

# The Notion of Reconciliation in *Sangsaeng* Theology for Korean Reunification

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## I. Introduction

Korea is the world's only divided country. This division is an international as well as a national issue, and it has inflicted pain and suffering on the Korean people for 50 years, since the truce that suspended the Korean War was signed at Panmunjom on July 27, 1953.<sup>1</sup> The disproportionate human cost paid by the Korean people in family divisions, separation of friends, and deaths is a result of the ideological differences that exist between the governments of South and North Korea as well as different world powers that exert influence and pressure on these governments. Communism, imperialism, capitalism, and the military rivalry between the two Koreas are the greatest obstacles to the reunification of this nation. Moreover, the situation on the Korean peninsula has implications not only for peace in northeast Asia but also for global peace.

Responding to this situation of fratricide, the paper analyzes *sangsaeng* theology,<sup>2</sup> which centers on the concept of life-sharing. *Sangsaeng* theology was first elaborated by Park Jong Chun and Hong Jeong Soo. In 1991, Methodist Theological Seminary Professor Park Jong Chun published the book *Sangsaeng Theology*, in which he proposed *sangsaeng* theology as the third stage of Korean theology.<sup>3</sup> According to Park, the first stage, starting in the early 1960s, focused on *tochakwha* (indigenization) theology. The theologians involved in that first stage were faculty members of the Methodist Theological Seminary, among them Yun Sung Bum and Park Pong Bae. In the 1970s, *minjung* theology marked the second stage of Korean theology. In the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, Park suggested, the third stage of Korean theology centered on *sangsaeng* theology which brought together the hermeneutical universality of *tochakwha* theology and the liberational partiality of *minjung* theology.<sup>4</sup>

In my analyses of *sangsaeng* theology, I pay close attention to the notions of *haewon* (resolution of resentment) and *sangsaeng* (life-sharing). *Haewon* and *sangsaeng*, I propose, are central to an ethical-theological discourse of reconciliation that can contribute to the reunification of Korea. *Sangsaeng* theology's main concepts of *haewon-sangsaeng* (resolution of resentment and life-sharing) are rooted in the Korean people's political and spiritual aspirations, which are fundamental to the reconciliation of North and South

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<sup>1</sup> Lee Ki-Baik, *A New History of Korea* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 380.

<sup>2</sup> 상\_(sang) means "each other" and 생\_(saeng) means "life or living."

<sup>3</sup> Park Jong Chun 상생의 신학 [*Sangsaeng Theology*] (Seoul: Korean Theological Study Institute, 1991), 14, 468.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Korea. *Sangsaeng* theology interprets the Christian message of eternal life as the light of *sangsaeng* triumphing over *sangguik* (conflict), over spiritual and ideological conflict, over the division between North and South Korean peoples, and over socio-economic contradictions.

## II. *Haewon-sangsaeng* Thought: Religious and Ethical Concepts

The *Haewon-sangsaeng* concept is a religious thought developed by Kang Jeung-San, who used the pseudonym of Kang, Il-Soon (1871–1909). *Haewon-sangsaeng* thought emerged from the political and spiritual aspirations for the liberation of Koreans during an era of Western and Japanese imperialism. Kang lived during the last quarter of the 19th-century, the late period of the Chosun dynasty, a time of social chaos caused by various revolts of the *minjung*. The *Tonghak* revolution<sup>5</sup> in 1894, a Korean *minjung* messianic movement led by the *minjung* with the intention of creating a new world, influenced Kang's thought. His idea of spiritual enlightenment emerged from the failure of the *Tonghak* revolution to create a new world through a socio-political revolution. As an alternative, Kang suggested a movement based on *haewon-sangsaeng*, which he created by taking the Shamanistic tradition of *haewon* and incorporating it into the other religious traditions in Korean Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. *Haewon-sangsaeng* urges people to put aside all grudges and acrimonious relationships, to forgive others, and to cooperate with them in order to live in harmony and peace, and to establish a new world.

In *haewon-sangsaeng* thought, conflict is considered the root of all suffering, and the removal of conflict is a necessary condition for true peace and hope to flourish. Kang defined conflict from a cosmological viewpoint.<sup>6</sup> Kang wrote, “In the age of Early Heaven, there were conflicts bringing all sorts of miserable disasters and wars to the world. People lived in an environment of conflict because the principle of *sangguik* (conflict) controlled everything.”<sup>7</sup>

In Kang's cosmology, the universe has two major phases: Early Heaven and Later Heaven. In the Early Heaven phase there is an imbalance in nature since *yang* dominates *yin*; because these two energies do not circulate well, *sangguik* (conflict) governs all life. In the Later Heaven phase, a time of returning to oneness and harmony, there will be peace because the relationship between *yin* and *yang* will achieve perfect balance.

