

CHAPTER 2
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Self-Theologizing

“Self-theologizing” is not as common a concept as “indigenization” or “contextualization,” even though it is intimately related to them. Yet it seems that this term is gaining increasing usage more than ever among missiologists (Hiebert 1985; Bosch 1991; Tiénou 1993; Nuñez 1996; Hwa 1997; Moon-Jang Lee 2004; Newberry 2005; Netland 2006; Tennent 2007).

The Self-theologizing concept originated in the extended discussion of the “indigenous church,” which has been a fundamental goal of modern missions. Even though many missiologists still adhere to the “indigenous church” concept characterized by the adoption of the “three-selves (self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating)” principle as a legitimate objective found in the New Testament (Hodges 1976, 5), noteworthy counterarguments that reassess the principle have also emerged.

William A. Smalley is one of the most prominent critics of the classic “three-selves” principle as the authentic mark of an indigenous church in the non-Western world. In his article, “Cultural Implications of an Indigenous Church,” he demonstrated his strong suspicion about the three “selves” as projections of American value systems into the idealization of the church. He regretfully remarked that “We have been Westernizing with all

our talk about indigenizing” (Smalley [1958] 1979, 35). Currently, it is generally considered that the “three self” principle has Western cultural overtones, in that it assumes a certain kind of entrepreneurial impulse and ability (Kirk 2000, 90).

Andrew F. Walls contended that a prime reason the “three-selves” policy gained widespread recognition in the mid 19th century was because there were simply not enough missionaries for the dual task of maintaining existing churches and founding new ones (Walls 2002, 218). As Wilbert R. Shenk points out, the fathers of the “three self” triad – Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson – being the good mission administrators that they were, insisted on a clear definition of the mission as the basis for the evaluation of results rather than suggested theological principles for missions (Shenk 1981, 170).

In the meantime, Dana L. Robert criticizes Rufus Anderson’s three self principles from the “feminine perspective.” In her book *American Women in Mission* (1998), she argues that women’s mission theory has been more “holistic” than that of males whose major interest has been institution-building and church-planting. Unlike their male counterparts, women’s missionary efforts were focused on personal witnessing and service, education and medical care for women and children often among their priorities (Robert 1998, 409, 410). Robert describes the continuous tension between the two genders in the process of amplifying the ministries of women missionaries in the period between 1860 and the Second World War. Emphasizing “Woman’s Work for Woman,” the Woman’s Union Missionary Society (WUMS) and the women of the Methodist Episcopal Church rejected the three-self theory as a narrow, male-dominated mission theory that would degrade women’s ministry to a secondary role (132, 183).

Historically, the “three-selves” principle was easily adapted and expanded to as many as a dozen “selves” by missiologists such as Alan Tippet, Melvin Hodges and McGavran (Kasdorf 1979, 85). However, the list of “selves” conceived by the Western missiologists, including the original trivium of Anderson and Venn, seemed to pay no attention to the self-theologizing issue for a long time. Walls succinctly summarized the cause when he said, “Theology was a *datum* to be explained and demonstrated in the new cultural setting, not something which would develop in it” (1996, 197).

It was Paul Hiebert who coined the term “self-theologizing” as the “Fourth Self” (Hiebert 1985, 193-224; Bosch 1991, 451-452). Hiebert has emphasized the necessity of self-theologizing for a church to become a genuinely indigenous one (Hiebert 193-197). In this sense, Hiebert’s contribution is very significant especially for the theological “conscientization” (Paulo Freire) of the non-Western church.

Why is this term gaining popularity? Does it convey something special that the conventional concepts of indigenization or contextualization cannot? It can be said that it probably does. The term “self-theologizing” directly draws our attention to theology and urges us to reflect on the nature of theology or doing theology. According to Donald Jacobs, the term “contextualization” should have unfortunately become the bone of contention because it has taken our eyes off the task of developing local theologies (Jacobs 1993, 239). Besides, the term “self-theologizing” turns all nouns related to theology (cf. indigenous theology, contextual theology, Reformed theology) into the present participle, ending in -ing, which transforms them into processes, that is, a continuing effort.

Furthermore, since the origins of the term “self-theologizing” lay in the issue of an indigenous church principle, it emphasizes the local churches’ role as the subject of

self-theologizing as opposed to that of the missionaries (cf. Hiebert 1985, 308-309; Jacobs 240). As Bosch mentioned, a lot of self-theologizing had already been taking place in the “mission fields,” even in ways that were often unnoticed or clandestine (Bosch 1991, 452). But it was only in the late 20th century that “the polycentric nature of Christianity” (Tiéno) began to be accepted widely by both the Western and the non-Western churches. Today, it is recognized that all “Christians certainly have the right to self-theologizing” in order to develop theologies that make the gospel clear in their different cultures (Hiebert 1985, 216; Tiéno 1993, 249). It simultaneously points to the fact that never before has there been so much potential for mutual enrichment and self-criticism among Christian churches (Walls 1996, 15).

Many missiologists, including Hiebert, use the self-theologizing concept related to the contextualization of theology. Hwa Yung argues that contextualization appears to be the most appropriate term for describing the task of self-theologizing in indigenous churches in general, the goal of this process being the enhancement of the mission of the church (1997, 13, 61). For Hiebert, however, self-theologizing has a broader goal beyond contextualization, that is, to contribute to the formation of a transcultural theology or metatheology (Hiebert 1985, 216-219; 1994, 93-103).

According to Hiebert there are three important reasons that we should seek metatheology: (1) to build a worldwide fellowship of believers, (2) to share in the mission of the church for evangelizing the world, and (3) to avoid the syncretism that emerges when we contextualize our theologies uncritically (1985, 219).

Accordingly, Korean Christians have to make an effort toward self-theologizing not just to produce their “own theology,” but for empowering their churches in

their mission within the particular situation of the Korean context. Furthermore, it is worth remembering that the Korean Church belongs to a community of churches, with both great benefits and responsibilities (Kirk 94). As Tite Tiéno has observed, the third millennium will be characterized as one in which “the global nature of the Christian faith” is revealed (Tiéno 245), and the Korean Church must try to take up its share of responsibility through its self-theologizing.

