

TRADITION AND CONTEXT: FRIENDS OR ENEMIES?

John L. Kater

He is a graduate of Columbia University in New York, The General Theological Seminary in New York, and McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. He served as rector of Christ Church in Poughkeepsie, New York, and as Education Officer for the Episcopal Diocese of Panama. He was a consultant at the 1998 Lambeth Conference. He is now professor of ministry Development Director, Center for Anglican Learning and Leadership, Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Berkeley, California, USA.

1. Introduction: Tradition, Context and Korean Christianity

The topic I have chosen is “Tradition and Context: Friends or Enemies?” I believe the issue of the relationship between the two is of importance for Christians whatever their setting; but it seems to me that it is of particular importance for Christians in a setting like Korea. Let me explain why.

On one hand, Christianity came to Korea relatively late in its history, and primarily as the result of missionary activity on the part of churches from an entirely different part of the world. That activity was not an integral part of the English-speaking nations’ imperialist project in the same way as Christian mission in other parts of Asia such as the Indian sub-continent or Hong Kong, not to mention nearly the entire continent of Africa, where the churches’ activity was directly related to the presence of British colonial power. Nevertheless, many if not most of the missionaries who first brought Christianity in Korea believed that they were the representatives not only of a religious tradition outside of which they believed there is no salvation, but also of a civilization which they judged to be superior to that of any other people. They understood themselves to be communicating a tradition of infinite value, and which therefore must be guarded against what they

would surely have considered weakening or even corrupting by any influence from the receiving culture.

Let me give you an example. The first Anglican bishop of Korea, C. G. Corfe, spent years learning the Korean language so that he could translate the liturgy of the English Book of Common Prayer.¹ He was concerned that the service as it was to be celebrated in Korea was exactly how he would have celebrated it back home in Britain. Indeed, he wrote, the English Prayer Book is “as adequate an instrument of the grace of God in Corea as in every part of the heathen world as it is in her Colonies....”² It is also noteworthy that, while he was aware that in Britain there was great liturgical diversity, reflecting differences of opinion and local idiosyncrasies, he and his companions determined that in Korea there would be absolutely no variation in worship permitted. Because Bishop Corfe considered that liturgical diversity would lead to confusion and strife, he was determined that the tradition as he passed it on to Korean Anglican Christians would be uniform and unchanging. Furthermore, as an additional tool in demonstrating the care and rigidity with which he attempted to impose his version of the tradition, he issued an edict that anyone whose church attendance was irregular would be excommunicated and sentenced to sit with those who were still preparing for baptism. Furthermore, only those who had been baptized were allowed to observe the celebration of the Eucharist and to hear the Lord’s Prayer. Both these restrictions were unknown among Anglicans in English-speaking countries. Tradition as Bishop Corfe and the other missionaries who brought Anglicanism to Korea understood it was a treasure to be handed

1. C. J. Corfe, *Anglican Church in Corea: Being Documents, original and translated, issued by Authority during the Episcopate of the First Bishop of the Church of England in Corea between 1889 and 1905*. Seoul: The Seoul Press, Hodge and Co., 1905.

2. *Ibid.*, xiii

on with great care, to be preserved and to be guarded against any possible change from what the bishop called “heathen” influence. That attitude, which has prevailed in most places where the spread of Christianity is the result of missionary activity, has resulted in a widespread belief that tradition is conceived as a static and unchanging body of dogma and practice, and faithfulness is understood to be loyalty to that tradition and a commitment to preserve it against any innovation. When tradition is understood in this way, any effort to relate Christian faith to a particular context and to adapt it to a specific culture is seen as suspicious and even dangerous. Context is understood to be the enemy of tradition.

But the story of Christianity in Korea tells us that there have been creative and daring attempts to re-cast Christian faith in terms that belong to this country, its history and its culture. In particular, *minjung* theology is the product of efforts to state Christian belief in terms that are drawn from Korean history and culture and that reflect the values and the reality of Korean society. In order to do so, however, in many cases it has been necessary to ignore, struggle with or even reject some of the terms in which aspects of the faith were brought to Korea from abroad. Korean Christians whose concept of tradition attempted to preserve intact the faith they inherited from the missionaries viewed the development of authentically Korean theology and Christian practice with alarm and outright opposition. For this reason, Christians who were committed to re-stating Christian faith in terms of the Korean context often considered tradition to be their enemy: tradition is the enemy of context.

