

A PENTECOST PARABLE:

*Minjung Theology as an Expression
of the Holy Spirit in Korea*

"Cracking the Code: Minjung Theology as an Expression of the Holy Spirit in Korea." *Pacifica* 10 (October 1997): 319-330.

Minjung theology's development in Korea as an indigenous theology of liberation is a genuine response to the Holy Spirit in Asia's fastest growing Christian population, though not without its problematic elements and critics. This article reflects on the inculturation of minjung theology in terms of a five-stage framework suggested by the Pentecost account in Acts 2:1-42.

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Introduction

At the 7th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Canberra, Australia in February, 1991 a young Korean feminist theologian, Hyun-kyung Chung,² created a minor sensation by leading a prayer service in which she used a shamanistic-type dance to invoke the *han*³ spirits of oppressed individuals and peoples, whom she called "icons of the Holy Spirit."

¹This paper was originally presented at the Missiology Section of the Catholic Theological Society of America's Fifty-First Annual Convention, held in San Diego, California from 6-9 June, 1996. The overall topic for the Section presentations was "Mission of the Spirit, Mission of Jesus Christ, Mission within Cultures: A Conversational Seminar Concerned with 'Church as Mission' and Its Future." I am particularly grateful for the help and feedback I have received from Professor Jong-Hyeok Sim of Sogang University in Seoul, with whom I am collaborating on research and writing on theology in Korea.

²Chung is one of the best-known Korean feminist theologians in the West. She did her doctorate under James Cone at Union Theological Seminary, and her dissertation was published as *Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990). For additional examples of her Korean feminist approach see "'Opium or the Seed for Revolution?' Shamanism: Women Centered Popular Religiosity in Korea," *Concilium* 199 (1988): 96-104; and "'Han-pu-ri': Doing Theology from Korean Women's Perspective," in *We Dare to Dream: Doing Theology as Asian Women*, ed. Virginia Fabella and Sun-Ai Park, (Hong Kong: Asian Women's Resource Center for Culture and Theology, 1989): 135-146.

³*Han* is a Chinese ideogram which could be translated as "hate" or "resentment," though the term *han* in Korea has a more nuanced meaning. An early minjung theologian, Younghak Hyun describes *han* as "a sense of unresolved resentment against injustices suffered, as sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against, a feeling of total abandonedness ("Why

While many in attendance enthusiastically applauded Chung's presentation, others present were deeply offended by what they regarded as clear syncretism incompatible with the Gospel.⁴ Even though the controversy over this particular incident has by now largely subsided, debate continues over a number of aspects of minjung⁵ theology, as well as related issues which revolve around questions of what constitutes authentic inculturation and the true discernment of spirits in the larger Asian theological context.

While it would be rather ambitious even to try to enumerate all of these issues I would suggest that a framework is provided in the initial evangelization encounter on the first Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:1-42 for a deeper theological reflection on the presence of the Holy Spirit in Christianity in Korea. Specifically, I would highlight a number of key "moments" which are contained in the New Testament account and which may guide our reflection on the Spirit's

hast thou forsaken me?"), a feeling of acute pain of sorrow in one's guts and bowels making the whole body writhe and wriggle, and an obstinate urge to take "revenge" and to right the wrong--all these combined. We Koreans often think of ourselves as a "han-ridden" people." Younghak Hyun, "Three Talks on Minjung Theology," *Inter-Religio* 7 (Spring, 1985): 7.

⁴For a number of articles which detail some of these reactions see the issue entitled, "Mission Impulses from Canberra," *International Review of Mission* 80 (1991).

⁵*Minjung* is composed of two Chinese ideograms: *Min*, which means "people" (as of a common ethnic or national group), and *Jung* refers to a large mass or grouping. Taken together, *Minjung* means the "common people" or "the masses," although neither of these expressions captures completely the nuances of the Korean usage of these Chinese ideograms. As one of the key minjung theologians, Byung-Mu Ahn, puts it: "I object to efforts to explain *Minjung* with one word. Western scholarship investigates everything as concepts. If you explain *Minjung* it becomes a concept and when it becomes materialized as a concept, that concept becomes isolated from reality. Then the live reality and the dead concept come into conflict with each other. The aspect of *Minjung* to which I give most attention is that of transcending oneself." Interview as recorded in "What is *Minjung* Theology?" *Inculturation, Korea*, 2 (Spring, 1992): 3.

presence and action in minjung theology.⁶ For purposes of easy identification I label these moments as 1) Finding One's Voice, 2) Cracking the Code, 3) Hearing and Listening 4) Playback and Feedback, and, finally 5) Conversion, which is marked by a reciprocal interplay of faith and action.