*Sangsaeng* (life-sharing) will be realized in Later Heaven.

<sup>5</sup> The term *tonghak* is comprised of 동\_(*tong*), meaning east and 학\_(*hak*), meaning learning. *Tonghak* revolution was that the people in Korea began to protest irregularities and corruption of the government and aristocratic in 19th-century.

<sup>6</sup> You Chul “The Theory of the Resolution of Bitterness and Grief in *Jeung San Do*” in 증산도사상, [*The Journal of JeungSanDo Thought*], No 5. (Seoul: JeungSanDo Research Institute, 2001), 45-46.

<sup>7</sup> JeungSanDo Committee, ed., 증산도 도전\_ (경세판) [*JeungSanDo Dojeon*], 76. Translation mine.

According to Kang's teaching, the time of the *Tonghak* revolution was near the end of Early Heaven, the *sangguik* age, which meant the start of Later Heaven—the time when *sangsaeng* would finally overcome *sangguik*<sup>8</sup>—was approaching. People were called to open themselves to a new world of *haewon-sangsaeng*.

#### 1. *Haewon* (Resolution of Resentment)

*Haewon* was the main focus of Kang's spiritual work. According to him, in order to overcome *sangguik*, *haewon* is required. *Haewon*, a Korean word with Chinese roots, is composed of two parts: *hae* (解), meaning “to resolve,” and *won* (冤), meaning “bitterness, grief, and resentment.” Therefore, *haewon* refers to resolving bitterness and grief and dissolving grudges that block communication. There is a difference between the Korean concept of *han*, discussed in the previous chapter, and *won* (冤), though in the Korean-Chinese dictionary the concepts are synonymous.<sup>9</sup> According to Jeung-San Do doctrine, *won* is a precondition of *han*.<sup>10</sup> *Han* is the accumulation of *won*. *Won* refers to emotions of fury, frustration, unresolved resentment against oppression and injustices suffered, a sense of helplessness, and a feeling of total abandonment. Over time, *won* accumulates and becomes a deep feeling, *han*.

#### 2. *Sangsaeng* (Life-Sharing)

The word *sangsaeng* is comprised of *sang* (相), meaning “mutual,” and *saeng* (生), meaning “life.” *Sangsaeng* is defined as living together, helping each other: life-sharing. In daily life, *sangsaeng* refers to working for the well-being of others; its goal is saving life. *Sangsaeng* does not refer to people prospering at the expense of others but rather to the fact that individual persons can only prosper by helping others.

To embrace *sangsaeng*, one needs to open oneself to others and become a true friend. *Sangsaeng* implies a friendship in which the powerlessness and pains—and hope—of the people are shared. *Sangsaeng* presupposes mutual relationships that create an environment in which communion is possible.

According to Kang, *sangsaeng* is like the movement of two hands clasping each other: “Our work is the practice of helping others do well. After others prosper, we need only to take what remains, and our work

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<sup>8</sup> Park, *상생의 신학*, [*Sangsaeng Theology*], 467.

<sup>9</sup> Shinwon Cultural Society, ed. *최근한문사전*, [*A Recent Korean-Chinese Dictionary*] (Seoul: Shinwon Cultural Society, 1995), 206.

<sup>10</sup> Sejeong Press & Plan, ed., *누구나 알기쉬운 증산도의 기본교리*, [*An Easy and Basic Doctrine of JeungSanDo*] (Seoul: Dae Won Press, 2000), 102.

will be accomplished.”<sup>11</sup> For him, the primary principle of *sangsaeng* is our neighbors’ well-being or success. To share friendship with others and to live in harmony and peace with other persons, nature, and God—that is what *sangsaeng* is about.<sup>12</sup> *Sangsaeng* cannot come from one side alone; it focuses on mutual relationships in which persons are not separable; they are essentially united. Such mutual relationships result in harmony. *Sangsaeng* centers on the idea that one cannot exist without the other.

