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Karl Barth's Reception in Korea: An Historical Overview

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During the mid-1960s and the 1970s, Korean theologians who had studied philosophy and theology under western theologians in the Reformed Protestant seminaries in Europe and North America were eager to characterize themselves as evangelical and Bible-centred, with an emphasis on the worshipping community and the maintenance of high standards of individual conduct. They emphasized both theocentric and Christocentric theology—so-called evangelical theology—by employing Karl Barth's Christocentric ecclesiology as a practical as well as a theoretical basis for Korean churches and pastors.

The reciprocal relationship between knowledge and practice, that is, the unity between theology and ethics in Barth's theological development, was helpful in promoting the rapid growth of the church in Korea. The statement, 'Knowing God is doing His will ethically and morally', became an extensively proclaimed motto by theologians and pastors in the Korean Christian community. Korean Christians accepted it without any resistance. This was because they had already been influenced by Confucianism with regard to their ethical principles of conduct as well as their religious views.

One of Barth's students in Basel, Sung-bum Yun (1916-1989), was instrumental in establishing Barth's ideas in Korea. In his work entitled *Han'gukjok Sinhak: Song ui Hae-sokhak* [The Korean Theology: The Hermeneutics of Sincerity] (1972), he has argued that a genuine Confucian-Christian dialogue and formula-

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tion of a Korean theology of Confucianism is possible by integrating the theology of Karl Barth and Neo-Confucianism. This is because Karl Barth has significantly influenced Korean Calvinist or Reformed Theology, namely Korean Presbyterianism, which was ultimately influenced by Confucianism.

Correspondingly, Heup-Young Kim (the most recent and outstanding neo-Calvinist interpreter of Karl Barth) has developed a unique relationship between Karl Barth's theology and Wang Yang-ming's confuciology of self-cultivation in his work *Wang Yang-Ming and Karl Barth: A Confucian-Christian Dialogue* (1996) for the purpose of a genuine inter-religious dialogue within a Northeast Asian context. In this work, Kim seeks to identify the affinity between Korean Christian thought and Barth's theology, and his impact on Korean Christianity, especially on the Presbyterian Church in Korea. However, Kim does not explore in any detail why and how Barth's theology was assimilated and is still influential in Korea. It is thus necessary to investigate the Korean reception of Karl Barth's theology and Confucianism in terms of its deep-rooted religious affinity with Reformed Christianity, namely Neo-Calvinism. This is because the ideas of the Reformer John Calvin have had a great influence on Korean theologians, especially those belonging to the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Tonghap), which represents over sixty percent of the Christian population. Therefore, it was natural for Karl Barth's theolo-

gy, rooted in Calvin, to be well received in Korea.¹

Barth's theological impact upon Korean Christian thought has been great, but it has never been brought to the attention of the English-speaking world. For this reason, this article will sketch an historical account of the rise of Barthianism in Korea, discussing when Barth's theology was received in Korea and how Korean Christian theologians responded to it. However, this article does not argue that all Christian churches and pastors in Korea accepted Barth's theology without criticism. Rather, it explores the interpreters of Karl Barth who have taken Barth's Christ-centred principle as their theological norm and basis.

The Reception of Karl Barth's Theology in Korea in the early 20th Century

Kyung-Ok Chung, the Wesleyan scholar, was the theologian who first introduced the theology of Karl Barth to the Korean Church in the 1930s. Chung graduated from the Methodist Theological Seminary (Seoul) in 1928, where he taught as a professor of systematic theology. His Barth-related works were not published, but his small book entitled *An Exposition of the Doctrinal Statement of the Korean*

¹ See Martha Huntley, *To Start a Work: the foundations of Protestant mission in Korea, 1884-1919* (Seoul: Presbyterian Church of Korea, 1987), p. 407. For an analysis of Barth's interpretation of some aspects of Calvin's theology, see William Klempa, 'Barth as a Scholar and Interpreter of Calvin', *Calvin Studies* 7 (1994), pp. 31-50.

Methodist Church (1935) interpreted Christian doctrines according to Karl Barth's theology.² Since Chung's theological image was radical, conservative Korean theologians misunderstood Barth's theology as being too liberal and therefore unacceptable. For Chung, for instance, the Bible becomes the Word of God to us by the work of the Holy Spirit rather than being a book of God's objective revelation.

