

# John Calvin as Public Theologian?

Reading Calvin's Theology in the Light of Contemporary Discourses  
in Public Theology with Reference to the Korean Context

by

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*Dissertation presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University*



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March 2020

## DECLARATION

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March 2020

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## ABSTRACT

Public theology is gaining prominence in many universities and institutions around the world. Yet, there is not a great deal of interest in public theology in the Korean context. This dissertation aims to show that there are particular historical and theological reasons for this disregard, and the concerns related to this theological approach, among Korean Reformed Christians. Yet, in spite of the history and development of Korean Reformed Christianity, public theologies hold promise and opportunity for Korean theology. The intention of this exercise is to illustrate the importance of a public theological approach to issues of social and public concern within Korean Reformed Christianity.

The dissertation shows that there is a coherence between some characteristics of public theology and the theological contribution of the Protestant Reformer, John Calvin. Aspects of John Calvin's theology were chosen as illustrative examples since Korean Reformed Christians have a high regard for his contribution in shaping the Reformed theological tradition. Since the research illustrates that John Calvin can be constructively engaged through the hermeneutic lens of particular characteristics of public theology, it would offer a measure of theological credence for this approach to theology for Korean Reformed Christians and theologians. The six characteristics of public theology, presented by Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, are utilized as a lens to engage aspects of John Calvin's theology and the period of the Reformation in Geneva.

To this end, this dissertation firstly provides a summary of relevant concepts that include, among others, the notion of civil religion, the public sphere, the de-privatization of faith, and various theological contributions that relate to public theology from notable theologians and schools of thought in this field. This exercise aims at providing a comprehensive understanding of public theology from a variety of perspectives. Secondly, the research presents, and analyses, the six characteristics of public theology presented by Heinrich Bedford-Strohm. These characteristics constitute a credible and manageable hermeneutic lens that can be compared and related to the claims of other public theologians. It is shown that Bedford-Strohm's six

characteristics encapsulate a measure of consensus with regards to what constitutes contemporary understandings of public theology. Next, this hermeneutic lens is employed to engage aspects of John Calvin's theology, and the Genevan Reformation. The intention in this section is to illustrate that such a hermeneutic approach to Reformed theology, with a particular emphasis on aspects of Calvin's theology, is not incompatible with Bedford-Strohm's characteristics of public theology. In this sense, Calvin's theology could be understood as public theological in nature. Lastly, the research focusses on the theological and historical development of Korean Reformed Christianity in relation to public theology. This section has two aims: first, it highlights why Korean Reformed Christianity has adopted a character that could be considered critical of some of the foci and intentions of contemporary public theologies. Second, this section of the dissertation argues that in light of this history, and the illustrative coherence between the characteristics of public theology and aspects of Calvin's Reformed theology, it would be reasonable and fruitful for Korean Reformed Christians to constructively engage public theologies going forward.

## OPSOMMING

In baie universiteite en instellings regoor die wêreld is daar 'n toename aan die prominensie van publieke teologie, maar tog is daar nie veel belangstelling in die veld van publieke teologie binne die Koreaanse konteks nie. Hierdie proefskrif poog om aan te toon dat daar sekere historiese en teologiese redes is waarom Gereformeerde Christene in Korea nie aanklank by hierdie teologiese benadering vind nie. Daar word ook geargumenteer dat, ondanks die geskiedenis en ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde tradisie in Korea, publieke teologie wel belangrike moontlikhede vir Koreaanse teologie inhou. Die doelwit van hierdie navorsing is om die belang van 'n publieke teologiese benadering tot sekere sosiale en publieke kwessies binne die gereformeerde Koreaanse Christendom ten toon te stel.

Hierdie proefskrif sal aantoon dat daar 'n noue band tussen sommige karaktereienskappe van publieke teologie en die teologiese bydraes van die Protestantse hervormer, Johannes Calvyn, bestaan. Johannes Calvyn en sy bydrae in die vorming van die Gereformeerde teologiese tradisie word deur die Koreaanse Gereformeerde Christene hoog geag en daarom is sekere aspekte van Johannes Calvyn se teologie as voorbeelde gekies. Siende dat die navorsing daarop wys dat Johannes Calvyn op konstruktiewe wyse deur die hermeneutiese lens van spesifieke karaktereienskappe van publieke teologie benader kan word, is die hoop dat dit teologiese geloofwaardigheid aan hierdie benadering binne die Gereformeerde kringe in Korea sal verleen. Die ses karaktereienskappe van publieke teologie wat deur Heinrich Bedford-Strohm daargestel word, word as lens ingespan om aspekte van Johannes Calvyn se teologie tydens die Reformasie-gebeure in Genève te ondersoek.

Om hierdie doel bied die proefskrif eerstens 'n opsomming van relevante konsepte wat, onder andere, burgerlike godsdiens, die publieke sfeer, en die de-privatisering van geloof insluit, en ondersoek ook verskeie teologiese bydraes van noemenswaardige teoloë en denkskole binne die veld van publieke teologie. Hierdeur word daar gepoog om 'n omvattende verstaan van publieke teologie vanuit 'n verskeidenheid van

perspektiewe daar te stel. Tweedens analiseer die navorsingsprojek ook die ses karaktereenskappe van publieke teologie, soos dit deur Heinrich Bedford-Strohm uiteengesit word. Hierdie karaktereenskappe bied 'n geloofwaardige en bruikbare hermeneutiese lens wat verband hou met die aansprake van ander publieke teoloë. Daar word aangevoer dat Bedford-Strohm se ses karaktereenskappe 'n konsensus voorhou van dit wat as publieke teologie gesien kan word.

Vervolgens word hierdie hermeneutiese lens gebruik om aspekte van die teologie van Johannes Calvyn en die Geneefse Reformasie te ondersoek. Die bedoeling van die gedeelte is om te illustreer dat hierdie hermeneutiese benadering tot gereformeerde teologie, met 'n besondere klem op aspekte van Calvyn se teologie, versoenbaar is met Bedford-Strohm se kenmerke van publieke teologie. In hierdie sin kan Calvyn se teologie as publieke teologie verstaan word. Laastens, fokus die navorsing op die teologiese en historiese ontwikkeling van die Koreaanse gereformeerde Christelike geloof met betrekking tot publieke teologie. Hierdie gedeelte het twee doelstellings: eerstens beklemtoon dit waarom Koreaanse gereformeerde Christene dikwels 'n kritiese posisie teen van die fokusse en bedoelings van kontemporêre publieke teologieë inneem. In die tweede plek word daar geargumenteer dat in die lig van hierdie geskiedenis en die bewese samehang tussen die eienskappe van publieke teologie en aspekte van Calvyn se gereformeerde teologie, dit redelik en voordelig vir gereformeerde kerke in Korea sou wees om op konstruktiewe wyse met publieke teologie in gesprek te tree.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Dion Forster, who invited me to the field of public theology and has successfully guided me throughout this difficult but wonderful and joyful journey. He has consistently encouraged me with sincere advice whenever I struggled with this dissertation. His unwavering support and generous, prompt, and accurate feedback have improved this dissertation beyond my effort. Witnessing his life and works up close, I could not be lazy. I have learnt from him not only theological knowledge, but also how to be an honest theologian.

I would like to extend a word of thanks to Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, who wholeheartedly encouraged my research through individual conversations each time he visited Stellenbosch. He has often provided me with crucial insights and important material including English versions of his writings. It was a great honor for me to study his theology and to witness the typical characteristics of a public theologian through his life.

A special mention is owed to Reverend Chun-Bae Ryu who has always loved me as his own son and prayed for my study, ministry, and the safety of my family. He is my role model who showed me through his own life how a pastor should live. Without his spiritual support, I could not have been here. In addition, I would like to thank the family of Jeongnam Central Church who has always remembered me and prayed for my study.

A word of special thanks must be given to Professor Sung-Gi Han. His invitation greatly influenced my decision to become a theologian. Furthermore, I found the image of the true teacher in his gentle character, humility, and love for disciples.

Lastly, I must admit that this project would not have been successful without the sacrifice of my family. My wife Sunjung Lim has invariably loved, trusted and encouraged me. In particular, last year I stayed in Stellenbosch away from my family

in order to finish this project was a very difficult time for my wife, who had to take care of three children alone, so I cannot help dedicating my dissertation to her. Our three beloved children, Saerom, Eungyeol, and Siyoung, who always regard me as a proud daddy, are the energies that raise me up whenever I want to give up. Special thanks should be given to my mother Youngae Lee, my father Sangchul Kim, my mother-in-law Yoonsuk Ko, my father-in-law Seokwoo Lim, for their prayer, patience and financial assistance. Additional thanks should also go to my sister Miran, my brother Minho, and my brother-in-law Hyungsoo Lim, for their spiritual and material support.

Soli Deo Gloria!

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction and background to the study

It can be contended that the notion of public theology has risen to prominence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In recent times academics in theology globally but particularly in developed and multicultural countries such as South Africa, Germany, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States of America have focused increasingly on public theology. The gospel, church and theology indeed have always dealt with public life, and it can be contended that public theology focuses on the sphere of the church in public life.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, public theology is not a new concept<sup>2</sup> and it is for this reason that the notion of public theology is widely accepted in contemporary theological discourse.

#### 1.1.1 Towards the significance of public theology today

Many theologians all over the world are spurred on to study public theology. The Global Network for Public Theology (GNPT) was launched in Princeton, New Jersey, in 2007. It has played an important role in its field with other groups such as the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Research Center for Public Theology in Germany, the Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology in South Africa, the Centre for Theology and Public Issues in Scotland and the Abraham Kuyper Center for Public Theology in the United States of

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<sup>1</sup> Dirkie Smit, "Notions of the Public and Doing Theology," *International Journal of Public Theology* 1, no. 3 (2007): 437.

<sup>2</sup> For a variety of opinions, including disagreements, see Dirkie Smit, "What Does 'public' Mean?," in *Christian in Public: Aims, Methodologies, and Issues in Public Theology*, ed. Len Hansen (Stellenbosch: AFRICAN SUN MeDIA, 2007), 34.

America.<sup>3</sup> These centres deal with certain public theological issues in their local and national contexts, but they are also extending their scope of interest to issues with a more global concern. Many theologians who have not participated in these groups are also doing public theology in their own particular ways. These groups and these theologians are engaged in important and interesting research projects with respect to the public role of the church. The GNPT conducts interdisciplinary research in theology and public issues in various contexts, for example, and, having launched the *International Journal of Public Theology* in 2007, has published four issues every year since then to provide a platform for original interdisciplinary research in the field of public theology. In 2016, the third GNPT triennial meeting took place at Stellenbosch University, South Africa and recently in Bamberg, Germany, in 2019.

### **1.1.2 The six characteristics presented by Heinrich Bedford-Strohm as one of the various approaches to public theology**

Public theology has not developed a definite and normative methodology since “those who claim to pursue public theology have widely different views on what they are doing” and, furthermore, “many who seemingly engage in doing public theology never use the term at all and some deliberately choose not to”.<sup>4</sup> Dirkie Smit cites Russel Botman as an example: “he never thought or suggested that his own way of doing theology of transformation was the only way and that there was only one normative methodology for public theology to follow.”<sup>5</sup> For Russel Botman, public theology was not a paradigm in the singular. In this sense, it is necessary to research the histories of public theologies in order to gain a more textured and varied understanding of what public theology is in its various contexts and contributions.

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<sup>3</sup> Sebastian Kim points out that “unlike the US situation where individual scholars are leading discussions on the topic, elsewhere centres for public theology have been established within university and denominations.” Sebastian C. H. Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere* (London: SCM, 2011), 6.

<sup>4</sup> Dirkie Smit, “Does It Matter? On Whether There Is Method in the Madness,” in *A Companion to Public Theology*, ed. Sebastian Kim and Katie Day (Boston: BRILL, 2017), 67.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

The term ‘public theology’ was introduced by the Lutheran church historian Martin Marty in 1974.<sup>6</sup> He also defined a ‘public church’ with the word ‘public’ derived from the notion of ‘public religion’ that was described by Benjamin Franklin.<sup>7</sup> David Tracy, almost at the same time, wrote an essay entitled “Theology as Public Discourse” in which he suggested that there were at least three identifiable publics, namely the “church, academy and society”.<sup>8</sup> Marty and Tracy are considered to be among the pioneers of public theology as it is understood today.<sup>9</sup> Aside from what is introduced above, discourses about the public roles of churches and theology have been widely considered in particular histories and contexts. Smit asserts that many “societies have their own particular histories regarding the role of theology in public life, whether the term public theology was used, or not. In fact, this radical and complex contextuality is integral to the story of public theology.”<sup>10</sup> He adds the following:

... This is why the Global Network for Public Theology was such a welcome initiative, why the *International Journal of Public Theology* with its diverse contributions from so many contexts makes such a helpful contribution, and why this International Conference discussing contextuality and inter-contextuality in public theology is so central to reflections on public theology.<sup>11</sup>

Within this broad scholarly context, Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, an extraordinary professor in the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University, became an influential role-player in the field of public theology. He recently published a book with the title *Position beziehen*. He describes six aspects of public theology in this book:

Sechs Charakteristika können also für die inhaltliche Bestimmung des Begriffs der Öffentlichen Theologie festgehalten werden: ihr biblisch-theologisches Profil, ihre Zweisprachigkeit, ihre Interdisziplinarität, ihre Politikberatungskompetenz, ihre prophetische Qualität und ihre Interkontextualität.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Martin E. Marty, “Reinhold Niebuhr: Public Theology and the American Experience,” *The Journal of Religion* 54, no. 4 (1974): 332–59.

<sup>7</sup> See Martin E. Marty, *The Public Church: Mainline - Evangelical - Catholic* (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> See David Tracy, “Theology as Public Discourse,” *The Christian Century* 92 (1975): 280–84.

<sup>9</sup> For more information about stories of origins and development of public theology, see Dirkie Smit, “The Paradigm of Public Theology - Origins and Development,” in *Contextuality and Intercontextuality in Public Theology*, ed. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, F. Hohne, and T. Reitmeier (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2013), 11–24.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, “Engagement Für Die Demokratie,” in *Position Beziehen: Perspektiven Einer Öffentlichen Theologie* (München: Claudius Verlag, 2012), 122.

Smit translated it as follows:

[S]ix characteristics should be kept in mind in order to determine the content and purpose of the notion of public theology. These are its biblical-theological profile, its bilingual ability, its inter-disciplinary character, its competency to provide political direction, its prophetic quality, and its inter-contextual nature.<sup>13</sup>

This characterisation of public theology by Bedford-Strohm is certain to be accepted and critically engaged with by many who are attempting to understand what public theology is and how this approach to theology can be characterised. In addition, these characteristics describe public theology better than any other.

### **1.1.3 The indifference of Korean Reformed theologies to public theology and the necessity of re-reading Calvin's theology through the lens of public theology**

While public theology has become popular and widespread in various contexts, it remains a contested topic in Korea. Why is this so? As seen in the names of the aforementioned centres involved in public theology research, many public theologians tend to seek out instances of doing public theology by modern and contemporary theologians such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Reinhold Niebuhr. It is contended that this may be a significant reason why public theology is regarded with suspicion among the Korean Reformed theologies and denominations that form the mainstream church in Korea. Naturally, this suspicion can be related to the history of Korean Christianity. Korean churches seem to be characterised by theological fundamentalism and conservative religious piety.<sup>14</sup> Kuk-Won Shin cites Arthur J Brown's description in his article:

The typical missionary of the first quarter century after the opening of the country was a man of the puritan type. He kept the Sabbath as our New England forefathers did a century ago. He looked upon dancing, smoking, and card playing as sin in which no true follower of Christ should indulge. In theology and biblical criticism he was strongly conservative, and he held

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<sup>13</sup> Smit, "Does It Matter? On Whether There Is Method in the Madness," 71.

<sup>14</sup> Kuk-Won Shin, "Calvinism and Public Theology: The Reformed Vision for Sociopolitical Philosophy in a Pluralist Society," *Korea Reformed Journal* 12 (2009): 417–54.

as a vital truth the premillenarian view of the second coming of Christ. The higher criticism and liberal theology were deemed dangerous heresies.<sup>15</sup>

Kuk-Won Shin also asserts, in this context, that neo-orthodoxy has been treated as a form of liberal theology rejected thoroughly by the mainstream churches in Korea.<sup>16</sup> If one were to relate the dominant theological approaches to the five types of theology identified by Hans Frei, the mainstream Korean church could be characterised as seeking to uphold and repeat a traditional theology.<sup>17</sup> This is proving to be a concern as Korean Christianity becomes increasingly disconnected from issues of public concern, thereby lessening its opportunity for witnessing and service in broader society.

This research therefore postulated that aspects of public theologies might be critically considered, engaged with and studied if it was shown that they had some basis in, and relationship to, the Protestant Reformers. Indeed, as John de Gruchy affirms, “One of the largest concentrations of churches of the Reformed faith is to be found in South Korea.”<sup>18</sup> Hence, if some aspects of what we call public theology today could be identified in the life and works of John Calvin, Korean Reformed theologies might be willing to consider this approach to theological reflection as valid since these theologies are greatly influenced by Calvin. Researchers will assume that this is an important and a worthwhile scholarly field to investigate.

However, Korean Reformed theologies seem not to thoroughly read Calvin’s theology. Evidence exists that Korean Reformed theologians recently started criticising this problem internally. According to Dong-Chun Kim, who is one of the most prominent Reformed theologians in Korea, Calvinism, which has an omnidirectional influence in Korean Protestantism, is losing its validity and persuasiveness in terms of social publicness. Calvinism, as used here, refers to theology under the umbrella of so-called orthodoxy, conservatism, fundamentalism, Puritanism and Reformed faith. Dong-Chun Kim argues that this type of Calvinism, having a doctrinal system that emphasises only certain parts of the doctrine and a closed worldview in most cases, makes it difficult to

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<sup>15</sup> Arthur Judson Brown, *The Mastery of the Far East: The Story of Korea’s Transformation and Japan’s Rise to Supremacy in the Orient* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1919), 540.

<sup>16</sup> Shin, “Calvinism and Public Theology,” 419–20.

<sup>17</sup> Hans W. Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 28–30.

<sup>18</sup> John W. de Gruchy, *John Calvin: Christian Humanist and Evangelical Reformer* (Wellington: Lux Verbi, 2009), 22.

convincingly reveal the truth of Christianity in the public sphere of society.<sup>19</sup> He further points out that the Korean Reformed theologies that follow Calvinism distort and narrowly understand Calvin's theology. In other words, the root cause of the lack of social publicness in Korean Reformed theologies lies in theological factors.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, Korean Reformed theologies need to read Calvin's theology more broadly and fully and reading Calvin's theology through the public theological lens is one of these efforts.

#### 1.1.4 John Calvin as a public theologian?

A central question that shaped this study was how John Calvin, a theologian of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, could be considered in the light of public theology as currently discussed. First, it must be acknowledged that the circumstances in which we are living are very different from those in Calvin's era. Hence, this requires a great deal of historical awareness and hermeneutic care. Even so, the feasibility of this project would seem to resonate with the following point made by De Gruchy in his own work:

The Church today is very different from what it was in Calvin's day, ... The Roman Catholic Church is certainly not the same as it was in Calvin's day ... We are also separated from Calvin's world by developments in human endeavor, intellectual advance and scientific achievement. The Enlightenment, European expansion across the globe, political and industrial revolutions, and our own post-colonial context stand between Calvin and ourselves, ... None of this implies that Calvin has nothing to teach us, ... On the contrary, there is much of contemporary value in Calvin's legacy, both as evangelical reformer and Christian humanist. And it is my conviction that his Christian "social humanism", ... remains central to his contribution to Christian understanding and witness for today.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, Dirkie Smit also argues that Calvin's life and thoughts can still affect us today, explaining why as follows:

Of course, he lived in Geneva in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Of course, the social conditions of that time differed completely from today's and it is impossible to hold up as models and as normative for later times the relations of state-politics, church-economy, church-public life as they existed then. Still, ...

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<sup>19</sup> Dong-Chun Kim, "Social Calvinism and Social Publicity of Korea Church," *Christian Social Ethic* 32 (2015): 149.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 150–51.

<sup>21</sup> Gruchy, *John Calvin*, 43.

it is equally impossible not to see the pathos that the church and theology are time and again called upon to discern what their calling entails under new and changing circumstance. ... This calling remains the same, even if under new, changing circumstances it manifests itself in new forms of responsibility and in new social practices and institutions.<sup>22</sup>

According to Bedford-Strohm, Martin Luther, who was dedicated to the Reformation before Calvin, could also be considered a public theologian. In fact, Luther's numerous achievements on economic ethics are relatively the least familiar part of his work. Luther's passionate involvement in matters related to social justice and the poor is the basis for his recognition as a public theologian.

Even though he did not have the theoretical or political intellectual scope of today at his disposal, he involved himself, often with biting criticism, in public affairs, writing about the Christian-ethical priority given to the weak in the social upheavals of nascent early capitalism.<sup>23</sup>

Bedford-Strohm's argument offers the possibility that Calvin can also be considered as a public theologian.

Some have mistakenly taken the perspective that the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century only reformed religion or theology in that period of history. Of course, it is true that this aforementioned historical and theological contribution is of great significance. However, the Reformation was not only an event with theological and ecclesiological significance. Rather it had, and still has, broader social consequences, such as reforming the economy, culture and worldview, including the politics of the day. De Gruchy asserts the following:

The Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century was an integral part of a monumental upheaval in the social, cultural, and spiritual life of Western Europe. Generated by a new experience and understanding of the gospel, it was also a product of diverse social, political, and economic forces. Focused on the renewal of the church and the salvation of the individual, it made a decisive contribution to the transformation of society.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Smit, "What Does 'public' Mean?," 35.

<sup>23</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, "Poverty and Public Theology: Advocacy of the Church in Pluralistic Society," in *Liberation Theology for a Democratic Society: Essays in Public Theology*, ed. Michael Mädler and Andrea Wagner-Pinggera (Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2018), 159.

<sup>24</sup> John W. De Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology: A South African Contribution to an Ecumenical Debate* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 2.

Bedford-Strohm also claims to find the sources of spiritual renewal for today in Luther's impulse for reformation:

I first want to argue that reformation was a call to a new spiritual authenticity and show why this is relevant today. There are five aspects which lead me to say that Luther's central ideas are powerful resources for an authentic public church: Repentance, justification, freedom, faith and love, public witness.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, public theology can draw significant insights from Reformed theology that reflects how Christian theology can beneficially contribute to contemporary public debate on economic and political issues, which include the ethical dimension.<sup>26</sup>

Building on Luther's pioneering work in the Reformation, Calvin played an influential role in the context of Geneva as a theologian, a holiness preacher and a minister. Moreover, his work and ministry had significant and far-reaching public consequences. In this context, Wim A Dreyer concludes his short but significant contribution with a paragraph presenting Calvin as a public theologian:

What is important, to my opinion, is to understand that reformed theology is intrinsically, almost genetically, predisposed to sociopolitical engagement. The fact that Calvin reflected on justice, law, human dignity, clemency and many more in a critical and theologically responsible manner, makes him a 'public theologian', still relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>27</sup>

Dreyer continues by stating that "if we agree that public theology is 'critical thinking about faith and public life' and 'theological hermeneutics in the service of moral, social and political praxis', Calvin could be regarded as a public theologian".<sup>28</sup> Ruben R Rodriguez also claims that Calvin's theology could be related to contemporary discourses in public theology.<sup>29</sup>

An aspect of public theology in Calvinism following Calvin's theology can be seen in a comment by De Gruchy:

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<sup>25</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, "Reformation. Freeing the Church for Authentic Public Witness," in *Liberation Theology for a Democratic Society: Essays in Public Theology*, ed. Michael Mädler and Andrea Wagner-Pinggera (Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2018), 97.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>27</sup> Wim A. Dreyer, "John Calvin as 'public Theologian' in View of His 'Commentary on Seneca's de Clementia,'" *HTS Theological Studies* 74, no. 4 (2018): 7.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Ruben R. Rodriguez, *Racism and God-Talk: A Latino/a Perspective* (New York: NYU Press, 2008), 119.

[T]here is no denying that Calvinism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries contributed significantly to social movements that managed to turn a theology of evangelical salvation into a program of political transformation.<sup>30</sup>

From this perspective, attempts to find some connection between Calvin and contemporary discourses in public theology with great hermeneutic care are quite worthwhile and possible.

### **1.1.5 The correlation between contemporary and traditional theological approaches**

There is another reason to study the relationship between public theology and the Reformers in relation to the Korean context. David Tracy, in an article that appeared in the *International Journal of Public Theology*, describes three forms of publicness: dialectical or argumentative reason, dialogical or hermeneutical reason and meditative reason. When he describes the second form (dialogical or hermeneutical reason) as ‘Dialogue with Classics’, he concludes that “we need dialogical-hermeneutical public conversation with the Christian classics” because “without learning new skills to dialogue with all the classics of all the traditions (starting with our own Christian tradition): religion will be privatized with no claim to public truth”.<sup>31</sup> This, indeed, has happened in Korea. The Korean Calvinist church did not play the role of a prophet in the social-political state following the democratisation process and the period of social change after the 1980s. In addition, the Korean Presbyterian Church, based on the tradition of Reformed theology, is failing to raise important public issues in this period of church growth in recent Korean ecclesial history.<sup>32</sup> De Gruchy emphasises the necessity of reforming tradition:

There is, however, a difference between traditionalism and living tradition. The former is dead, the latter dynamic and changing, always rediscovering itself, though always in continuity with its past. If this transmission stops,

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<sup>30</sup> John W. De Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology*, 3.

<sup>31</sup> David Tracy, “Three Kinds of Publicness in Public Theology,” *International Journal of Public Theology* 8, no. 3 (2014): 333.

<sup>32</sup> For the allegations that Calvinism lost publicness in Korea, see Kim, “Social Calvinism.”

a tradition loses its significance except for the archivist and historian, and eventually dies.<sup>33</sup>

It is therefore necessary to engage in dialogue with the classics from the perspective of new social and theological developments. Max Stackhouse also emphasises that there is continuity between the development of public theology and the classical theological tradition such as the Reformers' teachings.<sup>34</sup>

In 2017, many Christians and churches from all over the world prepared to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation, which is considered to have begun with the publication of the 95 Theses by Luther in 1517. One of the ways in which this tradition was celebrated was through many theologians' actively trying to reconsider and re-evaluate the life and works of Luther and Calvin in scholarly research and publication. These passionate attempts are continuing.

The Evangelical Church in Germany (Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland [EKD]) also celebrated the anniversary of the Reformation for 12 months in 2017. Bedford-Strohm as the Chairperson of the Board of the EKD was at the centre of these plans. He has been playing an influential role in the public sphere as well as in the academy. Particularly in the context of Germany, he has actively expressed what the government and people should do in relation to the topical issue of refugees in the German and European context. In his work, the current academic trend of the Lutheran Church can be seen as well since he leads the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Therefore, a critical study of Calvin's theology from the perspective of public theology, employing the six characteristics of public theology presented by Bedford-Strohm, can provide some insights for understanding and studying public theology in the context of Korea where the Reformed tradition has a strong impact.

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<sup>33</sup> Gruchy, *John Calvin*, 23.

<sup>34</sup> Max L. Stackhouse, *God and Globalization: Volume 4: Globalization and Grace* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 94.

## **1.2 Statement of the research problem and questions**

First, Korean Christians in large measure do not engage in public theological discourse because they do not regard it as a credible orthodox Reformed theological approach. Therefore, my problem was to find a way to help such persons to recognise elements of this contemporary theological approach in a source that they trusted, particularly in Calvin's theology and his life in Geneva.

Second, as far as I am aware, no one has yet engaged in a thorough, systematic and rigorous engagement with Calvin through the lens of Bedford-Strohm's six characteristics of public theology. My research hypothesis was that such characteristics could indeed be found to a varying extent in Calvin, his work and his context.

Third, I therefore aimed to engage with the first part of my problem as stated above by undertaking the second task and then drawing some theological conclusions.

### **1.2.1 Primary research question**

What aspects of John Calvin's theology and context, when considered through the six characteristics of Heinrich Bedford-Strohm's understanding of public theology, could help Korean Reformed Christians and theologians to consider public theologies as viable for the Korean Christian context?

### **1.2.2 Key questions**

1. What does public theology, or doing public theology, signify concerning the notions of public theology, the history of public theologies and possible 'methodologies and contents' of public theologies?

2. How does Heinrich Bedford-Strohm characterise public theology, and how does this relate to other approaches to public theology in contemporary and historical theological discourses?
3. To what extent are the six characteristics of public theology suggested by Heinrich Bedford-Strohm identifiable in John Calvin's works (which include, but are not limited to, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, commentaries, sermons, letters and his role in Geneva)?
4. How can such an approach to public theology be of value to the context of Korea?

### 1.3 Methodology

This research fell within the field of systematic theology and historical theology. It was shaped as a study of public theology and undertook a historical-critical review of the discourse regarding the notions, methodologies and history of public theology. In addition, a careful examining of the history of Korean Christianity was also conducted to show why the Korean Reformed church had become conservative with regard to political and cultural issues and how it played a role in the context of Korea.

In order to re-evaluate Calvin from the perspective of public theology in this study, the six aspects of public theology described by Bedford-Strohm in his book *Position beziehen: Perspektiven einer öffentlichen Theologie* were employed. The six characteristics of public theology are its biblical-theological profile, its bilingual ability, its interdisciplinary character, its competency to provide political direction, its prophetic quality, and its intercontextual nature. To determine the meaning of the six characteristics of public theology more explicitly, a dialogical and comparative analysis of various contrasting debates by well-known public theologians such as Dirkie Smit, John de Gruchy, Max Stackhouse and Sebastian Kim (among others) was employed.

In 2015, David N Field, academic coordinator at the Methodist e-Academy in Switzerland and the Research Institute for Theology and Religion at the University of South Africa, wrote a short but significant article titled "John Wesley as a Public Theologian: The Case of Thoughts upon Slavery". In the abstract of the article, he describes the aim of the argument:

[A]n analysis of the nascent public theology developed by John Wesley can contribute to the development of a prophetic public theology. This nascent prophetic public theology is best demonstrated in his booklet *Thoughts upon Slavery*. Wesley's argument is critically analysed in the context of eighteenth century Britain.<sup>35</sup>

Even though Wesley, an 18<sup>th</sup>-century evangelist, may not be regarded as an obvious example of a public theologian, Field asserts the following:

Methodism has, however, been characterised by an engagement with society which can in part [be] traced back to Wesley. Moreover, between 1768 and 1778 Wesley published a number of pamphlets addressing public issues such as poverty, the American Revolution, liberty, political power and the slave trade.<sup>36</sup>

Field describes the relation between Wesley and contemporary public theology as follows:

Wesley's incipient public theology is more than an item of historical interest as his writings continue to have an influence on global and South African Christianity through the church of the Methodist and Wesleyan tradition. Hence a critical re-examination of his incipient public theology in dialogue with contemporary debates can contribute to reflection on the public witness of churches within this tradition. Moreover, while Wesley's intervention against slavery is not without its problems, it makes an important contribution to the discussion of the public witness of the church which transcends denominational identity. It models an approach to the public witness of the church which has affinity with both public theologies, as they have emerged in North America and Europe, and the prophetic critique of society found of South African struggle theologies. Hence it suggests the mode of a prophetic public theology.<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, in the same manner, a critical reexamination of Calvin's theology in dialogue with contemporary debates can contribute to reflection on the public witness of churches within the Reformed tradition.<sup>38</sup>

I undertook a task in my research that was similar to what De Gruchy did in his book *John Calvin: Christian Humanist and Evangelical Reformer*. While I argued that we

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<sup>35</sup> David N. Field, "John Wesley as a Public Theologian: The Case of *Thoughts upon Slavery*," *Scriptura* 114 (2015): 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>38</sup> There is an example of attempt that connects public theology to a figure of ancient such as Augustine, "In the twilight of the ancient world, ... Augustine developed a public theology which was also a theology of history. ... Augustine saw public theology as speaking truth to power, as public confession of the faith, an essential aspect of the mission of the Church." Duncan B. Forrester, *Truthful Action: Explorations in Practical Theology* (Edinburgh: A&C Black, 2000), 132,134.

could see aspects of Bedford-Strohm's description of public theology in Calvin, De Gruchy similarly argued that we could see aspects of Christian humanism in Calvin's theology.

De Gruchy describes how living traditions are reinvented from one context to the next:

Church history, which is the story of the transmission of Christian tradition, is one of unceasing contested interpretations, starting with that between Jewish and Hellenistic converts and reaching through the centuries to our day. Ecumenical engagement and dialogue is one way in which this process can be encouraged and enabled.<sup>39</sup>

In this sense, "traditions stay alive precisely because those who share them are in conversation with the past – for Christians, especially the testimony of Scripture – and in debate with each other about their meaning for the present."<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, De Gruchy declares that we need to rephrase the Reformed tradition today through a new language with modern perspectives.<sup>41</sup>

When we evaluate Calvin, De Gruchy highlights, we need to consider two different portraits of Calvin and then both will provide us with the way to understand his significance today:

Those of us who highlight the liberating, humanist, creative and evangelical elements in Calvin's legacy need keep in mind the other side of the story, which reflects Calvin's more conservative, legalistic and reactionary tendencies – even though some of these might embarrass us.<sup>42</sup>

Approaches by Karl Barth that can help us to interpret Calvin today are cited in this book. First, Barth asserts that we have to read Calvin to discover that his words have meaning for us today as well as for his time. Hence, we have to read Calvin in a historical way. Second, to be informed by Calvin, we should take part in a dialogue with Calvin rather than simply repeating his words. Third, we should take great care not to misrepresent Calvin's theology and context by denying its historical and theological situation. De Gruchy summarises this as follows:

By engaging Calvin as a conversation partner in doing theology today, we sometimes have to probe beneath the surface of his thought and between

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<sup>39</sup> Gruchy, *John Calvin*, 24.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 24–25.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

the lines of what he wrote, as well as to open ourselves up to those insights and challenges that demand our attention and response. By studying Calvin in his historical context we keep that discussion honest, neither misusing Calvin for our own purposes by making him say what he did not – or vice versa – nor regarding what he said as beyond criticism, thus final and absolute. The first step I propose we take, then, is to locate Calvin in his historical context ...<sup>43</sup>

This research likewise was undertaken through an in-depth literary study of the primary sources with regard to Calvin's work such as the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, *Calvin's Commentaries*, his sermons and his personal letters, among others. It also engaged with pertinent secondary sources such as, but not limited to, *The Calvin Handbook*, *John Calvin: Christian Humanist & Evangelical Reformer* and *Calvin in the Public Square*. Moreover, it pursued historical engagement with the context of Geneva where Calvin played a significant role.

In addition to above, Dreyer's article "John Calvin as 'public theologian' in view of his 'Commentary on Seneca's de Clementia'" was considered by me in studying a similar task since he described Calvin as a public theologian and even pointed it out from another source, namely Calvin's first publication, his *Commentary on Seneca's de Clementia*. Dreyer cites Gerard Mannion's description in his article:

He points out that there had always been public theology or 'theology in the public square'. Jesus Christ preached in public places and confronted the authorities (civil and religious) with their moral bankruptcy, explaining the values of the kingdom of God. ... During the Medieval and Reformation eras, there was a continual stream of theologians who struggled with questions of how faith should relate to evolving patterns of social and political change.<sup>44</sup>

Dreyer also agrees with Roger Haight's argument that "no church or religion ever functions or exists in isolation. Society influences the identity of the church and shape of faith, and *vice versa* religion also influences the identity of society."<sup>45</sup> In this way, I focused on how Calvin dealt with the relationship between church and society at that time.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>44</sup> Dreyer, "John Calvin as 'public Theologian' in View of His 'Commentary on Seneca's de Clementia,'" 2.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 3.

## 1.4 Outline of the chapters

This dissertation comprises six chapters. Chapter 1 serves as a general introduction. This chapter provides a general overview of the topic, theme and background and seeks to provide some initial insights into the research problem. The research questions, the methodology and the structure of this project are included in this chapter.

Chapter 2 offers a theological overview of the discourse that seeks to introduce a broad-based, systematic understanding of various approaches to public theology. This task is undertaken critically, citing sources from those who use general terminology and approaches associated with public theological discourses as well as those who do not want to use the term and deliberately oppose definitions of public theology. This chapter shows how the notion of public theology emerged and developed in history. In order to identify more accurately the meaning of the term ‘public theology’, it explores Jürgen Habermas’s theory of ‘public sphere’. It presents the changed role of the church in contemporary society. The differences from other similar concepts such as civil religion, political theology and liberation theology are pointed out. Various approaches by influential public theologians are compared with each other.

Chapter 3 focuses on Bedford-Strohm’s six characteristics of public theology. In order to understand his challenge clearly, this chapter examines his other related works in conjunction with a summary of his assertion and brings debates from other scholars in this field into the dialogue with his ideas. The chapter presents a substantial, textured, critical theological discussion of the six characteristics of public theology in relation to other widely accepted scholarly contributions.

Chapter 4 critically re-evaluates Calvin’s works and his role in the context of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Geneva through the hermeneutic lens of Bedford-Strohm’s characteristics of public theology. The *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin’s most representative work that systemically organised his thought, is used and analysed. Calvin also described his thoughts regarding the public life of Christians in his sermons as well as in commentaries and letters. Hence, these are used carefully in the related section. Calvin’s crucial role in Genevan society is presented to support the evidence. For this, historical investigation of Calvin in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is incorporated into this chapter.

Some of the concepts including *sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone), divine accommodation, stewardship, twofold government, right of resistance and self-denial that underpinned his reform work are of special importance in this chapter. Moreover, various primary and secondary sources are brought into conversation in relation to the six characteristics of public theology.

Chapter 5 first discusses why the Korean church needs public theological discussion. The missionary history of the Korean church shows why the church has become conservative. This conservative tendency played a very important role in transforming Korean society and helped the independence movement by encouraging patriotism under Japanese colonial rule. However, after liberation, how Korean Christianity became connected with the ideology of anti-communism and how they lost its prophetic voice from this point on, which is also discussed in this chapter. After an examination of the characteristics of the Korean church throughout its history, some public theological suggestions for the Korean church are provided, as derived from considering Calvin's theology through the lens of the six characteristics of public theology presented by Bedford-Strohm.

Chapter 6 revisits the problem that prompted this research and presents the findings of the study. It is dedicated to summarising and concluding the discussion. The limitations of the study are presented. This chapter also makes some suggestions for future research beyond the scope of this project.

## **1.5 Aims and benefits of the research**

The world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is changing faster than any in previous centuries due to the immense development of industry, including the development of mass media, the internet and the social network system that rushed into the lives of modern people. However, theology in Korea does not seem to respond immediately to these ever-changing issues. In addition, in Korea, churches are often criticised by society because they fail to maintain proper relations with society. This is why public theological discussion is urgently needed in Korean churches.

However, public theology unfortunately has not had as much of an effect in Korea as one would hope, even though comprehensive and influential research on public theology is being conducted internationally. Conservative Korean churches question public theological approaches because they do not have an accurate understanding of public theology. Therefore, the aim of this research project was to make the public theological approach a reasonable and reliable method for these churches by providing richer and more accurate information regarding public theology.

Moreover, it is very important to demonstrate that public theological elements are found in Calvin's theology. Because of this, Korean Reformed theologies following Calvinism will be able to modify their preconceptions about public theology. Thus, this project that links public theology to Calvin's theology may encourage Korean Christians to take part in the discourse on public theology. In addition, since Bedford-Strohm's approach has not yet been used to re-evaluate classical theologians in the manner suggested in this study, this project may become one of the criteria by which a particular theologian (or theology) can be included in the category of public theology.

## CHAPTER 2

# The possibility of doing public theology in Korea? An exploration of various aspects of public theology

### 2.1 Introduction

As the previous chapter stated, the goal of this project is to determine the causes of why public theology, which is attracting worldwide attention, is not being actively discussed in the Korean Reformed theologies as the mainstream Korean Christianity and to find some reasonable suggestions to solve this problem. For this purpose, on the assumption that there are some congruent features of circumstance for public theological discourses that encourage Korean Reformed theologies to participate in public theology and that there are also in-congruent features that cause them to deny public theology, in this chapter, I will first examine what public theology is through a literature review to indicate what circumstances make the approach of public theology credible and what features of such circumstances can be shared with Korean Christianity.

The argument of Harold Breitenberg, Jr points out what should be dealt with for entering into a concrete discourse:

[U]nless we take into account the different types of public theology evidenced within the literature devoted to it – the interpretive, historical, and descriptive, the methodological, and the constructive – that together address critical issues and substantive concerns that are of importance to the field, we may know only part of the real public theology.<sup>46</sup>

First, the fact that a term is widely used does not mean that it is accurate. Rather, often-used terms in everyday life may be ambiguous. Although many scholars have used this term since public theology has received much attention recently, they do not always use it in the same sense. Perhaps it is because the context and culture of the times are being compressed in the language. Therefore, in order to understand this term more

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<sup>46</sup> E. Harold Breitenberg, "To Tell the Truth: Will the Real Public Theology Please Stand Up?," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23, no. 2 (2003): 70.

precisely, it is important to examine the history of its origin and development. Since many forms of public theology have evolved in various regions in recent years, we cannot look at all of them. Thus, I chose to examine the story of civil religion and only two early forms of public theology that originated with it, which can provide insights in relation to the Korean context. Second, I will try to explain what ‘public’ means by drawing on Jürgen Habermas’s theory in his well-known book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Although his theory cannot be fully applied today, his definition of the ‘public sphere’ is sufficient to understand the meaning of public in the expression of public theology. This part should be treated with caution because the debate on the public sphere of the Korean context can be different depending on how the public sphere is understood. Third, examining how scholars, particularly sociologists, assess the role of the church in secularised, globalised, civilized and pluralistic societies is also significant for recognising the necessity of public theology. If the necessity of public theology is perceived in societies that have these characteristics, the necessity of public theology in Korean society that also have similar characteristics can be perceived. However, one can claim that the notion of public theology is still not clear enough and that there are other approaches such as liberation theology, political theology, and civil religion that use similar methodology. Fourth, a comparative study between public theology and similar concepts will be conducted since they are closely related to each other. Fifth, brief summaries of various public theological approaches used by public theologians are of great help to shape public theology more precisely and to understand terminology more concretely. In this part, a number of public theologians whose work is significant on different continents will be discussed.

Through this work, I address my first key questions: What does public theology, or doing public theology, signify concerning the notions of public theology, the history of public theologies and possible ‘methodologies and contents’ of public theologies?

## 2.2 The importance and ambiguity in public theology

Looking at how many books, papers and articles about public theology are pouring out and how many institutions for public theology have been established in a short period, one can guess how important public theology has become in the world in recent years. Many centres for public theology have been established at educational institutions in various countries such as South Africa, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and New Zealand. Some of them are vigorously publishing journals and hosting conferences. As the tendency to emphasise the public role of the church has been expanded and public theological discourse has been growing rapidly in recent years, these efforts to establish institutions are increasingly spreading to diverse places.

Stackhouse asserts that public theology is the most significant theological development today that can address the issues raised by globalisation from the viewpoint of its potential capability. The reason why many scholars attempt to develop public theology is that “it has become a serious question whether a society or civilization can be sustained on the basis of either a purely local and particular faith, or a purely secular basis that claims to transcend all religion and theology”.<sup>47</sup>

Not long after the term had been first used, Charles Strain stated that “as with all initial efforts to specify the parameters of a particular genre, the definition of the term varies from person to person”.<sup>48</sup> Stackhouse also mentions that the term ‘public theology’ is argumentative and has taken several forms.<sup>49</sup> Benjamin Valentin emphasises the need for mapping of public theology. According to him, since the term public theology does not have the same meaning to all scholars, public theology has become a somewhat ‘nebulous’ and ‘elastic’ conception that requires some mapping.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Bedford-Strohm emphasises the diversity of public theology. When we develop public theology

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<sup>47</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 77.; Moreover, it is because public theology captured “wider and deeper strands of the classical Christian theological heritage” rather than because of its novelty. Ibid., 92.

<sup>48</sup> Charles R Strain, “Walter Rauschenbusch: A Resource for Public Theology,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 34, no. 1 (1978): 23.

<sup>49</sup> Max L. Stackhouse, “Broken Covenants: A Threat to Society?,” in *Judgment Day at the White House: A Critical Declaration Exploring Moral Issues and the Political Use and Abuse of Religion*, ed. Gabriel J. Fackre (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 19–20.

<sup>50</sup> Benjamin Valentin, *Mapping Public Theology: Beyond Culture, Identity, and Difference* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2002), 84–85.

with the evaluation of the public role of religion in the liberal state, we should be aware that there is not one universal public theology that can be applied everywhere but that a variety of public theologies that are appropriate for each area and situation exist.<sup>51</sup> One of South Africa's most significant theologians, Dirkie Smit, says about public theology that it "has not always been very clear what is meant by it. Both those practicing public theology as well as those criticizing the notion of public theology often seem not to be altogether sure what they are referring to".<sup>52</sup> Breitenberg explains that the reason why those interested in public theology has understood it in various ways is that the term arose and developed in different contexts.<sup>53</sup>

When we look at the arguments of the various scholars mentioned above, there seems to be a consensus that it is quite difficult to define the notion of public theology. Such ambiguity of the term causes a serious problem. When some describe a figure as a public theologian and regard this person's work as public theology, they often use the terminology of public theology without accurate understanding. This raises a serious problem because the categories of public theologians or public theologies are fluid depending on how they understand and use the terminology of public theology. As a result, a person who was generally regarded as a public theologian could be evaluated as not being a public theologian while a critic of public theology could be regarded as a public theologian.<sup>54</sup>

Therefore, clarifying and defining the notion of public theology by examining and contrasting the term's usage in its historical context and in the various literature is important for proceeding to more concrete studies.

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<sup>51</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, "Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State," in *Liberation Theology for a Democratic Society: Essays in Public Theology*, ed. Michael Mädler and Andrea Wagner-Pinggera (Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2018), 24.

<sup>52</sup> Smit, "What Does 'public' Mean?," 11.

<sup>53</sup> Breitenberg, "To Tell the Truth," 56.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

### 2.3 Emergence of the term ‘public theology’

As mentioned above, the notion of public theology is still ambiguous even though it has been increasingly used by not only scholars but also Christians in various countries.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, to answer the question from whom the paradigms of public theology can be found is very complicated since each theologian has his/her own specific views.

Therefore, as Smit says, it is significant to realise that

[T]here is no common origin and there is no gradual development because there is no real public theology that could stand up, no new normal and normative discipline of public theology, there are only historical moments of public theology, instructive and inspiring precisely in their uniqueness.<sup>56</sup>

Dreyer seems to agree with Smit. He emphasises that it is impossible to provide a complete overview of public theology. Rather, “it is enough to mention that it is an area of theology where one has to tread carefully to avoid the pitfalls of generalisation, lack of nuanced historical discourse, exclusivism, hypocrisy and a pessimistic world view.”<sup>57</sup> However, these arguments do not mean that it is not necessary to look at the history of the usage of the term. Rather, exploring various assertions regarding the origins and development of public theology worldwide is indispensable and the best way of introducing public theology because the diverseness of methodologies and the *sine qua non* of public theology stem from its history.

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<sup>55</sup> The term ‘public theology’ can be found not only in the field of Christianity but also in other religious traditions. Furthermore, in the near future, more contributions to public theology debate will come from outside Christianity. See *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>56</sup> Smit, “The Paradigm of Public Theology - Origins and Development,” 23.

<sup>57</sup> Dreyer, “John Calvin as ‘public Theologian’ in View of His ‘Commentary on Seneca’s de Clementia,’” 2.

### 2.3.1 Civil religion in the United States of America

Public theology originated in discussions on civil religion<sup>58</sup> and its role in the United States of America that were started by Robert Bellah in 1967.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, a similar term, namely ‘civic religion’, had already been used by Will Herberg to describe the religious version of ‘Americanism’<sup>60</sup> in the context that America had to reaffirm its core values such as religious freedom, human rights and constitutional democracy after World War II.<sup>61</sup>

In this context, Bellah argues that “there actually exists alongside of and rather clearly differentiated from the churches an elaborate and well-institutionalized civil religion in America”.<sup>62</sup> His assertion that there was a particular pattern in the public address of American presidents begins with introducing John F Kennedy’s inaugural address in 1961, in which God’s name was mentioned three times. For understanding how civil religion has worked, it is necessary to consider “whether the very special placing<sup>63</sup> of the references to God in Kennedy’s address may not reveal something rather important and serious about religion in American life” despite a possible opposing viewpoint that “religion has only a ceremonial significance”.<sup>64</sup> Concerning the question of how a president used the word ‘God’ in his public address with respect to the constitutional separation of church and state, Bellah says the following:

The answer is that the separation of church and state has not denied the political realm a religious dimension. Although matters of personal religious belief, worship, and association are considered to be strictly private affairs, there are, at the same time, certain common elements of

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<sup>58</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau coined the term ‘civil religion’ in Chapter 8, Book 4, of *The Social Contract*. He outlines the simple dogmas of the civil religion namely, deity, afterlife, the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice, the exclusion of religious intolerance. The civil religion, “some kind of national system of moral values,” replaced the Christian conviction which was regarded as a private dimension after the French Revolution. See Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 87.

<sup>59</sup> Breitenberg, “To Tell the Truth,” 56.

<sup>60</sup> In fact, this kind of civil religion is not only in America. However, modern American circumstances tend to make this more meaningful. See Max L. Stackhouse, “Civil Religion, Political Theology and Public Theology: What’s the Difference?,” in *Christian in Public: Aims, Methodologies, and Issues in Public Theology*, ed. L. D. Hansen (Stellenbosch: AFRICAN SUN MeDIA, 2008), 80.

<sup>61</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 87.

<sup>62</sup> Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 96, no. 1 (1967): 1.

<sup>63</sup> He argued that the three references placed in the two paragraphs of opening and in the paragraph of closing is of great structural significance. See *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 1–2.

religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share. These have played a crucial role in the development of American institutions and still provide a religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life, including the political sphere. This public religious dimension is expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals that I am calling the American civil religion.<sup>65</sup>

It seems that there was an unspoken agreement that the ultimate sovereignty belonged to God although sovereignty rested with the people depending on American political theory. The president was obligated to a higher criterion that could judge right and wrong beyond the will of the people, who themselves, could not be the ultimate criterion.<sup>66</sup> Thus, the religious dimension in political life often provides “a transcendent goal for the political process” in America since this was working as “the motivating spirit of those who founded America, and it has been present in every generation”.<sup>67</sup> The shape of the civil religion was developed by the speeches and behaviours of the first few presidents in particular. However, “this religion is clearly not itself Christianity” albeit it that much of it stems from, and shares common elements with Christianity.<sup>68</sup> It was not explicitly Christian language but just an appeal to the power of God. Civil religion was not simply ‘religion in general’ and never served as a replacement for Christianity. It was distinct from Christianity in which individuals still pursued their piety and voluntary social activities under the doctrine of religious liberty, but the churches were also neither to control the state nor to be controlled by it. Even though the dictate that anyone in an official capacity had to operate under the banner of the civil religion was the creation of a particular historical time, civil religion has survived.<sup>69</sup> Some have argued that it serves as a source for solidarity in a multicultural nation.

The concept of civil religion that reappeared with “a new theme of death, sacrifice, and rebirth” through the American Civil War can be found in the Gettysburg address of Abraham Lincoln. In the rituals for the people killed during the war, the theme of sacrifice entered civil religion. Memorial Day and Thanksgiving Day serve to integrate

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 4–5.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 8–9.

the family into the Civil War as well as to unite communities in the American vision.<sup>70</sup>

Bellah concludes as follows:

Behind the civil religion at every point lie Biblical archetypes: Exodus, Chosen People, Promised Land, New Jerusalem, Sacrificial Death and Rebirth. But it is also genuinely American and genuinely new. It has its own prophets and its own martyrs, its own sacred events and sacred places, its own solemn rituals and symbols. It is concerned that America be a society as perfectly in accord with the will of God as men can make it, and a light to all the nations.<sup>71</sup>

In short, as Breitenberg says that civil religion “consists of a basic and minimal set of religious beliefs and values, shared to some extent by most members of society”.<sup>72</sup>

According to Bedford-Strohm’s account, however, the concept of civil religion cannot be a credible model for the public role of religion since it has two problematic aspects. First, there is a problem with “its inclusivity: the more specific the content of the assumed civil religion is, the less inclusive it is”. Second, there is a problem related to “its religious quality: if the commitment to human dignity and to justice and reconciliation is not just a civil moral *consensus*, but also a civil *religion*, it does not unite all citizens anymore, at least if we assume that not all citizens automatically share the religious perspective”.<sup>73</sup> Stackhouse also cites Nazi Germany, the Communist Soviet Union and apartheid South Africa as the examples of ‘national cults’ understood as pagan ‘civic religions’ or factitious ‘civil religions’. The impact of civil religion has waxed and waned in the history of America; it particularly escalated in reaction to the 9/11 tragedy.<sup>74</sup>

### 2.3.2 Public theology distinguished from civil religion

In 1974, in his study “Reinhold Niebuhr: Public Theology and the American Experience,” Martin Marty, a prominent Lutheran church historian, introduced the term

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>72</sup> Breitenberg, “To Tell the Truth,” 56.

<sup>73</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State,” 27.

<sup>74</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 89–90.

‘public theology’<sup>75</sup> as a specific form of civil religion while assessing Reinhold Niebuhr’s theological ethics. Moreover, in 1982 in his influential book *The Public Church*,<sup>76</sup> he used the term ‘public church’ to argue about the role of the church in American public life. He attempted to analyse controversial perspectives regarding the role of religion in America using the terms ‘public religion’<sup>77</sup> and ‘the religion of the republic’ that already existed.

Marty used the term ‘public theology’ as distinguished from ‘invented cult’ to describe those who wanted to use explicitly biblical and doctrinal sources in order to engage in public issues.<sup>78</sup> A similar claim can be found in Stackhouse’s view that public theology is not simply another name for civil religion. Public theology that focused on ethics is more convincing than civil religion since public theology is “less dependent on experience in one context on one hand and less dependent on a single confessional tradition on the other”.<sup>79</sup>

Marty describes Niebuhr as a public theologian who offered “the best personal paradigms of the emerging American public theology style”.<sup>80</sup> Niebuhr regarded himself as a servant of and a prophet to America-in-praxis. He deemed America not as a nation of theorists about their belief but as a nation of ‘go-getters’ and experiencers. In this sense, he dealt with “the language of a believing and practicing ecclesiastical and national community”.<sup>81</sup> His will can be seen in his self-accusation that “one of the most fruitful sources of self-deception in the ministry is the proclamation of great ideals and principles without any clue to their relation to the controversial issues of the day”,

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<sup>75</sup> “If Edwards, Bushnell, and Rauschenbusch represent what might be called public theology from the churches’ side, their contemporaries Benjamin Franklin (or, later, Thomas Jefferson), Abraham Lincoln, and Woodrow Wilson used specifically deistic or theological materials in order to make sense of the American experience.” Marty, “Reinhold Niebuhr: Public Theology and the American Experience,” 333. However, Max Stackhouse comments that the term was used in correspondence between Reinhold Niebuhr and John Courtney Murray, since then others such as Martin Marty, David Tracy elaborated this term. Max L. Stackhouse, “Liberalism Revisited: From Social Gospel to Public Theology,” in *Being Christian Today: An American Conversation*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus and George Weigel (Washington: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1992), 317.

<sup>76</sup> Marty, *The Public Church: Mainline - Evangelical - Catholic*.

<sup>77</sup> “He derives the word ‘public’ from the ‘public religion’ described by Benjamin Franklin, which he thinks ‘fits the American pluralist pattern better’ than Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s ‘civil religion’.” Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere*, 4.

