

**Literacy and Social Development:  
The Church and Nonformal Education in South Korea (1910-1945)**

**By**

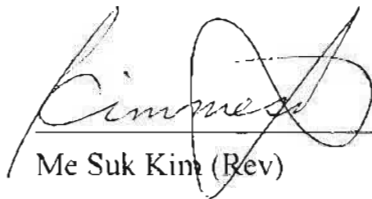
Kim, Me Suk  
B.Th( ACTS) B.Th (Hons) (UKZN)

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(Theology and Development) in the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Religion  
and Theology, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.**

**April 2005**

## DECLARATION

I, Me Suk Kim hereby declare that this thesis, unless specified in the text, is my original work. I also declare that I have not submitted this research project for any other purpose at any other Institution or University.

  
Me Suk Kim (Rev)

29-03-05  
Date

As supervisor, I agree to the submission of this thesis

  
Dr Steve M. de Gruchy

29-3-05  
Date

## **Abstracts**

The purpose of this thesis is to relate literacy (nonformal education) to social development. It begins with a theoretical discussion on literacy and social development and uses Paulo Freire's dialogical framework to determine the contribution literacy can make. In using the context of a South Korean literacy campaign, this work covers the historical development of the Korean alphabet and initiation of Hangeul literacy. It examines the arrival of Christian missionaries in Korea and how they used literacy to maximise conversion and Church establishment. Literacy became the Christian Church's mission and this is examined in the light of the Korean struggle for independence during the Japanese occupation. The impact of literacy on social development in political, economic and social sectors is evaluated. The paper discusses the problem of literacy and social development in developing nations and suggests some strategies for the society and Church.

## **Acknowledgment**

The completion of this thesis has been made possible with the help and support of a number of people. First, I want to express thanks to my supervisor Dr. Steve de Gruchy for the helpful lectures and guidance. His lectures helped my thinking and mind transformatively. I also want to express my thanks to the school of Religion and Theology for allowing me to audit some additional courses which gave me the room for understanding African culture and African theology. Especially, through the Professors Gerald O. West and Kwame Bediako's class I have developed the contextual interpretation of the Bible.

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## Table of Content

Title page	
Declaration	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Contents	iv
Chapter 1	
1. Introduction	1
1.1. Background to, and motivation for, the research	1
1.2. Preliminary literature study and the location of the research within the existing literature	2
1.3. Research problem	3
1.4. Theoretical framework	4
1.5. Research design and research methodology	5
Chapter 2	
2. Theoretical review on literacy and social development	6
2.1. Introduction	6
2.2. Literacy and social development	6
2.2.1. Literacy education in theological perspective	7
2.2.1.1. Jesus as the Word	8
2.2.1.2. Bible as the Word	10
2.2.1.3. Reformation and literacy	12
2.2.1.4. Mother tongue and literacy for development	14
2.2.2. Social development through literacy	17
2.2.2.1. The dynamics of people	17
2.2.2.2. Literacy as empowering and transformative social development	19
2.3. Analysis and synthesis of transformative education	23
2.3.1. Review of Paulo Freire	23
2.3.2. Issues on transformative education for development	28
2.3.2.1. The macro-impact of dialogical and anti-dialogical action on development	28
2.3.2.2. The micro-impact of dialogical and anti-dialogical action on development	30
2.4. Conclusion	31
Chapter 3	
3. Narrative: historical overview, nonformal education and the Church	32
3.1. Introduction	32
3.2. Historical background of South Korea	32
3.2.1. The three kingdoms and Chōson era	33
3.2.2. The revolution of the invention of the Hangeul alphabet	35
3.2.3. The arrival of Christianity	37

3.2.4. Japanese invasion	39
3.2.5. March 1 <sup>st</sup> 1919 Movement and Independence	40
3.2.6. The Korean War 1950-1953	42
3.2.7. Post-independence political scene: overview	43
3.3. Korea's literacy campaign in the twentieth century	45
3.3.1. Colonial circumstances and education.	46
3.3.2. The era of poor economic life and the eruption of social movements	48
3.3.3. Evening schools	49
3.3.4. Curriculum	50
3.3.5. Mobilization and utilization of local resources	51
3.3.5.1. The establishment of evening school	52
3.3.5.2. Human resources	52
3.3.5.3. Financial resources	53
3.4. The role of the Church	54
3.4.1. The transformation of Christian ministry into a holistic one	54
3.4.2 The impact of holistic ministry on literacy for social development	56
3.4.2.1. National level	56
3.4.2.2. Community level	57
3.4.2.2.1. Spiritual and intangible impact	57
3.4.2.2.2. Physical, material and socio-economic impact	59
3.5. Conclusion	60
Chapter 4	
4. Literacy and social development in South Korea: evaluation of impact on political, economic and social sectors	61
4.1. Introduction	61
4.2. The evaluation of the political revolution and women's emancipation process	61
4.2.1. The main process of the political revolution	62
4.2.2. Women's emancipation process and social development	64
4.3. Literacy and economic boom: rural empowerment and labour movement	67
4.3.1. Economic and rural empowerment	67
4.3.2. Farmer's and labour movement and economic growth	69
4.4. The effect of literacy on social reforms and education	72
4.4.1. Social reforms on development	73
4.4.1.1. Women's self-image	73
4.4.1.2. Social structures	74
4.4.2. The culminating impact of education on social development	75
4.4.2.1. Health and environment	75
4.4.2.2. Formal Education	77
4.5. Conclusion	78
Chapter 5	
5. Theological review	79
5.1. Introduction	79
5.2. Christian mission and literacy as development contribution	80
5.2.1. Bible translation	80
5.2.2. Negative issues of literacy for development	81

5.2.3. Human resource	83
5.3. The benefit of literacy on evangelization	85
5.3.1. Theological review of literacy benefit for missionaries, Church expansion and growth	85
5.3.2. The benefit of literacy for Korean Christian social mission	89
5.4. Conclusion	90
Chapter 6	
6. Literacy and social development in developing nations	92
6.1. Introduction	92
6.2. The problem of illiteracy in developing countries	92
6.2.1. The problem of illiteracy	93
6.2.2. The impact of illiteracy on social development	95
6.2.3. Literacy and Christian missions	98
6.3. Strategic suggestions	102
6.3.1. The social context	102
6.3.2. The church context	103
Chapter 7	
Conclusion	105
Bibliography	107

### List of Tables

Table 1. The number of churches and population of Korea in the Japanese period	39
Table 2. The comparative table between Hangeul and Japanese weekly periods	47
Table 3. Subjects of evening schools and number of locations offered	51
Table 4. The number of evening schools during the Japanese period	52

## Chapter 1

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. Background to and motivation for the research

Korean educational ideology is *Hong Ik In Gan* (홍익인간) i.e. to benefit the human world.<sup>1</sup> Thus the mission of offering education is to provide and enhance human well-being in health, independence, creativity and moral awareness. In the first 900 years of the common era, Koreans had elementary and higher educational schools in the Three Kingdoms of Silla, Goguryeo and Baekje. *Kuk Ja Gam*(국자감) in Goryeo (AD918 – AD1392), and *Sung Kyun Kwan*(성균관), in the Chōson era (AD1392 – AD1910), established venerable educational institutions to train the people to produce intellectuals for the national vision of transforming Korean society.<sup>2</sup> Today, education is extremely important for economic development and the supply of skilled human resources for the nation's progress. Korean education has grown quickly and has been universalised. Since 1953 there has been free elementary education. From 1995 admission to middle schools reached 99.9%. Until the growth and improvement in education, Koreans had experienced economic problems and poor living conditions. Nonformal education emerged under colonial era persecution, but it managed to survive and has contributed immensely to social education for renewal and change. At that time there was no government support for nonformal education.

Literacy training offered through nonformal education changed the vision of Koreans and

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<sup>1</sup> The World Today News: [www.worldtodaynews.com/world/asia/korea/about-3.htm](http://www.worldtodaynews.com/world/asia/korea/about-3.htm)

<sup>2</sup> The World Today News.



resulted in social development. The remarkable aspect of Korean literacy success is that it was reduced by 73.9% from early to mid-twentieth century. Today Korean society has a literacy rate of 98%. The impact and importance of Korea's literacy success can be seen in the rapid human capability and capacity building it promoted. There occurred an openness of mind and the discovering of opportunities by people. The fact that they could read their own language and write it, brought about social emancipation and liberty. I am indeed motivated by the remarkable fact that such nonformal educational activity could spark tremendous social change after two decades. Many social institutions contributed by playing their role in this mass literacy campaign. My desire is to trace the role played by Christian institutions. Hence, this research is aimed at clarifying the social educational activities of Christians in South Korea, and specifically, the Protestant contribution to the literature and literacy campaign for the social development of the poor. I hope to identify lessons that will be of benefit to the church in their contribution to development in Africa.

## **1.2. Preliminary literature study and the location of the research within the existing literature**

My preliminary literature review has located many books and theses around Korean formal education and nonformal education. Nonformal education has two elements which are normally considered separately or together namely "nonformal education"<sup>3</sup> and adult literacy. Myung sill Lee in 'A study on social education of Christianity in the early enlightenment age of Korea'<sup>4</sup> commented on the role of Christianity in the modernization and socialization of

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<sup>3</sup> This is an alternative informal training offered to people without the privilege of access to formal school courses.

<sup>4</sup> Myung sill Lee, 'A study on the national education of evening school under Japanese invasion', Unpublished thesis, Suk-Myung University - Department of Education, 1987.  
[http://cat2.riss4u.net/search/re\\_t\\_abstract\\_view.jsp?\\_control\\_no=00874527](http://cat2.riss4u.net/search/re_t_abstract_view.jsp?_control_no=00874527)

Korea. She cited the role Christian publications in the Hangeul (Korean) language played in bringing about the growth in literacy which contributed to the promotion of democracy and the modernization of Korea. Young Tek No in his thesis, 'The case of national education in colonial era,'<sup>5</sup> notes that evening school was seen as a tremendous contribution to promote literacy among peasant farmers and labourers. Again, Il Seok Chen in 'Changes of unsystematic educational agency and its improvement,'<sup>6</sup> highlighted how literacy opportunities in Korea benefited the most marginalized people. The contribution of some Christian movements was also cited by Joo Hyun Shin, 'Korean Christian National Movements in 1920s.'<sup>7</sup> What I have discovered is that they all deal with historical narratives. They therefore open the way for me to examine this historically based information. This has suggested further research to enable me do my own theological reflection on the Korean Churches' participation in the impressive literacy achievement. Both the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Education for Critical Consciousness* by Paulo Freire provide information on nonformal education and social development in an underdevelopment context. His work will provide the framework for a theological appraisal of literacy as nonformal education.

### 1.3. Research problem

The research question at the heart of this thesis is: what has been the contribution to social and economic development by the Church's nonformal educational methods (which eradicated illiteracy from amongst the very poor and marginalized) in South Korea's society

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<sup>5</sup> Young Tek No, 'The case of National education in colonial era', Unpublished thesis, Kon Kuk University, 1977.

[http://cat2.riss4u.net/search/re\\_t\\_abstract\\_view.jsp?\\_control\\_no=02509704](http://cat2.riss4u.net/search/re_t_abstract_view.jsp?_control_no=02509704)

<sup>6</sup> Il Seok Chen, '(A) study on the changes of unsystematic educational agency and its improvement', Unpublished thesis, Han-il University, 1998. [http://cat2.riss4u.net/search/re\\_t\\_abstract\\_view.jsp?\\_control\\_no=09145048](http://cat2.riss4u.net/search/re_t_abstract_view.jsp?_control_no=09145048)

<sup>7</sup> Joo Hyun Shin, 'Korean Christian national movement in 1920s', Unpublished thesis, Suk-Myung Universtiy, 1986. [http://cat2.riss4u.net/search/re\\_t\\_abstract\\_view.jsp?\\_control\\_no=00869047](http://cat2.riss4u.net/search/re_t_abstract_view.jsp?_control_no=00869047)

within the 1900s? I have realized that much of the documentation and research is historical and its relevance outside Korea is limited. However, there is the need to have another review of how Korea, when it was a poor nation, was able to use available resources in this massive campaign. Further, to see how the methods used contributed to effective agricultural independence and economic empowerment of the poor Koreans. Finally, how can the relevant lessons embedded in historical documents be identified so as to benefit Christian development ministry in other places such as in Africa?

#### **1.4. Theoretical framework**

The information I have available for analysing is historical, but the aim of my research is human development in scope and liberationist in theory. The literacy campaign in South Korea impacted the marginalized poor. The concern here is that the method employed for this transformational achievement in social development is empowering. On this basis I would like to apply the liberationist theoretical framework in sorting and interpreting the historical and social development data. Paulo Freire's works, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Education for Critical Consciousness*, will be the theoretical framework which provides the foundation for the fact that people have the capacity to change their reality and their circumstances for their full benefit. Freire's premise is that education (formal or nonformal) promotes "critical thinking" which is the way for self-empowered development.

## **1.5. Research design and research methodology**

My research utilized theoretical, historical and sociological materials. I collected internet materials, mostly dissertations by Koreans. I used other documents and books for more clarification on the historical issues and data available. The information I gathered was from both Koreans and non-Koreans. This enabled me to have accurate and balanced information pertaining to the literacy campaign history. The reason for making my research a historical one was that I want to focus on a specific period within Korean history. But I do not intend revising this history about Korea's literacy drive campaign. My task is to find out and examine how the literacy achievement became possible within a remarkably short period. In addition to that, to identify its theological significance, in order to help Churches in Africa contribute to social development. My literature review-based research utilized Internet web site resources of RISS4u.net, where classified dissertations are available, especially Korean ones. I reviewed and compared historical data from these sources. I found that each writer has a particular area of emphasis within the literacy campaign historical documents. I used resources of libraries.

## Chapter 2

### 2. Theoretical review on literacy and social development

#### 2.1. Introduction

There are many factors that contribute to social development in society, e.g. education, health, employment and a good economy. In Chapter 2, the focus is limited to literacy, which is argued to be the main cornerstone in social development. Firstly, literacy education will be examined from the theological point of view and the impact of literacy on social development discussed as a general theoretical premise. Secondly, the school of thought on transformative education will be analysed, making use of the ideas of Paulo Freire. The issues arising will become the framework for the review of the impact of the South Korean literacy campaign, which will be dealt with in the subsequent chapter.

#### 2.2. Literacy and social development

Literacy education in the technical sense is a programme designed to educate people to read and acquire the skill to write.<sup>8</sup> Literacy is normally classified as nonformal education. This form of education is defined by Coombs as:

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<sup>8</sup> Kowsar P. Chowdhury and Timothy D. Foster agree that there is no specific single jacket definition for literacy. They state that it is difficult to conceptualize the definition because it continues to evolve over time. Kowsar P. Chowdhury, 'Literacy and Primary Education', [www.worldvank.org/html/exldr/hnp/hddflash/workp/wp\\_00050.html](http://www.worldvank.org/html/exldr/hnp/hddflash/workp/wp_00050.html) and Timothy D. Foster, 'Literacy & Technology: The L.E.A.R.N. Centre (Internship Paper; Applied Sociology Program – N.A.U. 1995), <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~tdf/interm.html>

... any organized educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular sub-groups in the population, adults as well as children.<sup>9</sup>

Nonformal education has different dimensions of enabling people who missed the formal educational opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge. It is acclaimed by the British Commonwealth as an instrument for development.<sup>10</sup> Literacy is the main part of nonformal education, which has broadened its scope to include social development success. According to Irma Adelman:

Social development is an indicator of societal welfare. It includes not only material but also non-material, distributional and intergenerational aspects. Thus, a measure of "true" social development should reflect the degree of social, political and spiritual satisfaction in the society as well as the extent of progress in fulfilling societal material needs.<sup>11</sup>

For Adelman, the degree of welfare which improves the status of the poor is when the poor themselves become participants in the social development process. This cannot be effective unless the poorest class of society also becomes literate enough to understand issues and contribute meaningfully. In this context, social development could be narrowed to humanization for poor people's liberation and empowerment.

### 2.2.1. Literacy education in theological perspective

From the foregoing subsection it can be said that humanization and liberation and empowerment concerns people. People are intelligent and personal creatures. This quality about people requires the need for learning. There are forms of learning like oral, nonformal,

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<sup>9</sup> Elisabeth C. Mumba, 'Nonformal education in Zambia: Experiences of the working group on nonformal education in Zambia' (Paper presented at the national symposium on nonformal education in Mozambique Maputo 12-14 June 2002), p. 2. Mumba, 'Nonformal education in Zambia', p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Mumba, 'Nonformal education in Zambia', p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Irma Adelman, 'Social development in Korea, 1953-1993', <http://are.berkeley.edu/~adelman/KOREA.html>

informal and formal. Each of these aspects of learning carries its own impact in educating, equipping and helping preserve knowledge and open understanding. Most of the factors require literature to inform and educate. The Bible is a literary document which serves to educate users for the development of their life. It can be said that the Bible encourages literacy for both adults and children so that they can have responsible access to religious teaching (2Ti 3:15). This subsection will present the Biblical position on education, specifically relating to the *word*, which is basic for literacy. The theological implication of Jesus as the Word, Bible as the Word, Reformation and literacy and translation will be examined.

#### 2.2.1.1. Jesus as the Word

The incarnation of Jesus is described in John's Gospel as the "Word" becoming "flesh" and dwelling in a human context. The Word exists and became a visible person in the form of Jesus Christ. According to Andrew F. Walls, the "incarnation is translation."<sup>12</sup> The translation, hence, of the word into human form became necessary for the sake of particularity. This implies that the Word came into a cultural system identifying with its specific particularities: locality, ethnicity, place and time.<sup>13</sup> The implication of the translation of the Word for education and literacy will now be studied. The incarnation became necessary for human salvation. This began in the particular cultural context of the Jews. Jesus gave the Great Commission for the Gospel (the Word) to be taken into other parts of the world so that others may have faith in God and be saved and have

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<sup>12</sup> Walls, Andrew F., *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of faith*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, T&T Clark Edinburgh, 1996, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, p. 27.

transformation of their lives.<sup>14</sup> In the Gospel of Luke the author indicates that there is a necessity to write the researched account of Jesus Christ (Lk1:1-4). In the same manner the author of the Gospel of John indicated that he wrote that account about Jesus Christ for the sake of testimony to its readers for their faith in Jesus as the Saviour (Jn 20:30).

The essence of salvation is to direct human faith and hope to God, for personal and collective transformation. Salvation, thus, is a continuous process towards Christian maturity. Salvation has an aspect of growth which comes by education through the Word of God, i.e. the teachings of Jesus and the prophets (Phi 2:12-13).<sup>15</sup> In the case of Christianity, the transmission of the faith into new cultures (new ethnic tongues) requires translation of the Scriptures (the Word of God) into the new setting. This is described by Walls as taking “flesh in the cultures...and people behold *His* (Christ’s) glory under human conditions.”<sup>16</sup> The taking of Christ of *particular* human form simply tells us that within our existing context in body, community, ethnicity and geo-location human transformation by faith in God is possible.<sup>17</sup> This may contradict the religious belief in reincarnation in Buddhism and Confucianism, where a whole life-cycle of different existence is required. From Paul’s view, the Great Commission nevertheless signifies the “multi-ethnic New Humanity”<sup>18</sup> which takes its roots from his view of Christ as the Second Adam of the human race. Hence, the implication of the incarnation of the Word is to generate a ripple effect of the translatability of the new move of God’s grace to humanity, towards humanization and people’s liberation and empowerment. Being able to hear and read this “Word” is thus crucial for the work of Christ, and this has a direct bearing on the production of the Bible.

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<sup>14</sup> Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, p. 42.

<sup>17</sup> Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, p. 28.

<sup>18</sup> Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, p. 27.