In *sangsaeng*, harmony results from recognizing and accepting change. Resistance to change creates imbalance, disharmony, and oppression. To bring about *sangsaeng* will inevitably involve a struggle against structures and persons that maintain divisions and keep people from living in harmony. Harmony is only possible through the interplay of mutual engagement in friendship.

Kang’s concept of *haewon-sangsaeng* has important implications for current efforts for the reunification of North and South Korea, for solving the socio-political and ideological conflicts that exist. Following Kang, one can say that the reunification of Korea is possible only when *haewon* is achieved.

### III. Main Elements of *Sangsaeng* Theology

In the 1980s and 1990s, Park Jong Chun and Hong Jeong Soo elaborated *sangsaeng* theology focusing particularly on an interpretation of Kang’s work in view of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. They suggested *sangsaeng* as a new motif on which to build a Korean theology, which they described as a liberation theology. In contrast to the culture of conflict that exists in a divided society, they focused on creating a culture of life. This is the aim of *sangsaeng* theology: to harmonize all contradictions in Korea.

The principles of *sangsaeng* theology are governed by a dynamic balance of complementarities that embrace center and margin, female and male, the weak and the strong, the oppressor and the oppressed. It proposes the development of reconciliation and healing at the personal as well as social levels. It focuses on embracing, accepting, helping, serving and living together with others.

Theologically speaking, according to Park, *sangsaeng* theology has five distinguishing characteristics. First, *sangsaeng* theology uses as resources “the text and tradition of the faith community on the one hand, and the common human experience and language on the other.”<sup>13</sup> The second characteristic has to do with the academic task of critical correlation of these two resources. In order to dialogue between text and context, *sangsaeng* theology creatively uses hermeneutical methods also used by liberation theology, feminist theology

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Park, *상생의 신학*, [*Sangsaeng Theology*], 469.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 468.

and minjung theology. Thirdly, *sangsaeng* theology “phenomenologically delves into the ultimate question that has been present in the common experience and common language of the Korean nation and Korean *minjung*, namely, *han* or *won* (resentment).”<sup>14</sup> Park suggests, for example, that *han* and *shin myung*<sup>15</sup> have been a common experience among Koreans way before the division of the peninsula. Sangsaeng theology uses minjung’s experiences instead of the rulers’ experiences. *Sangsaeng* theology’s fourth characteristic refers to how to retrieve “the genuine authority of the Christian text and Christian tradition for the praxis of liberation by means of the ideological critique of distorted texts and traditions in Western theology.”<sup>16</sup> In order to interpret biblical texts for the community, sangsaeng theology joins minjung theology’s critique of Western Christianity. Finally, *sangsaeng* theology “critically correlates its phenomenological moment (third characteristic) with and its ideological critical moment (fourth characteristic) in a unique hermeneutics of *sangsaeng*—life through resolution of resentment.”<sup>17</sup>

For Park, it is the Holy Spirit who leads humans to overcome the culture of death and violence and directs our attention to peace and *sangsaeng*. Only the Holy Spirit can give people the power to struggle for a new society characterized by harmony, equality, and justice. In his text, *Crawl with God, Dance with the Spirits*, Park writes:

We want our society to be one where righteousness flows like a river. We want a fertile soil where women and men are treated as equals. We want to share the fruits of reunification together. The farmers are anticipating the harvest and are ready to celebrate the harvest festival with gladness. Only the Holy Spirit can give us the power to realize such a society.<sup>18</sup>

The Holy Spirit gives people the power to survive *sanguik* (conflict) so they can become partners with God in building *sangsaeng* in our world. Park understands the Holy Spirit as the mother who comforts us, her children.<sup>19</sup> In his view, “Corporal life is affirmed and cared for by the mother, for the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:20).”<sup>20</sup> Anticipating the resurrection of our bodies, he claims, we are touched and moved by the mother, the Holy Spirit who turns our wailing into dancing.<sup>21</sup>

In order to overcome religious division, according to Park, 통\_(*tong*)- church must exist. *Tong* includes both interdependence and interpenetration between the sacred and the profane, or among those with

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 469.