Gospel and Cultures

In order to do authentic or biblical self-theologizing one needs to properly understand the relationship between the gospel and cultures. As Schreier noted, “Without a sensitivity to the cultural context, a church and its theology either become a vehicle for outside dominion or lapse into docetism, as though its Lord never became flesh” (2003, 21).

Evangelical missiologists have been trying to diversely express the relationship as one of tension. For example, Walls eloquently described the relationship in the title of his article, “The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture,” in which he explained the “Indigenizing” principle and the “Pilgrim” Principle (1996, 3-15).

Meanwhile Hiebert understands the relationship as follows (1985, 53-55). First of all, “the gospel must be distinguished from all human cultures.” Second, “although the gospel is distinct from human culture, it must always be expressed in cultural forms. Humans cannot receive it apart from their languages, symbols, and rituals. The gospel must become incarnate in cultural forms if the people are to hear and believe.” In other words, the gospel belongs to no culture, including the Jewish culture, the Western or American culture, and not to mention, the Korean culture. At the same time, these cultures can adequately serve

as vehicles for the communication of the gospel. Third, “the gospel calls all cultures to change.” It means that all cultures have sinful aspects that should be condemned by the standards of the Kingdom of God. This relationship of tension between the gospel and human cultures requires us to make a continuing effort for “critical contextualization” (Hiebert 1985, 171-192; 1994, 75-92).

In light of the guideline mentioned above, one can think about a proper attitude to do self-theologizing in Korea. First, the Korean Church needs to see not only the historical “connection” and “continuity” but also the “disconnection” and “discontinuity” in the relationship between Korean Christianity and Western Christianity (Moon-Jang Lee 2002, 50; Rhie 1995, 5; Walls 1996, 6-7). Next, the Korean Church also needs to acknowledge that there is both “continuity” and “discontinuity” in the relationship between Korean Christianity and Korean history and culture (Moon-Jang Lee 2002, 213; Rhie 1995, 117; Walls 1996, 13). Moon-Jang Lee aptly points out why the Korean Church needs to be aware of this fact when he says that “the pre-Christian ‘actual beliefs’ of Asian[Korean] people operate in their minds as a hermeneutical filter that either hinders or facilitates their understanding of Christian teaching” (Moon-Jang Lee 1999, 268).

The Korean Church and Self-Theologizing

The Korean Protestant Church has been considered as one of the most successful cases of modern Western missions. It is generally accepted by both expatriates and Koreans that the Nevius plan was one of the crucial elements of Protestant beginnings in Korea that made the Korean Church grow as an indigenous one (Clark 1937; Hunt 1994; Min 1988; Park 1991).

On the other hand, there has been a constant but provocative voice which calls for a reevaluation of the Korean Church's reality. This voice has been ignored for a long time by the marvelous "growth" of the church. However, experiencing the current recession of its growth, the voice has gained allies from within and without of the Korean Church: "Is the Korean Church really an indigenous one?" If one accepts the "Three Selves" principle as the legitimate criteria, then the Korean Church becomes a marvelous example of indigenusness. However, in light of the "Fourth Self" (Paul Hiebert) principle, many would say that the Korean Church is backward, to say the least. We can identify three major reasons for this: socio-historical background, the influence of Western missionaries, and the factor of Korean culture.

Socio-Historical Background

The traditional Korean society was being abruptly deconstructed when Protestantism entered in the late 19th century. This allowed for the "soft-landing" of Protestantism in Korea without any systematic resistance and challenge by the traditional society. At that time, the Korean people considered Protestantism, unlike the Roman Catholicism which had been seen as an agent of foreign power, as the impetus of modernization to save their country from the plight of darkness of "ignorance" (Shin 1998, 57). The Koreans welcomed the Western powers into Korea to drive out the Japanese imperial power. The King even asked for the intervention of the United States to rescue his country from the political plight imposed by Japanese imperialism through an American missionary (Min 1988, 210). By the same logic, the gentry readily accepted Western influences and the Christian message that Western missionaries brought to Korea.

From the beginning, the Korean Church had been characterized as a “modernizing” institution, as well as one of patriotism. *Sangroksu* (상록수 Evergreen Tree: Hoon Sim, 1935), one of the famous modern novels of Korea which was used for a long time as a key high school textbook of Korean Literature, described the endeavor of a single Christian lady to “enlighten” Korea’s pre-modern agricultural society through her Christian faith and modern education. In terms of this subject, R.A. Torrey (Anglican Missionary to Korea, 1957-2001), the grandson of the famous Ruben Archer Torrey who was the colleague of D. L. Moody, proposed an insightful interpretation about the Korean translation of the term of “Church (교회).” “교회” was originally translated into Chinese from the term “*ekklesia*” in Greek and has commonly been used in China, Korea and Japan. Torrey notes that the two Chinese characters which designate “*ekklesia*” mean “education community (教會).” He has argued that it reflects the influence of Confucianism which placed emphasis on education. This was what led to confusion among the people of viewing the Church as an “Enlightenment Institution” for teaching Western religion and culture. He then argued that a better translation of the term “*ekklesia*” would have involved use of “交會” instead of “教會.” “交會” means “fellowship (*koinonia*) community” in which we enjoy fellowship with God and our human neighbors (Torrey 1991, 188-189). Very interestingly, this insight coincides with Andrew Kirk’s argument on the essence of the church (Kirk 2000, 187).

This special socio-historical situation made Korean people accept Christianity without a critical reflection of the relationship between their traditional worldview (or culture) and the Christian doctrine. As a result, Korean Christians have tended to despise other traditional religions and customs as mere “superstitions.” The majority of them have not

seriously attempted to learn about the other religions of Korea and have felt even less need to do so. This served to weaken the cultural indigeneity of Korean Christianity in order for it to become a “Korean religion” (Moon-Jang Lee 2005, 46-48). They have not been encouraged to make their church a place in which many Koreans can feel at home.

