

Towards an Ethics of *Sangsaeng* (living together) - focusing on Politics of Reunification and *Sangsaeng* Paradigm**

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Abstract

A 21st-century Korean reunification has to be achieved by overcoming the division between the North and South. Regarding the term, reunification, a basic question needs to be raised: what conflicting forces are mainly responsible for the division of Korea? Without the consent of the Korean people, powerful governments divided one Korea into North Korea and South Korea. The division is not an accidental happening. In this study, in order to examine the division of a Korean peninsula, I first analyze the historical background of Korea division and then I examine politics of reunification in the South

<http://dx.doi.org/10.26590/madang..28.201712.110>

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** This paper is written with the financial support of Seoul Theological University and is partly revised from my Ph. D. dissertation that was written in 2009 at Drew University.

Korea. In doing so, I suggest a new motif of *sangsaeng* (living together) in order to achieve reunification, which is valid as a framework for a critical analysis of the principal elements of one community. *Sangsaeng* paradigm guides us to build a new community in which people are able to live together in inclusiveness, harmony and reconciliation.

- Keywords

Korean Reunification movement, *Sangsaeng* (living together) ethics, Division, Rice (food) community, Politics of Reunification

I. Introduction

Korea is the world's only divided country. The division has inflicted pain and suffering on the Korean people for 64 years, since the truce that suspended the Korean War was signed at Panmunjom on July 27, 1953.¹ This division is one of the main causes of the structural evils present in the societies of both South and North Korea. The steady escalation of military competition, mutual distrust, reciprocal vilification, and hostility between the South and the North generates and sustains these structural evils. It has contributed to the creation and sustenance of systems in the North and South that are unjust.

A 21st-century Korean reunification has to be achieved by overcoming the division between the North and South. Regarding the term, reunification, a basic question needs to be raised: what conflicting forces are mainly responsible for the division of Korea? Without the consent of the Korean people, powerful governments divided one Korea into North Korea and South Korea. Most people agree that Korea was divided as a byproduct of the Cold War between the U.S.A. and Russia after the Second World War.²

The division of a Korean peninsula is not an accidental happening. In this study, in order to examine the division of a Korean community, I first analyze the historical background of Korea division and then I examine politics of reunification in the South Korea. In doing so, I suggest a new motif of *sangsaeng* (living together) in order to achieve re-

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

2 Wi Jo Kang, *Christ and Caesar in Modern Korea* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1997), 72.

unification, which is valid as a framework for a critical analysis of the principal elements of one community.

II. Historical Background³

The necessary starting consideration in this short account of the movement is to notice that the movement is about the “re-unification” of Korea and not about unification. Reunification implies returning to the unity that has existed throughout Korean history. Talking about reunification highlights the original state of oneness of Korea and makes necessary an analysis of who and what is responsible for the division of Korea.

The division of Korea can be traced back to 1905. In July of that year, U.S. Secretary of War William Howard Taft made a secret agreement with Count Taro Katsura, then prime minister of Japan. According to this agreement, the United States would support Japan taking over Korea if Japan recognized U.S. control over the Philippines. Then, in August 1905, when the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was renegotiated, the British “acknowledged Japan’s right to take appropriate measures for the ‘guidance, control, and protection’ of Korea.”⁴ In September 1905, Japan and Russia signed the Treaty of Portsmouth, ending the Russo-

3 As is true of all history, what follows is colored by my own worldview. My intention is to provide a very brief account of what led to the Korean War and the division of the peninsula, and not to fix blame or argue in favor of either side.

4 Lee, *A New History of Korea*, 309. For Taft and Katsura agreement, see also, Stanley Sandler, *The Korean War: No Victors, No Vanquished* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 20; William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 13.

Japanese War. In signing this treaty, Russia agreed to the political, economic, and military control of Korea by Japan.⁵

The Eulsa Treaty, or Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty of November 1905, made possible by the Taft-Katsura agreement and the victory of Japan over Russia, effectively deprived Korea of its sovereignty. The treaty was signed by five Korean ministers but not by Korean Emperor Gojong, the Prime Minister Han Gyu-seol, Minister of Justice Yi Ha-yeong, or Minister of Finance Min Yeong-gi. Emperor Gojong appealed to major powers like the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Germany, and others, for support against this action by Japan. In 1907 Gojong sent secret emissaries to the second international Hague Peace Convention to protest the Eulsa Treaty, but Korea was not allowed to take part in the Hague Convention. The Japanese forced Emperor Gojong to resign in July 1907 in favor of his son, Soonjong. After Gojong abdicated, Lee Wan-Yong became the Korean Prime Minister and signed the Japanese-Korean Annexation Treaty on August 22, 1910.⁶