<sup>78</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 87–88.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>80</sup> Marty, “Reinhold Niebuhr: Public Theology and the American Experience,” 334.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 336.

and he admitted that he had himself “too frequently avoided the specific application of general principles to controversial situations to be able to deny what really goes on in the mind of the preacher when he is doing this”.<sup>82</sup> His vision of the American religious circumstance shaped his thought. He dealt with “virtual stereotypes of his contemporaries’ behavioral patterns in their religious communities” since certain behaviours of people are related to their context.<sup>83</sup> Marty concludes as follows:

For all the limits in Niebuhr’s observation and despite some hidden ideological biases and tendencies to stereotype, he joined in his person the two main approaches to public theology in America. He took the behavior of his people and, reflecting on it in the light of biblical, historical, and philosophical positions, offered ensuing generation a paradigm for a public theology, a model which successors have only begun to develop and realize.<sup>84</sup>

Marty’s evaluation of Niebuhr shows how he thinks and conceptualises public theology. In this sense, Marty mentions theologians who attempted to explain social order and common life using theological language, such as Jonathan Edwards, Horace Bushnell and Walter Rauschenbush. He also assessed Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln as the important politicians who relied on a biblical, dogmatic basis to guide the nation’s moral duties. The contributions of these figures are different from civil religion for two reasons. One is that they preferred to use biblical, theological resources instead of political theories for national identity. The other is that they attempted to identify basic aspects of the human condition rather than the American experience.<sup>85</sup>

However, sometimes Marty’s distinction between ‘public church’ and ‘private church’ is criticised by scholars such as Stanley Hauerwas. Despite Marty’s distinction between private church, which concerns the purely private sphere of religion and its ultimate goal of the salvation of the individual, and public church, which members have to engage in the public sphere with their own agenda and then transform the social

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<sup>82</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Leaves from the Note Book of a Tamed Cynic* (New York: Living Age, 1957), 218–19.

<sup>83</sup> Marty, “Reinhold Niebuhr: Public Theology and the American Experience,” 340.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

<sup>85</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 88.

structure, Hauerwas asserts that American ecclesiology is not properly described as a dichotomy between private and public.<sup>86</sup>

Soon after Marty's first use of the term, Bellah accepted Marty's proposal to distinguish between civil religion and public theology<sup>87</sup> and incorporated it into his later work. Moreover, he abandoned the civil religion debate and used the term 'public church' instead of the term 'civil religion'.<sup>88</sup>

### 2.3.3 Theology as public discourse

In 1974, David Tracy wrote a significant essay on public theology called "Theology as Public Discourse"<sup>89</sup> in *The Christian Century*. He wrote, "The central question becomes the very character of the discipline itself: What modes of argumentation, which methods, what warrants, backings, evidence can count for or against a public statement by a physicist, a historian, a philosopher, a theologian?" Thus, he was haunted by the question, "What is this discipline called theology? What makes it a discipline? What allows it to be a form of public discourse? What methods and modes of argumentation and evidence can legitimately be put forward in any discussion that labels itself 'theological'?" Although Tracy admitted that he had been "semi-obsessed" with the question, he eventually said, "I still believe that the question of an adequate paradigm for theology as a public discourse remains the most important item on the contemporary theological agenda." In this study, he describes how the contemporary agenda helps fundamental theology and systematic theology to be a public discourse. He considers two questions derived from the general question "What is theology as a discipline informing public discourse?" One is related to 'fundamental theology', and

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<sup>86</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 31.

<sup>87</sup> "Marty proposes to distinguish between civil religion and public theology, a distinction which I view as a major contribution to the discussion of civil religion the Publicly institutionalized civil religion must remain as symbolically open or empty as possible. ... But public theology can speak from particular religious tradition to the national need." Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones, "American Civil Religion in the 1970s," in *American Civil Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 258.

<sup>88</sup> Breitenberg, "To Tell the Truth," 74.

<sup>89</sup> Tracy, "Theology as Public Discourse."

the other is related to 'systematic theology'. The question of a fundamental theology points out what the appropriate theological criteria are explicitly or implicitly, and the question of a systematic theology helps to order the enormous variety of Christian experience to make theology rational. Tracy claims that methodological reflection, the fundamental theological reflection as he prefers to call it, is "pure necessity for adjudicating the warring claims of the theologies fighting for one's attention". Fundamental theologians, therefore, have to try to make clear what criteria and methods are proper for "public discourse; genuine communication; authentic conversation" provided from the "emancipatory and public character of critical reason". If they want to make a theological statement, they have to consider whether it is adequate or not by two sets of criteria. The first set of criteria is that a Christian theological statement must correspond to the core of the Christian tradition. The second set of criteria is that a Christian theological statement must be seen as a 'meaning-system' to the common experience. Tracy suggests his own model, stating that "fundamental theology is that discipline which consists in philosophical reflection upon the meanings present in our common human experience and in the Christian fact".<sup>90</sup>

I have briefly described the emergence and development of the concept of public theology that stemmed from the discussion of civil religion. Even though it was originally a discussion of a specific period in the United States of America, similar developments could be witnessed in other regions and in other times in slightly different forms. The concept of civil religion is also found in the Korean context. According to In-cheol Kang, a Korean religious scholar, the phenomenon of civil religion began to emerge after the liberation from Japan's colonial rule in both South Korea and North Korea, which were divided by the 38th parallel. Whereas the civil religion of South Korea had a strong anticommunist democratic nature, the anti-American socialist civil religion was strong in North Korea. Throughout the Korean War, the unique nature of civil religions in North and South Korea became more apparent, and from the mid-

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<sup>90</sup> Tracy, "Theology as Public Discourse."

1950s, each of them invented and mass produced numerous sacred monuments, heroes, sanctuaries, memorials, scriptures and rituals.<sup>91</sup>

If there is evidence that Korea's civil religion differs from that of America, it is that the influence of Confucianism is greater than that of Christianity. In Korea, civil religion has been under the influence of traditional Confucianism in terms of cultural and political integration. Family-centred bonds are considered to be the most important, and this is a culture that supports civil society.<sup>92</sup> Thus, even though Korea had a similar civil religion, did not civil religion develop into public theology because Confucianism was more influential than Christianity? I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 5.

## 2.4 The meaning of 'public' in Habermas's theory of the 'public sphere'

In general, the word 'public' is the opposite of the word 'private'. Human life belongs to the private realm, a confidential or intimate realm. There is no need to consider the welfare, public good and public interest of others. Sometimes, the word 'public' is used in the opposite sense of the word 'state'. It is used in this sense when people say that they need a public place to form, develop, exchange and express their opinions for the public good.<sup>93</sup> However, this distinction is inadequate to capture the complexity of the notion of the 'public'.

Therefore, we need another way to clarify the notion of public theology. Hence we will examine the meaning of the term 'public'<sup>94</sup> in the expression 'public theology'. Stackhouse also claims that exploring the notion of the public is important for understanding public theology since the meaning of the term 'public' is as controversial as that of the term 'theology'. Jürgen Habermas's 'public sphere' can give us a useful

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<sup>91</sup> In-Cheol Kang, "Politics of the Past and the Formation of Korean Civil Religion: Divided Nation, 1948-Year Regime, East Asian Nationalism," *Social and History* 111 (2016): 122.

<sup>92</sup> Shin-Han Choi, "The Intrinsic Nature of Aesthetic Experience and Its Practical Implication," *Hegel-Studien (Hegel-Yeongu)* 33 (2013): 208.

<sup>93</sup> Smit, "Notions of the Public and Doing Theology," 436.

<sup>94</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 86.

guideline. Therefore, in this section, I will briefly summarise his theory and find some meaningful conceptualisation regarding the public sphere in Korea.

Habermas, a German social philosopher, published a significant study entitled *Stukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (1962) that was translated into English as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. His perspective regarding the term ‘public sphere’ shared by most European and North American sociologists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is very helpful to clarify the notion of public.

The subtitle of his study, namely *An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, shows his intention to explore civil society, which is typical in Western countries in the modern era.<sup>95</sup> In this respect, Habermas himself asserts as follows:

The usage of the words ‘public’ and ‘public sphere’ betrays a multiplicity of concurrent meanings. Their origins go back to various historical phases and, when applied synchronically to the conditions of a bourgeois society that is industrially advanced and constituted as a social-welfare state, they fuse into a clouded amalgam.<sup>96</sup>

#### 2.4.1 Representative publicness

Indeed, the words related to ‘public’ and ‘public sphere’ were formed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and unexpectedly were not used much. The notions of public or private, however, can be traced back to their Greek origin. The common place, *polis*, was totally separated from the private place, *oikos*, in the fully developed Greek city-state. Nevertheless, the social foundations of the bourgeois public sphere have begun to be dismantled again and its functions have become ineffective for the past century, the publicity that was developed from such a Hellenic public sphere still serves as an organisational principle of our political order.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Smit, “What Does ‘public’ Mean?,” 12.

<sup>96</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 1.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 2–4.

Before exploring the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere, it is necessary to look at a similar concept, ‘representative publicness’, for a proper understanding of the bourgeois public sphere. There is no clear evidence that the public sphere, as a separate space as distinguished from the private realm, existed in medieval feudal society. However, there was a public representation of sovereign power. In fact, this representative publicness was not recognised as one of the public spheres or as a part of the social realm but was something like a status attribute. For example, a manorial lord publicly showed their status despite of the fact that their status was not public or private but natural. Of course, such representative publicness had nothing to do with representation in the sense of a representative of a nation or a specific mandate. “They represented their lordship not for but before the people.”<sup>98</sup>

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, however, the independent local nobility, based on the feudal system, lost its representative power and representative publicness was concentrated in the court of the prince. Furthermore, the space that the types of representative publicness such as jousting, dancing, the theatre presented was relocated from the public place to inside a park, from the streets to the rooms of the palace. Ironically, however, the basic pattern of representative publicness has not only been maintained but has become even more prominent since then. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of the rise of the ‘aristocratic society’ from Renaissance society, the private and public spheres in the modern sense began to separate, and the feudal powers, the nobility and the church as the carriers of representative publicness were eventually dissolved into the private components on the one hand and public elements on the other hand. In this situation, the status of the church became a private matter. For the first time, the freedom of religion guaranteed the domain of private independence while the church itself remained one of the other public groups. Conversely, the elements of political privilege were incorporated into institutions of public authority such as a parliament and jurisdiction while the elements of occupational status were incorporated into the realm of civil society which was the genuine sphere of private autonomy opposing the state.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 9–12.

## 2.4.2 Origin and development of the bourgeois public sphere

With the knowledge of the background of the concept of representative publicness, in order to study the origin of the bourgeois public sphere, preunderstanding of the early capitalism in Western Europe has to be a starting point. From the 13<sup>th</sup> century, with the advent of early trade and finance capitalism that gradually spread from the Northern Italian city-states to Northern and Western Europe, Dutch centres for storing goods, and later the huge trade fairs at the intersections of long-distance trade had been established. This became a reason for the development of the elements of a new social order namely “the traffic in commodities and news”. Smit says, “Two factors would play an especially decisive role in this transformation, namely the flow of commerce and communication”.<sup>100</sup> As more and more commodities were exchanged, primitive newspapers appeared to exchange information about trade; these were not newspapers in the strict sense because of the lack of publicness.<sup>101</sup> These newspapers, however, developed into a unique explosive power within the transformed political and social organisation during the mercantilist stage of capitalism. Furthermore, the news became public in the sense that people could access it easily as information itself became a commodity. Increasingly, state authorities used the newspapers to proclaim instructions and ordinances. The addressees of the state’s announcements eventually became the public in the strict sense. As an abstract counterpart of public authority, the *publicum* was able to become conscious of itself as opponent of public authority, which is, “as the public of the emerging public sphere of civil society”. The bourgeois public sphere was developed because the authorities no longer represented public interest regarding the private realm of civil society, and the public regarded it as its own interest. In the last third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the newspapers were replaced by magazines “containing not primarily information but pedagogical instructions and even criticism and reviews”. This new form of publication promoted a new kind of public by providing information,

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<sup>100</sup> Smit, “What Does ‘public’ Mean?,” 14.

<sup>101</sup> “The so-called public targeted as leaders by these first newspapers did not really include all people of citizens, but rather only the more sophisticated and educated classes.” Ibid.

forming critical opinions and supplying reviews. In 1784, Frederick II issued a rescript<sup>102</sup> to hinder such developments.<sup>103</sup>

In the ‘town’, an early public sphere in the world of letters was developed in opposition to the court’s cultural policy, which was institutionalised as coffee houses, the salons and the table societies. These served as a bridge between the collapsing form of courtly publicity and the early forms of the new bourgeois public sphere:

The line between state and society, fundamental in our context, divided the public sphere from the private realm. The public sphere was coextensive with public authority, and we consider the court part of it. Included in the private realm was the authentic “public sphere,” for it was a public sphere constituted by private people. Within the realm that was the preserve of private people we therefore distinguish again between private and public spheres. The private sphere comprised civil society in the narrower sense, that is to say, the realm of commodity exchange and of social labor; imbedded in it was the family with its interior domain.<sup>104</sup>

The coffee house and the salon in France and England were at first centres of literary criticism and then became centres of political criticism.<sup>105</sup> They organised debate among private people; thus, they had several institutional criteria in common. First, everyone was considered equal, regardless of their economic status, political power and prestige of public office. Second, the topics of discussion in the public sphere extended to areas that had not been questioned previously. Third, no matter how exclusive each public was, it was eventually open to everyone and everyone could participate. In this public sphere, people could freely exchange necessary information and develop their own critical thinking and political opinions through dialogue and discussion.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> “A private person has no right to pass public and perhaps even disapproving judgment on the actions, procedures, laws, regulations, and ordinances of sovereigns and courts, their officials, assemblies, and courts of law, or to promulgate or publish in print pertinent reports that he manages to obtain. For a private person is not at all capable of making such judgment, because he lacks complete knowledge of circumstances and motives.” Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 25.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–25.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>105</sup> The fact that there are over 3,000 coffee houses already in London in the first decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century shows how much fashion it is. See *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

Habermas mentions three sets of rights that guaranteed that the spheres of the public realm and of the private realms were spelled out in the law of the constitutional state.<sup>107</sup>

A set of basic rights concerned the following:

1. The sphere of the public engaged in rational-critical debate (freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and association, etc.) and the political function of private people in this public sphere.
2. The individual's status as a free human being, grounded in the intimate sphere of the patriarchal conjugal family (personal freedom, inviolability of the home, etc.).
3. The transactions of the private owners of property in the sphere of civil society (equality before the law, protection of private property, etc.).

As a result, publicness became the organisational principle for the procedures of states, and their 'publicity' became a significant one. Of course, the public sphere opposes the explicit exclusion of any particular group. Similarly, Sebastian Kim maintains that the public sphere should be a place "where no particular bodies dominate, but rather all the individuals and co-operative bodies are given an inclusive forum for debate in order to negotiate with each other in the pursuit of a fair and open society".<sup>108</sup>

### **2.4.3 Transformation of the public sphere**

However, these situations were transformed by the emergence of liberalism and the explosive expansion of voting rights since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 'societalisation of the state' and the 'stateification of society' took place at the same time, and the basis of the bourgeois public sphere, the separation of state and society, gradually collapsed. The new sphere emerging from it did not belong purely to the private or to the public and obviously did not belong to any realm of private or public law. The new media, moreover, had become a source of entertainment for rest and pleasure, not for the public

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>108</sup> Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere*, 25.

use of reason. The world fashioned by the mass media was a public sphere in appearance only. In the end, the public was divided into minorities of experts who discussed non-publicly, and the great mass of consumers who were receptive publicly but uncritically.<sup>109</sup>

These changes also appeared in political functions. Since newspapers tried to gain profits through the advertising business, newspapers, which were institutions of private individuals, became the gateway for introducing privileged private interests into the public sphere. In the past, the press had just played a role in the transmission and amplification of the public debate, which was a collection of private people, but then the discourse was formed by mass media. This side effect had been maximised through ‘opinion management’. Opinion management aimed for a “reorientation of public opinion by the formation of new authorities of symbols which will have acceptance” by a dramatic presentation of facts. Public opinion no longer had purely rational or critical power. This is because these discussions were no longer based on people’s information gained by free exchange without coercion from economic and political forces.<sup>110</sup>

Dirkie Smit states that Habermas’s view is critical of those developments since his normative perspective of the public sphere is threatened by them. As the public sphere in the world of letters was turned into the ‘sham-private world of culture consumption,’ the public has lost the ability of critical dialogue that the real public should have. Therefore, “This shift is of pivotal importance in Habermas’s critical analysis of contemporary democracies, which he typifies as false democracies or pseudo-democracies.”<sup>111</sup> In this sense, it is still useful to understand the term ‘public’, even though Habermas’s thought about the structural reformation of the public sphere that refers to a specific society and a certain period no longer functions in the way that he argues in his book.<sup>112</sup> However, it is also true that there are various criticisms of Habermas’s analysis.

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<sup>109</sup> See Chapter V in his book, Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

<sup>110</sup> See Chapter VI in his book, *Ibid*.

<sup>111</sup> Smit, “What Does ‘public’ Mean?,” 16.

<sup>112</sup> “Still, a greatly simplified version of some of the main points in Habermas’s early study remains useful to open one’s eyes to issues and choices regarding the term ‘public.’ *Ibid*., 12.

#### 2.4.4 Criticism of Habermas's analysis

Smit asserts that there is some criticism about the details, albeit Habermas's basic idea regarding structural transformation of the public sphere is still valuable. Smit provides some critical comments on Habermas's analysis in his instructive paper "What does 'public' mean?"<sup>113</sup>, presented briefly below. Of course, there is also rebuttal of the criticism by Smit, but I will not deal with it here because the purpose of this section is to describe Habermas's notion of public sphere as pertaining to the Korean context.

Smit asserts the following:

1. Habermas constructs an idealised picture of a so-called public of informed citizens and of rational debate that never really existed in that way.
2. Habermas completely misreads the flourishing of the public media and especially the mass media, and he views their role much too negatively. Many communication experts choose, rather, to point out the positive role that the electronic mass media, for example, play in spreading information and in promoting the common good.
3. Habermas's analyses of what constitutes the public is simply no longer valid because reality has changed again radically. The future no longer lies in direct and face-to-face communication.
4. Habermas's analyses are not sufficient, and his proposals are too idealistic, impractical and simply not feasible. The kind of public sphere that he idealises – the coercion-free discourse conducted in an ideal speech situation among equal participants with equal information and influence and without regard to their own interest – never existed, does not exist now, and can never exist.

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<sup>113</sup> Smit, "What Does 'public' Mean?"

In addition, Nancy Frazer claims that although the public sphere must be accessible to all, the bourgeois public sphere was only accessible to certain people such as the mainstream male bourgeoisie.<sup>114</sup>

There was also criticism of Habermas's perspective on the role of religion. Habermas argued that there was no place for the public role of religion except as a negative influence. He thus underestimated the institutional voice of religion and put the churches on the row level with, for example, sports clubs or interest groups. However, he more recently revised his assessment, stating that religion could play a significant role in the modern world.<sup>115</sup>

If so, how has the concept of public sphere been discussed in the Korean context? Woo-Seon Hwang and Sung-Hae Kim assert that it is difficult to find traces of the public sphere before Korea's liberation. Since the absolute monarchy had been maintained for a long time and Korea had been colonised by Japan. Hence, there was no symbolic public sphere for democratic decision making. However, some consider the People's Joint Association, founded in 1898, as the first attempt at democratic politics in Korean society. Many of the people who led these associations were either Christians or were directly or indirectly influenced by Christians. At the heart of these associations was a community of churches that was run in a democratic manner in accordance with the Protestant tradition after the arrival of American missionaries in 1885.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 72–73. She suggests the notion 'subaltern counterpublics'. See *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>115</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, "Civil Society - Welfare State - Diaconia: International Perspectives for Development," in *Liberation Theology for a Democratic Society: Essays in Public Theology*, ed. Michael Mädler and Andrea Wagner-Pinggera (Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2018), 140.; "Habermas affirms that it is unreasonable to reject a priori the thought that the world religions have a place in modernity, because their cognitive value has not been fully redeemed. It cannot be excluded that they harbour a semantic potential that can inspire society as a whole." Bedford-Strohm, "Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State," 36.; "He now thinks differently about secularization and about the place and task of religion and theology in public life. His public conversation with Cardinal Ratzinger similarly speaks of his new understanding of the necessary and unique contribution that religion and theology can make to public life and the common good, to human dignity and to peace." Smit, "What Does 'public' Mean?," 27.

<sup>116</sup> Woo-Seon Hwang and Sung-Hae Kim, "The Prototype of Korean Democracy and Religious Community: Exploring the Role of Christian Assembly in Terms of Public Sphere," *Korean Journal of Communication Studies* 24, no. 3 (2016): 68.

This assessment is especially important because it is related to the constitutional legislation of the Republic of Korea. The public opinion leaders in Korean society were the public sphere of the Christian community and played a role as a ‘guide’ in the process of forming public opinion. This phenomenon is very similar to the bourgeois public sphere analysed by Habermas in that these leaders belonged to the intelligentsia, had experienced and understood foreign cultures and were the so-called informed public.

An understanding of the origin and development of the term ‘public’ through Habermas’s analysis almost automatically calls for the next question regarding the relationship between religion and society, namely, “How does religion play a role in the public sphere?”

## **2.5 The public return of the religious**

This section is quite significant since it is closely related to the aim of what I want to argue in this chapter. First, I will choose only three characteristics of contemporary societies among many, which are globalisation, civil society and pluralism since I feel that these represent important categories in contemporary society. Second, I will investigate the possibility of the role of religion in such societies through a literature study of scholars selected deliberately for supporting my aim. Since it is not my main purpose to verify whether their theory is correct or not, I will limit this section to introducing their contributions. What is really important in this section is whether these descriptions of the contemporary world by such scholars are applicable to the Korean context. If religion can play an important role in such societies that are similar to Korean society, the discussion of public theology related to Korea will also be meaningful.

De Gruchy points out that theologians who engage in public discourse used to fall into one of two temptations: the first one is to believe that theology makes more of a contribution and a difference than it actually does, and the second one is to

underestimate the value of its public role. Both temptations stem from a misunderstanding of the role of theology in the public sphere.<sup>117</sup>

Bedford-Strohm argues that the role of religion is very clear both in a ‘theocratic state’ and in an ‘atheist state’. In the former, a certain government uses the power of religion to push ahead by appealing to the authority of a particular religion. In the latter, there is no space for religion since the government does not allow any religion to express its belief. In an atheist state, religion is regarded as dangerous to the commonwealth and, therefore, “freedom of religion is seen as a threat”.<sup>118</sup> Bedford-Strohm’s claim does not necessarily apply to all these states, and there are many possible arguments against it. However, he seems to argue that the role of religion in these two places is clearer than elsewhere.

In modern society, however, the role of religion is not a simple question. Nonetheless it is clear that the principles of theology directly or indirectly affect all spheres of life, Stackhouse says:

[Theological and theological ethical principles] usually work indirectly through, e.g., the cultural, educational, and jurisprudential systems and penetrate other spheres of life – politics, business, technology, for examples – of a civilization and often quite directly through the convictions of the people who organize and manage the institutions in these spheres.<sup>119</sup>

The discourses regarding how religion plays a role in the modern world expressed as secular, democratic, plural and liberal society, however, are enormously complex and contested. While some scholars such as Michael Sandel, Nicholas Wolterstorff and Michael Perry claim that religious appeals can and should be allowed in public political discourse, others such as John Rawls and Robert Audi asserted that religion should be outside the public arena or at least should be expressed in theologically neutral language.<sup>120</sup> In order to explore the relationship between religion and the modern world,

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<sup>117</sup> John W. de Gruchy, “From Political to Public Theologies: The Role of Theology in Public Life in South Africa,” in *Public Theology for the 21st Century: Essays in Honour of Duncan B. Forrester*, ed. William Storrar and Andrew Morton (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 45.

<sup>118</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State,” 24.

<sup>119</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 80.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

understanding of the contemporary society as described and analysed by sociologists is therefore needed.

### 2.5.1 Secularisation theory and deprivatisation theory

A Croatian Protestant theologian, Miroslav Volf, who currently serves as the Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology and Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture at Yale University, in his book *A Public Faith* describes the theory of secularisation from a Marxist perspective. Marxism considers religion as an irrational notion and believes that it would lose its meaning in the light of reason so that religion would wane.<sup>121</sup> Religion is like a frosty cloud. Furthermore, it cannot ultimately cause or explain anything, but rather poverty, frailty and oppression of humankind can cause and explain religion. People, once they gain knowledge and technological prowess for dealing with their own lives thus no longer adhere to religion.<sup>122</sup>

Tom Wright, however, points out that the heated enthusiasm for the secular agenda arises partly from the sense of despair that the secularisation myth has not progressed as planned. In other words, unlike secularists' predictions, Christianity and Islam are not disappearing but are rather growing and gaining strength.<sup>123</sup> Against the backdrop of postmodernism's dismantling of all meta-discourses as well as of secular discourses, those who have craved spirituality have suddenly been rediscovering it.<sup>124</sup> Discourses about the role of religion in public life today are thus increasingly intensifying. The

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<sup>121</sup> Bryan Wilson who for the first time suggested the secularization as a central issue in academic circle of religious sociology asserts the decline of religion. "Secularization relates to the diminution in the social significance of religion. Its application covers such things as, sequestration by political powers of the property and facilities of religious agencies; the shift from religious to secular control of various of the erstwhile activities and functions of religion; ... the decay of religious institutions; the supplanting, in matters of behavior, of religious precepts by demands that accord with strictly technical criteria..." Bryan R. Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 149.

<sup>122</sup> Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011), 119.

<sup>123</sup> Refer to a similar opinion, "sociologists of religion like Peter Berger affirm that there is a growth in religiosity all over the world. He argues that even in highly secularized countries such as those in northern Europe, religiosity is growing." Nico Koopman, "Some Contours for Public Theology in South Africa," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 14, no. 1 (2010): 131.

<sup>124</sup> Tom Wright, *God in Public: How the Bible Speaks Truth to Power Today* (London: SPCK, 2016), 4.

number of believers in Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism are increasing, and they do not want to confine their religious confession to the private sphere. Rather, they actively try to form public life with their conviction that can make society better.<sup>125</sup> Even though it seems that secularisation is mainstream philosophy in the modern world, secularisation is not a totally new concept and is not a forewarning of the decline of religion. Rather, it has always been present in all societies.<sup>126</sup>

A prominent sociologist, Jose Casanova, in his significant book *Public Religions in the Modern World* agrees with many of the criticisms “that have been raised lately against the dominant theories of secularization”, “which have tended not only to assume but also to prescribe the privatization of religion in the modern world”.<sup>127</sup> According to Casanova,

Those versions of the theory of secularization which begin precisely with such an unfounded assumption and conceive the process of secularization as the progressive decline of religious beliefs and practices in the modern world are indeed reproducing a myth that sees history as the progressive evolution of humanity from superstition to reason, from belief to unbelief, from religion to science.<sup>128</sup>

The theory of secularisation has “three different propositions: secularization as religious decline, secularization as differentiation, and secularization as privatization”. While the second proposition is still regarded as the defensible core of the theory, the proposition that the marginalisation and privatisation of religion are *sine qua non* for the modern differentiation, or that public religion is harmful for modernity is no longer tenable.<sup>129</sup>

How can the theory of secularisation then be dealt with almost like a dogma in the realm of sociology even though it never had any empirical evidence? What made it possible? Regarding the reason for this phenomenon, Casanova points out the “hidden contextuality of the major sociological works”. These sociologists developed their theory in the context of Western Europe, which is still showing the decline of religion.

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<sup>125</sup> Volf, *A Public Faith*, ix.

<sup>126</sup> Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 1–3.

<sup>127</sup> José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 16–17.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

Indeed, they did not recognise the opposite phenomenon in other contexts such as Japan or the United States of America.<sup>130</sup> In most human cultures, indeed, religion is not something that is far from human life. Practically and ideologically, religion cannot be separated from the rest of life. On the practical level, all of life in society is made up of what Western Europeans call religious faith. On an ideological level, religion is a way of understanding human experience. Modern Western culture has drawn a clear line between religious and secular issues, which is a significant and unique phenomenon of Western culture alone, and those who have never seen such a culture cannot understand it at all.<sup>131</sup> Volf also explicitly emphasises the failure of the theory of secularisation that was partially effective only in a specific period in the particular sphere of Western Europe. Even in these societies, religion has not disappeared but is simply less influential than a century ago. “In fact, the fastest-growing worldviews today are religious – Islam and Christianity.”<sup>132</sup>

Four developments, namely “the Islamic revolution in Iran; the rise of the Solidarity movement in Poland; the role of Catholicism in Sandinista revolution and in other political conflicts throughout Latin America; and the public reemergence of Protestant fundamentalism as a force in American politics” combined to draw religion from the private realm to the public sphere.<sup>133</sup> Casanova continues to emphasise that we are witnessing the deprivatisation of religion and that various religious traditions in the world are refusing to accept the privatised and constrained role that secularisation had reserved for them. In other words, “social movements have appeared which either are religious in nature or are challenging in the name of religion the legitimacy and autonomy of the primary secular spheres, the state and the market economy.” Likewise, religious institutions and organisations also refuse to confine themselves to ministry to individuals and continue to raise conflict questions about the interconnection of private morality and public morality. In addition, religions are entering the public sphere not only to share their beliefs with others but also to define ‘the modern boundaries’ between the individual and society.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State,” 31.

<sup>131</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1989), 172.

<sup>132</sup> Volf, *A Public Faith*, 120.

<sup>133</sup> Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 3.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–6.

In spite of the prejudicial view that the efforts of religion are not regarded as the realm of public discourse or public affairs, in the view of public theology these efforts generate and maintain the ethos that affects political human life. The world view gained from this ethos in these efforts tremendously influences political outcome.<sup>135</sup> A similar aspect is seen in Bedford-Strohm's account of Habermas's new perspective on the role of religion in post-secular society. Habermas goes beyond the previous assertion that political decisions should depend purely on reason, not faith, and argues that the civil public should now be sensitive to the possibility of religious traditions.<sup>136</sup>

### 2.5.2 Religion in a globalised world

In the globalised world, religion is not clearly grouped as a geographic segment. The opportunity for people of different religions to live together is rapidly increasing, and they still want to live out their own religious convictions. In this respect, how can the relationship between religion and globalisation be defined?

Regarding globalisation as one of the examples of God's providence, Stackhouse in his book *Globalization and Grace*, the fourth book in the series *God and Globalization*, describes how religions, ethics and theologies occur in a globalised world. He points out that one of most important recent issues is that a new and wider public is being created by the complex dynamics of globalisation. He defines the term 'globalisation' as follows:

[G]lobalization is best understood as a worldwide set of social, political, cultural, technological and ethical dynamics, influenced and legitimated by certain theological, ethical and ideological motifs, that are creating a worldwide civil society that stands beyond the capacity of any nation-state to control. It is influencing every local context, all peoples, all social institutions and the ecology of the earth itself.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 96–97.

<sup>136</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Civil Society - Welfare State - Diaconia: International Perspectives for Development," 141.

<sup>137</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 8.

In other words, globalisation has broken the boundaries among regions, and issues in one region can affect another region thousands of kilometres away.

Stackhouse points out three reasons that prevent today's Christians from coping wisely and effectively with globalisation. The first reason is the confused policies of the United States of America's administration which are identified with the Christian faith. The faith perspectives that operate in the administration and among its supporters are failing to offer a theological ethic that will help the administration to discern the tasks necessary for the construction of the wider civil society promised by globalisation. The second reason is that neoliberal economists understand religion from a reductionist point of view. They do not view religion as the basis for ethics that can form or guide political or economic policies but rather view it as a subjective need that functions by market forces and that can be understood as a consumer commodity. The third reason is a misunderstanding of the Christian faith by anti-ecumenical advocates who have theologised certain models of liberationist ideas and Marxist social analysis. For them, globalisation is a wholly immoral economic phenomenon caught in an ideology of capitalist greed, making the rich richer and the poor poorer. These three perspectives fail to understand how religion forms the public ethos of civilisations, including social and economic life.<sup>138</sup>

Human beings have spread to every corner of the earth by their driving force that varies from the desire to share a world view to the pursuit of profit, to the adventure of a new culture and to the desire for domination. As a result, various travel routes have been pioneered and institutions related to linking and exchanging in each region have been established. Subsequently, colonisation by Western countries took place, particularly in South American and on the African continent, and this colonialism and missionaries cooperated in many ways. With indigenous people's selective adoption of what was offered and the limited change to their pre-existing faiths and social patterns of life, new synthetic worldviews were created, and today's globalisation is another wave of such development. Such globalisation involves the question of faith since "globalization is not the result of the naked play of impersonal or amoral or anti-religious forces and purely material interests". Therefore, Stackhouse argues that it is a

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 3–6.

grave mistake to understand globalisation as essentially unbridled capitalism, which is what some pro-globalists and many anti-globalists do.<sup>139</sup> He further emphasises that it is impossible to accurately grasp, reform and correct globalisation without wrestling with theological issues and their presuppositions.<sup>140</sup>

### 2.5.3 The role of religion in the civil society of the United States of America

One of the most prominent and influential religious sociologists, Robert Wuthnow, in his brilliant book *Christianity and Civil Society: The Contemporary Debate* presents his academic discernment between religious sociology and civil society. He argues that the civil society debate is inherently about “the quality of social life itself, especially in those voluntary realms governed by freedom of association rather than by the coercive powers of law and politics, and in those spheres of life motivated by commitments other than profit and self-interest”.<sup>141</sup> Therefore, in the context that religion is still affecting civil society, the discussion about the role of religion in civil society is regarded as important. In the light of Tocqueville’s view that civil society is the activity area of voluntary associations, religion can be regarded as an area of civil society as a voluntary association. Wothnow defines civil society as “the arena in which individual freedoms, even those that are self-interested, are kept in tension with collective values and community participation”. Civil society, furthermore, is public because of its relationship with the common good. It is related to achieving the aims of the member groups of civil society by making political appeals and engaging in the political process.<sup>142</sup>

Wuthnow first asks whether civil society is in fact at risk as people think. The reason that people think that civil society is in danger is that people do not feel safe enough to

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 18–21.

<sup>140</sup> “In short, the really existing dynamics of globalization cannot be grasped or guided without studying the relationship of faith to culture, culture to societies, and societies to the formation of a new public: a worldwide civil society and possibly a new civilization, from which economic developments cannot be isolated! We need a theology wide and deep enough to interpret and guide this new public.” Ibid., 33.

<sup>141</sup> Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society: The Contemporary Debate* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 2.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 7–8.

venture out of their houses in order to live in harmony as citizens with their neighbours and to walk the city for work or worship. A survey of crime rates in the United States of America shows the cause of this anxiety. The collapse of the family, a place where citizenship is learned, and the unsettled life of children resulting from this collapse lead to an increase in non-citizenship. Robert Putnam, furthermore, argues that civic engagement has been declining significantly in recent decades. He, of course, recognises that “civic engagement is a pivotal form of social capital,” and “the importance of religion as a kind of social capital that can contribute to the strength of civil society” since churches encourage significant social bonds.<sup>143</sup>

Even though churches in America have never been the only source of social capital on which civil society depends, they are certainly one of the most important sources of civic engagement. If so, is religion declining in the United States? Wuthnow raises questions about it. Citing Andrew Greeley’s words, Wuthnow argues that there is no secularisation in the United States of America:

If a secularization dynamic is at work in the United States, it is invisible to all the measures of religion which survey takers have been using for at least twenty years and in many cases for fifty years.<sup>144</sup>

Rather, religion is still as powerful as it was before. “As far as social capital is concerned, there is at least little indication that religious commitment is any less prominent in our society than it ever was”.<sup>145</sup> However, Wuthnow seems to agree in part with Bryan Wilson’s definition of secularisation that religion itself is not declining but the ability of religion to influence other realms of life is declining. The influence of religion has been severely debilitated as its importance in society has weakened. Because the government, the liberal media, and the universities are hostile to religion, civil society is in danger. As a result, believers do not actively participate in discussions of public issues, but they voluntarily withdraw, thinking that their efforts are inefficient. However, some scholars suggest the concept of ‘trivialisation’<sup>146</sup> as the cause of the

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 12–17.

<sup>144</sup> Andrew Greeley, “The Persistence of Religion,” *Cross Currents* 45, no. 1 (1995): 32–33.

<sup>145</sup> Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society*, 21.

<sup>146</sup> “I argue that in the public square, religion is too often trivialized, treated as an unimportant facet of human personality, one easily discarded, and one with which public-spirited citizens would not bother.” Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994), xv.

weakening of the influence of religion on society. For these reasons, religion has been marginalised from public life.<sup>147</sup>

How can the relationship between civil society and the marketplace be explained? Wuthnow points out that discussions about civil society are mostly silent about the influences of the marketplace because the market is regarded as neutral in relation to civil society, and even the market is regarded as a supporter of civil society. Civil society, however, would be at risk because of the marketplace. For example, because on average Americans work a month longer each year than a generation ago, civic participation is declining. Volunteer work that has been mainly done by women due to women's participation in economic activities is also diminishing. Even when people are not working, they experience job-related stress and so they want to rest at home during the weekends. Therefore, the following questions can be posed: "Does religion influence the conduct of economic life?", "Has religion's influence waned?", and "Are moral and religious teachings not irrelevant to economic life?" These questions have been pursued by economic theories over the past century. We cannot deny the fact that the role of religion in the economic realm has weakened because of the tendency to compartmentalise, that is to put "our faith in one mental box and our finances in another".<sup>148</sup>

However, Wuthnow disagrees with the general claim by sociologists that religion does not play a significant role in civil society, despite the fact that in both the domains of politics and economy, the influence of religion on civil society seems to be declining. Rather, he concedes that religion recently has more deeply engaged in the public sphere than ever before in other ways. To him, the return of religion to the public sphere is inevitable. He particularly introduces the 'small groups' that actually function as traditional civic associations and shape religious commitment in different ways in the economic sphere. This may well give religion new life, thus helping to sustain civil society.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society*, 18–29.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 31–33.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 37–39.

Bedford-Strohm similarly argues that “the founders of sociology Durkheim and Weber developed their theories against the background of pre-modern religious institutions that were in many ways very different from those we know today”. Thus, the image of religion has been distorted by “the reliance on these old conceptualisations of religion in modern sociology”. Rather, contemporary sociology pays attention to the churches’ significant role in the development of civil societies.<sup>150</sup>

How should religion participate in civil society? Wuthnow particularly emphasises ‘reconciliation’ and ‘civility’. He says that reconciliation is necessary to avoid an all-out cultural war, but this does not mean that people should abandon their convictions about social issues. The significant point is “not withdrawal but participation in a way that maintains civility in civil society”. He suggests three important requirements for a more civilised engagement between Christians and civil society<sup>151</sup>:

1. Willingness to come together, as individual citizens or as representatives of organised interest groups, to discuss issues of common concern.
2. Explicit public acknowledgment of the value of such discussion, when conducted civilly, to the democratic process.
3. Specific affirmation of common values, such as religious liberty, democracy, and schooling as well as endorsement of procedural norms, such as civility and an avoidance of personal attacks, for the conduct of public deliberation.

#### **2.5.4 The position of Christianity in a pluralist society**

When one considers the characteristics of modern society, the term ‘pluralism’ is often used. Indeed, it can be argued that pluralism is one of the main characteristics of modern society. An influential missionary and theologian, Lesslie Newbigin, in his book *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* investigates the relationship between the gospel and pluralism from his rich missionary experience.<sup>152</sup> Arguing that the view that

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<sup>150</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State,” 24.

<sup>151</sup> Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society*, 68.

<sup>152</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*.

Christianity in Western Europe has declined because of the development of ‘modern science’ seems to be an oversimplification, he rather maintains that it is because of the ‘strong humanist tradition’. Intellectuals who were more and more controlled by the humanist tradition attempted to demonstrate that the Christian faith was reasonable, which meant that it did not contradict the fundamental humanist assumption. However, he asserts that “the defense is, in fact, a tactical retreat”. He suggests a distinction between cultural pluralism and religious pluralism:

Cultural pluralism I take to be the attitude which welcomes the variety of different cultures and life-styles within one society and believes that this is an enrichment of human life.<sup>153</sup>

In contrast,

Religious pluralism ... is the belief that the differences between the religions are not a matter of truth and falsehood, but of different perceptions of the one truth; that to speak of religious beliefs as true or false is inadmissible.<sup>154</sup>

He concludes as follows:

I have suggested that there is an error in the frequently repeated statement that we live in a pluralist society. We are pluralist in respect of what we call beliefs but we are not pluralist in respect of what we call facts.<sup>155</sup>

Such an understanding by Newbigin is significant in that it shows that Christian belief is not necessarily compromised in a pluralist society. Bedford-Strohm similarly argues, “Pluralism in a democratic society is not an end in itself but guarantees everyone the right to publicly express their firm convictions on the direction society should take.”<sup>156</sup>

Pluralism is often used in conjunction with the term ‘multiculturalism’. With the ease of the massive exchange of information through the internet and the development of transportation to help people travel freely, there has been a tremendous racial, religious and ethnic diversification in every region of the world. The conflicts that arise when people from different religions live together in one area are increasing. In this context,

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>156</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State,” 38.

sociologists have recently tried to analyse the influences of religion in the public sphere and to suggest solutions to reduce the conflict.

Wuthnow introduces three ways in which religion may respond to the diversity of our world:<sup>157</sup> First, he describes ‘identity politics’, namely the way that people such as black people, Hispanics and feminists who experience themselves as oppressed minorities often use to defend their rights. This, of course, has often been criticised as tribalism because it ignores individual differences in common values and places too much emphasis on loyalty to the group to which the individual belongs. This response is witnessed in Christianity. The minority in the Christian communities asks their leaders to acknowledge them as much as the recognition given to other minority groups. It is a kind of reaction against so-called ‘reverse discrimination’. Such a response eventually tends to result in defining multiculturalism as the enemy. The second form of response of religion to the diversity of society is ‘pragmatic universalism’. Wuthnow describes the relationship between this way and the first one as the difference between a brick and a sponge:

A brick does not absorb influences from its surroundings easily; if you don’t like those surroundings, you pick it up and throw it at them. A sponge absorbs easily; something new appears, and you say, no problem, we’ll just soak that up like everything else.<sup>158</sup>

In recent years, the dominant Christian response to multiculturalism has taken on the function of a sponge, emphasising God’s universal love for all of creation and the idea that there are no gentiles or Jews, or males or females in the church. Such pragmatic universalism has a defect in that it does not have distinct impacts on social issues because it absorbs everything like a sponge. As a result, religious conviction becomes a kind of religious ‘Esperanto’ so that any meaningful content disappears. In this sense, “people whose faith is like a brick may have more integrity than those whose faith is like a sponge.”<sup>159</sup> Wuthnow points out the function of religion as ‘civil criticism’ in the third form of response to diversity. This means that citizens are required to approach differences with ‘intellectual sophistication’ when participating in civil society. The key point is thus to embrace ‘differences’ and ‘sophistication’ in harmony. Therefore,

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<sup>157</sup> Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society*, 73–97.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

the explanation of multiculturalism by the moral philosopher Joseph Raz should be carefully noted:

The belief that individual freedom and prosperity depend on full and unimpeded membership in a respected and flourishing cultural group [and] belief in value pluralism, and in particular in the validity of the diverse values embodied in the practices of different.<sup>160</sup>

It may be unacceptable for Christians that other groups, including other religions, should be respected as authentic, feasible and even true despite the fact that their values may be very different from those accepted by Christians. There is an alternative to this problem, which is called ‘mild relativism’. It is tolerant of differences but does not embrace all values as equally right or good. Rather, it holds the conviction that some values are of supreme importance, rejecting the lukewarm attitude for one’s own values. Therefore, controversy is an inevitable factor, and in order to maintain civil society, it is necessary to be able to deal with differences through intellectual sophistication<sup>161</sup> in the controversy. According to Wuthnow, to be sophisticated means “being willing to give up some control over one’s claims to know the truth, subjecting them to self-evaluation and to the critical commentary of others”.<sup>162</sup> At the same time, as Jürgen Moltmann says, public theology “refuses to fall into the modern trap of pluralism, where it is supposed to be reduced to its particular sphere and limited to its own religious society”.<sup>163</sup>

As we have seen above, the role of religion in contemporary societies seems to be increasingly important. Although some still doubt the return to the public sphere of religion, people are increasingly moving toward the public sphere with their convictions.

With worldwide internet penetration, South Korea is becoming increasingly globalised more so than many other countries, especially in Asia. The internet helps Koreans to quickly absorb information from Europe, the United States of America and other

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<sup>160</sup> Joseph Raz, “Multiculturalism: A Liberal Perspective,” *Dissent*, Winter 1994, 69.

<sup>161</sup> The sophistication that is meant here means that any trait or style is based on sufficient knowledge and skills. See Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society*, 94.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>163</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 1.

countries, at the same time it helps Korean culture to spread throughout the world. The group BTS<sup>164</sup> that is spreading the K-POP culture to the world is a good example, and SAMSUNG and Hyundai motors, which are global companies, are another example. Furthermore, as South Korea underwent a democratisation movement in the 1980s, civil society in Korea has been structured more stringently and has recently become more politically mature. In Korea, the former president was impeached, and in this process, citizens' nonviolent demonstrations had a major impact. These protests were not initiated by one party but were voluntary associations of citizens.

Can Korea be regarded as a pluralistic or multicultural society? Traditionally, Korea is a country where one race uses one language and thus it is considered to be far from multicultural. In recent years, however, immigration from countries in Asia and the Middle East has been increasing and religious conflicts have been intensifying. Recently, the issue of the treatment of the immigrants who entered Jeju Island from Yemen as refugees became a central issue in Korean society. In this discussion, religion was also an important issue.

In light of these aspects, the Korean context is very similar to that of the Western societies identified above. If so, what is the similarity and difference between the role of religion in Western society and the role of religion in Korea? And what factors make up the difference? This theme will be dealt with in Chapter 5.

## **2.6 Characterising public theology by comparing and contrasting it with similar concepts that have similar methodologies**

It is difficult to draw a clear line of demarcation between public theology and similar concepts such as civil religion, political theology and liberation theology since public

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<sup>164</sup> BTS had the second and third best-selling albums worldwide and were the second best-selling artists worldwide in 2018. The group won Top Duo/Group at the 26th Billboard Music Awards. *Time* magazine has named the band one of the 25 most influential people on the internet, featured them on their international cover as "Next Generation Leaders," and named them one of *Time* 100's most influential people of 2019.

theology shares some characteristics with each of these. Because of this ambiguity, conservative theologians and pastors in Korea regard public theology as a subcategory of liberation theology or political theology. These misunderstandings have a great influence on rejecting public theology. Minjung theology exists in Korea, and the Korean Reformed theologies do not trust it. Therefore, public theology also became suspicious for them. When the differences among the confusing terms are recognised, however, the term ‘public theology’ is more clearly distinguishable from others and can be understood more precisely.

Furthermore, if there is no difference between public theology and other similar concepts, criticism that is valid for civil religion, political theology and liberation theology has to be accepted without qualification for public theology. However, the fact that public theology and other similar concepts refer to different things calls for proponents and critics of public theology to pay attention more carefully to distinctions among these terms.<sup>165</sup>

### **2.6.1 Distinguishing public theology from civil religion**

Bellah describes civil religion as follows:

By civil religion I refer to that religious dimension, found I think in the life of every people, through which it interprets its historical experience in the light of transcendent reality.<sup>166</sup>

Marty describes public theology as follows:

Public theology is in my view an effort to interpret the life of a people in the light of a transcendent reference.<sup>167</sup>

Despite Marty’s distinction, these terms are sometimes confusing, as seen in very similar definitions of those. For this reason, many cannot distinguish between the two

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<sup>165</sup> Breitenberg, “To Tell the Truth,” 62.

<sup>166</sup> Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in a Time of Trial* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 3.

<sup>167</sup> Marty, *The Public Church: Mainline - Evangelical - Catholic*, 16.

concepts; therefore, it is necessary to carefully examine the differences between civil religion and public theology.

Civil religion and public theology are similar in that they are interested in the relationship between God and society. As Marty argues, however, several American founding fathers and presidents did not subordinate religion to the task of society whereas civil religion did.<sup>168</sup> According to Gerald McDermott's distinction, civil religion "refers to how a society relates itself or its culture to ultimate reality". Public theology, on the contrary, "refers to how an individual reflects critically on the meaning of civil community and the role of the religious community within it".<sup>169</sup> Kim maintains that while civil religion emphasises "the place and role of religion in relation to the nation and its people", public theology "starts from the religious community and considers its contributions to the society and nation".<sup>170</sup> Michael Himes points out two significant factors that distinguish public theology from civil religion:

First, it reverses the method of civil religion. Whereas civil religion examines public life in the United States for signs of transcendence or ultimate concern, public theology begins by looking at the Christian tradition for its public significance. Second, civil religion, because of its concern for pluralism, devalues the particularist traditions of religious belief whereas public theology is a serious retrieval of what is accessible to all within a particular religion.<sup>171</sup>

As Steve Goldzwig asserts, the rhetoric of public theology also differs from that of civil religion. He maintains that "while civil religion ends on an optimistic and largely complaisant note, public theology, for the most part, takes up a cause by pointing out what is wrong, not what is right about society".<sup>172</sup> Stackhouse asserts that "unlike the heritage of 'civil religion' this kind of public theology did not celebrate the social system and its culture as it was – it changed things".<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> See Marty, "Reinhold Niebuhr: Public Theology and the American Experience."

<sup>169</sup> Gerald R. McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society: The Public Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 8.

<sup>170</sup> Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere*, 4.

<sup>171</sup> Michael J. Himes and Kenneth R. Himes, *Fullness of Faith: The Public Significance of Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 21–22.

<sup>172</sup> Steve Goldzwig, "A Rhetoric of Public Theology: The Religious Rhetor and Public Policy," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 52, no. 2 (March 1, 1987): 130,145.

<sup>173</sup> Stackhouse, "Civil Religion, Political Theology and Public Theology: What's the Difference?," 87.

## 2.6.2 Distinguishing public theology from political theology

Stackhouse provides a brief history of political theology. While civil religion was rising in America after World War II, a different kind of tradition, namely ‘political theology’, developed in Europe. Political theology has its roots in Aristotle who “saw the political order as the comprehending and ordering institution of all of society”.<sup>174</sup> St Thomas Aquinas modified this view later through “his Augustinian understanding of the central role of the church and theology in society”.<sup>175</sup> Political theology often established national churches and tended to view religion as a subset of the political order. A late form of political theology was represented in Moltmann’s work. It maintains the idea that the believer and theologian should address public matters since the policies of every political order need to be guided and transformed by “the hands of theological-ethical insight”.<sup>176</sup>

Both public theology and political theology are concerned with the relationship between church and politics. Frederick Lawrence defines political theology as follows:

Political theology is one in a series of attempts made by Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians since the 1960s to come to grips with the foundations of Christianity in light of the twentieth-century crisis of culture.<sup>177</sup>

In contrast to political theology, “public theology is not exclusively or primarily concerned with politics and political institutions and the relationship of Christian believers and churches to them”.<sup>178</sup> In other words, “public theology makes clearer than political theology that the witness of the Gospel in the political realm can never be simply identified with a certain political programme”.<sup>179</sup> Political theology seeks to respond to the privatisation of religion and formulates “Christian theology in a way that

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> For more details, see Ibid., 83–84.

<sup>177</sup> Frederick G. Lawrence, “Political Theology,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 404–5.

<sup>178</sup> Breitenberg, “To Tell the Truth,” 59.

<sup>179</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, “Public Theology and Political Ethics,” in *Liberation Theology for a Democratic Society: Essays in Public Theology*, ed. Michael Mädler and Andrea Wagner-Pinggera (Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2018), 21.

accounts for the concrete experiences of nonidentity” in the Enlightenment.<sup>180</sup> McDermott argues that public theology is a broader notion than political theology that is too restrictive because of its programmatic comprehension.<sup>181</sup> Public theology, moreover, must not only respond to wider social and political issues but also must be appropriate in the form of genuinely public argumentation.<sup>182</sup>

When Stackhouse explains the reason why the adjective ‘public’ is used in the term ‘public theology’, he attempts to distinguish between public theology and political theology. The reason is that public theology is ‘a modest protest’ against the often-allied realm of political theology. Political theology tends to make religion a matter of national policy with the implicit purpose that “the government is and must be the only comprehending reality”. Put differently, political theology tends to directly connect theology with the policies of government, even if no society cannot be maintained without a feasible political order.<sup>183</sup> Stackhouse points out the difference as follows:

Public theology, thus, differs from political theology precisely in this: public theology tends to adopt a social theory of politics, and political theology inclines to a political view of society. The latter view is most common and tends to see the government as the comprehending institution of society. ... A social theory of politics sees every political party and every government as subject to the more primary powers in society – those spheres of life that exist prior to the formation of political orders.<sup>184</sup>

In a word, for public theology, political problems are not the primary ones. The various realms of life such as politics, the university, the economic sector and the medical institutions of society should control and guide the ‘principalities and authorities’ with an ethical dimension for the common good.<sup>185</sup> If political leaders try to control these realms of social life, they will instigate resistance.<sup>186</sup> However, public theology is not antipolitical. Public theology agrees with the necessity of institutions and of a tax system for maintaining society. It also wants to provide political directions for the

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<sup>180</sup> Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God: Political, Liberation, and Public Theologies* (London: Continuum, 2001), 217.

<sup>181</sup> McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society*, 6–7.

<sup>182</sup> Linell Elizabeth Cady, *Religion, Theology, and American Public Life* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 25–26.

<sup>183</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 95,101.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 102–3.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>186</sup> Stackhouse, “Civil Religion, Political Theology and Public Theology: What’s the Difference?,” 91.

realisation of justice in society if politics is simply “the limited servant of the other institutions of society”.<sup>187</sup>

### 2.6.3 Distinguishing public theology from liberation theology

Gaspar Martinez in his book *Confronting the Mystery of God* describes liberation theology as follows:

Liberation theology was born as a theology response to the experiences of systemic poverty, death, and nonpersonhood, in the context of a society founded on the grounds of colonization, dependence, and underdevelopment, in which the excluded, the nonpersons, have started to make their voices heard.<sup>188</sup>

In this respect, he considers liberation theology as representing a radically new theological voice that aims at “interpreting Christianity in a way that is relevant to people’s liberation from all kinds of exclusions, dependencies, and exploitations”.<sup>189</sup> Its main partners are “the theory of dependency and some aspects of Marxism”.<sup>190</sup>

Thus, liberation theology tends to regard the existing system as necessarily evil or entirely wrong, whereas public theology does not. Liberation theology prefers to follow revolutionary methods, while public theology, although it also denies any monopoly in public reality and seeks for a more fair and open society for all, follows reforming methods. Therefore, liberation theology claims the system has to be changed radically towards the poor and marginalised, whereas public theology wants the system to be reformed gradually for negotiation among opposing parties. For achieving its aim, liberation theology adopts the methodology of critical re-reading of the Scriptures, current systems, context and history, while public theology adopts the methodology of critical enquiry and open debate, social ethics and consensus politics.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>188</sup> Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God*, 217.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>191</sup> For a simple table, see Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere*, 24.

However, De Gruchy argues in his book *Liberating Reformed Theology* that Reformed traditions need to be sensitive to the issues addressed by liberation theology:

We may disagree with the way in which a particular form of liberation theology addresses certain issues. But it is unfaithfulness to the gospel, socially irresponsible, and escapist to think that because a liberation theology may be faulty in its analysis or prognosis the issues themselves do not exist, or that Reformed theology is exempt from dealing with them, and doing so better itself.<sup>192</sup>

If we are to be a little sensitive to human suffering and needs, we in the Reformed tradition must also face this challenge.

As we have seen here, public theology has some differences in its methodology and purpose, although there is an intersection with similar concepts. Therefore, it is possible to acknowledge that these are not the same paradigms, even though more clarification is needed through more studies. When the characteristics of public theology identified by Bedford-Strohm are described in Chapter 3, this distinction will become more apparent.

## 2.7 Various approaches of public theology

Methodologies are very important to make the approaches of public theology credible since there are some divergent assessments, for example that “public theology has been praised for being in keeping with the best of the Christian theological tradition and denounced as an unfaithful distortion of the church’s true calling”.<sup>193</sup> As Kim asserts, however, the question regarding the appropriate method to engage in the public sphere is not an easy one. Concerning the reason why there are various forms of engagement, he explains as follows:

This is not only because the theologians who are seeking to apply theology to public life come from a variety of sub-disciplines, such as theology, religious studies and social ethics. It is also because public theology is done

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<sup>192</sup> John W. de Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology: A South African Contribution to an Ecumenical Debate* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 36.

<sup>193</sup> Breitenberg, “To Tell the Truth,” 55.

in a variety of different social and political contexts that both constrain and shape its methods.<sup>194</sup>

However, it does not mean that there is no commonality. De Gruchy argues as follows:

[T]here is no universal ‘public theology’, but only theologies that seek to engage the political realm within particular localities. There are, however, shared commonalities, both confessional and ecumenical, in approach and substance between theologies that seek to do this.<sup>195</sup>

To seek some commonalities in the various approaches by public theologians is very helpful and meaningful for a clearer understanding of public theology.

