



Atheism, Non-Belief, and Religious Indifference in Korea

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In this paper, I shall present first the religious background of Korea, secondly the present religious situation in Korea, and thirdly the question of atheism, non-belief, and religious indifference as it is found in Korea today.

For the most part I shall be speaking of South Korea where I have been working as a missionary for the past thirty-one years. In preparing this paper I have asked bishops in Korea and other experts for their observations and opinions concerning atheism. I have also obtained reports written by several priests, religious, and others who have visited either

North Korea, or mainland China. When I do speak of North Korea, I shall be using these reports as source material.

What I shall say of the religious background of the Korean people will apply to all of Korea, both South and North. The Korean people are a single, homogeneous race, with a deep religious heritage, and with many noble human qualities. Over many centuries they have suffered grievously from powerful neighboring countries and from periodic invasions. From this religious heritage, from these noble human qualities, and from their sufferings has been forged a people with a deep love for religion, for art, for culture, and with strong qualities of endurance, hard work, and the ability to see the bright side of life.

1. THE RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF KOREA

As with so many peoples in the world, religion is deeply imbedded in the Korean people.

Legend has it that the Korean race began with the birth of Tangun 4,318 years ago, in the year 2,333 B.C. The heavenly king Hwaning had a son, by the name of Hwanung, who wanted to come to earth. Hwanung came to this earth and married a bear who had turned into a woman. Their offspring was called Tangun, the legendary founder of Korea. Tangun, according to these same legends, was both priest and king.

Apart from these legends, historical records indicate that the Korean people, about eleven centuries before Christ, emerged gradually from several tribes which had occupied what is now Korea, and southern Manchuria. Among these ancient tribes, SHAMANISM was the predominant religion. Some consider it a religion unique to Korea, others think that Shamanism came into Korea perhaps from the northern reaches of Siberia.

Shamanism is a form of nature worship, with a belief in many spirits (mountain spirits, tree spirits, house spirits), including ancestral spirits, and with Heaven, or the heavenly spirit, as the spirit among spirits. Shaman priests performed a ritual called the 'kut', a form of exorcism, which placated the spirit of a locality, or the spirits

of the elements. These ceremonies, which are still prevalent in Korea today, were popular especially among farmers, fishermen, and the poor, in reference to spring farming, the harvest, fishing, etc. This religion offered relief from misfortune for those burdened with worry, especially about the future. It is mixed with superstition and with fortune-telling.

BUDDHISM came into Korea through China in the fourth century A.D. This was during the Period of the Three Kingdoms (1st century B.C. - 7th century A.D.). The kingdoms were Koguryo; Paekche, and Silla. In 372 A.D. Buddhism entered Koguryo; twelve years later it entered Paekche; and by 528 A.D. Buddhism was recognized by the kingdom of Silla. Buddhism continued to grow and when the kingdom of Silla subjugated the other two kingdoms and united Korea for the first time under one dynasty in the year 668 A.D., Buddhism began to flourish even more. Across the entire country Buddhist temples, shrines, and pagodas more and more dotted the countryside.

Interestingly, the spread of Buddhism did not deter belief in the spirit world of Shamanism. Shamanistic practices entered into Buddhist practice. Even today these Shamanistic beliefs are visible on Buddhist temple grounds. Next to almost every Buddhist temple stands a small shrine which is dedicated to the Mountain Spirit and his attendant tiger. Perhaps this shrine is meant to placate the spirit of the locality on which the Buddhist temple stands.

CONFUCIANISM entered Korea from China before Buddhism. Confucianism had a very strong influence on the social and administrative life of the people. While some call Confucianism a religion, others would see it as an ethical, moral way of life. Both Confucius and Mencius taught about a personal God. It was later in the tenth century A.D. with the influx of Neo-Confucianism that Confucianism became more philosophical than religious in aspect.

Confucianism has affected the Korean people over the centuries with its moral and ethical codes, its outlook on life, its interpersonal relationships (king-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder-younger, friend-friend), and its code of conduct. The strong family ties, the respect

for elders, the innate courtesy even to strangers, which is a part of today's Korean society, is a flowering of this ancient code of conduct. Above all, Confucianism stressed the need to search for the truth.