While I believe this state of affairs is understandable, I do not believe that tradition and context

need necessarily be opposed to each other. In the balance of this article, I would like to propose a way of understanding the nature of Christian tradition in a way that not only *allows* but *demand*s the contextualization of the Gospel. In doing so, it will be necessary to challenge some of the assumptions and prejudices of the missionaries, while respecting their commitment and intentions.

2. Scripture, Tradition and Context: The Anglican Perspective

Like the other churches of the Reformation, the Church of England which set in motion the development of Anglicanism insisted that, in the words of the Lambeth Quadrilateral, the Holy Scriptures “[contain] all things necessary to salvation” and serve as “the rule and ultimate standard of faith.”³ Unlike some other heirs of the Reformation, however, Anglicans have always believed that the scriptures must be *interpreted* in order for their meaning to become clear. Richard Hooker, considered by many to be the greatest of all Anglican theologians, argued that human reason is God’s gift to us in order to be able to interpret the Bible correctly. Furthermore, an important help in interpreting the Bible in our own circumstances is the memory of how Christians in other times and places have interpreted the Scriptures. This is the primary meaning of tradition for Hooker: The shared experience of interpretation and faithful living by Christians down through the ages.⁴

In spelling out this understanding of tradition, Hooker and other theologians like him were seeking

3. Lambeth Conference of 1888, Resolution II, *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York, The Seabury Press, 1979), p. 877

4. See R. Hooker, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1907) I, pp. 233-282.

to relate three poles of faith to each other. Scripture is always the raw material, the base on which all reflection and practice ultimately stand. But scripture must always be interpreted; indeed, if we read the Biblical texts themselves carefully, we will see that this process of interpretation and re-interpretation can be found even in the pages of the Bible. Let me mention several examples.

2.1. Tradition and Context in the Scriptures

Many of the books of the Hebrew scriptures attempt to draw a firm connection between obedience to the Law and the covenant it symbolizes and the blessings of life which are presumed to be the reward for that obedience. In other words, God will ensure that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. However, at various points in its history, Israel had to wrestle with the obvious fact that it doesn't work this way: In fact, bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people. We find the questioning of the scriptural assumption in a number of places in the scriptures, notably the book of Job and the Psalms, where at different times the poets try reminding God of the covenant, railing at God in anger, even trying to shame God into taking their side by pointing out that other peoples are ridiculing God for allowing Israel to suffer. In its own way, each of those texts is in fact calling the earlier strand of scripture into question. If this passes unnoticed, it is probably because we are too used to seeing the Bible as one book rather than a collection of many books.

Let me give you two examples from the New Testament. One is the reading Paul gives of the story

of Sarah and Hagar and the two sons of Abraham.⁵ The primary meaning of the story in the Hebrew scriptures is almost certainly an affirmation of the special place the children of Abraham and Sarah enjoy with God over against the other neighboring peoples of similar ancestry. But for Paul, the story is not about Israel and its neighbors at all; it is in fact an allegory of the relationship between the old Israel, the Jewish people, and the New Israel, the Body of Christ. Again, the primary meaning of a scriptural tale has been re-interpreted to respond to a situation, we might even say crisis, facing Paul and the churches he established, namely the conflict over whether Christians are bound to keep the Jewish Law. Paul felt free to *re-interpret* the story in ways that made it relevant to the concrete situation in which he found himself.

Another story in from the book of Acts⁶ makes a similar point in an even more dramatic way, because it responds not only to the scriptures but also to Jewish tradition. Peter, who as a faithful Jew is follower of Jesus has never had occasion to question the appropriateness of keeping the Jewish Law, has an astonishing dream in which he is commanded to kill and eat a whole array of forbidden foods. These are foods prohibited not only by the scriptures, indeed in the very Law of Moses, but also in the teaching of centuries of rabbis since, all of whom have struggled to help faithful Jews figure out how to keep the commandments in the face of great pressure to ignore them.