Since there are many theologians who are involved in public theology and because of their different approaches, it is not possible to cover all the scholars’ methodologies in this short section. This inevitably requires intentional selection, and the question of whom to choose should be consistent with the purpose of my project. Therefore, with regard to the Korean context, especially the Korean Reformed theologies, I have selected four public theologians who can represent the voices of Europe, Africa, America and Asia. Of course these choices can be questioned and contested. However, I will support my reasons for choosing these persons and their perspectives in the section below.

Duncan Forrester is a Scottish theologian and the founder of the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at New College at the University of Edinburgh, and his work is still influential in the realm of public theology. As such, his perspective will be well regarded as being both informative, and historically authoritative in the development of public theologies. John de Gruchy studied and developed public theology from the perspective of the Reformed tradition in the special context of apartheid in South Africa. As will be explained later, the South African context has some points of coherence with the Korean context. Therefore, his approach may be very useful in the Korean context. Max Stackhouse, who was the first director of the Abraham Kuyper Center for Public Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, is a relatively well-known scholar in Korea, and so his views are likely to find some purchase among Korean theologians. Perhaps Sebastian Kim is the public theologian who has the best understanding of the

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<sup>194</sup> Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere*, 14.

<sup>195</sup> Gruchy, “From Political to Public Theologies,” 45.

Korean context. Assuming that the theory of a particular theologian is deeply related to his experiences, Kim's approach to public theology seems to have fully taken into account the Korean context. As such, his perspective will be both contextually relevant, and academically compatible with this project.

### 2.7.1 Duncan Forrester

In his concluding response to the Carberry Colloquium, Duncan Forrester points out several key elements that public theology should embody.<sup>196</sup> He argues that public theology, situated between a theology that is so distinctive, so orthodox and so unrelated to today's world and the extreme liberal proclaiming godless morality and having a wonderful ability to communicate acceptably to secular men and women, may make "a modest but truthful, constructive and challenging contribution to public debate, and beyond that, one hopes, to human flourishing in community". In other words, public theology gives theology the ability to make a difference and to engage in the real issues of the place "where people are hurting, where there is conflict, where there are seeds of vision and of hope". For this mission, learning the language of the secular world but without losing Christian insights and contribution to the debates is required. It means accepting the result of research from other academic realms such as sociology, science, philosophy and law.

For the affirmation that public theology is necessarily ecclesial theology, the form of church has to be properly identified. The church is called to proclaim the gospel, and it means prefiguring God's reign. The church is called to be "a kind of Utopian community, nurturing hope and giving shape to expectation, providing a working model of reconciliation, and transforming anger and despair". The church, thus, has to be a place for the poor and excluded.

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<sup>196</sup> Duncan B. Forrester, "Working in the Quarry: A Response to the Colloquium," in *Public Theology for the 21st Century: Essays in Honour of Duncan B. Forrester*, ed. William Storrar and Andrew Morton (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 431–38.

Forrester distinctively suggests the term ‘theological fragments.’ He agrees that “the most important, challenging and constructive theological fragments often come from the ‘underside of history’” and that “the idea of theological fragments is useful both in challenging an oppressive and oversystematic understanding of theology, and also developing theology’s contribution to public debate”.

### 2.7.2 John de Gruchy

De Gruchy introduces models of good practice in the South African context, and then recommends seven theses on public theological praxis.<sup>197</sup>

1. Good public theological praxis does not seek to preference Christianity but seeks to witness to values that Christians believe are important for the common good.

He takes the article entitled “Quest for morality covers all spheres of life” by Pataki and Lesejane as one of the best examples, who say “no one faith should be elevated above others” even though Christianity is the predominant religion in South Africa. This claim does not mean that “we are an immoral and unreligious society”. The Constitution of the new South Africa rather strongly affirms moral value. Although there are differences between private and public morality, they are connected and forgiveness does not mean ‘cheap grace’.

2. Good public theological praxis requires the development of a language that is accessible to people outside the Christian tradition and is convincing in its own right, but it also needs to address Christian congregations in a language whereby public debates are related to the traditions of faith.

This characteristic is, as De Gruchy admits, in line with what Forrester says, namely that public theology is engaging in the secular world in respect of its issues while at the

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<sup>197</sup> John W. de Gruchy, “Public Theology as Christian Witness: Exploring the Genre,” *International Journal of Public Theology* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 2007): 26–41.

same time dealing deeply with the Christian tradition for resources. To do so, learning the language of the secular world is necessary. Alex Boraine is one of the best models of this work. He served as President of the Methodist Church of South Africa in 1970 and became a Member of Parliament in 1973. He challenged government policy on theological grounds. Relying on Calvin, Barth and Bonhoeffer, he opposed apartheid policy and law and advocated black human rights. His rational and persuasive language played a significant role in persuading and challenging people outside the Christian tradition.

3. Good public theological praxis requires an informed knowledge of public policy and issues, grasping the implications of what is at stake and subjecting this to sharp analytical evaluation and theological critique.

A good example of this can be found in Joseph Wing's activities. He was one of the last missionaries of the London Missionary Society in southern Africa and served as the General Secretary of the United Congregational Church in South Africa. He dealt with many social and political issues, including the environment, education and health. His pastoral letters to ministers and congregations were good models of meticulous theological formulation and informed social analysis.

4. Good public theological praxis requires doing theology in a way that is interdisciplinary in character and uses a methodology in which content and process are intertwined.

For more appropriate reflection of the church on the issues that have arisen in the wider realm, public theology has to develop its theological approaches reliably. Therefore, interdisciplinary study is certainly needed to use the methodology and research results from other academic realms.

5. Good public theological praxis gives priority to the perspectives of victims and survivors, and to the restoration of justice. It sides with the powerless against the powerful and seeks to speak truth to power, drawing its inspiration from the prophetic trajectory in the Bible.

Public theology has a critical and prophetic character. Thus, public theology while relying on the witnesses of the Bible often urges repentance as well as advocating for

the marginalised. In this sense, public theology seems to share a methodology with liberation theology.

6. Good public theological praxis requires congregations that are consciously nurtured and informed by biblical and theological reflection and a rich life of worship in relation to the context within which they are situated, both locally and more widely.

The Rondebosch United Church (RUC) in Cape Town under the leadership of Pastor Douglas Bax began to identify more directly with the struggle against apartheid. The RUC typifies public theology as Christian witness. “What is important to recognize is that the RUC is a congregation spanning the social spectrum that has been theologically and spiritually equipped to engage in Christian witness in the public arena.”

7. Good public theological praxis requires a spirituality that enables a lived experience of God, with people and with creation, fed by a longing for justice and wholeness and a resistance to all that thwart wellbeing.

One of the leading practical theologians, Denise Ackermann, who struggled against apartheid and engaged in a way that can be described as doing public theology, in her doctoral dissertation committed herself to developing a praxis that was “just, loving, freeing and healing” in relation to “interrelated oppressions in the South African context”. The Black Sash that she focused on was a movement formed by middle-class white women to protest proposed changes to the legislation that would be eventually deprive coloured people of the right to vote. Ackermann has focused on the HIV/AIDS pandemic and, with developing a spirituality, encouraged churches to respond to the challenges thereof.

### **2.7.3 Max Stackhouse**

In the introduction of his book *Public Theology and Political Economy*, Stackhouse reveals that his recent research that concentrated on cross-cultural and cross-historical perspectives on religious and social issues, forced him to modify some of his earlier

views of political and economic life and that he gained an assurance that “theological ideas play a quite decisive role in social life”. Citing Bellah’s argument that we may have lost something significant and indispensable to the survival of civilisation in the long run, Stackhouse asserts that because of the Enlightenment, “many matters of religion, ethics, values, and meaning seem to have been relegated to the private, person, and subjective spheres of life, quite removed from the public, social, and objective patterns of living”. In particular, he emphasises the term ‘stewardship’, which can connect a public theology with a social perspective on political economics. There are two challenges of stewardship. On the one hand, it is the ‘reasonable stewardship’ by which the various ‘words’ of faith are assessed, refined and defended, and on the other hand, it is “to show that the key themes of theology can give normative guidance to political economy”.<sup>198</sup>

Stackhouse continuously argues that Scripture, tradition, reason and experience should be the four warrants or ‘touchstones of authority’ for contemporary public theologies.<sup>199</sup> The Holy Bible is accepted as a source and criterion of faith in Christianity. Scripture, however, has to be interpreted properly for believers today. Public theology, therefore, must attend to “what the historians, archaeologists, linguistic experts, and scholarly commentators tell us”. According to Stackhouse, we must engage in a rather subtle analysis to determine the following:

1. Which of the things that these authors say are only and specifically for the particular context in which they are speaking.
2. Which of the things are eternally true and just – constant and valid for all times and places.
3. Which things reflect development towards a fuller and richer view that we have to extend further in order to be faithful to what these authors originated.
4. Which things function in our contexts in such a way that they point towards the relief of malaise, towards the hope of reconciliation, forgiveness and peace with justice, as those messages did in earlier times (and in the development of

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<sup>198</sup> Max L. Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy: Christian Stewardship in Modern Society* (London: University Press of America, 1991), viii–xii.

<sup>199</sup> Subsequently, he sees four publics namely religious, political, academic and economics. See Max L. Stackhouse, “Public Theology and Ethical Judgment,” *Theology Today* 54, no. 2 (1997): 165–79.

tradition), even if we say things that in some ways seem to be at odds with earlier messages because the times and contexts are so different.

To do so, “we have to have a message that will make public sense.” Traditions also should be treated similarly. During the Enlightenment, tradition was regarded as the accumulation of human-made conventions for the benefit of the few. Many claim that ‘tradition’ has obscured the ‘Word’ by mixing the pure biblical message with the sociological, philosophical and political constructions of humans. However, even those who claim that they are not part of any tradition shows that they are in a certain tradition by their patterns of thought and action. When we honour tradition, “we develop a certain respect for the possible wisdom of those who struggled with issues that anticipated those now before us.” Reason is also one of the significant criteria for public theology. Although many leaders in Christianity do not like logical, philosophical argument, theology has honoured reason as a gift of grace. The argumentation of faith and of conviction should make sense across various spheres since ‘right’ reason can make human communication possible. If a mode of reasoning is confined to certain experiences or to a particular culture so that nobody outside them knows what they mean, it is good for private arenas but it is not significant to public theology. Stackhouse states that “loving regard for human experience is forth criterion, the completing boundary for a public theology”. The truth and justice that public theology attempts to explicitly show is rooted in God of compassion, and thus this truth must be spoken in love. “Love is the experiential knowledge of God’s truth and justice.” Those who provide guidance for civilisation differ from public theologians in that they do not take love and compassion as critical principles of their policies. “Public theology takes compassion as a public and not merely a private principle, one compatible with Scripture, Tradition, and Reason.” Thus, public theology will work alongside people, the culture and societies. It will engage in human experience with love.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy*, 1991, 4–15.

#### 2.7.4 Sebastian Kim

Kim identifies some main elements in the public sphere, namely the state, the market, the media, the academy, civil society and religious communities, that are common to all modern societies. The state, including governments, the parliaments, the judiciary and the military, plays a role in “policy-making, the maintenance of law and order and providing for the socio-political security and welfare of the people within its boundary”. The market, involving the economic activities of businesses, companies and banks, provides securing material and prosperity to its members and the wider society. The media, including the broadcast media, publishing and the internet, help to exchange information by reporting and critiquing individual or corporate bodies in the public realm. The academies, including universities and research centres, provide education and the results of research. Civil society, including nongovernmental organisations, various interest groups and local communities, enhances and challenges the activities of these groups in the public realm. Lastly, religious communities “provide spiritual, moral and ethical frameworks for people’s daily lives as well as contributing to social care and the welfare of the people both within and outside their own communities”. In various contexts, the state attempts to control the media and economy, religious communities try to control the states and the media uses significant information for their own benefit. However, a plurality of voices is needed for desirable interaction. For this, “public theology, while maintaining its connections with religious communities, deliberately expands its sources, audience and applications in the public sphere in association with the other four players, depending on issues.”<sup>201</sup>

According to Kim, “public theology is not purely an academic endeavor to be developed in academia and then conveyed to the wider public, but rather this type of theology is a public activity” with mentioning the general consensus among public theologians that “the main driving force of public theology is the Christian community, and theologians should play the role of catalysts only”. Therefore, it has to be open to

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<sup>201</sup> Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere*, 11–14.

all and allow all Christian communities to participate in forming a healthy public theology.<sup>202</sup>

What is especially important in Forrester's definition of public theology is his distinctive concept of 'theological fragments' that should be defended by public theology. Since it can help to prevent theology from remaining captured only in its own tradition. This concept would be helpful to the context of Korean Reformed theologies, which are suspicious of things that are outside their tradition. De Gruchy's methodology is significant in that it does not emphasise the dominant position of Christianity. Without this premise, genuine dialogue cannot be achieved. Conservative Korean Christianity, because of this tendency, needs to listen to his voice. However, we need concrete discussion on how we can keep our faith even if we give up the supremacy of Christianity. Stackhouse points out that the term 'stewardship' is very familiar to Korean Christians. However, they do not use the term in the manner proposed by Stackhouse. It is therefore necessary to listen to his argument, which was used to demonstrate the justification of public theology. I particularly appreciate Kim's argument that public theology is not something that should be done only in scholarship.<sup>203</sup> He seems to have accepted some criticism that the effect of public theology on society is insufficient, although public theology has been actively discussed. In the Korean context, Christianity is often criticised for separating life and faith. In this sense, it is reasonable to point out that the realm of theology as well as the church and the individual should take into account practical aspects.

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>203</sup> However, Dreyer argues differently: Public theology is not an easy option for theologians who want to do something practical. It is a proper academic discipline which builds of a sound knowledge of philosophy as well as historical and systematic theology. Dreyer, "John Calvin as 'public Theologian' in View of His 'Commentary on Seneca's de Clementia,'" 1.

## 2.8 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I attempted to give an answer to my first key question, “What does public theology, or doing public theology, signify concerning the notions of public theology, the history of public theologies and possible ‘methodologies and contents’ of public theologies?”, with the assumption that there are some shareable features of circumstance for public theological discourses that would encourage Korean Reformed theologies to participate in public theology.

For this purpose, in Section 3, I briefly looked at the historical background of the term ‘public theology’. Of course, I should not assume that the historical backgrounds that I have dealt with in this chapter can contain, or express, the entirety of this term. We should keep in mind that it is almost impossible to cover every meaning of this notion since there are various public theologies that have emerged and developed in various forms in various historical contexts. However, despite these diversities, the history of the origin and development of public theology above, provided helpful, and necessary insights into important aspects of its background. The fact that the discourse on public theology is closely connected with civil religion gives Korean Church an opportunity to consider public theology since Korea also has civil religion.

In Section 4, I had to ask what the public sphere meant. Since the concept of public sphere is also used in various places in so many different meanings, it is almost impossible to define this in a word. With these various usages, as many agree, Habermas’s concept of public sphere provides instructive insights to those who want to study public theology. In his work, Habermas describes the public sphere as an open forum in modern Western societies. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, bourgeois strata were formed in cities, and they freely shared their opinions and information, unlike those that had been passive through political forces. These meetings usually took place in the coffee house or salon, and the economic or political status of the participants was no longer seriously considered. In other words, everyone in these meetings was considered equal. The fact that Korea, in various fields, has the characteristics of the public sphere that Habermas speaks of shows that Korea also has a good foundation to start discussions of public theology.

One can ask the question, “How can religion participate in the public sphere where various opinions of diverse societies are exchanged without abandoning its own convictions?” Thus, it was essential to refer to the analysis of scholars, especially sociologists, for a review of the role of religion in contemporary societies characterised by secularisation, globalisation, pluralism and multiculturalism. This review was conducted in Section 5. In particular, the secularisation theory, which was considered to be almost immutable truth, has been criticised in recent times and it seems to be no contested since it contains serious errors in the premise. It is very important to confirm that the role of religion is increasingly becoming more important. At first glance, in the light of the believer’s own conviction, to participate in discourse in a pluralistic society where everyone has to respect the diverse opinions of each person is considered as disrespectful and uncivilised behaviour. However, many scholars have logically and empirically proven that believers can and should communicate and engage with people living in different cultures and having different religions without relinquishing their own beliefs. As I mentioned, Korea is one of most globalised, civilised, and pluralistic societies. Therefore, many of the arguments for the public role of religion can be applied to the Korean context and this is an important reason for Korean Reformed theologies to engage in public theology.

However, dealing with the relationship between religion and society is not the preserve of only public theology. In other words, there had been similar concepts before public theology became widespread. Therefore, in order to understand public theology properly, it is necessary to distinguish public theology from similar concepts: civil religion, political theology and liberation theology. In Section 6, I quoted various scholars’ opinions for this distinction, but I also confirmed that the distinction did not appear equally in all scholars and that there was still ambiguity among the concepts. Perhaps this is because public theology was not suddenly created in isolation but was influenced by these earlier discussions, and sometimes it borrowed and developed the methodologies of other concepts. This is why Bedford-Strohm states that “maybe political theology and liberation theology can be seen as forebears of Public Theology”.<sup>204</sup> Perhaps for the time being, each concept will be developed by influencing each other and eventually there will be more unique features. However, the

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<sup>204</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Public Theology and Political Ethics,” 20.

discovery that public theology is not a subordinate concept of liberation theology or Minjung theology has great implications for Korean Christianity.

The specific methodologies of the representative public theologians introduced in Section 7 not only helped us to better understand public theology but also showed what should be considered more important to those who attempt to do public theology in the Korean context.

In this chapter, I have indicated that Korea, like other regions where public theology has developed, also has a background in which public theology can be fully considered. In Chapter 3, considering this general background, I will analyse a specific approach to public theology, namely the six characteristics presented by Heinrich Bedford-Strohm in his recent work.

## CHAPTER 3

### What are the six characteristics of public theology presented by Heinrich Bedford-Strohm?

#### 3.1 Introduction

As the previous chapter discussed, public theology can be described in various ways according to scholars. Bedford-Strohm presents six characteristics of public theology that he has defined in his long journey devoted to public theology. Considering his walk of life and his recent role in the world, particularly in Germany, his contribution should be valued very highly. His significance in the realm of public theology can be evaluated on three dimensions, namely ‘church, society and academy.’<sup>205</sup>

Since 2011, Bedford-Strohm has been Regional Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria and since 2014 Council Chairman of the EKD. While he serves as the church leader, he has not only played a significant role for the church members but has also played an active role in public life in Germany and the rest of Europe. In particular, with regard to the recent arrivals of refugees in Europe. He publicly expressed his opinion, which not only contributed to the formation of public opinion but also had a considerable impact on national decisions on this matter. In addition, Bedford-Strohm served as professor of systematic theology and the founding director of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Research Center for Public Theology at the University of Bamberg and is still serving as extraordinary professor in the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University. From 2009 to 2011, he was executive and responsible editor of the magazine *Evangelische Theologie*. In such an academic realm, he has been constantly and intensely producing diverse and influential writings on public theology. Since he is a well-known public theologian who plays a crucial role in three publics,

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<sup>205</sup> David Tracy points out ‘church, society, academy’ as the places where the public theologian should be involved. David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (London: SCM, 1981), 3–5. For similar publics namely ‘Church, Academy, Nation’ see Gavin D’Costa, *Theology in the Public Square: Church, Academy, and Nation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

the church, society and the academy, his views can serve as a credible engagement with the paradigm of public theology. He is also one of the leaders of the Protestant (Lutheran) Church, so from the standpoint of the Korean Reformed theologies, his methodology may be quite persuasive.

He has released many books and monographs in German, including a short but significant book *Position Beziehen*,<sup>206</sup> and recently published *Liberation Theology for a Democratic Society* in English, a collection of his essays on public theology. I will analyse these two books by citing his own voice and compare his thoughts with those of other scholars to unpack and consider his arguments.

He describes public theology as ‘a theological paradigm’ that has developed recently with ‘a special dynamic’<sup>207</sup> and concludes with an affirmation of the necessity of the public theology in the preface of his book:

Public theology is an indispensable dimension of the calling of the church. In its academic form it is strongly needed to reflect theologically the praxis of the church. This is my conclusion after 15 years of work in Public Theology in different functions in the parish, at the university and in the office of a bishop.<sup>208</sup>

He also emphasises that there are many indications that the paradigm of public theology will in the future gain central importance for international discourse, especially between the countries of the South and the North.<sup>209</sup> The perception of the public mission of the gospel therefore can be seen as a service to society as a whole.<sup>210</sup>

Through Bedford-Strohm’s ongoing research, he points out six characteristics of public theology,<sup>211</sup> namely “ihr biblisch-theologisches Profil, ihre Zweisprachigkeit, ihre Interdisziplinarität, ihre Politikberatungskompetenz, ihre prophetische Qualität und

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<sup>206</sup> In the foreword, he states that public theology takes place between the pulpit, the academic rostrum, and the prime minister’s office.

<sup>207</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Public Theology and Political Ethics,” 5.

<sup>208</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, *Liberation Theology for a Democratic Society: Essays in Public Theology* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2018), 1.

<sup>209</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Engagement Für Die Demokratie,” 117.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>211</sup> He pointed out only five characteristics except the fourth one, its competency to provide political direction, in his earlier monograph. However, he had always described it in his other studies. For his earlier proposition, see Bedford-Strohm, “Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State,” 40–44.

ihre Interkontextualität”.<sup>212</sup> We shall consider each of these characteristics in turn in the sections that follow.

## 3.2 Biblical-theological profile

When one begins to discuss the methodology of public theology, it is natural to first ask the question whether it belongs to theology or not. Even though any discussion contains all the other characteristics of public theology, it cannot be called public theology, with integrity, unless it possesses a theological identity. Thus, public theology should demonstrate a biblical and theological profile. Furthermore, this feature is the standard to show the difference between public theology and political philosophy.

### 3.2.1 The crucial role of theology and Christian tradition in public theology

According to Bedford-Strohm, the church is always a public church and the public speaking of the church is at the heart of its mission.<sup>213</sup> Therefore, public theology must be based on the Christian tradition. The church must differ from the many ‘political interest groups’ in the political realm and the political activity of the church “must be recognizable as a consequence of its spiritual grounding in the Gospel, even without loud confessions of Christ”.<sup>214</sup> In short, public theology arises out of theological reflection and expresses convictions and commitments rooted in the Christian tradition.<sup>215</sup> In this sense, Ronald Thiemann explains that his challenge to public theology is “to show that a theology shaped by the biblical narratives and grounded in

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<sup>212</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Engagement Für Die Demokratie,” 122. Smit translated it: These are its biblical-theological profile, its bilingual ability, its inter-disciplinary character, its competency to provide political direction, its prophetic quality, and its inter-contextual nature. Smit, “Does It Matter? On Whether There Is Method in the Madness,” 71. This translation will be used as the subtitles in this chapter.

<sup>213</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, “Klar Und Verständlich,” in *Position Beziehen: Perspektiven Einer Öffentlichen Theologie* (München: Claudius Verlag, 2012), 47.

<sup>214</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Public Theology and Political Ethics,” 18.

<sup>215</sup> Gruchy, “Public Theology as Christian Witness,” 40.

the practices of Christian community can provide resources to enable people of faith to regain a public voice in our pluralistic culture”. Thereby, public theology can continue to be based on the tradition of faith and at the same time participate in public discourse.<sup>216</sup>

Bedford-Strohm claims that Christians from rural communities emphasise that what drives them are their religious convictions; this is a crucial point for public theology. “Defending oneself for religious claims or emphasizing the ethical profile at the cost of the spiritual profile”, therefore, is not an adequate basis for public theology. He continues to argue that public theology and the church are inevitably in a close relationship:

If public theology is based on the biblical and confessional traditions of Christian faith, it also has a natural connection to the church as the community of interpretation that has carried these traditions through the centuries.<sup>217</sup>

Moreover, “both draw on traditions of faith, which are not only a resource for spiritual regeneration, but also for public witness in ethical questions concerning everybody.”<sup>218</sup> Thus, Bedford-Strohm seems to emphasise the public thrust of the gospel.<sup>219</sup>

Churches have become the driving forces for a steady development of democracy and civil society by engaging in public debate and speaking out on the topics that are discussed in public. They have made a great contribution, especially in the areas where there is a need for fundamental ethical orientation. Since the church as an institution has for a long time emphasised ethical responsibility in the economic sphere, the public

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<sup>216</sup> Ronald F. Thiemann, *Constructing a Public Theology: The Church in a Pluralistic Culture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 19.

<sup>217</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State,” 40.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid. In this respect, Eva Harasta defines public theology as ‘the academic form of proclaiming the gospel.’ Eva Harasta, “Glocal Proclamation? An Excursion into ‘Public Dogmatics’ Inspired by Jürgen Moltmann and Heinrich Bedford-Strohm,” in *Contextuality and Intercontextuality in Public Theology*, ed. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, F. Hohne, and T. Reitmeier (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2013), 291–99.

<sup>219</sup> See also Sebastian’s argument, “with the growth of civil society and the increase in secularism, there is both an invitation and also an urgent need for Christian theology to be actively engaged in conversation on public issues. Of course, Christian theology does not have all the answers to these issues but, among other voices, it can put forward moral, ethical and spiritual insights that make a vital contribution to addressing problems and promoting the common good in modern societies.” Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere*, x.

continues to expect a special contribution of the church.<sup>220</sup> Bedford-Strohm challenges the church to respond to Steinbrück's request:

Wir brauchen deshalb eine Wertgemeinschaft in unserem Land, die den Menschen und das Gemeinwohl ins Zentrum ihres Denkens und Handelns stellt.<sup>221</sup>

Bedford-Strohm, citing the word of church,<sup>222</sup> argues that the ethical perspectives developed from biblical messages and the Christian faith are the basis for the churches' contribution to the development of nation and society and that non-Christians in the Christian European culture can accept this. These perspectives contribute to the recovery of the basic ethical consensus on which politics, business and society depend. Since such a basic consensus cannot be formed without the social-ethical orientations of the Christian tradition, civil society needs the church.<sup>223</sup>

### 3.2.2 Tension between religion and secular society

Stackhouse points out the reason why religion has been denied in a globalising era, can be related to the discourses of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment attempted to

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<sup>220</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, "Braucht Die Zivilgesellschaft Die Kirche?," in *Position Beziehen: Perspektiven Einer Öffentlichen Theologie* (München: Claudius Verlag, 2012), 31–32.

<sup>221</sup> "We therefore need a community based on values in our country, one that represents the people and common good in its thinking and actions." (own translation) *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>222</sup> "Die im vorausgegangenen Abschnitt aus biblischer Botschaft und christlichem Glauben entwickelten ethischen Perspektiven sind die Grundlage für den Beitrag der Kirchen zur Fortentwicklung einer menschenwürdigen, freien, gerechten und solidarischen Ordnung von Gesellschaft und Staat. Diese Perspektiven und Maßstäbe sind nicht wirklichkeitsferne Postulate, sondern Ausdruck einer langfristig denkenden Vernunft, die sich nicht durch vermeintliche Sachzwänge oder durch kurzfristige Interessen irremachen lässt. Sie können in der christlich geprägten europäischen Kultur auch von Nichtchristen akzeptiert werden und tragen damit zur Wiedergewinnung des ethischen Grundkonsenses bei, auf den Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft angewiesen sind." (Für eine Zukunft in Solidarität und Gerechtigkeit. Wort des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland und der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz zur wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Lage in Deutschland, Hannover 1997, Ziffer 126) "The perspectives in the preceding section developed out of the biblical message and Christian beliefs and they are the basis for the contribution of the church towards the further development of a dignified, free, just and solidarity oriented ordering of society and state. These perspectives and norms are not unrealistic postulations but the expression of well tested ideas that have been carefully considered and stood the test of time. These ideas cannot be shaken by temporary groups with agendas to force change. They could be accepted by non-Christians within the European cultural framework that has been forged through Christianity, just as well, and through this acceptance the ethical fundamental consensus of politics, business and society would be regained." (own translation)

<sup>223</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Braucht Die Zivilgesellschaft Die Kirche?," 34–35.

speak in a universal way based solely on certain understandings of reason. Consequently, when many thinkers of the Enlightenment abolished the theological dogmas enforced by the state, they unnecessarily denied even the helpful principles of theology that served for social development. What they imposed was no longer dogmas of religion or theologically rooted dogmas, while they still retained the idea that “a doctrine should be state imposed”. Indeed, this perspective by relying on only reason sometimes ravaged the broader ranges of human understanding. As a reaction to this, there is an attempt to return to the neo-fundamentalist, sometimes violent, interpretations of religion, saying that it is impossible to speak in a universalist expression as the Enlightenment’s liberalism showed the failure of this and this attempt eventually makes “religion a private concern of a certain group’s irrational passion, with theology nothing more than its mouthpiece”. It is another extreme that we should avoid. It does not mean that the tradition of Christianity should be renounced for engaging in conversation with non-Christians,<sup>224</sup> but rather that specific themes of Christian thought can serve as nomothetic and universal criteria in its content and ethical significance for the modern world. Public theology, thus, attempts to build selected ‘modernising developments’ on a more secure foundation by revealing and re-evaluating the hidden theological assumption behind them without any bias towards modernity. Theology can contribute a deep and broad perspective for public life by using ‘symbolic discourse’ while some put religion in the same range as irrational thought. Theology can contribute to law, ethics and society in a global era, with the conviction that “what is truly divine is the only truly universal reality”.<sup>225</sup>

There are people who argue that religion should be weakened or eliminated in the public sphere because it has recently legitimised and even fueled violence in the world with its resurgence.<sup>226</sup> Furthermore, there are people who argue that religion as one of the

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<sup>224</sup> Wuthnow argues that the believer’s abandonment of their convictions means fleeing from public involvement into the quiet and divine personal life, which inevitably leads to a decline of civic participation. Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society*, 67.

<sup>225</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 78–85.

<sup>226</sup> “Religion indeed has the potential to be destructive. It can foster doctrinal and moral absolutisms that leave no room for disagreement, debate, and the recognition of ambiguity and uncertainty. In this context of absolutism, moralism, judgementalism, stereotyping, generalisation, stigmatisation, and demonisation, eventually more direct violence such as murder and bloodshed develop on personal and communal, local and global scales.” Koopman, “Some Contours for Public Theology in South Africa,” 132.; “Liberal democracy, the kind that sought to take the convictions of particular religions out of public life, emerge in the wake of the European religious wars of the seventeenth century. People clashed partly because

subsystems of communication should not intervene or try to influence other subsystems such as the economy, education, science and politics.<sup>227</sup> De Gruchy mentions that a similar tradition is found in the Constantinian position. According to this tradition, the public role of the church must remain in the spiritual realm, not in the political realm. This view applies specifically to Luther's doctrine of 'two kingdoms', which can protect the formal liberty of the church by making the state a guardian of the church. However, it can also neutralise the church's true freedom and ability to engage in prophetic social criticism and behaviour against the dominant culture by making the church virtually one of the civil service organisations. The catastrophic consequences of this doctrine were very clearly proven in Nazi Germany.<sup>228</sup>

These attitudes are misguided because these attempts will bring another type of violence to the believers who define the way of personal and public life through religion.<sup>229</sup> "For many religious people, it is part and parcel of their religious commitment to base their convictions about public matters on religious reason." Then, "how can they be free to live the way they see fit when they aren't allowed to bring religious reasons into public debates and decisions?" For believers, liberalism is not ultimately liberal.<sup>230</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff agrees that the political form of liberal democracy may provide a forum for debate about justice, but it cannot address any of the controversial issues. It is fundamentally another form of discrimination that severely prevents people from bringing their religious issues into the political arena. He suggests 'consocial' as an alternative, which has two main features: First, "it repudiates the quest for an independent source and it places no moral restraint on the use of religious reason" and second, "it interprets the neutrality requirement, that the state be neutral with respect to the religious and other comprehensive perspectives present in society as requiring impartiality rather than separation". Furthermore,

What unites these two themes is that, at both points, the person embracing the consocial position wishes to grant citizens, no matter what their religion

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they had differing perspectives on life. To remove the cause of conflict, liberal democracy said the protagonists' religious perspectives should no longer be part of their public encounters." Volf, *A Public Faith*, 127.

<sup>227</sup> See Smit, "What Does 'public' Mean?," 28.

<sup>228</sup> Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology*, 272.

<sup>229</sup> Volf, *A Public Faith*, 39.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

of irreligion, as much liberty as possible to live out their lives as they see fit.<sup>231</sup>

Some suggest ‘pluralism’ to avoid conflicts derived from different religions. In this view, all religions are fundamentally the same, although each religion has differences in some parts, including its doctrine. The particularities are often ignored because the pluralist account of relations among religions relegates them to being accidental features of a given culture. However, Volf argues that this view is incoherent because some religious group always ends up being excluded. The members refuse “to let themselves be interpreted as instances of an underlying sameness”. This shows that pluralists have not overcome religious exclusivism.<sup>232</sup> Furthermore, “Christian communities will be able to survive and thrive in contemporary societies only if they attend to their ‘difference’ from surrounding cultures and subcultures.” In order for the Christian community to continue to exist, Christianity should not be blended with the surrounding culture but should be different from the surrounding culture. Thus, “Christian communities must ‘manage’ their identity by actively engaging in ‘boundary maintenance.’”<sup>233</sup> In this sense, Tracy argues that religious thinkers should actively present their biblical resources as plausible candidates for public acceptance rather than confining themselves to rational argument for their positions to become reasonable resources in the public realm.<sup>234</sup>

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this phenomenon also appeared as privatism which meant that unless individuals deliberately infringed the rights of others, they could believe in what they wanted and could practise their faith as actively as they would like. Privatism did not prevent religion from affecting public life but encouraged it to influence public life through the involvement of devout individuals in nonreligious institutions rather than through organised religious efforts.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, “The Role of Religion in Decision and Discussion of Political Issues,” in *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate*, ed. Nicholas Wolterstorff and Robert Audi (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 115.

<sup>232</sup> Volf, *A Public Faith*, 127–28.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>234</sup> Tracy, “Three Kinds of Publicness in Public Theology,” 332.

<sup>235</sup> However, the problem that this view arises is that it makes church leaders to regard faith as a kind of therapy, with adjusting emotionally to contemporary life, rather than connecting with civic participation. Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society*, 45–46.

For these reasons, the claim that public reason is contradictory to comprehensive religious doctrines has to be denied. On the contrary, there is a large intersection between public reason and the core values of many religions, even though some inconsistencies can be seen.<sup>236</sup> These views are confirmed in Michael Sandel's argument that the notions of justice and rights in both philosophy and politics cannot be separated from the religious vision organised and developed by religious scholars over the centuries. He wonders why religious visions cannot be discussed as rationally as the topics of liberal justice.<sup>237</sup> Michael Perry also emphasises that the awareness of human dignity and of the responsibility to care for neighbours can only be secured by religious arguments; accordingly, religious discourse should be allowed to participate in public debate.<sup>238</sup> In order to persuade those who suspect religion to be irrational, theology should offer a rational proposal with reference to "the moral and spiritual architecture and the inner guidance system of civilizations," and it is a significant and urgent issue since "all the world seems to be plunging toward global interactions that are perilous and potentially destructive yet simultaneously inviting and transformative".<sup>239</sup> Stackhouse says that one reason why we inevitably need public theology is "a warranted discourse about these judgements that is able both to persuade those who may not agree on social, philosophical, or religious grounds and to offer plausible, defensible guidelines for personal and social decisions".<sup>240</sup>

To sum up the arguments of these scholars, religion does not have to be silent about the political agenda that affects our daily life; rather, it should naturally contribute to the public domain that we are living in.<sup>241</sup> Of course, this feature is not a found only in

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<sup>236</sup> "Humans have some principles of right and wrong 'written on their hearts' as St. Paul stated. It is thus possible for all to recognize that there are norms of faith, hope, love and justice in spite of the fact that they are inevitably obscured by ignorance, self-interest and willful distortion." Stackhouse, "Civil Religion, Political Theology and Public Theology: What's the Difference?," 86.

<sup>237</sup> See Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>238</sup> See Michael J. Perry, *Love and Power: The Role of Religion and Morality in American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>239</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 84.

<sup>240</sup> Max L. Stackhouse, *Covenant and Commitments: Faith, Family, and Economic Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 7.

<sup>241</sup> Although, political philosophers such as Kent Greenawalt, John Rawls, Robert Audi claim that legislators, for example, should not reference to their religious conviction but consider secular rational argument solely in the debate of legislation for whole. See John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 64, no. 3 (1997): 765–807.; Kent Greenawalt, *Private Consciences and Public Reasons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).; Robert Audi and Nicholas

public theology. I once again emphasise here that a theology cannot be a public theology when it possesses only one of the six characteristics that Bedford-Strohm describes. Rather, the characteristics must be understood comprehensively. Therefore, in order for public theology to be distinguished from political theology, liberation theology or civil religion, the first characteristic should not be considered alone but the remaining characteristics as discussed in the following sections should be considered as well.

### 3.2.3 Prevention of abuse of tradition

Sebastian Kim argues that the Bible is a public book since it is read and interpreted not only by Christians but also by non-Christians. The Bible speaks to people in different contexts and religious traditions; thus, it is “a key authority and inspiration for doing public theology”.<sup>242</sup> However, theology and the Bible should not be used as a justification for a particular ideology or just to seem religious. On the contrary, “the evangelical profile of the contributions and activities should be convincing and demonstrable”, and it is possible since “the gospel itself has a public thrust and the church accordingly has a worthwhile contribution to make in public life”.<sup>243</sup> It should be noted here that the goal of public theology is not to supply “an overarching theory that explains how ‘church and world’ or ‘fundamental question and answer’ are related to one another”. Rather, the goal is to “identify the particular places where Christian convictions intersect with the practices that characterize contemporary public life”. In other words, it is not a subordinate relationship but a complementary relationship:

The goal should not be the simple recommendation of one from of life over the other, but a careful and critical analysis of the variety of ways the two might interact.<sup>244</sup>

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Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997).

<sup>242</sup> Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere*, 27.

<sup>243</sup> Smit, “Does It Matter? On Whether There Is Method in the Madness,” 71.

<sup>244</sup> Thiemann, *Constructing a Public Theology*, 21–24.

Stackhouse describes the model of Martin Luther King, Jr as a worldwide symbol of public theology. This model revived a tradition that had been temporarily weakened by unavoidable secularisation stemming from modernisation. Due to this, theologians and clergy could use theological resources when they engaged in public discourse regarding justice of society. They felt a responsibility to play a prophetic role in the common life since they regarded themselves as “deputies or agents of Christ, the prophet, priest and prince of peace” such as Reformers, Puritans and Pietists. Likewise, public theologians think that the powers, principalities and dominions that are at the root of social life can be understood and assessed properly in the theological-ethical dimension.<sup>245</sup>

Indeed, great social thinkers and activists such as Dorothy Day and Dietrich Bonhoeffer knew how to discern which religious classics bore truth for all reasonable and responsible human beings. Therefore, theologians should not hesitate to render their convictions as genuine public resources.<sup>246</sup> The perception that the church stands over against the world is still dominant, and because of this, the debate about public theology and about the role of the church has been greatly distorted and thus needs to be rectified.<sup>247</sup> In this aspect, Bedford-Strohm also argues that “the accessibility of public theology for a wider audience does not necessarily imply neglecting the importance of the roots in its own tradition”.<sup>248</sup>

### 3.2.4 Criticism

Smit points out that there is serious criticism of the suggestion that the biblical-theological profile is the first aspect of public theology. Whereas it can create the impression that public theology should begin with theology and with the Bible, critics argue that public theology should be responding to issues of public life itself since the methodological move should be seen as one from context back to text, not from text to context. Critics seem to disagree with Bedford-Strohm’s conviction that the Bible and

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<sup>245</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 92–95.

<sup>246</sup> Tracy, “Three Kinds of Publicness in Public Theology,” 332,334.

<sup>247</sup> Smit, “Does It Matter? On Whether There Is Method in the Madness,” 75.

<sup>248</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State,” 40.

tradition have an inherent public character, or they think that it is impossible to take the biblical-theological profile into their own context.<sup>249</sup>

Perhaps this question can arise in countries where democratic procedures are not yet well established in the convergence of opinions or in regions where Christianity is not part of the mainstream culture, unlike Germany where Bedford-Strohm himself presents a biblical-theological profile in public life. In this regard, the circumstances in Korea are very different from those in Germany. Christianity not only has a privileged position in Korea, but the influence of Christianity is declining due to various unfavourable factors in Christianity recently. In such a situation, there is a question of whether arguments based on the Christian tradition will be taken seriously by people. However, Kim's argument should be noted:

The fact that theology is not 'neutral' does not disqualify it from participation in public discussion; on the contrary, because of its distinctive perspective, theological findings can make an effective contribution to public issues.<sup>250</sup>

Therefore, for him, the biblical-theological profile is crucial for forming a healthy public theology.

I will suggest an alternative to this criticism in Chapter 5, but I want to say here that for this reason, the second characteristic of public theology that Bedford-Strohm presented, namely bilingual ability should be dealt with seriously.

### 3.3 Bilingual ability<sup>251</sup>

If the first feature emphasises the 'theology' of public theology, the second feature emphasises its 'public' nature. I argue that this second feature is the clearest manifestation of the difference between public theology and other theological

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<sup>249</sup> Smit, "Does It Matter? On Whether There Is Method in the Madness," 74.

<sup>250</sup> Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere*, 10.

<sup>251</sup> Smit prefers to use the term 'multilingual' instead of 'bilingual' and he argues the biblical-theological profile is not first in the sense of most important, see Smit, "Does It Matter? On Whether There Is Method in the Madness," 75.

approaches. Furthermore, when theology presents this second characteristic to nonbelievers or people of different religions, they will discard their preconceptions about the Christian tradition and may be willing to take account of it seriously. On the contrary, if public theology loses this second trait, it will be limited to a Christian audience only and eventually lose the purpose of public theology.

Nico Koopman asserts the need of some inputs from constructive public theological discourses when he describes the context of Western European countries in which increasing immigration leads to religious diversification.<sup>252</sup> He points out three bases for this: first, the inherent public nature of God's love, second, the rationality of God's love for the world and, third, the meaning and implications of God's love for every facet of life.<sup>253</sup> Jesus' message was not given only to specific people in a particular area but to whole cities and his whole culture. Wright therefore argues that Jesus' message is meaningless only if it is not a message for the whole world.<sup>254</sup> However, despite the recognition of this need, if such discourses do not coexist with this second characteristic, it will be a cause of serious conflict. Public theology should be different from a sermon of public witness by a faith community since public theology is not a direct expression of faith.<sup>255</sup> Thus, public theologians "seek to communicate, by means that are intelligible and assailable to all<sup>256</sup>, how Christian beliefs and practices bear, both descriptively and prescriptively, on public life and the common good, and in so doing possibly persuade and move to action both Christians and non-Christians."<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Koopman, "Some Contours for Public Theology in South Africa," 132.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>254</sup> Wright, *God in Public*, ix.

<sup>255</sup> See Dreyer, "John Calvin as 'public Theologian' in View of His 'Commentary on Seneca's de Clementia,'" 1.

<sup>256</sup> According to Frederike van Oorschot, this 'intellectual accessibility' was strongly emphasized in the early days of public theology in the US and Germany, while it did not rank first in the UK or South Africa. See Frederike Van Oorschot, "Public Theology Facing Globalization," in *Contextuality and Intercontextuality in Public Theology*, ed. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, F. Hohne, and T. Reitmeier (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2013), 228.

<sup>257</sup> Breitenberg, "To Tell the Truth," 66.

### 3.3.1 Two sides of the same coin

Bedford-Strohm, citing Bonhoeffer's theological thoughts regarding the relationship between the reality of God and the reality of the world,<sup>258</sup> emphasises that public theology "does not separate itself from the world into a self-sufficient counter-community with its own religious language, but knows how to speak the language of the world and how to be in dialogue with the world", because public theology "is grounded in Christ and therefore challenges the world to make God's way for the world visible".<sup>259</sup> In addition, he also describes Karl Barth as an early example of a public theologian because of his contribution to how to base ethical judgment on the Bible and tradition and at the same time how to demonstrate it to the public in commonly understandable language.<sup>260</sup>

In this sense, public theology seeks to emphasise the value of the Christian tradition in such a way that it can be understood in today's pluralistic public spheres. Public theology must therefore be bilingual. It should be expressed in biblical-theological language for a clear theological profile. Yet, at the same time, it should be also well versed in the language of the secular world, using reason and experience to make clear why the Christian orientations make good sense of and give helpful orientation to all people of good will. "As much as the public must be open for the semantic potential of religious language, religious communities in general, and the churches in particular, must translate their contributions to public discourse into a generally accessible language."<sup>261</sup> Similarly, Audrey Chapman states that "when public theology appeals to theological beliefs, even when the beliefs are not widely shared, the logical relationship

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<sup>258</sup> "In Christ we are offered the possibility of partaking in the reality of God and in the reality of the world, but not in the one without the other. The reality of God discloses itself only by setting me entirely in the reality of the world, and when I encounter the reality of the world it is always already sustained, accepted and reconciled in the reality of God. This is the inner meaning of the revelation of God in the man Jesus Christ." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 193.

<sup>259</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State," 38.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>261</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, "Gerechtigkeit Erhöht Ein Volk...", in *Position Beziehen: Perspektiven Einer Öffentlichen Theologie* (München: Claudius Verlag, 2012), 57–58.; Bedford-Strohm, "Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State," 40.

between the beliefs and the conclusions should be comprehensible to believer and non-believer alike”.<sup>262</sup>

‘Bilinguality’,<sup>263</sup> which is the ability to practise and cultivate both biblical-theological language and the language of secular reason, is therefore part of the core of public theology.<sup>264</sup> Therefore, bilinguality means that “public theology needs both theological and reason based language”.<sup>265</sup> When using such language, Christians can cooperate with other groups and initiatives of civil society<sup>266</sup> and the fact that faith and reason are not contradictory but complementary can be affirmed.<sup>267</sup> Biblical material should not be used as a ‘conversation stopper’, which means that “biblical themes cannot be thrown into the public debate without giving an account of their philosophical plausibility”.<sup>268</sup>

Bilinguality certainly seems to be necessary because, as DA Carson states, all forms of Christianity are originally and inevitably expressed culturally, and all faiths are necessarily expressed in cultural form.<sup>269</sup> Similarly, Moltmann asserts that “there is no Christian identity without public relevance, and no public relevance without theology’s Christian identity”.<sup>270</sup> To Stackhouse, salvation as a confession of Christians is not “esoteric, privileged, irrational, or inaccessible” but is something necessary<sup>271</sup>; thus, the ideas taught by the Christian tradition can and should address ‘all people of good will’ and are intrinsically understandable by all.<sup>272</sup> In this sense, advocates of public theology claim that public theology focuses on the dialectical character with applying individual,

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<sup>262</sup> Audrey R. Chapman, *Unprecedented Choices: Religious Ethics at the Frontiers of Genetic Science* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 159.

<sup>263</sup> For the historical background of this term see Eva Harasta, “Karl Barth, a Public Theologian? The One Word and Theological ‘Bilinguality,’” *International Journal of Public Theology* 3, no. 2 (2009): 188–203.

<sup>264</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Engagement Für Die Demokratie,” 118–19.

<sup>265</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State,” 13.

<sup>266</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Civil Society - Welfare State - Diaconia: International Perspectives for Development,” 149.

<sup>267</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, “Food Justice and Christian Ethics,” in *Liberation Theology for a Democratic Society: Essays in Public Theology*, ed. Michael Mädler and Andrea Wagner-Pinggera (Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2018), 177.

<sup>268</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State,” 17.

<sup>269</sup> D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2012).

<sup>270</sup> Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society*, 5.

<sup>271</sup> Max L. Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy: Christian Stewardship in Modern Society* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1987), xi.

<sup>272</sup> Stackhouse, “Civil Religion, Political Theology and Public Theology: What’s the Difference?,” 88.

confessional and dogmatic characters. In this way, theology can gain universality.<sup>273</sup> Thus, Thiemann defines public theology as “faith seeking to understand the relationship between Christian convictions and the broader social and political context within which the Christian community lives”.<sup>274</sup>

Of course, there is a complex question about how much translation of the biblical-theological content is necessary. According to Smit, “the answers and opinions often differ from one historical context to another.” Therefore, one form of public theology that would be possible and necessary under particular circumstances can be considered impossible and even offensive in other contexts.<sup>275</sup> This part should be considered together with another feature of public theology that Bedford-Strohm presents, namely ‘intercontextual nature’.

### 3.3.2 Different perspectives from the side of confessional theologies

There are two representative examples of objections against public theology. On the one hand, there is no intrinsically shared elements between the theology and the realms of public life; on the other hand, theology is a revelation given to a particular community of faith, so when theology is mixed with philosophy or sociology, it weakens theology.<sup>276</sup> For this reason, many of the debates about public theology in the academic realm of theology have been concerned with the question of whether theological discourses are valid for public examination and whether theological assertions are intelligible outside of the particular religious community.<sup>277</sup> Kim describes this issue as follows:

On the one hand, by emphasizing too much the need to meet the public and facilitate a common language, public theology may lose its Christian distinctiveness and contribution, but on the other hand, by prioritizing

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<sup>273</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 112.

<sup>274</sup> Thiemann, *Constructing a Public Theology*, 21.

<sup>275</sup> Smit, “Does It Matter? On Whether There Is Method in the Madness,” 76–77.

<sup>276</sup> “On the strength of their theological convictions some people felt that the church should not become involved in any way in this public life – in politics, economy, civil life, public opinion – because this will inevitably lead to adaptations and loss of spiritual integrity.” Smit, “What Does ‘public’ Mean?,” 41.

<sup>277</sup> Thiemann, *Constructing a Public Theology*, 173.

Christian values and understanding, it may not enter the common platform for discussion on complex issues in society ...<sup>278</sup>

This concern is likely to be raised by confessional theologies. They do not regard seeking to provide guidance for public sphere as a primary goal of the church, and they also do not accept the notion that certain Christian faiths can interact with the larger society through a universal language. Particularly, those theologies that subscribe to ‘narrative theology approaches’ hamper their participation in the public discourse.<sup>279</sup>

De Gruchy argues as follows:

Many traditional theologies deal with justice and liberation as ethical themes arising from theological reflection. They are items on their social witness agenda. But they do not regard engagement in the struggle for justice and liberation as fundamental to their dogmatic concern or way of doing theology. For most it is a consequence rather than a prior commitment.<sup>280</sup>

This implies that the church is concerned only with the spiritual welfare of the people, approving the authority of the state in exercising secular power.

In his book *The Nature of Doctrine*, George Lindbeck claims that Christian beliefs do not need to be and cannot be demonstrated in a rational way to non-Christians. He suggests the concept of ‘incommensurability’, saying that it is impossible for a person in a cultural-linguistic society to apply his/her criteria to other communities.<sup>281</sup> Similarly, Richard Mouw points out that the previous generation of North American evangelicals believed that the main task of the church was to prepare people to go to heaven and that paying too much attention to the main issues of public policy was close to secular attitudes that insulted God.<sup>282</sup>

The characteristics of ‘narrative theology approaches’ are clearly found in the contribution of Stanley Hauerwas. In the book *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*, he argues that it is more important for the church to have a Christian personality than to actively present social political alternatives and that it is the role of the church

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<sup>278</sup> Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere*, 19.

<sup>279</sup> E. Harold Breitenberg, “To Tell the Truth: Will the Real Public Theology Please Stand Up?,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23, no. 2 (2003): 66,93, no.120.

<sup>280</sup> Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology*, 37.

<sup>281</sup> See George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984).

<sup>282</sup> Richard J. Mouw, “Foreword,” in *Evangelicals on Public Policy Issues: Sustaining a Respectful Political Conversation*, ed. Harold Heie (Grand Rapids: Abilene Christian University Press, 2014), 9.

to organise its own community of churches that is distinguished from the world. In other words, he claims that when the church first becomes a true church, the church can transform the world. Hauerwas denies the theology of translation, which believes that there is a core of real Christianity, that is, an abstract essence that can be preserved even if we abandon the background of the Ancient Near East, since it distorts the essence of Christianity. According to him, we are not invited to learn basic ideas about God, the world and humanity from Jesus but are invited to participate in and to become part of a movement and a people. Modern theology has unconsciously distorted the gospel by making an effort to translate it and has also changed the gospel to something unrelated to its original form. As a result, Jesus with his people was lost and only abstract ideas from Jesus remained. Furthermore, modern theology requires us to transform the gospel rather than ourselves. Such a ‘Constantinian assumption’ has transformed Christianity into an ‘intellectual problem’ that modern theologians are preoccupied with.<sup>283</sup> As a result, the church loses its identity and rather conforms to the world.<sup>284</sup> Therefore, the task of theology is not an ‘interpretive matter’ of translating Jesus into modern categories but of translating the world towards him. The job of a theologian “is not to make the gospel credible to the modern world, but to make the world credible to the gospel”.<sup>285</sup> The church helps the world in its own way, not in the way of the world. In other words, it means that the church becomes an alternative community and serves the world.<sup>286</sup>

Hauerwas distinguishes between the activist church, the conversionist church and the confessing church, according to the typology of John Howard Yoder.<sup>287</sup> The activist church places greater emphasis on building a better society than on reforming the church. The problem is that the activist church does not have the theological insight to judge history for itself, so the politics of this church becomes “a sort of religiously glorified liberalism”. The conversionist church argues that even if the structure of

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<sup>283</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 21-22.

<sup>284</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, “On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological,” in *Revisions, Changing Perspectives in Moral Philosophy*, ed. Alasdair C. MacIntyre and Stanley Hauerwas (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 33.

<sup>285</sup> Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 24.

<sup>286</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between* (Durham: The Labyrinth, 1988), 54.

<sup>287</sup> John Howard Yoder, “A People in the World: Theological Interpretation,” in *The Concept of the Believer’s Church*, ed. James Leo Garrett (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1969), 252–83.

society is ameliorated, it cannot solve the consequences of human sin. This church does not have its own social structure or alternative social ethics to offer the world because it works only towards inward change. Unfortunately, Jesus' political claims were sacrificed because of this politics. The confessing church is not a synthesis of the two views mentioned above, nor is it a reasonable theory in the middle. The confessing church believes that its main political task is not to transform individual hearts or to modify society but to make the congregation determined to worship Christ in all things. Such a confessing church "seeks to influence the world by being the church, that is, by being something the world is not and can never be, lacking the gift of faith and vision; which is ours in Christ". In addition, the confessing church hopes to become a 'visible' church, in which people love their enemies and tell the truth, care for the poor, seek justice and witness God's power through these things. It is a church that clearly reveals itself to the world. To the confessing church, participating in secular movements that fight against all forms of inhumanity is not a fundamental aim of the church but "a part of its necessary proclamatory action".<sup>288</sup> Hauerwas argues that the assumption that the ethics of the church is acceptable to all thoughtful and discreet people regardless of their faith underestimates the 'peculiarity' of Christian ethics.<sup>289</sup> The difference between the church and the world is the difference in personal positions that exist between those who confess that Jesus is Lord and those who do not. In other words, Christianity is distinguished from the world by the distinctive stories that make up the Christian community.<sup>290</sup> Such a point of view is certainly different from the claim of Bedford-Strohm.

Therefore, for Hauerwas, the greatest task that Christian theology should wrestle with is "not translation, but enactment". One of the main reasons that the great modern theologians have tried to translate Christian language into modern language is the fact that the church has become helpless to enact God's will. However, even with clever theological moves, it cannot replace the church, a community of people who live the language of God. One of the best ways to know God is to look closely at the lives of the saints, God-called people. However, this is also the reason for saying that many

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<sup>288</sup> Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 44–47.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>290</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 60,101.

people will not believe in God. Because “Christians have failed to become like the One we adore”, they look at a group of ‘saints’ called churches and then say that these people do not seem to be much different from those who do not believe.<sup>291</sup> This is the reason that Hauerwas emphasises the enactment.

Hauerwas criticises the public theology of Stackhouse in two ways. One is that Stackhouse’s argument adopts the position of ‘functionalist’ regarding religious beliefs, and the other is that public theology shares the ideology of the Enlightenment in pursuit of universal ethics.<sup>292</sup>

### 3.3.3 The Gospel as public truth

However, the position of Hauerwas is criticised as being ‘*theos* without *logos*’, that is, not open to ‘rational criticism’.<sup>293</sup> Stackhouse argues that because of the sectarian limitations of Hauerwas, he sees God as Christ only in the church and this view shrinks the sovereign God of the universe into a small God.<sup>294</sup> He cannot see how the Christian trinitarian theology or the ethics of human rights can be universally true. As a result, they cannot think about the global responsibility of the church.<sup>295</sup>

John Stott also disagrees with those who emphasise that we should focus only on interpreting the Bible and that personal evangelism as a social act is nothing more than a distraction from this work. He argues that it is not possible because we stand on a high view of the Bible, and by reading the Bible carefully, we discover that the Bible does not separate evangelism from social action. The best example of this

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<sup>291</sup> Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 171.