<sup>15</sup> *Shin myung* refers to a forgetting of the self that occurs when a person is possessed by a divine spirit. In Korea, *shin myung* refers to the power, strength and vitality for life the possessed person has for her or himself and the community.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Park, *Crawl with God, Dance in the Spirit*, 134-35.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

conflicting beliefs.<sup>22</sup> *Tong* means *hanmon kongdongche* (one body community) echoing Ephesians 4:4, that all should be “one body, one Spirit in Christ.”<sup>23</sup> Without negating the institutional element of the church, *tong* is a vision of purified and unified Korean churches.<sup>24</sup> *Tong* is based on the reconciliation brought about by the cross;<sup>25</sup> *tong* prefers serving people to ruling people; for *tong*, love is not static but dynamic, bringing about solidarity among the churches. This proposal of *tong* by *sangsaeng* theology focuses on living together and creating social solidarity. Park proposed *tong* as the archetype for the Korean people where *sangsaeng*—harmony between heaven, earth, and among human beings—would flourish.<sup>26</sup>

Hong Jeong Soo links *sangsaeng* theology to Jesus’ teachings on confession and forgiveness.<sup>27</sup> Hong calls Jesus’ movement the fifth movement to distinguish it from four other popular movements of his time, that of the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Zealots, and the Essenes.<sup>28</sup> Jesus’ fifth movement rejected the paths proposed by the others. Jesus’ own way is best expressed in his saying, “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near” (Matthew 4:17).<sup>29</sup> This commandment is at the heart of *sangsaeng* theology urging people to remove all grudges and enmity, to forgive and to live together.<sup>30</sup>

For Hong, Jesus’ death and resurrection meant, first and foremost, forgiveness.<sup>31</sup> Forgiveness is both God’s will and the path of *sangsaeng*.<sup>32</sup> It was precisely to pass on the power of forgiveness to his disciples that Jesus was crucified and resurrected (Matthew 16:19; John 20:23).<sup>33</sup> Jesus’ good news is identified with the spirit of *sangsaeng*, with forgiveness and sacrificing oneself for a new society where all can coexist in harmony and equality. Hong sees Jesus as proclaiming Kang’s new era: *hoochun kaebyek*, Later Heaven, the opening of a new age.<sup>34</sup> Hong contends that the spirit of *sangsaeng* is God’s blessing given to us through Jesus Christ, in order for us to carry out the task of forgiveness and reconciliation.<sup>35</sup>

In *sangsaeng* theology, God is the God of *sangsaeng*. Building on the understanding of Park and Hong, Wang Dae Il analyzes Genesis 16 to explain the God of *sangsaeng*.<sup>36</sup> He focuses on God’s command to

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<sup>22</sup> Park, *상생의 신학*, [*Sangsaeng Theology*], 236, 470.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 237, 471.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 472.

<sup>27</sup> Hong Jeong Soo “*Sangsaeng* Theology and the Future of the Korean Church” *세계의 신학*, [*World Theology*] 6 (April 1990), 11.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>36</sup> Wang Dae Il “The Practice of *Sangsaeng* and a New Horizon of Old Testament” in *상생신학: 한국신학의*

Hagar, “Go back to your mistress” (Genesis 16:9). Wang concludes that God’s command to Hagar to go live with Sarah, who had terribly wronged her, indicates that God wants people to live together to overcome hurts and injustices. God, says Wang, wants all of humanity to live together in the world.<sup>37</sup>

According to Wang, the God of *sangsaeng* heals people so they can live together.<sup>38</sup> In Genesis 16, God healed both Hagar and Sarah. For Hagar, the praxis of *sangsaeng* resulted in being able to restore her relationship with Sarah. From Sarah, *sangsaeng* demanded a relationship of equality with Hagar.<sup>39</sup> The God of *sangsaeng* theology wanted both women to maintain their own identity while at the same time establishing a relationship of co-existence and reciprocity. It was precisely in such a relationship that healing between them could happen.<sup>40</sup>

Wang insists that the Kingdom of God for which Israel waited was a community of coexistence, mutuality, and equality.<sup>41</sup> This community was to live together under God’s reign. It is then, according to Wang, that the God of *sangsaeng* will say, “Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance” (Isaiah 19:25). In fact, at that time, Israel was hostile to both Egypt and Assyria. But God calls Israel to live with them. In *sangsaeng* theology, God is not a God of exclusiveness, conflict, and hatred but the God of inclusiveness, harmony, and reconciliation.<sup>42</sup>

