1 Practical Theology as Communication

From the beginning, practical theology itself has been an effort to communicate with the world outside the church and contemporary society. Don Browning introduces practical wisdom as useful for practical reasoning with the concept of *phronesis* that Aristotle and the Gospel of Luke commonly used. It distinguishes itself from *theoria* or *techne* and religious communities often demonstrate it in a powerful way by constituting practical rationality and conveying it to the world. Christianity has practical reason with a narrative envelope “about God’s creation, governance, and redemption of the world,” in which “the life and death of Jesus Christ further God’s plan for the world” (Browning 1995, 10).

Browning has well demonstrated how practical communication might happen since he developed a practical reasoning in the postmodern society or in the post-Christian culture. In the postmodern “deconstructionism” of pluralistic society, people “are all suspicious of all truth claims.” (Meracadante 2014, 183) He argues that religious communities must “exhibit reason or, more specifically, practical reason” to make sense to the outside world (Browning 1995, 1). In the post-Christian era of high reflection and communication, people do not feel that they are living in the present, but rather as deferred between past memory and future hope. The culture is rapidly changing into nihilism, and the church has lost its power to reform the world, let alone itself. Communication of religious faith has come to an end from within. The Church’s voices have lost its authenticity and rather received backlash from the public about its corrupt inside. Society, culture, and politics univocally stand against the church throughout the world, especially in Korea’s current society.

There is, however, one instigator for religious involvement in this atheistic era, that is, an individual’s suffering. “Suffering is pervasive, intrinsic to the human condition,” (Hunter 1991, 1230) and no one is able to escape from the vulnerability to suffer. Tim Keller, a preacher and Christian thinker, once said, “there is nothing more certain than the fact that you are going to suffer and/or people around you are going to be suffering” (Keller 2008). Suffering to those who tolerate pain is real; therefore, people are “not interested in the theoretical issue of suffering [...] [but] are torn apart by what is happening to real people, to those we know and love.” (Hauerwas 1990, 2)

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1 Especially, about a form of speech, Browning introduces Habermas’ three competences, that is, “to speak the truth, establish normative claims, and express oneself authentically” (Browning 1995, 200). Even among the uneducated people, according to Habermas, these communicative competences are essential not to break down the communicative action.
A Korean church introduced in this paper insists to grow because it has been dealing with human suffering in a unique way. It does not communicate practical wisdom with the society in a sophisticated way; instead, it has radical means to communicate with suffering individuals and connect them to God, that is, interpreting life in the light of the Scripture. This church follows “a classic expression of the theory-to-practice model” by “conforming itself totally to the Word of God revealed in Scripture” (Browning 1995, 7). At first glance, it seems naïve and subjective process of appropriating biblical instructions for one’s benefit.

However, the church exceptionally uses human suffering as a means to communicate with the world with biblical interpretations. Struggling with questions of why for a deep meaning functions as a path to faith in God. Regardless of the negative impressions of churches during the post-revival era in Korea, the church’s model of practical theology that interprets personal suffering is being used as a guide to faith. Its confessional theology in the form of universality per se is a remarkable way of communicating with the gospel to society by offering a spiritual meaning. Although Browning and Edward Farley commonly slam the confessional theology “as a hamper in practical theological thinking” (Ha 2011, 206) Korean churches that include this principle have been thriving with confessionalism among the past persecution and ongoing pluralism.

2 Suffering and Interpreting in Narrative Community

At the gate of Seoul in Korea, from the busiest No. 1 highway from the south, no one can miss the church to the left on the hillside with its large billboard sign saying, “Marriage is not for happiness, but for holiness,” which reminds us of a popular Christian author, Gary Thomas, and his bestselling book Sacred Marriage (Thomas 2015). The church is well-known for many peculiarities: first of all, the senior pastor is a woman who established the church in 2002, a time period when Korea did not have many female pastors. The church started its gatherings in a high school gymnasium in Seoul, but now it has two places to gather on Sundays. It is the Wooridle Church, which means our church. The church has been known for its magnetic power, especially for those who have suffered multiple afflictions in life including illness, abuse, or affairs. Its members are not usually local residents: they mostly come from distant cities within two, three, even five hours by car.