<sup>292</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, “FREEDOM OF RELIGION: A Subtle Temptation,” *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 72, no. 2/3 (1989): 333.

<sup>293</sup> Max L. Stackhouse, “Liberalism Dispatched vs Liberalism Engaged,” *The Christian Century* 112, no. 29 (1995): 963.

<sup>294</sup> “Our great danger is that we worship a God who is much too small when we only see God as Christ in the church.” Max L. Stackhouse, “In the Company of Hauerwas,” *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 2, no. 1 (1997): 22.

<sup>295</sup> Stackhouse, “Liberalism Dispatched vs Liberalism Engaged,” 964,967.

nonseparation can be found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Jesus teaches that we cannot separate love and justice because justice requires that love be aspiring.<sup>296</sup>

Kevin Vanhoozer, citing the arguments of Terry Eagleton, states that “societies become secular not when they dispense with religion altogether, but when they are no longer especially agitated by it.” In the beginning of the book, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*,<sup>297</sup> he argues that every pastor is responsible for proclaiming Christ and for preaching the word of God “at all times, to everyone, and in many ways”. Because God created everything that exists and the good news of God’s self-giving love surrounds the whole world, nothing in the entire universe is independent of God or the gospel.<sup>298</sup> According to Vanhoozer, “to be a pastor-theologian – to speak of God before some public – is to be squarely in the public eye.” However, the predicament faced by pastors is to demonstrate the truth about God in such a way as to satisfy the requirements of public discourse. In addition, pastors should speak publicly about common issues such as the meaning of life, but they do not have credentials (or expertise) that are publicly recognized and valued, unlike professionals that have publicly recognised expertise – such as lawyers or medical practitioners.<sup>299</sup> Vanhoozer emphasises that the pastor must be a public theologian for this reason. A pastor who wants to be ahead of the congregation should be rooted in the gospel and at the same time have cultural capacity. Public theologians help people to understand the world in which they live and, more importantly, to understand how to follow Christ in everyday as well as in exceptional situations. Therefore, public theologians are a special kind of generalist who “specializes in viewing all of life as relating to God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.”. Because of this, unlike experts who know much about a little but often cannot answer big questions, public theologians often address the big questions such as those about life and death, and the physical and the spiritual.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> For more details, see John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

<sup>297</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Culture and the Death of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 1.

<sup>298</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2015), 1–4.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 12–14.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 23–25.

As we have seen above, the views on whether theology or the Christian tradition should be interpreted into secular language for the comprehension of the wider world are in conflict with each other. While proponents place emphasis on the possibility of communication with nonbelievers, opponents tend to worry about the secularisation of faith. However, it should be noted that both sides agree that Christian truth is applicable not only to Christians but to all. We have already identified in the previous section that public theology should clearly demonstrate a biblical-theological profile, so as long as public theologians continue to hold on to this first characteristic, they will be able to define the limits of the translation work.

### 3.4 Interdisciplinary character

The second characteristic almost logically calls for the third characteristic of public theology, namely its interdisciplinary character. It is almost impossible to translate faith into the language of the world without knowledge about the contents and findings of other disciplines and fields. Analysis by experts from other disciplines helps nonbelievers to listen to theologians' claims.<sup>301</sup>

It can never simply be believers and theologians (whether ministers, office-bearers, church commissions, or theological writings) giving running theological commentary (whether religious, biblical, doctrinal, or pious) on public affairs and issues, but it always requires others as well – other scholars, other sources, other insights, other participants, other perspectives, particularly, other knowledge.<sup>302</sup>

Therefore, public theology should incorporate biblical orientation and beliefs with informed knowledge and accountability, and this characteristic, Smit argues, is “the only real criterion that can be used to describe public theology”.<sup>303</sup> A very important example is that in order to persuade people of his argument, Paul quoted not only the

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<sup>301</sup> “In its engagement with the academy, theology is challenged to provide arguments that all reasonable people from diverse religious and secular traditions can recognize as reasonable.” Koopman, “Some Contours for Public Theology in South Africa,” 129.

<sup>302</sup> Smit, “Does It Matter? On Whether There Is Method in the Madness,” 79.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 78–79.

teachings of the Bible but also the great poets and philosophers of the Greek world, such as Epimenides and Aratus.<sup>304</sup>

The need for interdisciplinary research is due to the increasing complexity and diversity of society. For this reason, it is noticed in the *International Journal of Public Theology* particularly that public theologians have been actively engaged in research that encompasses various subjects, diverse issues and traditional research fields. The fact that Bedford-Strohm worked with scholars from other backgrounds and other academic disciplines and also with representatives and stakeholders from public and influential groups makes his argument more credible. In this section, not only interdisciplinary study but also interreligious dialogue will be dealt with to analyse Bedford-Strohm's argument.

### 3.4.1 The need for interdisciplinary study

Bedford-Strohm argues that interdisciplinarity is crucial to public theology. Public theology needs to be in dialogue with economists, politicians, sociologists, natural scientists and other disciplines if it really wants to make a substantial contribution to the public debate.<sup>305</sup> Furthermore, public theology needs to learn from their insights and eschew 'a dogmatic or fundamentalist immunization' against the instructive dynamics of public discourse in democratic societies based on public reason.<sup>306</sup>

If Public Theology intends to speak to the wider public and if it claims to speak of and to present realities, it needs to engage in a vivid dialogue with the other scholarly disciplines. If public theologians want to understand societal trends, they need to study empirical sociological research and to understand theoretical interpretations of such research in theoretical sociology or social philosophy. If they aspire to engage into public debate on economic issues, they need to have a basic understanding of economic processes, even if it leads to unmasking seemingly objective facts as ideological constructs to be challenged. Since Public Theology is more than a confessional self-expression of believers but seeks to be heard in the

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<sup>304</sup> Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 57.

<sup>305</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Engagement Für Die Demokratie," 119.

<sup>306</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Reformation. Freeing the Church for Authentic Public Witness," 106.

publics of a democratic society and its political decision bodies, it needs to take account of political science.<sup>307</sup>

In this way, Bedford-Strohm emphasises that public theologians should try as much as they can to gain knowledge of the field in which they would speak. Koopman explains the background of the need for interdisciplinary study as follows:

Theologies in all countries of the world are challenged to think afresh about their agendas, priorities, methodologies, and epistemologies in the light of processes such as political, cultural, and economic globalisation, as well as the global threat to the environment.<sup>308</sup>

Furthermore, Stackhouse asserts that if we want people to consider Scripture and tradition seriously, we should give persuasive reasons why they have to do so in ways that they can understand. Thus, we should demonstrate that these principles make psychological, economic, political and social sense as well as metaphysical and moral sense.<sup>309</sup> As Smit states, various themes of public theology that are informed by and knowledgeable about a specific field show that public theology should engage with other disciplines and fields of expertise. For this reason, public theology is often dealt with in other forms of conferences and in collections of essays written by experts from other fields.<sup>310</sup>

Indeed, the basic questions for every public theology are how the pre-political organisations of life are ordered and, behind that, what religious or ethical presumptions they seek to incarnate. For this reason, public theology tends to refer to certain social theories of history and politics.<sup>311</sup> According to Breitenberg's definition, "public theology relies on sources of insight, language, method, of argument, and warrants that are in theory open to all."<sup>312</sup> Public theology does not rely on only limited sources just for certain people who have belief but seriously refers to the technical data gathered by sociologists, political philosophers and economists.<sup>313</sup> Certain insights from outside Christianity such as the philosophy, science and cultural achievements of non-

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<sup>307</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State," 42.

<sup>308</sup> Koopman, "Some Contours for Public Theology in South Africa," 132.

<sup>309</sup> Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy*, 1987, 13.

<sup>310</sup> Smit, "Does It Matter? On Whether There Is Method in the Madness," 80,82.

<sup>311</sup> Stackhouse, "Civil Religion, Political Theology and Public Theology: What's the Difference?," 91.

<sup>312</sup> Breitenberg, "To Tell the Truth," 66.

<sup>313</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 94–95.

Christians are helpful to determine and develop the crucial and universal themes of Christian tradition. Furthermore, Robert Benne expects that

The most effective public theology will be carried forward by laity who are more expert in their fields than theologians and ethicists will ever be. These laypeople will be informed by theologians but will filter their religious notions through the conceptual apparatus of their own fields.<sup>314</sup>

However, in interdisciplinary dialogue, it is not always important that public theologians know everything.<sup>315</sup>

### **3.4.2 The relationship between theology and science, including technology, the natural sciences and ecology**

According to Newbigin, those who found modern science and accomplished great achievements in the field were Christian believers. However, it was mainly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that some of the most godly and prominent people in Britain and Europe thought that science could find guidance from society instead of religion. Explaining historically how science and faith have attacked one another, Newbigin urges us to accept that one of the great tasks of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century church is to advocate the validity of science against those who attack science.<sup>316</sup>

In particular, the relationship between technology, the natural sciences and theology is one of the core themes of public theology. Questions regarding modern medicine, for example, are one of the significant issues in the world today. As can be seen from the issue of euthanasia, the question of how far these technological possibilities should be accepted raises new ethical questions. The use of nuclear power to generate energy and

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<sup>314</sup> Robert Benne, "Less Enthusiasm, Please, I'm Lutheran," *The Christian Century* 108, no. 3 (1991): 78.

<sup>315</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Engagement Für Die Demokratie," 119.

<sup>316</sup> See his book chapter 10 for the more detailed explanation. Lesslie Newbigin, *Faith in a Changing World* (London: Alpha International, 2012).

generic engineering are also at the intersection of technology, science and public theology.<sup>317</sup>

Due to the increasing environmental crisis in the global world, the relationship between theology and ecology has also become a significant theme in public theology. Bedford-Strohm points out three approaches for an appropriate interpretation of the relationship between humanity and nature, namely utilitarian anthropocentrism, the nature-centred approach and the anthropocentrism of responsibility.<sup>318</sup>

1. Utilitarian anthropocentrism: It sees the human being as the centre of creation. In its strong form, nonhuman nature is considered as a ‘thing’ of instrumental value for use by human beings. This view was supported by a specific interpretation of the *dominium terrae* (dominion over nature) in the Bible. Human beings lost their dominion over nature and the knowledge of nature through the fall. Human beings have the task of regaining this dominion and knowledge. The true goal of the knowledge of nature is the reinstatement of man into the sovereignty and power that came to them in the first state of creation. Therefore, human efforts to rule over nature are interpreted as attempts to regain paradise. However, utilitarian anthropocentrism in its strong form is barely represented publicly anymore. Today, this approach is only represented in a mild form, according to which the value of nature is well understood but this value is based solely on human needs. We all know the argument that we must leave earth to our children in a shape that gives them the same opportunity to use nature as we allow for ourselves.
2. Nature-centred approach: This approach is exactly the opposite of utilitarian anthropocentrism. The nature-centred approach involves geocentric thinking, that is, an orientation towards the earth as a whole and all its parts, whether alive or not, but also includes biocentric thinking, that is, an orientation towards all that is alive. This approach is mainly found in recent works on feminist

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<sup>317</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, “Technik, Theologie, Naturwissenschaften,” in *Position Beziehen: Perspektiven Einer Öffentlichen Theologie* (München: Claudius Verlag, 2012), 97–98.

<sup>318</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, “Tilling and Caring for the Earth: Public Theology and Ecology,” in *Liberation Theology for a Democratic Society: Essays in Public Theology*, ed. Michael Mädler and Andrea Wagner-Pinggera (Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2018), 250–56.; Bedford-Strohm, “Technik, Theologie, Naturwissenschaften,” 99–104.

theology and theological work inspired by indigenous spirituality. According to this approach, there is no room for a hierarchy between human beings and the rest of nature because human life is embedded in nature and both are an expression of God's creative power. The weakness of this approach lies in the lack of consideration of the plausible different assessments of humanity and nonhuman nature. There is even a danger of a new completely unintended dualism between religious wording and praxis.

3. Anthropocentrism of responsibility: It takes account of the special significance of the human being without legitimising subordination, exploitation and destruction of the earth by humans. Only human beings can reflect on their actions and take responsibility for them. Thus, an ethic of self-limitation of human beings is involved in their relationship with the earth. Anyone who recognises God as the creator of heaven and earth acknowledges that the creature of God is not only humanity but also nonhuman nature. Nature has its own dignity solely through its character as the creation of God and cannot be made freely available to the interests of humans. Human beings' responsible action in relationship to nature will lead to the minimisation of violence. This attitude considers the reality of conflict between human needs and nonhuman nature. "Human beings, in their 'tilling and caring for the earth' will extinguish life and will make use of non-living creature, but they will not forget that the earth is given to them to care for."

Newbiggin asserts that the issue of the use of scientific knowledge by the modern technology should also be dealt with in a deeply theological framework since there are both implications for, and from belief, for our technologies and how we use them for good or for harm.

### **3.4.3 Interreligious dialogue**

When Bedford-Strohm defines the characteristics of public theology, he does not only speak of the interdisciplinary character but also emphasises the interreligious nature of

public theology. Interreligious dialogue can also be a distinction of public theology, which can be seen in recent years in the realm of public theology where many articles on the relationship between Christianity and other religions are increasingly being produced. Stackhouse argues that the gospel we are to preach for the salvation of the world is not esoteric, privileged, irrational or inaccessible. Rather, it is something that we all can understand and deem necessary for all and something that we can reasonably discuss with Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Muslims humanists and Marxists.<sup>319</sup>

In the past, Christianity could be considered as the shared religious basis in Western countries. Today, however, this situation has changed because many people who adhere to different religions live together in the world as a globalised, pluralistic society. In this context, the issue of how we can really live together instead of just living side by side is growing more and more important. Indeed, anyone who looks at the history of Christianity encounters an attitude of intolerance and suppression towards other religious beliefs that fundamentally contradicts Jesus' life and teaching. Therefore, the tasks of tolerance, hospitality and humility, which are at the centre of Christian ethics, are urgently required today. Anyone who wants to overcome violence and who seeks peace must therefore assign central importance to interreligious dialogue. Interreligious dialogue is significant for the sake of peaceful coexistence in the global world.<sup>320</sup>

However, there is a concept to consider here, namely the culture war, which leads to conflict rather than dialogue in a pluralistic society. Wuthnow states that "the idea of a culture war has come to stand for a wide variety of divisive, contested, and often uncivil disputes that threaten the very fabric of civil society". To help us to understand this idea, he presents two examples. One is the statement by Charles Haynes, a professor at Vanderbilt University, that the public square is a very angry place and that it does not bode well for civil society. The other is James Davison Hunter's diagnosis that leaders currently use an abrasive style to foster their followers. Such people often parade in sexually outrageous costumes, stage flag-waving rallies and hold up pictures of dead

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<sup>319</sup> Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy*, 1987, xi.

<sup>320</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, "Miteinander, Nicht Nebeneinander," in *Position Beziehen: Perspektiven Einer Öffentlichen Theologie* (München: Claudius Verlag, 2012), 81.

foetuses nailed to crosses instead of relying on rational arguments.<sup>321</sup> These two ways of response have to be sublated.

Bedford-Strohm suggests four conceptions of tolerance for interreligious dialogue<sup>322</sup>:

1. The permission conception: A dominant majority grants minorities permission to live their convictions. For example, through the Edict of Nantes of 1598, the Catholic king of France gave undisturbed protests to live their religion.
2. The coexistence conception: Different equally strong groups live together only pragmatically in a *modus vivendi*. In their religious expression, they do not make room for one another out of genuine conviction. If one of these groups becomes the dominant group, therefore, it may be easy for it to use its power to oppress the other groups.
3. The respect conception: People respect themselves as equal persons or groups without adhering to the practices and convictions of the others. Such an attitude is very valuable because it is based on the conviction that all religious groups must have the right to live their convictions.
4. The appreciation conception: It goes beyond mere mutual respect. It includes a sense of the richness of others' religious traditions. Even if a tradition is not shared, it can be appreciated as an authentic expression of the faith of others.

Bedford-Strohm also derived four theological concepts from these four conceptions in the light of the Christian faith<sup>323</sup>:

1. Christocentric exclusivism – ecclesio-centrism: Adherents of this concept affirm the central importance of Jesus Christ for the Christian faith and, at the same time, reject the possibility that there may be elements of truth in other religions. Therefore, this concept considers the witness of Jesus Christ and other forms of faith as mutually exclusive. The verse “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6)

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<sup>321</sup> Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society*, 51–54.

<sup>322</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Miteinander, Nicht Nebeneinander,” 83–84.

<sup>323</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, “Public Theology and Interreligious Dialogue,” in *Liberation Theology for a Democratic Society: Essays in Public Theology*, ed. Michael Mädler and Andrea Wagner-Pinggera (Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2018), 224–27.

is evidence for the representatives of this position. The primary goal of dialogue with this concept is conversion to the Christian faith.

2. Pluralistic theology of religion: This concept assumes that all approaches to God are rooted in the respective biography and that each religion can only claim relative truth for itself. Each biography has its own story and thus its own truth. Everyone recognises only a part of the truth. The whole can only be approached if we embrace the richness and diversity of different religious views. Therefore, strong truth claims are seen as something to be overcome because they serve as a nurturing ground for intolerance. Furthermore, this concept seems to eventually require the privatisation of religion for publicly claiming truth is seen as threatening the culture of pluralism.
3. Moral credibility approach (ring parable): This view expresses the conviction that the truth of a religion can be seen in its moral credibility. Any religion that generates intolerance and hate cannot be a true religion since God is love and God can only work through a religion that values this love and bears witness to this love to the world. For Bedford-Strohm, this concept is not satisfying since there is a tension among the different views of different religions that cannot be overcome by subjectifying faith.
4. Trinitarian inclusivism - authenticity of the church in interreligious dialogue: This view is what Bedford-Strohm eventually wants to argue for. It emphasises the strengths of some of the other approaches without including their weaknesses. It implies a passionate witness to the Trinitarian God that clearly distinguishes the convictions of Christianity from those of other religions. It rejects an understanding of pluralism that assumes that truth claims generate intolerance. Rather, Trinitarian theology is extremely fruitful for an interreligious dialogue that avoids both relativism and absolutism. It does not ignore the tension among different religious convictions but explores how we deal with this tension. The differences among religions must therefore be recognised. It is not a matter of levelling the differences, but of dealing with these differences, which is not characterised by mutual devaluation but by mutual listening.

Bedford-Strohm concludes as follows:

Aus der Sicht des christlichen Glaubens kann die Wahrheit Gottes nie angemessen beschrieben werden, ohne auf das Zentrum des christlichen Glaubens Bezug zu nehmen, nämlich Christus selbst. Aber es ist ein Trugschluss, zu glauben, dass sich daraus eine prinzipielle Abwertung anderer Religionen ergibt. Die Menschenliebe ist jedenfalls untrennbar mit Leben und Lehre Jesu verbunden. Die Wertschätzung anderer Menschen liegt deswegen klar in der Ziellinie christlichen Glaubens.<sup>324</sup>

Where trust grows on the basis of mutually appreciative treatment, an open approach to the differences among religions is possible. It is best to bear witness to the gospel in a way that radiates the peace and reconciliation that came into the world with Christ. In this sense, to be witnesses of Jesus Christ means engaging in dialogue among religions.<sup>325</sup>

The religious, moral and spiritual devotion that people possess becomes a socially important cultural fact, which in turn creates an unexpected new way of life as a political and economic reality. Therefore, such interdisciplinary study will help to track the unique ways in which the religious dimension interacts with political and economic development to transform the social types of human behaviour and the types of human relationships.<sup>326</sup> In this sense, considering the model of the relationship between humanity and nature and the attitude of interreligious dialogue for the peaceful coexistence of Christianity with other religions as presented by Bedford-Strohm is a crucial characteristic of public theology and a significant subject to further develop in the future.

However, conservative churches in Korea are very sceptical about this idea. They suspect that when they try to engage in interdisciplinary study, especially when they aim to engage in dialogue with other religions, they will concede a point in the argument about Christian conviction and then seek religious pluralism. For this reason, they strongly oppose the World Council of Churches (WCC), saying that it pursues religious

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<sup>324</sup> “Seen from the viewpoint of Christian belief, the truth of the Bible and God cannot be seen as measurable unless we accept Jesus Christ Himself as the centre point. However, it is a false conclusion to use this definition as a way of measuring other religions. The love of humanity is inseparable from the life and teachings of Jesus. Therefore, the value we place on all other people clearly lies on the target line of Christian belief.” (own translation) Bedford-Strohm, “Miteinander, Nicht Nebeneinander,” 87.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 89–90.

<sup>326</sup> Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy*, 1987, 86.

pluralism. During the WCC Assembly in Busan, Korea in 2013, a number of conservative Christians who protested against the WCC outside the venue simply showed how concerned they were about this aspect. Therefore, public theology should be careful not to give up the truth of Christianity while encouraging interdisciplinary study and interreligious dialogue, with careful consideration of conservative Christians' anxieties to dissipate their concerns.

### 3.5 Competency to provide political direction

According to Stackhouse, public theology can be called 'public' since attempts of public theology can serve as a guide to the structure and policies of public life.<sup>327</sup> For Bedford-Strohm, this characteristic belongs to the mission of the church and the thrust of the gospel.<sup>328</sup> In this section, therefore, I will describe Bedford-Strohm's thoughts about the role of Christian theology in the processing of policy making and decisions about public life. In particular, since he emphasises the voice of the church for the poor, I will examine his four models of political ethics in Christian theology.

#### 3.5.1 The relationship between the church and politics

Bedford-Strohm starts his paper "Kompass für die Gesellschaft" with this sentence: "Unsere pluralistische Gesellschaft sucht nach Orientierung."<sup>329</sup> Based on the knowledge and wisdom provided by the biblical and theological traditions, we can contribute to the debate in the realm of politics and civil society on which path society will take.<sup>330</sup> As we live in modern times, if we have any interest in how this world that

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>328</sup> Smit, "Does It Matter? On Whether There Is Method in the Madness," 82.

<sup>329</sup> "Our pluralistic society is searching for orientation." (own translation) Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, "Kompass Für Die Gesellschaft," in *Position Beziehen: Perspektiven Einer Öffentlichen Theologie* (München: Claudius Verlag, 2012), 91.

<sup>330</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Reformation. Freeing the Church for Authentic Public Witness," 107.

we live in is working, we need orientation about how to cope with all the situations that we are facing.

Indeed, there is a tendency for the religious voice to be eliminated from the public sphere because of the fear of imposition of religious views. Those who advocate such views argue that politics, one major public sphere, must remain unilluminated by the light of revelation and be guided only by human reason.<sup>331</sup> However, if one is looking for an institution where the important questions for public life can be fixed and where the answers to these questions can be expected, then in the end the church will be an adequate place. Many people who are involved in the public discourse regarding the question of ethical importance are now realising what the church can offer. Therefore, the church's public statements today can be more than a compass for society. Its commitment to social justice, economic and social issues and in particular the rights of the weak who have no voice is of great importance to society as a whole.<sup>332</sup> Bedford-Strohm furthermore argues that "politics is a necessary dimension in our reflections on God and God's action in the world". Thus,

It is also understandable that Public Theology develops a special dynamic in transformation societies. In countries like South Africa, Brazil, or even Rwanda moving beyond the trauma of genocide, there are, with different intensities, moves towards developing a civil society, overcoming decades of authoritarian or dictatorial regimes.<sup>333</sup>

In this sense, churches need public theology in order to provide direction to politics by contributing moral expertise. A good example is found in countries such as the United States of America and Germany and in other transforming societies where many leading politicians are often members of the church and committed Christians.<sup>334</sup>

Of course, the church must not function as a moral teacher who has to offer the better solutions from the outset.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Volf, *A Public Faith*, x.

<sup>332</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Kompass Für Die Gesellschaft," 92.

<sup>333</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Public Theology and Political Ethics," 5.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>335</sup> "If a discourse is truly free, that is, governed by rules that prevent the dominion of some over others, the result of this discourse can orient political action." Bedford-Strohm, "Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State," 29.

As much as the churches should make concrete political proposals on the basis of their ethical guidelines, they must always be aware that they are not political parties trying to promote specific political programmes.<sup>336</sup>

Rather, the church can only set up round tables of social responsibility with local managers and union members in order to look for strategies in the regions that benefit all.

[T]hey must make it clear that they are not promoters of their own political interests but are witnesses of God's love for creation, which means seeking the best for the world.<sup>337</sup>

For this, the church can discover the economic competence of church members in communities and use their advice.<sup>338</sup> Similarly, Rowan Williams asserts in his *Faith in the Public Square* that the goal of public theology is not to directly influence public policy or to proclaim the gospel directly in the public square but to indirectly show and communicate the "vision of Christian faith in the life of the community centred on God".<sup>339</sup>

Smit well points out the place of public theology. According to him, if public theology intends to truly participate in public discourse and provide helpful direction, public theology should never stay within the realm of scholarship but should rather be practiced in public places.<sup>340</sup>

### **3.5.2 Correcting a distorted image of the relationship between the two kingdoms resulting from a misunderstanding of Martin Luther's two kingdoms doctrine**

Martin Luther's two kingdoms doctrine is still providing some insight, and it is still relevant today. However, Bedford-Strohm argues that it was misinterpreted and misused as a way of justifying injustice and violence in post-Reformation history. The basic premise of Luther is that God governs the world through two unique governments:

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<sup>336</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Public Theology and Political Ethics," 19.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Kompass Für Die Gesellschaft," 95–96.

<sup>339</sup> Rowan Williams, *Faith in the Public Square* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

<sup>340</sup> Smit, "Does It Matter? On Whether There Is Method in the Madness," 83.

one is the spiritual government and the other is the temporal government. The former is the government regulated exclusively by the gospel and is the ideal form of government based on the principles that Jesus gave us in the Sermon on the Mount. Under the spiritual government, we must embrace rather than respond to violence, even to the devil, to love our enemies at all times and to make others' well-being our first priority. However, since this government is difficult to achieve in the real world, we need God's temporal government.<sup>341</sup> Bedford-Strohm describes the temporal government as follows:

God's temporal government deals with the imperfection of the world that finds its expression in many injustices. Normally the victims of such injustices are the weakest members of society; hence, they need the protection of the law. Therefore, those to whom God has given the responsibility to govern, and thereby uphold the law, cannot act in the same way that they are called to act as individual Christians. Instead, they have the God given duty to protect the weak, even with the use of force. The clear purpose of such force, however, must be the fulfilment of the God given mandate to protect the weak and to promote peace.<sup>342</sup>

In his interpretation, Bedford-Strohm seems to emphasise that the two kingdoms doctrine does not merely segregate spiritual and temporal governments as many understand but that the temporal government has a duty to protect the weak.

For Luther, the task of politics is related to the gospel. Both governments must always coexist, and only one is not enough for this world. If everyone acts according to the gospel, that is, the principles of the spiritual kingdom, political ethics will be unnecessary. However, the world that we live in is not going this way.<sup>343</sup> Luther's advice for the temporal government is important as long as the powerful pursue their own interests while dominating the weak. In this respect, Luther's intense critique of the capitalism of the 16<sup>th</sup> century shows his concern that the temporal government failed to fulfill its God-given duty.<sup>344</sup> "The role of politics is to make way for God's love under the conditions of an unredeemed world. Thus, for Luther, being a committed

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<sup>341</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Public Theology and Political Ethics," 7.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>343</sup> James Smith described Augustine's thought. "For Augustine the earthly city begins with the fall, not with creation. The earthly city is not coincident with creation; it originates with sin. This is why Augustine sets the city of God in opposition to the earthly city: they are defined and animated by fundamentally different loves." James K. A. Smith, *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2017), 46.

<sup>344</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Reformation. Freeing the Church for Authentic Public Witness," 102.

Christian and really living according to the Gospel is not contradictory to being a committed politician.” In other words, Christian faith is nothing but a dedication and commitment to becoming a true citizen. In conclusion, what Luther really meant by the two kingdoms doctrine is not two distinctive realms but two kingdoms of God that coexist in the world. It does not mean that the gospel is irrelevant for temporal government, but the gospel cannot be the direct basis for political rule.<sup>345</sup>

When Luther’s two kingdoms doctrine is interpreted in this way, the distorted image<sup>346</sup> of the relationship between the church and politics is overcome and the church eventually can provide orientation to politics.

### 3.5.3 Four models of political ethics in Christian theology

For Bedford-Strohm, the issue of poverty and oppression is at the heart of the church’s political participation. He argues regarding this as follows: “‘Theo-logy’ – talk about God – is impossible without talking about the human historical experience of slavery and oppression and God’s action in history to overcome such oppression.”<sup>347</sup>

However, there is no consensus on how Christianity will communicate with politics in relation to these issues. Thus, Bedford-Strohm organises the various methods of Christian tradition into the following four models.<sup>348</sup>

1. The charity model: This model sees the option for the poor as a priority and emphasises living God’s command to help and love needy neighbours in their everyday lives. According to this model, however, biblical texts reflecting the option for the poor are meant for the action of individuals, and political readings are denied by this model since this model thinks that such readings are misused

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<sup>345</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Public Theology and Political Ethics,” 9–10.

<sup>346</sup> “Theologically the charity model often refers to a certain understanding of the Lutheran two kingdoms doctrine that separates the heavenly kingdom, which is the realm of personal piety where the commandments of the gospel are relevant, from the earthly kingdom, where the law of reason rather than the law of the gospel reigns” Bedford-Strohm, “Poverty and Public Theology: Advocacy of the Church in Pluralistic Society,” 154.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, 154–59.

ideologically. This model often refers to a certain understanding of Luther's two kingdoms doctrine that explicitly separates the spiritual kingdom, the domain of personal piety, and the temporal kingdom, which is governed by the laws of the world. As a result, this model has the following weaknesses: First, it reads the Bible with a dogmatic presupposition that it applies only to the personal realm. Second, it ignores the indivisible relationship between personal ethics and social ethics. However, since many of the stories in the Old Testament indeed have a great deal of political meaning and today's moral issues are both personal and political, this model is not appropriate for public theology.

2. The fundamental critical model: This model links the option for the poor inseparably to political action. It sees the poverty and oppression of the weak as a direct consequence of global capitalism. It prefers to resist and object to the privileges of the rich and powerful rather than to engage in the daily political debate to develop the right political strategies against poverty. However, this model has a weakness due to the presupposition that free trade makes the problem of poverty more serious. The model does not explain why some countries in Asia are witnessing how the liberalisation of trade is helping to overcome the poverty problem. In the end, depending on how the system is used, it produces good or bad results, but the system itself is not a problem. Therefore, this model is not appropriate because it interferes with essential discussions to establish an economic policy that can bestow dignity on all human beings.
3. The political advice model: This model responds to a need that is regularly expressed by policymakers. They want to find solutions to concrete problems at specific times rather than be concerned with ethical, moral and theological principles. The political advice of the church in pursuing this method tends to use a language that sounds more professional than employing a biblical-theological language. It may solve a specific problem by suggesting a concrete solution, but it does not answer the ethical and moral questions beyond it. Therefore, it is important to explicitly refer to answers that the biblical-theological tradition provides. "Political advice without a conscious and explicit reflection on its theological underpinnings is short-sighted and thus inappropriate."

4. The public theology model: This model is indeed the model that Bedford-Strohm considers most appropriate for dealing with the issue of poverty. According to him, this model “goes along with the fundamental critical and the political advice model in rejecting the claim of the charity model.” It explicitly argues the public role of the church as an agent for the world. Unlike the fundamental critical model, this model does not link the option for the poor directly to a particular political option and does not consider the acts of the church for the weak “as acts of confessional witness and resistance against the system”. Unlike the political advice model, in this model, the church explicitly considers the value dimension in its contribution to the public discourse. Therefore, this model is related to the second characteristic of public theology, namely bilingual ability. “Public theology tries to develop political options not only for opposition but also for situations of political power.” In this sense, Bedford-Strohm describes public theology as “liberation theology for a democratic society”.

The public theology model that he considers as an appropriate model can be summarised as follows:

The church is not the better political judge and should therefore not be a political force itself. But with its spiritual and ethical authority it can call politics to renew its commitment to ethical orientations as a basis for political judgment.<sup>349</sup>

In fact, if a public theology dealing with issues connected to both the church and society cannot provide a constructive direction for public issues, it will no longer be called public theology.

It is one of the great cultural achievements of the Christian faith to give support and orientation in times of crisis. The path of God with his people is characterised by many stories of crises and salvation from these crises. The ancient traditions of the Bible also convey confidence in the future, even in difficult times. Because this trust is based on

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<sup>349</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, “Prophetic Witness and Public Discours in European Societies - a German Perspective,” in *Liberation Theology for a Democratic Society: Essays in Public Theology*, ed. Michael Mädler and Andrea Wagner-Pinggera (Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2018), 53.

the certainty of guidance and direction through God, these old insights are gaining new relevance today.<sup>350</sup> “God’s covenant with creation implies human involvement in and for the world, including in politics.”<sup>351</sup> Therefore, the church can no longer escape from the crisis society into the private realm. If we leave all contemporary problems to politicians only, it will be a dereliction of duty by Christians. Rather, the church has to encourage citizens to become involved in politics.

Therefore, Bedford-Strohm concludes, “Niemand unterschätze die Orientierungskraft der christlichen Tradition in der modernen pluralistischen Gesellschaft. Deswegen brauchen wir eine ebenso selbstkritische wie selbstbewusste öffentliche Kirche in der Zivilgesellschaft.”<sup>352</sup>

### 3.6 Prophetic quality

Owen Strachan claims that the work of the priests, prophets and kings in the Old Testament can help us to understand the ministry of the pastor-theologian because the key element of the ministry of the old covenant was transferred to the pastorate of the new covenant. The prophet, in particular, performed a ministry of truth telling. Truth is not abstract beyond God. “Truth is rather a matter of the reliability of God’s Word, of God’s covenant faithfulness.” Furthermore, to be a prophet is not only to proclaim unchanging truth but to speak from a God-centred view about the changing times that God’s people experience. Prophets speak the truth in a situation that tempts people to worship false gods and break down every convenient illusion.<sup>353</sup> In this sense, Vanhoozer states that “the faithful pastor will always be a countercultural figure”.<sup>354</sup> Most of all, the task of orientation and direction that was described as the fourth

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<sup>350</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Gerechtigkeit Erhöht Ein Volk...” 76–77.

<sup>351</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Public Theology and Political Ethics,” 20.

<sup>352</sup> “Nobody should underestimate the orientation of the Christian tradition to remedy this problem in our modern pluralistic society. This is why we need a self-critical but self-confident public church in civil society.” (own translation) Bedford-Strohm, “Kompass Für Die Gesellschaft,” 96.

<sup>353</sup> Vanhoozer and Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, 39–46.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

characteristic of public theology almost inevitably demands a resistive attitude of the church.

### 3.6.1 Prophetic speaking of the church

Public theology should be “critical, in opposition, resisting, warning, critiquing, opposing what is already happening in public life”.<sup>355</sup> However, “prophetic witness can only be an appropriate mode of public discourse in societies when it does not block, but generates and encourages, such debate.”<sup>356</sup> Perhaps another reason why Bedford-Strohm often describes public theology as a liberation theology for ‘a democratic society’ is due to this characteristic of the public theology that we are considering now. Moltmann maintains that “theology has to be public theology: public, critical, and prophetic complaint to God – public, critical and prophetic hope in God”.<sup>357</sup> Public theology, therefore, tries to guide or resist ethically against the processing misunderstood and then misdirected.<sup>358</sup> Similarly, Sebastian Kim asserts that the church should “play an appropriate and prophetic role in the wider society”, opposing any monopoly on political, religious and economic power.<sup>359</sup>

However, public theology does not elevate this prophetic element to principle. It does not deny legitimacy to every power but rather leads to distinguishing the minds in terms of the exercise of power.<sup>360</sup> Therefore, prophetic criticism must also have the goal to arrive at feasible solutions. Prophetic criticism and political advice are therefore not in contradiction to each other but need each other in order to neither absorb the existing

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<sup>355</sup> Smit, “Does It Matter? On Whether There Is Method in the Madness,” 84.

<sup>356</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Prophetic Witness and Public Discours in European Societies - a German Perspective,” 51.

<sup>357</sup> Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society*, 5.

<sup>358</sup> Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 85.

<sup>359</sup> See Sebastian C. H. Kim, *Christianity as a World Religion: An Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

<sup>360</sup> “Other than a fundamental critical approach, which binds the option for the poor exclusively to one political option, a public theological approach, which I myself advocate, generates an open discourse in which political options best serve the ethical goals.” Bedford-Strohm, “Prophetic Witness and Public Discours in European Societies - a German Perspective,” 51.

nor to ignore the existing.<sup>361</sup> This point marks the difference between public theology and political theology.

For the prophets Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah, balance was not the primary goal. They did not come up with the idea of obtaining the most reliable scientific expertise before they spoke. They passionately expressed moral indignation when human action were blatantly unjust and where human practices were obviously contradictory to the commandments of God, for example where the poor were exploited and screaming injustice was whitewashed with spirituality and worship. Amos attempted to make the voice of God audible:

I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! (Amos 5:21-24)

Bedford-Strohm, in this respect, provides five important principles<sup>362</sup> about the prophetic dimension:

1. Even if it is difficult to assess the exact reason or the solutions, the moral problem must be obvious. Prophetic speaking has the function at least to point out the moral scandal, to bring it to attention and to ensure that more intensive efforts are made to overcome it.
2. It is important who speaks because the authority of the word depends on who is speaking. This may be the authority granted to the pastor by ordination to the ministry and expressed in a prophetic Sunday sermon.
3. Prophetic speaking by the church must be limited to particular situations. Prophetic speaking loses its power when it becomes predictable. Thus, it should not be used lightly. It must be noticeable to the listener that this is a matter of something spiritually distressing.
4. Prophetic speaking by the church must not close the discourse. It should be open so that even opponents can freely participate in the discussion. Prophetic

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<sup>361</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Engagement Für Die Demokratie," 120–21.

<sup>362</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Klar Und Verständlich," 51–55.

speaking is not a release of frustration. It may initially be fundamentally critical in the particular situation but aims at a constructive redesign.

5. Prophetic speaking of the church depends on humility. There is a great danger that the moral intensity of prophetic speaking will lead to self-exaltation.

This guidance by Bedford-Strohm helps us to avoid abuse of prophetic speaking that makes people uninterested.

In addition, Bedford-Strohm asserts that “public theology always takes account of the difference between God’s Kingdom and the kingdoms of this world”. He uses Nathan’s parable as a good example of this feature. After King David’s affair with Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan comes to the king and tells the story of a rich man who has taken the only sheep of a poor man to fulfil his desires. Upon hearing this story, the king becomes angry because of the injustice of the rich. Nathan rebukes King David by saying, “You are the very man.” Public theology should follow Nathan’s example.<sup>363</sup>

### 3.6.2 Preferential option for the poor

De Gruchy argues that Reformed theology (I would change this word to ‘church’) should raise questions about the illegality of the government in circumstances where the government is not interested in the welfare of all citizens and especially the poor or in some kind of brutally oppressive situation.<sup>364</sup>

The associated ethics of empathy also exists in Judeo-Christian tradition. The commandment to protect the weak, the so-called ‘preferential option for the poor’, calls for empathy with others by pointing to the historical experience of the people of Israel as shown in the Old Testament<sup>365</sup>: “Do not oppress an alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in Egypt” (Exodus 23:9).

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<sup>363</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State,” 42.

<sup>364</sup> Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology*, 269.

<sup>365</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Braucht Die Zivilgesellschaft Die Kirche?,” 39.

It is certainly no coincidence that the people whom God liberated from Egypt through the work of Moses were slaves. They were the hopeless and the powerless.<sup>366</sup> In addition, the fact that God is represented in the Bible as a lawyer for the weak should be kept in mind. Because God helped the Israelites when they were weak and powerless, the weak and powerless are now also under the special protection of his commandments. Thus, protecting the rights of the weak is the very core of the biblical understanding of justice.

If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you. Do not take interest of any kind from him, but fear your God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you. You must not lend him money at interest or sell him food at a profit. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God. (Leviticus 25:35-38)

Hence, it is not surprising that we find special attention to the poor and outcasts. Similar stories can be seen in the New Testament.<sup>367</sup>

Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. (Matthew 19:21-22)

Therefore, public theology is a critical, prophetic and reflective engagement of theology “in society for the sake of the poor and marginalized to bring the kingdom of God”.<sup>368</sup> Bedford-Strohm maintains that ‘reciprocity’ is an element of Christian ethics that is central to society as a whole and to its political culture. It is shown by the following words of Jesus:

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

What is important here is an ethic of freedom. Because we experience and are aware of so much love ourselves, we act the same way towards others. There is another New Testament tradition that has the honour of being called “the Law and the Prophets”,

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<sup>366</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Gerechtigkeit Erhöht Ein Volk...,” 62.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>368</sup> Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere*, 7.

namely the Golden Rule: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

“Man hat die Goldene Regel eine Gegenseitigkeitsregel genannt, weil ihr Kern die wechselseitige Anerkennung ist.”<sup>369</sup>

In this sense, the church always implies a special responsibility for the weak. Those who take the Golden Rule seriously must continually examine their political action to determine how it affects the most vulnerable members of society.<sup>370</sup> However, it should be noted that the preferential option for the poor does not mean that others are marginalised but means that special attention must be given to the weak until they can participate in general prosperity.<sup>371</sup> This is a very important point because conservative Christians in Korea are opposed to liberation theology, thinking that the liberation theologians have overestimated the preferential option for the poor and ignored others.

When we consider the prophetic quality of public theology, we must listen to De Gruchy’s argument that the responsibility of the prophet is not to avoid conflict but to engage in conflict in a way consistent with the interests of God’s kingdom.<sup>372</sup> Therefore, in order to fulfil its calling in the world, the church must not remain neutral towards oppression or injustice, nor should it rest in some kind of racial or hierarchical structure. The church must embrace all humankind in a way that not only surpasses but also frustrates the forces that divide and dehumanise.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> “One has identified the Golden Rule as a rule of reciprocity because its main idea is mutual recognition.” (own translation) Bedford-Strohm, “Braucht Die Zivilgesellschaft Die Kirche?,” 38.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 39,44.

<sup>371</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Gerechtigkeit Erhöht Ein Volk...,” 61.

<sup>372</sup> Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology*, 50.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

### 3.7 Intercontextual nature

The universal nature of public theological discourse is not just a coincidence. Rather, it expresses an important characteristic of this theology. In various parts of the world, public theologies, whose contextuality is a defining trait, have developed. This contextuality does not contradict universality<sup>374</sup> but necessarily involves intercontextuality.<sup>375</sup> Thus, “public theologians should learn from one another and from what is happening in other contexts without any attempt to emulate one another or to reduce what is called public theology to one comprehensive and all-inclusive methodology.”<sup>376</sup> Bedford-Strohm and the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Research Center for Public Theology in Bamberg published an instructive book, *Contextuality and Intercontextuality in Public Theology*, that wove together the contributions of various scholars who had attended the international conference on intercontextuality. The book provides significant insights into how public theologies are relevant with regard to contextuality and intercontextuality. In this section, I will explore this characteristic in terms of theological and social aspects.

#### 3.7.1 The universal orientation of public theology

“Public Theology speaks to the world in the global sense of the word.” When we refer to the church as one holy catholic apostolic church, it does not mean that different churches should be merely integrated into one system. Likewise, when we say that we are ‘brothers and sisters in Christ’, it implies a close relationship with those who live in the rest of the world, as well as those in the places that we live in. Therefore, the universal orientation of public theology is not only “based on the universality of the church,” but also “based on the universality of the basis of all Christian ethics in the

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<sup>374</sup> “One of the most distinctive characteristics of Public Theology is the universality of its reference frame. The universal character of Public Theology is not to be mixed up with an ignorance of its unavoidable contextuality.” Bedford-Strohm, “Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State,” 43.

<sup>375</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Engagement Für Die Demokratie,” 122.

<sup>376</sup> Smit, “Does It Matter? On Whether There Is Method in the Madness,” 85–86.

Bible: the commandment to love one's neighbour." This is confirmed when we see that we are moving to help people who are extremely vulnerable all over the world because we know human vulnerability from the people around us. Therefore, "being rooted in local parishes all over the world and being at the same time universal in the fullest sense makes the church an ideal agent of a global civil society."<sup>377</sup>

If we discuss the problems of poverty and exclusion as a challenge in African, Latin American, Asian, or European countries, we must realise that these problems are the concern of one world created by the one God who gives life and to whom all are accountable. Therefore, "the knowledge of our souls about this accountability leads to a deep feeling of responsibility for this world."<sup>378</sup> Furthermore, Newbigin argues that a mutual correction among Christians belonging to faith communities of different cultures is necessary. He points out that Westerners, especially those who have not lived in other cultures, find it difficult to see that their culture is merely one of the many cultures of humankind. He continues to argue that the witness of Christians belonging to other cultures is necessary in order to revise and supplement a certain understanding of the Bible based on a particular culture. Indeed, through active global mission, faith communities with different cultures around the world have now been formed and their diverse perspectives have become an excellent asset in correcting each other.<sup>379</sup> This characteristic of public theology is promoted not only by this theological basis but also by the phenomenon of globalisation.

### **3.7.2 Contextuality and intercontextuality of public theology in a global world**

As we have seen, all public theologies are characterised by their context because they originate from a specific context in a certain area. Evidence exists that today's studies in the field of public theology are still being conducted from specific backgrounds in

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<sup>377</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State," 43.

<sup>378</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Civil Society - Welfare State - Diaconia: International Perspectives for Development," 137.

<sup>379</sup> See Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1995).

specific regions. Therefore, public theologians generally seem to acknowledge the particular methodologies and specific paradigms of public theologies developed in each area. These studies, however, do not end with contributions for the limited area alone. Rather, they affect geographically and psychologically very remote areas that seem to have no relation. This phenomenon is strongly related to increasing globalisation.

The evidence of globalisation is very obvious. A peaceful demonstration against the government of a small Asian country inspires a democratisation movement in Africa. German environmental policy presents a good model for Asian countries that are suffering from serious air pollution problems. The incident in which the Philippines returned trash to Canada affected similar decisions in neighbouring Southeast Asian countries. International organizations such as the G20, the United Nations, the European Union and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation are not only products of this globalisation but are also seen to foster globalisation. We can see the power of globalisation by looking at how many countries are seriously affected by the recent trade war between the United States of America and China.

Therefore, we have to notice that we share a common world and that various contexts constitute this one world. This growing global awareness forms a crucial part in the development of public theology, and the stories that originate in a certain context of a particular region soon develop into a global story.<sup>380</sup> It is therefore natural that public theology, which is strongly connected to globalisation, possesses the characteristic of intercontextuality.

Similarly, Frederike van Oorschot in her essay “Public Theology facing Globalization” argues that public theology is fundamentally linked to globalisation. She presents three observations for the basis of this assertion. First, “the specific notion of public theology is its relation to the publics of the world.” The various manners and features of globalisation influence the various publics of the world. The phenomenon of globalisation transforms and shapes the publics of the world. Second, the theme of globalisation is treated as the topic of public theological ethics in many publications in the field of public theology. Third, “public theology itself is globally organized.” The

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<sup>380</sup> Smit, “The Paradigm of Public Theology - Origins and Development,” 18.

spread of the concept and the network of diverse ethicists with different theological backgrounds and contexts led to a theology in the mode of globalisation. For that reason, “globalization became a structural paradigm of public theology.”<sup>381</sup> Van Oorschot states in this context that some shared elements of the various public theologies in the world provide the basis for intercontextual collaboration.<sup>382</sup>

In addition, Van Oorschot asserts that “any public theology exists in the tension between global intercontextuality and contextuality” and the description of global public theology “gets its relevance only by reference to the situational characteristics in any context”. Because of such intercontextuality and globality, it is almost impossible to become unified public theology.<sup>383</sup> Many public theologians tend to argue for this reason that public theologies should be expressed in the plural. Bedford-Strohm also argues as follows:

[W]e have to be aware that it is not one universal Public Theology applicable everywhere in the world, but one of many public theologies, each one for its own context. ... If I nevertheless speak of ‘Public Theology’ in the singular, I want to express the need to relate the different contexts to each other in search for the will of the one God who guides God’s people each in their own context but at the same time united as an ecumenical whole.<sup>384</sup>

Perhaps for this reason, would a global network, such as the GNPT, be needed to help public theologians and public theological institutions around the world to cooperate with each other?

Van Oorschot concludes that “the interconnectedness of ethicists from different contexts offers a unique possibility to work together on the existing challenges of global impact”. Furthermore, if it succeeds in finding a balance between contextuality and intercontextuality, “the term public theology can develop integrating power for the work on ethical issues in a global way”. To do this, however, one must overcome the perception of the past that one culture is superior or inferior to another. Likewise, in theology, it is impossible to learn from public theology developed in other regions, as

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<sup>381</sup> Van Oorschot, “Public Theology Facing Globalization,” 225–26.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>384</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Nurturing Reason: The Public Role of Religion in the Liberal State,” 24.

long as there is a sense of superiority and a belief that the more civilized region helps the less civilised.

### **3.8 Concluding remarks**

This chapter presented the six characteristics of public theology as found in the work of Heinrich Bedford-Strohm. The first one is its biblical-theological profile. Bedford-Strohm emphasises that it is natural for a church to be a public church, and that the public speaking of the church is the central task of the church. Therefore, public theology should, of course, be based on theology and church tradition. He argues that the church has not only consistently influenced the development of democratic societies and civil society in particular but that the church should also continue to contribute to the need for a fundamental ethical orientation. However, not everyone welcomes this active role of the church. Especially those who oppose the return of religion argue that the church will continue to stir up conflict. For this reason, the church was forced to stay in the private sphere or not to make its own voice known under the banner of pluralism, which is clearly wrong. Research by various sociologists and other public theologians supports this view. There are two things to keep in mind from their criticism, however. One is the question of how a theological assertion can be recognised in a country with a different environment from Germany where the Christian position is a minority. Therefore, it is the task of the public theologian to prepare an alternative for this more convincing argument. The other is that abuse of church tradition or theology should be avoided when the church is actively engaged in the public domain.

How can the church participate in a public sphere that does not share the tradition of the church? To this end, Bedford-Strohm emphasises the need for the church to translate the church tradition into the language of the world. This is the second characteristic of public theology, namely bilingual ability. While the first feature emphasises the ‘theology’ aspect of public theology, this feature emphasises the ‘public’ aspect. Bedford-Strohm claims that theology should have an influence everywhere, on the basis that there is no place to be alienated from the reign of God, since all the world belongs to one God, the Creator. Therefore, the important content of church tradition needs to

be translated into a language that can be understood by the members of a pluralistic society. In fact, there is strong criticism of confessional churches claiming that the primary task of the church is not to provide guidance to the public sphere but to become a church with a Christian personality. However, the critics too underestimate the power of the gospel as a public truth. In this sense, Stackhouse's critique is very appropriate. We should, however, consider the criticism of confessional churches and bear in mind the possibility that Christianity is too immersed in the work of translation and loses its original content.

In order for the tradition of the church to be translated into a language understood by the world, it is necessary to use knowledge from other disciplines. Bedford-Strohm cautiously combined theology with other scholarly disciplines to make his claims credible. He considers conversations with other religions as important as interdisciplinary studies. In the multireligious society, dialogue among religions is very necessary for people to live together peacefully regardless of what their religion is. Among four theological concepts for interreligious dialogue in the light of the Christian faith, Bedford-Strohm argues that the 'Trinitarian inclusivism concept' is appropriate for public theology.

Furthermore, he argues that public theology should have the competency to provide political direction. He believes that this characteristic belongs to the mission of the church and the thrust of the gospel. Of course, other theological approaches emphasise this function, but in public theology, this feature is distinguished by its methodology. Bedford-Strohm's assertion that the church focuses on setting up a round table for discussion with the people involved in finding a policy that benefits everyone should be noted.

When the church is to contribute to such policies, the church must be a prophetic voice for justice. The church must provide prophetic counsel to the government or power for human dignity, especially in the interest of the marginalised, the poor and the oppressed. Bedford-Strohm presents the notion of 'reciprocity', which is an element of Christian ethics for fulfilling the church's prophetic role in the world. Reciprocity is in line with the Golden Rule in the New Testament.

Finally, Bedford-Strohm argues that public theology has an intercontextual nature. In fact, each public theology is very contextual because it has a unique methodology that is appropriate for the circumstance of the specific region. At the same time, however, each of the public theologies is interrelated and mutually dependent on the public theology of the other region. As globalisation accelerated due to the development of science and technology, public theology also required an international network. Thus, public theology can develop further while maintaining a balance between contextuality and intercontextuality.

Of course, I do not claim here that Bedford-Strohm's definition is the only way that properly describes public theology. As we have seen in the previous chapter, various valuable descriptions of public theology have already been made by many scholars. In addition, I acknowledge that not all public theologians will agree with his argument or characteristics. As we have seen in each section in this chapter, there are various reasonable criticisms of Bedford-Strohm's argument and the debate on it is still ongoing. Nonetheless, the six characteristics of public theology presented by Bedford-Strohm are crucial for my project in two ways: First, although each public theology has essential characteristics that cannot be integrated into one, most of the features that various public theologians have used in describing public theology can be included in these six characteristics. When we consider these features one by one, it can be the subject of serious criticism and sometimes public theology may not be distinguished from similar approaches such as liberation theology, political theology, and civil religion because there are also one or more intersections between public theology and the others. However, Bedford-Strohm did not expect when he put forward these characteristics that people would consider them separately. With a comprehensive consideration of these characteristics, public theology can be more clearly distinguished from other similar approaches. Second, the public theological approach could be considered as a quite attractive methodology for the Korean context. In other words, considering the recent issues of Korean churches, the public theology characterised by Bedford-Strohm seems to be very necessary. For example, as to the claim that is prevalent in Korean churches that the church should engage only in matters of individual salvation and faith, public theology with its six characteristics can show why the Christian truth should be communicated to people outside the church and how to use the language of the world to do so. Against the claim at the other extreme of

pursuing an exclusive Christian theocratic state and that the church should govern the state, the characteristics of public theology suggest to what extent the church should be involved in making policy. It is explicitly different from the way that political theology or liberation theology pursues. In opposition to the claim that one can dislike other religions and refuse to coexist, public theology that aims at interreligious dialogue for nonviolent and peaceful coexistence points out that it is a misguided thought. The criticism that the Korean churches are too capitalistic is derived from the churches' excessive desire to become a mega-church and their excessive indifference to the poor. Public theology, which pursues prophetic speaking, and thus emphasises a preferential option for the poor, presents a way to avoid such criticism. Perhaps Korea is also in the midst of globalisation. Therefore, discussions taking place all over the world about religion are often affecting Korea. By accepting the public theological features of contextuality and intercontextuality, the Korean churches will be able to turn from their somewhat insular attitude and thus look back on themselves through external stimulus and even contribute to global Christianity.

However, despite its significance, the question of where to derive the theological grounds of public theology, is of great importance to the prospective recipients. Since the major denominations in the Korean church follow a form of Calvinism and trust Calvin's theology very much, I deliberately aimed to create some links and coherences between this approach to public theology and aspects of Calvin's thought. However, I do not assume that viewing Calvin as a public theologian is the only right way to read or understand him. One can evaluate Calvin as a political theologian of sorts, and one may even view him as a liberation theologian of sorts. Therefore, I would be satisfied with showing that, in some sense at least, one could claim that Calvin was a type of public theologian in his time and that his work had public theological characteristics and value in relation to what Bedford-Strohm characterised as contemporary public theologies.

In the chapter that follows, I will examine John Calvin's life and work through the lens of Bedford-Strohm's characteristics of public theology.

## **CHAPTER 4**

# **Re-evaluating John Calvin's works and his role in the context of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Geneva through the hermeneutic lens of Heinrich Bedford-Strohm's characteristics of public theology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In the context of the Korean Reformed theologies' suspicions of public theology, the purpose of this study was to show that public theology holds some value for Korea today, and that the public theological approach is credible. With this aim, in Chapter 2, I delineated how public theology had emerged and developed, what theological, philosophical and social backgrounds had influenced the development of public theology, which methodologies had been presented and used by various public theologian and how public theology differed from other similar theological approaches. Through this work, I sought to provide an understanding of the nature of public theology and briefly argued that this background was relatable to the circumstances in Korea and that therefore public theological discourses were applicable to the Korean context. A more detailed discussion of the Korean context and the differences between the backgrounds of countries in which public theological discussions are of importance, and those of Korea, will be presented in Chapter 5.