Between 1905 and 1910, the Koreans unsuccessfully attempted to rebel against the Japanese. Most important were the “righteousness armies,” made up mostly of peasants, soldiers from the disbanded Korean army, and patriotic literati.⁷ These righteousness armies, or guerrillas, were supported by the people. They attacked Japanese garrisons and destroyed the railways. During the occupation of Korea by Japan, two groups formed that would later be of import in the wake of World War II. One was the Korean Provisional government,

5 Lee, *A New History of Korea*.

6 Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997), 145.

7 Ibid., 146. About the attempts by Koreans against the Japanese, see, Stueck, *The Korean War*, 14; Lee, *A New History of Korea*, 316.

founded in April 1919 and based in Shanghai. The other one was the Korean Communist Party, which was secretly organized in Seoul in 1925.⁸

At the end of World War II, both the United States and the Soviet Union were intent on creating areas of influence in the countries the Allied forces helped to liberate from Germany and Japan. Following an American-Soviet agreement, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan on August 8, 1945, two days after the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and one day before another one was dropped on Nagasaki. As part of the declaration of war, Soviet troops immediately invaded Manchuria and began to move south towards Korea. They halted their advance at the 38th parallel, in keeping with the previous agreement they had with the Americans stating the Japanese would surrender to Soviet forces north of this location.

The Soviet Army established a “Soviet Civil Authority” to rule the country until a Korean government friendly to them could be established. The Soviets turned to Kim Il-Sung, who had spent his youth in Manchuria, had participated in guerilla attacks against the Japanese in Korea, and entered Korea as a captain in the Soviet army. In February 1946, he became the head of a provisional government: the North Korean Provisional People’s Committee. The Soviet army forces departed North Korea in 1948.

While the Soviet forces invaded Manchuria and advanced into the Korean peninsula, the United States hastily created an American occupation zone, fearing Soviets occupation of the whole of the Korean peninsula and Japan. Since the beginning of August 1945, the last Japanese Governor-General of Korea was in contact with a number of

8 Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 159.

influential Koreans making arrangements to hand over the government. On August 15, 1945, the same day Japan agreed to unconditionally surrender to the Allies, a moderate left-wing politician, Yo Un Hyong, agreed to take over the government in Seoul. On September 6, 1945, four days after the official surrender of Japan to General Douglas MacArthur aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, a congress of representatives took place in Seoul, creating a “modern”⁹ Korea barely three weeks after Japan’s surrender. The government was predominantly left wing, caused in part by the fact that many resistance fighters had communist leanings. The very next day, General MacArthur announced that Lieutenant General John R. Hodge was to administer Korean affairs. General Hodge landed in Incheon with his troops on September 9, 1945.

In December 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to administer Korea under the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission. It was agreed that Korea would govern itself independently after five years of international oversight. The Koreans were not party to such an agreement and protested vehemently against any attempts to delay self-government. There were violent protests in the south.¹⁰ The U.S. occupation authorities considered the government headed by Yo Un Hyong as communist and refused to recognize it. Instead, they set up a government headed by Rhee Syngman, who had returned to Korea after living in exile in the United States since the first decade of the 20th century, when the Japanese took over Korea. Rhee Syngman had been president of the Korean Government in Exile between 1919 and

9 I use the term “modern” to indicate that this was not a return to an imperial Korea but rather a nation that was now to use a democratic form of government.

10 Lee, *A New History of Korea*, 376.

1925, when he was impeached by the Provisional Assembly of that government for misusing his authority. In August 1948, U.S. forces left the Korean peninsula.

Though both U.S. and Soviet military forces had left Korea, it was clear that the two provisional Korean governments were growing ideologically farther and farther apart. From 1948 until the start of the Korean War on June 25, 1950, the armed forces of North and South Korea engaged in many bloody conflicts along the border. In 1950, North Korea crossed the 38th parallel and attacked South Korea, marking the beginning of the Korean War. However, the Korean situation from 1945 on cannot be considered apart from the relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. The rapid deterioration of relations between these two nations contributes enormously to the situation that led to the Korean War.