The church presently has more than a thousand ‘powerful’ small groups for looking after souls, which they call “pastures”. They are a vital part of the church in which meetings are composed of Scripture readings and applications. There are pastures for couples, for women, and for workplaces; the size of each group is typically from seven to fourteen people. Once or twice a week, they gather at home, work, or church, doing Bible study and communal dialogues, which takes at least three hours.
Regardless of some resentments of the long meeting hours, the majority of the members still have a strong desire to attend the pasture meetings.

After reading the Bible, they share their life stories in light of the word for which they term this activity the *interpretation of life*. This allows for them to share their sufferings and ultimately seek spiritual meanings. Browning summarizes that “hermeneutics is basically a conversation” (Browning 1983, 49) as a process of interpretation, e.g., between theology and psychology. Biblical hermeneutics of life, however, is the church’s unique process of finding the underlying message suffering brings through the intersubjective group process. The church finds it effective regarding communicative and collective healing to practice Bible meditation, confession of sins, and resolution for holiness in life. By helping those who suffer interpret their lives based on scripture, the church facilitates spiritual growth of individuals and rebuilding of families.

The church has also begun seminars for ministers since 2014, which is called, “THINK Bathtub Ministry Seminar”. Public baths are common in Korea, in which everyone is expected to be naked, although sex-specific.² This metaphor makes it clear that the church prioritizes confession of sins, revealing wounds and weaknesses, while enabling rehabilitation from relational brokenness.

Victor Frankl, a survivor of a concentration camp during World War II, created the logotherapy based on his first-person experience of fatal sufferings and life-threatening fears among fellow inmates. He accepts the reality of “the unavoidability of suffering,” (Frankl 1963, 181) but believed that a person’s suffering has a meaning in itself. In the face of his own sufferings, including high chances of death, he bravely and rationally observed people’s responses to their own detrimental destinies. He kept asking questions about the meanings of suffering while most other prisoners became hopeless in sustaining their interpretations.

> The question which beset me was, “Has all this suffering, this dying around us, a meaning? For, if not, then ultimately there is no meaning to survival; for a life whose meaning depends upon such a happenstance—whether one escapes or not—ultimately would not be worth living at all. (Frankl 1963, 183)

Frankl’s concern in the camp was not survival itself. Instead, he believed that his suffering certainly had a meaning up to the moment of death. At the site of struggle for survival, he spawned the idea of logotherapy to help “the patient regain his (or her) capacity to suffer,” (Frankl 1963, 180) not simply to enjoy life.

His ideas of suffering and meaning have made an important shift in therapy: rather than getting rid of pain itself, the therapist can help illuminate a meaning or purpose hidden under the surface of hopeless situations of the patient. The pur-

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² It is not ‘gender-specific’ in Korea yet, legally or commonly. It has been a big dispute between progressivists and conservatives about the issue, but Korea still keeps its original constitutional position on ‘sex’ instead of ‘gender’.
suit of happiness by regarding unhappiness as a symptom of maladjustment is a result of the ‘mental-hygiene philosophy’. Instead of endeavoring to find pleasure or avoid pain, he sees a human as one who can embrace sufferings as long as hardships are meaningful.

Pastoral ministry is expected to accomplish a hermeneutical task by concerning “itself with ways of seeing and responding to situations of contemporary life that comfort with the vision of life that emerges from Scripture and tradition.” (Hunter 1991, 592) The church has paved its way for the search for meaning through its peculiar practice for sufferers. The church does not only try to comfort those who mourn to make them happy again, but it also actively welcomes suffering in an individual’s life and gets involved with it to make it meaningful. Instead of helping people overcome afflictions instantly, the church first teaches how to change themselves rather than changing their surrounding situations or related others.

By getting involved with people’s sufferings communally and spiritually, the church encourages them to interpret their lives in light of the scripture. It provides a way of seeing life’s predicaments, whose purposes and meanings can be found only in faith. The church functions as a pastoral guide for those in chaos by presenting a way of individual but biblical hermeneutics to find spiritual meanings.