However, it was not enough to explicitly explain why public theology was relevant to the Korean Reformed theologies. A more concrete example was needed. Therefore, in Chapter 3, I explored the six characteristics of public theology presented by Bedford-Strohm in order to provide deeper understanding of public theology and to discover and demonstrate the public theological dimension of Calvin, whom they trust. Bedford-Strohm's contribution includes most of the characteristics that various public theologians have proffered and shows that public theological approaches can be successfully applied in the Korean context.

In general, while Luther is regarded as a pioneer of the Reformation in which he has demonstrated evangelical doctrine in an existential and pragmatic manner, Calvin is regarded as a person who was consciously and firmly committed to associating evangelical theology with the structure and conflicts of church and society.<sup>385</sup> Based on his thought, a great theological movement called ‘Calvinism’ was formed and this tradition arrived in Korea via Europe and America. The Presbyterian Church, which adheres to Calvinism, forms the mainstream of Korean Christianity; thus, Calvin occupies a very important position in the seminaries of the denomination. In fact, Calvin was chosen as a model for this project not only because of his tremendous influence in the Korean Reformed theologies but also because the current situation in Korea is considered to show some semblances of coherence to that of Calvin’s time and therefore thoughtful Christians are calling for a second Reformation. This demand appeared particularly in the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Therefore, if the public theological elements are identifiable in Calvin’s thought, the Korean Reformed theologies may be willing to engage public theological approaches for the Korean context. Moreover, as De Gruchy asserts, a tradition that is lethargic needs to be restored:

While a tradition can wither and die – or worse, become an albatross around our necks – it can also be retrieved as a source of empowerment in the present, providing the symbols not only for its own revitalization and renewal, but for society at large.<sup>386</sup>

In addition, he states the following:

Symbols that have been misappropriated or lost their potency in the course of history will only regain their transforming power as they are critically examined, redeemed from their ideological captivities, and employed by Christian communities engaged in obedient service in the world.<sup>387</sup>

Therefore, in this chapter, I will re-evaluate Calvin’s work and his role in the context of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Geneva through the lens of Bedford-Strohm’s characteristics of public theology. For this, a critical historical theological approach will be employed to show how Calvin ministered and what his public role was in Geneva. A study of his writings will also be presented to analyse and summarise his thoughts in relation to the six

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<sup>385</sup> Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology*, 2.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 39–40.

characteristics of public theology.<sup>388</sup> In addition, Mario Turchetti argues that Calvin's theological, political thought in the 16<sup>th</sup> century can be examined by both synchronic and diachronic analysis. Synchronic analysis can "let Calvin express himself in his own words and not through the prism of our preferences or commentaries", whereas diachronic analysis allows us to interpret Calvin from the contemporary viewpoint.<sup>389</sup> Thus, I will employ the synchronic analysis method for understanding Calvin's original idea, and at the same time, the diachronic analysis method will be utilised to connect his thought with contemporary issues. In each section, I will first examine Calvin's theological theories and then show how his theological ideas were actually realised.

However, the scepticism about linking a character from over 500 years ago with contemporary discourses should be taken seriously. Thus, we shall consider how other scholars have undertaken similar projects in relation to historical figures such as Barth, Wesley, Luther and Abraham Kuyper. A careful hermeneutic engagement is required. At the same time, it should also be noted that while there are some cases in which theological terms, doctrines or methods are first defined and then practised, in many cases, certain phenomena occur first and thereafter many of these phenomena are defined theoretically (i.e., theology often emerges out of a process of reflection upon decisions, choices, and actions). Although the terms and specific approaches of public theology are becoming more detailed and diverse in contemporary scholarship, it is reasonable to assume that the phenomenon could already be identified earlier in church history. It is, therefore, not probable to conclude that public theological approaches of sorts were never utilised the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Rather, it is more meaningful to compare how theologians responded to various social problems between this age and those times since the role of Christianity in the Reformation can be related, carefully, and meaningfully, to how faith and public life interact today. De Gruchy states the following:

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<sup>388</sup> Among the primary sources, the *Institutes*, sermons, and commentaries will be mainly used. And among the secondary sources, *The Calvin Handbook* that is authoritative to Korean Reformed theologians will be cited mainly. For more details on Calvin's biography, see Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>389</sup> Mario Turchetti, "The Contribution of Calvin and Calvinism to the Birth of Modern Democracy," in *John Calvin's Impact on Church and Society, 1509-2009*, ed. Martin Ernst Hirzel and Martin Sallmann (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 194.

The Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century was an integral part of a monumental upheaval in the social, cultural, and spiritual life of Western Europe. Generated by a new experience and understanding of the gospel, it was also a product of diverse social, political, and economic forces. Focused on the renewal of the church and the salvation of the individual, it made a decisive contribution to the transformation of society.<sup>390</sup>

When evaluating the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Reformation in terms of public theology, Dreyer argues that many theologians of that age can be seen as the types of public theologians of whom we speak of today.<sup>391</sup> Bedford-Strohm also states that “learning from the past means winning the future”.<sup>392</sup> We need to revive the disappearing Christian tradition so that we can have lasting dialogue between ourselves and those who have gone before us. As long as we are united in the fellowship of the saints, including the living and the dead, the dead are not dead and therefore our conversation cannot be limited to those who now live.<sup>393</sup>

However, I emphasise here that I do not argue that the only way to read Calvin and his work is as public theology. Rather, I am aiming to show that given the characteristics presented by Bedford-Strohm, one could reasonably conclude that in some sense at least Calvin could be considered to be engaged in what Bedford-Strohm would call a public theology. In this way, I will suggest that a public theological reading of Calvin is credible among many other possible readings.

## 4.2 Calvin’s Bible-centred and tradition-based theology

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Bedford-Strohm emphasises that the church must differ from the many ‘political interest groups’ in the political realm, which are not based on biblical-theological sources. In other words, public theology must be based on Scripture and tradition. It is therefore the purpose of this section to show that Calvin

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<sup>390</sup> Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology*, 2.

<sup>391</sup> Dreyer, “John Calvin as ‘public Theologian’ in View of His ‘Commentary on Seneca’s de Clementia,’” 1.

<sup>392</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, “Community and Modern Society,” in *Liberation Theology for a Democratic Society: Essays in Public Theology*, ed. Michael Mädlar and Andrea Wagner-Pinggera (Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2018), 63.

<sup>393</sup> Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 165.

gained the impetus for social reform in the 16<sup>th</sup> century from Scripture and tradition. Therefore, I will look at the concept of *sola Scriptura* that permeates his theology and then at the ways and for what purpose he used the materials in the Christian tradition. Finally, I will examine how his theological stance applied to the society of Geneva.

Stephen Nichols asserts that even before the Reformation, there were various attempts to reform the church but they were not successful because the focus of the reform was on the specific phenomenon itself: the dominion of the Pope and the lackluster spirituality that was prevalent. Such a movement could point out the problem, but it could not solve the problem. However, unlike these earlier movements, the Reformation achieved great success because the Reformation had its focus on the core of the matter: right theology.<sup>394</sup> Among the Reformers, if anyone showed this focus best, it was Calvin. Especially in his ministry, he always did everything according to Scripture and tradition. The importance of Scripture to Calvin is found in his letter to Sadoleto. He wrote that because the Lord knew in advance how dangerous it would be to speak of the Spirit without regard to Scripture, he tied the guidance of the Holy Spirit to Scripture to prevent people from believing it to be ambiguous and uncertain.<sup>395</sup> In addition, in his theology, he regarded not only Scripture but also the Christian tradition as a very important source. This tradition, of course, is the tradition consistent with Scripture. He cited the writings of fathers who had authority even in the Roman Catholic Church in many of his writings in order to urge Protestants not to be entirely new but to be rooted in Scripture and the church tradition. According to Irena Backus, Calvin was fully aware of the importance of tradition and his work showed that he was especially conscious of the importance of the church in the fourth to sixth centuries for many theological issues.<sup>396</sup>

Calvin held onto the tradition of the church in order to renew it with the purpose of speaking to the faithful in the present and providing a foundation for the future of the church. Calvin often used traditional elements to renew theology and to edify the church. This was his practice when he commented on Scripture, his attitude when he wrote the

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<sup>394</sup> Stephen J. Nichols, *The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2007), 21.

<sup>395</sup> CO 5, 392-393.

<sup>396</sup> Irena Backus, "Calvin and the Church Fathers," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 126.

thesis and his procedure when he wrote the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. In all of these, Calvin used doctrines and traditional elements to renew biblical religion.<sup>397</sup>

#### 4.2.1 Sola Scriptura

The principle of *sola Scriptura* is one of the slogans used by the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformers, and Calvin was one of them. He left a will at the last minute of his life and, among other things, called himself “a servant of the word of God in the Geneva church”.<sup>398</sup> In addition, in the introduction to the Olivetan Bible, Calvin praised the Bible in colourful language. It is a “testimony of his good will” and the “school of wisdom”.<sup>399</sup> He was a faithful interpreter and a theologian of the Bible who tried to build all his theology on the principle of *sola Scriptura*.

According to Calvin, an awareness of divinity was originally revealed in the human mind<sup>400</sup> but was polluted by the ignorance and malice of humanity.<sup>401</sup> Even though “upon his individual works he has engraved unmistakable marks of his glory,” humans do not benefit from it because of superstition and confusion.<sup>402</sup> In the end, humans needed something else to see God’s revelation. God thus gave Scripture to humanity. Calvin likens Scripture to glasses:

Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> R. Ward Holder, “Tradition and Renewal,” in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 385.

<sup>398</sup> Wulfert de Greef, “Calvin’s Understanding and Interpretation of the Bible,” in *John Calvin’s Impact on Church and Society, 1509-2009*, ed. Martin Ernst Hirzel and Martin Sallmann (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 67.

<sup>399</sup> CO 9, 823.

<sup>400</sup> Inst. I.3.1.

<sup>401</sup> Inst. I.4.4.

<sup>402</sup> Inst. I.5.

<sup>403</sup> Inst. I.6.1.

Without Scripture, even the ‘sense of divinity’ would deviate from the ‘right path’ and fall into idolatry.<sup>404</sup> Calvin’s view of Scripture contrasts with that of the Roman Catholics of his time. He opposes the claim that

Inasmuch as the church is governed by the Spirit of God, it can proceed safely without the Word; no matter where it may go, it can think or speak only what is true; accordingly, if it should ordain anything beyond or apart from God’s Word, this must be taken as nothing but a sure oracle of God.<sup>405</sup>

Rather, he claims that “we insist that it be attached to the Word, and do not allow it to be separated from it.”<sup>406</sup>

Furthermore, Calvin strengthens the authority of Scripture by proving its classic excellence, emphasising that Scripture is superior to all human wisdom:

What wonderful confirmation ensues when, with keener study, we ponder the economy of the divine wisdom, so well ordered and disposed; the completely heavenly character of its doctrine, savoring of nothing earthly; the beautiful agreement of all the parts with one another – as well as such other qualities as can gain majesty for the writings.<sup>407</sup>

He also compares Scripture with the classics studied by the humanists at that time, emphasising that Scripture is superior to the classics:

Now this power which is peculiar to Scripture is clear from the fact that of human writings, however artfully polished, there is none capable of affecting us at all comparably. Read Demosthenes or Cicero; read Plato, Aristotle, and others of that tribe. They will, I admit, allure you, delight you, move you, enrapture you in wonderful measure. But betake yourself from them to this sacred reading. Then, in spite of yourself, so deeply will it affect you, so penetrate your heart, so fix itself in your very marrow, that compared with its deep impression, such vigor as the orators and philosophers have will nearly vanish. Consequently, it is easy to see that the Sacred Scriptures, which so far surpass all gifts and graces of human endeavor, breathe something divine.<sup>408</sup>

The excellence of Scripture can also be found in rhetoric. “Indeed, I admit that some of the prophets had an elegant and clear, even brilliant, manner of speaking, so that their eloquence yields nothing to secular writers.”<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> Inst. I.6.14.

<sup>405</sup> Inst. IV.8.13.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid.

<sup>407</sup> Inst. I.8.1.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid.

<sup>409</sup> Inst. I.8.2.

Calvin's emphasis on the significance of Scripture is found very often in all his other writings as well. His theological foundation in the Bible and his emphasis on doctrine as proclamation of the Bible underscore his 'Word-of-God theology'.<sup>410</sup> Nevertheless, he should not be regarded as one who exclusively acknowledged Scripture but ignored the classics. As he unfolded his argument, how important he considered the classics, though not as much as Scripture, was shown in his frequent quotes of the classics.

#### 4.2.2 Patristic quotations in Calvin's works

Although he focused on *sola Scriptura*, he accepted tradition without any hesitation if he thought that it was consistent with the Bible. According to Alister McGrath, the Reformers emphasised the works of the church fathers, especially Augustine, for they regarded the fathers as interpreters of biblical theology. The Reformers thought that the fathers had attempted to form only a Bible-based theology, which exactly matched what they were trying to do in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>411</sup> Calvin also expressed his views on the role of the classics and the proper use of the fathers. He made it clear that if he ever gave authority to the fathers, it was the result of their faithfulness to the Bible.<sup>412</sup> In other words, when he recognised the authority of the Christian classics, it was not because the foundations of the Reformation were consistent with the classics but because the classics were consistent with God's eternal truths.<sup>413</sup>

In his treatises, Calvin used both traditional materials and traditional doctrines. In addition, he devoted himself to writing treatises to demonstrate that the doctrine proposed by himself and other Reformers was not a wild innovation but a solid teaching of the church as revealed in the teachings of the most sober fathers.<sup>414</sup> For this, he deliberately referred to collections of authorities, especially patristic authorities, to

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<sup>410</sup> Victor E. D'Assonville, "Esegesis and Doctrina," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 380.

<sup>411</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 145.

<sup>412</sup> CO 12, 18.

<sup>413</sup> William Newton Todd, *The Function of the Patristic Writings in the Thought of John Calvin* (New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1964), 149–50.

<sup>414</sup> Holder, "Tradition and Renewal," 388.

show those who opposed his theology that the one who valued those theological traditions was him, not them.<sup>415</sup> In the Prefatory Address to King Francis I of France, Calvin protests as follows:

Despite this, they do not cease to assail our doctrine and to reproach and defame it with names that render it hated or suspect. They all it “new” and “of recent birth.” They reproach it as “doubtful and uncertain.” ... Moreover, they unjustly set the ancient fathers against us (I mean the ancient writers of a better age of the church) as if in them they had supporters of their own impiety. If the contest were to be determined by patristic authority, the tide of victory – to put it very modestly – would turn to our side.<sup>416</sup>

R Ward Holder also points out how much Calvin valued tradition:

Among the treatises, Calvin turned to the tradition the most frequently in his *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii adversus calumnias Alberti Pighii Campensis*. Calvin used at least seven patristic volumes, and that number might go as high as ten. It was certainly in Calvin’s polemical interest to be able to use the church’s tradition.<sup>417</sup>

In his *Institutes*, Calvin tended to use the fathers in two ways. The first was to reinforce his own points. Calvin thus relied on Cyprian for church discipline, and often on Augustine for issues of election. Second, Calvin wrote that the fathers spoke very well about certain points, using their rhetoric to express his own opinions in an elegant yet profoundly simple way.<sup>418</sup>

However, although Calvin pointed out that it was important to refer to the church’s exegetical tradition, he remained free to criticise the fathers as they went astray. This was evident in his criticism of his favourite father, Augustine.<sup>419</sup> With respect to commentary, Calvin criticised Augustine’s way of handling texts too allegorically and his excessively Platonic attitude when interpreting syntax.<sup>420</sup> However, “Calvin did not set out to destroy the patristic and medieval tradition of biblical commenting, but to purify it. That was his own ideal.”<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> Backus, “Calvin and the Church Fathers,” 128.

<sup>416</sup> Inst. Prefatory Address, 3-4.

<sup>417</sup> Holder, “Tradition and Renewal,” 389.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid., 385–86.

<sup>420</sup> CO 9,835.

<sup>421</sup> Holder, “Tradition and Renewal,” 387.

### 4.2.3 Calvin's theological application to society: Genevan Marriage Ordinance

As stated above, in the development of his theology, regarding Scripture as the first principle and at the same time considering the classics as very significant sources, he emphasised that all discussions in life should be guided by these two sources. This was in line with the biblical-theological profile of public theology of Bedford-Strohm. This belief of Calvin was shown clearly when he reformed Geneva, especially when he tried to realise the reform of the institution of marriage.

In Geneva, the Ecclesiastical Ordinances that defined the church and the religious life in fact became part of temporal justice. In addition, Calvin played a crucial role in enacting secular law. A good example of this is his design of the Genevan marriage laws for the Council of Geneva, which had repeatedly asked Calvin for legal advice.<sup>422</sup>

Marriage is basically a private institution that is established, maintained and extinguished upon agreement between the two parties, but at the same time it is a public institution in that family, society and the state are involved. Harvard historian Steve Ozment emphasises the change of the institution of marriage as an important aspect of the Reformation, arguing that the reform of the institution of marriage led to the most prominent forces for social change among the reforms with which the Reformation affected Western intellectual history.<sup>423</sup>

At the time of the Reformation, the Medieval Roman Catholic Church not only acknowledged the natural and contractual nature of marriage but also emphasised that it was fundamentally a sacrament. According to medieval canon law, marriage was a symbol of eternal union between Christ and the church and was a means of sanctifying

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<sup>422</sup> Christoph Strohm, "The Law and Canon Law," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 404.

<sup>423</sup> See Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform, 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

grace not only to the parties to the marriage but also to the church community and thus the institution of marriage had to be subordinated to the spiritual law of the church.<sup>424</sup>

The Reformers believed that the Roman Catholic theology of marriage, which defined marriage as a sacrament, distorted the teachings of the Bible and went on to argue that the Roman Church's exercise of full jurisdiction over marriage matters violated the authority of secular government. In particular, Luther criticised the heinous effects of the Roman Catholic domination over marriage and sex.<sup>425</sup> He insisted that the legal jurisdiction over marriage matters should be left entirely to the secular government and that pastors should minimise religious involvement in this matter. One of the reasons was that matters of marriage and sex were so complex that the pastors would be interfered by it.<sup>426</sup> As marriage became a private contract and not a sacrament anymore, the enactment of marriage law and the administration of the institution of marriage were left to professional lawyers and administrators. One can criticise Luther's Reformation for giving the initiative of social and public marriage to the secular government.

However, Genevan marriage reform, led by Calvin, went one step further and could be divided into two phases. The first phase was the period in which legal provisions and institutional arrangements were established for the reform of marriage, from 1536 when the first edition of the *Institutes* was published until 1546 when the Genevan Marriage Ordinance was enacted. The second phase was the period from the 1550s to Calvin's later years when his pastoral and political influence peaked in Geneva and during which he established his covenantal thinking of marriage.<sup>427</sup>

Calvin argued that marriage was instituted by God but was not a sacrament.<sup>428</sup> "Marriage is a good and holy ordinance of God; and farming, building, cobbling, and barbering are lawful ordinances of God, and yet are not sacraments" because "it is required that a sacrament be not only a work of God but an outward ceremony appointed

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<sup>424</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 51.

<sup>425</sup> See Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 3–24.

<sup>426</sup> Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, no. 748.

<sup>427</sup> See Witte Jr. John, *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997).

<sup>428</sup> He deals with marriage as he argues against the false sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church, which emerged from the first edition of the *Institutes*.

by God to confirm a promise”. Marriage does not have such a character.<sup>429</sup> However, Calvin made it clear that marriage was a ‘divine institution’. By emphasising the fact that God was the Author of marriage, he sought to overcome the limitations of the claim that marriage was merely an individual contract and reaffirmed the sanctity of marriage.<sup>430</sup> Through covenantal thought, he sought to restore the spiritual and public values of marriage. In his analysis of Malachi 2:14-16, Calvin used the covenant doctrine to describe the horizontal relationship between husband and wife as well as the vertical relationship between God and humanity. In other words, Calvin argued that just as God led the elect believers into a covenant relationship with him, so did a husband and wife enter into a covenant relationship with each other.<sup>431</sup>

As we have seen, Calvin did not exclusively place marriage matters under the church’s authority, as in the Roman Catholic Church, nor did he yield completely to the responsibilities of secular government, like Luther. He harmonised the religious, public and personal dimensions of the matter of marriage, and his covenantal thought was at the centre of the debate. This shows that his thinking was always based on Scripture even when he considered the ordinary matters of life.

Calvin’s Reformation was a process of theological criticism, re-evaluation and reinterpretation of the previous norms of life. In the process of criticising and reforming existing laws and institutions, he had to provide evidence derived from Scripture and church tradition. He thus held Scripture as the main source of his theology and always returned to it to solve the problems of his time. Public theology, which deals with contemporary anxieties, also must eventually find its evidence in Scripture and rely on it; it is therefore very useful to take note of Calvin’s view of Scripture and church tradition. Furthermore, in relation to the Korean context, public theology tends to be considered as a suspicious theological method because it often overlooks or weakens the importance of Scripture and church tradition. Therefore, this characteristic of public

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<sup>429</sup> Inst. IV.19.34.

<sup>430</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, 1:27-28.

<sup>431</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Prophet Malachi*, 2:14-16.

theology should be specially emphasized for the active discussion of public theology in Korea.

### **4.3 Calvin and the language of the world**

It is almost impossible to prove clearly, whether Calvin in his day had a concept of the relationship between church and wider society in the way that public theology has today. In his time, society was not pluralistic and globalised as it is today; thus, the problems raised by these factors would not have been as serious as they are today. Rather, Calvin was a man of an age when the boundary between church and society was unclear, perhaps when faith strongly ruled everyday life. Moreover, it was not a time when the language of the church was clearly distinguished from the language of secular society. Nevertheless, he attempted to distinguish between church and society and to establish a theological basis for the relationship between the two.

If we attempt to look for the characteristic of bilingual ability of public theology within Calvin's thought formed in an era with a very different background from today's society, we should explore how he established the relationship between theology and knowledge of the world and how he used knowledge of the world in his theological arguments. Through this work, Reformed theology can set limits with regard to what extent the translation of theology into the language of the world is allowed.

In this section, therefore, I will first look at the concept of 'divine accommodation' that Calvin used to describe the relationship between God and humanity, and I will then consider whether this can be applied to the relationship between church and society. His use of the knowledge of his age in describing God's creation and providence may show that he attempted to communicate with the wider society. Finally, by considering Calvin's relationship with humanism and, furthermore, the influence of humanism on his thinking, it can be proved that he did not claim that the church was disconnected from the world and that he used knowledge of the world for evangelism.

### 4.3.1 Calvin's thought regarding *accommodatio Dei*

Accommodation is the use of Latin rhetoric and jurists to adjust to the situation, structure, character, intellectual level and emotional state of the audience. Fathers such as Origen, Augustine and Chrysostom used this principle of accommodation. The method of accommodation serves as a tool to relieve the tension between everyday language and terminology in certain discourse.<sup>432</sup>

Calvin probably wrote more about divine accommodation than any Christian thinker except John Chrysostom.<sup>433</sup> Divine accommodation serves as an important element of Calvin's own thought. This is especially true of his thinking on God's relationship with humankind. According to him, the gap between God and his creation, particularly fallen humanity, is almost infinite.<sup>434</sup>

So glorious a creator whose majesty shines resplendently in the heavens, graciously condescends to adorn a creature so miserable and vile as man is with the greatest glory and to enrich him with numberless blessings.<sup>435</sup>

Against this background, Calvin's theory of accommodation means that it is possible for humanity to know God through the fact that God reveals himself in a humble way to humanity's condition:

For because our weakness does not attain to his exalted state, the description of him that is given to us must be accommodated to our capacity so that we may understand it. Now the mode of accommodation is for him to represent himself to us not as he is in himself, but as he seems to us.<sup>436</sup>

He emphasises this again with the parable of the shepherd and the sheep:

These words describe God's wonderful condescension, for not only is he led by a general feeling of love for his whole flock, but, in proportion to the weakness of any one sheep, he shows his carefulness in watching, his gentleness in handling, and his patience in leading it. Here he leaves out nothing that belongs to the office of a good shepherd. For the shepherd ought to observe each of his sheep, in order that he may treat it according

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<sup>432</sup> Ung-Kyu Pak, "The Political Activism of Korean Churches Revisited: With Particular Attention to the Church and State Issue," *Presbyterian and Theology* 5 (2008): 202.

<sup>433</sup> Jon Balsarak, "Accommodatio Dei," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 372.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.

<sup>435</sup> CO 31,91.

<sup>436</sup> Inst. I.17.13.

to its capacity; and especially they ought to be supported, if they are exceedingly weak. In a word, God will be mild, kind, gentle, and compassionate, so that he will not drive the weak harder than they are able to bear.<sup>437</sup>

Moreover, when God lays down the law and issues the commandments, we see that he proclaims in a way that people can understand.<sup>438</sup>

God accommodated himself to the capacity of the prophet since we are mortals, thus we cannot penetrate beyond the sky.<sup>439</sup> According to Calvin's commentary on Genesis 1:16, Moses wrote everything in a plain style so that all ordinary people with common sense could understand without special training. Moses did not write about the unique achievements of astronomy, but this is not to prevent us from making these explorations. Because Moses was not only the teacher of the uneducated, but also the teacher of the ignorant, there was no way to accomplish his task except to teach in an overly simple way. Thus, Moses had to write his story in everyday language.<sup>440</sup>

Some scholars, such as David Willis, Ford Lewis Battles and Olivier Millet, argue that accommodation is a concept related to classical rhetoric and thus that Calvin's learning of it is the result of his strong humanist education and his familiarity with the church fathers.<sup>441</sup>

Calvin's theory of accommodation, which means that God used everyday language to help humans to understand the gospel, can be a theological basis of bilingual ability in public theology. In other words, God's expression of truth on the human side in human everyday language is in line with theology's use of the language of the world to communicate with the wider society. Looking at how Calvin applies and rejects the knowledge of the world when he deals with the creation narrative helps us to understand Calvin's theory of accommodation more clearly.

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<sup>437</sup> CO 37, 15.

<sup>438</sup> Balserak, "Accommodatio Dei," 374.

<sup>439</sup> CO 40, 40.

<sup>440</sup> CO 23, 22.

<sup>441</sup> Balserak, "Accommodatio Dei," 377.

### 4.3.2 Calvin's use of secular knowledge in his theology of creation and providence

In the Middle Ages, numerous treatises on natural philosophy and the structure of the universe were produced. Medieval writers explored this subject by combining useful scientific sources with the 'hexaemeral' passages of Genesis. Calvin was conversant with the general principles of Aristotelianism and the hexaemeral tradition. Calvin also frequently cited Ambrose and Basil, and recommended Basil as a model for explaining the "history of the creation of the universe". Of course, even though Calvin stood in the tradition of intimate connection between cosmology and theology, he did not view Scripture as an authority on the matters of natural philosophy. For him, the biblical explanation of cosmology and the functioning of nature is contained in his hermeneutical principles of 'accommodation.'<sup>442</sup> Thus, when he commented on Genesis, he insisted that we should not attempt to learn astronomy or advanced skills from Genesis but should be wary of treating the Bible as a science book.<sup>443</sup>

Calvin both accepted and rejected some of the many traditional elements of the universe propounded by late medieval Aristotelianism.<sup>444</sup> He strongly denied the concept of Prime Mover, which was proposed by Aristotle, saying in the *Institutes* that "it would be senseless to interpret the words of the prophet after the manner of the philosophers, that God is the first agent because he is the beginning and cause of all motion".<sup>445</sup> Calvin opposed Epicurus' theory that the entire universe, including the Earth, was created by random collisions of atoms. He said, "The world is not eternal and has also not emanated coincidentally from particles."<sup>446</sup>

However, it does not mean that he always denied that it was God's will to enlighten all with knowledge through Gentile authors.<sup>447</sup> In Calvin's commentary on Genesis 1:16, he stressed that the work of astronomers who deliberately explored what only a

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<sup>442</sup> Susan E. Schreiner, "Creation and Providence," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 268.

<sup>443</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, 1:6.

<sup>444</sup> Schreiner, "Creation and Providence," 269–70.

<sup>445</sup> Inst. I.16.3.

<sup>446</sup> CO 32, 435.

<sup>447</sup> CO 32, 95.

knowledgeable person could understand should not be regarded as abandoned by God and that this science should not be condemned. Furthermore, he argued that astronomy was not only pleasant but very informative and that we could not deny that it revealed God's wonderful wisdom.<sup>448</sup> Rather, he claims that astronomy is the first step in theology because a person of right mind must be admired by the manifestation of the wisdom of God and his power and goodness. According to Calvin, the Chaldeans and Egyptians learned astronomy, which greatly contributed to the stimulation of the human heart towards the fear of God, and Moses and Daniel also did.<sup>449</sup>

Calvin actively asserted the manifestation of God's glory, power and wisdom in creation and in nature. Creation is presented as the first revelation, that is, as the source of revelation. Calvin described God as Creator and Liberator. He then argued that the recognition of the Creator could easily arise in God's own work and in this world. After all, this perception could be regarded as a bridge between theology and science because he compared this world of God's creation with the Bible.<sup>450</sup>

Calvin's commentary on Genesis shows that he was aware of the dangers of literal interpretation of the creation narrative because the creation narrative was aimed at the ordinary people of that time. This fact provides a good insight into fundamentalist attitudes that insist only on the literal interpretation of the Bible today. In contrast, Calvin argued that it was beneficial to gain knowledge of the world and therefore he recommended diligent exploration of knowledge of the world. However, he pointed out that there was a limit to the acceptance of knowledge of the world. This helps to organise the Reformed theological view in relation to the issue of the theology of translation, which is actively debated within the field of public theology. Where did this attitude of Calvin come from? Many scholars claim that it stemmed from the relationship between Calvin and humanism.

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<sup>448</sup> CO 23, 22.

<sup>449</sup> CO 38, 59.

<sup>450</sup> Dong-Gon Jung, "Calvin's Theology and Interdisciplinary Insight Theology," *Studies in Systematic Theology* 26 (2017): 59–61.

### 4.3.3 Calvin as humanist

The definition of humanism is very diverse. McGrath argues that any discussion of the relationship between humanism and the Reformation will be entirely dependent on the definition of humanism. Furthermore, he claims that “humanism was concerned with how ideas were obtained and expressed, rather than with the actual substance of those idea”.<sup>451</sup> In his biography of Calvin, he confines the definition of humanism to its formal aspect and views Calvin as a ‘humanist thinker and practical lawyer’.<sup>452</sup> At present, most Calvin researchers agree that the North European humanists at the time of Calvin’s activity were biased towards the ‘*belles lettres* of antiquity’ and that they hoped to resolve the unhappy situation of the day from it.<sup>453</sup>

When Calvin was exposed to humanism, it had already become firmly entrenched in France. According to William Bouwsma, humanism is not merely marginal or auxiliary to Calvin’s contribution, as has been generally thought but is rather central to Calvin’s thought.<sup>454</sup> For example, in his first edition of the *Institutes*, when discussing the issue of the power of the human soul, Calvin quoted extensively not only from the church fathers but also from ancient philosophers, especially Plato, Aristotle, Temistius and Cicero.<sup>455</sup> His understanding of biblical interpretations, acceptance of certain Christian philosophies, in-depth study of ancient church theologians, evaluation and recognition of pagan classical writers and moral emphasis on the believer’s life were influences from humanism.<sup>456</sup> According to Breen, Calvin had a respect for the classics and a favourable attitude towards humanism, both before and after his conversion.<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 45.

<sup>452</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 59.

<sup>453</sup> Christoph Burger, “Calvin and the Humanists,” in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 139.

<sup>454</sup> See William James Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>455</sup> François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 124.

<sup>456</sup> Ford Lewis Battles, “The Sources of Calvin’s Seneca Commentary,” in *John Calvin: A Collection of Essays* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 57.

<sup>457</sup> Quirinus Breen, “John Calvin and the Rhetorical Tradition,” *Church History* 26, no. 1 (1957): 3–21.

Calvin's return to the Bible and the fathers as the source of his theology and his ability to create excellent argumentative and dialectical works in a rhetorical way were influenced by the humanistic principle of *ad fontes* (to the sources). For example, in his commentary on the Bible, Calvin used the historical-grammatical criticism that Renaissance humanists often used as a textual critique, especially the criticism and argumentation of Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus.<sup>458</sup> In this way, in his theological work, Calvin interacted closely with the cultural tide and intellectual circumstances of his time as well as with contemporary theology. However, he was not overly immersed in it but rather excelled in integrating it into his theological work by creatively using the best intellectual tools available in his time.<sup>459</sup>

He already proved his philosophical abilities in his commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia*<sup>460</sup> in his early years. In this work, with vast numbers of quotations of Greek and Latin philosophers, he tried to clarify that the Stoic School was similar to Christianity in terms of divine providence. This shows humanism's influence on him.<sup>461</sup> Furthermore, Calvin executed an exegesis of the text by all the rules of philology and rhetoric. This clearly shows how much Calvin was influenced by Erasmus and the early French humanists in his treatment of texts. Calvin followed the same pattern later when annotating biblical texts from a philological and rhetorical perspective.<sup>462</sup> Joseph Haroutunian also agrees with this perspective, saying that Calvin's so-called literalism was directly linked to the hopes of Renaissance scholars who wanted to find the original meaning of the text. Calvin argued that the original meaning of a text should take precedence over the complementary meaning or the meaning reached by the parable. He accused the fathers, especially Augustine, Chrysostom, and Jerome, of treating the text too vaguely and interpreting it figuratively. With respect to Augustine in particular,

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<sup>458</sup> Wendel, *Calvin*, 130.

<sup>459</sup> Eun-Soo Kim, "The Characteristics of John Calvin's Theology and the Tasks of Reformed Theology," *Korea Reformed Theology* 29 (2011): 37.

<sup>460</sup> Through this work, insisting that the monarch's virtue is tolerance, Calvin persuaded King Francis I to stop persecuting Protestants and rather to exercise religious tolerance.

<sup>461</sup> Wulfert Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 65–67.

<sup>462</sup> Peter Opitz, "Scripture," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 243.

Calvin evaluated his textual interpretation as being far from the author's original intention, though it was splendid.<sup>463</sup>

In addition, the Genevan Academy, founded by Calvin to nurture the leaders of the church and Geneva city, also showed how much Calvin valued humanism for the purpose of teaching evangelism. The Genevan Academy was primarily an institution for teaching Latin, Greek, Hebrew and thoroughly educated rhetoric. Thus, we can see that Calvin put great importance on humanistic training in theological study. For Calvin, academia, humanist knowledge and the Bible, the root of faith, were not in conflict. Rather, he thought that Christians could thoroughly study other disciplines to better reveal the truth of God and that academia and theology could be harmonised.

Calvin's education in humanism in school led him to maintain a consistent appreciation for humanism throughout his life. Because of this, he was very interested in other disciplines and he incorporated the knowledge gained from other disciplines into the interpretation and application of Scripture. This can be seen in his ample use of humanistic literacy in theological debates and in the rich use of the fathers and ancient texts in many of his works. From this attitude of Calvin, we can learn to respect general scholarship. Furthermore, we can realise that other disciplines can be useful for theology and evangelism.

#### 4.4 Calvin and interdisciplinary study

Calvin gained the position of doctor *ecclesiae* in Reformed Protestantism.<sup>464</sup> He was a prolific writer. The *Bibliotheca Calviniana*<sup>465</sup> identifies 329 editions for 119 titles published between 1532 and 1564. However, he wanted to be a lawyer and scholar and

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<sup>463</sup> Joseph Haroutunian, *Calvin: Commentaries* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1958), 27–29.

<sup>464</sup> Herman J. Selderhuis, "Calvin Images: Images and Self-Image," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 4.

<sup>465</sup> Rodolphe Peter and Jean François Gilmont, *Bibliotheca Calviniana: Les Oeuvres de Jean Calvin Publiées Au XVIe Siècle*. 3 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1991-2000).

tried to be a significant figure in the blossoming humanism of France's intelligentsia.<sup>466</sup> In 1528, he obtained a master's degree at the Collège de Montaigu where he had obtained the degree *baccalaureus artium* as well. He published a commentary on Seneca, a Roman philosopher and lawyer in 1532.<sup>467</sup>

Beza wrote in his church history that Calvin turned to Bible studies in Orleans and soon after that he taught many households on the subject of the kingdom of God. During Calvin's study in Orleans, there was a crucial shift in his thinking. In addition, at the University of Bourges, he studied Greek literature, which dealt with the classical writers and their ethics, under Professor Melchior Volmar, although for a short period of time. He became a humanist, and after his father's death, he moved to Paris to concentrate more on humanistic studies, not law.<sup>468</sup> It should also be noted that he studied Hebrew in Paris and that his knowledge of Hebrew was further deepened by the teachings of Sebastian Münster when he stayed in Basel.<sup>469</sup>

Johannes Sturm incorporated small schools in Strasbourg into one high school in 1538. In this school, the Reformers lectured as part of the theological education, and at the suggestion of Kopfel, Calvin taught the New Testament. Calvin was popular with the French students, which influenced the good reputation of the high school. Calvin's exegesis, which was characterised by the ideal of 'transparent brevity', did not deviate into 'common places' but had the characteristic of briefly but sufficiently describing the biblical texts.<sup>470</sup> There, the scholars respected Calvin as a French man who was known as a learned and pious journeyman.<sup>471</sup> In 1559, the Genevan Academy was established to attempt educational reform, which later developed into the Collège Calvin and the University of Geneva.<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> Nichols, *The Reformation*, 69.

<sup>467</sup> Based on this work, Christoph Strohm claims that Calvin was acquainted with Stoicism. Strohm, "The Law and Canon Law," 404.

<sup>468</sup> Wilhelm H. Neuser, "France and Basel," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 24–25.

<sup>469</sup> Burger, "Calvin and the Humanists," 140.

<sup>470</sup> Matthieu Arnold, "Strasbourg," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 38–39.

<sup>471</sup> Anton Schindling, *Humanistische Hochschule Und Freie Reichsstadt: Gymnasium u. Akad. in Strassburg 1538-1621* (Wiesbaden: FRANZ STEINER VERLAG GMBH, 1977), 350.

<sup>472</sup> W. F. Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary & His Socio-Economic Impact: John Calvin* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1971).

Calvin's experience in the universities as a young man became a tremendous asset that made him an outstanding scholar, and that is why his legal and humanistic accomplishments and rational thoughts were revealed throughout his works. He argued that secular writers could express the truth:

Whenever we come upon these matters in secular writers, let that admirable light of truth shining in them teach us that the mind of man, though fallen and perverted from its wholeness, is nevertheless clothed and ornamented with God's excellent gifts.<sup>473</sup>

He emphasised that we should thus respect other scholars and receive help from them for a broader perspective:

But if the Lord has willed that we be helped in physics, dialectic, mathematics, and other like disciplines, by the work and ministry of the ungodly, let us use this assistance. For if we neglect God's gift freely offered in these arts, we ought to suffer just punishment for our sloths.<sup>474</sup>

In this way, Calvin knew and valued the significance of general disciplines. In addition, he explained that all true learning did not belong to humanity but originated with God and especially that all wisdom and knowledge belonged to the Holy Spirit.<sup>475</sup> However, one thing to note in this section is the fact that in Calvin's era, there was not such a variety of disciplines as there are today.

Calvin's views on the natural sciences, like many of his views on other topics, have been a subject of considerable debate. Some scholars associated Calvin with opposition to the sciences by claiming to have found a clear condemnation of Copernicus in Calvin's work.<sup>476</sup> Then again, others praised Calvin for his encouragement of scientific inquiry by pointing out that science flourished in Calvinistic countries, such as the Netherlands in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>477</sup> Calvin's views on the sciences, however, has already been addressed in the previous section with regard to divine accommodation and Calvin's use of knowledge of natural science in the creation narrative. Therefore, in this section, I will look at how Calvin used his legal knowledge

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<sup>473</sup> Inst. II.2.15.

<sup>474</sup> Inst. II.2.16.

<sup>475</sup> Jung, "Calvin's Theology and Interdisciplinary Insight Theology," 62.

<sup>476</sup> Andrew Dickson White, an American historian and the first president of Cornell University, condemned Calvin as an outlier in science. See Andrew D. White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2010).

<sup>477</sup> Jon Balsarak and David F. Wright, "Science," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 448–49.

in developing his theology. Subsequently, I will consider how his theology can be related to the environmental crisis of today, based on his arguments regarding the relationship among God and humanity and other creations.

#### 4.4.1 Calvin and law

Calvin learned law in Orleans from Pierre de l'Estoile, a famous French jurist. Leaving Orleans for the University of Bourges, Calvin learned law from the passionate Italian Andrea Alciati. At these two schools, Calvin experienced a different approach by two teachers who were rivals of one another. While Alciati's method of emphasising the historical and contextual reading of the text became central to Calvin's writings, De l'Estoile's extensive knowledge of Roman law influenced Calvin to follow him in his dedication to memorising most of the Bible and the vast amount of patriarchal literature. Through his study of law, his intellect was refined to interpret the text and to formulate accurate arguments based on the humanist methodology. In addition, he had the ability to take thorough control of the subject, from marriage to property to crime. He had also been trained in making legislation, writing statutes and giving legal opinions. His most basic theological concepts, such as the Holy Spirit as a 'witness', the essence of 'justification', 'the author of the law', 'the judge' and the everlasting 'advocate' can be attributed to his study of the law.<sup>478</sup> Christoph Strohm points out how Calvin's study of law influenced his theology:

The lifelong attempt to arrive at a philological-contextual explanation of biblical texts; the weight that Calvin assigns to questions of ethics and canon law; and finally, the interest in a systemic representation of Christian teaching that took shape in the *Institutio*. Moreover, Calvin's theological profile was influenced overall by his education in the dilieu of humanist jurisprudence.<sup>479</sup>

This view is concrete in asserting the use of the law. Calvin insisted on three uses of the law: The first was theological use, which revealed God's righteousness and condemned our injustice. The second was to convince people to obey the laws of the

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<sup>478</sup> See Gordon, *Calvin*, 18–22.

<sup>479</sup> Strohm, "The Law and Canon Law," 399.

government because of fear of coercion and punishment. The third was to teach and advise the Christian to keep on doing good. Calvin saw a need for the stimulation and counsel of the law because of the laziness and self-centeredness of each Christian, though they were united with Christ through faith.<sup>480</sup> This concept of Calvin was well represented by the role of the Consistory of Geneva. Those who violated the Ten Commandments and related New Testament directives were to be warned by the Consistory, and its primary purpose was not to establish the authority of the church but to nurture the members of the church and to exhort them to imitate Christ and to live in fellowship in the freedom of true Christian sanctification under the Word of God.<sup>481</sup>

Calvin's legal knowledge was embodied even in his thinking about natural law. Calvin referred to the natural law that God had engraved in the human mind when God created it. The natural law is also called the law of conscience, and Calvin described the role of conscience as follows:

In like manner, when men have an awareness of divine judgement adjoined to them as a witness which does not let them hide their sins but arraigns them as guilty before the judgment seat – this awareness is called “conscience.” It is a certain mean between God and man, for it does not allow man to suppress within himself what he knows, but pursues him to the point of making him acknowledge his guilt.<sup>482</sup>

According to Calvin, the reason that justice and equity could be included in laws made by those who did not know God was the natural law that God had given to all.<sup>483</sup>

Calvin recognised the necessity of the laws of the state and said that it was beneficial for even Christians to be supervised by these laws before receiving the spirit of holiness. He argued that Paul's letter to Timothy explained the political function of these laws well.<sup>484</sup> Calvin was often involved in legislation. He drafted the 1541 Ecclesiastical Ordinances, the 1542 Marriage Liturgy, the 1543 Ordinance on Civil Office, the 1546

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<sup>480</sup> For the purpose of the law, see Inst. II.7.

<sup>481</sup> Dolf Britz, “Politics and Social Life,” in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 439.

<sup>482</sup> Inst. IV.10.3.

<sup>483</sup> Calvin found that ancient Greek and Roman laws, enacted by those who did not know the Bible, contained content consistent with the moral law of the Bible. He thought this was due to natural law. Eun-Sun Lee, *Study on the Theological Political Ethic of John Calvin* (Seoul: CLC, 1997), 178.

<sup>484</sup> 1 Timothy 1:9-10.

Marriage Ordinance, the 1546 Ordinance on Child Names, either alone or with other scholars, and more than 150 other amendments and new laws until his death in 1564.<sup>485</sup>

Calvin's drafting of so many bills is relevant to his major in law. He finished his study of law in the period when the new goals and methods of French humanist law were spreading widely. Humanist lawyers attempted to understand Roman law against the background of ancient classical thought. The interest of humanist law was grasping the ethical dimension of Roman law. Philosophy was regarded as the source of jurisprudence and of the law, and thus these were regarded as belonging to moral philosophy. Describing the question of right and morality, the nature of justice and the nature of the law can be regarded as typical features of humanist law and ethics when considering how to reform the study of law.<sup>486</sup>

#### 4.4.2 Calvin and ecology

Climate change is now recognised as a serious crisis. Bedford-Strohm also argues that a change of the existing perception regarding the relationship between nature and humanity is needed and that this topic is a very important agenda of public theology. Can such ecological theological elements be found in Calvin's theology? In fact, in his theology, the kind of discussion that public theology deals with today is not found. Since environmental problems had not yet emerged as a big social problem in his time, perhaps he did not find a reason to discuss this topic. For this reason, some ecological theologians argue that the crisis is due to such church tradition.<sup>487</sup> Other scholars, such as Paul Tillich, assert that the relationship between God and human beings, and humans and nature was misunderstood by the dualistic thinking after Augustine.<sup>488</sup> In this context, Calvin's thought about creation can be criticised for promoting ecological crises because he focused more on the understanding of humanity and emphasised the

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<sup>485</sup> CO 10,5-153.

<sup>486</sup> Strohm, "The Law and Canon Law," 397–98.

<sup>487</sup> Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2005); Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1203–7.

<sup>488</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 94–112.

role of humanity in his understanding of creation more. However, the critics overlook the fact that Calvin considered human responsibility for the world that God created as an important component of his theology even in times when the environmental crisis was not severe.

Young-Ho Cho published a significant and meaningful paper on this issue. According to him, human beings cannot live apart from God, and therefore human beings cannot live apart from creation. Human beings can be regarded as part of God's creation.<sup>489</sup> Calvin praised God's continued creation in the universe because creation created by God was still being governed by him.<sup>490</sup> Calvin, of course, claimed that human beings were the noblest of all creation since God had decided to create the world for human beings.<sup>491</sup> However, Calvin did not understand creation as something that could be simply used by human beings. For him, nature was not only a living space and a play space for life but also the bosom of life because God indwells the whole of creation in full. Since God created nature for God's joy and as a gift for us to enjoy, creation must first be understood as stimulating our gratitude towards God. In other words, the world of creation is not just a substance used and abused by human beings, but a gift from God for enjoyment.<sup>492</sup>

Let this be our principle: that the use of God's gifts is not wrongly directed when it is referred to that end to which the Author himself created and destined them for us, since he created them for our good, not for our ruin. ... In grasses, trees, and fruits, apart from their various uses, there is beauty of appearance and pleasantness of odor. ... And the natural qualities themselves of things demonstrate sufficiently to what end and extent we may enjoy them.<sup>493</sup>

To this end, Calvin stressed that efforts should also be made to suppress the lusts of the flesh:

But no less diligently, on the other hand, we must resist the lust of the flesh, which, unless it is kept in order, overflows without measure. And it has, as I have said, its own advocates, who, under the pretext of the freedom conceded, permit everything to it. First, one bridle is put upon it if it be determined that all things were created for us that we might recognize the

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<sup>489</sup> Young-Ho Cho, "The Era of Ecological Crisis and the Meaning Calvin's Understanding of Creation," *Korea Reformed Theology* 46 (2015): 12–13.

<sup>490</sup> Inst. I.10.2.

<sup>491</sup> Inst. I.14.22.

<sup>492</sup> Cho, "The Era of Ecological Crisis and the Meaning Calvin's Understanding of Creation," 18–19.

<sup>493</sup> Inst. III.10.2.

Author and give thanks for his kindness toward us. ... Therefore, clearly, leave to abuse God's gifts must be somewhat curbed.<sup>494</sup>

In the light of Calvin's attitude, even if a particular position of human beings undoubtedly implies a willingness to domination, it cannot be understood in any case as a recognition of unilateral priority because human beings are also ethical beings with special responsibilities for God's creation. In his commentary on Genesis 2:15, Calvin asserted that Adam was entrusted with the care of the Garden of Eden and was allowed to possess all things under the condition of the full and proper use of all things. Those who own the land should be careful not to damage the land because of their indifference. They should pass it on to their descendants in a better condition. We should treat all things that God has given us as good stewards with responsibility and discretion. Therefore, no one should act in an uncontrolled manner, and no one should harm by misuse the things that God wants to keep perfect.<sup>495</sup>

In this sense, Calvin described the Jubilee. We must allow the land to rest every seven years. Fertility and abundance would hardly be found if the land had to bear fruit without rest. Therefore, we must allow rest and restoration of the earth. This will allow the earth to regain its strength.<sup>496</sup>

As we have seen above, even though Calvin did not explicitly deal with the issue of the crisis of nature as experienced today, when we delve into his thoughts about creation, we can see that he never claimed that human beings could use or abuse nature with impunity. Rather, his concept of creation is an alternative to suggest to modern societies facing a crisis, such as climate change due to human resource abuse.

As mentioned at the outset, the notion of the interdisciplinary character of public theology today cannot be applied directly to the theology of Calvin's day. One reason could be that in his day the disciplines were not as diverse as they are today. Therefore, it is impossible to find clearly in Calvin's theology the interdisciplinary study between theology and science, sociology, politics, and anthropology that public theology seeks

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<sup>494</sup> Inst. III.10.3.

<sup>495</sup> CO 23,44.

<sup>496</sup> CO 24,585.

today. Nevertheless, Calvin's emphasis on the importance of natural science, especially astronomy, in his creationism proves that he attempted and even recommended interdisciplinary research. In addition, the fact that Calvin, influenced by the study of the humanistic law, enacted a considerable amount of laws throughout his life and the discovery of many legal terms and ideas in his theology further support this hypothesis. In light of the purpose of public theology to benefit from theology on public issues, Calvin's theology can provide a public theological foundation for dealing with the environmental crisis, a serious problem in modern society.

#### **4.5 Calvin's political thought**

De Gruchy points out how the Reformed tradition does not deny the world and, conversely, cannot be transformed into political frenzy:

The real challenge facing the Reformed tradition has always been how to hold its evangelical center and its world-formative dynamism in creative tension in the service of truth and justice. Only by so doing does it remain politically prophetic and socially responsible in the service of justice without degenerating into religious, moral, or political fanaticism – whether imperial or apocalyptic – or, at the other extreme, into world-denying pseudo-piety.<sup>497</sup>

Calvin's political and prophetic role in society is well demonstrated by his stay in Geneva. He left France and arrived in Geneva on his way to Strasbourg to cooperate with the Reformer Martin Bucer. There he met Guillaume Farel and stayed in Geneva for Farel's almost cursed request. However, the reform with Farel was unsuccessful because of the opposition of the Council of Geneva and eventually Calvin was expelled from Geneva and went to Strasbourg. In 1540, the Genevan Council voted to bring Calvin back to Geneva, and Calvin eventually returned to Geneva in September 1541. Calvin, a prominent French refugee and well-known lawyer in Geneva, was inevitably involved in the city's politics and social life. Theological thoughts on politics and social

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<sup>497</sup> Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology*, 40–41.

life that supported his role in Geneva were expressed in his commentaries, sermons, letters and the *Institutes*.

On 16 January 1537, the ministers of the city of Geneva submitted the *Articles concernant l'organisation de l'Église et du culte à Genève* to the Petit Council. This provision made it clear that a virtuous life commenced from the Bible. This conviction stemmed from the principle that the Word of God penetrated all aspects of civilian affairs and social life in Geneva.<sup>498</sup>

Calvin pointed out that the divine image still remained in humans after the Fall,<sup>499</sup> which alone constituted a legitimate reason for human responsibility to respond to God's delicate involvement in and grace towards humanity and to participate in his work. It is why people should respect each other.<sup>500</sup> In addition, Calvin wanted church members to go out into the world and have a good influence after attending the service and being nurtured in the church: "Calvin did the same for his parishioners by locking the church doors after the service. Christians, having been fed and equipped, refreshed and nourished, are to be in the world, according to Calvin."<sup>501</sup>

Likewise, he emphasised that this world was under the reign of God and that we should develop and enjoy this world for the glory of God. His activities in Geneva were strong evidence of this.

#### **4.5.1 Calvin's thought regarding the relationship between church and government**

Calvin argued that the government of Geneva was obliged to provide a minimum order for social and economic life. Calvin frequently proposed to the authorities free-of-charge medical care for the poor, control of bread, wine and meat prices, regulation of working hours, wage increases and retraining of the unemployed. In this way, according

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<sup>498</sup> Britz, "Politics and Social Life," 437.

<sup>499</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, 6:9.

<sup>500</sup> Yong-Won Song, *Calvin and the Common Good* (Seoul: IVP, 2017), 53.

<sup>501</sup> Nichols, *The Reformation*, 79.

to Calvin, the government had to take care of its people.<sup>502</sup> Calvin's attitude towards government was consistent with his theological position regarding the relationship between the state and the church or the state and the common people. Therefore, it is necessary to explore his thoughts about this here.

Calvin offered three reasons for the necessity of discussing civil government in the *Institutes*. The first is to prevent the overthrow of the divinely established order, and the second is to criticise state absolutism, given the biblical view of civil authorities:

This is especially true since, from one side, insane and barbarous men furiously strive to overturn this divinely established order; while, on the other side, the flatterers of princes, immoderately praising their power, do not hesitate to set them against the rule of God himself. Unless both these evils are checked, purity of faith will perish.<sup>503</sup>

The third reason is pastoral motivation to know how deep God's love is: "Besides, it is of no slight importance to us to know how lovingly God has provided in this respect for mankind, that greater zeal for piety may flourish in us to attest our gratefulness."<sup>504</sup>

The first reason is evident in the debate with the Anabaptists. Under the pretext of establishing the new Jerusalem in Münster, the Anabaptists raised a number of riots and caused bloodshed. Because of this, Calvin pleaded with his fellow believers in France to keep away from the Anabaptists and their revolutionary and rebellious propensity. When Calvin was in Strasbourg in 1539, he attended the synod there and had various conversations with Anabaptist preachers. Calvin caused many Anabaptists to return to the Reformed Church, and one of them was Jean Stordeur whose wife was Idelette de Bure. After his death, Calvin married Idelette, and in this way Calvin was well acquainted with the mentality and piety of the Anabaptists.<sup>505</sup>

First, Calvin rejected their doctrine of the *nova creatio*. The Anabaptists regarded the world as worthless because the world had sunk into evil. However, Calvin confessed God's faithfulness to his creation. Therefore, according to Calvin, no matter how destructive sin was, God placed his church in this world and called us to sanctify the

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<sup>502</sup> Britz, "Politics and Social Life," 440.

<sup>503</sup> Inst. IV.20.1.

<sup>504</sup> Ibid.

<sup>505</sup> Wim Balke, "Calvin and the Anabaptists," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 147–48.

whole world, not to withdraw from the world.<sup>506</sup> Furthermore, Calvin did not dismiss the government, unlike the Anabaptists, who regarded all government positions as prohibited. For the Anabaptists, the public authorities were blood stained and Menno Simons using these expressions condemned the Reformers who respected the government office. However, through a prophetic witness, Calvin tried to place the government under the protection of the Word of God.<sup>507</sup> Moreover, Calvin found no conflict between Christianity and the state or the government. He found its legitimacy in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the civil government of the Israelites was not only a parable of the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ but also a good political order. The Christian has no right to ignore the civil government because what was good in the Old Covenant is still good in the New Covenant.<sup>508</sup>

Calvin proposed the concept of ‘twofold government’, which was divided into spiritual and civil government. The former is “the kind that resides in the soul or inner man and pertains to eternal life”. The latter “pertains only to the establishment of civil justice and outward morality”.<sup>509</sup> In the former, “the conscience is instructed in piety and in reverencing God”, and in the latter, “man is educated for the duties of humanity and citizenship that must be maintained among man”. These two “must always be examined separately; and while one is being considered, we must call away and turn aside the mind from thinking about the other”.<sup>510</sup> Calvin continued to argue as follows:

Through this distinction it comes about that we are not to misapply to the political order the gospel teaching on spiritual freedom, as if Christians were less subject, as concerns outward government, to human laws, because their consciences have been set free in God’s sight; as if they were released from all bodily servitude because they are free according to the spirit.<sup>511</sup>

Thus, civil government functions as an external method by which God draws us into Christ’s society and holds us in it.<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>509</sup> Inst. IV.20.1.

