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**International Journal of Contextual Theology  
in East Asia  
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## Foreword

### **Dalits and Minjung Gather Together in Madang\***

Suh Kwang sun David

#### **Greetings**

It is my personal honor to welcome our Dalit theologian friends from India and Pakistan who came to attend this auspicious gathering of Dalit/Minjung theologians. May I add to this welcome note to mention the presence of Professor Volker Kuester, a German friend of Minjung theologians from Holland here with us. Personally, I have been to India many times since 1983 with various capacities, so I know what it is, and how it is to travel from any part of India to Korea. I was first invited to attend an Asian theologians' dialogue meeting in Bangalore, India which was organized and sponsored by CCA (Christian Conference of Asia). There, for the first time in my life, I met with Dalit theologians and heard about their social, political and theological

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※ This paper was delivered as a keynote address at the 6<sup>th</sup> conference of Indian Dalits and Korean Minjung theologians met in Sunkonghoe (Anglican) University in Seoul, Korea, from October 20-22, 2011. Main body of this paper was formulated at a small gathering of theologians organized by NCCCK's WCC Assembly Planning Committee and presented to APC meeting of WCC in Busan, Korea, October 5-8, 2011.

David Kwang-sun Suh, a first generation minjung theologian, taught philosophy of religion and systematic theology at Ewha Womans University for more than thirty years, after which he was Henry Luce Visiting Professor of World Christianity at Union Theological Seminary in New York City (1996-1998), his *alma mater*.

He was also a visiting professor at Drew University School of Theology (1998-2001) teaching Korean and Asian theologies, after which he served United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia as a trustee and as Vice President for Programs in Hong Kong Office until he retired in 2006. Residing in Seoul, Korea he actively participates in Korea Association of Minjung Theologians and YMCA as well as in National Council of Churches in Korea.

struggles, and I shared a deep sense of *han* and solidarity with them. I would like to congratulate Dalit and Minjung theologians on their continuous effort to enhance Dalit/Minjung theological solidarity and exchanges.

This solidarity and dialogue meeting of Dalit/minjung theologians has a special meaning, because most of Korean theologians are very much preoccupied with and involved in the planning of the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly of World Council of Churches (WCC) which will be held in southern port city of Busan, Korea in October/November of 2013, only two years away. For example, the Korean theologians have a lot to do with the process of deciding on the theme of the Assembly, “**God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace.**” We hear that in the process of deciding the theme, the voice of Asian theologians was loud and clear in supporting Korean theologians’ proposal on the theme.

In this connection, I would like to present a Korean word, *madang* that would go with *minjung* and perhaps with *Dalit*. I thought it would be appropriate to share with you at the beginning of this meeting, because I read in a WCC newsletter of the Assembly Planning Committee about their decision to adopt the concept of *madang* in organizing the entire Assembly proceedings in Busan, Korea, 2013.

### ***Madang: A Center of Life:***

“*Madang*” is a Korean word for a front yard, court yard, a house garden, or just an open space in front of a house. It can also mean an outdoor area where a family’s daily household work takes place. *Madang* is at the same time a center of life and an outdoor living room, the place for family members’ outdoor activity. At one corner of a *madang*, there used to be a well, from which fresh spring water was drawn for drinking, cooking, washing and playing. *Madang* is small children’s playground: a place full of childhood memories.

In *madang*, families celebrate birthday parties and weddings, and hold funeral services. History and stories of a family life are recounted around the *madang*. It is a spiritual place where a shaman *gut*, a ritual of exorcism and for good family fortunes takes place. Buddhist adherents invite their monks to pray for the family in the open space of *madang*.

Women are in charge of the life of house *madang*, although they aspire to be liberated from the house chores of the house *madang*, and participate

in the public *madang* of a village, a town and in the world at large.

*Madang* is also an ecological space. The plain ground made of earth and sand is always clean, well swept, and tidy; a small flower garden may be at the corner of *madang*. Trees may have been planted to give cool shades. When a child is born, the parent would plant a *paulownia* tree (ohdong namu in Korean) at the corner of *madang* which may grow with the child, big enough to be cut and made a beautiful chest to be carried to a new home after marriage. *Madang* is a space where “soil and wind, water and the sun, the moon and the stars, the sky and clouds, birds and insects, flowers and trees, family members and travelers come and live together.”<sup>1)</sup>

In our theological imagination, we envision the Garden of Eden in *madang*. *Madang* could be called the place of God’s creation which God said, “It is good.”

### ***Outer Madang: A Center for Economic Life***

*Madang* functions as a market place, an open space at the center of a city or a village, or outside of a city gate. In the old days, *Jang Madang* or market *madang* was a bazaar where all kinds of farm products, household goods, daily commodities, and food stuff were brought from places near and far for exchange, for sale, for purchase or just for fun. It is an open public space where village folk, strangers, farmers, merchants, buyers, and sellers come together to mingle for commerce and fellowship.

*Madang* in a village would become the community harvest place for produces such as green peppers to be spread on the ground to make them turn red, and the grains to dry and ripe. It would become a community threshing ground, where grains of rice will be separated from its stalk by the whip. It is a place for hard labor during the harvest, hopefully before the *Chu Suk* (Festival of August full moon) when the daylight sun is hot enough to ripe rice and fruits.

In the Old Testament, harvest *madang* was mentioned quite often, though with different contexts. In Genesis 50:10, it was Jacob’s funeral *madang*. In the Book of Numbers, 15:18-20 and 18:27, it was named as a place for harvest *thanksgiving madang*. In the Book of Judges, 6:37, the

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1) Jung Hyo Koo, *Stories of Madang*, (Jakka Jungshin, 2008, cover page), in Korean, translation is mine.

threshing ground became a place for revelation given to Gideon. In the Book of Ruth, 3:2,5-6, the threshing *madang* was a place where a new way was shown to Ruth and where Ruth obeyed her mother-in-law's instructions. In other places in the Old Testament, on threshing *madang* God's altar and temple were erected for worship: II Samuel 24:21; I Chronicles 21:28; II Chronicles 3:1; 21:5; 33:5; II Kings 23:12.

*Madang* was related to God's promise to the Israelites for economic blessings: "But they (many nations) do not know the thoughts of the LORD: they do not understand his plan, that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor... (Micah 4:12)." And in Joel (2:23-24), "O children of Zion, be glad and rejoice in the LORD your God; he has given the early rain for your vindication, he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the later rain, as before. The threshing floors shall be full of grain, the vats shall overflow with wine and oil."

### ***Madang* for Minjung Culture of Peace:**

At the village open space, this market *madang* becomes in the evening an open *minjung* theatre, lighted up with bon fires. Villagers, market commercial partners, buyers and sellers, all gather together for fun. A group of mask dancers would come to perform. Mask dance *madang* will be filled with laughters, boos and woos of the *minjung* audience as the dancers ridicule and poke fun at hypocritical religious leaders, and oppressive and exploitative local aristocrats and landowners.<sup>2)</sup> Sometimes a group of *pansori*, Korean traditional one-person opera singing, will be performed. Other times, acrobats and mini-circus groups may be invited to perform.

*Madang* becomes a place for community festivals with sports and games such as wrestling for men and high rope swing for women as they celebrate *Dan Oh* May Day and *Chu Suk*, August Full Moon Thanksgiving Day. *Madang* brings people together for unity and conviviality. Thus, *madang* will become the place of peace, tranquility and *shalom* where people become neighbors and partners to live and work together in peace and harmony.<sup>3)</sup>

2) See my chapter on Korean masked dance: "Mask Dance of Liberation" in *The Korean Minjung in Christ*, (CCA, 1991)

3) *Madang* was not always a place of peace and tranquility. During the Korean War (1950-1953), anti-Communist Christian pastors as well as lay leaders were

Jesus proclaimed the good news to the poor in *madang*. In Jesus' time, *madang* was the place of *kerygma*, *diakonia*, and *koinonia*. And Jesus proclaimed the eschatological Reign of God in *oikumene*, the great *madang* of God's peace where *minjung* will become the subject. *Madang* is a center for the culture of peace.<sup>4)</sup>

### ***Madang* and Justice**

*Madang* has been a center of public life. The king's *madang*, the inner court of king's palace or the town square in front of city hall, was the place where royal politics have been conducted. The king's court was the place of dignity, authority, power and splendor. But it was also the place where criminals were judged and executed. Political power and justice were tested and honored. Justice in the king's *madang* was always challenged by *minjung* outside of king's court.

*Madang* has been the ground of revolutionary politics since the time of French Revolution and American Revolution. They were *minjung* revolutions against political tyranny and colonial exploitation. In the colonial history of Asia, powerless *minjung* gathered together to fight against the colonial tyranny for justice, freedom and independence. In Korea, Tonghak farmers' revolution in 1893 was triggered in the farm *madang*, and March First 1919 Independence Movement started at a public *madang* in the center of Seoul and spread all over the country. Even today, political voice against injustice is heard in an open *madang* of the city hall which has been tightly closed down by police buses in the middle of Seoul City.

During the colonial occupation, *minjung* was chased out of *madang*. Hence, we, the Koreans lost the space to gather in solidarity to shout and demand justice and condemn powers and principalities. In a way, the process of colonization was to occupy and dominate the *minjung's* space, of *madang*, thereby conquering and possessing the entire country and nationhood.<sup>5)</sup>

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executed to death in North Korea, and pro-Communist South Koreans were also executed in South Korea. With such tragic history of *madang*, peace and harmony have been wished and prayed with ardent hope.

4) In old Korea, church *madang* was used for Easter Sunrise service at the dawn of Easter Sunday morning to praise the risen Lord and to praise for peace and harmony in community and nation as well as in the world.

Most recently, American *minjung* has occupied Wall Street *Liberty Madang*. It is a protest movement of 99% of the population, the poor against 1% of the filthy rich.<sup>6)</sup> It is certainly a *minjung* revolutionary movement in the *minjung madang*. The movement has been spread worldwide now that just last week end, Korean *minjung* has risen against economic globalization of neo-liberalism of the economic Empire.

Some people, including younger Korean theologians, argue that the time of Korean *minjung* theology is over, for there are no more *minjung* in South Korea. On the contrary, the poor *minjung* population is rising with ever more widening gap between the haves and have-nots, despite the rising national GDP figures. According to the Korean National Statistics Bureau, the relative poverty rate has risen from 8.9% in 1997 to 14.9% in 2010. Internationally speaking, a statistics shows that in the middle of the 2000, Korea's relative poverty rate was 14.6%, while Sweden 5.3%, Mexico 18.4%. The OECD average was 10.6%. The Korean middle class population is decreasing, and the *minjung* population is rising. Since 1998, during the financial crisis, city dwellers' average income has risen to 92.5% by 2010. But the grown pie was not fairly divided among the people: the lowest income group of 10% saw the increase of 56.8% during the same period, while the upper 10% enjoyed the increase of 98.42%.<sup>7)</sup>

The poor gets poorer, and the rich becomes richer. The Korean *minjung* have been shouting for the affordable housing, against the reduction of income tax for the rich, and demanding for more jobs for the young and the old, and asking for the affordable tuition for the university students. Korean *minjung* is now struggling for economic justice for life. They have now rekindled the candle light demonstrations in the City Square, the *minjung madang*.

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5) Indian Dalit theologians responded to this paper on this point that Dalits community has no such community space as *madang*. The Indian caste system denies such space for the Dalits: So much so that the Dalits are *madang*-less people.

6) "Occupy Wall Street" movement has started at Liberty Square nearby the Wall Street in downtown Manhattan, New York City on September 17, 2011 with only a few hundred young jobless people, which is now spread all over the world in 82 countries and in over 1,500 cities as of October 15.

7) *DongA Ilbo*, (A conservative Korean daily newspaper, October 13, 2011: <http://media.daum.net/economics/others>).

*Madang* is a *kairoitic* space and time, where critical event such as Jesus' death on the Cross and the Resurrection happened. It is the *madang* of God where new heaven and new earth brings new city of justice and peace. And it is here where Jesus the Messiah comes and celebrates the fullness of life with justice and peace.

### ***Madang* and Ecumenical Mission Today:**

Our ecumenical mission today is a recovery and restoration of *madang*, *oikumene*, and the integrity of God's creation. We pray, therefore, to our God of Life to lead us and bring us to Peace and Justice. Our mission together is to restore life in the ecological world, to bring *minjung* back to *madang*, to recover economic and political justice, and to usher in peace and shalom amidst the divided and warmongering *madang*.<sup>8)</sup>

Our ecumenical mission today is to be united to insure that diversity will be respected and embraced in our church *madang*. In our *madang*, people come from East and West, and from North and South, together to celebrate this convergence and conviviality, forming unity in mission. In our *madang* we can live and work together with world religions and people of other faiths for humanization of all *minjung*. For "**Ecumenical**" means **openness**, open our minds and hearts to the whole world, and **engage** with the world in action. It is our mission together to witness the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberation of the captives, to heal the blind, and to let the oppressed go free (Luke 4;18). And it is in our *madang*, we create fellowship and solidarity and share our blessings with each other for the coming Reign of God.

Once again, we welcome each other to our *madang* here. We gather together here in our *madang* of fellowship and dialogue envisioning the *kairoitic* time of liberation for *minjung* in Korea, India and everywhere around the world. We pray for the presence of God in our *madang* in our conversation and theological discourse.

Thank you.

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8) For the Dalits, give them *madang*, allowing them to build a human community. This aspiration and ardent hope was strongly expressed in the dialogue meeting with Korean *minjung* theologians.

# A Theology of Justice, Peace and Life: From the Perspective of Dalit and Minjung

James Massey\*

## **Introduction : Dalit and Minjung**

Much has been reflected upon and written by theologians during the second half of the last century upon the theme 'Justice, Peace and Life.' But invariably the focus of almost all of them had been on 'Peace' rather than on 'Justice,' perhaps because of the two devastating Wars that had wrecked the world, and also because of the ensuing ethno-national conflicts that engulfed the entire globe and kept us constantly on the brink of a *possibility* of yet another fierce war. However, the theme of 'The integrity of Creation' had also been brought in by some as part of their reflections, but this perhaps was effected more because of various development projects owned by the dominant world, rather than for any other concern. One thing that catches the attention is the fact that very little attention is given in all these reflections to the question of 'Justice,' and consequently to the concerns of the vast majority of the oppressed communities all over the world. Dalits of my country and Minjungs of Korea - about whom we shall discuss in this paper - are part of these communities.

At this point I shall like to express my happiness and thanks to the

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※ He is Director of the Centre for Dalit/Subaltern Studies and the Community Contextual Communication Centre, New Delhi; Chairperson, Navjyoti Post-Graduate & Research Centre, Delhi and Member, Assessment & Monitoring Authority & Planning Commission of India, Govt. of India.

organizers for proposing to look at this significant theme from the perspective of Dalits and Minjungs and explore for relevant theological reflections in this regard. The burden of my argument shall be to underline the importance of the element of 'Justice' in theological reflections that are meant for oppressed communities. Incidentally, I will digress here a bit to make an observation with regard to Constitution of my country. I am proud to say that, in spite of the serious age-old problem of discrimination etc. within our society, our Constitution opens its Preamble statement with a promise "to secure to all its citizens: Justice in all areas- "social, economic and political" <sup>1)</sup> This clearly shows the importance of Justice in a social construct.

Now I shall begin my reflections by first introducing the two oppressed communities of Asia that we are discussing today. It is indeed fortunate that these two are in dialogue with each other now for more than a decade.

### ***Who are Minjung?***

I have learnt about Minjung of Korea indirectly through my various encounters with the Minjung theologians, and also by reading their works. What I gathered was that 'Minjung,' though a Korean ancient term, came into popular use in theological writings of Korea only from late 1970's; and by 1980's the term gained currency in Asia. By the beginning of 1990's it was a familiar term in other parts of the world as well. 'Minjung,' is a combination of two Chinese characters: 'min' which means 'people' and 'jung' which means 'mass.' Literally therefore, the term would mean 'the mass of the people' or 'the people.' But Prof. David Kwang-sun Suh cautions us about this literal meaning by explaining: "When we try to translate into English, 'mass' is not adequate for our theological purpose; and 'the people' is politically dangerous in anti-communist Korea, because it has become a Communist word. Nonetheless, 'the people' is close to what 'Minjung' seeks to convey sociologically, and theologically as well. Although 'the people of God' may be safest theological expression in both Korean and English, the phrase is now almost a cliché and does not say exactly what is meant theologically and politically."<sup>2)</sup>

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1) *The Constitution of India*, Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi, 1999, 1

2) Suh Kwang Sun David, *The Korean Minjung in Christ*, CCA, Hong Kong,

Another Minjung theologian Prof. Kim Yong-Bock clarifies further the meaning of the term 'Minjung' by saying: "It is a Korean word that can be translated as 'people' in English, but the translation does not do justice to the word. It has more encompassing meaning that refers to the people who are politically oppressed, economically deprived, exploited and, therefore, poor, socially alienated and culturally and religiously repressed or discriminated against. It refers to the people who are weak and powerless in terms of their class, race, culture and religion as well as in terms of their input and influence of political, economic and social events."<sup>3)</sup>

### **Who are Dalits?**

The second Asian community, with whom we are concerned in this paper, is a section of the Indian people, who have given themselves the name 'Dalit.' The term 'dalit' is derived from the Sanskrit root *dal* which means burst, split, broken or torn asunder, downtrodden, scattered, crushed, destroyed. But although the term has ancient roots, its contemporary usage to specify a section of the people of India who have suffered oppression throughout history under the prevailing religious and social norms, is only recent. Today *dalit* has become a part of the vocabulary of all North Indian languages. For example, the well-known Hindi dictionary *Bhasa-Sabad Kos*, describes *dalit* as "an undeveloped or backward section of people, such as untouchables (*achut*) or surviving caste (*shudra*) among the Hindus."<sup>4)</sup> In Panjabi, the *Mahan Kos* of Bhai Kahan Singh defines *dalit* as one who belongs to the lowest caste (*hini jati*) and has been trampled down by or broken under the feet of the upper caste (*uchi jati*).<sup>5)</sup>

It is in this sense that the term 'dalit' is being used in this paper. Dalits are those people of India who have been cast out of the mainstream of society because the architects of the system did not see it fit to include them in the graded fourfold caste structure of the Indian society. Not only have they been considered 'outcastes,' but have also been condemned to live life

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1991, 23.

3) Kim Yong Bock : *Messiah and Minjung- Christ's Solidarity with the People for New Life*, CCC, Hong Kong, 1992, 7.

4) Dr. Ramsankar Sukal Rasal: *Bhasa-Sabad Kos* (in Hindi), Allahabad 1971, 778, 779.

5) Bhai Kahan Singh: *Mahan Kos* (in Panjabi), Patiala, 1981 (reprint), 624, 625.

of 'untouchables,' now for more than three and a half millennia. On the basis of this status they have forever borne extreme forms of social disadvantage and oppression, together with continuous assaults on their humanity which virtually reduced them to a state of being *no-people*.

It is interesting to note that the Sanskrit root *dal* - which we had mentioned earlier - and the Hebrew root *dal*, bear almost similar meaning. The Hebrew root *dal* means to hang down, to be languid, weakened, low and feeble. Since Sanskrit and Hebrew belong to two different linguistic families — the Indo-Germanic and the Semitic — some scholars see this as mere coincidence. Be that as it may, a reading of some of the fifty or so passages in which the Hebrew root *dal* appears in the biblical literature can shed some fascinating light on the situation of Dalits in India today. The fact that Indian biblical scholars, translators and interpreters have not taken note earlier of the parallel between what the Old Testament is talking about and the workings of the caste system in Indian society can be explained by the contextual nature of all biblical interpretations. The training of these Indian scholars had been under European, particularly British, missionaries and whatever concern they have shown while relating the biblical message to the Indian context has largely been effected by the viewpoint of their peers. For the most part they have ignored the context of the masses of Indian people which would have included the Dalit concerns.

However, recently some western interpreters have also tried to go beyond the word-meaning to understand the text of Old Testament more deeply. For example, while *dal* in the Old Testament is often understood as 'poor,' which merely refers to the economic status of certain people, C.U.Wolf in an essay on the term 'poor' in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, writes:

They are those whose prosperity and social status have been reduced. In this respect they are the opposite of the rich (Exodus 23:3; 30:15; Leviticus 14:21; Proverbs 22:16). In physical strength in psychological ability, they are also impaired and helpless (Job 34:28; Psalm 82:3; Jeremiah 40:7; 52:16).<sup>6)</sup>

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6) Wolf, C.U.: 'Poor' in the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (An Illustrated Encyclopedia), 843.

This important point made by Wolf can indeed help in interpreting the situation of Dalits in India. Like the *dal* in the Old Testament, Dalits are not only economically and physically poor or weak, but they are poor in their “psychological ability” as well; indeed, their being has been “impaired” to such an extent that they have become “helpless.”

After this general introduction of the two oppressed Asian communities of Asia, let us try to understand their specific contexts upon which our biblical and theological reflections should rightly be based.

### **Context: Minjung Han and Dalit Peeran**

The context of both Minjung and Dalit communities can be best appreciated in the backdrop of what C.U. Wolf tries to underline while defining the ‘poor.’ It is a fact that during oppression, more than the physical poverty of the oppressed, it is their psychological ability that gets ‘impaired’ rendering them to a state of ‘helplessness’ and perpetual enslavement. We know that the two Asian communities have been historically oppressed in every aspect of their life. No doubt it is important to strive to give them back all that they have been denied physically till now. But that is not enough. What is more important is to understand the deeper *hurt* of their oppression, which has gone deep down in their psyche and can be seen easily even in those who have managed to gain some status - economic, educational, etc. — in the society. Most of them continue to carry a complex of inner ‘inferiority’ deep within them. Minjung call this ‘pain’ their *han*; and Dalits call it their *peeran*. It is this context of their life — *the excruciating pain in inner-self* — that a theologian should try to make his reference point so that the liberation or salvation can be brought about for them in order to give them the experience of ‘wholeness of life.’ No doubt ‘Peace’ is an essential element of such a life, but then both ‘Peace’ and ‘Life’ are basically the fruits of ‘Justice.’ It is ‘Justice’ therefore, that a theologian should try to get the oppressed, because by doing so he/she shall not only transform the life of the oppressed, but also that of the oppressor. When we talk about *han* or *peeran* we are not talking of individual level, but the level of the communities; so any Justice rendered this way will soothe *han* or *peeran* of the entire community, and shall also bring Peace to the oppressors.

To understand the issue more clearly, let us discuss briefly the context of the *Minjung han* and *Dalit peeran*, which is supposed to be the core

subject of our 'Theology of Justice, Peace and Life.'

### *Minjung Han*

One of the best definitions of *han*, is given in the footnote by Prof. Suh Nam-dong in his article 'Towards a Theology of Han' which says: "*Han* is a deep feeling that rises out of the unjust experience of the people. 'Just indignation' may be a close translation of *han*, but it evokes a refined emotion yearning for justice to be done..." The author explains further: "*Han* is the suppressed, amassed, and condensed experience of oppression caused by mischief or misfortune so that it forms a kind of 'lump' in one's spirit."<sup>7)</sup> This meaning of *han* is very close to the experience of Dalit, about whom a Dalit theologian had said that they are with a "wounded psyche."<sup>8)</sup> Meaning thereby that *han* is psychological in nature which could be inflicted by socially caused situation, resulting in a feeling of helplessness.<sup>9)</sup> We have already seen that while explaining the Hebrew word *dal* C.U Wolf also arrived at similar conclusion: "In physical strength, in psychological ability, they are also unpaired and helpless."<sup>10)</sup>

Prof. Suh Nam-dong listed four aspects of *han* of Korean people:

- a) Koreans have suffered numerous invasions by surrounding powerful nations so that the very existence of the Korean nation has come to be understood as *han*.
- b) Koreans have continually suffered the tyranny of the rulers so that they think of their existence as *backsong*.
- c) Also, under Confucianism strict imposition of laws and custom discriminating against women, the existence of women was *han* itself.
- d) At a certain point in Korean history, about half of the population were

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7) Suh Nam Dong: *Towards a Theology of han*, in 'Minjung theology - People as the Subjects of History,' CCC, Singapore, 1983, 68. (notes no 1)

8) Azariah, M: *The Church's Healing Ministry to Dalits*, in 'Towards a Dalit Theology' edited by M. E. Prabhakar, CISRS and CDLM, ISPCK, Delhi, 1988, 118.

9) Suh Kwang Sun David, *A Biographical Sketch of an Asian's Theological Consultation*, in 'Minjung Theology people as the subject of History,' CCC, op.Cit., 24-25.

10) Refers to the reference no. 6.

registered as hereditary slaves and were treated as property rather than as people of the nation. These thoughts of their lives as *han*.

To stress on his point further Prof. Suh Nam-dong quoted a stanza from the work of a Korean poet Ko Eun, who cried: "We Koreans were born from the womb of *han* and brought up in the womb of *han*."<sup>11)</sup> Here again we hear the echoes of the cries of Dalits in India, who have suffered for centuries under their *han*.

In this regard David Kwang-sun Suh very poignantly refers to a banned poem written by a poet Kim Chi Ha called 'The Story of the Sound' (1972). The poem tells the story of a poor person named Ando who is imprisoned and given unjust and cruel treatment in the prison. His head and legs are chopped off so that it is the trunk of his body which keeps rolling and bumping against the prison walls, creating disturbing soulful sounds. These sounds coming from the deep prison cell are in fact the expressions of Ando's deepest '*han*.' Prof David Kwang-sun Suh says: "It is this noise which is the '*han*' of the oppressed people; and the '*han-cry*' of the unjustly-treated people heard as strange bumping sounds day and night from prison gives an incredible threat to their oppressors. This noise is cry of the Minjung in the prison cells, and in the prison- like conditions of the society. It will accumulate to make the noise of revolution."<sup>12)</sup>

The deep sense of Minjung *han* is expressed by number of traditional Minjung religious stories. Both Prof. Suh Nam-dong and Prof. David Kwang-sun Suh have included several such stories in their works.<sup>13)</sup> Maltugi is the Hero of one such famous story of a mask dance, who originally is a slave of three ruler brothers named 'Yangban.' Yangban are supposed to be the Masters of Maltugi, but when he appears with them on the stage for mask dance, Minjung audience become one with Maltugi and take his side to laugh at the false dignity of their ruling masters. They "become one in expressing their deep-seated *han*, the unresolved angry feeling of injustice and hunger deeply stored in their hearts and stomachs. This moment they become critical of the existing order and social system.

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11) Suh Nam Dong: Op. Cit., 58.

12) Suh Kwang Sun David, *The Korean Minjung in Christ*, Op. Cit., 79.

13) See: Suh Nam Dong: Op. Cit., 163-66.; Suh Kwang-Sun David, *The Korean Minjung in Christ*, Op. Cit., 108-111, 170-172.

As they shout with Maltugi in the mask dance, they let out their *han*, their frustration, and their desire for resistance... *Han*, the deep feeling turned inside, is coming out in the open. The Minjung and audience join with Maltugi in shouting for a fight, the fight against injustice and oppression. In the mask dance play, Maltugi is no longer a subservient slave boy; he is an independent fighter, ready to resist and to cut the vicious circle of oppression. In the laughter and shouts of the Minjung audience, we hear the voice of the Minjung for liberation; we sense the storm coming”<sup>14)</sup> Prof Suh Nam-dong pleaded to the Korean theologians to make this *han* the theme of their theology. Because he says: “If one does not hear the sighs of the *han* of the Minjung, one cannot hear the voice of Christ knocking on our doors.”<sup>15)</sup>

### ***Dalit Peeran***

The name ‘Dalit’ itself, which the oppressed community of India has adopted recently, expresses the deep-seated *peeran* it harbors within. The name encapsulates all aspects of oppression the community had undergone for over three and a half millennia, and also represents the *peeran* which gets personified in every member of the community. There was not only physical suffering; they suffered much more socially, politically, culturally and religiously. And it is this multi-pronged oppression which pushed them into their present state ‘with no identity.’ It is indeed an irony that in a country that boasts of multi-ethnicity, Dalits remain ‘no people’ belonging to ‘no nation.’ Today they are both vertically and horizontally divided, for which they are not responsible, because these divisions have been imposed upon them by their opponents. Today they are socially untouchables, politically subjects and economically slaves. Living in segregated parts of the Indian villages, Dalits have different names of their dwelling in different Indian languages: so they have *Thathis* in Panjab, *Maharwarda* in Maharashtra, *Cherris* in some South India and *harijan bastis* in cities. It is in these localities, where one can observe the Dalit *peeran* visibly. A few examples from Dalit poets and writers are being given below to make my point clear.

A Christian poet Joshuva Kavi expresses his pain (*peer*), when he realized his state being outside the preview of fourfold human society:

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14) Suh Kwang Sun David, *Ibid*, 171-172.

15) Suh Nam Dong: *Op. Cit.*, 68 (middle).

I have heard that four sons  
Were born to Old Brahma  
But tell me, O Savithri, Who is this  
*Panchama* (fifth) who is worse than faces?<sup>16)</sup>

Because he sees himself as a Dalit, outside of the preview of human society, therefore it is hard for him to find a friend among the human beings. His feeling about this truth expressed as:

In this fatted, arrogant world,  
Who are friends and relatives to the poor  
Except, worms and creatures of anthills?  
Or  
Who will talk to the low, except  
A bird or a bat or a rat?<sup>17)</sup>

But a Dalit Marathi poet Jyoti Lanjewar, after expressing her *peeran* upon her Dalit state, also declares that she no longer will keep silent about her human rights. Both these aspects she expresses in her following poem:

Their inhuman atrocities have carved caves  
In the rock of my heart  
I must tread this forest with wary steps:  
eyes fixed on the changing times  
The tables have turned now  
Protests spark  
now here  
now there  
I have been silent all these days  
listening to the voice of right and wrong  
But now I will fan the flames  
For human rights.

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16) Ranjan, P. Swarnalata (tr.): *Christian Aspiration as Expressed by Jashuva Kavi in Gabbilam (The Bat)*, in 'Indigenous People: Dalits' edited by James Massey, ISPCK, CTE-5, Delhi, 1994, 327. (top)

17) Ibid, 327. (below top)

How did we ever get to this place  
 This land which was never mother to us?  
 Which never gave us even  
 the life of cats and dogs?  
 I hold their unpardonable sins as witness  
 And turn, here and now,  
 A rebel.<sup>18)</sup>

It is another Marathi poet Yusoja, who narrates the painful crushed life of the Dalits in his following poem:

On roads laid out according to the plan  
 breaths thwarted till yesterday, crawled and sped along  
 And with each swing of these orphaned breaths  
 my mute existence was moved  
 And swayed as a pendulum.  
 The unscrupulous pundits awaken desire  
 in the stillborn womb of civilization,  
 flaunted overhead, naked placards,  
 with slogans of purity and holiness  
 their metaphysical gymnastics trampled and  
 scattered my life, unbalanced already,  
 the life of the Dalits crushed  
 By tyrant stones of grinding inequality.<sup>19)</sup>

To experience the real *Dalit peeran*, I reproduce a part of the story by a Dalit writer Bandhumadhav entitled 'Poisoned Bread.' The story is about the leftover food that is kept aside overnight to be given to a Dalit for his / her wages. Mostly such food turns poisonous because it is not kept covered or in a proper place. As a result the leftover food becomes not only the instrument to kill the very humanness of a person, but even at times becomes the cause of a death.

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18) Lanjewar, Jyoti: translated by Shanta Gokhale in *Poisoned Bread*, Translation from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature, edited by Arjun Dangle, 1992, 22.

19) Yusoja, translated by Charudutta Bhagwat in *Poisoned Bread*, Translated from Marathi Literature, edited by Arjun Dangle, 1992, 67.

Come harvest tie with its operations of winnowing and sifting... That day, as usual, Grandpa Yetalya took me with him as he went out looking for a job of winnowing and treading out the corn at the threshing floor... We stopped at a threshing floor. There, tidying a pile of disheveled ears of corn was Babu Patil. Grandpa approached Patil and saluted him with a *johar*. Acknowledging Grandpa's salute like a swaggering Maharaja. Babu Patil said, 'Hey, what brings you here at such an early hour? Hope you haven't come here with your mind set on evil. For don't they say, an encounter with a Mahar in the morning, and you're doomed for good.' '...Why do you say that, Anna? I am your slave. I have come to you on purpose on hearing of the operations at your threshing floor. My Lord is our bread-giver and we find it a privilege to beg for our share of corn, master. I am your begging Mahar and feel proud to be so...' Don't give me that line; you're no longer the Mahar-Mangs (names of two Dalit communities) of the good old days, to beg for your share of the corn. You are not Harijans! You've even started claiming equality...

The next moment I set to work with my head bent low, moving the grubbing-hoe in the heap of corn. Somehow I managed to suppress my anger. Babu Patil was standing close by, watching us for some time. After a while he left but not before warning us: 'Finish the job before I return from breakfast. We'll yoke the bullocks for the winnowing in the evening. Harry up. Don't you know you have to work hard if you want your share of corn?' ...

But after we had toiled throughout the day Babu Patil did not give Grandpa even a few measures of jowar. Grandpa was crestfallen. As we dejectedly left the threshing floor, however, Grandpa could not fail to notice the pen where stale, rancid pieces of bread lay scattered on the ground in front of the oxen. It's rightly said that as the Chamar has his eye on the chappal, so does the Mahar on stale bread. Flies were swarming over the moldering crumbs which had turned green and foul. Grandpa begged Babu Patil for those crumbs. The oxen seemed to have refused to eat them... Thanks to if we can at least get this stale crumbs.. We forget all the while that the crumbs they give us make us slaves...' At night everyone at home greedily hogged the stuff. What with the heavy meal, we feel asleep immediately after supper. But the next

morning we work up to the sound of Grandpa writhing like a poisoned dog. He was vomiting and purging too... I was sitting by Grandpa's bed... Sitting by the side of his bed, shedding tears, I felt benumbed and despondent. My mind was wailing in agony. When shall the meek and humble people of my community be uplifted? And when shall they be treated like human beings... When? In the mean time my maternal uncle had brought a doctor... Examining Grandpa, the doctor asked, what did mhe eat last night? I went into the kitchen and brought the earthen pot in which the rancid crumbs of bread mixed with duli had been... The doctor looked surprised as he said, 'That's it! The mould in the stuff created toxin. The toxin must have caused his dysentery. It's a serious case... Grandpa showed great amazement as he lay in bed: 'What? You say the crumbs had turned to poison? It was in fact poison? Poisoned bread...?' ... None of the medicines suggested by the doctor proved effective and we became helpless. Mustering all his strength and with tremendous will power Grandpa finally succeeded in articulating a few words: 'Mahadeva, don't weep, my boy. I'm an old thing now. And being so old, I may stop breathing any moment. What can I say to you now? I can only say: never depend on the age-old bread associated with our caste. Get as much education as you can. Take away this accursed bread from the mouths of the Mahars. This poisonous bread will finally kill the very humanness of man...' Then he stopped abruptly, turned his face away and closed his eyes forever.<sup>20)</sup>

At the end of this section I will add a saying from my own mother tongue Panjabi: "*Jis tan lage, soi ta jane*" which means that the real pain can only be known by the one who suffers. A few examples from the Dalit writings testified to this harsh truth of *Dalit peeran*, which should be the core of Dalit theology. Giving a direction for Dalit theology, the pioneer Dalit theologian, the late A.P. Nirmal had said: "It will be based on their own Dalit experiences, their suffering, their own aspirations and their own hope. It will narrate the story of their sufferings and their pathos. It will anticipate liberation which is meaningful to them."<sup>21)</sup>

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20) Bandhumadhav, translated by Ramesh Dayate in *Poisoned Bread*, Translations from Modern Marathi Literature, edited by Arjun Dangle, 1992, 147-149, 151-153.

## Biblical and Theological Reflections

Before we attempt theology for Minjung and Dalit, we must first take a look at the reflections in Old and New Testament with regard to the Poor and Oppressed. Even a casual perusal of the Bible will show that 'Poor' and 'Oppressed' do not necessarily refer to economic condition of the sufferer. In different places both these words have different connotation. This is very much in accordance with the present thought on the subject. In an article in *Development Dialogue* a checklist of different forms of poverties prevailing today in the world is given. According to the checklist there is in the world.

- Poverty of subsistence (due to insufficient income, food, shelter etc).
- Poverty of protection (due to bad health system, violence, arms, race, caste, class etc.)
- Poverty of affection (due to authoritarian, oppression, exploitation relations with the natural environment etc.)
- Poverty of understanding (due to poor quality of education).
- Poverty of participation (due to marginalization and discrimination of women, children and minorities)
- Poverty of identity (due to alien values upon local cultures, forced migration, political exile etc.).<sup>22)</sup>

In Bible also we come across similar observations. For example the author of Exodus, while describing the oppression of Israelites from the hands of Egyptians says: "Therefore they set taskmasters (*nagash*) over them to oppress (*ʾanah*) with forced labor" (*Ex. 1 :11*). Here the title *nagash* is used for the 'taskmasters' who oppress others in order to exploit, force and exert pressure on them. It is in this sense that this word is used here and also later in the Exodus (5:6, 10, 13, 14). *Anah* is the other term used which for oppression, which directly affects the inner most being of the persons. Besides *negash* and *ʾanah*, there are other terms used in Hebrew to show the different aspects of oppression which include: *ʾashaq* meaning

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21) Nirmal, Arvind P.: *A Dialogue with Dalit Literature*, in 'Towards a Dalit Theology,' op.Cit., 76.