It was after 1945 that the number of disciples of Karl Barth increased on the campuses of the Methodist Theological Seminary (Seoul), the Hankuk Theological Seminary (Presbyterian Church of Korea), and the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea (Tonghap). While the Methodist interpreters of Barth's theology attempted to indigenize his Christocentric theology on the basis of Confucianism, the deep-rooted socio-cultural-religious tradition in Korea, the Presbyterian interpreters were firmly committed to Barth's Word-centred theology.³ In the 1950s, the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea began to teach the theology of Karl Barth to undergraduate theological students.

Minjung Theology and Karl Barth's Christocentrism

Barth's theology became increasingly recognized in Korea in the 1960s and 70s. Historically, the Korean Church began to see its mission through the emergence of the

students' revolutionary movement of April 19, 1960, which was directed against the corrupt Korean government. The students' revolutionary movement is called the heir to the spirit of the March First Independence Movement of 1919, and to the historical tradition of the Korean Christians' struggle for freedom and human rights. In 1962, the members of the Korean National Council of Churches (KNCC) and 204 Korean Christian leaders issued a statement urging the military government to hand over its political power to civilians as follows:

We resist all forms of dictatorship, injustice, irregularities and corruption. We reject the impure influence of foreign powers on all aspects of economic, culture, ethics and politics. We resolve to make a contribution to the historical development of our country with prayer and service led by the power of the Holy Spirit.⁴

Subsequently, 'The Korean Christian Declaration of 1973' shows clearly the awakening of the Korean Church's socio-political responsibility:

Jesus the Messiah, our Lord, lived and dwelt among the oppressed, poverty-stricken, and sick in Judea. He boldly confronted Pontius Pilate, a representative of the Roman Empire, and he was crucified while witnessing to the truth. He

² For Chung's other works, see Kyung-ok Chung, *Nanew Eirokae Salalda, Nanen Eirokae Whachul da* [I Lived and Proclaimed] (Seoul: Kohyung Siewon, 1982).

³ For details on the rise of Barthianism in Korea in the 1930s and the 1940s, see Chang-sik Lee, 'A Historical Review of Theological Thought for the Last One Century in Korea', *East Asia Journal of Theology* 3/2 (1985): pp. 321-326.

⁴ Chai-yong Choo, 'A Brief Sketch of a Korean Christian History from the Minjung Perspective', in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, ed. Yong-bok Kim (Singapore: The Commission on Theological Concerns, The Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), p. 75.

has risen from the dead, releasing the power to transform and set the people free. We resolve that we will follow the footsteps of our Lord, living among our oppressed and poor people, standing against political oppression, and participating in the transformation of history, for this is the only way to the Messianic Kingdom.⁵

'The Declaration of Human Rights in Korea' by the KNCC and 'The Declaration of Conscience' by Bishop Daniel Tji were made in 1974. Sixty-six leaders of various churches and seminaries signed 'The Theological Statement of Korean Christians'. Twelve church leaders also signed 'The Declaration for the Restoration of Democracy'.⁶

These statements of the 1960s, and 1970s, clearly manifest Korean Christianity's vision of the church's mission as being for, and of, the people who were oppressed by poverty, as well as those oppressed by dictatorship. The late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed a remarkable rise of Barthianism in Korea. Moreover, Minjung theology took shape in this period against the background of the politically oppressive and dictatorial Park regime in South Korea and the economic deprivation of urban workers and rural peasants there.