<sup>510</sup> Inst. III.19.15.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

<sup>512</sup> Inst. IV.1.1.

Calvin's view of this was more focused and developed in his 1559 edition of the *Institutes* compared to the first edition. He regarded the relationship between spiritual and civil government to be similar to that of Christ's divinity and humanity. Just as the Definition of Chalcedon said that the divinity and humanity of Christ should be distinguished but not separated, Calvin argued that spiritual and civil governments should also be distinguished but not separated.<sup>513</sup> Calvin's controversy with the Anabaptists who had an anarchistic political view was a big part of his life. His argument was also different from Luther's insistence on entrusting civil problems to feudal barons. In this way, Calvin revealed ideological differences from these two groups.<sup>514</sup>

He was able to hold on to this claim because he thought that civil government and authority were ordained by God. "The Lord has not only testified that the office of magistrate is approved by and acceptable to him, but he also sets out its dignity with the most honourable titles and marvellously commends it to us."<sup>515</sup> Calvin, therefore, concluded that as an agent of God, the authorities should carefully and diligently present in themselves the divine providence and God's goodness, mercy and justice to all people.<sup>516</sup>

Calvin defined the responsibilities of government as follows: In following the Word of God, the office of the authorities is shown in the Tablets of the law.<sup>517</sup> The First Tablet obliges civil governments "to cherish and protect the outward worship of God, to defend sound doctrine of piety and the position of the church".<sup>518</sup> Therefore, civil governments prevent society from "idolatry, sacrilege against God's name, blasphemies against his truth, and other public offences against religion from arising and spreading among the people".<sup>519</sup> The Second Tablet, dealing with social and ethical issues, calls for governments to prevent "the public peace from being disturbed" and declares "that each man may keep his property safe and sound", "that men may carry

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<sup>513</sup> Sung-gi Han, "Comprehension of Political Order in the Spirit of Reformation," *Sinhagjipyong* 20 (2007): 137.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>515</sup> Inst. IV.20.4.

<sup>516</sup> Inst. IV.2.6.

<sup>517</sup> Inst. IV.20.9.

<sup>518</sup> Inst. IV.20.2.

<sup>519</sup> Inst. IV.20.3.

on blameless intercourse among themselves”, and “that honesty and modesty may be preserved among men”.<sup>520</sup> Calvin took examples from Jeremiah 22 and Psalm 82:

Jeremiah admonishes kings to “do justice and righteousness,” to “deliver him who has been oppressed by force from the hand of the oppressor,” not to “grieve or wrong the alien, the widow, and the fatherless” or “shed innocent blood”. The exhortation which we read in Ps. 82 has the same purpose: that they should “give justice to the poor and needy, rescue the destitute and needy, and deliver the poor and needy from the hand of the oppressor”.<sup>521</sup>

Calvin argued that the role of the governments should be based on legitimate law:

Next to the magistracy in the civil state come the laws, stoutest sinews of the commonwealth, or, as Cicero, after Plato, calls them, the souls, without which the magistracy cannot stand, even as they themselves have no force apart from the magistracy.<sup>522</sup>

The moral law consists of the Ten Commandments and expresses God’s immutable will: worship God with pure faith and godliness and treat humans with sincere affection. This is the standard that every law should consider. Therefore,

Surely every nation is left free to make such laws as it foresees to be profitable for itself. Yet these must be in conformity to that perpetual rule of love, so that they indeed vary in form but have the same purpose.<sup>523</sup>

Calvin further mentioned the exercise of force by the magistrates. He asserted that “the magistrate in administering punishments does nothing by himself, but carries out the very judgments of God”.<sup>524</sup> Moreover, “while his authority goes before us, we never wander from the straight path.”<sup>525</sup> Therefore, “if princes and other rulers recognize that nothing is more acceptable to the Lord than their obedience, let them apply themselves to this ministry, if, indeed, they are intent on having their piety, righteousness, and uprightness approved of God.”<sup>526</sup> However, he opposed coercion without justification:

Begone, now, with that abrupt and savage harshness, and that tribunal which is rightly called the reef of accused men! For I am not one either to

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<sup>520</sup> Inst. IV.20.3.

<sup>521</sup> Inst. IV.20.9.

<sup>522</sup> Inst. IV.20.14.

<sup>523</sup> Inst. IV.20.15.

<sup>524</sup> Inst. IV.20.10.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

favor undue cruelty or think that a fair judgment can be pronounced unless clemency, ...<sup>527</sup>

Therefore, the people should respect the magistrates as messengers and agents of God and obey them.<sup>528</sup> However, there are exceptions too that are expressed in the concept of ‘the right of resistance’.

#### 4.5.2 Calvin and the right of resistance

The right of resistance to the state had emerged as a crucial matter, especially where persecution of the Reformed Church was widespread, such as France. Calvin initially insisted on following the New Testament teachings that although governments were hostile to true Christianity and actively persecuted Christians, Christians should obey their authority because all governments were instituted by God. The French Calvinists thus regarded themselves as similar to the early Christians who had been persecuted in the pagan Roman Empire. They could passively disobey “any law requiring them to practice false religion, as in attending a Catholic Mass”. However, they were not allowed to use force actively to resist governments that made these demands. They had to choose between accepting martyrdom, as the earliest Christians did, or fleeing to places where the Reformed Church was permitted. In fact, Calvin himself chose exile and under Calvin’s leadership, the city of Geneva accepted many fellow exiles. Even though those who could not go into exile along with Calvin requested that they be allowed to engage in active resistance, Calvin generally did not allow resistance with force.<sup>529</sup>

Nevertheless, Calvin opened up the possibility of resisting the ruler in two cases. First,

For if there are now any magistrates of the people, appointed to restrain the willfulness of kings, ... I am so far from forbidding them to withstand, in accordance with their duty, the fierce licentiousness of kings, that, if they

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<sup>527</sup> Ibid.

<sup>528</sup> Inst. IV.20.22.

<sup>529</sup> Robert M. Kingdon, “Church and State,” in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 359.

wink at kings who violently fall upon and assault the lowly common folk,  
I declare that their dissimulation involves nefarious perfidy, ...<sup>530</sup>

The reason is that “they dishonestly betray the freedom of the people, of which they know that they have been appointed protectors by God’s ordinance”. Calvin mentioned the ephors against the Spartan kings in ancient times, the tribunes of the people against the Roman consuls and the demarchs against the senate of the Athenians as examples.<sup>531</sup> Another possibility of resistance for Calvin was when the ruler commanded something against God’s will. That is to say, there should be no escape from obedience to God in spite of obedience to the rulers:

If they command anything against him, let it go unesteemed. And here let us not be concerned about all that dignity which the magistrates possess; for no harm is done to it when it is humbled before that singular and truly supreme power of God.<sup>532</sup>

Calvin said that Daniel did not commit any offense against the king when he disobeyed the king’s impious decree.

There is a claim that accepting these rights of resistance resulted in the wars of religion and that these wars brought disaster on Europe. Calvin publicly supported the earliest of the rebellions, especially the one that rebelled against the royal government in France.<sup>533</sup> One matter to clarify, however, is that although he supported the rebellion by Louis I de Bourbon, the Prince of Condé, against the French kingdom in 1562, it was still done with specific proviso. Aggressive resistance could only be led by government leaders in the royal class and with a reasonable chance of success.<sup>534</sup> While Calvin described Queen Mary of England as cruel and pointed out that her rule was against the legitimate natural order, the fact that he asked for prayer and not political resistance as a solution to this problem showed that he did not give priority to active resistance.<sup>535</sup> In addition, Calvin repeatedly sent letters to persecuted Christians in France, urging them to obey rather than resist.<sup>536</sup> Based on Calvin’s request for

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<sup>530</sup> Inst. IV.20.31.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid.

<sup>532</sup> Inst. IV.20.32.

<sup>533</sup> Kingdon, “Church and State,” 360.

<sup>534</sup> See Britz, “Politics and Social Life,” 446.

<sup>535</sup> See Brandt B. Boeke, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Civil Government,” *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 11 (1981): 61.

<sup>536</sup> Eun-Sun Lee, “Calvin’s Theological Political Ethics,” *Presbyterian and Theology* 1 (2004): 156.

mobilisation and funding of foreign troops during the First Religious War, some believe that he encouraged armed resistance. However, it is more reasonable to see this as a defensive war because he provided all the assistance that he could just rescue Christians in crisis.<sup>537</sup> Nevertheless, it has to be carefully considered that Calvin's disciples and young Reformed pastors who faced the provocation of absolutism and the brutal religious wars in France after 1560 and events such as the massacres at Vacy and the subsequent massacres of St Bartholomew's night in 1572 claimed their right of justifiable resistance. In fact, their work is said to have opened up more paths for active resistance in the sphere of politics and religion.<sup>538</sup>

### 4.5.3 Calvin and the Consistory

The study of the Consistory shows how Calvin's theology was embodied in reality through the lives of 16<sup>th</sup>-century laypeople. Calvin wanted to accomplish in Geneva what Martin Bucer attempted to establish in Strasbourg, namely institutions of discipline. The government of Geneva accepted Calvin's demands, resulting in the establishment of a new disciplinary institution called the Consistory. It was legally a standing committee of the government of Geneva, consisting of 12 lay elders and all ordained ministers serving in the city of Geneva. Calvin strived to entrust the Consistory to a group of like-minded politicians for the effective operation of the Consistory. Christoph Burger describes the Consistory as follows: "Being called before the Consistory meant facing a dozen politicians and a dozen ministers. This system was urban, politically responsive, and, in its ethos, republican."<sup>539</sup>

One of the city's syndics chaired the Consistory, and the weekly meetings became of fundamental importance in Geneva in Calvin's lifetime. He attended most of the meetings and played a crucial role in the proceedings, administering the concluding remarks and protests throughout most of the cases. However, the decisions of the

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<sup>537</sup> Ibid., 157–58.

<sup>538</sup> Britz, "Politics and Social Life," 446.

<sup>539</sup> Burger, "Calvin and the Humanists," 45.

Consistory sometimes appeared in the form of severe punishment beyond admonition, which drew public attention. In particular, there was considerable opposition to consistorial excommunication.<sup>540</sup> Nevertheless, Calvin and his pastoral colleagues insisted on the punishment, and effective opposition to Calvin disappeared in Geneva after the political forces that supported Calvin had defeated the opposition. Eventually, the Consistory in Geneva became an intrusive institution. The matter of marriage was the most frequent case, and it is estimated that approximately 6% of adult residents of Geneva were summoned to appear before the Consistory. The Consistory also became a compulsory counselling service, dealing with disputes within the family and conflicts among neighbours and among business associates.<sup>541</sup> In this sense, Robert Kingdon claims that the Consistory played an important role in a court hearing, a compulsory counselling service and an educational institution and that the action of the Consistory was a function of social control at the time.<sup>542</sup>

In the Genevan Marriage Ordinance, the role of the Consistory was very prominent. The Consistory, the church community, and the Council were actively involved in the establishment, maintenance, and end of marriage. Article 16 of the Ordinance required that marriage had to take place within six weeks of engagement to prevent the custom of rationalising premarital sex on the basis of engagement, and when marriage was delayed, the Consistory intervened and made recommendations to the parties. Article 52 of the Ordinance stipulated that all marriage cases relating to personal relations other than property matters first had to be dealt with by the Consistory, and if judicial decisions were required, the parties to the marriage should appeal to the Council with the ruling of the Consistory. From the standpoint of judicial authority and jurisdiction, the Council had the power of final deliberation and final judgment as a higher authority than the Consistory, but in matters of marriage and sex, the Consistory did not remain within its judicial limits and had more practical and pastoral influence.<sup>543</sup>

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<sup>540</sup> One example is called ‘libertine’, which consists of the wealthy and politically vested interests of Geneva, who claimed that if they were saved by grace, they would no longer be bound by ecclesiastical or civil law. Bernard Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 185–86.

<sup>541</sup> Kingdon, “Church and State,” 357–58.

<sup>542</sup> Robert M. Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce in Calvin’s Geneva* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 4.

<sup>543</sup> Hyung-Chul Yoon, “Calvin’s Genevan Marriage Reformation: Three Aspects and Public Theological Significance,” *Bible and Theology* 82 (2017): 376.

Occasionally, the Consistory consulted or made recommendations directly to the Council's investigations or decisions. In particular, Calvin attended and spoke to the Council to represent the Consistory's position on a particular issue.<sup>544</sup> In addition, on more complex matters, the Council returned the case to the Consistory for further factual confirmation, witness interrogation, pastoral advice and even pastoral punishment or sanction.<sup>545</sup> Since a divorce case often led to reconciliation between the parties, the role and weight of the Consistory's recommendation was greater than the judicial decision of the Council.<sup>546</sup>

Hyung-Chul Yoon evaluates the political role of the Calvin-led Consistory as follows:

The Consistory led by Calvin took its place at the site of Geneva's reformation, just as the organism adapts and survives in an ecological environment, in the midst of a variety of factors: the international situation surrounding Geneva and the changes in parliamentary composition by immigrants, political dynamics and transformational events, and the resistance and acceptance of theological changes. (own translation)<sup>547</sup>

There may be criticism that the Consistory was sometimes too powerful, but nevertheless, when we look at the operation of the Consistory in Geneva, we can see Calvin's thoughts on the political participation of the church and how his theological ideas were practically applied. At least, the Consistory reminds us that in the Reformed tradition, the church should seek ways of active participation in the public sphere to restore the spiritual meaning and values of life through dialogue, compromise and coexistence.

## 4.6 Calvin's prophetic role in Geneva

The fifth characteristic of public theology, as presented by Bedford-Strohm, is prophetic quality. Can this feature be found in Calvin? I would say that not only was

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<sup>544</sup> Witte Jr. John and Robert M. Kingdon, *Sex, Marriage, and Family in John Calvin's Geneva: Courtship, Engagement, and Marriage* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 69.

<sup>545</sup> *Ibid.*, 69–70.

<sup>546</sup> Yoon, "Calvin's Genevan Marriage Reformaion," 379.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

this characteristic found in him but that he was one of the Reformers who showed it the best. In this section, I will look at his life to see how critical, resistant and reform oriented he was towards the unjust circumstances of his time and how much of his interest was aimed at the weak.

First of all, Calvin was a pastor for refugees. In 1538 he arrived in Strasbourg. Since 1535, French refugees had settled in the city and numbered a few hundred. Calvin founded the refugee church with them, which was the first church founded by Calvin alone. He preached four times a week and twice on Sunday in this church.<sup>548</sup> His endeavour to reform the church was based on Scripture and tradition, and his prophetic voice towards the church member could be seen in his passion for discipline in this church. He first followed the liturgy customarily in use in Strasbourg. Then he gradually emphasised the importance of discipline more strongly than in the other congregation, restoring discipline and applying it to the French congregation.<sup>549</sup> In this context, his concern for refugees and the poor would naturally form his theological foundation with regard to the welfare of the people, and this experience would later become a reality in Geneva's reform.

Switzerland was actually a very poor country before Calvin came to Geneva. Geneva, in particular, was called "the smelliest city in Europe" because of the drunkenness and prostitution, with a plethora of criminals, spies and sailors.<sup>550</sup> In this environment, Calvin's various policies and efforts may have played a part in purifying the city. He came back to Geneva and through the participation of the two committees he contributed to the rules to govern the church of Geneva and to a secular Constitution to govern the republic. The Constitution was renewed to grant ducal, episcopal, and cathedral powers to elected and appointed magistrates. As a result, Geneva was transformed into an independent republic from a prince-bishopric. The initial draft of the Ecclesiastical Ordinances clearly declared the church's exclusive freedom in its own sphere. In the final version, there was less clear provision about the magisterial oversight.<sup>551</sup> In addition, in the Ecclesiastical Ordinances that were completed in late

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<sup>548</sup> Arnold, "Strasbourg," 39.

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*, 39–40.

<sup>550</sup> Thomas A. Bloomer, "Calvin's Geneva: Small City, Big Impact," *HOPE Magazine* Winter (2009): 5.

<sup>551</sup> Burger, "Calvin and the Humanists," 44.

September 1541 and were formally adopted within two months, the preexisting social welfare system was adopted as the city's diaconate structure.<sup>552</sup> In the reality of Geneva where churches, civil authority and society were operating in close association, this document had a significant impact. At the time, it was considered a document of an "evident order and way of living", that included articles on the future education of the youth, the livelihood of the poor and the maintenance of the hospital. In particular, thoughtful reflections on social life and conduct were clearly expressed in the sections on the office of deacon and ecclesiastical discipline.<sup>553</sup> In this sense, Bloomer argues that most Western Protestant relief organisations have their origins in relief work in Geneva.<sup>554</sup>

#### 4.6.1 Self-denial as a theological basis

According to Günther Haas, Calvin developed an ethical concept by frequently using words such as 'obedience', 'the life of a Christian' and 'the moral life' instead of the word 'ethics' in the *Institutes*. Furthermore, most scholars agree that union with Christ is the central element of Calvin's doctrine of the Christian life. Believers are justified in union with the death of Christ and sanctified by union with the victory of his resurrection. "While dying and rising with Christ are necessary for the Christian life, these are not merely features of our conversion. They also become the pattern for sanctification, which becomes a process of dying and rising with him."<sup>555</sup>

Most of Calvin's ideas about welfare began with the theological notion of 'self-denial'. According to Calvin, four key features of the Christian life embodied the imitation of Christ in both the inner and outer person.<sup>556</sup> Among them, the first characteristic of the

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<sup>552</sup> See Jeannine E. Olson, *The Bourse Française: Deacons and Social Welfare in Calvin's Geneva* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1980).

<sup>553</sup> Britz, "Politics and Social Life," 438.

<sup>554</sup> Bloomer, "Calvin's Geneva," 6.

<sup>555</sup> Günther H. Haas, "Ethics and Church Discipline," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 332–33.

<sup>556</sup> Ronald Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva and the Reformation: A Study of Calvin as Social Reformer, Churchman, Pastor and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 188.

Christian life was the call for self-denial. “We are not our own” but “we are God’s”.<sup>557</sup>

Self-denial derived from this conviction corrects our attitude towards our neighbour.

Now in these words we perceive that denial of self has regard partly to men, partly, and chiefly, to God. For when Scripture bids us act toward men so as to esteem them above ourselves, and in good faith to apply ourselves wholly to doing them good.<sup>558</sup>

The opposite of self-denial is self-love. Self-love as the main characteristic of sinners is removed when we become one with Christ. Self-denial is essential to a life for neighbours.<sup>559</sup> However, all human beings rush in the direction of self-love. It is why everyone thinks that there is a good reason for self-exalting and despising all others in comparison. However, we must constantly look at our faults and remain humble. At the same time, we are commanded to respect and honour others. With regard to all with whom we have intercourse, in this way, we will not only be generous and humble but also courteous and friendly. We must sincerely humble ourselves and honour others.<sup>560</sup> Furthermore, the grace that we obtain from God is granted on the condition that we use it for the common good of the church. In order to use all our gifts legitimately, we must give it friendly to others. Calvin explained this in more detail through the term ‘steward’:

Let this, therefore, be our rule for generosity and beneficence: We are the stewards of everything God has conferred on us by which we are able to help our neighbor, and are required to render account of our stewardship. Moreover, the only right stewardship is that which is tested by the rule of love. Thus it will come about that we shall not only join zeal for another’s benefit with care for our own advantage, but shall subordinate the latter to the former.<sup>561</sup>

Furthermore, he regarded assistance of the weak as the natural virtue of Christians.

Whoever needs our help, there is no good reason to decline his/her request:

Say, “he is a stranger”; but the Lord has given him a mark that ought to be familiar to you, by virtue of the fact that he forbids you to despise your own flesh. Say, “he is contemptible and worthless”; but the lord shows him to be one to whom he has deigned to give the beauty of his image. Say that you owe nothing for any service of his; but God, as it were, has put him in

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<sup>557</sup> Inst. III.7.1.

<sup>558</sup> Inst. III.7.4.

<sup>559</sup> Guenther H. Haas, *The Concept of Equity in Calvin’s Ethics* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), 63.

<sup>560</sup> Inst. III.7.4.

<sup>561</sup> Inst. III.7.5.

his own place in order that you may recognize toward him the many and great benefits with which God has bound you to himself.<sup>562</sup>

However, this self-denial must be carried out with a sincere feeling of love. It is not truly fulfilling to have a contemptuous attitude when giving alms. Rather, Christians should place themselves in the position of those whom they see in need of their help and sympathise with their ill. In this way, “they may be impelled by a feeling of mercy and humaneness to go to his aid just as to their own.”<sup>563</sup>

#### 4.6.2 The church’s role for the poor

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, nationalism was strongly expressed and the monopoly monarchy was weakened; thus, political unrest was intensified. Economically, the emergence of early capitalist modes of production intensified the differentiation of the capitalist, worker and peasant classes. The proliferation of people who left rural areas for cities created problems that needed to be solved in the cities, including housing, transportation, education and welfare. In this context, churches, monasteries and religious groups that had played an important role in the relief work for the poor were now unable to handle the new situation.<sup>564</sup> When Calvin gained leadership in Geneva, he developed the social relief facilities that had been entrusted to the government to operate in close cooperation with the church and the city government.<sup>565</sup>

The early church indeed saw relief work for the poor as part of its worship. Thus, the two were not separated; rather, Christians offered clothing, food and offerings for the poor during worship. In other words, service to the poor was an expression of worship to God.<sup>566</sup> When Calvin preached Deuteronomy 16, he stressed that we had to give back everything that we had received from God. In charity, for example, each individual should give back the gifts that she/he had received for the common profit of the church.

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<sup>562</sup> Inst. III.7.6.

<sup>563</sup> Inst. III.7.7.

<sup>564</sup> Joo-Han Kim, “Calvin and His Theological Perspective on Poverty -Theoretical Basics of His Social Welfare Policy,” *Journal of Korean Church History* 24 (2009): 127.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>566</sup> See Edward R Pirozzi, “Toward Locating the Separation of Charity from Eucharist in the Ancient Western Church,” *Worship* 71, no. 4 (1997): 335–49.

This was a fragrant sacrifice.<sup>567</sup> Calvin also elaborated on the essential mission of the church in connection with its use and administration of church possessions:

For they received the daily offerings of believers and the yearly income of the church. These they were to devote to proper uses, that is, to distribute some to feed the ministers, some to feed the poor, ...<sup>568</sup>

In addition,

You will frequently find both in the decrees of synods and in ancient writers that all that the church possesses, either in lands or in money, is the patrimony of the poor. And so this song is often sung there to bishops and deacons, that they should remember that they are not handling their own goods but those appointed for the need of the poor; ...<sup>569</sup>

He explained that the church had traditionally divided its income into four parts, namely “one for the clergy, another for the poor, a third for the repair of churches and other buildings, a fourth for the poor, both foreign and indigenous”.<sup>570</sup> According to Calvin, the church initially spent very little on the embellishment of sacred things and still kept moderation in this regard when the church became richer later. Rather, when the donation came in, it was kept intact for the poor and prepared, just in case. He found justification for this in the following example:

Thus, Cyril, when famine seized the province of Jerusalem and the distress could not otherwise be relieved, sold vessels and vestments, and spent the money on poor relief. Similarly, Acacius, bishop of Amida, when a great multitude of Persians was well-nigh dying from famine, calling together his clergy, delivered this famous speech: “Our God needs neither plates nor cups, for he neither eats nor drinks.” Then he melted the vessels to obtain both food and the price of ransom for the pitiable folk.<sup>571</sup>

Calvin also used Jerome and Ambrose as examples. He strongly agreed with Ambrose’s statement that “whatever, then, the church had was for the support of the needy”.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>567</sup> CO 27,431.

<sup>568</sup> Inst. IV.4.5.

<sup>569</sup> Inst. IV.4.6.

<sup>570</sup> Inst. IV.4.7.

<sup>571</sup> Inst. IV.4.8.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

### 4.6.3 Calvin's economic ethics

German sociologist Max Weber argues that the origin of Western modern capitalism was strongly influenced by Protestant ethics, in particular Calvinism, which claimed that all occupations were a calling. This idea influenced Protestants at that time, causing them to live frugally and diligently, to grow their businesses and to accumulate wealth for reinvestment.<sup>573</sup> Max Geiger, however, disagrees with this view. According to him, Calvin sharply criticised the individual accumulation of wealth while neglecting the community and pointed out the problem that no matter how diligent or hardworking people were, they could not escape from poverty because of institutional problems.<sup>574</sup> Despite such objections, however, McGrath agrees that it cannot be simply denied that Calvinism has brought changes to capitalism and entrepreneurship.<sup>575</sup>

Calvin's economic thought also affected the economic life of Geneva. He set a new standard for the economy because he viewed property as a gift from God that should be utilised to help one another. He emphasised that the devastating effects of sin had corrupted these blessings, which were easily transformed into materialism, injustice, hard and inhuman actions, greed, cruelty and luxuriousness. This made wealth a stumbling block to the weak rather than a useful tool for the poor and suffering. However, in the restoration of Christ, both the poor and the rich partook in the reign of Christ through the gospel. Calvin pointed out that this restored order was embodied by the fellowship of the saints, expressed in caring for the poor.<sup>576</sup> For Calvin, thus, economic wealth could only have meaning when it was reproduced and cycled again, and it had to be done in principle for justice and the common good. These basic ideas were based on the Jewish economic principles of the Old Testament to protect the weak,

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<sup>573</sup> See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>574</sup> See Max Geiger, "Calvin, Calvinismus, Kapitalismus," in *Gottesreich Und Menschenreich*, ed. Ernst Staehelin (Basel: Helbing Verlag, 1969), 229–86. For more opposite opinions, see Werner Sombart, *Der Bourgeois: Zur Geistesgeschichte Des Modernen Wirtschaftsmenschen* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 2003); R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 2017); Hector Menteith Robertson, *Aspects of the Rise of Economic Individualism: A Criticism of Max Weber and His School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933).

<sup>575</sup> McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin*, 253.

<sup>576</sup> Britz, "Politics and Social Life," 439.

such as strangers, widows and orphans and were associated with the recollection of Exodus and the joy of liberation and its responsibilities.<sup>577</sup>

Calvin redefined the concept of labour as human duty and task:

The Lord bids each one of us in all life's actions to look to his calling. ... Therefore, lest through our stupidity and rashness everything be turned topsy-turvy, he has appointed duties for every man in his particular way of life. And that no one may thoughtlessly transgress his limits, he has named these various kinds of living "callings." Therefore, each individual has his own kind of living assigned to him by the Lord as a sort of sentry post so that he may not heedlessly wander about throughout life.<sup>578</sup>

Thus, he stressed that all people should work for their communities, criticising landlords, aristocrats and people who lived on their heritage without working. In particular, he insisted on the principle of reciprocity and solidarity that mean that people with wealth, knowledge or resources were obliged to care for those who did not possess these.<sup>579</sup> Thus, he always criticised the maximisation of selfish profits and a greedy attitude without consideration of others.

In this sense, Calvin presented seven provisions related to interest, which Mee-Hyun Chung summarises as follows:<sup>580</sup>

1. There should be no interest from the poor, nor should anyone receive interest from those who are in a disaster or urgent need of rescue. Poor people also need the right amount of loans and capital for small capital projects. The principal of the loan must be paid back by the borrower in good faith, but care should be taken to forego interest for those who have difficulty paying back the principal.
2. The profit should be used to love the neighbour. The gap between the rich and the poor cannot be eliminated but can be reduced.
3. In harmony with natural justice, in accordance with Christ's law, we must treat others as we wish others to treat us. Justice should be emphasised in the human society in which we live together.

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<sup>577</sup> Mee-Hyun Chung, "Calvin's Economic Ethics and Gender," *Christian Social Ethic* 19 (2010): 184.

<sup>578</sup> Inst. III.10.6.

<sup>579</sup> Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 201–3; Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva and the Reformation*, 127.

<sup>580</sup> Chung, "Calvin's Economic Ethics and Gender," 188–90.

4. The borrower is obliged to use money wisely, effectively and productively. Loans for consumption only are strictly forbidden.
5. The customs or injustices generally permitted by us should not be the standard, but the word of God should be the norm of our actions. In other words, human historical, economic, political or opportunistic measures should not be the criteria for interest and loan issues, but those that are in accordance with God's will.
6. Public interests should always be considered. Keeping in mind that the contract between two partners has an impact on society as a whole, the public good must be actively pursued.
7. Righteousness that restricts and restrains too much and excessiveness are our first responsibility. Human law can only define the minimum. Beyond that, Christians should have a Christian conscience to do things that are in harmony with God's will and to restrain themselves.

In looking at Calvin's thoughts, we can see that the doctrine of total depravity of humanity that he insisted on was based on the fact that because humans had totally fallen, they had lost their freedom to choose righteousness and therefore the Word of God should be the standard. The idea of self-denial discussed earlier thus plays a very important role here.

The theological ideas mentioned above were realised in the formation and operation of a fund for French refugees in Geneva, the *Bourse Francaise*. This fund was originally intended for those who can be regarded as French Christian refugees. The fund began with the wealthy David Busanton of the Hainault making a donation to solve the refugee problem. Since then, many wealthy people joined in donating, including the rich who had been refugees in the past. This fund was essentially a kind of private fund.<sup>581</sup> It is significant that this fund was established and operated under Calvin's considerable interest and support. Calvin was actively involved in the operation of the fund from the outset because the beneficiaries were refugees who had left their homes to adhere to the faith. Given that Calvin himself was a French refugee and a pastor in the refugee church

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<sup>581</sup> Jeannine E. Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare: Deacons and the Bourse Française* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1989), 17–21.

for three years in Strasbourg, he would have felt a special affection and responsibility for religious refugees. Calvin's involvement is also presumed by the fact that the pastors in Geneva were involved in establishing of the fund. He was also one of the donors of this fund. Calvin himself basically ate simple meals and sometimes maintained a modest lifestyle that was close to poverty because he believed that Christ was frugal and satisfied with a simple meal.<sup>582</sup>

What we can see in his economic thought is that in the chaotic situation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, he played an important role in helping people to care for the poor by presenting biblical economic views. His prophetic voice was not only left in theory but had a real impact on the development of welfare in Geneva. De Gruchy argues that according to Calvin's eschatology, personal salvation has a purpose in the completion of God's total redemptive work, the final advent of the kingdom of justice and peace. "Within this tension – between living fully on earth, yet anticipating heaven – lies much of the dynamic of Calvin's ethics."<sup>583</sup> Similarly, John Leith argues that "it is this eschatology which enabled the Calvinists to be brave in the face of danger and active in the work of the Lord".<sup>584</sup>

#### **4.7 The intercontextual character of Calvin's theology**

Contextuality and intercontextuality, a characteristic of public theology that Bedford-Strohm presents, may be one of the most elusive features to find in Calvin's theology and his life. The reason is that the context of Calvin's day was very different from that of ours, which public theology focuses on. As discussed in the previous chapter, this characteristic of public theology is closely related to globalisation, pluralisation, and the rapid development of the media, which are the features of contemporary society. However, even though his theology did not interact in abundance with other theologies

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<sup>582</sup> Young-Sil Park, "Calvin's Understanding of Almsgiving and His Practical Plan of Social Welfare," *Korea Reformed Journal* 23 (2012): 35–36.

<sup>583</sup> Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology*, 276.

<sup>584</sup> John H. Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 161–62.

of other regions in his time, the fact that his theology has transcended the ages, has influenced Christianity all over the world for a long time, and is still present, can be an example of this feature.

#### 4.7.1 Calvin's endeavour to communicate with theologians in different regions

Since Calvin's pastoral thoughts were shaped by influencing and interacting with pastors in other parts of Europe, his ministry was not limited to one area but has an intercontextual character. Since 1537, Calvin shared his thoughts with Bullinger, the leader of the church in Zurich. Between 1537 and 1564, 115 letters were written by Calvin to Bullinger and 168 letters by Bullinger to Calvin, which included not only personal but political, theological and church issues. The two Reformers dealt not only with the concerns of the Swiss but also with those of the entire Europe. Particularly, Calvin dealt with the French area and Bullinger was more concerned with Eastern Europe. However, the political issues surrounding the Empire and the Swiss Confederation were discussed by both.<sup>585</sup> Furthermore, Calvin sought to influence individual states and churches, not only through letters but also by visiting the area. At the same time, he also strived to exchange thoughts with Reformed theologians residing in Switzerland.<sup>586</sup> Calvin's efforts were the driving force for his theology to affect various parts of Europe, not only Geneva.

It is a misconception that the Swiss Federation maintained peace under Reformed theology when Calvin was ministering in Geneva. Rather, the states were in conflict with each other due to different theological and political views. In particular, the conflict between Berne and Geneva was very serious. The conflicting relationship with Berne can be seen from the fact that in 1555, the Berne Council prohibited the reading of Calvin's *Institutes* at the Lausanne Academy and Calvin strongly protested against this decision.<sup>587</sup> Numerous pastors of Berne had severely attacked Calvin and the

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<sup>585</sup> Andreas Mühling, "Calvin and the Swiss Confederation," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 69.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>587</sup> CO 15, 2177, 2187, 2199, 2200.

church of Geneva due to the issues of the liturgy, the Lord's Supper and predestination since the 1540s.<sup>588</sup>

At that time, it was also true that there was political disagreement between the Lutheran and Reformed churches. However, Calvin thought that the differences between the Lutherans and Zwinglians were not so serious that they could not be overcome and thus sought a way to reconciliation. In 1541, Calvin published a paper *Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ* on the common basis of the Reformed churches that aimed at community with Christ. Nevertheless, Bullinger continued to be sceptical about all efforts to bring about unity with the Lutherans. He even rejected the Wittenberg Concordat of 1536. Luther was similar. In the same year, in his writing *Brief Confession on the Holy Sacrament*, Luther declared the believers in the church of Zurich to be heretics.<sup>589</sup> Although Calvin felt that he was being attacked by Luther, he did not yet abandon the hope of a theological agreement with the Lutherans.<sup>590</sup> Calvin saw it as his mission to find a way to stop the debate on the Lord's Supper between the Lutherans and the Reformed, and the political consequences that made the Reformed congregations very uncertain.<sup>591</sup>

Calvin was ordered by the Council of Geneva to hold discussions with representatives of the authorities in Zurich regarding the possibility of an alliance with the French king.<sup>592</sup> He went to Zurich not only for these political discussions but also for theological discussion of the issue of the Lord's Supper. Successful theological agreement with Zurich removed the obstacles to the theological agreement with the Lutherans, and the success of this effort led to a political compromise between the Reformed and the Lutherans. Furthermore, the Catholic authorities under the French King Henri II gave up the substantive restrictions on the Reformed congregation and pursued a political cooperation with it for its own rule. As a result, the Reformed could have a broad alliance with Roman Catholic authorities as well as Lutheran princes with a good conscience.<sup>593</sup> Thus, the misconception that Calvin's theology was separatism

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<sup>588</sup> CO 12, 1039.

<sup>589</sup> Mühling, "Calvin and the Swiss Confederation," 70.

<sup>590</sup> CO 11, 586.

<sup>591</sup> Mühling, "Calvin and the Swiss Confederation," 71.

<sup>592</sup> CO 21, 452.

<sup>593</sup> Mühling, "Calvin and the Swiss Confederation," 72.

must be corrected and his theology should rather be regarded as a good model for the ecumenical movement.

#### 4.7.2 Influence of Calvin's theology<sup>594</sup>

There is no debate as to whether Calvin contributed substantially to the political, ecclesiastical and social changes in the Western World and that Calvin's theological framework was constantly influential.<sup>595</sup> The fact that Geneva remains a humanitarian centre for the world today has a great deal to do with Calvin and his legacy:

Under his leadership the city promoted laws that supported the family, outlawing spousal abuse and elevating marriage as an institution. His sphere of leadership also extended to cleaning up the streets, with laws against public drunkenness and public disorderly conduct. On the positive side, hospitals were built and the entire education system overhauled. A "no child left behind" policy was truly enacted, seeing that all of Geneva's children had an education.<sup>596</sup>

Calvin's ideas of state and government had a major impact beyond Geneva. Influenced by Calvin, Reformed Christianity was considered the most common alternative throughout Western Europe. Reformed Christianity had to adapt to a wide variety of forms of government; it initially moved into other parts of Switzerland, then into France, parts of Germany, the Netherlands, Scotland and England. A pattern of church organisation and government designed for very small and independent city-states had to be adjusted to larger, more complex areas. Calvin was often asked how to deal with national governments, including some that were very hostile to this new Reformed faith.<sup>597</sup>

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<sup>594</sup> In this section, I will describe Calvin's impact in only certain region. Thus, to study the impact on other regions, see Irena Backus and Philip Benedict, eds., *Calvin and His Influence, 1509-2009* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); W. Stanford Reid (William Stanford) and Paul Woolley, eds., *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World, Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).

<sup>595</sup> Selderhuis, "Calvin Images: Images and Self-Image," 5.

<sup>596</sup> Nichols, *The Reformation*, 79–80.

<sup>597</sup> Kingdon, "Church and State," 358.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Calvin's theology regained attention by Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper's dominant role in politics and theology seemed to have been widely influenced by Calvin. Kuyper had a strong influence in the Netherlands by establishing a university, two newspapers and the anti-revolutionary political party, and by serving as Prime Minister from 1901 to 1905. A neo-Calvinist, Kuyper tried to develop his theology, philosophy and politics based on Calvin and Calvinism. It should be noted that Kuyper, who was influenced very much by Calvin, is often described as a model of public theology today.

As Calvinism spread throughout the world, Calvin's theology had an important impact on the African Continent. In 1652, the Dutch East India Company established a base at the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa. The Dutch Reformed Church was associated with the Dutch East India Company, which led to the Dutch Reformed Church's being planted in Africa. Later, in the work of the Presbyterian Church, in which John Knox had a significant influence, and missionary groups with a tendency to adhere to the Westminster Confession, the influence of Calvin and his theology indirectly appeared in Africa. During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Calvinist tradition was reinforced by theological training of indigenous people.<sup>598</sup> Given that the early universities in South Africa were founded by Calvinists, it can be inferred that the influence of Calvinism had a profound effect on early education in South Africa. At one time, however, Calvinism was used as the basis for ideological debate. De Gruchy mentions that "for many black Reformed Christians in South Africa, Reformed theology and especially Calvinism is regarded as in some significant way responsible for their oppression". However, he points out that "Afrikaner Calvinism provides a case study for much of what has gone wrong in the Reformed tradition".<sup>599</sup> Despite the possibility that there may be other assessments of the ideological use of Calvin's theology in Africa, it is undeniable that Calvin's theology is often at the centre of controversy and has had much influence on Africa.

Calvin's theology also had a great influence on Asian Christianity. In particular, Christianity in Korea, where Calvinism forms the mainstream, is uniquely under

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<sup>598</sup> Dolf Britz and Victor E. D'Assonville, "Calvin in Africa," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 505–12.

<sup>599</sup> Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology*, xiv.

Calvin's influence in Asia. A detailed study of the close relationship between Korean Christianity and Calvin will be presented in the next chapter.

## 4.8 Concluding remarks

The goal of this chapter was to re-examine Calvin's theology through the lens of public theology as characterised by Bedford-Strohm. Therefore, I dealt with Calvin's theology in relation to the six characteristics of public theology proposed by Bedford-Strohm.

First, in order to find a biblical-theological profile in Calvin's theology, I examined his theology as a Bible-centred, tradition-based theology. This feature is evident in his biblical theology under the slogan *sola Scriptura* that the Reformers used and followed. He set the standard for basing all thoughts and actions on Scripture. Thus, though he enjoyed quoting numerous classics and the fathers' writings, he dared to oppose them if they deviated from the teachings of the Bible. He was so strongly influenced by humanism that he did not hesitate to quote humanist writers unless they were in conflict with the Bible. This attitude was evident when he pushed for reform of the institution of marriage in Geneva.

Second, the bilingual ability of public theology is found in Calvin's concept of divine accommodation. According to him, God revealed his marvellous will in everyday language so that humans with limitations could understand it. Moses and the other prophets also expressed God's will not in their own exclusive language but in a language that the public could understand. Calvin himself used the language and knowledge of the world to communicate with the world, sometimes as a debate, sometimes as a persuasion. Furthermore, he judged worldly knowledge as useful and insisted on trying to obtain it. At the very least, it is hard to find a way in which he separated the church from the world and claimed that the truth of the church should not be translated into the language of the world.

The fact that he valued the knowledge of secular scholars makes it obvious that the third characteristic of public theology, the interdisciplinary character, is found in his theology and life. Since he was initially educated in humanism and studied law,

humanistic and legal concepts and methods are often found throughout his theology. Although the more detailed interdisciplinary research pursued by public theology today was not possible at the time, the fact that Calvin was deeply involved in the major disciplines of that era, such as law, literature, linguistics, rhetoric and even natural science and astronomy, and the fact that he used the knowledge of these disciplines in abundance are sufficient to demonstrate that Calvin's theology has an interdisciplinary character.

The fourth characteristic, competency to provide political direction, is the most prominent feature of Calvin's theology. Perhaps no one can deny that Calvin influenced the political situation of many countries in Western Europe as well as in Geneva in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, what we should pay attention to here is how Calvin saw the relationship between the church and the state or the wider society. Because of his negative view of Roman Catholic political thought, he of course opposed both the way in which religion ruled the state and vice versa. However, he also criticised the Anabaptists' political thoughts. He thus rejected the view that church and state were completely separated or that the church was sacred and the world was evil. His view is in line with public theology's trying to distinguish itself from political theology, which overemphasises political action, or liberation theology, which attempts to overthrow the system of the world in revolutionary ways. Calvin can thus be seen as a significant figure of public theology.

Perhaps the term Reformer already implies his prophetic quality, the fifth characteristic of public theology. When Calvin reformed Geneva, he took its theological basis from the concept of self-denial. Self-denial of the believer is to unite with Christ, and therefore it should be a major way of life for Christians. According to Calvin, when Christians voluntarily live a life of crucifixion with self-denial, their lives can contribute to the common good. On this theological basis, he focused his efforts to practically help the weak of Geneva. This is related to the fact that there were many religious refugees in Geneva and that Calvin's position was to care for them. Taking the characteristic of the early church as an example, he emphasised the role of the church, especially for the poor. In particular, he claimed that whatever the church had was for the support of the needy because he viewed property as a gift from God that should be utilised to help one another.

Finally, I attempted to find intercontextuality in his theology. However, I admit that this has not been clearly demonstrated because intercontextuality as a characteristic of public theology is intimately connected with globalisation. However, it is true that his reforms in Geneva and his theology had influence across Western Europe, although not far from Geneva. It is also important that his theology had influence all over the world for centuries. Could these features not be an example of the intercontextual nature that public theology seeks?

Putting all this together, we see that Calvin himself did not really try to tie the theology that he understood and established to the world of ideas. He wanted to apply it to the church, ‘the field of practice’, and to see the real, visible effects thereof. He was a theologian who spent his whole life trying to put theory into practice, not tying himself to a theological theory.<sup>600</sup>

As we have seen so far, there are many public theological elements in Calvin’s pastoral, scholarly and political roles. Therefore, it is curious that Korean Reformed theologies following Calvinism have negative views on the public theological approach. In the next chapter, the reason will be explained to some extent. However, I can say here shortly that in the situation where Korean churches lack awareness about ‘publicness’, theological orientations are needed to overcome this. Therefore, the public theological ideas inherent in Calvin’s thought can be a valuable source for the Korean churches. In other words, the Korean churches today should restore and reinterpret the public theological elements that appeared in Calvin’s thought and his work in Geneva in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and eventually apply these to the contemporary issues in Korea.

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<sup>600</sup> Sung-Chul Hwang, “A Study on the Identity of the Genevan Church in Calvin’s Day.,” *Sinhagjinam* 266 (2001): 142.

## CHAPTER 5

### Doing public theology in Korea

#### 5.1 Introduction

The ultimate goal of this project is to consider how public theology might be engaged in the Korean Reformed Churches, where public theology is still neglected. With this goal, I initially began this project with the idea that the mainstream of Korean Christianity was the Reformed Church following Calvin's thought and that the intersection between Calvinism and public theology had not been yet fully considered. Therefore, my hypothesis was that if a measure of coherence could be established between public theology and Calvin's theology, it might provide an opportunity for Korean Reformed theologies to be interested in public theology. Hence, I have attempted to find some meaningful coherences between public theology and Calvin's theology in the preceding chapters.

If we retrace the argument in outline we shall see, that in Chapter 2, in order to increase understanding of what public theology is, I presented an overview of the notion of public theology. In Chapter 3, I delved deeper into the six characteristics of public theology presented by Heinrich Bedford-Strohm to describe in more detail what public theology is and to use his methodology in order to find some commonalities between public theology and Calvin's theology. Through this work, I was able to provide a more specific character of public theology, and then I re-examined Calvin's theology through the hermeneutic lens provided by Bedford-Strohm in the previous chapter. As expected, the six characteristics of public theology could be evidenced to greater, and lesser, degrees in Calvin's theology and his role in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Geneva.

If this is so, then why do Korean Reformed theologies that follow Calvin's theology doubt the public theological approach in spite of the expression of public theological elements in Calvin's theology? The cause can be found when we look at the history of mission and the revival of Korean Christianity along with the political and democratic development of Korea. Without comprehensive understanding of the history of mission,

the relationship between the early church and Japanese imperialism, the critical attitude of the church against communism, the progovernment and the probusiness role of the church during the democratisation era, the objection to liberal theology by the church and the indifference of the church to the social gospel, the root cause cannot be found and without a proper diagnosis, no appropriate prescription can be made.

Furthermore, because of the methodology of public theology that places great emphasis on contextuality, historical studies of Korean Christianity are significant within this project. As we have seen in chapters 2 and 3, each public theology developed in various regions contains the particularities of that context or region, which forms the identity of a public theology. If the Korean context is not carefully considered, this is just an introduction to one of the Western theologies unrelated or less related to the Korean church. Therefore, in order for this project to be part of public theology, to be meaningful as public theological research and to contribute to the Korean church, the Korean context must be addressed.

Hence, this chapter will deal with the history of mission in Korean Christianity to show how aspects of a particular form of American Christianity were implanted in Korea, which was an important factor that made Korean Christianity conservative. Moreover, the role of Korean Christianity under Japanese colonial rule will be treated historically with care. The right-wing, pro-governmental attitude of Korean Christianity will also be intensively addressed because it is closely related to the attitude or revival of the church in the democratisation process of Korea. This process will paradoxically demonstrate how much public theological discussion is needed in Korea.

After this historical study, I would like to show how much the Korean Reformed theologies are related to public theology by linking both the public theological characteristics and Calvin's theology to the context of Korea. To this end, the individual events now being seriously discussed in Korea will be taken as examples. However, I will refrain from drawing normative conclusions on specific issues since this is not the primary purpose of the project.

## 5.2 The role of the church in the history of Korea

Religion and politics or religion and society are in very close relationship. In other words, the rise and fall of religion is interlocked with the social and political situation of the region. Especially in Korea, where the history of Christianity is very short but its impact is great, Christianity cannot be separated from political and social changes. Whenever the political and social circumstances fluctuated for even a short period, there was a simultaneous upheaval in Christianity.

Korean Christianity has been the driving force of social movements for the nation since the early days of mission. The churches have frequently presented the nation's vision since Korean Christianity played an important role in the anti-Japanese movement as well as in the educational and medical spheres. After Liberation, however, under the 'unrighteous' regime, the Korean church was on the side of the regime rather than the people and thus has been criticised for not fulfilling its prophetic calling. In addition, the churches divided into conservatism and liberalism due to theological differences, which led to different views on social movements. In other words, progressive churches were active in social movements such as democratisation and labour movements, while conservative churches focused more on individual salvation than on social movements.<sup>601</sup>

In this section, I will explore the history of the Korean church with regard to the social and political change in Korea. The study of the formation and development of Korean Christianity is not only helpful for understanding the current issues regarding Christianity in Korea but is also an essential and a prerequisite process in order to find public theological alternatives for the Korean context.

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<sup>601</sup> Joon-Bong Jeon, "Retrospect and Prospect in Social Movement of Korean Church," *Journal of Historical Theology* 27 (2014): 148–49.

### 5.2.1 The conservatism of mainstream Christianity in the missionary history of Korea

According to Harvie Conn, early Korean church history was the history of conservative and evangelical Christianity.<sup>602</sup> One of the factors that shaped the conservative theology of the Korean church is that most of the missionaries who brought the gospel to Korea for the first time were Puritan missionaries. Conn states that Presbyterian missionaries sent to Korea from North America for decades are said to be the most conservative in the world.<sup>603</sup> Charles Clark agrees that most of the early missionaries were descendants of Scottish covenantors who believed in the Bible as their ancestors believed and taught.<sup>604</sup> This claim appears to be supported by the statistics about missionaries who came to Korea. As confirmed, a total of 1 529 missionaries came to Korea until 1945. These include 1 059 from the United States of America (69.3%), 199 from the United Kingdom (13%), 98 from Canada (6.4%), 85 from Australia (5.6%) and 88 from other countries (5.7%). Among them, there were 694 Presbyterian missionaries (45.4%), including 338 Presbyterians from Northern parts of America, 190 from Southern parts of America, 84 from Australia and 82 from Canada.<sup>605</sup> According to William Hutchison, in the Protestant missionary history of the world, there is no mission field as completely secured by American Protestant mainstream denominations as Korea, except Brazil.<sup>606</sup> However, this conservative tendency is not just the story of Presbyterian missionaries. Methodist bishop William Ninde, who visited Korea in 1895, wrote in his report that Methodist missionaries in Korea were very conservative. This theological conservatism beyond denominations becomes even more evident when looking at the confession of faith of the Korean church in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>607</sup> In

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<sup>602</sup> Harvie M. Conn, *Studies in the Theology of the Korean Presbyterian Church* (Seoul: Siloam, 1991), 1.

<sup>603</sup> Harvie M. Conn, "The Conservative Theology of Korean Presbyterian Church after the Liberation," *Sinhaginam* 42, no. 3 (1975): 47.

<sup>604</sup> Charles A. Clark, *The Nevius Plan for Mission Work Illustrated in Korea* (Seoul: Christian Literature Society, 1937), 137.

<sup>605</sup> Seung-Tae Kim and Hye-Jin Park, *A Comprehensive Survey of Missionaries Came to Korea (1884-1984)* (Seoul: The Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea, 1994), 4–5.

<sup>606</sup> William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 128.

<sup>607</sup> Dae-Young Ryu, *Early American Missionaries in Korea (1884-1910): Understanding Missionaries from Their Middle-Class Background* (Seoul: The Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea, 2016), 92.

particular, the missionaries understood Korean indigenous religions and customs as idolatrous religions and superstitions and were convinced that the Christianity that they had introduced was the only perfect religion.<sup>608</sup> This exclusive recognition of Christianity greatly influenced the formation of faith among early Korean Christians. These factors show that missionaries who were known to have a very conservative theology at that time, especially Presbyterian missionaries from North America, were the leading missionaries, which may have influenced the formation of conservative beliefs in early Korean churches.

This theological conservatism of American missionaries is linked to the lives of Korean converts. American missionaries set very high standards when they accepted Korean converts as members of the church. Even for those who had attended the church for a considerable period of time, when they wanted to be baptised, the missionaries first accepted them as ‘catechumens’ and evaluated their lives for more than six months. While living as catechumens, they had to abide by the rules of living as Christians, which meant to be disconnected from the world, namely from non-Christian beliefs and practices. For example, they had to stop all work for a living, including all chores but attend worship and study the Bible on Sunday. They should not do anything what they have done for themselves and they should not even think of it on Sunday. Food and clothing had to be prepared the day before, and sewing was forbidden on Sundays. Missionaries viewed this observance of the Sabbath as a standard for dividing Christians from non-Christians. In addition, they were also adamant about the question of alcohol and emphasised that it was a sin to drink in any amount because alcohol was a poison and the source of all sin.<sup>609</sup> This standard of Christian righteous behaviour is still valid in the conservative denominations of the Korean church today.

This feature leads to the absolute authority and influence of the pastors in the church community. Because of high standards, only those whose faith is proven can be members and pastors in these churches can have much authority over those who take their words seriously. Koreans who wanted to be recognised as good believers by

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<sup>608</sup> Lak-Geon George Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832-1910* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1980), 367.

<sup>609</sup> Ryu, *Early American Missionaries in Korea (1884-1910)*, 105–8.

missionaries generally tended to be stricter than the standards set by the missionaries.<sup>610</sup> Missionaries especially wanted Korean Christianity to be pure. This eventually led to strict discipline. This was possible because in Korea it was easier to gain converts compared to other mission fields. In this context, it was more important for missionaries to manage and teach converts than to seek them.<sup>611</sup>

Missionaries brought not only the gospel but also capitalist values to Korea. According to Dae-Young Ryu, Koreans who had relationships with missionaries tended to be rich. The missionaries taught diligence and frugality through sermons and encouraged honesty to earn money and succeed. Therefore, poverty gradually came to be regarded as a sin among Koreans at that time.<sup>612</sup>

In summary, first, the early missionaries were largely Presbyterians who were influenced by Calvinism and Puritan theology and their conservative theology had a great influence on the formation of the faith of early Korean Christians. Second, this theological conservatism also effected changes in the lives of Korean Christians. In particular, keeping the Sabbath and giving up drinking and smoking, which are also important for the current conservative Korean denominations, were aspects of piety that missionaries strongly demanded from Korean converts. Third, missionaries exercised strong discipline to keep the purity of the church, which naturally led to a strong pastoral authority. Finally, the missionaries encouraged diligence, sincerity and even the accumulation of honest wealth by conveying the Puritan view of work and capitalism to Korea. Of course, it is hard to ignore the fact that these efforts of the early missionaries made many positive contributions to Korean society.

However, these characteristics of Korean missionary history are sometimes cited as the cause of the ill-being of Korean Christianity. First, the influence of the theological conservatism that Korean Christians have received from the early missionaries is not only an advantage to help preserve traditional beliefs but is also a disadvantage that justifies so-called dogmatism. Second, the missionaries' excessive demand for piety for Korean converts had the advantage of playing an important role in changing undesirable

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<sup>610</sup> Ibid., 114–17.

<sup>611</sup> J. R. Moose, "A Great Awakening," *The Korea Mission Field* 2 (1906): 52.

<sup>612</sup> Ryu, *Early American Missionaries in Korea (1884-1910)*, 253.

behaviours but at the same time it might be the cause of Korean Christianity's legalism. Third, while strong discipline is an advantage in preserving the purity of the church, the pastor's absolute authority is pointed out to be the cause of many problems in the church today, such as ignoring democratic processes in the church. Finally, the Puritan vocation perspective and the capitalist ideas conveyed by the missionaries helped converts to accumulate wealth through diligence. However, this is often cited as the cause of two adverse effects, one of which was that the church was coloured by the principles of capitalism and the other was to give rise to the idea that only being rich was a blessing.

### 5.2.2 The prophetic role of the early Korean church

Korean society was greatly influenced by the early missionaries and by the mission agencies and churches established by them. One example is the establishment of hospitals and schools. Missionaries regarded not only leading the individual to salvation but also healing sickness of the body as a means of mission and saw enlightening through education as the shortcut of mission.<sup>613</sup> Medical missions in Korea began with Horace Newton Allen, a Presbyterian missionary.<sup>614</sup> James Gale describes how closely the relationship between mission and medical ministry is as follows:

The first missionary to be appointed was a medical man, the first to arrive on the field was a medical man, the first great loss was a medical man.<sup>615</sup>

Allen describes the initial medical mission as follows:

I asked for, and obtained the use of a building in which to see and treat these people. This, the first modern hospital for the Koreans, was named by the ruler, Chai Chung Won, or house of civilized virtue. It had been the home of one of the officials who was assassinated in the emeute and some of the rooms were blood stained when we took it over. The house was put in good

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<sup>613</sup> Pak, "The Political Activism of Korean Churches Revisited," 164.

<sup>614</sup> Oliver R. Avison, *Memoirs of Life in Korea* (Seoul: Doctor's Weekly, 2012), 95.