Under the Koryo Dynasty (918 A.D. - 1392 A.D.), which had succeeded the Silla Dynasty, Buddhism became the state religion. As a result it gradually became very wealthy and powerful, with vast land holdings. As it gained in prestige, some of its monks became very political, aligning themselves with the ruling class. Moral decadence set in among these Buddhist leaders. Gradually the Korean masses, as well as the ruling bodies, became disenchanted with Buddhism. But Buddhism remained tied to the Koryo Dynasty. Invasions from the Mongols to the north, from Chinese Ming armies to the west, and from the Japanese to the east gradually weakened this dynasty. At the same time, Neo-Confucianism penetrated Korea, and in its disputes with Buddhist scholars, criticized the latter for their lack of family ties, and for the wealth and power of their monasteries. As a result, when the Koryo Dynasty fell to General Yi Song-gye in 1392 A.D., so too did Buddhism fall as the state religion.



Mencius



Confucius

General Yi founded the Yi Dynasty which was to last until the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910 A.D. In place of Buddhism he made Confucianism the state cult. And Confucianism remained in this position of prestige until the late nineteenth century, at which point Confucianism weakened; it was unable to cope with the new Western ideas which began to enter Korea.

TAOISM has also left its mark on the character of the Korean people. Taoism, at least in Korea, is looked on not so much as a religion as a philosophical way of life. It is not known when it came into Korea from China. Taoism advocated a static and idealistic way of life. Lao Zi would teach: "Do nothing and there is nothing that will not be done". Taoism, filled with animism, can best be described as a syncretic worship of many gods. It gained a foothold in the kingdom of Koguryo about the fifth century A.D. As it wended its way into Korea, it borrowed from Shamanistic beliefs, as well as from Confucianism and Buddhism. One of the chief objectives of Taoism was the attaining, in this life, of the Five Blessings: longevity, wealth (including the begetting of children as a sign of wealth), health, love of virtue, and a peaceful death. Many Koreans today still long for these five blessings. Taoism has been a factor in the development of Korean medicine. As a way of life, it looked to this life only, and to a utopia in this world (similar to that of Adam and Eve before the Fall)

As I mentioned above, Shamanism did not disappear with the advent of Buddhism. It penetrated Buddhism. It also blended with Confucian teachings, so much so that it is quite difficult to say what in modern Korean life is Confucian and what is Shamanistic. In other words, in the long religious history of the Korean people, there has always been a strong belief in the world of the spirit. It is hard to imagine a Korean who would deliberately deny the existence of this world of the spirit. This has implications when we consider atheism and non-belief in Korea today.

The four religions or philosophies of life have affected Koreans in varying ways. They have all helped to form the character of the Koreans. Shamanistic exorcism ceremonies have led to an abiding sense of the world of the

spirit. Confucian ethics and moral code have led to a great respect for social relationships. Human-heartedness, social etiquette, righteousness, mutual respect (especially toward elders), filial piety, loyalty, are all virtues to be prized. Buddhist ritual has helped the Korean people to love nature, and to be both long-suffering and compassionate. Taoism's practices have taught patience, simplicity, contentment, and harmony.

Vatican II has taught that the Holy Spirit is quietly at work in all ages and places preparing humans to be receptive to the Gospel. It seems from the above that, in God's Providence, a deep religious foundation had been laid in Korea for the reception of Christianity.

Just 200 years ago, in 1784, CATHOLICISM entered Korea. This history is well known to many, especially since His Holiness Pope John Paul II's pastoral visit to Korea in May, 1984, on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Christianity in Korea. This Christian religious history is now very much a part of the religious history of Korea. And its beginnings are unique in the annals of Catholic missionary endeavor; Korean laypersons were the first missionaries.

Several Confucian scholars had studied Western books, including books on the Catholic faith. These scholars had asked one of their number, who was on his way to Peking, to learn more about the Catholic faith. This young Korean layperson, Ri Sung-Hun by name, went to Peking and began to inquire about the Catholic faith from Jesuits there. After several months of instruction, Ri Sung-Hun was baptised Peter in early 1784. That same year he returned to Korea and instructed and baptised his fellow Confucian scholars

This small group, over the next ten years, instructed and baptised some 4,000 compatriots. Until 1836 (except on two occasions when two Chinese priests worked at different times in Korea) there were no priests in Korea. Despite violent persecutions, the Catholic faith spread. Paris foreign missionaries, who began coming to Korea as of 1836, set up a seminary in 1855 or 1856. From 1785 until the 1880's, more than 10,000 Catholics were martyred. Pope John Paul II canonised 103 of them on May 6, 1984.