Until quite recently, the “foreignness” of the Korean Church had been a “merit,” as the Korean society was eager for modernization and Westernization during the last one hundred years. During the last two decades, however, Koreans have been regaining their cultural identity. Consequently, negative sentiments began to surface against the foreignness of the Korean Church. For too long the Korean Church has been complacent in its effort to find its cultural rootage, neglecting its opportunity to realign with postmodern Korean culture as it did during the period of modernization, and in particular, when it strived for Korea’s liberation from Japanese annexation.

Influence of Western Missionaries

Protestant mission to Korea was initiated (1884) and executed mainly in the heyday of Western colonialism (1880-1920). As already mentioned above, it also means that the Korean Church has been greatly exposed to the influence of the Enlightenment, since the “entire modern missionary enterprise is, to a very real extent, a child of the Enlightenment” (Bosch 1991, 274).

The only model of Christianity that Western Europe knew was the Christendom model which is a “territorial idea of Christianity” that had developed over a long period (Walls 1996, 258; 2001, 27). Lesslie Newbigin put it comically when he calls it “the synthesis between the Gospel and the culture of the western part of the European

peninsula of Asia” (Newbigin [1953]1998, 1). It considers mission “finished” within its territory. In the Christendom mentality, mission simply means “European Church extension” or the expansion of Christendom. To achieve the aim of mission the world was divided into two parts: (1) the established European Church and (2) the missionary territories of the non-Christian world (Bosch 1980, 116-117). Furthermore, many Western missionaries regarded Western imperialism as both natural and, more significantly, providential in making straight the path for the spread of the gospel (Bonk 1991, 19-23). Therefore, mission was carried out from the top down, from the center of economic and political power (Escobar 2002, 153). Mission was an activity for “De-Paganisation” (Bosch 1980, 106).

Fortunately, in Korea the image of Christian gospel was not contaminated by Western colonialism.¹ However, while politically Korea suffered not from Western colonialism but from Japanese imperialism, the Korean Church could not avoid the influence of the “general tendency” of the era that made the young churches into ecclesiastical colonial copies of the Western churches, especially in the realm of theology. The first Theological Presbyterian Seminary in Pyongyang was proudly called the “McCormick of Korea” [McCormick was also called the Princeton of the Midwest] (Park 46). As Bosch remarks, in this process, “Western theology” was transmitted unchanged to the burgeoning [Korean] churches (1991, 294). Both missionaries and Korean Christians certainly believed that there is only one gospel but they did not fully realize that the gospel message they knew and their theology itself were contextualized to their particular world, namely the West.

¹The political situation in Korea was just the opposite of that in China, where Western powers and “Western Christianity” were rejected.

Consequently, the Western Church controlled the encounter between Christianity and traditional Korean culture and religions. Consciously or unconsciously, most Western missionaries considered Christianity and the traditional Korean religions to be incompatible. To them, the relationship between Christianity and the traditional Korean religions could not be a real issue in their theology and faith (Moon-Jang Lee 2002, 48).

Charles Allen Clark, an American Presbyterian missionary to Korea in early 20th century, once expressed in his book *The Nevius Plan for Mission Work—Illustrated in Korea*, his concept of the Christian gospel as follows:

No missionary ever “forced his religion” upon any nation or individual but all missionaries have rejoiced to be able to offer to all men *the finest possession of America and the other nations of the West*. (Clark 1937, 15) [emphasis is mine]

It reveals the common mentality of the Protestant missionaries of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. They were convinced not only of the truthfulness of Christianity but also of the superiority of “Western civilization” (Hiebert 1999, 24). Consequently, Korean customs and beliefs could be ignored and most Korean converts were encouraged to leave their “old way” and become Westernized.

Kyung-Bae Min, an eminent Korean Church historian, has critically evaluated the policy of Presbyterian missionaries concerning theological education in Korea (“The Korean minister should be educated just a little above his parishioners”) (Min 1988, 274). He attributes the Korean Church’s theological poverty to the anti-intellectualism of conservative American missionaries. He argues that in training Korean ministers the missionaries only

reluctantly presented even basic humanities studies or liberal education, hoping that the Korean pastors would limit themselves to the faith of “only Scripture.”²

It seems to the researcher that the missionaries wanted the Korean Church to be “indigenous” but theologically dependent, because as Hiebert states, “Most missionaries believed that there is only one correct body of knowledge – only one true theology – and that this had to be transmitted unchanged to their students” (1999, 28). Many Western missionaries thought that all that is necessary to establish an “indigenous” church is to indoctrinate a few leaders in Western patterns of church government, and let them take over (Smalley 32).

In the famous Nevius Plan³, we cannot find the "self-theologizing" concept for the churches in the mission field. Certainly, it adopts the presumptions of “proper” Western theology which was deeply influenced consciously or unconsciously by the "Enlightenment mentality" of the era (Stanley 2001, 169-197). However, it is also true that the Korean society itself, including the Korean Church, pursued its modernization and de-traditionalization by accepting Westernization and secularization as the spirit of the age. In the process of applying the Nevius plan, the pioneer Presbyterian missionaries also transplanted their denominational system in the Korean mission field and controlled it for a considerable time. At the time,

²Interestingly, his critical argument about the American Presbyterian missionaries' policy on theological education in Korea has been toned down considerably in the revised edition of his book (Min 2007, 320-21).

³The Nevius plan has been criticized by some Korean theologians as being at least partially responsible for planting “anti-intellectualism, militant fundamentalism, individualism, denominationalism, apoliticism and sectarianism in the early missionary church” (Park 106).