Minjung is a Korean word with its root in the Chinese characters for 'Min' and 'Jung'. The former means 'people' and the latter refers to the term 'the mass'. Thus 'Minjung'

means 'the mass of the people, or mass, or just the people, or the common people'.⁷ It should be noted, however, that both words can be carefully defined within the Korean political as well as economic context. That is to say that Minjung theologians do not use both terms 'people' and 'the mass' in the same way as Marxists use them. Thus, the term 'people' is not a political expression, and 'the mass' does not refer to the proletariat in the political sense. The term Minjung is therefore a rather general term which refers to 'the people of God' or 'the mass of oppressed people' in Korean society according to their Christian experiences in the political struggle for justice both in the past and present. After all, Minjung theology is 'an accumulation and articulation of theological reflections on the political experiences of Christian students, labourers, the press, professors, farmers, writers, and intellectuals as well as theologians in Korea in the 1970s'.⁸

For Minjung theologians, the church as community is an event. This is because Jesus Christ exists as the friend or head of his people in accordance with Barth's fundamental doctrinal affirmation of Jesus Christ as the head of his community. Barth, as well as Minjung theologians, began their theological work in the midst of a host of controversial

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Further details on this theological trend in Korea can be found in Taik-poo Chun, *The History of Christian Development in Korea* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1985).

⁷ David Kwang-sun Suh, 'Minjung and Theology in Korea: A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation', in *Minjung Theology*, pp. 17-18.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 18.

political and theological concerns.⁹ Barth held that the persecution of the Christian church was inevitable. He provides examples by citing political, state-religions, and anti-God movements during the times of such leaders as Nero, Diocletian, Louis XIV, and Adolf Hitler. For Barth, they are evidence of the continual political oppression that Christians have suffered.¹⁰ Minjung theologians also see the Christian community as 'the people' who are persecuted and oppressed either by political dictators, or economically by the bourgeoisie.

Minjung theology was therefore inspired by Karl Barth's socio-political concern for the poor and oppressed, and Latin American theology of liberation. Barth argued that the community's proclamation of the gospel summons the world to reflect on social injustice and its consequences and to alter the conditions and relationships in question. At this point, Minjung theologians shared Barth's viewpoints regarding social and political injustice as they addressed contemporary socio-political issues in Korea, such as human rights, social justice, and the political interpretation of the Bible. One may say that they were influenced by Barth and applied his theory and practice of theology to a particular

social circumstance in Korea in the 1970s.

Minjung theology is also one of the movements that has assimilated Barth's Christocentric ecclesiology into itself. Minjung theology's major themes are the person of Jesus Christ as the Lord of the community and the bringer of God's kingdom, his death and resurrection for the community and the world, and the Holy Spirit's coming at Pentecost. Basically, Minjung theologians have developed their major theological thought under the influence of contemporary western theologians. This includes such works as Jürgen Moltmann's *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in messianic dimensions*, Wolfhart Pannenberg's *Theology & the Kingdom of God*, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Christ the Center*. Karl Barth influenced all these theologians.

Minjung theologians, such as Byung-moo Ahn, Yong-bok Kim, Nam-dong Suh, and Young-sok Oh, were among those who propagated Barth's theology in Korea. But they were mainly concerned with theological indigenization, employing Barth's view of the church as a community along with the Korean concept of community and its structure. For example, Yong-bok Kim's *Korean Minjung and Christianity* (1981) represents Minjung theologians' understanding of *kongdongchae* (community) which was inspired by

⁹ See Yong-bok Kim, 'Karl Barth's Political Theology and Korean Minjung Theology', in *Korean Minjung and Christianity*, ed. Yong-bok Kim (Seoul: Hyungsung Sa, 1981), pp. 264-288.

¹⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1936-1969), pp. 664-665. Also cf. *ibid.*, IV/3, pp. 694, 767.

Barth's socio-political approach.¹¹

An Indigenous Theological Movement and Karl Barth's Christocentric Theology

An indigenous theological movement was established in Korea. Sung-bum Yun,¹² the best known interpreter of Barth's theology and the most influential theologian of the Methodist Church of Korea, published a book in 1967 entitled *Theology of Sung: Yellow Theology*. In this work, Yun set out a theological method of indigenization in accordance with Karl Barth's Christocentric theology and Korean Confucianism. Although Barth was opposed to all forms of syncretism, Yun argued that theological indigenization is an essential task for Christian theologians. It is an unavoidable syncretistic task in evangelizing non-Christian countries. That is, theological indigenization is a means of mission as well as of understanding other religious beliefs. Yun's other work, *Christianity and Korean Thought* (1964), deals explicitly with Barth's

perspectives on the Holy Spirit, mission, social service, and pastoral care. It suggests that ecumenism is the most essential task for the Christian community in Korea, making use of Karl Barth's Christocentric theology.

