

Anabaptist Reformation: Its Relationship to the Twenty-First Century Ecclesial Polity for East Asia

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Today, churches are making a radical shift from Western historical, cultural traditions to Eastern as the market in Asia opens up as the ultimate target of missions and church planting based on the Lord's mandate (Acts 1:8). Reformed denominations in South Korea (predominantly Presbyterian) have positioned themselves according to the teachings of Calvinism; consequently, their ecclesiastic hierarchical structures, creeds, and aristocratic elitism based on extra-biblical positions place them between Christ and the local churches. Missions today only requires that churches return to the teachings of the gospel without the man-made liturgies, creeds, and denominational traditions. The Anabaptist spirit and traditions of the sixteenth century can serve as new role models.

This article is based on my perspective as a missiologist and trainer for church planters in North America and as an Asian American Southern Baptist. The content of this essay is based on my fifty years of experience of ministries with the Home Mission Board and North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (U.S.A.) as a trainer for Asian American ethnic/linguistic cultural people groups. As an Asian American, the direction of the paper reflects the Korean American theological position targeting primarily the Reformed and Protestant churches in Asia, particularly the Korean and Chinese traditions and their values in the Christian church setting.

For the past twenty-five years, I was heavily involved in theological education among underground house church leadership in mainland China and doing humanitarian aid ministries in North Korea. Through this process I saw the new market where leadership training has to take radically different approaches consistent with the twenty-first century environment. My theory and solutions in this paper are based on the nature of the present marketplace and how they can influence functional theological training and approaches for the twenty-first century.

The Protestant Reformation as Background to Twenty-First Century Ecclesiology for Asia

The Protestant movement in the sixteenth century was initiated by Roman Catholic priests and theological students, led most notably by Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin and Heinrich Bollinger. Their primary objective was to separate from the corrupted traditions of Roman Catholicism that had become far removed from the teachings of the New Testament.

While these early Reformers did seek to make changes, they continued to adhere to the Roman Catholic tradition of infant baptism and to collaborate with the magistrates. William R. Estep states:

For them, the Reformation was a revolt against papal authority but not against the Roman concept of the church as an institution. They believed that the old church needed to be cleansed from various abuses and errors, but they did not want to be cut off from its corporate solidarity. Even after their organizational break with Rome was complete, they still felt a sense of continuity with the Roman church of pre-Reformation days.

In the Reformers' eyes, then, the fall of the church was never complete in the sense that the pre-Reformation Roman Catholic Church had ceased to be the church. This is the reason why the Anabaptists viewed the Reformers as halfway reformers. To them, the Reformers by introducing the *Landeskirchen*, remained within the fallen church.¹

Like Estep, church historians often differentiate between the theory and the concept of Protestantism and those of the larger Reformation movement.² By its nature and terminology, the Protestant movement was "protesting" the rigidity of the hierarchical tradition of Roman Catholicism. Reformers sought to return to the theology and practice of the New Testament.

The Anabaptist Continuation of the Reformation

These Reformers included Anabaptists who were trying to complete the unfinished work of the Protestants. They agreed with Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin that salvation is by faith, not by sacraments or works

1. William Roscoe Estep, *The Anabaptist Story: An Introduction to Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 242.

2. Today, Christians in Korea tend to have difficulty differentiating between the concepts of the Protestant and Reform movements in the sixteenth century and on to the present time. Protestantism (개신/改神 "kaeshin" in Korean and Chinese) which means "changing faith" is etymologically mistranslated in Korean; Reformed (개혁/改革 "kae hyuck") theology was introduced to Koreans by English-speaking Reformed missionaries.

of penance. They also agreed with the Protestant theologians that the final authority for Christians is the Bible. However Anabaptists did not agree with these Protestant theologians on all points. They also emphasized the authority of scriptures and the Holy Spirit alone, salvation by faith alone through conversion, living by the spirit of God, and the life of discipleship. These firmly held beliefs came together in their belief and practice of baptism.

In fact, they were called “Anabaptists” or “rebaptizers” because they insisted that water baptism should be reserved for believers only, since salvation was a provision of a new and free gift of life to those whose sins have been unconditionally forgiven and pardoned by our Lord. This conviction led them to baptize one another as adults even though they had been baptized as infants. The spiritual security of atonement resulted from the painful price paid by the Lord on the cross and His triumphant resurrection. It is an irreversible and everlasting gift. Anabaptists believed that the true sense of eternity which comes from the cross and resurrection is eternally secure.