#### IV. — Ethics of *Sangsaeng* : Reconciliation and Healing

Right relationships are essential to the notion of *sangsaeng*.<sup>43</sup> As human beings, we are innately relational. We are born into relationships, into community. We are able to behave toward each other in ways that promote mutuality, peace, and justice for all people.<sup>44</sup> Yet, in our world, human affairs are contrary to a morality that has mutuality as a principle. Human beings seem intent on behaving in ways that bring about miserable disasters, which produce *won* among humans, between humans and nature, and between humans and God. The ethics of *sangsaeng* aims to accomplish right relationships and dissolve *won*.<sup>45</sup>

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새 패러다임, [*Sangsaeng Theology: A New Paradigm of Korean Theology*] ed., Center for World-Theology (Seoul: Chomyung Press, 1992), 88.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>43</sup> Ahn Suck Mo, “A Model of *Sangsaeng* as a Method of Practical Theology” in *상생신학: 한국신학의 새 패러다임*, [*Sangsaeng Theology: A New Paradigm of Korean Theology*] ed., Center for World-Theology (Seoul: Chomyung Press, 1992), 165.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Hong Jeong Soo, “Hidden Jesus: *Sangsaeng* Theology” in *상생신학: 한국신학의 새 패러다임*, [*Sangsaeng*

This ethical understanding leads people to seek reconciliation and healing by overcoming their hostile feelings toward each other. Conflict, or *won*, cannot be overcome by taking revenge against one's enemy, as vengeance merely *diffuses won*. Instead, one has to deal artfully and virtuously with *won*, taking the long road of the practice of *haewon*, to free oneself from conflict and hostile feelings.<sup>46</sup> As a result of engaging in *haewon*, people can fully realize the reality of *sangsaeng*, enjoying the fulfillment of solidarity and unity after decades of brokenness, domination, and division.

#### 1. Hong Jeong Soo: *haewon-sangsaeng*, *yin/yang*, and dialogue

According to Hong, *haewon-sangsaeng* is not only a practical notion and a virtue; it is also a gift.<sup>47</sup> It is given by God to begin a new era.<sup>48</sup> *Haewon-sangsaeng* is an ethical praxis that makes possible the opening of this new age. *Haewon-sangsaeng*, then, is a process of cooperation between God and humans that involves the active efforts of humanity and the will of God. Understanding of *haewon-sangsaeng* deals with both human actions and is a cosmology.<sup>49</sup> *Haewon* has to do with bringing all the beings of the universe back to their original selves in order to build a new world. The goal of *haewon-sangsaeng* is to encourage a new way of living in a new world.<sup>50</sup>

The relationship of *haewon* and *sangsaeng* can be examined in parallel to the idea of *yin* and *yang*. In Asian thought, everything in the world can be divided into *yin* and *yang*. *Yin-yang* constitutes the basic principle of the universe. *Yin-yang* is a complementary principle, one of balance, not of the domination of one over another. Neither one is superior to the other.

*Yin* and *yang* are two co-existing polar opposites. Though they are opposite by nature, *yin* and *yang* are united, for one cannot exist without the other. *Yin* is related to *yang* and *yang* is related to *yin*. The existence of *yin* presupposes *yang* and vice versa. While they are exclusive of each other, at the same time, they are complementary to one another. This is a creative relationship rather than a destructive one; the differences are respected, and that is what makes *yin-yang* meaningful and dynamic.<sup>51</sup>

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*Theology: A New Paradigm of Korean Theology*], 30.

<sup>46</sup> Park Jong Chun, "Interliving Theology as a Wesleyan *Minjung* Theology" in *Methodist and Radical: Rejuvenating a Tradition*, eds. Joerg Rieger and John J. Vincent, (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2003), 167.

<sup>47</sup> Hong, "Hidden Jesus: *Sangsaeng* Theology," 30. See also, Park Jong Chun, "*Sangsaeng* Theology as a Wesleyan *Minjung* Theology," 180. In Park's thinking, the main trait of *sangsaeng* theology is "free grace for and in all."

<sup>48</sup> Hong, "Hidden Jesus: *Sangsaeng* Theology," 30.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>51</sup> Lee Jung Young, *Theology of Change: A Christian Concept of God in Eastern Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY:

*Yin-yang* resembles the relationship between the water of the ocean and its waves. The water of the ocean and its waves are not exactly the same because the former becomes the latter only when stirred by the wind. However, it is also true that ocean water and the ocean waves are not different. They have a common essence: both are ocean water; the waves of the ocean cannot be separated from the water of the ocean, but they are not the same.