In 1968, Sung-bum Yun published an introductory book entitled *Karl Barth*. This book focused on Barth's Christocentrism, including his theology of the Word of God and ecclesiology. It has been reprinted and continues to be useful to students of theology in Korea. Yun's monumental work, *Hankuk juk Shinhak* [Korean Theology: An Interpretation of Sung] (1972) discusses further the theological method of indigenization on the basis of both Korean Confucianism and Karl Barth's theology.

Subsequently, some Methodist theologians published an important monograph in 1969, entitled *Karl Barth's Theology*. In this volume, June-Kwan Eun's article, 'Barth's Doctrine of the Church', presents Barth's ecclesiology by following his discussion of the four marks of oneness, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. Eun's four books¹³ argue that the ecumenical and the missionary tasks are an intra-ecclesiological mandate for Korean Christians. In these volumes, Eun states that

¹¹ For a further similar theological understanding regarding 'the people of God' or 'Christian community' between Minjung theologians and Karl Barth, see Byung-Mu Ahn, 'The Korean Church's Understanding of Jesus', *International Review of Mission* 74/293 (Jan, 1985): pp. 81-91.

¹² Sung-bum Yun (1916-1979) was formerly principal of the Methodist Theological Seminary, Seoul, Korea, and taught Systematic Theology there. He studied at Doshisha University, Japan, and also at Basel University, Switzerland, under Karl Barth. His major research area was the theological indigenization of the gospel of Jesus Christ, especially as an indigenous Korean Christian-Confucian theology on the basis of Karl Barth's Christ-centred ecclesiology.

¹³ *Church, Mission and Education* (Seoul: Chunmangsa, 1982), *Ecclesiology in light of Basileia and Ecclesia* (Seoul: Taehan Kidokkyu Seohae, 1998), *Practical Ecclesiology* (Seoul: Taehan Kidokkyu Seohae, 1999), and *The Witness of the Word of God* (Seoul: Sungkwan Munhwasa, 1980).

Barth's doctrine of the church can be the best theological paradigm for the accomplishment of such tasks.

It is worth noting that it was the theologically progressive or liberal theologians of the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea (Tonghap), Hankuk Theological Seminary, and Methodist Theological Seminary, who mostly accepted Karl Barth's theology. Professors from Yonsei University Faculty of Divinity, and Ehwa Woman's University School of Theology also adopted Barth's theology enthusiastically.

During the 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s, the socio-political situation in Korea was unsettled, so Korean Christianity was seriously challenged by a number of indigenous theological movements including Minjung and Sung theologies. Both Minjung and Sung theologies were regarded as radical challenges to the conservative Korean Church. Since both took Barth's theology as their theological source and norm, the most conservative Korean theologians accordingly rejected Karl Barth's theology without any scholarly debate or analysis. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, there was an anti-Barthian movement among conservative Presbyterian theologians. For example, Chul-won Suh, Professor of Systematic Theology at Chongshin (Hapdong Presbyterian) Theological Seminary, and Young-han Kim, Professor of Christian Theology at Soongsill University School of Theology, led this movement. Professor Suh strongly resisted Karl Barth's theology, particularly Barth's view of Scripture and

divine revelation.¹⁴

Karl Barth's Reception in Korea in the late 20th Century

Although both the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea, and the Methodist Theological Seminary have taught Karl Barth's theology from the late 1950s or the early 1960s, it was not until the late 1970s that the theology of Karl Barth was taught at other institutions including Ehwa Woman's University School of Theology, Yonsei University Faculty of Divinity, Hankook, Reformed, and Seoul Theological Seminaries. This was because from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s, graduates of European and North American seminaries returned to Korea and began to teach the views of contemporary theologians, including Karl Barth. These graduates include Chun-gwan Un, Dongnam Suh, Kyun-jin Kim, Chul-ha Han, Yong-bok Kim, Byung-moo Ahn, Chung-ku Park, and Myung-yong Kim. The first three are professors of Christian Theology at Yonsei University Faculty of Divinity, which has a Methodist background. The other four are professors at Hankuk Theological Seminary (progressive Presbyterian), the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea (Tonghap), and the Methodist Theological Seminary. Therefore, those who graduated