Shortly after Korea opened its ports to the outside world in 1882, PROTESTANTISM (at the beginning both Methodists and Presbyterians) began to do missionary work in Korea. At the outset they stressed educational and medical works among their missionary priorities. Last year (1984) they celebrated their 100th anniversary in Korea.

In this short paper, it is impossible to delve into the whole religious history of Korea, other than to say that other religions have also found their way into Korea. Several native religions in the late nineteenth century began to attract followers, at the moment that Confucianism was weakening under the influx of Western thought. To mention a few: Tong Hak, or Eastern Learning, (which is now known by the name of Chontokyo) and several religions coming under the general name of Taejongkyo. Won (Circle) Buddhism was founded in Korea in 1915. And Islamism entered Korea with the Turkish troops during the Korean War of the 1950's.

As Korea opened its ports to the West, Confucianism was found to be inadequate to cope with the changing times, and to meet the new challenges which faced Korea at the turn of the twentieth century. Christianity, the religion of the West to Koreans, gradually became attractive to many.

To sum up this first part, throughout the religious history of Korea, Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism have had a deep impact on Koreans in general. The Korean people have a natural religiosity, and an inborn sense of the divine. It is on this foundation that Christianity is growing rapidly in today's Korea. At the same time there is much to be concerned about: a rapid social change is taking place as the economy advances urbanization continues at a fast pace upsetting traditional family values, the mass media is shaping young minds, materialism and consumerism affect a great many people.

2. THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION IN KOREA TODAY

As in the past, so today, Koreans in general have a respect for religion. Ordinarily when a person converts to a religion, that person is not breaking with any special structures.

This is true in the Catholic Church. In most cases, a convert to Catholicism does not encounter opposition from relatives. In a minority of cases, Buddhist family members will oppose a prospective convert's baptism. But this is not the general rule.

On this natural basis of religiosity, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Catholic Church in Korea has, since the end of the persecutions one hundred years ago, been growing steadily. Since 1980 this growth (considering the number of priests and religious) has been almost phenomenal. What with the National Pastoral Plan over the past five years, the pastoral visit of the Holy Father, and the canonization of 103 of the martyrs of Korea, there has been a great increase in conversions, in vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and in spiritual fervor. This fervor is shown in the many new parishes started, in the various leadership training programs, in the increase in many types of social works to help the poor.

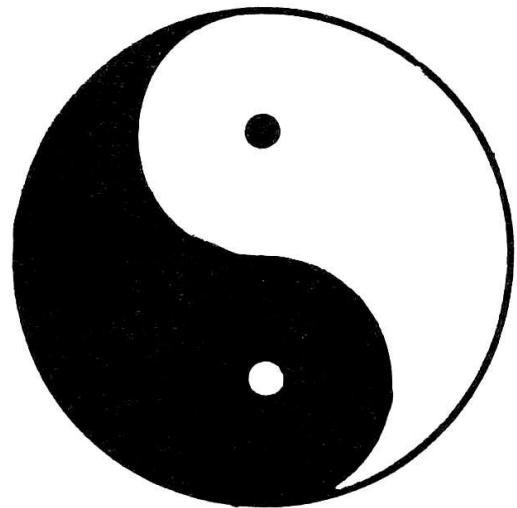
Where the Church in Korea was once a receiving Church, it is now fast becoming a sharing Church; Catholics are not only generous to parish projects and diocesan projects, but also to helping in social welfare programs. It is also a sending Church. The Korean Foreign Mission Society was founded some twelve years ago and now has several Korean missionary priests working in Papua New Guinea; four more will be ordained in 1986. A Congregation of Korean Foreign Missionary Sisters is planned. Catholics now number almost one million nine hundred thousand. The four major theological seminaries are crowded. And many communities of Sisters each have forty or more novices and postulants.

Protestant Churches have also grown rapidly during their hundred years in Korea. They now number six million believers. When the Holy Father visited Korea last May he praised the Protestant Churches in this land for their contributions in the fields of "modern medicine, education, the advancement of women, the inculcation of democratic ideals, and identity with the destiny of the people". Although ecumenical activities proceed at a slow pace, Catholics and Protestants are justly proud of the ecumenical version of the Bible published in Korean. Protestant churches,

together with Catholic churches, dot the cities and countryside of Korea, a phenomenon which visitors to Korea notice immediately upon arrival.