<sup>615</sup> James Scarth Gale, *Korea in Transition* (New York: Young People's Missionary Movement of The United States and Canada, 1909), 177.

repair and the afflicted came in hundreds, over ten thousand being treated the first year.<sup>616</sup>

Horace Newton Allen, John W Heron and Horace Grant Underwood established a medical class in 1885 to educate a small number of Koreans in medicine. Underwood taught physics and chemistry, and the other two taught practical medicine. This later developed into a medical college. Since then, many medical missionaries have arrived and they have worked for the health of people throughout the country. When cholera spread in 1895 and more than 5 000 people died in six weeks in Seoul and the surrounding area, missionaries cared for more than 2 000 patients by providing a shelter to accommodate them. After the crisis, the Korean government sent a letter of thanks. According to Young-Sik Lee, through their medical work, the missionaries practised Christian philanthropy by placing importance on human life in the image of God and making a dedicated contribution to the health of Koreans. This work contributed to the improvement of national health by combating various diseases in Korea. Furthermore, establishing many hospitals all over the country and training doctors had a great influence on the medical development of Korea.<sup>617</sup>

Early missionaries were dedicated not only to the establishment of hospitals but also to the establishment of schools. Underwood describes mission work for education as follows:

For many years missionary education led in the introduction of western civilization in the country and a large proportion of the leaders of educational work are products of the missionary endeavor. It is furthermore the phase of education in which students of experimental education and of missionary work in general are most interested. For this reason and because the facts are more accessible, the writer has given more space to this part of modern education.<sup>618</sup>

Efforts for modern education by missionaries spread throughout the country, and these efforts led to the establishment of modern educational institutions, including the first women's school, in various parts of the country. This education fostered young talent, which later played an important role in the independence movement and the interim

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<sup>616</sup> Horace Newton Allen, *Things Korean; A Collection of Sketches and Anecdotes, Missionary and Diplomatic* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1908), 188–89.

<sup>617</sup> Young-Sik Lee, *Korean Presbyterian Church and Nationalistic Movement* (Seoul: The Institute of the History of Christianity in Korea, 2019), 76–85.

<sup>618</sup> Horace Horton Underwood, *Modern Education in Korea* (New York: International Press, 1926), 17.

government. Furthermore, these efforts greatly influenced the development of women's rights by providing women with educational opportunities.<sup>619</sup> This phenomenon was related to the thoughts of the early missionaries. It was their missionary idea that the Holy Spirit called each individual, and then the individual should proclaim the gospel and live a blameless life, transforming society through fellowship with neighbours.<sup>620</sup>

Furthermore, the early Korean churches were deeply interested in the issues of state and nation and actively engaged in the nationalistic movement.<sup>621</sup> According to Chong-Ko Choi, in the late period of Chosun, in general, the idea of achieving political and social reform through religion, and possibly through Christianity, was dominant.<sup>622</sup> Indeed, in Korea, Christianity accompanied the cultural movement from the beginning and was a catalyst in the modernisation of Korean society. Through the dissemination of the Bible and Bible study, Christians deepened their awareness of freedom, independence and justice, and committed themselves to the antifeudal movement.<sup>623</sup> With regard to the economic realities of Korea at that time and the visualisation of the invasion by Japan, missionaries infused courage and conviction instead of frustration, and urged Christians to take their social responsibilities seriously.<sup>624</sup> Since 1907, Japan has openly blamed Christianity for the anti-Japanese resistance in Korea.<sup>625</sup>

The social movements of Korean churches under Japanese colonial rule were mainly conducted by Korean church members, while the social movements in the early days

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<sup>619</sup> Lee, *Korean Presbyterian Church and Nationalistic Movement*, 91–92.

<sup>620</sup> Pak, "The Political Activism of Korean Churches Revisited," 169.

<sup>621</sup> Kim Ju-Duk, on the contrary, argues that the Korean church was passive on social and non-church issues, and disregarded of the rapidly changing political situation, the invasion of Japanese colonialism, and the infiltration of socialist thoughts, and therefore sought afterlife and reality-avoidable faith in the 1930s. See Ju-Duk Kim, "A Research of the Relationship Between the Church and the Theology of Mission in the Korean Church," *University and Mission* 15 (2008): 282–85. There is a different opinion that the missionaries were deeply concerned about the annihilation of Christianity by Japanese colonial rule because of the church's use of politics and nationalistic movements in the face of the great crisis of the Eulsa Treaty and the Korea-Japan annexation. Thus, the church attempted to switch to a more religious church, which is totally separated from political issues and focuses on individual and soul salvation. See Pak, "The Political Activism of Korean Churches Revisited," 174. Similarly, Joon-Bong Jeon argues that early Christians considered loyalty to the state in front of a collapsing nation as the basis of Christian faith, but later the missionaries' non-political attitudes turned Korean churches into non-political dispositions. See Joon-Bong Jeon, "The Problems with the Politicization of the Church in Korea Right after Liberation," *Journal of Historical Theology* 30 (2017): 218–19.

<sup>622</sup> Chong-Ko Choi, *State and Religion* (Seoul: Mordern Thought, 1984), 277.

<sup>623</sup> Pak, "The Political Activism of Korean Churches Revisited," 163.

<sup>624</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>625</sup> Choi, *State and Religion*, 81.

of acceptance of Christianity were mainly carried out by missionaries.<sup>626</sup> From 1905 to 1910, the Christian nationalistic movement spread through prayer meetings for the state. In September 1905, the Presbyterian Council decided to conduct a prayer meeting for the nation for a week from the day after Thanksgiving, and the Methodist Church<sup>627</sup> also implemented such a prayer movement.<sup>628</sup> In this context, great changes occurred in the type of faith of Korean Christians, namely they empirically confessed that God's providence was inherent in the suffering and glory of individuals and the nation. In addition, communal and sacramental faith was finally being realised. As a community established through union with Christ, the church strengthened solidarity by sharing the pain of individuals and the nation. The great revival movement made Korean churches more and more interested in the nation, and they began to believe that faith included the salvation of the nation. As a result, the great revival movement became an anti-Japanese political movement.<sup>629</sup>

Japan pointed to Christians as a force behind the resistance movements that occurred frequently at home and abroad and engineered the so-called '105-Man Incident' in December 1910. Japan tortured the resistance fighters terribly and finally convicted everyone. After being released from prison, Hun Sonu, a victim of the incident, testified about the purpose of the incident, which was to break the barriers to Japanese to rule over Korea by dismantling the secret organisation the New People's Association, imprisoning Christian leaders and defeating missionaries.<sup>630</sup> Missionaries who identified this incident as Christian persecution sought to inform the United States of America mission headquarters and the world media of its falsehood and injustice. As a result, 99 out of 105 convicted during the first trial were found not guilty during the second trial.<sup>631</sup>

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<sup>626</sup> Jeon, "Retrospect and Prospect in Social Movement of Korean Church," 154.

<sup>627</sup> The Methodist missionaries from Drew University that emphasized both reason and experience and pursued a harmony of piety and evangelicalism, embraced 'Social Gospel' and thus actively sought to socialize the gospel. Jeon, "The Problems with the Politicization of the Church in Korea Right after Liberation," 221.

<sup>628</sup> Nak-Heong Yang, *Reformed Social Ethics and Korean Presbyterian Church* (Seoul: The Korea Society for Reformed Faith and Action, 1994), 139.

<sup>629</sup> Pak, "The Political Activism of Korean Churches Revisited," 180–81.

<sup>630</sup> Hun Sonu, *The Suffering of the Nation* (Seoul: Aegugdongjihoe, 1954), 19.

<sup>631</sup> Song, *Calvin and the Common Good*, 106.

The resistance movement of Korean Christianity is expressed dramatically in the March First Independence Movement. The movement was a protest movement led by Christians<sup>632</sup> for Korean independence, and 16 of the 33 who signed the Declaration of Independence were Christians. Ung-Kyu Pak argues that in the process of accelerating the independence movement, the Korean churches provided not only the energy of the independence movement but also the organisational network necessary to spread the movement. It is interesting to note that Christians who had been preparing for the independence movement partnered with Chondogyo, one of the national religions.<sup>633</sup> It is important to note that Christians did not use impulsive violence in their central role in the independence movement. This is a good example of a believer's attempt to transform the state while preserving the nature of faith. These efforts resulted in the dismissal of the Governor-General in Korea, and the Japanese imperialists mitigated military rule and attempted cultural rule.<sup>634</sup>

As shown above, the Korean church not only preached the gospel of Christianity but also made people aware of the concepts of freedom, equality and human rights through the establishment and operation of schools. Medical missionary work through hospitals improved the health of the people through the fight against diseases and provision of health care for the poor. Under Japanese imperialism, Christians' active involvement and initiative in national movements, such as the anti-Japanese movement, was a peculiar form that is not easily seen in the history of Christianity in the world.

Christianity was able to play a central role in the nationalistic movement in Korea because Korea was invaded by a non-Christian state, Japan, unlike many countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas that were invaded by Christian states. In other words, in countries that were invaded by Christian states, the colonial and missionary forces were the same, while in Korea, Christianity did not have any difficulty in actively

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<sup>632</sup> In connection with this incident, 8437 people were imprisoned between March 1 and May 10, 1919, with 1967 Christians, 24% of the total. At that time, Christians accounted for only 1.5% of Korea's population. Kyoung-Bae Min, *Social History of the Korean Church* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2008), 239. As a result, the common people's view of Christianity, which had been regarded as a foreign religion, originated from the Occident, turned into a religion that shared a common destiny with the nation. Eun-Sun Lee, "Korean Church and Political Participation from the View of Korean Church History," *Korea Reformed Theology* 13 (2003): 82.

<sup>633</sup> Pak, "The Political Activism of Korean Churches Revisited," 188–89.

<sup>634</sup> Ung-Kyu Pak, "March First Movement and the Korean Church from a Perspective of Church and State Issue," *Life and Word* 23, no. 1 (2019): 185.

participating in the nationalistic movement.<sup>635</sup> Nationalism in this context was not the pursuit of Koreans' exclusive interests based on the superiority of their own people. Rather, this nationalism was a moral, especially biblical, protest against oppression, violence and inhumane conduct by foreign forces against the nation. In this sense, Christianity can be said to have made a significant contribution to Korea's development as a democratic, independent country.

### 5.2.3 Ideology and the Korean church

In the early days of Korean Christian mission, despite the fact that missionaries were sent from various denominations, conflicts between denominations and sectarian actions between conservative and progressive Christianity were hard to find. Rather, missionaries sent from various denominations attempted to unite with one another for effective mission and to establish one integrated church. However, this union soon broke up in the face of historical trials.

On 15 August 1945, the Japanese emperor unconditionally surrendered, and Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule. Soon after, the Korean Establishment Preparation Board was established. However, the United States of America and the Soviet Union divided Korea based on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel so that the Soviet Union in the north and the United States in the south agreed to establish a military junta. In North Korea, where the Christian influence was strong, the Christian Democratic Party, the first democratic party of Korea, was founded by Christian pastors. The communist regime in North Korea, however, arrested Christian leaders and publicly suppressed the church. In South Korea, on the contrary, Christianity was in a privileged position, which stemmed from the United States military's favour with the Protestant Church. The United States military frequently attempted contact with pastors and other clergy to obtain advice,<sup>636</sup>

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<sup>635</sup> Ibid., 157–58.

<sup>636</sup> Missionaries maintained close ties with the Korean church and with the government while working in the US military government, took it for granted that the church would cooperate with the government. This allowed Christian leaders to take political power. Soo-Chan Kim, "The Korean Church's Relationship with State under the USMG and the First Republic of Korea (1945-1960)," *Journal of Historical Theology* 9 (2005): 118.

and a large amount of aid was distributed through the church. The South Korean churches worked together regardless of denomination to elect Syngman Rhee as the first president.<sup>637</sup> According to Ung-Kyu Pak, this attempt was based not on the judgment of his political philosophy but merely on favourable attitudes towards Christian politicians.<sup>638</sup> The unconditional preference of Christians as politicians is pointed out as a problem in Korean politics today.

Chong-Ko Choi insists that the church's antipathy against communism was firm and consistent, which was not a theological approach to overcoming communist ideology but an emotional expression based on President Rhee's thorough anticommunist thoughts.<sup>639</sup> Korean church leaders drew the concept of holy war and the covenant from the Old Testament to demonstrate this political stance. Based on the Sinai covenant idea that blessings and curses followed the Israelites' obedience and disobedience, the battle against communism was considered to be a just war. The war against communism was regarded as a kind of crusade that prevented communist expansion. Interestingly, the North Korean churches of the Korean Christian Federation regarded the South Korean government and United States troops as demons and wanted God to destroy them.<sup>640</sup> Syngman Rhee tried to pursue Christian politics from his early days, and the church actively engaged in politics after he came to power. In this situation, almost all denominations of Korean Christianity at that time suffered the disintegration of denominations due to the conflict of politics and nontheological factors. In addition, the church neglected the abuse of power and all sorts of antidemocratic operations to extend the Syngman Rhee regime and thus failed to speak a prophetic voice.<sup>641</sup> Jang-Sik Lee argues that the government used anticommunist ideology as a defense of dictatorship and that the church used it as a defense of conservative faith.<sup>642</sup>

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<sup>637</sup> The biggest issue of the South Korean church at that time was the establishment of a Christian state. The claim to rebuild the state on the basis of the Christian spirit has been made openly by Christian politicians and church leaders. 6 (55%) of the 11 administrative advisers including 3 pastors appointed by the US Military Government on October 5, 1945, were Christians. See Jeon, "The Problems with the Politicization of the Church in Korea Right after Liberation," 228–31.

<sup>638</sup> Pak, "The Political Activism of Korean Churches Revisited," 199–200.

<sup>639</sup> Choi, *State and Religion*, 92.

<sup>640</sup> Kim, "The Korean Church's Relationship with State under the USMG and the First Republic of Korea (1945-1960)," 122–23.

<sup>641</sup> Pak, "The Political Activism of Korean Churches Revisited," 200–201.

<sup>642</sup> Jang-Sik Lee, "Korean Political Reality and Church," in *Church and State*, ed. Hanguk Munhwajinheung-won (Seoul: Hanguk Munhwajinheung-won, 1988), 251.

This phenomenon is also seen under the military regime. Korean churches had been silent about the Syngman Rhee regime, but since Park Chung-hee's military coup, some churches began to take critical views. Jang-Sik Lee asserts that the church began to awake from the illusion that Christianity was regarded as the state religion of Korea.<sup>643</sup> The fundamental policy of the military regime was to promote industrialisation with anticommunism. If the Syngman Rhee regime connected democracy with anticommunism, the military regime connected industrialisation with anticommunism.<sup>644</sup> Since the 1960s, the Korean church outwardly has made a distinction between politics and churches but has been indeed deeply rooted in conservative, pro-system-oriented trends.<sup>645</sup> At the same time, there was active unity movement of the church for national evangelisation. This national evangelism movement, which had a revival nature, was strong enough to make the church refrain from engaging in the reality of politics. The churches therefore aimed at quantitative revival and growth into mega-churches.<sup>646</sup>

In this context, the Korean church was divided into conservative and progressive and began to show sharp opposition between these two poles. While conservative churches were committed to the growth and revival of local churches, emphasising evangelism in the shifting of large populations of rural areas to cities as a result of urbanisation and industrialisation, progressive churches, with their interest in human rights and social justice, engaged in politics, and struggled against the state for democratisation. Furthermore, in the process of industrialisation, the emphasis on wealth became widespread in the church, and faith for blessing became increasingly common.<sup>647</sup>

Korean Christianity was firmly united in the context of Japanese imperialism, but as the Korean peninsula became a place of confrontation between communism and liberal democracy after the liberation, the Korean church also began to divide into conservative and progressive church. Accordingly, conservative and progressive churches took their

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<sup>643</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>644</sup> Pak, "The Political Activism of Korean Churches Revisited," 202.

<sup>645</sup> Nyung Kim, *Korean Politics and Church-State Conflict* (Seoul: Sonamu, 1996), 229.

<sup>646</sup> Lee, "Korean Political Reality and Church," 255.

<sup>647</sup> Pak, "The Political Activism of Korean Churches Revisited," 203.

place with different emphasis. This feature is illustrated by the role of the church in Korean society since the 1970s.

#### **5.2.4 The political role of Christianity in the development of Korean democracy**

After the Korean War, Korean society and politics were in ideological confrontation. In the 1960s, while the dictatorship was established by a military coup d'état, the young scholars who returned home from theological education abroad began to recognise the church's social responsibility to Korean society and then called for a deep theological reflection on it. Furthermore, in 1970, the suicide of a 20-year-old Christian worker gave the church and progressive theologians a new appreciation of the realities of the political and economic situation in Korea. In this context, theologians reflected theologically on the reality of oppressed and marginalised people, and this resulted in Minjung theology.<sup>648</sup> After the 1970s, Korean churches were more explicitly divided into conservative churches that obeyed political power and progressive churches that stood against dictatorship, based on Minjung theology.

Minjung theology is rooted in what Jae-Joon Kim and some progressive pastors regarded the Korean church's role as a handmaiden of political power. In particular, Jae-Joon emphasised that the Korean churches should abandon their attitudes of compromising or neglecting injustice and should have a thorough awareness of their historical responsibilities. As these theological reflections began to be systemised in the mid-1970s, Minjung theology was born. Integrating liberation theology based on Marxism and Korean resentment, Minjung theologians attempted to defend workers' rights and human rights and to democratise Korean society through active resistance in the midst of the oppression of the people in the 1970s.<sup>649</sup> On 1 March 1976, at the Myeongdong Cathedral, Protestant and Catholic leaders and politicians dedicated to the democratisation of Korean society gathered together to announce the declaration of

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<sup>648</sup> Kim, "A Research of the Relationship Between the Church and the Theology of Mission in the Korean Church," 289.

<sup>649</sup> Lee, "Korean Church and Political Participation from the View of Korean Church History," 86.

national salvation. It is noteworthy that this event led to the development of Protestant and Catholic Church cooperation with one another in many cases of the democratisation movement. The Urban Industrial Mission began at first with the purpose of evangelism and fellowship for workers. However, when the negative effects of industrialisation began to emerge from the early 1970s, it supported the formation and education of democratic labour unions. The labour movement of the Korean church had focused mainly on improving the treatment of workers and working conditions until the mid-1970s but concentrated on the struggle against the government soon after realising that the government was the root cause of these problems.<sup>650</sup>

Joon-Bong Jeon classified the social movements of the Korean church into three forms, adding the unification movement to the pro-democracy and labour movements, which were mentioned earlier. According to him, the view of unification of the Korean church was in line with the government's ideology that claimed 'unification by pushing forward to the North'. Even in the 1970s, the church was not able to deal with the issue of unification because of the task of democratisation. Subsequent unification movements took place mainly in foreign countries because churches could not freely discuss unification under the military regime.<sup>651</sup> Nevertheless, these efforts were meaningful because they later became the basis for more active discussion by the churches on the issue of unification.

However, there is also a voice against the progressive church's political intervention. Jang-Sik Lee warns that the church's active intervention in politics could easily destroy the principle of the separation of church and state. This may lead to a close bond between the two, resulting in Christians' dreaming of old-time theocracy that is not feasible.<sup>652</sup>

During the military dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s, while progressive churches in Korea actively engaged in social movements, conservative churches were relatively indifferent to social movements, more focusing on the issue of individual salvation. Conservative churches expressed their opinions only on religious matters and were

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<sup>650</sup> Jeon, "Retrospect and Prospect in Social Movement of Korean Church," 162,164.

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>652</sup> Lee, "Korean Political Reality and Church," 270–71.

silent on unjust social issues. Rather, the extremely conservative churches and ministers were progovernment and this tendency was expressed in the annual National Prayer Breakfast held since 1 May 1968. Occasionally, progovernment comments were made at this meeting, causing national anger. Conservative churches revealed duplicity by criticising the attitude of progressive churches for social participatory speech with saying that it was ‘political participation under the pretext of social participation’, at the same time, frequently issuing progovernment statements for the sake of themselves. On 6 August 1980, more than 20 progovernment church leaders, including Pastor Kyung-Jik Han, an influential leader of the Korean church, held a breakfast prayer meeting for Doo-Hwan Chun, the head of the military coup. The church readers compared Doo-Hwan Chun to Moses’ successor, Joshua, as a leader who tried to maintain order in times of confusion.<sup>653</sup> They did not understand social reality from the victim’s point of view and defend the suffering of the socially weak, but represented the vested interests and the political logic of the state ruler.<sup>654</sup>

Of course, it does not mean that conservative churches never spoke to social and political issues. In June 1987, when the inflamed people struggled against the dictatorship, the conservative churches that had been silent eventually joined battle. This is meaningful in that the conservative churches that had been progovernment, finally showed the prophetic role of the church.<sup>655</sup> Nevertheless, such efforts of conservative churches are so rare that people generally recognise that conservative churches tend to be progovernment. These tendencies have been expressed more strongly in Korean political discourses in recent years. In addition, the conflict between progressives and conservatives is deepening.

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<sup>653</sup> Jeon, “Retrospect and Prospect in Social Movement of Korean Church,” 166–68.

<sup>654</sup> Kim, “Social Calvinism,” 166.

<sup>655</sup> Jeon, “Retrospect and Prospect in Social Movement of Korean Church,” 168–69.

### 5.2.5 Canonical Reformed theology stemmed from Machen and Van Til

The Reformed theology of the conservative Presbyterian Church, as the mainstream Korean church, is far from the aspect of the Reformed theology shared by the academia of theology across the world today, especially in Europe. Dong-Chun Kim asserts that the cause of this phenomenon is that early Korean Reformed theology was influenced by the Reformed theology of North America formed after the 1920s, particularly the theology of Gresham Machen and Cornelius van Til. According to Kim, the theology of the Korean Presbyterian Church is not brought from German Reformed theology, which has come down in its long history, but from the theology of the fundamentalist type claimed by Machen, which is based on the fragmentary and malformed logic in the fierce confrontation with liberal theology. Van Til's theology is further embodied in Machen's fundamentalist Reformed theology, which strongly criticises Barth's theology. For Van Til, Barth's theology was liberal theology itself, not the neo-orthodoxy that was opposed to liberal theology. This theological disposition has been implanted into the theology of the Presbyterian Church in Korea. This prevented subsequent generations from seeing the whole of comprehensive Reformed theology and hindered their understanding of the diversity of Reformed theology. This theology is characterised by uncompromising separation, disconnection and exclusivity. What Korean Reformed theology followed the Reformed theology of fundamentalist propensity claimed by Machen can be considered as a crucial role to contribute to the adherence of conservative theology but also as a negative role in terms of the impediment to the theological development of the Korean Presbyterian Church.<sup>656</sup>

Here, it is worth noting that John Stott in his book *Issues Facing Christians Today* points out why evangelicals drew attention from the issues of society. According to him, the first reason is that churches fought fiercely against theological liberalism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. At this time, a series of booklets titled *The Fundamentals* was published in the United States of America, in which the term 'fundamentalism' emerged. As evangelicals spent more time to defend the justification of the fundamentals of faith,

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<sup>656</sup> Dong-Chun Kim, "Paradigm of Korean Reformed Theology," *International Theological Journal* 12 (2010): 35–42.

their interest in society relatively diminished. They further opposed the so-called ‘social gospel’ that theological liberals developed. For example, Walter Rauschenbusch criticised capitalism and advocated a simple form of ‘communism’ or Christian socialism.<sup>657</sup> In the end, this situation in the United States of America would certainly have an impact on Korean Christianity that adopted its theology from America.

The negative effects that Dong-Chun Kim points out are the followings: First, the Korean Presbyterian Church is theologically disconnected from Reformed theology and the Reformed Church of the world. Therefore, the disconnection had a negative effect on the active and positive contribution of the Korean church to the church of the world. Second, following the fundamentalist tradition led to a theological severance between the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Reformed theology and the 21<sup>st</sup>-century Reformed theology. In other words, they only focused their faithfulness on the legacy of the Reformation but they neglected the formation and development of creative Reformed theology. To them, doing Reformed theology meant only adherence to the already recognised 16<sup>th</sup>-century Reformed theology.<sup>658</sup> Third, the theological severance resulted in the failure to provide an adequate response to the various problems facing Christians today.<sup>659</sup>

In the light of Kim’s arguments, is it obvious that there is no public theological discussion among conservative churches in Korea? In order for active constructive public theological discussions to take place among conservative churches in Korea, I insisted on re-evaluating or re-reading Calvin’s theology through a public theological perspective.

### **5.2.6 Reflections on the role of the conservative churches in Korean history**

As discussed above, the role of the Korean church has changed along with the tide of Korean history. The early theological characteristics of the Korean church were

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<sup>657</sup> Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 29.

<sup>658</sup> Some named it the ‘strict’ Reformed theology. A number of dissertations, including the term ‘strict Reformed theology’, were presented at conservative theological seminaries.

<sup>659</sup> Kim, “Paradigm of Korean Reformed Theology,” 44–46.

conservatively shaped by the missionaries' arrivals from conservative denominations adhering to Calvinism from the United States of America, Canada and Australia and their roles in Korea. Therefore, conservative Korean churches today also tend to focus on Calvinist doctrine. This theological conservatism played an effective role in improving the desperate state of Korea during the time of enlightenment because the early Korean churches stressed piety with regard to matters such as Sabbath keeping, alcohol and tobacco use, and gambling, and severely punished any believers who did not obey their directives. However, this strict discipline strengthened pastoral authority. The authority of the pastors was not confined to the spiritual dimension but extended to everyday life and thus had an omnidirectional influence. It is no exaggeration to say that these influences on early Christianity in Korea still affect conservative churches.

In fact, under Japanese colonial rule, the church spoke with a prophetic voice for national independence. Indeed, this was not only for national independence itself but also for human rights and freedom. In this movement the role of Christians who learned the concepts of human rights, freedom and equality from the Bible was very significant. Therefore, Christianity and social and political issues were closely intertwined at that time. It is notable that many Koreans regarded Christianity as a religion that would liberate the nation from Japanese colonial rule, while other subject peoples regarded Christianity as the religion of invaders.

After the liberation, the Korean peninsula was divided into North and South, becoming the stage of the confrontation between the United States of America, the liberal democracy, and the Soviet Union, the communism, and the church was also influenced by this ideology. Soon after the Korean War, the church had opposed communism in one voice and tried to establish one free state. However, politicians used this ideological conflict as a means to gain power. As a result, Christianity in South Korea rejected communism and became progovernment. Since then, the church began to lose its prophetic voice, which is its essential calling. Of course, some progressive churches joined the resistance of the citizens who were angered by the long military dictatorship and the undemocratic behaviours stemmed from it. However, these churches were only a small minority. Rather, the mainstream conservative churches were silent on these social realities and were only engrossed in the revival of the local churches in keeping with the rapid development of the economy.

When examining the relationship between the Korean church and politics or the state, one may wonder whether this is a type of civil religion. This argument is valid in the sense that Christianity has been used by the United States military government since liberation and by Korean Christian politicians since the inception of the First Republic to fulfil their political goals. Even today, this situation is either sustained or worse. However, it should be noted that people did not use Christianity to achieve their specific political ends in the early Korean church. Rather, the notions of freedom, equality and justice taught from Christian truth naturally led people into political sphere.

In the Christian community that is aware of this situation, there is a call to restore the fundamental calling of the church, that is, the prophetic role of the church, from both progressive and conservative churches, and even from non-Christians. In response to this request, churches and academia had various discussions in honour of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, with the slogan *ad fontes*. However, the researches of conservative theologians seem to show that they have just repeated already existing research on the Reformation and Reformers. For this reason, I argue that public theological discussion is very necessary in the context of Korea today.

### **5.3 Doing public theology in Korea**

In the previous section, I examined the role of the Korean churches, especially the conservative churches as mainstream, in the history of Korean Christianity. The features found from the Korean church history naturally showed the need for public theological discussion among the conservative churches in Korea. In this section, I will present both Calvinist and public theological discussion to address the crisis facing the conservative Korean churches. This attempt will not only provide conservative churches with a public theological perspective but also give them an opportunity to re-evaluate Calvin's theology. For this purpose, I will continue the discussion by linking the six characteristics of public theology presented by Heinrich Bedford-Strohm with Calvin's theology in the specific issues in Korea. However, the discussions undertaken in this section will be confined to only Korean Reformed theologies, not extended to the entire Korean church.

### **5.3.1 To what extent can Korean Reformed theologies be translated into the language of the world?**

As we saw in chapters 2 and 3, public theology emphasises its basis on the Bible and church tradition and at the same time seeks to translate the findings derived from this theological basis into the language of the world. If so, the question of what an acceptable level of translation is becomes important.

Public theology has its grounds on Christian tradition, which points out that the church is different from other political interests striving for their own benefit in the political realm (cf., 3.2.1). This characteristic distinguishes public theology from political philosophy. Public theology argues that the gospel can provide resources for ethical judgment in the complex world. This idea is of significant because many have argued that religion has nothing to say in the public realm and should therefore be silent (cf., 2.5). In reality, however, religion has become more and more influential in the public sphere in recent years, so it has become almost impossible to exclude the voice of religion from public discourse. Similarly, the influence of religion, including Christianity, is very strong in Korean politics. With this practical request, the argument that the church has a call to be a prophetic voice to society is getting more support.

Calvin followed Biblical principles when reforming both the church and the entire city of Geneva. In his reform work, he always sought to find the basis on the Bible and the Christian tradition (cf., 4.2.1). In particular, he frequently quoted the works of the fathers in his arguments (cf., 4.2.2). However, what conservative Korean churches are more interested in is that despite Calvin's respect for tradition and his perpetual quotation of the fathers, he sometimes boldly criticised the works of the fathers if it was not consistent with biblical principles. Thus, in view of this attitude, it is expected that Calvin would never allow his followers to blindly follow his theology. However, as Dong-Chun argues, Calvinist Reformed theology in Korea has almost been defined as canonical theology because conservative Christians have understood this theology as a theological system that is certainly orthodox, without any doctrinal error, incompatible

with other theologies, and in itself has perfection, finality and inerrancy.<sup>660</sup> De Gruchy criticises this attitude as follows:

Each of the classic and more contemporary Reformed confessions of faith is a product of a particular historical moment in the journey of the Reformed community of faith, not the end point. To cling uncritically to them in the present, as though fidelity to them in itself means salvation, is a denial of their intent to point beyond themselves to the gospel. Adherence to a confession cannot be a substitute for hearing and obeying the Word that addresses us in new ways, at new times, and in new places.<sup>661</sup>

In addition, pastor John Robinson's sermon on the pilgrim fathers in 1620 speaks to us today:

For my part I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of those Reformed Churches which are come to a period in religion and will go at present no further than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw. Whatever part of His will our God revealed to Calvin, they will die rather than embrace; and the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things.<sup>662</sup>

This is more evident in the Korean context. Korean Reformed theologies focus more on sticking to Calvinist theology than finding responses today's issues from it.

Dong-Chun Kim points out that Korean reformed theologies became exclusive and sectarian in nature, lacking publicity, due to a distorted understanding of Calvin's theology. First, Calvinism, which emphasises God's sovereignty, tends to put God's sovereignty and free will at a logical point of opposition. By weakening free will to further emphasise God's sovereignty, the Christian's voluntary and active zeal for the common good was also weakened. This attitude eventually led to fatalistic thinking, overlooking human ethical responsibilities in society. Second, the doctrine of predestination as Calvinists understood it made them accept and endure the reality given to them. This perception prevented conservative Christians from actively acting on social change and progress of history. Third, the doctrine of total depravity as Calvinists understood it helped them to recognise the seriousness of humanity's fall and corruption but also made them overlook the fact that God's image that helped humans

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<sup>660</sup> I've already covered this in the previous section. For the deeper understanding about it, see Kim, "Paradigm of Korean Reformed Theology."

<sup>661</sup> Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology*, 64.

<sup>662</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 64–65.

to seek the common good still remained in humanity despite this fall. Fourth, the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints that they emphasised resulted in an overly victorious view of salvation and therefore did not have ethical urgency because the salvation of the elect, regardless of their deeds in daily life, is certainly guaranteed.<sup>663</sup>

However, it must be reiterated that such attitude is attributable to a misunderstanding of Calvinism. Indeed, this attitude towards Calvinist theology is the opposite of Calvin's original intentions.<sup>664</sup> Therefore, the attitude of these blind followers should be corrected. Just as Calvin reinterpreted tradition to solve the problems facing his time, Korean Reformed theologies now need to reinterpret Calvin's theology to respond to the problems facing the church today. To this end, they must recognise that the situation of Calvin's era was very different from the present situation in Korea and acknowledge the need to reinterpret Calvin's outstanding theological achievements for the present Korean society.

In order for Christianity to engage in the public discourse, Christian truth should be translated into the language of the world (cf., 3.3) because the gospel is not proclaimed only for Christians but for the whole universe governed by God (cf., 3.3.3). However, for those who are not yet members of the church the language of the church is difficult to understand. Public theology, therefore, to communicate with the secular world, constantly performs the task of translating the gospel into a language that the world can understand and accept. Of course, some people argue that the gospel does not need to be translated into the language of the world (cf., 3.3.2). Korean Reformed theologies are closer to this viewpoint. This theological tendency is represented by Hauerwas's claim that the church must first become a true church. The church must live in its own language in the world, not in the language of the world. In other words, people who reject the theology of translation are wary of losing their uniqueness by translating theology into the language of the world. Conservative churches in Korea have also offered the criticism that progressive churches lose church's true meaning as they too actively participate in social movements and eventually show no difference from social movement groups (cf., 5.2.4). Thus, conservative Korean churches fear that if they

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<sup>663</sup> Kim, "Social Calvinism," 162–64.

<sup>664</sup> It should be considered once again here that Calvin was strongly opposed to give any tradition a superiority over the Bible.

accept public theological approaches, the church will lose its identity and rather adapt itself to the world. Likewise, Korean Reformed theologies seem to agree with Hauerwas's criticism that Stackhouse is following the tradition of enlightenment and liberalism (cf., 3.3.2) and thus they doubt the public theological approach. However, this overly defensive attitude is likely to regard the conservative churches as sectarian. In particular, conservative Korean churches have revealed this shortcoming clearly in the past. Dong-Chun Kim points out that Korean Reformed theology is not conveyed as a rational and reasonable belief in modern society where reason and rationality dominate.<sup>665</sup>

After all, the question is whether the church will focus more on the 'public' or more on 'theology'. Korean Reformed theologies have focused on 'theology' thoroughly. As seen in the history of Korean church, this perception has prevented Korean mainstream churches from directly engaging in social affairs, deprived them of the opportunity to speak with prophetic voices and turned them into churches for church members only (cf., 5.2.1-5.2.2).

If so, is reconciliation between the two different views impossible? I argue that Calvin's theology can provide some insights to this conflict and that Korean Reformed theologies thus should listen to Calvin's argument.<sup>666</sup> Calvin seems to agree that the gospel plays an important role in the secular world as well as in the church because God rules not only the churches and believers but also the entire universe, including non-believers. In this sense, Wolterstorff describes the social, political, economic and cultural influence of Calvinism as 'world-formative Christianity'. This Calvinism motivates the church to actively embody God's sovereignty in society on the premise that the whole realm is under God's sovereignty, beyond the dichotomy of the religious and secular realms.<sup>667</sup>

Calvin's concept of divine accommodation (cf., 4.3.1) provides the theological justification for theology to be translated for secular societies still under God's rule. If

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<sup>665</sup> Kim, "Social Calvinism," 155.

<sup>666</sup> The neo-Calvinist Richard Mouw suggests in his book *Uncommon Decency* how Christians can have peaceful coexistence with non-believers in a pluralist society while maintaining their Calvinist beliefs. See Richard J. Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011).

<sup>667</sup> Kim, "Social Calvinism," 153–54.

God has translated the truth into human language for human understanding, it is not unreasonable to translate the language of the church into the language of the world for non-Christian understanding. In other words, God's expression of truth in human everyday language for the sake of human is in line with theology's use of the language of the world to communicate with the wider society. Keeping in mind that even those who are not yet members of the church can become Christians in the future, translation for them becomes even more important. However, an important fact is that Calvin sets clear limits on these translations. When developing his theology, Calvin connected cosmology with theology but never adapted theology to cosmology (cf., 4.3.2). For him, the biblical explanation of cosmology and the functioning of nature is contained in his hermeneutical principle of 'accommodation'. In short, he did not admit the indefinite translation of theology into the language of the world. By seriously considering this concept of Calvin, the concern that translating theology into the language of the world will impair the uniqueness of theology will be wiped out.

I have already pointed out in Chapter 2 that the position of Christianity in the Korean context is different from that of Germany where Bedford-Strohm as a significant role player is still contributing to society and where Christianity plays a major role. I have also shown that Korean church cannot speak a prophetic voice to the wider society because many Koreans do not trust the church anymore. The reason why the Korean church has lost its credibility lies in the distorted and narrow-minded structure of belief in the orthodox Calvinist group with a conservative theology and the bizarre theological logic inherent in this way of thinking.<sup>668</sup> Therefore, in order for the Korean church, especially conservative churches, to engage in the public sphere and to present a biblical contribution, it is urgent to restore the confidence that they lost. This is why we cannot overlook the arguments of theologians such as Hauerwas (cf., 3.3.2), who insist that the church first should become a true church. This is also the reason why the Korean church needs to re-evaluate Calvin's theology and his piety, which led the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Geneva.

Korean Reformed theologies should first be able to reinterpret Calvin's theology with reference to the present situation in Korea. To this end, they have to seriously consider

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<sup>668</sup> Ibid., 150.

public theological approaches. First, they must, as both Calvin's theology and public theology insist, speak a prophetic voice for the secular world, still governed by God, rather than just for the church. In order to successfully do this, translating theology into a language that the world can understand is essential, and Calvin's concept of 'divine accommodation' provides a theological basis for this. Second, since unrestricted translations can cause the church to lose its identity, the work of translation requires appropriate guidelines that we found in Calvin's theology. In other words, as Calvin did, it is very important to maintain the unique identity of Christianity and not to abandon the basic truth of Christianity while talking to the world in the language of the world. This may help Korean Reformed theology dispel doubts about public theological approaches. Third, with careful consideration of Hauerwas's arguments, we can recover credibility from society. If Korean Reformed theology has focused so much on 'justification', it should now be more concerned with 'sanctification' of believers. Restoring the credibility of the conservative Korean church will make the church's prophetic role stronger in public.

### **5.3.2 How can Korean Reformed theologies communicate with other disciplines and other religions?**

As mentioned above, in order to be convincing, the church's message to the secular world should be expressed in the language of the world. This requires the use of other academic insights. Of course, there has been various attempts for comprehensive research projects between systematic theology and practical theology, missiology and biblical theology, etc. However, now it is time to become more engaged in interdisciplinary research with other disciplines such as law, economics, sociology, politics, science and so on. When public theology deals with public issues of culture, society, politics, science, technology and economics, rational and logical dialogue with experts is almost impossible without using knowledge gained from each involved field. In this sense, Stott asserts that although the decision on whether the church will take corporate political action can be different among the Lutheran, Reformed or Anabaptist traditions within Protestantism, it can be agreed among them that at least the church must not enter the field without the necessary expertise. When church leaders take time

and make the effort to study a complex topic, their informed and united stand is extremely influential.<sup>669</sup> Moreover, Dong-Gon Jung questions whether teaching only the Bible is the biblical way, and argues that ironically, when we accept only ‘the special revelation’ and reject ‘the general revelation’, we are faced with the contradiction of denying even the Bible. Thus, we should learn general disciplines such as languages, mathematics, science, law and medicine. Theology does not have the authority to ignore general disciplines.<sup>670</sup>

However, Korean Reformed theologies following Calvin’s theology tend to underestimate the value of other disciplines. Emphasising the absolute and exclusive superiority of theology, they often ignore other disciplines. For them, theology seeks to firmly hold the throne and dominate all other disciplines. Other disciplines must obey theology absolutely. This is what causes Korean Reformed theologies to neglect interdisciplinary studies. In other words, they do not need the help of other disciplines. Rather, for them, acceptance and application of the knowledge of other disciplines mean that theology obeys to other disciplines. Thus this attempt tends to be regarded as a methodology of liberal theology. However, this is a misunderstanding of Calvin’s view. Calvin distinguished the understanding of earthly things and the form of the human community from that of heavenly things (cf., 4.4). Earthly things are related to the meaning of temporal life, which includes “government, household management, all mechanical skills, and the liberal arts”.<sup>671</sup> Therefore, in order for us to live on earth and to understand earthly things, it is essential to have knowledge about them.

In order for public theology to communicate with the wider society, to persuade people and to draw them into dialogue, knowledge of other disciplines is required. Calvin also stressed that other disciplines could not be ignored:

Shall we deny that the truth shone upon the ancient jurists who established civic order and discipline with such great equity? Shall we say that the philosophers were blind in their fine observation and artful description of nature? Shall we say that those men were devoid of understanding who conceived the art of disputation and taught us to speak reasonably? Shall we say that they are insane who developed medicine, devoting their labor to our benefit? What shall we say of all thee mathematical sciences? Shall

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<sup>669</sup> Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 44.

<sup>670</sup> Jung, “Calvin’s Theology and Interdisciplinary Insight Theology,” 58.

<sup>671</sup> Inst. II.2.13.

we consider them the ravings of madmen? No, we cannot read the writings of the ancients on these subjects without great admiration. We marvel at them because we are compelled to recognize how preeminent they are.<sup>672</sup>

In addition, he claimed that there was much evidence of God's wonderful wisdom in heaven and on earth:

There are innumerable evidences both in heaven and on earth that declare his wonderful wisdom ... Indeed, men who have either quaffed or even tasted the liberal arts penetrate with their aid far more deeply into the secrets of the divine wisdom.<sup>673</sup>

Therefore, it cannot be denied that Calvin had a positive attitude towards interdisciplinary research.

In this sense, John Polkinghorne points out that it is a rather strange phenomenon that science and religion are perceived as being in conflict with each other. What both theology and science have in common is the search for truth, and therefore their relationship is a kinship that complements each other. Theology and science share the conviction that truth exists, despite the difference that theology learns from the Bible what the universal principles of the world are, while science studies through scientific instruments.<sup>674</sup> Werner Heisenberg also argues that science needs the help of philosophy and that without it, science encounters limitations. He argues that even though he himself is a physicist, he should be a philosopher to study quantum theory because it is now a philosophical problem.<sup>675</sup>

However, in this interdisciplinary study, if too much attention is paid to the results of other studies, the uniqueness of theology itself will disappear. Therefore, while pursuing interdisciplinary research with other scholarships, the content of theology should not be abandoned. In this sense, Calvin pursued interdisciplinary study in a different sense from Aquinas. Aquinas's theology began with human reason, while the starting point of Calvin's theology was the revelation of God. We should keep in mind

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<sup>672</sup> Inst. II.2.15.

<sup>673</sup> Inst. I.5.2.

<sup>674</sup> John Polkinghorne, *Quantum Physics and Theology: An Unexpected Kinship* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), 1,108.

<sup>675</sup> Jung, "Calvin's Theology and Interdisciplinary Insight Theology," 77. "I am a physicist, after all, and not a philosopher, and have just been forced by the development of quantum theory to deal now again with philosophical problem." Cathryn Carson, *Heisenberg in the Atomic Age: Science and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 98.

that while Calvin strongly encouraged the use of reason, he always emphasised that reason was God's gift, not humanity's own ability.<sup>676</sup>

Therefore, both should be emphasised at the same time: promoting interdisciplinary research with the recognition of kinship between theology and other disciplines and nevertheless being careful not to lose the uniqueness of theology itself. There is a reason why God has given us natural revelation, not only the Bible. Therefore, we must not overemphasise or ignore either one. However, given the possibility of underestimating interdisciplinary research with too much emphasis on the Bible, Korean Reformed theologies should now emphasise natural revelation more. In other words, Korean Reformed theologies should pay more attention to Calvin's legacy; respecting other disciplines and enriching theology through their knowledge.

Public theology seeks to find a common language between Christianity and other religions as well as between theology and other disciplines. As confirmed in Chapter 3, many public theologians, including Bedford-Strohm, describe interreligious dialogue as a very significant public theological element. We live in a pluralistic, multireligious society. It means that people of different cultures and religions live together in one community. Therefore, we inevitably need dialogue with our neighbour who believe in other religions. In this regard, Stott argues as follows:

So, while respecting the views of those who belongs to other religions, we must be careful to be aware of their influence on the society in which we live, as we also invite them to debate with us about the way we live and the positions we hold. What we cannot do is seek to impose our worldview on other religious groups even though we are aware that we disagree with them.<sup>677</sup>

In contrast, Korean Reformed theologies are reluctant to have a conversation with people who believe in other religions. They believe that this attempt results in concealing or abandoning the inherent faith of Christianity and eventually to accepting pantheism. Such attitude of mainstream of Korean Christianity has led to a sharp conflict with other religions and even other cultures expressed in other religions. A good example is the attitude of Korean Christians towards Yemeni refugees who

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<sup>676</sup> Jung, "Calvin's Theology and Interdisciplinary Insight Theology," 73.

<sup>677</sup> Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 73.

recently arrived in Jeju Island.<sup>678</sup> Then, is it possible for conservative Korean Christians to engage in dialogue with people who believe in other religions in this context?

In fact, in Calvin's theology and his work in Geneva, it is very difficult to find active and explicit evidence with regard to dialogue with other religious people. Perhaps the reason is that Calvin was a man of times when massacres and wars were rampant because of conflicts between Protestantism and Catholicism. While Protestants as the weak were massacred by Catholics as the strong because of only differences in faith, it would be nearly impossible to pursue peaceful inter-religious dialogue. Rather, participating in dialogue with Catholicism was like trying to die. In this sense, it is meaningful enough that Calvin pursued and actually participated in dialogue with Catholics.

First, as we have seen in the previous chapter, during his stay in Strasbourg, Calvin participated in theological debates and dialogues between Catholics and Protestants. Regarding the document on the doctrine of justification prepared at the meeting in Regensburg, Calvin was dissatisfied and critical but eventually signed the document. Because of this, Otto Weber argued that Calvin prioritised peace within the church and sometimes thus accepted a rather dangerous resolution. This shows that he did his best to reunite with the Catholics.<sup>679</sup>

Furthermore, Calvin worked for the unity of each of the sharply opposed traditions within Protestantism. Calvin cooperated with Bullinger and in 1549 published the *Consensus Tigurinus*. Even when the Lutheran Church and the Reformed Church were experiencing political discord, he intervened for their reconciliation, believing that the differences between Lutherans and Zwinglians were not so serious.<sup>680</sup> Given today's peaceful coexistence and unity among the denominations in Protestantism, Calvin's efforts can be underestimated. However, recalling the situation in which Luther

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<sup>678</sup> In 2018, more than 500 Yemenites entered Jeju Island and applied to the government for refugee status, which became a hot issue in Korean society. In particular, conservative Christians argued that their applications for refugee status should be rejected because their religion was Islam.

<sup>679</sup> For more details, see Otto Weber, *Die Treue Gottes in Der Geschichte Der Kirche*, vol. 29 (Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1968).

<sup>680</sup> Mühlhling, "Calvin and the Swiss Confederation," 70.

condemned the Reformed Church as heresy, we can see how difficult his efforts to bring about unity were.

Indeed, Calvin's theological ideas for unity of the church were often expressed in his work. According to him, "wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists."<sup>681</sup> This is the proclamation of the principle that if the preach of the Word and the administering of the sacraments are done properly, the church can be regarded as a true church, which is an expression of a strong ethos for the unity of the church. "We must not reject it so long as it retains them, even if it otherwise swarms with many faults."<sup>682</sup> Thus, "for it may happen that we ought to treat like brothers and count as believers those whom we think unworthy of the fellowship of the godly, because of the common agreement of the church by which they are borne and tolerated in the body of Christ." By doing this, "we preserve for the universal church its unity, which devilish spirits have always tried to sunder."<sup>683</sup> He points out why we should not judge others:

[To] know who are His is a prerogative belonging solely to God. Steps were indeed thus taken to restrain men's undue rashness. ... For those who seemed utterly lost and quite beyond hope are by his goodness called back to the way; while those who more than others seemed to stand firm often fall.<sup>684</sup>

In other words, "we are not bidden to distinguish between reprobate and elect – that is for God alone, not for us, to do."<sup>685</sup> Looking at Calvin's argument, at the very least, the misconception that Calvin supported schism should be reconsidered. Therefore, Korean Reformed theologians who follow Calvin but do not show efforts to bring about reunion after dividing into numerous denominations should listen to Calvin's voice. Given his intense passion for church unity in his time of even more severe and sharp conflict than now, if Calvin were living today, would he not have encouraged dialogue with other religions?

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<sup>681</sup> Inst. IV.2.9.

<sup>682</sup> Inst. IV.2.11.

<sup>683</sup> Inst. IV.2.9.

<sup>684</sup> Inst. IV.2.8.

<sup>685</sup> Inst. IV.2.3.

How can the Korean church participate in dialogue with other religions? According to the concept that Bedford-Strohm provided (cf., 3.4.3), the conservative Korean church shows the model of Christocentric exclusivism. While this model has the advantage of helping to preserve Christian intrinsic values and beliefs, it has the disadvantage of being very exclusive to other religions. Furthermore, this forces a one-sided conversion, which intensifies the conflict among religions. Nevertheless, the pluralistic theology of religion model cannot be a model for the Korean church since it will eventually dilute Christian uniqueness. However, the Trinitarian inclusivism model, which Bedford-Strohm describes as a proper model, could be an alternative for the Korean church. It implies a passionate witness to the Trinitarian God that clearly distinguishes the convictions of Christianity from that of other religions. Thus, this model can help Christians to engage in dialogue with other religions while not giving up their own faith. As Bedford-Strohm says, this model does not ignore the tension among different religious convictions but explores how we deal with this tension. It is not a matter of levelling the differences but of dealing with these differences, which is characterised not by mutual devaluation but by mutual listening.

In this sense, the method of ‘persuasion’ suggested by Stott can be another alternative for the Korean church. He describes three ways in which Christianity responds to pluralism: imposition, laissez-faire and persuasion. The method of imposition is incompatible with the Christian faith. The policy of imposition is not a proper method that people who hold a biblical doctrine of human beings can use. The method of laissez-faire is also rejected by Christians because they believe that God has revealed the truth in Jesus Christ. The gravest example of this is that the German church failed to speak out against the Nazi Holocaust. The biblical doctrine of God and humans offers persuasion as a way of action in a pluralistic society. “Because God is who he is, we cannot be indifferent when his truth and law are flouted, but because human beings are who they are, we cannot try to impose them by force.” Therefore, we must seek ‘authority from below’, which is self-evident and self-authenticating. As the apostles did, we should reasonably argue using the knowledge of nature and the truths of Scripture to bring people to the gospel of God. Instead of relying exclusively on the

dogmatic assertion of biblical values, we should convince people of the superiority of God's law by making rational arguments about the benefits of Christian morality.<sup>686</sup>

At this time, the Korean church needs to reduce the fear that Christianity will lose its identity in dialogue with other religions. If a Christian is too concerned about this, is this not an act of underestimating the competence of Christianity? Or if a Christian considers Christianity as a religion that is fundamentally unable to communicate with other religions, is this not an act of abandoning the rationality of Christianity?

### **5.3.3 How can Korean Reformed theologies provide political direction?**

Considering the political perceptions of the conservative churches in Korea, they should pay particular attention to the fourth characteristic of public theology that Bedford-Strohm presents: competency to provide political direction (cf., 3.5). As we have seen, the conservative churches in Korea display two extremes in relation to politics. On the one hand, they consider politics to be the realm of the secular world and thus avoid the active and direct political participation of the churches. In other words, they have a tendency to make a clear distinction between the spiritual and civil governments those are not compatible with one another. They focus only on evangelism for the salvation of souls but are less interested in the salvation of society, the social gospel. These attitudes lead non-Christians to recognise the church as a community of sectarians living apart from the world and, furthermore, the church as completely irresponsible for the world. On the other hand, as witnessed in recent Korean politics, the extremely conservative churches are actively pursuing political activities to build a Christian nation, a Christian city as they say. Most of them are proconservative, probusiness and anticommunist. Their actions make people feel as if they are using the religion of Christianity in order to achieve certain political goals. Thus, for conservative Korean churches, it is necessary to provide a proper awareness of the desirable relationship

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<sup>686</sup> Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 75–79.

between church and politics and a public theological view in the light of Calvin's theology can help it.

In this regard, it is very worthwhile to listen to the argument of John Stott. He mentions that it is very strange to ask questions about why Christianity should participate in society, because "all of these issues and many others affect both Christians and those with no religious faith. They challenge our sense of identity and purpose." Furthermore, "they challenge us to apply Christian thinking to new issues which come upon us at a rapid rate." Nevertheless, some still believe that Christians have no social responsibility and "only have a commission to evangelize those who have not heard the gospel". Stott continues to argue that Christians can only take one of two attitudes towards the world: escape or engagement. Many evangelicals were irresponsible escapists.<sup>687</sup> Desmond Tutu also comments, "I am puzzled which Bible people are reading when they suggest religion and politics don't mix."<sup>688</sup>

This view is applicable to the Korean context, since many conservative Christians in Korea have taken a similar position. Regarding this attitude of Christians, Stott argues that examining the relationship between Christianity and politics is extremely important for two reasons:

Firstly, to convince those who are overcautious that there is an appropriate involvement of Christians in politics and that this is part of our Christian calling. Secondly, to delineate the boundaries of that calling so that those who have become deeply involved in politics might appreciate the limits of that involvement and the dangers of politicizing the gospel.<sup>689</sup>

These two reasons are very important to the Korean churches as well. As mentioned above, conservative Korean churches prefer to remain silent on the principle of separation of politics and religion rather than actively engaging in the sensitive issues of society and offering a prophetic voice. Furthermore, extreme conservative churches and pastors are progovernment and probusiness. This is why these two reasons are of significant for the Korean church.

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<sup>687</sup> Ibid., 23–24.

<sup>688</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>689</sup> Ibid., 33.

The attempt to make Korean Calvinist theology as a nonpolitical theology as possible serves to undermine the public function and role of theology, and the lack of publicity ultimately shows that this theology takes the form of a private religion.<sup>690</sup> In fact, the strict separation from politics of the church and the indifference to society are the opposite of Calvin's theology (cf., 4.5). We can agree with this argument by seeing Calvin's political influence in Geneva's Reformation. In the preceding chapter, I pointed out that Christians should continue to participate in God's care for the world because, as Calvin argued, there is still the divine image in fallen humans. Calvin criticised the Anabaptists and argued that the church should not have a hostile and disparaging attitude towards civil government (cf., 4.5.1). Rather, God calls the church to sanctify the world. He also argued that spiritual and civil governments had to be distinguished but not separated as the divinity and humanity of Christ should be distinguished but not separated (cf., 4.5.1). Conservative Korean churches have the misconception that Calvin separated the church and the state thoroughly. There is a tendency among conservative Korean Christians to accept only the separation of church and state literally without understanding that the reason why Calvin strongly criticised the state's invasion of the inherent realm of religion, insisting on distinct areas of church and state, is that state power interfered with the church in his time. This principle of separation of church and state that Calvin asserted did not mean a thorough separation in the sense that religion could not participate in politics. The Korean churches' misconception is evident when noting the relationship between Calvin and the Consistory in Geneva (cf., 4.5.3). Calvin's activities affected not only Christians but also the lives of all citizens of Geneva.

The church is to be constantly reformed in the light of the Bible. The church is to be a light that illuminates the world; thus, the church should resist and finally correct structural social evil. Of course, progressive churches have actively participated in social issues (cf., 5.2.4), but they are only a few in the Korean context. Conservative churches reject the efforts of progressive churches with the criticism that they neglect the matter of salvation of the soul, the church's fundamental task. However, what is needed for conservative Korean churches is "to develop a Christian mind and that

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<sup>690</sup> Kim, "Social Calvinism," 167.

means analyzing the issues, reading the Scriptures, listening to others and taking action”.<sup>691</sup>

The proconservative efforts to maintain the privileges of the church or to seek more privileges are also far from the principles of the Reformation. For Korean extremely fundamentalist churches that actively engage in politics to achieve their political goals with proconservative, probusiness and anticommunist attitudes, liberation theological and political theological methodologies can play a powerful role in furthering their attitude. Therefore, these approaches must be carefully and critically considered. According to Bouwsma, Calvin “particularly abhorred the abuse of religion for legitimation and social control and was revolted by its hypocrisy.”<sup>692</sup> Ironically, however, Korean extremely fundamentalist churches often take the legitimacy of their extreme political participation from Calvinism or Puritanism. This misunderstanding stems from the failure to distinguish between the context of Calvin’s time and the present. Regardless of the context of Calvin’s time when Christianity or other religious laws became the standard of citizens’ lives, attempts to apply Calvin’s method as it was are bound to fail in Korea, which is not even a Christian state, but a pluralist society that gives no priority to Christianity.