22) *Development Dialogue*, A Journal of International Development Co-operation published by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala, 1989:1, 21.

oppressing (Jer .6:6, 22:7), *yanah*, meaning deadly violence (Eze. 18:7, 12, 16), *ratsats* meaning crushing and despoiling (Isa. 12:3), *daka* meaning grinding (Prov. 22:22) etc. The same way number of words are used for an oppressed person which include: *ani* meaning inferior (Am. 2:6) *dal* meaning economically and psychologically poor (Jer.5: 4), *ébion* meaning very poor and in a wretched state, (Ex. 23; 6, 11) *rash* meaning poor or needy (Prov. 17:5) and *misken* meaning a socially inferior or dependent person (Eccl. 9: 15, 16). I am now giving below a few examples where the term *dal* and *áni* have been used in the Old Testament.<sup>23)</sup>

There are a number of passages in the Hebrew Old Testament, which deal with the different aspects of concerns that are relevant to Dalit and Minjung in today's world. There are even some passages that go into the deeper meaning of oppression while reflecting the treatment met by the oppressed communities in the biblical world. In fact these passages are in the form of tragic songs, which are sung on behalf of such oppressed groups. A few selected passages are being given here:

- 1 They will give back the fruit of their toil, and will not swallow it down;  
from the profit of their trading they will get no enjoyment.  
For they have crushed and abandoned the *dalim* (the poor) they have seized a house that they did not build. (Job 20:18,19).
- 2 Do not remember against us the iniquities of our ancestors; let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for we are *dalonu* (brought very low) (Psalm 79:8).
- 3 Those who oppress *dal* (the poor), insult their Maker,  
but those who are kind to the needy honour him (Proverbs 14:31).
- 4 O Lord, do your eyes not look for truth?  
You have struck them, but they felt anguish;  
you have consumed them, but they have refused to turn back.  
Then I said, "These are only *dalim* (the poor)  
They have no sense for they do not know the way of Lord, the law of their God" (Jeremiah 5:3-4)

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23) See for detail discussions: Tamez, Elga: *Bible of the Oppressed*, Orbis Books, New York, 1982, 62-63, 70-71.

These passages give some glimpse of the kind of oppression prevalent in the biblical world. The first passage from of Job 20:18, 19 is part of a longer narrative, in which one of Job's friends Zapher makes some observations about the wickedness of the powerful oppressors and their methods of oppressing others including *dalim* (the poor). In verse 19 a special reference is made to the oppression, which is perpetrated on the oppressed. The oppressed are left alone after being crushed and even their houses are taken by their oppressors. Here for the oppressed Hebrew word *dalim* is used. In the Book of Amos, the prophet has even named the oppressors. About the people of Israel, he says that they "trample the head of the *dalim* (the poor) into the dust of the earth" (Amos 2:7). In Amos 4:1, even rich women perform the role of oppressors against *dalim*. The prophet speaks on behalf of the oppressed and poor to their oppressors very forcefully in his discourse by saying,

Hear this, you that trample on the needy,  
and bring to ruin the poor (*ani*) of the land,  
saying, "When the new moon be over so that  
So that we may sell grain;  
And the Sabbath, So that we may offer wheat for sale?  
We will make ephod small and the shekel great,  
and practice deceit with false balances,  
buying the poor (*dalim*) or silver,  
and needy for a pair of sandals,  
and selling the sweepings of wheat. (Am. 8:4-6).

In passage two quoted above from Psalms 79:8, the Psalmist addresses his whole community as *dalonu* (Dalits). This is almost like saying "The whole of the Indian Christian community is composed of Dalits" or "The Indian Church as a whole is the Dalit." Of course the Psalmist says his community's lowest state of *dalitness* is because of the past collective sins of their ancestors. He used a verb *dalonu* with the meaning "brought very low." The next passage is clear. Here the creator God is being equated with the oppressed and poor. According to this to oppress the *dal* (poor) as a community means insulting or oppressing God himself (Proverbs 14:3)

In the last passage quoted above, the Prophet Jeremiah *describes* the state of dalitness. One may even beat them, but it does not give them pain;

changing their dalit state perhaps is the most difficult. They themselves have become completely unconscious of their dalit state, so no correction is possible, and there is no way they can go back - after all according to Jeremiah "these are only *dalim*, they have no sense' (Jeremiah 5:4). Is this not the state of the majority of the Dalits in India today or other various oppressed communities in the world, like Minjung.

### ***Prophetic and Theological Response***

Against such oppression it is Justice that needs to be given priority. Peace is an important factor in the world today no doubt but it cannot be Peace without Justice. Three major Christian traditions namely Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant have common view with regard to Justice. For example Metropolitan Paul Gregorios a leading Eastern Orthodox theologian says: "Now peace, if it is integral to justice, cannot be simply the absence of conflict. For justice can be attained only by confrontation and conflict with injustice."<sup>24</sup> A Roman Catholic scholar Fr. Joseph H Ficher S.J. is still more direct when he said "Without justice there can be no lasting peace; without love there can be no lasting justice."<sup>25</sup> A Protestant scholar Walter A Wagner, while saying the same thing, adds in his statement the affect of 'peace with justice' upon the life of all living beings, when he says: "*Shalom*, the reign of peace with justice, will transform relationship among all creations and natural forces."<sup>26</sup> Wegner also says in his article on 'peace' : "The conviction that there can be no peace without justice and no justice without equality clearly derives from the prophetic time as did the cadences and rhetoric of the movement."<sup>27</sup>

Before moving further in our reflections of 'Prophetic and Theological Response,' it may be worthwhile to refer the views of a great Dalit leader Dr B R Ambedkar, who was the main architect of the present Indian

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24) Gregorios, Paul: *Problems in a Christian Philosophical Approach to Peace, An Eastern Orthodox View*, in 'Voices From World Religions' edited by Henry O.Thompson, ISPCK, Delhi 1993, 26.

25) Fitcher, S.J., Joseph H: *Catholic and World Peace*, in 'Voice From Religions,' Op. Cit., 35.

26) Wagner, Walter A.: *A Protestant Presentation on World Peace Today*, in 'Voices From World Religions' Op. Cit., 57.

27) Ibid, 61.

Constitution. According to Dr Ambedkar the sole purpose of creating an instrument in Indian Constitution was to establish an 'ideal' or 'just society' based upon the three universal principles, "liberty, equality and fraternity." He elaborated by saying, "Justice is simply another name of these principles."<sup>28)</sup> Dr Ambedkar's 'just society,' which he also called a 'democratic society,' involved two things: "The first is an attitude of mind, an attitude of respect and equality towards other fellow beings. The second is a social organization free from rigid social barriers."<sup>29)</sup> Ambedkar also warned that in a society, those who continue to "suffer from inequality," will one day blow up the structure" of it.<sup>30)</sup> In other words, what he wants to emphasize is that there cannot be a 'peace without justice.' Ambedkar's this point leads us to our next part of reflection on 'justice, peace and life' in the Bible.

The prophets in the Bible also proclaimed the 'will' of God to the people of Israel at different times. For example prophet Isaiah addressed them as Unfruitful Vineyard (Church). He said:

For the Vineyard of the Lord of hosts is hour of Israel,  
And the people of Judah are his pleasant planting;  
He expected justice, but saw bloodshed;  
Righteousness, but heard a cry! (Is 5:7)

The author of Isaiah in 'the Song of Unfruitful Vineyard' narrated the conditions of the people of Israel and Judah, and told them how they had invited the Lord's punishment on themselves by practicing 'social injustice' in various forms, which included amassing of property at the expense of others (Is. 5:8-10); drinking and committing debauchery (Is. 5:11) and lack of knowledge of their faith (Is. 5:13). Finally after denouncing these evils, which had become part of his people's life, the prophet announced the Lord's judgment on them (Is. 5:14-17). The most

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28) Quoted in: Massey, James: *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar - A Study in Just Society*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2003, 102.

29) B. R. Ambedkar, 'Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah,' in *Dr Babaseheb Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1, compiled by Vasant Moon, Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1989, 222.

30) Constituent Assembly Debates, Official Report, Book No. 5, vol. XI, 14-26 November 1949, New Delhi, 1999, third reprint, 979.

important verse of the song tells us that the basis of God's judgment was "justice" and "righteousness" (Is. 5:16). This point is stressed by other prophets as well (Mic. 2; 1-6), Ezek. 45:11, Am. 6:4-7). At another place Isaiah again proclaimed on behalf of the Lord that 'justice' and 'righteousness' were the criteria to determine whether one's faith was built on God's firm foundation or not (Isa. 28: 17).

Amos was also one of the prophets who spoke directly about 'justice' and 'righteousness.' For Example, at one place he addressed the people of Israel saying:

Ah, you turn justice to wormwood,  
 And being righteousness to the ground! (Am. 5:7)  
 He continued to address God's people and demanding from them to:  
 ... let justice roll down like waters,  
 And righteous like an ever-flowing stream (am. 5:14)

'Justice' means the establishment of the right, through fair legal procedures (Am.5:15; Deut. 25:3), in accordance with the will of the Lord. And 'righteousness' means the quality of life in relationship to others in the community that gives rise to justice.

Like Amos, prophet Micah also summed up the definition of the religion in the prophetic teaching, while challenging the people of Israel in the following words.

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
 And what does the Lord require of you  
 But to do justice, and to love kindness,  
 And to walk humbly with your God? (Mic.8)

In continuing the prophetic traditions of the Old Testament, in the New Testament too the prophet of the prophets, our Lord Jesus Christ, rebuked and denounced religious leaders of his days by saying:

Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees hypocrites!  
 For you tithe mint, dill, and cumin,  
 and have neglected the weightier matters of law:  
 Justice and mercy and faith.  
 You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but

Swallow a camel! (Mt. 23:23-24)

Here, 'tithe' represents the tenth of agricultural produce given to support the temple and its priests (lev. 27, 30-33, Num. 18:8-32, Deut. 25:1-5). 'Gnat' is an unclean insect (Lev. 11: 41-44) that was avoided by priests in their food while the camel, which also was supposed to be unclean, was conveniently swallowed by them (Lev. 11:4). Such was the hypocrisy followed by the priests at the time of Jesus.

Various oppressed groups were the focus of the Nazareth manifesto that was released in the beginning of his ministry by the Prophet of the prophets, Jesus Christ by declaring:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
Because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor ,  
He has sent me to proclaim release to captives,  
And recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed  
(in Hindi translation 'Dalit' ) go free (Lk. 4:18).

Besides such biblical references against the exploitation and oppression of the poor and needy, the message of the entire Bible is also centered on two divine interventions pointing in the same direction. On the one hand, the biblical message affirms that God takes the side of the oppressed, poor and the needy (Ex. 3:7-12) and on the other, that God liberates the oppressed (Lk. 4:18-19). The second intervention, besides offering liberation to the various oppressed groups of human beings (subaltern), also offers hope for their future by proclaiming "the year of the Lord's favour" (Lk. 4:19), which means that the time of their liberation is coming. The overall purpose of these divine activities is to create and maintain the balance in the created world, especially among the human beings.

One most important factor in all the prophecies and proclamations of both the Old and the New Testaments (as pointed by Bishop Newbigin) is that these speak of liberation or salvation in terms of actual historical happenings, and not as "a matter of doing justice and mercy in concrete situations."<sup>31)</sup> (Jer. 22:6; 1John 4:8, Cf. 3:14-24). An Indian theologian, Fr. L

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31) Newbigin, Lesslie: *The Open Secret, An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Revised Edition), SPCI, 1995, 23.

Stanislaus, affirms this when he says “Since the Gospel is linked to the concrete lives of the people, the Church’s proclamation includes the issue of human rights, social justice, equality, peace and development.<sup>32)</sup> Bishop Juliao Labayan of Philippines also sums up his discussion on ‘Prophetic mission’ of the Church saying: “The task and mission is simply to continue the history of salvation that her founder, Jesus Christ, inaugurated and sealed with his blood... Here too lies the purpose and rationale for transforming the Church from the historical model of a Christendom (imperialist) Church to that of the Church of the poor. The purpose and rationale of the Church’s mission is to be light, leaven and salt of the earth towards making the earth a place where God of love, justice and peace will be at home with His people and His whole creation<sup>33)</sup> (Jer 22:6;1 John 4:8; Cf. 14-24).

### **Conclusion: Theology of Justice, Peace and Life**

In this paper, first I tried to introduce to you the people - Minjung and Dalits - who are the target groups of our discussion. Then I tried to ascertain the core of the context of these two communities to which the proposed ‘Theology of justice, peace and life’ could be addressed. After this I looked into the biblical and theological responses already available to us concerning our theme. Now in the concluding section, I will consolidate my argument first, before giving my views on the topic.

#### ***Summary Statement***

Minjung and Dalits are the two oppressed Asian communities that have many common experiences insofar as their plight as tormented people is concerned. Both these communities are oppressed in all aspects of their life: politically, economically, and socially. The oppression unleashed on them has impaired them not only physically but even psychologically so much so that in due course they have accepted their helplessness as part of their lives and as natural order of things. To perpetuate their oppression and to keep the

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32) Stanislaus, L.: *The Liberative Mission of the Church Among Dalit Christians*, ISPCK, Delhi, 1999, 291.

33) Labanya, Julio: *Revolution and the Church of the Poor*, Quezon City, Philippines, 1995, 60.

vanquished communities forever under subjugation, the dominants manipulated to destroy their religious and cultural identity and formed policies to divide and rule them.

It is a fact that oppression unleashed on a people is not enough to destroy them; it is the acceptance of the oppression which destroys them. This is what happened with Dalits and Minjung communities. Centuries of oppression has affected their 'humanness' to an extent that they started considering themselves as non-humans. However, the process of awakening from this state began with their getting alive to their *han* or *peeran*. They started questioning the oppressors which definitely disturbed the status quo of prevailing false 'peace.' Now their demand was for 'justice' which had always been denied to them.

The other observation that I had made is that the concern for poor and oppressed has been central to the text of Old and New Testament. Various meanings of poverty and oppression are explored in the biblical text culminating in two major points: (1) God takes the side of the oppressed, poor and needy; and (2) God is committed to liberate the poor and oppressed. With these observations in mind, the Dalit and Minjung theologians would indeed do a service to take up the challenge to work on theology for these two oppressed communities. This would also mean the theologians abandoning part of their academic life and status to avoid possibility of reducing every effort of theirs only to an 'arm-chair' theology.

### ***Minjung Han and Dalit Peeran Demand a Paradigm Shift***

*Han* (unjust experiences) and *Peeran* (suffering and pathos) have been named as two central contextual realities by Prof. Suh nam-dong and Prof. A.P.Nirmal for theologians who would be working on 'Minjung theology' and 'Dalit theology.' But I feel that we should expand our concern farther to arrive at theology of more inclusive and permanent nature. We are aware that world is changing very fast, and in that scenario poverty and oppression are also assuming fresh dimensions. Everywhere in the world we encounter myriad category of poverty (of subsistence, of protection, of affection, of understanding, of participation and identity and so on) which imparts *han* and *peeran* to almost everyone. Even the oppressors are not free from experiencing these. Therefore a 'theology of justice, peace and life' has to be the one, which becomes an enabling tool of bringing 'transformation' in

the lives of not only the oppressed communities of the world, but also in the lives of their oppressors. Moreover, this ‘transformation’ should target not the individual needs, but the collective needs of the people. In fact by stressing this, I am trying to hint at a holistic approach, which includes not only the person as a whole, but the community as a whole. Such approach will in fact address the structural problems that encouraged the culture of violence in the first place, spilling oppression and misery all over. Structural justice will naturally come about, leading to structural peace emanating from Justice.

*Shalom* in the Old Testament conveys this meaning very clearly as ‘completion or ‘wholeness.’ Prophet Isaiah in 9:7 talks about an “endless peace,” which has a dual meaning ‘justice with righteousness’ (i.e. right relationship) which will be the characteristic of the reign of God on this earth. Again Jesus’ Nazareth manifesto is also a good example of the holistic approach to overcome *han* and *peeran*, both in the oppressed and the oppressors. Jesus has named four such groups: of poor (*deen*), who are faced with all kinds of poverties; economic physical, social etc. (Lk. 10: 25-27, Jn. 4: 1-41, Mt. 20: 1016); of captives (*bandi*), that refer to those who are prisoners to various ideologies, structures and systems; and blind (*andhey*), which includes that group of people who refuse to see beyond their self-interest and have closed their mind and heart to truth and values (Lk. 4:37-45). The fourth group is of ‘oppressed’ which would mean ‘Dalit’ or ‘Minjung.’ So Nazareth manifesto of Jesus is the charter of establishing a ‘just society’ or ‘just social order’ in this world, where according to the author of the book of Revelation there will neither be *han* nor *peeran*.

See, the home of God is among mortals  
 He will dwell with them as their God;  
 They will be his peoples,  
 He will wipe every tear from their eyes,  
 Death will be no more;  
 Mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
 For the first things have passed away. (Rev. 21: 3-4).

This should ideally be the end goal a theology of ‘Justice, Peace and Life’ from the perspective of Dalit and Minjung.

## Abstract

Much has been reflected upon and written by theologians during the second half of the last century upon the theme 'Justice, Peace and Life.' But invariably the focus of almost all of them had been on 'Peace' rather than on 'Justice,' perhaps because of the two devastating Wars that had wrecked the world, and also because of the ensuing ethno-national conflicts that engulfed the entire globe and kept us constantly on the brink of a *possibility* of yet another fierce war. One thing that catches the attention is the fact that very little attention is given in all these reflections to the question of 'Justice,' and consequently to the concerns of the vast majority of the oppressed communities all over the world. Dalits of my country and Minjungs of Korea - about whom we shall discuss in this paper - are part of these communities.

*Han* (unjust experiences) and *Peeran* (suffering and pathos) have been named as two central contextual realities by Prof. Suh nam-dong and Prof. A.P. Nirmal for theologians who would be working on 'Minjung theology' and 'Dalit theology.' But I feel that we should expand our concern farther to arrive at theology of more inclusive and permanent nature. We are aware that world is changing very fast, and in that scenario poverty and oppression are also assuming fresh dimensions. Everywhere in the world we encounter myriad category of poverty (of subsistence, of protection, of affection, of understanding, of participation and identity and so on) which imparts *han* and *peeran* to almost everyone. Even the oppressors are not free from experiencing these. Therefore a 'theology of justice, peace and life' has to be the one, which becomes an enabling tool of bringing 'transformation' in the lives of not only the oppressed communities of the world, but also in the lives of their oppressors. In fact by stressing this, I am trying to hint at a holistic approach, which includes not only the person as a whole, but the community as a whole. Such approach will in fact address the structural problems that encouraged the culture of violence in the first place, spilling oppression and misery all over. Structural justice will naturally come about, leading to structural peace emanating from Justice. This should ideally be the end goal a theology of 'Justice, Peace and Life' from the perspective of Dalit and Minjung.

### Key Words

Minjung, *Han*, Dalit, *Peeran*, justice, peace, life, *shalom*



# Dalit Christians Struggle for Justice in the Indian Sub-continent

Chilkuri Vasantha Rao\*

## Introduction

In the wake of the contextual theologies world over, specific theologies with existential concerns have taken form. In the India-Subcontinent the women's liberation, ecological liberation; and with the specific influence of the black theology and the liberation theology, Dalit theology became a possibility in its particular socio-economic, political and religious context. Human tendencies seem to be universally common and oppression of the weak has been a ubiquitous dynamic showing different faces in different continents and countries. Dalit theology in India stands out with its undergirding principle of pathos, and hermeneutical principle of reading the scripture with the eyes of the poor<sup>1)</sup> and oppressed.

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1) Read issue dedicated to Biblical Hermeneutics on Poverty and the specific article, Matthew E. Thathapudie, "Poor in the Book of Deuteronomy: A Dalit Christian Perspective," in *Religion and Society*, Vol. 51, Nos 2-3, June-September, 2006, 101-114.

### *Dalit Reading of Psalm 22*

Considering the hermeneutical principle of reading the scripture with the experience and eyes of the poor and oppressed, let me begin with a representative example of how a Dalit would read, identify, appropriate and draw inspiration. We would choose Psalm 22.<sup>2)</sup>

1. O Daridhra Narayana<sup>3)</sup>, O Dalit Bandhava!<sup>4)</sup>  
 Why do you behave like this?  
 Don't you see our sufferings  
 At the hands of these ruthless  
 So called high-caste people?  
 Why do you hide yourself and  
 Not come to rescue us?
2. Ceaselessly we screech to you  
 At the strike of every violence against us  
 Day in and day out  
 You don't even seem to care to answer our cries.
3. But we still own you and  
 Continue to worship you, in spite!
4. Could that be true then,  
 What we heard,  
 That you redeemed our forefathers and mothers  
 Who believed in you?
5. They raised their voices to you  
 And you delivered them!  
 They trusted in you

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2) The Dalit version of Psalm 22 has been paraphrased by the author. The German translation of the same is published by Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland (EMW), Hamburg, Germany, in another publication concerning the Dalit issue.

3) God of the poor.

4) Soul mate and rescuer of the Dalits.

And you never let them down!

6. But what is this?  
What happened to you now?  
We are being treated like dirt of its worst kind,  
We are called MLECHAS-  
An abomination to the human fold,  
And we are made untouchables.  
Disrespect and despise is their code of conduct  
Towards us - Dalits.
7. They mock at us, saying:  
"You are the 'cruse of God.'"  
They deprive us anything and everything  
That falls in the category of "decency" and "development"
8. Deliver us O God  
From the multiple oppressions of these multiple castes.
9. Is it not you who created us  
And sustained us till now,  
Under the protection of your merciful wings?
10. Ever since from our birth  
We have been your people and you our God.
11. Please God,  
Do not distance yourself from us  
At this critical juncture of troublesome times.  
There is no one to help.
12. They who call themselves high-castes,  
Arm themselves and  
Surround our habitation from all sides in the nights  
And take us in surprise with a sudden roar.
13. They abuse us with filthy language

And attack us brutally  
 For reasons only known to them-  
 "Children of a lesser God"!?

14. They pour petrol  
 And set our hamlets on fire.  
 They rejoice as our ghettos burn  
 As Nero fiddled while Rome burned.
  
15. Each of us still in our half sleep - drowsy mood  
 Not being able to sort out  
 If it's a dream or reality  
 Run for our lives  
 But fall at the swift strike of their  
 "Staves," "swords" and "spears,"  
 AMMAA!<sup>5)</sup>
  
16. Many of our youth  
 Are ruthlessly served alive into pieces  
 Packed in gunny bags  
 Tied with stones and  
 Thrown into the nearby rivers  
 Never to be identified,  
 Lives lost forever!  
 The so-called high-castes, the police and  
 The governments with its law are all hand in glove.  
 And we never meet justice!
  
17. Our heritage is only a dreadful past  
 Our present life is filled with threats of death  
 Our history is only bloody events.
  
18. They even make our women parade naked  
 And rape them before our own eyes.

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5) "Ammama" means O mother. This is the loud shout at the strike of every deathblow.

19. How can we bear this shame?  
Till when should we bear this pain?  
How can you tolerate,  
When such things happen to your children?  
*O Daridhra Narayana!*  
Enough is enough; do not be elusive,  
O our help come quickly to our aid!
20. Deliver us from the high - castes,  
Who pervert justice  
With their social status, money power,  
Political connections and influential contacts.
21. Deliver us O God,  
From the hands of these caste-obsessed beasts.
22. I shall witness of your deliverance  
To my Co-Dalits.  
In every community and religion.
23. You Dalits,  
Daughters and sons  
Of the wandering Dalits-Sarah and Abraham,  
Praise the God of the oppressed.
24. For God has despised or abhorred  
The affliction of the afflicted  
And God has not hid God's face from them  
When they cried to God.
25. From you comes my praise O God,  
I will offer to you as thanks giving  
What I have promised to you.
26. Every oppressed Dalit will be set free  
And shall live a life of freedom and dignity.  
May our freedom last forever.

Praise be to God our deliverer.

27. All the oppressed communities of the world  
 Will come to know our liberation  
 From the dreadful-caste-system and  
 Will turn to you  
 In hope of their own redemption.
28. For God's left hand is strong  
 To deliver us from these evil conspirators and  
 God's right hand is stronger  
 To rule the world with justice.
29. God will make the proud  
 To rub their noses on the ground and  
 The ones bent with the burden of injustice,  
 God will lift them up and  
 Make them stand on their own feet.
30. O Ellaiah, O Yenamma tell of the liberating power of God  
 To your son Samuel and your daughter Ruth, and  
 To your grandson Nishan and  
 Your granddaughter Parimala.
31. And let them in turn  
 Sing God's deliverance to their children's children  
 Who are yet to be born.  
 Hallelujah!

The mood in this Psalm reflects the Dalit experience. This is an instance of how the Biblical texts filled with passion narratives make meaning to the Dalits, which help them to identify their own life experiences with the Biblical characters and find hope for their own deliverance. Dalit Christians, this is how, derive spiritual strength from the scriptures to lead a powerful movement in the struggle for acquiring justice in the caste dominated Indian Sub-continent

## **The Caste System**

'Varna Dharma' is the Indian social organization based on one's color. It is the hierarchical caste system basically divided into four caste groups. First on the top of the ladder of the system are the Brahmins. Second, followed downward by Kshatrias. The third are the Vaishyas and the fourth are the Sudras. This caste system has a theological basis in Hindu religion. It is believed that the Brahmins are born out of the head of the Purusha (the primeval person), the Kshatrias are the fighters, the Vaishyas are the traders and the Sudras are the artisans of all kinds.

When the Aryans came into India, most probably around five to six thousand years ago, they drove the native Dravidians down beyond the Vindhya Mountains. The Dravidian religious concepts and worship practices are even ridiculed in the Vedas and the Dravidian religion was forbidden religion to the new immigrants as testified in the Vedas, too<sup>6</sup>). The Dravidians in order to escape from the Aryan invaders ran either into the forests (the forest dwellers today known as the tribal people) or far away to the South, as said, beyond the Vindhya and settled on land. However, eventually the native Indians were subjected to the Hindu social order but placed outside the caste system, on the basis of a different racial identity, since the Dravidians are considered to be the "Avarnas," the colourless (dark). This placement outside the caste system naturally led to the placing of the peoples outside of everything that is enjoyed by the upper-castes.

As time passed, these free natives were subjected to a process of being de-historized, de-culturized, de-economized and above all de-humanized. Everything was decided by the upper-castes: where they should live - outside the village, what they should wear - precisely what they should not wear, how they should speak- using only self dehumanizing language, what they should do - only the most menial ritually polluting tasks<sup>7</sup>), how they should behave - utter slavish, how they should walk - tying a palm leaf to their waist, lest an upper caste stamps on their foot prints and gets polluted, what they should eat - precisely what they should not possess. They are the "Others" the objects of disrespect and maltreatment. Once, a free people

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6) See Rig Veda 7.21.5 and 10. 99. 3.

7) For future reading, M. N. Srinivas, (ed), *Caste: its Twentieth century avatar*, New Delhi: Viking, 1996.

with a dignified living have gradually become slaves in a dehumanizing system. The hopelessness is that a person is born into a caste and remains within that caste until death.

While the upper castes enjoy the privilege to opt and change their occupation the Dalits are supposed to be confined to the menial jobs assigned to them. The caste system in its “practice relegated millions of people to a lifetime of violence, servitude, segregation, and discrimination, all on the basis of caste”<sup>8)</sup>.

## The Dalits

The untouchables who are outside the caste system were called by several names in history. The upper castes called them “Avarnas”<sup>9)</sup> the colorless. But the colonial British called them “the depressed classes.” When the Indian constitution was being drafted, they were named “Scheduled Castes.” Mahatma Gandhi called them “Harijans.” One people many names! But why are there so many names? Do not these people have their own identity? All these names have been given to them by others. But for the first time Dr. B. R. Ambedkar<sup>10)</sup> who himself belonged to the untouchables appropriated a new name to these people - ‘DALITS’ which means oppressed or broken people. Since then this name has been voluntarily accepted by the outcastes. Today this name gives an identity and this identity becomes an unifying category for all the out-castes, who amount to about one sixth of India’s population.

Dalits have been oppressed throughout the history by the upper-castes. Most Dalits in rural villages are made to live in segregated hamlets, away from the caste Hindus settlements. The Dalits are prevented from owning land or receiving education<sup>11)</sup>, which in itself is a process that checks the

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8) Broken People: Caste violence Against India’s “Untouchables,” Human Rights Watch: New York/Washington/London/Brussels, 1990, 207. Henceforth referred as Broken People. The author is indebted to the materials in this book that have been extensively quoted.

9) In each region of India they are called with different names, for instance in Andhra Pradesh they are called “Malas” and “Madigas,” in Kerala “Parayas,” “Pulayas” and “Kuravas,” in North India with names like “Chamars,” “Mahars” and “Muucchis” and with many other names in each state.

10) Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is the Father of the Indian constitution.

upward mobility of the Dalits. The Dalits, however, “have been forced to continue their occupations as leather workers, disposers of dead animals, or manual scavengers, and to perform other tasks deemed too ritually polluting for upper castes”<sup>12)</sup>. They fall in the last level both socially and economically<sup>13)</sup>.

### ***The Dalit Experience***

In order to have a glimpse at the various ways the Dalits and also the Tribals suffer under the upper-caste degrading treatment, we take a look at the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, enacted in 1989. The prohibitions themselves are an indicative of the treatment meted by the Dalits. The under mentioned Dalit experiences are, however, not just confined to the Act alone.

The Dalits are forced into eating and drinking of inedible or obnoxious substances. They are also made to wash and use separate tea tumblers at the village teashops, in some places coconut shells are given to them to keep them from sharing the tea tumblers used by the upper-castes. On one hand they are not allowed to draw water from public wells and on the other hand their water springs and reservoirs are corrupted and fouled. Their bridegrooms are not permitted to ride a mare, which is *de facto* a marriage tradition in some villages. They are not even allowed to sit on their beds in their own houses when an upper-caste passes by. They are not allowed to wear shoes in the presence of the caste Hindus. They are subjected to forcibly removing their clothes and are paraded naked and some times with painted faces or bodies, a treatment of social shame and degradation. They are made to dispose the dead animals and their hamlets are usually the places where the human excreta, waste matter, carcasses and other poisonous materials are dumped. They are made to dig the village graves. The one employment that is forced upon them and the Tribals is the bonded labor, which has its vicious cycle of almost every member of the family joining the bonded labor because of their poverty, sometimes it continues into generations where the debts are high. This is the inheritance! There is a consistent effort from the side of the upper-castes in making the Dalits and

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11) Broken People, 27.

12) Broken People, 141.

13) Sudhir Hindwan, “Caste iron jacket,” *The Pioneer*, September 9, 1996.

Tribals landless. They are denied the right of passages to a place of worship. As an ongoing tradition in the villages, they are made to render free services at times of deaths, marriages and village celebrations. The upper-castes even take advantages of their dominant social and economic positions to exploit the Dalit and Tribal women sexually.<sup>14)</sup>

### ***Struggle for Justice: State Reservations***

India became a republic by the introduction of the Indian Constitution in the year 1950. The Dalits who are named as the Scheduled Castes, along with the Scheduled Tribes and the Backward Classes were granted reservations in the fields of education and employment. This was the effort by the government of India to correct former injustices done to the people of the lower-castes.

Article 341 of the Indian Constitution does not allow any discrimination on the basis of caste, color or creed. But very soon in the same year after the Constitution of India came into effect, there was a “Presidential Order 1950” released, which stipulates that one needs to belong to the Hindu religion in order to avail the reservations. It was a grave injustice to the Dalits, who belonged to the Sikh, Buddhist, Muslim and Christian faiths. There were demonstrations and appeals to the government of India to do away with the third paragraph of the presidential order, which perpetuates this injustice. The Indian government in 1956 extended the reservations to the Dalits of Sikh religion; later in the year 1990 the same was allowed to the Dalits of the Buddhist religion. While the Dalits of Islam depend on the minority rights and privileges, it is only the Dalit Christians who are left without the Scheduled Caste reservations. Dalit Christians are twice alienated<sup>15)</sup>, once for being Dalits and secondly for being Christians. Dalit Christians have now become the objects of ridicule. Dalit Christians instead

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14) This includes information from “the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) act 1989”; National commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Highlights of the report for the years 1994-95 & 1995-96, New Delhi: Government of India, 1997; and other interviews done by the Human Rights Watch, see: *The Broken People*, 8, 23,25-27 and 85.

15) K. Wilson as a title of his book used the term “Twice Alienated.” He was a former Professor of theology at the Andhra Christian Theological College, and Professor of Philosophy at the University of Osmania, Hyderabad.

of being considered to be the Scheduled Castes, they are taken as “backward classes” and treated as BC-C that is the converted Christians category, but that is not the end of the story, the third generation Christians are no longer considered to be even eligible for the BC-C, they do not belong any more to any category of reservation. This is a very clever constitutional way of depriving life to Dalit Christians. Dalit Christians are still fighting with the Indian Government for equal justice on par with the Dalits of other religions in this area of reservations.<sup>16)</sup>

Missionaries imparted education to at least a few Dalits. Most of these educated Dalits have migrated from the rural villages to the cities in search of employment and got settled in cities and towns. Missionaries hoped that these educated Dalits will be a source for the emancipation of their Dalit brothers and sisters. But this dream of the missionaries has not come true. The educated and employed Dalits usually are not much concerned about their poor Dalit brothers and sisters, who live in abject poverty and slavery subjected to violence from the upper-caste, police, village administration and political parties. In the face of this oppression the many of the urbanized Dalits are proud to say to their unfortunate Dalit brothers and sisters that it is our duty to suffer for our faith!

### ***Curbing Dalit Transformation***

The reservation system has helped some Dalits to get educated and employed. As it has been mentioned above the missionary education has also helped a few Dalits to live liberated life to an extent. Some Dalits have also gone overseas to work in the Middle Eastern countries and have become independent from the upper-castes economically. This, on the one hand and on the other hand the growth of the Dalit movements like that of the Dalit Panthers of India in the 1960s<sup>17)</sup> have contributed to the questioning of the cast oppression of the upper-caste Hindus. Dalit

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16) For more on the Dalit Christians struggle for equal justice, see Vasantha Rao, “Biblical Reflections on the Plight, Fight and Fight of Dalits, in: Moses Paul peter, (ed), Struggles to Celebrate life, Bangalore: Student Christian Movement of India, 1998, 16-37

17) For the Activities of the Dalit Movements see: Pendse, Sandeep (ed), At Crossroads: Dalit Movement today, Bombay: Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, 1994, 69-82.

movements have mobilized Dalits under the common Dalit identity to assert themselves economically and to organize themselves politically.<sup>18)</sup>

But the response of the upper-castes has taken an even more ugly turn. Every effort of the Dalits to challenge the social organization of the caste system under which they suffer or defy the upper-caste's domination invites the brutality of the upper-castes. For instance, in April 1998 a Dalit refused to sell country cigarettes to an upper-caste on credit. The upper-castes punished the Dalit by making him to play the role of a cow by forcibly piercing his nose, drawing a string through it, and making him to parade around the village, and then they tied him to a cattle post. The beastly nature of the upper-castes has surfaced in making the Dalit play the role of a beast<sup>19)</sup>. Any independent behavior of the Dalits is immediately curbed by the upper-castes.

The upper-castes cannot tolerate any economic alteration in the poverty stricken Dalits. The upper-castes with the help of the police destroy every symbol of their new economic growth. In December 1995 in Kodiyankulum, Tamil Nadu, the police, in what seems to be a well schemed deliberate assault, destroyed bicycles, tape-recorders, televisions, sewing machines, agricultural tools, tractors, lorries, granaries, educational certificates and many more things that belonged to the Dalits<sup>20)</sup>. The upper-castes even destroyed the crops of the Dalits either manually or by sending their cattle to feed. Many Dalits have only 'title-deeds' to land but are not in possession of their lands. Their land has been either illegally encroached or confiscated on some pretext by the upper-castes<sup>21)</sup>.

Every police raid puts the Dalits ten years back in their progress. Houses are thoroughly searched and things like money, chickens, watches, ornaments, and whatever they could pick up are looted.<sup>22)</sup> The All-India Civil Rights Team reports the police atrocities on Dalits in Bihar in the following way.

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18) Broken People, 9.

19) Indian Express (Bombay edition), April 28, 1998.

20) V. R. Mani, "Center seeks report on the police atrocities on Dalits," The Sunday times of India, December, 3, 1995.

21) About land alienation and land grabbing see: Broken People, 28.

22) Broken People, 4, 76, 79, and 106.