¹⁴ For some evidence of this, see Young-han Kim, *Barth eaisu Moltmann kagi* [From Barth to Moltmann] (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1982) and Chul-won Suh, 'Critique of Karl Barth's Theology', *Shinhak Jinam* 258 (Spring 1999), pp. 160-171.

from the above seminaries and Yonsei University have been enthusiastic in adopting Barth's theology, while Chongshin (Hapdong Presbyterian) Theological Seminary graduates have resisted Karl Barth's ideas. Although both the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea (Tonghap) and Chongshin (Hapdong Presbyterian) Theological Seminary are Presbyterian and are influenced by the reformer, John Calvin, the former accepts Barth's theology enthusiastically, while the latter objects to it. This is because Hapdong Presbyterians regard themselves as conservative, but Tonghap Presbyterians and the other seminaries are theologically liberal and radical. However, the major reason for rejecting Barth's theology is denominational schism and competition between Tonghap and Hapdong Presbyterians.¹⁵ The other reason might be that Tonghap Presbyterians were influenced by Princeton Seminary graduates, and Hapdong Presbyterians by Westminster Theological Seminary graduates.

The Influence of Karl Barth's Practical Theology in Korea

It was true that Barth's Christocentric ecclesiology, and his theology of the Word of God impressed many

seminary students. Once they graduated from the seminary and planted churches, they not only adopted Barth's practical theology as their exemplary model for church growth, but they were also eager to apply his ecclesiology in their pastoral ministry. Coincidentally, the mid-1970s, and the 1980s marked a period of rapid church growth and spiritual revival with an emphasis on both Word-centred evangelism and socio-political concerns. Many Korean pastors who were influenced by Barth's ecclesiology and his theology of the Word of God were involved in the organization of the Word-centred evangelical movement, namely, 'a neo-orthodox movement' in Korea. It arose in 1967 and influenced Reformed and Methodist theologians from the late 1970s on.¹⁶ Professors Bong-nam Park, Chungkoo Park, Myung-yong Kim, Kwang-sik Kim, Chul-ha Han,¹⁷ and Kyung-yun Chung were all active in this theological movement.

There are a number of world-renowned Presbyterian and Methodist congregations, such as Somang, Myungsung, Onnuri, and

¹⁵ For a historical background of the denominational conflict between Tonghap and Hapdong Presbyterians in Korea, see Tail-poo Chun, *The History of Christian Development in Korea* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1985) and Seung-tae Kim, *Historical Reflection of Korean Christianity* (Seoul: Word of Press, 1994).

¹⁶ See Chul-ha Han, 'Analysis of Theological Circumstance in Korea', *Church and Theology* 2 (1966), pp. 83-97.

¹⁷ After Chul-ha Han completed his doctorate at the Union Theological Seminary in New York, he was very active in introducing Karl Barth's theology to Korea. His Barth-related works are as follows: 'An Asian Critique of Western Theology', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 7/1 (April 1983): pp. 34-47; 'Is there God outside of the Church?' *Church and Theology* 6 (1973): pp. 22-32; 'Karl Barth's Interpretation of Anselm's Theology', *ibid.*, 3 (1970): pp. 100-120; and 'Korean Theology and Church', *ibid.*, 4 (1971), pp. 46-73.

Kwanglim Church, in which Barth's Christ-centred ecclesiology are evident. These congregations stress evangelism, worship, prayer, fellowship, Bible study, social service, and foreign mission. All of the above congregations have at least 20,000 or more members and support many foreign missionaries. Significantly, the senior pastors at the above churches all graduated from the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea, and the Methodist Theological Seminary in Seoul, which principally teach the theology of Karl Barth.