Finding One's Voice

On Pentecost the first concrete manifestation of the gift of the Spirit was that the disciples "began to speak in other languages [γλώσσαις], as the Spirit gave them ability."⁷ In other words, the presence and gift of the Spirit enabled the disciples to find their own voice. Of course, what they proclaimed would be the Gospel message as they had come to internalize it through their intimate association with Jesus, but the key movement of the Pentecost event was that now it would be the disciples speaking on their own. Analogously, this finding of one's voice is the first hallmark of the development of minjung theology, in which the Korean theologians broke out of the mold of following Western theological approaches, in order to speak in a manner which would give legitimate voice to the Korean experience. As Byung-Mu Ahn notes,

Koreans must return to being Koreans. Before they are Christians they must be Koreans. They have to overcome the tendency to be Westernized. One of the leading factors in Westernization is Christianity. Theology is caught up too deeply in Western thought and tradition. How can this be changed? How can Christianity renew our Korean people's Christianity?

⁶For an overview of minjung theology in the historical context of the development of Christianity in the Korean Peninsula see James T. Bretzke, "Minjung Theology and Inculturation in the Context of the History of Christianity in Korea," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 28 (1991): 108-130.

⁷Acts 2:4b. All biblical quotations are taken from the NSRV translation.

In trying to answer these questions academic theology from an ivory tower will not suffice. The theology will have to be done where the *Minjung* are and where movements are happening.⁸

Minjung theology thus becomes a socio-political hermeneutics of the Christian gospel from the viewpoint of the past and present experience of the Korean people's suffering, especially as reflected in the socio-theological biographies of the Korean *minjung*.⁹ This means that theologically the Gospel message cannot be understood in Korea without paying explicit attention to the Korean situation itself. In the process of finding its voice, minjung theology does not seek so much to interpret the Bible in the light of the Korean situation, as to reflect on the myriad experiences, both individually and collectively, of the Korean minjung in the light of the Bible. Thus, rather than reading the text in light of the context, the hermeneutical process is somewhat reversed in minjung theology, even though there is an obvious reciprocity and inter-penetration between the reading of the text and the context. Thus, minjung theologians would claim that the "text" of the Bible cannot be adequately understood in Korea unless antecedent efforts are made to understand the "context" of the Korean situation as exemplified through the both the historical and contemporary experiences of the oppressed, alienated and marginalized minjung in Korean society.

⁸Byung-Mu Ahn, "What is *Minjung* Theology," p. 3.

⁹For a development of this point see David Kwang-sun Suh's essay, "A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation," and Yong-bock Kim's essay, "Messiah and Minjung: Discerning Messianic Politics over against Political Messianism," chapters 1 and 10 respectively in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, ed. Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia (CTC-CCA), (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983).

Cracking the Code

This methodological finding of one's theological voice leads then to the next step, namely speaking effectively in that voice. In order to speak convincingly one must locate one's audience, and then address them in a language that is comprehensible to them. On the first Pentecost the disciples turned to the "devout Jews from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) and spoke to them in a revolutionary way, i.e., "in the native language [διαλεκτῶ] of each" (Acts 2:6). Speaking in these "dialects" should not be seen as an early Palestinian feat of simultaneous translation in which the initial proclamation of the Gospel message was somehow reproduced exactly and identically into mother tongues of the audience.¹⁰ One of the key insights of inculturation is that if the Gospel kerygma is to be preached effectively in different cultural settings it will have to interact differently with each cultural milieu. Therefore, the Gospel proclaimed in a variety of locations will necessarily "sound" different to different audiences. This fact requires of both speakers and listeners a number of things, but at this point I would simply like to highlight that for the evangelizers effective Gospel proclamation will require using a language, i.e., a native dialect, that is genuinely comprehensible by those who are being evangelized.