Another important historical consideration involves the reasons behind China coming to the aid of North Korea during the Korean War. This is a complex issue with a variety of reasons at play. The weight given an argument depends on the point-of-view of the historian being quoted. Following are the main arguments found. There is evidence that Mao Zedong felt he needed to carry out “an anti-imperialist campaign against the United States,”¹¹ and that he considered it better for China to do this in Korea rather than in Vietnam or in Taiwan, where he would have the problem of having to take supplies for Chinese troops farther away.¹² At play also was the tense relationship between the Soviets and Mao, given that Stalin had recognized the

11 Hao Yufan and Zhai Zhihai, “China’s Decision to Enter the Korean War: History Revisited,” in *The China Quarterly* 121 (1990): 97.

12 Yufan, “China’s Decision to Enter the Korean War,” 106.

Chiang Kai-shek's government. The question of China's aid to North Korea could have played a role in bringing about the 1950 Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty.¹³ Mao seemed to have felt he owed it to the Koreans to come to their aid "because of the sacrifice of so many Koreans in the Chinese revolution and the anti-Japanese resistance."¹⁴ Finally, when the UN forces, mainly made-up of U.S. forces, crossed into North Korea, China feared that the advancing forces would not stop at the border between North Korea and China, and might extend their rollback policy into China.¹⁵

Access to Soviet archives since 1991 certainly make clear that the Soviets did not order the attack that started the Korean War on June 25, 1950, but that "Kim Il-Sung persuaded Stalin to support an attack to unify Korea."¹⁶ After the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives, an armistice was signed on July 27, 1953. Technically, the Korean War has not ended.

III. The Reunification Movement

A Korean ethics of reunification needs to be elaborated and continuously refined within the existing reunification movement. The elements I am proposing – *sangsaeng* and *minjok* - needs to be taken into consideration in the understanding of reunification that guides those in South Korea working for reunification. To see how this might work,

13 Lester H. Brune, "Recent Scholarship and Findings about the Korean War," in *American Studies International* 36 (1998): 3.

14 Cumings, *Korea's place in the Sun*, 284.

15 Yufan, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War," 100-101.

16 Brune, "Recent Scholarship and Findings about the Korean War," 1.

I present here brief history of reunification movement.

In the early 1950s, the governments of North Korea and South Korea attempted “reunification through military force.”¹⁷ The most violent form of this struggle was the Korean War. Soon after the Korean War, the South Korean government severely prohibited all people from debating the issue of reunification. Those interested in reunification were accused of being communists. Reunification was considered possible only through victory over North Korea’s communist government.¹⁸

The military regime of General Park Chung Hee, who came to power by staging a coup d’état in 1961, treated the reunification problem as secondary to economic reconstruction and political stability. The Park regime understood that the reunification movement demanded democratization, which it saw as a threat to the government. This government enacted an “anti-communist law” prohibiting the Korean people from discussing reunification or being involved in the democratization movement.¹⁹ As a result, no attempts or proposals were made by the South to have contacts or talks with the North until 1970.

The North-South Joint Communiqué issued by South and North Korea on July 4, 1972, announced three principles for Korean reunification: autonomous reunification without being dependent on powerful countries; peaceful reunification without using armed forces; and pursuit of great national unity, transcending differences in ideas, ideologies, and systems.²⁰ However, in the name of national security, the

17 Sung-Il Min, *Lessons for Reunification* (Seoul: Tolbaegae, 1991), 163.

18 Ibid., 171.

19 Ibid.

20 Wi Jo Kang, *Christ and Caesar in Modern Korea*, 129.

government of the South prohibited discussion of reunification except through government channels.²¹

In order to consolidate its power base, Park declared martial law in October 1972, suspending the Constitution and dissolving Parliament. From then on the Park regime held absolute authority over the people and exercised strict control over any attempts to have a reunification movement. In reality, the people of South Korea at that time concentrated on the “anti-dictatorship struggle,” rather than on the reunification movement. Nevertheless, the Park regime was the first South Korean government to advocate peaceful reunification and officially recognized the reality of two Koreas.²²

In the 1980s, especially after the Kwangju Peoples Uprising in May 1980, many South Koreans—in particular the progressive intellectuals—began to reflect on the causes of the dictatorship and the anti-democratic efforts of the South Korean society. Two factors became obvious: the ongoing interference of the United States and the division of Korea. This led the people to see that for the good of South Korea, they needed to create a reunification movement. This led to organizing the “democracy, reunification, and minjung movement league.” Its basic principle was that the reunification movement should not be a governmental initiative, but on the contrary, it must be a nongovernmental initiative. This movement believed that the method for achieving reunification is found in the principles of the North South Joint Communiqué of July 4, 1972: “autonomous reunification, peaceful reunification, and the pursuit of great national unity.”²³