Another misconception of conservative Korean churches is that Calvin told them to obey the political order unconditionally. This is a misconception that comes from overemphasising Calvin’s recognition of proper political order in response to the claims of extreme Anabaptists who seemed to follow anarchism. Therefore, to balance Calvin’s thought, one should pay attention to the right of resistance (cf., 4.5.2). He admitted the legitimate right of resistance to illegitimate state power. One thing to note here is that he consistently insisted on nonviolent resistance, which is different from the liberation theological approach (cf., 2.6.3, 3.5.3). Thus, in the Korean context where peaceful dialogue and compromise are now possible, the Korean church needs to seek public theological approaches derived from Calvin’s theology, reflecting on the violent and subversive social movements of the past.

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<sup>691</sup> Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 43.

<sup>692</sup> Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 55.

For conservative Korean churches, the warnings of public theologians also have to be noted, which theology should guard against simply being used to achieve a particular political goal (cf., 3.2.3). This phenomenon is often seen in the form of civil religion. Furthermore, public theology differs from political theology or liberation theology in that public theology does not regard making specific political decision by direct political participation as the best way. Public theology aims to influence ethos, its inner values and virtues, which cultivate the political beliefs of people including politician rather than directly engaging in individual political issues (cf., 2.6). William Temple in his book *Christianity and the Social Order* emphasises the following: “The church is committed to the everlasting Gospel ... it must never commit itself to an ephemeral programme of detailed action.”<sup>693</sup> In other words, “the church is concerned with principal and not policy.”<sup>694</sup> Stott also opposes the claim that Christian faith can be identified with a political programme because in a fallen world no political programme can claim to be a sign of God’s will.<sup>695</sup> In this sense, at the great International Congress on World Evangelization, evangelical Christians declared the following: “We ... reject as a proud, self-confident dream the notion that man can ever build a Utopia on earth.”<sup>696</sup> Of course, it is admitted that individual Christians and specialist Christian institutions comment on, campaign for and conduct research on the issues of society. Christians may also agree or disagree with certain policies. However, these are different from the church’s commitment to a particular policy.<sup>697</sup> Therefore, “Christians should be careful not to ‘baptise’ any political ideology as if it contained a monopoly of truth and goodness. At best a political ideology and its programme are only an approximation to the will and purpose of God.”<sup>698</sup> Furthermore, Christians should be careful to regard any particular political system as exclusively biblical. Stott explains the reason for this:

Capitalism appeals because it encourages individual human initiative and enterprise, but also repels because it seems not to care that the weak succumb to the fierce competition it engenders. Socialism appeals, on the other hand, because it has great compassion for the poor and the weak, but

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<sup>693</sup> William Temple, *Christianity and Social Order* (London: Penguin Books, 1942), 54.

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>695</sup> Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 36.

<sup>696</sup> “The Lausanne Covenant”, para. 15.

<sup>697</sup> Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 38.

<sup>698</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

also repels because it seems not to care that individual initiative and enterprise are smothered by the big government which it engenders.<sup>699</sup>

In this sense, the firm convictions of the conservative churches in Korea, which regard the pure market economy system with minimal state intervention as biblical and the socialist system as non-biblical, must be reconsidered. Rather, Christians must individually judge whether a particular policy is in accordance with the gospel of God and continue to participate in the public discourses so that God's love and justice can be considered in the process of policymaking.

To do so, Christians should seriously consider the models for poverty presented by Bedford-Strohm (cf., 3.5.3). Although these are models for the problem of poverty, the inherent principle provides insight into how the church should participate in other political issues as well as the problem of poverty. If the church leaves these matters to the choices of individuals, it results in a thorough separation of church and politics. The model of considering the social system as a structure of evil, which has to be rejected, ignores the advantage of solving various problems from the social system. This model therefore hinders free debate for the right policy. The model that gives concrete solutions to particular individual issues obscures the moral and ethical problems those are the underlying causes of the problem. For these reasons, Bedford-Strohm argues that the church should prevent indifference that is often derived from confining these issues of reality to responsibility of the individual realm. Furthermore, the church should abandon the notion that a particular system of society is the product of evil and steer it in the right direction. To this end, the church should contribute to the moral and ethical discussions for a policy rather than provide a concrete solution.

Reflecting that claim, unlike the current Korean churches have been silent on irrational policies for their benefit, when actively participating in dialogue and presenting reasonable and just alternatives, Korean churches would restore lost confidence and regain their vital role in society. Thus, Korean Christianity must seriously consider the fifth characteristic of public theology presented by Bedford-Strohm, namely the prophetic quality.

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<sup>699</sup> Ibid.

### 5.3.4 How can Korean Reformed theologies speak with a prophetic voice to Korean society?

Despite the positive influence of Reformed theologies within Korean Christian history, it is lamentable that Reformed theologies have silently obeyed and even actively cooperated with state power and political order (cf., 5.2.3-4). When dictatorships occupied the regime in an illegal way, when they suppressed the democratisation movement and when they gave preference to business and did not guarantee legitimate human rights to workers to achieve rapid economic growth, Reformed churches and leaders advocated the political position of the government.<sup>700</sup> In addition, the church members who heard pro-governmental sermons from influential pastors thought that those who spoke on the side of the workers and victims were communists, socialists, leftists or liberal theologians. In this sense, De Gruchy's following argument is relevant to the Korean context:

The nature of the present conflict in the church is complex. Yet it is possible to distinguish between those who regard the gospel as socially liberating and transformative, those who link faith and the struggle for justice, and those who do not. Among the latter are the advocates of a right-wing form of Christianity for whom the watchwords are uncritical patriotism, uncritical anti-communism, anti-ecumenism, and an authoritarian fundamentalism.<sup>701</sup>

As a result, Reformed theologies often tend to regard the public theological approach that attempts to speak prophetically on the side of the weak as a subclass of liberal theology.

Sometimes Korean Reformed Christians are hesitant to deliver political criticism, arguing that they must maintain political neutrality. Many Christians in South Africa also rejected oppression or racism in principle but were not actively involved in the struggle for freedom and justice, seeking neutrality in political involvement. Many Christians take the position that the church should be involved in justice and

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<sup>700</sup> Kim, "Social Calvinism," 164–65.

<sup>701</sup> Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology*, 222.

reconciliation “but not by taking sides that would undermine and destroy the unity of the church”.<sup>702</sup> This attitude causes the churches to forget their mission as prophets, supporting those in power, as the Korean churches have been doing. However,

Neutrality is necessary in the sense that the church should not align itself with a particular political party or organization. It is not legitimate when it comes to taking sides with and supporting the cause of those who are the victims of injustice.<sup>703</sup>

With a proper understanding of the notion of political neutrality, therefore, Korean Reformed Christians should endeavour to do God’s will on earth rather than to maintain a comfortable position.

Furthermore, Korean Reformed Christians must not be silent about the structural or other forms of violence committed for political power and material interests in the name of ideology because “torture in prisons and the shooting of innocent victims, political opponents, or peaceful protesters in the name of ‘law and order’ and security are not qualitatively different” from solidarity in sin, “though they may be protected by emergency and other regulations.” In a stricter sense, “all those who benefit from the system are implicated in its sinfulness”.<sup>704</sup> Korean churches have not been free from this accusation because they have done and are still doing such things very often.

It is important to note how often Calvin offered a radical, reformed and prophetic voice in Geneva in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Korean Reformed Christians should remember that Calvin who they admire so much was in his day regarded as a radical and heretic by the Catholics because of his reform and prophetic speaking and actions. If the Reformers, including Calvin and Luther, voiced criticism against the absurdity of the government and the Roman Catholic Church, what is the reason that Korean Reformed theologies, which claim to be their descendants, cannot speak critically of the absurdity of the Korean government and society?

Again, De Gruchy’s criticism of Reformed theology in South Africa echoes the current Korean context. Although the Reformed tradition has always included the poor and other victims of society, this tradition has historically partnered with the middle-class

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<sup>702</sup> Ibid.

<sup>703</sup> Ibid., 276.

<sup>704</sup> Ibid., 154–55.

culture.<sup>705</sup> Increasingly, Korean Reformed theologies are being assimilated into the middle-class culture, representing its interests, and as a result being criticised by society. This is evident in the Sewol ferry incident. On 16 April 2014, the sinking of the Sewol ferry killed hundreds of young students but only a few churches comforted the victims' families and participated in mourning. Given the government's response as the most important cause of the rise in the number of victims, the churches are still passive in the movement to clarify the case. Rather, the churches are forcing victims to no longer mention this. This attitude of the church is consistent with that of the middle class in Korea. What the churches need, therefore, is the ability to deal properly with the poor and victims from a Reformed perspective. In this context, acceptance of the idea that the poor have special insight into the meaning of the Bible is required of the churches. If we are familiar with Calvin's biblical expositions, this is by no means surprising or difficult. Calvin "frequently maintained that God prefers to reveal himself to the poor, the simple, and the humble because they more readily recognize their need of God".<sup>706</sup>

The argument that Calvin had a profound effect on the free market economy and democracy should be considered important, but it is also important to see what he did in Geneva for the poor and the weak. He never separated serving the poor from worshipping God (cf., 4.6.2). Given Calvin's insistence that the church should spend its resources on the poor rather than on adorning its buildings, it is ironic that Korean churches are trying to build churches competitively at a high cost. Therefore, the Korean churches should now make efforts to use their resources for the poor in the church community and even in the local community, not for the appearance of their buildings.

It must be taken seriously in the Korean church community that Calvin was a refugee and this experience of exile "contributed to his understanding of the Gospel as a haven for the dispossessed, a refuge for those quite literally alienated".<sup>707</sup> Because Geneva accepted Calvin, a refugee, he could play an important role in the Reformation. Moreover, considering that the influence of the Reformation has restored the right faith, the Korean churches have to abandon their hostility to the recent arrival of refugees. In

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<sup>705</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>706</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>707</sup> Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, 17.

addition, with Calvin at the centre, the Church made an effort to raise relief funds for the refugees of that time. If someone argues that the situation is different because Calvin helped Christian refugees and that recent refugees entering Korea are non-Christian, could this also be a misunderstanding of Calvin? Calvin did not distinguish between Christians and non-Christians in giving relief (cf., 4.6.3). He insisted in the 1536 edition of the *Institutes* that the state should not persecute refugees, even those who had been dismissed for doctrinal matters. Therefore, the humanity of the Turks, Saracens and those from other religions had to be respected. He further argued that the state should not oppress them through fire and water and other everyday elements but should help them to maintain the quality of human life in the social welfare dimension.<sup>708</sup> In the light of Calvin's attitude, Korean Reformed theologies should welcome refugees arriving in Korea and assist them in gaining refugee status and living a stable life in Korea,<sup>709</sup> even if they are Muslim. Evangelism and social action cannot be separated. Our love for our neighbours will be expressed specifically when we give total attention to all the needs of their bodies, souls and community.<sup>710</sup>

In conclusion, what is urgent for the Korean church is to restore the prophetic voice. No matter who the prophets described in the Bible are and the Reformers during the Reformation are, they thought they had to be the prophetic voice. The loss of the prophetic voice of the church is as if salt had lost its salty taste, so it will be thrown away on the streets and trampled by people.<sup>711</sup> Therefore, the church should not hesitate to make scathing criticism to the absurdity of society. Tom Sine explains "We have been remarkably effective at diluting his extremist teaching and truncating his radical gospel. That explains why we ... make such an embarrassingly little difference in the morality of our society."<sup>712</sup> In the end, the church should fulfil the role of prophet. As

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<sup>708</sup> In-Sub Ahn, "Church and Politics : Calvin's Thoughts on the Church's Participation into the Politics," *Journal of Historical Theology* 16 (2008): 44–45.

<sup>709</sup> Recently, a large number of North Koreans have come to South Korea, but few churches specialize in their settlement and independence. This problem is one of the serious considerations of the Korean church.

<sup>710</sup> Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 87.

<sup>711</sup> In that sense, it is painful for the church not to actively join together, in 2016, when a large crowd held peaceful protests with candles for the impeachment of the former president, who had monopolized state affairs. Even today, conservative Christians immersing in ideological controversies are representing the voices of the strong rather than making prophetic speaking. For this reason, rather society is demanding a prophetic speaking to the church.

<sup>712</sup> Tom Sine, *The Mustard Seed Conspiracy* (Waco: Word Books, 1981), 113.

many prophets of the Old Testament criticised false rule, including the idolatry of kings, and as theologians such as Barth and Bonhoeffer criticised Hitler, the church is to offer a prophetic voice when political power distinctly goes against God's Word. The Barmen Theological Declaration of the Confessing Church in 1934 affirms the following:

As Jesus Christ is God's assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins, so, in the same way and with the same seriousness he is also God's mighty claim upon our whole life. ... We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords – areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him.

Therefore, Christians must reform the unrighteous structure of society. Conservative Korean churches must reflect on the fact that they have been on the side of the strong, not the weak, and then must be born again as Christians who can represent the weak and the victims.

### **5.3.5 How can Korean Reformed theologies deal with local problems, and how can their achievements affect other regions?**

The salient feature of modern society can be described by the word 'globalisation' (cf., 2.5). Christine and Wolfgang describe globalisation as follows:

Globalization means increasing interdependencies, which are or should be matters of personal or collective responsibilities. ... One can try to ignore the real conditions of global interdependencies within the world society, but it is a matter of fact. One can refuse the imputation of an extended responsibility, but decisions and actions here have consequences there. Developments in one part of the earth are affecting people elsewhere. The empirical globalization compels the search for a global normative order.<sup>713</sup>

Accelerating this phenomenon is a remarkable development of electronic communication systems that help people from all over the world to share ideas and news quickly and easily. Thus, issues in one area no longer remain only in that area but

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<sup>713</sup> Christine Lienemann-Perrin and Wolfgang Lienemann, "Inter-Contextuality Essentials of Public Theology," in *Contextuality and Intercontextuality in Public Theology*, ed. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, F. Hohne, and T. Reitmeier (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2013), 28.

affect people thousands of miles away. For example, in 2018, a 15-year-old Swedish girl, Greta Thunberg, started an environmental movement that soon aroused many people around the world through social media, and now she is one of the most influential people in the world. In September 2019, she addressed at the United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York. Now, all over the world, not only adults but also students are participating in her movement. Another example relates to the 2019 Hong Kong protests, also known as the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement. In the protests in Hong Kong, many demonstrators sang the song that Koreans had sung in the past to protest for impeachment of the former president. This again stimulated Koreans and is now encouraging those who are participating in protests against prosecution by authorities.

Does theology then have anything to do with this social trend? In the past, mainly Western theology unilaterally influenced the theology of the African and American continents. In other words, the theology of colonies was a form of total acceptance of Western theology. In the Korean context, as we saw earlier, Korean Reformed theologies were thoroughly influenced by American Puritan or fundamentalist theology and were moreover encouraged to preserve it rather than develop it (cf., 5.2.1). Therefore, Minjung theology, which attempted contextualisation of Western theology, failed to become an influential voice in Korean Christian circles (cf., 5.2.4). However, this phenomenon is undergoing major changes today. The theologies of Africa, South America and Asia, which had been almost impossible to utter their own voices because of being buried in the theology of Europe and the United States, began to actively speak out their voice and even affected Europe and the United States. In this context, public theology began to ask the following questions: “How can Christian faith become relevant in these different contexts?”, “How is ‘public theology’ understood contextually?” and “What draws public theologians from those different contexts all over the world together?”<sup>714</sup> In this sense, Bedford-Strohm argues that “one of the most

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<sup>714</sup> Bedford-Strohm states in the preface of the book *Contextuality and Intercontextuality in Public Theology* that these were the questions the international conference that held in Bamberg in 2011 aimed to address.

important dimensions of this further development will be the relationship of contextuality and intercontextuality in public theology”.<sup>715</sup>

Public theology in South Africa played an important role against the background of apartheid. Public theology, developed in the historical context of apartheid, is now finding its place between continuing critique of power and providing constructive orientation for building a democratic state after the liberation from apartheid. Thus, “the challenge for the church is the transformation from a liberation struggle into being a strong public voice in democratic decision making processes.”<sup>716</sup> This context of South Africa is very similar to that of Korea. Korean progressive churches, though few in number, that joined the democratisation movement in the 1970s and 1980s were leading the way in criticism of the military dictatorship and struggle against the military power. This was systematised in the form of Minjung theology. However, because the political situation in Korea has changed and the Minjung theological approach has shown its limitations, progressive theologies are required to look for other approaches.

Public theologies that developed not only in South Africa but also in Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia all function within a specific context for the region. In this sense, “every public theology is a contextual theology. Its origin and place always were and are within a given society.”<sup>717</sup> For this reason, as mentioned in Chapter 2, many public theologians agree to use the plural form of the term ‘public theology’. Of course, it is not easy to find such a phenomenon in Korea where public theological discourse is considered useless. However, if discussions on public theology take place in earnest in Korea, Korean public theology also needs to reflect the Korean context. If Korean Christians accept public theologies, which are developed in different contexts in different countries, without any criticism and any reflection on the Korean context, it is no different than repeating past efforts that uncritically accepted and preserved certain Reformed theology. The issues that public theology can deal with in the Korean context include the unification of the divided North and South Korea, the sharp conflict between liberal democracy and socialism in the political arena, abortion

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<sup>715</sup> Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, “Contextuality and Intercontextuality in Public Theology - Introductory Perspectives,” in *Contextuality and Intercontextuality in Public Theology*, ed. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, F. Hohne, and T. Reitmeier (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2013), 7.

<sup>716</sup> Ibid.

<sup>717</sup> Lienemann-Perrin and Lienemann, “Inter-Contextuality Essentials of Public Theology,” 26.

and homosexuality those are the leading causes of conflict between conservatives and progressives, the conflict between Christianity and other religions, especially Buddhism and Islam, the large number of immigrants coming from Southeast Asian countries, the nuclear power plant, serious air pollution, the underprivileged and refugees.

However, these theological discussions motivated by the Korean context will not be confined only in Korea but will interact with theological discussions in neighbouring countries and around the world because “any public theology exists in the tension between global intercontextuality and contextuality”.<sup>718</sup> Likewise, “a global discussion on public theology can be enriched by different perspectives given by specific contexts.”<sup>719</sup> Moreover, “the interconnectivity in global networks does not only generate possibilities to work on common concerns, but also enduring and close coexistence of different localities.”<sup>720</sup> As Frederike van Oorschot argues, “Public theology without contextual reference is neither conceivable nor relevant. Public theology without intercontextual global reference today missed its own ecumenical possibilities and is neither desirable nor effective. Public theology without transcontextual reference is meaningless.”<sup>721</sup>

In conclusion, Reformed theologians in Korea should be more concerned with developing the theological implications for the Korean context while preserving the essence of the theology that we inherited from our ancestors of faith. In that sense, the public theological approach is a very useful alternative.

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<sup>718</sup> Van Oorschot, “Public Theology Facing Globalization,” 229.

<sup>719</sup> Eneida Jacobsen, “Public and Contextual? An Introductory Approach to the Contextuality of Public Theologies,” in *Contextuality and Intercontextuality in Public Theology*, ed. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, F. Hohne, and T. Reitmeier (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2013), 82.

<sup>720</sup> Van Oorschot, “Public Theology Facing Globalization,” 229.

<sup>721</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

## 5.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter has presented how Korean Reformed theologies can do public theology. To this end, I first pointed out the reasons why Korean Reformed theologies are conservative and adopt two extreme attitudes towards politics by looking at the historical background of the Korean church. Only then can the cause be discovered why the church looks at the public theological approach with suspicion.

The first reason why mainstream Christianity in Korea, centred on Reformed theologies, is the conservative theological background of the early missionaries. They were mostly from North America, and their theological disposition was Puritan. Nevertheless, it can be said that early Korean Christianity was very Reformed and prophetic. This is because the position of Christianity in Korea is very different from the position of Christianity in countries in Africa and South America. In other words, Christianity in Korea was recognised as a religion that provided power against Japan, the invader, while Christianity in the colonies in Africa and South America was recognised as the religion of invaders from the native perspective. Of course, it should not be forgotten that in Korea, this patriotism, which was a force to resist imperialist invasion, was often transformed into an uncritical patriotism after the liberation from Japanese colonial rule.

The second reason for the conservatism of the mainstream Christianity in Korea was that after the Korean War, Korea was divided and North Korea followed the path of communism. Highly influential pastors from North Korea were eager for anticommunist movements in South Korea. This zeal of the Korean church was further fuelled by the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. This influence made the Korean church very pro-American. In the Korean church, anticommunism is still very influential. This is why the Korean church strongly opposes the socialist reforms of progressive politicians. Conservative politicians who know the anticommunist tendencies of the Korean church often promote ideological conflicts in order to gain Christian support.

The third reason for the conservatism is that the Korean church experienced explosive growth with the Korean economy that grew rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s. This is one reason why the Korean church preferred to take a probusiness and progovernment

stance rather than representing the underprivileged and victims. Because of this background, the church failed to be a prophetic voice regarding the abuse of power and the tyranny of capitalism, unlike the prophets in the Bible who scolded the kings for their faults and unlike Barth and Bonhoeffer who criticised the Nazis. At that time, the Korean church was immersed only in the growth of the church, and such a trend is still found today.

Finally, it is important that Korean mainstream Christianity was greatly influenced by American theology, especially the theology of Machen and Van Til. Their theological features are strongly critical of liberal theological ideas. Korean Reformed theologies as influenced by them, therefore, regarded it as a proper theological attitude to preserve the Calvinist theology inherited from America and thus had less interest in Reformed theologies inherited from other regions, especially Europe. This is why they are reluctant to put Barth in the category of reformed theologians.

These factors intertwined and influenced the current conservative Korean church. Of course, these factors did not only negatively affect the Korean church and evaluation of this is very diverse. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that these factors had a negative effect on the Korean church. Then, what is the attitude that the conservative Korean church should take now to address its weaknesses? I am convinced that public theological discussion can help the church.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the public theological approach is not incongruent with Korean Reformed thought. Although it is difficult to name Calvin's theology as the only public theology, it should be noted by Korean Reformed theologies that many public theological elements can be related to his theology and in his Reformation in Geneva.

Exploring how Calvin in his theology communicated with non-Christians and used the achievements of other disciplines to persuade them while keeping the truth of the Bible, Korean Reformed theologies will be able to present a moral and ethical ethos towards a wider society. In particular, they should note that public theological approaches never require that Christian fundamental truths be abandoned or suspended. Calvin was convinced that the truth of the Bible as translated into the language of the world by using the achievements of the other disciplines was more persuasive. Korean Reformed

theologies, therefore, need not be afraid of interdisciplinary studies and translation of theology into the language of the world. Furthermore, as Korea is increasingly becoming a multicultural country, the churches also need to participate in interreligious dialogue for peaceful coexistence with immigrants having other religious beliefs.

The idea of excessive separation between religion and politics that existed in Korean church circles must be urgently revised because if this attitude continues, the Korean church will be branded as sectarian. As Calvin emphasised and as Kuyper declared, the Christian can never be indifferent to the world because God's reign extends not only to the church but to the whole world. This is the basis for Calvin's passion for the Reformation in Geneva. Nevertheless, it does not mean that public theology encourages Christians to engage in politics to the extreme. Public theology does not aim to offer direct solutions to any political issue. Rather, it focuses on the moral, ethical and spiritual insights that make a crucial contribution to addressing problems. Hence, it addresses the public, the wider society and not the state and politics directly. It prefers to take the constructive method for reform, not revolution. For these reasons, people who prefer to engage in politics in extreme ways argue that it is hard to find this attitude in Calvin's theology and works. Rather, Calvin used an extreme revolutionary method, according to them. However, they are indifferent to the context of Calvin's time. Calvin sometimes took a direct approach when rational communication and persuasion were impossible, but if not, he did not recommend extreme ways. Similarly, the Minjung theological approach was effective when Korea was ruled by a military dictatorship but lost its relevance since rational dialogue and persuasion became important in a democratised Korea. Therefore, it should be noted that Bedford-Strohm describes public theology as 'liberation theology for a democratic society'.

The way in which the church provides political direction to the wider society is very important, but its content is even more important. Because we should remember that Christianity has declared violent power as contrary to the Bible. This view is frequently found in the history of countries where Christianity has had a significant influence, such as Korea, South Africa, Germany and the United States. Hence, the church's prophetic role, which the Bible testifies to, Calvin emphasises and public theology seeks, is particularly demanding of the conservative Korean church. Rather than standing on the

side of power and business for the benefit of the church, the prophetic voice should be cast on the side of the poor, the oppressed, the confined and the marginalised.

It is a pity that Korean Reformed theologies have been so engrossed in accepting and preserving American conservative theology. Just as American theology reflects the context in America, it is only natural that Korean theology reflects the context in Korea. As theology strives for this, it gains greater influence. Korean Reformed theologies, therefore, should strive for research on issues that arise in Korea, while remaining within the various Reformed traditions. To this end, greater attention should be paid to theological themes being discussed elsewhere, and comparative and contrastive studies should be actively conducted on them. Through these attempts, Korean reformed theologies can have both the characteristics of contextuality and intercontextuality.

In conclusion, public theological discourses are necessary and beneficial to Korean Reformed theologies.

In the last chapter, I will revisit the research objectives and provide some tentative answers to the research questions. A summary of the findings, the limitations of this study and a proposal for further academic discourse will be presented.

## CHAPTER 6

### Discussion and conclusions

#### 6.1 Introduction

This research project sought to find some theological alternatives in the context of Korean Christianity, which is reluctant to engage in the public sphere. It did so by linking the six characteristics of public theology presented by Bedford-Strohm with Calvin's theology that Korean Reformed theologies are still following today.

This study began with a description of public theology to clear up the misunderstanding of public theology among conservative Korean churches. Various views of theologians in the broad field of public theology, as well as some narratives of the historical origins and developments of public theologies, were introduced and compared and contrasted with one another. In order to determine in more detail what 'public' meant in 'public theology', in particular, we considered the meaning of public through Habermas's theory of the public sphere. Since people, especially conservative Korean Christians, often cannot distinguish similar concepts such as civil religion, political theology and liberation theology from public theology, brief comparisons of these concepts were presented. This task was carried out with reference to the first research question.

Considering the above, an aim of this study was to provide more detailed and systemised characteristics of public theology. I argued that the six characteristics of public theology presented by Heinrich Bedford-Strohm described public theology in a manner that captured much of what the other theologians, and historical narratives, of the concept intended. Therefore, a systematic scrutiny of his argument will be very instructive in Korean Christians' understanding of public theology. Furthermore, considering these characteristics of public theology, it was shown that a public theological approach would be helpful in engaging some problems faced by the Reformed Korean churches. This analysis was engaged in with reference to the second research question.

The hypothesis of the study was that the public theological elements that Bedford-Strohm presented could be found in Calvin's theology and his works in Geneva, despite the large time gap and the contextual differences between the two eras. Many scholars have demonstrated that Calvin, as a representative Reformer, not only influenced the Reformation but was also deeply involved in social issues in Geneva. The fact that Calvin was a theologian, pastor and role player in the wider society showed the possibility that he could be considered a public theologian. That is, he not only led church reform with theological knowledge acquired from his academic experience but he also became deeply involved in society by equipping people and politicians with the knowledge necessary for the reform of society. The task of linking Calvin and public theology was carried out with reference to the third research question.

It was contended that Korean reformed theologies that strongly advocate Calvinism show almost indifferent attitudes towards public theological approaches. This raises the question of whether there is a coherence between certain characteristics of public theology and Calvinism? However, I assumed that the reason lay not in the absence of a common element between Calvin's theology and public theology but in the unusual reception of Calvin's theology in Korea. Therefore, the hypothesis that the unique development of Calvinist theology within Korean Christianity can be understood when Korean church history is carefully examined and the claim that from this understanding, public theology could be of value for the Korean church were related to the fourth research question.

To undertake a credible analysis of the contributions of Bedford-Strohm and Calvin, it was necessary to engage them as primary conversation partners. Thus, the research design was a literature study that used primary sources. In addition, a historical research methodology was used to evaluate the meaning of Calvin's theology and his role in Geneva in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and to explore the development of the Korean church.

## **6.2 A discussion of the findings with regard to the research questions**

The research design was based on four primary research questions. I will briefly mention the findings derived from this research with regard to each of the research questions.

### **6.2.1 What does public theology, or doing public theology, signify concerning the notions of public theology, the history of public theologies, and possible ‘methodologies and contents’ of public theologies?**

In answer to this question, it is concluded that the notion of public theology has various meanings stemming from its different origins and developments so that it cannot be defined in a single sentence.<sup>722</sup> Yet, there are also some elements that are commonly found in its diversity. The proper tension between diversity and unity is a catalyst that actively evokes various public theological discussions around the world. In addition, when looking at the context in which such public theological discussion is actively conducted, one can conclude that there is a possibility that public theology could be of some value in Korea where there are some contextual similarities.

The ambiguity of the notion of public theology is not only because public theological discussions began and developed within various contexts but also due to the controversial meaning of the term ‘public’ in the expression ‘public theology’. In this regard, Habermas’s concept of ‘public sphere’ helped to clarify the meaning of the term public, and many public theologians use it for positive or negative purposes when describing public theology (cf., 2.4).

Indeed, in order for public theological discussions to be active, an environment in which the voice of religion can exert influence on the public sphere is required. Many who

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<sup>722</sup> Breitenberg, “To Tell the Truth,” 56.

agreed with the theory of secularisation considered religion as an irrational idea and thus believed it would soon lose its meaning.<sup>723</sup> Contrary to their expectations, however, the influence of religion, including Christianity and Islam, is becoming stronger in contemporary society.<sup>724</sup> Many believers deny confining their religious conviction to the private realm but rather want to create a better society by actively incorporating their religious convictions into society. The role of religion is recognized as important in contemporary societies, expressed in globalisation, civilisation and pluralism. Globalisation has broken down the boundaries among regions, and thus problems in a certain region can promptly affect other areas far away. In this sense, wrestling with theological issues is almost essential in order to accurately grasp, reform and correct the complexities of globalisation. Religion is still influential in civil society when debating the quality of life in civil society as a voluntary association. Furthermore, the importance of religion as social capital can contribute to the strengthening of civil society. It is very important to distinguish between cultural pluralism and religious pluralism. In this way, Christian beliefs are not necessarily to be retired or compromised in a pluralistic society. Rather, pluralism in a democratic society guarantees everyone the right to express her/his convictions in public. The situation in which religion plays an important role in contemporary societies with these characteristics such as globalisation, civil society and pluralism is an important background for active public theological debate and at the same time the reason why public theological debate is required (cf., 2.5).

If so, public theology needs to be distinguished from civil religion, political theology and liberation theology, which have similar concerns and approaches to the theological task. This distinction provides an opportunity to dispel misunderstandings for Korean Reformed theologies that regard public theology as a subclass of liberation theology. Civil religion emphasises the role of religion in connection with the nation and people, while public theology starts at the religious communities and considers its contributions to the wider society.<sup>725</sup> In addition, public theology has a critical and prophetic role in the social system and its culture, whereas civil religion aims at a complaisant and

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<sup>723</sup> Volf, *A Public Faith*, 119.

<sup>724</sup> Wright, *God in Public*, 4.

<sup>725</sup> Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere*, 4.

optimistic note.<sup>726</sup> Political theology sees the political order as the comprehensive institution of society. It views religion as a subset of the political order.<sup>727</sup> However, public theology argues that the gospel in the political domain cannot simply be identified with a certain policy.<sup>728</sup> At the same time, it should be noted that public theology is not antipolitical.<sup>729</sup> Since liberation theology based on Marxism aims to interpret Christianity in the way of liberation of people from all exclusions, oppressions and exploitations,<sup>730</sup> it tends to view the existing system as either bad or wrong. It prefers to follow revolutionary methods whereas public theology prefers to follow a reforming one. Hence, public theology aims at reforming the system gradually through negotiation and dialogue.<sup>731</sup>

These differences between other approaches and public theology and the peculiarities of public theolog can be understood in greater detail through examining the various methodologies of public theologians and the content of public theology that they claim. In Chapter 2 it is shown that the characteristics and contents of public theology claimed by public theologians such as Duncan Forrester, John de Gruchy, Max Stackhouse and Sebastian Kim are closely related and important to the issues in the Korean context (cf., 2.7).

## **6.2.2 How does Heinrich Bedford-Strohm characterise public theology, and how does this relate to other approaches to public theology in contemporary and historical theological discourses?**

Heinrich Bedford-Strohm presented six characteristics of public theology that thoroughly systemised the common features found within the diversity of public theology. These characteristics are convincing when considered in connection with his

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<sup>726</sup> Goldzwig, "A Rhetoric of Public Theology," 130,145.

<sup>727</sup> Stackhouse, "Civil Religion, Political Theology and Public Theology: What's the Difference?," 83–84.

<sup>728</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Public Theology and Political Ethics," 21.

<sup>729</sup> Stackhouse, "Civil Religion, Political Theology and Public Theology: What's the Difference?," 88.

<sup>730</sup> Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God*, 217,222.

<sup>731</sup> See the table in Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere*, 24.

experience and life as a public theologian and his active and important role in academy, society and church. He claims that a biblical-theological profile is one of characteristics of the public theology (cf., 3.2). According to him, public theology must be based on the biblical and confessional traditions of the Christian faith. The church is not a kind of political interest group.<sup>732</sup> He emphasises the public thrust of the gospel. Many other scholars similarly assert that the church can participate in public discourse while retaining its own voice, pointing out that the voice of the church is now becoming important in contemporary society in contrast to the past when religion remained in the private realm. The church has contributed to the formation of an ethical ethos.

At the same time, public theology seeks to translate Christian traditions into the language of the secular world because Jesus' message was not only given to Christians but also to non-Christians. Therefore, Bedford-Strohm argues that public theology should have a bilingual ability to communicate with non-Christian by means that are reasonable and understandable to all.<sup>733</sup> In this way, it can be affirmed that faith and reason are not contradictory but complementary. However, some argue that there is no overlap between theology and public life and that even if there are common areas, theology will lose its identity when translated into the language of the world. They argue that the Christian faith does not have to be demonstrated in a rational way to non-Christians but rather that the church must first become a true church (cf., 3.3.2). However, if public theology seeks to translate the Christian faith into the language of the world with these concerns in mind, the danger of indiscriminate and unlimited translation can be avoided.

Of course, public theology requires knowledge of other disciplines in order to translate the Christian faith into the language of the world in a reasonable way. Public theology therefore pursues interdisciplinary study. Bedford-Strohm asserts that public theology needs to communicate with scholars engaged in other disciplines to make contributions to the public discourse.<sup>734</sup> He emphasises the importance of interreligious dialogue as well. Thus, interreligious dialogue can be a characteristic of public theology (cf., 3.4.3). In modern society, people of various religious backgrounds live together in one area;

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<sup>732</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Public Theology and Political Ethics," 18.

<sup>733</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Gerechtigkeit Erhöht Ein Volk...", 57–58.

<sup>734</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Engagement Für Die Demokratie," 119.

therefore, peaceful interreligious dialogue is needed to prevent violence and war caused by religious conflicts. According to Bedford-Strohm, the attitude of oppression and intolerance toward people of other religions contradicts Jesus' life and teachings.<sup>735</sup>

Public theology seeks to contribute to the debate in the political realm with knowledge and wisdom from biblical theological traditions. Of course, some strongly argue that religion should not intervene in the political realm but it should not be overlooked that proper ethical answers to important questions for public life can be found in the church. In this context, Bedford-Strohm argues that a distorted image of the relationship between the two kingdoms resulting from a misunderstanding of Luther's two kingdoms doctrine needs to be corrected. According to him, Luther's two Kingdoms doctrine does not simply mean that temporal governments should be separated from spiritual government but that temporal governments have obligations imposed by God, for example protecting the weak.<sup>736</sup> Thus, being a committed Christian sometimes means being a committed politician. However, Bedford-Strohm does not only care about 'what' the relationship between the church and politics is, but also 'how' the church participates in politics. By presenting four models, he argues that both extremes, namely the fundamental critical model and the political advice model, should be avoided and that an interventional position is the most appropriate model for public theology (cf., 3.5.3).

Regarding establishing the appropriate relationship between the church and politics, Bedford-Strohm also places great emphasis on the prophetic role of the church. If the church disregards the content and emphasises the form alone, the failure of the German church, which was sympathetic to the Nazi atrocities, and the South African church, which supported apartheid, could be reproduced. In other words, public theology should be able to give ethical direction to the politics that goes wrong due to misunderstanding. One thing to note, however, is that public theology does not repudiate the legitimacy of every power. In this sense, the five important elements that Bedford-Strohm presents in relation to the prophetic dimension help us to prevent abuse of prophetic speaking (cf., 3.6.1). He further argues that this prophetic voice is related to a greater concern for

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<sup>735</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Miteinander, Nicht Nebeneinander," 81.

<sup>736</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Public Theology and Political Ethics," 8.

the weak, the poor and the oppressed. Hence, he requires the church to keep in mind ‘reciprocity’ and ‘the Golden Rule’ (cf., 3.6.2).

Lastly, public theology has an intercontextual nature. Theological discussions that are very closely related to the context of a certain place no longer remain only in that region but are correlated with discussions in remote regions. Thus, “public theologians should learn from one another and from what is happening in other contexts without any attempt to emulate one another or to reduce what is called public theology to one comprehensive and all-inclusive methodology.”<sup>737</sup> This characteristic is sometimes promoted by globalisation. Some sharable elements of the public theologies formed in various contexts provide the foundation for intercontextual collaboration. Moreover, this raises the need for a worldwide network for public theology such as the GNPT.

### **6.2.3 To what extent are the six characteristics of public theology suggested by Heinrich Bedford-Strohm identifiable in John Calvin’s works?**

Although public theology is very necessary for the Korean context, if this methodology continues to be regarded with suspicion in the Korean Reformed theologians, it will be difficult for public theology to become active in the Korean theological circles. However, if the Calvinist theology that Korean churches follow demonstrates that the public theological methodology is credible, the picture could be quite different. The hypothesis of this research was that Korean Reformed theologies would reconsider misunderstandings of public theology and re-evaluate the validity and value of public theologies for the Reformed Korean churches. To do this, it was essential to revisit Calvin’s theology through the hermeneutic lens of Bedford-Strohm’s six characteristics of public theology.

The Reformation that Calvin pursued was expressed in the term *ad fontes*, which means returning to the Bible. This was again expressed by the term *sola Scriptura*. According

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<sup>737</sup> Smit, “Does It Matter? On Whether There Is Method in the Madness,” 85–86.

to him, God revealed his will in Scripture.<sup>738</sup> Therefore, only through Scripture can we understand the true will of God or we will go the wrong way. For the correct interpretation of Scripture, the works of the fathers were used as hermeneutic basis. Calvin used the fathers' works and their rhetoric to reinforce his arguments and to express his claims more sophisticatedly and clearly. Of course, tradition was finally to be tested by Scripture. Thus, even if the claims of authoritative fathers were contrary to Scripture, he did not hesitate to refute them (cf., 4.2.2). This attitude of Calvin was reflected in the Genevan Marriage Ordinance (cf., 4.2.3). He did not regard the institution of marriage as a sacrament like Roman Catholic theology but at the same time did not consider it to be entirely secular. In reforming the institution of marriage, he considered covenant doctrine as the theological basis and applied it to legislation. This provides insight into how Korean Reformed theologies should deal with Scripture and tradition with regard to the issues facing Christians today.

Despite Calvin's firm belief in Scripture and tradition, he did not hesitate to translate these truths into the language of the world. One thing to keep in mind with regard to this feature is that Calvin's time was different from today so that religious language had an impact on society as a whole. This meant that he did not have to translate religious truth into the language of the world. Nonetheless, he insisted on the concept of *accommodatio Dei*, meaning that God used language that humans could understand to reveal himself (cf., 4.3.1). Calvin was thus willing to use the knowledge of the world in explaining creation and providence, but he did not allow this knowledge of the world to destroy Christian fundamental truths.

In this process, Calvin naturally abundantly used the knowledge of various disciplines of the world, namely philosophy, astronomy, law and the humanities, which were almost all disciplines of his time. He even emphasised that astronomy was the first step in theology.<sup>739</sup> Concepts such as witness, justification, the author of the law, the judge and the advocate, which form the basis of his theology, were very relevant to his experience of studying law.<sup>740</sup> The idea of natural law, a core concept of his theology, also revealed his legal and humanistic literacy. His great interest in other disciplines

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<sup>738</sup> Inst. I.6.1.

<sup>739</sup> CO 38,59.

<sup>740</sup> Gordon, *Calvin*, 22.

and efforts to gain knowledge from those later influenced legislation and policy decisions in Geneva.

It is hard to deny that Calvin played a decisive role in political and policy decisions in Geneva because, as many agree, his Reformation not only pursued a reform of religion alone but also a reform of society and even politics. In particular, his distinction between church and state through the concept of ‘twofold government’ (cf., 4.5.1) showed his public theological thinking. Calvin acknowledged the legitimate position and role of the government and did not regard the government as evil, as the Anabaptists argued. According to him, the church was only tasked with sanctifying the world.<sup>741</sup> This attitude shows that his theology is different from liberation theology. However, he did not place unlimited confidence in the role of government and politics, which shows a difference from political theology. In particular, it is unique and appropriate that he likened the relationship between church and state to the relationship between the divinity and humanity of Christ, which can be distinguished but not separated.<sup>742</sup> On this premise, Calvin acknowledged the legitimate role of the government but at the same time, with the notion of the ‘right of resistance’ (cf., 4.5.2), he insisted that Christians could resist governments that went against God’s will. He practised this idea through the Consistory (cf., 4.5.3).

In the reforms of Geneva, Calvin was often very prophetic. This is very relevant to the fact that he was a refugee, giving him the opportunity to understand the situation of the poor and the persecuted. He developed his ethical ideas through the theological concept of ‘self-denial’ (cf., 4.6.1). With the claim that we are God’s, not our own, he emphasised our obligation to apply this attitude to our neighbours and to esteem them more than ourselves. Therefore, all the grace we have received from God must be used for the common good. His argument is abbreviated to the term ‘steward’. “We are the stewards of everything God has conferred on us by which we are able to help our neighbor, and are required to render account of our stewardship.”<sup>743</sup> Hence, church worship and helping the poor cannot be separated. Serving the poor is an expression of

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<sup>741</sup> Balke, “Calvin and the Anabaptists,” 149.

<sup>742</sup> Han, “Comprehension of Political Order in the Spirit of Reformation,” 137.

<sup>743</sup> Inst. III.7.5.

worshiping God. This attitude toward the weak is well expressed in his arguments about interest (cf., 4.6.3).

Calvin's ideas for reforming society and politics not only affected Geneva but also had a great impact on government and society throughout Europe. When his theological ideas were formed, he sought to interact with various theologians in the surrounding area. In particular, as his reputation grew, his ideas regarding the Reformation had an important influence on the Reformers and reforms of other countries in Europe. In other words, his theology and his reforms not only reflected the context of Geneva but also had an influence on reforms and theologies in other regions. Furthermore, his theology has transcended time and influences a great part of the world today.

#### **6.2.4 How can such an approach to public theology be of value to the context of Korea?**

How can public theological elements extracted from Calvin's theology through the lens provided by Bedford-Strohm be of value to the Korean context? To find a possible answer to this question, it was necessary to first revisit how Korean Reformed theologies had become conservative by exploring the history of the Korean church. This was important because it related to the contextual nature emphasised by public theology and doing public theology and furthermore because it was impossible to make a correct diagnosis without comprehensive understanding of the historical background.

There are many reasons why the Korean churches have become conservative, but the first aspect to look at is the theological conservatism of the early missionaries who came to Korea at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (cf., 5.2.1). In large measure, they adhered to Puritan or evangelical theology, which was mostly conservative. In addition, missionaries who felt the need to reform the problems of Korean society at the time, such as dissoluteness, drunkenness and laziness, attempted to transplant the Puritanical life that their ancestors had pursued. Their efforts helped to reform Korean society, but at the same time it contributed to the problems that need to be addressed in the Korean Christianity of today, such as dogmatism, the absolute authority and influence of the

pastors in the church community and the tendency to regard poverty as sin and wealth as blessing. However, we cannot deny that there was a time when the Korean church had a prophetic role in Korean society. In particular, under Japanese colonial rule, the church resisted violence and exploitation (cf., 5.2.2). Another important reason why the Korean church has become conservative, pro-American and progovernment is its intense antipathy against communism after the Korean War (cf., 5.2.3). Politicians often used this situation for their political ambitions. It should also be noted that when revival started in the Korean church, the theological background of the pastors, who were the main driver of the revival, was mostly in the conservative theology of America, especially the theology that came from Van Til and Machen (cf., 5.2.5). Barth's theology was thus questioned by them. For these reasons, public theological methodologies continue to be questioned among the Reformed theologies in Korea, which prevents the Korean church from actively pursuing public theological discussion. Thus, in order for Korean Reformed theologies to contribute to the problems of the Korean church or Korean society, they must listen to what both public theology and Calvin's theology say in each case.

Above all, Korean Reformed theologies should maintain a proper balance between succession in respect of the orthodox heritage of the Reformation and the responsibility to reflect the changing times. Korean Reformed theologies have overemphasised their adherence to a particular view of tradition (cf., 5.2.5) and thus have been excluded from the public sphere. They have believed that if Christianity actively participates in the public sphere and if it translates the gospel into the language of the world, it will lose its identity. However, as confirmed by the arguments of many scholars presented in chapters 2 and 3, public theology does not insist that the church give up its identity in order to participate in the public sphere. According to these scholars, it is possible to participate in the public sphere while preserving the Christian identity and in this way, Christianity can make a unique contribution. Therefore, the Korean Reformed theologies need to abandon their excessive vigilance about participating in the public sphere and translating the gospel into the public language. An example was found in Calvin's theological work. Calvin also struggled to express the gospel in a reasonable, world-understandable language, with the idea that the gospel is needed outside Christianity (cf., 4.2-4.3). At the same time, however, one can avoid indiscriminate translation when seriously considering the first characteristic of public theology

presented by Bedford-Strohm, namely the biblical-theological profile (cf., 3.2), and *sola Scriptura*, a concept that Calvin presented. Hence, Korean Reformed theologies need to accept public theological methods and seek to translate the gospel into the language of the world as Calvin did.

To do this, Korean Reformed theologies need to engage in a dialogue with other disciplines. The idea that since only theology bears the truth, other disciplines are not needed or, if necessary, can only serve as a handmaid of theology should be avoided. In an increasingly complex and diversified society, public theology, which says that theology requires interdisciplinary research in order to participate responsibly and persuasively in the dialogue with the wider society (cf., 3.4), must be seriously reconsidered in Korea. Calvin also encouraged interdisciplinary study since he argued that secular authors could express the truth and we thus should respect other disciplines (cf., 4.4). In particular, Korean reformed theologies, which are reluctant to communicate with other religions, should pay attention to the claim of the need for dialogue among religions, which is a significant characteristic of public theology. In fact, in Calvin's theology, it is difficult to find a clear basis for emphasizing interreligious dialogue. However, his efforts to defend Christianity against Catholicism under Catholic religious persecution - the *Institutes* is his masterpiece written for this purpose – and to unite the different traditions within Protestantism that were in conflict at the time suggest that he attempted interreligious dialogue (cf., 5.3.2). The Trinitarian inclusivism model, which Bedford-Strohm named as a suitable model for public theology (cf., 3.4.3), is a model that Korean Reformed theologies can refer to in order to communicate with other religions.

Korean Reformed theologies need to provide political direction to the wider society as Calvin did in his day. Most churches in Korea belong to one of two extremes with respect to politics. On the one hand, some churches focus on only matters inside the church, showing indifference to politics on the principle that religion and politics should not interfere with each other. On the other hand, some churches actively intervene in political activity, proclaiming the support of certain political parties in the name of the church (cf., 5.2). Public theology aims neither at the former nor at the latter. Public theology believes that the church should avoid being isolated from the world and becoming a church for Christians only but should rather communicate with the

world and give it ethical, moral and political directions, emphasising the power of the gospel to the world (cf., 2.5, 3.3.2-3). Nevertheless, public theology does not always accord politics superiority (cf., 2.6). Bedford-Strohm argues that “as much as the churches should make concrete political proposals on the basis of their ethical guidelines, they must always be aware that they are not political parties trying to promote specific political programmes”.<sup>744</sup> Therefore, Korean churches that prefer to engage directly in politics should keep in mind that the church is not an interest group that pursues its own political interests (cf., 3.5.1). Calvin also strongly criticised the strict separation of politics from the church and the view of politics and government systems as evil (cf., 4.5.1). Thus, he wanted to have political influence not only for religious reforms but also for social reforms in Geneva and through the Consistory, he continually tried to present the values of the Christian tradition (cf., 4.5.3).

The Korean Reformed theologies should attempt to restore the prophetic voice to society through proper political participation. One of the main reasons why the Korean churches are criticised by society is that they seek only their own interests by supporting the strong rather than standing up for the weak and the victims by opposing illegitimate power and oppression. Public theology, however, argues that theology should be publicly critical and prophetic against great forces (cf., 3.6.1). Especially in the face of the extreme gap between the rich and the poor due to the neoliberal market economy today, public theology argues that the church should increase its interest in the poor. Bedford-Strohm also argues that church should pay attention to the biblical message expressed by the concept of reciprocity and the Golden Rule (cf., 3.6.2). Conservative Korean churches tend to believe that efforts to defend the poor and oppressed are only related to socialism and liberation theology. In fact, however, these efforts are very evident in Calvin’s theology and his life in Geneva. He was a refugee who had left home to avoid religious persecution and established a church and ministered to those in similar circumstances. Thus, his attention naturally turned to the refugees, the poor and the oppressed. He used the concept of self-denial to emphasise loving and caring for the neighbour (cf., 4.6.1). He sought to raise funds to help the poor and emphasised the use of gifts from God for the common profit of the church community and society in his sermons (cf., 4.6.2). His thoughts were well expressed in the provisions related

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<sup>744</sup> Bedford-Strohm, “Public Theology and Political Ethics,” 19.

to interest (cf., 4.6.3). In conclusion, Korean Reformed theologies should, as Calvin did, be a prophetic voice on the side of the poor and the weak and pay attention to the five principles related to the prophetic dimension presented by Bedford-Strohm.

As Korean Reformed theologies constantly attempt to apply these public theological elements to the Korean context, they will have a Korean public theology that will make a significant contribution to the Korean church and society. Korean Reformed theologies have embraced Western theology, especially American Calvinism, without sufficient critical regard, and have applied it unilaterally to Korean churches without considering contextual differences. The consequences are worse than we expected. Calvin's theology did not only affect America through the Puritans but also had an effect in Europe, including Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, and even in South America and Africa. It also developed in various forms in each region. Therefore, in the pursuit of public theology, Korean reformed theologies should also be able to enjoy the richness of theology by studying theology in other regions and carrying out projects with them. As Bedford-Strohm argues, "One of the most important dimensions of this further development will be the relationship of contextuality and intercontextuality in public theology."<sup>745</sup>

In summary, the primary conclusion of this research is that the six characteristics of public theology presented by Bedford-Strohm are definitely found in Calvin's theology and can help Korean Reformed theologies to regard public theology as a credible, helpful and reasonable methodology for Korean Christianity.

### **6.3 Limitations of the research**

This research was deliberately aimed at linking public theology with the Reformed Churches in the Korean context. Therefore, although I summarised general notions and histories of public theology in Chapter 2, this project has the limitation of using only

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<sup>745</sup> Bedford-Strohm, "Contextuality and Intercontextuality in Public Theology - Introductory Perspectives," 7.

those elements that are meaningful in relation to the Korean context. We should recognise that there are many other useful and excellent descriptions of public theology by many theologians that could be applicable to those contexts. In addition, the six characteristics presented by Bedford-Strohm were intentionally chosen because they would be very helpful and credible for the Korean context.

The intention of this research was not to provide some normative solutions in relation to certain issues facing the Korean church. Hence, this research only focused on showing that public theology should be taken seriously for a genuine and concrete discussion about the issues facing the Korean church by demonstrating the correlation between the issues facing the Korean church and the chosen approach to public theology.

In addition, this project limited the subject of discussion to Korean Reformed theologies as a sub-set of mainstream of Korean Christianity. Therefore, this study was not aimed at Korean progressive theologies or churches. Nevertheless, given that public theology has not yet been comprehensively introduced to even those who are interested in public theology - Korean scholars who are interested in public theology also point out that American public theology, especially Stackhouse's public theology, has been mainly introduced in Korea - it would be a significant contribution if this study could convey an introductory knowledge of public theology to them as well.

This study needed to select one of the Reformers whom Korean Reformed theologies admire to demonstrate to them the need to engage in public theological discussions. Calvin is respected by Korean Reformed theologies, but he and his theology are dealt with relatively passively in the field of public theology. Thus, when I attempted to discover public theological elements from Reformed theology, I limited my research to Calvin's theology and his life in Geneva.

## **6.4 Suggestions for future research**

Some of the limitations mentioned above serve as important sources for future research in relation to this research and its findings. The project focused on finding public

theological elements in Calvin's theology among the Reformers to help Korean Reformed theologies to regard public theology as a viable theological approach. However, this single attempt may not be able to fully dispel Korean Reformed theologies' doubts about public theology. Therefore, projects that connect public theology with Reformers other than Calvin or authoritative theologians within the Reformed theological tradition through various methodologies need to be continued. The accumulation of these findings will narrow the gap between Korean Reformed theologies and public theology.

In this sense, recent attempts to connect Abraham Kuyper<sup>746</sup> with public theology are very meaningful. Although these projects have been tried with various methodologies, Bedford-Strohm's approach has not yet been used to illuminate theologies of the Reformers and Reformed theologians. The six characteristics of public theology presented by him can serve as constructive to the task, since as we have already seen, they can present almost all of the various features of public theology claimed by other public theologians. Moreover, they have the advantage of explaining the concept of public theology in a clear and orderly manner. Therefore, his approach could be actively engaged and further developed in future research in this, and other related, fields.

In the previous section, I pointed out that as a limitation of this project, it did not directly and specifically address each issue facing the Korean church and did not provide a normative solution. Hence, considering the contextuality emphasised by public theology, it is necessary to develop a Korean public theology for the Korean church. Furthermore, in developing a public theology appropriate to the Korean context, the findings will contribute to enriching public theological discussions in other regions.

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<sup>746</sup> For the relationship between Abraham Kuyper and public theology, see Abraham Kuyper, *Common Grace: God's Gifts for a Fallen World, Volume 1* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016); Vincent E. Bacote, *The Spirit in Public Theology: Appropriating the Legacy of Abraham Kuyper* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010); John Bolt, *A Free Church, a Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper's American Public Theology* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2001); Mark J. Larson, *Abraham Kuyper, Conservatism, and Church and State* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015); Michael R. Wagenman, *Engaging the World with Abraham Kuyper* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2019).

## 6.5 Conclusion

This project started from the point of view that Korean Reformed theologies tend to regard public theologies with a measure of skepticism, even though theological circles all over the world are increasingly paying attention to public theology and actively promoting its discourses. Therefore, can the gap between public theology and Korean Reformed theologies not be narrowed? Is it impossible for public theology to find a constructive reception in Korea?

When it was demonstrated that there were common elements between public theology and the theology of the Reformers, especially Calvin, I believed that the doubts of the Korean churches could be resolved to some extent. Further, by illuminating Calvin's theology and his life in Geneva in 16<sup>th</sup> century through Bedford-Strohm's hermeneutic lens, this project fully showed the public theological elements in Calvin's thinking. Therefore, it is not inconceivable to regard Calvin from the perspective of public theology.

Calvin was not a socially disconnected person who merely enforced doctrine. Rather, he a socially engaged Reformer who emphasised Christian stewardship with concepts such as tolerance, kindness and love for the neighbour.

Let this, then, be our method of showing good-will and kindness, considering that, in regard to everything which God has bestowed upon us, and by which we can aid our neighbour, we are his stewards, and are bound to give account of our stewardship; moreover, that the only right mode of administration is that which is regulated by love. In this way, we shall not only unite the study of our neighbour's advantage with a regard to our own, but make the latter subordinate to the former.<sup>747</sup>

Therefore, it is hoped that this research will help Korean Reformed theologian and theologies to re-read Calvin and his theology through the lens of Bedford-Strohm's six characteristics of public theology enabling them to reconsider misunderstandings of public theology, and that it will serve as a spark for a heated public theological discussion in Korea.

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<sup>747</sup> Inst. III.7.5.



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