¹⁰The Greek text itself lends support to this interpretation. Note that from the Apostles' point of view they are speaking in other "languages" [γλώσσαις], but from their hearers' perspective these other "languages" [γλώσσαις] objectively-speaking are transformed subjectively-speaking into the "native language" [διαλεκτῶ] of each listener. The shift is theologically clearly more significant than a mere semantic choice of vocabulary.

Finding this effective comprehensible language involves what the well-known Asian theologian, C.S. Song, calls "cracking the codes."¹¹ The Holy Spirit has been present in all cultures since the dawn of time, and so it is incumbent upon theologians and evangelists to discern these ways in which the Spirit has manifested itself in any given culture.¹² Discerning the presence of the Spirit means we must find and then "decode" those ways in which God has, and continues to operate in and through a given culture.

In this vein a key innovation of minjung theology is turning to and utilizing the ways in which those who made up the minjung have already coded and decoded their universe. This "wisdom" of the minjung has traditionally been expressed in traditional religions such as shamanism and Buddhism and through vehicles such as folk tales (*mindam*), art-forms such as the masked dance (*talch'um*), songs and folk opera (*pansori*), and farmers' traditional music--all of which often carried a biting social satire on the upper class (*yangban*).¹³ These resources have

¹¹Most of C.S. Song's works are based on this basic insight, but for a good exposition of this point see "Life is Coded," chapter one in his *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986): 7-18.

¹²Cf. *Gaudium et spes*, e.g., here at #11: "The People of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord who fills the whole world. Moved by that faith it tries to discern in the events, the needs, and longings which it shares with other men of our time, what may be genuine signs of the presence or of the purpose of God. For faith throws a new light on all things and makes known the full ideal which God has set for man, thus guiding the mind towards solutions that are fully human." Translation from Austin P. Flannery, O.P. ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, (New York: Pillar Books, 1975).

¹³For a succinct overview of this point see Jae-Woong Ahn's "The Wisdom of the Minjung in Korea," *Ching Feng* 38 (June 1995): 106-115. It is interesting to note that Korean university students consistently widely use these traditional forms, especially the farmers' music and the masked dance, in their demonstrations against their own government and strong foreign powers such as Japan and the United States.

been appropriated creatively in a number of ways¹⁴ in minjung theology and give it much of its methodological distinctiveness.¹⁵

Listening and Hearing

Once those charged with the task of evangelizing and theologizing have undertaken the process of finding and decoding the ways in which the Spirit has already spoken in a given culture they must then formulate their message in such a way that it will then be listened to and heard. Here the focus is more on those receiving the Gospel message and their own process of hermeneutical appropriation. In the first Pentecost the hearers were reported as being "amazed and astonished" (Acts 2:7) that they heard this message in their own languages, but this amazement does not stop with recognition of the supposedly miraculous linguistic feat, but passes on immediately to a consideration of the message itself: "... in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power" (Acts 2:11).

In this verbalization of the hearers' account of what was transpiring during the first Pentecost we find an indication of another important aspect of the evangelization account: namely, that the initial hearing must move from passive hearing into active listening. Not every hearer will stay to become a listener, as Acts 2:12-13 attests: "All were amazed and perplexed,

¹⁴For example, see Younghak Hyun's essay, "A Theological Look at the Mask Dance in Korea," chapter 3 in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, pp. 47-54; and Hongjung Lee's "The Minjung Behind the Folktale: An Example of Narrative Hermeneutics." *Asia Journal of Theology* 8 (1994): 89-94.

¹⁵For this and a variety of other reasons most minjung theologians draw an important distinction between minjung theology and Latin American liberation theology, and resist simply identifying minjung theology as "Korean liberation theology."

saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine'."

What accounts for this decisive difference in the modes of reception and non-reception on the part of the hearers must depend in part on how well the process of decoding discussed above had taken place. But the decoding phase alone cannot account completely for the success or failure of the reception of the Gospel message. Rather, much also depends on the recipients and their being convinced that the message which is proclaimed is both directed to them, and has something important to say to them as well. In this regard minjung theology makes an important contribution in its methodological approach of identification of the minjung as "subjects" of history and using their "social biographies"¹⁶ to access theologically their own experiences of alienation and oppression in order to reflect more meaningfully on the Gospel message. In short, minjung theology emphasizes the truth that sees these people worthy of being addressed and engaged by the Gospel proclamation of salvation history. Younghak Hyun expresses this key point in the following way:

We tried to see the history not merely as that of kings, generals, aristocrats, and intellectual elites but more as the story of minjung, the people who composed the majority of the population throughout history, that is, as a social biography of minjung. We tried to read the history from the bottom-up, from the perspective of the underdogs rather than from that of the top-dogs."¹⁷

¹⁶A fair amount has been written on minjung theology's usage of social biography. For one good article, see Young-bock Kim's "Minjung Social Biography and Theology," *Asia Journal of Theology* 1 (October, 1987): 523-530. For some concrete examples of these social biographies see Young-sook Harvey Kim's *From the Womb of Han: Stories of Korean Women Workers*, (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia--Urban Rural Mission, 1982).

¹⁷Younghak Hyun, "Three Talks on Minjung Theology," p. 35.

Thus, the experience of the minjung is taken seriously and in turn invites and facilitates a serious "listening" on their part to the Gospel. The theological significance of the experience of the minjung as accessed through their social biographies ties in with my earlier assertion that minjung theology is basically a socio-political hermeneutics of the Christian gospel from the viewpoint of the minjung's suffering--which in turn becomes the key to the interpretation of the meaning of both the experience of the suffering and the biblical message itself. The use of the stories of the social biographies underscores the distinctive narrative character of minjung theology, which in turn resonates more easily with biblical narratives and thus encourages the process of listening and hearing.¹⁸

Politically, Korea has had a long history of being at the crossroads of struggles between her more powerful neighbors, and internally there has been much oppression and inequality among the social classes as well. These historical forces have helped to create a certain cultural attitude towards oppression which often goes by the name of *han*.¹⁹ In minjung theology the use of the social biographies of the individuals, collective groups (e.g., workers, farmers, women), as well as

¹⁸The use of social biography has the principal mode of social analysis is another way in which minjung theology differs from Latin American liberation theology, which tends to utilize more economic analysis.

¹⁹For an introductory overview to the theological significance of *han* in minjung theology see Nam-dong Suh's "Towards a Theology of *Han*," chapter 4 in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, pp. 55-69. For a more recent and interesting sustained theological reflection on *han* see Andrew Sung Park's *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993). For a inter-disciplinary treatment of the concept of *han* itself from the perspectives of depth psychology, Korean history, as well as some representative minjung theologians see Jae Hoon Lee's *The Exploration of the Inner Wounds--Han*, American Academy of Religion Academy Series, 86, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994).

the story of whole Korean nation itself are best interpreted through a reflection on these experiences of han. Theologically, as Cyris Moon observes,

through the experience of *han* one's spiritual eyes are opened and one is enabled to see the deep truths about life. In *han*, we come to see the infinite value of personhood and are able to assert our precious rights as human beings. In *han* we see clearly what is good and evil and learn to hate evil and love good. In *han* we encounter God who comes down to the *han*-ridden people and justifies their plight. With *han* as our point of departure we begin to dream of a new, alternative future and to dedicate ourselves to the cause of making that future a reality.²⁰

The han stories contained in the social biographies of the minjung are interpreted theologically as the story of the Holy Spirit, who in a certain sense "resides" in the minjung's han, consoling and guiding them in their quest for liberation through the transformation of the oppression of the present situation. Whenever the minjung stories are told, the tellers/hearers experience in the depths of their hearts the eschatological vision and yearning for God who delivers them from their suffering and despair. It is primarily the Holy Spirit who ignites that fire.

Creative and legitimate usage of han, as well as its eventual resolution pose considerable ongoing challenges for Christianity in Korea. However, at this point it is sufficient to re-emphasize that theologically speaking the hermeneutical reading of the minjung social biographies in light of the biblical message and vice versa is inspired and sustained by the action of the Holy Spirit in the community, and as such requires both corporate and individual ongoing discernment of spirits.

²⁰Cyris H.S. Moon, *A Korean Minjung Theology: An Old Testament Perspective*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985): 2.