To take an example, the senior pastor at Somang Presbyterian Church is the Reverend Sun-hee Kwak. He graduated from the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea, and Princeton Theological Seminary. In 1976, he encouraged his congregation to emphasize the Reformed tradition of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*. Since he had a vision of the church being devoted to evangelism and offering biblical teaching to the members, his church concentrates on the spiritual growth of believers through prayer, Bible study, retreats at Prayer Mountain, fellowship, social concerns, and foreign mission. By 1990, its membership had expanded to 22,000, and currently it supports fifty missionaries, working in centres as diverse as isolated rural areas of Korea, Africa, Southeast Asia, South America, Russia, and China. In Korea, the Reverend Sun-hee Kwak is known as an interpreter of Barth's theology, and he is famous for his successful pastoral ministry, especially his

Christ-centred preaching, which he believes contributed directly to the rapid growth of his congregation within such a short period. He has published many books and articles that deal with ecclesiology on the basis of Calvinism and Barth's theology.¹⁸

Numerous Publications on Karl Barth's Theology in Korea

The introduction of Barth's ideas can also be traced to a Korean translation by Kwang-sik Kim of Otto Weber's *Karl Barths Kirchliche Dogmatik* in 1976. Professor Myung-yong Kim was eager to introduce Barth's theology to Korea by publishing several articles.¹⁹ Accordingly, Kim translated A. D. R. Polman's book *Karl Barth's Neo-Orthodoxy* into Korean and published it in 1981. In 1986, Professor Bong-nam Park published the book entitled *Kyueui Hak Bangbup Ron* [How to Understand Karl Barth], which introduced Karl Barth's monumental work, *Church Dogmatics*, to the Korean Church, and to theo-

¹⁸ For his understanding of Barth's theology, see Sun-hee Kwak, 'The proclamation of the Word of God and the Korean Church', *Church and Theology* 5 (1972): pp. 47-55 and idem, 'The Scripture as the Word of God: Calvin's View of Scripture', *ibid.*, 4 (1971), pp. 168-187.

¹⁹ Myung-yong Kim's thesis topic for a doctorate is 'Der Gottesbegriff Karl Barths in der heutigen Diskussion' (ThD Thesis: Tübingen University, 1985). And his published articles are 'Karl Barth's Theological Reflection on Socio-political Movements', *Kidokkyu Sasang* (Aug, 1986), 90-105 and 'Karl Barth's Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans', *Theology and Church* 20 (1988), pp. 103-133.

logical students. Since the above books have been published, Barth's theological stature in Korea has increased greatly.

From the late 1980s, Presbyterian and Methodist students have written masters' theses on Barth's theology. It should also be noted that Baptist and Seoul Theological Seminary (Evangelical Holiness) students have also submitted master's theses on Barth's theology, especially his ecclesiology. There are now more than forty masters' theses which deal extensively with Barth's ecclesiology.²⁰ The particular reason for choosing Barth's ecclesiology as the favourite thesis topic was the fact that theological students were very interested in identifying Barth's Christocentrism within the rapidly growing Reformed and evangelical churches in Korea.

The Baptists tended to be scornful of Karl Barth's theology until the late 1980s. In the early 1990s, that initial distorted attitude changed as Korean Baptist theological candidates wrote masters' theses on Barth.²¹

Although Barth's reception in Korea was mainly among Tonghap Presbyterians and the Methodists, the Evangelical Holiness Church

(Wesleyan Background) was also enthusiastic in accepting Barth's theology. In the late 1980s, Professor Shin-keun Lee took a position on the faculty of Seoul Theological Seminary and began to teach the theology of Karl Barth supported by the Evangelical Holiness Church of Korea. Lee completed his doctoral thesis entitled '*Entwicklung und Gestalt der Ekklesiologie Karl Barths*' at Tübingen University in 1987. His Barth-related works are *The Kingdom of God and Ideology* (1990) and *The Ethics of the Kingdom of God* (1991). His book, *Karl Barth's Ecclesiology* (1989), is an outstanding, comprehensive work for understanding the biblical and ecumenical character of Barth's ecclesiology. His other book, entitled *Theology and Church* (1998), emphasizes the Christian community's relationship with non-Christians in the world-occurrence, and thus it has become the well-known articulation of Barth's theology of mission. He also translated U. Dannemann's book *Theologie und Politik im Denken Karl Barths* into Korean and published it in 1991.²²

²⁰ For a fuller list of Barth-related masters' and doctoral theses by Korean theological students one can access the Korea Library Computer System, which is available at most Korean theological seminaries.