The church values the interpretation of individual life based on the interpretation of the Bible. It is interesting to see how the church members do not just depend on sermons of the pastor. Instead, they actively participate in the process of interpreting the Bible in their own words. The church likes to use the term interpretation of life instead of the scriptural interpretation.

Rosemary Ruether once found that Korean women’s life experiences and their views of scripture are closely integrated: “it is they and their lives that are the text, and the various scriptures and traditions provide material by which women can interpret their lives” (Ruether 1998, 271). The integration of their life stories in the form of particularity with Bible stories is respected and shared, which ends up becoming an active interpretation of life. The Bible is not simply one of the many reading materials but the one true resource that makes them obedient even during the suffering.

Once people register as a church member, they will be taught how to interpret their lives based on a personal and communal application. They are encouraged to seek individualized meanings for their suffering. Life situations such as broken relationships may not be easily altered, but the confessing of sins within small groups is necessary because they believe a person’s suffering is not bigger than the graceful purpose of God. The authority of the Bible is universal and is accepted as absolute: theodicy always prevails over individual sufferings. It is natural in this situation that no other voice can be bigger than that of the Scripture. The church welcomes whomever suffers: it practices hospitality especially for those with broken relationships. Therefore, it is not strange for the church to be called “the shelter for sufferers.”
3 Hermeneutics of Scriptures and Sufferings: 
Encounter of Universality and Particularity

Instead of taking a western medical paradigm to get rid of pain, the church targets the extraction of messages from God. One of the common words that people like to mention is “my sinfulness” in the midst of suffering. In appearance, the church wrongly imposes a sense of guilt on the sufferers or victims. However, the habit actually began with the pastor’s personal experience before the church existed. As a matter of fact, the whole church is repeating the healing process of the pastor’s individual afflictions in the past.

The pastor had a distinctive biography: she was not a welcome baby at birth. Her parents gave her a boy’s name before she was born, expecting a boy to inherit the family’s name in the Confucian patriarchy. Her growth was full of disappointment because she felt ashamed as a girl and was resented by the family.

Regardless of the negative attitude in the family, she grew up well and went to a prestigious college. She married a medical doctor and lived with parents-in-law for five years. As defectives from North Korea during the Korean War, they were beyond harsh and oppressive to her. She experienced serious verbal abuse and unforgiving demands from the family. She tried to kill herself in depression which finally made her run away from home.

As a runaway, she experienced a spiritual conversion. In an interview with the author, she said she had met Jesus Christ in person and returned home. She reconciled with the family by confessing her sins and asking for forgiveness. At the same time, she began studying scriptures with the Daily Bible, a Christian magazine for a quiet time. She has not skipped even a single day for more than forty years thereafter.

Under the supervision of her pastor, she also began to lead a Quiet Time group in a local church.

Her husband died in her late thirties due to a sudden rupture of the liver. As a single mother, she founded Quiet Time Mission for biblical meditation and went to a seminary, sensing the limitations in her ministry as a lay person. She was ordained as a minister in order to facilitate God’s ministry without interruption.

Following the pastor’s model, church members share their life stories in depth; she often introduces some of the cases to the whole congregation under their consent. The church is always added up with novelties of the first-person experience and keeps up to date in terms of taking care of a person, which only reinforces its priority of the Bible. For the pastor and the congregation, “God is always right!” Whenever they share their particular stories, they commonly accept them as part of the universal and providential will of God. Theodicy prevails at all times among the congregation.

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3 Rev. Yang Jae Kim has a boy’s name that is not common among Korean women.
There are rules of thumb for the community to practice: no future divorce, no marriage to a person without faith, no abortion, no silence in revealing sufferings, and no financial interaction between church members. The pastor insists these are essential for a person’s real change.