Peter's private, interior experience is soon echoed in the request from Cornelius, an officer of the hated Roman occupying force, to come and preach to him. Peter is equally astounded when his

⁵ Galatians 4: 21-31

preaching produces evident manifestations of God's Spirit among his gentile audience. At this point, Peter is led by both his own internal, private experience and the external, public experience of gentile converts to a radical conclusion: The prohibitions of the Torah distinguishing between permitted and forbidden foods, enshrined in the Hebrew scripture and treasured by generations of teachers in the years following, must be re-interpreted and even re-evaluated *in the light of the context in which Peter is now living and working*. Peter's experience is ultimately reflected in similar conclusions reached by Paul, and formed the basis of serious and even anguished reflection on the part of the first Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem. But the conclusion they reached is clear, and the development of the entire history of Christian faith as we know depends on it: scripture and the tradition on which it is based must be brought into dialogue with the specific circumstances and experiences of those who are hearing and responding to it. This is not an innovation or a modern idea but a principle which is itself scriptural, which we have seen can be found in both the Hebrew scriptures and the Christian New Testament.

2.2. Scripture, Tradition and Context: The Early Christian Experience

The same principle of interpreting scripture in relationship to context to produce tradition can be found throughout the church's history. Augustine is the great theologian of the early church, on whom the entire structure of western Christianity (both Catholic and Protestant) is built. His own understanding of Christian faith is profoundly rooted in scripture, as is evident from his constant references to biblical texts throughout his writings. Yet his own story as described in the

6. Acts 10:1 – 11:18

Confessions reveals that while his conversion is primarily based draws not only on the scripture, the scriptures alone – on their own terms – could not draw him to accept Christianity. Indeed, he describes how reading the Bible without the aid of interpretation led him to consider it a childish, foolish, superstitious book. His conversion depended on two factors: learning from other Christians that the scriptures must be *interpreted*, and his own effort to describe Christian faith using non-Christian tools -- in his case, the concepts of the Greek philosopher Plato. The aspect of Augustine's teaching for which he is probably most remembered and either honored or rejected is his treatment of the nature of evil and original sin. But the way Augustine explained his understanding of evil and sin makes clear that his understanding of the nature of reality is based on the scripture *as read in the light of Plato*.⁷ For Augustine, Plato was not just a convenient mentor whose teaching made sense to him; Plato's understanding of reality was part of the intellectual and cultural context in which Augustine, like all educated Romans, was educated. In many ways, his acceptance of Plato was not just a conscious decision but simply an aspect of the ways he was shaped by the culture in which he was raised.

Augustine's great work *The City of God* reveals further how his teaching was formed and also how it became part of the Christian tradition. Written at the end of his life while the Roman Empire as he knew it was collapsing, Augustine's theology shifts its emphasis from this world to the next, from earth to heaven. At such a moment, Augustine described earth as fragile, temporary, torn by the results of the Fall and human sin. Everything that belongs to earth is ultimately doomed to

7. Augustine, *Confessions* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1942), pp. 82-83.

disappear, and is therefore not really worth our concern.⁸

The City of God is the product, then, of three poles of reflection: the scripture, the cultural milieu – we might say the cultural traditions – of his time, and also his own experience of what was happening to the world as he knew it. And Augustine’s work became part of Christian *tradition* – that is, a way of interpreting the scripture which was passed on to people in other times and places, so that hundreds of years later and on the other side of the world, Christians still read and react to and incorporate -- or reject -- Augustine’s theology.

2.3. Scripture, Tradition and Context in the Reformation

The same process can be seen at the time of the Reformation. Each of the great Reformation traditions – those identified with Anglicanism in England, Calvin and Zwingli in Switzerland, Luther in Germany, the Radical Reformers in central Europe – was born out of a desire to re-claim the scriptures as the source of all Christian faith. In various ways, the Reformers were critical of the tradition that had evolved as the result of the experience of fifteen centuries of interpretation in dialogue with various contexts. By the time the Reformers lived, Christianity had developed in many ways that seemed to them to contradict the clear sense of scripture. Each in their own way wanted to clear away what now kept Christians from a clear hearing of God’s Word from the Bible. Some went so far as to say “sola scriptura” – “only scripture” has any authority for the Christian faith. Because tradition had, they believed, obscured or even betrayed the scriptures, it was

8. Augustine, *The City of God* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1958), pp. 494-506.

untrustworthy.