The material seized in this looting is of varied kind, and appears to be aimed at destroying the livelihood of people. Grain or rice stored in the house, all possible utensils, chairs, cots and tables, doorframes, etc., are taken away. Buffaloes were taken away in Uber village in Jehanabad [district, Bihar]. Goats were also taken away in some villages... in Uber, not satisfied with having taken away buffaloes, the police asked the house holders to give them Rs. 100 (US \$ 2.50) a day to feed the buffaloes.<sup>23)</sup>

Dalit women are thrice alienated i.e., they bear the triple burden of caste, class, and gender.<sup>24)</sup> Sexual abuse and other forms of violence against women are used by landlords and the police to inflict political 'lessons' and crush the dissent within the community.<sup>25)</sup> Women are raped by members of the upper-caste, by landlords, and by the police in pursuit of their male relatives.<sup>26)</sup> Dalit female children between the ages of six and eight are inducted into the Devadasi system (divine prostitution)<sup>27)</sup> to serve sex to the Hindu temple priests and devotees in the former times and now to the upper castes.<sup>28)</sup> This system has been the crafty invention of the upper-castes and the Hindu priests to destroy the self-respect of the Dalit women and to keep them under subjugation. Many upper-castes also use the method of keeping Dalit women as concubines to control the Dalit men.<sup>29)</sup>

The upper-castes and the police are ruthless towards the Dalit women. The upper-castes as well as the police raid the Dalit hamlets in midnight with the pretext of searching for arms, rebels and illicit liquor. They rape

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23) All-India civil rights team, "After the Massacre, Findings of an all-India civil rights team," A press release by the All India civil rights team, February, 1998, in: *Broken People*, 81, n. 225.

24) *Broken people*, 2.

25) *Loc. Cit.*

26) *Ibid*, 31.

27) See: Nagendra Kumar Sing, *Divine Prostitution*, New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation 1997.

28) Human Rights Watch interview with Jyothi Raj, Rural Education and Development Society, Bangalore, July, 26, 1998, in: *broken people*, 151, n. 477.

29) The *Arthasastra*, an economic and political treatise in Sanskrit interestingly suggests this method of subjugation of women to control affairs.

Dalit women and indiscriminately kill men, women and children. Invariably in every raid the Dalit hamlets are set on fire. While the women are raped the escaping men are caught and thrown into the fire. One case explains how brutally the Dalit women are killed.

In Nammakal District of Tamil Nadu

A girl was gang-raped, murdered, and then butchered. She belonged to the scavengers' community. The men belonged to the weaving community. They cut off her hand and leg and shaved her. They then cut her head and put a stick into her private parts and then hung her head with stick.<sup>30)</sup>

In another instance in Bihar, an eyewitness describes how Dalit girls were brutally butchered by the upper-castes.

Every one was shot in the chest. I also saw that the panties were torn. One girl was Prabha. She was fifteen years old. She was supposed to go to her husband's house two to three days later. They also cut her breast and shot her in the chest. Another was Manmatiya, also fifteen. They raped her and cut off her breast. The girls were all naked, and their panties were ripped. They also shot them in the vagina. There were five girls in all. All five were raped. All were fifteen or younger. All their breasts were cut off.<sup>31)</sup>

The question why the upper-castes are bent to such heinous and inhuman way of behavior towards the Dalits is answered saying. "Because for them Dalits are nothing. They give more respect to their animals"<sup>32)</sup>

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30) Human Rights Watch interview with TNWF and people's watch, Madras, February, 14, 1998, in: Broken People, 113-114, n. 349.

31) Human Rights Watch interview with Surajmani Devi, Jehanabad district, Bihar, February 25, 1998, in: Broken People, 61-62, n.147.

32) Human Rights Watch interview with TNWF and people's watch, Madras, February, 14, 1998, in: Broken People, 113-114, n. 349.

## **The Upper-Castes-Police-Judiciary-Political Parties-Nexus**

The upper-castes are able to exercise power over the police, area administration, judiciary, and also at the state government level.<sup>33)</sup>

Bhanwari Devi's case is a typical example of the influence of caste basis on the justice system and the inability of lower caste women to obtain redress. It is also a striking example of rape as a weapon of retaliation used to punish and silence women's rights advocates. The nature of the district judge's opinion sounded many alarms, and the case itself was taken up by several women's rights organizations in North India.

Bhanwari Devi joined the Rajasthan Government's Women's Development Programme (WDP), called Sthin, in 1985 ... She reported the marriage of the one-year-old daughter of Ram Karan Gurjar to WDP authorities. The police came to the village and tried to stop the marriage, but the family proceeded with the ceremony in secret. On September 22, 1992, in the presence of her husband, Bhanwari was gang raped by members of the Gurjar family in retaliation for her intervention in the child marriage. Upon approaching the police Bhanwari was told, however, that she was too old and unattractive to merit the attentions of young men.

The trial judge acquitted the accused on the reasoning that "rape is usually committed by teenagers, and since the accused are middle-aged and therefore respectable, they could not have committed the crime. An upper caste man could not have defiled himself by raping a lower-caste woman." Those accused of raping Bhanwari also enjoyed political support. BJP (Bharateeya Janatha Party) leader Kanhaiya Lal Meena reportedly organized a rally in support of the accused. As of February, 1999, Bhanwari was still in court appealing the acquittal.

Bhanwari's case, and in particular the manner in which it was handled by the police and the courts, is not an isolated incident.<sup>34)</sup>

When the police and the judiciary do not want to accept the fact that Bhanwar Devi was raped the 'Doctrine of Denial' is in vogue, because the

cost of knowledge is responsibility. This is the tactic that is employed to shun responsibility leading to only injustice to the Dalits.

Normally when the Dalits go to the police station to report the atrocities of the upper-castes against them, the Dalits are simply driven away from the police station. The police are not willing to register the complaints either because they belong to the same caste or they themselves fear the upper-caste. Even if it comes to the extent of registering the case due to pressure from public and other organizations, the “first information report” (FIR) is manipulated in order not to implicate the upper-castes. The police many a times pacify the Dalits with the promise of reconciliation or compensation. The Police also implicate the Dalits by registering wrong cases against them. Karupaia says:

The police put false cases against us because we organized a procession. They wanted to teach us a lesson. The section 436 charge (mischief by explosive substance) is still pending. One shop was burned but we did not do it. One hundred Thevars (the upper-castes) came behind us in the procession and set fire to a shop on the main road.<sup>35)</sup>

Even when the case is tried in the court of justice, the judiciary is not free from caste affiliations, gender bias, political influences and bribery. The local police biases regarding the case are reflected at the judicial level. Many times a lack of conviction amounts to the judicial corruption.<sup>36)</sup>

The hurdles that are faced by the Dalits at the trial levels are clearly explained by R. Balakrishnan.<sup>37)</sup> He says:

I have studied fifty to sixty cases: invariably the judge concluded that scheduled caste/ scheduled tribe (SC/ST) evidence is not valid because they are an interested party. To attribute a pattern to a community is a prejudice in and of itself. That itself is an atrocity. They do not give

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33) Broken People, 10.

34) *Ibid.*, 176.

35) Human rights watch interview with Karupaia, Murugesan’s older brother, Madurai district, Tamil Nadu, February 15, 1998, in: Broken People, 95, n. 280.

36) *Ibid.*, 73,170, 191-192.

37) R.Balakrishna is the director of the Tamil Nadu chapter of the National Commission for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

weight to SC/ST evidence, but it is too much to expect evidence from a non - SC/ST when the victim is a Dalit. That is the dichotomy.<sup>38)</sup>

Even when judicial commissions are appointed by the State to investigate into the communal and caste clashes the findings are invariably in favor of the State.<sup>39)</sup>

Dalit children are the most unfortunate ones. Because of the family's poverty children are soon inducted into the bonded labor. They lose their childhood beginning with the harsh life system with oppression all around at a very tender age. If there are Dalit parents, who take keen interest in sending their children to school, the children face caste discrimination right in the school and in their very classroom. Most of the teachers belong to the upper-caste; many times the Dalit children are made to sit in the back of the class room or even outside the classroom. Dalit children often complain about their upper-caste teachers calling them names. Even the Dalit parents, who are interested in their children's education, stop their girl children from going to school after some years for fear of the misbehavior of the upper-castes towards them. When Dalit families are implicated into false cases, children do not attend school since their parents cannot spare money for them because money is used to fight court cases. The aftermath of every raid of the Dalit colony is that children are so terrorized by the police and upper-castes' violence that they are afraid of going to school. They are scared of further reprisals. The police have also harassed children, children have complained that the police kicked them and pulled their ears. The police also arrested Dalit school children. This they do against the law by registering their age as nineteen years. This too hampers the studies of the children.<sup>40)</sup>

The police punish anyone, who questions their actions; students are no exception to that. A teenage student narrates her experience:

It was Sunday, so I was home from school. On the street a twenty-years-old girl named Ladha was arrested. I saw it happen and asked my

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38) Human Rights Watch interview with Balakrishna, Madras, February 13, 1998, in: *Broken People*, 192, n.598.

39) *Broken People*, 124, n. 384.

40) *Broken People*, 2, 23, 26, 69, 76, 97 and 159.

neighbour why they were arresting women. The police shouted, “Karuvachi,” which means black girl. I said, “Don’t call me that.” He started using more vulgar words. He said, “What a bold pallachi (prostitute)!” I pleaded with him not to arrest me. I said, “I have to go to school tomorrow, sir.” They used the same vulgar words. “Why are you pallachis studying?” … Still I was taken to the police station. Again I was beaten. They pulled off half my sari.<sup>41)</sup>

The words of the police why the Dalits are studying make their intentions quite clear that the upper-castes see education as the most powerful weapon for the transformation of the Dalits. Unfortunately there are some State Governments like the Government of Andhra Pradesh that were planning to privatize education. This only means that the Dalits will never be in a position to afford education. This will be another blow. Dalits without education would mean that the coming generations will be on the way back to square one.

## Conclusion

This is the Dalit experience. The words of the prophet Micah do depict the upper-caste atrocities against the Dalits, his words sound as though directed to the upper-castes saying: Hear, you so-called upper-castes!

It is not for you to know justice?  
 You who hate the good and love the evil,  
 Who tear the skin off from my people,  
 And their flesh off from their bones;  
 Who eat the flesh of my people,  
 And flay their skin off from them  
 And break their bones in pieces,  
 And chop them up like meat in a kettle,  
 Like flesh in a cauldron.<sup>42)</sup>

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41) Human Rights Watch interview with Muniamal, Virudhunagar district, Tamil Nadu, February 15, 1998, in: *Broken People*, 108-109, n. 333.

42) Micah 3:1-3, revised standard version.

Atrocities on the Dalits in Andhra Pradesh are invariably committed by the people belonging to the dominant Reddy caste. News papers carry news of incessant heinous crimes the Reddys commit against the Dalits. Our former Chief Minister late Dr. Y. S. Rajashekar Reddy, who belonged to the same caste, but Christian by faith has moved a motion in the State Assembly to consider the Dalit Christians for the Scheduled Caste reservations on par with the Dalits of other religious professions. The same has been sent to the Central government for further consideration. Dr. Reddy has also established what he called as 'Andhra Pradesh State Christian Minority Finance Corporation.' It is in and through this Corporation Dalit Christians are aided in their education, vocational training and employment. The Corporation also takes up issues concerning Christians with the State and the Central government. It also helps in reviving the Christian hospitals, educational institutions, reconstruction of church buildings, purchase of burial grounds, taking Christians on a Holy Land tour on a subsidized tariff.

This Corporation has become a ray of hope in the lives of the Dalit Christians of the state of Andhra Pradesh. Church Heads and Christians leaders and the respective state Christian Councils need to pressurize the Chief Ministers to establish such State Christian Minority Finance Corporations catering justice to the Dalits Christians in the Indian Sub-Continent. Mean while the struggle to consider the Dalit Christians for the Scheduled Caste reservations continues in the national scenario.

## Abstract

In the India-Subcontinent the women's liberation, ecological liberation; and with the specific influence of the black theology and the liberation theology, Dalit theology became a possibility in its particular socio-economic, political and religious context. Human tendencies seem to be universally common and oppression of the weak has been a ubiquitous dynamic showing different faces in different continents and countries. Dalit theology in India stands out with its undergirding principle of pathos, and hermeneutical principle of reading the scripture with the eyes of the poor and oppressed.

Atrocities on the Dalits in Andhra Pradesh are invariably committed by the people belonging to the dominant Reddy caste. News papers carry news of incessant heinous crimes the Reddys commit against the Dalits. Our former Chief Minister late Dr. Y. S. Rajashekar Reddy, who belonged to the same caste, but Christian by faith has moved a motion in the State Assembly to consider the Dalit Christians for the Scheduled Caste reservations on par with the Dalits of other religious professions. The same has been sent to the Central government for further consideration. Dr. Reddy has also established what he called as 'Andhra Pradesh State Christian Minority Finance Corporation.' It is in and through this Corporation Dalit Christians are aided in their education, vocational training and employment. The Corporation also takes up issues concerning Christians with the State and the Central government. It also helps in reviving the Christian hospitals, educational institutions, reconstruction of church buildings, purchase of burial grounds, taking Christians on a Holy Land tour on a subsidized tariff.

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### **Key Words**

Dalit Christian, Justice, sub-continent, caste system, caste reservation, India.

“The Subjecthood of Minjung in history  
through *Han, Dan*, and Event” :  
An Interpretation of Suh Namdong and Ahn  
Byungmu

Kwon Jin Kwan\*

**Introductory Remarks**

In this study, I will attempt to reinterpret some of the main theological ideas of two leading minjung theologians, Suh Namdong (1918-1984) and Ahn Byungmu (1922-1996). These ideas are *han* and *dan* in Suh Namdong and “event” in Ahn Byungmu. Personally, the two theologians were my teachers when I studied theology during the period of 1977-1979 at the Mission-Education Institute in Seoul. I was a young activist Christian and the government prevented us from going back to school after a year-long imprisonment for my engagement with the student movement against Park Chunghee’s military dictatorship. This situation induced me to study theology. I was blessed to meet these great teachers and others including Moon Donghwan and Kim Yongbock. Dr. Moon introduced me to a

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seminary in the U.S. and enabled me to continue to study theology.

I will interpret the thoughts of Suh and Ahn from the view point of my concern, which is that of securing the subjective aspect of the minjung in history and society. Minjung are subjective, active participants in history, and they do not allow us to objectify them. Minjung resist and evade the constant effort of the ruling classes to objectify them. Some thinkers may claim that minjung are silent, and that they are forced to silence by the ruling systems. Some oppressed people who are caught in extreme conditions of oppression and suppression may be speechless and voiceless. But I believe that as long as the minjung are humans, they are expressing themselves and at least they have the potentiality to speak out. Their silence itself can be seen as a way of expressing themselves.

I will first tell a story about a woman named Kim Jinsook (1960- ) and attempt to analyze this story by employing three ideas drawn from Suh Namdong and Ahn Byungmu. At the time when I write this paper, Ms. Kim Jinsook is a laid-off worker and activist. She has been struggling for more than nine months to demand jobs for her 400-plus fellow laid-off workers.

Ms. Kim has been perched 115 feet above the ground on the infamous crane #85 at the shipyard. On January 6th Ms. Kim climbed to the top and began her protest against Hanjin laying off more than 400 workers. ... Ms. Kim strategically chose crane #85 to perch herself. This crane is a symbolically powerful symbol of the conflict because it is where another trade unionist, Kim Joo-Ik, hung himself in 2003 after spending 129 days in the crane as he saw no compromise in sight.<sup>1)</sup>

Kim Jinsook is the first woman welding-worker in Korea, having had to work for her living since her youth. She was born into a family of poor peasants; her parents could not afford to pay for a school uniform and fees for her education. She fled home when she was 15 years old, and ended up in a factory dormitory room on whose walls roamed countless bloodsucking bedbugs. Then she peddled ice creams on the beach in Pusan, and in the early mornings and evenings delivered newspapers or milk to houses and

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1) George Baca. *Hanjin Heavy Industries Labor Conflict, Kim Jin-Sook, and the Bus of Hope Movement in South Korea* (August 1, 2011), <http://www.georgebaca.com/2011/08/hanjin-shipyards-labor-conflict-and-bus.html>

offices. During the daytime, she often went around coffee shops and restaurants selling peanuts and weekly newspapers. She worked as a peddler selling shampoos and cleansers, and as a bus-fare collector. She was not a worker of critical consciousness; she worked for her livelihood. She started, at the age of 22, to work as the first welding worker at a big company named Hanjin Heavy Industry.

She went to night classes in order to supplement her poor education. One of her teachers gave her a book entitled *The Life and Death of a Young Laborer: A Critical Biography of Chun Taeil* but she kept it aside for a while because that book looked dull and uninteresting to her. One day she came back to the long unattended book. As she finished reading it, she burst into tears. She wrote,

One day, the company took a day off from operations because of a heavy rain fall, and I had unexpected free time and opened the book rather mindlessly. Shouldn't I have left it unopened? I wept, and the first time ever in my life I felt ashamed of myself. I wailed like a big mountain valley, because I was ashamed of none other than myself.

My conscience collapsed like a mountain. He (Chun Taeil) had lived a life that was similar to mine. But he did not avoid it and wrestled with it by his whole self.

But who am I? What is my life compared with his? I had constantly watched out in order not to step on excrement in a situation which was like a pile of dung. I had liked reading poems and despised those who did not know Nietzsche, and kept thinking of myself as a different species. Who am I, who had despised the title of laborer or worker? I had regarded myself as an office worker?<sup>2)</sup>

Chun Taeil was a sewing machine operator and textile worker. He was sympathetic for the young, assisting his fellow workers in small factories who earned a low income and who became diseased from extended work hours and the dust-filled and polluted environment of the work place. He organized fellow workers and finally he immolated himself in protest against the structures that created such miserable situations for the workers.

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2) Kim Jinsook, *SogumKotnamoo* [The Tree of Salt Flower], (Seoul, Korea: Humanitas, 2011), 47.

Kim Jinsook was changed into a new person. The life story of Chun Taeil was so shocking to her that Ms. Kim instantly became self-conscious about herself and her fellow workers' life situation. She participated in the worker's movement and was involved in changing the union into a more progressive one. She was soon laid off and has been struggling to return to work for 25 years. Her different and persecuted life can be noticed from a few lines from her biographical book, *The Tree of Salt Flower*:

I was 26, Chungshik 27, Yongje 28. I do not like the time of my young age. Remembering it is itself a pain. Remembering the days of being detained by the Anti-communist Interrogation Squad Unit, three times changed in workplace assignment, being on the waiting list for a new assignment, being fired, struggling to enter into the work place, obstructed by police forces, and the lining up of police buses, and being beaten up, is painful. We were beaten up hundreds and thousands of times.<sup>3)</sup>

The world Kim Jinsook finds herself in is a world where the weak cannot live a human life. It is a world for the rich and the powerful. It is a world where the weak are forced to the brink of despair and death. The weak are forced into a deadlock of no hope. But miraculously enough, Kim is more positive about herself and more spirited than anyone else. Theologically speaking, she is resurrected from the depth of *han*, injustice, and the cross.

### *Han*

In order to understand the story of Kim Jinsook in terms of minjung theology, I will introduce some of the ideas employed by the first generation of minjung theologians. These ideas are *han* (an internal sentiment derived from suffering a lengthy period of injustice and oppression), *dan* (cutting off of the evil cycle, and the self-transcendence of minjung), event, subjecthood, and story. Every story of the active, self-conscious minjung has a pattern. His/Her story is composed of the sub-stories of *han*, *dan*, and events.

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3) Ibid., 16-17.

*Han* is the most frequently visited reality of minjung by minjung theologians. *Han* is an accumulated feeling of long-time sufferings. For example, a woman who is married to an extended patriarchal family may have this sentiment. She may have been treated as a servant only because she is wife and daughter-in-law. Daughters and women in a Korean family were less protected and educated. They bosom *han* in themselves.

People are sometimes conscious of their own *han*, but most of the time their *han* is submerged into sub-consciousness. When they are conscious of *han* and know the reasons and causes, they can speak out and attempt to find ways to resolve it. But when it is submerged into sub-consciousness or unconsciousness, they are silent and mute.

Returning to Kim Jinsook, it is when Kim read the biography of Chun Taeil that she gained her self-consciousness of her *han*. Before that time, *han* was within her but latent and submerged in her unconsciousness. The event of encountering Chun Taeil by reading the biography broke up her old consciousness which was not self-reflective and almost in the state of unconsciousness. *Han* without self-consciousness of it can kill and destroy the self and society. We hear many stories of self-destructive people who at the same time destroy others too.

Kim Jinsook was thrown into the world of *han*. Her life itself is filled with *han*; and she has *han* in her inner self. Now the *han* has emerged into her consciousness and it has become a creative, not destructive, power in herself. She risked her life in order to be honest toward the reality surrounding her and by this risk she made her *han* historical, creative and transformative. She chose the crane no. 85 at the Pusan shipyard of the Hanjin Heavy Industry because she believed that her fellow deceased worker Kim Jooik must be resurrected and made alive again. Before she climbed to the Crane #85 of Hanjin Heavy Industry, she wrote in a letter, "I will make the crane a place of resurrection and triumph, not of death, tears, *han*, and sorrows. I will return alive with the soul of Kim Joo-ik." It is sure that she is faithfully representing the will of many *han*-ridden workers. By the rising of Kim Joo-ik many people and workers will also rise and the workers' situation will become transformed into a more humane and just one.

She cut off her own desire to be comfortable and stable in her private life. She has become a heroine; her case has become a hot issue on the national level. The political parties, mass media and internet

communications show interest in her case. She confessed often such a life was not of her willful decision, but an outcome of her situation and circumstances. She said that her life had been determined not by herself, but by others. It means that her situation made her determined to be the one she is now. However, I would also like to state that her present consciousness is an outcome of her firm subjective decision to be faithful to the will of minjung for the emancipation of the whole society, including both the oppressed and oppressors. I would further mean that she puts historical tasks for minjung in the first place before her own private desire and that it means that she performs cut-offs, that is, *dan*.

*Han* can be either creative or destructive. In his monumental study entitled "Towards a Theology of *Han*," Suh Namdong defines *Han* as "an accumulation of suppressed and condensed experiences of oppression. Thus accumulated *han* is inherited and transmitted, boiling in the blood of the people."<sup>4</sup> So "there is the fearful *han* which can kill, cause revenge, destroy and hate endlessly."<sup>5</sup> Also *han* can be a creative force, by being "sublimated as higher spiritual power."<sup>6</sup> But this positive power arises when *dan*, self-denial and cutting off the evil cycle within oneself, is practiced. Poet Kim Chiha describes in a poetic way: "I separate my body and mind from every comfort and easy life, circles of petit bourgeois dreams, and secular swamps without depth. This is total content of my faith - I know that only vigorous self-denial is my way. Let us leave as a wayfarer, leaving everything behind. This is the revolution which I have to show and realize with my life itself."<sup>7</sup> By practice of *dan*, *han* is transformed into a creative force. Artists and scholars including theologians must have *han* and sublimate it into a creative force leaving behind the self-destructive and self-corrosive elements in it.

Poet Kim Chiha also writes, "People's *han* and rage ought to be liberated from its masochistic exercise to be a great and fervent clamor asking for God's justice. If needed it ought to be developed into a decisive and organized explosion. This miraculous transition lies in religious

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4) Suh Namdong, "Towards a Theology of *Han*," *Minjung Theology, People as the Subjects of History*, CTC of the Christian Conference of Asia, ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis books, 1983), 64.

5) *Ibid.*, 65.

6) *Ibid.*

7) *Ibid.*, 64.

commitment and in internal and spiritual transformation." 8) Kim Chiha calls himself "a priest of *han* with this philosophy of *dan*." 9)

We can conclude that as active subjects in history, minjung have two essential elements in their (sub-)consciousness, *han* and *dan*. *Han* is spontaneously accumulated into the psyche of minjung. But *dan* is more intentional. In order to have the character of *dan* one must practice self-control, self-transcendence and self-sublimation. *Dan* is a decision made by a subject.

Kim Jinsook has spontaneously and unconsciously accumulated a feeling that could not be named. Naming it was not within her capability. It was a strange but bad feeling; it was however, thought of by her as an innate, inevitable part of her psyche. The story of Chun Taeil changed her life. Her *han* has turned into a creative energy that empowered her with rage against inhuman structures. It was the *han* that sustained her as an activist. Without *han* we would not be workers for the poor, and we may become functionaries or managers of social work for the poor. We must attain the *han* of minjung when we want to engage with and for minjung. The minjung theologian must receive *han*, identify him/herself with, and be able to feel, the *han* of minjung, e.g., the *han* of the poor and the unemployed. Suh Namdong admonished students of theology to become the priests of *han*.

According to Suh Kwangsun, *han* is a "deep awareness of the contradictions" and a "yearning for justice." The most typical phenomenon of *han* can be seen in the stories of Korean women under Confucian laws and customs, which are particularly patriarchal and oppressive of women.<sup>10)</sup> Suh Kwangsun further argues that *han* is not an individual phenomenon, but a collective one. *Han* can be "cured only when the total structure of the oppressed society and culture is changed."<sup>11)</sup>

Here we see some development in understanding of *han* from one to another thinker. Suh Namdong reviewed the idea of *han* elaborated by poet Kim Chiha; Suh Kwangsun reviewed the interpretation of *han* by Suh

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8) Ibid., 65.

9) Ibid.

10) David Kwangsun Suh, "A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation," in *Minjung Theology*, 23.

11) Ibid.

Namdong. In such process, the meaning of *han* became step by step clearer; and the statement on *han* got longer and more sophisticatedly detailed. It is the minjung poets and artists and minjung theologians who most sensitively responded to the reality of the *han* of minjung. It is minjung theologians who had the keenest interest in the nature of *han* as the “energy of for a revolution or rebellion.”<sup>12)</sup>

As I already noted, the moment when Kim Jinsook became self-conscious of her *han* in her depth was when she encountered Chun Taeil in his *Critical Biography*. It was like the moment when the Apostle Paul encountered the resurrected Jesus in Damascus and was a turning point in the life of Ms. Kim. Her *han* was no longer a self-pity, self or psychological disease. Rather, it became an ever overflowing spiritual fountain. *Han* became a sustaining power for the weak. In the weakness of *han*, *han* is the inner power of the weak and the poor.

### *Dan*

*Dan* sustains the inner spiritual power of *han* in the poor and the weak by inducing it to be a creative force for justice in society. *Dan* is the cutting off. It cuts off worldly secular attachment. It sublimates and annuls the will to revenge. *Dan* is to overcome the destructive and nihilistic aspect of *han*. Collectively it is to cut off the vicious cycle of violence and revenge.<sup>13)</sup>

At this conjunction, I would like to compare the story of Kim Jinsook with that of Chang Ildam. *Chang Ildam* is a socio-biography of minjung in the form of a memo. It is an unfinished work of the poet Kim Chiha. The story goes thus:

The butcher Chang Ildam is a wanted man. Having escaped from prison, he hides in a back street where prostitutes live. He happens to see one prostitute giving birth to a child. She is dying. Her body is rotting with venereal disease. She has tuberculosis; and she is also mentally ill. Yet she is giving birth to a child. At the sight of it, he says, “Ah, from a rotten body, new life is coming out! It is God who is coming out!” He learns the truth of the world. He kneels down and says, “Oh, my mother,

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12) Ibid., 26.

13) Suh Namdong, *ibid.*, 65.

God is in your womb. God is the very bottom." ... He becomes a preacher of liberation. He meets and argues with various Urban Industrial Mission pastors, Catholic priests, intellectuals, professors, trade union leaders, Buddhist monks, servicemen, and social workers. ... He learns many things from this encounter which deepen his thoughts. His previous blunt and violent attitudes change into more flexible ideas; and they are sublimated into the philosophy of *dan* and the road of a wayfarer.

Chang Ildam encounters the event of truth, a sick, dying woman giving birth to a child. This encounter is shocking and reveals the whole truth of reality. This encountering event opens up a beginning of new life, a life of *dan*. Through *dan* the unleashed energy becomes harnessed, less destructive, and more flexible, and thus more creative and transformative. Learning through meeting with various people, that is, through participation in social and collective issues, one can evolve into a higher and more mature state of being. Kim Jinsook also attained necessary wisdom and knowledge through participation in collective struggles and issues.

While *han* is a primitive energy that has been spontaneously accumulated within the minjung, *dan* is the outcome of a truthful event with which the subject encounters and, by which he/she is changed. For Kim Jinsook it is the story of Chun Taeil, and for Chang Ildam the dying woman bearing a child. By the event the self is divided into an old self and a new self, and the old self is receded from the scene by the event. Minjung as a collective entity also encounters historical events and changes into a new minjung.

The process of *dan* is a never-ending process in the journey of Chang Ildam and Kim Jinsook. *Dan* takes place incessantly in the individual and collective journey. *Dan* is a self-conscious action of the subjects. Minjung as subjects are self-conscious of *han* in inner lives. *Han* is a subjective power. It gives not only physical and spiritual power, but also a cognitive orientation. *Dan* makes minjung to be the subjects of history. *Han*, as a primitive power, provides minjung with the potentiality to be the subjects of history. *Dan* realizes it into actuality. But *han* can devour and stifle the people like a life-destroying monster. *Han* can transform an individual and collectivity into monsters. Roaming monsters can destroy people and a city. But this monster can be tamed through *dan* and become a fountain of

positive energy. Those who have not accumulated *han* within themselves in different reasons do not have the potentiality at all to be creative.

## Event

Now I would like to turn to the problem of event. Ahn Byungmu was not as much concerned about *han* as about event. It seems that Ahn Byungmu took the importance of *han* for granted. This seems why he has not shown interest in the *han* of *minjung*. Ahn was interested in the potentiality of transcendence that *minjung* possess. One of his catchphrases was “You are the possibility (or, potentiality.)” His theology was often called a theology of event. Let us look at his remark on event. “Important is not the word, but the event. In the beginning there was the event, not the word.”<sup>14)</sup> Ahn focuses on the events where Jesus was involved, while theologians from the West focus on the words of Jesus. He believes that Western theologians tend to subtract the word from the event, although Jesus’ word cannot be thought of without its evental base. Jesus’ word was always connected to its evental context. Event takes place and then word follows.

Ahn states about event as follows:

Western theology asks only who Jesus is, about his *persona*. Its answer is that his person is this or that. Western theologians find comfort in such answers. But I do not think that is right. My response is “Jesus is an event!” and “God is also an event!” I came to realize it. Regarding Jesus as a person is wrong! This enlightenment has become a turning point in my theological journey. Event, not a Person! The person of Jesus two thousand years ago in Galilee, Palestine has no significant meaning for me. Event is more significant. This enlightenment came to me late in my life. Jesus was an event! This awareness made me turn from study on historical Jesus to *minjung* theology.

In the past my study on historical Jesus focused on the person of Jesus. However, a new insight into Jesus opens up a new road that leads anew to my search for historical Jesus. ...

I would like to see Jesus as the event of *minjung*, a collective event. The

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14) Ahn Byungmu, *Minjungshinhak Iyaki*. [The Story of *Minjung* Theology], (Seoul, Korea: Korea Institute of Theology, 1987), 31.

event of Jesus was not a complete, 'once and for all' event two thousand years ago. It happens again and again not only in the church, but in history. This awareness lets my theology of the event easily pass over to minjung theology.<sup>15)</sup>

I liken the event of minjung to the magma of volcano (molten rock below ground) by analogy. An amount of magma erupts at a certain time in history. In Jesus' time, a large volcano erupted and overflowed magma, which is the event of Jesus. Other eruptions have taken place at different historical moments. The events of minjung that are taking place today are not disparate and separate ones, but are connected to the event of Jesus two thousand years ago. ... Jesus appears to us through the events of minjung! It is nonsense to quest for the Jesus of two thousand years ago, or to quest for the Christ in doctrine. Important is where Christ of today - in my word, today's event of Jesus - appears.<sup>16)</sup> (my trans.)

At this point, we must ask what the event is. I would refer to Alain Badiou's understanding of event. For him, an event is "purely haphazard, cannot be inferred from the situation. An event is unpredictable result of chance and chance alone. Whereas the structure of a situation never provides us with anything other than repetition, every event is unprecedented and unexpected. Only the event enables the assertion that there can be genuine novelty in being."<sup>17)</sup> Then, I would understand an event as an emerging singular multiple (in ontological jargon) arising out of our historical situation. It has such a novelty that it does not share the commonalities with the components of situation. Event brings us a new thing, a liberation and freedom. The event of Jesus was a unique event in history, which changed ordinary people into a prophetic people of God. This event takes place on and on in history.

I would like to analyze the nature of the event from the perspective of Ahn Byungmu.<sup>18)</sup>

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15) Ibid., 25-26.

16) Ibid., 35.

17) Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, (Univ of Minnesota Press, 2003), 114.

- 1) An event is a subjective event. Event must have its own adherents. Christ event brings forth its adherents. Chun Taeil as an event created his adherents (progressive workers). Adherents are not objects; they are subjects. They are those who have decided that such an event is their own event. In this sense, theologians are those who are critical of structures that force minjung to be objects of the control and ministry. Minjung are subjects and ought to be subjects in, and of, history. By becoming subjects minjung can encounter events, events of Jesus, in other words, the moments of truth. An event has the moment of truth, which makes the event true. As Badiou puts it, "every truth has its origin in event."<sup>19)</sup> It is minjung theologians who proclaim the event of Jesus as truthful. With Ahn Byungmu, minjung theologians proclaim Jesus as a truthful event for history.
- 2) An event comes out of multiple relationships. But event is beyond them and brings them into a new relationship. The Jesus event also arose out of power relations in his times. But the Jesus event did not share the sameness with them, which made his event unique and singular.
- 3) In an event there are both horizontal and vertical dimensions. Here, the vertical is truthful, without which an event is not an authentic event and is merely a repetition of the situation. An event is "evental" because it has a vertical dimension.<sup>20)</sup> In a political arena, a truth is, more than anything else, a justice realized singularly and uniquely in a concrete situation.
- 4) For Christians, an event is a Jesus event taking place in history, and specially in minjung movements which are tackling historical contradictions and fulfilling the historical mission of minjung.
- 5) An event takes the form of story. Event is an action and is transmitted to others in narratives, anecdotes, and stories. Therefore historical truth takes the form of action, story, and event, not the form of

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18) Here I changed my previous discussion of Ahn's understanding of the event in my book, *Yesu, Minjungui Sangjing, Minjung, Yesuui Sangjing*, [Jesus, Symbol of Minjung; Minjung, Symbol of Jesus] (Seoul: Dongyon, 2009), 445-446.

19) *Ibid.*, xxv.

20) Refer to Ahn Byungmu's article, "Salvation through Event," *Googolhanun Chowolja*, [Begging Transcendent Being], (Ch'onan, Korea: Korea Theology Institute, 1998), 232.

proposition and doctrine.

## Concluding Remarks

In this study I have explored the subjectivity of the oppressed minjung, through the terms of *han*, *dan*, and event. The terms *han* and *dan* were employed by Suh Namdong, Suh Kwangsun and many other minjung theologians, and the term event by Ahn Byungmu only. I intended to see how subjecthood is evolving from the experiences of the oppressed minjung. I looked at the life of Ms. Kim Jinsook, who is still standing, demanding for justice, high on the crane #85, experiencing life and death, and also hope and despair. I have found that her life and consciousness consist of *han*, event, and *dan*. *Dan* is a long process through which she grows, and in which she continues her struggle for justice. Through *dan* she has experienced, and will continue to experience, numerous events throughout the life.

I put these three stages in sequence in order to explain the developing process of the self-consciousness of minjung: *han*-event-*dan*. But throughout the life we experience these three phases simultaneously. The ordinary minjung commonly but involuntarily possess *han*. *Han* is a spontaneous and natural experience of all oppressed people. Those who bosom *han* seem ironically in the most privileged position to receive the Holy Spirit. They are the ones who receive the mission and blessing of God. *Han* becomes a creative and liberating force, only when it is harnessed by *dan*, the cutting-off of the evil cycle. Events and moments of truth in history help turn hitherto unconscious people to a self-conscious one who practice *dan*.

The whole project of minjung theology and other different liberation theologies must be to transform the historical status of the oppressed people (minjung) from object-hood to subject-hood. Minjung have been the objects of rule and oppression by the ruling classes. Oppression hurts the ordinary, oppressed people. To the extent of their suffering, *han* accumulates itself within them. One of the tasks of minjung theology is to induce this original energy of minjung toward a creative and liberating force of history.

## Abstract

The study is an attempt to analyze the socio-biography of a labor worker named Kim Jin Sook, who has protested against the lay-offs of hundreds workers by a industrial company for more than 25 years, employing some of the main theological ideas of two leading minjung theologians, Suh Namdong (1918-1984) and Ahn Byungmu (1922-1996). These ideas are *han* and *dan* in Suh Namdong and “event” in Ahn Byungmu. The author argues that the self-conscious minjung follows the following process of arriving at the self-consciousness of minjung: *han-event-dan*, which does not always take place in sequence, but often takes place simultaneously in the whole sociobiography of a minjung. The author argues that the whole project of minjung theology is to transform minjung into the subjecthood in history from their servile objecthood. Through going through the process of *han-event-dan*, minjung, it is argued, attain to the subjecthood in history. The author also argues that the process of the self-awareness of minjung has a similar pattern.