Playback and Feedback

This discernment of spirits marks the transition to the next phase in the ongoing appropriation of the Gospel kerygma, namely, "playback and feedback." In the first Pentecost the initial "playback/feedback" phase is illustrated by the dialogue between Peter and his hearers in which Peter delivers the principal content of his sermon (Acts 2:14-36). However, this extended sermon would have fallen on deaf ears if Peter had not yet first gained a hearing from his audience (i.e., the first three stages discussed above). The dialogue continues now, however, in reference to a third dialogue partner represented by Peter's citation and interpretation of the scriptural evidence which attests to the veracity of both Jesus as the Messiah and the Gospel message as being in fact God's revelation. Thus, Scripture and revelation now become the touchstone for the dialogue in the playback/feedback phase.

This identification of a theological *norma normans* is critical for an authentic discernment and evaluation of what legitimately might be called orthodoxy in the original sense of the term (i.e., "'correct' or 'legitimate' teaching"). Any inculturated theology, including minjung theology must be subject to this sort of evaluation. In the same breath it should be said that this assertion does not mean that there can be only one version of "orthodox" theology. The first hearers of the Apostles' preaching on Pentecost heard the Gospel message in many different tongues, and no doubt various parts of that message struck different chords and carried different nuances than would have been the case if the message had been given and received in one uniform and identical theological language. In this same sense we can clearly accept minjung theology as a potentially

rich and orthodox Christian theology, while still recognizing that it is both partial and perhaps incomplete in its development (like each and every other orthodox theology to date!).²¹

So we need to accept that this theology still needs to be deepened and strengthened, and in that process, like all human enterprises, may well need to undergo a certain amount of evaluation, clarification, purification, and, if necessary, correction. This multi-faceted process requires both ongoing discernment of spirits and dialogue. Discernment of spirits requires playback and feedback in terms of prayer and reflection on the Scriptures. Dialogue involves playback and feedback with a variety of partners, and should also be multi-faceted: academic, cross-cultural, economic, ecumenical, inter-religious, political, and secular. In other words, the dialogue on minjung theology should reflect accurately the context in which Christianity in Korea finds itself: that is, within the Korean Peninsula, within East Asia, and within the universal Church which is itself located in a diverse global community. Thus, minjung theology should not be afraid to engage other theologians and religious communities both inside and outside of Korea.²² However, the non-Korean dialogue partners must inform themselves better of what minjung theology is about before any constructive dialogue can be undertaken.²³

²¹Robert Schreiter is one theologian who has done much to advance the reflection on this issue. See his following works: *Constructing Local Theologies*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985); "Faith and Cultures: Challenges to a World Church," *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 744-760; and "Inculturation of Faith or Identification with Culture," *Concilium* (2/1994): 15-25.

²²Nam-Soon Kang makes this point vis-à-vis Asian feminist theology. See her article, "Creating 'Dangerous Memory': Challenges for Asian and Korean Feminist Theology," *The Ecumenical Review* 47 (1995): 21-31.

²³As one good example of such academic playback/feedback on minjung theology see *An Emerging Theology in World Perspective: Commentary on Korean Minjung Theology*, ed. Jung Young Lee, (Mystic CT: Twenty-third Publications, 1988). Besides Jung Young Lee himself, the volume contains contributions from Byung-mu Ahn, José Míguez Bonino, Robert McAfee

Conversion

While dialogue is key to any contemporary inculturated theology, it is important to realize that the dialogue is not an end in itself, but a means to a more important end, namely the refinement of the Gospel message which in turn will lead to a genuine conversion on the part of all who partake in the Gospel encounter. Thus, a significant corollary to the playback/feedback aspect is that in this process those who originally were the "evangelizers" will also become more deeply evangelized as well. If the dynamic announcement of the Gospel message does not leave the hearers unchanged, neither will the proclaimers remain the same.

This double-edged effect of evangelization is seen clearly in the whole original Pentecost event. Those who had been until so recently closeted in an upper room, and unclear on some very basic concepts of Jesus' mission (cf. Acts 1:6-7), were now transformed not only the reception of the gift of the Spirit, but also through the performance inspired and required by that same gift. Thus, the Gospel ministry is seen right from its inception to be both an ongoing and reciprocal enterprise.

Certainly this same dynamic can be traced clearly in Korea as well. Any number of those associated with minjung theology, especially in the 1970's and 1980's, have undergone profound conversion experiences of their own--conversions which have been tested, deepened, and ratified in prison and torture, detention and harassment, and persecution in a number of ways.