Anabaptists believed that the New Testament church was to be understood as a visible church:

Anabaptists are the believers of the visible church. The New Testament church would be recognized by the repentance, rebirth, and new life of its members. It would be a church of obedient disciples, pledged to following after their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

The visible church is a suffering church, for it stands as a light in the secular world of sin. The visible church is full of the life of Christ and His Spirit where it stands on solid rock which is the Word of God. The secular world and its communities disown the visible church, as it disrupts the traditions and cultural values that disagree with the teachings of the gospel.³

According to Malcolm Yarnell, it was to avoid disrupting the traditions and cultural values which led the Protestants to continue the tradition of infant baptism. As a result, there was a period of tremendous friction and struggle in the first thirty years between Reformers and Anabaptists over two major doctrines: 1) infant baptism or believer’s baptism and 2) separation of church and state.⁴

3. C. Arnold Snyder, *From Anabaptist Seed: Exploring the Historical Center of Anabaptist Teachings and Practices* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2007), 18.

4. Malcolm Yarnell, “Radical Reformation Key Figures and Time Line” (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Radical Reformation Tour, May 2012).

What led Reformers and magistrates to persecute Anabaptists with sword, fire, and water? Yarnell explains that these Reformers persecuted Anabaptists so intensely in order to cover up their incomplete Reformation process and its movement.

... the repeated persecution and slaying of the Anabaptists by the Reformed is indicative of two irreconcilable outlooks regarding what it means to be a faithful Christian. The Reformed murder, through public drowning, of Felix Manz in 1527 under Zwingli, and the Reformed murder, through public burning, of Michael Servetus in Geneva under Calvin manifests a fundamentally flawed outlook toward both God and man.⁵

The Anabaptists, at first inspired by new ideas that were circulating at the time of the Reformation, were trying to complete the unfinished work of the Reformers.

The Protestants Compromise Led to Today's European Reformed Churches

The failure to separate church and state during the Reformation has resulted in churches in the twenty-first century that are continuously experiencing confusion and losing their main objectives mandated by Christ.

Zwingli and Bullinger both pastored Grossmünster Church in Zurich for sixty-six years, 1519-1575. At its peak, the Reformation movement centered there. During this time the persecution of Anabaptists, who were initially members of that church, began. Oyer gives two reasons for this persecution:

Anabaptists both disrupted the religious order and threatened the peace and even the existence of the civil order. Both Zwingli and Bullinger considered the actual issues on which there was open conflict to be trivial and incidental. The entire conflict between Anabaptists and Protestants should be seen in the light of an attempt by both parties to discover and put into practice a new Christian order founded upon New Testament principles. They disagreed sharply on the nature of that order, and on the manner and speed at which it should be instituted.⁶

5. Malcolm Yarnell, "The Potential Impact of Calvinist Tendencies Upon Local Baptist Churches," in *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism*, ed. David Lewis Allen and Steve Lemke (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 223.

6. John S. Oyer, "The Reformers Oppose the Anabaptist Theology," in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision: a Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Harold S.*

Today, many European cathedrals have become state-supported sightseeing attractions and concert halls, with few local residents attending the worship services. This situation is a result of the church compromising with the secular state, thus most state-run churches in Europe are non-functional and spiritually dead.⁷ For example, during the height of the Reformation (1519–1531, 1531–1575), Grossmünster Church in Zurich, over fifteen hundred people would come to hear their preaching. From this place, the Swiss phase of the Reformation movement spread like wildfire throughout the city of Zurich and the entire Europe, changing Roman Catholic to Reformed churches. However, today, only twenty to twenty-five people come regularly to their services, and these historic cathedral buildings are used as tourist attractions and musical concert halls.⁸

Another illustration of the problems of entanglement of church and state occurred in Nazi Germany when pastors were afraid to stand up against Hitler's takeover of the churches because they feared losing their tax-supported governmental salary. Eric Metaxas in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* explains that Bonhoeffer was aware that something of the unwillingness to speak boldly against Hitler had to do with money. The state provided financial security for the pastors of Germany and even pastors in the Confessing Church would have jeopardized their income only to a certain point.⁹

The compromise between church and state throughout two thousand years of the Christian movement has led today's churches toward liberalism and hierarchical bureaucracy of ecclesiastic classes. As a result, European Reformed churches have gradually become marginalized and irrelevant.