### Key Words

*Han, Dan*, Event, Story

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# The Priest of *Han* as a Theme in Christian-Shamanist Interfaith Dialogue

Kang Won Don\*

## Preface

In the period in which the Korean *minjung*<sup>1)</sup> has struggled against the military dictatorship, Suh Namdong, one of the founders of Korean *minjung* theology, suggested that the church should be engaged in the *minjung* liberation movement and practice the priesthood of *han*<sup>2)</sup> to relieve the

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He is Professor at the Hanshin University and teaches social ethics and Minjung theology. He received his Dr. theol. at the Ruhr University Bochum in Germany. In his dissertation he has started from an ecological concept of work and articulated a new basis of Economic Ethics. As Minjung theologian of the second generation he has made efforts to combine the Marxist analysis of reality and the theological reflection with each other in the struggle of the Korean Minjung for democracy, justice and a sustainable society. He has developed his own theology that is deeply rooted in the liberation praxis of the Minjung and the materialism and named it a 'materialistic theology.'

- 1) *Minjung* is a Korean word for the people who are suppressed, exploited and marginalized in society. They seem to be silent and powerless, but under certain circumstances they clearly express their strong will to change their status quo from the bottom.
- 2) Cf., Suh Namdong, "Towards a Theology of Han," *Minjung Theology: People as The Subject of History*, ed. Kim Yongbock (Singapore: A CTC-CCA Publication, 1981), 54: *Han* is a "feeling of defeat, resignation and nothingness" on the one hand. On the other, it is "a feeling with a tenacity of will for life which

*minjung* from their *han*. He situated *han* as a central theme of theological reflection and so succeeded in shaping a very authentic form of Korean theology. But for many people who are foreign to Korean culture in which *han* is an underlying emotion it is somewhat difficult to understand his theology of *han*. Some have blamed it as uncommunicative.

*Han* and *hanpuri*, release from *han*, are favorite themes in various genre of modern Korean literature and culture like poetry, novels, drama, film, opera etc. At the sight of the positive response of the public to them, *han* and *hanpuri* remain still as a cultural code with which Koreans are very familiar. In *pansori*, traditional dramatic songs, and in mask dances, *han* and *hanpuri* have bound actors, audience and spectators together. *Pansori* and narratives in mask dances were differentiated from the narratives of village festivals, the original form of which was the shaman's epic. In this epic, which is recited in shaman rituals, people can find typical expressions of *han* and *hanpuri*. In this tradition one of the basic tasks of shamans was to liberate people, whether alive or dead, from their own *han* and this is still now the case. Therefore, without a deep understanding of Korean shamanism it would be difficult to approach the *han* which is prevalent in the emotion and mentality of Koreans.

If the thesis of Suh Namdong were valid that the church ought to practice the priesthood of *han*, then protestant ecclesiology and ministry would be deepened and widened. A study of shaman's *hanpuri* could be helpful in articulating new concepts in church and ministry.

In this article I will examine as a first step how influential shamanism still is in Korean society. In this connection, I will investigate briefly how this shamanism is incorporated in Korean protestantism. Second, I will explain *han* and *hanpuri* in the context of Korean shamanism. Third, I will examine how *Minjung* theology has employed the themes of *han* and *hanpuri*. Lastly, I will give some suggestions about spiritual formation for ministry.

## **The Influential Power of Shamanism in Korea**

The current state of Korean shamanism cannot be grasped in official government statistics. The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism statistics

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comes to weaker beings.”

on religions have a certain category of investigation to which Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Confucianism, Won Buddhism, Cheondoism, other religious beliefs, no belief and no answer belong. There is no place for Shamanism in it.<sup>3)</sup> It is very probable that the shamanistic devotees were categorized into “other,” “no answer” or “no belief.” In the religious statistics in 1994 Buddhists amounted to 21.6% of the population, Protestants 32.9%, Catholics 11.8%, Confucians 1.6%, Won Buddhists 0.5%, the Cheondoists 0.1%, other 0.9%, non-religious 30.2% and no answer 0.5%. In the statistics of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism on the religious state based on the data which each religious body has issued the *Daejongkyo*, worship of the national progenitor *Dangun*, was added, but shamanism left no trace here.<sup>4)</sup>

Even if the state of shamanism in Korea cannot be apprehended in governmental statistics, the influential power of shamanism can be estimated from a wide-spread phrase that people are Christians in the brain, Buddhists in the bosom and shamanists in the internal organs. This phrase indicates that shamanism underlies deeply the religiosity of Koreans. It could be said that shamanism forms the archetype of Korean religiosity. It has been emphasized that the shamanistic rituals have maintained their basic procedures without essential change from antiquity till nowadays.<sup>5)</sup> It means that the shamanistic worldview and religiosity structure have been anchored deeply in the religious life of Koreans and successfully transmitted from generation to generation.

Although shamanism is not treated as an official religion in modern Korea, it exercised strong influences on the state and the community in some historical periods. Above all, shamans played a role as rulers in ancient society. In the *Gojoseon*, allegedly the first monarchy in the Korean Peninsula and Manchuria (2333[?] - 108 BC), rulers were named *Dangun*; the meaning of this is *shaman*.<sup>6)</sup> In this point, *Dangun* can be considered as

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3) That there is no place for shamanism in the governmental statistics is one of the important pieces of evidence that shamanism has been systematically excluded from the official sphere. I return to such a systematic exclusion later.

4) The religious statistics in 2002 are regarded as unbelievable because the total number of believers is twice the total population.

5) In-hoe Kim, “Korean Shamanism: A Bibliographical Introduction,” *Shamanism: The Spirit World of Korea*, eds. Chai-shin Yu and R. Guisso (Berkeley, California: Asian Humanities Press, 1988), 12.

a priest-king. *Gojoseon* was a theocratic society in which the ruler did not dominate the priesthood, but on the contrary the priesthood was superior to the kingship.

In the Record of Eastern Tribes in the Chronicle of the Wei Kingdom in the History of Three Kingdoms by Chen Sou (AD 233-297) there is a noteworthy record: "every year after the harvest, eastern tribes eat, drink and dance together all the night; in the dawn they go to the prison, open the prison gate and liberate prisoners." "Eastern tribes" in the quotation indicate forefathers of the Koreans in the northern area of the Korean Peninsula. "Dance" means certainly a shaman's dance, in which people danced together orgiastically. There is no doubt that such a shamanistic ritual created the primitive orgy in which the exhausted energy of life could be regenerated for the next year's agriculture and harvest and that community members were thus united in strong solidarity.<sup>7)</sup> The recreation of life-energy through the shamanistic ritual had a political aspect also. From the description above it can be assumed that people full of life-energy destroyed the prison, letting prisoners free in order to integrate them in the communal life. Religion and politics were not separated from each other, but were interwoven together.<sup>8)</sup> The shaman played a role of mediator and promoter for communication in nature, among the people, and even in politics; in a word, in all the dimensions of life.<sup>9)</sup>

In the period of the Three Kingdoms (4th-7th centuries AD) the relation between priesthood and kingship was reversed. Shamans functioned as advisers for rulers in the state affairs in the following areas: maintenance of kingship, personnel matters, settlement of the public sentiment, decisions on

6) Lim Jaehae, "The Political Function of *Gut* Culture and the Political Status of the Shaman," *Comparative Folklore* 26 (2004/2), 240. (Korean edition), *Gut* means a shaman's ritual.

7) Kim Taegon, *A Study of Korean Shamanism* (Seoul: Jipmoondang, 1981), 161ff. (Korean edition)

8) Cha Namhee, "Political Change and Shamanism in Ancient Korean society," *Korean Politics* 39/2 (2005/6), 311. (Korean edition)

9) The Chinese character for shaman is *mu* (巫). It symbolizes that the shaman mediates through ecstatic dance a communication between heaven and earth. If heaven and the earth communicate and cooperate in harmony, then all things live in fertility and prosperity. Such a communication is created also among the people through the shaman's ritual which breaks down blocked barriers.

war, prosperity in agriculture and harvest, fighting off epidemic diseases, flood, drought, etc. Some shamans were killed by kings because they were forthright to their rulers.<sup>10)</sup> In the period of the Unified *Silla* (AD 676-935) and in the following period of the *Goryeo* dynasty (AD 918-1392) shamans practiced the state rituals. Especially in the *Goryeo* dynasty shamans led the *Palkwanhoe*, the highest state ritual, in which prayers were offered for harmony among all things on earth and under heaven, the prosperity of the state and the welfare of the people.

But shamanism was systematically expelled from the official sphere after the *Chosun* dynasty (AD 1392-1910) was founded and which employed Confucianism as the ruling ideology. This Confucianism dominated the whole official sphere. Legal codices were designed according to Confucian principles; the highest-level state examination to recruit ranking officials was based on the knowledge of confucianistic canons; the status system, the domination structure in the village, the patriarchal family structure were reinforced under the influence of Confucianism. The state rituals which had been practiced traditionally by shamans were abolished, Confucian-patterned state rituals were introduced and the ruling elite adopted the Confucian ancestral rite.<sup>11)</sup> Shamanism withdrew to the unofficial sphere and survived barely as a sub-culture but maintained its influence among the underprivileged and especially among women who were excluded from the Confucian family rituals. Shamans lost their dignity and formed the caste of the lowest ranking with slaves, tanners, butchers, pallbearers, monks and prostitutes.

The elite who had a strong will to modernize the state and society from the period of the falling *Chosun* dynasty regarded shamanism as the core of pre-modernity and asserted firmly on eradicating it.<sup>12)</sup> In the Japanese colonial period (AD 1910-1945) shamanism was all the more severely suppressed by the authorities who would eliminate the national identity of the Koreans, because it was regarded as the very indigenous religion of

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10) Lim Jaehae, *ibid.*, 254f.

11) Lim Jaehae, *ibid.*, 260.

12) Lee Yongbum, "A Study on the Negative View on the Shamanism in Modern Korean Society," *Studies on Korean Shamanism* 9 (2005/2), 163: "What is interesting here is that there is no reference to the positive aspect of the folklore religiosity in the newspapers published at the end of the *Chosun* dynasty and in the colonial period." (Korean edition)

Korea. The colonial officials and the Japanese folklorists considered shamanism as a barbarian custom and, what was worse, as superstition. Such a viewpoint towards shamanism appeared also among the American missionaries who came to Korea for the purpose of preaching the gospel. They regarded the shaman's rituals and ancestor rites as superstition and asked the Koreans to convert from them to the gospel. The negative perspective on shamanism as superstition or pre-modern heritage prevails still among the Korean elite.

Even though shamanism has been depreciated for a long time, it has exercised strong influences on the life of the *minjung* and especially on the sub-culture of women. In this tradition it has played a role in improving the well-being of the local community. Shamans have practiced the *maeulgut* (shaman's village ritual) periodically in order to pray for prosperity and peace in the community and to expel misfortunes from the village. The main figure in the *maeulgut* was usually the shaman who was regarded as the spiritual power, and who had her shrine in the village. The *maeulgut* has been practiced everywhere in the country, especially in the rural areas and in the fishing villages. Moreover, 80% of the population lived in these areas even at the beginning of the 1960s when the modernization process had not yet reached its full strength. Therefore it is no exaggeration to say that shamanism has shaped the core of Korean life culture. As for a shaman's rituals for individuals or a family it was customary that the shaman was invited to play a certain *gut* to let the dead go to a good place or to release the dead from the distress of their *han*; the shaman's rituals were practiced in order to wipe out diseases, to expel misfortunes from the family and to bring fortune to the family. But shamanism has sometimes deteriorated into a magical tool for imprecation or degraded to a machine for an infantile wish-fulfillment which is closely bound with greed and avarice.

Shamanism is still powerful and influential in the modern Korea in which a sort of modernization and individualization euphoria is dominant. As is evident in the governmental statistics, shamanism is still expelled from the official sphere. But the shaman's rituals have been flexibly adapted to the changed life circumstances of modern Korea.

All foreign religions have gained unique colors through the prism of Korean shamanism which has formed a deep layer of Korean religiosity. Korean Buddhism has amalgamated with shamanism, so that it has taken some elements foreign to original Buddhism. For example, there are

*Samsingak* and *Myongbujeon* in a Buddhist temple. *Samsingak* was originally the shaman's shrine for *Samsinhalmi*, the divinity of fertility and pregnancy and *Myongbujeon* the sanctuary for the ritual to lead the spirit of the dead to the Land of Happiness. Such a ritual is specific to Korean shamanism and the Confucian ancestral rite is in the background of shamanistic rituals for the dead and ancestors. In shamanism it is believed that the spirits of the dead or ancestors haunt and bring diseases and misfortunes if they are not properly treated and appeased. According to Ryu Dongsik, a famous indigenization theologian, who tried earnestly to make an interfaith dialogue with shamanism, Koreans could easily accept the Christian god in the first phase of evangelization, because they had the shamanistic concept of the supreme god in the sky. *Hananim* as the name of the Christian God in Korean resembles *Haneunim* as the celestial supreme god in Korea.<sup>13)</sup>

The influence of shamanism upon the protestant churches in Korea is very apparent. It has left unique traits in the belief and ritual practice of Korean Protestants. Lee Bock-kyu has investigated these traits and summarized them in the following ten theses:

- 1) Prayer-at-dawn is closely related to the worship of "Chowang," one of the house spirits.
- 2) The three-time calling of "Lord!" at some prayer meetings is related to the invocation of god in shamanistic practices.
- 3) Going to a mountain for prayer is associated with the shaman's practice of mountain prayer.
- 4) The expression of "to receive a prayer" is related to the oracle-seeking of folk religion.
- 5) The intentional tone variation of the minister at special prayer resembles the voice change of the shaman when she tries to get an oracle.
- 6) "Wish-fulfilling thanks donation" or "wish-fulfilling offering" resembles the give-and-take offerings of folk religion.
- 7) The rigorous rule of donation preparation is associated with that of sacrifice preparation in folk religion.

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13) Ryu Dongsik, *Korean Religions and Christianity* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1965), 37. (Korean edition)

- 8) The invocation of blessing heard at donation prayers is related to that of folk religion.
- 9) The blessing-giving holy meeting at New Year's Eve is associated with folk religion's various forms of rituals at New Year.
- 10) The impolite speech of some famous evangelists is associated with the speech style of shamans that they choose when granting an oracle.<sup>14)</sup>

Such unique phenomena which are observed widely among protestant ministers and laymen can be explained from the assumption that the shamanistic machinery for wish-fulfillment has been accepted consciously or unconsciously. Korean protestants are inclined to consider the minister as a mediator who transmits their wishes like health, long life, success, promotion, admission, wealth and so on to God the omnipotent and who receives miraculous means of wish-fulfillment from God. Even some ministers seem to order God to fulfill their wishes which are submitted to him. They seem to take over the job of the shaman as master of the divinity. Therefore some protestant ministers are blamed for being shamanized. But such a shamanistic ministry is not my concern.

### **Toward a Proper Understanding of Shamanism and the Shaman**

Korean shamanism is regarded as a branch of the shamanism of Siberia and Central Asia but the origin of the Korean branch has not been accurately investigated. However, some archeological findings and the Korean language, which belongs to the Ural-Altaic language family, indicate that Korean ancestors originated in the northwestern area of Siberia, moved through the area around Baikal to the Korean Peninsula, expelled the natives and settled there.

M. Eliade presented his classical study on the shamanism of Siberia and Central Asia in which he defined shamanism as "archaic techniques of ecstasy."<sup>15)</sup> His definition started from the premise that shamanism has its

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14) Lee Bock-kyu, "Unique Phenomena in Korean Protestantism and their Relationship with Folklore Religiosity," *Korean Folklore* 34 (2001/12), 165-175. (Korean edition) The summarized ten theses are the author's. (179f.)

15) Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, tr. from the French by Williard R. Trask (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1970), 4.

own intrinsic essence and structure before its historical development and transfiguration. Shamanism has appeared in various forms and shapes in different areas, but Eliade saw its essential and intrinsic distinction in ecstasy. It is beyond history and civilization. "There is no reason whatever for regarding it as the result of a particular historical moment, that is as produces by a certain form of civilization. Rather, we would consider it fundamental in the human condition, and hence known to the whole of archaic humanity."<sup>16)</sup> The shaman is "the great master of ecstasy." It is true that magicians and medicine men experience ecstasy, but the shaman's ecstasy has a particular specialty. "The shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld."<sup>17)</sup> Ascent to the sky and descent to the underworld amounts to the essential sign of the shaman's ecstasy. The shaman is chosen by the community, but in order to be recognized as a shaman, he must acquire the capacity for ecstasy. Without exception a shaman candidate is afflicted with a certain "initiatory sickness" in which he or she falls into the first ecstatic experience. All the ecstatic experience of a shaman candidate involves "the traditional schema of an initiation ceremony: suffering, death, resurrection."<sup>18)</sup> In the first ecstasy the candidate has one or more of the following experiences: "dismemberment of the body, followed by a renewal of the internal organs and viscera; ascent to the sky and dialogue with the gods or spirits; descent to the underworld and conversations with spirits and the souls of dead shamans; various revelations, both religious and shamanic (secrets of profession)."<sup>19)</sup> After such ecstatic experiences the shaman becomes an entirely new person. In the initiatory sickness full of suffering and affliction the shaman deeply apprehends human conditions. This initiatory sickness has not been overcome until the shaman acquires the ability to cure others. As Eliade puts it, "like the sick man, the religious man is projected onto a vital plane that shows him the fundamental data of human existence, that is, solitude, danger, hostility of the surrounding world. But the primitive magician, the medicine man, or the shaman is not only a sick man; he is, above all, a sick

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16) M. Eliade, *ibid.*, 504.

17) M. Eliade, *ibid.*, 5.

18) M. Eliade, *ibid.*, 33.

19) M. Eliade, *ibid.*, 34.

man who has been cured, who has succeeded in curing himself.”<sup>20)</sup> It is noteworthy, so I think, that the experience of the initiatory sickness provides the shaman with the ability to sympathize with others in suffering and sickness and to be in solidarity with the weak and the afflicted. Without the ability for sympathy and solidarity the shaman’s healing competency could lose its proper direction.

It is true that Eliade’s understanding of shamanism as an archaic technique of ecstasy makes the fundamental structure of shamanism clear and distinct. But it is very problematic that his definition of shamanism has nothing to do with history, social structure and ideology. Therefore Eliade couldn’t explain in which social structure and in which ideological frameworks shamanism came into being, and under which historical and cultural conditions shamanisms are differentiated one from one another. Many scholars have made efforts to overcome such limits of Eliade’s theory. First of all, it was S. M. Shirokogoroff, the Russian specialist in Tungus shamanism, who paid attention to the tribal structure and the worldview which were, so he believed, the constituent elements of Tungus shamanism. Furthermore, he postulated that Tungus shamanism had changed contents and forms of belief under the influence of the Lamaism which had come to the area.<sup>21)</sup>

In contrast with M. Eliade who thought that the ecstasy is “a primary phenomenon”<sup>22)</sup> I. M. Lewis regards possession as the very element of shamanism and approaches this possession from a sociological perspective. He believes that ecstasy is a state of possession, that is, “seizure of man by divinity.” Therefore, possession is primary and ecstasy follows it. “Transcendental experiences of this kind, typically conceived of as states of ‘possession,’ have given the mystic a unique claim to direct experiential knowledge of the divine and, where this is acknowledged by others, the authority to act as a privileged channel of communication between man and the supernatural.”<sup>23)</sup> He doesn’t attempt to articulate a universal valid, and

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20) M. Eliade, *ibid.*, 27.

21) S. M. Shirokogoroff, *Psychomental Complex of the Tungus* (Berlin: Schletzer, 1999). (Original text: London, 1935)

22) It means that trance and possession can follow the ecstasy as accompanied phenomena. M. Eliade, *ibid.*, 504.

23) I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion : A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession*, 3rd ed. (London/New York: Routledge, 2003), 15.

therefore abstract, definition of possession, but rather starts from the assumption that possession is “a culturally normative experience.”<sup>24)</sup> Therefore, “if someone is, in his own cultural milieu, generally considered to be in a state of spirit possession, then he (or she) is possessed.”<sup>25)</sup> In his sociological approach to shamanism he confirms two important facts. One is that shamanism is mainly accepted by women and settled as a sub-culture in the patriarchal society in which men are dominant in the official sphere whereas women are driven into the unofficial sphere of life.<sup>26)</sup> The other fact is that, after his overcoming afflictions during his initiatory sickness, the shaman has “a special predilection for the weak and oppressed.”<sup>27)</sup> It is noteworthy, so I think, that the shaman’s sensitivity to the suffering of the weak and oppressed is the basis for his or her sympathy with them and readiness for solidarity with them.

Ake Hultkrantz has examined thoroughly the studies and debates on shamanism after M. Eliade and attempted to reformulate shamanism as a complex of religious practices and belief which are integrated in a structure. On the ground of such a careful definition of shamanism he has analyzed and summarized the role of shamans by the following four points:

- 1) The shaman makes contact with the spiritual world through the technique of ecstasy.
- 2) The shaman acts as mediator between a human group and spirits for the sake of their welfare.
- 3) The shaman is inspired by her possession spirit as patron and becomes the master of spirits.
- 4) The shaman has ecstatic experiences.<sup>28)</sup>

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24) I. M. Lewis, *ibid.*, 57.

25) I. M. Lewis, *ibid.*, 40.

26) I. M. Lewis, *ibid.*, 80. In reliance upon I. M. Lewis, Laurel Kendall shows clearly that in Korea the shamanistic household rites are performed mainly by women while the Confucian rituals are practiced exclusively by men. For detailed explanation see Laurel Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 27f.

27) I. M. Lewis, *ibid.*, 64.

28) Ake Hultkrantz, “An Ecological and Phenomenological Approach to Shamanism,” *Shamanism in Siberia*, tr. Choi Gilsung into Korean (Seoul: Mineumsa, 1988). Original: *Shamanism in Siberia*, ed. V. Dioszegi, M. Hoppal

Korean scholars have studied shamanism in three different directions. First, some scholars have explored Korean shamanism from the perspective of Eliade. Such a study is represented by Ryu Dongsik. He believes that shamanism is the archetype of Korean culture and underlies it deeply. Shamanism has been transfigured variously by encounter with foreign religions, but its archetype has remained without essential change. The various historical forms in which shamanism has appeared are nothing but derivations of the archetypal shamanism or its deterioration.<sup>29)</sup>

Other scholars approach Korean shamanism from the viewpoint of psychology of religion, depending mainly upon the analytic psychology of C. G. Jung. Yi Puyong sees the archetype of collective unconsciousness in Korean shamanism,<sup>30)</sup> whereas Kim Taegon regards shamanism as the archetype of Korean religiosity.<sup>31)</sup> Modern shamanism is therefore an appearance form of the archetypal psycho-structure which lies in the layer of Korean collective unconsciousness.

Lastly, a group of scholars have assumed a critical position against the above mentioned two viewpoints. These viewpoints are not competent to explore the historical, sociological and ideological contexts in which shamanism originated, transfigured and developed itself. Kim Seongnae represents such a direction of shamanism study. She has employed the perspective of I. M. Lewis and A. Hultkranz and defined Korean shamanism as follows: "Korean shamanism is an ensemble of cultural knowledge about human beings, nature and cosmos which is acquired by Korean common people in experiencing and exploring the worldly reality of life and a structure of symbolical imagination about transcendental powers."<sup>32)</sup> Such a definition is very helpful for explaining the particularity of Korean shamanism. Kim suggests that unique characteristics of Korean

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(Budapest : Akadémiai Kiadó, 1978). The original title of the article may be different from the title above.

29) Ryu Dongsik, *History and Structure of Korean Shamanism* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1975). (Korean edition)

30) Yi Puyong, "Illness and Healing in Three Kingdom Period," *Korea Journal* 21/12 (December 1981), 4-12.

31) Kim Taegon, *A Study of Korean Shamanism* (Seoul: Jipmoondang, 1981). (Korean edition)

32) Kim Seunghye, Kim Seongnae, *Christianity and Shamanism* (Seoul: Daughters of St Paul, 1998), 67. (Korean edition)

shamanism have been formed in the cultural frameworks in which Koreans have experienced and interpreted their everyday life. In so far as the cultural frameworks are endlessly changed, so shamanism is always transfigured. Korean shamanism as a religion is a model of reality used to conceptualize the relationship between person and society, between human beings and nature, and between human and supernatural beings. The model of reality changes as much as the reality. Modern shamanism has different contents from those of traditional shamanism; the former oriented to the prevailing individualism and materialism, while the latter was more community-oriented.

In order to end this brief and selective sketch of shamanism studies, I would like to emphasize the following three points. First, it is true that the distinctive mark of shamanism, regardless of its various appearance forms, lies in ecstasy and spirit possession. But it is very important to understand ecstasy and spirit possession as culture-bound and not as unhistorical. Second, I pay my attention to the point that the suffering and affliction which shamans have experienced in the initiation process makes them sensitive to the suffering of the weak and oppressed. Third, in patriarchal and class society shamanism has formed a certain sub-culture and exercised its strong influence upon the underprivileged, especially upon women.

### ***Han and Hanpuri***

Han is the central concept which helps to understand the characteristics of Korean shamanism and shaman. In her case study on six *mansin* (great shamans) Youngsook Kim Harvey comes to the conclusion that they were worn out with *han*.<sup>33)</sup> After they suffered from *sinbyong*, possession sickness, with their internal organs and viscera worn out with *han*, they became shamans. According to Seon Sunhwa, a feminist theologian, the shaman's ecstatic experience during possession sickness as well as during *gut* can be explained from her unconscious choice to be liberated from her unfortunate life full of *han*. Korean shamans cannot be released from their *han*, because the prejudice toward shamans is still extremely severe in Korean society. They live in the world, but they don't belong to the world.

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33) Youngsook Kim Harvey, *Six Korean Women* (Minnesota: West Publishing Co., 1979).

Such an existence *sub contrario* in the world forces them to seek for freedom and transcendence.<sup>34)</sup> What is *han* on earth?

It is very difficult to explain what *han* is. Only one who *has* suffered from *han* can probably apprehend what it is and understand other people who also suffer *han*. Koreans are familiar with *han*, because *han* is an underlying feeling of the Korean people. Eun Koh, a famous minjung poet, says: "We Koreans were born from the womb of *han* and brought up in the womb of *han*."<sup>35)</sup> Sometimes *han* expresses itself as resignation, adaption to reality, nihilism etc. Sometimes it explodes in the form of revenge, protest, revolt and so on. The former is named *junghan* and the latter is called *wonhan*. In consideration of its various aspects *han* is conceived of as a complex of feelings. The Japanese and the Chinese don't know such complicated and nuanced connotations of *han*, although they use the same Chinese script for *han* (恨). In the Japanese context the word means simply grudge. In China the script has rather the meaning of repentance. From such comparison follows the consequence that *han* is culture-bound.

Kim Yulkyu has employed the analytic psychology of C. G. Jung in order to investigate *han* as a dominant feeling among Koreans. Kim regards *han* as a shadow which comes from the Korean collective unconsciousness. If *han* transfers positively, it is sublimated to the energy for a great achievement. But the negative transference of *han* leads to revenge. Such a transference mechanism is observed not only in the personal dimension, but also in the collective dimension. Collective *han* can express itself as the energy for revolution. The peasant war in 1896 is a good example of this. But collective *han* can evoke a vicious circle of revenge; examples of this abide in history.<sup>36)</sup>

What is made of *han* in a shaman's *sinbyong* (initiatory sickness or possession sickness)? Scholars have interpreted *sinbyong* variously. For psychiatrists *sinbyong* has been an interesting object of analysis. Kim Kwang-il, a competent psychiatrist, defines *sinbyong* as "god sickness" and diagnoses it as "culture-bound depersonalization syndrome."<sup>37)</sup> According

34) Seon Sunhwa, "How to see Shamanism from a Christian's Perspective?", *Christianity and Shamanism*, ed. by Kim Seunghye, Kim Seongnae (Seoul: Daughters of St Paul, 1998), 226.

35) Citation from Suh Namdong, "Towards a Theology of Han," 54.

36) Kim Yulkyu, *The Ore of 'Han' and the Stream of 'Won'* (Seoul, Joowoo, 1081), 21ff.

to him, shamans attain the ability to control trances and possession during *sinbyong*. These controlled trances and possession are categorized into the “transient regression of ego.” In trance and possession occur “the depersonalization of a person so that an ego faced with harsh reality enters another world - that of fantasy.”<sup>38)</sup> Shamans have the techniques to induce the audience in rituals to trance and possession. What people seek in the *naerimgut*, namely the shaman ritual for curing illness, is nothing but an infantile wish-fulfillment. *Gut* involves “a temporary escape from the reality for a period of time with a certain return to reality;”<sup>39)</sup> therefore the “transient regression of ego” sustains temporarily the healthiness of the ego. In a word, it has a hypnotic efficacy.

On the contrary, the folklorists consider *sinbyong* as a religious experience rather than a psychiatric symptom. They believe that the *sinbyong* results from the *han* which is accumulated in the mind of a person who desperately seeks eternal life in the world.<sup>40)</sup> For example, the sudden death of a closely associated person can invoke a disassociation of the ego and generate *han* in the deep layer of the mind.

In her analysis of the initiation process of six *mansin* with various personal-historical backgrounds Youngsook Kim Harvey confirms that their experienced *sinbyong* was an expression of *han*. Even though their *han* is difficult to generalize, six *mansin* remembered their possession sickness as a path from the impasse “between social expectations of them as women and their personal goals and interests as individuals.”<sup>41)</sup> Such conflicts have remained for a long time unexpressed and their *han* has been accumulated as “a deep and abiding sense of having been morally injured as human beings.”<sup>42)</sup> For them there was no exit from such conflicts in a patriarchal society. Their *han* found at last an exit in the *sinbyong* and in curing their

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37) Kim Kwang-il, “Sin-byong: A Culture-Bound Depersonalization Syndrome in Korea,” *Neuropsychiatry* 11 (1972), 233.

38) Kim Kwang-il, “Kut and the Treatment of Mental Disorders,” *Shamanism: The Spirit World of Korea*, eds. Chai-shin Yu and R. Guisso (Berkeley, California: Asian Humanities Press, 1988), 146.

39) *Loc. cit.*

40) Kim Taegon, *A Study of Korean Shamanism* (Seoul: Jipmoondang, 1981), 247.

41) Youngsook Kim Harvey, *Six Korean Women* (Minnesota: West Publishing Co., 1979), 237.

42) *Loc. cit.*

own *sinbyong* they obtained the capacity to master their *han* and, furthermore, to help other persons to be released from their *han*. This coincides with the assumption of M. Eliade, I. M. Lewis, etc. that the shaman candidates gain the ability to cure others in overcoming afflictions in the initiation process.

*Hanpuri* is the central device of shaman rituals. It has a variety of contents and patterns. Here I can present only a few limited examples. From a shamanistic perspective, illness is aroused by the spirit of the dead who is not at all free from his or her *han* or by the spirit of the ancestor who is not properly treated. In order to cure the illness, shamans must identify the *han* of the dead and release him or her from the *han*; shamans must suggest to the descendants the way to appease the spirit of their ancestor. A housewife bears *han* in her mind owing to the unsolvable conflict between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law or owing to her husband's mistress. She suffers a lingering illness. In such a case the shaman practices the curing ritual to expose the *han* of the housewife and bring it to speech. The shaman opens a channel for communication among the concerned persons and tries to establish peace and reconciliation among them. During the Korean War (1950-1953) many innocent people were killed in war crimes or massacred. For a long time people have been forced by authorities to ignore those killed in this way. In this period of enforced silence the *han* of the victims has been unceasingly brought into light through *Jinoguigut*. The shamans have stood in front of the remembrance struggle.

But the shaman's *hanpuri* is inclined to ignore the structure of evil from which *han* originated. Shamanistic *hanpuri* is inclined to patch up peace and reconciliation among the people in conflicts without solving the structured conflicts in the reality. How can the housewife be released from her *han*, if the patriarchal structure of conflicts remains unchanged? Probably her husband paid the *narimgut* for curing her lingering illness. The comfort and catharsis which it brought her can be regarded as rewards for colluding in her oppression.<sup>43)</sup>

## ***Han and Dan***

Minjung theologians have defined *han* as the internal reality of the Korean

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43) Cf., I. M. Lewis, op. cit., 78.

*minjung* who has suffered from political oppression, economical exploitation, socio-cultural marginalization, etc. Their interest in the *hanpuri* practiced by shamans was so great to employ *han* and *hanpuri* as themes of theological reflection. But they have been critical of the shaman's *hanpuri* with the argument that it is inclined to be a catharsis machinery without seeking for a radical change of the reality which generated the *han*. They believed that *han* is not only rooted in the personal-historical context of a person, but also comes into being owing to the structured evils in the reality. In the case that there is no exit from the suppression and suffering which the *minjung* endures in these structured evils, *han* cannot be but accumulated. It is the collective *han* of the *minjung*. Minjung theologians have put their special emphasis on the collective *han*. Therefore they have distanced themselves from the one-sided psychological approach to *han*. They have rather attempted to interpret *han* from a political viewpoint.<sup>44)</sup> As David Kwang-sun Suh puts it, "the feeling of *han* is not just an individual feeling of repression. This is not just a sickness that can be cured by psychotherapy. This is a collective feeling of the oppressed. This sickness of *han* can be cured only when the total structure of the oppressed society and culture is changed."<sup>45)</sup>

Earlier, Hyun Younghak, one of the founders of Korean Minjung theology, attempted a theological look at the mask dance in Korea. He focused on the ability of the *minjung* for critical transcendence and analyzed three aspects of this transcendence. First, the experience of critical transcendence gives the *minjung* the energy to live in the fallen world with humor and without falling into despair. They are sure that the existing world

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44) Jae-hoon Lee points out that the political interpretation of *han* is rather short-sighted. He distinguishes the original *han* from the secondary. The former resembles the shadow in the sense of C. G. Jung. The latter is generated under the influences of various factors on the basis of this. But the original *han* remains still unchanged in the layer of unconsciousness, if it is properly cured. Jae-hoon Lee, *A Study of "Han" of the Korean People: A Depth Psychological Contribution to the Understanding of the Concept of "Han" in the Korean Minjung Theology*, Dissertation (New York: Union Theological Seminary, December 1989), 49ff.

45) David Kwang-sun Suh, "Minjung and Theology in Korea: A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation," *Minjung Theology: People as The Subject of History*, 28.

is fallen and rotten, and that they are standing over, against and beyond it. Because there seems to be no exit from it, they bear *han* in their minds. But they must survive. They bear the hardship of the world with good humor and satire. It is the wisdom of the *minjung*. "Without such a wisdom they could not survive as human beings with dignity in a world where their dignity is not recognized."<sup>46)</sup> Second, the experience provides the *minjung* with the courage to fight for change and freedom. Third, the experience of critical transcendence prevents them from self-righteousness. Therefore they can fight against the oppressors as well as against themselves. They can be free from self-righteousness so that they can change the existing world without seeking for revenge. Hyun argued that the experience of critical transcendence is the very basis for cutting off the vicious circle of bloody revenge.

In reliance on Kim Chiha's concept of the "dialectic unification of *han* and *dan*" Suh Namdong has attempted to reformulate what Hyun wanted to speak of with the concept "critical transcendence." *Dan* means literally cutting off. In the personal dimension *dan* is expressed as a resolute self denial, which leads to restraints from comfort and easy life and so on. In the collective dimension *dan* means "cutting the chain of the circulation of *han*." *Dan* is necessary for the transformation of the secular world and secular attachments. *Han* is fearful because it can explode as a destructive energy to create a vicious circle of evil. Therefore, the more *han* is accumulated, the more necessary *dan* is. As Kim Chiha puts it, "on the one hand, there is the fearful *han* which can kill, cause revenge, destroy and hate endlessly, and on the other, there is the repetition of *dan* to suppress the explosion which can break out of the vicious circle, so that *han* can be sublimated as higher spiritual power."<sup>47)</sup> *Dan* can happen because the bearer of *han* has the ability for self transcendence. In the experience of self transcendence he or she is no more tied to *han*, but rather free from it. Whoever indescribably suffers *han* knotted in their mind cannot fall into despair, but attain the tenacious life energy from the bottom. In Korea it is widely said that the *minjung* are like the grassroots which survive, even if they are trodden and trodden. The phrase indicates how strong and

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46) Hyun Younghak, "A Theological Look at the Mask Dance in Korea," *Minjung Theology: People as The Subject of History*, 48.

47) Suh Namdong, "Towards a Theology of Han," 61.

tenacious the life energy of the *minjung* is. It is because of the life energy that they can see heaven in the bottom of despair. I think that the *minjung* is privileged to see a light of hope in the darkness.