The Buddhists are becoming more conscious of the missionary work of the Catholic Church and of Protestant Churches, and the major sect is now stressing the need for seminaries to train their monks, both male and female; they are encouraging their believers to come to the temples on a regular basis; they even encourage 'Sunday schools' for the children of believers. Some sixteen Buddhist sects total almost eight million adherents.

Shamanism is still very much a part of the background of Korean life. This is shown in some surprising statistics which Professor Moon Sang-hee, dean of the Graduate School of Theology at Yonsei University, revealed. In 1834, the total number of registered Shaman priests in Korea was 2,600. One hundred years later there were 12,380. Professor Moon says that today there are more than 100,000. Most of these are female Shamans, called in Korean 'mutang'.



Not only the poor who live in crowded rooms in the big cities, but farmers, fishermen, and other people who depend on the elements of nature for their livelihood, turn to shamanistic practices to obtain good fortune. Even educated people will pray for good luck in the choice of a wedding partner or wedding date, for a business venture, or to pass school exams. Shamanistic practices, superstition, and fortune-telling even attract some Christians who are weak in their faith.

Since about 1968, when the first signs of economic advance became visible in Korea, (as new expressways began to be built), a new phenomenon is now reshaping the thinking and social life patterns of Koreans. It is the phenomenon

of materialism, consumerism, and urbanization, which I have mentioned above. Urbanization, with its attendant trends toward nuclear family styles, consumerism, the gradual breakdown of the extended family, abortions, and sterilizations, have all contributed to make many more people very materialistically and individualistically inclined. If the Church cannot help society to face this grave social condition, in the future the trend toward non-belief, religious indifference, and a general secularization will no doubt increase.

With these thoughts on paper, I shall now speak of the question of atheism, non-belief, and religious indifference in Korea. I shall try first to describe the present situation of these three categories in this land, and then from my own observations, and the observations of others, mention several ways in which the Church in Korea can dialogue with atheists, non-believers, and those who are indifferent to God and religion. At present, there is no formal vehicle through which the Church can dialogue with the above.

3. THE PRESENT SITUATION

ATHEISM IN SOUTH KOREA

Atheists are a very small minority. With more than 3,000 years of belief in Shamanism, and with almost 2,000 years of belief in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, the modern Korean has at least some belief in the after-life, and if not a belief in a personal God, at least some belief in the spirit world, or in an Absolute Being. With the coming of Catholic Christianity to Korea two hundred years ago, Koreans began to understand more clearly the doctrine of belief in a personal God.

Atheists are not found among simple farming or working people. Some intellectuals do teach atheism in colleges. However, it seems that these professors do not so much hold to the non-tenets of atheism, as they introduce to college students those nihilistic philosophers who do advocate atheism. I was told by one individual, who attended one of the most prestigious universities in Seoul, that he had never heard a lecture on atheism. What surprised him (he later became a Catholic) was that professors did not say anything

at all about religion or God. He experienced complete indifference to supernatural realities.

What is becoming a serious problem is the gradual tendency of young people, especially college students and graduates, to lean toward leftist thinking. These young people seem disillusioned with the present social structures, with corruption in politics, with lack of freedom of the press, with other social ills like poverty and unemployment. They have high ideals for social action and democracy, for freedom, equality, and love. Because these young people have no forum in which they can express their doubts and feelings, there is a tendency for some of them to disclaim God and religion. These leftist-leaning tendencies, however, are not so much a denial of God, as a protest against a religion which does not live up to its obligations, its teachings, its mission in life.

ATHEISM IN NORTH KOREA

Those who have visited North Korea reported afterwards that "an incredible 25% of all adults belong to the Communist Party. Although they would be dominated numerically by workers, it would seem that the intellectuals also have much power because we noticed that the traditional communist hammer and sickle emblem is enhanced with a brush pen as part of the symbol". Atheism is thus no doubt a strong factor in North Korean society.

There is a great labor shortage in North Korea, in part due to the large armed forces. All men and women are employed in some occupation. During the work-week, from Monday to Saturday, children are placed in live-in nurseries, away from contact with their working parents.

According to one report, in four of the largest cities of North Korea there are some 5,000 Protestants, and only 100 Catholics. Seventeen Protestant ministers care for their believers; there is no mention of a Catholic priest ministering to Catholics. One report says that many churches were destroyed by American bombing during the Korean War. Another report says that all churches existing in North Korea are used as schools.