Brown, John B. Cobb, Jr., Harvey Cox, Kwesi A. Dickson, Kosuke Koyama, George Ogle, J. Deotis Roberts, Letty M. Russell, C.S. Song, and Herwig Wagner. In regards to the critical role of dialogue as a possible source of correction and clarification see the essay by Herwig Wagner and the response by Byung-Mu Ahn, pp. 183-207.

Nevertheless, this individual and corporate witness has inspired and emboldened countless others to commit themselves to the demands of the costly grace of the life of Christian discipleship.²⁴ In terms of pneumatology, the conversion stage of minjung theology emphasizes the performative aspect of faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Yet, commitment to the liberation of the politically and economically oppressed is not enough to encompass the whole of the vision of the Gospel contained within minjung theology. At the conclusion of the Apostles' preaching on the first Pentecost those who had both heard and heeded [Ἀκούσαντες δὲ κατενύγησαν τὴν καρδίαν] the Gospel message came to Peter with the key question: "Brothers [ἀδελφοί], what should we do?" (Acts 2:37). The framing of the question anticipates in part an important aspect of the mode of the response, namely that all are united by the common bonds of a familial relationship in Jesus Christ, i.e., the identification of each other now as ἀδελφος. In minjung theology this insight is expressed in a conversion to the minjung themselves--i.e., not just as a social or economic class, but as subjects, as real people, individuals with a social biography, who stand in social relationship to one another as ἀδελφοί--brothers and sisters.

This initial conversion to see in the other a brother or sister is what grounds the possibility of a genuine response to the question itself of "what should we do?":

²⁴Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama suggests that Koreans "have understood the historical meaning of 'conversion' (discontinuity and radical reorientation) as enunciated by the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures far better than have other Asians." Koyama, "'Building the House by Righteousness': The Ecumenical Horizons of Minjung Theology," in *An Emerging Theology in World Perspective: Commentary on Korean Minjung Theology*, p. 141.

Peter said to them, "Repent [Μετανοήσατε], and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your [ὑμῶν]²⁵ sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him."
(Acts 2:38-39)

A key insight of all liberation theologies, including minjung theology, is that the metanoia involved in the process of Gospel conversion requires adopting a committed faith-in-action stance toward the poor, oppressed, and marginalized. Minjung theology sees this ongoing process of social solidarity for liberation as made possible by the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. In fact, one of the distinguishing features of minjung theology is its special stress on the Holy Spirit, even to the point of de-emphasis on the other two persons of the Trinity.²⁶

Another important aspect of the original Pentecost proclamation was the promise of the corporate forgiveness of sins. Conversion in both Acts and in minjung theology is not just individual, but social and communitarian. In minjung theology this dimension of conversion and forgiveness is expressed in the concept of *dan*. Like many other terms associated with minjung theology *dan* is difficult to express. The dictionary translates *dan* in the physical sense as "cutting" or a "cutting off." However, applied to the built up sense of oppression and injustice expressed by *han*, minjung theology's use of the concept of *dan* involves a decisive breaking of the cycle of *han*. *Han* then becomes something to be transformed and overcome with the help of

²⁵The Greek here in this passage is in the second person plural.

²⁶As Jung Young Lee notes, "The spiritual presence of God is presupposed in the liberating movement of the minjung. God as Holy Spirit is more relevant to minjung theologians than God as the Father or as the Son. The God who works in us and in acts of liberation in the past, present and future is best understood as the Holy Spirit." Jung Young Lee, "Minjung Theology: A Critical Introduction," in *An Emerging Theology in World Perspective: Commentary on Korean Minjung Theology*, p. 13.

God's saving power--to be "cut" (dan), not by some *deus ex machina*, but by a God who works in, among and through God's people (as expressed in the minjung) in the process of bringing forth God's own eschatological Kingdom in which there will be no more han. Here the special insight of minjung theology is that it will be primarily the minjung themselves who must resolve this han through a movement by which they first become better aware of the nature of their suffering and its causes, and then work for their own liberation through a resolution of the causes which produce their han. Once again it is primarily the Holy Spirit whose presence and action support the efforts to resolve han both individually as well as through its corporate manifestations in social sin and structural evil. Therefore, the conversion process expressed in the concept of dan requires a commitment grounded in faith to work for greater justice so that the unjust han-producing situations will be resolved. In this process the community of the Church, the ἀδελφοί identified in Acts 2:37, is crucial in consoling and supporting the minjung, while helping them establish their identity as true "subjects" of history, rather than as "objects" oppressed by a ruling class.