When Browning defines hermeneutics as a conversation, he refers to bringing something foreign to a familiar understanding, based on Hans Gadamer, David Tracy, and Richard Rorty. He emphasizes it as a process in which a necessary conversation happens “for understanding the depths of one’s own faith [...] And understanding the perspectives and meanings of the other people” (Browning 1983, 49). Distinguished from Browning, the church does not use mutually critical hermeneutics between two equal partners in a rational conversation. Rather, it resonates the method of Tillich, which states that people have questions from life and the Bible proposes the answer. Foreign to Tillich, the church members themselves actively participate in the hermeneutical process and willingly accept the will of God in the midst of sufferings through obedience.

Hermeneutics of life in the church is not simply a cognitive theological process. Although it looks like a simple one-way application of faith or theology, it is the fruit of painstaking engagements between suffering and faith, life and the scripture, meditation and confession, human desire and God’s will, and furthermore, particularity and universality. Its uniquely embodied hermeneutics of life has helped people experiencing suffering keep discussing between those poles conversely and communally.

A new meaning discovered through interpretation reduces the depth of suffering. Howard Brody says that the “relief of suffering comes most often by changing the meaning of the experience for the sufferer and restoring the disrupted connectedness of the sufferer with herself and with those around her” (Brody 2002, 30). By finding meanings, a person is capable of suffering deeper and thus can endure longer, regardless of life’s unfavorable fortunes. The community with empathic acceptance facilitates healing by interpreting the meaning of individual suffering in particularity; it helps relieve the pain by seriously considering “the multiple aspects of personhood and personal meaning” (Brody 2002, 30).

4 Narrative, Interpretation, and Community

One important difference between this church and the charismatic movement is that the former does not follow the model of medicine to remove the pain. Rather, it seeks “a narrative unity,” as Stanley Hauerwas suggests, as an alternative (or supplementary) model of healing the charismatic or medical tradition (Hauerwas 1990, 120). The narrative is simply a story of our life, but it has a multitude of forms of expression that convey our stories of ordinary life. It is necessary that “our lives [...] have a narrative unity” (Hauerwas 1990, 119). Our life is not laid out as is lived in a way of mere chronicity; instead, it expresses itself by maintaining a pattern of narrative unity that is bound up with stories.
The situation is graver when patients themselves lack any sense of narrative unity, for medicine becomes impotent to bring about or enhance patient well-being, even by accident, if there is no “intelligible narrative” to ground questions about better or worse treatments (Long 1986, 80).

Thus, storytelling by a person in suffering is a crucial part of becoming or recovering herself. Especially “intelligible narratives” are an effective (or essential) way of promoting the well-being of the sufferer. Narrative unity may build and grow “out of a kind of belief system that not everyone has” (Hauerwas 1990, 120).

Christian stories in the past contributed to the growth of Christian communities and to the maintenance of its tradition regardless of multitudes of counterforces against the church. However, by storytelling of the narratives, the church was able to avoid Christian amnesia and continue to reaffirm its identities. In its tradition, the story has been a way and a tool “to invite those outside to join our family and become renewed by sharing our memories” (Culbertson 2000, 44).

On the other hand, stories of a person in the family can help form an interpretive community because “a commonality of interpretation creates the sense of belonging or family loyalty” (Culbertson 2000, 51). People in the Wooridle Church have explored the spiritual meanings by interpreting both the daily texts and the individual narratives, which reinforces their communal identity. For them, interpretation is considered prior or superior to objective facts of sufferings, in which the faith community is worth being maintained in order to pass its beliefs and values to those who are not aware of their meaning. Beyond individual and particular narratives, the church offers a universal canopy of faith that covers their shame and discovers a common hope through biblical interpretation that meaningfully binds them together. By sharing the interpretive strategies among members, the church “becomes a social unit [...] (of) an interpretive community” like a family does (Culbertson 2000, 51).

How can any one of us know whether or not he is a member of the same interpretive community as any other of us? [...] The only ‘proof’ of membership is membership, the nod of recognition from someone in the same community, someone who says to you what neither of us could ever prove to a third party: ‘we know’ (Fish 1980, 173).