### 2.2.1.2. Bible as the Word

The Bible is the ultimate authority, particularly for Protestant Christians. It is considered as the Word of God. The Bible, with its message in various formats, historic, the laws, poetic, prophetic and the Gospels, together with the epistles of the Apostles, embodies the mind and purpose of God for humanity and creation. The historic records of the Old and New Testaments reveal God's involvement and control of human history. The life of Abraham, specifically his encounter with God, changed his destiny and this has influenced the history of the world (Gen 12:1-3). The promise of God's redemptive work took seed in his promise to Abraham as the one through whom all nations would be blessed. This was the initiation of God's purpose of revealing himself in the material world.

The laws present the mind of God on righteous requirements for Israel. Moses told the Israelites to observe them because they were God's commandments (Dt 6:6-9). The poetic literature of the Bible affirms the laws as God's commandments, which are able to change those who follow them.

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night (Ps1:1-2).

The prophetic writings vindicate themselves as being divinely inspired by their prophetic contents. The fulfilment of their prophecies allowed them to be canonized as part of Scripture. These writings foretold and warned Israel (and the gentile nations) about God's intention pertaining to their obedience to the laws or otherwise. Through the prophets, God confirmed his promise of redemption by the Christ (Isa 7: 14, 9: 1-7; Mic 5: 2; Zec 11: 12, 13).

The Gospels and the apostolic epistles re-echo the historic events of Jesus Christ as the Word of God, the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. His birth and works are alluded to as the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham through King David and the prediction of the prophets (Matt 1:1; Act 2:14ff; 7). The Gospels and the epistles further affirm the Old Testament as the authentic Word of God by constant reference to it by the authors. They see the Old Testament law and prophecy as the embodiment of Jesus the Christ (Matt 2:6, 18; Lk). Peter and Paul confirmed to Timothy that the Scripture is inspired by God for salvation, teaching and correction (2 Pe 1: 21; 2 Ti 3:15-17). Jesus himself referred to the Old Testament as the Word of God by his references, "It is written ..." (Matt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13). The Gospels and the epistles find their authenticity, as reliable and inspired by God, in the credibility of the authors. The authors had been the disciples of Jesus (1 Jn 1:1-4). The Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles, which shared the same non-apostolic authorship claims relied on authentic research by the writer (Lk 1:1-4; Ac 1:1-3). The literary nature of ancient Israel's religion and Christianity should have induced a high literacy rate in their context. The facts available, however, do not indicate such a phenomenon until the Reformation period.

### 2.2.1.3. Reformation and literacy

The high rate of illiteracy in the Biblical world and the Western kingdoms depended on the oral use of the Bible until the period of the Reformation. M. Bar-Ilan says,

According to the Torah, there is no need to read or write, except for writing the *Mezuza*, *Tefilin*, and the Torah itself. However, for these purposes there was always a scribe, so a Jew in antiquity could fulfil the commandments of the Torah while being illiterate.<sup>19</sup>

This assertion has been explained on the grounds that, due to the farming activities that were the main pre-occupation of the greater majority of the people, they did not need learning or literacy. There were no formal jobs that made literacy necessary. Becoming literate was viewed as a waste of time, which could otherwise have been spent farming or making money.<sup>20</sup> Even though the level of literacy had improved since the time of the Roman Empire, in the case of Israel it was estimated not to be above 3%.<sup>21</sup> Therefore the level of social, political and economic injustice which Jesus and Old Testament prophets had to deal with is not surprising. Europe had the same problem of high illiteracy until the Reformation.<sup>22</sup>

From the 11<sup>th</sup> century the common people were prohibited by the Church from reading the Bible on their own. "Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) ordered Bohemians not to read the Bible. Innocent III (1198-1216) forbade the people reading the Bible in their own

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<sup>19</sup> M. Bar-Ilan, 'Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C.E.', S. Fishbane, S. Schoenfeld and A. Goldschlaeger (eds.), *Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society*, II, New York: Ktav, 1992, pp. 46-61. <http://faculty.biu.ac.il/~barilm/illitera.html>

<sup>20</sup> Bar-Ilan, 'Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C.E.'

<sup>21</sup> Bar-Ilan, 'Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C.E.'

<sup>22</sup> Morris Watkins, *Literacy, Bible reading, and Church growth: through the ages*, William Carey Library, California, 1978, pp. 35-36.

language."<sup>23</sup> This was further reinforced by the Council of Toulouse which put a complete ban on ordinary people possessing any portion of the Bible or translating it.<sup>24</sup> Morris Watkins describes the condition as:

The laity was at the mercy of the clergy, for they were almost all illiterate, or, if they were able to read, seldom had access to the Sacred Word. Because of this ignorance of God's Word, the Church was able to teach anything it wanted to teach.<sup>25</sup>

Because of this the introduction of Christianity into other parts of Europe, with the Vulgate translation in Latin, was a real hindrance to easy conversion and the spreading of the Gospel. At this time the gap between the rich and the poor was wide and the feudal system was practised.

In Europe it took the effort of the medieval Reformers to get the Bible translated into other Western languages. This generated the desire by many people to learn to read. The invention of the printing press in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century added to the widespread desire for knowledge and information of which the Bible became one source.<sup>26</sup> Martin Luther translated the New Testament into German (some other translations had preceded Luther's) in 1522.<sup>27</sup> Tyndale translated the Bible into English in 1525. This accelerated the spread of the Reformation's influence in England.<sup>28</sup> In 1535 Olivetan translated the Bible into French.<sup>29</sup> These events contributed to promoting literacy, which was very low in Europe. Translations into the vernacular showed the aversion of the Reformers to the monopoly of Latin on Scripture.

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<sup>23</sup> Watkins, *Literacy, Bible reading, and Church growth*, p. 65.

<sup>24</sup> Watkins, *Literacy, Bible reading, and Church growth*, p. 56.

<sup>25</sup> Watkins, *Literacy, Bible reading, and Church growth*, p. 65.

<sup>26</sup> Watkins, *Literacy, Bible reading, and Church growth*, pp. 62, 67.

<sup>27</sup> Watkins, *Literacy, Bible reading, and Church growth*, p. 66.

<sup>28</sup> Watkins, *Literacy, Bible reading, and Church growth*, p. 66.

<sup>29</sup> Watkins, *Literacy, Bible reading, and Church growth*, p. 66.

Luther had declared:

Would that this one Book were in every language, in every land, before the eyes, and in the ears and hearts of all men! Scripture without any comment is the sun whence all teachers receive their sight<sup>30</sup>

This desire of the Reformers is attributed to their recognition of Jesus Christ as the Word of God and therefore their faith in the Scripture as the only source of salvation and hope for human transformation and social liberation, especially at a time when the Church had become corrupt within itself and political abuses were widespread in Europe. Their insistence on getting the Bible as the Word translated into vernacular languages had its own positive implications for revivals across Europe and for the rise of the lower classes to defend their liberty from the feudal system and upper class hegemony.

#### 2.2.1.4. Mother tongue and literacy for development

The mother tongue is the language that people possess as a means of expression and for understanding themselves. It is in their mother tongue that people find their identity and values. It is also through their mother tongue that people name their world. It can be seen that if people are deprived of their mother tongue it may pose a major obstacle for the total expression of themselves and their identity. The power of the mother tongue, i.e. the native language, can be theologically justified. In the early stages of human development and in ancient history, as found in Genesis, language became the unifying factor in what the people of Babel wanted to do (Gen 11). The idea of building a tower into the sky had the possibility of succeeding, because they had power and understanding embedded in the language they

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<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Watkins, *Literacy, Bible reading, and Church growth*, p. 66.

possessed. By sharing one language they could make a “name” for themselves. This would keep them concentrated on one focus or vision (Gen 11:4). Then God decided to stop them and confuse them, the Bible says: “come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other” (Gen 11:7). In the New Testament, on the Day of Pentecost, people heard the believers in their own languages. This made a great impact on the inauguration of the early Church:

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.... - We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues! (Act 2:4-11)

This event led to the baptism of about three thousand new converts, who believed in the subsequent message of Peter. This happened because they could reason with him by virtue of what they first heard in their own mother tongue.<sup>31</sup> The purpose of God is to use what is dear to human hearts for the conversion and transformation of a person. From the event in Acts, chapter 2, it is evident that God recognizes people by what He has given to them, specifically in the context of their own language. It is in their own language that human beings name themselves and other things (Gen 2: 19, 23). In the same way, Isaiah said God called Israel by name, implying what is understandable and familiar to them: “I have summoned you by name” (Isa 43:1).

Yahweh is the liberator whose interest is in holistic liberation from things that seek to distort the identity of people. He opposes oppression of people, because it normally brings about dehumanization by destroying their identity. The Exodus deliverance shows God’s strong

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<sup>31</sup> Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, p. 32.

interest in the oppressive bondage of people. In the same way, Jesus' interest has been the liberation of people from many kinds of distortions and oppression: "He sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed..." (Lk 4:18).

Literacy in the vernacular entitles a people to control their own destiny for humanization and freedom for their development. When people who are oppressed and subjected to cultural invasion (see p. 22), achieve liberation there is a need for general renewal (empowerment). The New Testament describes conversion and transformation from the old sinful (subjected) person to a regenerated life as a new creation (2 Cor 5:17; Rom 8:1-17). The new creature in the Pauline sense is the new empowerment which the Holy Spirit gives to the believer as a free, liberated person from the power of sin and forces of evil. This should continue in growth as empowerment that affects all the life around to bring about not only personal changes, but also changes in social circumstances. This requires renewal in mind (Eph 4:23ff). It is affirmed by Peter in his epistle, in which he exhorted the persecuted believers, saying, "therefore, prepare your minds for action..." (1 Peter 1:13). The "mind" in this sense, from the two New Testament epistles writers, implies that of knowledge (2 Peter 1:5-8). Peter challenged them to observe their lives as free people (1 Peter 2:16). In this we find the entitlement of the spiritually liberated to control their lives to satisfy the demands of God. The effective way for people to maintain their liberation is by the level of their literacy and education. Oral tradition has been a basic starting point for every culture, when letters and numerals were absent. Today, it is acknowledged that literacy is necessary for changing people and society.

## 2.2.2. Social development through literacy

In this section, individual development and integration into the larger social community will be analysed. This will be done from the premise that literacy stands out as the basic and most relevant factor in social development. Social development is the larger circle, but the individuals become the focus of transformation, bringing together the total unity of transformation through people's empowerment by literacy. Empowerment activates dynamism in people towards change and the sustaining of it.

### 2.2.2.1. The dynamics of people

Paulo Freire categorically describes the person as a "conscious" personality.<sup>32</sup> This understanding of the total person is depicted in Diagram 1. It shows that the centre of a person's world is in the reality which impinges upon the consciousness. The reality of living, which creates history, activates the sense of perception, emotion and action (and reaction).<sup>33</sup> Freire is vividly affirming the inseparable cosmic and material reality which is the basic outlook

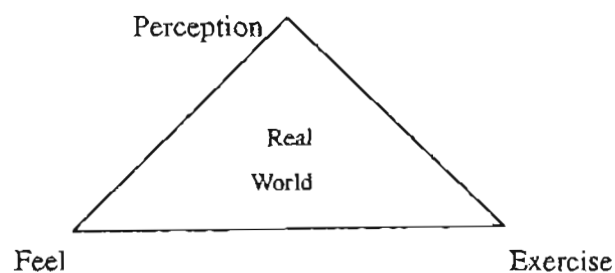


Diagram 1.

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<sup>32</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 146.

<sup>33</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 147.



of the Christian Scripture.<sup>34</sup> God created the material world as good. The incarnation of the cosmic Jesus brought what we are conscious of, God, into what we can feel and touch and the making of active history. Jesus affirmed spiritual reality by the relevance of the material. He ministered to physical and material needs inseparable from the “spiritual.” According to Freire, the denial of human consciousness is “mechanistic objectivism.”<sup>35</sup> This position hinders people from realising their potential and choices or decision-making on their own. It obstructs effective construction of accurate history, based on the human conscious cause that is progress through the “process” of education.<sup>36</sup> “Process” is the interaction of perception, emotions and action (reactions), which leads to transformation.<sup>37</sup> But the interconnections may work effectively for transformation if the process is mediated by word.

“Existence is a dynamic concept.”<sup>38</sup> The reason is that people and individuals are dynamically capable of changing situations and conditions in given circumstances. This depends on relationships and co-ordination which makes others subject to their potential. People should not be taken for granted. According to Freire, “There is no such thing as absolute ignorance or absolute wisdom.”<sup>39</sup> For people to become the subject of their own lives they need to be capable of “critical awareness.”<sup>40</sup> This means they ought to seek to observe their own context and reflect on issues prevailing which hamper their progress. By so doing, people exercise their rulership over their world as authorised in Genesis chapter one.<sup>41</sup> To be critically conscious is the ability to self-examine and increase one’s capability

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<sup>34</sup> Steve de Gruchy, ‘Critically analyse, from Christian perspective, Freire’s understanding of the process of humanization’, (lecture handout).

<sup>35</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 146.

<sup>36</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 147.

<sup>37</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 147.

<sup>38</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>39</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 43.

<sup>40</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 19.

<sup>41</sup> José Míguez Bonino, *Room to Be People*, An interpretation of the message of the Bible for Today’s World, Fortress

and capacity. This enables people to consider, reflectively, peculiar constraints upon their lives. This is the type of freedom people should have, to pave the way for transformation. Where this freedom is made impossible by mechanistic subjection, Freire says “magic consciousness”<sup>42</sup> takes over the thinking pattern of the people. Magic consciousness is the focus on unrealistic illusions. This is capable of obstructing their realities and settling them comfortably in a wrong disposition, which eventually disempowers and sets the way for maintenance of self-deception and retrogression. Offsetting the disempowerment of the people would require strategic transformative education. The Bible shares in Freire’s sentiment that God does not show favouritism but recognises the capability of all humans. Jesus taught and empowered the unlearned who believed in him by his Word. He made them aware of their realities and helped them to master their adverse conditions. He identified himself as the truth (Jn 14: 16) and not illusion. He is the Word and the light to understanding and freedom to own the world and to the human vocation of humanisation.

#### **2.2.2.2. Literacy as empowering and transformative social development**

Literacy should not be a matter of personal choice. The consequence of illiteracy is a social calamity rather than a personal one. When illiteracy renders individuals incapable and ineffective in certain practical ways, like ordinary farming, it affects those who depend on that farmer.<sup>43</sup> Literacy has in this way proven that it promotes social transformation. It equips people with the self-empowering skills of reading and writing. Empowerment is the conscious preparation for transformative change. What is empowerment? It is the ability of

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press Philadelphia, 1979, p. 28,

<sup>42</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 44.

<sup>43</sup> See further explanation in Chapter 4.

people to regain self-recognition of their potentialities and their readiness to work for change. Empowerment is therefore necessary for people who have been oppressed or dominated and had their opportunity for development blocked. It lifts people to recognise their position in the world as co-creators with God. Empowerment itself is conceptual, unless it is linked to some programme of action whereby people exercise mastership over their life as created in the image of God. A literacy programme, thus, becomes empowering by what it does to bring about conscious change<sup>44</sup> to full realisation of worthiness of existence in the Word of God.

Literacy is self-empowering because it is involved with "words" which accordingly is a term that carries creative power.<sup>45</sup> It has served in many places to radically impact social change in encounters such as between South Korea and Japan, in Asia. (The Korean impact will be the subject matter in the subsequent chapter.) Freire sees literacy as a form of education, which opens the eyes of the oppressed enabling them to rise against their subjection.<sup>46</sup> It also enables people to access information that is relevant for their self-discovery and promotes discussion among people in communities. Literacy is highly desirable because the proliferation of literacy helps in promoting Christian faith where people have access to reflect on the Word on their own. When people become literate their exposure to literary information enables them to be critical in their attitude. This brings about transformation and progress in all aspects of their social participation. Freire supports this, quoting Mannheim: "As democratic processes become widespread, it becomes more and more difficult to permit the masses to remain in a state of ignorance."<sup>47</sup> In other words, an educated citizenry becomes the root of democracy.

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<sup>44</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 102.

<sup>45</sup> Míguez Bonino, *Room to Be People*, p. 32.

<sup>46</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, pp. viii-ix.

<sup>47</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 41.

Literacy for social empowerment and transformation can be achieved, in Freire's view, when national leaders recognize the potentiality and capability of their people to change.<sup>48</sup> This should compel a nation to map out an effective strategy, backed by an effective policy, to eradicate illiteracy. In contemporary times various NGOs and Christian religious bodies have been contributing their efforts in places where illiteracy is a critical problem. However, when a literacy campaign is not supported by the local or national government the efforts may be short-lived; but this is relative to different places and countries. Literacy as a programme mostly targets the adult population in many countries, because they cannot afford the formal school system. UNESCO reports that some parts of Asia and Africa still have high illiteracy rates among school-going age children who are without a school.<sup>49</sup> These children have no access to formal education for various reasons, such as geographic location, gender and finance. Whilst these are not the issue in this section, it raises the concern about how soon people should become literate.

Literacy is an acclaimed effective transformational programme. Freire has made it clear that the issue of illiteracy, which affects human destiny for the worst, is an ethical one. Therefore, it takes "love" and an "act of courage" and boldness to initiate such a transformative programme for social change.<sup>50</sup> The Bible says that love that does not seek its own but the interest of others is paramount (1Cor 13:5; Mt. 22: 39). The love of God desires liberty for humanity because it is in human freedom that our highest potential can be realised. Freire's remark is valid, and it implores government and policy administrators with a heart for social transformation to facilitate and promote literacy and education, which have far-reaching benefits for the people. It also becomes the imperative of social functionaries and

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<sup>48</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>49</sup> Kowsar P. Chowdhury, 'Literacy and Primary Education', [www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/hnp/hbdf/flash/workp/wp\\_00050.html](http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/hnp/hbdf/flash/workp/wp_00050.html)

<sup>50</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 38.

organizations, whether religious or social, to engage in the task of eradicating illiteracy as a social and national challenge towards transformative social development.

Transformative social development is a development approach which is people centred. It concentrates on people's capacity and potential development as the basis for general development outcomes within communities. It equips individuals and communities to be critical in their outlook which, according to Freire, results in transformation or development. Literacy as a transformative social development instrument has the potential to enhance the capability of people. This enables them to avoid distortion in information, engage in arguments based on facts and practise the use of dialogue. It also helps people to reject passive positions and become receptive to new issues, without destroying the old. Literacy also builds up community, diversifying the capacities of people. It exposes them to renewal and revision and they take their destiny in their own hands as their own responsibility.<sup>51</sup> The goal of the Bible is human transformation now with a view towards the future heaven. It is for this reason that Jesus launched the "Kingdom of God" (Mk 1: 15) business to begin the transforming process of repentance from sin and selfishness and greed. This agrees with Freire's basic objective of transformation by overthrowing the oppressor. The richness of these ideas can be of more benefit with further evaluation of other works by Freire on this subject.

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<sup>51</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 18.

### 2.3. Analysis and synthesis of transformative education

The focus of Freire is on the experiences of oppressed people. These have created different syndromes like fatalism, psychological and economic violence, self-depreciation and the cherishing of ignorance. The basic problem of the oppressed is their illiteracy. He found it a challenge to fight the social system that deprived the oppressed of the privilege of transformative education that could set them free from injustice and exploitation through literacy. Paulo Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, has worked out a framework which is said to establish steps in a revolutionary cultural action to liberate the oppressed from dominant forces. To overcome the state of underdevelopment, Freire has evolved the method of education by dialogue. These are a set of guidance rules and instructions based on love, humility, truth, trust, hope and action.<sup>52</sup> He says that the process and action induced by this education sets the tone for conscientization (*conscientização*) and leadership action with the oppressed. The aim of this section is to examine Paulo Freire's cultural action as a framework for social transformation.