Rolland Allen cynically criticized the Western missionaries' work and the Christian Churches' foreignness in various cultures in his "prophetic" book, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours*:

If a traveler returns from visiting our Indian or Chinese Christians the first thing that he tells us that he was delighted to find himself worshipping in a church where the language indeed was strange and the worshippers of another colour, but that in every other respect he felt quite at home ([1912] 1962, 136).

Likewise, the Western denominations so fully "indigenized" [sic!] themselves that many Korean Christians today do not even realize the fact (cf. Kasdorf 80).

Korean Monoculturality

Koreans in general are very proud of their "one people and one language" heritage as a nation. According to Hofstede, a homogeneous culture is a strong culture in which all survey respondents generally give the same answers on key questions regardless of their content (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005, 293). In the survey, Korea has been categorized as a nation that has a high score of "Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)" values. Korea ranked 22-25th among the 74 countries that were surveyed. People ranked high in the UAI are likely to see what is different as dangerous (163-205). It is no wonder that the Korean monoculture has led its people to prefer uniformity to diversity in thinking, limiting the space to accept different opinions and perspective. It is said that this cultural characteristic has even affected the religious sentiments of the Korean people. In Korea, not only Christianity but also the traditional Korean religions have demonstrated high exclusivity (Moon-Jang Lee 1999, 407, 408).

Furthermore, until the middle of the 1980s, there were many restrictions on the Korean people's ability to have a broad perspective. Under the Cold War system, the division of North and South Korea turned South Korea into an "Island Nation" with restrictive borders. Thus, it was difficult for Koreans to expand their cultural and mental horizons (Jung 2007, 406).

Besides the aforementioned causes, there is another important factor: Korean conservative/evangelical Christians have feared being categorized as "liberals" or "unorthodox" in their theology. Mark Young's description of the attitude of American conservative evangelicals toward the contextualization of theology is also an adequate description of their Korean counterparts:

In particular, conservative evangelicals view contextualization warily because they suspect that it threatens belief in absolute, transcultural truth as revealed in the Bible.... Unfortunately, many conservative evangelicals fear critical thinking and dialogue about these foundational issues. For some, such conversation threatens their personal sense of security built upon an uncritical certainty of belief. For others, the risk to their own professional identity and security is too great. In many ecclesiastical and mission relationship, common confession acts as social power. (Young 2011, 54)

Furthermore, his analysis of the evangelicals' view of theology as a "bounded-set" category which does not promote contextualization and insist that the beliefs and the language of belief are static and must be fiercely defended (Hiebert 1999, 107-136; Young 2011, 56), is applicable to the many Korean Christians who believe that the Korean Church should keep and maintain what it has learned from the missionaries and the Western Church (Han 1996, 116; Ryu 2003, 401).

Meanwhile, the theology of indigenization in Korea was discussed actively among liberal theologians in the 1960s, especially among the Methodist theologians who

were largely associated with the Korean Methodist Seminary. It was a consequence of a natural process toward theological maturity. As Hiebert observes, “Three or four generations after a church is planted in a new culture, local theologians arise and struggle with the question of how the gospel relates to their cultural traditions” (Hiebert 1985, 196. cf. Walls 1996, 14). The Korean indigenization theologians have shown their creativity, at least in terms of their material for constructing theology, if not in terms of their methodology. For example, Sung-Bum Yun tried to explain Christian doctrines using concepts derived from Confucianism. He even tried to read the doctrine of the Trinity in Korea’s traditional *Dangun* (檀君) mythology (Ryu 2003, 287).⁴

But the Korean indigenization theology was criticized and failed to gain broad acceptance in the Korean Church. The Korean indigenization theology regarded the Korean culture and religions as objects of theological study. Moreover, it focused on the similarity between the two rather than any exclusivity of Christianity and traditional religions (Hwang 2003, 90). We can say that they fell into the pitfall of theological relativism (Kim 1992, 43; Han 1996, 343; Hiebert 1999, 58). Besides, Korean theologians who have dealt with the issue of the “gospel and culture” (like some in the West – Niebuhr, Tillich) have not had “the experience of the cultural frontier, of seeking to transmit the gospel from one culture to a radically different one” (Newbigin 1986, 1).

⁴Joong-En Kim, an Old Testament scholar at the Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary (Tonghap) evaluated that the Korean indigenization theology movement, at least in its early stage, seemed to appear sound in its biblical foundation and understanding of the gospel. But he went on to state that the concept of indigenization theology gradually deteriorated into theological relativism or pluralism (Kim 1992, 42).

Another “Korean theology” acknowledged worldwide is the *minjung* (민중) theology. Some radical scholars largely associated with the Korean Theological Seminary focused on the socio-political context of the Korea in 1970s and 1980s. The *Minjung* theology claims to originate from Christian roots, and rightly pays attention to “social justice” issues. Furthermore, *Minjung* theologians successfully connect the “*han* (한)” of Korean people to their theological reflection. However, their emphasis on context over the Scripture has been criticized as reflecting extremely liberal presuppositions that leave them with a Scripture that cannot function normatively or authoritatively.

As such, many Korean conservative/evangelical theologians and Christians who constitute the majority in the Korean Church have felt discomforts toward these “liberal theologies.” Many of them believe that it is their obligation to maintain the “evangelical theology” which the Korean Church received through the missionaries.

According to Hiebert, however, it can be said that they have a naïve realism or idealism in their epistemological positions in theology. They consider their theologies to correspond exactly with the Scripture, and consequently endow their theological stances with a false sense of absoluteness. Hiebert presents “critical realism” as the adequate epistemological posture toward theology. In critical realism, theology and Scripture are to be distinguished (1994, 26-30). For evangelicals in the West and the majority world as well, ongoing reconsideration of the nature of theology, theological confession, and Scripture may be needed before they can embrace the contextualization of theology more enthusiastically (Young 54).

Thankfully, now the situation is changing rapidly in both Korea and in the global church. A more favorable milieu for “self-theologizing” is being created: Westerners are beginning to notice their “ethnocentrism” in theology. On the other hand, non-Westerners, especially evangelicals, do “self-theologizing” more confidently. All of us now recognize that Christians need to develop theologies that make the gospel clear in their particular culture (Hiebert 1985, 216). In the case of Korea, we can see a rapidly growing interest in the topic of “contextual theology” among the younger generations of evangelical theologians.