21 Ibid., 130.

22 Min, *Lessons for Reunification*, 178.

23 Ibid., 98, 101-104.

In the 1980s, the Chun Doo Hwan military regime officially followed the reunification policies of the 70s; however, in reality it was not concerned with achieving Korea's reunification. For example, though many people felt that close cooperation between the South Korean and U.S. governments, including annual military exercises, was not good for reunification, Chun's regime continued having them.²⁴

On October 10, 1980, North Korea suggested a "Democratic Confederate Republic of Korea" which "proposed the achievement of reunification by recognizing the existence of the two governmental systems while agreeing on their confederation, participating in all international sports events as one Korea team, and reducing the size of the military."²⁵ Even though this plan was a realistic approach and earned considerable attention among the South Korean Christian groups and abroad, the Chun regime did not take it seriously.

From the middle of the 1980s on, with an international reconciliatory mood prevailing, the South's government gradually began not only to allow the people to talk about reunification but also permitted the people to visit North Korea as long as they did not have a political purpose. On July 7, 1988, President Roh Tae Woo announced his six-point reunification policy that included permitting free and open discussion of reunification issues.²⁶

In the 1990s when president Kim Young Sam was inaugurated, he declared a three-step reunification policy.²⁷ The first step was to be one

23 Ibid., 98, 101-104.

24 Kang, *Christ and Caesar in Modern Korea*, 130.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., 136.

27 Korean Association of Christian Studies, ed., *The Korean Church and Reunification* (Seoul: Inter Varsity Press, 1994), 178.

of reconciliation and cooperation; the second one would result on a South-North confederation; the third referred to one people, one nation.²⁸ Despite what he said at his inauguration, Kim's approach to reunification was very conservative. For example, under Kim's regime, on March 7, 1993, the joint U.S.- South Korean military exercise Team Spirit was launched.²⁹ However, in the late of 1990s, President Kim Dae Jung was determined to attempt a Sunshine Policy of Reconciliation with the North. The Sunshine Policy put forth three policies: no aggression against North Korea; maintain a strong defense against possible North military invasion; and encourage exchanges of political, economic, and cultural ideas.³⁰

From June 13 to 15, 2000, President Kim Dae Jung visited Pyongyang, holding a historic "Inter-Korean Summit Talks" with National Defense Chairman Kim Jong Il. It was for the first time in 55 years that the highest leaders from both governments met. At the end of this meeting they issued the Inter-Korean Joint Declaration which included the following:

1. The North and the South agreed to solve the question of the country's reunification independently by the concerted efforts of the Korean nation responsible for it.
2. The North and the South, recognizing that a proposal for federation of lower stage advanced by the North side and a proposal for confederation put forth by the South side for the reunification of the country have elements in common, agreed to work for the reunification in this

28 Kang, *Christ and Caesar in Modern Korea*, 146-47.

29 Ibid., 144. Under President Roh Tae Woo in 1992 this annual exercise was suspended as a gesture of the desire for peaceful relations with North Korea.

30 <http://www.unikorea.go.kr/data/src/whitepaper/wp2000appl.pdf>; see 4-5.

direction in the future.

3. The North and the South agreed to settle humanitarian issues, including exchange of visiting groups of separated families and relatives and the issue of unconverted long-term prisoners, as early as possible in the occasion of August 15 this year.
4. The North and the South agreed to promote the balanced development of the national economy through economic cooperation and build mutual confidence by activating cooperation and exchanges in all fields, social, cultural, sports, public health, environmental and so on.
5. The North and the South agreed to hold dialogues between the authorities as soon as possible to implement the above-mentioned agreed points in the near future.³¹

The Inter-Korean summit proved the Korean people's ability for resolving pending issues through dialogue.

The regime of President Roh Moo-hyun (2003–2008) basically committed to continuing the Sunshine Policy. The second Inter-Korean summit took place during Roh's time as president on October 2–3, 2007. Roh met with Kim Jong Il in Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. The agreement they signed at the end of the meeting repeats many of the same points that had been agreed to before. Important to notice is the renewed commitment "to firmly transform inter-Korean relations into ties of mutual respect and trust, transcending the differences in ideology and systems," to increase "exchanges and cooperation in the social areas covering history, language, education, science and technology, culture and the arts, and sports to highlight the long history and excellent culture of the Korean people," and "to actively promote humanitarian cooperation projects," this last agreement

31 http://www1.korea-np.co.jp/pk/142th_issue/2000061501.htm.

being specified further in the document as an agreement to expand reunion of separated family members and their relatives and promote exchanges of video messages.