#### 2.3.1. Review of Paulo Freire

From the picture given above about Freire's outlook on the society he encountered, it can be seen that he reacts to the displacement of people from the centre of society. When this happens, society is not people-focused but holds the view of "mechanistic objectivism,"<sup>53</sup> which turns humans into mere objects. In his view, there is a need to move people from the periphery of the social circle to the centre, against other reactionary forces. These are the

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<sup>52</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin Books, 1993, pp. 70-74.

<sup>53</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 146.

forces of the oppressor or the dominant powers as social elites. To achieve the task will depend on cultural action, which is dialogical action. Cultural action employs education or literacy as an instrument for cultural synthesis. The outcome of cultural synthesis is manifested in social renewal, which is produced through factors of co-operation, unity and organization. How does this come about?

In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire notes that cultural invasion is used to displace human beings from the centre of their world. Cultural invasion is described by Freire as programs and plans to disrupt the potentialities and development of the oppressed.<sup>54</sup> Cultural invasion has its own nature. Firstly, it is done to implant the invaders' outlook and their philosophy.<sup>55</sup> This implies that the objects of intrusion are transmuted through cultural identity. It also means an indigenous ideology will be displaced and replaced with an invading one, which undermines local identity. Secondly, cultural invasion has the nature of economic hegemony.<sup>56</sup> This means that the invaded social group becomes economically dependent on the invader. This is a form of enslavement and imperialism.

Cultural invasion identifies itself by its actions, according to Freire. Firstly, it intrudes upon the culture of its targets and uses cultural invasion as an instrument to achieve their surrender. This is done by making the people think of themselves as being inferior.<sup>57</sup> This is made possible by inducing the attitude of imitation and the unquestionable acceptance of the new imposed culture. Secondly, cultural invasion as a disrupting tool is used to undermine

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<sup>54</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 133.

<sup>55</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 133.

<sup>56</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 134, 143.

<sup>57</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 134.

the creativity within a culture.<sup>58</sup> The achievement of this makes the intruding actors become those who know and possess all that is good. The invaded societies distrust their capabilities and potentialities. In addition to this point is the fact that cultural invasion forbids and discourages self-expression as anti-dialogical action.<sup>59</sup> In this way, the people become accustomed to the imposition and yield themselves to the invaders. Thereafter, the people are compelled to live within the world-view of the invaders, with the consequent demise of their own cultural heritage.

Dialogical cultural synthesis is used to overcome the “induced action”<sup>60</sup> of cultural invasion. It is ambivalent in nature and, because of this, it can be used to promote the course of liberation or its subversion. In cultural synthesis, the actors in both opposing sectors of cultural clashing become the focus of the induced synthesizing process. As an induced action, cultural synthesis has these objectives:

- (i) to revive creativity as a platform for cultural action to liberate and bring about transformation. Here the Bible also affirms the renewal of human creativity by the Word and power of the Spirit. Human creativity identifies humanity with the God, who has redeemed us from wickedness to be partners in his ongoing historical vision of a liberated world, devoid of dehumanisation.
- (ii) to transform leaders of the revolution and the oppressed for the historical process of action for change. Freire’s notion of humble and loving visionary leadership ties with the Christian standard of leadership that empties itself in order to lift the oppressed (Phil 2, 1 Pe 5).

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<sup>58</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 133.

<sup>59</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 133, 134.

<sup>60</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 161.



- (iii) to enable praxis by involving analysis of issues in the process for transformative change. In a similar manner the New Testament requires faith that goes with action (Jn 2).<sup>61</sup>

The effectiveness of cultural synthesis depends on its ability to arrest and dissolve the effects of cultural invasion. This cultural synthesis is able to achieve people's transformation or liberty through the instrument of education or literacy. Freire's emphasis on the education of the oppressed, i.e. their ability to be literate, underlies the effectiveness of this instrument to generate radical change which he termed "cultural revolution." The effectiveness of literacy in cultural synthesis is due to its ability to empower people and move them from the sidelines to the centre, where they belong in society in a creative way.

The implementation of cultural synthesis allows the achievement of three other factors that support cultural revolution as cultural action. The process of cultural synthesis, when effective through education, brings about people's mobilization as an organization. It provides natural growth towards unity. It offers strength and sustenance by converging the aspirations and tasks of the people. The essence of organization is to foster the witness of the people through their own interaction and participation. The people's witness counts heavily as the basis of uncovering the realistic historical process which has been kept covered by their disorganization. It becomes the mode of cultural revitalization for the inspiration of community and oneness. To achieve the forum where the active witness of the masses can become active weaponry, their organizations become relevant and indispensable<sup>62</sup> as their "educational process."<sup>63</sup> It helps to avoid any danger of their fragmentation by sharing the task of responsibility induced in their

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<sup>61</sup> Freire described praxis as the combination of reflection and action which in other words takes the form of word and work. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.68.

<sup>62</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 157.

<sup>63</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 159.

educational process. Organisation and unity are essential to Christian community. Jesus prayed fervently for the unity of the Church as a weapon against the enemy (Jn 17: 20f). Unity in the Church has the Word as its centre from which the Church is linked as one organised body.

Education through cultural synthesis works towards the people's co-operation. It builds on the recognition of equality and acceptance, irrespective of status and position. It should not start taking advantage of the marginalized, oppressed communities to achieve merely a parochial, selfish scheme.<sup>64</sup> It is needed in order to allow people and rural communities to take collective action for their common liberation and advancement.<sup>65</sup> Co-operation is again needed in order that history can be transformed to serve the collective purpose of the oppressed, for their emancipation. In this case, dialogue becomes indispensable to debunk previous and misconstrued images and their realities.<sup>66</sup> This cannot be effective without the people's literate capability. Only in this way can the people's desire be concentrated on pursuing the fight to dislodge the yoke which is on them. This can be done through their ability to source information for their reflection. They might, for generations, have accepted something, willingly or unwillingly. When the people achieve co-operation, they are ready for unity. Co-operation in the Christian sense can be likened to Paul's advocating for single-mindedness (Phil 2: 1-4).

The purpose of unity in dialogical action is to promote solidarity.<sup>67</sup> The purpose of solidarity is to set the people free by bringing them together.<sup>68</sup> In order to build unity there is the need to recognize that people are important and needed in the transformative change

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<sup>64</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 149, 150.

<sup>65</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 149.

<sup>66</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 149, 150.

<sup>67</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 155.

<sup>68</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 153.

process. This implies leading people to the centre of their world as the focus of transformation and development. Freire feels it is necessary to have them educated for their effective contribution through their own understanding of their world. In this case, the recognition of themselves as Subjects, and not things, becomes foremost.<sup>69</sup> To fortify this unity calls for dissociation from unrealistic myths, which critical reflection and the help of literacy can help achieve.<sup>70</sup> But Christianity goes further to say that for effective transformation to take place with humans transformation of the heart through faith in Christ the author of new life is called for. Transformation is not limited to material changes and gains but transformation of character and habits.

### **2.3.2. Issues on transformative education for development**

#### **2.3.2.1. The macro-impact of dialogical and anti-dialogical actions on development**

On the macro-level the focus of dialogical action is basically on libertarian education.<sup>71</sup> It is one of the strong basic factors for people's development and their transformation. These two conceptual approaches to development through social education have their effect on it in positive and negative ways. From Freire's point of view, the picture given from his dialogical perspective is toward productive and creative education.<sup>72</sup> The method ought to revitalize society and give it some meaning and a way forward. Education should be able to lead people to solve problems they face, on their own. He calls that "problem posing"<sup>73</sup> education, where the people become the centre. For "problem posing" education to be

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<sup>69</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 153, 154.

<sup>70</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 156.

<sup>71</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 52, 68.

<sup>72</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 51, 53, 56.

<sup>73</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 61, 61.

effective to achieve development as its basic objective, it should incorporate the four factors of dialogical action processes:

- co-operation contributes to development by building bridges and allowing the harnessing of available ideas and information;
- unity contributes to development in dialogical action by reviving people's inert strength and binding their minds together, for common action;
- organization as a dialogical factor strengthens the communication base to initiate transformative development;
- cultural synthesis contributes to development in a dialogical way, by enabling cultural action to lift the people in a common identity and restoration of indigenous values.

Freire sees anti-dialogical action as the main obstacle to dialogical action as a productive development process. The reason is that its mode of operation limits people's access to knowledge and information and is rather an imposition. This he described as "banking education."<sup>74</sup> Because this approach is counter-productive economically for the social life of the oppressed, it also robs them of their economic and other freedoms. The Christian understanding of Freire at this point can be described as the nature of sin that compels subjection of other people for exploitation. In similar manner it takes Bible education to bring people to understand the realities of their evil ways. The oppressed take consolation in the Word of God as a source of strength to resist the oppression of evil.

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<sup>74</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 53.

### 2.3.2.2. The micro-impact of dialogical and anti-dialogical action on development

Freire's perspective of the impact of the two concepts on education for social development from the micro-milieu can also be examined. At this level, anti-dialogical action becomes an obstacle and adversary to social transformation, with the individual as the centre. The dialogical concept then introduces the "being"<sup>75</sup> as the foundation for development. Because, in the anti-dialogical process, the oppressed's capability is neglected, the "being" is substituted with "thing."<sup>76</sup> There are two approaches:

#### (i) "being" concept

It is the individual whose recognition as Subject becomes the prime factor and basis to measure the ultimate outcome of the transformation process. The recognition given to the individual makes it necessary to determine the educational process, whether cognitive or through controlled exposure. The cognitive method, which is dialogical, allows the beginning of understanding, which promotes development. It produces productive and resourceful individuals who are free.<sup>77</sup> The Christian view of the person as created in the image of God makes it conditional to regard others as yourself. In this case the humanity of others is valued.

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<sup>75</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 142.

<sup>76</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 39, 41.

<sup>77</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 142, 143.

(ii) “Thing” concept

In the anti-dialogical approach the personality is considered as “thing.” One’s value is seen as important only in the position of subservience. An education method that could be transformative becomes irrelevant. What the “thing” concept perceives as necessary for the object is illusive modernization and not development. This concept has no generative capability to liberate the oppressed.<sup>78</sup>

## 2.4. Conclusion

Theoretically, it can be affirmed that literacy is the heart of social development. The effective transformation of human life both spiritually and materially requires literacy. The importance of literacy in Christianity as is underscored by the effect of post Reformation revival which resulted in various translated versions of the Bible that promoted literacy and a subsequent social awakening. The concept of humanisation as postulated by Paulo Freire, also supports the need for dialogical education which includes literacy as the key for social mobilisation and social conscientisation for the process of social transformation. The subsequent Chapters will bring out some practical examples pertaining to the primary role of literacy in social transformation.

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<sup>78</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 142.

## Chapter 3

### 3. Narrative: historical overview, nonformal education and the Church

#### 3.1. Introduction

Chapter 3 will examine, firstly, the historical background of South Korea. It will explain the origin and the three kingdoms, to the Chōson era, the invention of the Hangeul alphabet, the arrival of Christianity, the Japanese invasion, The Korean War 1950-1953 and will briefly examine the post-independence political scene. Secondly, it will examine the colonial circumstances and the activities of Korea's literacy campaign in the twentieth century. Thirdly, it will explain the role the Church played in the Hangeul literacy efforts, under colonial conditions, toward social development.

#### 3.2. Historical background of South Korea

Koreans call their country Chōson, literally 'morning freshness' or, more familiarly, 'The Land of the Morning Calm'. Korean history goes back over two thousand years, and from the unified Silla kingdom of the seventh century to 1945, Korea was one country.<sup>79</sup> Today, there are two Korean nation-states, North and South Korea. Until 1948, the two were one state that shared the same cultural heritage, politics, religion and language, the Hangeul. Geographically, Korea is a peninsula located in northern Asia in the Sea of Japan and Yellow Sea. Korea shares a northern border with the north-eastern corner of China and Russia, along the Yalu and Tumen Rivers. To the south lies the Japanese home islands of Kyushu

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<sup>79</sup> David Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, Ham Publishing, 1988, pp. 1-2.

and Honshu, 120 miles away.<sup>80</sup> Previous efforts by neighbouring states to control and possess the Peninsula have led to resistance by Koreans. These efforts were caused by Korea's strategic location, irrespective of size and wealth.<sup>81</sup> The following sub-section of this chapter will present the historical events from the three kingdoms to an overview of the post-independence political period.

### 3.2.1. The three kingdoms and the Chōson era

Before the three kingdoms, the Korean tradition has it that the Korean nation was founded by a man called, *Tun'gunwanggom*. The traditional narrative says that this man descended from a heavenly father and a woman whose clan is the bear-totem.<sup>82</sup> He lived in the third millennium B.C. and he and his family ruled the land for a thousand years. From the descendents of *Tun'gunwanggom* emerged the three dynasties that ruled Korea during the Kyojosen period. Most of these tribes from which the Korean people descend probably lived originally in an area between the Taedong River, in what is now North Korea, and the Liao River in southern Manchuria. It was only much later that the Yalu and the Tumen Rivers became the accepted northern boundaries of Korea.<sup>83</sup> These kingdoms were Koguryo, which comprised most of today's North Korea and southern Manchuria; Paekche, based in south-west Korea, encompassing the Kum River basin; and Silla, which included most of south-east Korea and, in particular, the Naktong valley.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Rees. *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> Rees. *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 3.

<sup>82</sup> Rees. *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 5.

<sup>83</sup> Rees. *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Rees. *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 5.



There evolved the land control system of feudalism, which separated land owners as the ruling class from the peasant majority. This developed into a complex political and military process which lasted for more than three centuries.<sup>85</sup> The land owners took advantage of the larger peasant community for militarization and formed political kingdoms. The three kingdoms struggled and fought one another in an effort to set up one kingdom. Even though this was not achieved at that time, there evolved some level of development from the civilization taking place in China. Chinese influence on the Korean kingdoms showed itself in new developments in social, religious and philosophical factors that have left a lasting impact on Korean society.<sup>86</sup> Firstly, there was the adoption of the Chinese language as the literary language while the spoken language continued to be Korean.<sup>87</sup> Secondly, Koreans were made to embrace Buddhism in 372 A.D. According to David Rees, "As Buddhism was an undogmatic religion, it soon quickly absorbed local beliefs and superstitions, and became quickly acceptable to all classes."<sup>88</sup> It became the state religion and was thus protected. The importance of Buddhism to development was the introduction of the first printing of Buddhist devotional materials. This was done by carving on wooden blocks.<sup>89</sup> Thirdly, the Confucianism philosophy was imported subsequent to the total embracement of Buddhism. This brought about a rivalry between the Buddhist religion and the Confucian philosophy. "...its stress on filial piety, on loyalty to the ruler, and to the established order... had a major influence on social life generally and reinforced Korean forms of feudalism."<sup>90</sup> By A.D. 600, Confucianism had taken hold of the three kingdoms, influencing political and socio-cultural life.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>86</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 6.

<sup>87</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 6.

<sup>88</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 6.

<sup>89</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 15.

<sup>90</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 8.

<sup>91</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 8.

*Silla* allied with China and overthrew *Baekje* in A.D. 660, to be followed by *Goguryeo* in A.D. 668<sup>92</sup> The *Silla* kingdom period saw the development of arts and culture, with the building of magnificent Buddhist temples.<sup>93</sup> The class system became more prominent with the development of the minority high class *Yangban* and the majority poor peasants and labourers. *Silla* was suppressed and subdued by the new *Goryeo* kingdom in A.D. 935.<sup>94</sup> There was now the introduction of a legal system and the development of a civil service. The Mongolian invasion in A.D. 1231 brought this kingdom under Mongolian control for a period of 150 years.<sup>95</sup> When the Mongolian control declined it affected the *Goryeo*, which fell at the same time. General Yi Song-Ye in 1388 A.D. took over the control of Kaesong in the north and was made king in A.D. 1392. This was the start of the Yi (*Chōson*) dynasty.<sup>96</sup> Under this dynasty the capital of Korea was moved to *Hanyang-gun* (now Seoul) in 1394.<sup>97</sup> Confucianism became stronger during this period and became the official religion. It was during this reign that the Hangeul alphabet was invented.

### 3.2.2. The revolution of the invention of the Hangeul alphabet

In A.D. 1446, King Sejong (General Yi Song-Ye's grandson) initiated the invention of the Korean language (Hangeul) alphabet for literacy purposes.<sup>98</sup> It helped improve the indigenous language, with a varied range of beautiful and distinct sounds and intonations. The King was supported by his court of scholars in undertaking this task and producing materials needed to

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<sup>92</sup> Pre-20<sup>th</sup> Century: <http://www.lifeinkorea.com/Information/history1.cfm>

<sup>93</sup> Pre-20<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>94</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>95</sup> Pre-20<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>96</sup> Pre-20<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>97</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>98</sup> Jong Gon Hwang, 'Literacy Education in Korean; A Historical Perspective', Seoul National University, <http://aped.snu.ac.kr/cyberedu/cyberedu1/index.htm>

promote Hangeul literacy among ordinary people. The King's inspiration helped Koreans promote the learning of their language in the place of the imposed imperial Chinese language.

Among the unlearned people, there have been many who, having something to put into words, have in the end been unable to express themselves. Feeling sorry for this, I have newly made twenty-eight letters only because I wish them to be easy for everyone to learn and convenient for use in daily life.<sup>99</sup>

This was the start of the history of literacy education in Korea. This novel initiation was, however, not without problems in the beginning and later. Some subsequent kings, such as Yonsangun, and other state officials, worked to suppress the Hangeul literacy effort.<sup>100</sup> The reason was that they feared the social awakening among the common people, when the inevitable literacy enabled them to oppose their oppressive regimes. However, the development and use of the written language did not stop at the official level, but it spread among the public and ordinary people, who became literate.<sup>101</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century King Kojong, together with other progressive scholars and political figures, saw the need for the revival of the Hangeul literacy to stimulate national development. For the sake of modernization and change, in 1894 it became compulsory to have all official documents and government papers translated or written in Hangeul.<sup>102</sup> This moved on to functional literacy for the common people as a national objective.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Florian Columas, 'The Linguistic Fit: Considerations on the Development of Writing' Chuo University, [www.koreandb.net/Sejong600/sejong03\\_11.htm](http://www.koreandb.net/Sejong600/sejong03_11.htm)

<sup>100</sup> Hwang, 'Literacy Education in Korean; A historical perspective.'

<sup>101</sup> Hwang, 'Literacy Education in Korean; A historical perspective.'

<sup>102</sup> Hwang, 'Literacy Education in Korean; A historical perspective.'

<sup>103</sup> Hwang, 'Literacy Education in Korean; A historical perspective.'

### 3.2.3. The arrival of Christianity

The introduction of Christianity into Korea began with the Roman Catholic Church mission in 1784.<sup>104</sup> They started a Church and organized worship meetings in Seoul in 1785. Persecution began the same year against their members, who repudiated the worship of ancestors. There developed systematic attacks on them in 1791, 1801, 1839, 1846, 1866 (great persecution) and 1869. By 1866 their population had increased, in spite of the persecutions, to 23,000, but in the same year almost 8,000 believers were killed. Nine out of twelve French priests were martyred.<sup>105</sup>

The first Protestant missionaries who arrived in Korea in 1885 were Henry G Appenzeller, a Methodist, and Horace G Underwood, a Presbyterian. Within this period Korean society was obsessed with intemperance and class structure.<sup>106</sup> There were circumstances of underdevelopment such as ‘unsanitary living conditions, disease, slavery, the plight of low-class women and other social issues.’<sup>107</sup> These factors provided Appenzeller and Underwood with a strategy on how to go about their mission work. They started their work as missionaries through education. This was highly welcomed, not only by all the Korean people, but by the government as well. According Myung Kyun Shin:

The people and the politicians believed that Christianity would bring about national development. Especially the people of the Enlightenment Party<sup>108</sup> had great hope that the missionaries could bring enlightenment to Korea, and that Korea could come into close contact with Western culture.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> ‘Modern history of Korean Churches.’

