, Korean Christians do not live in accordance with a biblical worldview.[48] Korean non-Christians have become aware of this hypocrisy, says Yim, and judge everything else about the Korean church through this lens of distrust.

C. The Growth of the Korean Church and Its Ethical Issues

The leading cause of the ethical problems in the Korean church, according to a majority of Korean Christian scholars, is its "church growth first" mentality, which places growth in membership as the church's top priority. If this is to blame for many of the ethical failings within the church, it is essential to look at the growth of the Korean church in this dissertation, especially the change in the membership of the Korean church after its explosive growth from the 1960s through the 1980s.

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[48] Yim, *Public Theology for Korean Church and Society*, 195.

The Explosive Growth of the Korean Church

The astounding growth of Christianity in South Korea is a phenomenal aspect of modern

Korean society, demographically, with the most rapid growth from the 1960s through

the 1980s.[49] At no other time since Protestant missionaries introduced (Protestant)

Christianity to Korea 170 years ago has the Korean church grown this much.[50] Timothy

S. Lee lists more specific numbers that confirm this general claim:

> From 1950 to 1988, Korean evangelicalism underwent remarkable growth. In
> 1950 it claimed at most 600,000 adherents (2.9 percent of the total population).
> By 1960 that figure had increased to 1,257,000 (5 percent); by 1970, to
> 2,197,000 (7 percent); and by 1979, to 4,868,000 (13 percent). By 1985 the
> number of evangelical adherents had risen to 6,489,000 (16 percent). This meant
> that from 1950 to 1980 the number of Protestants in Korea roughly doubled just
> about every decade, and from 1950 to 1985 the growth was more than tenfold.
> Moreover, by the middle of the 1980s, Korean evangelicalism had become a
> record holder in a number of categories of church growth. As of 1981, for
> example, according to church growth expert Peter Wagner, it had the fastest-
> growing congregation in the history of evangelicalism as a whole.[51]

Prior to 1985, it is worth noting, neither *Statistics Korea* nor any other national polling

agency measured religious populations in their censuses. Instead, these numbers were

self-reported by the religious organizations themselves. The Korean church derived its

population by adding together the membership numbers reported by each Protestant

denomination. The composition of the Korean churches, however, has never been static.

Members often move laterally between churches within in the same denomination, and

even from one denomination to another. Consequently, it is likely that a significant

number of members are counted multiple times within the church's censuses.

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[49] Clark, "History and Religion in Modern Korea," 69.
[50] Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, ed., *A History of Christianity in Korea*, 97.
[51] Lee, *Born Again*, 85.

This flaw in counting can be seen in a comparison of the Korean church's self-reported population for 1980 and the first *Statistics Korea* count in 1985. The 1980 count is several hundred thousand people higher than the 1985 count, and yet the church was not done growing in 1980. Therefore, it is appropriate and reasonable to consider that the number of members reported by the Korean church prior to 1985 has been unintentionally inflated. Despite the doubts about its accuracy, however, the Korean church's own aggregated membership statistics are sufficient to show the explosive growth trend of Korean churches from 1960 to 1980. After 1980, Statistics Korea is the best source for census figures of the religious population. Its census data, compiled every 10 years since 1985, shows the growth of the Korean church (See the figure below). The data of the censuses from 1985, 1995, 2005, and 2015 are important for examining the growth trends of Korean churches and other major religions in South Korea.

Analysis of the changes in the Korean religious population during the 30 years from 1985 to 2015 shows that the growth of the Korean church first crested and then slowed despite rising numerically. In 2005, the number of Korean church members decreased by around 140,000 people, while the number of Korean Roman Catholics increased by more than two million. The reliability of the census is usually quite high, because it was collected by Statistics Korea. However, critics have raised doubts about the accuracy of the 2005 numbers. A change in the wording of the census may have confused respondents. In Korea, Christianity refers to the Protestant church, and it is not common to include the Roman Catholic Church within that label. In the 2005 survey, because the Korean Roman Catholic Church was misrepresented as "Christianity," some

Korean Protestant Christians probably reported their religion as Roman Catholic

Christian by accident.[52] This explanation is plausible, considering that the number of

Korean church members surged ten years later, according to the figure below:
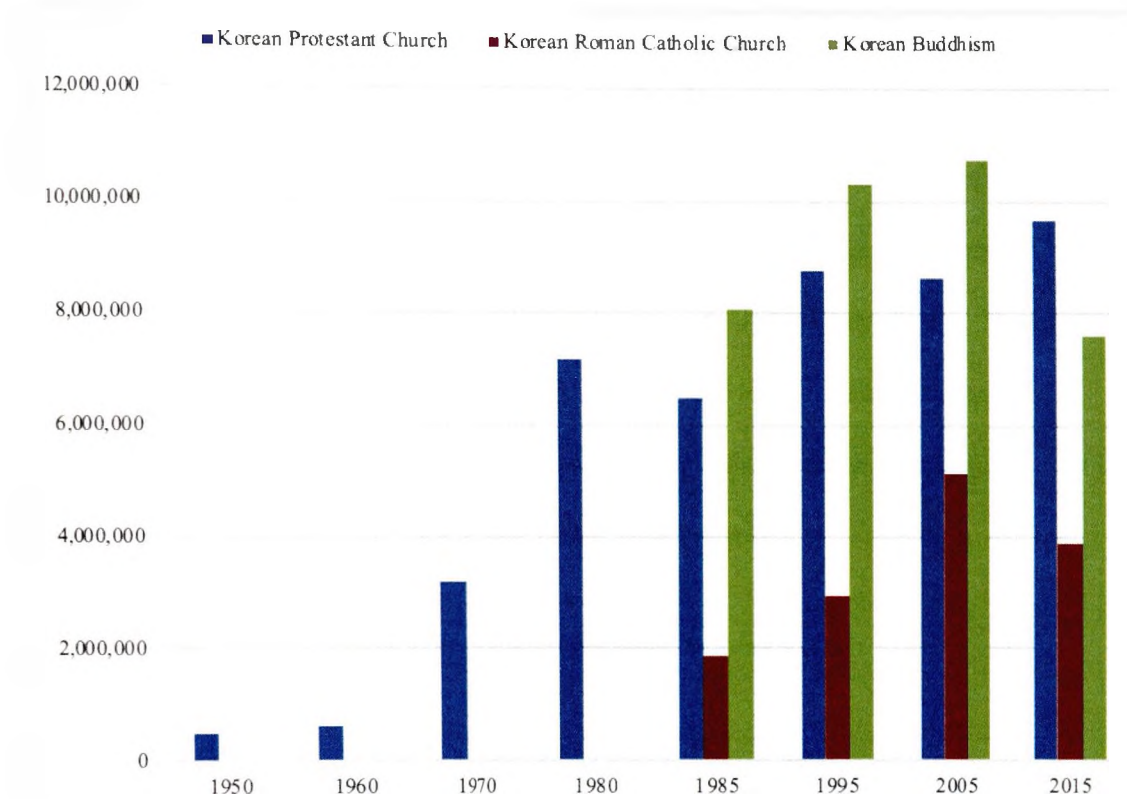
Figure 3. Population changes of major religions of South Korea by Statistics Korea

A line of best fit would look more like the first half of a bell curve that has reached its

peak and is slowing down its growth. The questions surrounding the 2005 census make

it difficult to conclude that the Korean church has actually seen a decrease in

membership. Given the historical trend from 1985 to 2015, though, it is reasonable to

conclude that the growth of the church has slowed over the past 30 years.

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[52] Ji, "The Survey on the Social Trust of the Korean Church in 2017 in Comparison with Other Polls."

One way of cross-checking the 2005 data from Statistics Korea is to compare the information with other surveys. Gallop Korea, as another reputable example, surveyed Korean religions five times from 1984 to 2014. According to these results, the number of members of Korean churches in 2004 did not decrease compared to 1997 but increased by only 1 percent. In 2014, the number of Korean churches was 21 percent, the same percentage as in 2004, but the total population of South Korea increased by 5 million people during that period, increasing the number of church members by 1 million. These percentages can be grasped more easily in the figure below. Therefore, according to the Gallop Korea survey, it is not accurate to estimate that church membership decreased in the early 21st century. It would be more correct to say that the growth of Korean churches has slowed down considerably.
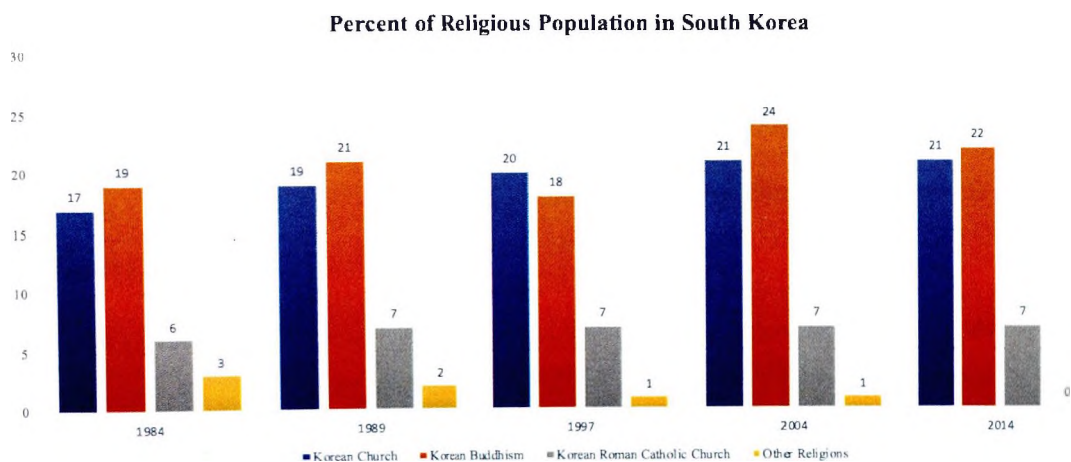
Figure 4. Percent of religious population in South Korea

The Growth of the Korean Church and Its Social Background

Census statistics show the rapid growth of the Korean church, especially in the 40 years following the Korean War in the 1950s. In those four decades, membership expanded from about 2 percent of the overall population to about 20 percent. Since most scholars claim church growth has been a key reason for the ethical problems in the church today, one can better understand the church's current situation by analyzing the causes of ecclesial growth.

There are two main theories explaining the explosive growth of the Korean church.[53] Sun-il Kim describes them in terms of a "deprivation-compensation" perspective and a "desire-satisfaction" perspective. First, in order to win the competition with North Korea, the dictatorship of South Korea regarded economic growth as the first priority and was hungry to achieve it.[54] The economic growth of South Korea during that period has been described as "extraordinary growth."[55] Growth was thus compensation for the economic deprivation the country felt when in competition with North Korea. More tangibly, the economic growth of South Korea is represented by the following list of economic indicators:

> A per capita GNP of about $100 in 1963 versus a figure of nearly $5,000 as the year 1990 began; a war-ravaged Seoul of gutted buildings, rubble, beggars, and orphans in 1953 versus the proud, bustling city of the 1988 Summer Olympics with its skyscrapers, subways, plush restaurants, boutiques, first-class hotels, and prosperous middle class; a country abjectly dependent on foreign aid in the 1950s versus a 1980s economic powerhouse—a factory to the world for

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[53] Kim, *Growth Narratives*, 26.

[54] Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, ed., *A History of Christianity in Korea*, 103.

[55] Lee, *Born Again*, 87.

everything from clothes, shoes, and electronic goods to steel, ships, and now even automobiles and semiconductors.[56]

Subsequent to the 1950s, South Korea has been rapidly industrialized. Many rural people migrated to the city, and South Korea evolved into an industrialized society in its own right. The proportion of the urban population increased from 28 percent in 1960 to 74 percent of all South Koreans in 1990.[57] Amid such rapid social change, the Korean church became a new haven for people. Unlike Buddhist temples, which are typically far from the cities, the Korean churches were in places where people could easily access them. In addition, the doctrine of the Korean church, which emphasizes the salvation of the individual rather than the interest of the group, was seen as more attractive by those living in the city who did not always have such strong family ties as those in more rural communities. This is the "desire-satisfaction" explanation of the growth. Therefore, as urbanization progressed, the number of Christians increased, and the number of churches in Korea increased. In other words, social upheaval contributed to the growth of the church for these two reasons.

Nevertheless, the rapid economic development, industrialization, and urbanization of Korean society also had negative side effects. The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea puts it this way:

> The struggle for existence in the urbanized industrial society and the materialistic world-views demolished traditional community and human relations and brought a serious self-identity crisis. In the city, which was composed of self-interested people who had a heterogeneous background, people became individualized and began to lose their traditional relationships. Moreover, the market economy of [South] Korea was at a stage where people

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[56] Eckert, *Korea, Old and New*, 388.

[57] Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, ed., *A History of Christianity in Korea*, 102.

could not anticipate the fair competition that kept order and principles due to the structural limit of "developmental dictatorship" (developmental problems during the dictatorship). Many people from the ruling class did not respect the law and rules, taking advantage of close relationships between political and business circles. The privileged class's moral corruption and contempt of laws produced a prevailing sense of immorality, trickery, and expediency throughout the whole society. The period between the 1970s and the middle of the 1980s was the time in which anti-communism, military nationalism, bureaucratism, and the growth-first mentalities were promoted more furiously. In this way, the developmental dictatorship produced anomie, and the Korean people fell into a chaotic state, having lost common values or moral norms. As a result[,] Korean society showed many kinds of pathological phenomena.[58]

Sung-gun Kim argues that an "affinity" exists between Protestantism and capitalism as a factor to be considered when explaining the growth of the Korean church.[59] In fact, the Korean church emulated the capitalistic government in two key ways. First, just as the South Korean government promoted economic growth as its first priority, the Korean church pursued membership growth as its first priority. The greatest desire of the Korean church from the 1960s through the 1980s was quantitative growth. And second, the Korean church emulated the very methods by which the South Korean government pursued economic growth. Just as the South Korean government favored economic development by large corporations, which received financial and regulatory favoritism from the state, the Korean church favored growth by mega-churches, which received strong favoritism within their respective denominations.

The strategy of concentrating membership growth in mega-churches proved to be extremely effective. The outward success of the mega-churches influenced other

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[58] Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, ed., *A History of Christianity in Korea*, 104–05.

[59] Kim, "The Korean Protestant Church after Its Rapid Growth," 11.

Korean society or the government. This relationship has seriously influenced the ethical

problems of the Korean church. In regard to the ecclesial relationship with the

government, Won-Bum Chung argues that many problems stem from Constantinian

theology and conservative theology. According to him, while conservative

fundamentalism contributed to the quantitative growth of the church, both that

theological stance and Constantinianism have focused the Korean church only on

individual salvation, making it indifferent to social problems. Accordingly, this

theological trend has made the Korean church a religion focused on growth and

maintaining its current membership.

Bong-ho Son describes how growth has become an idol to the Korean church:

How did the Korean church, which had a good reputation in Korean society,
become a mockery of the world as it is now? The most important reason is the
growth-firstism pursued by the Korean church. Although the Korean Church
made the cause of the expansion of the kingdom, preaching the gospel, and
salvation of souls, the Korean Church actually made church growth their idol.
Moreover, the growth was not the growth of the entire Korean church, but of the
"their own church". Only the growth of their own church was more important
than anything else. It is enough to evaluate that almost all Korean churches
worship their own churches as idols. The most effective means mobilized for
church growth was Blessing-seeking faith based on shamanism. Prosperity
theology imported from the American church, which theoretically supported the
blessing-seeking faith, emerged as the mainstream theology of the Korean
church. The Korean church has used immoral and ungodly means and methods
to help church growth.[61]

According to him, the Korean church rejected moral values that might hinder church

growth but justified their growth under the pretense that they were expanding the

kingdom of God. What these churches were really expanding was simply their own little

kingdoms, their own churches. The ends justified the means, even unethical means. It

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[61] Son, "Ethics of the Korean Church and the Hereditary Succession," 32.

seems that the church had lost its vision and started living out a different master narrative than the one they started with.

Indeed, if nothing else, the Korean church has arguably been influenced by the master narrative of Korean society, but that society has historical, economic, and political dimensions as well as religious dimensions. Therefore, in constructing a hypothesis to analyze the ethical problems of the Korean church, it is necessary to consider the master narratives of Korean society within some of these contexts, or else the picture will not be nuanced enough.

Theoretical Analysis

Won-gyu Lee, Chi-joon Roh, and Jung-yeon Yi analyze the problems of the Korean church from the perspective of Christian sociology, adding more depth to the discussion.[62] They agree that Korea's modernization and rapid economic growth became the social background that triggered the explosive growth of the Korean church and the ethical problems that arose in the process. However, since religious institutions interact with and are influenced by other institutions in a society, Chi-joon Roh argues that an individual's choice of religion is related to a number of historical and social factors.[63] Therefore, according to him, the growth of a particular religion is not the result of its own characteristics alone. The explosive growth of the Korean church must therefore be the result of various social and historical causes. In order to determine what contributed to the growth of the Korean church, he argues, one needs to delve into the issue from a

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[62] Lee, *The Crisis and Hope*, 127–31; Roh, *Korean Protestant Sociology*, 18–31; Yi, "Urban Modernization and Religion," 47–55.

[63] Roh, *Korean Protestant Sociology*, 16.

historical and social perspective. According to him, the modernization and

industrialization of Korea were the key drivers behind the growth of the Korean church,

and when they stagnated, the church did as well. The Korean church grew rapidly from

the 1920s to the pre-industrial period after rapid growth at the beginning of Christian

missions by Western missionaries. In the 1960s and 1980s, however, the Korean church

experienced faster rates of growth than before. Its growth can be called an explosive

growth that occurred along with the industrialization, modernization, and urbanization

of Korea. Since the pace of modernization and industrialization in Korea has stalled,

however, the Korean church has also seemed to have lost its social environment for

growth.

Along with Roh, Byong-suh Kim argues that industrialization, urbanization,

social instability, political insecurity, and "motivational aspects of individual converts"

contributed to the explosive growth of the Korean church.[64] His view on the link

between industrialization and a collapse of meaning and identity is particularly helpful:

> Religion as a social institution has many distinct social functions as it gives
> answers to people's ultimate concern or ultimate inquiries. When an individual
> faces a situation of tension and confusion, he/she needs to have a clear self-
> identity and definition of situation. Thus a person can construct an identity
> through interaction with others in a setting of reference groups or communities.
> He/she can see meanings by defining a situation through the understanding of the
> interactional relationships with the generalized others, that is, religion gives self-
> identity for inward common order and definition of situation for meaning in
> social life.
> Church is indeed a reference group for these needs of individuals. In a Korean
> context, when one confronts the situation of unrest, chaos, tension and
> instability, one can look to the church for the construction of self-identity and the
> social meaning of reality through definition of situation. In Korea, when the
> trends of industrialization combined with the social characteristics of the Korean

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[64] Kim, "The Explosive Growth of the Korean Church Today," 62.

churches, a unique social context developed. Thus people in mass knocked on the doors of the church searching for selfhood and meaning in life.[65]

Kim, therefore, argues that people needed answers to existential questions, and the church at first provided those answers in ways that more money, productivity, and achievements did not.[66]

In-chul Kang, on the other hand, claims that the Korean church was able to achieve overwhelming growth compared to other religions through the preferential treatment afforded to it by the Korean government.[67] The Korean church benefited exclusively from this favoritism, making it impossible for the Korean religious institutions to compete freely in the religious "marketplace." As a result, the Korean church was able to access national power and status more effectively than other religious groups. The Korean church was also able to respond more quickly to changes in Korean society than other religions were.

Likewise, Dong-min Chang contends that Korean society was a functional Christendom during the period when Korean churches grew explosively. Since then, this Christendom has collapsed and South Korea is now a completely secular society, at least officially. In other words, the system of Korean society has changed, and the Korean church no longer enjoys a pseudo-Christendom or functional Christendom status in the country.[68]

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[65] Kim, "The Explosive Growth of the Korean Church Today," 69.
[66] Kim, "The Explosive Growth of the Korean Church Today," 70.
[67] Kang, *Religions, Politics, and State of South Korea*, 73.
[68] Chang, *Post-Christendom*, 46.

Rather than attempting a theological interpretation of the church's growth, Sun-il Kim also attempts to explain how the Korean church could benefit from the social and cultural contexts in which it grew. He works with a concept of "plausibility structures" that fueled this growth.[69] He argues that Korea's anti-communism, modernization paradigm, and the formation of Korean culture dependent on American culture have established plausibility structures for the Korean church to grow explosively. These were the structures in which being a Protestant Christian in Korea was plausible and attractive. The Korean church thereby became a reciprocal religion in Korean society. According to Kim, the deprivation-compensation theory explains the growth of Korean churches in the sense that Koreans were compensated by the church for deficiencies in Korean society from the 1960s to the 1980s.[70] Essentially, the Korean church became a place of "religious alternatives and shelters suitable for the chaos of society and the anxiety of people."[71] As described above, many people in Korean society feel deprived at the economic, social, ethical, and spiritual levels. This deprivation may have motivated religious reward mechanisms such as the healing movement and the church reform movement.[72] Political instability and social discontent have increased the need for religion in Korean society. At least for a time, people found the stability they wanted in the Protestant church.

Looking at the social situation from a different angle, Sun-il Kim accounts for the growth of the Korean church in terms of the need-satisfaction theory as well. Need-

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[69] Kim, *Growth Narratives*, 11–12.
[70] Kim, *Growth Narratives*, 27–31.
[71] Kim, *Growth Narratives*, 29.
[72] Kim, *Growth Narratives*, 28.

satisfaction theory is a theory that explains that the church has grown by satisfying

mental values and cultural needs in society.[73] The two social theories can overlap,

admittedly. Not only do people receive compensation from Korean Protestant

Christianity for their deprivation in Korean society, but they can also meet their needs

there in as well. Either way, Christianity is established as a prominent social structure of

Korean society.[74]

In *Beyond Megacurch*, Gwang-eun Shin explains how the Korean church was

assimilated into society by the phenomenon of the mega-church. According to him,

mega-church theology leads to growth-at-all-costs thinking. Historically, conservative

and progressive theology coexisted within the Korean church, but the era of explosive

church growth changed this peaceable diversity, merging them together into evangelical

(or evangelistic) theology after the 1970s, when the church was influenced by neo-

evangelicalism.[75] Shin argues that the explosive growth is the theological result of

denominations that emphasized evangelism. For example, the number of believers in the

Hapdong and Tonghap denomination, which are conservative Korean Presbyterian

denominations in Korea, has grown eightfold from about 1 million in 1961 to about 8.1

million in 1993, while the number of believers in the progressive Christian Presbyterian

denomination has increased over the same period 2.5 times from about 130,000 to

320,000.[76] Such swelling of numbers inclined most churches in Korea to adopt

evangelical or evangelistic theology, which has growth-first priorities. Perhaps the

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[73] Kim, *Growth Narratives*, 31.

[74] Kim, *Growth Narratives*, 32.

[75] Shin, *Beyond Megachurch*, 102.

[76] Shin, *Beyond Megachurch*, 103.

theology of the Korean church resulted in a growth in width but not in depth of the Christians and faith communities in the country.

With great numbers and great power comes great responsibility, however. That is why, in recent years, many Korean scholars turned to developing public theology and thus the church's role in the public sphere.[77] The church cannot pretend that it is too small to wield influence in the political and social arenas, after all. This recent theological concern naturally stems from the crisis of social trust in the Korean church. As discussed above, the Korean church is regarded in society as a group loyal only to its own interests, neglecting its social responsibility. Jae-young Jeong argues this loss of trust in the church is actually more serious of a problem than the slowdown in church growth. Because the church is one of Korea's major religious institutions,[78] he concludes that Christians should set an example of life not only in the church but also in the public sphere. Since this distinct way of life needs to be moral, Christians must live in the public sphere being known for their virtuous lives. Christians who successfully live out this moral life present the church as an example of this community of morals.

My Hypothesis for the Korean Church

Based on the preceding research, I will hypothesize the causes of the ethical problems in the Korean church and suggest some nuanced solutions. My hypothesis in this dissertation is that the Korean church has been assimilated into the growth-first mentality of Korean society, and the moral character of the Korean church has thus been

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[77] Jeong, "From Private Faith to Public Faith," 346. See Yim et. al, *Public Theology*; Jang, *Public Practical Theology*; Lee et. al, *Public Theology and Public Church*; Yim, *Public Theology for Korean Church and Society*; Volf, *Public Faith*.

[78] Jeong, "From Private Faith to Public Faith," 349.

disformed out of keeping with its story as the people of God. In order to verify this hypothesis, it is necessary to examine whether the church has been assimilated into the culture of the world—what counts as evidence, in other words. To this end, the next chapter will look at the assimilation theory of H. Richard Niebuhr and the ethics of character of Stanley Hauerwas. Through this, I will analyze how the assimilation of the church into the world negatively affects the character of the Korean church. This dissertation will identify the narrative created by the growth-first mentalities of Korean society based on Hauerwas's claim that the ethical character of a community is formed by its guiding narrative. I will then examine the moral character produced by this warped narrative in the Korean church.

E. Conclusion

This chapter categorized and analyzed the types of ethical problems in the Korean church. It also used the concept of social capital and social trust to determine how the Korean society views the Korean church. The survey on *Social Trust of the Korean Church* from 2008 to 2017 clearly revealed that the Korean church had the lowest social trust from Korean society when compared to the other major religions.[79] Furthermore, historical and sociological studies confirmed that the Korean church was influenced by the growth-first mindset of Korean society and government. In order to see how this mentality was adopted in the church itself and how it influenced the moral formation of Korean churches, the next chapter will discuss the paradigms of Niebuhr and Hauerwas.

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[79] See Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2008 Social Trust*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2009 Social Trust*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2010 Social Trust*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2013 Social Trust*; Christian Ethics Movement of Korea, *2017 Social Trust*.

This allows for a theological account of the crisis rather than simply a historical and political account. It also sets the stage for constructive theological solutions to the problems of the Korean church today.

CHAPTER 3: THE ETHICS OF HAUERWAS AND NIEBUHR

This chapter will analyze the ethical paradigms of Stanley Hauerwas and H. Richard

Niebuhr as theories for interpreting the ethical issues and situation of the Korean church

within its culture. Although both theories are helpful in this task, Hauerwas is critical of

Niebuhr's categories for picturing the relationship between the church and the world. He

criticizes Niebuhr's typology as leading people to a false dichotomy that favors

liberalism:

> Niebuhr set up the argument in such a way as to ensure that the transformist
> approach would be viewed as the most worthy. A democracy like ours must
> believe that it is making progress, that the people are, through their own power
> and choice, transforming the world into something better than it would be
> without their power and choice. Thus Niebuhr set up the argument as if a world-
> affirming "church" or world-denying "sect" were our only options, as if these
> categories were a faithful depiction of some historical or sociological reality in
> the first place. In good, liberal fashion, Niebuhr ensured that the most inclusive
> ecclesiology would be viewed as the most truthful, that any church becoming too
> concerned about its identity and the formation of its young would be rejected by
> American culture as incipiently "sectarian," as irresponsible in a state that had
> given us the political tools to transform the world. *Christ and Culture* thus stands
> as a prime example of repressive tolerance. Since Niebuhr could appreciate the
> "rightness" of all the types of churches he described (after all, he claimed that he
> was only describing, not prescribing), his own pluralism underwrote the implicit
> assumption that his position (pluralism) was superior to other, more narrow
> ecclesiology. Pluralism in theology became an ideology for justifying the alleged
> pluralism of American culture. In *Christ and Culture*, liberal theology gave a
> theological rationale for liberal democracy.[1]

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[1] Hauerwas, *Resident Aliens*, 40–41.

Contrary to Niebuhr, Hauerwas argues that transforming the world should not be the

Christian's political task. Rather, their task should be this: to be the church.[2] If the

political task of Christians were to be no different than that of unbelievers, the politics of

Christians would be the politics of unbelief. If Christians are distinct from unbelievers,

though, their political or public task should be distinct as well. According to Hauerwas,

Niebuhr blurs the line between the politics of unbelief and the politics of belief and sets

up a false dichotomy so that people would prefer the assimilation or cooperation model

of the church's relationship with its culture. Niebuhr's book *Christ and Culture* would

thus actually be one of the greatest obstacles to Christians today in formulating a

Christian theology of relating to their culture. As Hauerwas details:

> We have come to believe that few books have been a greater hindrance to an
> accurate assessment of our situation than *Christ and Culture*. Niebuhr rightly
> saw that our politics determines our theology. He was right that Christians
> cannot reject "culture." But his call to Christians to accept "culture" (where is
> this monolithic "culture" Niebuhr describes?) and politics in the name of the
> unity of God's creating and redeeming activity had the effect of endorsing a
> Constantinian social strategy. "Culture" became a blanket term to underwrite
> Christian involvement with the world without providing any discriminating
> modes for discerning how Christians should see the good or the bad in
> "culture."[3]

In this light, it seems difficult to find common ground between Hauerwas and Niebuhr.

However, in this chapter I want to show that, despite the differences between these two

scholars, their theories both contribute to fruitful interpretations of the ethical problems

of the Korean church. Hauerwas's theory is useful for explaining how the Korean

church's narrative influenced moral formation, while Niebuhr's typology is useful for

explaining how the Korean church was assimilated into the narrative of Korean society.

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[2] Hauerwas, *Resident Aliens*, 36.

[3] Hauerwas, *Resident Aliens*, 40.

This chapter first treats Hauerwas's ethics of character—virtue ethics—and then the ethical paradigms of Niebuhr before arguing that they each provide helpful heuristic approaches for explaining how the Korean church has lost or tarnished its Christian identity. They also provide a way forward.

A. Hauerwas: His Narrative Theology and Ethics of Character

To analyze Hauerwas's theology and methodology, this chapter will critically analyze virtue ethics and other components of Hauerwas's ethical approach to theology. Hauerwas emphasizes the identity of the church, the narrative of a community, and the ethics of character in the light of Christianity becoming a watered-down civil religion in the United States. After introducing his narrative theology and ethics of character, I will diagnose whether it is appropriate to use his work as a tool to analyze the ethical problems of the Korean church.

Christian Virtue Ethics

Because Hauerwas utilizes virtue ethics in a Christian way, this section examines the recent renewal of interest in virtue ethics and Christian virtue ethics more specifically. In addition, it examines whether virtue ethics is suitable for Christian ethics and how useful it might be for contemporary Christian life.

Virtue Ethics

Scholarly interest in virtues today is a revival of the ethical theories of traditional Greek philosophers. Most contemporary virtue ethics approaches have been influenced by these philosophers, especially by Aristotle's idea of virtue. According to Aristotle, the concept of virtue is personal excellence, that is, individual strength or superiority. A

longer definition will be given later. In *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explains this

concept and other foundational concepts such as the "good." He says, "All human

activities aim at some good: some goods subordinate to others."[4] Happiness, according

to his definition, is "an activity of soul in accordance with perfect virtue."[5] Regarding

Aristotle's the concept of goodness, Stanley J. Grenz explains that "[g]ood refers

primarily to excellence in the performance of whatever activity is essential to the nature

of the performer of the activity."[6] It is important to recognize that Aristotle's idea of

"happiness" is also different from today's concept of "happiness."[7] According to Grenz,

"happiness is not a static state of being but an activity."[8] Since "perfect activity" makes

"perfect happiness," "the highest happiness" can be gained "through the activity that is

connected with our highest good."[9] In this sense, Aristotle's concept of "happiness" is

based on his understanding of humanity's "rational nature."[10] At this point, Grenz

summarizes that "the happiness all humans seek" is located in "excellence in performing

the activity of thinking" because it satisfies "our proper human function as rational

beings."[11] Therefore, it makes sense that Aristotle divided the human soul into "rational

and nonrational parts."[12] While the rational part of human soul is capable of the

intellectual virtues, the nonrational part of human soul is capable of the moral virtues.

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[4] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 3.

[5] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 19.

[6] Grenz, *The Moral Quest*, 71.

[7] Grenz, *The Moral Quest*, 70.

[8] Grenz, *The Moral Quest*, 71.

[9] Grenz, *The Moral Quest*, 71.

[10] Grenz, *The Moral Quest*, 71.

[11] Grenz, *The Moral Quest*, 71.

[12] Grenz, *The Moral Quest*, 72.

But what is the nature of virtue? Since virtue entails "excellence," the concept of excellence in Aristotle demonstrates the meaning of virtue to him:

> Some of the virtues are intellectual and others moral, philosophic wisdom and understanding and practical wisdom [all] being intellectual [virtues], liberality and temperance moral. For in speaking about a person's character — we do not say that he is wise or has understanding, but that he is good-tempered or temperate; yet we praise the wise man also with respect to his state of mind; and of states of mind we call those which merit praise virtues.[13]

Here Aristotle explains virtue (or excellence) by using the concept of a praiseworthy "state of mind." In addition, he defines virtue as "a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean."[14] He explains this "mean" or middle ground between two extremes in this way:

> [This mean is] determined by reason, and by that reason by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect; and again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions, while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate.[15]

Such a middle ground of excellence to live out happiness requires enough non-moral goods, such as health, moderate wealth, and freedom from pain, so as to enable a person to do virtuous activities.[16] In other words, "a virtuous person" did not mean a person who "merely fits in with or accommodates oneself to others, or who poses no kind of threat."[17] On the contrary, a virtuous person is not only a person who appears superior to others but also a person "who is quite literally better than others, uncommon, noble, and

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[13] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 21.

[14] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 31.

[15] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 31.

[16] Russell, *The Cambridge Companion to Virtue Ethics*, 35.

[17] Tayor, "Ancient Wisdom and Modern Folly," 55.

therefore deserving of honor in a sense in which others are not."[18] The concept of virtue for Aristotle cannot be a private thing. It is a publicly lived life, not only aiming at excellence "in theoretical knowledge like others" who seek knowledge "in order to know what virtue is," but even aiming to "become good."[19]

To develop these virtues, Aristotle emphasizes "habituation" or habit formation. He says, "intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time). . . . Moral virtue, like the arts, is acquired by repetition of the corresponding acts."[20] By repetition, moral virtue can be made "as a result of habit, whence also its name (*ethike*) is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word ethos."[21] There is thus a process for forming moral virtues. Thus, "we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit."[22] At this point, Aristotle emphasizes constant repetition to formulate virtue as habitual excellence. Virtue requires practice—or practices, really.

Thus, Aristotle's virtue ethics emphasizes practices to achieve virtue as excellence and to become a good or virtuous person. Such a theory of moral self-improvement might initially seem to be incompatible with a Christian emphasis on God's grace or God's sovereignty in which humans are not the ones who earn or control their own status with God.[23] In this view, Christians only passively receive God's grace rather than actively earning forgiveness or righteousness. It is understandable why there

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[18] Tayor, "Ancient Wisdom and Modern Folly," 55.

[19] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 24.

[20] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 23.

[21] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 23.

[22] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 23.

[23] Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 36.

could be theological objections against virtue ethics within Christian theology. And yet, contrary to these objections, many scholars have tried to develop a Christian virtue ethics based on the New Testament.

Virtue Ethics in the New Testament

Indeed, virtue ethics is rising in popularity among Christian scholars. This popularity is perhaps related to "dissatisfaction with our culture's ethical tradition and with the current state of morality."[24] Normative ethics is no longer sufficient as the moral guide for the contemporary church, because it comes across as legalistic and overly authoritarian. Christians today are looking for help with practicing their faith in their daily lives, providing an opportunity for theologians to develop new formulations of biblical truth to help Christians in personal and public areas of their lives. Increasingly, theologians and congregations are turning to virtue ethics for that guidance in living a good life.

Recognizing that teaching rules and principles alone is not sufficient for Christians to live morally, Christian ethics has been compelled "to change its focus much more toward virtues and the formation of character, and away from rules and principles."[25] Stassen argues that Christians should acknowledge the necessity of nurturing "the kind of character and virtues that lead people actually to do the right and avoid the wrong."[26] In other words, virtue ethics can provide a moral vision to contemporary Christians rather than just giving them rules or principles.