In this summit, the leaders added some specifics regarding economic projects that would actually be carried out by North and South Korea working together. They agreed to create a “special peace and cooperation zone” in Haeju and its vicinity in North Korea near the demilitarized zone; to the construction of an industrial complex in Gaeseong, North Korea; and “to establish cooperative opening freight train service between Munsan [South Korea] and Bondong [North Korea].”³²

The government of Lee Myung-Bak aims to advance inter-Korean relations for mutual benefits and common prosperity through pragmatic and result-oriented approaches. Lee’s proposals include creating a “Community for Peace,” which will denuclearize the Korean peninsula, build military trust between South and North Korea, and reduce tension in the peninsula; creating a “Community for Common Prosperity” to help North Korea develop its economy and participate in the international community and to pursue an economic cooperation that will benefit both Koreas; creating a “Community for Happiness” that will enhance the well-being of the 70 million South and North Koreans by resolving humanitarian issues between the two Koreas and raising the quality of life for all Koreans.³³ The government of Park Geun-Hye aimed to build trust between the two Koreas which proposed ‘the Korean peninsula trust building process’ that efforts to create trust through inter-Korean dialogue and cooperation. However,

32 http://www1.korea-np.co.jp/pk/142th_issue/2000061501.htm 185.

33 <http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eng/default.jsp?pname=POLvision>.

inter-Koreans relation certainly became strained.

The present government of Moon Jae-in follows the spirit of the reunification policy in Roh Moo-hyun regime, which proposes 'the Korean peninsula of Peace and Prosperity'. It includes reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas and denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and improving inter-Korean relations through exchanges.³⁴ Though undoubtedly there were some positive steps taken towards reunification during the presidency of Roh Moo-hyun, lately, under the present regime in South Korea, cooperation for reconciliation and mutual life-affirming has been shrinking, and the South-North political relationship has encountered new obstacles. The fact is that the division of the Korean peninsula has caused extremely high military expenses that result in the government's unwillingness to promote the welfare of its people. The military expenditures of South Korea in 2008 were 26 billion dollars. If South Korea would reduce its military expenses by some, it would be possible not only to provide welfare benefits for the elderly and the handicapped, but also to provide middle school education for all students.

IV. Towards an Ethics of *Sangsaeng*: Healing and Reconciliation³⁵

What ethical understanding must guide the work of reunification? What are the central elements of an ethics of Korean reunification? In

34 http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eng_unikorea/unificationpolicy/policytask/vision; accessed Oct. 25, 2017.

35 For this part, I recite some in my article, "The Notion of Reconciliation in *Sangsaeng* Theology for Korean Reunification," in *Madang* 18 (2012), 103-105.

view of what it can contribute to an ethics of reunification, *sangsaeng* ethics' central concept, *haewon-sangsaeng*, makes clear that reunification means reconciliation and healing and that to accomplish these Koreans must focus on resolution of accumulated resentment-*han*. In order to articulate the ethics of *sangsaeng*, I analyze the work of Hong Jeong-soo and Jeong Gyoung-Ho.

Right relationships are essential to the notion of *sangsaeng*.³⁶ 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.³⁷ 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*.³⁸

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.³⁹ As a result

36 Suck Mo Ahn, "A Model of Sangsaeng as a Method of Practical Theology," in *Sangsaeng Theology: A New Paradigm of Korean Theology*, ed. by Center for World-Theology (Seoul: Chomyung Press, 1992), 165.

37 Ibid.

38 Jeong Soo Hong, "Hidden Jesus: Sangsaeng Theology," in *Sangsaeng Theology: A New Paradigm of Korean Theology*, 30.

39 Jong Chun Park, "Interliving Theology as a Wesleyan Minjung Theology," in *Methodist and*

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.

According to Hong, *haewon-sangsaeng* is not only a practical notion and a virtue; it is also a gift.⁴⁰ It is given by God to begin a new era.⁴¹ *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.⁴² *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.⁴³

Jeong Gyoung-Ho⁴⁴ refers to the experiment done by Hong Jeong-Soo⁴⁵—the 19th-century first exponent of *haewon* and *sangsaeng*—to explain the ethics of *sangsaeng*.⁴⁶ Since *sangsaeng* is about accepting others, Hong conducted the following experiment: He made hens sit on duck eggs together with their own chicken eggs. After three weeks, yellow chickens and ducklings hatched, and all of them followed the

Radical: Rejuvenating a Tradition, eds. by Joerg Rieger and John J. Vincent (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2003), 167.