<sup>105</sup> ‘Modern history of Korean Churches.’

<sup>106</sup> Myoung Kyun Shin, ‘Korean Christian church and social work : a critical analysis of the social work of Christian church’, *Unpublished dissertation, Carolina University of Theology, 1998*, p. 22.  
[http://cat2.riss4u.net/search/re\\_t\\_abstract\\_view.jsp?\\_control\\_no=08555762](http://cat2.riss4u.net/search/re_t_abstract_view.jsp?_control_no=08555762)

<sup>107</sup> Shin, ‘Korean Christian church and social work’, p. 22.

<sup>108</sup> This was a political group whose intension is to reform Korea through new ideas and the introduction of Western technology. This group were in opposition to Sugu-p’a, which was a conservative group.

<sup>109</sup> Shin, ‘Korean Christian church and social work’, p. 22.

Even though this sounds like an open approval and acknowledgement of the mission approach used by these missionaries, State policy did not allow direct proselytization into Christianity.<sup>110</sup> The use of education as a route to introduce Christianity was one of the possible alternatives, in view of what happened with the Roman Catholic's direct conversion experience. The education approach actually opened the way for the spreading of the Gospel.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the entrenchment of the Japanese upon Korea brought hostile encounters for Christian missions. After having enjoyed co-operation from Korean politicians the stage was set for possible suppression. In the wake of this threat the Christian missions succeeded in getting close affinity and assimilation by Koreans, due to their role in promoting Hangeul literacy and other humanitarian services. In a sense "the Church became the substitute for the absent Korean state."<sup>111</sup> This did not mean things became easier. Christians were persecuted and many were killed when they refused to participate in the Japanese cult of Shinto Shrine worship (신사참배).<sup>112</sup> In spite of these circumstances, the Church continued to experience growth and expansion, because it satisfied and fulfilled the Korean desire for the new trend of reform by education which the Japanese administration was not inclined to support. At that time the number of Churches increased every year, with a minimum of 1,705 and a maximum of 2,451. This occurred between the years 1917 and 1930, as shown in Table 5. Growth continued thereafter.

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<sup>110</sup> Shin, 'Korean Christian church and social work', pp. 22-23.

<sup>111</sup> 'Korea's pre-colonial Christianity'.

<sup>112</sup> Park, 'A Study on Korean Christian Education and Its Characteristics under Japanese Imperialism', p. 5.

Year	No. of Churches	Population	Year	No. of Churches	Population
1917	1,962	149,562	1924	2,171	191,887
1918	1,788	160,919	1925	2,232	193,823
1919	1,705	144,062	1926	2,277	194,408
1920	1,738	153,915	1927	2,265	159,060
1921	1,879	179,158	1928	2,191	177,416
1922	1,941	187,271	1929	2,451	186,994
1923	2,097	193,850	1930	2,345	194,678

Source: Korean Jeshuko Presbyterian Minutes no. 6-19

Table 1. The number of churches and population of Korea in the Japanese period<sup>113</sup>

### 3.2.4. Japanese invasion

Interest in the Korean peninsula intensified and the Japanese, who had already made contact with Korea, entered into a non-interference agreement with the Russians. On April 25, 1899, the Russo-Japanese Treaty III was signed to prevent the Russians from any aggression in Korea.<sup>114</sup> This agreement was supported by the British, who were seeking to prevent the Russians from extending their influence over Asia. But the Russians, having occupied Manchuria, where they had a timber concession company along the Amnokkang river, initiated a military operation to influence their control further south of the river.<sup>115</sup> The Japanese reacted to this by putting their military at the opposite side of the river. Fear and suspicion provoked Japan into opening offensive fire on Russian fleets off Inchon and Port Arthur. Thus began the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 to 1905.<sup>116</sup>

Korea was forced to sign a Protocol agreement of protection in February 23, 1904 with Japan.<sup>117</sup> Korea had been neutral during the Russo-Japanese War, but Japan sent a large

<sup>113</sup> Park, 'A Study on Korean Christian Education and Its Characteristics under Japanese Imperialism', p. 12.

<sup>114</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>115</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>116</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>117</sup> 'Korean history'.

number of troops into Hanyang (the former capital city) to occupy the city, thus putting pressure on the Korean government. The United States recognized the Japanese invasion of Korea in a secret agreement at Taft-Katsura.<sup>118</sup> The two Western powers, the United States and United Kingdom, together with Russia, affirmed the aggression of Japan in colonizing Korea. In August 22, 1910, the Japanese transformed the position of Resident-General in Korea to Governor-General.<sup>119</sup> This began the full colonization period. Social instruments that could be used to express opposition were suppressed. The news-media were restricted and many Korean leaders were arrested.

### 3.2.5. March 1<sup>st</sup> 1919 Movement and Independence

The March 1<sup>st</sup> 1919 Movement was a broad-based Korean-independence organization that consisted of Koreans at home and abroad. The purpose of this organization was to organize all Koreans to raise an outcry for national survival in the wake of intolerable aggression, oppression, and plundering by the Japanese colonialists. It was formed to help mobilize and educate Koreans to protest against their colonization and to demand their independence. This movement, which covered the whole of Korea, was sponsored by 33 leading Koreans as national leaders. The secret campaign and educational activities of this Movement culminated in the March 1<sup>st</sup> 1919 independence protest demonstrations in Seoul. "There were 1,542 rallies, in which 2 million Koreans participated. During the movement, 7,509 were killed and 15,961 were wounded."<sup>120</sup> The leaders who had earlier secretly distributed

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<sup>118</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>119</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>120</sup> Whan Yung Kim, 'Political economy of development and religions in Korea', Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Sanford, 1996, p.85.

nationwide a draft Declaration of Korean Independence read this publicly on the day of the protest. Out of this organization many other groups sprang up when the people suffered severe persecution by the colonial power. After the March 1<sup>st</sup> demonstration and its severe casualties of 1919, the Movement's education campaign was actively and widely spread out, in order to foster national unity.<sup>121</sup> The aftermath of the protest was that many key people and other citizens went into exile in Manchuria, China, Siberia and the USA. These political refugees continued to organize themselves in continuous support of the struggle for independence.

The Korean pursuit of independence went through a complex process of international politicking. There emerged an exiled provisional government that was based in Shanghai, China.<sup>122</sup> The function of this government was to put pressure on the colonialists and lobby for international solidarity behind the Koreans. The activities of the provisional government yielded results by getting the independence matter into the circle of the United Nations. In Cairo in November 1943 the meeting between American President Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek of China deliberated on the Japanese colonization and Korean independence.<sup>123</sup> Among the matters included in the Cairo Declaration was a call on Japan to withdraw from Korea. This was to be followed by a forty-year political tutelage under the USA, the Soviet Union and China.<sup>124</sup> In July 1945 the Potsdam Conference did not discuss the Korean issue but called on the Japanese to surrender

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<sup>121</sup> Kyung Ran Park, 'A Study on Korean Christian Education and Its Characteristics under Japanese Imperialism – Focused on the 1920s and the 1930s', Unpublished thesis, University of Han Sung, p. 9.

<sup>122</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>123</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 47.

<sup>124</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, pp. 74-75.



unconditionally or face massive and complete destruction.<sup>125</sup> This warning referred cryptically to the manufacture of the atomic bomb by the USA. On the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> August 1945 Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed. This compelled the Japanese to withdraw from Korea after handing over to the American military authority in September 1945.<sup>126</sup>

The Japanese withdrawal was followed by the division of Korea. The nation was separated into two along latitude 38°, which became known as the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Russia occupied the northern part and the USA took over the south.<sup>127</sup> The Russians, in October 1945, disconnected all communication links between the north and the south. The political unity achieved between the various exiled leaders was destroyed by the division of Korea. Korean leaders rejected the plan to suspend Korea's independence and to put the nation under the trusteeship of the United States, the USSR, Britain and China.<sup>128</sup> This move was to eliminate the division that had been created. Irrespective of this resistance, on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1948 the two Koreas were given their sovereignty as independent nations.

### 3.2.6. The Korean War 1950-1953

On June 25 1950, South Korea was invaded by the North Korean army. Their heavily armed troops crushed the unprepared South Korean people and penetrated almost as far as the south-eastern end, in the city of Taegu. They used Russian T-3 tanks, which revealed the support they had from Russia. South Korea appealed for help from the United Nations.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>126</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 72.

<sup>127</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, pp. 77,81-82.

<sup>128</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>129</sup> 'Korean history'.

The U.S. first sent troops, to be followed by 15 other nations: Australia, New Zealand, Britain, France, Canada, South Africa, Turkey, Thailand, Greece, the Netherlands, Ethiopia, Colombia, the Philippines, Belgium and Luxembourg. The three Scandinavian countries sent medical personnel and hospitals.<sup>130</sup> Led by Gen. Douglas MacArthur, the allied forces overpowered the communists and drove them back to the North.<sup>131</sup> However, Communist China sent a large force to back President Kim Il Sung.<sup>132</sup> President Kim, on June 25 1950, accused South Korea in a radio broadcast of attacking the territory of Haeju.<sup>133</sup> Later on President Kim claimed that the attack was to reunify the two Koreas.<sup>134</sup> At the U.N., Russia signed a truce with the allied forces that would reunite the two Koreas. Although the allied forces were trying to use military means to curtail the war, it protracted it for a period of three years. The Korean War ended on July 27 1953.<sup>135</sup>

### 3.2.7. Post-independence political scene: overview

The invasion of the Japanese in 1910 and subsequent independence in 1948 did not guarantee immediate peace of mind for the people. The War of North Korea was followed by robust political administrations, with the majority of the leaders being military juntas. In 1987 civilians had the opportunity to lead the nation. Historic social events showed that the people never relinquished their desire for real democracy, in spite of oppressive regimes.

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<sup>130</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>131</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>132</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>133</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>134</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, pp. 96,98.

<sup>135</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 110.

Syng Man Rhee became the first President of South Korea in 1948,<sup>136</sup> after his exemplary contribution during the struggle for independence in the exiled provisional government. His political performance was a fateful one which let him down. He occupied himself at that early stage with what David Rees described as “an unreal unification policy,”<sup>137</sup> which prevented him from getting the economy to develop. This happened because he did not work for the promotion of agriculture and a programme to reduce rural poverty. He also rejected normalizing relations with Japan that could have promoted effective commerce.<sup>138</sup> After a disputed electoral victory in 1960 he was to resign in April of the same year.

Maj.-Gen. Park Chung Hee became the first military leader, on May 16 1961. He was installed through a military uprising that took over the political administration of Korea in the name of the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction (SCNR).<sup>139</sup> Park’s regime became very autocratic and repressive. He transformed his military administration into an elected government by resigning as a military officer in 1964. He maintained himself by winning a third and a fourth election by 1972. In this year, in the fourth Republic, he changed the constitution and brought in the *Yushin* (Revitalizing Reforms), one of which guaranteed his indefinite rule.<sup>140</sup> During Park’s rule, he inspired massive rural development but his tyrannical leadership style caused him to be assassinated by the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) in 1979.<sup>141</sup>

Chun Doo Hwan, another military officer, was elected in October 1981 as the new head of

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<sup>136</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 55.

<sup>137</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 141.

<sup>138</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 141.

<sup>139</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 144.

<sup>140</sup> ‘Korean history’.

<sup>141</sup> ‘Korean history’.

state under the *Yushin* constitution. His administration was autocratic but he revised the constitution, creating a seven-year term for the presidency.<sup>142</sup> He faced persistent civilian protestation against his rule, due to the lack of democracy during his administration. In 1987, No Tae Woo, a military man, won election through the first direct election in 16 years.<sup>143</sup> His regime was the beginning of real democracy. He released political prisoners and allowed freedom of the press. The first civilian Korean leader since 1961 was elected in 1992 and installed in early 1993. President Kim Young Sam's administration targeted corruption in the civil service, the military, universities, banks and the traffic police. In 1998 Kim Dae Jung won the election and was set to push democracy further than his predecessor, Kim Young Sam. His slogan has been "government of the people"<sup>144</sup> and the promotion of the free market economy. He worked for better relations with the North and his efforts won him the Nobel Peace Prize.

### **3.3. Korea's literacy campaign in the twentieth century**

Reaction to the Japanese conquest of Korea led to a literacy campaign in all parts of the nation. Under the patronage of revolutionary leaders this educational phenomenon resulted in the formation of evening schools (night schools). This further received the voluntary support of patriotic Koreans, both elderly and young, and some of the mass-media. The achievements of the literacy campaign took various forms: the conscientisation of the Korean people for self-determination and liberation from Japan; increased educational opportunities for poor rural people and for unskilled labourers, most of whom were women and children from poor

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<sup>142</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>143</sup> 'Korean history'.

<sup>144</sup> 'Korean history'.

families. The next section will look at education under colonial circumstances, the era of poor economic life and the eruption of social movements, the formation of evening schools, their curriculum and the mobilization of resources for their activities.

### 3.3.1. Colonial circumstances and education

The Japanese colonial period set back the Korean educational process that had began as Hangeul literacy. Their education policy was not to promote the people's development, but to keep them at a level where they could easily exploit them.<sup>145</sup> Their policy limited ordinary Koreans to acquire only low-grade vocational training and elementary education. It prevented modern education for the people. This brought about the reversal of the progress and gains of the previous functional literacy process. The Japanese educational policy in Korea decreased the number of private schools in order to gain control over all educational institutes by increasing the number of public schools. Some of the private schools charged no fees during this period, so the poor farmers and low-waged labourers benefited from them. This certainly was undermining the imperialist control. The clamp-down on the private schools caused the marginalisation of the very poor from their educational opportunities. The Japanese imposed their language as the official language for education, and imposed Japanese teachers and textbooks.<sup>146</sup> Some of these factors are indicated in the Table 2. The length of the lesson periods for Hangeul literacy was reduced, with the Japanese language being taught for longer periods.

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<sup>145</sup> Joe, 'A study of the peasant evening school in the Pyunando under Japanese invasion period', p. 22.

<sup>146</sup> Joe, 'A study of the peasant evening school in the Pyunando under Japanese invasion period', pp. 22-25.

	Korea (Choson)	Japanese	Total hours
1909 – 1911	40 (34.5)	24 (20.7)	116
1911 – 1922	22 (20.8)	40 (37.7)	106
1922 – 1938	20 (12.4)	64 (39.5)	162

Table 2. The comparative table between Hangeul and Japanese weekly periods.<sup>147</sup>

These official imperialist tactics were to enable the invasion of the Korean culture and to show the superiority of the Japanese. It was to erase the history of Korea and replace it with their own. This trend was preparing the way for full control and possession of Korean lands. Confucianism, which was anti-modernisation, was much promoted. This was achieved by removing some of the modern subjects and substituting them with quasi-religious Confucian ideologies.<sup>148</sup>

The percentage of school attendance by Korean children was not more than 15.3% in 1925 and 20.5% in 1936. This turn of events caused serious displeasure and protestation from the Korean people. It opened the way for native officers within the Education Department of Korea to submit protest notes about these concerns. They demanded that the Japanese colonial government take the following steps to satisfy the wishes of the Korean people<sup>149</sup>:

- ◆ Colonial type of education, which is unproductive, ceases;
- ◆ Japanese language being taught in schools ceases;
- ◆ the colonial administration improves the educational system and the environment;
- ◆ there should be an increase in the number of schools; and

<sup>147</sup> Joe, 'A study of the peasant evening school in the Pyunando under Japanese invasion period', p. 22.

<sup>148</sup> Joe, 'A study of the peasant evening school in the Pyunando under Japanese invasion period', p. 22.

<sup>149</sup> Joe, 'A study of the peasant evening school in the Pyunando under Japanese invasion period', p. 23.

- ◆ there should be an increase in the number of teacher training institutes.

### 3.3.2. The era of poor economic life and the eruption of social movements

The Japanese occupation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century did not only affect the educational sector but also the economic life of the ordinary Korean. With Korea at that time having about 80% of the population engaged in farming, the Japanese policy of expropriation devastated many of them. How was this policy pursued? The entire Korean peninsula was surveyed to be utilized in the interests of Japan. The Japanese ignored the customary land ownership regulations. Instead they imposed legislation of land registration which caused many peasant farmers to forfeit their farmlands. The farmers insisted on the recognition of their traditional rights of ownership. It also used the default of the land tax payment to expropriate more land from illiterate farmers, who had no understanding of some of these official developments:

*The Japanese administration of Korea thus became a major landlord in its own right. Some of this land was leased to Japanese individuals but the Government-General also used the Oriental Development Company as its agent in developing its newly-acquired estates.<sup>150</sup>*

The government formed the Oriental Development Company, which was used for the exploitative control of lands. This company invested in large-scale agriculture, which had good yields. This brought in Japanese settlers to exploit the agricultural markets, to the detriment of Koreans. This systemic government-supported exploitation rendered many Korean farmers bankrupt and some went into exile in neighbouring countries such as Manchuria. The unfortunate aspect of this

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<sup>150</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 65.

development and the agricultural output success is lamentable from the perspective of Koreans. With the increase in rice production, about 50% was exported cheaply to Japan.<sup>151</sup> The remainder was insufficient to meet local demand. Koreans were compelled to decrease the consumption of rice as the main staple crop. This, affecting their “basic standard of living, was one of the major complaints against Japanese rule in Korea.”<sup>152</sup> Hence, the peasant uprising against the imperialist regime became inevitable, with the support of new social group movements.

### 3.3.3. Evening schools

Evening schools under Japanese rule could be described as nonformal educational agencies that carried out educational activities with the aim of dealing with all the problems that occurred in the social structure. During the occupation there was a limitation of entry into the formal education system. Many poor people could not afford the expenses involved in formal education for their children. Some had exceeded the age limit and could not enrol, e.g. adult groups from farming communities and labourers in urban places. The other significant purpose of the evening, nonformal schools was that:

It concentrated on developing the conscience of most people who were excluded from the formal subjects of the education at that time, and that it offered the spiritual bases to the people who took part in the various social movements as those of labour and peasant under the specific situation of the Japanese invasion.<sup>153</sup>

The spiritual basis of the social movement was found in Hangeul literacy, which provoked

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<sup>151</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 65.

<sup>152</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 65.

<sup>153</sup> Myung sil Lee, '(A) study on the national education of evening school under Japanese invasion', Unpublished thesis, Suk-Myung University - Department of Education, 1987, p. 2.  
[http://cat2.riss4u.net/search/re\\_ε\\_abstract\\_view.jsp?p\\_control\\_no=00874527](http://cat2.riss4u.net/search/re_ε_abstract_view.jsp?p_control_no=00874527)



Korean identity and self-realisation. Learning in the mother tongue provided not only knowledge, but dialogical impartation of knowledge underlying Koreans' self-discovery. The dialogical manner of the evening schools' lessons promoted reflection on issues and the necessary commensurate action. Teaching and learning used the problem-solving approach and not simply "knowing." This type of learning provokes people to look for solutions and answers to their problems in their own context. It brought about a spirit of self-reliance in the students' attitudes.

#### **3.3.4. Curriculum**

Each evening school varied in the subjects taught. The schools were categorised according to sex, age, work and other forms of social activity. For instance, men and women had different schools and farmers were separated from labourers and store workers. (In some places there was no such separation.) For this reason basic literacy was supplemented with a particular subject pertaining to the group and needs of the area in which the evening school was situated. Table 3 does not contain every subject that was taught in the evening schools. The major subjects are named in the Table, with the top three being Hangeul, mathematics and composition. Koreans abhorred the Japanese language because of the Japanese colonial control of their territory. Japanese was, however, taught in many schools to avoid being closed down.