When the whole church shares common religious belief systems, however, the communication of religious meanings in a narrative unity gains powerful effects on the individual and the community. It makes the community build itself by connecting individuals as a common unit of particular narratives and general interpretations. It also expands itself by repeating its own script, that is, a sequence of repetitive practices of listening and empathizing. In this context, shared stories of enduring sufferings end up with a powerful community of interpretive communication, which reduces their formidable sufferings into tolerable pieces.

Instead of existing for themselves as an end, communities “are created in response to a call” (Kornfeld 2001, 17). The sense of calling strengthens the motivation to serve and care for others as well as themselves. Because all communities, whether religious or not, take care of each other as their root for existence, they are ‘spiritual’
The church, however, prioritizes God’s call first and its members share their visions of healing based on the common confession of faith as a general theological property. The scripture and the confessional tradition function as bases for the current community progressing towards a meaningful interpretation of life both individually and communally.

5 Practical Theology that Creates, Cultivates, and Cares for Community

Introducing a revisionist model for contemporary theology, Tracy argues that “the two principal sources for theology are Christian texts and common human experience and language” (Tracy 1975, 43). He does not ignore the importance of “appropriate interpretations” of the scriptures and “a theologian’s responsibility to the tradition” (Tracy 1975, 44). However, he regards both coherence in articulating reality and adequacy for common human experience as more important values of today’s practical theology. As with Browning, he goes beyond Tillich’s correlational model for intrinsic conviction and consistency of the task of theology in order to explicate the ultimate meaning of the existential everyday life.

The Wooridle Church’s approach to interpretation of life considering scriptures may look simple or naïve in this respect: it does not allow any mutually critical position on the scripture or on the redemptive historical faith in Jesus. The orthodox theology that most Korean churches represent has a major strength in its “ability to develop sophisticated models for providing systematic understanding of the basic beliefs of [the] church community,” with its weakness in making “intrinsic use of the other scholarly disciplines” (Tracy 1975, 25). That is why Browning draws a line between confessional theology and practical theology: “Confessionally-oriented religious interpreters may stop the process here” (Browning 1995, 6). In his mind, practical theology must be critical in order to develop its own religious motivation and test its adequacy for communication of meanings with the world outside. Confessional interpreters, however, may not be able to continue the process of critical hermeneutics on the traditional text regardless of having well-organized theological properties to be effectively transferred to others.

Therefore, Browning recommends practical theologians to think in religious and philosophical terms with/using a narrative envelope outside. It is important for Christian churches and theologians to cultivate a new way to communicate with the secular world on the level of common human reason. However, it is still crucial that Christianity keeps its tradition and identity within the society with its faith-

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4 Annie Dillard defines community as a ‘spiritual fact’ before it is built as a social or political reality. She says we have to begin with contemplation instead of activity in order to experience a sense of a common life, our “hidden wholeness.” Quoted in Kornfeld 2001, 19.
ful presence and servanthood without compromising its core values as manifest in the scripture.

Hermeneutics of classic texts must “be a community effort involving several people and their respective horizons in a dialogue with the classic texts” (Browning 1995, 50). Widely leaning on Gadamer’s works, he defines hermeneutics as “a community process” in which the community and its members actively – but each in a different degree – participate in a dialogue or conversation to attain a consensus that is still fluid and open (Browning 1995, 50). Concerning the church as a community of interpretation, he illustrates Josiah Royce’s image of the church as the “beloved community” that is “committed to the process of loving interpretation to achieve the good and true” (Browning 1995, 51). Communal understanding of conversation, nevertheless, must be a mutually critical or correcting process so that it incorporates both the present praxis questions and the past textual hermeneutics. Anton Boisen’s metaphor, the living human document, is a good example of a correlational revisionist theology integrating the individual’s archaeological stories and the biblical and theological texts.

The Woordle Church tries to communicate with Korean society in its own way, saying “the family is not for happiness but for holiness.” Although the secular society may not understand what this means, the church tries to communicate a meaning of family in a different way and embrace those who suffer from it with its strong, conservative, and text-oriented practical (or pastoral) theology. The church keeps a practical intention to integrate its conservative values in practicing care for specificities of individual, interpersonal, and socio-cultural problems.