Bender, ed. Guy F. Hershberger and Harold Stauffer Bender (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1957), 203.

7. Robert Heinrich Oehninger, *Das Zwingliportal Am Grossmünster in Zürich* (Zürich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1985).

8. Daniel Y. Moon, "How Reformation Theology Came to Korea and How Establishing Anabaptist Theology in Asia Should Become the Next Phase of the Christian Movement in the Twenty-First Century: An Unpublished Paper Presented to Paige Patterson, Malcolm Yarnell, and Seung-Jin Kim," (2012). This statement was related by a retired pastor of an evangelical church in Zurich, Werner Tobler, who also served as the guide during the Radical Reformation Tour conducted by Southwestern Seminary, May 14-24, 2012.

9. Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy: a Righteous Gentile Vs. the Third Reich* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 282.

The Effect of Reformed Theology on Asian Churches

In Korea and China, Western missionaries planted their seeds on the soil of the local roots and culture. However, this seed had developed for almost two thousand years in the culture and history of Europe. The first Protestant missionaries brought with them their Protestant traditions—infant baptism, denominational schisms, hierarchical bureaucracy, and denominational politics—which has affected the beliefs and practices of Asian churches in a number of ways, especially baptism and hierarchical bureaucracy in the local churches.

Baptism

The New Testament in the Korean language was adopted from the Chinese translation by Robert Morrison, a Presbyterian missionary from America to China in the early nineteenth century. He translated the word baptism as “sprinkle.” “Sae rae” (洗禮/세례) in Korean and Chinese means “washing ritual or ceremony” rather than “immersion.” The Korean translation based on Morrison’s Chinese version followed his usage in Chinese characters. Roman Catholic missionaries had come to China much earlier than Reformed missionaries and had extensively translated their catechism and liturgy from Latin into Chinese. Protestant Reformers in Asia, particularly in Korea, continued to practice “pedobaptism” following Roman Catholic tradition, rather than scriptural baptism of believers.

Baptists and other denominations which practice believer’s baptism by immersion in South Korea have been accused of being cults by those who believe that baptism by immersion is not based on the New Testament because “baptism” was translated as “sprinkle” or “washing ceremony.” Furthermore, Reformed churches that practice infant baptism advocate “one baptism,” quoting from Ephesians 4:5, “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” Additionally, the Reformed missionaries who came toward the end of the nineteenth century taught Koreans to practice infant baptism by sprinkling, and most Korean Reformed churches, i.e., Presbyterians and Methodists, have continued practicing infant baptism to the present time.

Hierarchical Bureaucracy

Another current practice by the Reformed churches that is inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible concerns leadership roles and clergy positions. The senior pastor of a local church has overall authority and in effect has hierarchical leadership. He presides over the worship

service from invocation to benediction, and leads the congregational hymns. The worship would not be completed without a benediction given with both arms raised high to bless the congregation. The pastor has the exclusive right and power and authority to bless people at the end of the service, which is not scriptural.

Seung-Jin Kim, church historian at Korea Baptist Theological University and Seminary, clearly describes the overarching authority of a senior or ordained pastor who practices giving the benediction at the end of the worship service. Baptists believe a benediction is simply a prayer for closing of service, but Reformed churches in Korea have a different view of it. Kim writes,

The Korean tradition of benediction needs to be re-evaluated from the perspective of New Testament guidelines God bestows blessings only through an ordained pastor, this is not based on New Testament principles and this is obviously insulting God. Furthermore, it centers on sacerdotalism and sacramentalism. In the New Testament era, God bestows His blessings directly to believers, not through clergy.¹⁰

Most Korean church leaders have titles and positions with various different levels of influence and recognition. It seems that local church leaders not only position themselves in the hierarchical ecclesiastic order, but expect recognition and honor in the secular world in Korean society outside of church functions. These ecclesiastic positions and honorific titles widely used for both men and women within Korean Protestant churches:

Senior pastor 담임목사/擔任牧師

Assistant and associate pastors 부목사/협동목사/副牧師/協同牧師

Missionary Pastor 선교목사/宣敎 牧師

Pastor emeritus 원노목사/元老牧師

Woman pastor 여자목사/女子牧師

Jundosa evangelist 전도사/傳道師

Kangdosa one licensed to preach 강도사/講道師

Elder 장노/長老

Woman elder 여자장노/女子長老

Kwonsa 권사/勸士

Kwonchal 권찰/勸察

10. Kim, *First-Century Faith in the Twenty-First Century: Defining Baptist Convention*, 422-23.

Ordained Deacon 안수집사/按手執事

Unordained Deacon 집사/執事

Deaconess 여집사/女執事

Revivalist 부흥사/復興 師

Pastor's wife 사모/師母

Such influences are not limited to Korea; they can also be found in China, too. Jeremy Sin observes: “When I was in Hong Kong, the role of the ordained pastor ‘mu shi’ (牧師) is very different from the non-ordained preacher ‘chuan dao’ (傳道). Only the former can officiate the Lord’s Supper, Baptism, and to give the Benediction, as well as wedding and funeral. It was not surprising that a seminary graduate had to wait for many years to be recognized by the church to move up on the ‘hierarchy.’ On the other hand, the ordained deacons served as the elders of the church. In some Baptist churches, the deacon board has the power to hire and fire the pastor, and one who can overrule the church council. They act more like the ruling administration board instead of being the servants of the church in her ministry.” About the situation in Chinese Reformed churches, Sin concluded,

It is interesting that some of the spiritual leaders in Chinese church history took very different road from the Reformation tradition. Chinese theologian Watchman Nee did not have formal theological training, and he was much influenced by the Brethrens. In his church, there are no ordained pastors. The congregations are led by ‘brothers.’ Though these brothers usually act like elders in their leadership.”¹¹

The above-mentioned eleven positions in Korean reformed churches have been created by church denominations and their leaders. These leadership roles are not found in the New Testament, which prescribes only two ecclesiastic leadership positions: pastor/elder and deacon (Eph 4:12-13), which are identified as male roles.. These titles are unnecessary evils which are not based on the scriptures. They merely give social status both in church and in the secular world, although holding these positions may result in members of the local churches getting involved more in the areas of commitment and service for the kingdom. There are obviously different interpretations of being a “man of God” and a “servant of God.” However, ordained Korean Protestant pastors call themselves “song jik ja,”성직자 (聖職者) which refers to being a “professional”

11. Jeremy Sin, email message to author, December 5, 2012. Jeremy Sin is a theological educator who serves as Director of Chinese American Mobilization at the North American Mission Board, Alpharetta, Georgia.

saint, meaning a person who is engaged in fulltime religious work with social recognition and remuneration of their services. They wear white collars during the week and put on doctoral gowns when they preside and preach from the pulpit during the worship services.

This practice ignores the New Testament teaching that all believers are priests, not only ordained clergy and staff, whose role is to simply share Christ, as 1 Peter 1:9-10 states. The Apostle Simon Peter called himself a “fellow elder” when he addressed the leaders of churches in 1 Peter 5:1-3, although he served as an apostle and one of the leading disciples of the Lord during the days of early church. The Apostle John also called himself an elder (2 John 1). Anabaptists believed and practiced the autonomy of a local church as a body of believers of Christ. I personally believe that whether the congregation consists of two or ten or one hundred, each unit is considered as a body of Christ and is autonomous. Jesus said in Matthew 18:20 that when two or three are gathered, He would be in the midst. Whether it is a small church or a mega-church in the twenty-first century, in the eyes of God it is autonomous and co-equal. In the Anabaptist tradition, pastors and deacons should be duly elected by local members of the congregation and ordained by the body of believers.

There is an obvious gap between pulpit and pew where preaching of “the priesthood of all believers” in the Bible has been intentionally ignored in the local churches. In Asian churches, for lay people to call a pastor or elder “Brother” is absolutely taboo; church leaders have to be addressed with titles and honorific terms before their names. They refer to themselves with titles before their names whether they speak to individuals or congregations. This could be direct violation of New Testament value of servanthood and priesthood of all believers and their lifestyle.