Subjects	No. of schools	Subjects	No. of schools	Subjects	No. of schools
Hangeul	115	Farmers reading	11	Labour reading	3
Mathematics	105	History	10	Doctrine	2
Composition	75	Farm journal	7	Korean	2
Japanese	70	Farming	7	Practical skills	1
Abacus calculation	43	Current events	6	Cultural reading	1
Chinese	26	Moral training	6	Science	1
Siron*	23	Geography	5	Social	1
Penmanship	22	Music	3	Library	1

\* A current trend of opinion; a current [contemporary] view; public sentiments (of the day)

Table 3. Subjects of evening schools and number of locations offered<sup>154</sup>

Three of the subjects are agriculture-related, because another rationale behind the evening school forum was to promote the economic life of the rural people by improved agricultural output. To sum up, it could be said that the significance that evening schools had for the Korean people was their contribution to liberation from the Japanese. It also led to the subsequent awakening and contribution to social development that underlies the economic independence of Korea today.

### 3.3.5. Mobilization and utilization of local resources

The popularity of the evening schools, in spite of colonial suppression, was due to their reliance on local resources. Various people and organisations contributed in various ways to starting and maintaining the evening schools.<sup>155</sup> By the year 1921 official statistics showed that the number of evening schools available had risen to 210. There was continuous growth to 1301 in 1926 and by 1930 it was 1966. These figures reflect the pattern of resources available (both human and financial) and other logistics, although additional factors might also have contributed.

<sup>154</sup> Il Seok Chen, '(A) study on the changes of unsystematic educational agency and its improvement', Unpublished thesis, Han-il University, 1998, p.28 [http://cat2.riss4u.net/search/re\\_t\\_abstract\\_view.jsp?\\_control\\_no=0914504](http://cat2.riss4u.net/search/re_t_abstract_view.jsp?_control_no=0914504)

<sup>155</sup> Chen, '(A) study on the changes of unsystematic educational agency and its improvement', p. 31.

Year	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	Total
No.Schools	210	190	204	134	271	292	277	156	112	120	1966

Table 4. The number of evening schools established each year during the Japanese period<sup>156</sup>

### 3.3.5.1. The establishment of evening schools

The lack of schools during the colonial era and the desire for learning, and especially for literacy, underlies the establishment of the evening schools. The initial organisers of the evening schools were the revolutionary minded individuals who came together to establish them to promote the change people yearned for. They comprised clan and community leaders, individuals and community groups and organisations.<sup>157</sup> The groups and organisations were the students, farmers' co-operatives, labour groups and religious institutions. The evening schools received no support in any form from the government, but the local people contributed in various ways, as follows.

### 3.3.5.2. Human resources

Human resources were made up of people who volunteered to teach at the evening schools. They were mostly students from the universities and youth bodies, of different educational levels. Available statistics of 1937 of Kyong Sang Nam Do Province show that 811 schools had 1,303 teachers. Of these, 1,008 were of elementary school standard and 205 of secondary school level.<sup>158</sup> It shows that most of the teachers available for these schools in certain areas had a low level of education. About 70% of them were students in their twenties.<sup>159</sup> They

<sup>156</sup> Chen, '(A) study on the changes of unsystematic educational agency and its improvement', p. 19.

<sup>157</sup> Chen, '(A) study on the changes of unsystematic educational agency and its improvement', p. 31.

<sup>158</sup> Chen, '(A) study on the changes of unsystematic educational agency and its improvement', p. 26.

<sup>159</sup> Chen, '(A) study on the changes of unsystematic educational agency and its improvement', p. 26.

were not remunerated, but served voluntarily. External Korean students taught voluntarily, during their summer and winter recess back home.

### 3.3.5.3. Financial resources

Even though the evening schools enjoyed voluntary services from those who taught in them, there was need for funding. A huge financial input was unnecessary, because many of the needed facilities, as well as personnel, were rendered free. The leaders who started the schools contributed from their own resources to solve financial needs. They also received support and contributions from local co-operative groups.<sup>160</sup> The individually owned schools' financial needs were borne by the proprietors.<sup>161</sup> They supplied the necessary things to enable the schools to continue uninterrupted. Some schools that were started by students working together to support their communities found their own ways of solving the financial needs of the schools. They used other avenues to raise funds to provide teaching and study materials for the learners. An example is that they collected art works and self-produced products, which were either sold or used to solicit funds in the course of concerts or music shows. Some also organised sports competitions and through them they solicited financial support to provide for the needs.<sup>162</sup> They also consulted benevolent individuals for funds and materials.

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<sup>160</sup> Chen, '(A) study on the changes of unsystematic educational agency and its improvement', p.31.

<sup>161</sup> Chen, '(A) study on the changes of unsystematic educational agency and its improvement', p.32.

<sup>162</sup> Chen, '(A) study on the changes of unsystematic educational agency and its improvement', p.35.

### **3.4. The role of the Church**

From the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Church had an important social, economic and political impact on the Korean nation. This could be attributed to some of the methods used by the early missionaries and the later revival of Christian social activities during the Japanese occupation period.

#### **3.4.1. The transformation of Christian ministry into a holistic one**

The early Protestant missionaries started their ministry in a way that yielded positive results for an open door for preaching the Gospel. The indigenous Churches, which were growing in terms of population, concentrated much of their energies on the spiritual education and development of their congregations. This reduced their contribution to other social concerns, until the annexation of Korea. This colonial period brought about the transformation of the nature of the Church's ministry. The over-emphasis or one-sided focus on spiritual welfare was challenged by the oppressive circumstances, so that they had to consider other forms of ministering to people. Attention to social concerns became relevant as well, and this made the Churches extend and expand their activities by starting nonformal education schools, which gave opportunities to the disadvantaged and rural people. These people were mainly poor farmers and labourers' children, women and adult farmers. It was during this period that the summer and winter school ideas were developed to offer opportunities for Bible knowledge, literacy and other subjects which they taught.

The 1920's onwards saw the decline of Korea's formal education.<sup>163</sup> Most of the schools of different academic levels faced acute financial problems. There was no effort by Japan to salvage the declining trend of education standards. The concern for the abysmal state of education brought about the establishment and rise of Christianity for educational reform. These movements, for example, Kwon Se Yeol (권세열) and Zonal Bible Movement (성경구락부 운동) started with homeless children whom they taught. These activities developed into nonformal schools, with day and night sessions, and they spread into other areas. Many Korean Christian leaders were raised through these schools.<sup>164</sup> The Church's running of other nonformal schools increased during the later colonial period because they were the only institution recognised to keep on with the teaching of Hangeul. However, in spite of this some Christian nonformal schools were clamped down upon and closed, as persecution from the colonial government intensified.

There were two types of nonformal schools set up by Christian institutions and groups. There was the Learner Training Course (강습회), which took place during the daytime. Those school concentrated on children, offering them lessons in Scripture, hymns and basic subjects (Hangeul, mathematics, art), recreation and sports. The second school took place in the evenings and the classes were categorised: farmers, labourers and women. The subjects taught in these adult class groups were the same as provided in Table 3 above. Some of the schools were started by para-church groups, for example the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), EpWit Youth Association (엠플릿 청년회) and CE Youth Association (먼려 청년회). The input and output record of the Christian Churches and para-Church groups' nonformal educational programme was impressive.

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<sup>163</sup> Park, 'A Study on Korean Christian Education and Its Characteristics under Japanese Imperialism', p. 27.

<sup>164</sup> Park, 'A Study on Korean Christian Education and Its Characteristics under Japanese Imperialism', pp. 48-49.

### 3.4.2. The impact of holistic ministry on literacy for social development

The impact of the Christian bodies' literacy activities will be examined at the national level and then at the local community level.

#### 3.4.2.1. National level ✓

At the national level the schools served as productive and creative centres, by transforming the people for social change and revival. The impact was felt in the way citizens became resourceful. The products of the schools participated actively in political activities for example in the March 1st Movement, and economic reform movements such as the Local Products-Encouragement Movement and the Frugality Movement. It also brought about transformation of old customs and formalities. This resulted, for example, in the education of females (which, within the Confucian and ancient traditions, was not the ideal: "Woman's virtue is her ignorance"<sup>165</sup>) and farmers who, under the Yangban<sup>166</sup> system in the Chōson era, were prevented from learning. The impact of the schools' education for national gain made the attendants realize that they had the capability of dealing with the issues which were a national burden, such as liberation from the colonial power of Japan.

The evening schools raised the attendants' level of thinking for praxis, by thus reflecting on issues and finding possible action. By doing this, the schools contributed to reshaping the mind and attitude of the attendants for a real national task of independence and progress in

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<sup>165</sup> Huntley quoted in Shin, 'Korean Christian church and social work', p. 27.

<sup>166</sup> See explanation in p.53.

self-rule. Their approach and method of organising the people for the classes promoted co-operation, unity, communication links and cultural revival. There was a bond of co-operation in the form of solidarity. This brought unity among those who were passing through these schools together with students from the formal institutions, who even helped to train the students at the evening schools. The impact on cultural issues was that the teaching and use of Hangeul, which had been prohibited from being used in schools, served to sustain cultural identity. The Scriptures available in Hangeul were the preservation of the key elements of culture and language.

#### **3.4.2.2. Community level**

The second area of consideration of the impact of the evening schools is at the community level. The particular benefits the Christian night schools gave to individuals for their life progress will be examined. This has two dimensions for consideration, the spiritual or intangible impacts and the tangible results, in the form of physical, material and socio-economic benefits.

##### **3.4.2.2.1. Spiritual or intangible impact**

In the cause of literacy by the Church, both those in the Church already and outside it benefited by intangible, life transforming values. Those in the Church, by acquiring Hangeul literacy, gained personal access to the Bible in their own mother tongue. This improved their reflection on religious knowledge, which also improved their attitude. The transformation which ensued took the form of diligence, capability, co-operation, and the desire to help each



other, especially those who were marginalized. These changes impacted on the material and socio-economic areas of their lives. For those outside the Church, the evening schools offered them the opportunity to encounter the Bible, as they acquired reading skills. This caused many to convert to Christianity in the process of learning. Rural Churches grew and expanded into other areas.

The gains for these people are that many of them traded off their obsolete values. The result was that some of them learnt to value females, which brought about gender equality in such families and communities. The overarching impact was that the new religious moral values that were being promoted in the communities as literacy achievement brought about the formation of new social values movements. For example, the Frugality Movement advocated frugality in economic life. It promoted the virtue of saving money against an unnecessarily extravagant life and the preservation and frugal use of available resources in families and in the communities. The Non-smoking and Anti-alcoholic Movements campaigned against the abuse of tobacco and alcohol products.<sup>167</sup>

The Christian Women's Jol-Jae Hyeo (Korean Women's Christian Temperance Union) was also organized in 1923 by Park In-Duek, Chung Maria and others, as a member of the World Women's Christian Temperance Union (W. Lee 1985:194). The major work of this organization was to advocate the prohibition of tobacco smoking and prohibition of alcohol, as well as to advocate the consumption of Korean products.<sup>168</sup>

By this type of moral, activist campaign the social consciousness was raised against personal and private life excesses, which do not only affect individuals but families and the nation.

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<sup>167</sup> Park, 'A Study on Korean Christian Education and Its Characteristics under Japanese Imperialism', pp.12-13.

<sup>168</sup> Park, 'A Study on Korean Christian Education and Its Characteristics under Japanese Imperialism', p. 101.

#### 3.4.2.2.2. Physical, material and socio-economic impact

At the local level, the impact of literacy has been recognized as reducing the gap between urban and rural communities. The effects are seen firstly in the level of health of individuals and the community. With the upsurge in literacy, health campaigns were easily disseminated to the general populace, both urban and periphery, through reading mass media and publications. The ability to read enabled many women to better understand issues of primary health care and hygiene. This reduced the pregnancy risks and maternal mortality and infant mortality. Many contagious and communicable diseases, which were prevalent because of high illiteracy and poverty, were controlled. The appreciation of education, which many communities ignored, whether available or not, changed with literacy. Parents who participated in the literacy classes made their children's education a matter of priority. The literate parents took time to teach their children to read at home.

This effort by families and communities to educate the young generation served to drastically reduce the illiteracy rate in Korea. In the area of political participation, literacy helped raise the consciousness of the ordinary people to become involved in determining their political destiny. Without the effort and the benefits of the evening schools in the type of literacy offered, it would have been difficult to assemble the scattered rural people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for the Korean revolution and subsequent political gains as a democracy. Lastly, economic empowerment of the people resulted in the improvement of the skills of peasant farmers. The knowledge acquired was not only literacy but good farming techniques. In the area of labour, some training was offered to men and women, to enable them to find jobs. This broadened their advantage in income-earning activities.

### 3.5. Conclusion

This chapter can be concluded with the verdict that the Korean people's political and social system shows the history of partial and total oppressive social governments in the dynastic eras, the colonisation period by Japan and the post-colonisation self-rule politics. These events were characterised by forms of dehumanisation and exploitation of the poor Korean people. The social segregation based on the *Yangban* and the *Pyungmin* declined with the introduction of Hangeul alphabet and literacy. The proliferation of literacy was made more popular and was promoted by the arrival of Christian missionaries from America. The effect, as this chapter shows, is that nonformal education underlies the empowerment of the Korean people, and the literacy campaign or night schools positively served, the conscientisation and increasing patriotism of Koreans. The major significance is how through the organisation of literacy classes under the oppressive Japanese colonisation period, the Korean masses were awakened to resist the colonisation and to demand a free Korea. Further impact of the Hangeul literacy drive as nonformal education on the Korean social development and its success during the occupation period will be evaluated within the next Chapter.

## **Chapter 4**

### **4. Literacy and social development in South Korea: evaluation of impact on political, economic and social sectors**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

Nonformal education, which began with literacy, affected the political evolution process under authoritarian regimes, which culminated in independence. Chapter 3 highlighted the events of the preparatory stage for liberation and the subsequent achievement of independence. The major significance of independence can be described as the economic boom which enabled faster development than other East Asian countries, and it is also underscored by literacy attainment. These achievements have been sustained by growth in Christianity, a remarkable feature in Asia, which has resulted in cultural and moral transformation. Chapter 4 will evaluate the culminating impacts of the reforms and changes from the angle of the Korean political revolution, women's emancipation, literacy and the economic boom and the effects of social reforms on development.

#### **4.2. The evaluation of the political revolution and women's emancipation**

The political revolution and women's emancipation cannot be evaluated in isolation from each other. They are overlapping issues which benefited from the nonformal education, to arrive at the desired goal, which is Korean liberation. The people enjoy a freedom which they paid dearly to achieve, without compromising their identity which they sought to preserve. This process of rescuing a progressive social identity is what makes Korea's success in social development worth examining. To make a meaningful evaluation of this dynamic process, the process of the political revolution and that of women's emancipation will be considered.

#### 4.2.1. The main process of the political revolution

The Korean political revolution had Christian leaders at the forefront. This need for political revolution began during pre-colonial times. This was made necessary because of developments in the late Chōson era. Development took the form of political and social disaffections among the people because the monarch did not serve the interests of the majority. The lack of democracy in the political system led to abuses that caused the fragmentation of the society into hierarchical and class structures. This development was not recent, but a legacy that was inherited from earlier dynasty periods in Korean history. The introduction of Christianity awakened the people to call for the reformation of the political system.<sup>169</sup> It is not the religion *per se* which could have the solution for a better political system. Christians in history, for example, have created hierarchical systems and social fragmentation in other places in the world. But Christianity as a religion has values which attracted the revolutionary leaders. Their request for foreign missionaries showed that they valued doctrines which are capable of stimulating effective social change, development and progress.<sup>170</sup>

The attempt at working toward political transformation was interrupted by the Japanese invasion in 1910. This intervention was not only capable of taking over the national political system but also terminating the transformational process. Whilst one oppressive system was being worked out, another brutal one had emerged, the most horrendous 'Dark Age of Korea.'<sup>171</sup> This raised fierce resistance from the people and their leaders. This has been acknowledged by Bok Young Park that:

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<sup>169</sup> Kim, 'Political economy of development and religions in Korea', p. 75.

<sup>170</sup> Kim, 'Political economy of development and religions in Korea', p. 74.

<sup>171</sup> Bok Young Park, 'The contributions of Korean Christian women to the church and its mission: implications for an evangelical missiology', Unpublished dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999, p. 90.

During the early period of colonization, the Korean people's protest against Japan steadily mounted. Korean men and women united in the midst of the national crisis to assert their national independence. The sense of crisis and feelings of agony due to annihilation of national identity led many people to the church as a place of hope.<sup>172</sup>

The ensuing political crisis was a blow to Korean identity. The democratic self-determination and search for all inclusive participation in government was becoming merely a daydream. The resistance was to show the people's desire for an open political institution.

The formation of the March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement in 1919 was an attempt to overcome the colonial obstacle to Korea's transformational process. At this stage the Church had raised some educated people, who became leaders of this movement. The evidence is that:

This movement led to a new synthesis of nationalism and Christianity... The March First Independence Movement of 1919 marked the climax of Korean Christians' hope for national independence. With the outbreak of the March First Movement, and the active participation and leadership of Korean Christians, Protestant churches formed the centre of Korean nationalism.<sup>173</sup>

After the March 1<sup>st</sup> 1919 independence protest the leaders and supporters were persecuted and suppressed. Koreans, being rendered helpless, resorted to the strategy of organization to educate and mobilize the people for unity and a common front of powerful resistance. The Church at this stage offered its resources such as the use of meeting place facilities and materials and personnel, for instance the women for the movement.

The women became the main support and resource input for the March 1st Movement. Park continues:

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<sup>172</sup> Park, 'The contributions of Korean Christian women to the church and its mission', pp. 90-91.

<sup>173</sup> Suh, David Kwang-sun, *The Korean Minjung in Christ*. Hong Kong: The Christian Conference of Asia and Commission on Theological Concerns, 1991, p. 22, quoted in Bok Young Park, 'The contributions of Korean Christian women to the church and its mission', p. 91.

The participation of Korean women in this independence movement was significant. Many leading women of the movement were Christian students, teachers and ordinary church members.<sup>174</sup>

The backlash was a more focal attack on women by the Japanese soldiers. Many were tortured, imprisoned and killed, just for their support and participation in the movement's activities. The most disturbing and greatest martyrdom was that of sixteen-year-old Yoo Kwan Soon. She was a new Christian convert and a student of Ehwa Girls' school. She joined the protest march on the street, which resulted in her being arrested, beaten severely and her mutilated body cut into pieces. This was done to discourage further resistance and participation in the movement. Her family suffered extermination the same way for her actions.<sup>175</sup> However, these cruel actions against the people, whose only concern was to have their freedom in their own land did not stop further opposition by the ordinary people, especially women. The persecution rather enabled innovation in the approaches of resistance and the desire for freedom and change.

#### 4.2.2. Women's emancipation process and social development

The social development process of South Korea could not have achieved much impact without the emancipation of women. Even though the previous Korean culture repudiated the value and capacity of women, the period of struggle for independence recognized the worth and contribution which women could make for social change. It has been recognized that "during the colonial social transformation gender relationships were going through a

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<sup>174</sup> Min Ji Choi, "The suffering of Korean People and Christian women's movement", in *women, wake up, rise and sing!: The 100-year history of Korean Christian women. Women's anniversary committee for 100 years of Korean Church history*, 1985, p. 162, quoted in Park, 'The contributions of Korean Christian women to the church and its mission', p. 94.

<sup>175</sup> Park, 'The contributions of Korean Christian women to the church and its mission', p. 96.

complex and ambiguous process of change.”<sup>176</sup> The outcome of this process is underscored by the question of education for women. This need, which has been of tremendous and inevitable aid to women’s emancipation, has been facilitated and fought for by the various women’s organizations and movements.