Cross-Cultural Experience and Theology

Hiebert argues that “The failure to differentiate between the gospel and human cultures has been one of the great weaknesses of modern Christian missions” (1985, 53). In fact, from the beginning of the history of Christianity, the same problem was rampant. In the first century, Jewish Christians did not distinguish the gospel from their culture. Many of them tried to force Gentile Christians to adopt Jewish culture such as circumcision and food laws in order to become Jews. It was Jewish proselytism rather than genuine Christian conversion (Walls 1996, 51-53). They were constantly tempted to equate the gospel with their own culture. Harold Dollar highlights the result when he said,

This explains why the apostles did not rush out and evangelize Gentiles after the Great Commission. Their slowness in evangelizing Gentiles cannot be attributed to disobedience, nor spiritual dullness, but rather to the need of understanding the distinction between their historic faith [culture] and the gospel. (1996, 88)

However, simultaneously, from the initial stage of its history, Christianity – its life and theology – has been greatly affected by the cross-cultural movement. As we know, the New Testament itself was a product of “cross-cultural” mission during the “transition”

period as the center of Christianity moved from the Jewish tradition to the Greco-Roman world.

Above all, the meaning of the Christian “gospel” itself can be most fully understood in the cross-cultural context as we saw in the case of the encounter between Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10). The conversion of Cornelius created a crisis and led the Jerusalem church into a “paradigm shift.” The apostle Paul is another excellent model who “desacralizes” his own Jewish culture. Paul’s theology (“my gospel”) portrays the essence of the gospel as follows:

For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Rom 10:12, 13)

How did the apostle Paul reach this understanding? How was he able to “desacralize” his own Jewish culture in order to “universalize” the gospel? Even though he was keenly conscious of his “national” identity as a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews (Phil 3:5), he was able to “relativize” his national identity for the cause of “Christian identity” (Phil 3:7-9).

Daniel Jong-Sang Chae, a Korean missionary-scholar, was highly acclaimed by many eminent New Testament scholars of the West like James Dunn, Martin Hengel, and Howard Marshall for his book *Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles: His Apostolic Self-Awareness and Its Influence on the Soteriological Argument in Romans* (1997).⁵ In this book, Chae argues that Paul’s Gentile mission perspective, his *practical experience among Gentiles*, and

⁵Daniel Jong-Sang Chae was a member of O.M. (Operation Mobilization) and served as the director of the M/V Doulos of the O.M.

his self-awareness of his apostolic obligation, all had an effect on his theological thinking.⁶

He concluded his research with this thesis statement:

Paul's self-awareness of being apostle to the Gentiles has significantly influenced the shape, the content and the structure of his inclusive soteriological argument in Romans. As apostle to the Gentiles he boldly presents the theological argument in favour of the Gentiles in his attempt to affirm the legitimacy of Gentile salvation by establishing the equality of Jew and Gentile in Christ. (300)

Lamin Sanneh also points out the same fact when he says, "Paul's ambiguous and often very critical relationship to Judaism cannot be isolated from his participation in the Gentile mission, and with good reason" (2002, 25). In the same vein, Martin Kähler's famous century old dictum, "mission is the mother of theology," is fortified by David Bosch's comment, "Paul was the first Christian theologian precisely because he was the first Christian missionary" (Bosch 124).

Today, the notion that Paul was both a missionary and a theologian has gained ground among not only missiologists but also among biblical scholars. Hafemann describes concretely the relationship between the two identities:

It is simply impossible to divorce Paul the theologian from Paul the missionary pastor. But neither is it adequate to speak of Paul as a theologian and a missionary, as if Paul's theological reflection and pastoral ministry operated out of two separate spheres.... Paul was a theologically driven missionary and a missiologically driven theologian. His theology was missiological and his missionary endeavors were theological. (Hafemann 2000, 22)

⁶Chae also confessed that the perspective gained from his missionary experience had helped him to better understand Paul, the missionary theologian, and his letter [Romans] (iv).

Therefore, the following argument of Hiebert seems very persuasive when he said, “Missionaries, by the very nature of their task, must do theological reflection to make the message of Scripture understood and relevant to people in the particularities of their lives” (Hiebert 2000, 167).

Andrew F. Walls expresses his hope that “In the providence of God a renaissance of mission studies could be the prelude to the reordering of theology and the refreshment of the human and social sciences”(Walls 1996, 159). If one accepts these arguments as true, he or she will expect that the Korean missionary movement will have an impact on the mission fields and on the Korean Church as well, especially in the realm of theology.

Korean Missionaries and Cross-Cultural Experience

The transforming effect of cross-cultural experience has been widely discussed and accepted not only by missiologists, but also by secular scholars (Hiebert 1985; Newbigin 1986; Lingerfelter 1996; Walls 2001; Elmer 2002; Schreiter 2003; Bevans, 2003; and Shweder 1987; Spindler 1997; Trompenaars 1998; Endicott 2003; Hofstede 2005; Milstein 2005).

For example, Tema Milstein argued that sojourning experience enhance self-efficacy. Many who have sojourned perceive an increased sense of empowerment, an enriched sense of belief in their own capabilities (Milstein 218). Moreover, Endicott and his colleagues have found that multicultural experience, and particularly the depth of experience (as opposed to breadth), has a deep relationship with the development of both moral reasoning and intercultural sensitivity (Endicott et al. 2003, 416).

