

CENTRAL PHILIPPINE UNIVERSITY
ILOILO CITY

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE CHURCH IN KOREAN MILIEU

-Towards An Evangelical Theology in Korean Context
in terms of Its Understanding of the Kingdom of God-

A Special Paper

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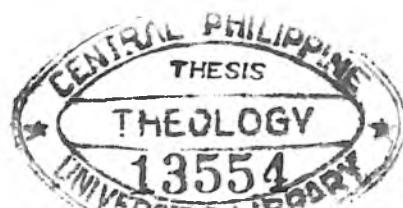
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INTRODUCTION

A. The Proposed Problem

The Korean Protestant church has a history of more than a century. The first Presbyterian missionary from North America came to Korea to evangelize the people in this hermit nation in 1884. He was followed by the first Methodist missionary in 1885. The Korean Protestant church is growing rapidly, and is now estimated at ten million believers after one hundred years of Protestantism. This figure represents about twenty-five percent of the population of forty million of South Korea, where Christianity has become the second largest religion and has strongly influenced its society, culture and politics.

In the light of the above fact, the Korean Protestant church has been highly esteemed by the evangelical churches of other countries, and has shifted from the unreached people¹ to a missionary-sending church. In spite of the numerical strength of the Korean Protestant church, there are some negative aspects of rapid growth which are, indeed, very real and alarming. These need to be corrected and

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Edward R. Dayton, in his work, That Everyone May Hear Reaching the Unreached, (Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, Monrovia, CA 1979), p. 27, says that "An Unreached People is a group that is less than 20 percent practicing Christian."

revised in the light of the evangelical theology.

Korea is a religiously pluralistic society in which Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity coexist without much tension and conflict. Like other Christians in other countries, both within and outside Korea, the Korean Protestant Church today is viewed chaotic and disorderly in its understanding of the Kingdom of God. Neglecting the matter of the Cross and the redemption of Christ, the Korean Church has emphasized that of blessings which are confined to material, visible aspects.

Since World War II, the theology of Missio Dei² has appeared and by the influence of worldwide trends of theologies like theology of liberation and theology of hope, in the middle of 1970's, Minjung Theology developed in Korea, in which the characteristics of worldwide theologies took shape in a concrete way. In the late sixties the concerns of theology have shifted from heaven to earth, from the matter of transcendence to that of immanence, from the other world to this world. The subjects of theology have also been changed from the individual redemption point of view to the matter of humanization in the areas of politics, economics and culture. Thus the frame of theological thinking rests on a historical, horizontal and present category

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According to this theology, the church is not the true center of gravity towards which one should direct missionary thinking; rather, it should be the self-revelation of the Triune God in Jesus Christ—the missio dei revealed in the mission of the church, but not only in and through the church.

rather than on a practical, vertical and futuristic one. Main stream of Korean Churches have been directed and based on the task of evangelization without the concerns of social works, while some other churches emphasized on social works only.

In the light of the above analysis, it seems that some churches misunderstood the concept of the Kingdom of God, in the sense that the Kingdom of God as confined to the other world, i.e. beyond history. On the other hand, others have understood it as a Utopia which could be established on earth by the efforts of human beings through the improvement of the structure of society.

What, then, is the significance of the Kingdom of God? The writer wants to evaluate the ecclesio-theological dimension of the Korean Church in terms of its understanding of the Kingdom of God in order to establish an evangelical theology in Korean situations.

Problem Statement

The problem to be addressed in this study is the evaluation of the Korean Church in terms of the theological, biblical appropriateness of its understanding of the Kingdom of God, with a view to establishing an evangelical theology in the Korean context.