The ways the Reformers reacted to tradition varied from place to place. In some settings, they destroyed architectural and artistic treasures because they considered that they distorted the true faith. Sometimes they burned books. Often they restructured the church's institutions and revised its worship – all in the light of their own reading of scripture.

But the history of Reformation Christianity demonstrates some interesting developments. In the first place, “sola scriptura” – “only scripture” – proved to be a very difficult concept to put into practice. If the Bible were self-explanatory – that is, if it did not need interpretation in order to be understood – then it is surely curious that even in their beginnings, the churches of the Reformation were unable to agree on how it should shape the practice of their faith. The first two hundred years of Reformed Christianity in Europe were marked by repeated efforts to achieve agreement among the churches of the Reformation, through personal conversation, scholarly debates, synods and councils. But the differences between Anglicans and Presbyterians, between followers of Calvin and Zwingli and Luther, proved to be impossible to overcome. On one hand, they recognized that they shared many aspects of their faith in common; but on the other hand, they also discovered that there were great differences about which they continued to argue and disagree.

Second, if you read the history of the Reformation with care, it is interesting that in spite of the clear priority given to scripture, in fact none of the Reformers abandoned tradition completely. In particular, they looked back to the early experience of Christianity for help in understanding the

meaning of the scripture. People like Augustine continued to have enormous influence on how they conceived of Christian faith. The devotional writing of medieval saints like Brother Lawrence continued to be read as guides for life with God in Christ. In some places, like England and Scandinavia, even the old structure of ministry – bishops, presbyters and deacons – was preserved intact.

But more importantly for our purposes, the form that each of the Reformation traditions took was dramatically – and often unconsciously – shaped by the particular context in which they emerged. Calvin’s desire to create a godly society, and his understanding of what that society would look like, is surely a reflection of the realities of the Swiss city-states where his theology took root. Anglicanism was shaped from its beginnings by the struggles between the Tudor rulers – Henry VIII and his children – and the Papacy. Lutheran Christianity is heavy with the flavor of the German culture of Martin Luther. The Radical Reformation drew on the alienation of some groups within a European social structure that was quickly falling apart. In its own way, each of the strains of the Reformation reflects the times in which they were born – the collapse of the feudalism of the Middle Ages, the beginnings of urbanization and the emergence of new social classes, the long process of transferring wealth from land and the old nobility to capital and the bourgeoisie, the so-called “Age of Discovery” which was changing the way Europeans understood their place in the world. In other words, the shape of Reformed Christianity not only reflects the scripture, but *how it was read* at a particular moment in history. Those distinctive readings do not simply reflect theology and spirituality – how we understand God and the world and our relationship with both. They also reflect how the scripture was interpreted within contexts that had religious but also

political, economic and social dimensions.

This is not accidental. The truth is, it could not be otherwise. Just as the New Testament figures themselves sought to interpret the scriptures in the light of how others had read it and in the light of their own experience and context; just as Christians down through history made the same attempt; so the Reformers of the sixteenth century read and interpreted the Bible in the light of what was happening to them and to their world. Their theology was the result of bringing the scripture into conversation or dialogue with the faith of Christians who had lived before them, and also with their own reality. In doing so, they allowed their understanding of scripture to confirm and also to correct or even contradict the interpretations of Christians in other times and places when the interpretations seemed wrong or misplaced. If they had not attempted to do this, their theology would not have been authentic and their life of faith would not have been fully honest.

3. Tradition: A Contextual Approach

If the point I am making in this essay is correct, then tradition is not a fixed and static “package” of faith and practice, but is an integral way by which Christians appropriated the scripture through the centuries and which helped them bring the scriptures into a creative dialogue with their own context. In other words, tradition is dynamic and living, changing as new generations of Christians hear God’s Word addressing their own situation. As the scriptures are brought into new and changed situations, the tradition helps to comprehend that encounter. No one hears the scriptures without reference to those who have lived before and who have passed the Bible on to

them. But each new context in which Christians live contributes to the tradition, amends the tradition and critiques the tradition.

As Christian faith accompanied European Christians to new places such as the wilds of North America, they took with them not only the Bible but also the tradition which had brought it to them.

As they lived their faith in the changed circumstances of their life in the new context, they realized that some aspects of their tradition were out of place and with time they began to adapt to the new context.