In his lay 'Chang Il-dam' Kim Chiha describes very movingly how the bottom of despair is turned up to the heaven. "The butcher Chang Il-dam is a wanted man. Having escaped from prison, he hides in a back street where prostitutes live. He happens to see one prostitute giving birth to a child. She is dying. Her body is rotten with venereal disease. She has tuberculosis; and she is also mentally ill. Yet, she is giving birth to a child. At the sight of it, he says, 'Ah, from a rotten body, new life is coming out! It is God who is coming out!' He learns the truth of the world. He kneels down and says, 'Oh, my mother, God is in your womb. God is the very bottom.' And he kisses her feet."<sup>48)</sup>

Such a bold imagination is possible, so I think, if one has a firm belief in the tenacious life energy of the *minjung*. It is because of the ability to see the sky in the very bottom that they experience the critical transcendence. They stand over not only against themselves, but also against the fallen world. They fight against the existing world as well as against themselves. I see the possibility of transcendence in the experience of suffering. The experience of suffering provides the *minjung* with sensitivity to the suffering of others and strengthens their capacity to sympathize with others in suffering and to be in solidarity with them. The experience of suffering lets them unite and share hope with one another. They hope together for a new world where the vicious circle of revenge is cut off, and where all people live together in solidarity, justice and great peace.

In order to articulate the priesthood of *han*, I return to the case of the shaman once more. I think that shamans are talented for sympathy and solidarity with others in suffering because they have suffered their possession sickness and in overcoming this sickness they could cut off the tie of *han* and could be cured. I interpret this as the shaman's self-transcendence. It is because of their ability for this self-transcendence that shamans can practice *hanpuri* and the shamans who are cured of this possession sickness and released from *han* can help others to be free from their *han*.

Suh Namdong has introduced Kim Chiha's concept of the "dialectic of

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48) Suh Namdong, "Towards a Theology of Han," 62f.

*han* and *dan*” into a theological reflection on the role of the church and ministry. As Kim puts it, “The church ought to be the comforter to resolve the *han* of the *minjung* and to cut the vicious circle of violence, and to change it into a progressive movement. For this purpose, churches ought to accept limited violence, and ought to be a sanctuary for radicals and fighters who are progressing out of the dark.”<sup>49)</sup>

In their political hermeneutics of *han*, Korean Minjung theologians could pave the way to transform the energy condensed in *han* to the energy for justice, solidarity and peace. According to them, the priest of *han* should not seek for a false reconciliation and peace in the world where injustice and contradictions prevail. The priest of *han* ought to establish a reconciliation and peace based on justice. Only where the relationship among the people as well as among all the things in the world is straight and right, can there be enjoyed the fullness of life in justice. This is the great peace. The priest of *han* has a vision of a world in unity and solidarity. It is a vision and hope of a life in peace based on justice. Korean Minjung theology will present such a vision and hope to this world where injustice, disorders, conflicts and war dominate.

## Conclusion

From the interfaith dialogue between Christianity and shamanism I would like to draw a few consequences. First of all, I suggest that the Christian minister should learn something from the attitude of shamans towards the weak and oppressed. They have “a special predilection for the weak and oppressed” (I. M. Lewis) and are ready to be in solidarity with others in suffering. Of course, the Christian minister need not suffer the initiation sickness like shamans, but they must be trained to attain a spiritual competency to sympathize and to be in solidarity with the little people in suffering.

Second, I think that the church should be earnest to the priesthood of *han*. It is not just the duty of the minister but the priesthood of *han* should be reinterpreted from the perspective of the priesthood of all believers. Only when all believers practice the priesthood of *han* can the church be engaged in the movement to change the existing world radically and to open the

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49) Suh Namdong, “Towards a Theology of Han,” 61f.

world in justice, solidarity and great peace.

## Abstract

In the article I would see into the 'priest of *han*' as a theme which Nam-dong Suh, one of the fathers of the *Minjung* theology, has developed, and suggest how he has made a creative and critical encounter with the shamanistic *hanpuri*.

First, I examine in the first step how influential the shamanism is still in Korean society. In this connection I would investigate briefly how the shamanism is incorporated in Korean Protestantism. Second, I explain *han* and *hanpuri* in the context of Korean shamanism. Third, I analyze how the *Minjung* theology has employed the themes of *han* and *hanpuri*. Lastly, I give some suggestions about a spiritual formation for the ministry.

From the Christian encounter with the shamanism I draw a few consequences. First of all, I suggest that Christian minister should learn something from the attitude of shamans towards the weak and oppressed. They have "a special predilection for the weak and oppressed" (I. M. Lewis) and are ready to be in solidarity with others in suffering. Of course, Christian minister need not to suffer the initiation sickness like shamans, but they must be trained to attain a spiritual competency to sympathize and to be in solidarity with the little people in suffering.

Second, I think that the church should be earnest to the priesthood of *han*. It is not just the duty of the minister. The priesthood of *han* should be reinterpreted from the perspective of the priesthood of all believers.

### Key Words

initiation illness, *han*, *hanpuri*, shamanism, *Minjung* theology, priest, suffering

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# The Confluence of the Israelite Girl in 2 Kings 5 and Baridegi in a Korean Myth: Toward *Hanpuri* Hermeneutics for Korean Women

Park Hye Kyung\*

## Introduction

In this paper, I argue that the wisdom and courage of two girls - one in the Hebrew Bible and the other in a Korean myth - enable them to become the subjects of Minjung-women-hermeneutical conversations within the confluence of two heritages of Korean women. The confluence of two stories has been a theme of biblical studies in Minjung theology over the past years. As *Imago Dei* appears in the creation event, Minjung's narratives are located in Minjung's events. For Koreans, the events often occur in han<sup>1)</sup>, which both girls have experienced.

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1) "*Han* is the suffering of the innocent who are caught in the wicked situation of

The Israelite girl was captured by Aramean soldiers and exiled from her home, while Baridegi was abandoned by her royal parents. Each girl experienced “*han* as the convergence of all contradiction and enmity.”<sup>2)</sup> However, the Israelite girl helped to heal the chief of the Aramean army, while Baridegi founds a divine medicine to revive her parents. In the two stories, the *han*-givers have problems of illness, and the *han*-takers function as the healers of illness. At the same time, these two girls achieved release from their *han* through reconciliation with their enemies by doing *hanpuri*.<sup>3)</sup> If the Israelite girl still suffered from *han*, she would not have been able to help Naaman with her wisdom and courage. When Baridegi met her parents, she became released from her *han* and, later, became a goddess. The two girls do not take revenge on their enemies, but sought reconciliation with them in order to live a holistic life.<sup>4)</sup> They reached the climax of *hanpuri* by restoring life to the *han*-givers.

I often see an old lady in a Korean traditional market nearby my house. She draws a cart filled with materials to be recycled. It seems that she supports herself by selling waste paper. In my eyes, she has been abandoned by her father, husband, or children. However, she keeps her eyes alive, and wants to meet others in order to release her *han*.

As Korean Minjung women live in multi-encounters based on both biblical and Korean traditions, *hanpuri* hermeneutics begins the confluence

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helplessness... The experience of the powerless, the marginalized, and the voiceless in the world can be summed up as *han*.” (Andrew Sung Park, “The Bible and Han,” in *The Other Side of Sin: Woundedness from the Perspective of the Sinned-Against*, eds., Andrew Sung Park and Susan Nelson (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001), 47). For the feminist theological interpretation of Korean women’s *han* and culture, see Young-sil Choi, “Creating a Culture of Reconciliation and Life through *Hanpuri* and *Hanmaji* - A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the *Miyalhalmi* Dance in the *Bongsan Talchum* (Bongsan Mask Dance),” *Madang* 11.15 (June 2009): 117-146.

2) Kim Yongbok, “Suh Namdong-ui Han Damron-eh Kwanhayuh” [*Han* of Suh Namdong], in *Suh Namdong-kwa Oh Neul-ui Minjung Shin Hak* [Suh Namdong and Today’s Minjung Theology (Seoul: Tong Yon, 2009), 25.

3) *Hanpuri* is “to release from Han.” (<http://socialethics.org/wwwb/CrazyWWWBoard.cgi?db=article&mode=read&num=258&page=1&ftype=6&fval=&backdepth=1>, accessed Oct. 16, 2011).

4) Cf. *Ibid.*

of women-related narratives in the two traditions.

Yet, such a confluence of two stories cannot take place without some basic common ground in conversation. The shared common ground provides a space for people meeting in “mutual relationship.”<sup>5)</sup> Facing the necessity of a common ground, I choose the Bible as a meeting place that can serve as a bridge, since the Bible is a “‘talking book,’ inviting dialogue and conversation.”<sup>6)</sup> Their mutual platform is *han*. The Israelite girl was exiled, while Baridegi was abandoned. Thus, I argue that an application of new form criticism to a comparative study between the Israelite girl in 2 Kings 5 and Baridegi provides a common space, where two cultures can meet and dialogue in *hanpuri* hermeneutics. The confluence of the stories of these two women shows a dialogical hermeneutics of *han* for Minjung women in diverse cultures.

When compared, the stories reveal what roles the Israelite girl and Baridegi play within these bicultural accounts of religious healing. By conducting a mutual conversation before higher authority figures, the two women functioned as powerful mediators in each of the two cultures. For women who have less voice in churches, the Israelite girl is an example of one of the powerful females in the Bible. Baridegi’s courage also has great impact on informing Korean women of their identity and thus enhances their abilities in the *hanpuri* situations. These narratives empower Korean women to live out their wisdom and courage. Thus, I am interested in the meeting of these girls through new form criticism<sup>7)</sup> to excavate common languages for *hanpuri* hermeneutical conversation in the different cultures.

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5) Cf. Martin Buber, *I and Thou: A New Translation with Prologue “I and You” and Notes* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1970), 58.

6) Kwok Pui-lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World* (Mayknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 42.

7) To understand new form criticism, see my dissertation in the following, “Although form criticism comes from the German scholars after Herman Gunkel’s understanding of the Hebrew Bible in the early 20th century, this method has been developed and expanded by recent scholars, particularly Rolf P. Knierim and Marvin A. Sweeney. Their form criticism can be called ‘new form criticism’ compared with Gunkel’s classic form criticism (Hye Kyung Park, “Why Not Her? Form Critical Interpretation of the Named and Unnamed Women in the Elijah and Elisha Traditions,” PhD diss. Claremont Graduate University (May, 2011), 14).

New form criticism is very helpful in fostering a space where two narratives can find common language through the unique linguistic and communicative forms of the given texts. New form criticism also shows a way of overcoming “anti-theology,”<sup>8)</sup> which comes from disagreement between Minjung theology and dogmatic theologies.

This work will reveal how powerless women gain leadership in reconciliation with their contradictions in *hanpuri*.

## Methodology

According to Noh Soon Kwak, “the Hebrew Bible is the fruit of the Jewish culture.”<sup>9)</sup> In the Hebrew Bible, the Israelite culture and tradition importantly seep into the relationship between God and Israel. The Jewish people preserve their cultural heritages in the Hebrew Bible. Thus, it is important to understand the cultural discourse in order to interpret the biblical narratives in the Hebrew Bible. Like the Jewish heritages, the Korean cultures have formed various Korean traditions. When one conceptualizes Korean biblical studies in dialogue with the Hebrew biblical traditions, one needs to appreciate Korean culture, spirituality, sensibility and thoughts. *Han* represents a Korean culture because “*han* is a motive for Korean cultural atmosphere.”<sup>10)</sup> *Han* is an important interjection, since it connects the women by a common atmosphere of experiencing oppression in all times and places. Women in both biblical narratives and Korean traditions share the common concern of suffering from patriarchal societies. *Han* summarizes the unfair experiences of women, the Minjung of Minjung. Women-related narratives in the Hebrew Bible and Korean myths show a cultural-biblical encounter between the Hebrew Bible and Korean traditions. This confluence leads Korean women to read the Hebrew Bible as the hopeful reference of keeping their Korean-Christian identity and in

8) Kwang Sun Suh, “*Suh Nam Dong-kwa 5.18, Kerigo Yuwoel-ui Chotbul*,” [Suh Ham Dong and 5.18, and the Candles of June] in *Suh Nam Dong-kwa Oh Neul-ui Minjung Shin Hak* [Suh Nam Dong and Today’s Minjung Theology (Seoul: Tong Yon, 2009), 78-82.

9) Noh Soon Kwak, “Han Kook Sung Suh-ui Min Jok Shin Hak-joek Cho Myung” [New Perspective of Min Jok Theology in Korean Biblical Studies], ed. Sung Ro Cho (Seoul: Hyundai Shin Hak Institute, 1993), 120.

10) *Ibid.*, 51.

assuaging their *han*-full<sup>11)</sup> experiences. This reading truly makes the Hebrew Bible come alive.

Shin Bae Park points out that form criticism is a methodology for developing Korean culture biblical criticism<sup>12)</sup> and his suggestion results in the presentation of a creative interpretation for Koreans. It is necessary for Koreans to draw attention to Korean cultural traditions in order to create Korean biblical interpretations. Creative methodology requires a dialogue between Korean heritages and biblical traditions for Korean readers of the Hebrew Bible. Creative methodology occurs through the intersectional atmosphere between Korean identity and biblical reference. Korean identity appears in the traditional narratives. New form criticism is very helpful for initiating Korean women's hermeneutics. It focuses on finding the meanings of each text by analyzing the linguistic elements, which consist of structure, genre, setting, and intention within both written texts and oral texts, synchronically and diachronically. Thus, it invites Korean women to the meeting place of the biblical narratives in dialogue with the Bible by reclaiming their own identity.

Every human language, including the Hebrew texts of the Bible and Korean sacred literature, is based on a unique linguistic system. This fact allows all the text to be analyzed by new form criticism. The dialogue of two different texts requires common linguistic elements as their meeting place. New form criticism can offer this common ground in the study of different texts, since this methodology helps to find the meanings of a text whose goal is to achieve communication.<sup>13)</sup> New form criticism first identifies the unique linguistic and communicative form of any given text. It then provides a basis for comparative study. Furthermore, this communication opens up a hermeneutical discourse between a text and its readers who attempt to dialogue in the different cultures that show women's *han* as a hermeneutical turning point.

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11) Young-sil Choi, "Creating a Culture of Reconciliation and Life through *Hanpuri* and *Hanmaji* - A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the *Miyalhalmi* Dance in the *Bongsan Talchum* (*Bongsan* Mask Dance)," 117.

12) Shin Bae Park, "Han Kook Mun Hwa-jeok Sung Suh Hae Seok Bang Bub Ron [Korea Cultural Biblical Criticism]" in *Shin Hak Sah Sang* [Christian Thought] 140 (Spring 2008): 59.

13) Marvin A. Sweeney, "Form Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1999), 58.

## Summary of the Two Stories

In 2 Kings 5, an unnamed Israelite girl was captured by Aramean soldiers from Israel and taken to Aram. She became a slave girl in the house of Naaman, chief of the Aramean army and who was also a leper. The unnamed girl told her mistress about Elisha, the prophet from Samaria, who she thought surely could heal her master. Ultimately Naaman was cured by following Elisha's directions.

Baridegi was a princess in the Korean oral tradition. King Okui in the Bulla nation had sought the help of prophecy in his pursuit to marry Queen Kildae. A prophet told the king he would beget three sons if he married the queen the following year. However, the king did not listen to the prophet's words and married the queen in that very same year. This marriage resulted in seven daughters. The king commanded his servant to throw the seventh baby into the sea. Her name was Baridegi, a name meaning "the abandoned one." She was discovered and raised by an old couple and in spite of her lack of formal education, she grew up to be very wise.

When she was fifteen years old, her biological parents became severely ill. In their dream, a divine child told them that their illness was due to abandoning their daughter Baridegi, and that the king and the queen could be healed if they received a divine medicine. The king's servant went out to seek Baridegi and asked her to find the medicine. After meeting with her father who had once abandoned her, Baridegi went on an adventure into a foreign nation to find this divine medicine for her parents. During this adventure, she married Mujangseung (a totem) and bore seven sons. On her way back from the adventure, she saw the funeral bier of her parents. She put the medicine into the mouths of her deceased parents and they were revived.

## Form<sup>14)</sup>/ Structure

Form criticism first identifies the unique formulation of each narrative and that comparative study of the two unique forms then reveals a commonality:

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14) The form of narratives refers to finding the unique formula within a text. Form is an important component in describing literary structure. Literary structure highlights the content of the narrative to show the meaning of a text.

each story tells of a lowly girl who becomes a powerful figure, capable of providing solutions to a problem faced by the royal protagonists.

In 2 Kings 5, after recovering from leprosy, Naaman confesses,<sup>15)</sup> “there is no God in all the earth except in Israel” which is a formula of incomparability,<sup>16)</sup> expressing the superiority of the God of Israel. After meeting the God of Israel in his religious experience of being healed, Naaman credits his recovery to YHWH, instead of Elisha. However, Naaman seems not to keep his credit to YHWH, because his incomparable confession to God is compromised by his request in verse 18 in which he asks pardon of YHWH when he bows down to the house of Rimmon, the Aramean storm-God. The formula of incomparability of Naaman shifts to his uncertainty of YHWH’s superiority. This is a reverse of the situation of the Israelite girl who lives in Aram, but who recognizes the Israelite God’s healing power.

The Israelite girl’s words are short in v. 3, but her function in the narrative is important: “She said to her mistress, אָהַלֵּ (‘*ahale*, if only) my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then, he would cure him of his leprosy.” She says אָהַלֵּ (‘*ahale*), the interjection form with the quality of the ancient meaning in order to express her compassion. The use of this word signals the elevation of the Israelite girl’s status: the word *ahulap* is used by the deity and the king in cuneiform texts. For example, “Sorrowfully I will say *ahulap!* for that young man.”<sup>17)</sup> *Ahulap*, the predecessor of the word of ‘*ahale*, is used in the royal setting to express lamentation.

Her choice of a word highlighted the form of her speech as a

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15) “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel.” (2 Kings 5:15a, NRSV).

16) Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, and Lamentations, Part 2* (FOTL 15; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 542.

17) *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, vol. 1 A, part I. Editorial Board: Ignace J. Gelb, Benno Landsberger, A. Leo Oppenheim, Erica Reiner (Chicago, IL: The Oriental Institute and Glückstadt, Germany: J. J. Augustin Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1964), 214. This *a?ulap* occurs in the voice of an Assyrian mother-goddess of the texts, Sm 1366 and K 6849. She laments for her son’s leaving, and her lamentation is emphasized in the repetitions of *a?ulap* (Carl Frank, “Ein Klagegedicht der Muttergöttin aus Uruk,” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 40, no. 1/2 [1931]: 81-94).

lamentation and elevated her status to one that is above a maid, at least so far as she knew the royal word for the expression of her sadness. In addition, this lamentation was changed to the happy moment of expecting the healing of Naaman's leprosy. אֵלֵּי־יְהוָה of v. 3a and אָז, כֵּן (az, then) of v. 3b are a pair that indicate the completion of a wish. The Israelite girl's lamentation did not end in hopelessness, but it anticipated Naaman's recovery through the prophet of Israel.

In addition, the Israelite girl is the one who introduced the prophetic identity of Elisha in v. 3. No matter how prominent the prophet Elisha might have been in Samaria, no one would have recognized him as a prophet without her introduction. When she introduced Elisha to her mistress, she called Elisha, "the prophet who was in Samaria," which is similar to a recognition formula in the form of the prophetic proof saying. As Marvin A. Sweeney points out, the phrase, "and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel,"<sup>18)</sup> in v. 8 is an early form of the prophetic proof saying, and the Israelite girl already attested to the prophet's existence and his ability to heal Naaman in this formula, which is used by a prophet in a prophetic speech.<sup>19)</sup> The Israelite girl also recognized the prophetic ability of Elisha in using a similar recognition formula. The little girl's words are no longer insignificant in the DtrH's literature. Her wise and brave speech functions as a mediator between Aram and Israel, and as the Aramean leader comes to invoke the sovereignty of YHWH, his religious nature is touched by the healing.

In the Baridegi narrative, Baridegi used the self-revelation formula, "I"<sup>20)</sup> when she introduced herself to Mujangseung, saying "I am the seventh son of the king." Wise Baridegi not only chose to present herself as male to gain advantage in the long arduous search for the medicine, but also used a highly affirmative language in presenting herself. Just as God revealed Godself to Abram, saying "I am your shield (Gen 15:1)," so did she use language of self-revelation appropriate to the context of the other.

In response to Baridegi's request, Mujangseung asked for a payment.

18) Marvin A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 299.

19) Ronald M. Hals, *Ezekiel* (FOTL 19; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 353.

20) Rolf P. Knierim and George W. Coats, *Numbers* (FOTL 6; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 367.

Having no money, she negotiated with Mujangseung to do three jobs for nine years instead of paying the money. He demanded her to chop trees for three years, to make fire for three years, and to draw water for three years. When she heard his demands, she repeated three times “Yes, I will do,” a commitment formula.<sup>21)</sup> This formula is a give and take formula such as “I give in to the order that you give to me.”<sup>22)</sup> In addition, repetition is a literary pattern to present “dramatic emphasis.”<sup>23)</sup> The repetitive use of commitment formula emphasizes Baridegi’s eagerness and commitment to bring the medicine to her parents. She was so determined to cure her parents that she was willing to endure harsh labor for nine years. Her resolution for her parents can be compared with the Israelite girl’s resolution to help Naaman. This formulaic analysis indicates the commonplace for dialogue, since the two girls’ hope for curing authority figures was formalized by their formulas, which appear in their linguistic descriptions.

## Genre

The narrative of 2 Kings 5 represents various genres such as a prophetic narrative, judgmental prophecy or petition. Scholars have usually described 2 Kings 5 as prophetic legend, because one sees Elisha as a miracle worker. However, the Israelite girl played a role of “a prophetic by foretelling the cure of her master if he comes before the prophet in Samaria (2 Kings 5:3).”<sup>24)</sup> Her prophecy is fulfilled in Naaman’s healing.

In this respect, a similar prophetic voice can be heard in a current event. After his self-immolation in protest over the ill treatment of garment workers, his mother, So Sun Lee, interpreted the death of her son Tae Il Jeon, as his plea, “Please, I want you to complete the work that I could not do. After I die, you will cry with students and workers for the rights of laborers.” For 40 years she faithfully carried on the struggle, suffering imprisonment and winning awards for her efforts, and eventually

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21) Gerstenberger, *Psalms, and Lamentations, Part 2*, 512.

22) This formula explains the intricate relationship between two parties. After she worked for *Mujangseung* for nine years, *Mujangseung* asked her to marry him, a transformation from the working relationship.

23) Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narratives: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 388.

24) Park, “Why Not Her?” 346.

succeeding in changing the treatment of workers. So Sun Lee followed the prophetic voices of her son through all her life until she passed away on September 3rd 2011. While the Israelite girl proclaimed her prophecy, So Sun Lee followed it through her life.

On the other hand, in v. 10, Elisha failed to play the role of a prophet when he gave the direction to Naaman. Elisha did not appear before Naaman, but gave the direction of washing in v. 10. This direction made Naaman angry and he initially refused to follow Elisha's direction. However, Naaman's servants suggested that he follow Elisha's direction (v. 13) in order to recover from leprosy. Without the advice of his servants, Naaman would not have followed Elisha's direction, and would have had no chance to be healed: "This would have resulted in no prophetic role for Elisha."<sup>25</sup> Thus, Naaman did not initially realize the prophecy intended by Elisha. The girl's prophecy was readily fulfilled. As such, this narrative forms the confrontation story genre,<sup>26</sup> weighing against each other these two prophets' prophetic failure and success.

The Baridegi narrative consists of various genres: myth, messenger speech, heroic saga, and prophetic narrative. It contains a prophetic narrative in the sense that the king sought a prophecy about his marital future. Prophets also appeared later in the king's dream to suggest he could be healed. At the same time, the Baridegi narrative is a myth, in which Baridegi became a goddess who guides the dead to the underworld. Baridegi functions as a pioneer in this myth. Thus, the examination of the genre of the two narratives discloses the identities of these two women as prophetic, courageous women who can serve as examples for Korean women. The genre of prophetic narrative in both stories presents a dialogical hermeneutics, presenting women's central roles in the stories: a prophetic role for the Israelite girl and a pioneer role for Baridegi. The generic study of the two women-related stories is an important witness to the confluence of two stories by Namdong Suh in *Minjung Theology*.

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25) Ibid.

26) Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (FOTL 16; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 518.

## Setting

Both narratives share the sickness/healing concept of higher positions in a royal setting. In 2 Kings 5, the unnamed Israelite girl's role can be highlighted by comparison with its male-dominated settings. First, in an army setting, verse 2 tells us that a large brigade of soldiers captured only one Israelite girl as a prisoner of war, and forced her to serve the wife of Naaman. She was small, but knew how to cure Naaman of his leprosy, something his mighty soldiers could not do. Second, in this royal setting, the Israelite king misunderstood the letter from the Aramean king asking for a cure for Naaman's leprosy. The Israelite king's action and speech treated the letter as a declaration of war from the Aramean king. The kings of Aram and Israel wanted to place Naaman's leprosy in a political and war-like situation, which was not the problem at hand. It was only the girl who understood the real problem of Naaman's illness and who provided the solution to the problem by recommending the prophet in Samaria.

Similarly, in King Okui's court, no one was willing to find the medicine for the king and the queen. When the king commanded his servants to go find the medicine, they answered, "No living men can go to the undersea world to find the medicine, only the dead can go." What a miserable answer. Yet, Baridegi the daughter once abandoned by the king, followed the king's wishes. There was nothing that the royal court of King Okui could do for the king, just as the army and kings in the Naaman narrative were incompetent to heal him.

In addition to being the only one who knew how to heal Namaan, the Israelite girl also knew how to survive in the midst of disaster and to deal with the situation of a foreign nation. Likewise, Baridegi survived the adventure, even in the blood sea. Both girls were uprooted from their home nation and placed in a foreign nation. The unnamed Israelite girl was transferred by the army, while Baridegi was uprooted by her father's abandonment. Their situations provide a common place to dialogue, as their unfamiliar contexts forced them to change their social or cultural settings. However, they maintain their original cultures: for the Israelite girl, her knowledge of YHWH, and for Baridegi, her respect for her parents. While it is unfortunate that these women were transported by authority figures, they nonetheless became a bridge of connecting different cultures and survived their new *Sitz im Leben* as demonstrated by a comparative study of

the two settings. The women were transported by figures of great power. Korean women can meet the dialogical hermeneutics with these two foremothers, as they are situated in the tensions between two cultures, ready to be *hanpurists* in their own *Sitz im Leben*.

### **Intention and Conclusion:**<sup>27)</sup> *Hanpuri Hermeneutics*

The illness of human beings appeals to the religious nature of the human mind. The Israelite girl in 2 Kings 5 and Baridegi in a Korean oral tale show the contexts of illness as their social or literary setting. In a compassionate response to the illness of higher authority figures, the two women figures, the Israelite girl and Baridegi, resolved the problems of the illness. Each higher power figure in the two women's narratives, namely Elisha and Naaman, and King *Okui* and his court, had his own power, although they could not cure their own illnesses. The takers of *han* became the subjects of *hanpuri*, while the givers of *han* could not remove their problems. The power and abilities that are acknowledged and practiced by the conventional authority figures of Elisha and Naaman, and King *Okui* and his court, became powerless in their inability to solve their own illnesses. It is the ordinary girls who applied their wisdom and courage to the given situations and provided the way to heal. It is not power, but wisdom and courage - characteristics the male power figures do not have - that empower these two women to play prophetic roles in their multicultural contexts. Therefore, the illnesses provoke knowledge of a religious nature, and the healing process confirms the female characters as the leaders of the narratives. Without the girls' knowledge, wisdom, and courage, the powerful men's illnesses would not be cured.

For Korean women, women-related narratives such as those of the unnamed girl in 2 Kings 5 and Baridegi, provide opportunities to participate in the conversation between two cultures. The two women demonstrate their interpretation of their lives and use their wisdom and courage to connect cultures and ponder how to be bridges between different cultures. Therefore, the Israelite girl and Baridegi, as the ancestresses of Korean women, participate in the hermeneutical conversation<sup>28)</sup> in the common

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27) Form criticism intends to find the meaning of a text in a concluding stage of the analysis.

concern of women leadership in these healing narratives. *Hanpuri* hermeneutics involves a conversation between texts and readers who, even though they are innocent, have suffered from patriarchal traditions. Thus, this hermeneutics shows the powerful meaning of stories to release Korean women from *han*. Even though the two women lived in different times and places, form criticism's exploration and comparison of their stories opens a new ground for Korean women's *hanpuri*-hermeneutical conversation.

## Abstract

Minjung theology has been interested in the confluence of biblical stories and Korean traditions. The mutual relationship between the two narratives (biblical and Korean) is a hermeneutical process of reading the Bible in Korean contexts. For Korean women, the hermeneutical confluence appears in the mutual meetings of women in the biblical narratives and Korean narratives. *Han* is a platform to encounter meeting between the two women: Baridegi and the Israelite girl (2 Kings 5). They suffer from *han* in their own contexts. The Israelite girl had been captured by Aramean soldiers and exiled to Aram, while Baridegi was abandoned by her royal parents. Even though these two girls innocently suffered from *han*, they showed their wisdom and courage through their narratives. Furthermore, they are available to become the subjects of women-hermeneutical conversations. To

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28) A dialogical relationship between texts and readers is emphasized by Martin Buber and later Gadamer (Steven Kepnes, *The Text as Thou: Martin Buber's Dialogical Hermeneutics and Narrative Theology* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 19). In addition, Buber redefines a notion of interpretation as a dialogic relationship between the reader and the text. With this latter move Buber opened new ground for his hermeneutic theory and anticipated some of the hermeneutic developments usually associated with the contemporary philosopher of interpretation theory, Hans-Georg Gadamer. In this respect, the dialogic relationship between texts and readers expands to a conversational meeting between a text and another text, because a reader has already an influence on diverse texts. One of Gadamer's hermeneutical conversations refers to the involvement of readers during the process of conducting conversation (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, New York: Continuum 1988, 345). Thus, he emphasizes, "we fall into conversation, or even that we become involved in it." (Ibid.).

theorize *hanpuri* hermeneutics, new form criticism functions as a critical method of the interpretation of the two narratives. New form criticism focuses on finding the meanings of each text by analyzing the linguistic elements, which consist of structure, genre, setting, and intention synchronically and diachronically.

Both Baridegi and the Israelite girl function as the healers of their *han*-givers: Naaman and King Okui. How can the *han*-takers become the subjects of the healing process of their *han*-givers? An answer comes from the *hanpuri* of the two girls. Baridegi and the Israelite girl, the *han*-takers, achieve release from their *han* through reconciliation with their enemies by doing *hanpuri*. If the Israelite girl still suffered from *han* in her exiled situation in Aram, she would not be able to help Naaman with her wisdom. When Baridegi encounters her parents, she becomes released from her *han* and, later, becomes a goddess. The two girls' *hanpuri* does not lead them to revenge on their enemies, but helps them to seek genuine reconciliation with their high-authorities for a holistic life.

In particular, some scholars have interpreted Baridegi as a good daughter who respects her parents and takes care of them. However, her journey to the undersea world is a process of finding her identity. This journey results in her *hanpuri* and revives her parents. Their *hanpuri* does not simply ask the forgiveness of their *han*-givers, but it sincerely reveals the identity of the *han*-takers. The Israelite girl and Baridegi reach the climax of *hanpuri* by restoring life to the *han*-givers.

*Hanpuri* hermeneutics engages in dialogue with texts and the Korean women who are innocent, but who suffer from the patriarchal traditions. This hermeneutics shows the powerful meaning of stories to release Korean women from their *han*.

### **Key Words**

Baridegi, 2 Kings 5, the Israelite girl, *Han*, *Hanpuri* Hermeneutics, Minjung, New Form Criticism.

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# The Emergence and Convergence of Christian Identities: An East Asian Reflection on the Bible, Minjung, and Identities

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## Introduction

The Bible is never read in a vacuum, insofar as it affects believers in their own contexts as a “Word of God” to live by. Whether the interpreter is aware of it or not, the context serves not only as a choice, but also as a consequence. It is a choice because the interpreters choose to read from a particular location. It is also a consequence because biblical interpretation has powerful effects on people and their lives in certain ways. Hence, critical readers have to make explicit at the outset their own context and bring to critical understanding their own interests and perspectives.

My reading of the Bible in general and the Gospel of Luke in particular

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emerges from an East Asian global context, where globalization becomes a new world order and its own rule and conception creates scarcity. This context informs my reading of the text. However, the same context is also informed by my reading which helps me to see it in a new light. In light of the Gospel of Luke, I see that the People of God struggle with a lack of agency under the construct of power.

The issue of human agency is such an “uncomfortable” subject in my native South Korea, which was one of the poorest countries in Asia until the 1960s and has grown into the tenth largest economy of the world. In a country, still gripped by the memory of the colonial rule and the ethnic, national divide, the “World” within and beyond has been heavily influenced by what Althusser calls “ideological representation of ideology.”<sup>1)</sup>

During the latter part of the twentieth century, South Korea was governed by a military dictatorship that had served the Japanese Empire and then quickly turned to the U.S. for its protection.<sup>2)</sup> Consequently, the Japanese colonial legacy and the American hegemony have long supported each other in South Korea. At the same time, the domestic power has combined itself with such discourses as anticommunism, modernization, and globalization, which have followed one after the other, each supporting the next.

Being haunted by the memory of colonial cruelty and exploitation, South Korea has cultivated its own colony - not a “colony” abroad, but a “colony” within.<sup>3)</sup> Thus, while problems and contradictions emerge from

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1) Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984), 36-42. According to Althusser, “ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence,” and “their imaginary transposition is caused by a few men who base their domination and exploitation of the people on a *falsified* representation of the world which they imagined in order to enslave other minds by dominating their imagination.” As he points out, the “ideological representation of ideology” has influenced people to have a “consciousness” or “belief” in particular ideas, according to which they must act and conduct themselves, lest they become deviant.

2) For further elaboration, see George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

3) As Franz Fanon observes, in this situation, the combination of colonialism and such other discourses forms oppression that runs tighter. *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 148-205.

the life of the colonial and postcolonial subjects, South Koreans must relegate them to a distant past and move on rather than contest and resist in their present (hi)story. They were deprived of their own (hi)story, culture, and language, while being harnessed for modernity, progress, and development - in Partha Chatterjee's words, to experience "continued subjection under a world order which only sets their tasks for them and over which they have no control."<sup>4)</sup>

Therefore, what the colonial and postcolonial subjects desperately wanted and still cannot acquire is their sufficient agency and freedom. Their lack of agency, however, arises most poignantly today in globalization - a process of appropriation that reaches across diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial identities while creating 'inside' / 'outside' boundaries. With regard to the current globalization, Fernando Segovia traces it to the last five hundred years of imperialism and the domination of capitalism:

At each stage of imperialism in the modern and postmodern era, capitalism has prevailed and dominated the economic landscape, from mercantile capitalism in the 15th to 18th centuries, to monopoly capitalism in the 19th and first half of the 20th century, to global capitalism in the latter half of the 20th century to the present.<sup>5)</sup>

At each turn, human identities are contested, challenged, and often jeopardized by strife and scarcity. Throughout this history, the poor - the "others" of history - always have been present, crying for a more just world.

However, the issue of living together, as well as the representation of self and other, has drawn limited attention from modern (mostly, western) economics, while the over-representation of scarcity has been widespread.<sup>6)</sup> Biblical studies also have increased knowledge of wealth and poverty. However, biblical criticism's seemingly "impartial" and "neutral" measures

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4) Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zen Books, 1986), 10.

5) Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 127.

6) I find myself in agreement with the alert offered over the assumptions of modern economics and their solid presupposition of scarcity by Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), see esp. 15-28.

have not advanced the awareness of how the construction of political economy pertains to such a topic, while the value of such practices as “almsgiving” is dragged into the politically charged zone of economy.

This paper seeks a connection between human identities and agency, especially with regard to those materially poor who are locked out of the prevailing political-economic paradigms. For my overall project, I ground myself as a real reader, immersed in a specific historical, cultural, social, and geographical location. From such a location, I take into account the (hi)stories of Korean *minjung* as another text and evaluate as well as analyze in dialogue how a biblical text stands with regard to the particular East-Asian global context.

To begin with, I illuminate the social memory of *minjung*, which will characterize both the narrative world of Luke and my own reading context. Then, I tackle the economic constructs and relations represented by the Lukan text and acted out by the literary characters in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (15:11-32) in particular. Finally, by reweaving my argument through a more direct theological engagement with *minjung* (hi)stories, I address the ethical (and political) power of biblical interpretation. With this, I now turn to a social script of *minjung* in the early 1970s.

### **Does Minjung-Jesus Still Live?**

In a context such as mine, the presence of the Korean *minjung*, or grassroots people, is highly significant.<sup>7)</sup> While the legacy of colonialism and the threat of neocolonialism shape the lands of the Far East, *minjung* have been subject to a long subordination and have borne the imprint of colonial oppressions.

Since the seeds of capitalism and its infrastructure were first laid in Korea during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), colonial and neocolonial development has continued upwards. Economic success made possible by the *minjung* and their cheap labor has favored the wealthy and the corporations. This brought out strong resistance from students, laborers, farmers, and religious institutions in the 1970' s.

At that time, one famous poetic expression of discontent came in the

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7) The concept of *minjung* first came to the fore when people in a rural area flocked to urban centers after the Korean War (1950-1953).

form of a parody, “Five Bandits,” by Kim Chiha. “Five Bandits” employed stylistic features of *Pansori*, a traditional style of oral performance that often had its own obscene and satirical elements. Such use of traditional folk culture has served as a “negative dialectic,” as Adorno put it, and became central to *minjung* movements through the 1980’s. His work contributed to the formative *minjung* theology in the mid-1970s. For this and other poems, Kim was arrested, imprisoned, and tortured. Later, in 1974, he would be sentenced to death for advocating rebellion. However, he was eventually released because of heavy international pressure upon the Park government.