Irreversible Influence of Calvinism

In spite of a misleading Reformed theology, Korean Christian leaders and churches have attained a significant following within the limited 130 year history of Protestantism in Korea (1882–2012). Since the Korean War (1950) to today, neo-Reformed denominations in the United States have sent Baptist, Church of Christ, and Pentecostal missionaries to South Korea.

To clarify the historical background of the Protestant presence in South Korea, missionaries from Reformed denominations in the United States came to Korea in 1883, roughly 360 years after Luther posted the ninety-five theses in 1517 in the city of Wittenberg, Germany. Even though the Reform theology of Calvin has been ingrained in the souls of

Koreans from the inception of Protestant Christianity in Korea, the total history of the Reformation movement in Korea is very limited.

Twenty-First Century Paradigm for Asian Churches in the Spirit and Tradition of Anabaptists

In this twenty-first century information and media era, the global network and culture allows us to be accessible beyond ideological/ethnic barriers in a phenomenal way. A recent “Our Daily Bread” devotional by C. P. Hia gives an enlightening example of current technology.

Creating a system by which an “eye in the sky” can help guide cars and planes and boats all the time is complicated. For instance, the Global Positioning System (GPS) that most people are familiar with works because there are always 24 to 32 satellites orbiting the Earth at an altitude of 12,500 miles. These satellites must maintain a constant speed and altitude if the guidance they provide is to be accurate.¹²

Japan, Korea, and the People’s Republic of China are rapidly becoming a hub for high-tech development and production for global distribution. In this information age, Christians need to adopt high-tech applications to share with and train local leadership in global dimensions. South Korea and mainland-China are increasingly becoming the hub for Christian missions and church planting throughout the region, either directly through appropriate channels or by mobilizing local potential resources and cultural channels, including language and culture. The Christian faith needs to be molded with indigenous and local origin and ownership. Churches in Asia claim ownership of their beliefs that are more local and indigenous and contextual to their values and culture.

From its inception, Christianity, especially Roman Catholicism and Reformation theology, has developed mostly within the European culture. Asian Christians do not have the European tradition and culture from the Roman Empire to Renaissance and Reformation. Consequently, the Christian movement in Asia, whose history spans less than two hundred years, should go back to the basis of the Word in the days of Christ. Christians should be identified not as Protestant or Reformed entities, but rather as pure, non-polluted believers of the Word and Jesus Christ as God incarnate. Their Christian faith can adhere to the Word of God as the cornerstone in the soul of the local people who are seeking identity at the local level of culture and their receptivity to the gospel. In the mindset of Asians who are not part of the Kingdom family, Chris-

12. C. P. Hia, *Eye in the Sky*, Our Daily Bread (Grand Rapids, Mich. : RBC Ministries, November 17, 2012).

tianity is perceived as a Western religion. Anabaptism and its traditions, for those who willingly follow Jesus, should be the foundation of the spirituality of the new market field in Asia. The local leadership should address new converts who are so open and ready to have the gospel seed planted from the Anabaptist spirit and tradition.

***Creative Approaches for Missions in
Mainland China and North Korea***

There are over twenty-four million North Koreans who have been indoctrinated and brainwashed that Christianity is a religion of American imperialistic capitalism and Western missionaries are spies and insurrectionists against the socialistic cause. Both China and North Korea for the last sixty-five years after World War II have been advocating in Asia that Christianity is a white man's religion from the West. They claim that Christianity is in opposition to the cause of promoting the principles and philosophies of evolutionism and socialism.

In spite of all this persecution and alienation of Christianity in this region, the gospel has continued to creep in beyond the Iron Curtain both in China and North Korea. The People's Republic of China has become the fastest-growing Christian nation where underground mission collaboration and networking take place, primarily through the witness of South Korean missionaries and foreign evangelical Chinese churches.