For example, Anglicanism in England was part of the apparatus of the state, and the monarch was considered to be the supreme governor of the Church, responsible not only for the material but also the spiritual well-being of the people. Indeed, church and state were considered to be two aspects of the same national reality. When English Anglicans settled in the North American colonies, they attempted to establish the same system that prevailed in the mother country. But they discovered that in most of the colonies, it was impossible. Settlers from other religious traditions had also settled in the same area, and for the first time in history, Anglicans had to learn to live in a situation of religious pluralism.

In the same way, the Calvinists who came to North America wished to establish a perfect Puritan commonwealth in Massachusetts. They succeeded for a while, but in the end there too the Calvinist model of society they had created had to be adapted to a context of pluralism. Similar adjustments had to be made by each of the Christian groups who settled in North America. Once

some of the colonies declared their independence from England and established the United States, all of the traditional church structures had to adapt to a new context in which the state was completely independent of any religious body. With time, the polity, worship, and values of North American Christians reflected more and more the situation of the new context, rather than attempting to repeat the situation in which they had been born. Once again, tradition was revealed to be dynamic, not static. In the changed situation of an independent America, Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians and Baptists felt free to read the Bible and their spiritual heritage in the light of their own reality. And in time, their experience itself became part of tradition.

3.1. Tradition, Context and Christian Mission

The history of Christian mission in the nineteenth and twentieth century corresponds to the period in which the Great Powers in Europe, Japan and later the United States, attempted to increase their influence and control over other parts of the world through the use of both military and economic means. That imperial project was fueled not only by political and economic motives but by deeply held assumptions about the relative value of the civilizations in conflict. Many, perhaps most Europeans, Japanese and Americans sincerely believed that their strength demonstrated the superiority of their society and culture, and in many cases considered that they had a duty to “save” other peoples by helping them to replace their own culture with the institutions and values of the Great Powers.

The missionary enterprise contributed to the colonial expansion of European and American power,

particularly in places such as Africa and southern Asia. Many of the missionaries lived dedicated lives of service and indeed suffered and died on behalf of the mission to bring Christian faith to peoples in other parts of the world. It is certainly true that they occasionally allied themselves with the military forces that were imposing foreign control on large areas of two continents; but most of the time they did not, and indeed often found themselves opposing the goals of the political and military powers of their own country of origin. Nevertheless, what they frequently did share was the assumption that they represented a “superior” culture. While the agents of military and political domination pointed to their armies and their institutions as evidence of their cultural superiority, the missionaries were more likely to identify the “Christian” tradition of their country as an important sign of why their culture was “better.” In practice, then, the missionaries had similar aims to their colonizing powers: All were attempting to replace the cultural traditions of others with the values and institutions of their own context.

I believe that it was this assumption, shared by so many of the missionaries who brought their faith to countries far from their own, that caused them to describe and transmit the Christian tradition in ways very different from the way in which they had themselves experienced it. While American and European Christians experienced tradition at home as dynamic and changeable, when they transmitted it to peoples previously non-Christian they presented it as static and unchanging. In such a situation, faith is not interacting with the tradition in creative ways that themselves become part of the tradition; rather, faith is absolute acceptance of, and obedience to, the tradition as it is presented and taught. That is why Bishop Corfe, the first Anglican bishop in Korea, could demand such unquestioning response to the tradition as he taught it. No bishop in England would have

dared to define tradition in such a way, because Anglicanism as it was experienced in England and in other English-speaking countries was diverse, in its theology, its worship and even in its polity.

Let me note a further example. When Bishop Corfe created the first Anglican liturgy in Korea, he decreed that incense would be part of the regular Sunday worship. To be a faithful Anglican in Korea required that this decree be studiously obeyed. But in fact, incense was not used in the Church of England for at least 300 years, had only recently been restored, and that only in a very few marginal congregations. When Bishop Corfe asked the primate of the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, his opinion on Corfe's requirement of using incense, the Archbishop was very concerned and referred the matter to the next worldwide gathering of Anglican bishops. In fact, what was presented to Korean Anglicans as unalterable tradition was in part personal preference and idiosyncrasy and in part a refusal to share with Anglicans in Korea the diversity of opinion and practice that was part of the Anglican tradition in England.⁹

While I know less about how other religious traditions were presented on the Korean peninsula, I do know that the experience of Anglicans in Korea is mirrored in other places where missionaries were responsible for carrying Anglican Christianity, notably other countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. I am told that if you wish to experience a service in the style of the Church of England in the late nineteenth century, it is best not to go to England, for there the Anglican tradition has evolved and its customary worship is quite different from that of a century ago.