What are the implications of these arguments regarding to the Korean missionaries' experience? We do not yet have sufficient data related to this question, but there are some clues that illuminate the high possibility of transformation in Korean missionaries that results from their cross-cultural experience. For example, in her dissertation, *The status and role of Korean missionaries wives in cross-cultural mission*, Grace Hye-Won Park surveyed 120 Korean wife missionaries. Park argues that Korean wife- missionary seem to uncritically hold the traditional Korean worldview embedded in Confucian values (231). But she also found that in the mission fields they have already gone beyond the roles defined by the Korea's culture and its conservative church (239). This phenomenon led her to propose a remarkable hypothesis as she concluded her study:

Thus, we can theorize from this study that as Christians move across new frontiers in order to live out and communicate the Gospel, their values seem to change and are determined more by the Kingdom of God and less by their traditional culture. (240-241)

Unfortunately, however, many are unaware of the potential of the Korean missionaries for contributing to the self-theologizing of the Korean Church. Newbigin once pointed out an important reason why the Western churches that have sent missions to Asia and Africa had remained largely unaffected by the developments outside of Western Christianity: Their missionaries have operated at a distance from the sending churches and on the extreme periphery of their consciousness ([1978] 1995, 147).

However, due to the rapid changes of today's globalizing world and the mission field situations, there is more possibility now than in the past that many or most missionaries will return to Korea someday. Many of them may return in the peak of their life and ministry with rich and diverse cross-cultural experiences. This means that the Korean

Church can hope that its cross-cultural missionaries who are serving in 177 countries will significantly affect the “self-theologizing” process in their passport country if they approach their home culture from the perspective of a foreign missionary.⁷ A cross-cultural missionary who has both “emic” and “etic” views about his/her original culture is a valuable resource for the task of “self-theologizing” in his/her home church (cf. Hiebert 1994, 69).

Now it is a good time to review the works of some important scholars who strongly support or implicate the missionaries’ contribution to “self-theologizing.” The researcher will review the arguments of Paul G. Hiebert, Lamin Sanneh, Andrew F. Walls, Philip Jenkins, Robert Schreiter, Stephen Bevans, and Lesslie Newbigin.

Paul Hiebert, in his fascinating book, *Anthropology Insights for Missionaries* (1985), has highlighted the importance of “self-theologizing” as the “Fourth Self” principle for an authentic indigenous church. Furthermore, he emphasizes the role of missionaries as “culture brokers” who belong to the “bicultural community” to provoke the process. According to him, as “transforming human agents” of God, missionaries try to cross diverse borders with the gospel, and in that process, the missionaries themselves experience transformation through interaction with different culture and peoples (Hiebert 1985, 80).

Cross-cultural experience enables missionaries to stand above both their own and other cultures and become more aware of deeply held cultural assumptions, which they had previously taken for granted (95). He has also described in a very realistic way the “reentry shock” of missionaries in their original cultures. However, even Hiebert doesn’t

⁷It also deserves to be mentioned that most of them are representatives and agents of Korean “evangelical” churches.

mention the influence of cross-cultural missionaries on “self-theologizing” in their home culture although he concretely mentions that process in the mission field (193-253). But we can imagine that the cross-cultural missionaries, in reverse, will significantly affect the “self-theologizing” process in their home countries. Is this really possible? We’ll later see one excellent example in the legacy of the late Lesslie Newbigin.

Lamin Sanneh’s powerful argument of the translatability of Christianity not only provides a solid theological basis for the Christian cross-cultural movement but also represents quality apologetics against the accusation that the Christian missionary enterprise is imperialistic (Sanneh 1989, 105). Due to the inherent characteristics of Christianity, he argues, missionaries have been participating in the process of vernacularizing the gospel in diverse ways consciously or unconsciously. In many cases, according to him, missionaries became indigenizers, in the best sense of the term, rather than cultural imperialists (90). He contends that mission as translation carries with it a deep theological vocation, which arises as an inevitable stage in the process of reception and adaptation (29). Therefore, mission as translation fundamentally concede to the vernacular and results in an inevitable weakening of the forces of uniformity and centralization (53). Consequently, the cross-cultural movement has been able to repeatedly break out of the missionaries’ own cultural confinements (27, 45, 83, 90, 97).

In his other book, *Whose Religion is Christianity: The Gospel beyond the West*, Sanneh boldly defends the Western missionary enterprise, remarking that “Christianity helped Africans to become renewed Africans, not remade Europeans” (Sanneh 2003, 43). Like Hiebert, Sanneh demonstrates a keen awareness of the special “ability” of the cross-cultural missionaries’ when he says, “Thus cross-cultural boundaries are accorded an intrinsic

status in the proclamation of the gospel, and Christians who stood at such frontiers acquire a critical comparative perspective on their own cultural identity (Sanneh 1989, 30).

However, he fails to extend his awareness to recognize the potential impact of missionaries on their own culture, although he does mention that Livingstone's field experience impelled him to carry his criticism right back to the sources of Western Christianity itself (Sanneh 1989, 109).

Andrew F. Walls consistently explores the meaning of church history and its implication for the Christian faith, that is, theology. Even though Christianity has placed great emphasis on the historicity of its faith, so far we Christians have not shown sufficient awareness of the relationship between our faith and history. However, in his insightful book, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (1996), Walls persuasively interprets the whole Christian history as the story of successive transformations of the Christian faith following its translation into a series of diverse cultural settings through the cross-cultural missionary movement (Chapter 2, 3). In addition to this, he asserts that the Christian faith is missionary both in its essence and in its history, and God accomplishes salvation not only in history but also *through* history toward the Full Grown Humanity in Christ (51). In doing so, he provides us with an adequate perspective to interpret the recession of Western Christianity and the advance of Non-Western Christianity. Like Lamin Sanneh, he explains how Africans accepted Christianity and made it an "African religion," and boldly declares that African Church history is not only a part of mission history but also an important part of the history of African Religions (Walls 2002, 119). In evaluating the missionary movement, Walls correctly acknowledges that even though it was only peripheral to the church, "the whole shape of the Christian faith in the world has been transformed by it" (Walls 1996, 239). Walls

sees the impact of the missionary movement on theology, and the potential of missionaries for renewing it, even though he laments on the one hand the lack of contribution from missionaries to theology, and, on the other hand, the disinterest of theological departments regarding mission studies (Wall 1996, 153, 197).