Harmony is a key to understanding the relational categories of *yin* and *yang*. One includes the other in itself. *Yin* and *yang* are interrelated just in such a way that they are one, and yet they are opposite poles.<sup>52</sup> *Yin* and *yang* have opposite characteristics and opposite roles, but they are inseparable. *Yin-yang* are a relational reality.

Based on *yin-yang*, harmony exists if there is a recognition and acceptance of the tides of change. *Yin-yang* as opposite poles in harmony are a dynamic reality, one that changes. Our resistance to change is the imbalance that creates disharmony. *Yin* is always becoming *yang*, and *yang* is always becoming *yin*. The inclusiveness of one in the other creates a dynamic of mutual interplay that results in harmony instead of in conflict. Harmony, therefore, is not the result of the absence of differences or of the domination of one over another. Harmony is only possible through engagement of the different elements.

Just as *yin* cannot exist without *yang* nor *yang* without *yin*, *haewon* and *sangsaeng* exist in relation to one other. *Haewon* exists prior to *sangsaeng*, while *sangsaeng* is the result of the action of *haewon*.<sup>53</sup> One cannot reach *sangsaeng* without going through the process of *haewon*. *Haewon* refers to a process of tension; *sangsaeng* denotes the result of tension. *Sangsaeng* is reached only because *haewon* exists. *Haewon* provides the opportunity to recognize the tensions that exist in societal structures. This recognition is what sets one on the road to *sangsaeng*.

The relationship between *haewon* and *sangsaeng* is based also on what can be considered *sangsaeng* cosmology.<sup>54</sup> In the earth and heaven cosmology, “there is no difference between the height of Heaven and the lowness of Earth (how high Heaven is, is equal to how low Earth is). But there are differences in perspective.

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Orbis Books, 1979), 4-5.

<sup>52</sup> For Asians *yin-yang* helps to understand Gen 2:24 where husband and wife, without stopping being two, become one.

<sup>53</sup> Hong Jeong Soo, “Hidden Jesus: *Sangsaeng* Theology” in *상생신학: 한국신학의 새 패러다임*, [*Sangsaeng Theology: A New Paradigm of Korean Theology*], ed., Center for World-Theology (Seoul: Chomyung Press, 1992), 30.

<sup>54</sup> Park Kyu-Tae, “Ethics and Femininity in Korean and Japanese New Religions-Focusing on *Chungsan’gyo* and *Tenrikyo*” in *Women and Religion: Tenri International Symposium ’98*. [ed.](#), Center for Women and Religion (Berkeley: The Graduate Theological Union, 2003), 166.

This does not mean that Heaven looks down on Earth, but the Earth and Heaven look at and see each other on the same level.”<sup>55</sup>

*Sangsaeng* theology changes this understanding that is based on the Kang’s interpretation: “In the prior world only Heaven was respected, because the greatness of the virtue of the Earth was not known. Hereafter, both Heaven and Earth shall be respected equally.”<sup>56</sup>

The relationship between *yin* and *yang*, between Heaven and Earth, and between *haewon* and *sangsaeng* is parallel to the process of dialogue Isasi-Díaz presents in her paradigm of reconciliation. *Haewon-sangsaeng* demands people to be open to each other, to get to know each other, to come together and learn from each other in order to be able to move together into the future. Dialogue, as set forth by Isasi-Díaz, includes understanding *yin-yang* and *haewon-sangsaeng*, and therefore can be an effective way of moving people beyond broken relationships with God, with self, and with one’s neighbor.

## 2. Park Jong Chun: Holy Spirit, the tree of life, and ethical virtue

From a Christian perspective, Park relates *sangsaeng* and *haewon* to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Looking at what lies behind conflict—resentment (*won han*)—Park posits that the unique experience of “God within me” can overcome the vicious cycle of the unjustifiable *han*. When the supreme *chi* (spirit or a vital and original power that permeates the entire universe) of God becomes present in one’s heart and one is awakened to the internal witness of “God-within” being, one has to be awakened and move away from *han*. In his view, “Unless the supreme *chi* (spirit) of God comes down into one’s heart, there can be no awakening to God-within-ness.”<sup>57</sup> *Haewon-sangsaeng* for Park is the result of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the self. It is this relationship that makes *haewon-sangsaeng* possible, bringing peace and reconciliation among persons and with the cosmos. *Haewon-sangsaeng*, then, is precisely about reconciliation, about an understanding and a way of acting that will create a new world.