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[24] Wilson, *Gospel Virtues*, 30.

[25] Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 32.

[26] Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 32.

The revival of virtue ethics in the twentieth century arose from Aristotelian-Thomistic virtue ethics.[27] Like these thinkers—Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas—Alasdair MacIntyre sees virtue as a human characteristic that can be developed through learning. He argues that virtue ethics is necessary to solve the moral crisis of modern Western society. According to him, Kant's enlightenment project led to a moral crisis. In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre calls for a restoration of communitarianism and virtue ethics. Emphasizing the notion of "telos" in classical virtue ethics, he argues that any valid ethical system must include "some account of the essence of [a person] . . . as a rational animal and above all some account of the human *telos*."[28] In his view, rejecting a "teleological view of human nature, any view of [humanity] as having an essence which defines [their] . . . true end" or purpose, does not allow one to form a "a basis for morality."[29] Accordingly, MacIntyre advocates "habitual exercise" to build virtues.[30] For him, a community's identity is determined by its narrative, and the character of individuals is shaped by their community. Through this, the community becomes not only an important socio-cultural channel in sharing moral traditions but also a place of cultivating virtues such that the virtues become second nature. MacIntyre thus rejects the individualistic and rationalist trends in modern society and insists on the need for community virtues.

Following MacIntyre, Hauerwas also advocates community virtues. In this line of thought, an individual's behavior is never merely personal but social at the same time.

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[27] Cochran, *Receptive Human Virtues*, ix.

[28] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 52.

[29] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 54.

[30] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 54.

In other words, the behavior of an individual is the social-self's behavior in the community to which she or he belongs. In *Community of Character*, Hauerwas shows that the church should be a community of character by nurturing Christians in becoming virtuous people.[31] To foster Christian character (or virtues), Christian discipleship must include habitual practices, just as MacIntyre would stress for virtue formation by any person, Christian or not. More than most authors, Hauerwas develops a theology of narrative formation of Christian character in terms of social virtue. In his view, social virtue is available not only for the church, but also for the world.

The call for re-appropriating virtue ethics in Christian ethics is not limited to one or two voices alone. In *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics*, Joseph J. Kotva argues that many "moral theologians and philosophers" can work based on such "virtue perspectives."[32] Indeed, he shows the relevance of the approach and its growing use by both Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians. Virtue ethics is not a passing fad but a fruitful framework for ethical analysis, and it is not anti-Christian or anti-grace. Precisely how it is advantageous and how it must be modified to be compatible with Christian theology remains to be discussed below, however.

In *The Theory and Practice of Virtue,* Gilbert Meilaender emphasizes the contribution of virtues to strengthen moral vision. He insists that one must be able to see the world and human nature correctly in order to know which character qualities count as virtues and which as vices. According to him, virtue is essential for one to see rightly. In other words, virtue improves one's vision of discerning the traits of character. In

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[31] Hauerwas, *Community of Character*, 3.

[32] Kotva, *The Christian Case*, 12.

contrast, vices (evil character traits) deteriorate one's ability to discern such things and ultimately render a person morally blind.[33] Virtue ethics can help Christians not only find moral vision but also strengthen their character.

However, the virtue ethics of Aristotle is insufficient because of its requirement to find a good lawgiver. In *Politics*, Aristotle says, "There are, then, three parts in all regimes with respect to which the excellent lawgiver must attempt to discern what is advantageous for each. As long as these are in a fine condition, the regime is necessarily in a fine condition; and regimes necessarily differ from one another as a result of differing in each of these parts."[34] The import of this political quote is that the moral vision of a community depends on an excellent lawgiver. Meilaender picks up on this and argues that Christians need a source of virtue that exceeds their powers. Having a sinful human nature, no person can perfectly model virtue as lawgiver or moral exemplar.

Further complicating the use of virtue ethics, other theologians find that the virtues put forth by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* are incompatible with the virtues found in the New Testament. "Aristotle has no place for the virtue of humility," writes Jonathan Wilson, "and his account of friendship precludes the possibility of friendship between God and humanity."[35] In Aristotle's understanding, the virtue of friendship can exist only among people who have similar social status. In Wilson's view, Aristotle did not think friendship could exist between people of different social statuses. Wilson

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[33] Meilaender, *Theory and Practice of Virtue*, 17.

[34] Aristotle, *Politics*, 120.

[35] Wilson, *Gospel Virtues*, 18–19.

argues that Jesus, however, does not limit friendship in this way. In his teaching and living, Jesus emphasized friendship with outcasts and the powerless. Therefore, it seems impossible to accept Aristotle's idea of virtues as the virtues in Christianity. For this reason, Wilson argues that "an ethics of virtue must be transformed by the gospel."[36]

Early Christian virtue ethicists like Hauerwas and Pinches value classical tradition, and their theologies affirmed the four traditional Greek virtues.[37] But additional virtues could be added and old ones transformed in the light of Christian thought. Despite the caveats, then, virtue ethics can help Christians to live according to their faith. Perhaps an ethical paradigm of this sort would benefit more from finding the virtues in the Bible rather than Greco-Roman philosophy.

Benjamin W. Farley is representative of a new wave of theologians who look to the Bible rather than traditional philosophy as their starting point for virtue ethics. In his book *In Praise of Virtue: An Exploration of the Biblical Virtues in a Christian Context*, Farley articulates the concept of biblical virtue ethics by pointing to virtues rooted in "God's character" in both Catholic and Protestant theologies.[38] Virtue is not in competition with divine grace, but "biblical ethical character is possible only if founded on the biblical emphasis of God's initiative, wherein God chooses to create human life and summons that life to seek its highest fulfillment in the Divine."[39] He says, "Throughout the Bible, one truth reigns supreme that provides the fundamental metaphysics of any biblical ethics of character: no one is saved by exercising virtue; nor

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[36] Wilson, *Gospel Virtues*, 39.

[37] Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 51.

[38] Farley, *In Praise of Virtue*, 4.

[39] Farley, *In Praise of Virtue*, 4.

is anyone damned for the lack of it. God and God's grace come first."[40] Emphasizing the

purpose God has for his creation, Farley systematically identifies, explores, and reflects

on the virtues in light of the *telos* given by God in both the Old and New Testaments.

Even though specific references to virtue may be lacking in the Christian Scriptures, a

general concern for moral formation and integrity is an important theme through all

books of the Bible.[41] Farley's study of virtues in the Bible also highlights virtues such as

gratitude, respect, faithfulness, truthfulness, and contentment in the Ten

Commandments.[42] Furthermore, he shows that "the ground and source of all that defines

'good' and 'evil' can be seen in Christ."[43] Virtue can partly be defined "as an activity of

the whole person in conformity with love of God and love of neighbor."[44] Other

theologians also look for virtues in the Bible and point to Christ as the ultimate moral

exemplar.

In *Gospel Virtues*, for example, Jonathan Wilson describes the Christian life and

moral formation in the New Testament using the language of virtue. He argues that "a

Christian ethic of virtue must be developed within the context of the living tradition of

the gospel."[45] This "living tradition" is "the everlasting reality of God's work in Jesus

Christ."[46] The virtues that help Christians keep God's commandments, therefore, are not

just based on any story or any regular actors in that story. They are based on and witness

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[40] Farley, *In Praise of Virtue*, 3.

[41] See these two collections of essays on Old Testament and New Testament virtue ethics: Brawley, ed., *Character Ethics and the New Testament*; Carroll R. and Lapsley, eds., *Character Ethics and the Old Testament*.

[42] Farley, *In Praise of Virtue*, 141–42.

[43] Farley, *In Praise of Virtue*, 96.

[44] Farley, *In Praise of Virtue*, 160.

[45] Wilson, *Gospel Virtues*, 39.

[46] Wilson, *Gospel Virtues*, 39.

to "the everlasting reality of the gospel."[47] The everlasting reality of the gospel—a distinctively Christian narrative—can be seen in Christians by the power of the Holy Spirit who forms "the incarnate, crucified and risen Jesus Christ" in those who are Christians.[48] Character formation comes through divine power and the story of God's work in the past, present, and future. Christian communities grow in virtue as they are shaped to be more like Jesus Christ. So, "the language and concepts of virtue ethics" teach people how to express the best in the Christian life,[49] but it is never merely human power or wisdom that accomplishes this.

Consider the divine wisdom revealed in the Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament (Matt 5–7). The sermon itself can be understood as premised on virtue ethics of a certain type.[50] Even within an Aristotelian framework, Jesus re-defines true happiness and goodness with his profound statements about those who are "blessed" or "fortunate" in the kingdom of God, and it is the unlikely "blessed" people who represent (or qualify as) the virtuous community.

Furthermore, the virtues in the Beatitudes of the Sermon of the Mount are echoed in the letters of Paul in addition to being deeply rooted in the teachings of the whole Bible. In *Paul and Virtue Ethics*, Harrington and Keenan explain Paul's purpose-centered character ethics by quoting Philippians 3:13–14: "Straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ

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[47] Wilson, *Gospel Virtues*, 41.

[48] Wilson, *Gospel Virtues*, 41.

[49] Wilson, *Gospel Virtues*, 38.

[50] See Harrington and Keenan, *Jesus and Virtue Ethics*, 61; Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount*.

Jesus."[51] Arguably, this ethical teaching is based on a *telos* (goal) toward which

Christian living is aimed. There is an already-but-not-yet aspect to this virtue formation,

as is true of all virtue ethics:

> All of the ethical teachings in his [Paul's] letters are directed to those who are 'in Christ' — to members of Christian communities, to people who had responded to the proclamation of the crucified and risen Christ in faith and in baptism. Such persons were regarded as 'walking between the times.' They were already in the age to come by virtue of Jesus' death and resurrection. But they did not yet enjoy the fullness of God's kingdom that is still to be unveiled and toward which they strive as their end or goal (*telos*).[52]

In this passage, Keenan and Harrington clearly say that the goal of Paul's ethical striving

was "fullness of life with Christ."[53] This is the "good life" toward which morally

virtuous people should aim. Therefore, Paul's ethical teachings describe the virtues of

Jesus and explain to Christians how to attain these virtues through continued practices.

Conclusion on Virtue Ethics

In the end, today's Christian communities and Christian scholars are looking

beyond a normative ethics of rules and principles for guidance regarding how to live the

Christian faith in day-to-day life. Virtue ethics is one promising approach for filling this

need, and as a result, this branch of theology and Christian ethics has seen a resurgence

of scholarly interest.

The virtue ethics of the Greek philosophers heavily influenced Christian virtue

ethics at first. That is, Christian ethicists often framed their arguments within Aristotle's

categories or attempted to integrate their ideas into his. Although some of Aristotle's

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[51] Harrington and Keenan, *Paul and Virtue Ethics*, 17.

[52] Harrington and Keenan, *Paul and Virtue Ethics*, 27.

[53] Harrington and Keenan, *Paul and Virtue Ethics*, 27.

ideas are compatible with Christian theology, there are many divergences concerning the definitions and source of moral goodness and purpose for humans, making some attempts at reconciling "Athens" and "Jerusalem" quite forced.

More recently, Christian ethicists have moved away from Aristotelian virtues and focused instead on building ethical arguments based mostly on biblical interpretation. While these scholars explore virtues throughout the Bible, they have been especially effective at discovering virtues in the Sermon on the Mount and in Paul's letters. These parts of the Bible teach Christians how to live virtuously, how to live according to the Christian faith by following the moral example of Jesus. There is a strong need among Christians today for virtue ethics rooted in the Bible, and there is likewise an opportunity for Christian ethicists to help Christians worldwide live more virtuous lives both within their church communities and in the other areas of society. Christian ethicists can witness to Jesus and serve Him by developing effective, Bible-centered virtue ethics that fill this need for moral formation that shapes people to be like Christ.

Narrative and Community in Stanley Hauerwas's Theology

Virtue ethics sometimes emphasizes narrative and community, but Hauerwas pays attention to the characteristics of narrative and community that are unique to Christianity. This section explores his ideas in more detail to show how his insights will prove useful for the present study despite criticism of this framework from other scholars.

Narrative Approach and Narrative Theology

Hauerwas emphasizes the church's identity as a community of character. But what does this mean specifically? For one thing, it means that Christian ethics cannot be an individual project of moral self-improvement apart from one's community. He claims that the church as an institution is a context and source of social ethics. In his seminal work entitled *A Community of Character*, Hauerwas sets forth ten theses. Just as Martin Luther sparked the Reformation by posting ninety-five theses to challenge the errors of his time, Hauerwas published "ten theses toward the reform of Christian social ethics."[54] Here they are:

> 1.1 The social significance of the Gospel requires the recognition of the narrative structure of Christian convictions for the life of the church.
> 1.2 Every social ethic involves a narrative, whether it is concerned with the formulation of basic principles of social organization and/or concrete policy alternatives.
> 1.3 The ability to provide an adequate account of our existence is the primary test of the truthfulness of a social ethic.
> 1.4 Communities formed by a truthful narrative must provide the skills to transform fate into destiny so that the unexpected, especially as it comes in the form of strangers, can be welcomed as gift.
> 1.5 The primary social task of the church is to be itself—that is, a people who have been formed by a story that provides them with the skills for negotiating the danger of this existence, trusting in God's promise of redemption.
> 1.6 Christian social ethics can only be done from the perspective of those who do not seek to control national or world history but who are content to live "out of control."
> 1.7 Christian social ethics depends on the development of leadership in the church that can trust and depend on the diversity of gifts in the community.
> 1.8 For the church to be, rather than to have, a social ethic means we must recapture the social significance of common behavior, such as acts of kindness, friendship, and the formation of families.
> 1.9 In our attempt to control our society Christians in America have too readily accepted liberalism as a social strategy appropriate to the Christian story.
> 1.10 The church does not exist to provide an ethos for democracy or any other form of social organization, but stands as a political alternative to every nation,

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[54] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 9.

witnessing to the kind of social life possible for those that have been formed by the story of Christ.[55]

Following virtue ethics, Hauerwas emphasizes character-formation more than decision-making or moral laws in ethics. His emphasis is on narratives, characters, and community. According to him, each community has its own narrative. The narrative determines the identity of the community. Members of the community are people who share the narrative of that group. Narrative theology and community dynamics relate to each other reciprocally, because the community forms and maintains narrative that in turn guides the community. Hauerwas suggests five themes to explain his position further:

> I am identified with (1) the recovery of the importance of the virtues for understanding the Christian life, (2) an emphasis on narrative for the intelligibility of an action description, (3) a correlative emphasis on the significance of the church as a community necessary for the formation of people of virtue, (4) criticism of the accommodation of the church to liberal political arrangements, and (5) an emphasis on the significance of nonviolence as a hallmark of the Christian way of being in the world.[56]

These five themes show what Hauerwas is concerned about. He acknowledges the importance of virtue and the restoration of virtues in the Christian life. He also stresses the importance of narrative for virtue recovery and ethical behavior. For him, the church is a community of character and an alternative community to society. Nonviolence is what sets the church apart from the world.

Hauerwas's narrative theology follows the Yale School of thought.[57] George A. Lindbeck, a scholar representing this line of thought, is adamantly opposed to modern

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[55] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 9–12.

[56] Hauerwas, *A Cross-Shattered Church*, 145.

[57] Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child*, 146.

liberal theology. For Lindbeck, language is already given *a priori* before religious experience, and language itself has a revelatory meaning.[58] This is important because, according to Wentzel van Huyssteen, narrative theologians can be divided into purist narrative theologians and non-purist narrative theologians.[59] The purists can be identified as "anti-foundational, cultural-linguistic, Wittgensteinian-inspired descriptivists."[60] Hauerwas counts as a purist, one who regards "narrative as [an] autonomous literary form" which is suitable for theological reflection.[61] For these theologians, philosophical categories and abstract reasoning do not provide essential tools for theology. Rather, narrative is necessary for constructing theological statements. On the other hand, non-purist narrative theologians get their inspiration from "revisionist, hermeneutical, Gadamerian-inspired correlationists."[62] David Tracy, Sallie McFague, and Paul Ricoeur belong to this camp. Even though they agree with purists on the importance of the Christian story, they do not accept that narrative theology is autonomous and sufficient apart from other fields of knowledge.[63]

Lindbeck's post-liberal theology expresses the Christian position in part by integrating philosophy and social science, for example. He argues that the future of Christianity will be sectarian as the bond between church and society breaks down. According to him, the main task of the church is not to change the culture of the world to fit into Christian values. Rather, the task of the church is to inform the world of the

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[58] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 33.
[59] Huyssteen, "Narrative Theology," 767.
[60] Huyssteen, "Narrative Theology," 767.
[61] Huyssteen, "Narrative Theology," 767.
[62] Huyssteen, "Narrative Theology," 767.
[63] Huyssteen, "Narrative Theology," 767.

uniqueness of Christianity by embodying the unique way of the Christian life in the world. This life becomes a way of embodying the biblical story. Thus, the biblical meta-narrative has the power to determine and shape the behavior and character of members of the church community. This is Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic theory. He says, "a religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought."[64] His presuppositions are based on a narrative interpretation of the Bible exemplified by Hans Frei.[65] Frei explains a "narrative framework" as follows:

> Such sense of a narrative framework as continued to exist among religious (and not merely scholarly) readers was now no longer chiefly that of providentially governed biblical history. In that scheme, earlier and later depictions within the Bible had been connected as type and antitype; but in addition, every present moral and historical experience had been fitted into it by bestowing on the present experience a figural interpretation that adapted it into the governing biblical narrative.[66]

Accordingly, the Bible tells Christians about God through narratives, and the narratives culminate in the narrative of Jesus, who was crucified on the cross and the rose from the dead.

According to Hauerwas, a purist, narrative is of particular importance in Christian theology. Storytelling in Christianity is the most fundamental way of talking about God. Thus, according to him, narrative is a way of describing God and is in fact a superior way of formulating theology above other ways and genres. He even argues that narrative is more important than doctrine.[67] Christian convictions require narrative to be

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[64] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 49.

[65] See Frei, *Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*.

[66] Frei, "Apologetics, Criticism, and the Loss of Narrative Interpretation," 63.

[67] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 25–26.

comprehensible. He says, "Good and just societies require a narrative, therefore, which helps them know the truth about existence and fight the constant temptation to self-deception."[68]

Hauerwas, of course, does not claim that narrative is the only genre in the Bible. Other literary genres and narratives are complementary. By "narrative" he thus means more than simply a literary genre but narrative as underscoring how Christians place their narrative "in the narrative of God." It is about a master narrative or a meta-narrative, in other words. When the narrative of the church community is not God's narrative, namely, the biblical narrative, the identity of the church community will have a misshapen identity because it is detached from God's narrative. Hauerwas thus stresses the biblical narrative as a distinct possession of the church, arguing that this narrative cannot be translated into the public realm. Any attempt to translate the Christian narrative into the public domain inevitably results in distortions of the church narrative, watering its story down and making it blend in with the guiding narrative of the powerful and prestigious culture in which the church is located.

Narrative and Moral Character Formation

Hauerwas has a second emphasis on moral character formation. He argues that moral development is not just an important topic for educational pedagogy and psychology but an important topic for philosophy and theology. This is true despite the hesitancy within Protestantism to deal with moral development in an academic way for fear of human-centered self-development ideas or because of the contrast between faith and works that

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[68] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 18.

is a hallmark of Protestant theology. Protestantism was hesitant to speak in terms of

"moral" because the term "moral" was used mostly as a secular concept after

Enlightenment.[69] Regarding this matter, he says as following:

> While it is certainly true that Christians have emphasized the necessity of moral development, it is equally interesting to note that they have seldom used phrases like "moral development" to talk about it. Rather they have talked about the necessity of spiritual growth, growth in holiness, the pilgrimage of the self, being faithful to the way, and the quaint, but still significant, notion of perfection. It is quite legitimate, of course, to suggest that these are simply more colorful ways to talk about moral development, but such a suggestion fails to do justice to the kind of life Christians have been concerned to promote.[70]

Hauerwas argues that the Protestant prejudice against uniting faith and morality does not

help Christian morality either, however. Christianity has no framework for explaining

and interpreting its own moral development if Christians reject an ethical framework

wholesale. As a result of rejecting an ethical framework, whenever Christians demand

moral behavior based on Christian ethics, they often have only this to offer by way of

justification: "that is the way Christians do things."[71] That is not much of a reason for

motivating behavior and convictions regarding moral issues. Hence, Hauerwas argues

that such Christian claims often appear unreflective, irrational, and self-righteous to

other Christians and the world. It also drives a wedge between the spiritual life and

moral life: moral theology deals with problems of right and wrong, and spiritual

theology deals with human inner and spiritual growth, supposedly. Unfortunately, this

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[69] Hauerwas also recognizes why Protestantism was critical of moral theology. Moral theology can be seen as a term of the Roman Catholic theology that emphasizes good deeds. See Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 132.

[70] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 129–30.

[71] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 132.

trend has limited Christian ethics to the study of what is morally right about major issues, neglecting dealing with Christian moral maturity and the spiritual life.

At this point, Hauerwas sees a moral crisis similar to the one identified by MacIntyre. MacIntyre sought to rebuild the Aristotelian tradition, offering virtue ethics as a solution to the moral crisis of modern society. According to him, Kant's enlightenment project led to a moral crisis in modern society, as will be described below. Hauerwas, too, sees Aristotle's virtue ethics as a corrective to modern society or Christian community. Christian ethics should focus on the self and character of a moral agent rather than on the matter of behavior and external laws. If one places all their focus on the decisions and actions of an individual, they lose sight of the moral character that makes a person act morally or immorally in the first place. Hauerwas thus accepts and applies MacIntyre's argument, but from a Christian perspective.

According to MacIntyre, in the Modern period the "self" has been separated from its moral decisions. When utilitarian or deontological ethics is followed, it does not matter what the self's motivations are as long as the outcomes are good or the law is obeyed. The self is not really in the picture except as a means to some end (i.e., maximal happiness or obedience). Following MacIntyre, Hauerwas wants to reunite the self and her or his decisions. After all, it is the self that makes these decisions. He says, "One way of trying to break this circle is to understand the self fundamentally as agent. Exactly what it means to be a self is to act on the world."[72] He does not devalue action

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[72] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 38.

but emphasizes the inseparability between the actions of the agent and the character of

the agent:

> To emphasize the idea of character is to recognize that our actions are also acts
> of self-determination; in them we not only reaffirm what we have been but also
> determine what we will be in the future. By our actions we not only shape a
> particular situation, we also form ourselves to meet future situations in a
> particular way. Thus the concept of character implies that moral goodness is
> primarily a prediction of persons and not acts, and that this goodness of persons
> is not automatic but must be acquired and cultivated.[73]

Hauerwas argues that an autonomous and dichotomous view of the human self

emphasized in the Enlightenment contradicts Christian ethics. Christianity recognizes

that life is a gift from God. This deepens Christian dependence on God and redefines

what "autonomy" means: to a Christian, "autonomous freedom can only mean slavery to

the self and the self's desires."[74] Following Kant's categorial imperative does not make

Christians free, for freedom to choose anything is simply slavery to self. True freedom is

the freedom to be followers of Jesus and to love others. Freedom is not disconnected

from God or others. Freedom is the opportunity to imitate Jesus Christ, which becomes a

moral good in its own right for Christians. In Kant's moral philosophy, Hauerwas insists,

"autonomy consists of doing our duty in accordance with the universal law of our

being."[75] More in line with virtue ethics instead of Kant, Hauerwas explains, "We do not

become free by conforming our actions to the categorial imperative but by being

accepted as disciples and thus learning to imitate a master. Such discipleship can only

appear heteronomous from the moral point of view, since the paradigm cannot be

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[73] Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue*, 49.
[74] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 130.
[75] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 131.

reduced to, or determined by, principles known prior to imitation."[76] Rather than moral

laws, "the Christian life requires a transformation of the self that can be accomplished

only through direction from a master. The problem lies not in knowing what we must

do, but how we are to do it. And the how is learned only by watching and following."[77]

Therefore, he argues that the church should be a school of virtue or a community of

virtue that can train people in how to follow Jesus.[78] At this point, he clarifies the

relationship between character formation and narrative:

> Even though the concepts of virtue and character help situate the appropriate
> locus for Christian growth, they do not provide a sufficient account for the kind
> of growth required of those seeking to lead the Christian life. Character is but a
> reminder that it is the self that is the subject of growth. But the kind of character
> we develop is a correlative of a narrative that trains the self to be sufficient to
> negotiate our existence without illusion or deception. For our character is not the
> result of any one narrative, as the self is made up of or constituted by many
> different roles or stories. Moral growth involves the constant conversation
> between our stories that allows us to live appropriate to the character of our
> existence. By learning to make their lives conform to God's way, Christians
> claim that they are provided with a self, that is, a story, that enables the
> conversation to continue in a truthful manner.[79]

Specifically, the narratives that make moral growth possible are what he calls

"substantive narratives."[80] Not all narratives determine one's moral formation very

strongly. Substantive narratives are in a category that is more challenging to the self:

> Substantive narratives that promise me a way to make my self my own require
> me to grow into the narrative by constantly challenging my past achievements.
> That is what I mean by saying that the narrative must provide skills of
> discernment and distancing. For it is certainly a skill to be able to describe my
> behavior appropriately and to know how to "step back" from myself so that I
> might better understand what I am doing. The ability to step back cannot come

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76 Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 131.

77 Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 131.

78 Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 83.

79 Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 132–33.

80 Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 144.

by trying to discover a moral perspective abstracted from all my endeavors, but rather comes through having a narrative that gives me critical purchase on my own projects.[81]

Without a narrative to make sense of where the moral self is located, there is no way to measure sanctification or moral growth or decline. Sanctification does not simply mean obeying prescribed actions. That devolves into legalism. Instead, even the process that leads people to moral action forms their character.[82] Sanctification thus affects the core of a person's existence rather than simply changing a person's outward actions. Moral decisions affect more than just the temperament of the person.[83] He explains relations between sanctification and ethics of character as follows:

> I would contend that if the nature of sanctification is described in terms of character it will be more intelligible as a vital aspect of the Christian moral life. In order to try to establish this contention, I will attempt to show how the theme of the change of the "person" in sanctification suggests and is made more intelligible when sanctification is understood as the actual formation of our character.[84]

If Hauerwas is persuasive on these points, then it allows Christian ethics to account for moral action and moral character in more complex and intelligible ways in each cultural context.

Hauerwas's Ecclesial Ethics

Hauerwas has proposed three key reasons why narrative is central to understanding the Christian life.[85] The first claim is that, because Christians know themselves only in the

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[81] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 144–45.

[82] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 196.

[83] Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life*, 201.

[84] Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life*, 202.

[85] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 28. Compare Gustafson, "Varieties of Moral Discourse: Prophetic, Narrative, Ethical, and Policy," 19–20; Hauerwas and Jones, "Introduction: Why Narrative?," 3; Hauerwas, "From System to Story," 166.

life and story that God gives, narratives have a fundamental meaning for their knowledge of God and ourselves. Second, narrative is a distinctive form in which the self perceives itself in a temporally separated fashion. Someone once joked that "Time is God's way of keeping everything from happening all at once." Well, the same is true for the self in its community relationships, for narrative is the mode in which the community accounts for its identity, an identity that did not form all at once. In this context, each person is subordinate to the community and cannot understand herself or himself apart from the context of their community. The narrative not only has the historical characteristics experienced by the community but also provides the ability to live a life that meets the goals of the community. And third, Christian narrative challenges Christians to live into their redeemed character and requires them to change by teaching them why they need to be reborn through baptism into their community. Therefore, the *telos* that Christians should pursue is essentially a specific kind of community, namely, the church.

With the church as a moral community sharing Jesus's narrative, members of the community will form virtuous character by living according to the narrative of the community. In this sense, the ecclesial ethics of Hauerwas incorporates virtue ethics as well as narrative theology. He argues that Christian social ethics, the communal virtues, are that the church should be faithful to the biblical narrative, practicing the virtues of the biblical narrative. The narrative of the church community aims not simply to relate historical events but to create virtuous people in a virtuous community.

It might seem that this virtuous community could simply be adapted for the public sphere and political involvement. But this is the liberal tradition, to insist that

Christianity can be translated sufficiently into the public sphere with no loss. Contrary to David Tracy and Gustafson who belong to the Chicago school of thought, Hauerwas argues that the narrative of the church community, the gospel of Christianity, is unique so that it is difficult to translate it into a universal language for use in the public sphere. His narrative theology seems to follow the Yale school which emphasizes the uniqueness of Christian theology over its universality. When the exclusive and unique content of the gospel is translated for public use by nonbelievers, there is a risk that secular priorities will suppress and limit the moral claims that the Christian gospel makes on those who hear the narrative. The Yale school argues that the translation inevitably reduces, waters down, or distorts the meaning of the gospel. If the biblical narrative is unique, then Christian morality will also be unique and not adaptable for those who do not share the same values and trust the truthfulness of the Christian narrative.

Again, Hauerwas reminds his readers that moral "character is constituted by the rules, metaphors, and stories that are combined to give a design or unity to the variety of things we must and must not do in our lives."[86] Of course, the metaphors and stories that shape moral character stem from one's particular "culture and our particular biographical situation."[87] According to this view, the church community has a particular narrative that can never be the same as any other community's story. Some Christians and non-Christians want virtues without Jesus in American society and American churches, but this is impossible if the virtues of a community are tied to the

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[86] Hauerwas, "The Self as Story," 76.
[87] Hauerwas, "The Self as Story," 76.

community's guiding narrative. The identity of the church is a moral community that is faithful to the Jesus narrative and shaped according to the Jesus narrative. Hauerwas argues that because Jesus's story is a social ethic, Christian social ethics can be embodied when the church is faithful to this story:

> By recovering the narrative dimension of christology we will be able to see that Jesus did not have a social ethic, but that his story is a social ethic. For the social and political validity of a community results from its being formed by a truthful story, a story that gives us the means to live without fear of one another. Therefore there can be no separation of christology from ecclesiology, that is, Jesus from the church. The truthfulness of Jesus creates and is known by the kind of community his story should form.[88]

This ethical community aims to produce virtuous people, but it cannot magically create a virtuous nation or culture as if the social ethic of the biblical narrative were identical to the American dream or the values of liberal democracy. No, the church as a moral community will practice God's will and witness God's justice and love in Christ even though these virtues conflict with many "virtues" that are desired in American society. One such conflict, according to Hauerwas, is that the Christian life should embody nonviolent pacifism—Jesus did not advocate practicing violence—instead of political power and violence in the public sphere. Thus, for him, the church, the public body of those formed by the Jesus narrative, must follow Christ in costly virtue formation, including an ethics of peace on earth.

Hauerwas warns of the church being captivated by political values and agendas. In other words, if the church's loyalties are with liberal democracy, it means that the church is assimilated into society. Ironically, the church's attempts to participate in

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[88] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 37.

politics and change the world with political force can make the church less faithful to its

moral responsibilities. According to him, the church can degenerate into a civil religion

or a civic club. Although Christian realists encourage Christian participation in politics,

Hauerwas criticizes that the participation is usually a futile attempt to make social

change that do not involve changes in individuals of the church community or society.

He calls it "the Christian acquiescence to the liberal assumption that a just polity is

possible without the people being just."[89] In other words, he does not believe you can

legislate morality. Morality must be formed, not regulated.

Moreover, Hauerwas critiques the very notion of an American liberal democracy

that can serve all desires of its people equally. If people assume that the government can

justly distribute whatever citizens desire, then the American public has not thought

through what the content of their desires might be.[90] In American society, where

individual freedom is of utmost value, the idea of developing individuals as virtuous

people with communal, unified values is hardly politically acceptable or possible. Thus,

when Christians participate in liberal politics to create a just society, the project is

doomed from the start, partly because "autonomy" is at odds with justice and other

Christian virtues. He observes the following ironies of political liberalism:

> Many of our current political problems and the way we understand and try to
> solve them are a direct outgrowth of our liberal presuppositions. For example,
> the American government is often condemned for its inability to develop an
> economic or energy policy, but such policies must necessarily be public policies.
> Just as it has been the genius of the American political system to turn every issue
> of principle into an issue of interest, so it has been the intention of our polity to
> make impossible the very idea of public policy or public interest. Public policy
> cannot exist because society is nothing more than an aggregate of self-interested

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[89] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 73.

[90] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 73.

individuals. The policy which is formulated therefore must be the result of a coalescence of self-interests that is then justified in the name of the greatest good for the greatest number (but too often turns out to be the greatest good for the most powerful). Liberalism thus becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; a social order that is designed to work on the presumption that people are self-interested tends to produce that kind of people.[91]

Hauerwas points out that there is an assumption that American society considers it moral to meet the wants and needs of its citizens. But if one were to encourage morality simply by satisfying the wants and needs of individuals in society, there will be no place for the unique morality of Christianity, which is not so much about freedom and meeting human desires as it is about the costly path of following Jesus in loving others and honoring God as the giver of life and redemption. Christians cannot force those things onto the rest of society if the rest of society wants freedom and self-interested benefits rather than wanting transformed character or nonviolent peace.

Critiques of Hauerwas's Ecclesial Ethics: Sectarian Withdrawal

Due to his emphasis on the distinction between church and world, Hauerwas's ethics has been criticized as a strategy for "sectarian withdrawal."[92] Hauerwas, however, rejects the label of "sectarian" for himself.[93] He does not want Christians or the church to withdraw from the world but to engage with the world as individuals and as Christian communities according to the narrative of Jesus Christ in the Gospels. It is a question of where Christian allegiance should be, whether primarily to a national flag or to the Lord whose narrative models counter- cultural virtues for his people. In *Resident Aliens*,

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[91] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 79.

[92] Max Stackhouse criticize Hauerwas' ecclesial ethics as "sectarian withdrawal" because Hauerwas emphasizes the discreteness of church from the world. See Stackhouse, *Shaping Public Theology*, 82–90.

[93] Hauerwas, *Unleashing the Scripture*, 7.

Hauerwas shows what it means that the church should be faithful to its identity as a church:

> The church does not exist to ask what needs doing to keep the world running smoothly and then to motivate our people to go do it. The church is not to be judged by how useful we are as a 'supportive institution' and our clergy as members of a 'helping profession.' The church has its own reason for being, hid within its own mandate and not found in the world.[94]

Hauerwas sees a flaw in the approach to public theology taken by one of his critics, Max Stackhouse, for example. For Hauerwas, such public theology emphasizes the church's engagement in social issues in order to serve others in society. Hauerwas favors a different approach, one that avoids public theology and the potential risks it poses. His solution is a system of ecclesial ethics based on his version of virtue ethics, an ethics of character. In the ecclesial ethics of Hauerwas, the church should be the church, an alternative to business as usual.[95] He says this:

> the most important social task of Christians is to be nothing less than a community capable of forming people with virtues sufficient to witness to God's truth in the world. Put as directly as I can, it is not the task of the church to try to develop social theories or strategies to make America work; rather the task of the church in this country is to become a polity that has the character necessary to survive as a truthful society. That task carried out would represent a distinctive contribution to the body politic we call America.[96]

It is not that the church would not benefit the country where it finds itself. It is just that its main mission as the church is not to grease the wheels of the political machine and blend in with everyone else. Only if church and culture are different can the church can

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[94] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 39.

[95] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 3.

[96] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 3.

fully serve the world as a heavenly institution, an alternative community formed by God.

As is evident by now, Hauerwas underscores that the church should be faithful to its identity, not assimilated into the identity of some other cause, culture, or social group. By staying unique, Christians can overcome Constantinian accommodation which is the ideal of Christendom today. If the church is tied with secular politics or is assimilated into the political world, it might not only give up its identity but also morph into a religion of the state or a passing cultural phenomenon like a social club. If the church is to be a training ground for virtue, then these virtues cannot be separated from the story of Jesus himself, and so Christian virtues are explicitly different from the generic virtues of non-Christians.