Philip Jenkins, in his book *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (2002), has challenged the traditional concept which labels Christianity as the religion of the “West” or the global North. He eloquently demonstrates that Christian expansion occurred simultaneously on the three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. Furthermore, to draw attention to the revolutionary shift of the center of gravity in the Christian world, he presents a great amount of data about its new demography. He then declares, “The era of Western Christianity has passed within our lifetimes, and the day of Southern Christianity is dawning” (Jenkins 2002, 3). Furthermore, he interprets the meaning of this shift as Christianity “returning to its roots” as a non-Western religion (215). He characterizes this Southern Christianity as conservative, supernatural, more bible-centered, and of the poor.

Robert Schreiter views the rise local theologies in the non-Western world positively, saying that “[T]he theologies once thought to have a universal, and even enduring or perennial character (such as neo-scholastic Thomism in Catholicism or neo-orthodoxy in Protestantism) were but regional expressions of certain cultures” (Schreiter 2003, 3). In constructing local theology, he considers the role of insiders and outsiders. He acknowledges that both inner and outer descriptions are necessary for the development of a local theology. According to him, being an outsider means that a person is aware of the structure and situated character of the tradition itself among other traditions. It happens “[W]hen members

of a culture have a cross-cultural experience, or when competing world-view seriously threaten the received way of experiencing the world, the authority of a tradition can be called into question” (111). We may apply this definition especially to cross-cultural missionaries returning to their own culture.

The researcher agrees with Stephen Bevans when he says, “Contextualization, therefore, is not something on the fringes of the theological enterprise. It is at the very center of what it means to do theology in today’s world. Contextualization, in other words, is a theological imperative (Bevans 2003, 15).

He presents six models of contextual theology in his book *Models of Contextual Theology* (2003): the translation model, the anthropological model, the praxis model, the synthetic model, the transcendental model and the countercultural model.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher would like to concentrate on the countercultural model.⁸ This model was not included in the first edition of Bevan’s book (1992). According to him, the countercultural model finds its most vigorous proponents today among theologians who have recognized the deeply anti-Christian nature of all contemporary Western culture (2003, 118). It calls the Christian community to take a missionary stance in regard to context. The “Gospel and Our Culture Network” (GOCN) would be a good example for this model. The GOCN believes that if the gospel is to be communicated in North America today, it must be through a missionary or “missional” encounter between the Christian Church and contemporary North American culture. If we can slightly change this

⁸Instead of the “countercultural” model, Bevans himself proposes an “encounter” model as an alternative term for this model (Bevans 2003, 119).

model, being careful not to fall into the pitfall of *anticultural*, we may apply it for the promotion of “self-theologizing,” as we see in the case of Lesslie Newbigin.

Indeed, the legacy of the late Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998) provides an excellent example of the issue at hand. Lesslie Newbigin’s long and full life reminds us of the words of Ps 92:12-15, which describes the life of the righteous: “They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green.” Geoffrey Wainwright has called him the “Confident Believer, Direct Evangelist, Ecumenical Advocate, Pastoral Bishop, Missionary Strategist, Religious Interlocutor, Social Visionary, Liturgical Preacher, Scriptural Teacher, and Christian Apologist,” summarizing these characteristics under the single title: *A Theological Life* (Wainwright, 2000). However, we may also call his life “*A Missiological Life*,” since he has engaged everything with a “missionary passion.”

Lesslie Newbigin returned to his country in 1974 after completing 35 years of missionary service in India. His experience deeply transformed him, reducing his reliance on his own culture as a universal normative pattern. He expressed it as follows:

As a young missionary, I was confident that the critical evaluation I made about Hindu beliefs and practices were securely founded on God’s revelation in Christ. As I grew older, I learned to see that they were shaped more than I had realized by my own culture. And I could not have come to this critical stance in relation to my own culture without the experience of living in another, an Indian culture. (1985, 21)

After returning to England from the “mission field,” Newbigin looked at the West through a missionary’s perspective and asked a missionary’s analytic questions (Stafford 1996, 25). We can still encounter the mind and heart of the missionary theologian at work on almost every page of his writings (Shenk 2000, 60). Significantly, his greatest impact, as a career missionary to India, took place in England and America since his

retirement. In his famous book, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (1986), he approached his own culture as a foreign missionary. Newbigin's main struggle in his later years can be summarized in this single question: "What would be involved in a missionary encounter between the gospel and this whole way of perceiving, thinking, and living that we call "modern Western Culture?" (1986, 1).

Newbigin really was a missionary not only in "gentile" India but also in "pagan" England. His "missiological" life can shed light on the potential influence of Korean cross-cultural missionaries within the Korean Church.

The literature survey up to now cannot be "thorough," but at least "sufficient" to justify the "self-theologizing" of the Korean Church and the potential of the Korean cross-cultural missionaries' to contribute toward that matter. But perhaps it is necessary to present one more important subject related to the research topic of this study: The relationship between the missionary's potential for self-theologizing and cross-cultural education or training. As a missionary trainer, the researcher wants to focus on the effect of missionary training.

Korean Missionaries and Missionary Training

George Spindler, an anthropologist educator, argues that "Human beings tend to interpret new experience in the light of past experience, unless there is decisive intervention in the interpretive process" (1997, 499). Based on this insight, the researcher asked these questions: "Does cross-cultural experience automatically make Korean missionaries valuable resources who can contribute to the 'self-theologizing' of the Korean

Church with their bicultural perspective?” “Do they need to be trained to have a ‘useful’ perspective or to ‘maximize’ their ability for self-theologizing?”

As products of the mono-cultural Korean society, Korean missionaries have been criticized because of their lack of cultural sensitivity (Ro 1993; Choi 2000; Hwa 2002). Furthermore, it is evaluated that most of them usually plant Westernized Korean denominational churches in their mission fields because they barely understand the relationship between the gospel and culture (Choi 2000, 12).