During 1983, Protestants in North Korea printed 6,000 hymnals and New Testaments. In 1984, 6,000 Old Testaments

were to be printed.

Although life seems drab, and the clothing of adults is of a non-descript color, salaries are fair, food cheap, rent negligible; modern busses, trains, and highways seem excellent. Church people who have visited North Korea made these comments. They also had the feeling that the country wishes to be more open to countries in the West. They also wrote: "Cultural exchanges with the U.S. could be an important step in the developing of a new understanding and the lowering of unnecessary barriers. Fiercely independent, North Korea is obviously not subservient either to Moscow or Beijing. The image of North Korea projected by the U.S. State Department and the Pentagon clearly helps maintain military budgets in the U.S. and maintains pressure on Japan to underwrite far larger military budgets than Japan's constitution will justify." There seems to be an aspiration, felt on visiting North Korea, that North Koreans yearn for peace and reunification.

Kim Il Sung is honored everywhere. Most adults wear a pin emblem which marks some meeting at which they had been with Kim Il Sung. "There is even more deification of Kim than there was Mao. His heir-apparent son is honored too, but the people feel he lacks his father's charism."

There seems to be no population problem; the North Korean government does not speak for or against having children.

NON BELIEF Government statistics for the year ending 1983, state that there are a total of 15,707,000 Koreans, out of a population of 40,000,000, who profess membership in a religion. Those figures break down as follows:

Buddhists	7,507,059
Protestants	5,337,308
Catholics	1,711,367
Confucianists	786,900
Won Buddhists	96,333
Chontokyo	52,030
Others	216,809

15,707,806

According to these statistics, 40% of the people profess a religion. However, this does not mean that the remaining 60% of the population are non-believers. The government statistics for Confucianists, Won Buddhists and Chontokyo do not seem accurate; there are many more adherents of these groups. Also, as several persons told me, people, who do not admit membership in an established religion, should not necessarily be classed as non-believers. Many people do believe in a personal God, or at least in an Absolute Being; they simply choose not to belong to a religion.

Several told me that unbelief is not on the rise in Korea. There are no figures to prove that it is, or is not. I was told though that the 'tendency to non-belief' is definitely on the rise in South Korea. Many, who on the intellectual level acknowledge the reality of God, live daily lives as though God did not exist. Realism ('this life only') and materialism draw many to see in possessions, position, and power life's greatest values, and spend their lives in pursuit of these values.

RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE Those people who have no interest in, or concern for, God and religion, or for matters of faith, even though they do acknowledge the existence of God, are no doubt to be classed as religiously indifferent. Their attitude is one of "God has no meaning in my daily life. And neither does religion have meaning for me." Secularism seems to keep them from seeing God in their daily lives.

While it is difficult to give any statistics in this matter, I did ask bishops and other experts whether religious indifference and secularization were a strong factor in Korean society today.

One bishop told me that he thinks that religious indifference is a strong factor in today's society. There is a social trend to live for this life only, and to be pre-occupied with the material. He said that this materialism, this secularization, is becoming stronger, and one reason is that believers in Christ are not living out their original mission to be a light to the world. If followers of Christ were to live sincerely by the tenets of their faith, and put into action the command to love, they could change this nation from an attitude of indifference to one of interest in God and religion.

Another told me that he thinks that the stress in Korea on economic development helps to increase religious indifference. He sees it as an 'economic trap' for religious leaders to become involved in these matters. Such leaders should train the laity to enter as leaven into this field of economics and to help turn people to God.

Another bishop told me forcefully that if the Church does not overcome the tidal wave of secularization, the trend toward secularism will gain strength in Korea. He added, however, that the spiritual background of Koreans will, in his estimation, have the strength under God to offset this tendency.

As I have mentioned above, urbanization, the power of the mass-media, consumerism, seem to be pulling many people into materialism and individualism. Abortion and sterilization are easily obtainable. The government is adamant in encouraging families to have only two children each. Come 1990, government policy will advocate the 'one-child family'. These trends are against the traditional customs of the people, where the extended family meant so much and contributed to small village family and community life. In Confucian teaching, filial piety, and therefore children, are a necessary part of family life. Today's society and its trends are tearing at the traditional make-up and sentiments of the people. This leaves many, especially those who move into the big cities, very lonely. They are the ones who are prey to a resultant indifference.