Hauerwas names peace as the most important virtue for Christians, because Jesus Christ rejects violence and brings peace into the world. Peacemaking and peacekeeping are necessary virtues for the church, per this reading of Scripture. Therefore, the church is a community of God's forgiveness and reconciliation for the sake of peace. He says, "To learn to follow Jesus means we must learn to accept such [divine] forgiveness, and it is no easy thing to accept, as acceptance requires recognition of our sin as well as vulnerability. But by learning to be forgiven we are enabled to view other lives not as threats but as gifts."[97] Hauerwas proceeds to argue as well that the church should reject any use violence for ensuring its survival. Unlike "all societies built on shared resentments and fears," he says, "Christian community is

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[97] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 50.

formed by a story that enables its members to trust the otherness of the other as the very sign of the forgiving character of God's Kingdom."[98] Therefore, for Hauerwas, "the marks through which we know that the church is church" cannot guarantee "the existence of the church."[99] In other words, the church must resist the temptation toward using violence for self-preservation. This insight is a communal application of the teaching of Jesus: "All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me will find them" (CEB).

This pacifist position on public engagement draws more criticism of Hauerwas, not surprisingly. Admittedly, it is impossible for Christians and the church to live with absolutely no contact or cooperation with the government of the country in which they reside. But many scholars think violence is a necessary element of any government. For the legitimate use of force by governments, Niebuhr notes that God sometimes sanctions of the use of violence in the Bible and even the New Testament. Romans 13:1–7 is a frequently cited text. Niebuhr mentions the possibility of violence being redemptive. Most important here is the subject who exercises the force. If a government is impartial and unbiased with reference to the controversy, the use of violence could be redemptive.[100]

It is not that Hauerwas wants Christians and the church to withdraw from the world. And yet, the church must serve God and serve others in a distinct way, according to the narrative of Jesus Christ in the Gospels. This narrative implies certain standards and virtues that are not always in alignment with the powerful self-interests of

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[98] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 50.
[99] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 107.
[100] Niebuhr, "Pacifism and the Use of Force," 248.

governing leaders in a country. In addition, Hauerwas's understanding of salvation is very closely related with his social-ethical understanding of the church. Salvation is not a free-for-all but a way of life that Christians live into as an alternative, humanly-impossible life:

> Salvation, then, is best understood not as being accepted no matter what we have done, but rather as our material embodiment in the habits and practices of people that makes possible a way of life that is otherwise impossible. That is why we are not saved in spite of our sin, but we are saved precisely through practices of confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation.[101]

With such practices of people, the church witnesses God's kingdom in this world. Therefore, the church can be regarded as "foretaste of the kingdom. For it is in the church that the narrative of God is lived in a way that makes the kingdom visible."[102] In order to show the world that the kingdom of God is different than the violent regimes of the world—different than politics as usual—the church must be an ecclesial community that does things quite differently. According to David Fergusson, Hauerwas expects Christians to influence civic society through the realization of a genuine Christian community rather than through disdainful sectarianism.[103] Even though Fergusson does not fully agree with Hauerwas's ecclesial ethics, he acknowledges that this ethical paradigm can be used to help solve social conflicts.

As seen above, even if one does not fully agree with Hauerwas's theological presuppositions for his ethics of character and ecclesial ethics, his theological methodology can still be used effectively for analyzing current church situations and

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[101] Hauerwas, *Sanctify Them in the Truth*, 74.
[102] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 97.
[103] Fergusson, *Community, Liberalism, and Christian Ethics*, 76–77.

ethical problems. But his approach needs to be supplemented with the insights of another theologian, as I will argue below.

B. Niebuhr: Relationships between Christ and Culture

H. Richard Niebuhr categorized and analyzed five types of relationships between Christ (or the church) and culture. In this, he expanded Ernst Troeltsch's three types of churches into five.[104] Originally, Troeltsch's categories included a "church-type," the type of church that compromises with culture. This is also called the type that is "of culture." Because Western culture and Christianity are inseparable in this mindset, the church embraces the world's order and culture in order to spread grace and salvation to the world. The church adapts itself to its culture because the culture functions as a means to spread the grace and salvation of God to the world.[105]

Second, the "sect-type" refers to the type of church that does not compromise with the culture of the world. In other words, this type is decidedly against its culture. This type rejects efforts to transform the world or compromise with its culture, seeking instead to build up the faith of the church community. In this type, the culture and laws of the world are views as in opposition to and incompatible with the law of Christ. Rather than accepting or transforming culture, they seek to mature and develop their faith and faithfulness.

Third, the "mysticism-type" is a transcendental position on culture. This type pursues mystical spiritual experiences and is indifferent to culture.[106] Niebuhr not only

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[104] Troeltsch classifies Christian types into church-type, sect-type, and mysticism-type. See Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches,* 337–47, 993–99.

[105] Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches,* 999.

[106] Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches,* 993–96.

introduced Troeltsch's categories to the United States but also developed them into five ethical types.

According to Niebuhr, culture can be defined in these general ways: First, culture is inevitably tied to human social life. In other words, culture is not private but social. Second, culture is an achievement accomplished by human effort. Third, these achievements are "designed for an end or ends."[107] The end is related to values which contemporary humans seek. The values are based on what is believed to be good for people in the society. In this sense, he argues that "culture in all its forms and varieties is concerned with the temporal and material realization of values."[108] Fourth, culture is pluralistic; many values are included in a culture.

Based on this understanding of culture, Niebuhr suggests five ethical paradigms or types of relationships the church might have with its culture. After introducing his typology, I will analyze criticisms of his categories and describe how Niebuhr's categories can contribute to analyzing the ethical issues of the Korean church.

Two Extremes

H. Richard Niebuhr mentions two extreme types of ways to engage with one's surrounding culture. He first introduces these extreme types and then shows why Christians should avoid them. He does, however, note the appeal of each type and what good it did throughout church history.

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[107] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 34.
[108] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 36.

Christ-against-Culture

First, Niebuhr introduces two extreme types for the relationship between Christ and culture. The first extreme is the "Christ-against-culture" position.[109] It considers the surrounding culture to be entirely corrupt. This type rejects cultural arguments and only accepts Christ's authority through the Bible or the Holy Spirit. It is a position comparable to Troeltsch's sect-type, which pits Christ and culture in opposition to each other. In this case, culture and Christ are incompatible, so the Christian must choose between culture and Christ, leading to some form of withdrawal from culture. According to Niebuhr, since the Bible clearly recognizes the Lordship of Christ, this position, which ranks the Lordship of Christ above the authority of all others, is an integral part of Christianity. He explains the first position as follows:

> The first answer to the question of Christ and culture we shall consider is the one that uncompromisingly affirms the sole authority of Christ over the Christian and resolutely rejects culture's claims to loyalty. It seems to be both logically and chronologically entitled to the first position: logically, because it appears to follow directly from the common Christian principle of the Lordship of Jesus Christ; chronologically, because it is widely held to be the typical attitude of the first Christians.[110]

According to Niebuhr, Tertullian was one of the most representative of the Christ-against-culture position in early Christianity.[111] Tertullian regarded his culture as incompatible with the ways of Christ, and all aspects of culture were suspicious and up for criticism.

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[109] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 40.
[110] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 45.
[111] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 51.

Niebuhr evaluates the Christ-against-culture position as "a necessary and [yet] inadequate position."[112] He acknowledges the positive contributions of this position and does not doubt that those who hold to it are sincerely trying to be loyal to Christ. They want themselves to be more obedient to Christ. Their loyalty and devotion to God "led to reformations in both church and world," contrary to their intentions to avoid changing the political scene.[113] For example, second-century believers, who were not influential leaders in the Roman empire, contributed to changing the Roman Empire into a Christian state. In other words, the second-century Christians, who were distrustful of or indifferent to politics, brought a great social change that could be called a social victory. Medieval monasticism, as a sectarian kind of withdrawn life, also contributed to the preservation and transmission of Christian cultural traditions. It was an important contribution for Protestant monastics to preserve cultural and Christian traditions that ensured religious freedom for all members of society.

Even so, Niebuhr finds four theological problems with this type of church. First, this type has an incoherent understanding of reason and revelation. Radical Christian movements holding an anti-culture stance use reason to object to the methods and values of their culture while using revelation to defend Christ and their community. They seem to reject reason and accept only revelation as their source of knowledge, but in reality they distinguish between the revelation given to their in-group and the revelation that is manifested more broadly in the culture around them. There is also the distinction such

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[112] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 65.
[113] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 66.

Christians sometimes allow between revelation by inner light (God's Spirit) and revelation transmitted through the Bible (God's Word).

Second, their understanding of sin and its pervasiveness is problematic. Christ-against-culture types claim that sin is rampant in culture, while the light and grace of Christ lead them to live as Christians. They believe that Christians must be separated from the world in order to protect the holy community from corruption by the world. Niebuhr, however, points out that no human can be free from culture, and withdrawal from the culture doesn't make Christians free from sin. Thus, in one sense, the Christ-against-culture position actually underestimates the severity of sin. Simply breaking away from cultural activities and building a community of Christians does not free Christians from sin. According to their argument, sin seems to be found only in culture, not within people—or at least not within Christians. However, even if no sinful influence from the outside culture creeps in, sin's temptation can still emerge from within each person's heart. Niebuhr points out that each Christian community and the individuals who make up the community are still polluted by sin. Such a black-and-white argument from the Christ-against-culture position seems to misinterpret the Bible's understanding of human nature.

Third, this understanding of law and grace is also problematic. Those holding this position seeks to defend their holiness with new rules or laws for their community, but grace has a much smaller place in their theology. Sometimes grace must be earned by following the rules, including specially created rules unique to the congregation. A fourth difficulty is that some churches confuse the Trinitarian relationships of God the

Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.[114] The churches neglect either the Holy

Spirit present in the Christian community or God the Father, the Creator of nature and

the organizer of history. These radical Christians try to concentrate on the Lordship of

Christ, his commandments, and his reign over the church.[115] Their rejection of culture

can be connected with the rejection of God's Trinitarian, relational nature. In summary,

this extreme position rejects culture and supposedly recognizes only the authority and

values of the Christian faith. Such Christians object to worldly cultures and ideologies,

and they separate themselves from cultural practices in order to avoid corruption. People

in this position resist culture despite the disadvantages and harshness that come as a

result.

Christ-of-Culture

The second type of position is "Christ-of-culture."[116] This position claims that there is "a

fundamental agreement between Christ and culture."[117] It also can be regarded as "the

natural law type" or "the accommodationist type."[118] Niebuhr explains the

characteristics of the accommodationist position below:

> 1. It seeks to assimilate the injunctions and values of the gospel to those of the society at large. The imperatives of Jesus are regarded as republications of the law of reason or nature; the values of the Christian life are religious formations of the values of natural and social existence as understood by culture at its best.
> 2. This process involves the interpretation of gospel values and demands through culture. The gospel is dealt with very selectively. Those elements in it which are most intelligible to culture are taken as primary, and they are understood in the context of the culture. Thus John Stuart Mill finds good, Anglo-Saxon, bourgeois utilitarianism in the Sermon on the Mount. "In the golden rule of Jesus

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[114] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 80-81.

[115] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 81.

[116] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 83.

[117] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 41.

[118] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, xlv.

of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility, 'To do as you would be done by,' and 'to love your neighbour as yourself,' constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality." Thomas Jefferson's use of the New Testament indicates a similar spirit.

3. This assimilation does not truly represent the type unless the complementary statement is made; those elements in cultural ethics are selected as normative which are most in agreement with the New Testament. Hence this type does not simply sanction prevailing culture with its natural law or common sense ethics; it emphasizes the "ideal" in that morality. Between this ideal and essential Christianity it finds no real distinction.

4. The type is marked by a sense of harmony; its strategy is melioristic rather than separatist or revolutionary; it does not abandon the idea of another world but makes it an extension of the best parts of the [present] aeon.[119]

Under these assumption, the best demonstration of this type of Christianity is "modern liberal Christianity."[120] In terms of liberalism, Niebuhr explains that ethics is the "basis for theology."[121] This type creates a synthesis of Christianity and culture, for the best of both are one and the same.[122]

According to Niebuhr, this type of Christian community regards Jesus as "a great hero of human cultural history."[123] Thus Jesus's life and teachings are the greatest achievements of human civilization. Representative of this type of view is cultural Protestantism or Liberalism. Here, the tension between Christ and culture hardly appears. Thus, this position is criticized for neglecting the conflict between biblical values and the values of today's culture.

Niebuhr, however, gives two positive aspects of this position to consider. First, this position can contribute to the expansion of the kingdom of God. If Christian values

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[119] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, xlvi–xlvii.
[120] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, xlviii.
[121] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, xlviii.
[122] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, xlviii.
[123] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 41.

penetrate a culture, then those values will prevail in that society as a whole, presumably making it a more virtuous society and building the kingdom of God in transforming people. This position translates Christian words and values into cultural words and values. The position of Christ-of-culture also aids the effective communication of the universal relevance of the gospel. In this way, the position conveys "the truth that Jesus is the saviour, not of a selected little band of saints, but of the world."[124] Such a stance is likely to be supported by non-Christians as well as Christians, and it is sure to gain far more Christian adherents than Christian radicalism. However, Niebuhr ultimately evaluates the position negatively, because it is not complex enough. That is why there are some middle-ground position or median types of churches.

The Median Types

The median types of churches recognize "divine values are apprehended in two situations . . . or from two points of view, in the church and in culture."[125] In addition, positions in this category acknowledge that "divine imperatives come through two mediators, Christ (Bible, church) and nature (reason, culture),"[126] rather than one source alone. There are thus three median types to be discussed in more detail: Christ above Culture, Christ and Culture in Paradox, and Christ-the-Transformer-of-Culture.

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[124] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 105.
[125] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, xlix.
[126] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, xlix.

Christ above Culture

Niebuhr's third type of position regards Christ as the fulfillment of cultural aspirations

and the restoration of a true social system. Christ is in a relationship to culture that has

both continuity and discontinuity. Social life and culture positively help people in

bringing them toward Christ, but Christ must bring them the rest of the way. According

to Niebuhr, people need a great leap to reach Christ. With Christ being above culture,

almost parallel to it, the position might be described like a train jumping tracks with

God's help to switch to a higher level of existence. Or perhaps Christ and culture speak

two different languages, and people need both rather than choosing between them for

truth. The realization of the ideals of culture are beyond all human ability to fulfill

perfectly, and so it is only from above when Christ empowers people and society with

the gifts they need that humans are able to transcend their merely human achievements

and have spiritual fulfillment. In this view, Christ is not only the Christ of culture, but

also Christ above culture. This position can be found in the Roman Catholic Church

based on the theology of Thomas Aquinas. It is a "both-and" relationship between Christ

and culture, not an "either-or" relationship.[127] Niebuhr also calls the type as "the

architectonic type."[128] He outlines the key points of this position as follows:

> 1. Both the imperatives of nature and those of the gospel are recognized as
> divine imperatives, yet a partial and genuine discontinuity between them is also
> acknowledged; though the divine law is in part republication of the natural law,
> there: in it some things which cannot be apprehended by reason.
> 2. The discontinuity involves no real antithesis. In fact, the values and
> imperatives of nature known through culture for the reception of the values and
> imperatives of the gospel, though they do not mediate them.

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[127] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 120.
[128] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 1.

3. In view of the fact that the values and imperatives of nature-reason are realizable by human effort and have a preparatory function, the practical emphasis falls upon them. Hence this type is confused sometimes with the natural law type, but it is genuinely different.
4. The type is "architectonic" in the sense that it recognizes that type the two sets of values and of imperatives do not really lie on the same level, that the imperatives of the gospel do not adequately supply directives for the life of [people] . . . in culture, and that the imperatives of nature do not supply adequate motivation or guidance for the life of [people] . . . in spiritual relations to God and fellow-[people].[129]

This approach not only acknowledges the gap between Christ and culture, but also highlights Christ's priority over culture. People who follow this position are called the "synthesists" by Niebuhr. Even though they regard culture as imperfect, they find their own positive values in culture. Also, their Christ is more of an instructor or guide than a judge or a king. They argue that the good products of Christian teaching and culture are not the same, but they are not in conflict either.

Niebuhr evaluates Christ-above-culture as a reasonable choice for Christians. According to him, the position makes cooperation between Christians and non-Christians possible, and it does not sacrifice the uniqueness of the Christian message. It merely makes it transcend the messages of culture so that there can be no conflict or contradiction. This view contributed to Christianity in the Middle Ages as Christians protected and re-invigorated the writings of Greek and Roman culture.

Niebuhr also describes the shortcomings, however. Christians of this variety tend to recognize their approach as absolute, their grasp of culture's knowledge as the pinnacle of human knowledge. Niebuhr argues that Thomas Aquinas is the best individual representative of this, the modern Catholic Church being the best collective

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[129] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 1.

representative of this trend.[130] In other words, Catholics often regard Thomas Aquinas's theology as the eternal law of God, failing to recognize the cultural limits of the theology of Aquinas. In addition, such Christians have a superficial understanding of sin. Although they take sin in humanity more seriously than people of the Christ-of-culture type, sin is never thought to corrupt human knowledge so much that it is incompatible with Christian theology. All humanity needs is a little push in the right direction, not a complete, moral transformation or repentance from sin. This is not adequate to account for the biblical narrative.

Christ and Culture in Paradox

The fourth type is Christ-and-Culture-in-Paradox. In this position, Christ and culture are in dualistic conflict. At the same time, however, both Christ and culture have authority over Christians. Christians live in paradox and tension, managing to obey two opposing authorities. They do not seek to apply the claims of Christ to secular society, but they do not seek to apply social standard to their Christian story either. They are convinced that obedience to God not only requires obedience to Christ, who judges society, but also obedience to the social system and its leaders. Christians exist simultaneously in two opposing worlds, Christ and culture. In addition, Christians are forced to live an unstable and sinful life, hoping for justification and sanctification beyond this life. Simultaneously a sinner and a saint, might be the motto of this position, and adherents can be found in Lutheranism and its founder (Martin Luther). This stance is also called the dualist type. Niebuhr lists its characteristics below:

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[130] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 1.

1. It accepts the gospel ethics in radical form, not attempting to re-interpret it so as to make it seem reasonable to the "natural" mind. It also protests sharply against any effort to qualify this ethics by making it applicable only to the future or to a spiritual aristocracy or to a spiritual level of existence, as the architectonic type tends to do.

2. It accepts the demands of nature and culture as inescapable and as divine demands. Procreation, self-preservation, the maintenance of order in a wicked world, the coercive production of the just against oppressions by the unjust are demands of God. There is no escape from these.

3. As the values and imperatives of the gospel cannot be translated into the values and imperatives of culture, so also the latter cannot be translated into the former.

4. The demands of God in the gospel convict [people] . . . of sin in [their] fulfillment of the demands of God in nature. The demands of God in nature and culture convict [people] . . . of sin when [they] seek . . . simply to fulfill the demands of the gospel and abandons nature and culture. . . .

5. Peace and righteousness are therefore impossible, save as they exist in faith and hope, by a kind of anticipation. The moral life of oscillation not only receives its energy from outside itself but also its meaningfulness from beyond itself.

6. Various explanations of the situation are offered: (a) [Humanity] is a *homo duplex*: as spirit and body, as transcendent person and as empirical individual, . . . as [people] in revolt against [themselves] . . . . (b) God is *deus duplex*: grace and mercy in Jesus Christ, wrath and darkness in the world. (c) The world is *mundus duplex*: created and fallen, good and corrupted. These explanations may be variously combined.[131]

This position is complex and nuanced, but Niebuhr finds a better category last of all.

Christ-the-Transformer-of-Culture

The most desirable type of stance Niebuhr discusses is Christ-the-Transformer-of-Culture. A distinctive feature of this type is that it recognizes the tension between Christ and culture, but at the same time it presents a vision for transforming culture based on the theology of Reformed churches. This position is based on "optimism that human culture can be transformed for the glory of God."[132] Christ, as Transformer of culture,

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[131] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, li–lii.

[132] Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture*, 196.

seeks to save the present creation with his redemptive work. Niebuhr calls this type "the conversionist type." He introduces its distinctive features as follows:

> 1. The natural law, apprehended by reason, is not the true law of God mediated by nature, but the law as apprehended by a corrupted reason—hence the distinction from the Thomistic type. Yet the imperatives are not imperatives for a corrupted order, but corrupted imperatives issuing from a true order—hence the distinction from the oscillatory type [or paradox model of the relationship between Christ and culture].
> 2. The values recognized by reason in the world apart from Christ are true values for God and not merely relative to the world; the values are, however, disordered by reason and culture, being detached from God and attached to the self or to some temporal final end.
> 3. The imperatives issuing from the gospel and Christ do not take the place of the imperatives issuing from nature and reason, nor are the values apprehended in the gospel values of the same order as those apprehended by reason. They are truly final imperatives, final values.
> 4. The vision of the good in Christ and the reception of the final commandment through him are to be used for the restoration of the corrupted order in nature-culture, for the reinterpretation of the natural imperatives. As, in the case of knowledge, revelation does not take the place of reason but restores it, so in the moral life the vision of eternal good in the gospel does not take the place of temporal good but puts this in its proper place and leads to restoration of the true order of values in the world—though the power of sin is so great and the corruption of the moral and the rational life so deep-seated that no easy transvaluation is possible.[133]

Niebuhr summarizes three theological convictions of this position. First, God created heaven and earth through Jesus Christ. Dualists emphasize the fact that God is the Redeemer, while conversionists emphasize the fact that God created the world. Normally, the emphasis is on God the Father creating the world and God the Son saving it, but this position focuses on Christ, who is at work even in creation, given the doctrine of the Trinity. Thus culture is not excluded from Christ's redemptive work, for it was not excluded from his role as cosmic creator either. The second belief is that, despite the

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[133] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, liii–liv.

doctrine of total depravity, humanity is still associated with the good plan of the first creation. Humanity's fall is redeemable, and hence culture, which includes the creative activities of humans, is fallen and yet able to be redeemed or transformed by God. The third belief is that throughout history God is transforming culture. From this point of view, history is not just a human event but a dramatic interaction between God and human, the very context of God's master narrative. Humanity's response to the works of God in history become history. Christ-the-transformer-of-culture Christians desire Jesus's return at the end of history, but they also endeavor to transform their culture here and now, in line with God's mission.

Christ-the-Transformer-of-Culture as It Relates to Public Theology

Niebuhr's ethical types contribute to public theology and are closely related to public theology. In his view, the transformation of culture is essential for Christians to live a life of loyalty to God. Cultural transformation is the task of a responsible Christian life for society and the world. In his view, faith should not only involve personal life but responsibility for the public sphere. When a Christian's faith is only related to their individual concerns and ignores the public sphere, it is hard to say that their faith has holistic integrity. Niebuhr's approach thus provides a theological basis for public theology. Not every one of his paradigms is equally suited to this theological task, however.

Niebuhr is negative about the type "Christ against Culture," for example, because it lacks the motivation to transform culture in the public sphere. According to Niebuhr's concept of the responsible self, the sphere of Christian responsibility goes beyond personal morality to include community responsibility for the public sphere.

Therefore, public theology—if truly "public"—must be a theology which explains why Christians should transform culture in the world.

More positively, I would summarize the necessity of public theology with three reasons. First, theology in itself should be a public theology if it is to remain relevant. Second, public theology provides Christians with a critical basis for defending certain theological issues and for distinguishing between theological positions and their social agendas. Third, contemporary society in the West is largely comprised of post-Christendom cultures, and Christians today need the guidance of public theology to help them relate to the secular aspects of their culture now that Christendom is fading or gone in many countries, not simply in the "Western" ones. I will elaborate on these points.

First of all, public theology is needed because theology loses much of its relevance if it is not a part of contemporary public discourse.[134] Stackhouse is critical of Hauerwas's ecclesial ethics and supports Niebuhr's transforming-culture position for this reason. He argues that Christians should be able to explain salvation to others, especially those who follow other religions, in language that is not obscure jargon to those people. Such conversations between Christians and non-Christians commonly occur in public settings. Public theology equips Christians to share their faith fully and persuasively with people who do not understand Christianity or have misperceptions of it. Without public theology, Christianity becomes irrelevant and incoherent to a watching world.

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[134] The history of public theology shows how theology has impacted public discourse. Not until 1974 did Martin Marty coin the phrase "public theology" for the first time when discussing Reinhold Niebuhr as a "public theologian." See Marty, "Reinhold Niebuhr," 166. It was first time the term "public theology" appeared in print in a way that distinguished it slightly from civil religion.

In the collected essays of *Public Theology for the 21st Century*, Andrew Morton

points out that contemporary theology operates within the plurality of modern society.

Morton draws on the work of Duncan Forrester to emphasize that theology, if it aspires

to relevance today, cannot be a soliloquy or monologue.[135] To be relevant, it must be a

conversation or dialogue among various groups of people in differing contexts. Forrester

describes public theology as a theology which insists on pointing to publicly accessible

truths and contributes to public discussion by witnessing to a truth which is relevant for

contemporary people. Here is the detailed version:

> [P]ublic theology is rather a theology, talk about God, which claims to point to
> publicly accessible truth, to contribute to public discussion by witnessing to a
> truth that is relevant to what is going on in the world and to the pressing issues
> which are facing people and societies today . . . . It offers convictions, challenges
> and insights derived from the tradition of which it is a steward, rather than
> seeking to articulate a consensus or reiterate what everyone is saying anyway.
> Public theology is thus confessional and evangelical. It has a gospel to share,
> good news to proclaim. Public theology attends to the Bible and the tradition of
> faith at the same time as it attempts to discern the signs of the times and
> understand what is going on in the light of the gospel.[136]

Second, moreover, Christians need public theology because it provides them with a

basis for defending theological positions and for distinguishing between these positions

and their social implications globally and locally. For example, Sebastian Kim contrasts

liberation theology with public theology. Political theologies such as liberation theology

aim to emancipate oppressed groups from social injustice, while public theology aims to

build a just society for all. Political theologies consider the vulnerable groups to be more

important than other groups in society. In contrast, public theology tries to make an open

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[135] Morton, "Duncan Forrester: A Public Theologian," 26.

[136] Forrester, *Truthful Action*, 127–28.

and just society through coordination and negotiation between the various groups. As the world gets "smaller" through globalization, Stackhouse believes that public theology is actually "the most important theological development today in terms of its potential capacity to address the issues posed by globalization."[137] Let me expand on this before addressing the third reason for the necessity of public theology.

Since public theology emphasizes the responsibility the church has toward society, it encourages Christians to have interests in participating actively not only in their local communities by also in global society. At this point, the influence of the church globally should not be overlooked. Given the leadership role churches have in the lives of Christians worldwide, churches should demonstrate a strong interest in social responsibility and the public side of organized religion. Yet, according to many theologians, churches seem reluctant to address Christian responsibilities in the public sphere. They are content to remain focused on individual theologies while ignoring public ones.

Although the church functions as a base camp for public theology, the church must reject such privatization of its faith which limits the concerns of a church and its members to its own church alone. In Stackhouse's public theology, churches must pay attention to the relationships between churches and society, churches and global society, and churches and Christian ethics in society. This does not mean that it is meaningless for theology to address issues of individual confessions of faith, but in

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[137] Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 77.

essence the church is already a public institution in relationship to other institutions and groups in society.[138] That brings social responsibility with it.

As a third reason for why Christians need public theology, contemporary society is largely a post-secular and post-Christendom society, and Christians today need the guidance of public theology to help them relate to the secular aspects of modern culture. To discuss the necessity of public theology in post-secular society, one needs to articulate the relationship between the church and the state for both Christendom and the Anabaptists, since Anabaptist theology informs some of the key scholars on whom I rely in this study. The relationship between the church and the state is not only relevant for Niebuhr's paradigms but also for evaluating whether one or more of the paradigms could work in a Korean context or whether Niebuhr's work is hopelessly restricted to contexts in which "Christendom" prevailed.

Niebuhr's Paradigms and the Korean Church

Craig Carter attacks Niebuhr's categories of Christ and culture by arguing that they are all based on the presupposition that Christendom exists and should exist, that the church and state share power in a particular country or culture.[139] But according to Carter, Christendom has already died in some places around the world and is dying in others. Any attempt to revive Christendom harms the true Christian faith. Carter points out the dangers of Christianity in pursuit of Christendom. He insists:

> [In Christian history] the bishops of the fourth century compromised the unique identity of the church when they allowed it to be coopted by the emperor for his own political purposes and made into the religious arm of the empire. The state

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[138] Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 77.
[139] Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture*, 17.

persecution of heretics led to a false ecclesial *unity* based on state coercion and political considerations. The church of the martyrs became the church of the persecutors, which compromised the *holiness* of the church. The *catholicity* of the church was compromised by the provincialism of the church becoming the court religion of the Roman emperors, which led to the persecution of Christians in Persia. Finally, we saw that the failure of the bishops to preach the gospel to Constantine represented a failure of the church to be truly *apostolic*. A new typology of Christ and culture should aid us in the task of discerning how the church can engage culture without compromising its unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity.[140]

In terms of the failure of the church, he argues that "the church today needs to keep church and state separate, follow Jesus in rejecting violence, renounce natural theology, challenge the powers, and learn to think like Jews instead of Romans."[141] Surprisingly, Carter does not turn to support a Christ-against-culture position. Rather, he acknowledges the need for social action and cultural transformation. At the same time, he warns that Niebuhr's categories can lead to a compromising pursuit of Christendom instead of God's kingdom. That is why he argues that Christians should seek the kingdom of God in a way that is more faithful to the teachings of the Bible without seeking the political power and prominence of another kind of Christendom.

In order to improve Niebuhr's typology of cultural engagement, Carter proposes to distinguish between Christendom types and Non-Christendom types of stances.[142] For Christendom types, there are three types: type 1 is "Christ legitimizing culture," type 2 is "Christ humanizing culture," and type 3 is "Christ transforming culture." For Non-Christendom types, there are three additional types: type 4 is "Christ transforming

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[140] Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture*, 112.

[141] Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture*, 112.

[142] Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture*, 113.

culture," type 5 is "Christ humanizing culture," and type 6 is "Christ separating from culture." Other scholars suggest critique of Niebuhr as well.

George Marsden, for example, argues that Niebuhr's typologies may have been valid in his time, but they are not suitable for the present. Citing Hauerwas's assertion that "few books have been a greater hindrance to an accurate assessment of our situation than *Christ and Culture*," he agrees with Hauerwas.[143] The main reason the categories are a hindrance, once again, is that they presume a context of Christendom without enough critical evaluation of whether "culture" and its aims are good and worthy of supporting.[144] Marsden, too, calls for more categories than the five types listed by Niebuhr. A more appropriate title for Niebuhr's book, in fact, would be *Christianity and Cultures*.

By contrast, James M. Gustafson challenges the critics of Niebuhr's typology. He argues that those critics misunderstand the intention of Niebuhr's paradigms, for the critics have failed to grasp the theological location of Niebuhr's paradigms. Niebuhr's emphasis on culture and the moral self relates to his concern for social relationships and public responsibility. Gustafson thus argues that the categories are still valid and meaningful in Christian ethics, and—with enough nuances—they can still aid Christians in choosing a way of life.[145]

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[143] Cited in Marsden, "Christianity and Cultures: Transforming Niebuhr's Categories," 4.

[144] This same kind of criticism can be found in the work of John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas. Adjustment in Niebuhr's typologies can be seen in James William McClendon, Jr, and Charles Scriven. See Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 40; Jr and McClendon, *Ethics*, 232–34; Scriven, *The Transformation of Culture*, 38; Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 146.

[145] Gustafson, "Preface," xxxiv.

This dissertation need not argue that Niebuhr's categories of cultural engagement are universally relevant. Rather, it only maintains that the paradigms effectively show that a master narrative of the church can be formed in a way that is "of its culture," namely, that it conforms to the master narrative of its society rather than biblically transforming its society. Even if Niebuhr's categories are not universally valid, are the categories useful for potentially post-Christendom societies like South Korea? I will argue that they are still useful categories if the complex relationships between the Korean church and society and state are carefully nuanced. No matter what church tradition and country is studied, the Christian tradition is diverse enough that there is always more than one stance held concerning "Christ and culture." Among Niebuhr's five types, even if one proves to be most prevalent in the Korean church, the other types also show up. I will discuss here the most prominent of the five positions in the Korean church, even though it is impossible to reduce the church's positions down to a uniform view.

Traditionally, the Korean church has held a dualistic view of culture and Christian engagement. This position is closest to Niebuhr's type of view called "Christ-and-culture-in-paradox." Seyoon Kim argues that this dualistic position stems from the lack of theological depth of the Korean church. According to him, the fundamentalist faith of the Korean church led to a dualistic position on culture.[146] At the same time, it is commonly acknowledged that mainline churches in South Korea follow conservative, Calvinistic theology. That is close to the Christ-the-Transformer-of-culture position, to which I will return later.

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[146] Kim, "The Origin of Problems in the Korean Church, Theological Poverty," 18.

The Korean church also has a counter-cultural stance. This is because many

Korean church leaders, including those who agree on the necessity of social reform,

have a sixteenth-century Anabaptist understanding of politics, which John Calvin

severely reproached.[147] The Anabaptist position is set against the culture in a more

separatist fashion. Because of the escapist spirituality of Taoism in Korea, Koreans

(including Korean Christians) do not find this Anabaptist understanding of politics to be

foreign or unnatural.[148] Therefore, historically and culturally, it has not been easy for

Korean Christians to adopt a Christ-the Transformer-of-culture position. It would take a

significant social upheaval for such a perspective to gain a majority of adherents in the

Korean church. At the same time, the potential is there for this position to grow, because

the Korean church has been influenced by the theology of those like Abraham Kuyper

and others who advocate transforming the culture as part of Christianity's mission.

Like Kuyper and Herman Bavinck, the theologians who hold to the

transforming-culture position today can typically be identified as neo-Calvinists in the

Reformed camp. James Eglinton provides details of what counts as neo-Calvinist:

> In surveying Reformed theological trends at the outset of the twenty-first
> century, it becomes apparent that talk of 'transforming the culture' has become
> common parlance in various circles within the Reformed community.
> Furthermore, many of those in such circles have self-identified as neo-Calvinist
> or Kuyperian. Indeed, the concept of cultural transformation has become closely
> associated with the Kuyperian theological identity.[149]

Nevertheless, the cultural theology of neo-Calvinists could be one of the most attractive

views that Korean evangelicals could take on social issues. Neo-Calvinism provides the

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[147] Yang, *Reformed Social Ethics*, 269.

[148] Yoo, *Not a Square Inch*, 12.

[149] Eglinton, "To Transcend and to Transform," 163.

theological basis for Christians to participate in discussion of the problems of Korean society. Kuyper, in fact, is one of the neo-Calvinist scholars who most influenced the Korean church.

Kuyper replaces not only the medieval distinction between grace and nature with his Reformed principles but also dismisses the objection of Anabaptists to the doctrine of common grace.[150] Here is how he describes the doctrine of common grace:

> It is altogether a new Creation which, though linked with the original (for it is Re-creation), in its newness cannot be explained from the old. The inaccurate antithesis between nature and grace that has come down to us from medieval theology can be used only if qualified by the addition that nature, cursed as it is by itself, can endure only by the action of common grace. The Reformed principle produces a much purer distinction between the things that originate from the Creation and the things that originate from Re-creation. That far-reaching distinction is this: in common grace there is never anything new, never anything but what can be explained from the original creation; on the other hand, in special grace nothing arises from creation but everything is new and can only be explained from the new Creation or Re-creation.[151]

Here, Kuyper rejects the artificial antithesis between nature and grace. By God's providence, the natural order is preserved through common grace instead of completely cut off from God's goodness. This stands in contrast to the more dualistic or black-and-white doctrine of medieval theology or Anabaptist theology. Kuyper revises the medieval distinction between nature and grace by bringing "nature and grace together by reference to Christ in order to reveal creation as graced."[152] Contrary to Kuyper, Anabaptists object to the doctrine of common grace because they believe the entire

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[150] Bacote, *The Spirit in Public Theology*, 100; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 445.

[151] Kuyper, "Common Grace," 174.