Although it is not mutual or critical enough as Browning expects for phronesis, the Korean church communicates the practical issues about abortion, divorce, feminism, or homosexuality based on the orthodox scriptural readings. Confessing the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, the pastor simply but faithfully performs her duty as “a Christian pastor by bringing men into the obedience of the Gospel, to offer them as it were in sacrifice unto God” as John Calvin appointed” (Taylor 1989, 228).

Although different from this radical openness among congregations, most other Korean churches accept the authority of the Bible like this church. Their communication with society is largely limited to personal evangelism and charities, which still falls short in terms of the practical theological expectations. However, their conservative values seem to be hardly compromised, considering the church and political history that perpetuate the status quo of today’s practical theology in Korea (Ha 2015).
6 Hermeneutical Particularity and Particular Hermeneutics

Paying attention to particularity in pastoral and practical theology has accomplished a spectacular paradigm shift in theology in which a specific human experience gains eligibility to be part of an academic status. Considering the stronghold of *academia* throughout history, generality or universality with objectivity has always prevailed over particularity with subjectivity due to the nature of human understanding, that is, it is easier to grasp the overview than the smallest details. That is why Martin Heidegger defends particularity against metaphysical generality: a loss of particularity in the modern technological era means a loss of subject (Heidegger 1982).

Traditionally, theoretical theologians have overlooked practical theologians who actively include and participate in messy details of life as non-academic or less worthy for systematic speculations. Miller-McLemore raises a significant question about practical theology’s tendency of abstraction and objectivity that may obscure certain voices of truths in order to get some scholarly validity (Miller-McLemore 1999). Due to loyal commitments and efforts of many practical theologians, practice and reality of life have intruded in the academic fortress, being planted yet to grow.

On the contrary, the propensity toward practice and particularity brings about a relative disregard of the traditional texts including scriptures, which Korean churches and theologians are critically concerned about. Some radical proponents of particularity even require to change scriptural texts instead of changing of situation. Although Christian theology has a wide spectrum in Korea, simply erasing or correcting the essential Christian resources upon the need of sufferers may provoke a critical opposition from the majority of Christian believers.

By criticizing Rebecca Chopp’s theory of “a hermeneutic of marginality,” Anthony C. Thiselton, a renowned British scholar in biblical hermeneutics, regards it as a “restless hermeneutics’ that leaves behind any foundationalism, and moves through the endless polyvalency of language” (Thiselton 1992, 461). The scriptures, according to Chopp, must be “de-centered” for “an experience of emancipatory transformation” (Chopp 1989, 126). However, Thiselton is concerned that it is hard to “establish adequate criteria for determining how far a tradition can be transformed before it ceases to remain this tradition” (Thiselton 1992, 461). He raises an important question about her priority to the present particularity over the traditional text.

Might it be that many pastoral theologians, by concentrating on the segment of the process that concerns the present, have fallen into the very same trap of objectifying pastoral phenomena in ways which give privilege to the present as over against the biblical text? (Thiselton 1992, 557)

Thiselton pays critical attention to Browning’s note on contingent particularities and diversity in the public world, whose terms are found also in Tracy and Farley. Although Thiselton is “extremely cautious about George Lindbeck’s tendency to locate
the meaning of biblical texts in intralinguistic or ‘intratextual’ categories,” both of them give a doubt together to “this tendency to give privilege to the present” (Thiselton 1992, 557).

He understands the fluidity of hermeneutics between the text and the present experience. He mentions that “the flow of interpretation between the horizons of biblical texts and those of pastoral situations assumes different forms and different functions as the two sets of particularities change” (Thiselton 1992, 557). He resents that many books on hermeneutics fall short in expectation because of simply generalizing the situation or being ignorant of diversity and even the text itself. The old text of scripture contains different types of texts such as didactic, narrative, poetic, boundary situation, apocalyptic and so on. He maintains that these different texts “perform different, though often overlapping, hermeneutical functions, especially in relation to different reading-situations” (Thiselton 1992, 558).