²¹ These theses were written by Baptist Theological Seminary graduates: Myung-soo Kim's 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of God' (1995); and Won-bong Lee's 'Karl Barth's Ecclesiology' (1995).

²² There are six masters' theses, which were supervised by Professor Shin-keun Lee: In-sook Hong's 'Karl Barth's Theology of Mission and His Ecclesiology' (1987); June Huh's 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of Reconciliation' (1995); Bo-kyung Kim's 'Karl Barth's Understanding of Sin' (1988); Seo-taek Oh's 'Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: An Examination of Church Dogmatics IV/1, 2, and 3' (1994); Seong-seok Park's 'Karl Barth's View of the Relationship between Church and State' (1994); Byung-hoo Soen's 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of Election' (1991); and Soon-chul Yang's 'Political Ethics in Karl Barth's Doctrine of Reconciliation' (1993).

In any case, since the 1980s convincing attempts to construct an ecclesiology emphasizing the nature of community are finally receiving attention. Barth's dynamic view of the gathering, upbuilding, and sending of the Christian community has been influential. For example, the following three masters' theses, which have been written by Presbyterian Seminary graduates, have examined Barth's ecclesiology: Jae-eun Lee's 'Karl Barth's Ecclesiology in relation to His Theology of Mission' (1993); Chul-min Kim's 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church' (1993), and Dok-man Lee's 'Karl Barth's Ecclesiology' (1992). Two other masters' theses have also commanded particular attention as exemplary works: Jung-keon Chun's 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church' (1993); and Young-hwan Kim's 'A Biblical Doctrine of the Church on the Basis of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology' (1994).

We might also note that a doctoral thesis was written by Eae-young Kim, a graduate of Ehwa Woman's University School of Theology. It was subsequently published in 1991 with the title *Karl Barth's Socio-Political Interpretation of the Christian Community*. Her supervisor, Soon-kyung Park, is a well-known interpreter of Barth's theology in Korea. Professor Park initially introduced U. Dannemann's work, entitled *Der Zusammenhang von Theologie und Politik im Denken*

Karl Barths (1975), to Korea in 1977.²³

All of the above writings and publications of masters' and doctoral theses are the fruit of Barth scholars' theological contribution to the Korean Christian community. Certainly, Barth's Christocentrism has influenced Korean theologians and theological students to reaffirm the ecclesiological principle, rooted in the Word of God, which has promoted the growth of the Korean Christian community. In the 1980s, the number of Barth interpreters increased dramatically in Korea.

During the 1990s, the number of Barth-related monographs and articles were numerous, so a full discussion of Barth's theology, and his ecclesiology, has occurred among Korean theologians and pastors. Some important monographs from the Korean Presbyterian perspective are Sang-young Han's *Karl Barth's Ecclesiology and His Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (1990)²⁴; Heup-young Kim's *Wang Yang-Ming and Karl Barth: A Confucian-Christian Dialogue* (1996); and Jae-jin Kim's *Die Systematische Anatomie der Theologie von Karl Barth* (1998). There are also a number of Barth-related articles and works produced by the Evangelical Holiness theolo-

²³ Park's other Barth-related works are 'Socio-political Issue and Task in Christian Theology', *Shinhak Sasang* 19 (1979); 'Theory and Praxis in Communism and Christianity', *Kidokkyo Sasang* (March 1983); and 'Karl Marx and Karl Barth', *Soongshil University Research Centre for Theology and Sociology* (1988).

²⁴ In this work, Han developed Barth's theology of mission systematically and asserted that Barth's theology is biblical as well as practical.

gians. Some of their works are as follows: Keun-hwan Kang's 'Korean Church's Ecclesiological Principle on the basis of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church' (1991); Dok-hyung Han's 'Karl Barth's Theology and Hermeneutics' (1997); Shin-keun Lee's 'Karl Barth's Understanding of the Kingdom of God' (1994); and Chang-kyun Mok's *Theological Debate in the Twentieth Century* (1995).