[152] Bacote, *The Spirit in Public Theology*, 100.

created order is now marred by human sin and its effects. They "see only impurity in the natural order as such."[153]

In the Korean church today, then, there are two dominant positions on Christ and culture. Because of the escapism of Taoism, Korean Christians are very familiar with the Christ-against-culture position, which resembles an Anabaptist understanding of politics.[154] Korean Christians had little or no exposure to Kuyper's ideas, historically, and several cultural factors favored Anabaptist ideas in opposition to Kuyperian theology. At the same time, Sung-bihn Yim argues that most mainline churches of Korea follow Rev. Hyung-nong Park, a pastor who maintained a conservative, Reformed theology in the Protestant church.[155] The Korean church today can learn from both perspectives, as I will argue in my conclusion below.

C. Conclusion on Hauerwas and Niebuhr

The ethics of character in the work of Hauerwas shows that the narrative of the church community has a decisive influence on the character formation of the individuals in that community. In addition, he argues that the church serves the world best not by offering institutional support to secular affairs but by living up to its own ethical, spiritual calling. As he says "[T]he church does not have, but rather *is* a social ethic."[156] He not only explains the dynamic between the church's narrative and its character formation but also clearly presents the identity formation of the church and its unique social ethics.

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[153] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 446.
[154] Yoo, *Not a Square Inch*, 12.
[155] Yim, "The Relevance," 76–77.
[156] Hauerwas, Bondi, and Burrell, *Truthfulness and Tragedy*, 143.

He insists that the church should be faithful to the narrative of Jesus. This insight can help the Korean church.

Moreover, Niebuhr's typology classifies the relationship between Christians and culture into five types. His Christ-of-culture position effectively labels the situation in which a church is assimilated into the culture of the world. Niebuhr advocates the Christ-the-Transformer-of-culture position which has positive engagement in the public sphere but does not compromise on biblical values. Despite the reservations of Hauerwas, both scholars are critical of the church's assimilation to non-Christian culture. Therefore, the theories of these two theologians will not only contribute to explaining how the Korean church has bought into the narrative of Korean society but will also contribute to describing how this has harmed the moral character of the Christian community. Future solutions for the ethical problems in the Korean church likewise appear on the horizon when these two sets of insights are in place.

CHAPTER 4: THE ASSIMILATION OF NARRATIVES AND ETHICAL
PRACTICES WITHIN KOREAN SOCIETY AND THE KOREAN CHURCH

As discussed in the previous chapters, the narrative of the Korean church—Protestant

denominations in South Korea—is one that has been assimilated into the master

narrative of Korean society. This chapter will analyze the influence of the assimilation

on the moral formation of the church and suggest theological resources for correcting

this problem. The theologies of Hauerwas and Niebuhr provide the tools for analyzing

the church's cultural assimilation. To this end, this chapter will delve into the master

narrative of growth in Korean society in the 1960s to 1980s, a period of simultaneous

explosive growth for the Korean church. It will also look at the historical and cultural

contexts that have led to the master narrative of Korean society being accepted by the

church. Finally, it will also look at the effects of this master narrative on the narrative

and moral formation of the Korean church.

In order to examine the impact of the historical and cultural narrative of Korean

society on the growth narrative of the Korean church, I will analyze the two most

powerful people who formed the narrative of South Korean society and the Korean

church. The first is South Korean President Park Chung-hee, who achieved economic

growth during his dictatorship. He is regarded as the greatest contributor to the

industrialization and modernization of Korea. The second is Yong-gi Cho, who grew

Yoido Full Gospel Church into the world's largest mega-church. Both of them not only

popularized a strong growth narrative in Korean society or the church but also turned the

growth narrative into a successful model. When analyzing the cultural and historical contexts of the growth narratives formed in Korean society and Korean churches, this chapter presents the narratives of President Park and Rev. David Yong-gi Cho. Finally, based on Hauerwas and Niebuhr's ethical paradigms, I will analyze the influence of the growth narrative of Korean society on the narrative of many Korean churches and the moral character formation of the Korean church overall.

A. Historical and Cultural Context

The dominant narrative of a society is deeply related to culture and history. The dominant narrative of a community within that society is based on its history and culture as well. Here, I will examine the historical and cultural contexts that influence the formation of the dominant narrative of Korean society and its churches.

Historical Context

The history of Korean Christianity began in the transition from pre-modern feudal society to modern society in the nineteenth century. Therefore, understanding the history of Korean Christianity requires understanding the development of Korean history over the past two hundred years. In this dissertation, the wider cultural background of the Korean church is also required, because historical events alone are not the only factors that led to the master narratives of society or the church blending together.

Since its beginning in 1876, Korean modern history can be divided into three stages. First is the period of the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1876, which inaugurated the pre-Japanese colonial rule of Korea (1876–1910). Second is the Japanese colonial era that lasted for 35 years, when Japan forcibly made Korea a colony and ruled over it (1910–

1945). Third is the period after Korean liberation in 1945. This period is the period of Korean division, because of the land of Korea was divided into North Korea and South Korea by Western powers.[1]

Kyung-Ro Yoon argues that the first step in Korean modern history was its formation as a modern nation-state.[2] At that time, Korea was called the Chosen Dynasty, but its other name was the Hermit Kingdom. At that time, Korea was not known to Western countries, and foreign exchange was prohibited. This description captures the atmosphere leading up to the late 1800s: "Korea was known long before the nineteenth century as a country where foreigners were met with mistrust and dispatched as quickly as possible back to their homes."[3] In other words, the first step into transitioning Korea into the global scene was to leave behind its status as a closed state and open its doors to foreign countries, accept Western civilization, and build the country into a modern nation-state.[4] Political scheming to implement these changes did not succeed. A few reformists who embraced Western culture tried to start a revolution in Korea with a coup in 1884, but the coup was overpowered within three days by the ruling monarchy (the Joseon Dynasty). After that, many social reform movements developed in Korea, but the attempts did not lead to building a modern nation-state. Suffering unwanted interference by various foreign countries, Korea was finally reduced to a Japanese colony in 1910.

Colonization by Japan inaugurated the second stage of Korea's modern history from 1910–1945. During the final years of Japanese colonial rule (1931–1945), Japan

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[1] Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 87.
[2] Yoon, "The Characteristics and Meanings of Acceptance of Christianity," 35.
[3] Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 87.
[4] Yoon, "The Characteristics and Meanings of Acceptance of Christianity," 35.

was a fascist state. During those years, Japan fought military conflicts on several fronts: its invasion of Manchuria, the Sino-Japanese War, and the Pacific War. To support its war efforts, Japan made Korea's entire territory a logistics base and conscripted the Korean people to serve the wartime efforts on the battlefields and in the factories. Over the years, Japan not only expelled American missionaries from Korea but also forced Korean Christians to worship at the Shinto Shrine.

The third and final major stage of modern Korean history began with its independence from Japan on August 15, 1945. After independence in 1945, Korea was divided into South Korea and North Korea along the 38th parallel. South Korea was under the control of a United States military government for three years after independence. After the establishment of a natively-ruled South Korean government in 1948, significant historical events occurred, including the Korean War in 1950–1953, the "4/19" revolution that overthrew President Rhee Syng-man in 1960, and the military coup by Park Chung-hee in 1961. South Korea was governed by his military dictatorship from 1961 to 1987, after which another president, Roh Tae-woo (who participated in a coup attempt in 1979) was elected by the 1987 democratic election. Even though Roh Tae-woo was elected democratically, the Korean people knew that the government was a military dictatorship. Then, in 1992, a president was elected in a democratic election so that the long-standing rule of the Korean military governments came to an end. In February 1993, as a civilian (not a military general), Kim Young-sam was officially inaugurated as President of South Korea. From 1961 to 1993, the military governments had pursued economic growth under various dictators. They called it a "developmental

dictatorship" (*kaebal tokchae*). Eckhart provides the meaning of the phrase in the context of South Korean society:

> It was of course the army under the leadership of Park, a major general, that originally seized power in a *coup d'etat* in May 1961 and established a political regime zealously dedicated to "modernization" (*kŭndaehwa*), a South Korean version of the paradigmatic "developmental state," or, as it is also frequently described in Korean scholarship, a "developmental dictatorship" (*kaebal tokchae*).[5]

This dissertation focuses on the influence this cultural trend of "developmental dictatorship" had on the Korean church. Before detailing the influence of Korean culture on the Korean church, this chapter first details the history of the Korean church before independence in 1945 and the rise of the developmental-dictatorship style of government.

Before 1945

The First Protestant Missionaries

Unlike Protestant churches in other Asian countries, the Protestant church tradition in South Korea was only established by Western missionaries within the past 120 years. It struggled to take root during its early years, in large part because the dominant religions of Confucianism and Buddhism created cultural barriers to the spread of Christianity. During this early phase of Christianity in Korea, accepting Christianity often meant being ostracized by family and friends. Despite these challenges, however, Christianity started to take root in Korea. It had a certain appeal to the people of Korea, for reasons I will now explain.

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[5] Eckert, *Park Chung Hee and Modern Korea*, 1.

At the end of the nineteenth century, when American missionaries first introduced Protestantism to Korea, a good number of Koreans eagerly accepted it. Between 1910 and 1945, Korea was under Japanese colonial rule. Even before 1910, Korea's national power was weak, and the country suffered from unfair interference by foreign countries. In the 1880s, therefore, when Protestantism was first introduced to Korea, the existing philosophical and religious values of Korea did not receive much support from the Korean people. Korea's national power was declining at that time. The Korean people were very disappointed with the philosophy and religion of the ruling class of Korea, for it had not made them safe or prosperous. At that time, Korea was called "Chosen." In the eighteenth century, when Catholicism was introduced to Korean society, Korean national power was stronger than its power in the nineteenth century. The Korean government at that time saw Catholicism as a great threat to the security of Korean society, so the government suppressed Catholicism. By contrast, when Protestantism was introduced to Korea in the late nineteenth century, the Korean people voluntarily accepted it. Even the Korean ruling class and the king were very receptive to Christianity.

At that time, Koreans accepted Western missionaries and Protestant churches at the same time as Western civilization. In 1910, Korea became a Japanese colony. Korea, which had the name "Chosen," disappeared as the country lost its independence. Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century, the Korean people actively embraced Protestantism and its missionaries in order to find ways to solve the problems in their lives. Existing religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism offered very little hope to the Korean people. Protestantism was introduced to Korea when the need to find hope in a new

religion was at its greatest. Efforts to resolve the difficulties of the nation through political Protestantism were attempted by political leaders at that time. Furthermore, even before Western missionaries entered Korea, the Chinese Bible had already been imported into Korea and introduced to Korean people. The national soil was ready for Christianity to grow there.

Interestingly, the status that Christianity would eventually enjoy in Korean society has its origins in immigration law. The authorities for decades turned away the first missionaries to Korea and prohibited direct proselytizing of the Korean people. But they welcomed Westerners with skills in high demand. Therefore, the first missionaries into the country were also teachers and physicians who focused on educational and medical services. The Korean government also actively sought help from the United States in order to escape unwarranted political interference and oppression from Japan and China. For some decades, American missionaries were the most effective diplomatic channel to communicate with the United States government, and Korea welcomed that channel. Back in 1905, the United States had recognized Japan's control of Korea as a condition for Japan's recognition of U.S. control of the Philippines. Since then, American missionaries have not officially supported the Korean government, but they have made significant contributions to the Korean people through medical and educational work.[6]

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[6] Yang, *Reformed Social Ethics*, 252.

The Great Revival in 1907

Christian missionaries did not stick solely to indirect methods of missionary efforts such as medical, educational, and relief work, however. Increased evangelism resulted in the Great Revival of 1907. Sometimes described as "the Korean Pentecost," the Great Revival of 1907 began during a Bible study meeting at a Presbyterian church in Pyongyang when hundreds of attendees felt overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit. The Great Revival ultimately resulted in an unprecedented spiritual awakening and moral improvement for thousands of Christians across Korea, and the results rippled across the Korean church for about a century.[7] According to Nak-chun Paek, the first church historian in Korea, the revival was not fleeting in its effects:

> The most convincing argument for the genuineness of the revival is in the result that followed. The great awakening marks the spiritual rebirth of the Korean Church. The religious experience of the people gave to the Christian Church in Korea a character which is its own. Following the revival, the new religious experience was severely tested, but it has survived as a moral and spiritual force. Korean Christians of today look back on the movement as the source of their spiritual life.[8]

The revival also initiated several new characteristics of the Korean church such as "early-morning prayer meetings, unison prayer in a loud voice, Bible studies, generous offerings, and zeal for evangelism."[9]

The influence of this revival was seen everywhere in Korea. It rippled across the country and affected fledgling congregations from coast to coast.[10] Christians gathered to hold similar revivals where they recommitted themselves to living faithful lives.

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[7] Yang, *Reformed Social Ethics*, 171–72.
[8] Paek, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832–1910*, 374.
[9] Lee, "Korean Pentecost," 81.
[10] Lee, "Korean Pentecost," 79.

People who had joined the church "with various motives" now understood the meaning of "true repentance" and how they should live as Christians.[11] In addition, the Great Revival instilled new moral values in Korean Christians, and many Christians proved their faith by making significant changes in lifestyles.[12]

While the Great Revival triggered widespread spiritual excitement and a period of rapid growth for Christianity, it also disseminated the conservative theological stance of the early missionaries, which was theologically "conservative within the wide theological spectrum of nineteenth-century evangelicalism."[13] Since these missionaries were primarily interested only in spiritual spheres (and often had only a rudimentary understanding of Korean culture), the Korean church followed suit and limited the scope of its preaching and activities to spiritual spheres as well. As a result, Korean Christians drew a clear distinction between their spiritual lives and their lives in public, secular, social, and political environments.

Japan Colonial Rule and the Reputation of the Korean Church

Even though the Great Revival inspired Korean Christians to repent of their sins, it did not motivate the Korean church to begin showing any special concern for socio-political issues.[14] Nevertheless, many individual Christians attempted to practice their faith in the socio-political sphere, particularly when faced with the widespread brutalities that took place under the Japanese colonial government that ruled Korea from 1910 to 1945.

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[11] Lee, "Korean Pentecost," 73.
[12] Lee, "Korean Pentecost," 80.
[13] Ryu, "Origin and Characteristics of Evangelical Protestantism in Korea," 376–77.
[14] Ryu, "Origin and Characteristics of Evangelical Protestantism in Korea," 393.

The March First Movement (or: March 1st) in 1919 was the most significant civil protest, up to this point, against the Japanese colonial government. Many Koreans throughout the country gathered and began to rise up for the independence of Korea. Ultimately, more than two million people participated in this demonstration and kept it going for more than a year. The movement resulted in the drafting of a formal Declaration of Independence that was presented to Japan. Christians played a vital role in the March First Movement. Most notably, even though the population of Christians in Korea was less than 5 percent at the time, "out of 33 who signed the *Declaration of Independence*, 16 were Christians."[15] The social status of Christianity was already on the rise before this event. Christians were earning the admiration of their neighbors with their diligence, honesty, and generosity. The educational and medical services established by the first missionaries were badly needed and filled an important social need. Christianity's status rose even faster after the March First Movement as Koreans took note of who was willing to stand against their oppressors. Young-Jae Kim, a professor of church history, describes this connection: "By Christians' involvement in the independence movement, the Korean church has gained a high reputation from the people and many young people have been seeking hope from the church."[16] Thus, during Japan's colonization of Korea, the Korean church took a leading role in the independence movement.

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[15] Yang, *Reformed Social Ethics*, 179.
[16] Kim, *Korean Church History*, 184.

From 1945 to 1961

After Japan surrendered to the United States on August 15, 1945, Korea was freed from

Japanese colonial rule. For Korean Christians, independence from Japan meant freedom

of faith.[17] Since Korea's independence from Japan in 1945, the 38th parallel has been

established as Korea's dividing border between the southern part of Korea and northern

part of Korea. As a result, U.S. troops occupied the southern part of the Korean

peninsula, and Soviet troops occupied the north. Disregarding the wishes of the Korean

people, Korea was not only divided into South Korea and North Korea, but the conflict

between the Soviet Union and the United States—the Cold War—eventually led to the

Korean War on the Korean Peninsula. Bruce Cumings describes the situation on the

Korean Peninsula after 1945:

> When the colonial system abruptly terminated in 1945, millions of Koreans
> sought to return to their native villages from these far-flung mobilization details.
> But they were no longer the same people: they had grievances against those who
> remained secure at home, they had suffered material and status losses, they had
> often come into contact with new ideologies, they had all seen a broader world
> beyond the villages. It was thus this pressure cooker of a final decade that loosed
> upon postwar Korea a mass of changed and disgruntled people who deeply
> disordered the early postwar period, and the plans of the Americans and the
> Soviets.[18]

Caught up in the anti-communist conflict, South Korea mostly absorbed values from the

United States. From 1945 to the establishment of the South Korean government in 1948,

the US established a military government (hereafter USMG) and ruled over South

Korea. After arriving in South Korea, John L. Hodge, the Commander of the 24th Corps

of the United States Army, took over the administrative organization of what had been

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[17] Asami, *Kankoku to Kirisuto-Kyo*, 149.

[18] Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 182.

the Japanese Government-General in Joseon (i.e., Korea) and inherited the Koreans who had worked for the previous government.[19]

In South Korea, Christians received many privileges from the USMG, and South Korea's first president, Rhee Syngman, was a Christian. In-Chul Kang argues that the USMG and President Rhee gave Korean churches overwhelming preference compared to other religions, allowing the Korean church as a whole to grow significantly during that time.[20] The USMG absolutely needed the recommendation and assistance of American missionaries for effective South Korean rule at this time, because these people were the most cooperative with the military government. During the 35 years that Korea was under Japanese colonial rule, the Korean church had been the only place for Koreans to learn democratic politics. As a result, since Korea became independent in 1945, many politicians come from within the Korean church, where they learned democratic values. At that time, the three most powerful political leaders were all Christians. President Rhee, who wanted to make South Korea a Christian country, received strong support from the Korean Church, and he used Christians for many of his accomplishments. Since independence in 1945, Christians in North Korea attempted to engage in political (pro-democratic) activity. Their activities, however, were persecuted by the North Korean Communist Party, and the majority of Christians were arrested or martyred. As a result, many Christians in North Korea fled to South Korea even before the Korean War of the 1950s.

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[19] Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, ed., *A History of Christianity in Korea*, 18.
[20] Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, ed., *A History of Christianity in Korea*, 65–68.

The experience of the Korean War provided an opportunity for the Korean church to internalize their antipathy and fear of North Korea and its communist party. Also, many North Korean Christians helped the church grow in South Korea, and those from the north strengthened the anti-communist character of the Korean church. This civil war caused the largest number of deaths in Korean history. About four million people died in South and North Korea—four million people. Understandably, the war sparked strong anti-communism in South Korea. On July 27, 1953, after the Korean War was over, anti-communism functioned as the master narrative for the society of South Korea. President Syngman Rhee made anti-communism the nation's most important national policy. Park Chung-hee, the first president of South Korea's military dictatorship, made economic growth and modernization one of the nation's most important political policies as well.

The Korean War not only caused the Korean public to experience extreme poverty. It also put them in survival mode, longing for stability and anything that could give them hope for a better life. This context of poverty was an important reason for the spread of the "faith-seeking-blessings" movement in Protestant churches around South Korea. Heung-soo Kim, who studied the relationship between the Korean War and this faith-seeking-blessings movement, summarizes the aftermath of the Korean War as follows:

> In short, the war had a tremendous impact on Korean society, fundamentally shaking not only the cultural and social systems of Korean society but also the psychological stability of Korean society. The systems have already been destroyed by the process of contact with foreign powers and the colonial rule of the Japanese Empire since the late 19th century. Traditional social systems and disruptions led to the breakdown of [social] norms that maintained them. Together with these situations, the Korean people suffered from extreme poverty, creating a social environment in which they must struggle to survive on

their own every day. Thus, post-war Korean society was in a situation where both the destroyed economy and the collapsed social structure had to be restored and rebuilt. Here, the government's industrialization and westernization plan emerged as the former solution, and the New Community Movement which modernized the national spirit as the latter alternative appeared.
This was the situation of the [Korea] church in the 1960s and 1970s. Many churches, except a few, took advantage of the industrialization policies of the Korean government, not only shouting economic development and [society] stability, but also focusing on evangelism to expand their duties. It is no surprise that these churches have received messages of comfort and blessing for the present situation.[21]

As will be described later, these conditions created a social environment in which Korean society would be predisposed to embrace Park Chung-hee's economic growth narrative and the Korean church's church growth narrative hand in hand.

From 1961 to 1992

The period of explosive growth for the Korean church took place from 1960 to 1987, when South Korea was ruled by military dictatorships. Timothy Lee points out two important facts about the political situation in Korea from 1953 to 1988, roughly the same span of decades: First, Korean politics appeared very unstable. Second, the South Korean government used anti-communism for the benefit of whatever South Korean regime was in power. Timothy Lee describes the political situation of Korea during that period as follows:

> However casually one surveys the development of South Korean politics from 1953 to 1988, two observations are inevitable. One is that during this period the nation's political development was extremely unstable and democracy had a difficult time anchoring in the country. This was apparent from the First Republic (1948–1960) of Syngman Rhee, whose political manipulations and autocratic ways finally provoked a student revolt on April 19, 1960, exiling him to Hawai`i [sic]; to the Second Republic (1960–1961) of Yun Poson [sic] and Chang Myŏn [sic], whose inability to maintain public order provoked a military

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[21] Kim, *Hanguk Cheonjaeng Kwa Kibok Sinang Hwaksan Yeongu [The Korean War and the Faith Seeking Blessing Spread Out]*, 40–41.

coup in May 1961; to the Third and the Fourth Republics (1963–1972, 1972–1979) of Park Chung Hee, who set the country on the path to economic prosperity but in the process subverted democracy and perpetrated severe human rights violations; and to the Fifth Republic (1981–1988) of Chun Doo Hwan, who came to power by another military coup and whose name will always be linked with the Kwangju Uprising of May 1980, in which his troops massacred citizens of Kwangju who opposed his dictatorship. A second ready observation that can be made about Korean politics in this period is that all of the five republics made anticommunism their official ideology and assiduously exploited it.[22]

During roughly this same period, and under the rule of various military dictatorships, Korean churches experienced astounding growth. To some extent, this growth may be attributed to the zealous evangelism efforts by the Korean church. However, it is necessary to examine how the political and social situations, such as modernization, industrialization, military tyranny, and anti-communism all contributed to the explosive growth of the church.

As mentioned above, Park Chung-hee emphasized economic development and modernization in order to gain superiority compared to North Korea. It was during his reign that growth ideologies were promoted as the highest good for society. President Park suppressed human rights and other important social values and strictly controlled Korean society, because economic growth was the top priority. His reign ended when he was assassinated by Kim Jae-gyu, the head of the Korean CIA in 1979.[23] But even after that, the country saw another seven years under the military dictator Chun Doo-hwan. Even though the following president was elected democratically in 1987, President Roh Tae-woo himself had a military career as a general and had assisted the coup attempt

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[22] Lee, *Born Again*, 86–87.

[23] The Korean CIA is not related to the CIA of the U.S. The Korea Central Intelligence Agency is an independent Korean intelligence agency, albeit modeled after the US agency by that name.

when Chun Doo-hwan took over back in 1979. During the reign of Roh Tae-woo, the strength of military dictatorship in Korea was weakened, but military rule still operated in Korean society.

Since 1993

Although South Korea's military dictatorship ended in 1987, it was not until 1992 or the 1993 inauguration ceremony that Kim Young-sam was elected as the first civilian president. Finally, Korean society was freed from military rule. Since 1993, Korean society has become a politically democratic society, and regime changes have been made in a democratic way. In addition, after experiencing the 1997 economic crisis, Korean society has shied away from the "growth first" policy. Despite changes in Korean society that are moving people and policies away from an emphasis on economic growth, the Korean church remains captivated by the church growth first narrative. To understand why, some cultural context of the Korean church is necessary.

Cultural Context

Among the cultural factors relevant for this period of Korean history, this dissertation next deals with a low level of functional Christendom that formed in Korean society. Therefore, the study defines this phenomenon and articulates the fact that a functional Christendom had been formed in South Korea. Then it asserts that the social structure of functional Christendom contributed to the assimilation of narratives between the Korean church and Korean society.

Functional Christendom

It is difficult to accept the claim that South Korea was ever completely and fully a Christendom or a Christian nation. Korean society, however, was a functional Christendom for part of its history, and that functional Christendom is essential for understanding the growth of the Korean church and its narrative. Dong-min Chang argues that a broad definition of Christendom can be used to understand the Korean church.[24] In a narrow sense, Christendom is a society in which Christianity and the state have formed a bond. More broadly speaking, however, Christendom describes an era in which Christianity leads the society at the heart of its social dynamics and political influence. Chang uses the United States as an example to explain Christendom in a broad sense. In the United States, although separation of church and state is stipulated by the Constitution, Christianity nevertheless impacted the overall value systems of American society for many decades. In such a case, the United States could be described as a Christendom culture, a "Christian nation" in a broad sense. In other words, countries such as the United States are functional Christendoms, even though it is debatable whether this is true today.

When Western civilization was first introduced into Korean society, Christianity and Western civilization were practically indistinguishable. Korean society did not differentiate Western scientific civilization and the cultural values from Christianity. After all, those who introduced Western civilization to Koreans were Western missionaries intent on bringing Christianity. In addition, the influence in the 1940s of

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[24] Chang, *Korean Christianity in Post-Christendom*, 175–76.

the USMG and South Korea's first president, Rhee Syngman, gave Korean churches a favored position above other religions in the marketplace of religious options in South Korea. Even during the reign of military dictatorships, when legal and institutional benefits for the Korean church formally disappeared, the Korean church had a close relationship with the government. In analyzing the ethical issues of the Korean church, it is therefore necessary to understand the rise and fall of this functional Christendom in Korean society. The growth and decline of this example of Christendom is related to the growth and ethical trends of the Korean church. Also, I will examine the master narrative formed in the Korean church and Korean society in the process of examining the short-lived Christendom in the country.

The United States Military Government and the Korean Church

For some years after Korea became independent from Japan in 1945, Korean Protestantism received exclusive benefits from the USMG and the Korean government. Naturally, the status of Protestantism rose sharply with such sponsorship from the USMG. What Commander-in-Chief Douglas MacArthur had done in Japan—favoring Christianity as a countermeasure to communism—he also did in South Korea:

> Another reason why Korean Christianity enjoyed an advantageous environment under the American military rule was due to the influence of General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers. He had never attended a church, but read the Bible every day, and regarded himself to be, along with the Pope, the highest defender of the Christian world. While he was in Japan as the Supreme Commander of the US Armed Forces in Occupied Japan, he actively invited Christian missionaries to Christianize Japan, and tried his best to provide them with every possible convenience. The reason for his effort to bring Christianity to Japan was that he considered Christianity to be the origin of democracy and a bulwark against communism. . . . The leaders of the American military government in southern Korea also considered it their mission to protect democracy from totalitarianism such as communism, and some even said that the founding of the country should be based on Christian principles.

Even though MacArthur did not rule southern Korea directly, his being the Supreme Commander and the influence of his views on Christianity on the USMG in southern Korea could be sufficiently inferred.[25]

In addition, during the reign of the USMG, US missionaries who re-entered South Korea became a channel of communication between the US and the Korean church. The Korean church enjoyed exclusive financial and social benefits too. Among other things, the financial help of the USMG bolstered the Korean church. When Japanese forces were defeated at the end of World War II, the Japanese left a lot of properties behind in Korea. These were sometimes called "properties of the enemy," and the Korean church received much of this real estate, thanks to the help of US missionaries and the favorable USMG in charge of distributing the land. In the end, "over one hundred Christian facilities like churches or schools were established."[26]

Overall, the US was not only a political ally whose soldiers shed blood in South Korea in the Korean War against communism. The nation was also a sponsor that enabled free democracy and a market economy to function in South Korea.[27] The impact of the United States on Korea's economy and culture can be explained as follows:

> A final major factor in the 1960s economic takeoff [in South Korea], though not as easily discerned, can be deemed "association with America." The United States affected the South Korean economy in several ways. Its dozens of military bases and tens of thousands of soldiers stationed around the country injected capital into the consumer economy and, as noted above, gave rise to specialty occupations and businesses servicing them. Furthermore, the Americans' direct aid to the South Korean government in the form of grants and loans provided the regime great leverage, through its control over lending practices of major banks, in getting industry and labor to comply with state-directed development. There was also the considerable impact of American soft power—the widespread influence of American ideals, popular music, fashion, movies, and entertainers,

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[25] Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, ed., *A History of Christianity*, 20–21.

[26] Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, ed., *A History of Christianity*, 21.

[27] Chang, *Korean Christianity in Post-Christendom*, 157.

some of whom, like Louis Armstrong, actually performed in South Korea. This influence helped set trends and increase demand for American products, both cultural and material.[28]

The United States and South Korea, however, did not simply cooperate and benefit each other out of simple kindness or unilateral altruism. They cooperated for their respective diplomatic interests. The United States needed South Korea to contain the Soviet Union and China in the Far East, and South Korea desperately needed US help to protect the country from invasion by the armies of the North Korean Communist Party. From independence (1945) until after the Korean War (1953), the Korean church was the channel of communication that effectively connected the United States and South Korea. Also, Christians tended to hold the strongest anti-communist sentiments. They thus supported the South Korean government, and some of them even participated in armed mob attacks on communists within South Korea.[29]

In terms of religious influence, the Christians who came from the northwest area of North Korea to South Korea to escape the repression of the communist regime were mainly members of the Presbyterian Church. This influx of Christians impacted the Korean church in various ways, not the least of which was in making the church more Presbyterian overall. These Christians had been in close contact with the missionaries of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America for decades during Japanese colonial rule. In fact, that region of North Korea had been evangelized by missionaries from the US, and a prominent pastor, Han Kyung-chik, who represented Protestants in

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[28] Hwang, *A History of Korea*, 200.

[29] As will be described later, there were still many socialists and communists in South Korea before and after the Korean War. The group most opposed to communists in South Korea was the Christians who fled from North Korea. Their hostility to the communists led to the massacre of the communists and white terrorism. Many innocent people were killed in the process.

the northwest region, had studied at Princeton Theological Seminary back in the States. He eventually fled to South Korea to escape the oppression of the North Korean Communist Party in 1945, and he established a church in Seoul, where Christians from the northwest region began to gather. Youngnak Church, as it was called, became a community center that aided the re-settlement of refugees in South Korea and also a bastion for anti-communism.[30] Despite the existence of Presbyterian denominations in the south before this, the Korean church was led by Christians from the northwest (North Korea), and the contributions of Christians from the northwest were significant in sending relief supplies from American Christian organizations after the Korean War.[31]

Furthermore, the organizations that cared for the numerous war orphans after the Korean War were Christian organizations from the United States.[32] These charitable organizations were responsible for promoting the propaganda of the United States, including American democratic values, modernization, and Christian mercy or charity.[33] In turn, the groups also shaped US foreign policy toward South Korea. The most active helpers of the American-based evangelical relief organizations in South Korea were once again the northwest Christians, along with Rev. Han. The Youngnak Church that Rev. Han founded not only grew into the first mega-church in South Korea but also had

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[30] Kim, *Growth Narratives*, 155.

[31] The Northwest Youth League, a group of young people from the northwestern region, also experienced persecution by the North Korean Communist Party. They experienced not only personal persecution but also persecution against their family members. The Korean War only intensified the antipathy against the North Korean Communist Party in South Korea, further strengthening the bond between American missionaries and Christians from the northwest of what is now North Korea. See Kim, *Growth Narratives*, 155.

[32] Kim, *Growth Narratives*, 162–63.

[33] Kim, *Growth Narratives*, 163.

a disproportionate influence on the political and economic developments of South Korean society.[34]

In summary, the strong anti-communism and the need for national survival that solidified in South Korean society during the Korean War became the plausibility structures that made the growth of the Korean church possible. Since the mainstream of Korean society was formed around anti-communist ideology, the strong anti-communism of Christians from North Korea facilitated their social success as a religious tradition. The soil of Korean society after the Korean War was favorable to the growth of the Korean church, led by the northwest Christians, since both the society and the church concentrated on anti-communism.[35] Tangibly, the Korean church was recognized as a savior by the Korean people, for it rescued many from poverty and suffering in the 1950s. Sun-il Kim calls the 1950s the era of survival. With the church as a major institution that could help people survive, the church grew significantly at that time. Unfortunately, the survival-mode thinking also led to the spread of the faith-seeking-blessings movement in the Korean church, as will be discussed later. These conditions in the cultural context set the stage for the explosive growth of Korean churches in the 1960s.

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[34] Kim, *Growth Narratives*, 165. The Youngnak Church had already become one of the world's largest churches in 1965, when it had more than 10,000 members. The rapid growth of the church, which began with a mere 27 members in 1945, can be explained as a result of its favorable relationship with the United States and the Korean government. See Kim, *Citizen K*, 72.

[35] In addition, the Christian-friendly policy of the USMG and of the Rhee Syng-man regime created social conditions favorable to Christianity in South Korean society. See Kim, *Growth Narratives*, 168.

Functional Christendom under Military Dictatorship

Every historian acknowledges that the close bond between the Korean government and

the Korean church contributed to some growth of the Korean church in the 1940s and

1950s.[36] However, the really explosive growth of the church was actually from the

1960s through the 1980s, not the 1950s. Jeongyeon Yi argues that the rapid expansion of

the Korean church must not be due to political factors or charitable (relief) work alone.

By the 1960s, the Korean church was providing something beyond anti-communist

activism and humanitarian relief. Therefore, in order to analyze this phenomenon,

attention should be paid to the most important social changes that explain the three

decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Specifically, one must look at the effects of

industrialization and urbanization.[37] Yi does not simply say that industrialization and

urbanization directly caused the growth of the Korean church. Nevertheless, the rapid

social changes created by industrialization and urbanization created suitable situations

that raised religious aspirations for seeking God. Since the Korean church responded

actively to this situation, appealing to those aspirations, Yi argues, the Korean church

was able to grow at an unprecedented rate.

This period of explosive growth overlaps with the reign of Park Chung-hee and

Chun Doo-hwan, and not by accident. In essence, the Park Chung-hee government

developed a stronger narrative than the Rhee Syng-man government did. While Rhee

Syng-man emphasized anti-communism and national independence, Park Chung-hee

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[36] Kang, *Religions, Politics, and State of South Korea*, 72–74; Kim, *Growth Narratives*, 124–70; Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, ed., *A History of Christianity in Korea*, 18–31; Yi, "Urban Modernization and Religion," 37–47.

[37] Yi, "Urban Modernization and Religion," 47.

emphasized modernization and industrialization along with anti-communism. In other words, he stressed the narrative of economic development from poverty. That was priority number one. Park Chung-hee, who came to power through a coup in 1961, tried to secure the legitimacy of his rule through economic growth and development—hence the common label "developmental dictatorship (autocracy)" for this and later regimes. His successor, Chun Doo-hwan, also became president of South Korea through a coup, and he likewise needed a growing economy to keep social unrest at bay. Sun-il Kim characterizes the 1980s as an era of struggle in South Korea.[38] These two reigns brought numerous human rights abuses. Civil protests continued in the 1970s, and well into the 1980s the struggle for democratic freedoms continued and peaked. The Gwangju massacre of 1980 by government soldiers was the most glaring example of the tyranny characteristic of military dictatorship. This case is regarded as the most tragic and traumatic event in modern Korean history. As a result, resistance against the tyranny of the military dictatorship was built on the support of Korean civil society. During this era of struggle, most of the Korean church benefited from a close relationship with the government, but that favor did not last.[39]

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[38] Kim, *Growth Narratives*, 186.