After participating in the Radical Reformation Tour of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in May 2012,¹³ I have come to believe more deeply that modern churches can adopt the spirit of Anabaptism and its traditions. I concur with Paul Peachey when he states, "Anabaptism means that the living fellowship by its very nature can never be transformed into objectified ecclesiastical structure, for fellowship with Christ and the brother is, in the full-orbed sense, the essence of the church."¹⁴

By visiting the sites of sixteenth century Anabaptists in five countries in Europe, I have discovered that Anabaptism and its traditions have deep and clear implications to help remold twenty-first century

13. The tour was to Anabaptist sites in five countries to witness the legacies of the New Testament Christians who stood against Reformers and Roman Catholics—sponsored by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and directed by Paige Patterson and Malcolm Yarnell.

14. Paul Peachey, "The Modern Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision," in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*, ed. Guy F. Hershberger (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1957), 338.

Reformed churches, as well as a new generation of believers. As Peachey adds,

For a while reliance on culture and ecclesiastical structure can insure greater uniformity (though not necessarily unity) among a group of like-traditional and like-minded assemblies, those very unifying entities weigh heavily on the true spiritual creativity of the assembly, and throttle the experience of fellowship with those standing outside the communion in question.¹⁵

From an anthropological perspective, culture and language are inseparable from the approaches and methodologies of religious experience. Although we adhere to the first-century faith of which the word of God has been formulated, its approaches and methodologies have always been contextual where people's traditions and values have been respected and honored. The gospel, the very seed of life-giving power, is indispensable in bringing personal knowledge and acceptance of Christ to different people groups.

In the Asian context, where the Christian movement spreads rapidly as current leaders look for a new paradigm of truth and faith, I also have come to believe that future Christianity in the Asian context with the Anabaptist spirit and tradition can be applicable in the sphere of evangelism and church planting. Peachey observes,

It is on these scales, it seems to me, that the reactivation of Anabaptist vision among the cultural descendants of the sixteenth-century vision must be weighed. . . . It cannot be denied that, while there may be genuine spiritual vitality among many, there is still in great measure an ethnic cohesion. But insofar as we build upon a carefully guarded cultural continuity, on objectively formulated creeds or theology, on uniform social institutions, and cultural traits, where is the valiant leap of faith, the eschatological expectancy, and radical walk of discipleship in the new aeon?¹⁶

I believe that first century faith and its tradition ought not to be compromised in twenty-first century practice. The Gospel has its own uncompromising directives and objectives to all humanity. The Word of God is the power of God unto salvation as evidenced from the day of Pentecost in the lives and acts of the Apostles and as preached and written by the Apostle Paul in his epistles.

15. Peachey, "The Modern Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision," 338.

16. Peachey, "The Modern Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision," 338.

Where Do We Go from Here?

The church in the twenty-first century needs to recover from the chains of misguidance that are far from the basic teachings of the New Testament. In the West, the disputes over liberalism, its theology, and the inerrancy of the Word of God has led to today's contemporary theology among Southern Baptists, which leads to further confusion as it overlooks the priorities of Kingdom approaches on basic evangelism and church planting taught by our Lord. Churches of today need to stand firm on nothing but the teachings of the New Testament and its directives, following the pattern of the Anabaptists who obeyed them and responded to them. The spirit and principles of Anabaptism have been ignored mostly by Reformed churches because of various different theological interpretations and their denominational schisms and creeds which are not found in the New Testament.

Seung-Jin Kim argues that Korean churches have reached a crisis point that needs a "Second Reformation."¹⁷ He further concludes that Korean churches are emerging as capitalistic secularists espousing "prosperity theology." He states, "Since the 1970s prosperity theology began infiltrating churches with the message that numerical growth and worldly prosperity are signs of God's blessings. Megachurches in urban areas began adopting secularized management approaches in their ministries at the local churches."¹⁸

Since the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries Protestant and Reformed megachurches in Korea have flourished. Now the world's largest Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist and Pentecostal churches are not in the countries of their origin but in South Korea. Church historians took notice half a century ago when David Youngi Cho's Yoido Full Gospel Church membership reached astronomical figures as a local church. In the process of large church movements underdeveloped-war-torn victims of South Korea began experiencing the power of their new spirit in Christ. Throughout the limited period of Korean church history and tumultuous crisis after crisis that people in the Korean peninsula have been through, people are now experiencing a high level of prosperity and development in their lifestyle. Churches began advocating the theology of wealth in a secular sense rather than a spiritual sense. The lifestyle of material affluence became the focus of their prayers and preaching, rather than the spiritual wealth that comes from God through obedience and thanksgiving for new life. Based on human history, material affluence and prosperity are seasonal and highly vulnerable whereas

17. Victor Seung-Jin Kim, *Gun Won Juk Jong Kyo Gae Hyuck [Radical Reformation]* (Daejeon: Korea Baptist Seminary Press, 2011), 472.