Another decisive factor is that both Handeul and Taehan Kidokkyo Seohae (the Christian Literature Society) publishing companies have devoted themselves to translating books by and on Karl Barth into Korean, and they continue to publish them. Some of Taehan Kidokkyu Seohae's Korean translations and publications of Barth-related works are as follows: Karl Barth, *Homiletik: wesen und vorbereitung der predigt*, tran. In-kyu Jeong (1999); *The Humanity of God*, tran. Kyung-yun Chun (1994); *Kurze erklärung des Römerbriefes*, tran. Kyung-yun Chun (1966); Georges Casalis, *Karl Barth's Life and Theological Thought*, tran. Young Choi (1993); and Karl Barth Society in Korea, *The Word of God and Theology* (1995). Also Handel's publication is: Karl Barth, *Letzte Zeugnisse*, tran. Mee-hyun Chung (1997). One of their real accomplishments was the publication of Nam-hong Choi's translation of Karl Barth's *Der Römerbrief* (Handel Publishing Company) in 1997. This remains an important text for the study of Karl Barth's theology at most Korean theological seminaries.

Establishment of the 'Karl Barth Society' in Korea

In 1993, a few zealous, young Korean theologians who had completed their advanced degrees in theology at European, and North American universities or seminaries, organized a 'Karl Barth Society'. The leading members of the 'Karl Barth Society' in Korea are Professors Shin-kun Lee, Kwang-sik Kim, Kyun-jin Kim, Jong-ho Choi, Myung-yong Kim, Mee-hyun Jeong, and Young-sok Oh. There are also many members of this society who graduated from the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea, the Methodist Theological Seminary, Hankuk Theological Seminary, and Seoul Theological Seminaries. Kyun-jin Kim, Professor of Christian Theology at Yonsei University School of Theology, is presently a leading figure in the 'Karl Barth Society' in Korea. This society has cultivated the seeds sown in the Korean neo-orthodox movement of the 1970s and 1980s in Korea. Its major activity has been to organize a 'Karl Barth Colloquium' semi-annually and to sponsor other seminars. The annual publication of Barth-related articles and monographs is also one of their activities. The Korean translation of the first volume of *Church Dogmatics* is being produced by Young-sok Oh, a Professor of Systematic Theology at Hankuk Theological Seminary. Other members of the 'Karl Barth Society' are also working on Korean translations of other volumes of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*.

The 1990s have witnessed a widespread and positive reception of Karl

Barth's theology in Korea. It is worthy of note that Professor Shin-keun Lee, one of the leading members of 'Karl Barth Society', subsequently organized another branch of the 'Karl Barth Society' in Bucheon, Kyunggi Province, Korea, called 'Hankuk Shinhak YunKu So' (The Research Centre for the Studies of Contemporary Theology). The main purpose of this research centre is to publish a large number of Barth-related monographs, pamphlets, and articles. Professor Lee, chair of this centre, published a Korean translation of Barth's *Theology and Church* in 1998 and of Ulrich Danemann's *Theologie und politik im denken Karl Barths* in 1991.

Conclusion

Since many Korean interpreters of Barth's theology have written and published so extensively, Karl Barth is known as 'a father of neo-orthodox theology' or 'a father of dialectical theology'.²⁵ Barth's theology is generally regarded as basic for the understanding of contemporary theology in Korea. His Christocentric doctrine of the Church as the Christian community still commands attention. His perspective on the

nature and mission of the church is particularly significant for the contemporary ecclesiological situation in Korea. Therefore, the theological contributions of the members of the 'Karl Barth Society' are marked by a theological passion for the primacy of God, of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. This has exerted a noteworthy impact upon a new generation of theological students in Korea.

Having given a specific overview of the Korean reception of Karl Barth's theology, we have recognized that Barth, for the Korean Christian community, is remembered as 'a father of neo-orthodox theology' or 'a father of dialectical theology'. Significantly, his Christocentric and community-based ecclesiology continues to make an impact on the contemporary Korean church's theology and practice.

²⁵ The Karl Barth Society, preface to *The Word of God and Theology* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1995). As we have observed, Barth's theological impact upon Korean theologians is not confined to Presbyterians and Methodists, but is also found among the Baptists and the Evangelical Holiness Church. For theological trends in Korea in the 1990s and Korean theologians' understanding of Barth's theology, see Yong-kyu Park, 'The Birth of Korean Evangelicalism', *Shinhak Jinam* 65/3 (Fall 1998), pp. 270-303.