THE HEALING OF HAN IN KOREAN PENTECOSTALISM

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Why has the church in Korea, especially the Pentecostal church, been growing so rapidly? What are the distinctive features that make its growth so special? As Harvey Cox points out, 'there are many ways to try to explain the eruption of Christianity and Pentecostalism in Korea'.

For example, from the viewpoint of comparative religion, Kyoko Fuchigami claims that the immediate cause of the rapid growth of the Korean church was 'the healing activity of Korean Christian ministers' influenced by Korean shamanism.

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1. For the cultural aspects of Korean church growth, see Bong-Rin Ro, 'Non-Spiritual Factors in Church Growth', and Harold S. Hong, 'Social, Political and Psychological Aspects of Church Growth', both in Bong-Rin Ro and Marlin L. Nelson (eds.), Korean Church Growth Explosion: Centennial of the Protestant Church (1884–1984) (Seoul, Korea: Word of Life Press, 1983), pp. 159-70 and 171-81 respectively.

2. From a perspective of church growth, Jae Bum Lee's 'Pentecostal Type Distinctive and Korean Church Growth' (PhD dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, 1986) shows how the Korean churches' emphasis on spiritual activities such as prayer and evangelism contributes to the growth of Pentecostal-type churches in Korea.


In this essay I attempt to explain the rapid spread of Korean Pentecostalism in terms of han, a Korean word. In his recent book, *The Wounded Heart of God*, Andrew S. Park shows that 'Han is an Asian, particularly Korean, term used to describe the depths of human suffering'.\(^5\) It is widely recognized that Korean shamanism and *minjung* theology\(^6\) explicitly address han.\(^7\) I have found that Pentecostalism in Korea is also deeply related to han, although implicitly. Pentecostalism in Korea could not spread so rapidly without its having a function of releasing the han of ordinary people.

The purpose of this essay is to show that to release *han* is a common factor among shamanism, *minjung* theology and Pentecostalism in Korea, and that Pentecostalism, in contrast to *minjung* theology, is similar to shamanism in terms of its method of releasing han. This may explain why so many Korean people (*minjung*) find the preferential option for the Pentecostal church, although *minjung* theology has proclaimed itself the 'preferential option for the poor *minjung*'.

As a preliminary step of this study a survey of han is required, as it is an unfamiliar word for foreigners. Following this, I will show how shamanism, *minjung* theology and Pentecostalism are related to han. Consequently, I will argue that Pentecostalism is similar to shamanism with regard to unraveling han in terms of the following factors: (1) the theology of material blessings; (2) the role of pastors; (3) rituals.

There remains a problem in defining Pentecostalism in Korea. On the one hand, most Korean churches are Pentecostal from a foreigner's point of view; on the other, however, two-thirds of Korean church members are Presbyterians who usually object to distinctive Korean Pentecostal practices such as speaking in tongues, divine healing or exorcism. So I will focus mainly on Paul Yonggi Cho's theology of the


7. I will show in the main body of this essay that the starting point of *minjung* theology was han, and that the main function of Korean shamanism was unraveling the han of *minjung*. 