[39] Some Korean Christians later participated in organized resistance against the Chun Doo-hwan regime. This resistance by some Christians will be discussed later. The resistance of some Christians in the 1980s was stronger than in the 1970s. The Gwangju Massacre in 1980 happened. After the assassination of Park Chung-hee, people tried to recover a democratic system in South Korea. Tens of thousands of students and other protestors poured into the streets of Gwangju, a city in southwestern South Korea, in the spring of 1980. They were protesting the state of martial law that had been in force since a coup the previous year which helped military strongman General Chun Doo-hwan take power. In these circumstances, Korean Christians could participate in resistance against the military dictatorship more than they did in the 1970s. To see details of the Gwangju Massacre, see Coyner, "Interview: Donald Baker, Gwangju Massacre Witness."

Paradoxically, just when the Korean church was really starting to expand, President Park removed the special privileges that had been afforded to the Korean church. Thus, to say that the explosive growth of the Korean church is simply the result of a functional Christendom in South Korea cannot be an adequate explanation. If that were so, then church membership would have stagnated when the political favoritism dried up. Despite the fact that benefits from the government were no longer exclusively available to the Korean church, though, the Korean church grew even larger. Therefore, in addition to the earlier political support for the Korean church, it is necessary to analyze the subsequent economic factors—despite the governmental brutality—that influenced the growth of the church and the master narrative of both society and church. The latter half of this chapter attempts to show that the economic growth narrative of Korean society has been actively accepted and assimilated into the narrative of the Korean church and contributed to the growth of the Korean church. In other words, the national narrative of economic growth became the Korean church's growth narrative such that it was hard to distinguish the stories from each other.

The Korean church was not merely the social group that most enthusiastically supported the Park Chung-hee regime and the narrative of economic growth. It was also the most active in embodying the spirit of modernization and economic growth. As a result, the Korean church established a friendly relationship with the Park Chung-hee regime. Jin-ho Kim explains the social status of the Korean church at that time as follows:

> In this period of the emergence of Korea's independent modern state, the Korean church was not only one of the most influential social forces in the process, but also a group that possessed great preferences in proportion to the degree of participation in the state's modernization process. It [the Korean

church] was not the only recipient of the national system. The Korean church also occupied an important position in the emergence of social and cultural modernity. It is no exaggeration to say that the Korean church is a religion that symbolizes Korean modernity, noting that Korean modernity was embodied through the combination of Korean nationalism and the civilization that internalizes Americanism.[40]

There is evidence that Korea operated as a functional Christendom in an address of President Park Chung-hee as well. He was not a Christian, but, using Christian rhetoric and language, he gave this address to Korean soldiers who were sent to the battlefields of South Vietnam:

> You, as officers and men of our armed forces, must keep in mind the fact that the honor of your fatherland[sic] and the expectations of your 27 million fellow countrymen rest on your shoulders. You must be proud of being the elite chosen from among the Korean armed forces for this special mission.
> I hope you will fulfill the mission entrusted to you, and demonstrate once again the high traditions and invincibility of our military services.
> We on the home front will never forget your hardships on a foreign battlefield, and will concentrate our total efforts in the reconstruction of our economy.
> I pray that God may bless you, the crusaders for freedom.[41]

That last line in particular is noteworthy for its Christian-sounding language, and yet the speech was not given by the president of the United States of America to its soldiers but by the non-Christian president of South Korea, Park Chung-hee. Thus, the claim that a functional Christendom was formed temporarily in South Korea is convincing.

As seen above, the years from the 1960s to the 1980s were times of military dictatorship, industrialization, modernization, and civil protests. The Korean church was able to grow explosively in this period, when the country was a low-level, functional Christendom, or at least was not very secular. The social structure was such that the

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[40] Kim, Citizen K, 46–47.

[41] Park, *Major Speeches*, 240.

narrative of Korean society could influence the narrative of the Korean church, so the next section will examine the master narrative of Korean society at that time.

B. The Master Narrative of Korean Society

The Anti-Communism and Growth Narrative Plots

Before applying theological insights from Hauerwas and Niebuhr to the situation of South Korean society and of the church, it is necessary to discuss the anti-communism narrative in South Korean society and the church for a final time. This is because the anti-communism narrative actually facilitated the acceptance of growth narratives by Korean society and the Korean church. The stories or sub-plots within the stories are not unrelated to each other.

Hostility and Competition in South Korea against North Korean Communism

Even though the effects are still felt today, the division of Korea into two countries had a profound impact on Korean society for the 30 years from the 1960s to the 1980s—just when the explosive growth in the Korean church was happening.[42] South Korea's government, a military dictatorship of one sort or another, saw itself in a fierce competition with North Korea both militarily and economically. South Korea used the slogan "the war is not ended yet" to win public support for massive economic and infrastructure programs.[43] South Korea regarded economic growth as its first priority in this culture war, and it was eager to achieve it.

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[42] Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, ed., *A History of Christianity in Korea*, 102.

[43] Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, ed., *A History of Christianity in Korea*, 102.

As already discussed, many Christians in North Korea fled to South Korea to escape persecution by the North Korean government during and after the Korean War. However, the conflict between communism and Christians actually began much earlier, after the Communist Party of Korea was founded in 1925. The communists had systematically interfered with and attacked the Korean church from the time it was introduced into that part of Asia. After Korea was liberated from Japan's colonial rule in 1945, North Korea was occupied by the Soviet Union, and Kim Il-sung's regime started ruling North Korea. Under the persecution from Kim Il-Sung's regime, the majority of North Korean Christians fled to South Korea. Some estimates calculate that North Korean Christians comprised 70–80 percent of the Korean Protestant population at the time of the Korean War,[44] and so when these masses of conservative believers moved south to live and worship in South Korea, the South Korean church became strongly anti-communist by default. Of course, the South Korean government was extremely hostile toward communism as well, due to the Korean War. Many members of the Korean church opposed communism because it was "atheistic, materialistic, anti-religious, undemocratic, insensitive to human rights, and foreign (i.e., Russian) dominated."[45] Ever since the persecution experienced by Christians in North Korea during 1945–1950, the anti-communism of the Korean church has closely linked the South Korean government to the church. They were allies in the fight against a common enemy.

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[44] Bae, *Korean Protestant Fundamentalism*, 40–41.
[45] Clark, "History and Religion in Modern Korea," 183.

Through this process, the Korean church solidified a conservative and politically anti-communist identity in Korean society, and it easily joined to support the Rhee Syng-man regime, thereby solidifying its position in the mainstream of Christian power in Korea. Korean fundamentalism was combined with anti-communism, and political activism was seen as the Christian duty of the church. Later in history, the Korean church developed a worldview that separated the church and the world. According to this view, there is only salvation in the church, and the world outside the church is evil and filthy, so Christians must resist and overcome the world through spiritual means. But for a while, in the middle of the twentieth century, the church's narrative was closer to a triumphal one of Christendom and the Christian influence and growth that sometimes results from that mainstream status. The political sentiments were joined to economic ambitions during this time, and so now the research turns to the economic growth narrative as promoted by President Park Chung-hee.

Park Chung-hee's Economic Growth Narrative

President Park Chung-hee's modernization narrative cannot be explained by his public policies alone. His modernization narrative was formed through his personal narrative, which resonated in Korean society. Although he is a very controversial figure, it is very difficult to find a Korean or a historian who would deny that President Park revolutionized Korean society. I will examine Park Chung-hee's biographical details along with the narrative he presented about himself and then how he enshrined the narrative in Korean society in order to expand the country economically.

Park's Personal Narrative

Park Chung-hee, who eventually became the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth

president of the Republic of Korea, was born on November 14, 1917 as the son of a poor

farmer in Gumi, North Gyeongsang Province. The poverty he experienced in childhood

was closely related to his father's participation in the Tonghak movement, a peasant

uprising that resulted in persecution for those peasants.[46] In *Park Chung-Hee: From

Poverty to Power*, it is described as follows:

> The immediate cause of Park's poverty was his father's involvement in the
> Tonghak movement, which swept the country in the late nineteenth century. His
> grandfather had inherited enough land to feed the family. Having the heritage of
> *yangban*, he naturally wanted his first son, Sŏng-bin (1871–1938), to climb the
> ladder of success, which meant preparing for and taking the civil service
> examinations.[47]

Because of this background, Park Chung-hee was poor when he was in elementary

school, so he could not always bring a lunch box or eat enough at school. He would go

to his friend's house to eat after school. He had a small physique compared to other

students because of his poor nutrition. Having experienced poverty as a child, he longed

to escape poverty and to live comfortably without depending on others for his next meal.

In-kwon Chun describes Park's childhood based on Park Chung-hee's autobiography

entitled *My Youth*:

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[46] The Tonghak Movement, which began in the summer of 1894, was an event that revealed the
serious problems of Joseon [later Korean] society at that time. Local governors were exploiting farmers
severely. The Tonghak Movement was a peasant rebellion that spread like wildfire to the southwest of
Korea and overwhelmed many county governments in the area within a few weeks. The Korean
government only suppressed the rebellion with the help of the Japanese army. As a result, thousands of
peasants lost their lives. The inciting problem of government officials exploiting peasants was not
resolved by the uprising, but the Korean government borrowed the power of foreign troops to suppress the
insurrection of its own people, and the average farming family still stayed stuck in poverty.
See Hwang, *A History of Korea*, 112.
[47] Lee, *From Poverty to Power*, 8.

There is a great deal of weight in the [autobiographical] literature about eating. The stories were about lunch boxes, breakfast, herb with barley rice, tasting night meals, and the first time he ate ice cream. Of course, this was more of an issue for most of those who lived in that era than Park Jung-hee's unique perception. In other words, Park Chung Hee was a boy full of hunger, worrying about the problem of eating, and even strong desire for more abundance without economic suffering. However, in the case of Park Chung-hee, the problem of hunger was developed to worry about the home economy with her mother.[48]

After childhood, he graduated from Daegu Normal School (a secondary school for training elementary-school teachers) and served as a teacher for three years before entering the Manchuria Army Military School.[49] He wanted to be a soldier rather than a socially respected teacher. In particular, he wanted to be a general, to be powerful.[50] He submitted a blood pledge to Manchuria Military Academy to become a Japanese military officer. His blood pledge was reported in the newspaper by his Japanese teacher.[51]

Carter J. Eckert describes this pledge to join the military as follows:

> After much discussion with Yu, in the end Park decided to send a handwritten letter directly to the MMA [i.e., the Manchurian Military Academy] explaining his situation and vowing "to die for the greater good" (*isshi gohōkō*) of Manchukuo and Japan if the school would make an exception and permit him to join the officer corps. Together with his letter, Park enclosed a photograph and curriculum vitae, a copy of his family registry, a certification of his TNS military training, and a "blood pledge" (Japanese: *kessho*; Korean: *hyŏlsŏ*), written and signed on a sheet of rice paper literally in his own blood, to reiterate and emphasize his willingness to serve to the death.[52]

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[48] Chun, *Pak Jeong-hui Pyeongjeon*, 44.

[49] It was the third school established by the Japanese colonial government in Korea, following Seoul and Pyongyang, and the academic competition was fierce. The school not only charged tuition fees but also promised a professorship after graduation. Teachers have a high degree of public respect in Korean society. The school therefore provided students opportunities for social advancement. And the Manchuria Army Military School was also a great opportunity for Park for social development. See Lee, *From Poverty to Power*, 52, 96.

[50] The reason Park wanted to be a soldier is related to his strong ambition for power. When he was a boy, Korean police officers were the most powerful people around. However, young Park Chung-hee found that the only people who were stronger than the police were the soldiers. Knowing that, he wanted to be a soldier. See Chun, *Pak Jeong-hui Pyeongjeon*, 46.

[51] Chun, *Pak Jeong-hui Pyeongjeon*, 83.

[52] Eckert, *Park Chung Hee and Modern Korea*, 97.

This letter clearly shows how intensely Park Chung-hee wanted to be a soldier. After graduating from the Army Military Academy with honors, he entered the Japanese Military Academy with the recommendations given by the top teachers. Despite his social constraints from childhood, he was able to get excellent grades, and he graduated in 1944 as one of the top-ranking cadets. Until Japan was defeated in World War II, he served as an officer of the Japanese-Kanto Army in Manchuria, an outpost established by the Japanese Empire. Park returned to Korea in July 1946 after the end of World War II. After his older brother, Sang-hee Park, whom he respected very much, was killed by the local police, he joined the South Korean Workers's Party in disapproval of the police. His act of joining a group classified as supportive of the Communist Party had a detrimental effect on him.

In the era of colonial rule by Japan, Korean police were proactive collaborators with the Japanese Empire.[53] Like the Hebrew taskmasters recruited by the Egyptian rulers in the book of Exodus, the Korean police officers were the direct oppressors of the Korean people, so the Korean public felt great hostility toward them. Politically, this is where it gets complicated: the majority of the leaders of the independence movement against the Japanese Empire were socialists, so there were many socialists in support of the Communist Party in North Korea since the liberation (1945), even when South Korea was under the USMG for a few years. After 1945, collaborators with the Japanese Empire were still allowed to continue their jobs as Korean policemen under the USMG regime. Under these circumstances, the Korean people were understandably more

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[53] Like the situation in South Vietnam before and after the Vietnam War, South Korea at the time was confused by clashes between rightists and leftists. See Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 217–24.

friendly to the socialists who campaigned for independence than to the right-leaning socialists and police who cooperated with the Japanese Empire. But again, the USMG had hired those who cooperated with the Japanese empire as police and civil servants, complicating the social situation. The socialists, wanted by the police, sometimes enlisted with the army as a refuge from being caught. But the government went to extreme lengths to root out socialism and related communist ideas: the worst example was the "4/3" incident on Jeju Island in 1948, when government officers and the North Korean Youth Corps brutally massacred the residents of Jeju on April 3. The message from the South Korean government and USMG to socialists was clear: socialists were not wanted in the country. Prior to April 3, the residents of Jeju had been rioting in protest of colonial powers and supporting communist or socialist ideals, and a similar uprising, the Yeosu Suncheon Rebellion, was sparked by the 4/3 Incident. The 14th Regiment, who had been ordered to suppress the riots on Jeju island, disobeyed the order and rebelled against the government. The 14th Regiment included many socialists, ironically. In response to the Jeju Uprising and the Yeosu Suncheon Rebellion in South Korea, the Republic of Korea began to search for communist supporters in the army itself.

As a result, Park Chung-hee's membership in the socialist Workers's Party was discovered, and he was sentenced to death. Because his colleagues and commander in the army came to his defense, Park narrowly avoided the death penalty. Instead, he was forcefully and dishonorably discharged from the army. That might have been the end of his prominence in Korea were it not for the Korean War.

After the Korean War broke out, Park Chung-hee was able to serve as a soldier once more. Because of the dire circumstances, he was promoted to brigadier general very quickly. He was also promoted quickly by the recommendation and help of former soldiers from the Manchuria Military Academy and the Japanese Military Academy. His strong will and superior ability to perform work were commonly recognized by his superiors and subordinates. Park Chung-hee dreamed of a country ruled by soldiers.[54] The Manchuria Military Academy was where he originally experienced a place (i.e., the Manchu Empire) established and ruled by Japanese soldiers. He wanted to rule South Korea in the same way. Ultimately, martial law was exercised due to the Korean War, giving him his chance.

Under the Rhee Syng-man regime, Park Chung-hee and several soldiers had often flirted with the idea of starting a coup. After the Rhee Syng-man regime was destroyed by the Civil Revolution in 1960, Park came to power in a *coup d'état* when the disappointment at the new Democratic government was amplified by the public. His coup succeeded in spite of the fact that information about it had leaked to some military leaders. Disappointment in the government was at a high level throughout the army at that time, and even among the Korean public there was a desire for strong leadership to replace the civilian governments and make the country powerful again.

After Park Chung-hee took office, he announced his vision for a new country and achieved rapid economic growth. He served in office three consecutive times by creating a special Constitutional amendment, pursuing permanent power and a

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[54] Chun, *Pak Jeong-hui Pyeongjeon*, 84.

dictatorship. As a result, however, he faced strong resistance from the Korean people against his regime. He was assassinated by Kim Jae-gyu, the head of the Korean CIA, on October 26, 1979, when social turmoil rose to a new level.[55]

Park's Narrative for South Korean Society

Park Chung-hee remains a controversial figure. Many people criticize him for his military dictatorship and human rights abuses.[56] On the other hand, there are people who praise his contribution to South Korea's economic growth and modernization.[57] Thus, although there are many people who think highly of him and consider him one of the best leaders in Korean history, there are just as many people who negatively evaluate his despotic reign. Here are some of the pros and cons in more detail:

> Without him, they say, Korea would not have been able to join the ranks of advanced nations. His leadership transformed a backward economy, which was far behind that of the Philippines and Nigeria, into a member of the G20. His leadership nurtured Hyundai, Samsung, and LG into world-renowned companies. He is credited with the creation of the [economic] "Miracle on the Han River." On the other hand, some argue that Park's role in South Korea's development has been exaggerated. Korea was on the threshold of a rapid takeoff in 1961 when Park Chung-Hee[sic] overturned the democratic government led by Premier Chang Myŏn. Korea had the human resources; it could have obtained the capital from abroad, as Park subsequently did. The international environment was also quite favorable for South Korea's development.[58]

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[55] The Korean CIA is an intelligence agency that does the same kind of work as the CIA in the US, but it is not affiliated with or under the control of the US CIA.

[56] See critical assessments: Cho, *Pak Jeong-Hui Wa Kaebal Tokchae Sidae*; Han, *Pak Jeong-Hui Wa Chinilpa Ui Yuryeongdl*; Kang, *Park Chung Hee Nostalgia*; Kim, *Pak Jeong-hui Yujeonja*; Kim, *Pak Jeong-Hui Wa Kaebal Tokchae [Park Chung-hee and Developmental Dictatorship]*.

[57] See supportive assessments: Cho, *Nae Mudeom E Chim Eul Baeteora*; Cotton and Leest, "The New Rich and the New Middle Class in South Korea"; Kim, *Seven Years with Korea's Park Chung-Hee*; Kim, *Korea's Development*; Kim, *Korea's Development under Park Chung Hee*; Kim and Sorensen, *Reassessing the Park Chung Hee Era, 1961–1979*; Kim et al., eds., *The Park Chung Hee Era*; Lee, *From Poverty to Power*; Lee and Lee, *Successful Reforestation in South Korea*; Shim et al., *Korean Entrepreneurship*.

[58] Lee, *From Poverty to Power*, 1.

Since Park Chung-hee took power in a coup, it was impossible to praise his regime based on democratic processes, of course. He tried to justify the coup by saying, "In order to rescue the fatherland from extreme danger, the military has finally unleashed a serious of actions and assumed the administrative, legislative, and judicial powers of the state completely and has organized a military committee."[59] If no improvement for the country had resulted, the Korean public would not have been so mixed in their opinions of him.

Park Chung-hee's vision and modernization narrative were sympathetically received by the military and populace alike, however. Even though his plans to join a coup against the former president were discovered in advance by Korean intelligence agencies—and reported to the government and president—no military leaders successfully stopped Park from attempting the (unsuccessful) coup.[60] The suppression forces that did come to arrest him even joined the coup due to Park Chung-hee's persuasive and charismatic personality. Yong-sup Han, a professor of defense policy at Korea National Defense University, evaluates the resulting coup as follows:

> To be sure, the success of the coup despite the information leaks shows the weakness of the civilian oversight of the military under Chang Myŏn, thus creating the conditions that permitted military intervention, but it is also true that the coup attempt could have been defeated at that early stage if its potential opponents had taken the leaked information seriously and cracked down on the key coup leaders.[61]

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[59] Kim, "Impact on National Consciousness and Identity," 95.

[60] Chun, *Pak Jeong-hui Pyeongjeon*, 181–84. Even the CIA in the US received information about Park Chung-hee's coup attempt before it happened, according to Brazinsky, *Nation Building in South Korea*, 112.

[61] Han, "May Sixteenth Military Coup," 36.

In other words, the government could have stopped it before it was attempted if they had taken it seriously. It seems that enough key people wanted a change of president that they let the coup attempt happen. After the coup attempt took place, the U.S. Embassy in Korea reported it to the U.S. government, including the fact that the Korean public was favorable to Park Chung-hee and wanted him in power.[62] After all, the Korean public, who had mostly all experienced Japanese colonial rule and then the Korean War, could agree with Park Chung-hee, who argued for the urgent need for modernization and political independence. The initial support from the Korean public enabled him to win a later "election" to legitimate his regime.[63]

Both the supporters of Park Chung-hee and his critics recognize that solving the problem of poverty during his reign was an important social priority. Poverty had been a pressing issue ever since the Korean War. In the aftermath of the war, the Korean public often worried about food insecurity and starvation. President Park shrewdly recognized this problem and suggested ways to alleviate it. Whereas overcoming communism was the narrative of President Rhee Syng-man, President Park proposed something that was not negative in orientation but positive—to grow their way out of poverty.

Thus, President Park proposed anti-communism and modernization as important national goals. Anti-communism was not simply a reason for the United States to support South Korea during the Cold War. It was also a policy that gained broad support

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[62] Chun, *Pak Jeong-hui Pyeongjeon*, 198–200.

[63] See Chun, *Pak Jeong-hui Pyeongjeon*, 210–14. Shortly after his coup, Park Chung-hee visited the United States, where leaders urged him to hold a presidential election following a democratic process. Even though the regime was still best defined as a military government after the Korean election, it is noteworthy that President Park was elected by democratically. Later, the Yushin Constitution of 1972 withdrew the option for the public to choose a president democratically.

from the South Korean people. However, the South Korean public in the 1960s wanted a policy that would solve their real difficulties, including poverty. For modernization, then, the Park regime sought economic growth as the most important policy. Making the country modern and making it prosperous to lift it out of the economic impoverishment—these two policies justified President Park's "development dictatorship." The combination of anti-communism and economic growth first priorities resulted in the establishment of a system that mobilized the South Korean people toward a unified goal. In order to achieve this goal, however, freedom of thought and political expression could not be guaranteed.

Kwang-eun Shin points out that the industrialization of Korea was incredibly fast in the twenty years since 1960 (or 1961). According to him, the Park Chung-hee administration used the national desire to escape poverty as a driving force for economic growth and industrial development. President Park's economic growth first policy resulted in unprecedented growth such as the following: the gross domestic product per capita, which was only $83 in 1961, was an impressive $1,696 in 1981. The average annual economic growth rate over the 20 years since 1962, when he first announced his policy, reached 8.3 percent. Koreans were excited about this miraculous economic growth. However, this growth came with side effects. For one, the economic growth was a government-led planned economy, so there was not much of a free market. Furthermore, the economic policy achieved quantitative growth rather than qualitative growth. There was a financial meltdown across the country in 1997–1998 that may have

been abetted by the mentality of quantity over quality of financial transactions.[64] Finally, military dictatorships over the years did not hesitate to use and tolerate immoral methods to achieve economic growth. Thus, declining morality in society happened as result of the rapid growth.

Because Korea was slow to modernize in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Korea was vulnerable and experienced Japanese colonial rule. After this experience, modernization and industrialization were values desired in Korean society even before President Park ruled. At the end of the nineteenth century, Korean elites had wanted to establish a modern state, but it was not able to do so effectively. Park Chung-hee distinguished himself from previous rulers and intellectuals in that he succeeded in recognizing the need for modernization and industrialization and actually accomplishing it. Although previous regimes and governing forces emphasized nationalism and democracy, Park Chung-hee set modernization as a key task and goal of his regime. Modernization, therefore, was adopted as the governing narrative of the Park Chung-hee government. It was his personal narrative—from rags to riches—writ large for the entire country. His emphasis on economic growth bordered on obsession:

> This obsession with economic growth and the leadership's ability to carry out its shock therapy despite political risks and economic dangers can only be understood by turning to an analysis of Park's vision of *puguk kangbyong* (rich nation, strong army) and his strategy to leverage structural pressures to achieve that vision and, with it, satisfy his will to power.[65]

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[64] Chang, "East Asia's Condensed Transition to Second Modernity," 321–22.
[65] Kim, "Introduction," 5.

President Park presented a master narrative that went beyond anti-communism. The narrative was an economic growth first narrative, pursuing modernization and industrialization. This was the goal of Park's reign and his life's ambition.

Throughout his tenure as president, Park Chung-hee stressed that Korea's autonomy would be achieved only through modernization and economic growth. To set the stage rhetorically, he argued that the pain and failure in Korea's past was due to the incompetence and irresponsibility of Korea's past political leadership. In fact, he often referred to Korean history in his political speeches. Here is a representative example of one of his speeches that sought to blame the suffering of Koreans on their history of weakness or tragedy:

> Let us now calmly examine our history, for reflection on our past is essential to future progress. As I have said previously, ours has been a history of being exploited by, and relying upon others. From the time of the establishment of four Chinese colonial towns, following the invasion of Han Wu-shi during the era of Ancient Korea; the invasion of Su and Tang against Koguryo, Paekche and Silla Kingdoms; the Silla's unification of Korea with Chinese help; the establishment of Palhae Kingdom by the remnants of Koguryo, invasions of Manchus, Mongols and Japanese, the Japanese invasion during the Yi Dynasty; another Mongolian invasion, the invasion of the Japanese following the Sino-Japanese war; our history is annals of foreign oppressions, conquests and misery. A deep regret is that despite all these accumulated sufferings, we have never once undertaken a foreign excursion by turning the tide. Most of the invasions, under which we have suffered, were invited by ourselves rather than because we were weak. There were times, of course, when we repulsed the enemy with a single unity.[66]

As seen above, Park Chung-hee finds the reason for the suffering of the past in the weakness of Korea compared to other nations. It was also due to incompetent leaders who allowed Korea to stay weak.

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[66] Park, *The Country, the Revolution, and I*, 166.

For example, Park Chung-hee claimed that the Jang Myeon regime, which he overturned in the May Sixteenth coup, was incompetent and failed.[67] He argues that the repeated factionalism over the thousands of years of Korean history was characteristic, too, of the Jang Myeon regime. Since the history of division and weakness was shameful, Park Chung-hee insisted the Korean people begin a new chapter of history with him. He argued that to do otherwise would be to stay stuck in the past:

> We cannot repeat forever the shameful past which has weakened the nation with idleness and complacency, hoping for miracles as we indulge in vain discussion and partisan strife. We cannot admit that our past failures to achieve true democracy were inevitable, or that they were simply the results of errors committed during our short period of democratic practice. We will not permit the resurgence of dictatorship under any guise or pretext, nor will we permit the reappearance of incompetence and corruption masquerading under the name of democracy.[68]

At this point, the "incompetence and corruption masquerading under the name of democracy" referred to the Democratic Party in South Korea. Since the incompetence of the previous regime caused the suffering of the Korean people, Park Chung-hee argues that the Korean people should never tolerate such incompetent leaders again. The political implication of this ideology is that democratic freedoms are not worthy of keeping if the country can gain power and prosperity by a quicker means such as his

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[67] At that time, since the country had a parliamentary system, Korea had both a president and a prime minister, but the most important political leader was the prime minister. Jang Myeon was not the president but the prime minister, so in this dissertation, his name is written in Korean order. The prime minister's family name was Chang.

[68] Park, *Major Speeches*, 287. This speech was his First Inaugural Address at the President's Inauguration on 17 December 1963. The title of the address was "The Dawn of a New Era." Like this address, Park emphasized the failure of the past and the necessity of new leadership like himself. See Park, *Korea Reborn*; Park, *To Build a Nation,*; Park, *Major Speeches*; Park, *The Country, the Revolution, and I,*; Park, *Some Reflections on Our Society*.

military dictatorship. His ambitions came into full force in the enactment of the New Constitution of 1972, the Yushin Constitution.[69]

But back in the 1960s, President Park tried to convince Korean people of the necessity of building a prosperous and strong nation so that they would never be poor or weak again. The narrative he suggested to Korean society could be accomplished by the participation of Korean people. Thus, he argued that an "economy first" consciousness was necessary for "building a strong national state."[70] New leadership was necessary, and that new leadership, of course, was Park Chung-hee himself. Under his leadership, he suggested, the Korean people could live in a modernized country and enjoy a prosperous life. That was the narrative he proclaimed.

The economic growth narrative Park Chung-hee provided is directly related to modernization of Korea. The "Modernization of our fatherland" is the method he suggested to the Korean people as a way of overcoming their poverty and the threat of North Korea against South Korea.[71] In short, the economic growth narrative could be expressed as "Let's become wealthy."[72] For people who had lived in poverty-ridden conditions for so long, this message seemed like the salvation of the nation. But how were they to accomplish this dream?

To accomplish this, Park told the Korean people to adopt a "we can do it" spirit and aim for economic productivity. This spirit of industriousness, in his master narrative, is a virtue that individuals and the entire nation alike must have. Look at how he sold

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[69] This constitution was enacted in October 1972, and is sometimes called the October Restoration.

[70] Park, *The Country, the Revolution, and I,* 168.

[71] Park, *Major Speeches,* 122.

[72] Kim, "The Problem of Poverty in Post-War Korean Christianity," 43.

this narrative by exhorting the society to practice the virtue of hard-working productivity

rather than the vice of laziness:

> Maybe countries with gross national products several times larger than ours can afford to be smug about themselves, but this country that has so long struggled to lift itself from age-old poverty through blood and sweat cannot relax or delay the speed of development. If we sit down with folded arms and let pass this one chance in a thousand, Korea may not ever again have another opportunity to regenerate itself. Compared to the day we started, the results of development over the past few years are indeed impressive. But when compared to the goals of bringing about the peaceful reunification of Korea and the regeneration of the nation, they are still too insufficient. This is why the next ten years or so will be crucial for our efforts to catch up with advanced nations. Neither our present reality nor the current international situation permit us to indulge in self-congratulation; indeed, they only demand harder work to sustain the high pace of our economy. . . .
> Some are skeptical of whether the Korean economy can continue to grow at the current high rate, whether a highly industrialized society can be so quickly achieved in Korea in such a short time. The question, however, depends on our own mental attitude. If, finding smug satisfaction in what we have already achieved, we let ourselves become too relaxed, then no more progress will be possible beyond this point. If that situation comes to pass, Korea will soon be overtaken again by the even fiercer international competition that is foreseen. Our achievements so far gained, then, will have been in vain.[73]

Park went on to urge people to prioritize economic growth at any cost. For him, since

this mission is the ultimate aspiration of the nation as a whole, nothing should interfere

or displace this goal. Korean society did embrace this narrative of growth, and it brought

positive economic growth alright, but it had side effects such as "mammonism" (i.e.,

materialism or the worship of the Almighty Dollar, to put it in a North American

context), disregard of human life, and human rights abuses, as will be discussed later. In

hindsight, this is not surprising. Since the highest priority was given to economic

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[73] Park, *Korea Reborn*, 95.

growth, poor working conditions and human rights abuses would be expected as casualties sacrificed for the sake of "progress."

Even before Park Chung-hee, there were many political leaders in Korea who talked about economic growth. No other regime, however, has portrayed economic growth as a dominant narrative the way Park Chung-hee's regime did. Rather than just establishing a narrative for economic growth, the Park Chung-hee regime achieved a level of economic growth that could be called miraculous:

> South Korea has witnessed continued economic growth since the 1960s. The Park Chung Hee [*sic*] military government strongly pushed ahead with economic development plans in a bid to obtain popular support because it had come into power by staging a military coup and therefore lacked political legitimacy. South Korea subsequently achieved high economic growth (7.8 percent) during the first economic plan period from 1962 to 1966, 9.6 percent from 1967 to 1971, 9.2 percent from 1972 to 1976, 5.8 percent from 1977 to 1981, and 8.7 percent from 1982 to 1986.1 In line with economic growth, the GNP jumped about 200 fold from $2.3 billion in 1962 to $458 billion in 1995, and per capita GNP increased 116 fold from $87 to $10,076 over the same period. Secondary industries also rose accounting for 36.6 percent of GNP in 1995. They changed the labor market, household income, and the overall economy, as well as economic growth, while they accounted for only 8.7 percent of GNP in the early 1960s. With the growth of East Asian New Industrializing Countries (NICs) since World War II, the extent of South Korean economic growth is evidenced by its internationally accredited high growth rate. . . . South Korea achieved far higher economic growth rates than advanced Western countries (as one would expect, given the extremely small economic base in South Korea in the 1960s [to start with]). Over the past thirty years, South Korea has recorded an average growth rate of 8.38 percent compared with 2–3 percent, [the rate] common among advanced Western countries.[74]

Most Koreans believe that the growth of the Korean economy was due to Park Chung-hee's economic growth policy. Aware of this, the number of people who missed the late Park Chung-hee after the Korean economic crisis in 1997 has soared. Furthermore, it is

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[74] Kang, "Formation of a Developmentalist Mentality," 167–69.

hard to deny that public support and respect for Park Chung-hee contributed to his

daughter being elected as president of South Korea in 2012.

The positive economic results back in the 1960s and 1970s further reinforced the

economic growth narrative in Korean society. This economic growth narrative still

influences Korean society after Park Chung-hee's sudden death in 1979. And the

negative results of the narrative are still affecting Korean society and the Korean church

as well.

Indeed, Park Chung-hee successfully spread his economic growth first narrative

into Korean society, considered how popular the results were, but this growth was not

without its own problems. Nak-chung Paik describes the tensions at play:

> Thus, even apart from Park's shady personal past (running the gamut of pro-Japanese collaboration, communist ties, and betrayal of his communist colleagues in the army, and later, two *coups d'état*, the second of which abolished the constitution he had written after his first), Park's hold on power was inherently unstable and had to be buttressed by economic success. But ironically, this very success ultimately further threatened his power, for his slogan "Let's live well" (*Chal sara pose*)—meaning "let's live for once like the well-fed and well-clothed"—in essence represented the philosophy of a beggar, and people once out of poverty usually wish to live not by bread alone.[75]

In short, Park Chung-hee was able to gain support from the Korean public by presenting

modernization ("Let's live well") as the vision for Korean society. The fact that he

successfully achieved modernization and economic growth, of course, does not justify

his military dictatorship. Even so, the narrative he proposed was based on the aspirations

and needs of the people at that time in the nation's history.

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[75] Paik, "How to Think about the Park Chung Hee Era," 89.

Myung-koo Kang explains how this economic policy did raise the standards of living for most South Koreans, but without lasting contentment:

> The rise of many South Koreans above the hunger and poverty level is attributable to industrialization and modernization. Even though there remain such problems as serious inequality, unemployment, a lack of transparency, as well as instability in the market system, many South Koreans have finally reached the minimum living conditions necessary for a decent life. Nonetheless, many obsessively believe that they should enjoy an even more abundant life. The middle and lower classes are eager to ascend to a higher social status.[76]

Without this desire in society to rise above poverty, it would have been difficult for President Park's modernization narrative to successfully take root in Korean society. But take root it did. President Park's strategy to eliminate poverty was to increase the efficiency and productivity of the Korean economy. Quantity mattered more than quality in this strategy, so his government aimed to incentivize the largest quantities of products in the shortest time, even if the products and facilities produced were of low quality. Because quantitative growth shows tangible results, this was the easiest way to gain public support for economic growth. The questions of how President Park managed to boost the economy more specifically—and the moral fallout of those methods—remains to be examined.

The Means and the Moral Issues of Park's Narrative Guiding South Korea

In the narrative Park Chung-hee regime provided, there were many villains. Oftentimes, fighting against these enemies resulted in moral corruption in order to achieve victory. In the narrative, North Korea, communists or socialists in South Korea, opposition parties, student movements against the state, and labor unions were regarded as villains.

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[76] Kang, "Formation of a Developmentalist Mentality," 166.

The oppression of these villains was justified within this narrative structure. By contrast, the Park Chung-hee regime and the big companies that contributed to the modernization of the country were the protagonists in the narrative. Support for these protagonists (and sabotage of the enemies) was hardly ever punished, except in very exceptional cases, even if that support of the "good guys" entailed illegal activities or abuse of power. Accordingly, President Park boosted large corporations in the country in order to achieve his narrative vision, and he also sent Korean troops to fight in the Vietnam War in order to procure financial assistance from the United States. His heavy-handed dictatorship was another moral problem overall. These three issues led to significant moral problems in Korean society, as I will now explain.