Another theo-ethical understanding of Park pertinent to this discussion is that of *han*. For him, *han* is like a tree that is cut off and is then joined to the tree of life, to the cross, where it will produce the fruits of *sangsaeng*.<sup>58</sup> *Haewon-sangsaeng* can be seen in the cross of reconciliation. As the cross of reconciliation has both vertical (between human beings and God) and horizontal (between human beings) dimensions, *haewon-*

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 166-67.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 164. See also, JeungSanDo Committee, ed., 증산도 도전 (경세관) [*JeungSanDo Dojeon*], 486.

<sup>57</sup> Park, “Interliving Theology As a Wesleyan *Minjung* Theology” in *Methodist and Radical: Rejuvenating a Tradition*, 176, 171.

<sup>58</sup> Park, 상생의 신학, [*Sangsaeng Theology*], 30, 102.

*sangsaeng* also has two dimensions: a personal level (vertical) and a social level (horizontal).<sup>59</sup> The personal level involves a self-awareness about the mystical union with God (*si chun ju*: God-within-ness) and about reconciliation between the person and God.<sup>60</sup> On the social level, *haewon-sangsaeng* begins to bring the Later Heaven (*hoochun kaebyek*) where human beings and all of the world is reconciled with God. *Hoochun kaebyek* points to a radical change of the cosmological order, a process determined by the efforts of humanity. *Haewon-sangsaeng*, then, is an ethical praxis, an ethical virtue—habitual practice—that impacts individual persons as well as society, enabling all to live together in meaningful community.

Park cites Kim Chi-Ha, the *minjung* poet and advocate of life, who noted that women and men should be equal in all ways. Kim insists that the rich and the poor must be equal, that the high and the low must be on the same level. Kim, one could say, calls for the elimination of all social discrimination between the strong and the weak.<sup>61</sup> He posits that *sangsaeng* can function as a paradigm for a way of thinking that awakens people to the need one has to think of others. This will transform humanity's civilization of confrontation, strife, and war into one of reconciliation, harmony, peace, and unity not only at the personal level but also at the social and civic level. *Haewon-sangsaeng*, therefore, can be said to introduce 홍익인간 (*hong ik in gan*), a way of benefiting all people and the world of 재세이화 (*jae se li hwa*), a way of making the world better as a virtue for all Korean society.<sup>62</sup>

Park uses a key concept of *tonghak* thought:<sup>63</sup> *innaechun* (humanity is heaven).<sup>64</sup> In *tonghak* thought, God was in all persons, including women, slaves, outcasts, the handicapped, and the poor. Essential to this meaning of *innaechun* is benefiting the oppressed, the poor, and the powerless. "The other person was to be seen as the bearer of heaven or god (*si ch'on ju*). As such, the obeisance rendered to the divine (or by the *minjung* to the *yangban* and especially the emperor) was to be rendered to every person (*sa in yo ch'on*, or treat people as

<sup>59</sup> Park, "Interliving Theology As a Wesleyan *Minjung* Theology" in *Methodist and Radical: Rejuvenating a Tradition*, 176.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>61</sup> Park Jong Chun, *상생의 신학*, [*Sangsaeng Theology*], 439.

<sup>62</sup> Park bases this understanding on the *Tan Gun* myth, a story about the origin of the Korean people and the establishment of the Korean nation. According to the myth, *Hwan-Woong* controlled the world. He needed a woman but he was the only human in the world. So he recruited two animals, a tiger and a bear. To be born as a woman, they were required to eat only garlic and wormwood for 100 days. The bear sustained all severe hardships for 100 days and then became a woman. Between that woman and *Hwan-Woong*, a child was born. His name was *Tangun*, and he established Korea.

<sup>63</sup> In the 19th century, the people in Korea began to protest irregularities and corruption of the government and the aristocratic class. That was the *tonghak* revolution that was based on *tonghak* thought -- the people's mind is at the same time heaven's mind -- that was later refined as *innaechun*. *tonghak* means literally "Eastern Learning." in Noh Jung-Sun, *Religion and Just Revolution* (Seoul: Voice Press, 1987), 66-67.