Conclusion

While it was beyond the intention or scope of this article to discuss minjung theology in great detail, still we should be able to draw some conclusions from our overview, not only for minjung theology as a whole, but also to indicate for some prospects for further theological reflection. Hopefully we have seen that minjung theology is a legitimate expression of an inculturated theology in the Korean context. Just as the Apostles in their initial Pentecost mission outreach adapted, under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel message to their audience of Jews from around the Mediterranean, so too minjung theology has sought to

proclaim the same Gospel message effectively in the Korean context. The development of minjung theology reflects the same stages outlined in the evangelization which occurred on the original Pentecost, namely finding one's theological voice, discovering an appropriate language comprehensible to those being evangelized (i.e., "cracking the codes"), having the Gospel proclamation attended to and taken seriously, ongoing discussion and reflection (i.e., "playback and feedback"), and finally and most importantly, moving both evangelizers and evangelized to a deeper conversion of committed faith-in-action.

Minjung theology's strong emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit can be an important contribution to the development and refinement of other local theologies. Minjung theology interprets the Holy Spirit in terms of dynamic historical forces, which empower the people of the minjung to demolish those oppressive barriers of inter-communication, which in turn will eventually bring about genuine community of *koinonia* among all the people, symbolized by the expression of ἀδελφοί found in Acts 2:37 and expressed by the bonds of community described in Acts 2:42. Thus, the Holy Spirit evokes and sustains hope for the minjung to become real subjects of their own history, as they realize their own fuller identity and role in the process of historical transformation. The conversion decision to dedicate one's whole life for the liberation of minjung is also seen as the work of the Holy Spirit.

Another important aspect which minjung theology has shown is the creative way in which sin and oppression are identified, unmasked, and resolved. The han/dan dialectic provides a very richly prophetic means not only for the identification of sin and sinful structures, but for their resolution through breaking the cycle of revenge through forgiveness and reconciliation. Through

this process of dan resolving han the vicious cycle of hatred and revenge is broken and those once oppressed are delivered from the fate of becoming oppressors in turn.

All of the stages suggested by the Pentecost event need to continue and be repeated as minjung theology undergoes transformation into what some now call the "post-minjung" era in Korea, an era marked by real economic and political advances.²⁷ Minjung theology also will need to refine a number of aspects of its theological approach, for example, its understanding of christology.²⁸ Certainly the issues of the proper uses of shamanism and the legitimate dangers of syncretism have not yet been completely resolved. In this whole process the discernment of spirits and dialogue outlined in the playback/feedback stage will be especially important. If this process continues then the vision which concluded the original Pentecost event will become a stronger and enduring reality: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship [κοινωνία], to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

²⁷Anyone who has had the opportunity, like myself, to live in and/or visit Korea over a long period of time can easily attest to these positive developments.

²⁸For example, Robert McAfee Brown notes a christological debate in which some "claim that the real message of the gospel today is the minjung themselves, that they are the true bearers of hope and meaning. Others stress the need to develop a clearer sense of the relationship between Jesus and minjung, feeling that the danger of the first position is to cast Jesus in too subordinate a role in the contemporary retelling of the story." From Brown's essay, "What Can North Americans Learn from Minjung Theology?" in *An Emerging Theology in World Perspective: Commentary on Korean Minjung Theology*, p.40.

Glossary of Korean Terms Used

Term	Meaning
<i>Dan</i>	"Cutting" of <i>han</i> ; breaking the vicious cycle of <i>han</i> and revenge
<i>Han</i>	Resentment, grudge, hatred
<i>Mindam</i>	Folk tale
<i>Minjung</i>	The common people (as oppressed)
<i>Pansori</i>	Song genre widely used by the minjung; a sort of minjung opera
<i>Talch'um</i>	Masked dance genre of social satire widely used by the minjung
<i>Yangban</i>	Upper class of Korean aristocracy

Abstract

Minjung theology's development in Korea as an indigenous theology of liberation is a genuine response to the Holy Spirit in Asia's fastest growing Christian population, though not without its problematic elements and critics. This article reflects on the inculturation of minjung theology in terms of a five-stage framework suggested by the Pentecost account in Acts 2:1-42.