Chaebols and the Economic Growth First Narrative

President Park's government policies, initially based on an export-led strategy in the 1960s, contributed to the rapid growth of *chaebols*, which can be defined as manufacturing and services conglomerates owned by wealthy families. During the early years of Park's regime, his government extensively interfered with domestic and international credit markets by controlling the price and amount of financial funds in Korean institutions. While there was impressive growth because of this, it was due to a dual structure or double standard in the financial markets, because the Korean government had granted low interest rates for the *chaebols*. As a result, the special financial benefits to *chaebols* were an important factor in the growth of these conglomerates or corporations. The rapid growth of capital by these *chaebols* was achieved through debt borrowed from banks at low interest rates, thanks to the special treatment by the government. Based on that capital, *chaebols* (and the national

economy) grew greatly during the 1960s. At this time, *chaebol* companies used several market conditions in order to accumulate their capital.

First, *chaebols* could accumulate capital through monopolistic gains in the market. They were able to obtain a monopoly in some manufacturing areas, leading to a surplus of profits due to market imperfections and underdevelopment, both characteristic of underdeveloped economies. The corporations were allowed to get away with this monopoly because the government had created invested in them and authorized them to increase capital efficiency, supposedly to prevent collective bankruptcy due to over-competition.

Second, *chaebols* accumulated capital because the government gave them exclusive access to domestic and foreign capital. Park Chung-hee's benefits to the *chaebols* can be explained as follows:

> Park initiated, and with significant modifications Chun continued, a policy of rapid export-oriented industrialisation which was to have effects on Korean society that ran counter to this commitment to austerity. On the one hand this strategy transformed the social structure, creating not only a sizeable working class, but also an increasingly significant middle class. The latter included managers, technical personnel and business proprietors, as well as the bureaucrats and administrators who were an integral part of the government's programme. In addition, the particular vehicle that Park employed to achieve industrialisation was the large manufacturing and services conglomerate, the *chaebol*. The relative size of these conglomerates can be judged by the fact that the value of the sales of the ten largest has in some years been equivalent to around 60 per cent of the Korean GNP. As these were almost invariably family owned, a small group of extremely wealthy industrialists emerged to occupy the upper slopes of the social pyramid.[77]

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[77] Cotton and Kim, "The New Rich and the New Middle Class in South Korea," 186.

This favoritism caused regions conflicts within Korea. And with these corporations
making more than half of the entire country's gross national product, there were several
moral downsides.

For one thing, the Park Chung-hee government did not seek to protect the rights
of workers in the companies. The human rights of employees were violated not only by
the *chaebols* but by many companies, but the government preferred to protect these
family-run conglomerates more than the rights of the average workers in these
businesses. Company sales showed economic growth, but the human rights of their
workers cannot be measured quantitatively, so these rights were thus a hidden cost that
was sacrificed for the sake of "progress." The Korean government and the wealthy
chaebols treated the human rights of workers as if they had nothing to do with economic
growth and so as if they were insignificant.

The inhumane treatment of workers included forcing them to work long hours at
low wages—some of them literally worked to death—and this treatment caused protests
by a few who had seen enough. On November 13, 1970, Tae-il Chun, who was a worker
in the peace market, graphically demonstrated how the poor and dying workers were
treated at the time. He committed suicide in order to send a message to society and the
government, as one scholar explains:

> In 1970 there occurred a solitary act that, in retrospect, became the touchstone of
> the labor movement. A textile worker, Chŏn T'ae-il [*sic*: Tae-il Chun],
> immolated himself at Seoul's Peace Market on November 13, shouting as the
> flames consumed him, "Obey the labor standards act!" and "Don't mistreat
> young girls!" This suicide shocked the entire nation, much as the self-
> immolation of a Buddhist priest in downtown Saigon seven years earlier did so
> much to bring down the Diem regime. Chŏn's sacrifice spurred many groups to
> action, but perhaps his greatest legacy was the Ch'ŏnggye Garment Workers'
> Union, formed in the same month he died, led by his mother, Yi Sŏ-sun, and
> influential all through the 1970s in spite of terrible repression. Chŏn's self-

immolation in 1970 and Kim Dae Jung's mass support in 1971 were key reasons for the Yushin system [by which the president took away democratic power from the public].[78]

After Chun's death, many workers and students formed labor unions and protests against the Park Chung Hee regime. Although the regime had achieved economic growth throughout Korean society, it sparked strong resistance because it was pressuring so many workers to suffer and die for the sake of the greater good—economic growth. But the growth of the *chaebols* was not the only method the president used to achieve economic growth in the country.

The Vietnam War and the Economic Growth Narrative

To pursue economic growth and improve diplomatic relations with the United States, Park Chung-hee also sent Korean troops to the Vietnam War. Before being asked by the U.S., in fact, President Park proposed to President John F. Kennedy that the Republic of Korea could send South Korean troops to Vietnam to help the U.S. military there. Kennedy did not accept the offer at the time, but later, in 1964, the U.S. did request help from South Korea. Park Chung-hee sent more than 50,000 troops to the battlefield. Not only did the Korean government receive economic support from the United States in exchange for this military assistance in Vietnam, but it also strengthened the relationship between the Korean government and the United States.

As a result, the sending of troops to Vietnam contributed to success of Park's economic development policies. Specifically, the Korean government received the following aid money from the United States:

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[78] Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 375.

In April 1965 Henry Cabot Lodge, American ambassador to Vietnam, came to Seoul with Lyndon Johnson's personal message to Park asking for Korean combat troops. After several months of negotiations, the Koreans squeezed a large pile of cash and aid commitments out of Washington, estimated at $7.5 million per division. The operative document was the so-called Brown memorandum of March 4, 1966, under which about $1 billion in American payments went to Korea in the period 1965–70. Scholars estimated that this arrangement annually accounted for between 7 and 8 percent of Korea's GDP in the period 1966–69 and for as much as 19 percent of its total foreign earnings.[79]

With such financial support from the U.S., South Korea's economy got another boost. However, this came at the cost of thousands of Korean soldiers who lost their lives fighting in the Vietnam War.[80] It was morally questionable and not popular among the public.

Developmental Dictatorship and Democracy

These unpopular political decisions during the Vietnam War were symptomatic of another related issue in terms of the country's moral decline: the use of legal methods to justify the regime and abolish term limits. During the era of Park Chung-hee, Korea's constitution ended up supporting his dictatorship—once the document was altered, that is. Faced with increasing dissent from the public, President Park assumed dictatorial powers in 1972 and made a new constitution which is called the Yushin Constitution. Originally, Park came to power as the head of the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction after his coup in 1961, and in 1963 he won elections and assumed office as civilian president. Nak-heong Yang, an Assistant Professor of Church History and

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[79] Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 321.

[80] It should be also noted that there were 3,500 nurses and miners volunteered to work in Germany to earn foreign dollars in 1960s. Without their contribution, the economic growth of South Korea must be difficult to be achieved. See Shim, "Korea Inc.," 26.

Christian Ethics at Korea Theological Seminary, describes how Park used the Yushin

Constitution to secure his position indefinitely:

> Chung Hee Park [*sic*] was not content, however, to let go of the power he
> enjoyed so much, even after a third term. Immediately after winning the election
> of April through various questionable means, Park: secretly ordered some
> scholars to formulate a constitutional system which enabled him to hold the
> power as long as he wished. Suddenly, on October 17, 1971, through a special
> presidential proclamation, Park suspended some articles of the constitution,
> dissolved the National Assembly and banned political activities and party
> politics. At the same time, emergency martial law was also declared. Meetings
> and demonstrations for the political purposes were prohibited from that day
> forward, the press was required to submit to pre-censorship, and the colleges
> were temporarily closed.[81]

President Park did not exactly have a Western view of human rights and democracy

anyway, and he disregarded such rights whenever it was convenient for him to do so

politically. One writer puts it this way:

> When Park declared a state of emergency in 1971, he put it thus: "We can no
> longer waste national energy simply to copy democracy. Yusin [*sic*: Yushin]
> reforms afford us the last chance to 'indigenize democracy' (*minjujuūi ūi
> t'och'akhwa*) in Korea and pave the way for ourselves." From that moment on,
> Park never hesitated to announce, when there was a chance, his view and belief
> that the national right to survival must be protected first in order to protect
> human rights. Choosing between individual human rights and the national right
> to survival was a matter of time and circumstances, not a matter of general
> theory.[82]

In other words, Park Chung-hee argued that democratic freedoms can be restricted for

the development and security of the nation. While individual rights pertain only to

individual people, the development (economic growth) of the state pertains to the entire

society. So, when push comes to shove, the rights of workers will be ignored so as to

prop up the collective and larger-scale entities in Korea. Public interests outweigh

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[81] Yang, *Reformed Social Ethics*, 214.

[82] Kim, "Impact on National Consciousness and Identity," 100.

private interests. Indeed, according to the president's logic, Korean society has no reason to protect the human rights of workers. Not only would it be a more reasonable option to sacrifice the human rights of a small number of workers to benefit the majority of people in a corporation, but it would also contribute more to the public good of Korean society to do so.

Also, the second implication of his rhetoric is that democracy is only useful in terms of efficiency. If its principles hinder economic efficiency, then it should be disregarded so that Korea can grow faster. Countries that need to achieve economic development and modernization should not implement democracy until it is convenient for them to do so. The argument was an attempt to justify his variety of developmental dictatorship, claiming that he only suppresses the development of democracy in the name of the greater good for Korea: economic development. He was appealing to a nationalistic point of view. Responding to North Korea's threats by developing the economy of South Korea was an urgent task for the Korean people, so he argued that democratic values needed to be temporarily suspended. Of course, to justify this claim, he exaggerated North Korea's threat to South Korea and stressed the importance of economic development for regional superiority.

The Yushin Constitution and some of the more egregious social injustices that resulted from it sparked debates among conservative Christians.[83] In this context, some conservative Protestant leaders began to question to the Park government.

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[83] Yang, *Reformed Social Ethics*, 219–26.

Conclusion on Park Chung-hee's Economic Growth Narrative

Among the presidents of Korea, no president has revolutionized Korean society as much as Park Chung-hee did. Assessing him as a leader is still controversial. Both zealous support and fiery criticism appears in academic circles as well as among the Korean public. His modernization narrative can also be called the economic growth narrative or the economic development narrative, and it was successful on a purely financial level. But the moral repercussions were equally large in the opposite direction, leaving many to wonder if Korea lost more than it gained in the process of its growth. In order to explore the growth narrative of Korean society as it had a decisive influence on the Korean church's narrative, I will next and finally need to examine a representative of the growth narrative within the church itself.

C. The Church Growth First Narrative

We must keep in mind that the period of explosive growth for the Korean church did not occur until the 1960s through the 1980s, so the growth cannot be due primarily to the government favoritism or support of the Korean church as was true in earlier decades. Instead, it is more likely that the church's growth was due to the economic factors and the growth first narrative that was pervasive during President Park's tenure. The church in these decades assimilated the economic growth narrative into its own narrative, and it began to focus on growing mega-churches and other congregations. Evidence for this assimilation can be found in the sermons and writings of the pastors themselves. There is hardly a more famous Protestant pastor than Yong-gi Cho of Yoido Full Gospel Church to serve as a representative of the "church growth first" narrative as it has been adopted as the master narrative of the Korean church. Even before the rise of the Yoido

Full Gospel Church, however, there was a theological movement called "Minjung theology" that provides a contrast with the prosperity-oriented theology that also emerged in the church. I will first discuss Minjung theology in the Korean church, including how it contrasts with the faith-seeking-blessings "prosperity gospel," and then I will discuss Yong-gi Cho's personal narrative and the way he applied this his mega-church.

The Church and Minjung Theology

The Korean church responded to the growth of the economy and the military regimes of these decades in various ways. Usually, the Korean church endeavored to contextualize the gospel message of Christianity to be relevant to the historical circumstances of South Korea. Minjung theology and the faith-seeking-blessings movements were two such responses for contextualizing the gospel into the Korean situation.[84] Not only did Korean Christians accept prosperity-oriented theology in greater numbers than those who accepted the liberation theology called Minjung theology, but the two theological movements differed in how much they grew the Korean church as well. This section briefly introduces Minjung theology and then examines how the Korean church was assimilated into the economic growth narrative of Korean society to form the narrative of church growth. I will also look at the moral problems within the Korean church caused by the church growth narrative.

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[84] Kim, "The Problem of Poverty," 48–49.

Minjung theology is a contextual theological response to the situation in South Korea beginning in the 1970s, and it has been studied by Korean theologians such as Nam-dong Suh and Byung-moo Ahn.[85] The theological emphasis emerged in the 1970s, but it only began to gain global attention in the 1980s. It is essential to understand Korea's social circumstances in the 1970s in order to understand Minjung theology.

As seen above, Korean society in the 1970s experienced a period of severe military dictatorship during the Park Chung-hee regime. In 1968, the regime revised the Constitution of Korea, which had previously allowed a person to be president only two terms in a row at most. In 1972, Park Chung-hee created an entirely new constitution to give himself permanent power as president. Some of the leaders of the Korean church, who had given absolute support to the Park Chung-hee regime, reacted negatively at this point. Many college students, intellectuals, religious people, and opposition parties in South Korea opposed the so-called Restoration Constitution, a document that effectively destroyed the democratic system. Their resistance, however, was suppressed by the ruthless and reckless power of the Park Chung-hee regime. A certain type of liberation theology thus became popular among the powerless masses.

This is where Minjung theology comes in. Jürgen Moltmann introduces the background of this theological movement as follows:

> [M]injung theology is the first liberation theology to come from Asia, with critical questions put to the First World, and questions too challenging the modernization of South Korea according to Western standards. In 1975 South Korea was still a Third World development country with stringent exploitation of the working people[86]

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[85] See Küster, *A Protestant Theology of Passion*; Suh, "Toward a Theology of Han."
[86] Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology*, 250.

As the Korean translation for the Greek *ochlos* ("crowd, masses"), the word *minjung* refers to "the whole suffering underside of the dominant society." For centuries the oppressed masses developed forms of resistance. Whenever the pain and anger (*Han*) became unendurable, the crowds of the oppressed have risen up and rebelled, as they did in the Tonghak revolt of 1890, for example.[87]

Minjung theology is quite different from what fundamentalism or evangelical theology usually maintains in South Korea. This is because God in Jesus is on the side of the oppressed rather than the government, in Minjung theology. Moltmann introduces the relationship between Jesus and the oppressed masses (*minjung*) as follows:

> Jesus is unconditionally on the side of the *ochlos*. He quite evidently has no intention of turning the *ochlos* into an anti-Roman fighting force, but he proclaims to them the kingdom of God as their future, the future which already belongs to them here and now, and he fills this people with new hope and with the vision of a way that can be their own.[88]

Minjung theology was a liberation theology made to fit the Korea context, but it did not empower people to take charge of political outcomes or get rich, so it was very difficult for Christians in Korea to accept. Under the regime of Park Chung-hee, those in pain were enthusiastic about this theology, but churches following the movement did not grow significantly. Instead, most churches simply assimilated into the government's economic growth narrative and thereby achieved explosive growth. Although Minjung theology emphasized God's love for suffering people in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who has compassion or suffers with them, Korean society responded more favorably to the theology of the churches that responding to their survival needs with

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[87] Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology*, 251–252.

[88] Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology*, 255.

material blessings. From the 1970s to the 1980s, Minjung theology had gained a small but meaningful following in Korean society and the church, but since the 1990s, when a non-military government was established, Korean interest in Minjung theology all but evaporated. As a result, almost all Korean churches today have evangelical or fundamentalist beliefs and have become a homogeneous group, many of them following the faith-seeking-blessings movement rather than the liberation emphasis of Minjung theology. It is to the most representative example of the faith-seeking-blessings movement that I now turn.

David Yong-gi Cho and Church Growth First

Reverend David (Paul)[89] Yong-gi Cho's emphasis on prosperity theology or "faith-seeking-blessings" was another response of the Korean church to Park Chung-hee's economic growth narrative in society.[90] This pastor's personal narrative and his church narrative bear similarities to the economic growth narrative of the time, so first I will look at the personal side of things that influenced Yong-gi Cho before examining how he applied this to his church. Many churches in South Korea follow the same theological narrative that he preached.

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[89] Cho's Korean name is written as Cho Yong-gi. In Korea, he is thus known as "Cho Yong-gi." In the English order of names, he is David (Paul) Yong-gi Cho. At first, he introduced his English name as Paul Yong-gi Cho, but in recent decades, he changed his first name to "David." In this dissertation, his name will be written as Yong-gi Cho most of the time.

[90] Cho's "faith-seeking-blessings" theology not only emphasizes material blessings and bodily health but also the growth of the church. In this dissertation, I treat "faith-seeking-blessings" and the church growth narrative as sufficiently similar as to be used interchangeably.

David Yong-gi Cho's Personal Narrative

Young-hoon Lee, the current senior pastor of the Yoido Full Gospel Church, recounts

Cho's life based on his biography as follows:

> Cho was born on February 14, 1936 in a small town in Wooljoo county,
> Kyungnam Province in the southern part of Korea, while the country was under
> Japanese occupation. From the time that Japan invaded Manchuria and started a
> war with China (1931), the Japanese exploited most crops and requisitioned
> Koreans to harvest them. It was in this devastating situation that Cho spent his
> childhood. The country was liberated in 1945 but divided into south and north by
> American and Soviet forces: the north became a communist country and the
> south a democratic one. But South Korea was still going through major chaos
> both politically and socially. . . . Later he was diagnosed as having a terminal
> case of tuberculosis. Without proper treatment, he became severely weakened
> and close to death. On what was thought to be his deathbed he was visited by a
> Christian girl who was a friend of his sister. His Buddhist parents had forbidden
> her to visit their home, but she persisted and gave Cho a Bible, preaching the
> gospel to him. Soon Cho became a Christian and his health began to improve
> dramatically. . . . As his Christian faith grew deeper, his health also gradually
> improved. During these years of study, Cho met Jashil Choi, his classmate and a
> former registered nurse, who took care of him. She later became his associate
> pastor and mother-in-law. Cho started a tent church in 1958.[91]

Cho came to think about the meaning of death and life through his fight with

tuberculosis, and he thought about divine intervention when God apparently healed him.

As mentioned above, he encountered Jesus, whom he credits with healing his sickness

after he received that Bible from a Christian girl. Through these experiences, Cho

became aware of God's concern to alleviate human suffering.

Cho had first been exposed to Pentecostal theology when he met a missionary in

the American Pentecostal Church during the Korean War. In 1956, he moved to Seoul,

where he studied theology at the Full Gospel Bible College. During the first year at

college (November 1956), he became ill. Jashill Choi, then his classmate and former

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[91] Lee, "The Life and Ministry of David Yonggi Cho and the Yoido Full Gospel Church," 3–4.

registered nurse, took care of Cho. Thanks to her earnest prayers and care, Cho was

restored to health. This experience led him to commit himself to be a minister to the

Lord Jesus. He counted Jashill Choi as the mother of his faith. With her help, he planted

a church in 1958 in Seoul. It is called the Yoido Full Gospel Church, and it is the largest

mega-church in the world. His church grew at the same time as the entire country was

growing.

Yong-gi Cho's Church Growth Narrative

The rate of growth for Yoido Full Gospel Church was unprecedented. It grew from a tent

with five members to a church with more than 700,000 members. Not surprisingly,

Yong-gi Cho has been the strongest proponent of the church growth narrative in the

Korean church. He represents the "prosperity gospel" message in the Korean church.

Su-kyung Kwon, who has analyzed his prosperity theology, describes his popularity and

influence in this way:

> Yong-gi Cho is "everything" in the Korean Prosperity Gospel. There are
> numerous other pastors who make similar claims, but all of them are Rev. Cho's
> imitators or just disciples. The prosperity gospel of the Korean church is
> represented by Yong-gi Cho. Because of his long ministry as a pastor, his
> theology encompasses the Faith Seeking Blessings before the prosperity gospel.
> Cho's ideas are the synthesis of the Faith Seeking Blessings and the Prosperity
> Gospel. Cho is a world-renowned pastor of Korea. There is no need to explain
> him additionally. Where the poor were overflowing after the Korean War, he
> started his tent church and became the world's largest church with more than
> 700,000 members in [only a few] decades. Not only did he grow the church, he
> had a great influence by spreading the unique ministry of the Holy Spirit
> throughout the world. Many pastors around the world run the church on the
> principles they have learned today [from him], both directly and indirectly. Not
> to mention his influence in Korea. Although not necessarily his disciples, the
> majority of Christians are not free from his influence.[92]

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[92] Kwon, *The Deception of Prosperity Theology*, 273.

In other words, Yong-Gi Cho is the one who most consistently and successfully embodied Park Chung-hee's economic growth narrative in the Korean church. Cho preached the Fivefold Gospel and the Threefold Blessing, offering God's blessing and healing to those who left their homes and moved to cities, thus contributing to the urbanization of South Korea. Reverend Young-hoon Lee defines the Fivefold Gospel as "the core five blessings manifested in the gospel of the cross of Jesus Christ: Regeneration, the Fullness of the Holy Spirit, Divine Healing, Blessing, and the Second Coming."[93] He goes on to define the Threefold Blessing as "the holistic blessing given to the believers in Jesus as a result of the atonement of the cross: 'I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well' (3 John 2)."

Yong-gi Cho encouraged Christians to become people who actively seek God's help. Following Robert Schultz's positive mindset approach, he encouraged Christians to face the challenges of life actively rather than passively. God's original design of the universe included abundance and beauty, not poverty, so living in poverty must not be God's will, Cho reasoned:

> When I became a minister myself I volunteered to pastor in a slum area of the city of Seoul. People in that community lived lives of poverty, most eating only one meal a day. Children were sick from malnutrition, and many were starving to death. I realized that poverty was not a blessing from God. It was then that I read the Bible anew, searching for a solution. I wanted to know God's will about poverty.
> I discovered that God's teaching about poverty was completely different from what was earlier taught in the traditional Korean church. God had never created poverty. When God had created heaven and earth He had created everything in abundance. The Garden of Eden had no deprivation; it was a place of extreme

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[93] Lee, "Foreword," xii.

beauty and abundance.[94]

Cho's message of prosperity served as a word of hope that comforted and encouraged

the urban poor. According to him, the problem of poverty is also the main difficulty of

life that Christians need to overcome. Not only did he preach to the poor in the city that

God's help could solve their woes, but he also comforted many who had struggled to

adjust to living in the city, because it was a strange, new environment for them. Cho met

the people's most pressing spiritual needs and physical needs at the time, so his message

gained overwhelming acceptance among the people in society. His message that Christ

wants us to prosper as children of God was viewed as the joy of heaven come down to

earth. He even anticipated a common objection Christians might have to his prosperity

theology, so he argued using Bible verses that the poverty Jesus lived in was so that he

could make others rich, as can be seen in the excerpt below:

> There are those who make the fact of Christ's earthly poverty a justification for
> their own. In many ways Christ was poor, although traveling with Him were a
> group of women to attend to His material needs and those of His disciples. The
> Bible states that Christ was poor so that we would not have to be: "You know
> how full of love and kindness our Lord Jesus was: though he was so very rich,
> yet to help you he became so very poor, so that by being poor he could make you
> rich" (2 Cor. 8:9, TLB). Christ desires that His children of faith be prosperous;
> however, many are not. They have failed to claim God's blessing of prosperity.[95]

According to this explanation of divine blessings, the same God of the Bible who heals

people's bodies also wants to give them prosperity and spiritual blessings. Those who

experienced both immediate and gradual healing of their body or spiritual health readily

accepted Cho's message. In addition, many Korean Christians contributed to the

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[94] Cho, *Solving Life's Problems*, 27–28.
[95] Cho, *Solving Life's Problems*, 28–29.

economic development of South Korea as they pursued material (and spiritual) prosperity. At first glance, it is hard to argue with "success," but that depends on how one defines success and how one defines the message of the biblical gospel (i.e., good news).

Thus, the success of Rev. Cho and the Full Gospel Church increased the appeal of the faith-seeking-blessings movement in South Korea, a movement that had been popular after the Korean War. As I will discuss later, the emphasis on prosperity and the Holy Spirit actually turned the Holy Spirit into a tool for church growth and personal blessings. But Cho is a prime example of the church growth narrative in the country, and his preaching did much to promote this master narrative in other churches too. He claimed that his efforts were God's will, and that the success of his church is evidence of God at work to bless the nation.

The Church Growth Narrative Embodied by David Yong-gi Cho

Yong-gi Cho explained that he had faith that it was God's will to establish Yoido Full Gospel Church and grow it into the world's largest church. He claimed that God was teaching him this and specifically directing him in these efforts. He recounts, "Early on in the ministry, God had taught me the importance of setting goals, dreaming and waiting in faith for Him to bring growth."[96] In addition, he noted that God taught him how to pray and how to ask for what he needed. Cho also claimed that God had revealed to him the number of members the Yoido Full Gospel Church would have over the years. In other words, in his prayers, the Holy Spirit confirmed his faith by guiding him

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[96] Cho, *Ministering Hope*, 69.

to details of certain biblical texts, and the Spirit assured him that he would see the number of people he prayed for join the church. All of these things, according to him, were given to him by God. His congregation did grow in incredible ways, whatever the causes.

Originally, Cho established a tent church in 1958 with five members in Daejo-dong, a poor neighborhood in Seoul.[97] The tent church grew rapidly as soon as the church was founded, thanks to Cho's powerful messages and healing ministry. The church had 600 members in 1961, and in 1964, the church had reached 3,000 members. At that time, Cho was even hospitalized because of poor health. While in the hospital, he claimed that God had revealed to him a system for using women-led small groups in the church. In the 1960s, Korea was strongly influenced by Confucianism, which did not allow women to be leaders, so female leadership in the church was not recognized in Christian congregations either. But Cho gave women these leadership roles to direct the small groups or cell units, and thanks to the devoted and passionate outreach efforts of these women, the church grew even more quickly. His small-group system was the reason he was able to minister to over 700,000 members of the church and still have the members feel connected to one another.

As a result of continued growth, the church building was unable to accommodate its members, so in 1973 the congregation decided to set up a new church. They began to build it on Yoido, a sandy island. Despite an economic recession, some opposition, and other difficulties, the members of the church completed the construction of the new

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[97] Lee, "The Life and Ministry of David Yonggi Cho and the Yoido Full Gospel Church," Kindle Location 160.

church in Yoido on September 23, 1973. After moving to the new location, the growth of the Yoido Full Gospel Church accelerated. Yoido was a place of influence in South Korea where financial companies, major broadcasters, and politicians often worked or gathered for business meetings. There, the Yoido Full Gospel Church continued to grow, reaching 100,000 members in 1979, 200,000 members in November 1980 (a year later), 500,000 in 1985, and 700,000 in 1992. It was a mega-church alright. In addition, the church established as publishing company, a newspaper, and a broadcasting company, and it has grown into a church that greatly influences Korean society, economy, and politics.

As seen above, Cho himself proved the success of his narrative. It is difficult to determine if the church grew by divine blessings and revelations—as opposed to a favorable economic climate and his prosperity gospel appealing to popular hopes—but Cho at least realized his dream of quantitative church growth. Thus, the church growth narrative was further strengthened by him and spread throughout the Korean church and Korean society. This is why the Yoido Full Gospel Church and David Yong-gi Cho had the greatest influence on the Korean church, despite the fact that his denomination, the Pentecostal Church, was a non-mainstream denomination in Korea. Ironically, this assimilated narrative of growth ended up backing the military dictatorship's discourse on economic growth during these decades. If one compares the historical and religious scene one last time, the similarity of the two narratives becomes evident in a new way. The government may even have wanted the narratives to be the same, using the Korean church to promote its economic growth goals.

D. The Assimilation of Narratives

South Korea's regimes in the mid-twentieth century used any means possible to grow

the nation's economy and military. Jinho Kim argues that the modernization and

industrialization taking place were manifestations of the strong antipathy of the Korean

public against North Korean communism.[98] President Park's military dictatorship

carried out economic development programs as enforced by the military and other

institutions. The president organized Korean society in such a way as to mobilize the

maximum resources available for the growth and development of the Korean economy.

Kim calls this a "development mobilization system." Interestingly, Kim finds

similarities between Korean society and the Korean church at this point. Park's

development mobilization system operated partly by converting anti-communist hatred

into the engine of national development. The Korean church also achieved its growth in

this period at first by converting Christian hatred of communism into the driving force

of the church's evangelistic efforts and mission.[99] Although the church had no financial

privileges from the government, Christians congregations may have been allowed to

thrive without persecution because many of them had embraced the same mentality as

the regime: growth first, at any (non-financial) cost.

Indeed, the economic growth narrative suggested by Park Chung-hee was shared

by many Korean churches.[100] The churches viewed the country's economic growth as a

blessing from God for South Korea. In the process of expanding, the economic

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[98] Kim, *Citizen K*, 22.
[99] Kim, *Citizen K*, 68.
[100] Yi, "Urban Modernization and Religion," 47–55.

development of the state was replaced with the religious language of the church. Jeong-yeon Yi explains that Park Chung-hee's growth narrative of productivity was adapted in the Korean church's religious language as a narrative of spiritual "revival.". The Korean church conflated the revival of the church with the increased membership of the church. According to Yi, Rev. David Yong-gi Cho claimed to have built the world's largest church in Yoido in order to obey God's commands. This shows that the Korean church interpreted the increase of church members and the growth of the church as evidence of God's favor on them and on the nation. Therefore, in order to become a church that is blessed by God, the Korean church had to grow unconditionally. This is one of the main signs that the economic growth narrative had a great influence on the Korean church.

Kwang-eun Shin argues that the Korean church fully embraced the growth and development narrative of the Park Chung-hee government.[101] According to him, the Korean church and the South Korean government have become partners in sharing the ideas of capitalism and growth. In support of his argument, he points to the parallel growth of the church and the nation's economy. The time when the growth rate of the Korean economy reached its peak and the time when the growth rate of the Korean church peaked overlap exactly. He argues that at this time, the Korean church made Park Chung-hee government's policy its theological basis and began running the churches more like for-profit businesses:

> The Korean church does not stop in approving the government's growthism, but goes on to make it a kind of theology. For example, Yonggi[sic] Cho's theology, which established the world's largest church, can be summarized as the so-called Fivefold Gospel and Threefold Blessings, the core of which is in line with economic growth-overcoming poverty. Church growth, which was introduced in

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[101] Shin, *Beyond Megachurch*, 114.

Korea at the time, greatly contributed to the Korean church's growthism, internalization, and growth. The study emphasized the growth methodology of individual churches rather than the church strategy introduced in Korea. The premise of this biased church growth theory was to place church goals on "growth" and to seek the most efficient means to achieve them. Under these guidelines, the Korean church not only tried to accommodate all means for growth, but also embraced business theories and marketing techniques. As the Korean church internalizes the growth supremacy of the era of developmental dictatorship, it also follows the characteristic of the deviant capitalism of the Korean economy.[102]

The premise behind church growth was to make numerical and financial growth the top priority and to devise the most efficient means to achieve this. In accordance with these guidelines, the Korean church embraced almost any and all means for growth, especially business theory and marketing techniques. As the Korean church internalizes this mindset, it becomes like a mega-corporation or like the "developmental dictatorship" of the political world.

From the Economic Growth Narrative to the Church Growth Narrative

President Park Chung-hee's discourse on the modernization and economic growth of the country served as a narrative to overcome the poor and suffering conditions the Korean people were experiencing and thereby to achieve social and economic success. That is Park's economic growth narrative. Jeong-yeon Lee claims that the myth of success presented by Park Chung-hee in the 1960–1970s was quite convincing throughout Korean society. Lee argues that the meaning of success in the economy was replaced by the myth of the growth of the membership within the Korean church. She describes the

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[102] Shin, *Beyond Megachurch*, 116–17.

process by which the success myth of Korean society flowed into and influenced the Korean church as follows:

> In the 1970s, the success myth presented around President Park Chung-hee was easily replaced by the religious meaning of the growth of the church. It was like a myth with miracles. Just as the growth of the nation's economy is a miracle and a joy, the growth of the church was also a "miracle" from God and the best "blessing". Since the 1970s, many churches have been eager to build large chapels, as if they were proving their miraculous divine blessings. Relocating the church to a new city like Gangnam and breaking down the old chapel and building a large chapel was like an investment to expand the bigger business. Religiously, it meant moving toward a new vision from God. The reason why the chapel was newly built was not because believers flocked and the church narrowed. It was a sign of great ambition and determination to build a large chapel and draw people to fill it in the future. Therefore, during the Sunday worship sermons of the churches, messages frequently emphasized the dedication to God and emphasized the architectural offering.[103]

Here, the Korean church replaced the concept of economic growth with the concept of church growth.[104] Most of the members of the Korean society had faith in economic growth. The economic growth narrative presented by the Park Chung-hee regime was seen as a hope for the future for urban residents in Korea, who rapidly became city-dwellers if they were farmers previously. The Park Chung-hee regime built a new city and developed a new city center to increase the number of people living in urban settings. And the people who moved to the city from the country could find comfort, hope, courage (and wealthier connections) in the Korean church. They dreamed of a wealthy life with the economic growth narrative presented by the Park Chung-hee regime, and they dreamed of happiness in spirit and in pocketbooks with the message of faith-seeking-blessings presented by many leaders in the Korean church.

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[103] Yi, "Urban Modernization and Religion," 195.
[104] Yi, "Urban Modernization and Religion," 196.

Cultural Assimilation according to H. Richard Niebuhr

The Korean church is dominated by evangelical and fundamentalist churches today. It is no exaggeration to say that the Korean church has become a homogeneous group because of the trend of theology and ministry led by the mega-churches in Korea. Given the theological tendencies of the Korean church, their claimed view of culture would be the Christ-and-culture-in-paradox type or the Christ-against-culture type. As the cultural transformation movements such as Abraham Kuyper and H. Richard Niebuhr have been introduced to the Korean church, there are also many Christians who hold the stance of Christ-transforming-culture.

The Korean church, however, rarely recognizes itself as the position Niebuhr would call "Christ of culture." This is because the preaching that the Korean church must not be assimilated into the world and that the Korean church must maintain the purity of its faith has been transmitted by the Korean church for more than a decade or two. The church growth narrative of the Korean church, nevertheless, betrays the main characteristics of Niebuhr's Christ of culture type of position.

According to Niebuhr, cultural Christians, who are called liberalist by the fundamentalists, argue that Christians must actively use culture to spread the gospel to society. For them, culture and Christ are not in conflict, nor are they contradictory. They work together for the same goals. This is why David Yong-gi Cho's church growth narrative can be delivered to the Korean people with no real tension, because it presents no conflict between Christ and economic growth. As argued, this is because the church narrative shares many things in common with the economic growth narrative of Park Chung-hee's regime.

Even though the Full Gospel denomination is not the mainstream Korean church, its narrative affects the Korean church and Korean society more strongly than any narratives formed by the rest of the Korean church. David Yong-gi Cho has received the same sort of criticism as that directed against cultural Christians for a long time. He has been criticized for his extreme emphasis on blessings and on healing from God, because these emphases distort the gospel, which includes suffering with Christ. Niebuhr explains his own criticism of cultural Christians as follows:

> If the evangelists of the Christ of culture do not go far enough to meet the demands of men whose loyalty is primarily to the values of civilization, they go too far in the judgment of their fellow believers of other schools. These point out that the cultural answers to the Christ-culture problem show a consistent tendency to distort the figure of the New Testament Jesus. In their efforts at accommodation, Gnostics and cultural Protestants find it strangely desirable to write apocryphal gospels and new lives of Jesus.[105]

In other words, cultural Christians can distort the essence of the gospel. In addition, questions can be raised as to whether the faith formed by cultural Christians is correct or whether it is a different faith and a different narrative altogether. At the same time, it is difficult to criticize the effort to use one's culture as a way of delivering the gospel to the world.