40 Hong, “Hidden Jesus: *Sangsaeng* Theology,” 30.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., 28.

43 Ibid., 30.

44 He is a retired professor in Youngnam Theological University.

45 Madang Journal Editors, *Theology of Life & Peace in Korea* (Seoul: Dong Yeon Press, 2013), 174-182.

46 Gyoung-Ho Jeong, “Korean Christian Ethics for Peaceful *Tongil* between South and North Korea,” (PhD. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 2002), 249-250.

hens. The hens took care of both providing food for the chickens and for the ducks. Hong wrote that *sangsaeng* is like the hens embracing the little ducks as well as their own chickens. For Hong this was precisely the goal of *sangsaeng*: to embrace all and take care of all—just as Jesus did.⁴⁷

Jeong also uses the image of the “rice cake of *haewon*” to make clear what *sangsaeng* ethics is about.⁴⁸ In the Korean tradition, rice cakes of *haewon* are eaten on January 15th to completely rid oneself of any resentment towards others. To share food with others, one has to forgive and be reconciled with all who are members of the rice community (the dining table community). The rice cakes of *haewon* are symbols of the process of healing and reconciliation.⁴⁹ Eating together makes reconciliation possible and allows healing to grow in all, and confirms the nature of one inseparable community. *Haewon*, as reconciliation and healing, requires the will to embrace, to be unconditional and indiscriminate. The will to embrace the other for the sake of reconciliation must take precedence over any conflict one might have with others. The process of reconciliation must proceed under the assumption that no one should ever be excluded from the embrace of the rice community because all human beings are equal before God. To be reconciled to God, one must overcome any *won* (resentment) towards others in the community; one must practice the social virtue of reconciliation.

Also important is Jeong’s understanding that the governing princi-

47 Jeong Soo Hong, “The Spirit of Sangsaeng for Korean People,” in *Sangsaeng Theology: A New Paradigm of Korean Theology*, 213-214.

48 Ibid., 241.

49 Jeong, “Korean Christian Ethics for Peaceful *Tongil* between South and North Korea.”

ple of *sangsaeng* ethics is balance and equality (yin-yang).⁵⁰ The *sangsaeng* ethics of life-sharing is the result of this yin-yang relationship between *haewon* and *sangsaeng*. 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.⁵¹ For Jeong, to live according to *sangsaeng* ethics, “recovery of balance through the settlement of resentment and grudge is essential.”⁵²

V. Conclusion

The reunification of the Korean peninsula should not only be dealt

⁵⁰ Ibid., 242.

⁵¹ Jung Young Lee, *Theology of Change: A Christian Concept of God in Eastern Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 4-5.

⁵² Kyu-Tae Park, “Ethics and Femininity in Korean and Japanese New Religions,” 167; see also, Jeong, “Korean Christian Ethics for Peaceful *Tongil* between South and North Korea,” 240-241.

with based on an emotional approach but also a programmatic approach. That means that the difficulties that will be confronted after reunification such as financial problem, political system, and geopolitical problems around the Korean peninsula will be given serious considerations enough. Thus, the reunification will be dealt with positively step by step given enough time.

Sangsaeng ethical principles bring to mind the insightful poem by Kim Chi Ha, "Rice [*bab*: food]"

Rice is heaven
As you can't go to heaven by yourself
Rice is to be shared
Rice is heaven
As you see the stars in heaven together
Rice is to be shared by everybody
When the rice goes into a mouth
Rice is worshipped in the mind
Rice is heaven
Ah, ah, rice is
To be shared by everybody.⁵³

This poem means that it is God's will that everyone shares rice (food). It describes the ethics of *sangsaeng*: Life cannot survive alone. Life cannot exist without the other. *Sangsaeng* ethics aims to accomplish embracing all community to dissolve hostility. The ethical understanding leads people to seek reconciliation and healing by

53 The Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia (CTC-CCA) eds., *Minjung Theology: People as the subjects of history* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 67.

overcoming their hostile feelings toward each other. It is about helping others become successful, cooperating with others, and living in sharing and caring for all people, and peace with people with nature, and with God. It is therefore remembered that North and South is a rice community by sharing and caring for others. The goal of the reunification is to live together in *Sangsaeng* community that guides us, not only in the work of creating a single political unit, but also in the construction of a new society in which all people are able to live together in peace and love that God wants us, all of humanity.

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Received 2017.10.30.	Revised 2017.12.07.	Accepted 2017.12.14.
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