Even though the March 1<sup>st</sup> Movement in 1919 became the cradle for the conscientization of women for change, it also served to raise different women’s organizations. These groups can be categorised under specialized activities of concern: religious, national enlightenment (political), career, young women, women’s labour movements and *Kun-u hoe* (근우회). Each of them had branches that were scattered across the nation. The rationale behind the formation of these groups was that of national liberation. The evidence has shown that:

These Christian women believed that national independence would be possible only through the education and enlightenment of women. Therefore, almost every educational and enlightenment movement for Korean women during this period was indirectly aimed at national independence.<sup>177</sup>

Why was education for women the key factor for national independence? Women became aware of their marginalization. It made them see their weakness and powerlessness in political matters. The only way to arm themselves to contribute effectively in the national liberation struggle lay in their exposure to knowledge by literacy and general education. It can thus be seen that most of the women’s organizations had literacy or nonformal education as the basic focus of their activities. Another factor was that national independence could be extended to the overall liberation of women from the conservative traditional rules of Confucianism, which had been used to frustrate and hinder women’s progress, for many generations.

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<sup>176</sup> Myung Sook Sung, ‘Modernisation and tradition in Korean women’s lives: a historical study of the construction of feminine identities in an evolving patriarchy’, Unpublished dissertation, University of Lancaster, 2001, p. 155

<sup>177</sup> Park, ‘The contributions of Korean Christian women to the church and its mission’, p. 99.



The activities of the women's organizations took place through evening schools, seminars and forums. Through these structures, and in spite of the tense political atmosphere, they were able to educate themselves on issues of gender equality, political participation, women's family life and labour. The learning ability exposed the women to embrace modernization and improve their labour skills. Some of the women's movements had their news magazines and other publications, the purpose of which was to awaken the mental and social awareness of women. They emphasised women's education and functions and helped educate them on good traditional values and marriage and exposure to the issues of job and foreign matters. These publications started in 1906 and by 1936 there were about 29 different publications.<sup>178</sup>

Korean women discovered that their destiny was linked to the overall freedom of their country from external aggression and control. They saw that their illiteracy led to weakness in political participation. Their marginalization under the patriarchal system was due to their illiteracy. In addition, many of their family problems and inadequate incomes were attributed to their illiteracy. This section has shown that women did not submit to the *status quo*, i.e. the underdog position in the family, society and the world they lived in. They chose the strategy that weapons could not destroy, i.e. education, to achieve their desired goal of national independence and women's emancipation for their time, today and the future. Korean women did not see their freedom separately from their nation's liberation.

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<sup>178</sup> So Yeon Lee, 'A study of women's magazines during Japanese invasion: focus from 1920s to 1930s', Unpublished theses, University of Ewha Women, 2001, p. iii.

### 4.3. Literacy and the economic boom: rural empowerment and the labour movement

The Korean economic revival which began in the 1960s “with export-led industrial growth”<sup>179</sup> contributed to achievements in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Literacy *per se* did not cause the Korean economic growth, which resulted in the social development of the entire nation. It became the major vehicle through which ideals and principles of religion and general knowledge were communicated to people for learning and transformation. In the Korean context it was people transforming to change things and not things changing people. This thought helps to assess the process through which literacy transformed the Korean mind-set to change their poor economic situation.

#### 4.3.1. Economics and rural empowerment

The pre-colonial political system, which was monarchical, created barriers of social segregation. This had economic implications for the pre-colonial society. There was the division in wealth and ownership of land. There was the *Yangban* class, the landed and intellectual class, eligible to take the civil service examination<sup>180</sup> and *Sangmin(Pyungmin)*, peasants - often landless bondsmen, artisans and merchants who could not hold government office.<sup>181</sup> Early Christianity first reached the *Pyungmin* class and the result was persecution by the higher class. Subsequent Protestant missions targeted both the ruling class and ordinary people. This eventually helped the emergence of a democratic system by transformation of the monarchy. This change opened the way for social equity in terms of wealth redistribution and political participation. It also gave

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<sup>179</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 147.

<sup>180</sup> Through this examination they can get the political and social position.

<sup>181</sup> Kim, 'Political economy of development and religions in Korea', p. 117.

way for the lowest class *Pyungmin*, who are mostly the rural people, to rise through education to hold other social privileges. This initial privilege was, however, short-lived. Because the Japanese invasion was primarily for economic exploitation, emerging economic freedom was reversed. The Japanese reversed land distribution by introducing expropriation. This was another trend of individual economics, where they subverted “petty commodity production”, that is peasantry, and the “progressive dissolution of self-sufficiency”, which undermined people’s well-being, especially rural people.<sup>182</sup> The effect of this reversal, which was taking back lands from the ordinary people, caused them to become agricultural labourers, wage-labourers in urban places and some adopted a form of nomadic life.

The pain inflicted on the people during the colonial period, and the strategy used by the various social movements and the Church, had served to prepare the oppressed people mentally, spiritually and physically for their expected goal of independence. The most significant aspect of this was the education of farm labourers and wage-labourers. The approach to rural social development in the Korean context began first with the people. Korten asserts the importance of this approach by saying that, “social development is a political process – its central purpose being to build the power of the powerless.”<sup>183</sup> Korten had explained that the focus of development is the building of the capacity of the people as its immediate resource.<sup>184</sup> Korten’s view, tallies with Adelman’s definition of social development that includes “political satisfaction” among other aspects. Satisfaction is nevertheless a form of capability fulfilment. In this case it becomes a political activity which is evident in the Korean people’s determination for social change for freedom development.

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<sup>182</sup> Sung, ‘Modernisation and tradition in Korean women’s lives’, p. 124.

<sup>183</sup> David C. Korten, ‘Social Development: Putting People first’, in David C. Korten and Felipe B. Alfonso (eds), *Bureaucracy of the Poor: Closing the Gap*, Kumarian Press, USA, 1983, p. 219.

<sup>184</sup> Korten, ‘Social Development: Putting People first’, p. 201.

So, by independence in 1945 Korea had the skilled labour force to sustain the economy for progress. The colonial government did hinder the political process of rural social development by putting the urban people first. This having been a deliberate political policy for exploitation was nullified by the way the Churches' facilities and private assets were made available for the rural nonformal schools that improved the capacity of farmers and labourers. This unofficial facilitation of the rural people's development has been underscored by Amartya Sen's contention, that where and when social facilities are used to promote economic opportunities of all people indiscriminatingly, it has brought about economic growth.<sup>185</sup> South Korea as a result experienced fast economic expansion and growth for two decades after independence, in spite of the Korean War of 1950 to 1953 and some considerable period of military dictatorship regimes. Meanwhile, in some parts of the world, lack of such preparation has undermined what could be post-independence progress. Education affected skills and mental and spiritual discipline for the initial stage of the post-independence period. This helped to bring about change in social and personal values as a form of discipline for productive life and profitable personal management. For instance, the ideas of abstaining from alcohol and tobacco products, and of frugality, were acquired at that time.

#### **4.3.2. Farmer and labour movements and economic growth**

Rural empowerment set the stage for an unforeseen economic bumper harvest for the future South Korea (the South and North were not yet separated). Farmers and labourers, who formed the bulk of the rural population, had been demoralized by the colonial events. The Japanese

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<sup>185</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, New York City, Random house, 1999, p. 91.

applied what in Freire's term can be described as functional oppression, which is an effort to domesticate the oppressed for exploitation. Freire has suggested that,

To no longer be prey to its forces (oppressor), one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.<sup>186</sup>

Farmers and labourers, and especially women, could not be anything less than mere prey for Japanese exploitation. They had lost much of what represented their identity and pride. They were subjects in their own country, serving the interests of the colonisers. The teaching of the Church, in the prevailing situation, exposed the people to the reality of their condition, which *built their confidence to resist*.

The education which led to the rising of the lower class had to undo the "duality which has established itself in their innermost being."<sup>187</sup> Most historical literature shows that Koreans could hardly exist without their authentic freedom. It was in the circumstance of freedom that they could enjoy their economic sovereignty. They rejected the process of magic consciousness that was being enforced by the colonizers. They needed help to transform their reality into the dream and longing for freedom. What kind of help would have been possible, apart from a transformative educational process, which could impact their conscious personality, to use Freire's term? This is the answer the church's strategy provided for the helpless and the powerless people. They received transformative instructions, which resulted in economic productivity at the end of the colonization period. The Christian ethos for hard work, which Marx Weber attributes to Protestant ethics, worked well in Korea. According to Reinhard Bendix, Weber had said,

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<sup>186</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 33

<sup>187</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 30.

...whether and at what points certain “elective affinities” are discernible between particular types of religious beliefs (sic) and ethics of work-a-day life. By virtue of such affinities the religious movements has influenced the development of material culture, and [an analysis of these affinities] will clarify as far as possible the manner and the general direction [of that influence]...<sup>188</sup>

Post-colonial Korea experienced great productivity, because they saw their capabilities and developed their potential. For instance, there was a reduction in illiterate farmers and this boosted agricultural production.

The strategy of the Church had the full Freire type of praxis. The educational form provided gave much room for reflection. The leaders were those who themselves had been sharing in the experience of the Korean oppression. They did not limit themselves to dreaming alone, but engaged in actions which emerged from their reflections on their situation. For example, the offer of voluntary services by students and other capable leaders and the provision of facilities and funds were aspects of the practical dimensions to their praxis.

The most obvious legacy of the colonial period’s literacy is productivity and capability. The Korean experience after the three-year war (1950-1953) saw fast growth of the urban centres. This was due to what Rees attributes to the facilitation of a well-educated population.<sup>189</sup> The type of education which was offered in a pedagogical way, and coupled with a religious foundation, prepared the people for economic productivity. The first result of the quality of the labour resource was the post-war urban industrialization during the 1960s, but this created a wide gap between the urban and the rural people.

Rural areas experienced some period of neglect due to the urban population drift. It also suffered from the Korean War, which affected the life of the rural people. In the 1960s the

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<sup>188</sup> Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber*, p. 63.

<sup>189</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p. 148

rural people's income was half that of the urban wage-earners. However, because of the legacy left by the colonial time's education, the rural people still possessed "the resilience and capacity for hard work."<sup>190</sup> The faith expressed in the rural people led to the formation of the *Saemaul* Movement. The task of this movement became their slogan: "Self-help, hard work and co-operation."<sup>191</sup> The response of the villages to the *Saemaul* Movement programme, which was supported by the government (but not centrally controlled), succeeded in improving conditions in rural areas which were in a state of decline. It helped to raise agricultural output and increased the capital income of the rural people. In 1976 the economic gap between rural and urban people had closed.<sup>192</sup>

#### 4.4. The effect of literacy on social reforms and education

Literacy had an impact on general social reforms and education in Korea. As it is knowledge-based, it helped to renew social views and improved the way of doing things. Korean society, having been a traditional one, could experience transformation by the development of literacy. Much has been said about some of the social dimensions which literacy has already touched. In this section, the main concerns are some of the social issues and structures which literacy has also affected, bringing about reforms in their standard and position.

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<sup>190</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p.151.

<sup>191</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p.152.

<sup>192</sup> Rees, *A Short History of Modern Korea*, p.152.

#### 4.4.1. Social reforms and development

##### 4.4.1.1. Women's self-image

History has revealed that there was a time when Korean women had a place of importance in society. This is reflected in the period before "Yi Korea" rule (1392-1910), through the "Silla" era into the "Koryo" epoch. These periods gave women considerable room for self-expression, equality with men and access to kinship inheritance and the right to remarriage.<sup>193</sup> However, this was terminated by the coming of Confucianism, that subjugated women to a position below men.<sup>194</sup> It made the men look down upon the noble role of mothers and wives. Women were made to feel that they could not do what men could do.<sup>195</sup> This was asserted by Myung Sook Sung, who said that:

...they were still defined by and expected to live according to traditional Confucian ideology. This ideology was even reinforced by the Japanese ruling patriarchy which designated women as 'disabled' according to the colonial legal codes.<sup>196</sup>

This development, with its semi-religious oppression, negatively affected the image and the status of women in Korea. Some of these structures are the barrier created to obstruct the girl-child from getting formal education that could set her on the course of progress.<sup>197</sup> Where girls are allowed to go to school, the boy is seen as more likely to do well in

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<sup>193</sup> Choi, Elizabeth, Status of the Family and Motherhood for Korean Women, (in: Women of Japan and Korea – Continuity and Change, edits. Joyce Gelb and Marian Lief Palley, Temple Univ. Press, Philadelphia, 1994, p. 192.

<sup>194</sup> Choi, Status of the Family and Motherhood for Korean Women, p. 192.

<sup>195</sup> Sun Ai – Park, Mananzan, Mary J., Emerging Spirituality of Asian Woman, (in: With Passion and Compassion – The World Women Doing Theology, editors: Virginia Fabella, M.M., and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y., 1988) p. 79.

<sup>196</sup> Sung, 'Modernisation and tradition in Korean women's lives', p. 5.

<sup>197</sup> Cho Kyung Won, Overcoming Confucian Barriers: Changing Education Opportunities for Women in Korea, (in: Women of Japan and Korea – Continuity and Change, edits. Joyce Gelb and Marian Lief Palley, Temple Univ. Press, Philadelphia, 1994, pp. 211-212,218.



education than the girl.<sup>198</sup> As a traditional value, such negative social attitudes have to give way for effective development which impacts every individual irrespective of gender. This has been achieved by education that was given to women through the work of the Christian ministry.

#### 4.4.1.2. Social structures

Social structures are traditional and so are cultural systems, which have their positive and negative effects. This depends on how the structures operate to allow more freedom or encourage oppression. Social structures normally take the form of political, religious, economic, family and class stratification. In the Korean case, these structures during the pre-colonial and colonial times were abused, to the detriment of females and ordinary people. For instance, exploitative political structures practised by the monarchies were condoned by the religious tradition of Confucianism. Kim has observed that:

The Confucian support of the old political and class structure prevented rapid social transformations; thus, Confucian inertia contributed to the failure of autonomous modernization...<sup>199</sup>

The period of education has contributed, however, to reducing the level of abuse. For development, transformation and progress to occur, such systems have to disappear. Confucianism, according to Weber, holds “a static world view, notions of development and progress were foreign to its social thought.”<sup>200</sup> This could be attributed to the rigidity and unresponsiveness of Confucianism to progressive change. Until these systems crumbled, the

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<sup>198</sup> Cho, *Overcoming Confucian Barriers: Changing Education Opportunities for Women in Korea*, pp. 212-213.

<sup>199</sup> Kim, 'Political economy of development and religions in Korea' p. 119.

<sup>200</sup> Kim, 'Political economy of development and religions in Korea' p. 119.

influence of Confucianism would not have allowed South Korea to experience social reform and transformation:

With the collapse of the traditional state and social structure..., a societal condition that created motivation for hard work and aspiration for success was formed.<sup>201</sup>

Under the collapsed monarchical system and reduced influence of Confucianism, and with rising confidence in the teachings of the Bible, the condition of exploitation decreased. The absence of fear increased the access of ordinary people to available opportunities for development. Individuals discovered their potential through access to learning and literacy.

#### **4.4.2. The culminating impact of education on social development**

##### **4.4.2.1. Health and environment**

An aspect of the culminating impact of literacy on health and the environment was access to information which helped in health matters. Until the literacy campaign increased social awareness to unnecessary and bad customs, many illiterate people had superstitious views of diseases. This made them suffer economically and physically. As people, through their literacy, were educated by reading newspapers and magazines, their understanding changed. Likewise, Bryant Myers draws attention to,

...another body of research that shows that female literacy is a positive predictor of many good things – lower fertility, lower child mortality, and successful micro-enterprise development.<sup>202</sup>

They were also in a position to understand indirect health education, offered through the evening

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<sup>201</sup> Kim, 'Political economy of development and religions in Korea' p. 116.

<sup>202</sup> Bryant Myers, 'poverty and the poor' in *Walking with the poor*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999, p. 65.

schools and seminars. There was government and Christian medical mission intervention and support for people. These helped to reverse the worsening condition of health, because of the prevalence of many contagious and deadly diseases. This progress was a good trend toward effective social development. However, the improvement in human health did not affect the environment.

By the end of the 1980s Korea faced deteriorating environmental conditions. This has been contradictory to the level of literacy and high education which Koreans possess. But the problem of environmental degradation and pollution can be blamed on negligence. According to Jeong Ho Moon,

...the Korean population paid the quality of environment to buy economic growth and industrialization (which mean the shift of economic system form precapitalist society to mass production and mass consumption society), and the Korean state, as a leading agency of growth, is most responsible for that.<sup>203</sup>

Until 1980s, environmental policy to control the high level of industrialization and wastage was inactive. It is within this period that emerging environmental protection groups and NGOs put pressure on policy makers to revise the weak policy.<sup>204</sup> Socially, the economic boom caused people to be preoccupied with enjoying the gains of a good salary, and the excessive consumption of manufactured products resulted. The outcome has been much poisonous wastage which is harmful to health. This negligence could also be attributed to the Church, which overlooked the protection of the environment. In the context of Christian stewardship, even though God has made available to humans the utilization of the earth's resources, people are accountable for the destruction and pollution cause by consumption. Nicholas Walterstorff has noted what God requires of people in shalom towards the non-human world:

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<sup>203</sup> Jeoun Ho Moon, 'Planning against the leviathan: State planning and the prospects for social movement in South Korea, focusing on environment movement', Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1994, p. 159.

<sup>204</sup> Moon, 'Planning against the leviathan', pp. 155-157.

...harmonious relationships to nature and delight in our physical surroundings. Shalom comes when we, bodily creatures and not disembodied souls, shape the world with our labour and find fulfilment in so doing and delight in its results.<sup>205</sup>

Humans have shown collective irresponsibility in unjustifiable disregard for the environment. In the course of educating society to be holistically responsible, the environment, which is the source of life, has been neglected. This has been a weakness in the remarkable achievement of social development in the South Korean Republic.

#### 4.4.2.2. Formal education

The effect of literacy on formal education is that those who became literate gave much attention to the formal education of their children. The awakening and the desire to learn contributed to the high enrolment for formal education in the post-colonial period. The figure of 99.9% by 1995 is not due to the free basic education offered, but the realization by Koreans of the benefits of education in general. Today, after Korea achieved almost universal literacy status, many of the nonformal schools (evening schools) have further developed to serve the needs of contemporary time. They have transformed into formal structures, but specializing in certain skills and technical training. This has given young Korean people wider opportunity for personal development and for the opportunity to work. A particular example is the access of women to employment opportunities because of the education and skills they have acquired.

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<sup>205</sup> Nicholas Walterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983, pp. 70-71.

## 4.5. Conclusion

It can be concluded at this stage that Korean independence and the post-war economic growth and social development can be attributed to the prior preparation of the people through the literacy drive that also promoted increased formal education. As Sen has commented:

Indeed many Asian economies – first Japan, and then South Korea... have done remarkably well in spreading the economic opportunities through an adequately supportive social background, including high levels of literacy, numeracy, and basic education...<sup>206</sup>

The impact of the literacy drive covers the areas of women's emancipation from the marginalisation of patriarchal cultural practices, peasant farmers' productivity, and the development and improvement of labour skills. The proliferation of Christian religious principles and general knowledge depended on the literacy drive as part of nonformal education. This also contributed to the rise of the lower class rural poor through education and the subsequent effects in governance reforms for the institution of democracy. Upon these changes that the Korean society experienced from the early 1900s, the literacy (nonformal) education drive therefore, can be accredited as the principal agent for the event of Korean social development.

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<sup>206</sup> Sen, *Development as Freedom*, p. 91.