Niebuhr clearly acknowledges the positive contribution of cultural Christians. He believes that it is not wrong to try to express the gospel in a language suitable for today's culture. He explains why this Christ of culture type is needed:

> That the translation of the gospel into the "vulgar tongue" has its dangers the aberrations of this group make evident, but it is also clear that to avoid such perils by leaving the gospel untranslated is to invite the danger of letting it be buried in the dead language of an alien society. Those critics of cultural Protestantism who urge return to Biblical ways of thought sometimes seem to

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[105] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 108.

forget that many cultures are represented in the Bible; and that as there is no single Biblical language there is also no single Biblical cosmology psychology. The word of God as it is uttered to men comes in human words; and human words are cultural things, along with the concepts with which they are associated.[106]

As a matter of fact, since a culture is shared by Christians and non-Christians alike in a society, culture would be the optimal tool for translating and transmitting the gospel message of Christianity. In this sense, purely on a communication level, David Yong-gi Cho succeeded in translating the gospel into a language that Korean culture could understand. This is because the Korean people and Christians in Korea have achieved the material blessings and overcome poverty, just as they had hoped. Cho also grew Yoido Full Gospel Church into the largest church in the world, with over 700,000 members today. Thus, if the moral side effects of his church growth narrative were excluded, he would be the most successful minister of the Christian faith in history.

The problem, however, is that the side effects of his church growth narrative are serious enough that they cannot be ignored. The moral corruption calls into question the "gospel" that he and other pastors have been preaching, and it makes Christians wonder if it is really good news or whether it is just a materialism repackaged with Christian language. The church growth narrative of David Yong-gi Cho, assimilated into the economic growth narrative of the Korean society, is currently the master narrative of the Korean church, and has played a decisive role in shaping the moral character of the Korean church.

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[106] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 104.

Moral Formation according to Stanley Hauerwas

Stanley Hauerwas argues that the church should be a community of character or a school of virtue. The virtue that the church inculcates as a school of virtue is formed by the church's master narrative, almost like a curriculum—only it is caught more than taught. Therefore, when the church is assimilated the culture's master narrative into its religious one and is not faithful to the narrative of Jesus, moral problems arise in the church. This is because the character of its members and thus its corporate communities is a character far from the virtues suggested by the Bible.

Therefore, Hauerwas insists that the church should be a community guided by the biblical narrative. For him, the church should not only be a training ground for virtue to make Christians faithful to Jesus's love but also a community of people of solid character. Given Hauerwas's emphasis on character and virtue, the assimilation between the Korean church and Korean society causes serious moral problems. This is because the pastors and members of the Korean church have had their character formed by the narrative that seeks material blessings and economic benefits, not the character formed by the narrative of Jesus, who himself never became rich but rather suffered and gave his life for the sake of others.

Case Study: *Chaebols* and Mega-churches

The assimilation of church and society can be detected by studying the similarity between Korean mega-churches and Korean *chaebol*s (family-run business conglomerates) in South Korea. This section will compare the two entities side by side.

The main drivers of Korea's economic development are *chaebols*. As explained earlier, the *chaebols* are companies that developed into large conglomerates by the

wealth allocated by the U.S. military and Korean government after the liberation of Korea in 1945 and after the Korean War. Wayne Le Cheminant accurately documents the beginning of these conglomerates and the problems they brought in Korean society.[107] He says this:

> The move toward economic liberalization and democratization had to move through various governmental policies that allowed for large conglomerates (chaebols) to hold the vast majority of the wealth, authoritarian regimes, military coups, and political corruption. While South Korea has become an economic giant over the last 40 years, it has generally been perceived as a haven for large corporate conglomerates. These large corporations have worked hand in hand with the authoritarian regimes that have dominated the South Korean landscape from the Korean War until the 1990s.[108]

Comparatively, mega-churches in South Korea were established in the same way. Major churches were established after the liberation in 1945 based on the land and buildings that the U.S. military government awarded to the Korean church. Yeongnak Church which was established by Kyung-sick Han is a case in point.

It was not simply foreign aid that helped both entities, though. Korean *chaebols* were able to acquire an exclusive status in Korea and achieve rapid growth through intensive support from the Korean government. Although the Korean church did not receive as much support as the corporations did, the Korean church still received a good deal of support and favors initially. Power that is not criticized is a kind of absolute power. As the saying goes, power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Korean *chaebols* were shielded from criticism or at least from the consequences of their

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[107] Wayne Le Cheminant is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles.

[108] Cheminant, "Korean Politics and the Spirit of Entrepreneurship," 3.

actions, and later they were socially criticized for embezzling their company's funds and being involved in many crimes.

Just as Korean *chaebols* have caused many moral problems, so many mega-churches in Korea are causing ethical problems. As documented in chapter 2, many mega-churches in Korea are guilty of practicing the hereditary succession of the senior pastorate, keeping the power within a small number of families. In addition, many churches that have been indicted for embezzling church funds are large churches of which their membership is more than 1,000 people. The more power they have, the more they seem to think they are beyond ethical restraints.

South Korea's judicial system, too, has been very generous and lenient in dealing with the criminal acts of founders and owners of Korean chaebols that have contributed to the country's economic growth. Even though the economic growth narrative has weakened a lot compared to the era of the mid-twentieth century, it still holds some force as a strong narrative in Korean society. For this same reason, most Korean churches are very generous and lenient in dealing with the criminal acts of senior pastors who have succeeded in growing their church's membership exceptionally. It is difficult for most Korean churches, where church growth is recognized as the most important value, to properly punish their senior pastor if that pastor also happened to contribute significantly to their church growth. Just as Park Chung-hee's economic growth narrative justified dictatorship in the name of economic development, the church growth narrative made the Korean church silent, unable to criticize the pastoral abuse of authority happening in the congregations. Thus, since uncriticized power became absolute power, it corrupted many pastors of the Korean church into practicing

hereditary succession of the senior pastorate, financial embezzlement, academic forgery, and/or sexual crimes and misconduct.

The economic growth narrative values the financial gains that result from economic growth as an important value. Similarly, the church growth narrative sees the increase in church finances and lavish church buildings that result from church growth as important indicators of the church's success. While economic growth and church growth are values that both the state and the church can pursue with outward results, treating these narratives as the master narrative causes a distortion of moral values in both Korean society and the church. Won-beom Chung argues that the Korean church today has essentially become a religion that seeks material abundance, quantitative growth, and tangible blessings. The difference between for-profit businesses and churches is disappearing.[109] In line with this latter similarity, the Korean church learned pastor-centered, authoritarian church management, which resulted in heavy-handed leadership that prioritized the material growth of the church despite the ethical problems that came along with that set of priorities. The ends justified the means within the walls of the church as well as outside of the walls.

E. Conclusion

As discussed above, during the explosive growth period of the Korean church in the 1960s–1980s, most Korean churches were assimilated into the narrative of Korean society. President Park's personal narrative, rising from poverty to power and wealth, effectively became the nation's modernization and economic growth narrative, and the

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[109] Chung, Church like Church, 80

Korean public was eager to live out that narrative as their *telos*. The president embodied the economic growth narrative he proposed, and he enlisted the Korean people as coworkers to embody it together with him.

Park's economic growth narrative, however, brought many ethical problems. In the name of economic development, he held tyrannical power for eighteen years. He condoned violence against his opponents, violated human rights, and even sentenced to death some of those who protested against him. The Yushin Constitution was merely a tool to keep his control over the nation when democracy proved inconvenient. In addition, the regime and its partners in economic growth, especially the corporate *chaebols*, enjoyed economic benefits and financial gains from ethical corruption. All the while, the narrative of economic growth ("Let's live well") led the Korean people to give up important values such as democracy, human rights, and socio-economic justice in the process of pursuing economic growth.

The Korean church likewise pursued their own growth narrative by accepting the economic growth narrative and adapting it behind thinly veiled, "spiritual" language. The biggest contributor to the resulting church growth narrative was David Yong-gi Cho. He emphasized material blessings as well as spiritual blessings, but he tied the material and social blessings to God's favor and grace for those who had enough faith. His messages were widely accepted in Korean society, drawing many to his church and other mega-churches like his. As a result, the Yoido Full Gospel Church he founded became the world's largest church.

Just as Park's economic growth narrative produced several moral side effects in society, David Yong-gi Cho's church growth narrative distorted the Korean church's

moral character. Because the church growth narrative emphasizes material blessing and quantitative growth, the Korean church has prioritized material blessing and church growth more than any other goals. The Korean church's pursuit of worldly success is justified by Cho's narrative. In order to solve the many moral problems of the Korean church, it is necessary for the Korean church to acknowledge and reflect the false narrative that has misled the Korean church. Then, a narrative more faithful to the Bible is necessary if there is to be any change in the Korean church.

CHAPTER 5: TRANSFORMING THE NARRATIVE AND ETHICAL PRACTICES OF THE KOREAN CHURCH

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Korean church has ethical issues such as hereditary succession, financial embezzlement, sexual crimes, academic forgery and plagiarism, and callous remarks from church leaders. These problems led to the bankruptcy of the social trust of the Korean church. As seen in Chapter 4, the moral failure of the Korean church stems from the intrusion of the Korean society's economic growth narrative into the Korean church, an intrusion that altered the Korean church's narrative and identity. Instead of purely an economic growth narrative, the church converted this story into one of church growth, with all of the economic and ethical issues this brought in its wake. This chapter will explore ways to improve the ethical condition of the Korean church and to form a more theologically faithful narrative that can transform the Korean church. Only if the narrative changes from the leadership and laity can the church live differently in their communities.

Both Stanley Hauerwas and H. Richard Niebuhr provide insights for analyzing social ethics in the Korean church. Considering that the Korean church has been in trouble in terms of the level of social trust in Korean society due to these ethical issues, this section will look at how these two theologians are helpful in constructing a pastoral theology applicable to the current moral crisis in the Korean church.

A. Hauerwas's Proposal for the Korean Church

Hauerwas's ethics of character is applicable to pastoral theology, which I define broadly below as the study of the spiritual care of Christians for one another. This section thus examines Hauerwas's ethics of character in terms of pastoral theology so as to contextualize it for the ethical issues of the Korean church. His ethics of character relates ethical virtue to practical concerns in pastoral kinds of ministry and in Christian living.

Hauerwas's theology and ethics can be applied to the context of the Korean church for two main reasons. First, Hauerwas's insight that the most dominant narrative of the church determines the character of the church is an insight that suggests the need to identify the dominant narrative of the Korean church today. There is also a need to discern the relationship between the church narrative and the dominant narrative of Korean society more generally. If the church is faithful to the biblical narrative, then the church can lead its individual members to have moral character according to that narrative. If Hauerwas is correct, then the moral problems of the Korean church likely stem from a warped narrative that has co-opted the Korean church. Exactly what this narrative is (or has been) and how it leads to ethical problems is an important task for analyzing the condition of the Korean church today. Simply lamenting the problems and scandals is not enough.

Second, Hauerwas's ethics of character suggests a way for the Korean church to overcome its current ethical problems. Aware of the wrong narrative, the Korean church

can learn to hear a narrative more faithful to the biblical story. By hearing the biblical

story, the church can become the church again. Hauerwas insists that the church's

primary social responsibility is to be the church, not a civil religion, and so the Korean

church can seek to be the church in a Korean setting, exploring what that means in their

own society.[1]

<div align="center">Hauerwas's Ten Theses for the Korean Church</div>

In *A Community of Character*, Stanley Hauerwas presents ten theses toward the reform

of Christian social ethics. The ten theses are the ten main arguments at the core of his

approach to Christian social ethics. Accordingly, this dissertation applies the ethics of

character and his social ethics to the ethical issues of the Korean church. I classify his

ten theses into five categories adapted for a Korean context: (1) narrative structure of

social ethics for the Korean church, (2) explanatory truth and purpose in the unexpected,

(3) the identity and social task of the Korean church, (4) character formation for the

Korean church, and (5) the Korean church as an alternative community for society.

Narrative Structure of Social Ethics for the Korean Church

> First thesis: The social significance of the Gospel requires the recognition of the narrative structure of Christian convictions for the life of the church.
> Second thesis: Every social ethic involves a narrative, whether it is concerned with the formulation of basic principles of social organization and/or concrete policy alternatives.[2]

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[1] Moon, *To Reform the Ethics of the Church*, 170.
[2] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 9.

For Hauerwas, the narrative structure of all forms of social ethics—particularly Christian ethics—is foundational.. He argues that Christian social ethics, regrettably, often includes principles or policies that are not based on the central convictions of the Christian faith. According to him, however, any form of Christian social ethics should be based on the narrative structures of Christian faith. In other words, *narrative* should be recognized as the basic category of Christian social ethics. He lets us know narrative is a crucial category not only for our knowledge of self, but also for our knowledge of God. Christians can learn of God in narrative form, such as in historical texts. In a light of narrative, Christians can see how to apply Christian convictions and doctrines into the Christian life. In other words, Christians can locate their stories within God's story.[3]

The Korean church over the last several decades has employed Christian ethics in a manner similar to that criticized by Hauerwas. In other words, for the Korean church, Christian ethics has been considered as an area of theologythat teaches moral rules that Christians should follow or suggests actions Christians should not practice. Traditionally, the Korean church has emphasized sexual abstinence until marriage, prohibitions against smoking tobacco, against ancestor worship, and observing Sunday worship services as rules that Christians must follow. However, the Korean church neglected to explain how these rules relate to the gospel meta-narrative of the Bible. According to Hauerwas's view, the Korean church should not just present rules, but should explain the social significance of the gospel based on the biblical narrative. In

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[3] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 26–27.

doing so, the Korean church can help Christians recognize the basis and necessity of Christian social ethics. However, as Hauerwas mentions, "the loss of narrative as a central category for social ethics" could keep Christians from comprehending the connection ethical issues have to the narrative of the gospel.[4] Historically, the more the Korean church was criticized by society, the more the church reacted by promoting moral rules. However, moral rules without a narrative basis in God's redemptive work are seldom able to motivate Korean Christians to follow the rules. It is a situation not unlike the Law of Moses, since the Law was powerless to produce in weak humans the righteousness to which it pointed (Rom 8:3).

In Korea today, it is not valid to argue that the Korean church should be a community that cultivates virtues without being based on Jesus's narrative. After all, the moral problems of the Korean church do not stem from the fact that the Korean church simply does not know the moral rules. The church is well aware of the rules. For example, Korea has a high suicide rate and abortion rate. The Korean church is not free from these problems in Korean society, despite having moral rules in the church context discouraging such tragic choices. To solve the problem of suicide and abortion in the Korean church as an institution, it is not helpful to reiterate the rules of "do not commit suicide" or "do not have an abortion."

As Hauerwas emphasizes, the church should be a community embodying the Jesus narrative. Embodying the Jesus narrative, of course, is not disconnected from

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[4] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 9.

moral rules and Christian social ethics, but ethics follow from the narrative, not the other way around. Therefore, the Korean church must model ethical practices embodying the narrative of Jesus. The virtues that Christians should pursue must be virtues that tell and remember the story of Jesus Christ who died on the cross and rose again so that others might live. Within the Korean church, Christians can remember and embody the Jesus narrative through church liturgies, including the sermons, sacraments, and baptism rites. The uniqueness of the church is not in the moral acts of Christians, but in the narrative of the Savior who reconciled them into the family of God and called them to live new lives.

The various denominations of the Korean church and seminaries in Korea should emphasize the importance of narrative in Christian ethics so that Korean Christians can pursue a moral life based on the Jesus narrative. In this regard, the Korean church should pay attention to the following contents of Hauerwas's emphasis and set the direction of change for the Korean church.

The biblical narrative is the basis for the extraordinary Christian claim that we participate morally in God's life. For our God is a God who wills to include us within his life. This is what we mean when we say, in shorthand as it were, that God is a God of grace. Such shorthand can be dangerous if it is mistaken for the suggestion that our relationship with God has an immediacy that makes the journey of the self with God irrelevant. Grace is not an eternal moment above history rendering history irrelevant. Rather, it is God's choice to be a Lord whose kingdom is furthered by our concrete

obedience through which we acquire a history befitting our nature as God's creatures.[5] Divine grace, the generous inclusion of creatures in God's life, is the beginning and the goal of the gospel narrative. It is this Christian story of grace that makes suicide and abortion unappealing options for Christians, because God's loving grace is a story that speaks dying in hope that others might live, not ending the lives of the vulnerable (abortion) or dying out of despair (suicide).

Presenting moral duties and things not to do is not enough as a way to solve these ethical problems of the Korean church. As Hauerwas argues, narrative enables Christians to participate morally in God's life. This is the most important thing that the Korean church needs to recognize in order to solve its ethical problems. Therefore, the first task of Christian ethics is "to help us rightly envision the world," but it must be ethics "specifically formed by a very definite story with determinative content."[6] This will be the ethical basis for the moral formation of the Korean church. In summary, all practices of the Korean church should be linked to the narrative structure of the Bible (i.e., creation, fall, redemption). Hauerwas's proposal implies that the Korean church needs to recognize the narrative structures of Christian social ethics.

Explanatory Truth and Purpose in the Unexpected

> Third thesis: The ability to provide an adequate account of our existence is the primary test of the truthfulness of a social ethic.

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[5] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 27.
[6] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 29.

Fourth thesis: Communities formed by a truthful narrative must provide the skills to transform fate into destiny so that the unexpected, especially as it comes in the form of strangers, can be welcomed as gift.[7]

Hauerwas argues that the social ethic of a Christian community can be measured by its ability to provide a proper explanation for our human (and Christian) existence. The narrative's explanatory power will be the most basic test to confirm the authenticity of the Christian social ethic that is constructed from that narrative. Regarding his third thesis, Hauerwas elaborates as follows:

> No society can be just or good that is built on falsehood. The first task of Christian social ethics, therefore, is not to make the "world" better or more just, but to help Christian people form their community consistent with their conviction that the story of Christ is a truthful account of our existence. For as H. R. Niebuhr argued, only when we know "what is going on," do we know "what we should do," and Christians believe that we learn most decisively "what is going on" in the cross and resurrection of Christ.[8]

For Hauerwas, the biblical narrative helps us see how moral and plausible our beliefs are, whether these beliefs ring true to the human condition and a community's place in history.[9] Indeed, Hauerwas concludes that our moral life is "the process in which our convictions form our character to be truthful."[10] Therefore, the explanatory truth of the biblical narrative may help the Korean church understand how it got to where it currently sits, and then to know how to form its character in ways that are truthful rather than in ways that are delusional thinking.

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[7] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 10.
[8] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 10.
[9] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 16.
[10] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 16.

Hauerwas's argument about our convictions and moral life provides a relevant insight for Korean churches where the faith and moral life of Christians show serious disagreements or contradictions. In many cases, the sermons of the Korean church have failed to explain the Christian faith and moral life effectively. For example, as mentioned in previous chapters, Rev. David Yong-gi Cho himself claimed that most of his sermons emphasized church growth and material blessings. His sermons also refer to Christians morality, but to him, the moral life was seen as a means of receiving material blessings. While this might seem like a narrative that holds explanatory power—good morals lead to blessings—it actually fails to explain how the Korean church could be ethically bankrupt in society. After all, if morality leads to blessings, and if the church is so blessed by God in Korea, then there would not be so many ethical scandals that leave people distrustful of the church. The church growth narrative does not have enough explanatory truth. It is an inauthentic narrative, because it does not explain the bad fruit coming from the Korean church. Cho is not an isolated example, either. Many other Korean churches and church leaders have not effectively linked the biblical narrative and moral life of the their congregants. Therefore, the Korean church and seminary education system in must seek ways of encouraging church ministry for moral life and moral formation based on the biblical narrative.

One such way is found in *Kingdom Ethics* by Glen Stassen and David Gushee. They provide effective examples of how to promote moral life and character formation

Like Stassen and Gushee, Hauerwas relates the moral life to biblical texts. He emphasizes the narrative nature of social ethics. According to him, Christian social participation is based on a Christian's perception of God. Because this perception of God is defined by the narratives of Christians, Christians and churches must adhere to Christian and not cultural narratives. Because the church's identity is shaped by the church's narrative, a church that is not faithful to the Jesus narrative loses its identity as a distinct and authentic Christian community.

Hauerwas describes a crucial way of "being truthful people" to properly restore the church and its ministry.[13] Namely, "Where the word is rightly proclaimed and the sacraments duly administered, a people are made present who are capable of acknowledging the authority of [the] scriptures."[14] These are foundational ways that Christian ministers can contribute to helping their church members be truthful people. According to him, Christian clergy members should proclaim the written Word of God (i.e., the Bible) and not fear the congregation or the pressures it may impose on the preacher to be comfortable or popular in his or her messages. In addition, these leaders need to "be clear about our source of authority. One way to do that is to preach from scripture, specifically, to preach from the ecumenical lectionary."[15] This works well in a Reformed church such as the Presbyterian church or another more liturgical church in

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[13] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 128.
[14] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 128.
[15] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 162.

Korea, and even without a lectionary, most Protestant ministers can preach from the Bible as their source of authority.

Churchgoers are thus shaped as the people of God through the Scriptures and the sacraments such as receiving the Eucharist of bread and the fruit of the vine. Hauerwas elevates these aspects of church experience with these words: "There can be no more prophetic task than the preaching of the word and the serving of the Eucharist, for it is through them that the church is constituted as God's people in a world that does not know God."[16] In short, Christians need to acknowledge the role of Scripture and corporate religious practices in Christian settings in shaping the moral life.[17] Scripture reading in the weekly religious gathering shapes "our moral outlook and character."[18] A pastor should seek his or her moral identity as a person who guides the congregation into the communal narrative found in Scripture.

After all, according to Hauerwas, the responsibility of the pastor is to show the community the story which establishes the church's identity, the story that makes it different from other communities. This highlights the crucial function of proclaiming the Bible for a prophetic pastor. "Prophetic" does not mean that the church is trying to turn pastors into prophets, per se. But it does mean that a key pastoral task in ecclesial ethics is found in proclaiming the story—the master narrative—that makes the church the

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[16] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 161.

[17] Kotva, *The Christian Case,* 173.

[18] Kotva, *The Christian Case,* 173.

people of God rather than the people of some other defining relationship or leader. In other words, "the pastoral task is prophetic, in so far as the means that are peculiar to the church's ministry help to remind the community of the story that makes that community prophetic."[19]

The reason Hauerwas emphasizes the prophetic nature of the pastoral office is that Christians are followers of Jesus Christ, the ultimate prophet for the church in this world. As followers of Jesus, ministers should strive to reflect the prophetic qualities of Christ. Being a prophetic pastor in today's world, however, is more difficult than ever because of the materialistic and fragmented context within which today's church operates, especially in Korea. Hauerwas describes today's context as a "buyer's market" where the "church no longer represents a community of authority through which the minister exercises leadership by calling the community to live in accordance with its own best convictions."[20] This is relevant to the context of the Korean church, as I will explain later on.

Hauerwas says the church can recover its identity and convictions through ministries that are faithful to the story of Jesus and the teachings found in the gospel (i.e., the central message of the Bible). As Hauerwas says, "Pastoral power arises from truthfulness. The power of Christian clergy lies, not in their cultural significance, but in

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[19] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 161.
[20] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 150.

their service to the living truth who is Jesus Christ."[21] One moral task of the clergy, then, is to lead the church via the proclamation of the word to be a community that is faithful to the gospel narrative.

Similarly, Hauerwas emphasizes the Eucharist. According to him, a connection exists between the sacramental character of the ministry and the moral character of the clergy and the congregation. The purpose or *telos* of Christian ethics is to encourage Christians to develop a proper relationship with Jesus Christ, and the Scriptures and the Eucharist are the primary methods of realizing this purpose. This relational purpose is most evident, Hauerwas says, when the church gathers on Sundays and "our worship has a way of reminding us, in the most explicit and ecclesial of ways, of the source of our power, the peculiar nature of our solutions to what ails the world."[22] In the Eucharist, the broken body of the God who suffers with humanity is sacramentally displayed as bread and wine, and these elements remind Christians of their identity in union with the story of Jesus. The frequency of the Eucharist compared to baptismal ceremonies is the reason he focuses on the Eucharist as the most important and formative practice other than hearing or preaching from Scripture. The essence of ministerial ethics therefore consists in fulfilling the ecclesial mission of the church through the proclamation of the Word of God and celebrating the Eucharist. These are the two most important tasks to make the

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[21] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 166.
[22] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 171.

church the church, and they require pastors who have "the character to sustain them in the ministry."[23]

According to Hauerwas's suggestions, the Korean church should pay attention to the Jesus narrative. The reason why the Korean church considers material values of the world more important than Christian values emphasized by the Bible is because Korean churches are not faithful to the gospel (or Jesus) narrative. Since the Korean church has adhered to narratives that value church growth, materialism, and social success, it has seen ongoing ethical issues such as hereditary succession, financial embezzlement, sexual misconduct, academic forgery and plagiarism, and callous remarks from church leaders. These issues additionally relate to Hauerwas's fourth thesis about the skills necessary for a church community to transform unexpected and odd things (i.e., strangers) into a purpose-filled occasion for hospitality. Among the ethical problems of the Korean church, sexual crimes by the clergy are the most blatant examples of failing to welcome the stranger and vulnerable into the church. However, even the callous remarks of pastors after national disasters show that the Korean church has not learned to transform unexpected things into an occasion for compassionate hospitality but instead has demonized those suffering (i.e., blamed the victims). As discussed in chapter 2, the Sewol Ferry disaster in 2014 revealed what the Korean church cared about. When numerous lives were lost aboard the sinking Sewol ferry, some leaders of the Korean

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[23] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 135.

church paid more attention to political posturing than to caring for the pain of the non-Christian victims and their families. These pastors even heartlessly told the families of the victims not to blame the government but to support the government. They also interpreted the Sewol Ferry tragedy directly in connection with God's will, and criticized and mocked the victims and their families as politically impure. When these callous responses were promulgated in the name of the church, it became an opportunity for Korean society to recognize that the Korean church was more concerned with political interests than the interests of those who suffered. Also, by linking the tragic event to the will of God without clear grounds, they exposed an inhospitable attitude to the strangers in their midst, coming across as heartless to the suffering of the wounded.

This is not simply a manner of poor etiquette but of idolatry. James K. A. Smith, a professor of philosophy at Calvin University in the United States, explains how the unfaithfulness of Christians to the narrative of the Bible makes them idolatrous. He effectively explains how the desires pursued by members of a society become the idols of that society or sub-group within it. In *You Are What You Love*, based on Augustine and Luther, he describes a person's existence as driven by their loves, their ultimate desires. According to Smith, a person's identity is not defined by wealth or social status but by the person's deepest desires that fuel one's character and habits of life. In other words, what one person loves becomes the God the person worships. He explains the relationship between affections and identity via formative practices that he calls "liturgies":

In order to appreciate the spiritual significance of such cultural practices, let's call these sorts of formative, love-shaping rituals "liturgies." It's a bit of an old, churchy word, but I want to both revive and expand it because it crystallizes a final aspect of this model of the human person: to say "you are what you love" is synonymous with saying "you are what you worship." The great Reformer Martin Luther once said, "Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your god." We become what we worship because what we worship is what we love. As we've seen, it's not a question of whether you worship but what you worship—which is why John Calvin refers to the human heart as an "idol factory."[24]

What Smith would describe as idolatry, seeking after the wrong kingdom, Hauerwas would describe as unfaithfulness to the biblical narrative. Members of a Christian community have to be faithful to the narrative of Bible. This narrative is not a tool for church growth. Instead, it is a narrative that forms the identity of the church and character of its members. With liturgical practices which are faithful to Jesus's narrative, the Korean church must rediscover the value of their role in God's story. That will help the Korean church to escape from its extreme moral failures. When considering what the Korean church will do to solve ethical problems, Hauerwas emphasizes what the church ought to be. And since the identity of the church is formed by the church's unique narrative about God's work in Jesus, he claims that the church should be a community faithful to the Jesus narrative.

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[24] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 22–23.

The Identity and Social Task of the Korean Church

> Fifth thesis: The primary social task of the church is to be itself—that is, a people who have been formed by a story that provides them with the skills for negotiating the danger of this existence, trusting in God's promise of redemption.
> Sixth thesis: Christian social ethics can only be done from the perspective of those who do not seek to control national or world history but who are content to live "out of control."[25]

Hauerwas claims that the main social task of the church lies in being the church itself. This is related to the identity of the church. To him, "[t]he church is a people on a journey who insist on living consistent with the conviction that God is the lord of history."[26] In other words, the church is a people formed by the story of believing God's promise of salvation and providing them with the skills to negotiate the dangers common to human life.

The reason behind Hauerwas's fifth thesis statement is that his ethics of character is closely related to his ecclesial ethics. His ecclesial ethics focuses on what the church is and should be. Per Hauerwas, pastoral theology should be defined in a church-community-oriented way. Such an understanding of ecclesial ethics thus requires the concepts of the community of church and the identity of Christians shaped within that community. Ministerial ethics might then take its cues from the relational, compassionate, and community-oriented insights of this approach to theology and ethics.

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[25] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 10–11.
[26] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 10.

Even the Bible provides such an understanding supporting this kind of pastoral theology and ministerial ethics, including the ethics of the religious leaders themselves. Ezekiel 34:16, for example, lists the core responsibilities of a pastor in this metaphorical way, according to one article commenting on the passage: "the shepherd engages in searching, guiding, healing, nurturing and governing."[27] Contemporary pastoral theology echoes this passage, often suggesting that the tasks of a pastor include "healing, sustaining, reconciling and nurturing,"[28] much like faithful shepherds would care for their sheep with compassion.

Some pastoral theologians attempt to achieve these practices through normative ethics. Based on normative approach, ministerial ethics asks pastors, church leaders, worship leaders, and other church workers in Christian ministry to follow ethical pledges. In *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders*, Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter give two reasons why ministerial ethics has recently grown in importance:

> After half a century of relative silence on the subject, the last decade has witnessed a renewed interest in ministerial ethics. One reason for this attention is our rapidly changing culture; clergy ethics are more complex in today's society. Another factor is the seeming increase in moral failures in the ministry.[29]

The two authors proceed to make six statements regarding their fundamental convictions about ethics in ministry:

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[27] Atkinson et al., "Practical and Pastoral Theology," 49.

[28] Atkinson et al., "Practical and Pastoral Theology," 49.

[29] Trull, *Ministerial Ethics*, 11.

1. Most ministers want to be persons of integrity, persons whose professional lives uphold the highest ethical ideals.
2. Developing moral character and ethical conduct is a difficult process.
3. Every cleric needs training in ethics and spiritual formation.
4. There is an art to doing ethics, one that can also be learned.
5. The central moral choice facing the Christian minister is the same one facing all professionals: Will I be an enabler or an exploiter?
6. A ministerial code of ethics, if used appropriately, is beneficial to ministers and to the communities they serve.[30]

The book contains much of the same advice on ministerial ethics given in other works in that it focuses on the application of a moral code of conduct to guide the personal morality of pastors. This approach assumes that people working in ministry must demonstrate a higher level of morality than others, and that the means of achieving this higher level of morality is by adhering to a set of rules, principles, or codes.

Personal morality among pastors is certainly an important aspect of ministerial ethics, but these days a different approach is needed. Aspiring to a set of rules is not the best answer for pastors or the church, perhaps because these codes are not firmly tied to anything that is authoritative or exemplary in Christian tradition. Hauerwas is arguably the leading theologian who challenges this rules-based perspective of ministerial ethics. He says, "This traditional view of the morality expected of the clergy is open to serious objection,"[31] because it often creates "a terrible double-bind for those in ministry" by putting them on a moral pedestal and expecting them to be fundamentally different than the members of their congregation—"altruistic, infinitely understanding, self-

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[30] Trull, *Ministerial Ethics*, 17–19.
[31] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 133.

effacing."[32] Instead, Hauerwas argues, virtue ethics would suggest that ministers could focus less on questions of what is permissible and impermissible and more on "the question of the kind of person that one should be to be a minister."[33] And no minister can be any sort of person in isolation, apart from a community formative of character.

The communitarian elements of virtue ethics support Hauerwas's argument. Aristotle summarizes these communitarian elements this way: "For in every community there is thought to be some form of justice, and friendship too; at least [people] . . . address as friends their fellow voyagers and fellow soldiers, and so too those associated with them in any other kind of community."[34] For Hauerwas, these communitarian elements of virtue ethics expand the scope of ministerial ethics from the morality of the individual to the morality of the entire congregation. Hauerwas changes the perspective from one of normative ethics, which emphasizes keeping rules or principles as a duty, to one of virtue ethics, which focuses on the moral character and communitarian context of the entire congregation.

In this broader perspective, it is not sufficient to emphasize personal morality and the responsibility of ministers to uphold ethics rules or principles. While personal morality remains important in virtue ethics, it is secondary to the primary focus of virtue ethics, which is how well the entire church—ministers and congregants working

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[32] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 134.

[33] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 134–35.

[34] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 153.

together—fulfills its Christian purpose. Get that bigger picture right, Hauerwas seems to say, and the secondary issues such as personal morality take care of themselves. This argument also bears relevance for the problem of the church losing its distinctive identity. It is not just the individual minister who loses her or his identity. It is collectively the whole congregation or denomination. Hauerwas stresses, "The first social task of the church is to be the church," indeed, "the servant church"[35] rather than the self-aggrandizing church. That is why the sixth thesis addresses the need for Christian ethics to be done without seeking to control national or world history, perhaps because of the corruption and misuse of power that often happens when the church tries to become the master rather than the servant on the political scene.

Theologians have largely embraced the approach Hauerwas takes toward ministerial ethics. According to Joseph J. Kotva, "virtue theory offers an ethical framework notably well-suited to Christian convictions."[36] In the process of sanctification, virtue ethics can help Christians live according to their Christian convictions. Kotva therefore sees "a mutually edifying union" between Christian convictions and virtue ethics.[37]

Hauerwas's ecclesial ethics is a prominent example of how biblical virtue ethics has incorporated contemporary virtue ethics. A common criticism of contemporary

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[35] Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader*, 371.
[36] Kotva, *The Christian Case*, 2.
[37] Kotva, *The Christian Case*, 174.

virtue ethics is that it shifts the concern from "doing" to "being." In normative or deontological ethics, an action can be determined to be good or bad according to rules or norms. In contrast, virtue ethics emphasizes who the person is. In this sense, "rightness is about what we're doing; virtue is also about how we're living."[38] This kind of understanding of virtue ethics can be applied to pastoral theology as well.

Pastoral theology can be defined as "the study of all aspects of the care of persons in the church, in a context of theological inquiry, including implications for other branches of theology."[39] This is one of the clearest and yet broadest definitions for pastoral theology.[40] It is important to note that this definition does not limit the work of pastoral care and ministry to professional Christian counselors or clergy. As a community, all members of a congregation should be pastoral caregivers in the church. In this sense, "the church should be the best therapeutic community in the world."[41]

Hauerwas's ethics of character can be applied in pastoral theology as well. Virtues and character traits are applicable to pastors and how they live in community with their congregants. As a foundation, Hauerwas is in line with classical theologians who wrote about virtue. Of those who wrote about virtue or moral character extensively, the classical theologians with whom contemporary Christians are already familiar include Saint Augustine, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, and John Wesley.

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[38] Russell, *The Cambridge Companion to Virtue Ethics*, 2.
[39] Oglesby, "Pastoral Theology Past and Present," 43.
[40] Atkinson et al., "Practical and Pastoral Theology," 47.
[41] Atkinson et al., "Practical and Pastoral Theology," 50.

As a case in point of how the concept of virtue has been used for formulating pastoral theology, some recent theological scholarship draws a connection between Jonathan Edwards and virtue ethics. Phil C. Zylla, a professor of pastoral theology at McMaster Divinity College, shows that a relational view of the moral life must include God's concern for suffering in this world. He argues that true virtue can be embodied only "when we as human beings align our perspective on the moral issues with God's compassionate participation in the world demonstrated as mercy."[42] Therefore, for Edwards and Zylla, it is impossible for a compassionate God—the Christian God—to ignore suffering in this world. The same is true for virtuous church leaders and laity.