In his PhD dissertation submitted to the Asbury Theological Seminary, Hyung-Keun Choi compared the missionary training curriculums of eight Korean missionary training centers. Furthermore, he surveyed missionary graduates from each institution in order to investigate his hypothesis that inadequate cross-cultural missionary training or no training at all is related to a missionary’s poor cross-cultural adjustment (Choi 2000, 19).

The names of the eight missionary training centers and denominations that were surveyed are as follows: CFWM (Presbyterian Church of Korea, Tonghap), IMTI (Korean Methodist Church), KMTI (Presbyterian Church of Korea, Kosin), KMTC (Korea Evangelical Holiness Church), GMTI (Presbyterian Church of Korea, Hapdong), GMTC (Global Missionary Fellowship), MTI (Interdenominational), and OMMTC (Operation Mobilization Korea). Choi used interviews and questionnaires for his research.

According to his survey, the GMTC provided the most appropriate cross-cultural training program among the eight training centers (Choi 2000, 296). Furthermore, he also showed that the GMTC graduates’ cross-cultural adjustment capability got higher scores than those of graduates from other training centers (297). One other significant factor he discovered was that Korean missionaries in general had much lower scores on flexibility,

openness and emotional resilience than original study group of Kelley and Meyers that mainly consisted of U.S. citizens (305, 341). Moreover, he found that Korean missionaries tend to be exclusive toward people of other cultures (148). Choi attributed this to the mono-cultural and monolingual background of Korean missionaries (336). At the same time, Choi evaluated the GMTTC highly because only the GMTTC provides a course on “Understanding Korean Culture” to its trainees (148).

The result of the survey implies that if we provide more appropriate missionary training which helps missionaries analyze the foundation of their own theology as a mixture of the cultural and the biblical (Priest 1994, 308), we will be able to expect greater ability in the Korean missionaries to encourage self-theologizing not only in the local churches of their mission fields but in the Korean Church as well. How, then, can we maximize effect of missionary training to increase this capability in the Korean missionaries?

We, Christians, have a tendency to “spiritualize” every aspect of human development instead of studying, analyzing, and understanding it through empirical methods (294). As such, many missionary training institutions have also tended to merely emphasize communication competence and skills for cross-cultural ministry without understanding the structured developmental sequences in which these skills are attained (cf. Endicott 405). Therefore, in terms of Korean missionary training, we need to have a concrete goal to help our missionaries develop “flexible thinking” beyond narrow ethnocentrism in order to see various things with a broad perspective.

Spindler researched some eight hundred Stanford undergraduate students in California and Germany. He has found that the perceptual/ interpretive errors they make are remarkably consistent from group to group when individuals are in cultural contexts other

than their own (498). In other words, “people do not respond directly to events; they respond to the *meaning* they attach to events” (Bennett 1986, 179). Through his research, Spindler has found that perceptual distortion in transcultural observation increases when:

1. There is no clear counterpart for the perceived object or event in the observer’s culture.
2. There is no functional complex into which the object, event, or situation, even if accurately perceived, fits, so the significance is lost or skewed.
3. There is a stereotype of experience related to the event, object, or situation patterned in the observer’s own culture.
4. There is a stereotype of the experience or meaning of the event, object, or situation as it is presumed to exist in another culture.
5. There is ambiguity due to lack of clarity in the structural or spatial relations surrounding or involved in the event, object, or situation.
6. There is projection of emotional states ascribed to subjects in another culture. (510-511)

Spindler goes on to persuasively argue that “Human beings tend to interpret new experience in the light of past experience,” but immediately adds an *educational insight* to the phrase, saying that this is true “unless there is decisive intervention in the interpretive process” (499). Furthermore, he expresses a conviction that all teacher-training programs should include “transcultural sensitization” and that the anthropological perspective may help improve teaching (512).

The ideas mentioned above are very suggestive to Korean missionary training. Even though Korean missionary candidates are generally lacking in sensitivity to cultural diversity because of their “mono-cultural background,” through the “intentional intervention” of training that encourages “thinking flexibly,” they will at least begin to get into the process of overcoming the weakness. At the same time, we need to remember that intercultural sensitivity is not “natural” to any single culture (Bennett 1986, 179).

On the same basis, as a trainer at GMTC, the researcher has become aware of the awesome aspect of education, namely, its “disequilibration” role. As we know, one important aspect of education is to maintain the integrity and identity of a group by cultural transmission. We can see an extreme case in the “Amish education.” The Amish teachers want to teach their children “our Amish way of life” in contrast to “the way of the world” (Hostetler 1992, 75). Consequently, they often fail to help students to become effective participants in a wider community of relationships (Lingenfelter 2003, 82). On the other hand, missionary training needs to help students to have a new and broad perspective so that they may efficiently cross cultural borders with the gospel. The missionary candidates need to question their cultural assumptions and values and learn to think outside their cultural and contextual expectations in order to look for solutions beyond their own experiences (32-33). Missionary trainers need to overcome the general tendency of education to concentrate on keeping a student thinking on the same stage, rather than helping him or her to jump to a new stage.

Through the literature survey, the researcher come to develop the hypothesis that if a missionary has more ability to think flexibly, to differentiate between the gospel and cultures, and to be aware of the need of contextual theologies for the Korean church, it could be presumed that he or she would have a greater potential to contribute to the self-theologizing process of the Korean Church.

Until now, however, we have had no substantial empirical data, neither in Korea or abroad, about cross-cultural missionaries’ potential to contribute to the self-theologizing of their home Church. This research will try to gather empirical data about this

potential in the Korean cross-cultural missionaries in regard to the Korean Church and theology. The Korean Church should expect that its missionaries will enrich not only the mission field but also the home Church and society with their ministries. Furthermore, it is hoped that this research will also be encouraging to Korean missionaries who want to return to Korea someday. They need to be conscious of their own potential contribution to the Korean Church and society.