Upon being released, Kim Chiha wrote another *Pansori* poem, “Chang Il Tam,” that came out in *Declaration of Conscience* (1976). In this poem, a man named Chang Il Tam is a butcher and the son of a butcher. He comes from a lineage of three generations of butchers and prostitutes. He himself is the son of a prostitute. He later becomes a criminal and escapes from prison. While being pursued by the police, he was able to hide in a back street where prostitutes live. There he notices a prostitute giving birth to a child. She has tuberculosis, and her body is rotting with venereal disease. She is risking her life with the delivery. This scene enlightens Chang’s consciousness, and thereby he exclaims, “Oh, from a rotten body, new life is coming out! It is God who is coming out!” He kneels down and says, “Oh, my mother, God is in your womb. God is the very bottom.”<sup>8)</sup>

By way of this awakening, Chang not only recognizes but also invalidates the code of “identity thinking” - for Adorno, a “covertly paranoid style of rationality” which inexorably transmutes the Others into a mere simulacrum of humans or expels them beyond the human borders in “a panic-stricken act of exclusion.”<sup>9)</sup> After his awakening, he himself becomes an itinerant preacher, proclaiming the liberation of people. He calls prostitutes his mother, kisses their feet, and declares:

The soles of your feet are heaven.  
God is in your decaying wombs.  
God’s place is with the lowest of the low.<sup>10)</sup>

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8) Kim Chi Ha, *The Gold Crowned Jesus And Other Writings*, eds. Chong Sun Kim and Shelly Killen (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978), 27.

9) Terry Eagleton. *Ideology: An Introduction*, 126; Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 1973.

Chang meets and argues with various urban mission pastors, priests, intellectuals, professors, trade union leaders, monks, servicemen, and social workers.



“Oh, you are my mother!”

Figure 1: The Picture of Chang Il Tam and Prostitutes in *The Gold Crowned Jesus*.<sup>11)</sup>

He acknowledges his own life as a journey going in a reverse direction to that which most people have been forced to take. He leads his disciples up a mountain and teaches them the philosophy of *Dan* that pertains to self-denial, and which helps them cast out the temptation of selfishness and comfort.<sup>12)</sup> At the end of the story Chang leads his disciples and they march together toward the capital city, each and every one carrying beggars’ cans.

10) Kim Chi Ha, *The Gold Crowned Jesus And Other Writings*, 27.

11) *Ibid.*, 29.

12) See Suh Namdong’s discussion of *Dan*, “Towards a Theology of Han,” in The Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia, *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983), 55-72. According to Suh, *Dan* (meaning the act of “cutting”) is the poet’s self-denial. One’s enlightenment (or revolution) should be accompanied by living as “a wayfarer, leaving everything behind.” *Dan* also conveys a social dimension of the people: “Cutting the vicious circle of revenge” for “the transformation of the secular world and secular attachments.” If needed, *Dan* ought to be developed into a decisive and organized explosion. This transition lies in “religious commitment” and in “internal and spiritual transformation.” I will address the theme of “commitment” and “internal/spiritual transformation” in the concluding chapter. See Suh (1983), 56-57.

Chang proclaims in their midst:

Paradise is to share food with others.  
Food is heaven.<sup>13)</sup>

When the big march comes closer to the capital, the authorities get more confused and more frightened. The journey of Chang and his disciples goes against the flow of the multitudes undertaking their daily journey, an “endless trans migratory pilgrimage to their destination and then a return to the place where there is no food.”<sup>14)</sup> These multitudes throng around Chang and his disciples, adding to their numbers. Before Chang finishes his journey, however, he gets arrested. He was betrayed by one of his disciples, another down-and-out.

The authority takes him out in order to execute him in public for conspiring against the throne. At the moment, he begins to sing a song, entitled “Food is Heaven”:

Food is heaven  
You can't make it on your own  
Food should be shared.  
Food is heaven.  
We all see  
the same stars in heaven  
How natural it is that we  
all share the same food.  
Food is heaven  
as we eat

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13) Kim Chi Ha, *The Gold Crowned Jesus And Other Writings*, 28.

14) Suh Namdong sees the life of Chang as the social biography of the Korean *Minjung*. Suh notes that: “religious ascetism, revolutionary action, a yearning for the communal life of early Christianity and a deep affection for the valiant resistance of Koreans are all part of Chang’s kaleidoscopic world.” For Suh, some of those movements and ideas combine and coalesce, and others clash in confrontation. See “Historical References for a Theology of *Minjung*,” in eds. The Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia, *Minjung Theology: People As the Subjects of History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 155-182; esp. 177.

God enters us  
 food is heaven.  
 Oh, food  
 should be shared and eaten by all.<sup>15)</sup>

Finally, Chang is beheaded. Three days after his decapitation, however, he returns to life. His resurrection is so strange that his head is put on the betrayer's body, and the betrayer's head on Chang's body. The head speaking justice and truth is bonded to the body carrying injustice and falsehood.

Presumably, such a strange scene promises resurrection not to physical bodies, but to hybrid existence woven out of "self" and "other," regardless of whether or not each is recognized as "good" or "bad." For Kim, this is the resurrection - an embrace that is truly celebrative, from which the notion of political economy shall flow. In the face of conceptual straitjacketing, Kim affirms heterogeneity over and against the tyranny of seamless homogeneity. Chang already witnessed the Otherness - a "God" - in a grimy cesspool of humanity.

As such, Kim envisions Chang's birth, itinerating, preaching of liberation, trial, and execution as the reproduction of the life of Jesus.<sup>16)</sup> Those prostitutes, prisoners, and beggars, with whom Chang joins himself were, in fact, the *minjung* who are victimized by the powerful oppressors - that is, markets, governments, and corporations. They were heavily taxed by the bias of the ruling class and marginalized from the center of society. Some of them lost their speech, others followed the path of the powerful, and still others had to engage in self-censoring. Chang Il Tam's story is a witness of the life of *minjung* in the 1970s, one that slides into a deep pit where political economy normalizes the degrading of human lives and bodies.

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15) Kim Chi Ha, *The Gold Crowned Jesus And Other Writings*, 30.

16) David Suh describes Chang's life as "complete conformity with the *han* of hell." According to Suh, *Han* which is a feeling of helpless suffering and oppression becomes the most important element in the politico-economic consciousness of the *minjung*. See the discussion of David Suh, "A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation," in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 24-28.

However, when Chang finds the truth at the bottom, the bottom turns upside down and becomes heaven. Chang's resurrection is an initiation into mysteries, enabling those marginalized to perceive and understand what is otherwise beyond human perception and understanding. Through the carrier, a body of the "evil," the news of liberation becomes widespread as by a wild and stormy wind.

### Challenge of *Minjung* Theology Today

The word *minjung* was first used in theology by two scholars, Ahn Byungmu and Suh Namdong, both in 1975.<sup>17)</sup> When *Minjung* Theology first arose in Korea in the early 1970s, it was most likely a theological proposal to vindicate 22 year-old *Jun Tae-il*. He immolated himself on a street in the front of the Pyonghwa Market in November 1970 in a protest against the labor conditions to which he and his coworkers were subject. Sweatshops were densely packed into the market where he toiled as a garment worker.

What particularly caused his suicidal protest were the miserable lives of "See-da," who worked in a sweatshop covered with dust, from early morning to midnight every day. The term "See-da" used to refer to downcast laborers, albeit with a despised connotation of "errand boy." Most of them were women as young as thirteen, in Korea. The Japanese colonial etymology of the word, however, points to a different meaning, that is, "supporter" or "advocate," "See-da-ba-da-rakee."

These "See-da," who were never known by their own names or capacities, frequently fell victim to abrupt deaths or fatal diseases due to the hazardous working circumstances. Feeling that there was no other way to bring attention to their plight, *Jun Tae-il* had decided on a more radical course of action. He left his world shouting, "We are not machines!" Jun's

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17) The word *minjung* indicates common people who undergo socio-cultural alienation, economic exploitation, or political oppression. Kim Yong-bock states that "the reality and identity of *Minjung* is not to be known by the philosophical or scientific definition of the character or substance of *minjung*. It is to be known by the story of *minjung*, that is, the social biography created by *minjung* themselves." Kim Yong-bock, *Korean Minjung and Christian* (Seoul: Hyungsungsa, 1988), 110.

death is recorded in Korean history as a spark that started the labor union movement, which led to the end of the “developmental” dictatorship. A distorted meaning of See-da, the plight of the downcast and undocumented laborers, has been still transmitted through Korean *minjung* (hi)story.

For the *minjung* theologian, Suh Namdong, Chang Il Tam is an heir to both Korean *minjung* and Christian *minjung* traditions. He acknowledges that the story of Chang Il Tam provides a description of the suffering Jesus *in disguise*, just like the poor, the weak, and the ones who need clothes or have nowhere to go (e.g., Matt 25:31-46). Chang Il Tam is the Jesus of Korea, born in Korea in the 1970s. In this way, the *minjung* becomes Messiah.<sup>18)</sup> This does not mean that the *minjung* and Jesus are ontologically identical. Although the *minjung* are not Jesus himself, they rather play the role of Messiah in two distinct ways.

First, they bear “the remaining suffering” of Messiah. In Matt 25:31-46, for example, the poor, the weak, and those who are in need of clothes and have nowhere to go are identified with Jesus. They are “Jesus in disguise.” A man who suffered at the hands of robbers in Luke 10:30-35 also can be a type of Messiah, playing a Messianic role, a role of Jesus Christ. He was half dead and cried out for help. His groaning and crying is a symbol that repeatedly asserts itself in the process of history and controls what one may find in the cultural text.

By presenting the despised *minjung* as the one who has true subjectivity, the early *minjung* theology attempted to tackle all the stereotypes and prejudices. True salvation is found among those *minjung* who bear the suffering of the Christ and who cannot truly rely on powerful institutions - be they economic, political, or religious institutions. The suffering Jesus is an affirmation for *minjung* in the face of a constant barrage from the experience of “otherness,” a cry from agony.

Second, tainted as they are by colonial exploitations, the identity of *minjung* regenerates itself into the one who participates in the suffering of the *minjung*. The fellowship of suffering involves a self who responds to the Others as a “subject of history.”<sup>19)</sup> A self-conscious turn to the Others not only expresses the eschatological aspiration of an unredeemed world, but actually overcomes the powers of evil that enslave, and dwell in, humanity.

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18) Suh Namdong, *A Study on Minjung Theology* (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1980).

19) *Ibid.*, 181; emphasis mine.

In this regard, Suh states that:

If someone goes to the dying man and treats him, then s/he becomes a true human. But if s/he ignores him and passes by, then s/he becomes a beast. The way I fulfill humanity depends on whether I hear the groan of the suffering man and help him or not... The participating in the suffering of the *Minjung* is the way of becoming a true human and a way of salvation.<sup>20)</sup>

The affirmation of those participants as a *prototype* of humanity is a call to recognize the *present* manifestations of the divine Jesus in the *minjung*. This enables human agency in a mysterious way and creates opportunities in bringing about different life and reality.<sup>21)</sup>

With hope both for and against historical realities, *minjung* share such stories as folktales, songs, and even rumors that inspire the *minjung* to resist or to transform the oppressive power and construct. Through the stories multiplying, the *minjung* participate together in their movement.<sup>22)</sup> In this respect, the role of the *minjung* as Messiah is not merely *given*, but *gives*, especially to the one who receives it. The affirmation of those participants not only clarifies what it means to be a human being, singularly and in community, but also establishes their identity as the subjects of history. The vision as such brings forth the ethical, political, and theological significance of human subjects. Minjung Theology, through the 1980s, has addressed the power of subordinated individuals and groups to resist and subvert the dominant structures, even if they must do so in ways that appear hybrid, abnormal, illegal or ineffective.

For early Minjung Theology, the “social biography of the *minjung*,” or

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20) *Ibid.*, 180-81.

21) This seems peculiar when compared with the Hebrews exodus from bondage in Egypt. Richard Horsley asserts that those Hebrews are the very prototype of people claiming its agency. See Richard Horsley, *Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 18.

22) Indeed, listening to those stories and voices from the margin should broaden one's knowledge and information base, provoking the process that becomes a discursive conscientization. See Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1993), 52-53.

the collective experience of *minjung*, serve as the hermeneutical basis for interpreting the resources of Minjung Theology - that is, the Bible, tradition, and history.<sup>23)</sup> Listening to the voices from the margin through such stories as folktales, songs, and even rumors inspires the readers to (re)read the Bible and examine some of the core beliefs of history. Hyun YoungHak refers to this as an “experience of critical transcendence.”<sup>24)</sup> He states that “beginning to *do* theology in such a way is exciting, for you feel theology with your body and dance with it before you *think* it.”<sup>25)</sup> Thus, as anti-Western theology, early Minjung Theology pertains to what Freire might call a “discursive conscientization.”<sup>26)</sup>

For an East Asian global reader, recourse to the *minjung* may serve not only as a “point of contact,” but also as a tremendous resource for trans-historical and cross-cultural reflection on humanity and human agency - the kind of vision that Luke presents over and against the colonial construction of fear and scarcity. Henceforth, from an East Asian *minjung* perspective, I focus special attention on the household (*oikos*) story in the Gospel of Luke that might thrust the reader back to an encounter with the (*minjung*-) messiah, which will foster human agency and (comm)unity between and beyond center and periphery, metropolis and margins. From an East Asian *minjung* perspective, reading the Bible becomes thus a mutual dialogue between the text and readers more than a discovery of the latent meaning of the text. Hence, an examination of the creation of the household is in order.

### **The Parable of the Prodigal Son<sup>27)</sup>**

The Parable of the Prodigal Son unveils a material construct of economy

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23) Kim Yongbock, *Korean Minjung and Christian* (Seoul: Hyungsungsa, 1988), 110.

24) Hyun Younghak, “A Theological Look at the Mask Dance in Korea” in *Minjung Theology*, ed. Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia (CTC-CCA) (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 47-54.

25) *Ibid.*

26) Freire (1993): 52-53.

27) For more detailed discussion, please see Rohun Park, “Revisiting the Parable of the Prodigal Son for Decolonization: Luke’s Reconfiguration of *Oikos* in 15:11-32,” *Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches*, Volume 17,?Number 5, 2009: 507-520.

that carries out the norms affirming “this is the way things are” or “should be.” In order to disclose what is really at stake in the parable, there is a need to reconstruct the submerged voices emerged within the *oikos*. First and foremost, a very perceptive articulation is drawn from the older son who confronts his father:

Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends (15:29).

The older son disparages himself as a slave at home, when his father champions his voiceless younger brother as the cause for celebration. The kyriarchal order hinted at in his speech carries out the authorization of scarcity. The father as a property owner, a slave master, and a patron to clients, exerts both “material and moral power over those who live in and around” the household, as Paul Veyne states. With the *paterfamilias* commanding economic goods and food, the household becomes an embodiment of material force in its exclusive operation, serving as the site of the denial of “enough” to everyone else.

In this regard, the older son is a counter-model, an illustration, or clarification of the problem in Luke’s *oikonomia*, as he further criticizes his father for his lax economic management:

But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him (Lk 15:30).

When the deprivation of the older son emerges from the power problematic, its mode of relational polarity should condone silence or engender mimicry. For its victims, poverty becomes an intention or discipline of “God,” just like the younger son says to the father, “I have sinned against heaven” (Lk 15:18, 21). For its masters, on the other hand, it only reinforces opportunities to develop a vast source of patronage and to evade accountability. This makes it very difficult for colonial subjects to discern the call of God to act and resist (Lk 15:29).

Hence, turning the older son’s speech into a personal confrontation, the way most commentators do with this parable, could undercut any chance of envisioning human subjectivities, or what it means to be a human being,

singularly and in community.<sup>28)</sup> For the older son, “the problem” is not the lack of loyalty, but the lack of agency to live the kind of life he has reason to value, ‘that [he] may celebrate with his friends.’ A young goat he refers to becomes goods that not only define his subjectivity, but also his communal experience.

The older son has long internalized the rule of kyriarchal boundary. He could not go out to celebrate with his friends, since, for him, the boundary is highly marked by the power of the *paterfamilias*. This boundary justifies human suffering, rationalizes the cost and benefit, and undermines the possibilities of (comm)union.

Thus, it is striking that the *paterfamilias* of the *oikos* does not dictate or exercise his power, but tries to conciliate his household with a soothing voice:

Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours; but we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found (15:31-32)

What really strikes the reader herein, however, is not the father’s attitude, but the father’s construction of communion between the *paterfamilias* and the son, then-slave. Luke’s patriarch lacks the ambition of strict management of the household and fails to maintain it. He rather goes back and forth interacting with his sons and erasing the borderlines. As such, no distinction exists between the “prodigal” and the “principled.”

The father’s sense of (comm)unity, in which self and other seem so interconnected and interdependent, allows one’s property to be absorbed in each other. The father’s utterance, “Son, you are always with me; all that is mine yours,” could amount to saying: You are neither indebted nor

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28) The manifest breach of rules in Luke is actually the condition for the alternative *oikos* and *oikonomia* to become more visible. When colonial agents apply dominant power to every corner of the household, creating scarcity, especially in a zero-sum colonial society, Luke’s *oikos* discourse tends to focus on entitlements rather than on loyalty, on rights rather than on discipline. Hence, the idea of ‘repentance’ alone, condoning the “like-mindedness” under the Empire, fails to explain Luke’s substantial development of the human agents. The text of Luke does not give a chance to exploit the marginalized with a sense of indebtedness, inequality or immorality.

obligated to me, as you think, because you are part of the *oikos* whose economy ensures (comm)union and liberation. Accordingly, both profits and losses are socialized, rather than privatized.

This is not a zero-sum game, but a positive-sum game. The household as a whole widens and everyone in it wins. Its pervasive interdependence from within and without salutes the full humanity of shameful and honored, have-nots and haves, powerless and powerful, all embracing culture of a community caught in structural oppression. Hence, the sacred space of the family encourages human subjects to cross over imperial-colonial descriptions of the boundary between center and periphery, metropolis and the margins - in effect, the imperial and the colonial.

For the father, celebration serves as a symbolic act in which one can enter and participate as a community and communicate a different faith/vision and a sense of the move from the binomial polarities and contradictions to the heteronomous communion and correlation. Those persons formerly conceived as voiceless and invisible, are reclaimed and become legitimated for the (comm)union of the *oikos*. Hence, the colonial inscriptions of self and other are lifted up, and so will be colonial convention and conformity.

This new world that we hear from the parable is quite challenging, since it redefines what our culture sees as the problem with the economy, and therefore how we envision security for ourselves and our society. Luke's household might be felt as unsettling and even as threatening. Indeed, few New Testament texts reflect to the same degree an awareness of the link between human existence and economy.

Within the reconfiguration of Luke's household and its related, ideological stance against the empire, a postcolonial *minjung* finds an alternative way of living-together or meals-together. Luke's *oikos* discourse produces an internal structure shared by *all* of the household of God, a dangerous union that might have pressed back against individual relations and exclusive motivation, its abstractions and delimitation of life and

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29) This cannot be told through narratives of success or failure, narratives with their endings in this present world. But it might take the form of eschatological genealogies, as in Luke (3:23-38) - a story that can be told only from a redeemed end that is continuously transcendent from the present moment. In this regard, Luke's genealogy is a cultural turn to the culture of the now and the present Household of God.

death.<sup>29)</sup> For an East Asian global reader, this more hybrid account of *oikos* might suggest a vision within a wide array of institutions between and beyond self and other.

## Heteronomous Communion

While economy originally refers to a household, it also provides a norm, whereby self and other, or individual and community (communal selves), may live in a house in a manner that is both just and sustainable. Under the neocolonial dominance of global economy, however, the flow of economy has the effect of marginalizing the rest of the world, so that those on the periphery become merely a means of supplying the needs of others.

In this regard, Luke's *oikos* visions can be understood as a "fitting" theo-ethical response, where a rhetorical situation similar to that addressed by Luke exists today.<sup>30)</sup> Indeed, it would seem that implicit and explicit scriptural allusions also abound in the contemporary neo-colonial economy. Hence, my reading of the Gospel of Luke and its economy helps me to see my own context in a new light where globalization becomes a new world order and its own rule and conception creates scarcity.

*Economy as Domination* Today, while the contemporary world sees a more nearly equal, "flat" world, bringing with it "open markets," "open trade" and "open politics," proponents of neoliberal shifts release diverse capitalist truisms for those who strive to be globally competitive:

Make your corporate taxes low, simple and transparent; actively seek out global companies; open your economy to competition; speak English; keep your fiscal house in order; and build a consensus around the whole package with labor and management.<sup>31)</sup>

Since globalization has become a new world order, its own rule and conception has been able to influence virtually every space in the world. Its deceptive appearance presents capitalist realities as natural and eternal - a

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30) E. S. Fiorenza, "Changing the Paradigms: The Ethos of Biblical Studies," in *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 31-55.

31) Thomas L. Friedman, "The End of the Rainbow," *New York Times*: 29 June 2005.

continuing representation of 'god,' which is an idolatrous cult of Mammon.<sup>32)</sup>

Henceforth, when capitalism charges itself with domination and exclusion, poverty becomes the result of divine will, though it is an inevitable consequence of the nature of the capitalist market. It has thrived at the cost of such disenfranchised human subjects, while at the same time having excluded those who do not have the property which results from having a livelihood. This leads to a number of issues, or problems to be resolved: first, the market itself as the mechanism of global domination; second, commodification as the reality of the mechanism as such; and third, scarcity as the consequence of the domination and its justification.<sup>33)</sup>

First, while the market promises a free and harmonious way of integrating and coordinating society, its universal justification for "rational" choice is, in reality, a reflection of domination. Second, commodity chains emerge as the core of marketization. The whole process of commodification effectively reduces the lands and labor to rents (in place of lands) and wages (in place of persons) as well as limiting justice, health, and life. Everything in the commodity chain is commodified; the market renders all transactions inhuman. Third, as wealth is used merely as a means for gaining more wealth, scarcity emerges and it effectively denies others access to their livelihood.<sup>34)</sup> The Gospel tackles the problems and needs as such, while conveying a liberating new narrative for the people of God living under global capitalism.

*Economy as Liberation* For an East Asian postcolonial reader, Luke's parable stories point to political and economic changes by way of a broader sense of the Others not simply as alien, but in their full human dignity as persons and groups. This awareness is directly related to the ethical

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32) See the earlier discussion of Segovia (2000); Meeks (1989).

33) Rohun Park, "Revelation for Sale: An Intercultural Reading of Revelation 18 from an East Asian Perspective," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 4 (2008:2): 25.1?25.12.

34) In this regard, Dussel notes that "Once capital is absolutized - idolized, fetishized - it is the workers themselves who are immolated on its altar, as their life is extracted from them (their wages do not pay the whole of the life they objectify in the value of the product) and immolated to the god. As of old, so today as well, living human beings are sacrificed to mammon and Moloch." *Ethics and Community* (Maryknoll, NY : Orbis Books, 1988), 260.

imperative: If God is on everyone's side, what must I/we do as a "faithful" response to the world as is? The question touches upon how broadly we can imagine the economy for all of God's creation and how broadly we bring justice for sustainable existence for all.<sup>35)</sup>

In this regard, Luke's representation of human beings suggests that my existence is not quite my own since my life is already bound up with the life of the Other(s). In addition, the relationship to self and other emerges in the *dative* (e.g., kissing and hugging between the parent and the prodigal; cf. Luke 16:22, "Lazarus in the 'bosom' of Abraham").<sup>36)</sup> This economy redefines what our culture "sees" as the problem with poverty and also redirects how we envision life and life-together for ourselves, our families, and our society.

The teaching is therefore seen as unsettling and even threatening. However, constant empowerment through the corrective of the Gospel shall serve as a condition for being rescued from the power of mammon and its destructive bondage of slavery. This understanding certainly opens the possibility of liberation, as opposed to oppression by neocolonial market mechanisms. For the people at the grassroots, Luke's *oikos* story serves as a vehicle through which all others participate in their world as envisioned by story-makers, story-tellers, and story-performers. The *oikos* becomes a possible locus for emancipatory practice. Hence, the *minjung* can be directly connected to and grow out of the irrepressibly inspired convictions that imagine the world that is not and engage in the practice of freedom.

*Economy as Transformation* Luke raises this sort of radical reflection and critical consciousness over and against the construct of political economy that justifies scarcity and triggers the threat of starvation. What still needs to be done, however, is to display that which the practice that Lukan (hi)stories inspire might look like in our time and space. At the heart

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35) It is here worth quoting from the poem of Wallace Stevens: "We are not our own. Nothing is itself taken alone. Things are because of interrelations and interconnections." *Opus Posthumous: Poems, Plays, Prose*, ed. Milton J. Bates (NY: Vintage, 1990), 163.

36) Deleuze defines transcendence by means of the *dative* relation. *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, eds. Paul Patton and John Protevi (London; New York: Continuum, 2003), 81; see Claire Elise Katz and Lara Trout's *Emmanuel Levinas: Levinas and the History of Philosophy* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 179.

of the *oikos* is God's invitation to God's people to live in a "present" that has been liberated and transformed by the visions of the beyond. For grassroots *minjung*, this is an affirmation of hope and a call for dreaming new visions in a way that is so "foreign" in their land which obsesses with mammon- "capital."

Luke's economy not only goes beyond all the concepts of "utility" or "disutility" but also establishes transformation across categorical dominant boundaries of "self" and "other." In the *oikos* of God, partial identity cannot rule or tyrannize communal identity. In addition, all the exploitations, abstractions, and delimitations of life are lifted up. There is always "enough" to go around for all by radical interdependence from with-in and with-out. One may return to the *oikos* and find oneself at home. Luke's *oikos* stories as located in the travel narrative invite us to a transmigatory pilgrimage to God and then to return to the place in which there is found enough for us all.

From a perspective of the *minjung*-messiah, however, the Gospel of Luke does not condone interested relations, but rather fosters (comm)union - such as "hugging" and "kissing" with the "prodigal." Hence, the disappeared will be found, the missing welcomed home. For an East Asian global reader, the "prodigal" remains a marker of the *heteronomous* unity of self and other. Luke's Gospel populates its *oikos* discourse with such alternative visions, recreating an *oikos* which subverts the exploitative political economy presently governing human agency and identity.

Neither an "atomized" self nor an "ideal" whole can be viable "in a salutary and vivifying manner" without the Other(s).<sup>37)</sup> In view of the Gospel, it is pure formalism to imagine that otherness, heterogeneity and marginality are unqualified political/economic benefits. Without the imperial-colonial drive to "atomized singles" (e.g., the older brother) or "constrained wholes" (e.g., *paterfamilias*), one may find the *oikos* in Luke to be both internal pluralism and external connection - that is, a living space in which to encounter competing visions and to cultivate human capabilities and freedom. The readers are also invited to imagine and build up (*oikodomeo*) what they could be with regard to the political-economic "double bind." The divine *oikos* in Luke does not divide or discriminate

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37) Dwight N. Hopkins's insightful discussion of humanity, *Being Human* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 82.

according to interested, oppressive relations. It rather fosters a mutual, “heteronomous” unity (e.g., “hugging” and “kissing,” 15:20).

This calls into existence the people of God as *community* whereby one re/members the suffering Others as (*minjung*-)messiah, a manifestation of God, oppressed as well as exploited by the destructive power. In the *minjung*'s intertext, Chang Il Tam encounters God when he sees the prostitute risking her life at delivery. This shapes truly postcolonial subjectivity which is heterogeneous by nature over and against homogenizing, colonial, and capitalist, straitjacketing totality.

## Conclusion

In the Gospel of Luke, human misappropriations bring about scarcity. For those who monopolize resources and exclude those who do not have property from the *oikos* (that is, from livelihood), Luke's prophetic impulses announce irretrievable curses. No elite families on earth have a natural, moral, or divine mandate to monopolize the resources of the earth. However, for those who “see” (2:20; 7:22; 15:20), “hear” (2:20; 4:21; 7:22), and “respond” (1:46-56), they will find the beginning of their redemption by entering God's economic work for the creation which ensures abundance for all.

Hence, Luke unabashedly presents a whole range of work options: renouncing riches for the poor, lowering debts (16:5-7), lending without expecting return (6:34-35), putting oneself at others' disposal both with service and riches by and providing hospitality (8:1-3; 10:38-42), inviting the poor and the social outcasts (14:15-24), offering (21:1-4), wasting for love (7:36-50; 15:22-32), disposing half of one's assets and also making restitutions (19:1-9), and communal ownership (Acts 4:32-37). This sort of variety in the Lukan corpus precludes the formulation of any single norm as to “the” Lukan ethic about property and wealth. Rather Luke commends and even celebrates all the options by inviting the people of God, be they “children” (16:25), “friends” (12:4, 22; 16:9), or “disciples” (14:26; 16:1), to the *oikos* - a rich, full, and joyful environment for the individual and the communal.<sup>38)</sup>

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38) Sondra Ely Wheeler, *The New Testament on Wealth and Possessions: A Test of Ethical Method* (Ph.D. Dissertation: Yale University, 1992).

Luke's political economy, therefore, pertains to cultural, ontological, and theological consciousness. All the parables we have observed occur in Luke's unique so-called Travel Narrative. Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, which inspired Chang Il Tam, remains a central section of Luke. Luke describes Jesus as one constantly on the road. At the heart of this journey are the invitations to the people of God to live in the present being shaped and transformed by the dreams and visions, which go beyond simply a concept of "utility," or "disutility," while affirming communion and liberation. As such, reading the Gospel from the present may give us pause, but does Luke's narrator also want to stop us in our journeys? Notice that the parable is still open-ended!

Thus far, my reading of the Gospel has not taken place beyond perspective and contextualization. While the exclusive focus on the text has long obscured the ways in which cultural context and social location inform the subjectivity of interpretation, foregrounding cultural/social location puts readers in a better position to recognize the ways in which their location informs and reforms their understanding of the text. Bringing an interpreter's context to critical understanding also enables interpreters to "see" more clearly when their interpretations contribute to oppression or to justice - that is "ethical dimensions and ethical consequences."<sup>39)</sup>

Hence, from an East Asian global perspective, I have employed the marginality of the colonized as a cultural text that creates new horizons with biblical interpretations. I have since attempted to read the text anew by way of discursive reflections and conscientizations through a struggle between competing visions and ideologies.<sup>40)</sup> In the process, meaning has been

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39) Rhoads (2004): 55.

40) On this point, Segovia states that: "[C]ritical situation envisioned is not necessarily one where 'anything goes,' since readers and interpreters are always positioned and interested and thus always engaged in evaluation and construction: both texts and "texts" are constantly analyzed and engaged, with acceptance or rejection, full or partial, as ever-present and ever-shifting possibilities." *Interpreting Beyond Borders* (2000), 47; see also the discussion of E. S. Fiorenza. She asserts that: "In and through such a critical rhetorical process of interpretation and deliberation religious and biblical studies are constituted as public discourses that are sites of struggle and conscientization. The transformation of biblical studies into such a theo-ethics of interpretation calls for a rhetorical method of analysis that is able to articulate the power and

produced through complex modes of interaction involving both text and reader; the meaning is, for sure, not value-neutral, not autonomous-hermeneutical, and not authoritative-dominant.

The alternative construction of Luke challenges our own convictions and empowers us to confront the economy in our worlds. We cannot be inactive in this endeavor since without our collective self-reflection of and engagement in the political economic institution we will remain its victims. As “the child grew and became strong in spirit” (1:80), the readers need to be deeply connected to, and grow out of the irrepressibly inspired convictions that imagine the world that is not and draw them into radical visions of the beyond. Since the experience as such cannot be transmitted directly - because it is not an idea or doctrine that one can understand - one only experiences it in a true experience of communion with the Others, in which one determines the very character of political economic existence.

It is, then, a relocation into the imaginative landscape of God’s *oikos* that allows the readers to “see” and “hear” “salvation” - indeed, “see” (2:30, “My eyes have seen your salvation”) and “hear” (4:21, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”). This salvation shall no longer sound like a special language for the saints, since the economy (*oikonomia*) of God is the greatest “realism,” with its emphasis on the intuitive appreciation of the Others as a way to sane heavenly belief and practice (11:2, “Your Kingdom come!”) - a concrete, real, efficacious, bodily contest and engagement, as we listen:

Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them (7:22).

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radical democratic visions of well-being inscribed in biblical studies.” E. S. Fiorenza, “Changing the Paradigms: The Ethos of Biblical Studies” in *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 55.

## **Abstract**

While economy is a word about a 'household' (*oikos*), it provides a description of a norm - a 'norm' (*nomos*) whereby self and other live in both a just and sustainable way. The representation of self and other, however, has derived little attention from Western discourses, while the overrepresentation of insufficiency has been common. Meanwhile, the process of economy has become a site of great contention, a place where political and cultural gravity becomes condensed and incarnate - and so does the human subjectivity in its interrelated symbolic, political, and economic constructs. The process has not only legitimated scarcity, but also has assigned human subjects, namely the self and other(s), their given place and purpose. If the contemporary construct of globalization in which everyone is so interrelated and interconnected can be a cultural context, does the biblical text also help us to confront the power that entraps human agency and creates scarcity today just as it did in the past? Is there an economics of life, a theology of "self" and "other" in the Bible that can move people today beyond clinging to wealth and possessions? This essay combines insights from the stories of the grassroots *minjung* as well as the story of those in the Bible who share a common life or even those who hold goods in common - that is, a group who lives together and makes a living together.

### ***Key Words***

East Asian, *minjung*, household, living-together, economy

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## The Korean War (1950-1953) and Christianity: Pro-American Activities of the Christian Churches and the North Korean Reactions

Kim Heung Soo\*

On June 25, 1950, war broke out between North Korea and South Korea, a country that had been divided since 1945. As soon as the war started, each side declared that the other had attacked first, and that its subsequent actions were primarily defensive. The United Nations Security Council branded North Korea as the aggressor and authorized armed intervention to repel them. In this emergency situation, the Korea National Christian Council cabled to the International Missionary Council (IMC) asking for immediate help from the United States. In two weeks, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) approved the police action of the United Nations. Churches in the Western nations considered it imperative to support the United Nations in its effort to maintain international order. Churches in Eastern Europe and China, however, considered the action of the United Nations as an attempt to oppose the liberation of Asian peoples.

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This paper explores how and why the Western European and North American churches, their missionaries, and the Korean churches supported the South Korean government, the United States, and the United Nations during the Korean War. Due to the pro-American stance of the Christian churches the Communist regime of North Korea regarded Christianity as an anti-patriotic religion. Because of this belief, the North Korean regime intensified its anti-religious campaigns, and tried to wipe out Christians in the post-bellum period. Thus, the Korean War deepened the conflict between the Marxist regime and Christian churches, and brought about the transformation of North Korean churches into house churches.

### **The Korean War and World Council of Churches**

The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches convened on July 8-15 in Toronto, Canada, two weeks after the Korean War started. The Korean situation was not on the originally circulated agenda, as the meeting had already been scheduled before the outbreak of hostilities. Prior to the Central Committee session, the Executive Committee of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) met on July 3 to 5. The CCIA, a joint agency of the WCC and the IMC, had prepared a statement on the Korean question and submitted it to the Central Committee. The draft for the statement of the CCIA was written by Rev. Richard M. Fagley of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America (FCC) and Bishop Oxnam of the United Methodist Church.<sup>1)</sup> The draft was sent to the WCC Central Committee, where Reinhold Niebuhr and Martin Niemoeller of West Germany were asked to rework the draft. To the majority of the Central Committee members from the West, the issue appeared to be straightforward: The North Koreans were aggressors. The United Nations Commission in Korea had already come to the conclusion that an act of aggression had been committed by the North.<sup>2)</sup> The Security Council of the

1) "Richard M. Fagley's letter to Hans-Jurgen Benedict," Kim Heung Soo ed., *Documents of the WCC Library: The Korean War* (Seoul: The Institute for Korean Church History, 2003), 27. Later Fagley worked as co-director of the National Council of Churches of Christ Department of International Justice and Goodwill.

2) On the report of the United Nations Commission in Korea, see Glenn D. Paige, *The Korean Decision* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 205-206.

United Nations had decided to meet this aggression with a police measure. Hence, there was general agreement that if the World Council of Churches were to make a statement on Korea, it should speak up for the maintenance of the principles of world order.<sup>3)</sup>

When the CCIA and the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches discussed issues raised by the Korean War, major importance was attached to first-hand reports of the United Nations Commission on the Korean situation as a means of verifying North Korean aggression. It was on the basis of reports from this Commission, the “most objective witness available,” that the Central Committee adopted a “Statement on the Korean Situation and World Order” for its 160 member Churches in forty-five countries, commending the United Nations for its prompt decision to meet the aggression, and for authorizing the police action.

An act of aggression has been committed. The United Nations Commission in Korea, the most objective witness available, asserts that “all evidence points to a calculated, coordinated attack prepared and launched with secrecy” by the North Korean troops.