<sup>64</sup> Park Jong Chun, "Interliving Theology as a Wesleyan *Minjung* Theology" in *Methodist and Radical: Rejuvenating a Tradition*, eds. Joerg Rieger and John J. Vincent, (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2003), 169-170.

though they were God), and this concretely meant the practice of obeisance to persons of the underclass including women, children, and slaves.”<sup>65</sup> Kang Jeung-San expanded this notion into “treat all persons as you treat God.”<sup>66</sup> This fundamental ethical norm contributes to the Christian understanding of all persons as being *imago Dei*, which in turn is the basis for the intrinsic dignity of all human beings.

Hong also works in the notion of *innaechun*. He posits that the core meaning of *innaechun* refers to *injon* (人尊) (human nobility) that is related to *haewon-sangsaeng*.<sup>67</sup> He asserts that *injon*—which is realized by helping neighbors succeed in their lives—is achieved through *haewon-sangsaeng*.<sup>68</sup> In this sense, *haewon-sangsaeng* is considered a religious and an ethical virtue. It is a way to liberation-salvation and to justice (reconciliation) in the world.<sup>69</sup>

## V. Conclusion

*Sangsaeng* ethical principles bring to mind the insightful poem by Kim Min Kee, “Two Fish.”

There were two pretty fish  
living in a small pond  
by the path, deep in the mountain.  
A certain clear summer day,  
two pretty fish fought each other.  
One fish floated on the water,  
its flesh was decayed, and  
the water was polluted at the same time.  
Finally in that little pond  
by the path, deep in the mountain  
no life can survive.<sup>70</sup>

This poem describes the ethics of *sangsaeng*: Life cannot survive resentment and strife. *Sangsaeng* ethics is about helping others become successful, cooperating with others, and living in harmony and peace with all people, with nature, and with God. It is about eliminating *won—han*—so *sangsaeng* can flourish. Reconciliation comes through the resolution of resentment or *han*. It makes clear to construct an ethics of Korean reunification.

<sup>65</sup> Theodore W. Jennings Jr., “Transcendence, Justice and Mercy: Toward a (Wesleyan) Reconceptualization of God,” in *Rethinking Wesley’s Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, ed., Randy L. Maddox (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1988), 76. See also, Park Jong Chun, “Interliving Theology as a Wesleyan *Minjung* Theology”, 170.

<sup>66</sup> JeungSanDo Committee, ed., 증산도 도전 (경세판) [*JeungSanDo Dojeon*], 437, 108, 120. Kang Jeung-San basically had the thought of *innaechun*. See, Hong Jeong Soo, “The Spirit of *Sangsaeng* for Korean People” in 상생신학: 한국신학의 새 패러다임, [*Sangsaeng Theology: A New Paradigm of Korean Theology*], 27.

<sup>67</sup> Hong, 28.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Noh Jong-Sun, *Liberating God for Minjung* (Seoul: Hanul, 1994), 55.

## Abstract

This paper deals with the notion of reconciliation in *sangsaeng* theology for Korean reunification. *Sangsaeng* theology's central concept, *haewon-sangsaeng* (resolution of resentment and life- sharing), makes clear that reunification means reconciliation and to accomplish it Koreans must focus on resolution of accumulated resentment –han. *Haewon-sangsaeng* enables people to put all grudges and acrimonious relationships, to forgive others, and to cooperate with them in order to live in harmony and peace. *Haewon-sangsaeng* is central to an ethical-theological discourse of reconciliation. Reconciliation in *sangsaeng* theology is to come through the resolution of resentment or han and to construct an ethics of Korean reunification.

Reconciliation focuses on building together shared vision of the future. Reconciliation is not so much about the past as it is about the future. Reconciliation is to move beyond revenge and hatred. There can be no communion in the world if there is no reconciliation, that is, if there is no healing of the divisions that exist in the world. Reconciliation is a key element in the work unity. Reconciliation enables us not only to counter in every way possible enmity and opposition, but actually to foster openness and understanding of differences. Reconciliation will help us create a world

In thinking of the notion of reconciliation, I am reminded of a poem by Moon Ik-Hwan, “Two Skies, One Sky,” in which a father suffers because of the division of Korea. As he stands in the Demilitarized Zone on a cold, rainy night, he looks up to the sky as the morning light begins to shine. With the left eye he could see North Korea, and with the right eye he could see South Korea. He cries as he realizes that these are not different skies but one same sky, one same heaven.

## Keyword

Korean reunification, reconciliation, *sangsaeng* theology, han, Haewon

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