Accordingly, any virtue ethics forming the framework for pastoral theology must go beyond the emotions of pity or sympathy. Compassion as true virtue means "to suffer with." Any pastoral theology based on Edwards's virtue ethics must instruct Christians to suffer with others. Zylla defines compassion more thoroughly in another book, *The Roots of Sorrow: A Pastoral Theology of Suffering*. In this book, he defines compassion by breaking the word down into its basic components: "suffer (-*passion*) and "with" (*com-*).[43] The concept, he argues, is "the very center of Christian theology and the heart of the paradigmatic approach of this volume to the theology of suffering."[44] Moreover, he establishes God as "the author of compassion."[45] In his view, suffering is not one-

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[42] Zylla, *Virtue as Consent to Being*, 123.
[43] Zylla, *The Roots of Sorrow*, 12.
[44] Zylla, *The Roots of Sorrow*, 12.
[45] Zylla, *The Roots of Sorrow*, 16.

dimensional but "a multi-dimensional disrupting experience of life."[46] By defining

compassion and sorrow this way, *The Roots of Sorrow* deals primarily with the types of

suffering encountered within the field of pastoral theology. Although such moral

character and suffering-with is not limited to official church leaders alone, it is

particularly relevant for them if they are to be a Christian community that is morally

healthy. The Sewol Ferry incident is a fitting example of the type of situation in which

the Korean church, particularly its vocal leaders, needed to suffer with the victims of the

ferry accident rather than blaming them or defending those who mismanaged the ferry

or the aftermath. Hauerwas's ethics of character can be relevant for the way that pastoral

theologians apply virtue ethics in the discussion and practice of pastoral theology.

Comparing other scholars to Hauerwas on the relational ethics of character in pastoral

ministry will be helpful at this point.

   Hauerwas's ethics of character and his ecclesial theology are not universally

applicable to all churches and nations without considering culture and history, of course.

Nevertheless, there have been several scholars who have applied his theories while

taking into account the cultural context of their own churches and nations, including the

contexts in the United States, South Africa, Scotland, Japan, and Norway.[47] This

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[46] Zylla, *The Roots of Sorrow*, 49.

[47] See Anderson, "Presence of the Peaceable Kingdom"; Bafinamene, "Church and Moral Formation in an African Context"; Bjørndal, "The Church in a Secular Age"; Dean, "For the Life of the World"; Gay, "A Practical Theology of Church and World"; Hagley, "Presence of the Peaceable Kingdom"; Horstkoetter, "Dorrien, Stanley Hauerwas, Rowan Williams"; Kim, "Study for Building Public Homiletical Theology"; Riley, "Truth as a Source"; Tsukada, "Whose Politics?"; Wells, "How the

suggests that the ethical framework is applicable in different cultures, if nuanced properly.

It is important to remember, however, that changing the narrative of the Korean church will not happen in a short span of time. Since the dominant narrative of the Korean church has been formed over decades in the historical and cultural context of Korea, transforming it will not happen overnight.

As seen in chapter 2, the survey on the social trust of the Korean church shows what the church should do to restore its social trust. According to the survey, the church must operate with greater fiscal integrity and transparency, display a more inclusive attitude toward other religions in South Korea, and maintain the integrity of the character of the leaders of the Korean church. Compassion includes a more compassionate understanding of other religious traditions and the struggles their adherents face, not just compassion for those suffering physical tragedies.

Park Chung-hee's economic growth narrative was a narrative that fulfilled the most fundamental needs of Korean society, so it could function as a dominant narrative in Korean society for some time. Despite its many theological problems, the similar narrative presented by David Yong-gi Cho was able to strike a chord in Korean society and expand Cho's little tent meetings into the world's largest church. It was his church growth narrative that fulfilled the desire of Koreans to escape poverty and live

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Church Performs Jesus' Story"; Williams, "The Church Engaging Culture"; Willowby, "Sanctification as Virtue and Mission."

comfortably. The faith-seeking-blessings narrative, encompassed by the narrative of church growth, has received a significant response from the Korean people, a people who experienced Japanese colonial rule and the Korean War, after all. There were many controversies about the president during these years, but the Park Chung-hee regime's economic growth narrative received strong support from the Korean people. The two narratives formed and strengthened over the decades, and the two have equally created a distortion of moral values. As a result, the economic growth narrative formed with Park Chung-hee's developmental dictatorship and the church growth narrative formed with David yong-gi Cho's health and wealth theology are now criticized by Korean society and many Christians.

The first step the Korean church can take to correcting the distorted moral values created by Cho is to recognize the current dominant narrative of the Korean church and its deceptive power. Then, with a narrative that is closer to the biblical story of Jesus, the church can move forward in being a community of character. The church must become like a servant, as Jesus did, rather than seeking wealth and status (John 13:1–17). Only if it follows the right narrative can the church move from moral bankruptcy to moral credibility once again.

Character Formation for the Korean Church

Seventh thesis: Christian social ethics depends on the development of leadership in the church that can trust and depend on the diversity of gifts in the community.

> Eighth thesis: For the church to be, rather than to have, a social ethic means we must recapture the social significance of common behavior, such as acts of kindness, friendship, and the formation of families.[48]

Hauerwas's character ethics incorporates not only community-centered ethics but also church-centered ethics or "ecclesial ethics."[49] The entire discipline of Christian ethics is redefined when the church is the center of theological reflection and praxis.[50] Although Hauerwas acknowledges that the reality of today's church falls short of his ideal, he points out that his "task as a theologian is not to say what the church is but what the church ought to be."[51]

What kind of ethics *would* achieve his ideal of the church fully being the church? Hauerwas does not seem to suggest a different kind of ecclesiology or church structure. Instead, he argues that the church should be a community that individually and collectively practices the story of Jesus. In other words, "through the witnessing to the story of Jesus Christ generation after generation, God will create a people capable of carrying into the world the story of Jesus and his kingdom."[52] In this sense, as the church, Christians should be "the kind of community capable of telling the story of a crucified messiah," the story of Jesus.[53] For Hauerwas's ethical paradigm, the story of Jesus is very important. By emphasizing the story of Jesus as the master narrative,

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[48] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 11.

[49] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 112.

[50] See Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 112. He says, "The integrity of Christian ethics as a theological discipline requires a rediscovery of the significance of the church."

[51] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 112.

[52] Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader*, 385.

[53] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 160.

Hauerwas wants to recover the authority of the Bible for Christian communities.[54]
Unlike rules-based ethics, the authority of the Bible is not found in a fundamentalist
literalism (e.g., "The Bible says so!") but rather in a more nuanced way as the meta-
narrative of the Bible acts as the primary guide for Christians. But the sixth thesis goes
further than this, for it points to the gifting from God's Spirit as essential for serving in
the church community rather than hereditary succession of leadership based on being the
pastor's son.

Further questions arise if this ethics of character is correct. For example, if the
primary purpose of the church is to be the church with diverse spiritual gifts, what type
of people should serve in the church? In addition, what kind of ethics should they have?
According to Hauerwas, ministers should let God's people know who they are and what
their role is as God's people. He says, "What a pastor needs is . . . to understand his or
her ministry as nothing less than participation in the story of God."[55] Pastors need the
right kind of character that can sustain them, of course, and so it is not enough that such
persons merely have a personal interest or passion for ministry.[56] Mere enthusiasm is not
the same as consistent moral virtue. Of course, it is also not enough to rely only on a
clergy appointed by hereditary succession, for that does not honor the diversity of gifts
that God gives to each Christian congregation.

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[54] Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader*, 152.

[55] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 142.

[56] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 135.

As to his seventh thesis statement, Hauerwas points to the need for shared practices of friendship, family life, and kindness. These practices are learned, not innate. As is true of other skills, people learn virtues by observing and imitating examples in their relationships with others. In *Resident Aliens*, Hauerwas explains that "learning to be moral is much like learning to speak a language."[57] Just as a baby cannot learn how to speak by studying grammar, the church can only "learn to speak [the language or habit of virtue] by being initiated into a community of language, by observing your elders, by imitating them."[58] Therefore, Christians need to expose themselves to "significant examples of Christian living" in order to foster morality in the congregation and each member.[59] In other words, the virtues which enables Christians to live morally can be obtained only in the church community. They are more "caught" than "taught." As such, it is vital that the clergy all understand this point and the church's collective responsibility for learning virtue rather than putting all the weight on the pastoral shoulders of official leaders.

The church community that Hauerwas describes is an ideal and, as such, can never be fully realized by actual church communities. In fact, many contemporary churches differ greatly from the ideal described by Hauerwas. In this real-world context, Christians are nevertheless asked to pursue "accountability to what the gospel demands

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[57] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 97.
[58] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 97.
[59] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 97.

that the church become rather than conformity to things as they are."[60] Even the apostle

Paul could say, despite his flaws, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of

Christ" (1 Cor 11:1 NIV). Unlike the negative lists of things Korean churches and

leaders should not do, the kindness in relationships that Hauerwas describes are positive

things that can be modeled by every Christian, not only pastors.

Hauerwas's character ethics does not limit church ministry to ordained ministers.

That is because "ministry" simply consists in doing "the things that make the church the

church."[61] He continues, "The ministry is thus set apart and identified with specific

persons not because it involves matters reserved to the minister or priest, but because

those activities that characterize the ministry are properly activities of the whole

church."[62] All congregants contribute to the ministry, with ordained pastors acting as

guides and facilitators. That being so, the virtues required for individual ministers

should be connected to the communitarian context of the church. Therefore, a necessary

trait for ministers is to be people of character to make the church truly the church.

The task of ministry is thus not only for paid pastors but also for every church

member or Christian. For Hauerwas, "ministry is the vocation of all Christians, a

communal undertaking."[63] Pastors should therefore try to "discover the ministry of all

Christians" so that they might help every church member participate in the work of

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[60] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 117.

[61] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 136.

[62] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today*, 136.

[63] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 118.

ministry.[64] For discovering such ministries, pastors always have to ask "the basic, communal, ecclesial, social questions that are fundamental to the church's staying the church; namely, what sort of community would we have to be in order to be the sort of people who live by our convictions?"[65] To find answers for such questions, pastors or other church leaders have to proclaim the Word of God to their congregations, preaching the biblical narrative and thereby "orienting God's people to God."[66]

The moral crisis of the Korean church is evident in the bankruptcy of its social trust. To restore the social credibility of the Korean church, it will be helpful to examine the claims of a scholar who has applied Hauerwas to the context of the Korean church in the past. Through his work, it is possible to find ways to apply Hauerwas's theology to the context of the Korean church in ways that are more detailed than they would be otherwise.

Specifically, Si-young Moon is the most active in publishing work that applies the theology of Hauerwas to the Korean church.[67] He argues for the need to read and apply Hauerwas's claims to the church context of South Korea for a few reasons. One reason that looms large in the literature is the moral crisis of Korean church and how

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[64] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 118.

[65] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 122.

[66] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 140.

[67] See Moon, "A Study on Ethical Responsibility for Post-modern Moral Crisis"; Moon, "A Study on Ethical Responsibility"; Moon, "Church as the Base of Public Theology and Ecclesial Ethics"; Moon, "Haueowoseuui Yunlieseo Bog-Eumgwa Gyohoe [The Gospel and the Church in the Ethics of Hauerwas]"; Moon, "Preaching Ethics and Ethical Preaching"; Moon, *To Reform the Ethics of the Church*; Moon, "Sociological Implications."

this impacts it social trust level. Essentially, the church is morally bankrupt. Moon

insists that the social insights of Hauerwas should be applied to the context of the

Korean church if the church is to have integrity as the people of God. Hauerwas often

writes that the social responsibility of the church and its primary social ethics is to be the

church itself. Therefore, Moon's work explores the meaning of the church acting as the

church in the context of the Korean church, with all of the historical and cultural

implications of practicing Christianity in the Protestant tradition. If pastors alone are not

sufficient to model Christian virtues of friendship and kindness, there needs to be a

greater diversity or role models in the Korean church for Christians to imitate. There

must also be a greater transparency with the finances of the church so that congregations

are not trying to be corporate conglomerates for profit. The church needs to be for

prophets, not profit.

The Korean Church as an Alternative Community for Society

> Ninth thesis: In our attempt to control our society Christians in America have too
> readily accepted liberalism as a social strategy appropriate to the Christian story.
> Tenth thesis: The church does not exist to provide an ethos for democracy or any
> other form of social organization, but stands as a political alternative to every
> nation, witnessing to the kind of social life possible for those that have been
> formed by the story of Christ.[68]

As the surveys of the Christian Ethics Movement of Korea demonstrated, the Korean

church has a very low level of social trust from Korean society. The reason why Korean

society consistently gives the lowest social trust rating to the Korean church compared

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[68] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 11–12.

to the Korean Roman Catholic Church or Korean Buddhism is that the Korean church is a religious institution that does not meet the social moral standards expected of them. Although the ninth and tenth theses of Hauerwas were formulated for an American context, the low social trust of the Protestant church in South Korea may be related in part to the church conflating its moral values with the political values of non-Christian leaders in Korea. By aiming to be nationalistic, the Korean church failed the social, ethical standards expected of most any religious tradition.

In the previous chapter, this dissertation showed that the Korean church assimilated the economic growth narrative of Korean society into its own church narrative, bringing a decline in moral values and an increase in ethical scandals. Korean society currently is seeking a new narrative for itself, something removed from association with the military government's developmental dictatorship. South Korea now elects its leaders based on democratic procedures, and these procedures are not just a façade by a military-backed presidential candidate. After the severe economic crisis in 1997, the Korean society recognized that the narrative of growth was unsustainable. It was not true, it turned out, that the nation's economic development always ensured better lives for its citizens. People in society are beginning to realize that their problems cannot be solved simply by pursuing national economic growth or more money for themselves. Because of this realization, political leaders in Korea are strengthening welfare systems and focusing on the happiness of individuals rather than merely the collective good of the nation. Disillusioned by the old economic growth narrative, the

country is looking for other alternative narratives, for a new story. Unfortunately, the Korean church remains stuck in the church growth narrative as if nothing has changed. The Korean church uses as a measure of its success the growth of each church in terms of quantitative growth. Its leaders do not always see the problem or the pitfalls of continuing to focus on quantity instead of quality.

The ecclesial ethics of Hauerwas would claim that the church should try to escape Constantinian accommodation that happens when becoming large and powerful. Hauerwas points out that churches that rely on the power and benefits of the state are in danger of losing their identity as Christian churches today. Applying his argument to the situation of the Korean church, it can be inferred that the Korean church is weakening its identity as a church as a result of assimilation to the dominant narrative of the Korean government and Korean society. The church must therefore reclaim its biblical narrative rather than compromising its identity with political and social power. The church's mission is not to grow in quantity, if that comes at the price of shallow moral character. The ends do not justify any means. Equally, it is not the church's primary mission to support the democratic freedoms of present-day South Korea. Even that would be a misguided attempt to turn the church into an incubator for political liberalism or political candidates. Instead, the church must stand as an alternative community that does not exist for the sake of some other institution. It is a community of character, not a community of status and political ambitions. It is a community shaped by the story of Jesus, the savior who did not seek political power for himself. This is the proposal

Hauerwas provides for the church, but next is a discussion of Niebuhr's correctives before integrating both perspectives into a Korean context.

B. Niebuhr's Proposal for the Korean Church

Hauerwas' emphasis on character ethics and narrative contributes to the Korean church becoming a community faithful to Jesus's narrative. The Korean church, however, must also consider how it can become a community that practices Jesus's narrative in relation to Korean society. It is not enough for the church to cultivate many people of good character in isolated cocoons, for the church does not fulfill its mission through that. Applying Hauerwas becomes complicated once social responsibilities are considered. Another scholar is needed to complement the insights from Hauerwas.

Although Hauerwas's ethics of character is an appealing paradigm for cultivating virtues in an ecclesial community, it is very difficult for the ethical approach to be relevantly effective in all cultural situations. In Korean society, the Korean church is recognized as a religion for the rich and privileged. Mega-churches in South Korea represent how much social power Protestant Christianity has in society. Historically, it is undeniable that the Korean church grew up under the protection and support of the government. Korean society expects the Korean church to show its social responsibility to Korean society. Here is where H. Richard Niebuhr's ethical paradigm is helpful as a complementary perspective that can be applied to the context of the Korean church. Since Niebuhr emphasizes the responsibility of the church for society, his ethical

paradigm can show how the Korean church should act in Korean society in terms of the church's public involvement.

Niebuhr's Christ Transforming Culture Position

Niebuhr argues, in the view of his preferred paradigm, Christ-the-transformer-of-culture, that Christians can engage in cultural activities to transform their culture in positive ways. Niebuhr calls Christians who have this view "conversionists." Other than those who are only nominally or culturally Christians (i.e., the Christ of Culture position), conversionists are the most optimistic about human culture out of the five cultural perspectives that Niebuhr discusses in his book *Christ and Culture*. Conversionists view culture as corrupt, yet redeemable. It is such a perspective that can nuance Hauerwas for the purposes of this study. Besides Niebuhr, several other scholars argue for a public theology by which Christians can address the redeemable parts of society rather than just focusing on being the church in isolation from society. In other words, both Hauerwas's approach and Niebuhr's "conversionist" approach are needed for transforming culture while being shaped by the right narrative in the church.

Niebuhr's Conversionist View and the Korean Church

The conversionist view shares much in common with neo-Calvinism and Christian perspectives on public theology. Accordingly, this section introduces arguments from neo-Calvinist and other perspectives to support Niebuhr's conversionist view as a

helpful one, including perspectives from David Fergusson, Miroslav Volf, J. Philip Wogaman, Richard Mouw, Stefan Paas, Lewis S. Mudge, and Vigen Guroian.

In *Community, Liberalism, and Christian Ethics*, David Fergusson agrees with Niebuhr's Christ-transforming-culture perspective. He argues that Christians have a moral vision which is different from and sometimes even against the prevailing culture around them. He does not try to build Christian ethics based on common moral ground with general or secular ethics. Instead, he identifies Christian ethics with its own particular qualities. He relies heavily on Karl Barth and Hauerwas for his argument by introducing his own summaries of their theological ethics. All agree on the uniqueness of Christian ethics compared with other ethical systems. This use of Niebuhr's approach suggests that Niebuhr's argument for Christ and culture is still relevant, though it must be fleshed out in specific contexts and nuanced sufficiently.

Fergusson states that, though ethical practices need to be understood within the context of community identity, it is also true that the practices of the community contribute to its character. There is a mutual enrichment of character and habitual activity in any community. One such practice is the practice of showing hospitality. Hospitality to strangers and guests is a prominent Jewish theme which appears in biblical literature and in the literature of the post-apostolic period. Hospitality forges links with Christians from other parts of the world, supports the church's itinerant ministers, and symbolically reminds Christians of their own identity as "resident aliens"

since they have in this world no abiding city.[69] Similarly, the gathering of funds for

Christians in other parts of the Roman empire was an important expression and

reinforcement of belonging one to another in New Testament literature, as is the regular

support of the sick and widowed within each congregation.

Fergusson goes on to explain that, while Christian ethics and secular ethics do

not share common moral ground, they may share common moral practices. In this sense,

he acknowledges the contribution of Christian realism for contemporary society. He

argues that the church can contribute to a pluralistic society just as non-Christians can

contribute. At this point, he differs from MacIntyre and Hauerwas regarding Christian

involvement in politics and the public sphere. Since Fergusson emphasizes God's action

in the world, he sees a larger role for public involvement for the church in each nation.

Considering the pluralistic and complex world in which humanity lives, Fergusson's

approach is one way to apply Hauerwas's ethics of character and Niebuhr's

transforming-culture position in the current circumstances of the Korean church. Other

scholars also resonate with this approach.

In today's world, Christians need to know how to behave in the public sphere.

The emphasis on Christian responsibility in society found in Niebuhr's Christ-

transforming-culture paradigm is relevant in this twenty-first century context, because it

addresses that behavioral component. Miroslav Volf likewise aligns with this paradigm,

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[69] Fergusson, *Community, Liberalism, and Christian Ethics*, 62.

insisting in *A Public Faith* that Christians always take part in culturally-defined

practices but shape them on the basis of their dominant values.[70] These values are to be

rooted in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, if they are to be truly Christian values.

And Volf recognizes the danger of Christian accommodation to its surrounding culture,

much as Hauerwas does. Volf, however, argues that separation from the world is not a

suitable choice for Christians. It is not a question of if a Christian will engage in the

public sphere of life but how they will engage in it. Many Christians find ways to resist

the allure of compromises and attempt to make their culture a better place. Here is how

Volf puts it:

> In this new polytheism, we follow the voice of one god at work, another at home, and maybe yet another at church. Each sphere resists the claims of the one God to shape all of life. Most people of faith living in the modern world have experienced this pull of divided loyalties. Though many have given in, many others have also resisted. Those who resist have refused to play the game when the rules conflict with their deeply held religious convictions. They have tried to transform their places of work from within, endeavored to create more just rules of engagement, and sometimes even worked to set up alternative institutions so that the demands of their work can stay in sync with the claims of their faith.[71]

It is a question of loyalties and remaining faithful to the right narrative in the midst of

many competing claims on one's loyalties.

J. Philip Wogaman also supports Niebuhr's Christ-transforming-culture

argument. He has a more optimistic view of cultural engagement by Christians than

Hauerwas does, claiming that the church needs to take realistic responsibility for its life

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[70] Volf, *A Public Faith*, 92.
[71] Volf, *A Public Faith*, 14.

in public rather than retreating into narrow enclaves of exclusivism or idealism of what

the church should be in a perfect world:

> But twenty-first century realities may not prove hospitable to narrow definitions
> of the moral community. First, there is wide and growing moral revulsion against
> the excesses of religious extremism and intolerance. Second, the realities of
> global communication, travel, and trade make it ever more difficult to stereotype
> persons of different religious traditions. Third, there is simply too much negative
> material (including terrible atrocities) in the actual history of the Christian
> churches for us to present that history in only idealized terms. Fourth, in modern
> pluralistic societies all of us participate in a variety of different communities of
> reference at different levels: the church, of course, but also family, local
> community, economic and educational institutions, the state. Each has a narrative
> of some sort; each is a repository of value perspectives. Most of us wish to find
> approval in a variety of social settings, including some that might seem far
> removed from the church.[72]

As Wogaman mentioned, these are realities of the twenty-first century. There are many

communities in which each Christian might participate, and so a type of public theology

is needed that can be flexible enough for embodied character lived out in all of these

communities. Christians in today's global society need a theology which is public

theology. Niebuhr's Christ-transforming-culture position has a successor in public

theology, depending on how the latter is defined. According to Stackhouse, "public

theology is an argument regarding the way things are and ought to be, one decisive for

public discourse and necessary to the guidance of individual souls, societies, and,

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[72] Wogaman, *Christian Ethics*, 319.

indeed, the community of nations."[73] Richard Mouw includes political and social ethics

within the realm of public theology.[74]

Moreover, it is not just the public nature of Christian community that needs to be

addressed but also the reality of "post-Christendom," especially across Western Europe

and North America. Post-Christian societies are now common even in Asia and Africa,

in places where Christianity was once prominent.[75] Paas defines such societies more

clearly:

> Post-Christian societies are societies where so many individuals have declined
> from Christian beliefs and practices that Christians have become or are
> becoming a minority. Also, it could signify the diminishing importance and
> relevance of Christian beliefs and practices on the motivational level, even if
> people do not leave the church formally. Where many people used to invoke
> Christian teachings to motivate their own behaviour and decisions, but they do
> no longer so, a post-Christian society is in the making.[76]

With this in mind, public theology needs to address the challenges of post-Christian

society in a contemporary Korean context. Such theology should not be just another set

of rules or principles in normative ethics. That is where virtue ethics comes in.

Therefore, a robust public theology would effectively communicate Christian social

values but also help Christians live virtuously in ecclesial communities in the context of

post-Christian societies.

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[73] Stackhouse, "Public Theology and Ethical Judgment," 165.
[74] Mouw, *The Challenges of Cultural Discipleship*, 2.
[75] Paas, "Post-Christian, Post-Christendom, and Post-Modern Europe," 3.
[76] Paas, "Post-Christian, Post-Christendom, and Post-Modern Europe," 11.

On this point, Lewis S. Mudge lists at least two models of public theology which finds ways to relate the church and ethics to each other faithfully. The first model regards the church as an ethical community that is a substitute for the ethics of civil society.[77] This model characterizes Hauerwas's ecclesial ethics. The other model is represented by Stackhouse's public theology, which can be characterized as a conversionist type of theology in line with Niebuhr's thinking. In both models, the church is of central importance as a formative context for the Christian life. Building on the point, Vigen Guroian argues that theologians should emphasize the church in any discussion of Christian ethics.[78]

That said, it is very difficult to determine exactly what position of Niebuhr's five positions the Korean church holds. According to Niebuhr's typology, the Christ-transforming-the-culture position can become a Christ-of-culture position, if Christians are not careful. In addition, the Christ-over-culture type and the Christ-and-culture-in-paradox type can become the Christ-against-culture type as congregations isolate themselves from culture and set up more rigid boundaries. The church growth narrative of the Korean church had many characteristics of the type "Christ of culture," regardless of the conservative theology the Christians in these congregations avowed. Even so, there is potential for the church to change its narrative. If the Korean church can not only recognize its responsibility to society but also make concerted efforts to preserve

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[77] Mudge, *The Church as Moral Community*, 12.
[78] Guroian, *Ethics after Christendom*, 83.

its distinct identity, then Niebuhr's paradigms are helpful for both a negative diagnosis and a positive vision for the future. But his categories alone do not contain the narrative theology that is also needed. In this light, both Hauerwas's ecclesial ethics and Niebuhr's emphasis on the church's social responsibility are complementary perspectives that focus on the church and the ethical implications of being the church.

C. The Integration of Hauerwas and Niebuhr

Despite the complexities of Korean society and the theological diversity of the church, the theology of Hauerwas and Niebuhr as described in this chapter can contribute in complementary ways to theological reflection in analyzing the ethical problems of the Korean church. Therefore, this dissertation seeks to implement the insights from both Hauerwas and Niebuhr to explore the ethical concerns of the Korean church historically and today. Despite their differences, both scholars have a desire for church to be an alternative community and a servant-hearted community in the world. What is distinctive in each scholar's writings is what makes the combination of them so useful for the moral crisis of the church in South Korea today.

Because of their nuances, the ethical paradigms of Hauerwas and Niebuhr are often misunderstood, though. Hauerwas's ethics of character should not be regarded as a sectarian withdrawal from society, because he argues that the church itself is a community of social ethics that serves society and the world by living according to a different narrative, a narrative that is good and formative of virtuous character. Even though he does not identify his ethics of character (or virtue ethics) as a kind of public

theology, his view of the church has social implications related to those in public theology for how the church can transform into its identity as the church according to the master narrative of Jesus Christ in Scripture. The church can be a community of character together rather than a community that lives out the story of some other group. The narrative should be that of Jesus revealed throughout the Bible, or else it is a false gospel altogether. Admittedly, Hauerwas also warns that the church can lose its identity when it emphasizes engagement in social and public issues. That is why he is so concerned to underline the centrality of the church as a formative community with its own end (*telos*) from God. A true community of character is a community that connects the sanctification of the congregation with the virtues modeled in the New Testament. In doing so, the church can witness the true life of Jesus Christ to the lives of those in the congregation so that their community might be regarded as an alternative community to a watching world. Hauerwas has an emphasis on inward-facing discipleship rather than outward-facing evangelism, overall.

By contrast, Niebuhr emphasizes the public-facing role of the church so that the church can participate and cooperate in serving local society and the global public. It is not his intention to suggest that the church should compromise with its culture in ungodly ways in order to transform the culture. At the same time, his Christ-transforming-culture position does insist that the recovery of the church's identity is not for the sake of the church alone. In other words, just as the gospel message should be for the world and not only for insiders already within the church, so too the church

exists for the sake of the world, not only for the needs and moral growth of those already within the church. The voice of Niebuhr is valuable if the church is to go into the world with a missional vision. Accordingly, Niebuhr has more attention on evangelism than discipleship, if one had to characterize his position.

Niebuhr's Christ-transforming-culture perspective and Hauerwas's ethics of character can both be combined to solve the moral crisis of the Korean church. Hauerwas's ethics of character and his emphasis on the church are not incompatible with Niebuhr's conversionist vision for engaging with culture. The latter vision can be used as a kind of public theology. Of course, while Niebuhr is concerned about the church's responsibility in the public sphere, Hauerwas is concerned about the more limited and distinctive context of the institutional Protestant church and its gathered religious activities. Nevertheless, both of them are concerned about the church, defined as the Christian community or the people of God. Both of them articulate an ethical vision that could be considered a type of Christian social ethics. Although the theologians wrote in different times and places, they were not speaking past each other. Hauerwas's ecclesial ethics and Niebuhr's ethical paradigms both focus on an ethical vision for the church and can be useful in public theology.

Even though both authors differ in their vision for how the church is to serve in the world, they share a common concern for the church as an alternative community. With Niebuhr's paradigm of public engagement, the Korean church can be responsible for its duties in the public sphere. In addition, with Hauerwas's ecclesial ethics based

on his virtue ethics, the Korean church can recover what the church should be according to the story of God based on the virtues modeled by Jesus Christ. In the Korean church, therefore, a faithful application of both paradigms would develop a concern for the church community, drawing from both Hauerwas's ecclesial ethics and Niebuhr's Christ-transforming-culture position. Both Niebuhr and Hauerwas can provide guidance to the Korean church regarding its role and identity in contemporary society. More than just the Korean church, the global church can listen both to Hauerwas's ecclesial ethics and Niebuhr's Christ-transforming-culture paradigm so that it can maintain its distinct identity and serve the world in various cultures. The insights from Hauerwas and Niebuhr can thereby contribute to contemporary public theology based on a vision of biblical virtue ethics. Such an ethical framework will be both easier and harder than a mere list of rules, because it is about who the church is becoming rather than simply what some members decide to do or avoid doing occasionally.

This dissertation argues that the narrative of the Korean church is enmeshed with the narrative of Korean society. Most Christians in the country are actually comfortable with this unbiblical distortion of their faith. Niebuhr's paradigms are effective in explaining how the Korean church has actively embraced the narrative of Korean society. His theory is also effective in explaining the explosive growth of the "faith-seeking-blessings" movement, a movement that is widespread in the Korean church.

A challenge to integrating the two theologians is that Hauerwas is critical of

Niebuhr's categories. Hauerwas criticizes Niebuhr's presentation of Christ-the-

Transformer-of-Culture as the most desirable model of the relationship between

Christians and culture. Hauerwas believes that the paradigm could justify Christianity's

compliance with the current political system in which it is enmeshed. Niebuhr, likewise,

appears to be in conflict with Hauerwas's ethics of character, because Hauerwas can be

perceived as advocating the sectarian, Christ-against-Culture position. Both kinds of

criticism are not entirely fair to the other theological framework. Instead, both scholars

can mutually benefit this research on the church in South Korea. By carefully employing

Niebuhr's paradigms, Hauerwas's ethics of character is thereby refined and fleshed out.

In tandem, the work of both theologians can be applied to this specific research context.

D. Conclusion

Both Hauerwas and Niebuhr have theoretical insights that apply to the Korean church.

Niebuhr's work not only allows scholars to assess how deeply the Korean church has

absorbed the materialistic narrative of Korean society. It is work that also emphasizes

the social responsibility of the church. Because his ethical paradigms describe the

relationship between the church and the culture, this connection to social

responsibility—or relative lack thereof—is inevitable. All of the five paradigms he

offers have some relational element, and greater or lesser embrace of the relationship

with non-Christians and non-Christian communities. His "conversionist" or transformer-

of-culture model is useful in Korea, because the alternative is so often for the church to adopt whatever is popular in the surrounding culture without any critical filtering. Then, too, the ecclesial ethics of Hauerwas reminds Christians that the Korean church must strive to preserve its identity as a church and to shape its character according to the narrative of Jesus. This means that not just any narrative will do. It must be a biblical narrative that is faithful to the gospel message of creation, fall, and redemption throughout the Bible. Materialism or "mammonism" is a competing narrative, but it is not the story of Jesus or the *telos* that he taught Christians to aim for concerning the kingdom of God. The narrative theology and ethics of character of Hauerwas thus apply to both Korean society and particularly the Korean church. The church is always being shaped into a certain kind of community with a specific character, but only certain kinds of character will be positive enough to reverse the moral crisis in the Korean church. The Korean church needs a new way forward, and a new narrative along with practices that form virtue are a step in the right direction.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

A. The Ethical Crisis of the Korean Church

This dissertation used the theology of Stanley Hauerwas and H. Richard Niebuhr to

analyze the ethical issues of the Protestant Korean church in South Korea. Chapter 1

introduced two attractive solutions to these ethical problems. The first solution generally

proposed by Christians is to emphasize the outward social responsibility of the church.

This solution involves better public theology and better public living by Christians

before a watching world. If these are rectified, this line of thought goes, Korean

Christians might be able to overcome the current crisis of the Korean church due to its

ethical corruption and scandals. Niebuhr and other public theologians most closely align

with this first solution. The second solution, however, focuses on improving the church's

internal moral compass and capacities so that the church might live ethically as a distinct

religious community. This solution is inwardly focused, and it is represented by the

biblical virtue ethics and narrative theology in works by writers such as Hauerwas.

Given the economic growth narrative in Korean society and all the ethical problems this

has caused in South Korea in general and in the Protestant church in particular, I argued

that both inward and outward solutions are needed. Hauerwas and Niebuhr together

provide moral resources for assessing and improving the moral character of the Korean church.

B. Further Research

Further research can be done to apply this historical and theological argument in new ways, even within the context of the Korean church. First of all, because Korean society is changing, the current master narrative of Korean society needs to be examined in more depth to see whether the church will follow its culture lockstep during the next decade or whether the church will remain stuck in the middle of the twentieth century with its growth narrative, as I have claimed it currently remains. Such research needs to read contemporary religious and non-religious texts as well as the secondary literature on the culture of Korean society in the twenty-first century. As the economic growth narrative influenced the church growth narrative of the Korean chuch in the past, the current master narrative of Korean society will inevitably influence the narrative of the Korean church. Future studies could also examine whether some congregations have developed communities of virtue that resist the church growth narrative. These congregations will likely be smaller in size and have less centralized pastoral leadership power. They will not preach prosperity theology, of course. More scholars will be needed to contribute to articulating the master narrative of Korean society and the level of social trust people have in the church as both the national narrative and the level of trust changes in the years to come.

A second avenue for further research would be to examine the specific character traits or virtues that are formed by the narrative of Jesus. What virtues would follow from a church following the narrative of Jesus? It is clear that the narrative of Jesus does not exist as a simplistic, single layer of narrative. In other words, the ability to read the Bible with its complexity is required to apply the narrative of Jesus into the context of contemporary society. Not only to discover Christian virtues, then, but also to delve into the narrative of Jesus, the Bible should be read carefully. The careful work of Gushee and Stassen is relevant here. Furthermore, what practices would be necessary to sustain those virtues and pass on the story from generation to generation? How does the public perceive certain virtues compared to other virtues? More needs to be done in the context of Korean society and how they perceive different denominations in its regard. Perhaps Presbyterians and Pentecostals will develop different levels of social trust in the broader public in the years to come.

Third, the task remains to work together for the mission of the church. In order to apply an ethics of character to the context of the Korean church, there will need to be collaboration between Christian ethicists, ministers, teachers, and laity. On the one hand, interdisciplinary research into Christian virtue ethics and Christian education is necessary for the church and the Christian university to serve as contexts of character formation. In addition, in-depth and practical research is needed on how Christians can live virtuously in the public sphere. Through such collaborative work, if the Korean church's character is restored, then the Korean church can be remade as a church that

forms virtuous Christians living out the narrative of Jesus. Only then will the Korean

church escape from its moral crisis and become a church trusted by society. Only then

can the Korean church go from moral bankruptcy to moral credibility.

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