Armed attack as an instrument of national policy is wrong. We therefore commend the United Nations, an instrument of world order, for its prompt decision to meet this aggression and for authorizing a police measure which every member nation should support.<sup>4)</sup>

The most important emphasis in the document was its commending of the action of the United Nations as an instrument of world order in resisting the aggression in Korea. During the debate the most controversial point was whether the churches could commend the use of force for the defense of world order. Reinhold Niebuhr and Martin Niemoeller defended the conception of a police measure in Korea.<sup>5)</sup> The pacifist position, one of three possible attitudes defined by the Amsterdam assembly of the World

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3) W. A. Visser't Hooft, *Memoirs* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1973), 220.

4) World Council of Churches, “Statement on the Korean Situation and World Order,” *Minutes and Reports of the Third Meeting of Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Toronto, 9-15 July 1950*, 91-92.

5) *Ibid.*, 27.

Council of Churches, received little support in the statement.

The statement was adopted overwhelmingly by a vote of 45 to 2. The vote was taken in the absence of representatives from the churches in Eastern Europe, who were not able to take part in the Central Committee meeting as a result of failing to obtain entry visas to Canada. Hence, the Western European and American voice on the police action dominated both the CCIA executive committee and the WCC Central Committee.

The Central Committee stated its conviction that the Korean situation “need not be the beginning of a general war.” It warned that “We must not regard world-wide conflict as inevitable.” The Central Committee also condemned methods of modern warfare and declared that they “involve a use of force and destruction of life on so terrible a scale as to imperil the very basis on which law and civilization can exist.” The Committee said that it was imperative “that they should be banned by international agreement and we welcome every sincere proposal to this end.” However, the so-called “Stockholm Appeal” issued in March 1950 by the World Committee of Partisans of Peace,<sup>6)</sup> which demanded the immediate outlawing just of atomic weapons, without effective international inspection and continuous control, “must be regarded as a strategy of propaganda rather than a genuine peace proposal.”

As mentioned above, two members of the Central Committee did not agree with the Toronto statement because they were conscientiously opposed to the use of armed forces. However, this was not the end of the debate on the Korean War. The Toronto statement was bitterly criticized by some members of the World Council of Churches, especially by the churches in Eastern Europe and China. The churches in the Soviet Union protested against “American aggression in Korea,” but did not mention the Toronto statement directly. At that time the Russian Orthodox Church was

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6) The World Committee of Partisans for Peace was established in Paris in April 1949 with 2,200 delegates from 72 countries attending. Many delegates were refused visas by the French government, and a simultaneous congress was held in Prague. Rev. Kim Chang Jun and two other North Korean delegates attended the congress held in Prague. In March 1950 the Committee met in Stockholm and launched the Stockholm Appeal calling for a ban of the atom bomb. The World Committee adopted its present title, World Peace Council, in 1950. It had been alleged to be a front organization of Communist parties due to the funding of the council by the Soviet bloc.

not a member of the World Council of Churches. The Toronto statement warning that the Stockholm Peace Appeal was not “a genuine peace proposal” intensified the criticism.

A few weeks after the Toronto meeting, the Hungarian Church Press published an open letter to W. A. Visser't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, signed by Bishop Albert Bereczky of the Reformed Church in Hungary<sup>7)</sup> In his letter, Bereczky, a member of the Central Committee, pointed out that the Central Committee had been quite wrong in its judgment on the acceptance of the UN Commission's report as an objective statement of fact. Bishop J. Peter of the Hungarian Reformed Church also criticized the World Council resolution, claiming that it supported the real aggressors in Korea.<sup>8)</sup> The concern of Hungarian churches for the Korean situation was not limited to Protestant churches. Catholic priests also passed a resolution, in August 1950, promising their support in the [North Korean] fight for peace, and condemning “the war-mongering imperialists” and their actions in Korea.

The Toronto statement on the Korean situation was also criticized by Joseph L. Hromadka, Dean of the Comenius Faculty in Prague, and Viktor Hajek, a Synodal Senior of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren. They were disturbed by the fact that “the World Council of Churches identified itself, self-assuredly, with one side.”<sup>9)</sup> Later Hromadka's letter entitled “A Voice from the Other Side” appeared in *Christianity and Crisis* in a revised form.<sup>10)</sup> Hromadka, a member of the Central Committee,

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7) Extracts from Bishop Bereczky's open letter can be found in “Hungarian Bishops on Church-State Relations and International Affairs,” *Christianity and Crisis*, October 16, 1950, 136.

8) “Bishop Peter at World Peace Council,” *The Protestant*, April-May-June 1951, 6.

9) “Dear Friend,” Joseph L. Hromadka and Viktor Hajek's letter to W.A. Visser't Hooft,” Kim, ed., *Documents of the WCC Library: The Korean War*, 180-184. This letter was written by Hromadka after he discussed the matter with Hajek. Shortly before writing this letter to the General Secretary of World Council of Churches, Hromadka had written to the United Nations Security Council to protest against the United Nations' police action in Korea as a “fatal decision” and accused America of aggression. *Christian Century*, December 20, 1950, 1535.

10) Josef L. Hromadka, “A Voice from the Other Side,” *Christianity and Crisis*,

repeated that the World Council of Churches identified itself with one group of great power, backed its military action, and encouraged all UN members to participate in it. According to Hromadka, the most perilous aspect of the present situation was the assumption, obviously motivating the Toronto statement, that the real *bête noire* was communism and its diabolic incarnation in the Soviet Union.<sup>11)</sup> Convinced that Western civilization was a spent force in world history, Hromadka believed that the revolution in China in 1948-1949, the Korean War, and the cease-fire in Vietnam were evidence of a major historical development.<sup>12)</sup> Therefore, the World Council's approval of the United Nations action in Korea represented a yielding to the mood of one side of the world, which was a spent force.

The Chinese Church's response to the Toronto statement was more severe. Since October 1950, Chinese soldiers had been fighting against American soldiers and other UN troops in Korea. In this situation, the Chinese Churches in a conference of 151 leaders held on April 16-21, 1951 issued a statement, "United Declaration of the Delegates of Chinese Christian Churches and Church Institutions." It stated that the Toronto statement "distorts truth," and that "the World Council is the tool of Wall Street, and of that instigator of the Korean War, Dulles."<sup>13)</sup> Shortly after the conference, T. C. Chao (趙紫宸), Dean of the School of Religion, Yenching University, resigned from his position as one of the six presidents of the World Council of Churches on April 28, 1951. Chao thought that the World Council of Churches had been used as a tool of American imperialism, and felt that, as a loyal citizen of the People's Republic, he could no longer be identified with the organization.<sup>14)</sup>

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March 19, 1951, 27-30.

11) Ibid., 28.

12) Josef L. Hromadka, "From the Reformation to Tomorrow," in Milan Opocensky, ed., *From the Reformation to Tomorrow. In Memory and Appreciation of Josef L. Hromadka (1889-1969)* (Geneva, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1999), 16-26.

13) Wallace C. Merwin and Francis P. Jones, *Documents of the Three-Self Movement. Source Materials for the Study of the Protestant Church in Communist China* (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1963), 41.

14) T. C. Chao, "Dear Presidents," Kim, ed., *Documents of the WCC Library: The Korean War*, 235.

## **The Korean War and American Churches**

Immediately upon hearing the news of the Korean War, Han Kyongjik, the pastor of Yongnak Church in Seoul, and Namgung Hyok, the General Secretary of the Korean National Christian Council (KNCC), decided that the KNCC should wire President Harry S. Truman, General Douglas MacArthur, and the IMC in New York requesting immediate assistance.<sup>15)</sup> In the morning of June 26 (American time), Charles W. Ranson of the IMC received a telegram from the KNCC saying “Large invading forces are pressing around us. Begging immediate help from USA. Use your best influence.”<sup>16)</sup>

Charles W. Ranson replied at once to the KNCC that the IMC had shared the telegram with the Foreign Missions Conference of North America (FMC) and the CCIA. And on the same day, an emergency meeting on Korea was called at the office of the FMC in New York City with the board secretaries from various denominations and church organizations with interests in the Korean situation. At the meeting, these representatives decided to support the missionaries who had volunteered to remain in Korea and, responding to the Korean appeal, sent telegrams to Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, urging the US government to make every effort to settle the Korean conflict by diplomatic means and support the measures already taken by the United Nations.<sup>17)</sup>

Judgment on the Korean situation of various denominations and church organizations was clear and unequivocal. North Korean aggression had been proved and had to be resisted. On July 6, the Federal Council of Churches expressed gratitude that the United Nations had responded with “prompt and vigorous action.”<sup>18)</sup> The Federal Council’s statement issued in

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15) Letter from Rev. Kyung-chik Han, 12 August 1950, cited in Yin Allison Haga, “An Overlooked Dimension of the Korean War: The Role of Christianity and American Missionaries in the Rise of Korean Nationalism, Anti-Colonialism, and Eventual Civil War, 1884-1953,” Ph.D. Dissertation, The College of William and Mary in Virginia (2007), 305.

16) Telegram from Namgung and C.Y. Hwang, Kim, ed., *Documents of the WCC Library: The Korean War*, 2.

17) Letter from Rowland M. Cross, June 27 1959. *Ibid.*, 3.

18) The National Council of Churches of Christ (NCC) came into official existence on November 30, 1950 as a replacement for and an extension of the FCC.

the name of President John S. Stamm and General Secretary Samuel McCrea Cavert termed the attack on Korea “a most direct challenge to the authority of the United Nations as an instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security.” The new Republic of Korea was a ward of the United Nations - born under its supervision and being helped by its agencies toward economic and political growth. Thus, the statement assumed that it was the United Nations, through the Republic of Korea, that had been attacked on June 25.<sup>19)</sup> The Executive Committee of the FCC endorsed this statement in New York on September 19, 1950. The Executive Committee also adopted a message for World Order Day of October 22 saying that “Communist leaders, in seeking world domination, appear ready to risk the catastrophe of another general war to achieve their ends. In Eastern Europe and now in Asia the expansive thrust of communism imperils the peace.”<sup>20)</sup>

The United Nations action in Korea received FCC and Protestant support because it was carried out “legally” under the United Nations and because the United Nations itself was regarded as the essential first step towards a system of world order. Most denominations took a position similar to that of the FCC. They commended the U.N. action in Korea. This American voice stood behind the CCIA executive committee and the WCC Central Committee meetings on the Korean situation. American churches had the largest number of commissioners including John Foster Dulles, one of the most influential leaders, and O. Frederick Nolde, the Director of the CCIA. Dulles exercised powerful leadership in the ecumenical movement from the 1940s and was one of the main speakers in the inaugural assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948.<sup>21)</sup> He attended the Toronto meeting shortly after having visited Korea from June 18 to the outbreak of

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19) “The Korean Situation and the United Nations,” *Federal Council Bulletin*, September, 1950, 21.

20) “A Message for World Order Day,” *Federal Council Bulletin*, October 1950, 18.

21) Dulles participated in the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State in 1937. When the CCIA was established in 1946, Dulles influenced the election of the Chairman and the appointment of the Director. Jooseop Keum, “Remnants and Renewal: A History of Protestant Christianity in North Korea, with Special Reference to Issues of Church and State, 1945-1994,” Ph.D. Thesis, University of Edinburgh (2002), 184-185.

the war as the US special envoy to Korea and as a UN Field Observer. Thus, Dulles was the only person at the Toronto meeting who could provide a detailed description of the war. At that time, the US Government needed a strong moral justification for the police action in Korea because the Security Council of the United Nations had decided upon the police action without Soviet approval. In this situation, Dulles wanted to utilize the World Council of Churches to justify Truman's police action through the Toronto statement.<sup>22)</sup> It thus appears that the Chinese churches' criticism that "the World Council is the tool of Wall Street, and of that instigator of the Korean War, Dulles"<sup>23)</sup> rose from this.

American churches approved either expressly or implicitly of the police action in Korea. There were, however, a few dissenting opinions. Two Korean retired pastors in the United States, Hyun Soon and Hwang Sa Yong, appealed to American Christians in July 1950 that "U.S. intervention is unjust because the war is a civil war" of the Korean people to reunite their divided country.<sup>24)</sup> The most vigorous criticism of the Toronto statement and the American participation in the Korean War came from the *Protestant* published by Kenneth Leslie. He referred to America as the "aggressor" and claimed that the whole conflict was a "Dulles baby, the work of Wall Street evangelist John Foster Dulles." Leslie's acrid attacks against the World Council of Churches and its leadership continued in nearly every issue of the *Protestant*. According to Leslie, "It[the Korean War] was a revolution, the same revolution that has been proceeding all over Asia and in parts of Europe." It was, in his opinion, not an invasion.<sup>25)</sup>

Doubt on the police action was also raised by other church magazines. The *Social Questions Bulletin* of the Methodist Federation for Social Action also contended that the UN flag or World Council of Churches could not justify or sanction mass murder, and that the activities of the UN troops

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22) Keum, "Remnants and Renewal: A History of Protestant Christianity in North Korea, with Special Reference to Issues of Church and State, 1945-1994," 183-188.

23) Merwin and Jones, 41.

24) "Appeal To American Christians," *Korea Independence*, July 19, 1950. See also "An Appeal to the American People from Koreans in North America," *Protestant*, July-August-September, 1950, 28-30.

25) "Common Sense about Korea," *The Protestant*, July-August-September, 1950, 3.

were beyond the scope of a police measure.<sup>26)</sup> *Fellowship*, a bulletin of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, also maintained that what was happening in Korea was not a “police action,” but a continuation of the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union in that all available weapons were being used, and that roads, railroads, villages, and non-combatants were being bombed.<sup>27)</sup> As seen above, *The Protestant, Fellowship, Social Questions Bulletin*, and *the Churchman* held different thinking from the mainline denominations or the FCC on the Korean War and the Toronto Statement. They all asked for the resolution of the Korean War through negotiation and mediation.

American churches also showed interest in the Stockholm Peace Appeal issued in March 1950 by the World Committee of Partisans of Peace. A statement, issued by the FCC, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the Synagogue Council of America, Jewish, Protestant and Roman Catholic leaders on August 2, declared that aggressive policies and actual aggression revealed in the invasion of Korea constitute the “greatest menace to world peace” and termed the Stockholm Peace Appeal “spurious” and “camouflage.” The joint statement warned the American people to be on guard lest they be misled by the Stockholm Peace Appeal being circulated by Communist and pro-Communist groups.<sup>28)</sup>

With the justification of the police action in Korea, the American churches were involved in relief work from the early stage of the war. Although the Korean churches formed a basic structure for relief operations, they did not have money or goods to carry out relief activities. American church leaders were the first group to answer requests related to relief activities of the churches and missionaries in Korea. On October 19, 1950, the American church leaders held a meeting in New York City to discuss relief work in Korea with representatives from the World Council of Churches, Foreign Missions Conference, IMC, and Church World Service.

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26) H. F. W., “Behind the Headlines,” *Social Questions Bulletin* (November, 1950), 36; H. F. W., “Behind the Headlines,” *Social Questions Bulletin* (April 1951), 14.

27) Norman Hill and Doniver A. Lund, *If the Churches Want World Peace* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), 70. Alfred Hassler, “Cops in Korea,” *Fellowship* (September 1950), 4-8.

28) “Stockholm Appeal ‘Camouflage’ says Interfaith Group,” *Federal Council Bulletin*, September 1950, 15.

It was recognized in the meeting that “the need for relief in Korea was extremely urgent,” and that “Christian concern must find expression in an organized effort for Christian relief in Korea.”<sup>29)</sup> Drives for cash donations and clothing began from November by many denominations.

In the February of 1951, Father Edward Swanstrom of the Catholic Relief Service and Rev. Henry Appenzeller, the new director of the Church World Service, came to Korea. The Church World Service, a department of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, had been conducting relief and rehabilitation programs in Korea since 1948. During the Korean War, it carried out a more extensive relief program for refugees and other war victims in connection with the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Relief, the Christian Rural Overseas Program, and the Heiper Project. By 1952, influential church-related relief organizations including the Church World Service and Catholic Relief Service were carrying out relief activities in South Korea. The purposes for supporting relief through the Church World Service were to express Christian love by service to those in need, to help Koreans build a new Korea, and to strengthen the ties of friendship between the people of Korea and the American people.<sup>30)</sup> From this time, Korea began to replace China and Japan as the primary recipient of American paternalism in East Asia.<sup>31)</sup>

## **The Korean War and Korean Churches**

As soon as church leaders in Seoul received news of the North Korean invasion, they declared June 27 a special day of prayer,<sup>32)</sup> and prayed for the victory of the South. But with the fall of Seoul on June 28, pastors and congregations fled to Taejeon. In Taejeon, on July 3, Protestant workers of

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29) C. W. Ranson, “Korean Relief,” Kim ed., *Documents of the WCC Library: The Korean War*, 136-137.

30) Arnold B. Vaught, “Relief and Rehabilitation,” Report to Korea Planning Conference, October 13, 14, 1953. CCIA Country Files: Asia-Korea 1953-1973, Library of World Council of Churches.

31) Haga, “An Overlooked Dimension of the Korean War: The Role of Christianity and American Missionaries in the Rise of Korean Nationalism, Anti-Colonialism, and Eventual Civil War, 1884-1953”, 340.

32) Letter from Rev. Kyung Jik Han, August 12, 1950, quoted in *ibid.*, 322.

every denomination formed the Korean Christian National Relief Association (*Kidokkyo Kugukhae*) for relief work. This association began its work in Taegu and Pusan, with branches in about thirty South Korean cities, cooperating with the departments of Defense and Social Welfare in maintaining local order, administering relief, broadcasting, and recruiting volunteer soldiers. About 2,500 young Christians were recruited for volunteer service and trained for battle.<sup>33)</sup> After the recovery of September 28, the Korean Christian National Relief Association sent people into the occupied regions of North Korea for placation work.

As UN troops marched into North Korea and occupied Pyongyang on October 19, "the people were never more open and never as appreciative to America and the U.N."<sup>34)</sup> American missionaries, especially those who had worked in the North before World War II, and Korean church leaders followed behind. Following the 5th Air Force's northward advancement, Lt.(Doctor) Howard Moffett was the first missionary to arrive in Pyongyang. A few days later, Lt. Richard Underwood, Rev. Harold Voelkel (Civilian Chaplain), and Rev. William Shaw (Civilian Chaplain), also arrived with the UN troops. Next, other civilian missionaries came, including Edward Adams, Harry Hills, Archibald Campbell, and Francis Kinsler, with five Korean refugee pastors, Yun Ha Yong, Han Kyung Jik, Yi In Sik, Kim Yang Sun, and Yu Haw Jun.<sup>35)</sup>

The missionaries and refugee church leaders were welcomed by North Korean Christians. A special service was held on October 29 at the Seomunbak Church.<sup>36)</sup> The atmosphere of the place was "magnetic, release after the tension of the Japanese war years and the Communist oppression."<sup>37)</sup> Revival meetings were held in different locations with the support of the US

33) On the Christian volunteer army, Kim Byung Sub, "Days of Crusade Volunteer Army," *Kyohoe Yeonhap Sinbo*, July 8, 1984; Lee Jong Bae, "Christian Volunteer Army 'Crusade' and I," *Saemunan* (June 2002), 18-20.

34) A confidential letter from Chaplain Harold Voelkel, October 29, 1950, Kim, ed., *Documents of the WCC Library: The Korean War*, 147.

35) *Ibid.*, 145.

36) H.A. Rhodes and A. Campbell, *History of the Korea Mission Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Volume II, 1935-1959* (New York: Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1964), 100-103.

37) A confidential letter from Chaplain Harold Voelkel, October 29, 1950, 146.

Chaplains Office. These parties entered North Korea in an effort to stabilize the Christians of the occupied regions and to lend assistance to the UN occupation of North Korea. The US troops welcomed the help of the missionaries and Korean Christians in the administration of the occupied regions, as they proved a valuable asset to the occupation forces. Missionary chaplains served as a link both between the native population and the troops, and between the American public and the Korean people. Although many people were shying away from the Americans because of frequent guerilla attacks,<sup>38)</sup> the Christian community in the North remained the most loyal supporter of the UN occupation. Especially Christians in Pyongyang proved eager and supportive.<sup>39)</sup>

The occupation period was short, however, and the missionaries could do little for the North Korean churches. Chinese “volunteers” had crossed the Yalu River. On December 3, the 8th Army began a full retreat from Pyongyang. The sudden reversal of the Korean War disappointed many pro-American and anti-Communist Koreans, especially those who had actively collaborated with the United Nations. The Christian population was particularly at risk since they had worked closely with UN occupation forces. Most Christians could not stay any longer in North Korea because they had welcomed and supported the enemy of North Korea, the South Korean army and the UN troops. In the end, many Christians in the North fled to the South with the help of the US troops. There is, however, no solid data available on how many Christians were actually evacuated from North Korea at this time. Shortly before the war, according to Ko Ki Jun, the former general secretary of the Korean Christian Federation, there were 117,000 Christians in the North.<sup>40)</sup> Lee Young Bin and Kang In Chul maintained that about 20 ordained pastors and 50,000 Christians were left after the war.<sup>41)</sup> In the end, the activities of impatient missionaries and their

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38) Donald N. Clark, *Living Dangerously in Korea. The Western Experience 1900-1950* (Norwalk: EastBridge, 2003), 387.

39) Haga, “An Overlooked Dimension of the Korean War: The Role of Christianity and American Missionaries in the Rise of Korean Nationalism, Anti-Colonialism, and Eventual Civil War, 1884-1953,” 379.

40) Ko Ki Jun, “Socialism and Christianity,” [Dialogue Material between North and Overseas Christians for the Unification of Homeland] (1982). Korean language.

41) Kang In Chul, “The Root of Fled Christianity: The Revolution and Christianity in North Korea after Liberation,” *Yoksa Bipyung* (Summer, 1992), 134-135.

pro-South Korea activities which ignored the changes in the war situation failed. These supportive activities became decisive proofs for the North Korean government to oppose and suppress Christianity during and after the war. Before the Korean War, churches in the North had close relations with the bourgeois class; during the war they then supported South Korea and the UN troops. These attitudes are pointed out in North Korea and South Korea alike as one of the reasons leading to suffering and suppression of the North Korean churches.<sup>42)</sup>

The stance of Korean churches toward the Korean War was also founded in truce talks, which began in July 1951. President Rhee Syngman was not pleased about opening these peace talks because he believed that defeating communism was the only way of unifying Korea. South Korean churches supported Rhee on the issue of the cease-fire, and their anti-truce stance was expressed in an Anti-truce Christian Rally held in Pusan in July 1951. As the truce talks were rapidly developing in June 1953, Christian anti-truce demonstrations were organized in most major cities in South Korea and the relevant parties issued statements. The main reason for the anti-truce attitude was that if an armistice treaty were reached at the 38th parallel, Korea would be forever divided, and it would not be possible to check the spread of communism in Asia and throughout the whole world.<sup>43)</sup> The statements which were sent to the world churches and President Dwight David Eisenhower said that “the whole population of Korea and her government are opposed to the now proposed cease-fire,” and “any attempt at compromise with them can be linked to an attempt at forcing Christ to compromise with the devil during His forty days in the wilderness,” and that “communism is the devil who cannot repent forever.”<sup>44)</sup> For Korean

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Korean language.

- 42) Ko Ki Jun, “Socialism and Christianity,” 65; Han Chul Ha, “Glory and Shame of the Korean Churches,” *Kidokgosasang* (August 1968), 24; Min kyungbae, *Church and Nationality* (Daehankidokkyo Chulpansa, 1981), 450. Korean language.
- 43) “Truce Reargument and Our Attitude,” *Kidokkongbo*, April 20 and “The 38th parallel and opposition of cease-fire,” *Ibid.*, January 21, 1952.
- 44) Kim Yang Sun, *History of the Korean Church in the Ten years since Liberation* (Seoul: Presbyterian Church of Korea, 1956), 140-141. Korean language. See also “A Statement of Korea Christians,” *Documents of the WCC Library: The Korean War*, 346-347.

church leaders, the Communists were unforgivable devils. Therefore, they understood the Korean War as a crusade to wipe out these devils. Based on this understanding, the South Korean churches rejected the cease-fire and desired to continue the war until the victory was achieved by the UN troops. In this atmosphere, it was not easy to voice other sentiments outside of those providing its justification.

President Rhee realized that American Christians were at odds with Korean Christians over the truce issue. President Truman relieved MacArthur who sought to expand the war and bring in the Chinese Nationalists under his command on April 11, 1951. The opinion of the NCCC in the United States and many liberal Protestant church leaders sided with the President and supported his stand on limited warfare. O. Frederick Nolde, Director of the CCIA, met with President Rhee on July 3 to inform the South Korean President that the opinion of Western churches favored an armistice.<sup>45)</sup> Rhee's opinion of liberal Christian institutions, such as the NCCC and the World Council of Churches, turned sour. Unfortunately, from 1951 he proved susceptible to Carl MacIntire's anti-communist propaganda, which denounced the World Council of Churches as a pro-Communist organization<sup>46)</sup> and mobilized Korean Christians to support his stance. Hoping to liberate the North, many missionaries to Korea appreciated MacArthur's tough stance against compromise and sympathized with the South Korean desire to unify the country.

### **North Korean Reactions to the Christian Churches**

The truce was concluded on July 27, 1953. While all the Korean people suffered from the war, whole areas of North Korea had been devastated by war, and this resulted in widespread "war-weariness."<sup>47)</sup> Along with this war-weariness, hostility towards the USA increased. The destruction and

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45) On Nolde's visit to Korea, see "Report of O. Frederick Nolde's Visit to Korea" and "Dr. Nolde Speaking on His Trip to Korea," *Documents of the WCC Library: The Korean War*, 365-380, 383-384.

46) Charles August Sauer, *Methodists in Korea 1930-1960* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1973), 222-223.

47) Glenn D. Paige and Dong Jun Lee, "The Post-War Politics of Communist Korea," R. A. Scalapino ed., *North Korea Today* (New York: Praeger, 1963), 18.

loss of lives by massive U.S. air raids during the war planted a burning hatred of Americans in North Korean minds. This hatred was reflected in Kim Il Sung's speeches, too.

The U.S. robbers have reduced our towns and villages to ashes and are slaughtering our people en masse. The American missionaries who once behaved themselves as "apostles of God" in Korea are now bringing pregnant women together by scores and shooting them all at once with carbines, and are running over children with tanks. The "gentleman of Wall Street" who used to boast arrogantly of the "Goddess of Liberty" to the world, now carry Korean girls stripped naked in cars and tanks, perpetrating all kinds of outrages and atrocities against them which surpass all human imagination.<sup>48)</sup>

Terrible atrocities were committed on both sides, and in North Korea they were used to arouse anti-American sentiment. Even American missionaries and their works were understood in mood of anti-American sentiment. According to Kim Il Sung, "The United States had sent to our country missionaries under the mantle of religion long ago to build churches in many places and disseminate Christianity and ideas of U.S. worship, and made preparations over tens of years to dominate Korea some day." Kim set forth the idea that Christianity had come to Korea as the forerunner of imperialism and this was an insidious trick of the United States to establish its influence in Korea under the cloak of religion.<sup>49)</sup> Therefore Christianity naturally became the object of contempt and ridicule in post-war North Korea. In addition to having cooperated with US troops during the occupation, Christians in the North organized the so-called "peace maintenance corps" with anti-communist groups to attack the North Korean soldiers. This gave the North Korean government its best opportunity to wipe out Christianity in North Korea. Retaliation against participants in "peace maintenance corps" and the people whose families or relatives had escaped to the South must have been harsh, though Kim Il Sung appealed to the cadres of the Labor Party to treat them generously.

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48) Kim Il Sung, *Selected Works*, Vol. III (Pyongyang: Korean Worker's Party Press, 1954), 245. Korean language.

49) *Ibid.*

In this situation, some of the Christians who stayed in the North lost their faith and the remaining faithful were forced to worship alone or in small scattered groups. House churches or unorganized small congregations became the *modus operandi* of Christian faith in this situation. The Korean Christian Federation was now the sole official church organization in North Korea. This does not mean that collisions between the state and Christians came to an end. The ideological conflict with Kim Il Sung's regime continued among the remaining Christians in the North until up to the late 1950s. Underground Christian groups in Yongchun, Bakchun, and Wonsan were subject to accusations by the police, and executed or sent to work in the mines. For example, the police accused Rev. Lee Man Wha and ten other leaders of organizing a boycott of a general election to elect representatives of the Second Supreme People's Assembly in August 1957. One year later Kim Il Sung made mention of Lee as a man who opposed Party and Nation.<sup>50)</sup> There was also systematic social discrimination towards Christians. In May 1957, the Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party adopted a document "On the Struggle of the Whole Party and Whole People with Anti-Revolutionaries" which allowed the government to classify North Korean civilians into three categories: basic class, agitated class, and hostile class.<sup>51)</sup> Collaborators with the United States or South Korea during the war and religionists were classified in the hostile class. In this situation, it was not easy for Christians to openly profess and exercise their religious beliefs.

This kind of discrimination towards religionists in general and Christians in particular finally developed into an anti-religious campaign through literature, movies, and the performing arts. In 1959, the Korean Workers' Party and other organizations in Pyongyang published booklets for anti-religious propaganda. *Urinun Wae Jongkyo rul Bandae Hanunga?* (Why Do We Oppose Religion?), representative of the booklets, based its critique of religion on the Marxist-Leninist theory of religion: religion is

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50) Kim Il Sung, "For the Accomplishment of Our Party's Judicial Policy," Suh Dae Sook ed., *A Study of North Korean Literature: Literature and Bibliographical Introduction* Vol. 6 [Society, Law] (Seoul: Kyungnam University Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2004), 368-369. Korean language.

51) Suh Jae Jin, "Class Structure and Class Conflict of North Korean Society," Society of North Korean Studies, ed., *North Korean Society* (Seoul: Kyungin Publishing Co., 2006), 81-82. Korean language.

unscientific and the opium of the people, weakening revolutionary desire with its non-scientific fantasy aimed towards the next world. The booklet was, however, very different from other Marxist texts in that it criticized Christianity based on the North Korean experience of the war. It said, "It is no wonder that a great number of our patriots were buried alive and massacred by cutting off the limbs by 'holy,' 'God's army,'" that is, the US army, during the war.<sup>52)</sup> It continued to cite Kim Il Sung's speeches saying that "the American missionaries who once behaved themselves as 'apostles of God' in Korea are now bringing pregnant women together by scores and shooting them all at once with carbines, and are running over children with tanks," and concluded that Christianity had been a tool of American imperialism in Korea. These findings of Christian support for South Korea and the US during the war were reflected in the proposal of the religious policy. *Urinun Wae Jongkyo rul Banae hanunga?* which grouped religious people into those who supported the policy of the party and the system and wanted the victory of their revolution, and those who were some bad religious reactionaries attempting anti-revolutionary plots, hindering their march and destroying their socialist construction. For the former, it recommended persuading them to give up their religious beliefs through continuous education. For the latter, severe punishment was needed. They felt that in doing so, "we can remove the root of religious remnants in us and construct brilliant socialism and communism more productively."<sup>53)</sup>

The anti-religious campaign in this period was propelled by social antipathy towards Christians and governmental suppression. Pro-Communist Christians in this period were doubted and even the Korean Christian Federation, the umbrella organization of North Korean churches, was daunted by the anti-religious campaign. For example, before 1958, the Korean Christian Federation had regularly appeared in the reports on the United Front. However, from 1958, there was not a single mention of their activities.<sup>54)</sup>

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52) Jung Ha-Chul, "Why Do We Oppose Religion?," 352. Kim Heung Soo, ed., *A History of the North Korean Church since 1945* (Seoul: Dasangeulbang, 1992), Korean language.

53) *Ibid.*, 360.

54) Keum, "Remnants and Renewal: A History of Protestant Christianity in North Korea, with Special Reference to Issues of Church and State, 1945-1994," 224.

If we shift our concern from anti-religious campaigns to the religious life of North Korean Christians themselves, we find that underground churches called “house churches” emerged during and after the Korean War.<sup>55)</sup> According to statements by the late Rev. Ko Gi Jun of the (North) Korean Christian Federation in 1981, there were 1473 churches and some 117,000 Christians in North Korea shortly before the Korean War. After the breakout of the war, between the Inchon Landing on September 15 and the fall of Pyongyang on October 19, the retreating North Korean armies killed church leaders who remained in the North, Rev. Kim Ik Du and Rev. Park Sang Soon, for example. The North Korean government suspected that they might collaborate with the UN troops. A pastor who came from North Korea in July 1952 reported that the churches in the city had been destroyed and the churches in rural areas had been used as propaganda places, and that only elders and deacons in groups of five to six believers had been meeting privately for prayer.<sup>56)</sup> This was the beginning of house churches. Thus, during and after the war, those Christians left in North continued bearing witness to their Christian faith individually or through the small house churches as “‘stump’ (Isaiah 6:13) faith- communities.”<sup>57)</sup>

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55) On the existence of house churches in North Korean society see Kim Heung Soo and Ryu Dae Young, *Religion in North Korea: A New Understanding* (Seoul: Dasanggeulbang, 2002), 193-201. Korean language.

56) “Actual Condition of North Korea since Large Scale Big Bombing,” *Kidokgongbo*, September 15, 1952. Korean language.

57) Shin Pyeong Gil, an ex-officer of the Korean Workers’ Party, the ruling party of North Korea, reported that house churches had continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>58)</sup> During these two decades, the anti-religious propaganda was at its height. In 1968, however, worship in house churches was allowed in the case of some parents of party leaders. Two hundred house churches were approved in select areas (Sonchon, Jeongju, Nampo, Sinchon, and Jaeryong) where Christianity had been quite active before the war. See Shin Pyeong Gil, “The Process of the Labor Party’s Anti-Religious Policies,” *North Korea* (July 1995), 59. Korean language. Among these believers and members of house churches, some who lived in Pyongyang as well as some who used to practice their faith long ago seem to have joined Pongsu church, which was built in Pyongyang in 1988.

## **Concluding Remarks**

In this paper we examined the role of Christian churches during the Korean War and found that the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and American churches took a pro-South Korean, pro-American, and pro-UN position on the Korean War. According to Hromadka, this stand was taken owing to the anti-Communist stance of American churches, and it motivated the Toronto statement. Although the World Council of Churches maintained that it had not identified itself with any bloc of nations and had no such intention, the Toronto statement was criticized as having identified itself with one group of world powers or as echoing the voice of the United States.

Second, the pro-South Korean, pro-American, and pro-UN position of Western European and American churches was related to their legal approach to the Korean War. Some critics thought that order and law rather than justice were regarded as being of paramount importance in the Toronto statement and in the Korean War, even when the latter was taken into account. In fact, the statement emphasized the fact of the aggression. For Albert Bereczky and Joseph Hromadka, fighting in Korea was a revolution against a tyrannical police government, the same revolution that had been taking place all over Asia and in parts of Europe. It was not an invasion but a revolutionary war of the Korean people to reunite their divided country. They saw the Korean situation from the perspective of great changes which had taken place in their own country, and regarded war as a way to justice.

The stance of Korean churches on the Korean War and on the truce was based on their strong anti-Communism. This conflict of the Christians and Marxist-Leninists in Korea dates from the 1920s. The conflict had been exacerbated since August 15, 1945 as the two movements began to transfer their struggle against Japan to direct confrontation with each other in the process of their new nation building. When Kim Il Sung's socialist government came into power in September 1948, he invited the Christians to cooperate in socialist nation building. Some people in the churches welcomed socialism and were actively involved in the nation building. But the Christian population was the strongest anti-Communist force in North Korea, and it clashed with the Communist land reform and boycotted the general election that took place in 1946. The Communist-Christian confrontation became a war within a war during the Korean War. As a

result, Christians in the North welcomed the UN forces during the occupation period. Christian support for South Korea and the UN troops helped isolate Christians from North Korean society and intensify the anti-Christian campaign in North Korea after the war. In this situation, churches disappeared or were replaced by house churches.

## **Abstract**

On June 25, 1950, war broke out between North Korea and South Korea. This paper explores how and why the Western European and North American churches, their missionaries, and the Korean churches supported the South Korean government, the United States, and the United Nations during the Korean War. Christian churches in the Western nations considered it imperative to support the United Nations in its effort to maintain international order. Churches in Eastern Europe and China, however, considered the action of the United Nations as an attempt to oppose the liberation of Asian peoples.

Due to the pro-American stance of the Christian churches the Communist regime of North Korea regarded Christianity as an anti-patriotic religion. Because of this belief, the North Korean regime intensified its anti-religious campaigns, and tried to wipe out Christians in the post-bellum period. Thus, the Korean War deepened the conflict between Marxist regime and Christian churches, and brought about an anti-religious campaign in North Korea and the transformation of North Korean churches into house churches.

### ***Key Words***

The Korean War, World Council of Churches (WCC), Toronto Statement, American Churches, Korean Churches, Kim Il Sung, (North) Korean Christian Federation, House Churches.