## Chapter 5

### 5. Theological review

#### 5.1. Introduction

Theologically, mother tongue literacy underlies effective social change and renewal (Acts 2:1-11; Gen 11:1-9). This is affirmed by Kwame Bediako:

The significance of Scripture... makes language itself into a theological category, conferring upon it 'eternal significance... and transcendent range.' Human language, as far as is humanly possible, is thereby given the capacity to carry the burden of divine communication, the theological basis for this, once again, being the incarnation. For when divine word became flesh and dwelt among us, it was God translating himself into humanity, as though humanity were a receptor language (for the purpose of transforming humanity and entire creation).<sup>207</sup>

In the same way, the vision of Koreans for social renewal and development has been made possible by the victory of literacy in their mother tongue. After perusing the history and evaluation of Korean literacy, the whole picture of the literacy exercise will be examined in a theological review. This is to enable us to examine and validate the main significance of the literacy campaign and its achievements, from a theological perspective. Two factors will be reviewed, namely, the Christian mission and literacy as development contribution and the benefits of literacy on evangelization.

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<sup>207</sup> Bediako, Kwame 2003 'Biblical Exegesis in the African Context-The factor and impact of the translated Scriptures', in *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol.6, No.1, June, p. 17.

## 5.2. Christian mission and literacy as development contribution

The early missionaries targeted the ordinary people. This stimulated the idea of introducing the Hangeul literacy to help facilitate the reading of the translated Hangeul version of the Bible. The benefit of translation would first have to answer questions pertaining to the world view, aspirations of the Koreans and the survival of their faith. This would require examining the issues of Bible translation and Christian leadership training as theological input for Korea's social development by Christian mission.

### 5.2.1. Bible translation

The first portion of the Bible translated by the Scottish Presbyterian missionaries John Ross and John McIntyre into Hangeul in 1882 was the Gospel of Luke.<sup>208</sup> This was done in Manchuria where they were stationed with the help of some Korean converts. By 1887 the New Testament and portions of the Old Testament had been translated<sup>209</sup> into Hangeul. The theological significance of the translations has lasted until today and is still impacting the social, political and economic life of Koreans, as a landmark record in Asia and the world. From the impact of the Bible translation into Hangeul it could be agreed with Bediako that: "vernacular (mother-tongue) languages as essential vehicles of religious transition"<sup>210</sup> touch the reality of the people. It challenges the search for their identity and answers their questions. The Korean social context has experienced tremendous political and social upheaval with much life lost in the past. The issue of

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<sup>208</sup> Park, 'The contributions of Korean Christian women to the Church and its mission', p. 70.

<sup>209</sup> Park, 'The contributions of Korean Christian women to the Church and its mission', p. 70.

<sup>210</sup> Bediako, *Jesus in Africa- the Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*, p. xi.

oppression gives the picture of what Koreans' questions have been, when surrounded by forces of local and external imperialism.

The translation of the Bible that underlies the promotion of literacy in Korea brought the people into contact with the realities of the traditional Korean religions. The Confucian ethical system and ideals, which had been introduced in the Chōson era, had easily mixed with Buddhism. The Hangeul version of the Bible offered ordinary Koreans the opportunity of assessing their traditional world view in line with the problems and questions that faced them. The Hangeul Bible helped many people to see and understand the weakness of the traditional religious and ethical systems, which did not promote effective social development. The translation made the ordinary people discover that they could find answers to Korean problems and achieve the national aspiration of liberation and freedom. The Korean aspiration for social development had been frustrated by certain social and religious practices and evils such as the discrimination against females. The choice for males had been so strong due to the existing religious values, which had prevented education of females. Again, the existence of social stratification, which had the support of traditional religions, undermined individual aspiration and discovery of personal capability. The Bible exposed these as sinful and a hindrance to just human progress.

### **5.2.2. Negative issues of literacy in development**

The localization or indigenization of Christianity was made possible by the Bible being translated into Hangeul. The translation helped to solve the problem of the foreign appearance of Christianity by Koreans. Cultural invasion has been the negative factor hindering mother tongue literacy and promoting an imposed language. The imposition of



a language barrier brings about misunderstanding and disunity. Some colonization history in the world shows that the imposition of a foreign language on indigenous people creates problems for Christian missionary work. Local languages were relegated to a secondary position, rather than helping them to develop. Where missionaries were not able to translate the Scripture into the local vernacular, a shallow development of the faith resulted. The fact is that people may have faith but they lack an indigenous theology of their own, because they may not have the Scriptures in their own language. Where Scriptures have been translated into the mother tongue people have been motivated to pursue literacy skills. This enabled people to look for other opportunities in education.

After cultural invasion, the absence of indigenous theology works to keep the people blinded to their realities and destroys their identity. This truncates and distorts their historical process and cultural values for evolving authentic religious identity. According to Bediako:

...theological consciousness presupposes religious tradition, and tradition requires memory, and memory is integral to identity: without memory we have no past, and if we have no past, we lose our identity.<sup>211</sup>

In the long run, people become confused and are entrenched in a dual personality attitude. This is what Bediako described as loss of memory and identity. The end product is lack of substantive development, even when on the surface there seem to be activities. Anything that hinders people's unity undermines their spiritual progress and collective mindset to overcome their problems. For this reason, it could be argued that Koreans

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<sup>211</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa*, p. 50.

who received the Gospel translated into their mother tongue fostered their *unity* and desire to resist and overthrow any force that was set to undermine the course of their destiny.

### **5.2.3. Human resources**

Human resource development became one of the beneficial outcomes of the literacy and other activities of the Christian mission. The need is to justify such social contributions by Christianity for development. Humans are created in the image of God. This gives them some special qualities which are peculiar to human beings. Humans have been given the ability to relate to God and other human beings and even to the environment. They have a sense of imagination and are potentially creative. Moreover, humans have moral capacity and are potentially talented. These qualities are potential and latent abilities which need to be developed. This can be done through various kinds of training. Though not every skill development requires a substantive form of knowledge, basic literacy and numeracy are essential requirements for effective human reasoning and understanding.

What should be the task of the Christian mission? Primarily, it is the mission of God to people and the world. God loves people and He loves the world (Jn 3:16). God knows the conditions in the world and the helpless situation of many people across the earth. He sent His son Jesus for human salvation. Jesus identified with the deprivation, helplessness and weakness of humanity. Jesus did not ignore issues and problems concerning people's physical and material conditions. He commissioned His Church to continue His work in the great commission. This commission to carry the Gospel is not different from His purpose, concern and compassion for social issues.

In Jesus' ministry the two are inseparable. In the prophetic Biblical literature the spiritual and material conditions are inseparable. The Bible expresses itself clearly on the value of human life. So deprivation, disease, lack of skill and joblessness which serve to reduce human value and competence have to be corrected. According to Sarah White and Romy Tiongco:

The key issue here is not material good, but values. What was at stake was not just their economic standard of living, but who they felt themselves to be. Although not expressed in religious language, these are spiritual concerns.<sup>212</sup>

The implication of this view is that the ordinary people are entitled to some value which emerges from the economic circumstances. This value cannot be dissociated from their spiritual reality and concerns. In this case, Christian mission cannot be effective if circumstances of poverty and underdevelopment are ignored for the sake of a spiritual emphasis and expediency. In the long run, the Korean Christian missionaries' example offers us the material background in modern Christian mission history. Spirituality and material concerns have an integral role for human and social development that the Church should not ignore. The rationale for the missionaries' activities, which eventually reaped benefits for social development in Korea, shall be evaluated.

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<sup>212</sup> Sarah White and Romy Tiongco, "What has theology to do with development, peace and reconstruction?" in Phiri I.A., Ross K.A and Cox J.L (eds) *The Role of Christianity in development, peace, and reconstruction: Southern perspectives* (Nairobi: All African Conference of Churches, 1996), p.15.

### **5.3. The benefit of literacy on evangelization**

In this section, the theological aspects of literacy on missionaries' strategies in Korea and on Church expansion and growth will be reviewed, as well as how these factors contributed to the success of Korea's social development.

#### **5.3.1. Theological review of literacy benefit for missionaries, Church expansion and growth**

When the Protestant missionaries arrived in Korea, the New Testament in Hangeul was available. This was a great opportunity for them, because people had the Bible in a language they could understand. First, it did not make the missionaries seem like strange people. In the Bible, Jesus' mission was made easier in a similar way. There was the Roman Peace (Pax Romana) in the Caesar Augustus period. Then He came into the context where the Scripture had been. Jesus' task, as we find in the Gospels, was more or less reinterpreting what they already possessed, without the basic understanding of the salvation and empowerment it provided. The missionaries' task could be said to be helping in the reinterpretation of the Hangeul Bible message. They helped the people to discover the spirit of the word they possessed in their hands. In the same way the apostles helped the Jews to discover the Spirit of the Old Testament Scripture. For Koreans, who were highly religious people, the Bible could have been perceived as some of the traditional religious and wisdom materials they possessed. For this reason, the mission of the missionaries has been relevant and needful to enable the Koreans to discover Jesus in the Bible, as the son of God and not as a

Kongja<sup>213</sup> (공자). With the Hangeul Bible ready and waiting, the stage was set for acceleration and expansion of the Church into many areas.

The expansion of the Church was not difficult for the missionaries to achieve. Even though there was the strong influence of Confucianism and Buddhism, the missionaries' strategy capitalized on the available Bible text and prepared people to read the Bible. They had the privilege of not spending their time on translation activities. This enabled them to spend their initial energies and time in training capable and available people for leadership and ministry activities. That actually followed the pattern set by Jesus and His apostles. Jesus, right from the beginning, settled on training people He could delegate duties to, and take over from Him, knowing His mission was temporary. Another factor is that by training the leaders, He duplicated His effort by equipping those He trained. In the New Testament, Paul happened to have his team of people whom he trained to share in his work and extend the work faster. This work of training leaders was made easier and the trainees received the needed response in their work as evangelists and Church leaders, because they were instructed and had all the materials in their own vernacular.

With a very high response of women to conversion, the training programmes concentrated on training women leaders and workers for the ministry:

*The actual work was nevertheless conducted among the poor and oppressed, and among these lower classes, Korean women were the key targets. As early as 1893, as its official policy, the Presbyterians declared their points of mission policy for the Korean mission. Among these, the conversion of women and training of Christian girls were special aims for the effective mission work of Korea.*<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Kongja is one of the great teachers of Confucianism.

<sup>214</sup> Park, 'The contributions of Korean Christian women to the Church and its mission', p. 78.

This approach opened much more room for women to contribute beyond measure to missionary evangelization and Church planting activities. The greater focus on women led to the formation of the "Bible Women." These were mainly widows and unmarried women trained for ministry work alongside the missionaries:

The works of Bible women were mainly evangelistic ones. They included visiting the homes of both believers and non-believers, teaching the Bible in Bible classes, teaching children in Sunday school, leading the Women's Evangelism Association (WEA) in the local churches, and helping girls and elderly women in the life of the church. These women travelled the countryside alone, or with only a few other women missionaries in their regions, visiting women all along the way, teaching the Bible, and challenging them to believe in Christ. They also distributed the Gospels and evangelistic literature. Moreover, they visited the sick, offering prayers to expel evil spirits.<sup>215</sup>

Some of the women did work which was noted as outstanding. For instance, one of the women, Chun Sam-Duk, established nine churches in Kangsu, Hamjong, Samhwa and elsewhere, in a period of thirty years.<sup>216</sup>

Some others were also noted to have excelled in evangelistic activities:

A Bible woman known as Mrs. Soobok's mother, who worked for her for five years, visited 6,730 Korean women, and distributed 4,491 Bibles and 1,500 small booklets. In 1907,....Kim Sea-Ji.... visited 2,016 homes and distributed many Christian books.<sup>217</sup>

In the case of the Methodists, this led to the establishment of a Women's Theological Seminary (Hyopsun) in 1917, before the one for men was established in 1932.<sup>218</sup> This is an indication that the involvement of women in Christian ministry contributed much to the expansion of Christianity in Korea. The outflow of women's ministry activities due to the training they were receiving spilt over into foreign missionary enterprises by the Korean

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<sup>215</sup> Park, 'The contributions of Korean Christian women to the Church and its mission', pp. 81-82.

<sup>216</sup> Park, 'The contributions of Korean Christian women to the Church and its mission', p. 82.

<sup>217</sup> Park, 'The contributions of Korean Christian women to the Church and its mission', p. 82.

<sup>218</sup> Park, 'The contributions of Korean Christian women to the Church and its mission', p. 108.

Church, as early as the 1920s. The missionaries were mainly single women who were first sent to Russia and Manchuria and subsequently to Japan and China, without foreign support.<sup>219</sup>

The benefits of literacy for Church growth since the missionary period cannot be over-emphasised. Similarly to what happened in the early stages of the Church in Acts, literacy was a miraculous factor which attracted the people, especially the women, into the Church. The trained women, having become literate, taught others in the Church and in homes. This served to attract many women who until that time were forbidden from learning Christianity.

Park says that

...Bible women taught *Hangul*, the Korean alphabet. During this period, literacy with *Hangul* among lower women was very low. So, in order to teach women to read the Bible, Bible women had to teach *Hangul* to Korean women (S. Chang 1985:221) In this way, these Bible women also greatly participated in spreading the *Hangul* among Korean women.<sup>220</sup>

It is quite obvious that, for the literacy drive by Christian women, leaders were using the Bible and other Christian materials.

This facilitated the exposure of the Gospel message in the Hangeul language to those using such materials. It is undeniable that the process of literacy, especially among the women, underscored the ascendancy in Church growth at these historic times. This process prompted Church growth, because the encounter of the women with the Biblical message enabled them to discover their value and humanity. They were empowered in the process and many continued to dedicate themselves to the ministry of the Church. The Korean women became

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<sup>219</sup> Park, 'The contributions of Korean Christian women to the Church and its mission', pp.103-104.

<sup>220</sup> Park, 'The contributions of Korean Christian women to the Church and its mission', p.85.

like their compatriots in the Bible who, through their encounter with Jesus Christ, followed Him even to the grave and were the first to meet Him after the resurrection. By their empowerment Jesus did not disdain them and made them the first to be commissioned to proclaim His resurrection. This is the foundation of the growth of the Church in Korea.

### **5.3.2. The benefit of literacy for Korean Christian social mission**

The Christian social mission is to contribute to social awakening, to morality and to uprightness, for social renewal and sustainable development. In the words of Jesus Christ, “You are the salt of the earth ...” “You are the light of the world...” “...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven” (Matt 5:13-16). In this statement we see Jesus requiring the transformed Christian to prevent social decay. The essence of salt is for preservation. The capability of the people as they come to God through Jesus Christ is the change that enables them to be critical of society, acting as social watchdogs. The fact that the Christian is a “royal priest” enjoins us to decry the evils of society, i.e. sin and the things which work in society against human dignity and social development. Many countries in the world are suffering, because of high immorality, irresponsibility and corruption. The availability of natural resources does not guarantee positive development unless morality is the chosen way.

Christian values are depicted as the “light” which ought to shine so that what is not clear and what is not understandable become lucid. Human society everywhere has been plagued with the sin of injustice and oppression. The human desire for wealth and materialist overabundance is a clear indication that there ought to be some checks and balances over society,



to correct such human excesses. Sin in society is only controlled when the capacity of Christians and lovers of morality rise up to advocate the cause of justice and order for fairness and peace. Literacy has played its role in Korea by the command it has given people to understand and know God's purpose and demands. The attitude of Korean Christians to stand firm against injustice and oppression is the empowerment they receive from the skill of literacy. God's command to the leaders and prophets of old was that they "meditate" on his word (Jos 1:8-9; Ps119:1-2). The privilege people have to be literate in the positive sense brings them closer to God. It can be said that the literate person has a valid opportunity to know what is right or wrong. The unfortunate thing, however, is that illiteracy in itself is not an excuse to do wrong. Literacy affected the social morality of Korea when literate people, by virtue of the Scripture, formed many educative groupings to work against human attitudinal excesses. The formation of frugality, temperance, anti-smoking and gender equality groups shows the level of consciousness the people developed to create a better society.

## **5.5. Conclusion**

It has become apparent that Korean society has gone through a period of dominant negative cultural and traditional practices and beliefs that were counterproductive to the social development of Koreans. The introduction of Christianity with the translation of the Bible into Hangeul opened the way for exposure of such negative cultural and traditional practices. The Hangeul version of the Bible stimulated the desire for many to learn to read it and the opportunity to question some useless and counterproductive social values. It also underlies the proliferation of Christian leadership training by the missionaries, which consolidated the

emancipation of women with many women leaders developed for the Gospel propagation and other social development activities. A further benefit of the Hangeul translation of the Bible is the understanding of God's purpose for humanity it brought to its readers. This did help to empower the people to seek their freedom from various forms of injustice and oppression and motivated a call for moral sanity in society. The point of the lesson here is that the promotion of literacy and specifically of Hangeul, has revolutionized the Korean society. What lesson can the peculiar Korean example of literacy drive offer some other developing nations? This is discussed in the next Chapter.

## Chapter 6

### 6. Literacy and social development in developing nations

#### 6.1. Introduction

Korea has through fire and ice achieved literacy success. However, there are many countries that have far lower and very poor levels of literacy. Many of them are in Africa and South-East Asia. Chapter 6 examines the problem of illiteracy in developing countries. Some strategic ideas arising from the Korean experience will then be offered for consideration.

#### 6.2. The problem of illiteracy in developing countries

The Korean experience of achieving social development for economic growth, in terms of human value and capacity, can offer room for some comparative analyses and lessons for developing countries. Available data of history, economics and political patterns show some specific characteristics which affect social development. In the Korean context these attributes were evident as complimentary factors for social change. These factors are literacy (education), Christianity and economic freedom. In this particular section, some of the problems of illiteracy, their impact on social development and the role of Christian mission, which pertains in the African context as an example of developing nations, will be highlighted.

### 6.2.1. The problem of illiteracy

The International Literacy Day reports of 2001 reveal that, since 1980, basic school enrolment has declined from 58% to 50% in Sub-Saharan Africa. In developing nations the percentage of young children not in school is 15% whilst that of the least developed nations was 45%.<sup>221</sup> At the end of 1998, one-sixth of the world population (5.6 billion) were without literacy ability.<sup>222</sup> It was expected before that time that the condition would improve, with the rate declining in developing nations. The greater portion, which is two-thirds, are female.<sup>223</sup> However, the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) that undermined poor countries' economies resulted in the forecast that illiteracy will increase in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,<sup>224</sup> to affect life mostly in the developing nations. At the end of 2003 a UNICEF report<sup>225</sup> confirmed that education is on the decline in developing nations.<sup>226</sup> The measures suggested to arrest the situation of declining education in the economically struggling nations did not include the promotion of nonformal education but rather of a formal type. This could delay total literacy in developing nations for a century or more.

The high rate of illiteracy in developing nations has many factors underlying the lack of progress in changing the situation. The main problem, according to Kowsar P. Chowdhury, can be attributed to problems with primary education. There is low enrolment at the primary

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<sup>221</sup> International Literacy Day September 7, 2001 Washington, DC, [www.sil.org/literacy/LitFacis.htm](http://www.sil.org/literacy/LitFacis.htm)

<sup>222</sup> International Literacy Day September 7, 2001 Washington, DC.