At the same time, under the grace of the Holy Spirit, this loneliness, and the yearning for community, as well as the religious character of the people, the Korean War with all its suffering, the 38th parallel, the social unrest, the Church's strong stand for social justice in the 1970's, have all helped to steer many people into the Christian community.

4. HOW CAN THE CHURCH DIALOGUE WITH ATHEISTS, NON-BELIEVERS, AND THOSE WHO ARE RELIGIOUSLY INDIFFERENT?

To date, there has been no formal dialogue on the part of the Church with any of the above in South Korea, let alone in North Korea.

When I did ask many people the above question, I received some very forthright answers. At first I listed them separately: dialogue with atheists, dialogue with non-believers, dialogue with those religiously indifferent. However, the answers were so interlaced that for this paper I shall list them together. Some of the following observations were mentioned by several; they include my own observations.

Before going into this matter, I shall mention some thoughts about North Korea.

There is much hope that in the next few years North Korea will open up avenues of communication with the Western world. It already has diplomatic relations with more than 100 countries. Mainland China has opened its doors, and is giving some freedom to Catholics and Protestants to practice their faith on a limited scale. The Catholic Patriotic Association (the word 'Church' is not used in this title) is supervised by the government, and in its turn acts as a liaison between the church and the government. There is evidence that the priests and faithful of China want to be one with the Holy Father. Time will heal past hurts and rifts. Wherever there are 200 Catholics, and a priest available, the Chinese government allows a church to reopen.

This has implications for the Church in North Korea. Korea has over the centuries looked with deep respect to China. China does have a great influence on North Korea. There is strong reason to hope that what is now taking place in China will eventually, and in the not too distant future, begin to take place in North Korea. The Church in South Korea is praying fervently for reunification; it is the great desire of the Korean nation. During his visit to Korea, Pope John Paul II made special mention of this, and prayed for this intention. The Conference of Bishops of Korea are deeply interested in this priority; a Committee for the Evangelization of North Korea has been established with one priest in charge.

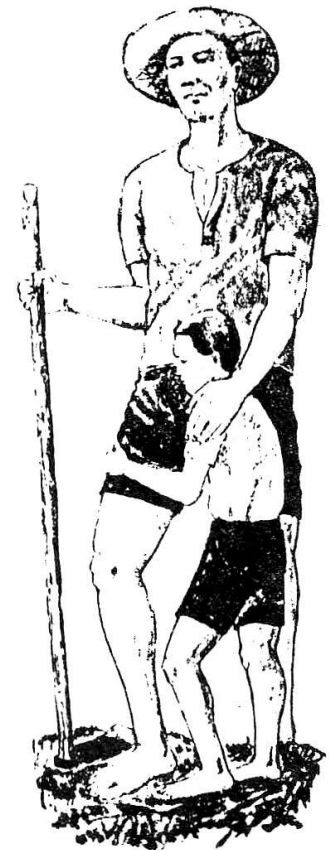
Two Maryknoll priests, at the request of the Korean Conference of Bishops, did visit northern China on one occasion in 1984. Although they were unable to enter North Korea, they did visit with Koreans in northern China.

At least one Korean priest with an American passport was able to visit relatives in North Korea. Last year, in October, Sister Rose Marie Franklin, a Maryknoll Sister, and two Protestant ministers were able to visit North Korea, and after their visit they prepared a written report.

These reports have been my source of information when writing about North Korea. Their reports show that the Holy Spirit is guiding the Church of China and no doubt is doing the same for North Korea. With so many prayers being offered daily for the reunification of Korea, and for reconciliation, there is hope that God will hear these petitions and grant them.

I shall now list various methods which either will lead to dialogue, or will enhance future dialogue with atheists, non-believers, and those religiously indifferent.

1. First of all (as many mentioned), if the Church is to dialogue effectively with the above, Church leaders and all her faithful must not only preach the Gospel, but live that Gospel. We followers of Christ must truly live our faith as radical disciples of Jesus. If we do live as disciples, and take the Good News seriously, many people will come to see the true value of religion. People who are looking for the truth will not see it in those disciples of Jesus who do not live by the Gospel.



Within the community of faith, there is need for a deep inner and spiritual renewal if the Church is to dialogue effectively with atheists and others. There is need for the Church to live in practice the poverty of Christ. In this way the Christian community will be an effective sign of the love God has for all humans. As St. James says in his Epistle (2,26), a religion which does not put into practice what it preaches is a dead religion.