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# Analysis on Women Leadership in Women House Churches in Comparison to Leadership in Male-centered Mainstream Presbyterian Churches

Hong Sang Tae\*

## Introduction

This paper analyzes the tension on woman leadership between woman house churches and mainstream Presbyterian churches in Korea. What is the woman house church? There are Protestant Christians in Korea who meet regularly in private houses for a worship service. Most of them are lower-middle class women coming from different denominations mainly Presbyterians and Methodists, and they are active members in their churches. Thus, participants keep double membership at their mainstream churches and woman house churches. All leaders who take charge in the meetings are women despite a few male participants. They call the house meeting *Gajung Jedan* in Korean (literally house altar, in this article, woman house church).<sup>1)</sup>

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Historically speaking, woman house church movement originated from the prayer mountain movement which has been a part of Korean Protestantism. The appearance and development of woman house church movement paralleled the rapid growth of Korean Protestantism. The woman house church movement shares the history of Korean Protestantism in the period of remarkable growth especially in 1970s and 1980s. The two streams of Korean Protestantism have remained parallel with each other while keeping their distinct features.<sup>2)</sup>

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1) Woman house church is a gathering of women that takes place in a private home where people, mostly women, coming from different Protestant churches are held once a week or more. Depending on its location, members of the organized woman house church refer to their meeting place as "house altar." For example, if a woman house church locates in *Daebang Dong*, they call the woman house church *Daebang Altar (Daebang Jedan)* literally in Korean pronunciation). Woman house church differs from either the class meeting of Methodists or district meeting of Presbyterians, which meet weekly. Both share the common element of meeting at a private house; they differ because of participants. Participants of woman house church come from different Protestant churches mainly Presbyterians and Methodists, whereas people at those meetings of mainstream churches are from the same church.

There are two kinds of woman house churches: organized and independent one. The organized woman house church has the center, *Daehan* Christian Prayer Hill (*Daehan Sudowon* in Korean, DCPH in this article), where the church originated, so we can capture the number and size whereas we cannot know about the independent woman house church, which has no organization. The number of organized woman house church has been increased continuously since 1965, the year of establishing the first of it. Through several visits to the *Daehan* Christian Prayer Hill, I was able to get information as follows.

Period of Foundation	Number of new woman house church	Total
1961-1970	6	6
1971-1980	22	28
1981-1990	89	117
1991-2000	225	342

2) In the history of Korean Protestantism, the prayer center movement began in the 1940s when Japanese colonial government suppressed freedom of Protestant churches. At that time, some Christians sought for places of seclusion individually in order to escape from Japanese control as well as to pray for the

The woman house churches usually worship once per week during weekdays while some house churches provide worship services more than two times per week. The number of participants in these services ranges from 3 or 4 persons to more than 30. Services usually consist of two parts. Worship, which is longer than Sunday worship in mainstream churches, is the first part, followed by charismatic practices such as praying loudly together and healing practice follow the worship.<sup>3)</sup> Unlike mainstream churches, woman has an authority at the house churches, so woman particularly lay woman preaches at the worship. The woman house church constitutes itself an important part of Korean Protestantism but insufficient attention is being given to it.

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independence of Korea. However, it was after the liberation of Korea, 1945, that Protestant prayer centers appeared officially. Founders constructed buildings in the mountain for worship and pray. For the first time in the history of Korean Protestantism, sanctuaries for worship and prayer appeared in the mountain.

**Growth of the Prayer Centers in Korea**

Period	Total Numbers
Before 1945	2
1945-1955	4
1956-1965	49
1966-1975	207
1975-1989	362

Source: International Research Institution of International and Korean Religions (Seoul, Korea, 1989)

- 3) For this research, I interviewed with fifteen women in order to investigate why they join to the woman house church. All of interviewees had been active church members before they joined the woman house church. They decided to join for various reasons such as financial crisis, family problems, spiritual matters, and physical diseases. One common factor found in most of the responses is that their churches provided no help in hard situations. When they were in difficult situations, churches were not able to respond to their needs. To a new woman visitor, the woman house church becomes a shelter in which she is welcomed, where she tells her painful story to the members, and has the opportunity to listen to their stories. Through continuous participation and fellowship at the house church, the suffering woman gradually enters the stage of self-awakening through which she can figure out the meaning of her difficulties. In addition, she experiences holistic healing through which she can be cured physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Unlike the woman house church, in most mainstream Korean Protestant churches, women continue to be excluded from ecclesiastical office and from any decision-making process. Women in Korean Protestantism represent 70 percent of their numbers today, but they perform only supplementary roles. However, in woman house church, it is women particularly lay women who play dominant roles despite the existence of some male participants. The acknowledgement of woman leadership cannot but produce a tension with mainstream churches.

In this article, we analyze the tension that exists in regard to woman leadership between the two Korean Protestant, mainstream churches and woman house church. Through the analysis, we will argue that the tension between male-centered mainstream churches and female-based woman house church is related to the tension between male-centered Confucianism and female-based Shamanism in Korean society.

### **Tension within Korean Society: Male-centered Confucianism vs. Female-based Shamanism**

It was Japanese scholar Akiba Takashi who first explored Korean society as dualistic cultures in terms of gender-based religion: male-centered Confucian culture and female-based Shamanistic culture.<sup>4)</sup> His dualistic view has influenced many scholars who studied the relation of religion and society in Korea. Following the dualistic view, Laurel Kendall approaches the structure of the Korean household divided into two religious areas based on gender. She analyzes the *kut*, a ritual of Shamanism.

Early ethnologists described the “dual organization” of Korean household religion. Men worship the ancestors in solemn, dignified rites. Women honor the household gods and expel ghosts. Some women’s rituals require an ecstatic shaman, a pounding drum, and a *kut*’s raucous gaiety. Men’s rituals are usually described as Confucian. Women’s rituals have been called spirit worship, shamanism, folk belief, and superstition.<sup>5)</sup>

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4) Kil-Song Choi, “Male and Female in Korean Folk Belief” *Asian Folklore Studies* vol. 43 (1984): 230.

In a Korean household, Kendall observes the division of male-centered Confucian ritual and female-based Shamanistic ritual. Youngsook Harvey Kim, who studies Korean shamans, also insists that the architecture of Korean household is separated into two spheres: male and female.<sup>6)</sup> In terms of division, some scholars indicate, it can be assumed that Korean society as well as its households are separated into two spheres: male-centered Confucian culture and female-based Shamanistic culture.

Since the establishment of the Yi-Dynasty (1392-1910) and before the official arrival of American Protestant missionaries in 1885, two competitive cultures, Confucianism and Shamanism had existed in Korea. Under the Yi-Dynasty, which chose Confucianism as the principle for ruling the kingdom, these two religion-based cultures generated a tension between official religion and popular religion.<sup>7)</sup> Based on this dualistic view, we can explore Korean society before the encounter with Protestantism in order to approach the tension between male-centered mainstream churches and female-based woman house church in light of Korean cultural history.

### **Tension between Official Religion Confucianism and Popular Religion Shamanism before the Arrival of Protestantism**

Before we delve into the tension of the two religions in Korean society, it is important to state the meaning of official religion and popular religion. It is Towler who attempts to classify religion into two types, official religion and common religion, based on their respective function in society.

If by official religion we mean beliefs and practices which are prescribed, regulated and socialized by specialized religious institutions, then common religion may be described as those beliefs and practices of

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5) Laurel Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 26-27.

6) Youngsook Kim Harvey, *Six Korean Women: The Socialization of Shamans* (St.Paul: West Publishing Co., 1979), 255.

7) In 1392, the newly established Yi-Dynasty adopted Confucianism as its official religion in order to suppress Buddhism, the official religion of Koryo-Dynasty (918-1392 C.E.), the former kingdom. In 1945, with independence from Japanese colonialism (1910-1945), the new country chose Korea as the nation's name remembering Koryo.

an overtly religious nature which are not under the domination of a prevailing religious institutions.<sup>8)</sup>

According to Towler, common religion tends to provide alternative ways in the society where official religion plays a dominant role.<sup>9)</sup> Based on Towler's concept, changing the "common" into "popular" in order to avoid misleading of the "common" with "ordinary," scholars suggest classification of official religion and popular religion for general use for religious study. In a conference, Vrijhoff suggests a definition.

Popular religion does not need, therefore, any formalization or organization. Official religion, on the other hand, cannot function without such expedients. Official religion is defined by institutional specialization and must be regulated and maintained... official religion, finally, needs well-educated and trained religious specialists who are capable to accomplish these tasks.<sup>10)</sup>

The distinction between official religion and popular religion is similar to that of institutional church and voluntary church in the circle of Christianity. Generally speaking, we can summarize distinctive characteristics of official religion vs. popular religion as religion of state vs. religion of individual, dominant vs. marginal, politically powerful vs. those without power, the educated or upper class vs. the uneducated or lower class, systematized and organized vs. not institutionalized.<sup>11)</sup>

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8) Robert Towler, *Homo Religious: Sociological Problems in the Study of Religion* (London: Constable, 1974), 148.

9) *Ibid.*, 150.

10) Pieter Hendrick Vrijhoff, "Twentieth Century Western Christianity" in Pieter Hendrick Vrijhof & Jacqjes Waardenburg eds, *Official and Popular Religion*(The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 226.

In 1974, scholars held a conference on the concept of the official religion and popular religion at the University of Utrecht, Netherland. Nine scholars dealt with the classification of the concept within Christianity, and another nine explored the concept in other religions such as Judaism, Muslim, and Confucianism. They published their efforts in the conference, *Official and Popular Religion*.

11) Robert A. Segal, Book Review of *Official and Popular Religion*(The Hague:

Throughout the history of religion and society, we could observe a certain tension between the official religion and popular religion.<sup>12)</sup> The history of Korea is not an exception. Under the Yi-Dynasty (1392-1910), before the arrival of Protestantism in 1885, Korean society manifested a tension between official religion Confucianism and popular religion Shamanism.

As we have observed above, the newly established Yi-Dynasty accepted Confucianism as the official religion, and suppressed Shamanism, a popular religion which was attractive to the lower-class people, particularly women. The elite of Confucianism were unable to eradicate Shamanism because of its popularity, particularly among lower-class people, although Shamanism lacked system or organization.<sup>13)</sup> Shamanism responded to the practical needs of people who were in disastrous situations, whereas official religion Confucianism could not. Under the Yi-Dynasty, the upper class and the educated adhered to Confucianism, but common people and women in particular relied on Shamanism.<sup>14)</sup> When the country was in an unstable situation, whether caused by epidemic or economic crisis, even the upper class secretly turned to Shamanist practices.<sup>15)</sup> Thus, Yi-Dynasty made Shamanism take a subsidiary role due to its popularity to the Korean masses. As Youngsook Kim Harvey states:

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Mouton Publishers, 1979) in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* vol. 21, no.3 (1982): 284.

12) Vrihjoft, 222.

13) Jong-Sung Choi, "Chosunsidae Yugyowa Musokeui Gwangye Yeongu," [A Study on the Relation of Confucianism and Shamanism in Yi-Dynasty] *Minjokkwa Moonhwa* [Nation and Culture] vol. 10 (2001): 222.

14) Young-Taek Ji, "Shamanismi Hankook Gyohoe Kichinyoungyang," [Influence of Shamanism to Korean Protestant Church] *Nonmunjip*[Collection of Works] vol.18 (1990): 207.

15) Chang-Sam Yang, "Shamanismkwa Hankook Gyohoe" [Shamanism and Korean Church] *Hyunsangkwa Insik* [Pheonomena and Understanding] vol. 10, no. 3 (1986): 58.

In the early period of Yi-Dynasty, when Confucianism did not present itself as an official religion, Confucian officials requested the help of Shamanism like *kut* in that kind of crisis. However, after they established the Confucian social system, in the middle of Yi-Dynasty, they, as representatives of the official religion, tried to suppress Shamanism. Jong-Sung Choi, 241.

The *Yi* Dynasty made the eradication of shamanism an official policy and launched a systematic campaign of persecution. . . . Indeed, it appears that the *Yi* Dynasty government coped with its failure to eradicate shamanism by giving it begrudging recognition as a belief system suitable only for women and some men of ignorance. It made the role of shaman one of the four professional roles officially permitted to women, the other three being those of *kungnyo* (palace woman), *uinyo* (female physician), and *kisaeng* (courtesan).<sup>16)</sup>

Under *Yi*-Dynasty, male- centered Confucianism, the official religion that had many religious experts, developed its dogma, established its ceremony, and organized itself, while female-based Shamanism, the popular religion, kept its tradition based on people's requests through shamans, who were mostly women.<sup>17)</sup> Before Protestantism arrived in Korea, Korean society already had developed a tension between male- centered Confucian culture and female-based Shamanism with different roles for women as an important aspect in the tension.

This discussion will now explore the views of woman within the two different cultures in Korean society.

### *Confucianism and the Korean Woman*

Under Confucian system, loyalty to the king and filial piety to the parents plays an important role in sustaining social system. In order to strengthen the Confucian social system, it arranges the family system such that the father possesses supreme authority. Under the patriarchal Confucian family system, the father holds absolute power over family matters including the life and death of members of his own household.<sup>18)</sup>

Confucianism holds the theoretical principle that woman is inferior to man. The inferiority of woman functions as a basic principle for sustaining the Confucian family system in society such as *Yi*-Dynasty.

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16) Youngsook Kim Harvey, *Six Korean Women: The Socialization of Shamans* (St.Paul: West Publishing Co., 1979), 3.

17) Jong-Sung Choi, 222.

18) Youngsook Kim Harvey, 255.

Yi Dynasty was an absolute male-centered society. According to the idea of yin and yang as stipulated by the *I Ching* (Book of Change), the Yi Dynasty's Confucian social ethics considered women inferior to man by nature and subjected woman to man. "That *yang* is strong and *yin* lenient is the heaven's truth, the principle which is in accordance with the man's way of putting man higher than women."<sup>19)</sup>

Confucianism built a system in which woman was segregated, and the segregation by gender became a pivotal tool of controlling woman.

Women were perceived as inferior beings, beings who had no capability for an academic understanding of Confucianism... While the wife was confined to the inner house or inner rooms of the house, her husband lived in the outer house and handled all social contacts with outsiders... *anae* (wife)...means inside person... women gradually lost all opportunity for social involvement and became virtual slaves and prisoners of the Confucian system.<sup>20)</sup>

As a result, silence was regarded as the most important virtue of woman. In addition, in order to control woman, Confucianism invented several devices such as "seven eligible grounds for divorce" and "woman's three virtues of obedience."<sup>21)</sup> According to the rule on woman's three

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19) Hee-Soo Kim, "Roots of Han and Its Healing: A Study of Han from the Perspective of Christian Ethics" (PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1994), 104.

20) Kwang-Soon Lee, "Korean Women's Understanding of Mission-The Role of Women in the Korean Presbyterian Church" (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1985), 56-65.

21) Beginning under the Ching dynasty (1644-1912) in China, there have been seven grounds under which a man could arbitrarily divorce his wife:

- 1) If she behaves disobediently to her parents-in-law
- 2) If she fails to give birth to a son
- 3) If she is talkative
- 4) If she commits adultery
- 5) If she is jealous of her husband'
- 6) If she carries a malignant disease
- 7) If she commits theft

virtues of obedience, a woman, through her whole life, must acquiesce to her father when she is young, to her husband when she is married, and to her son when she is old.<sup>22)</sup> In other words, woman should stay within a household under a man (father, husband or son) as his supporter or helper, nurturing the children of the man.<sup>23)</sup> Woman under the Confucianism of Yi-Dynasty was an “unregistered servant.”<sup>24)</sup> As we will explore in the next section, under the oppressive social and family system of Confucianism, Korean women experienced an increase of *han*, an accumulation of inner sufferings. Today, Confucianism continues to play an oppressive role in the lives of Korean women. In contrast to Confucianism, woman played active roles in Korean Shamanism.

## Shamanism and Korean Woman

Most scholars agree that Shamanism constitutes itself as basic layer of Korean culture and religion. It had existed before the fourth century C.E. when the major foreign religions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism were introduced to Korea.<sup>25)</sup> Shamanism has absorbed other religions, and transformed them as “Koreanized religions” as Youngsook Kim points out.

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Since a divorced woman was rejected by her own family and her husband’s family, as well as by society, most women were willing to accept everything to keep their marriage, including accepting concubines.

Andrew S.Park, *The Wounded Heart of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 55.

22) *Ibid.*, 55.

Originally the three virtues of obediences are in the teaching of the Classics of Rites, which is one of the Five Confucian Classics. Five Confucian Classics are Classics of Poetry, History, Changes, Rites and Spring and Autumn Annals.

23) Heung-Seok Nam, “Yugyoewi Yeosunggwankwa Hyundai Yeosungleader-shipeui Moonje” [Confucianism’s View of Woman and Woman Leadership Today] *Dongbanghak* [Study of East Asia] vol. 14 (2008): 291-292.

24) Hye-Sook Oh, “Gaehwagi Gidokkyo Yeosung Undong” [Women’s Movement of Korea in the Period of Modernization] (Master’s thesis, Berea Theological Seminary, 2004), 21.

25) Chang-Sam Yang, 56-8

In fact, the claim that shamanism is the only indigenous religion of Korea...Palmer... acknowledges shamanism as the most powerful religious force among the Korean and observes that new religions, whether imported or generated from within, have historically failed to survive among the Korean unless shamanistic traits were incorporated on a large scales... Buddhism was much Koreanized... Confucianism also became Koreanized... Christianity proved no exception.<sup>26)</sup>

In Shamanism, it is the shaman who plays an essential role with the threefold function: priest, doctor, and fortune teller. The shaman presides various religious rites including *kut*, heals patients by expelling evil spirits, and prophesies future things with the help of the shaman's own god. In addition, *kut*, a ritual unique to Shamanism, is accompanied by music and dance, through which the shaman can communicate with spirits in order to solve problems of clients. The shaman fills people with delight through their participation in and enjoyment of music and dance.<sup>27)</sup>

In contrast to Confucianism, women play a dominant role in Shamanism in terms of ministers and participants. Most shamans as well as clients are women. As Kim states: "Today, while there continue to be male shamans, the vast majority of shamans and their clients are female."<sup>28)</sup> It was women who experienced suppression under the male-centered Confucian society. Under the patriarchal Korean society, most women faced a bitterly difficult life which caused them to increase their *han*. They were victims of the patriarchal Confucianism culture. Through the performance of the *kut*, women or marginalized people could resolve their *han*.<sup>29)</sup> Therefore, there have been more female believers than male in Shamanism. One Korean scholar defines Shamanism impressively: "Korean Shamanism especially its ritual, *kut*, exists for women, of women, and by women because its producer (client), actor (shaman), and audience (participants) are dominantly women."<sup>30)</sup> Unlike Confucianism, in Shamanism, women take

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26) Youngsook Kim Harvey, 8-9.

27) Ho-Jin Kim, "Hankook Gyohoe Chukbokshinangeui Mugyojeok Geukbokkwa Gidokkyo Gyoyookjeok Geukbokbangahn" [Shamanism's Influence to Blessing Theology of Korean Church and a Suggestion of Overcoming the Influence] (Master's thesis, Yon-Sei University. 2007), 14-20.

28) Youngsook Kim Harvey, 3.

29) Young-Taek Ji, 212.

charge of important roles, perform rituals and they constitute the majority of believers. Shamanism cannot exist without women shamans and believers.

Tension within the two streams of Korean Protestantism, male-centered mainstream churches and female-based woman house church, is built upon the existing tension of the two different cultures within Korean society long before the arrival of Protestantism - Confucianism and Shamanism.

Now we will explore the relationship between two streams of Korean Protestantism and the tensions within the two cultures in regard to woman leadership.

### **Korean Protestantism, Confucianism, and Shamanism**

Since the introduction of Protestantism to Korea, these two cultures, male-centered Confucianism and female-based Shamanism, have influenced the lives of Korean people, and Korean Protestants are not exceptions. Just as the male-centered Confucianism contributed to the formation of patriarchal mainstream churches, so female-based Shamanism connected itself to the rise of woman house church and mountain prayer centers, particularly since the 1970s and 1980s, the remarkable numerical growth period in Korean Protestantism.<sup>31)</sup> As we will examine further, the influence of Confucianism was tremendous in most areas of Korean society including mainstream Protestant churches. Thus, it is not difficult to observe the relationship of Confucianism with mainstream churches in their shared values, such as the patriarchal system. Likewise, female-based Shamanism has a relationship to

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30) Yong-Sik Lee, "Seongeui Sangjingsung, Mubokeul Tonghaebon Hankook Musokeui Kwonryuk," [Sign of Gender: Observation of Korean Shamanism's Power through Shaman's Clothing] Shamanism Yeongu [Shamanism Study] vol. 3 (2000): 137.

31) Confucianism has continued to be a dominant social system in Korea even after the arrival of Protestantism. Naturally mainstream Protestant churches exhibited patriarchal aspects due to the influence of Confucianism. Since the 1970s and 1980s, the numerical growth period, the Shamanistic culture emerged with the appearance and expansion of prayer centers in mountain and woman house church. Thus, we could observe the tension of the two Protestant groups, which reflected the tension of Confucianism and Shamanism. Further research will be necessary on the influence of Shamanistic culture on Protestantism before the 1970s.

the appearance of woman house church. Yee-Heum Yoon, professor of religious studies at Seoul National University, points out the close relation: "It is indeed surprising that Shamanistic practices seem to revive also in a certain trend of Protestant movement, namely *Kajong-jedan* literally meaning "family altars."<sup>32)</sup> As Yoon points out, woman house church has been a part of the Protestant movement, a stream that is distinct from mainstream churches. In relation to the two different cultures, woman house church connected itself to female-based Shamanistic culture, whereas mainline churches had deep influences from Confucian culture. Both mainstream churches and woman house church (*Gajung Jedan*) belong to Korean Protestantism but emerge from different cultural roots.

In the process of Christianization, especially the explosive numerical growth period in the 1970s and 1980s, the existing two cultures, patriarchal Confucianism and feministic Shamanism, infused the two types of Protestant churches, mainstream Protestant churches and woman house church and mountain prayer centers.<sup>33)</sup> In order to understand the connection between these existing two cultures and these two types of Korean Protestantism, in terms of women, we will explore woman leadership of mainstream churches and woman house church.

## Woman Leadership in Mainstream Churches

In 2005, the believers of Confucianism reached only 0.2 percent of the total population in Korea. However, Confucianism has had a tremendous influence on the daily lives of Korean people. Though Confucianism lost its position as the official religion and ruling value system at the end of the *Yi*-Dynasty in 1910, Confucian culture has retained its dominant role in the lives of the Korean people.<sup>34)</sup> Korean Protestant churches were not exempt

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32) Yee-Heum Yoon, "The Diversity and Continuity of Shamanism in Korean Religious History," *Shamanism Yeongoo* [Shamanism Study] vol.3 ( 2000): 267.

*Ka-jeong jedan* in Korean literally means house (or home) altar, which is the same woman house church in this dissertation. Therefore, Yoon already acknowledges the Korean woman house church.

33) Actually, mainstream churches had kept their Confucian culture before the growth of Protestantism. Due to the growth, woman house church began to appear as a new stream, so that we could see the two streams.

from the influence of Confucianism, which limited women leadership in churches. As a result, despite the active role of Protestant women, in 1912, when the first General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church was launched, there was no woman leadership in it. Even after the law of woman ordination was passed at the General Assembly in 1995, woman in mainstream churches have continued to be excluded from important portions such as leading worship service, the decision-making process, and education especially in the Presbyterian Church.<sup>35)</sup>

The male-centered culture of Confucianism influenced the emergence of the same dualistic realms, male and female spaces, in mainstream churches, so women continue to be excluded from important things just as they were in Confucian society. Moon-Jang Lee, a professor at Singapore Trinity Theological Seminary, points out on the discrimination of women in Protestant churches based on the dualistic roles of man and woman derive from Confucian culture:

There is a cultural discrimination in Korean society. The discrimination distinguishes space of male and female. Confucianism provided the foundation of the discrimination...The same discrimination based on gender exists in the church. In the church, people regard woman's realm as inferior than man's sphere. As a result, important matters in the church belong to man's realm whereas woman is supposed to follow the decisions of man's area... What we observe in the church is not evangelical but the culture of Confucianism.<sup>36)</sup>

In most Protestant churches, women take charge in subsidiary roles which ask obedience and sacrifices just as they do at home, like working in

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34) Jae-Kwang Gye, "Yugyo Munhwaga Hankook Leadershipe Michin Yeonghyang," [Influence of Confucian Culture to the Formation of Korean Leadership] *Shinhakkwa Shilcheon* [Theology and Praxis] vol. 22 (2010): 85.

35) Jeong-Sook, Jeong, "Bokeumseoreul Tonghaebon Yeosungkwankwa Onelnal Hankook Gyohoeuk Yeosung" [Women in Gospel and Women in Korean Church Today] (Master's thesis, Hanil Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 2006), 65.

36) Moon-Jang Lee, "Bokeumkwa Munhwa Georigo Yeosungeui Wichiekwanhan Ehae" [Gospel and Culture, and Understanding of Woman's Role in the Church] *Mokhoewa Shinhak* [Ministry and Theology] (May, 2004): 77-78.

the kitchen. Despite their active contribution, women are excluded from important matters of their churches. Behind the discrimination against women, the influence of Confucian culture plays an essential role to the church. In other words, patriarchal structure of Confucianism penetrated directly into mainstream churches, so women could not be leader in their churches.<sup>37)</sup> In most mainstream Protestant churches, women perform tasks that are similar to the work they do in their homes.

Statistics from 1979, the period of numerical growth of Korean Protestantism, explains well the situation of woman leadership in mainstream Korean Protestant churches.

Table 5-1. Number of Lay Person and Minister in Protestant Church (1979)<sup>38)</sup>

		Male	Female	Total
Lay Person		1,778,848 (36.5%)	3,088,809 (63.5%)	4,867,657 (100.0%)
Minister	Pastor	11,312(97.6%)	270(2.4%)	11,582(100.0%)
	Evangelist (unordained)	9,386(75.4%)	3,067(24.6%)	12,453(100.0%)

In the table above, the number of women leaders was only 2.4 percent for pastors (*Moksa* in Korean) and 24.6 percent for unordained ministers (*Jeondosa* in Korean) while women represented 63.5 percent of the total of Korean Protestants. In important decision-making meetings, consisting of elders and pastors in mainstream churches, *Jeondosa* cannot be members. Thus, we can understand that women can have no influence on important matters in their churches, although they constitute the majority: almost two-thirds of whole congregation. Leadership in mainstream churches is biased against women, and patriarchal Confucianism functions as one of the

37) Young-Jae Won, "Yugyomunhwa Yeonghyangeuroinhan Hankook Gyohoeui Sesokhwa," [The Influence of Confucian Culture to the Secularization of Korean Protestantism] *Gidokkyo Cheolhak* [Protestant Philosophy] vol. 8 (June, 2009): 66.

38) Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development, *Hankook Gyohoe Baeknyun Jonghap Yeonguseo* [Analysis of Korean Protestantism Reviewing Its 100 Years] (Seoul: Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development, 1982), 161.

primary causes.<sup>39)</sup>

Women ministers are also discriminated against in terms of wages and tasks. According to one survey on the situation of woman ministers in 1988, 51.9 percent of women ministers received wages below 400 U.S. dollars, the minimum wage at that time. In addition, their tasks were house visitation (77.7%), Sunday school (5.0%), and preaching (3.3%), whereas male ministers worked mainly in preaching and education.<sup>40)</sup>

Women in male-centered mainstream churches play the same roles as women in the over-all Confucian Korean society. In regard to woman leadership, we can argue that patriarchal mainstream churches reflect the system and culture of Confucianism. Unlike mainstream Protestant churches, women in Korean woman house church and mountain prayer center, another stream of Korean Protestantism, perform active roles reminiscent of women's roles in the Shamanistic culture.

Now we explore woman's role in woman house church, especially considering its common features with Shamanism.

## **Woman Leadership in Korean Woman House Church**

As we have seen in introduction of this paper, it is woman who plays a central role in woman house church, just as woman does in Shamanism. Several common aspects exist between woman house church and Shamanism. This section will explore woman leadership in woman house church (*Gajung Jedan*) comparing the common features with Shamanism in view of woman-centered movement.

Shamanism has survived as a popular religion, because Confucianism has not been able to satisfy the practical needs of people, particularly those of the lower-middle class, despite its dominance as the official religion under the *Yi*-Dynasty.<sup>41)</sup> The rise and prosperity of woman house church and

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39) Jae-Kwang Gye, 94.

40) Jeong-Sook Lee, "Hankook Gaeshingyo Yeogyoyeokjaeui Inkwon," [Human Right of Korean Protestant Woman Ministers] in *Asia Yeosung Yeongu* [*Research on Asian Women*] vol. 4 (2003): 145-149. According to this survey, in regard to education, one of the most important elements of church, female ministers spend only 5% at these among their allotted works, whereas male ministers spend most of their time doing this kind of core work, including preaching.

mountain prayer centers is the result of a similar problem within mainstream churches that have been unable or unwilling to care for the spiritual needs of their people.<sup>42)</sup> As Tark points out: "One of the most important reason [of rising mountain prayer centers] is that established churches lost attractiveness to Christians. The churches of today are so rich that they do not listen to the cry of the sick, the poor, the powerless, and the widow. That is why prayer centers are attractive to Christians."<sup>43)</sup> Korea today has no official religion, as it did under the Yi Dynasty when Confucianism was the official religion. However, today's mainstream Protestant churches stand in the same relationship to woman house church as in an earlier time Confucianism stood in relation to the popular Shamanism.

Similarities can be seen between Shamanism and woman house church (*Gajung Jedan*) in terms of the process of training women leaders. In Shamanism, a student shaman refers to her teacher shaman as "mother," and the relation of the two is similar to that of master-apprentice.<sup>44)</sup> Usually, the apprenticeship of the student shaman occurs during a stage of hard times. As Kendall states: "A woman (or man) becomes a shaman through traumatic possession sickness, initiation, and apprenticeship to a more experienced shaman."<sup>45)</sup> Similarly, in woman house church, a "spiritual mother-daughter" relationship exists between a woman leader and leaders-in-training, showing their respect for her as God's daughter. These similar features of Shamanism and woman house church can be a ladder through which we can examine further deeply the characteristics of the woman house church in view of cultural connection of the two woman movement.

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41) Jong-Sung Choi, "Chosunsidae Yugyowa Musokeui Gwangye Yeongu" [A Study on the Relation of Confucianism and Shamanism in Yi-Dynasty], 236.

42) Historically woman house church movement was originated from the mountain prayer center movement, which launched in the middle of 1960s and flourished in the 1970s and 1980s..

43) Myung-Hwan Tark, "Hankook Gidowon Undongeu Gongkwa," [Evaluation of Korean Prayer Center Movement] *Gidokyo Sasang* [Christian Thought] vol. 18, no. 9 (1974), 53.

44) Nam-Hyuk Chang, "Shamanism," *Sunkyowa shinhak* [Mission and Theology] vol. 6 (2000): 159.

45) Laurel Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 27.

As in Shamanism, the majority of woman house church leaders are women and adherents of both are of the lower classes. Today's woman house church women are primarily lower-middle class women who have low-education careers. Unlike woman in patriarchal mainstream churches, the women in woman house church and mountain prayer centers play active roles. Most directors in mountain prayer centers are women. In addition, all of the leaders of the woman house churches are women, most of whom are lay people. In the meeting of the Daehan Christian Prayer Hill, a prayer center and birthplace of the organized woman house church, lay women led meetings including the sermon and Holy Spirit Dance, even though male pastors and elders were present.<sup>46)</sup> In local woman house churches, numerous lay women preach, preside over worship, and care for members, playing a role similar to that of male pastors in mainstream churches.

On the issue of woman leadership, the leader of organized woman house church points out the little room for woman to be ordained minister under the current situation of Korea. Though she had a dream to serve as God's daughter, it is hard for her to work as a leader in mainstream churches due to her low education career as well as her responsibility as a house keeper. The other reason derives from doing charismatic practice like healing prayer (*anchal gido* in Korean) which needs to touch body of participants, most of whom are women. The lay woman leadership can provide a good opportunity for her to serve other people with spiritual gifts through preaching, praying, and caring. However, there is some criticism on the theological problems which can be derived from the deficiency of theological training.

## Conclusion

Up to this point, we have examined different understandings of woman leadership in the two streams of Korean Protestantism, with a focus on the tension that exists between the male-centered Confucian culture and female-dominant Shamanistic culture. As in the Confucian social system, men have dominated the leadership within Protestant churches, with women excluded from the decision-making structure despite their

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46) My observation and explanation of the woman director of the DCPH, Myung-Hee Park.

numerical dominance. Under the influence of Confucian principles, Korean churches extended the segregation into its own religious environment, thus limiting the role of women in the church to the same subsidiary roles they played in their homes. Thus, until recently, women could not aspire to be pastor or elder.<sup>47)</sup>

Historically speaking, the period of development of the woman house church (*Gajung Jedan*) movement paralleled with the rapid growth of mainstream Korean Protestantism, mainly during the 1970s and 1980s. Basically, the tension between the two streams of Korean Protestantism derives from the double membership of participants, because members of the woman house church (*Gajung Jedan*) are active church-goers in the mainstream churches. On the woman issue, the tension between male-centered mainstream churches and female-based woman house church reflects the existing cultural tension between male-centered Confucianism and female-based Shamanism in Korean society. The tension appeared with the blooming of woman house church in the growth period of Korean Protestantism in the 1970s and 1980s. In woman house church (*Gajung Jedan*), despite male participants, women play leading roles. Only woman may take on the leadership roles in local woman house churches. As male leaders do in mainstream churches, she leads worship, preaches sermons, and sometimes visits homes for individual care. However, mainstream churches have restricted women in the church only to subordinate roles. Women have been excluded from decision-making procedures or ordination for a long time despite their numerical majority.

Because of its somewhat unorthodox characteristics, the movement produced tension within mainstream Protestant churches that, interestingly, share the same people as their members. As a voluntary church, woman house church created tension with the mainstream institutional church. Following in the tradition of female-based Shamanistic culture, the movement revealed a conflict with the male-centered Confucian mainstream church. However, woman house church leaders maintain that mainline church is to woman house church what public school is to after school institution. The purpose of woman house church is to return members to the mainline church after they are healed at the woman house

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47) Woo-Jeong Lee, *Hankook Gidokkyo Yeosung Baeknyuneuk Baljachi* [Stories of Hundred years of Korean Women] (Seoul: Minjung Press, 1985), 106.

church. In terms of the tension, one of the important things is to understand the woman house church movement. The understanding can lead us to have an expectation that the woman house church can provide challenge as well as hope for the mainstream churches particularly in terms of developing woman leadership and reforming churches.

### **Abstract**

Woman house church movement has been a part of Korean Protestantism since 1960s, when prayer centers in mountain, the birthplace of the woman house church, began to flourish in Korea. With the growth of the woman house churches, the tension with mainstream Korean Protestant churches such as Methodists and Presbyterians has increased because the participants have double membership to the two different churches: woman house church and mainstream churches. Woman leadership in the two churches occupies an important issue in the tension. Behind the subordinate role of women in mainstream Korean Protestant churches, there have been influences of patriarchal Confucianism. Likewise, female-centered Korean Shamanism contributed to shape female-based Korean woman houses church. Thus, the tension between the two streams of Korean Protestantism reflects the socio-cultural tension between Confucianism and Shamanism that existed before the arrival of Protestantism.

### ***Keyword***

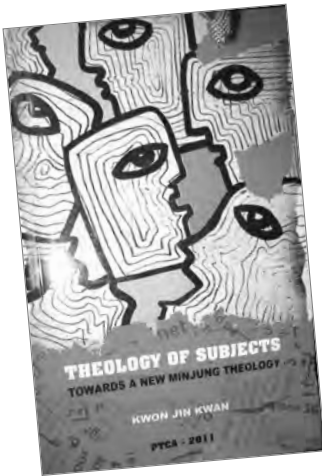
Woman, House Church, Korea, Shamanism, Confucianism.

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## Book Review



*Theology of Subjects: Towards a New Minjung Theology* by Kwon Jinkwan (Tainan, Taiwan: PTCA, 2011)

This book is an attempt to delineate a Minjung Theology in the changed Korean society. As we know, Korean society has achieved democracy and social reformation to some degree. But the pain and *han* of many minjung (the weak and poor) are still enormous. The global neoliberal market capitalism and political systems continue to inflict pains and injustice upon the ordinary

people. Prof. Kwon discusses theological issues in connection to the new context in Korea. He discusses on new and old themes of minjung theology. He specially focuses on the subjecthood of minjung in history and society. The Holy Spirit is first of all a Spirit that inspires the people to become the subjects in history. Prof. Kwon emphasizes in this book that the whole project of minjung and liberation theologies is to transform the status of minjung in history from the objecthood to the subjecthood. Major chapter titles are: "Theology based on Social Movement," "Between Suffering and Hope," "Minjung, a Historical Symbol of Jesus," "Encountering the Minjung Through Three Symbols: the Multitude, the *Inmin*, and the Subaltern," "The Wisdom of the Weak as Opposed to the Wisdom of the Empire," "The Holy Spirit, the Life of the Suffering Minjung," "The Holy Spirit and Minjung from the Perspective of Process Thought," and "The Spirit for the Subjects of History." (Order for the book can be made to the office of the *Madang* journal.)