<sup>223</sup> David Boaz, 'Illiteracy – The Bad News and the Good', [www.cato.org/cgi-bin/scripts/printtech.cgi/dailys/01-20-99.html](http://www.cato.org/cgi-bin/scripts/printtech.cgi/dailys/01-20-99.html)

<sup>224</sup> Barbara Crossette, UNICEF study predicts 16% world illiteracy rate will increase, New York Times, December 8, 1998, [www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/global/unicef\\_98.htm](http://www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/global/unicef_98.htm)

<sup>225</sup> UNICEF, 'The state of the world's children 2003', [www.unicef.org/sow03/](http://www.unicef.org/sow03/)

<sup>226</sup> Chowdhury has indicated that though enrolment has improved since 1960, there remains the problem of increasing unschooled in Sub-Saharan Africa. Chowdhury, 'Literacy and Primary Education'

level.<sup>227</sup> This low enrolment is aggravated by pupil dropout before completion of primary schooling. There are two reasons, which are in-school and out-of-school ones. In-school factors are, firstly, a proximity problem, where the child has to walk a long distance to the nearest school. Secondly, cultural norms may determine the enrolment rate. Thirdly, the quality of the school may influence enrolment, in many places. Fourthly, a gender bias could be a hindrance to female interest in school.<sup>228</sup>

The out-of-school factors are, firstly, the direct cost for parents. Low salaries and incomes in many developing countries make it difficult for parents to get their children to school.<sup>229</sup> Secondly, the opportunity cost of schooling takes the form of family commitment, which demands that very young members of the family contribute to their economic survival. For instance, a girl whose services are needed at home may be prevented from attending school.<sup>230</sup> Thirdly, sickness and malnutrition undermine the educational opportunity of many children in developing countries. These factors induce poor school performance, because they weaken physical strength and mental ability.<sup>231</sup> Finally, limited economic opportunities serve as disincentives to some children and their parents in seeking education. Low salaries and a lack of job opportunities make some parents erroneously see education as a waste of time for the child. For these reasons parents and communities in poor nations are tempted to ignore the overarching effect of illiteracy that is perpetuated by the non-schooling of children.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Chowdhury, 'Literacy and Primary Education.'

<sup>228</sup> Chowdhury, 'Literacy and Primary Education.'

<sup>229</sup> Chowdhury, 'Literacy and Primary Education.'

<sup>230</sup> Chowdhury, 'Literacy and Primary Education.'

<sup>231</sup> Chowdhury, 'Literacy and Primary Education.'

<sup>232</sup> Chowdhury, 'Literacy and Primary Education.'

The effects of illiteracy, shown by the absence of minimal education, are as follows. It produces mediocre or low levels of reading skills. It results in functional illiteracy, which renders people ineffective to use literature and written documents that affect their practical lives. Protracted illiteracy leads to residual illiteracy, which creates the condition of deficiency, handicap and/or maladjustment. In this case, the people find it hard to adjust to change. Entrenched illiteracy could be a characteristic of a particular cultural, national or immigrant minority group. This affects the opportunities available to such groups in job qualification and promotion. Illiteracy carries the tag of poverty, which normally results in the condition of generalized exclusion.<sup>233</sup> Illiteracy can be a social theory. It becomes “a set of ideological facts with varied social definitions.”<sup>234</sup> In this case, a society’s perception of what is described as valid or otherwise may not be the same, due to their pattern of historical and cultural experiences. For instance, a community of nomadic cattle herdsman may find little relevance for literacy, because they do not have a permanent settlement.

### **6.2.2. The impact of illiteracy on social development**

The price of illiteracy is that it brings loss of income to individuals that also become a loss for society.<sup>235</sup> It is a fact that illiterate individuals and communities cost more for the nation to maintain than literate citizenry.<sup>236</sup> This asserts the fact that the economic stresses developing nations are going through can be attributed partly to the high illiteracy rate. An example from one of the developed nations: the USA is estimated as losing \$17 billion per year as result of its small proportion of illiterate people. This loss is indicated in tax

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<sup>233</sup> Timothy D.Foster,M.A, ‘Literacy & Technology The L.E.A.R.N. Centre, (Internship Paper; Applied Sociology Program – N.A.U.1995.

<sup>234</sup> Foster, ‘Literacy & Technology The L.E.A.R.N. Centre.’

<sup>235</sup> Foster, ‘Literacy & Technology The L.E.A.R.N. Centre.’

<sup>236</sup> Foster, ‘Literacy & Technology The L.E.A.R.N. Centre.’

revenues, welfare, unemployment, crime and incarceration, and training costs for business and industry.<sup>237</sup> If this state of minimal illiteracy, which is quite negligible, can affect such a nation then it can be deduced that a key reason for why the so-called developing nations are poor because of illiteracy. Illiteracy affects the GDP because of human capital wastage. Illiterate people cannot be described as incapable but are less productive economically. For instance, in some African nations, many literate farmers showed maximum productivity in an equivalent size of land, compared to illiterate farmers.<sup>238</sup> Another way illiteracy impacts the economy is in the area of health. For instance, the illiterate status of many females in developing nations has linkage with child health and fertility. "A 10-percentage-point increase in girls' primary enrolment can be expected to decrease infant mortality by 4.1 deaths per 1,000, and a similar rise in girls' secondary enrolment by 5.6 deaths per 1,000."<sup>239</sup>

Another impact of illiteracy on social development of developing nations is the lack of understanding of political and civic issues. When many people are illiterate their contribution to democratic political processes is less valuable and even ineffective. Because they cannot easily understand simple political matters they become mere rubber stamps during elections. They lack understanding of basic political and basic economic issues and do not help in the effective development of governance. Development planning and implementation in many developing countries is done and controlled by the top government level.<sup>240</sup> Such imposition of development policy, like the Structural Adjustment Programmes, without the people's understanding and input, end in failure. An effective

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<sup>237</sup> Foster, 'Literacy & Technology The L.E.A.R.N. Centre.'

<sup>238</sup> Chowdhury, 'Literacy and Primary Education.'

<sup>239</sup> Barbara Crossette, UNICEF study predicts 16% world illiteracy rate will increase. New York Times, December 8, 1998, [www.globalpolicy.org/socecon/global/unicef98.htm](http://www.globalpolicy.org/socecon/global/unicef98.htm)

<sup>240</sup> Donal Dorr, *Integral Spirituality: Resources for Community, Peace, Justice and the Earth*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990, p. 147.

decentralization process, which contributes to rapid development, requires critical minds in the people. Freire argues that people can participate effectively in their local political matters if they have developed dialogical thinking. This cannot be possible when people remain illiterate and blind to their realities. Literacy, therefore, is fundamental to political decentralization for the development process.

Against such a position, David Boaz pointed out that literacy or education does not necessarily underlie economic growth and, for that matter, development. He says that Western Europe, North America and Hong Kong had rapid economic growth before an increase in education.<sup>241</sup> Though this is valid, there is a background to that kind of growth which was connected to the moral change that influenced Europe and America, which affected productivity. Boaz also says that the high level of literacy which grew in Communist countries like "Russia, China and Cuba"<sup>242</sup> did not induce economic growth to reduce poverty.<sup>243</sup> His point is that it takes economic freedom, irrespective of literacy and education, to promote "economic growth" for prosperity.<sup>244</sup> Boaz, in trying to justify his main concern, has overstated his case. He ignored certain circumstances which made economic freedom and growth possible. He did not consider some places in Asia, Africa and elsewhere, where economic freedom in the midst of high illiteracy has not improved economic growth and poverty condition. Boaz has missed the point that there are other forms of freedom that should compliment economic freedom. Freire talks about dialogical education as the "practice of freedom,"<sup>245</sup> because it brings about liberation and critical

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<sup>241</sup> David Boaz, 'Illiteracy – The Bad News and the Good', [www.cato.org/cgi-bin/scripts/prinuech.cgi/dailys/01-20-99.html](http://www.cato.org/cgi-bin/scripts/prinuech.cgi/dailys/01-20-99.html)

<sup>242</sup> The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition, 2001, [http://www.encyclopedia.com/printable.asp?url=/ssi/section/illitera\\_WorldIlliteracyRates.html](http://www.encyclopedia.com/printable.asp?url=/ssi/section/illitera_WorldIlliteracyRates.html)

<sup>243</sup> Boaz, 'Illiteracy – The Bad News and the Good.'

<sup>244</sup> Boaz, 'Illiteracy – The Bad News and the Good.'

<sup>245</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 77.



thinking. A good education is that which makes the reality concrete to the people as they learn.<sup>246</sup> In this case education is an instrument<sup>247</sup> that can be manipulated.<sup>248</sup> Having said this, the context of the communist countries which Boaz cited as a reference cannot be tenable if they manipulate literacy or education not for liberation but other purposes. Economic freedom cannot be realistic without the appropriate literate environment that enables critical thinking for the practice of economic freedom. From Sen's point of view,

The pioneering example of enhancing economic growth through social opportunity, especially in basic education, is of course Japan....(It's) economic development was clearly much helped by the human resource development related to the social opportunities that were generated.<sup>249</sup>

By the mid-nineteenth century Japan's literacy rate was higher than Europe before the period of industrialization. This, as noted by Sen, contributed to economic development and growth by preparing the social abilities of the people.<sup>250</sup> The example from Korean research and history also shows that no single factor, such as what Boaz is insisting upon, could achieve social development. There are three key factors that could combine to produce the desired result of positive social development. They are "dialogical" literacy, human value and moral conditions, and economic freedom.

### 6.2.3. Literacy and Christian missions

Historically, literacy has been part and parcel of Christian mission activities. The

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<sup>246</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 78.

<sup>247</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 30.

<sup>248</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 53,59.

<sup>249</sup> Sen, *Development as Freedom*, p. 41. Also: "the three relevant Asian countries (Japan, South Korea and Taiwan) built their economic growth on a foundation of radical land reform, significant investments in education, strong voluntary population programs, the development of dense networks of local organizations in their rural area, and policies aimed at increasing rural incomes and developing domestic market." See David C. Korten, *Getting to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda*, Kumarian Press, USA, 1990, p.54.

<sup>250</sup> Sen, *Development as Freedom*, p. 41.

proliferation of mass literacy in Europe has been credited to the translation of the Bible into the English language and other European vernaculars.

The first known reference to “literate laymen” did not appear until the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> cent. Illiteracy was not seen as a problem until after the invention of printing in the 15<sup>th</sup> cent. The first significant decline in illiteracy came with the Reformation, when translation of the Bible into the vernacular became widespread and Protestant converts were taught to read it.<sup>251</sup>

The value of the translation and the corresponding literacy culminated in moral regeneration and subsequent social development. This took the form of high productivity, in spite of the presence of the feudal system. The reading of the Bible brought about social awakening in terms of commitment and value of life and time. In Europe, literacy combined powerfully with Biblical values, especially human value pertaining to individual freedom and self-discovery.<sup>252</sup>

The early missions to Africa in the 15<sup>th</sup> century delayed the translation of the Bible into the local vernacular. Around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century some copies of portions of the Bible were translated into some African languages.<sup>253</sup> The concern here is that it initiated a literacy drive exercise in areas where they were fortunate to have translated versions of parts of the Bible. The aftermath of vernacular translation of the Bible gave way to contextualization and inculturation of worship and Christian practices in many places in Africa. It enabled self-expression and the quest for identity in what has been accepted as the Word of God. It enabled ordinary Africans without theological training to become Christian leaders from their standpoint of understanding God's call. They used the Bible to find answers to meet the aspirations and needs of the ordinary person. This became easier

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<sup>251</sup> 'The Columbia Encyclopedia', Sixth Edition, 2001.

<sup>252</sup> Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber*, pp.49-69.

<sup>253</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the message: The missionary impact on culture*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1989, pp. 172,179-186.

because the context of the Bible does not differ much from the African context. The impact of this is that Africans began to see their faith not as exported to them or imported for them. Their faith is seen as “essentially local and in this sense the current of Christian mission could flow from everywhere to everywhere.”<sup>254</sup>

The early Christian missionary activities to Africa delayed the development of local languages, by introducing Western-style education. The mission schools used the medium of European languages to train the students. The products of this educational effort by the missionaries became the centre of formation of African leaders and human resource development.<sup>255</sup> African Churches, after the missionary era, did little to promote literacy in the mother tongues. Post-colonial Africa saw many of the mission schools going under government control.<sup>256</sup> The focus of the African Church has been on formal education, which has been good. But the Church, left issues of education and literacy to governments, to enable them to focus on so-called spiritual matters. This made them neglect many of their members who were illiterate in their own vernacular and also the official European language. Those who became literate in the European language because of formal school were sometimes not literate in their mother tongue. There is the other factor of how many have the privilege of being formally educated and what form of education? Many rural African people do not have access to formal education.

The decline of education in Sub-Saharan Africa is attributed to high poverty, gender

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<sup>254</sup> Tinyiko S Maluleke ‘The Bible among African Christians: A Missiological Perspective’, in Teresa Okure (ed) *To cast fire upon the earth: Bible and mission collaboration in today’s multicultural global context*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2000, p. 88.

<sup>255</sup> Samuel G Kibicho, ‘The continuity of the African conception of God into and through Christianity: a Kikuyu case-study’, in E.Fahole-Luke et al. (eds) *Christianity in Independent Africa*, London: Rex Collings, 1978, pp.373-374.

<sup>256</sup> Ogbu U. Kalu, *Power, Poverty and Prayer* (The Challenges of poverty and pluralism in African Christianity, 1960 – 1996), Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2000, p. 34.

discrimination, poor health and fewer schools and resources. Even if the schools available in Africa have full enrolment, there will still be a backlog of children. The United Nations' Children's Fund (UNICEF) 2003 report indicates that it would take an "extraordinary level of progress" to achieve universal primary education by 2129.<sup>257</sup> There also exists a large backlog of adult illiteracy, some of whom are living where there is a strong Christian presence.<sup>258</sup> The point is that a Church literacy drive is not totally absent on the continent of Africa, but very insignificant compared to the existing level of illiterate people. This neglect, combined with the decline in education for the past two decades, implicates the Church in the low level of community literacy.

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<sup>257</sup> UNICEF, 'The state of the world's children 2003', p.54.

<sup>258</sup> Chowdhury, 'Literacy and Primary Education.'

### **6.3. Strategic suggestions**

In this section, I would like to offer some humble suggestions to interested readers of this research work. Illiteracy has caused much harm to local people and has hindered rapid social progress. My personal observation, as I travelled to places in Southern and East Africa and South-East Asia, has made me raise some issues of much concern, firstly to society at larger and secondly to the Christian bodies in developing nations.

#### **6.3.1. The social context**

1. There is a need for people to seek their own destiny and well-being for enhancement of life and general progress. This research has shown that literacy in “dialogical” form has the ability and capability to make people take control of their own lives.
2. The neglect of a literacy campaign, or less attention given to it politically or socially, maintains underdevelopment. High illiteracy in colonized areas helps retain the impression and image of wrong self-identity. The introduction of literacy carries with it the joy of recognition and invokes self-acceptance, which is necessary for social development.
3. In the emancipation of women, literacy has proven to be a powerful weapon. Any society that recognizes women as an integral factor for social change and development should make women’s literacy a critical issue.
4. Rural empowerment and development cannot be effective without driving out illiteracy. Literate rural communities provide security for justice and economic progress. Pursuing the policy of rural literacy reduces the urban - periphery economic gap.
5. In the area of health, literacy has underscored a reduction in the cost of providing for

health needs and control of the spread of diseases. It also helps to reduce infant mortality and increases the average lifespan. Social measures to reduce health costs should include a literacy campaign.

6. Formal education could expand beyond estimation if it is preceded by a literacy campaign which is sustained. Literacy programmes could develop into avenues of nonformal skills provision and acquisition centres in rural areas.
7. Literacy campaigns could also promote social awareness for effective political participation and democracy. A good way to destroy democracy and impose dictatorship is to keep people illiterate and uninformed.
8. For greater benefit, literacy requires making the programme work in a dialogical way or making it functional,<sup>259</sup> to facilitate critical thinking and not merely to be literate in alphabets and numbers.

### 6.3.2. The Church context

1. From the Christian point of view, literacy without adequate spiritual formation could lead to some negative outcomes. Theologically, literacy should lead people to be responsible for their liberty. Literacy brings about self-liberation, which is the capability of knowledge-based transformation. This entitles individuals and people to have choices and opportunities.
2. Literacy that accompanies proper theological formation should enable the Church to become environmentally conscious. Literacy without spiritual understanding of well-

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<sup>259</sup> According to Feed the Minds organization, "The term 'functional' literacy is used to describe a meaningful level of literacy that can be put to practical use. This might mean people becoming aware of their basic rights. Taking part in community life, learning everyday skills, expressing themselves or achieving a measure of self-reliance." [www.feedtheminds.org](http://www.feedtheminds.org)

being issues (shalom) could make Christians careless about their attitude to their environment, in the pursuit of modernization and civilization.

3. Churches could contribute to rapid social change and development, if they promoted public issues and auxiliary groups in their congregations. Such groups would concern themselves with educating the Church and society on specific issues. This would help many congregation members to find avenues to discharge their ministry and be actively involved. This could help the Churches to become pace-setters in creating social awareness and education concerning moral and other issues.
4. Literacy is known to be an effective way of mobilizing people. In this way it has helped in evangelization. Having stated already that the Christian body in many places in Africa has neglected literacy campaigns, an appeal is now made for its consideration. Women and young people could be resourceful in literacy campaigns. This would enable willing people to offer their voluntary services to help others become literate and, in the course of doing this, introduce the Gospel. This could bring about Church growth and expansion.
5. The Church's task concerning literacy is two-fold, firstly, letter literacy to give people access and a valid opportunity to read the Bible, and secondly, functional literacy in understanding the Bible's message. Ignoring any of them can be equivalent to hindering social development, which, on the positive side, begins with the literate individual.

## Chapter 7

### 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research set out to clarify the social educational activities of Christians in South Korea. It covered specifically, the Protestant contribution to the literacy campaign (nonformal education) for the social development of the poor. The Korean Church, through a literacy campaign, disseminated the Gospel, the ethics of human value and morality and people's potential development, which brought about personal economic freedom. The motivation for people to read the Bible underlies the major factor of a rapid literacy campaign that took place in South Korea in the twentieth century.

The rise in literacy, especially with the exposure of people to Christian values and the world view, has brought dramatic change to Korean society. Human values such as women's emancipation has changed the destiny of Koreans, who once suffered from all forms of underdevelopment problems. Besides that, Korean society largely replaced its previous Confucian discipline with Christian morality. This momentous social change, which preserves and enhances human dignity, became possible because of individuals' acquired reading and learning ability.

The Korean literacy campaign did not only manifest itself as a religious revival and the enhancement of moral sanity for Korean society. The evidence which emerged from historical and academic materials justified the fact that the literacy campaign also affected the Korean story of liberation from colonialism. Korean society awakened to the issues of their realities



because of mass literacy. They were not only empowered by the usefulness of reading to overthrow oppression. The gate of learning opportunities was opened to the common people. This raised a high level of national consciousness and a faster way of disseminating information for social mobilization towards a national vision and mission. Koreans' desire for the achievement of national sovereignty and social freedom is highly underscored by literacy which the people, especially the Church, pursued, sometimes at a high cost.

The literacy campaign, coupled with the Christian principles of work and the value of the individual's capability, released Koreans from economic subjection. This made the people, in spite of the destructive nature of the Korean War, to move quickly toward active improvement and utilization of their economic potential and capacity. Literacy, or evening school, later evolved into skill-learning institutions. This was a major contribution to laying the foundation for the economic regeneration and growth of the nation. Koreans are reaping the benefits of decades of perseverance to sustain the literacy campaign during hostile political conditions. This is made evident in the social development and economic growth which has taken place in the past thirty years.

The present research reminds us that people have potential. People have hidden capabilities that can only be developed through literacy and other forms of education. The research was limited to examining Korean literacy success. The surprising story is steeped in the quality of sacrifices the people, both low and high, made some generations ago. Theologically, sacrifice is essential to any significant change or development in cosmic history. God sacrificed His Son, who in turn sacrificed His own life, for the salvation of the world. This salvation is God's desire and mission for liberating and transforming the world.

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