He warns about the existential understanding of the text and particularity for its danger of making the text of the Bible “individuating vehicles” (Thiselton 1992, 563) in pastoral theology. Existential readers like to use the “boundary situation” of Karl Jaspers, but they may lack “the social and communal perspectives of socio-pragmatic or even speech-act models” (Thiselton 1992, 563). It is important for him to reconstruct the lifeworld that is bound to the author with the text’s directed goal first. Therefore, not only is pastoral theology using the essential “listening skills” with patience in respect of others, but also do the historical biblical studies expand critical “objective” methods into “re-live” or “reconstruct its life-world and [...] seek to enter it by sharing its form” (Thiselton 1992, 559).

Most of all, Thiselton points out that “the relation between biblical material and the present situation cannot be regarded as fully symmetrical” (Thiselton 1992, 606). By quoting Pannenberg’s argument that “the present can be understood only in the light of the past history of traditions,” he summarizes that “divine promise shapes both the nature of reality and how the present is to be understood” (Thiselton 1992, 606). He objects the trend of “over-privileging of the present in pastoral theology” (Thiselton 1992, 606), that is, the inclination of giving too much emphasis on the present situation.

Korean churches including the Wooridle Church have demonstrated a strong dedication to the biblical text, which is closer to Thiselton than to other theologians. They take particular hermeneutics of the individual in a situation by giving preference to the text, not without giving attention to the particularities of human suffering. Although Korean pastors, pastoral counselors, or pastoral theologians offer proper significance to the present issues of suicide, poverty, or injustice, they are still expected to stay within the priority of biblical authority by the churches.
7 A Practical ‘Biblical’ Thinking

Although Browning always prioritizes practical moral reasoning in practical theology, he still pays attention to the postmodern trend of ignoring the biblical axis. Considering the issue of homosexuality in the 1980s, he thought it deserves a “calm, careful, loving, unanxious, and undogmatic reflection” (Browning 1983, 74). However, he finds that supporters of homosexuality are “all [taking] a modern scholarly critical view of the Bible” (Browning 1983, 82). Although he takes a position of a non-dogmatic approach to homosexuality, he is still marveled at the asymmetry in understanding of God.

Some of the higher-level metaphors (God as love) are used, but others (God as creator and governor) are neglected. Neighbor love as a principle of obligation is affirmed, but on the whole it is disconnected from principles of justice and unsupported by understandings of human nature (human tendencies and needs) as articulated in the arguments either from orders of creation or from natural law (Browning 1983, 86–87).

Browning resents that the movement attracts great attention within the present social context. Within practical moral rules and social roles at the lowest levels, biblical patterns are gone, and new ones have replaced them in their place. He asserts that it should be properly balanced with “parental, familial, and societal expectations with respect to sexual preference” (Browning 1983, 89). He does not mean that it cannot be tolerated; instead, he does not want it to be advocated.

Many Korean churches are currently advocating against the upcoming movement of legislating gay marriage by the progressive government and its major Democratic lawmakers. Churches and lay leaders including lawmakers, lawyers, medical doctors, professors, and college students have been working together to communicate with the secular society in stopping the legislation. It has been successful so far to slow down the rushing political movement. With Christian fundamentalism, they have sound practical reasons to execute social resistance. Founded on the teachings of the scripture, their communications to the secular society are translated into the scientific data of public health.⁵

Korean churches have accomplished a peculiar progress in communicating with society while carefully balancing between the universality of faith and the particularity of care. They prioritize the scriptures as God’s word and confess their belief in Jesus Christ as a savior and moral standard. However, they are not simply naïve in communication.

⁵ HIV patients have been rapidly increasing in Korea for the last two decades due to a failure of public health policies for control on a socio-political level. In 2017, the number of teenage HIV patients expanded up to 600% compared to 2001. Korea has been in danger of AIDS expansion since 2013 when the total number of patients exceeded a ten thousand according to the Kukmin-ilbo daily newspaper in October 10, 2018: http://news.kmib.co.kr/article/view.asp?arcid=0012749709&code=61221111&cp=du (29.11.2021).
They have actively participated in particularity of individual sufferings in order to take care of people and to rebuild their surroundings based on the universality of faith.

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