18. Kim, *Radical Reformation*, 472.

spiritual prosperity in assurance and conviction in result of obedience to the word is infinite and lasting. I believe the Anabaptist spirit and tradition provides stronger eschatological security than the prosperity theology that permeates various Protestant Reformed churches today.

Korean Christians need to find creative and positive solutions to return to the Kingdom message from which most Reformed churches have derailed. The theme and scope of our discussion has to be evaluating twenty-first century ecclesiology and soteriology (salvation theology). In this particular time of the Christian era, there is a new movement of transition taking place within the church from West to East, shifting from English to Mandarin and Korean, as large numbers of Mandarin-Han Chinese (漢族/한족) and Korean-speaking people are responding to the Gospel.

The real challenge comes to a particular people group when and where these have significant receptivity and spiritual potential for their leaders to receive the gospel when it is presented in ways suited to their culture, language, and history. There are untold numbers of unreached Han Chinese people among overseas Chinese and in Mainland China.

Today in the northern half of the Korean peninsula, there are over twenty-three million unreached souls who are being abused by an atheistic and idolatrous regime. It is God's desire that all people be reached with the gospel of the Kingdom with every possible method. However, Christians and church leaders need to reach these people based purely upon New Testament concepts, with the type of spirit and dedication and sacrifice that Anabaptists had.

We ought not to repeat evangelism and traditional church planting approaches patterned after Korean Reformed churches when reaching North Koreans with the gospel. When the door opens for the gospel, North Koreans and Mainland Chinese hold significant potential as a role model of twenty-first century evangelism and church planting with first-century faith.

A similar pattern has happened before within the Asian context. In the previous century there were two major Chinese theologians who were very effective in sharing the gospel—John Sung and Watchman Nee. Watchman Nee was arrested for his faith in Christ in 1952, and he spent the rest of his life in prison. He died in his cell on May 30, 1972. When his niece came to collect his few possessions, she was given a scrap of paper that the guard had found by his bed. On it was written his life's testimony. Dennis Fisher of RBC Ministries writes in his "Our Daily Bread" devotion that this was Watchman Nee's last testament when he died in a Chinese prison: "Christ is the Son of God who died for the redemption of sinners and was resurrected after three days.

This is the greatest truth in the universe. I die because of my belief in Christ."¹⁹

There was also a prominent Japanese evangelist and founder of the Nonchurch Movement (Mukyokai), Dr. Kanzo Uchimura, who was a theologian respected and honored by Korean Christians. In Korea, some of the leading evangelists and church growth strategists are David Yonggi-Cho of Yoido Full Gospel Church and Joon-Gon Kim of Korea Campus Crusade for Christ. We could name a few more outstanding Christian leaders in Asia who have made a great contribution to directions beyond reformed theology and practices.

However, as the twentieth century has given way to a new world of secularism and the information technology culture of the twenty-first century, Protestant churches in Asia not only have become a platform to launch the next phase of church planting to reach unreached people, but also they become targets of criticism by secular leadership. Mega-church leaders have been maintaining programs influenced by the tradition and formalities practiced by their elders. Besides this, local churches and seminaries have difficulty in dealing with affluence and apathy toward looking at their spiritual foundations from purely scriptural perspectives.

Today we need to come up with spiritual strategy and approaches that are basically New Testament-centered in church planting and evangelism in Asia. Existing Reformed churches, both in China and South Korea, need to be restored to the basics of New Testament Christian truth. We need to reach these people groups in Asia and come up with viable approaches and methodologies that are consistent with the teaching of the New Testament and its principles.

Conclusion

Recovering the unfinished Reformation movement that began in the sixteenth century now needs to be directed toward globally reaching people who are out in the field, particularly in Asia, by planting visible churches to reach them for Christ. This presents two major challenges.