We need to use the very methods which Jesus himself used in his ministry in Palestine. He not only proclaimed by word that God is love, he proclaimed it by his own life, by deeds and miracles. He gave bread to the hungry, healed the sick, and forgave sinners. He gave love and comfort to the outcasts, prostitutes, tax collectors, and the poor. People in Jesus' day needed proof before they would believe in Jesus. Even as it was, many did not believe until after Christ's resurrection from the dead. How much more so in our day. To enhance dialogue, to make it effective, to lead people from unbelief to belief, the Church especially in her leaders must show that we believe and live what we preach, that we do take Jesus at his word.

As I mentioned above, after Buddhism became wealthy and powerful throughout Korea during the Koryo dynasty, it gradually fell into decadence. During the Yi dynasty Buddhism was suppressed, and to this day Buddhism remains weak in this land.

History can repeat itself. We need to learn from history. The Church today in Korea is growing vigorously. The faithful are very generous to many projects and to the poor. But there is an undercurrent of feeling (as large churches become more and more elaborate, and as the Church becomes more and more middle-class, with few financial worries), that complacency will set in. The Church must not only help the poor; it must be poor, if it is to proclaim the Gospel effectively, and enter into dialogue with atheists.

Like a selfless mother, the Church should pour herself out in oblation, becoming poor that she might help the poor, the starving, the cast-offs of this world. It is only in this way that we leaders of the Church in Korea will be able to enter into effective dialogue with others. It is not so much in ideological disputes, as in love in action that the non-believer in Korea, living in a world of unbelief, will experience the God of love and compassion.

2. Church leaders should be fearless when speaking out on matters of justice and social principles. The Church should use all its strength to protect the dignity of all humans, to combat unemployment, poverty, and inequalities. It should speak out strongly to protect human rights, social

justice, the rights of workers, farmers, students, the young married couples. Many people, including atheists, etc., are attracted to these same ideals for humanitarian reasons. Action for social justice will be the key which will open the door to dialogue.

3. Thirdly, the Church should work with atheists in humanitarian projects. It is not enough that the Church put her resources into Catholic humanitarian projects, but she should cooperate with general social humanitarian projects (social welfare, work with poor families, old folks' homes and hospitals). Catholic-sponsored and Catholic-directed projects are necessary. But it is also necessary to avoid a 'ghetto mentality'; cooperation with non-believers in their projects will be the oil that will keep the door of dialogue from squeaking shut.

4. Fourthly, if the Church is to dialogue effectively, there should be systematic studies of atheism, of communism, and of the causes of materialism and secularization in today's world. Before we dialogue we must get to know our antagonist. The Church in Korea needs experts, who through intense study, will become the scholars who can enter into formal dialogue with the non-believers.

This will be a great help also to young students who need guidance if they are to be led away from leftist thinking. At present, studies in communism in local colleges are very limited, and not effective with the students.

5. Some also suggested that in dialogue with the non-believer in Korea, there is a need to discuss, from the viewpoint of oriental moral concepts, matters of social ethics and human morality. Non-believers in Korea would find this a good starting point for dialogue.

6. It was also suggested that in the matter of religious indifference and the whole question of modern secularization, Christian lay leaders need intense formation to be apostles in their social fields. Without Catholic lay leaders, in large numbers, as a leaven in their places of work, it will be difficult to stem the tide of secularization and indifference. This is especially true in the fields of government, industry, and the mass media, all of which wield great power to form minds in today's world.

7. The above suggestions will be without effect, if there is no concerted effort to pray and do penance. A whole nation of Catholics doing this will bring God's blessings down on the people.

CONCLUSION

The Church is growing in Korea. Parish centers, retreat houses, novitiates and seminaries are increasing in number. Catechumens are many, especially in the cities. Special apostolates, and social projects are going on in every diocese. In general, the Church in Korea is very active. This activity reflects Korean society as a whole and strikes visitors to Korea. It is not a hindrance to evangelization and to full human development.

But if the Church is to be fully effective, and thus encourage dialogue, it must be a loving eucharistic Community, believing what it preaches and reflecting the poverty of Christ. It must embrace all the people in this nation; not just the middle class. It must reach out to the poor and it must become poor. Until we become a light to the world, the salt of the earth, and a leaven in society, dialogue will be merely useless words.

As one bishop said, "Dialogue will be easy, if we concentrate on what we must do before dialogue".

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