9. Corfe, *op. cit.*

However, if you visit the indigenous Guaraní people of rural Paraguay, you will find Evensong sung exactly as the missionaries taught them in the time of Queen Victoria. The language is Guaraní but the worship itself is pure English.

What does this tell us about the missionaries' understanding of tradition? All too often, it indicates an assumed superiority which reserved to themselves the dynamism of a living tradition, while sharing the form of tradition but not its living, breathing soul. We can respect the deep commitment and faithfulness of those Guaraní Anglican Christians, but at the same time we must surely be saddened by the fact that they have been denied the fullness of that tradition, which would have enabled them to hear not only God's Word in the scriptures, but also to have profited from the stories of how Christians in other times and places have related that Word to their different contexts. If they had been entrusted with that sense of a living tradition, they would have been enabled to use the experience of other Christians to help them bring the scriptures into dialogue with their own context in ways that would be liberating and enriching, rather than being restrained by an understanding of tradition as demanding and unchanging.

4. Tradition, Context and a Living Faith

When Christians grasp something of the power of the gospel to set us free, when we perceive God's Word in relation not to someone else's context but our own, then tradition is not the enemy of context but rather helps us to affirm *our own* context at the same time that we learn from others' experience of the gospel. Then we are free to allow the scripture to critique those elements of our

context in need of changing; then we are ourselves helping to create the ongoing tradition of Christians through the ages. That is perhaps the most important point I want to make: in allowing scripture and tradition to interact with our own context, we are honoring both our inheritance and our own culture.

Contemporary Korean Christians understand very well how the Bible can best be interpreted in the Korean context. Many creative theologians are working today to reclaim its message in the language and culture of this country and its own rich heritage. Often, in order to do so, they have had to ignore or reject aspects of what they have inherited that seem irrelevant or even foreign to the Korean context. Given the ways in which tradition has often been used to discipline and control the development of Korean Christianity, that posture has been necessary in order to allow a truly Korean expression of Christian faith to flourish.

But this essay has attempted to suggest and, I hope, to demonstrate that it need not be that way. Tradition need not be oppressive or restrictive. Understood as the living, growing product of Christians living their faith in countless different contexts, The creative theology being done in this country can be brought into dialogue with the experience of Christians in other contexts, both similar and different. Out of that rich interchange and mutual respect can come a constantly evolving tradition which will include not only the faith and practice of Christians down through the ages and around the world, but will also include the distinctive flavor of the faith and practice of Korean Christians being faithful to their own history, culture and context, and sharing their experience with Christians in other contexts who will be able to learn from what it means to be a

Christian in Korea how to be faithful in their own place and time.

I believe this vision of the relationship between tradition and context accurately reflects the way Christianity has evolved throughout most of its history. The Reformation was itself a rebellion against a view of tradition that was too narrow, too oppressive, too restrictive. Churches that trace their descent from the Reformation need to re-claim that identity and the understanding of tradition in relation to context that shaped our history. But long before the Reformation, the early Christians were creating tradition by their own efforts to relate the scripture and the experience of their ancestors to the world they lived in. And before them, the scriptures themselves showed the same process of interpretation and dialogue between the Bible, the wisdom of the past, and the situation that confronted them. Neither the biblical authors nor our ancestors in faith considered that they were imprisoned by tradition; rather, tradition was an instrument by which the liberating Word could reach them in their own context.

If that has not always been the experience of Christians, it is not because of the nature of tradition, but because tradition has been misused and even abused. I invite you to consider how tradition might be reclaimed in this place and this time, not as a treasure to be guarded but as a gift to bear fruit. And I invite you to consider too how important is the experience of Korean Christians for the story of Christianity as it will be written by our grandchildren and by historians centuries from now. For like Christians in every time and place, Christians in Korea are not only listening to and receiving tradition; they are *participating* in creating that living tradition which stretches from the pages of the Bible to our own time. Tradition and context were never meant to be enemies; like all

friends, they belong together.