First, those in the Anabaptist tradition should help to redirect historic Reformed churches and their denominations, most of which have been misdirected theologically and doctrinally. Denominations influenced by the Reformed movement need to revoke or denounce their ecclesiastic polities and traditions that are not in accordance with the Word of God. If they desire to make real sense of reform and complete the movement, all their schisms and denominational controversies and bureaucracies need to revert to the spirit and the principles that follow

19. March 13, 2013 by Dennis Fisher.

basic biblical foundations. The Anabaptist spirit from the sixteenth century can provide role models and case studies to remold and re-reform twenty-first century churches and their denominations. Schisms, creeds, ecclesiastic classes and levels of power and authority are not in a true sense consistent with the Word of God. They need to be denounced and churches and denominations need to return to the basics of New Testament foundations.

Second, these Anabaptist descendants need to provide functional theological training for new leadership at the seminaries both in the United States and in Asia to develop effective ways to share the gospel to fulfill God's mandate. The present scope of the theological curricula has become outdated; too often it has focused on training specialists in elite compartments directed toward independent measures, disciplines, and vocations in the church. The present theological institutions tend to produce elite specialists taught by authorities in the theological subjects whose identity is to provide credentials of academics rather than training in "how to's" in practical and functional ministries. Academics combined with providing practical functional ministries in the ethnic/cultural and linguistic settings have to be prioritized at all levels of theological institutions in the global dimension.

Instead, professors, specialists, and staff at theological institutions need to teach the basic Word of the Kingdom, and its applied ministries, in all subject matters in their theological curricula. Some courses need to be discarded if they cannot be applied to practical ministry in the marketplace. All theological graduates should be equipped as dynamic doers of God's Word.

Theological academicians and administrators need to hear the voices of the grassroots people at the local level out in the field so that curricula can be consistent with contemporary global communities in the twenty-first century. Moon-Jang Lee makes important theological assessments and observations, writing,

The methods for theological studies we use today in Asia are not indigenous. They were not developed from within the history and culture of Asia, but imported from the West, outside of Asian intellectual milieu. Asian Christians have taken it for granted that they learn how to do theology from the West, copying the Western patterns of doing theology."²⁰

All Southern Baptist seminaries in the United States, as well as seminaries in Asia, and particularly Korean Baptist Theological University and Seminary, which claim that their position is neo-Reformed,

20. Moon-Jang Lee, "Reconfiguring Western Theology in Asia," *Trinity Theological Journal* (2002): 4.

patterned after the theological curricula copied from Southern Baptist values and approaches of North American culture, also need to reform and reevaluate their approaches and methodologies in training new leadership in transcultural settings. Those educated in the United States see the irrelevance of this theological educational curricula for the indigenous people in Asia. We need new leadership development and training for the twenty-first century market to produce leaders who can boldly stand up for all people and all cultures by coming out of the traditional format and mold of theological education.

During the historical visit by the team of the Korea Baptist Theological University and Seminary (KBTUS) headed by President Kook-Won Bae to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) campus on January 30-February 1, 2013, the presidents of the world's two largest theological institutes agreed that reaching mainland China with the gospel in the twenty-first century by developing leadership training is a mandate from the Lord. In fulfilling this mandate, KBTUS can play a pivotal role as a bridge between East and West. Timothy Hyun-Mo Lee of KBTUS, a leading Korean missiologist, has proposed that KBTUS initiates a M.Div. curriculum for mainland Chinese leadership in Mandarin at their campus; Paige Patterson, president of SWBTS, has concurred with their forward-looking visionary plan.

The global community faces high levels of unpredictability and uncertainty, shifting from traditional molds into new molds created for the new high-tech and information technology culture. Every nation is experiencing leadership changes, including South Korea, North Korea, Japan, and China. Their churches need to develop the focused priorities mandated by our Lord that will also be consistent with the nature of the present market. The Anabaptist spirit and doctrines should not be overlooked in this reform of training centers that will provide down-to-earth training for future leadership. As Patterson writes, "The recovery of the Anabaptist vision in our churches today is our only hope for a consistent witness to a dying world."²¹

21. Paige Patterson, "A Letter from the President," *Southwestern News* 71, no. 1 (2012): 5.

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